Aim and Scope
Childhood in Africa is the journal of the Institute for the African Child at Ohio University. Childhood in Africa is published online on a bi-annual basis. It follows the mission statement and goals of the Institute for the African Child by encouraging holistic approaches to the understanding of issues impacting children and childhood in Africa. Childhood in Africa seeks to reflect African and Africanist perspectives regarding children and childhood. It includes all academic disciplines in the discussion of childhood in Africa and also attempts to further the professional interests of Africanists by disseminating knowledge about children and childhood in Africa.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

3 Editorial
Steve Howard

Assan Sarr

13 Youth and Currency Counterfeiting at Crossroad with Special Reference to Mutengene (Cham), South-West Cameroon
Flavius M Mokake

24 Caring and Caning – Luo children’s Perceptions of Respect and Reciprocity
Jens Aagaard-Hansen

36 Health and Disease Symptomology in Luo Children
Amy M. Zidron

47 Surveying Epistemology: Discursive Impacts on the African Understanding of Childhood Stories
Francis Semwaza
On behalf of the Institute for the African Child I would like to extend a sincere apology for the remarkable delay in getting this third issue of Childhood in Africa on-line. I am particularly anguished about the contributors to the journal who have waited most patiently for us to edit and upload your articles. I have, of course, many fine excuses as to why this issue has taken so long, but then I consider what is available to scholars of African children for publication outlets, and I see some correlation.

I have, in fact, recently reviewed the state of research on African children (Oxford Bibliographies in African Studies- Children and Childhood, 2013). The journals are few and difficult to locate, and about half of them are South African. Some are produced at African universities, and all are subject to the vagaries of funding a field that lacks powerful constituents. If nothing else, understanding this fact gives us enormous incentive to continue this work. We are committed to providing this space for scholars to report on the changing circumstances of children across Africa.

One of the major goals in establishing Childhood in Africa at Ohio University was to provide an access gateway for African scholars in the many fields that touch children's lives to get published and promote their careers as advocates for African children. We encourage you to contact us with your ideas about how we can sustain this journal and bring it to the attention of those who work to make the lives of Africa's children better.

Steve Howard,
Director, Institute for the African Child

Assan Sarr
Ohio University

Introduction:

The period from roughly 1929 to the late 1940s was an era of great uncertainty for the people living in Bathurst – the most important colonial city in the British West African colony of the Gambia. This era coincided with the Great Economic Depression of the late 1920s and 30s and the outbreak of World War II – which arguably are two of the most important twentieth century events that are known to have affected large segments of Africa and its diverse population. With the outbreak of the global economic depression and the Second World War in 1930s, the global economy in general and that of Africa in particular was thrown into crises. For example, the decline in government revenue in the Gambian colony is an evidence of this. Government expenditure declined from £194,546 in 1938 to £191,352 in 1939 and to £189,578 in 1940. Also, in the Gambia, as in elsewhere, the cost of food items increasingly went up while exports prices dropped (Wright: 2004, 199). The hardest hit areas appeared to have been the countryside, commonly referred to as the hinterlands. Here, too, several household heads became less capable of feeding their children and sources make reference to a “large urban population [that] live in . . . overcrowded conditions . . . they must obtain food either from the rural areas or from abroad.” The most successful economic protest of the decade, he further writes, was the cocoa boycott of 1937-8. The boycott had been organized by farmers, traders and traditional leaders in part to challenge to European control of the colony but the economic uncertainties of the time may have also played a role in its outbreak.

Obviously, several studies show that the situation was so desperate not just in the Gambia but also in other parts of West Africa. For instance, in the Gold Coast, present day Ghana, Wendell Holbrook writes that “the government’s attempt to introduce an urban income tax to raise revenue in the depression year of 1931 had brought forth angry criticism from the press and from African members of the Legislative Council; and in several towns the proposed tax provoked street demonstrations and, in some cases, riots” (Holbrook, 1985: 350). In northern Nigeria “aggressive revenue drives at the grass roots caused food shortages and full-scale famines in several districts . . . Famines devastated whole villages as the agents of an avowedly bankrupt state watched helplessly” (Ochonu, 2009: 16). Similarly in French West Africa, especially in Dakar, Bamako and Conakry the growth of urban unemployment forced hundreds of youths to join the Tirailleurs Sénégalais (Echenberg, 1991: 112).

In the Gambia, historian Donald Wright states that when President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Gambia in January 1944, on his way to Morocco, he saw the dark images of underdevelopment or poverty. Thus, when he met with British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, he told him “what [he] about his British Gambia . . . Dir. Disease. Very high mortality rate . . . Life expectancy . . . Twenty-six years” (Wright,
was about 14,370. As the size of the settlement’s population continued to grow, it became a fertile ground for Christian missionary activity. The history of missionary enterprise in Bathurst can be traced to 1821 and 1831. Without missionary activity, as Florence Mahoney argues, the process of education in St. Mary’s Island (i.e. Bathurst) would have been delayed (Mahoney, 1963: 142). As soon as the Methodist and the Anglican churches established themselves in the island, member of the church began to serve “the needs of the young - between the ages of nine and thirteen - by imparting a rudimentary knowledge in the three Rs through scriptural texts, adolescent and adult domestic slaves who were otherwise employed during the day, were provided for in evening classes” (Mahoney, 145).

So encouraging were the results that after three years the school provided the Colonial Chaplain with a boy-clerk, since “not a native man could be found who was competent to be his clerk. Another boy in less time became a merchant’s clerk. Girls were given special attention in needlework by missionary wives, and some orphans enjoyed the special privilege of living in the Mission House free of charge in return for domestic services rendered after school hours (Mahoney, 145-46)

The schools registered a steady population increase in the 1840s. In 1841, for instance, 172 children had enrolled in the schools in Bathurst and nearby Berwick Town. By 1848 numbers in the city’s schools rose to 298 pupils (Mahoney, 159). In 1849, four priests from the Roman Catholic mission arrived in the city and purchased land for the construction of a church and house. These men “were followed by four Sisters of Charity, who, once they had found a base, devoted themselves to education, to the assistance of the poor and sick - receiving orphans and abandoned children into their establishment.” For the first time in the city’s history, a boarding school was established on the Island of Bathurst; it was a free school where the children were instructed in religion and domestic subjects. This mission also depended primarily on funds collected overseas, in particular France, for the maintenance of its social work in Bathurst (Mahoney, 164).

From early on, the schools were owned and run by Christian missionaries. As Mahoney writes, education then was not a province of Government but of voluntary bodies. This is also true for other parts of Africa. As Richard Gray writes, in the whole of British West and South Africa, the colonial government assumed limited direct responsibility for education (Gray, 1986: 183). As the case in Bathurst demonstrates, the British provided only begin to give modest financial assistance to the mission schools in later years. As a result, between 1820s and 1850s, the schools were few and the number of available space for city’s population was small.

In 1879 a local school for higher education was established in Bathurst, both for training African agents, and for the education of the sons of the growing class of African entrepreneurs. The Wesleyan Boys’ High School opened with fifteen boys under the headship of the Rev Robert Dixon, with a curriculum little different from that of the Grammar school in Sierra Leone. Mahoney cites other reports that show that the performance of the school was encouraging; they show, overwhelmingly, the sort of lively interest that parents were beginning to take in the education of their children.

The growing economic prosperity of the 1860s and 1870s may have played a key role in this development. The prosperity resulted in preference being given to a boarding school education abroad for a larger number of Gambian boys than before. In 1881, the Boys High School in Bathurst contained 21 pupils, but in the 1880s no fewer than 18 children entered the C.M.S. Grammar school. This figure does not include those who went to the Wesleyan Boys’ School in Sierra Leone founded in 1874. Even the daughters of the “middle class” were also being considered for higher education Freetown. A small number of girls were already in the C.M.S. Girls’ boarding school, the Annie Walsh Memorial School. Those who could not afford sending their children to Sierra Leone sometimes sent their daughters to the Sisters of Charity in Bathurst for special tuition in Domestic subjects, especially Needlework and Dressmaking (Mahoney, 182-83).

Christian missionaries continued to be the sole providers of “Western” education even well into the 1940s. For instance, in the 1940s the Methodists...
tended to credit the colonial o
colonial areas of the world.” Other colonial sources
emerged over the past decades raising serious
questions about the use of “child labor,” employment
and/or abuse in various African societies—past and
present (Canagarajah and Nielsen, 2001). Also,
research on education (and childhood) in sub-
Saharan Africa has grown steadily in recent years
(Montgomery, 1). However, as far as the Gambia
is concerned the literature is thin. One of the few
exceptions is Paul Hunt’s pioneering essay on the
almudo or Quranic student who are often employed
as beggars in Gambia’s urban centers (Hunt, 1993).
Hunt examines the phenomenon of urban street
children in the Gambia where Quranic students
lived by begging in return for Islamic instruction.
Since Hunt wrote his essay, no substantial work of
‘Gambian studies’ dealing with issues of children has
emerged. Most importantly, historical studies focusing
on the socio-political and economic factors affecting
Gambian children, whether in the pre-colonial,
colonial or post-colonial periods are non-existent.

In part, this essay seeks to make a modest
contribution to the scholarly literature on children,
employment and education in a colonial city in British
West Africa. Drawing from documentary evidence left
behind by Europeans, this paper describes some of
the challenges that the educational sector in Gambia
faced during the 1930s and 1940s and how children
fit into that history. It argues that in the colonial city
of Bathurst, especially between the 1930s and 1940s,
there was a close relationship between economic
decline, lower enrollment in the post-elementary
schools and the desire on the part of boys of school-
going age to seek gainful employment in the colonial
civil service.

Missionaries and Education in Bathurst, 1816-1945

The Gambia was a British colony. It was the
smallest British dependency in West Africa. Since
Britain abandoned its settlement on James Island in
the 1829, Bathurst (also known as St. Mary’s Island)
remained its most important administrative center in
the Senegambia region. The settlement (i.e. Bathurst)
was founded in 1816 with the purpose of stamping
out the Atlantic slave trade along the Gambia River
and the nearby West African Atlantic coastline
(Wright, 126).

From 1818, Bathurst’s civil population rose
and began to outnumber those of the military. Its
population during the inter-war years was nearly

2010: 176). Surely, hunger was reported in the
bigger Mandinka towns so much so that rationing
of foodstuffs and other items had by 1942 become
the norm (Wright, 175). As if that was not enough,
the colony’s cattle industry was ravaged by dreaded
rinderpest epidemic that ruined the wealth of the
population.

Wright suggests that a change in colonial
attitude partly came about after Roosevelt exerted
pressure on Churchill’s government to improve
education, raise the standards of living, and improve
“the health conditions of all backward, depressed
colonial areas of the world.” Other colonial sources
tended to credit the colonial office’s genuine concerns
over the plight of the British subjects living within
the empire. In any event, as a direct response to
the looming crises, in July 1941 the Secretary of
State for colonies dispatched a circular, which sent
to all colonial offices in British West Africa asking
administrators to “prepare post-war development
schemes and stating as much progress as possible
should be made during the war.” One of the results
of this was the publication of Development and
Welfare in the Gambia (1943), which among other
things sought to lay out the modalities of improving
“the conditions of service of school teachers, involve
a permanent increase in recurrent expenditure.”

This document acknowledged among other
things that depressed economic conditions in Bathurst
made it difficult for parents to keep their children
in school. It blamed the relatively high dropout
rate in schools on the growing poverty of the city’s
residents. In other words, the report raised concern
over the poverty of the African residents of the city,
which made it difficult for parents to pay for their
children’s educational expenses. It stated that many
“boys of the street” do not attend school because
their parents could not afford to pay any fees. The
situation was further aggravated by the difficulty of
the Missions (i.e. the Roman Catholic, Anglican and
Wesleyan Missions) to access sufficient funds for the
maintenance of their schools (Blackburne, 1943).
With little government assistance, the Missions were
mostly dependent on revenue from school fees they
charged to parents with children attending their
schools.

The most common reaction of these children
was to seek employment in the formal and informal
sectors. Paradoxically, many of them, especially
those with a Standard VII certificate, were able to
acquire employment as clerical workers in the already
economically depressed colonial bureaucracy. This
created a situation whereby there was an “inadequate
supply of youths” with a Junior Cambridge certificate
to fill the higher clerical posts in the civil service (i.e.
children with secondary school diplomas). Generally,
these were children between the ages of twelve
and fifteen. Those who were successful in laying
hands on clerical jobs were at times referred to as
“black-coated” workers in colonial reports. By finding
employment in the public service many of these
children probably used such incomes to contribute
financially to the upkeep of their families—a role
thousands, if not, millions of children in Africa are to
this day expected to play. As Heather Montgomery
writes, in several non-Western societies “children can
still be seen as an economic investment with specific
returns . . . They are expected to look after parents in
their old age, thereby guaranteeing a safety net for
the elderly” (Montgomery, 2009: 67).

A number of social science studies have
emerged over the past decades raising serious
questions about the use of “child labor,” employment
and/or abuse in various African societies—past and
present (Canagarajah and Nielsen, 2001). It is
universally argued that in colonial or post-colonial
periods are non-existent.

In part, this essay seeks to make a modest
contribution to the scholarly literature on children,
employment and education in a colonial city in British
West Africa. Drawing from documentary evidence left
behind by Europeans, this paper describes some of
the challenges that the educational sector in Gambia
faced during the 1930s and 1940s and how children
fit into that history. It argues that in the colonial city
of Bathurst, especially between the 1930s and 1940s,
there was a close relationship between economic
decline, lower enrollment in the post-elementary
schools and the desire on the part of boys of school-
going age to seek gainful employment in the colonial
civil service.

Missionaries and Education in Bathurst, 1816-1945

The Gambia was a British colony. It was the
smallest British dependency in West Africa. Since
Britain abandoned its settlement on James Island in
the 1829, Bathurst (also known as St. Mary’s Island)
remained its most important administrative center in
the Senegambia region. The settlement (i.e. Bathurst)
was founded in 1816 with the purpose of stamping
out the Atlantic slave trade along the Gambia River
and the nearby West African Atlantic coastline
(Wright, 126).

From 1818, Bathurst’s civil population rose
and began to outnumber those of the military. Its
population during the inter-war years was nearly
opened the Wesley school in Dobson Street and the Bethel School in Stanley Street; the Anglicans kept the St. Mary’s School and the Roman Catholic managed St. Augustine’s school (for boys only) and St. Joseph’s school for girls. The primary role that Christian missionaries played in providing education in Africa is not unique to the Gambia. In fact, as Richard Gray states, in all of former British Africa, the British left education in the hands of the Christian missions (Gray, 1986).

But obviously by the late 1930s and early 1940s, the optimism of the preceding decades has begun to fade away. The challenges of the inter-war years had brought considerable changes in the settlement’s population. The population of Bathurst and the neighboring district of Kombo St. Mary had been augmented by many thousands of young men and women who left their farms in the countryside and neighboring French Senegal to find work in the colony’s Service Departments. Most of the inhabitants were largely dependent on paid employment for their survival. From their wages, many fed their families both in the cities and those they left behind in their home villages. Many of them often, especially in good times, used part of their wages to send their children to school.

In these decades, the late 1930s and 1940s, the colonial government admitted that the educational system in Bathurst was facing serious problems. Administrators blamed the lacked adequate trained teachers and the poor infrastructure of schools. As of January 1946 it was estimated that there were 3,200 children of school age in Bathurst. Sixty percent of that number attended school (Blackburne, 1943). Sadly the educational infrastructure was not expanding at a rate that was commensurate with the growing school population. As one would expect, standards were low. This was aggravated by the government’s decision to be a secondary stakeholder in providing education to the city’s young population, almost entirely leaving matters of education in the hands of the resource-constrained missions. Although the government had started assisting missionary schools with financial assistance in 1900, this was limited. Only a grant of £350 per annum was given to the Technical school of the Wesleyan mission that year. And for twenty years or so that followed, the Missions continued to occupy the center in providing education to numerous children in Bathurst. Now with family incomes overstretched “parents were too eager to withdraw their boys from school as soon as they could find situations for them as clerks or traders” (Mahoney, 183).

Because of the growing crisis, the colonial government began to support the missionary schools. From then onwards education became the most important sector where the colonial state co-operated with Christian missionaries (Gray, 1986: 183). No important step was taken by the government until 1930 when an independent Education Department was created. As of 1931, there were six elementary schools in Bathurst with a total of 1,853 pupils on the registers (1,233 boys and 620 girls). In addition, there were four secondary schools in the city maintained by the Wesleyan and Roman Catholic missions (Gray, 1966: 495). There was a Teacher Training school opened in 1930. Another school, the Manual Training Centre (MTC) was opened. MTC was under the supervision of the Public Works Department (PWD). These schools provide education up to the seventh Standards. Five of the schools were maintained by Christians missions and the government maintained a Mohammedan school for the children of the Muslim population. The Muhammedan School was established by the government in 1903. Mohammedan school was operated by committee under the chairmanship of the Director of Education, R. C. Allen, who at the time was a British. Later, it seems to have passed under the control of Trustees of the Bathurst Muslim elders who were provided with “a grant in aid of 500 pounds annually given by the Government of the Gambia and twenty pounds for repairs.” The teachers who taught in the school were however paid by government even though the remaining elementary schools were left in the hands of the missions.

Now with limited assistance from the government, the Christian Missions developed some additional interest in expanding practical training and secondary education to Bathurst’s thousands of kids. There were only four secondary schools in the whole city. Two of these schools were for boys and the other two were for girls. They were maintained by the Roman Catholic and Methodist Missions. The total numbers on the register in these schools in 1932 was 109 boys and 92 girls.

Despite the government’s involvement in providing education to Bathurst growing population of young men and women, the educational sector and the larger economy continued faced stiff challenges. First, there was little incentive on the part of parents to send their children to secondary schools. Also, the city’s unfavorable socio-economic conditions during the inter-war period tended to force parents to pull their young ones from the schools. In short, there seems to be a direct correlation between economic distress and parents’ lack of incentive to keep their children in school.

Added to this, secondary education was scarce. There were fewer secondary and vocational schools that were operational in the Gambia colony in general and Bathurst in particular. While government scholarships were often provided each year for students in Secondary schools, practically more than 3% of the elementary school graduates could not be absorbed in these secondary schools. In this sense, the colonial education system was no doubt in itself exclusionary. It left-out hundreds, if not thousands, of children of school going age.
As mentioned earlier, the 1930s and 1940s were characterized by economic decline, which forced the government to postpone until a later date the collection of the outstanding debts owed to her by its subjects. The colony had during this time incurred a debt of £38,700. Revenue fell to £162,000 in 1938 to £137,000 in 1939 and to £142,000 in 1940. The causes of this deterioration were summarized by the then Governor of the Gambia in 1938 as due to “diminished returns from groundnuts [the major export of the colony] reacted on purchasing power and this in turn on imports. Private incomes fell and with them Government revenue.”13 During this period the colonial administration undertook a number of measures to retrench staff and curtailed its efforts to provide services. Even the European staff working in Gambia was reduced from 57 to 42. This no doubt had consequences for the schools since many of these “expatriates” from European taught in the schools.

Sadly, the gloomy financial outlook which drove them away from the country continued to be weary for most part of the 1940s, if not throughout the decade. To be sure, it was not attractive to be in the Mission schools of Bathurst during this period; however, it is important to note that the high dropout rate was due to the terrible socio-economic problems that engulfed the colony.

Colonialism and Education: Potential Historiographical Implications

The challenges of colonial education are well known to historians of Africa. For instance, virtually all the studies that are reviewed in this essay acknowledges the important role that Christian missionaries played in providing “Western” education in colonial Africa (esp. Mugomba and Nyaggah, 1980; Harik & Schilling, 1984; Van der Veur, 1996; Bassey, 1999). Because of government’s marginal interest in education, and tiny resources available to the various Missions working in Africa, many African colonies continued to lack adequate infrastructure to meet the growing demand for Western education. As Nigerian historian Michael Crowder writes, even though there were instances of expansion during the 1930s and 40s, educational facilities for Africans remained infinitesimal. Consequently, educational standards, he claims, were usually low and only a small number of Africans were able to go to schools of any sort, fewer still to secondary schools (Crowder, 1978: 123).

Other scholars criticized education in colonial by focusing on curriculum issues. Walter Rodney, for instance, believes that the curriculum designed for African colonial schools were poor by prevailing European standards. Rodney claims that the books, the methods of teaching, and the discipline were all brought to Africa in the nineteenth century and the colonial schools remained indifferent to the twentieth century. New ideas that were incorporated in the Europe never reached the colonies, he claims. This includes the positive changes in European science, which did not reach African classrooms, for there were few schools where science subjects were taught (Rodney, 1982: 246).

Echoing Rodney’s view, Majid Rahnema thinks that colonial education policies were designed to separate students from their parents and their cultural milieu. Colonial education, he argues, instilled in students a proud feeling and new alienating values, attitudes and goals, which drove them to gradually reject and/or despise their own cultural and personal identity. Many of the products of these schools acquired a false sense of superiority, which turned them away from manual work, from real life and from unschooled people, whom they tend to perceive as ignorant and underdeveloped (Rahnema, 1997: 158). Ali Muzrui agrees. For him, African schools seemed preeminently designed to produce rural misfits.14 An African who completes the equivalent of the Cambridge School certificate examination is regarded as no longer suitable for residences in the rural areas. The young person’s own parents may feel betrayed if the child with such a level of education insisted on remaining in the villages (Mazrui, 2001: 73). That means, as a whole, the educational system fostered unprecedented processes of exclusion against the poor and the powerless. For him, colonial education destroyed all previously established systems of cultural reference by systematically discrediting all previously established mechanisms that different cultures had created throughout their histories for fostering knowledge and culture.

To be sure, in Bathurst, there were problems of access and educational quality. For instance, even though the Missions had from time to time opened schools in various parts of the Protectorate, most of their schools were confined in Bathurst, where their headquarters were situated.15 This created a rural-urban drift where young boys were sent to the city in order to receive education. The situation was further exacerbated by the preference that rural-folks had for urban schools. A number of Protectorate people (or rural folks) considered Bathurst schools as better educational institutions. As a result, many favored sending their children to the urban schools. These children were sent down to “stay with friends or relatives” who lieu of board and lodging, used these children as house helps. This has in many places, according to Dr. McMath, set up “a minor slave trade.”16

There is also a gender bias in the colonial education system. First, the British complained that a number of children who do not attend “secular” school run by Christian missionaries were “Mohammedan” or Muslim girls whose parents “were too old-fashioned to wish that [their daughters] should receive a school education” (Blacburne, 1943). Second, as it existed elsewhere in colonial Africa, the local Mission schools mostly emphasized domestic science training for girls (Mianda, 2002: 147; Gaiteskell, 2005: 177). The main domestic science premises
were located behind Dobson Street School. In this schoolgirls were instructed in needlework, cooking, laundry and housecraft. They were also taught first aid, home nursing and child welfare. These, the European educationists insisted, constituted an essential part of domestic science training in Africa. For the boys, there was a training center maintained under the Public Works Department (PWD). Male students who attended this center came mostly from Bathurst schools to receive instructions in carpentry and mechanical instructions. Third, the policy makers were also in favor of supporting more schools for boys than for girls. For instance, Dr. A. M. McMath in his 1943 report suggested that it is normal for the number of boys in school to be considerably more than the number of girls. He wrote, “there would be . . . two good girls’ primary schools and three boys’ primary schools.”

But there were numerous other problems that deserve special mention. For instance, the larger issue that worsened the shape of the education system in the 1930s and 1940s was the economic depression. During this time, the educational system in Bathurst was plagued by a widespread unwillingness on the part of young boys and girls to continue their education. Only a few considered enrolling in secondary schools or vocational institutions. Instead, many boys and girls with elementary education wanted to find employment as clerks, messengers or auxiliary staff in the colonial bureaucracy. Colonial records dating back to this period indicate that children with Standard VII desired to become “black coated” workers. They preferred to leave school as soon as they can read and write in order to obtain employment with the Service Departments or contractors. Many of them worked in Public Works Department occupying the lowest ranks of the civil service.

Prior to 1939 the only educational qualification required for admission to the government service was a pass in Standard VII (a standard below the junior Cambridge certificate), which means children with a Standard VII qualification easily found employment somewhere in the public service. The requirement was even lower in the Police Force. All that was required was that “recruits should have passed Standard V.” There was little inducement for the youths to undergo practical or technical training or continue on to secondary schools. Besides, conditions of employment in the clerical services of government and of the commercial firms was comparably better than those offered in the informal sector, particularly in the craft industry. The Blackburn report mentioned that government clerks and auxiliary staff were better paid than those worked as artisans. For example, in the Public Utilities Department, the African clerks of works were paid £160 per annum. Laborers employed by mercantile firms, were also paid on a monthly rate ranging from 30/- to 36/-.

This was comparatively more attractive than the rates of pay for artisans such as carpenters, blacksmiths, masons and porters. The latter’s pay rates ranged from 2/6 to 6/- a day (8 hours). This had created a situation whereby a good number of the youths with little encouragement to undergo practical or technical training. Employment in the clerical sector was therefore preferred than other types of low-paying jobs. With a job the public service, these children’s income could contribute to feeding and taking care of extended families.

Parents rarely opposed their children obtaining clerical employment or other lesser prestigious jobs. Many them may have complied with their children’s decision to dropout of school and enter the colonial civil service simply because of what that could mean for the family’s income. Now with jobs, children and dependents could surrender part of their income to support the extended family. Furthermore, because of the difficulties posed by the economic depression – higher taxes and food prices – parents were probably more reluctant to send their children to secondary schools, which required higher school fees. Hence, this explains the higher dropout rate.

As a response, in 1939 government raised the qualification of employment for clerks to Junior Cambridge certificate. With the new regulation children were required to spend additional one or two years in school. Government anticipated that the raising of the educational qualification would induce school children to attempt to reach the higher classes. This, however, was not entirely successful. The policy was undermined by the need for government to “fill a number of vacancies with unqualified candidates.” It was forced to appoint these “drop-outs” on “a temporary basis.” The goal was to curb the temptation for children to leave school at an early age. Furthermore, it appears that this was possible because there was no rigid age limit for admission to the public service. Thus, children as young as twelve and fifteen were able to find employment in the colonial civil service many of them as clerks and messengers.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the Christian missionaries, especially the Anglican and Methodist, have played a central role in providing education in the British West African colony of the Gambia. For most of the colonial period, the colonial government left education virtually in their hands. With very little assistance, missionaries built elementary and secondary schools in not only Bathurst but also in the Protectorate. The Methodist schools founded in Bathurst include the Wesley and Bethel schools in Dobson Street and Stanley Street respectively; the Anglicans run the St. Mary’s School and the Roman Catholic built St. Augustine’s school (for boys only) and St. Joseph’s school for girls. There were only four secondary schools in Bathurst. Two of these schools were for boys and the other two...
were for girls. The Roman Catholic and Methodist missions maintained both schools. Fewer secondary schools existed in the colony too. As of 1931, the only school run by the government was the Mohammedan school. The government only started to provide some support for the mission schools from the late 1930s. Because of this neglect, the missionaries were overburdened with having to provide education to the growing number of children living in Bathurst. Despite these challenges, however, the number of schools as well as enrolments continued to grow since the mid-nineteenth century. This continued well into the 1920s. But the historical record seemed to show that as crises caused by the Great Economic depression of the 1930s and 1940s spread, and began to touch lives in the Gambia colony, this relatively impressive success in providing education began to disappear. During this period, and given the economic circumstances of the time, children who completed Standard VII had little incentive to pursue secondary school or technical training. Thus, in the colonial city of Bathurst, in this period, there was a close relationship between economic decline, lower enrollment in the post-elementary schools and the desire on the part of boys of school-going age to seek gainful employment in the colonial civil service.

In spite of the poor conditions of service, working in the clerical service appeared to be attractive to these children and their parents. Boys and girls were reluctant to adopt any career other than becoming what chauvinistic colonial authorities often called “black-coated workers.” To become “black-coated” workers meant increased social mobility as one would be able to take a much more active role in making financial contributions to help sustain ones’ family. It placed these children in relatively privileged positions in Bathurst society.

Notes
(Endnotes)
3  Ibid
4  Ibid
5  Ibid
6  Ibid
7  In 1821, the settlement of Bathurst was placed under the authority of a central government in Sierra Leone. But these posed numerous administrative challenges and in 1843 the Gambia colony was separated from Sierra Leone. Twenty-three years later the British government, however, decided for reasons of maximizing cost to merge the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos into one Colony. It was not until 1888 that the Gambia was once more separated from Sierra Leone. During this period, the British controlled only Bathurst, the “Ceded Mile” (settlements located on the westernmost territory on the North bank of the Gambia River) and McCarthy Island, located about 150 miles in the interior. The present boundaries of the Gambia were established by an Anglo-French Convention in 1889. But Britain would not establish formal control over the entire country until 1893. In that same year, it declared the rest of the country as part of the Protectorate.
8  The 1931 census report estimates the national population to 200,000.
9  One of the schools was run by the Anglicans and the remaining four by the Roman Catholics and Wesleyans, each running two schools.
11  The first elementary school started by the British in the Gambia begun in 1826. It was started by the Wesleyan, now Methodist, Mission. By 1860 schools had also been established by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Missions.
12  NRS, Banjul, CSO3/144, 1903
13  Development and Welfare in the Gambia, “The Background,” January 1945
14  Certainly, colonial development programs, not just in schools, reflected a rural-urban disparity. Even though the urban areas experienced unique problems, level of development (and in this case in education) in the Colony and Protectorate was largely uneven.
15  The Anglicans had opened a school in Kristi Kunda in Basse (Upper River Province) and the Roman Catholic ran St. Joseph’s school also in the same town. There was also a government school in Georgetown called Armitage School which was opened in 1927.
16  Development and Welfare in the Gambia, June 1943; See also Dr. A. M. McMath, Report on

17 Dr. A. M. McMath, Report on Infant and Girls’ Education, Sessional Paper No. 4/1943 in Development and Welfare in the Gambia, June 1943, p. 16. Dr. McMath, Lady Education Officer for Gambia and Sierra Leone, was in January 1943 invited by the Governor to visit the Gambia

18 See Gail P Kelly, “When I Become a Fonctionnaire”: School Knowledge in French Colonial Africa, 1918-1938. Occasional Papers Series, Number 11 State Univ. of New York, Buffalo. Comparative Education Center. This is one of a series of papers on comparative education, this report considers curriculum and student life under colonialism through an examination of school knowledge in French West Africa in the first decades of the twentieth century. The monograph is divided into three parts. Part one describes the educational system of interwar West Africa. It emphasizes school organization, admissions and matriculation policies, the composition of the teaching staff, curriculum, and student enrollment. Part two contains translations from interwar elementary and primary textbooks. Part three is composed of translations from students’ class notebooks. Focus is on students’ French compositions and, in some cases, teacher corrections. What the notebooks reveal about how students perceive themselves, their school, and their aspirations for themselves once they graduate is evaluated.

19 Another option was for the children to join the Gambia Police Force since this institution only required all recruits to have Standard V (which is lower than the Junior Cambridge certificate). However, the opposition of the literate population of Bathurst prevented educated youths in the Gambia to enter the Force. A major reason for their opposition could have due to the low pay, which was 1/9d per diem per recruit. This compares unfavorably with, for instance, the rate of pay of probationary staff in other departments. But while the parents’ reluctance could have been due to low pay, parents’ perception of police service could also have been part of the problem.


References


Mlaanda, Gertrude. 2002. “Colonialism, Education, and


21 Development and Welfare in the Gambia, June 1943; See also Dr. A. M. McMath, Report on Infant and Girls Education, Sessional Paper No. 4/1943 in Development and Welfare in the Gambia, June 1943,
This essay examines the involvement of youth in counterfeiting and uttering of the Franc CFA in Cameroon, and the response of state authorities. In particular, it establishes a connection between ‘shrinking possibilities’ and youth criminality. In this regard, it contextualises the preponderant involvement of the youth in the circulation of forged money in Mutengene, a junction town in the South West Region (SWR) of Cameroon. It shows that lapses in security strategies and nuances in the country’s penal legal arsenals are possible explanations for the persistence of currency counterfeiting which greatly hampers the town’s economy and social relations. The association of fake money with Mutengene has scarred the town’s image. It must be disclaimed, however, that not all Mutengene youth are involved in counterfeiting, and Mutengene is not the only town in which counterfeits or counterfeiting pass as an ‘illegal-legal tender’ or has become a form of accumulation. Finally, I argue that this symbolises cracks on the walls of effective political and economic governance and epitomises a response to the denial of the basic rights to access decent jobs or have better life that, even with the reintroduction of popular democracy, has not been able to successfully reverse the situation in the country.

Keywords: Counterfeit, Currency, Economy, Mutengene, Uttering, Youth

1. Introduction

This essay is about the involvement of youth in the forgery and circulation of fake money in Mutengene. It argues that, contrary to the views of previous studies on counterfeiting, there is a correlation between the performance of the economy, governance, and counterfeiting. As economic possibilities shrink in the formal sector due to poor economic performance, particularly those available to the youth, there is the tendency for juvenile citizens to exploit their agency and resort to creative ways to circumvent the severity of challenges meagre economic performance generates. Some of the response tends out to be engagements in the informal sector like hawking of items in the street for survival, riders of commercial motorcycles, or self-invest in agro-businesses like vegetable farming and stock-breeding. Perhaps, because of the commendable job the riders are doing, President Paul Biya unexpectedly mentioned them in his traditional speech on the night of 10 February 2013, the eve of the national Youth Day commemorated annually on 11 February. Following his speech on 1 March 2013, approximately ten thousand commercial motorbike riders from across the country staged a
support march in Yaounde in Biya’s acknowledgement of them. Since then, various politicians have exploited this development to make political capital out of it in the guise of organizing the sector or through the distribution of free helmets.

Similarly, in an effort to address youth unemployment and encourage entrepreneurship, the government launched in 2012 a program, the National Civic Agency for Participation in Development, through which it sponsors business projects of youth groups in the entire country. These are positive ventures that deserve encouragement from appropriate quarters considering their potentials in socio-economic transformation and development of the community. Yet, others with disposition indulge in clandestine and socially deviant activities like petty theft, car-jacking, smuggling, organised crime, scamming and currency counterfeiting.

The challenges Cameroonian youth face are considerably enormous and they tend to respond differentially. The economic calamity of the last three decades shrunk opportunities for everyone. The Bretton Woods’ ambitious Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) designed to remedy the structural economic problems only exacerbated the crisis. Generally, many consider the SAP in Cameroon and Africa by extension as a macroeconomic catastrophe, engendering high unemployment and limited growth, and preceded the January 1994 devaluation of the CFA. Being overly dependants, the consequences of SAP on the Cameroonian youth were even more devastating. The scarcity of legal tender as a result of the program intensified the marginalisation of youths and firmly shut on their faces windows of opportunities for sustainable livelihood. The youth were also further politically disfranchised contrary to the opinion of previous studies. Confronted by a seemingly inescapable dilemma the youth resorted to beat-the-system strategies or migrant to the West having succumbed to popular imagination of perceived than real images of Europe and the United States of America (USA) as metaphorical lands of milk and honey among Cameroonian youth. New forms of criminality like counterfeiting money and feymania like internet scamming, and other dubious means were adopted and adapted by Cameroonian youths for survival. The argument is that poor economic performance erodes the values that hold society together. It is from the vantage point of connection between deprivation and criminality that the study examines youth and counterfeiting in Mutengene.

At this point a discussion on Mutengene, in time and space, may be in order. Mutengene is a road junction town located in Tiko Subdivision, Fako Division in the SWR of Cameroon. The area derived its name from the Bakweri word *litengene* meaning “to place across” and had grown as a crossroad since the period of German colonial rule when the latter mapped out and constructed a road to serve as a hub to the network of paved roads from Buea, Tiko, and Bwenga. Worthy to mention that this was part of a scheme to construct a road from Victoria to Mutengene that avoided delays from transiting via Bwenga. In recent years the area has experienced dramatic changes in its spatial morphology and sociological character, and is considered one of the most rapidly urbanising towns in the country. Initially a village dominated by the Bakweri ethnic group, the town is currently a cosmopolitan area with a heterogeneous population. Because of its strategic position, the town was pivotal in trade relations between indigenous ethnic groups before and during colonial rule. This has not changed. Rather, the strategic nature of this crossroad town serves as a gateway to three major commercial centres in the region, Kumba (business capital of the region), Limbe (erstwhile colonial port town known formerly as Victoria), and Douala (both the major entry port into and economic capital of Cameroon). Adjacent to
Mutengene is Tiko, together with Kumba and Limbe the busiest commercial centres in the region. Its location is both a boon and bane to its commerce. While pregnant with business opportunities, Mutengene is also a sanctuary for urban crimes like counterfeiting and uttering of the Franc CFA. However it should be cautioned, the use of forged money is not particularly an urban problem.

The Franc (CFA) zone Coopération Financière en Afrique Centrale translated Financial Cooperation in Central Africa comprises fourteen independent African states divided into the West and Central Africa economic and fiscal zones with separate central banks, West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) respectively. The Franc CFA in circulation in the six central African states of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon is issued by the sub-region’s central bank (BEAC). The coins of this currency range from one, two, five, ten, twenty-five, fifty, one hundred, and five hundred Francs (frs), while banknotes include five hundred, one thousand, two thousands, five thousands, and ten thousands frs. Fake banknotes of two thousands, five thousands, and ten thousands are widely in circulation than coins, except the five hundred frs coin. The disparity could be attributed to the fact that higher denominations fetch more profit than the lower denominations as was noted by Falola in his examination of counterfeiting of the colonial currency in Nigeria. It could also be that those denominations that are easier to forged, are those most flagrantly counterfeited and put into circulation.

2. Objectives, Methodology and Significance of Study
The primary aim of this study is to examine the involvement of youth in the manufacturing and circulation of counterfeit money in Mutengene. The specific objectives are the interactions between its sociological composition, contemporary character and the upsurge of criminality as alleyways to sustain livelihood within a context of flinching opportunities. The study also discusses the possible factors that accounts for the persistence in the counterfeiting and uttering of fake money, and its reversal effects on the economy and social relations in the town.

To achieve its principal objective, the study draws from three major sources of information. First, public opinion was obtained from semi-structured and informal discussions with randomly selected Mutengene residents. The interviews were conducted intermittently between June 2010 and the summer of 2012; and is equally informed by two encounters with three feymen (the same swindlers) on two different occasions within one week that summer. The first encounter is an incident I accidentally witness in September 2009 in Mutengene. Alighting from a taxi from the neighbouring town of Tiko, I encountered a squabble by the roadside involving a bartender and distributors of a brewery company which attracted a crowd. Upon inquiry, it was narrated that the bartender had been caught in an attempt to dupe the beer distributors with counterfeit money. I will come back to this incidence in the course of our discussion. The other experience is quite recent. Last summer, August 2012, while visiting Cameroon, I had appointment to interview a retired health officer in Mutengene. On my way to his residence, I was confronted by three young men who claimed to be my acquaintances. After an unsuccessful attempt to have me shake their hands, one of them touched my right shoulder at which point the other stepped forward and asked me if I know the boy who just touched me, and that I needed to perform some rituals with them else I will took ill. Aware their scheme which incidentally they replay to all their potential targets attracted by their outfit, I warned them and walked away smiling, having eluded their scheme. I encountered the same trio a couple of days later, about thirty metres from the spot I met
them previously, in another attempt to scam a lady who was heading to the Baptist Hospital in the area. Considering that they keep repeating the same line of story, the lady who certainly had been informed of previous cases from the regional FM radio station did not fall to their prank. These two incidences rekindled my interest to investigate the extent to which the town’s youth can go to make extra money.

The target informants were those involved in commerce of any type, for example bar-tenders, street cafes/ restaurants, hawkers, transporters and operators of filling stations. Most respondents were remarkably enthusiastic to offer relevant pieces of information as a way to contribute in effacing this illegal enterprise. Our aim was to ascertain the velocity of the circulation of counterfeit money in Mutengene and the demographic category involved. Though the respondents were mixed in terms of gender, literacy and regional background, they were unanimous in terms of age-group involved, youth (15-35 years), although others were of the opinion some elder men are also culpable. Except for cases reported in the tabloid, all names of informants and the bar are pseudonyms.

Additional relevant information was gotten from security reports of the local Police and Gendarmerie forces, although not without challenges. Authorities of both force were unwilling, at best reluctant, to release classified police files containing vital information. This difficulty was partly overcome by discussions with some ‘outgoing’ principal investigators of the Tiko District Police and Gendarmerie Stations who provided information on the condition of anonymity. However, court cases reported in tabloids provide some anecdotes. The other source of data includes a review of extant literature on the subject.

A number of factors warrant a study on youth and counterfeiting in Mutengene relevant. First is the increasing crime wave and notorious insecurity in the town. Public perception holds Mutengene as arguably one of the most unsecured towns in the country. This unfortunate imagery, perhaps, explains the fear among the population and visitors, and justifies the move by state authorities to create new Police and Gendarmerie Posts at strategic points in the area within the last decade. The cells of these posts are usually crowded with yobbos and hoodlums, discern from my visits, some of whom were money swindlers. Second, the difficult economic terrain paved by the economic malaise that struck the country in the 1990s and the global financial recession, and poor economic and political governance have led to the scarcity of legal tender and an inflation of the size of jobless youths in the streets. Similarly, the reversal effects of the global economic crunch exposes local economies in developing countries to primitive modes of accumulation and while it predisposes others to illicit coping mechanisms that create ideal conditions for the growth of underground and parallel banking systems epitomised by the negative effects of counterfeit money on an economy. The third factor is the flexibility and malleability of the youth to emulate wrong things, especially from the West as part of the ‘global culture.’ In this perspective the involvement of youths in the counterfeiting business is interpreted as a form of agency.

3. The Sociological Composition and Criminality in Mutengene

To better understand the interaction between youth, state-economic fragility and phoney money in Mutengene, an idea of the town’s sociological composition is imperative. Partly due to the dramatic changes the town experienced in recent years, its heterogeneous population is dominated by youths attracted by its opportunities. It opportunities attracts youth from different regions with diverse cultural, social and educational backgrounds. The schools and educational services located in the town are sites of attraction for many youth, although, the town registers
a school drop-out rate. In this category are found youth who abandoned school because of the hardship of their parents/guardians hard hit by the privatisation, closure of state-owned plantations or retirement from the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC) and Del-Monte in Dibanda, Ombe and Tiko. Yet, others were brought to town by relations employed by the plantations and local firms. The closure of these establishments means the youth are left to fare in a precarious socio-economic climate. Counterfeit barons recruit prospective agents from this lot. Survival in the precarious situation the town presents is challenging. Employment refuge is sought in menial jobs in bus-stops, garages, patchworks, street hawking and in illicit forms of accumulation like pick-pocketing and to circulate counterfeit money. Though risky, the uttering of counterfeits is perceived by the youth as an alternative source of employment and it is my observation that fast and easy money is the delight of Mutengene youth.

Becker argued that youth have the predisposition to resort to the fast and risky means to earn money with contempt for moral values for a livelihood. According to the economic theory of crime, individuals form expectations of their legal and illegal income opportunities. Similarly, Horst and Spengler are of the opinion that criminal activities become more likely, when illegal income opportunities are higher than opportunities from legal work. This could be a possible explanation for the increasing crime rates in towns in transitional countries characterised by a deficiency of formal economic opportunities and formally provided public services. Urban theorists are unanimous that there are quantitative differences in the incidence of crime in areas of varying degrees of urbanisation. The causes of youth delinquency in Mutengene are manifold –social, institutional and physical urban environment –and currency counterfeiting is arguably a manifestation of the dysfunctional impact of its urban growth.

4. Agents, Uttering and Circulation of Counterfeit Money

The study makes no claim to provide a detail discussion on the manufacturing of counterfeit money. This could have been possible and exhuming if the ‘factories’ of counterfeit gangs were infiltratable, culprits willing to open-up to an outsider, or classified police investigation reports accessible. Security officers claim that raids to the homes of suspected forgers and arrested con artists have yielded limited information on how counterfeit money is produced. Besides, being a criminal act, it is necessarily diminutive and secretive. No doubt the readily available modern sophisticated technology facilitates the activities of the counterfeit industry. Rather, this section limits its discussion to the different strategies by agents to distribute counterfeit money in the town. Conversations with residents confirm that youths are agents in the uttering of counterfeits. Uttering, the criminal act of passing bad money as genuine, complements the art of counterfeiting itself since money is produced to be spent. As has been mentioned, Mutengene youths consider the counterfeit industry as an alternative site for employment. Recruits are usually smart fellows, and demonstrate the willingness to share the risks and profits in the furtive business.

The velocity of the circulation of counterfeits suggests that the social phenomenon is fast becoming part of the daily life of the economy of Mutengene. Agents attempt to and use counterfeit money at various times of the day, but nights are preferred to minimise risks of detection. The town has a longstanding reputation for street hawking by both adults and children of a variety of items. Agents usually take advantage of the night markets to introduce counterfeit coins and banknotes into circulation. To the utterers, it is easier for coins to be used than banknotes as coins are difficult to discern in places with limited light than notes. Young children
or women, considered more gullible, are approached often hastily with bad money and whatever item is bought with the intention of gaining genuine money as change and several visits are made to different vendors in each expedition to increase profit. In a perfect form many of the spurious coins would never be detected. In this way a large quantity of fake coinage in circulation stay in the streets and among petty business operators since they are rarely tendered to firms or banks in the hours of daylight.

Another means of circulation is by taxi-drivers or commercial motorists using fake bank bills at fuel stations particularly during rush hours to refill car tanks. It should be cautioned some drivers may, unknown to them, have been duped through this process in an earlier transactions as it is, for example, alleged to be the case with the driver footnoted here. They are usually lucky and as such succeed not only in changing the case with the driver footnoted here. They are usually lucky and as such succeed not only in changing the counterfeit, but in addition drove away with a full tank and, perhaps some good money. Similarly, utterers also target the suppliers of brewery products. Bartenders connive with counterfeit agents and slot in fake bank notes within legal money for purchase. It is generally assumed that brewery companies have a solid capital base partly because of their high turnover and profit, consequently a few fake notes would not threaten or crumble the establishment. This was the case of the bartender of *Casino Friendship Club*, a popular drinking spot in Mutengene, who surreptitiously slotted forty thousands (three pieces of ten thousands and two pieces of five thousands) CFA francs notes into two hundred and twenty-five thousands frs. meant for purchasing drinks. Unfortunately for him, the dubious scam was detected by the brewery company’s agents. The barman insisted it was not deliberate and was, probably, himself a victim of transactions the previous night. But the amount of counterfeit uncovered was implicating. It was after persistent intimidation and threats that the matter was reported to the Police where he confessed to being a partner to a network of utterers, though his collaborators were never disclosed. It can hardly be imagined the number of times he had performed the dishonest act.

What makes the findings on counterfeiting fascinating is the preponderance of the social phenomenon in particular quarters and neighbourhoods in the town. Field evidence points at particular quarters infested with utterers and where counterfeit is exponentially rife. Informants spoke with one voice and were quick to describe Quarter II, Rangers Valley Street and Quarter Rubber (a conglomeration of Quarters X, XI, XII, XIII and XIV) as havens for dealers. Here, there is no gender sensitivity as both young males and females are involved. It is even easier for girls to be successful in the circulation of counterfeits than boys because least suspicion is raised. Security attention to these quarters has forced dealers to relocate to neighbouring towns like Miles IV, XV, and XVI, and Ombe, areas noted for harbouring lumpens, colony of deviants. From the adjoining towns they move into Mutengene, strike and then retreat to their various hiding places to evade the dragnet of security officers. The hide-and-seek attitude of dealers renders anti-forgery efforts by authorities, the least, ineffective.

One other strategy or technique utterers employ to circulate counterfeits is using children as young as fifteen years old, especially during festive periods and to pay fines to some corrupt Police officers and Gendarmerie checkpoints. Under the country’s Penal Code teenagers less than eighteen years are minors and cannot be prosecuted for felony. Dealers hide under this provision that literally protect juveniles to exploit innocent children. Coins or notes of five hundred frs are handed to minors and sent to buy foodstuffs like puff-puff-and-beans, a local morning or evening delicacy, or any other item costing a few francs. The intention is to collect genuine money in exchange. The choice of minors is determined by the feeling that...
it plays down on any form of suspicion and also to evade exposure, public ridicule or litigation. But the children are rarely courageous to cushion the slightest public pressure and ridicule when caught in the act. Juveniles are easily lured into this execrable enterprise partly for their high premium for easy life and delight for dubious activities. Yet, a public transporter confided he usually buys his way with fake five hundred frs coins through highway checkpoints on several occasion at night. It is interesting how security agents supposed to be of exceptional character and vigilant are easily baited. This speaks tomes of the depth of corruption in the country’s Police and Gendarmerie forces.

Another interesting dimension of currency counterfeiting in Mutengene is its connection with feymania and the involvement of bigwigs in the society. Ndjio defines feymania as the “ability to attain wealth through witchcraft, trickery, and devilish intelligence”, and considers the phenomenon a noticeable manifestation of some dubious Cameroonians’ endeavour to reinvent the global capitalism. He describes how a suitcase or trunk of allegedly genuine money is shown to a mugu (victim or gullible person), as they are ordinarily known. The prospective mugu is told that because the notes are ostensibly stained with a special substance, a special chemical is needed for it to be washed off in order to authenticate the notes. Huge sums of money is then requested from the victim, the rest is obvious. In the context of our study victims are usually approached on the streets or in taxis and the proposed amount in legal currency to buy counterfeit is usually half the face value, thus tempting to any irresolute individual. At high level deals foreign currency is usually involved, US dollars and Euro.

No example better illustrate this evil blend than the case brought before the Buea Magistrate Court on Tuesday, 23 November 2004, “involving an Army Colonel, Michael Mosah, who allegedly lost FCFA thirty-eight million to counterfeiters“ (Manga, 2004). In the caption “Colonel Loses FCFA thirty-eight Million in Counterfeit Deal,” the newspaper columnist narrates the four-count arraignment against one Severin Wandji, alias John Kumalo Babey, who posed as the son of Mosah’s course mate, General Kumalo of Sierra Leone. Wandji told Colonel Mosah, a medical doctor, that he was in possession of hundreds of thousands of stamped, but genuine US dollars meant for relief aid, which had to be washed (Manga, 2004). It turned out to be a ruse, but not before Colonel Mosah had lost a colossal sum of money. Even more fascinating is the manner in which cases of financial crimes implicating influential persons are treated by the Cameroonian judicial system as the Wandji-vs-Mosah case presents. Another counterfeit case involves a young man who fleeced a Chinese woman of the equivalent of nineteen million frs is reported in AfricaNews by columnist Mfor gham.

5. Effects of the Forgery of the Franc CFA on the Economy
The circulation of forged money is injurious to the social economy of the country in general and that of Mutengene in particular. Because the volume of counterfeit money in traffic in the town cannot be measured, it is difficult to estimate in real terms its impact on the country’s economy and financial system or how illegally accumulated money affect the lives of counterfeiters. In advanced economies the effects of counterfeit are cushioned by the low fraction of paper money in circulation. In contrast, in a rudimentary all-cash economy like Cameroon’s, counterfeit increase the cash in circulation and dilutes its value. It is fair then to conclude that the public takes the hit.

Obviously the circulation of counterfeit currency in Mutengene has negative effects. First, while the activity enriches a few individuals it conversely ruins business initiatives. Counterfeits chop up the running capital of its victims; slash deeply on profits that may eventually ruin business. This is the case of
a certain bread seller, Rachael who lost her capital to swindlers. She narrates her story thus: she was given ten thousands frs, three loaves of bread costing two hundred and fifty frs each collected and in return she gave the phoney client in a bus nine thousands two hundred and fifty frs (the day’s sales) as change. It was only after the bus kicked-and-drove off that she realised she had been duped. Rachael ran into financial difficulties and wrapped-off. She had to pay in a certain sum to her supplier at the end of the day and failed to meet up with daily contributions. Only her small savings could bail her out from her lose at the expense of her business. There are other cases like Rachael’s, which dampens the potentials of street-vending highlighted by Jimu in the case of Botswana.

Second, the fear of being duped with counterfeit has led to suspicion and lack of trust among individuals. Since a courier cannot be Identified physically, the tendency is for individuals to thoroughly scrutinise banknotes during each commercial transaction, especially when dealing with a stranger. Thus, undermining confidence and sometimes leading to acrimonious quarrels, fights that negatively affect business. The circulation of counterfeit has also strained and dragged social relations to the edge.

Third, the association of criminality, counterfeiting and Mutengene negatively affects the image of the town. The town’s public image seems hardest hit by the clandestine activity. This has generated unprecedented fear among members of the public, visitors, or those transiting through Cham. The origin of this disparaging name of the town is not clear, but its pronunciation puts individuals on alert. However, because most counterfeiters do not understand basic monetary policies, they cannot estimate the length and ways in which their activities harm the economy or franc CFA.

6. Responses to Efface the Circulation of Counterfeits

in Mutengene

Because this undesirable social phenomenon is a tragedy both to the national and local economies, and society, several mechanisms have been introduced by the state authorities and at community level to wean the circulation of counterfeits in Mutengene.

Recognising the fact that counterfeit was increasing exponentially and that bad money chases out good money, and undermine the confidence of real money, state authorities resorted in the mid-1990s to the use of propaganda as a countermeasure to the menace. Radio slots aired messages and sensitise the public against the negative effects of counterfeit money. Many people used to accept counterfeits ignorantly in commercial transactions. To further raise awareness, posters were pasted on the walls and entrance of Police and Gendarmerie Stations, banks and micro-financial institutions, and at strategic spots along the streets. The posters carried diverse messages and picture illustrations that discredit forged money and impressed on the public the risk involved in using counterfeits. At moment the degree of success of such campaigns is tentative for a number of reasons: high illiteracy rates, the contemptuous attitude of the Cameroonian public to public notices, and the degree of penetration of such media outlets. Nonetheless, it is estimated that it created some impact, if not on the public in general, among counterfeiters that authorities are on alert and determine to combat the clandestine trade. As a result of such campaigns, people became diligent in scrutinising any money tendered. But some are so close to perfection, as Olukoju noted with the uttering of currency in colonial Nigeria, that they cannot be detected by ‘ordinary visual examination’.

Another measure has been to arrest and penalise counterfeiters. Under Section 215 of Cameroon’s Penal Code, the manufacturing and circulation of facsimile version of genuine money is a criminal offence and attracts severe punishment. The reason why retribution
is harsh is because counterfeit money reduces the value of actual money and causes inflation due to the increase in money in circulation in the economy. In addition to the numerous cases reported, occasional police raids – known locally as *kalle-kalle* - by agents of the new security posts were carried out in suspected quarters and households as was the case with the above-mentioned Wandji case. Such raids have not been quite successful for a number of reasons. This partly accounts for the persistence of the circulation of counterfeits. During such raiding expeditions culprits found with counterfeits are arrested and expected to be prosecuted, but corruption occasionally shroud and abort due process. Consequently, shortly after arrest culprits are once more seen parading the streets. Even so, records of litigation in the Tiko courts are less revealing of the widespread nature of counterfeiting in the municipality.

In the Wandji case, as comments on the tabloid’s blog suggest, the public is of the opinion that lapses in the judicial system condole with high level counterfeit deals that implicates societal bigwigs like the army colonel. It was expected that the army officer be also prosecuted for charges of shady acquisition of wealth. Expectations are that an officer of Mosah’s calibre could have sensed that when the surface of any currency is stamped, it simply means the currency is no longer meant for circulation, or that it is just a sample and not genuine.

A certain procedure follows the arrest of a suspect or culprit. Instantly, in the presence of security officers and onlookers, the serial number of the suspected banknote is written down against which the culprit signs. This is to prevent eventual refusal and to ascertain the banknote was found on the said individual. After investigation an expert report from BEAC is appended to the Police report and forwarded to court. It is only the BEAC report that confirms the status of the money. Without the report the case risks being thrown out of court and the accused person acquitted. Nevertheless, arrest and incarceration do not seem to deter prospective couriers.

The third measure by the government to combat the circulation of counterfeits among genuine money followed the introduction of new CFA banknotes in 1993 (two thousands), 2002 (five thousands and ten thousands) and 2006 for coins (one, two, five, ten, twenty-five, fifty, and five hundred frs). On the new notes, new serial numbers difficult to destroy by folding were inscribed on the edges, rare colours were used in their production, insertion of a tread, emblemised with lithographic watermark paintings and the exclusion of portraits of individuals. Milling and security edges were impressed on coins together with complicated designs. The change in the design of the currency has made duplication difficult and, in Falola’s words, “catches counterfeiters by surprise and throw them out of business.” However, forgers are smart and are still able to produce counterfeit banknotes and adjust edges on the old five hundred frs coin still in circulation.

At the individual and community level, there is the widespread use of counterfeit discerners – pens, mercury bulbs etc. There is hardly a shop, provision store, or drinking parlour without this machine or gadget. Transporters use red mercury bulbs especially at night. Money collected is place under the light or attempt is made to write on the notes, one is able to detect if it is fake. The absence of the lithographic seal of BEAC and other short special marks indicate its falseness. The marks can only be seen with the help of detectors. Coins are dropped on the road or floor, and from the sound it can be detected if it is counterfeit. The method has been quite successful which accounts for their proliferation. But there is a shared fear that due to high demands unscrupulous suppliers may supply cheap defective counterfei-
detectors from China and Asia that may complicate efforts to stamp out counterfeiting. Another strategy adopted by business people in Mutengene is to report suspected cases to the Police or employ honest youths with exceptional character to manage their businesses to prevent a similar situation, or even worse, of the barman at Casino Friendship Club. But good character is not tangible.

7. Persistence of Currency Counterfeiting

Despite efforts by state authorities to abate the counterfeiting and circulation of bad money, the trade persists. Why? It was noticed counterfeiters demonstrated steadfastness to break the law. One reason why the activities of counterfeiters continue is not only because of the cumbersome procedure from arrest to prosecution highlighted above, but also due to the nuances in the provisions of the country’s new criminal procedure code. Investigators lament with disappointment the frustrations of the cumbersome course of action. Worthy to mention the new procedure code is heralded as designed to safeguard the inalienable rights of individuals. Puzzling how efforts at stemming a criminal offence like counterfeiting is sacrificed at the altar of human right.

Security officers also find it difficult to identify the source of counterfeit because most of the complaints from the public of cases of swindling are against the unknown. These are mostly after daily commercial transactions. Because suspects are not identified in person or by name the police and gendarmes find it difficult to trace, track and crack down perpetrators of the illicit trade. This is compounded by the taciturn character of the town’s residents to expose suspects in their midst. It is often said that it is easier to locate a criminal in big cities like Douala, Lagos or Nairobi than in a small town of the size of Mutengene. The reticence is partly based on fear of retribution or requirement.

The public repine at corrupt security officers for the flourishing of the activities of forgers. It is believed that quacks officers tip-off suspects whenever raids are planned, collect brides or collude with offenders to ensure their release unduly from police detention, thereby allowing currency forgery to flourish. Several cases were cited by our informants. But it should be understood arrested persons are necessarily suspects until tried and proven guilty in a law court. Besides, police release could be based on the fact that no incriminating evidence was found on the arrestee strong enough for him to be arraigned. Since it is not always possible to apprehend coiners in act or red-handed, it can be argued they were mere innocent victims of swindlers. Yet another reason for the persistence of counterfeiting is because of the nomadic lifestyle of couriers. It has been noticed most of the suspects troupe in from adjoining towns like Mile IV and XVI, distribute and then retreat. The highly floating nature of counterfeiters makes efforts to track them down ineffective.

Based on the findings, one other factor for the persistence in the circulation of bad money in Mutengene is the unwillingness of some members of the public to be at the losing end of counterfeit deals. One Bob, a businessman, confided that “in case he was given a counterfeit, he will do his best to pass it over to another person. Life continues.” To him as a businessman such an action is driven by the desire to make profit and fast cash. Many people with Bob’s line of thinking were encountered.

The persistence of poverty characterised by the scarcity of money and the liberalisation of the country’s economy in the 1990s literally opened up floodgates for the importation of sophisticated money minting machines used for the manufacturing of counterfeit, even though these were mostly smuggled in. There is the need for custom officials and ports’ authorities to carry out rigorous checks to control the importation of goods that are inimical to the country’s economy.
Until the authorities fully understand that currency forgery is bad for both the economy and society, and all necessary steps taken to prevent its (re)occurrence or weed out counterfeiters, their clandestine activities will persists.

8. Conclusion
The study concludes with a summary of the main issues discussed. The study has examined the involvement of youth in counterfeiting and uttering of the franc CFA in Mutengene. The study was rimmed within the context of disappearing opportunities to youths in the country and their alternative coping strategies before the introduction of national youth empowerment and employment programs. The origin of counterfeiting in the town is not determined as much as it is associated with the replacement of old mediums of exchange by the introduction of ‘new money’, but it certainly assumed disturbing proportion during the economic squeeze that led to the scarcity of hard cash. It is evident that the undesirable social phenomenon was given a fillip by the economic adversity of the gruesome three decades that trailed SAP, and it is partly a response to the failures of poor governance and persistent denial of basic rights to employment.

The findings reveal that because of high profits more banknotes are forged than coins. There are a number of strategies that have been adopted to rid the economy and society of counterfeit money, but because of factors like nuances in the country’s criminal procedure, complicity of security officers with forgers rather than hunt them down, the clandestine activities of counterfeiters threaten to persist in perpetuity. No doubt the sociology of Mutengene negatively affects its economy that threatens social cohesion. The public perception of the town is a negative one. This negativity is partly influenced by the association of the town with felonious activities like counterfeiting.

Although dwindling, the circulation of counterfeit CFA in the town is real and is continuously a source of financial loss to individuals. Failure to take decisive action at combating counterfeiting can lead to uninsurable risk with negative effects on the reputation and functioning of the country’s central bank. This is contrary to the opinion of some critics that reports about the circulation of face CFA notes is a deliberate attempt by invisible forces to discourage the CFA zone countries from coming up with their own ‘African-made’ single currency. However, wealth earned by pursuing anti-social activities like counterfeiting, genuine money could neatly be likened to what the Luo of Burkina Faso consider ‘bitter-money’, money that is illegally earned, illegally transferred or illegally utilised. If money breaks laws in its origin, movement or use, then it qualifies for the label and is thus less a source of prosperity than a danger to be avoided. There is the need for young people to understand there are better options for survival other than in counterfeiting money.
Caring and Caning – Luo children’s Perceptions of Respect and Reciprocity

Jens Aagaard-Hansen*
Steno Health Promotion Center
Steno Diabetes Center, Niels Steensensvej 2-4, 2820 Gentofte, Denmark
E-mail:jxah@steno.dk, phone +45 4443 3438

ABSTRACT

The article explores Luo children’s perceptions of the people they like and respect and the ones that they dislike and disrespect. It is shown how the relationships can be characterized by Sahlins’ analytical concepts of generalized and negative reciprocity. The persons that the children like are predominantly parents or age mates and the reasons given emphasize the tangible and intangible gifts and services rendered. The disliked persons are mostly non-kin children and adults. Stealing and beating as well as other perceived injustices are mentioned as main causes. However, caning is perceived not only as a negative action conducted by the disliked persons, but also as an accepted disciplinary sanction. The findings show the basic elements of the moral economy of reciprocity among the Luo children as it is often sanctioned by references to Christian values.

Keywords: children, exchange, Kenya, Luo, reciprocity, respect.

Introduction

Studies of children and childhood have gained an important place in anthropology. LeVine (2007) reminds us, that ethnographic studies of childhood are not a recent phenomenon and reviews the many contributions over the past 80 years. The seminal work of James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) highlight children’s roles, not only as passive individuals, but also as active social agents. During the past decades, this has been a key perspective in anthropological and sociological childhood studies, and simultaneously, there has been a marked increase in the number of research projects focusing on childhood in both industrialized and developing countries. The research, on which the present article is based, has been conceived within this discourse and should be seen as part of a large cluster of anthropological studies of childhood in eastern Africa (e.g. Meinert 2001; Nyambedha 2006; Onyango-Ouma 2000; Prince 2005). The article aims at describing Luo primary school children’s notions of their key social relationships and whom they liked and disliked, respected and disrespected. Based on their explanations of the main reasons for either, a pattern of the morality of social interaction emerged which was congruent with Sahlins’s (1974) categories of general and negative reciprocity. It was furthermore shown how infliction of physical pain (caning) was not necessarily seen as something negative (but could also be a warranted disciplinary action), and how the perceptions of respect and disrespect was often explicitly sanctioned by the children’s references to Christianity. Thus, the likes and dislikes of the children pointed to the basic dynamics and values of the moral
Study area and population

Nyang’oma, where the study was conducted, is situated at the shores of Lake Victoria in Bondo District in western Kenya. It is a semi-arid area with the long rainy season from February to June. However, the rain fall is unreliable which affects the local subsistence farming of mainly maize and sorghum negatively and this often leads food insecurity. Fishing, small scale gold mining and petty trade are other means of subsistence. The Luo population is traditionally patrilineal and virilocal (Ocholla-Ayayo 1976) and in the study area about half of the homesteads are polygynous. However, the traditional lifestyles are rapidly changing partly due to ‘modernisation’ and partly due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic which is rampant in the area and entails major demographic changes (Nyambedha, Wandibba, and Aagaard-Hansen 2001, 2003a, 2003b). In Nyang’oma, the small township centre from which the division got its name, there is a Roman Catholic mission that at the time of the study supported three primary and one secondary school as well as a dispensary and other institutions. In the Educational Zone of Amoyo (of which the study’s primary school was part) there were a total of 13 primary schools and a total of about 2800 children enrolled.

Methodology

The study is based on data generated in October 1998 by twenty nine school children attending Standard (class) 6 and 7 in a local primary school. They all wrote essays based on two questions: “write about somebody you like or respect and explain why” and “write about somebody you dislike or disrespect and explain why”. Data from the essays were supplemented by participant-observation and general familiarity with the study area for the past 17 years. The essays were written in the vernacular, Dholuo, and subsequently translated into English by trained field assistants. Subsequently quality control was done by a Dholuo speaking research assistant. The school was purposively selected based on the view that it was typical for most primary schools in the area. All the children in the two classes that were attending school at the given days participated. The children were informed about the project and had the option to decline participation without repercussions. As the research team had worked in the school for three years already, both the Parents-Teachers Association and the school management approved the project activities.

The analysis was conducted from a perspective of social constructivism (Schwandt 1994), where children’s choices of (positive and negative) ‘important others’ and their reasons why were in focus. On that basis, the essays were analyzed for cross-cutting themes and conspicuous patterns and links which are illustrated in the quotes below. In that process, the ‘problem of authencity’ has been fully acknowledged in the sense that “it remains the case that the words and phrases have been chosen by the researcher (…..). The point of view being presented is, therefore, the view of the author, not that of the child” (James 2007, 264-265). Nevertheless, the article claims to provide glimpses into the social relations, likes and dislikes of Luo children in western Kenya, some of which are contextually bound and some of which may have more general relevance beyond this Luo community. In the same vain it is not the concern to judge whether the children’s statements are true, but rather to take them at face value as representations of their social world. Finally, the present article does not engage in judging the rights and wrongs of Luo values and moralities.

In this paper, the children (as well as the ones about whom they are talking) are kept anonymous. When
quoting the informants, they are referred to by numbers (6.1 to 6.15 for the ones in Standard 6, and 7.1 to 7.14 for the ones in Standard 7).

**Modes of reciprocity**

Reciprocity as an analytical concept is “one of the few main topics of social science” playing an important role in anthropology, sociology, social psychology and economy (Kolm 2008, 49). Whereas economic authors originally took the stand that reciprocal behavior is based on self-interest, more recent research-based theories contend that “reciprocity is not only a behaviour but also a motive that sometimes appears to be inconsistent with self-interest” (Bruni, Gilli, and Pelligra et al. 2008, 1), and that “reciprocity is a behavioral response to perceived kindness and unkindness, where kindness comprises both distributitional fairness as well as fairness intentions” (Falk and Fischbacher 2006, 294). “People do not always react as the strictly self-interested homo oeconomicus” (Kolm 2008, 29). Within sociology, Gouldner’s (1960) seminal article contributes to a clarification of the concept and points out the close relation to functionalism. Marcel Mauss’s classic, The Gift (1980), is a milestone in the social scientific quest to comprehend exchange and reciprocity. He states that “reciprocity is the human rock on which societies are built” (Kolm 2008, v).

Later Sahlins (1974) elaborated and suggested a ‘scheme of reciprocities’ comprising a continuum from generalized over balanced to negative reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity “refers to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance returned” (Sahlins 1974, 193-194). Balanced reciprocity “refers to direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay” (Sahlins 1974, 194). Negative reciprocity “is the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity.” (Sahlins 1974, 195). Though Sahlins’ perspective is to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Like/respect</th>
<th>Dislike/disrespect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents: 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s sister: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents &amp; grandparents: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents &amp; elders &amp; uncle: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents &amp; teacher: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-kin</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific persons named</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specific persons named</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thieves: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Others: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categories of the people mentioned by the children as being either liked or respected, or disliked or disrespected.
a large extent economic and comprises exchange of commodities, this classification is also of relevance to the present article as it will be shown below.

Luo children’s views of ‘positive and negative relationships’

A total of 29 children accepted to write the essays. There were 15 boys and 14 girls, out of whom 15 in Standard 6 and 14 in Standard 7. The age range in Standard 6 was between 11 years, 10 months and 16 years, 7 months, and in Standard 7 between 13 years 10 months and 17 years, 6 months. The broad age range in both classes is a common phenomenon in this part of the world due to variation in age at school start as well as frequent repetitions. Because of the age overlap, the differences between the two Standards were not emphasized in the analysis.

Liking and respecting

When choosing a person that they liked or respected, the majority of the pupils (20/29) mentioned close kin. In most cases (10) it was ‘parents’, sometimes combined with either ‘grandparents’, ‘teacher’ or even ‘elders and uncle’ - or equivalently mothers (5) or fathers (4). In one case the ‘grandmother’ was mentioned. In the remaining cases (9/29) the children named specific persons that were not kin (see Table 1).

Table 1. Categories of the people mentioned by the children as being either liked or respected, or disliked or disrespected.

The children gave many and to a large extent similar reasons for liking and respecting their parents (mothers and/or fathers). Some recognized that they were their ‘creators’:

Mother is a very good person. I respect her (omiye luor) so much because she is the one who carried me in her womb until she gave birth to me, and she is the one who took care of me (....). (7.5, girl, 13 years)

The majority mentioned that the parents were the providers of tangible things such as food, housing, soap, shoes and clothing as well as other essentials like provision of medical care and schooling. In more general terms it was recognized that parents make an effort to support the child: “I also like them (ahero gi) because they work hard, so that I get clothes and shoes.” (6.3, girl, 12 years). Also the concern and protection provided by the parents is appreciated:

She [the mother] has taken care of me (orita koa) from childhood up to now, so that I know how to distinguish between bad and good. And even when I was sick she took care of me well. And even the way children get burnt, she took care of me and I never got burnt. (7.11, girl, 16 years)

In this rural community, where death is common, other issues are appreciated as well: “I like (ahero) the parents because even now in case I die, then it’s him/her who would look for a coffin before anybody else begins.” (6.12, girl, 13 years)

In the cases above, the pupils mentioned rendition of very tangible commodities and the direction was mainly unidirectional (from parents to children) as is comprised by the concept of general reciprocity. However, also more intangible services were mentioned, such as the role of parents as ‘teachers’:

“(…) he/she teaches me (opuonja) many jobs. Now I know how to wash utensils, clothes, how to fetch firewood (…)”. (6.11, girl, 15 years). This reflects the phenomenon that children carry out all sorts of domestic and agricultural tasks in this rural community. In addition to teaching, the parents also
played the role as controllers of discipline:

(...) I also love (ahero) my parents because they teach me (gipuonja) to know wrong and right. And more so when I did something wrong, they caned me (gichwada) when I was still young, and I thought they did not like me (ok dwara) and hated me (ochaya). Nowadays I have realized that they were teaching me (gipuonja) (...). I nowadays just smile knowing that they used to teach me so well (...). (7.10, boy, 14 years)

Finally, the children simply expressed that they liked each other: “(...) and I like (ahero) my parents because they too like me (gihera).” (6.3, girl, 12 years)

The impression that most of the quotes above are from girls is a true reflection of the data where the girls dominated in this part. The quotes above may give the impression that parents were always perceived positively. However, that was not the case. Especially when either the mother or the father were explicitly mentioned (9 cases), it was often an indication that the other was less liked. This could be expressed in different willingness to assist:

Dad, even when I tell him to buy me sandals to go with to school, he just tells me that he does not have [money]. And if I tell Mum, she buys [the sandals for] me. So for that, I like (ahero) Mum more than Dad. (7.11, girl, 16 years)

The last quote refers to the frequent situation where pupils are sent home from school to collect money for various things. Some children narrated how the difference was expressed in situations when they were ill. A boy told this story about when he broke a leg in school:

(...) then my father came and then the teachers collected me and took me to Bondo [the local hospital] and I was treated. And we stayed with him while he took care of me. I stayed in the ward for one week. (...) The next day we went back home. My mother did not do anything for me at all. She could only prepare porridge for me. As from that day I knew that my father is better than my mother. (6.9, boy, 14 years)

In seven of the nine cases where either mother or father was mentioned, they explicitly criticized the other party. Even the child that mentioned the grandmother did so at the expense of the deceased mother. Mothers and fathers were praised in about the same number of cases. In the cases where one parent was preferred to the other it was precisely because the children felt that the discarded one did not live up to his or her obligations to provide tangible and intangible services. Or in the terminology of Sahlins, they did not live up to the spirit of general reciprocity.

In nine cases specific persons were mentioned that were not relatives and six of these were children:

One day I went with him to poach in the bush. Then we killed only a hare. Then I told him that we did not have any food at all [at home]. Then he told me that I just take the whole hare, because they had some fish in their house (...). (7.3, boy, 16 years)

Thus, the pupils described relationships that were characterized by mutually sharing and helping one another. The help was extended in both directions: “(...) when she has money she can buy me porridge and I take. And even if I am the one who has money, I can buy for her too.” (7.8, girl, 16 years)

Also here the pupils describe close friendships characterized by unconditional sharing as can be seen in general reciprocity. Only in one of the six cases, a friend of the opposite sex was mentioned. The children also valued the moral integrity of their friends:
She is still a friend of mine because she pays a lot of deference (ingi luor ahinya) [to others], and she likes to greet the people she meets on the way (...). (7.8, girl, 16 years)

In the three cases where the children named adult non-relatives, there were similar stories of rendering mutual services, though here the relationships were asymmetrical in the sense that the adults tended to provide more support than the children. The fact that the majority of the children chose a relative as the liked person is in harmony with Sahlins’s observation: “Reciprocity is inclined towards the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance” (Sahlins 1974, 196), though there could be exceptions.

**Dislike and disrespect**

Only in one case did a child mention a relative as a disliked or disrespected person (see Table 1). A girl (6.10, 15 years) stated that she disliked the ‘father’s sister’. She explained that the father’s sister did not bother or greet people, nor did she pay debt or speak the truth. In all the other cases, the pupils either mentioned specific persons that were not relatives (21/29) or a neutral, general category of persons (7/29) toward whom they had negative feelings.

When asked to explain why they disliked or disrespected certain persons, the two overwhelmingly predominant complaints were ‘stealing’ and ‘beating’. In 13 out of the 21 disliked non-kin cases where named individuals were referred to, stealing was mentioned as a reason for dislike or disrespect. The same was the case in 6 out of 7 of the neutral cases (maybe not so surprising as 5 out of 7 were the called ‘thieves’ – a category that was solely referred to by girls).

What causes hatred (kelo charuok) between me and him is that he stole (no kwalo) a certain book belonging to my sibling. When he was told to return it, he did not want to. He did not want to admit that he had stolen that book. He wanted to beat me (goya), and that is why I don’t like (ok adwar) him. (7.9, boy, 16 years)

Thus, these persons were disliked and disrespected for their stealing – an act that clearly qualifies to be termed negative reciprocity. Beating (or caning, slapping, slashing with panga or fighting) was mentioned in 15 out of 21 named cases and 3 out of 7 of the ‘neutral’ cases: “(....) he knocked me (otuoma) hard and I fell down, and my dress opened and my nose also bled (...).” (7.4, girl, 17 years)

The children telling about the category ‘thieves’ often mentioned that they were prone to be violent as well: “(.....) then he knows that you are a wealthy person, and he can even slap you with a panga (padi kata gi opanga) (...).” (6.3, girl, 12 years)

Many other (and partly overlapping) reasons for dislike and disrespect were mentioned more rarely. In 4 out of 5 cases where the children mentioned the category ‘thieves’ they were also seen to kill people. Two cases involved accusations of witchcraft, for example:

(...) we annoyed him and he went to the magician who told him [the names of] those who were in that bush [collecting firewood without permission]. So he went for magic and was shown the magic which he placed, and as we were four girls, all of us fell sick, and one died by the name xxx. (7.14, girl, 16 years)

In three cases the disliked persons were seen to hurt animals:

I disrespect (achaye) him because he is someone who likes chasing people and he can cane somebody’s child (....) and he does not want
people to graze their cattle near his garden, and that can make him slash (*miye otong*) someone’s animals or hit it (*ago gi*) with something hard. And he can beat an animal like a goat or a sheep and even kill [it] (...). (7.13, boys, 16 years)

Only one child complained that the disliked (named) person lied, whereas in five cases, general statements were made about their personality, for example: “Furthermore, his characters are not good, and I don’t pay deference to him (*ok luore*) at all (...). (7.9, boy, 16 years)

Sometimes, the disliked persons were said to be “untidy like a sheep” or to smell “(...) like a dog which is dead” (7.12, boy, 16 years). Other children complained that the disliked or disrespected persons abused, tempted, disturbed, made noise, bullied, cheated, hurt, disrespected or had bad habits. In one special case, the child disliked and disrespected ‘the inheritor’. The background is that the patrilineal Luo have a tradition of levirate, i.e. that a widow should be ‘inherited’ by another man – ideally a brother of the deceased husband, but in reality many other men may qualify. This is done in order to avoid ritual pollution (*kwer*) that may lead to illness and death (*chira*).

(...) there is someone whom I don’t want. He is the inheritor. He inherited our home. Now he wants that I call him ‘father’, but I refused. He held me and caned me, and I ran to my grandmother’s house. (6-9, boy, 14 years)

Then, the child narrated a long story about how the inheritor also stole and was subsequently chased out by the grandmother. Thus, even this case was characterized by negative reciprocity.

Among the 21 named, disliked individuals, the majority were children or youth (13/21), whereas 6 out of 21 were adults. In two cases both categories were men. Only in two of all the cases the disliked persons were females.

### Caring and caning – reciprocity in the lives of Luo children

In the essays which were written by the pupils in the vernacular, Dholuo, some key words occurred very frequently. The verbs indicating positive feelings were *hero* and *dwaro* (to like, to love). The noun,
<p><em>luor</em> (respect, fear, deference) is often used in the expression <em>miyo luor</em> (to give respect), and it was also used as a verb, <em>luoro</em> (to fear, to pay deference to). It is remarkable how these terms merge elements of respect and fear. The reasons why the selected persons were liked or respected stemmed from their good deeds: <em>puonjo</em> (to teach), <em>konyo</em> (to help) or <em>rito</em> (to attend, to take care of).

The opposite situation was expressed either by a simple negation <em>ok</em> (not) in front of the verbs above, for example <em>ok luoro</em> (not to respect), or by the term <em>chayo</em> (to disrespect). The negative sentiments were explained by a number of verbs conveying negative actions: <em>chando</em> (to harass, to molest, to disturb), <em>goyo</em> (to beat, to hit), <em>kwalo</em> (to steal), <em>mayo</em> (to snatch), <em>miyo otong’o</em> (to slash), <em>nyalo</em> (to revenge, to rob), <em>pado</em> (to slap), <em>thago</em> (to bully, to knock), <em>otuomo</em> (to knock), <em>pado kata gi opanga</em> (to slap with a panga), <em>timo marach</em> (to do wrong), <em>thago gi wach</em> (to disturb), <em>tong’o di beti</em> (to slash with a panga), <em>yago</em> (to tease) or <em>yanyo</em> (to abuse, to insult). The verb <em>chwado</em> (to cane) was more ambiguous in the sense that caning could be part of relationships that were both positive and negative.

Thus, whereas beating was an important reason for dislike and disrespect, infliction of physical pain was not always perceived to be totally negative. Caning was a process where a stick was used to beat another person - typically a child. In many cases caning was used as a disciplinary practice, and it was frequently observed in homesteads and primary schools in the study area. As it can be seen, some children found it warranted:

And if you do wrong (<em>itim marach</em>), then you will be caned (<em>chwadi</em>), because you are being straightened, so that you dislike (<em>kik iher</em>) jokes [having a negative connotation of playing around]. (6.2, girl, 14 years)

Thus, for some of the children caning could be comprised within a relationship of general reciprocity. The cases (7.10, boy, 14 years) and (7.11, girl, 16 years) quoted above are other examples, where parents’ and teachers’ caning was perceived by the children as a legitimate means of disciplining. This ambiguity of caning is in harmony with the observation of Bruni et al. (2008, 4) that “the role of <em>intentions</em> is particularly important in Rabin’s work and in the literature on reciprocity in general.” Caning was also frequently used by the local authorities as an accepted sanction, as it was described by the children when the disliked/disrespected people were punished.

And when the owner of the garden caught him, he was taken to the chief and was caned, then taken to Bondo and again he was caned and jailed (...). (6.2, girl, 14 years)

Caning as punishment for stealing was also mentioned in the quote of 7.11 (girl, 16 years) above. Caning could also be used as revenge by one child toward another: “I caned him five strokes of cane. From that day he has not teased me again up to today (...).” (6.7, boy, 11 years)

Table 2. Overview of tangible and intangible elements’ of exchange in the relationships as part of the categories of general and negative reciprocity (Sahlins, 1974).

According to Kolm (2008, 53) “a gift from an agent to another can consist of anything done by the former and favourable to the latter or favoured by her (……) and can be, for instance, bestowing a gift in the strict sense or a favour, approving or expressing a favourable judgment (……) and so on.” Table 2 provides
a summary of the various tangibles (commodities) and intangibles (services and favors) that were exchanged within the relationships categorized according to Sahlins’ general and negative reciprocity.

As it appears above, infliction of physical pain in various forms was a prominent part of the children’s lives within the homesteads, in schools and in the community. Articles from Kenyan newspapers showed that it was not just a local phenomenon. For example, The Daily Nation reported on July 20, 1996 about a girl in Kiambu district who died as a direct consequence of caning in her primary school. It is important to emphasize that legislative measures have been taken in Kenya, that the situation varies from place to place (for instance urban or rural areas) and that this is not only a Kenyan phenomenon.

The African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organization of African Unity 1999) states that “State Parties to the present Charter shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse, while in the care of the child.” (Article 16.1). The ethical dilemmas of universal versus cultural relativistic perspectives on child rights have been aptly described by Nieuwenhuys (2008).

The moral economy of reciprocity

Quite a few of the children themselves had reflections about reciprocity, all of which related to the ‘positive’ cases where they liked or respected someone:

(... that person who gives you something (miyi gimoro) is the one you too give (emi miyo), and is the one you like (be kendo emi hero). That person who does not give you (ok miyi) something, abuses you (oyanyi) and beats you (ogoyi), you would not like (ok diher). (7.9, boy, 16 years)

This is in line with Gouldner (1960, 171) who suggests “that a norm of reciprocity, in its universal form, makes two interrelated, minimal demands: (1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them”. Furthermore, Gouldner perceives reciprocity as “one among a number of “Principal Components” universally present in moral codes.” Five children (all girls) extended the reciprocity into the future, where they expected to pay back their ‘debt’ to their parents:

I like (ahero) my parents because they are the people who teach me some jobs, so that even when they are sick then I can assist them (konygi) with such jobs. (6.14, girl, 11 years)

Also here general reciprocity is in focus though in another time perspective. In the terminology of Kolm (2008, 46) this is called ‘intergenerational reciprocities’ or ‘chain reciprocities’. When writing their essays, the children often referred to Christianity (either God, Jesus or the Bible) when explaining the ties to their parents: “Even the Bible says, respect (miya luor) your mother and father plus all people who are older than you (…)” (6.11, girl, 15 years)

This and other quotes expressed principles of general reciprocity with reference to religiously sanctioned morale. However, Christianity could also be used to explain the bad standing of disliked or disrespected persons:

(... I disrespect (achayo) a thief because they treat us badly, because they steal their fellow’s good properties, and God says ‘don’t covet the thing which belong to your fellow’ (...). (6.11, girl, 15 years)

According to the children, these persons should not
only face punishment. Religion would even come in when the children tried to deal with the disliked or disrespected people in a more positive way. A child who stayed with his fervently religious grandparents, told how he pacified the disliked boy: “(...) when he realized that I was beginning to sing to him. And he began to tell me that now we start praying to God. (...) we went to church only twice (...)” (6.6, boy, 15 years)

There were more girls (18) than boys (9) referring to Christianity as a way of legitimizing their positions, both for positive and negative cases. Christianity played a major role in the children’s community. Many people attended church services every Sunday and prayers were often said at the start of meetings and visits before the formal greetings and conversations were initiated. The two dominant denominations were Roman Catholic and Anglican, but there were many minor sects as well.

**Conclusion**

The article has explored Luo children’s notions of likes and dislikes, respect and disrespect as they were expressed in their relationships to other persons. It has been shown how positive relationships are characterized by free and unconditional exchange of tangible as well as intangible commodities and favors (general reciprocity), whereas the relationships to disliked and disrespected persons were based on negative interactions such as stealing and beating (negative reciprocity). The study showed that infliction of physical pain (e.g. caning) was ambiguous in the sense that it pertained to the positive as well as the negative relationships. In a broader perspective the children’s accounts showed that reciprocity was a cornerstone in the local moral economy.

The study can be criticized from various perspectives. The data collection was based on a combination of long-term participant-observation and essays written in a classroom where the school children were sitting close. Thus, in principle there was a chance that the responses (and especially choice of categories) were not completely independent. However, even if it was the case that they had sought ‘inspiration’ from one another, there was no chance that the approximately 40 pages that they wrote in average could be copied. Furthermore, careful reading of the essays showed so much variation in the individual stories and life situations, that this should not be a concern. As always there is the risk that the informants report what the researchers want to hear. However, the fact that the assignments were very open-ended promoted a situation where the children had to mobilize their own perceptions, experiences and values without guidance from the researchers about the direction to take. All the children gave exact dates of birth. However, based on previous studies in the same area, precise age estimates are always dubious. The school enrolment rate in the study areas is estimated to be 80-90%, so the pupils can be claimed to be rather typical for their age group.

The article has described reciprocity as a key concept in the lived experiences and moral worlds of Luo children in western Kenya. Empirically it provided insights into Luo ethnography as well as the anthropology of Luo childhood. Theoretically it emphasized that the vintage concept of reciprocity is still relevant and holds significant explanatory power in contemporary anthropology.

(Endnotes)

1. According to Kolm (2008: 13) the term ‘reciprocity’ is mostly used to refer to the positive aspects, whereas the term ‘reciprocation’ more broadly include negative exchanges as well.

2. During the time of the study parents had to pay school fees (about USD 11 per year depending on class level). In addition there were numerous expenses for school uniform, exercise books, text books and
many other things. As from 2003 the newly elected Kibaki government introduced free primary education, which reduced the cost significantly, though there were still expenses for items such as school uniforms, pens and exercise books.


Acknowledgements

I am thankful to the school children who shared their time and knowledge with me as well as the school and the parents and other community members. Also heartfelt thanks to Charles Ogoye-Ndegewa and the other staff members working at the Nyang’oma Research Training Site (NRTS) as well as colleagues at the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi. Charles Omondi Olang’o provided valuable assistance with aspects of Dholuo translation. The study was generously funded and supported by DBL – Centre for Health Research and Development (formerly Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory).

References


* Author biography:

The author has a double education as anthropologist and medical doctor. He has been engaged in anthropological research on childhood and medical anthropology in eastern Africa during the past 17 years, as well as institutional capacity building and training of a large number of African and European anthropologists.
Health and Disease Symptomology in Luo Children

Amy M. Zidron, DO, PhD
Pediatric Resident
West Virginia University Children’s Hospital
Morgantown, WV 26505

ABSTRACT

Objectives: This paper examines the impact of orphanhood on the health of Kenyan Luo children through the use of a clinical history and physical exam. Orphans were hypothesized to have poorer health than non-orphans; differences were expected in both males and females.

Methods: Four hundred eleven Luo children (9±1 yr), residing in western Kenya were recruited to participate in a cross-sectional study examining health via a structured clinical history and physical exam.

Results: Using a t-test as the method of analysis, no significant differences in the clinical history and physical exam were found between the two groups of male children or the two groups of female children.

Discussion: Results from this study suggest that Luo children would benefit from health education as well as prevention and treatment for parasitic and fungal infections.

INTRODUCTION

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is creating a generation of orphaned children in Africa. The continent of Africa is home to 95% of the world’s children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS (Human Rights Watch 2001; Matshalaga 2002:324). It is estimated that by the year 2010, approximately 18 million African children under 18 years of age will be orphaned as a result of the pandemic (UNICEF 2005). According to a report by UNAIDS (2006), the HIV/AIDS pandemic has not peaked so the extent of the orphan crisis has yet to be fully realized. The number of HIV/AIDS orphans will continue to increase long after the crisis peaks so it is important to determine how best to aid these children to ensure that they are healthy and well-nourished.

In addition to the risk of becoming orphaned, the World Health Organization (2006) reports that a child born today in Africa may face more health risks throughout his life than a child born on any other continent. This high risk of poor health may be the result of several factors, including both the high HIV/AIDS prevalence on the continent and the rates of poverty (World Health Organization 2006). Currently, the leading causes of death among African children 5-14 years old are lower respiratory tract infections, HIV/AIDS, traffic accidents, measles, and trypanosomiasis (African sleeping sickness) (World Health Organization 2006). Furthermore, many Africans do not have access to adequate healthcare.

Child health in Nyanza Province, the site of data collection, is considered to be poor. For children under the age of 5 years, causes of morbidity and mortality in the region are consistent with those seen...
across Kenya: malaria, diarrhea, measles, malnutrition, and respiratory, parasitic, and skin infections (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003; Kenyan Ministry of Health 2004). Although both infant mortality and under-5 child mortality rates are extremely high in Nyanza Province (Kenyan Ministry of Health 2004), over 50% of the families surveyed in the Kenyan Demographic and Health Survey 2003 reported seeking healthcare for child illness (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003).

Although not well studied, several means exist through which orphanhood could impact child health. Orphans often live in poor socioeconomic homes where there may be a lack of food, education, and clothing (Kenyan Ministry of Health 2004). Orphaned children who are living in households in which one or more persons are infected with HIV/AIDS will be exposed and potentially infected with more diseases than children living in non-AIDS affected homes. Length of disease episodes was found to be longer in those children living in homes where someone was infected with HIV/AIDS (Bridge et al. 2006:74). It is possible that children living with grandparents may suffer from poorer health as elderly people are more susceptible to many infectious diseases. These children may be exposed to disease more often. Furthermore, children living with an elderly caregiver may not receive adequate healthcare if the elder does not have the resources to pay for a physician and pharmacy visit.

Several researchers have found orphans to have poorer health than non-orphans. In one study, orphan self-reported morbidity per parent/guardian of diarrhea, fever, and cough was higher than that of non-orphans (Sarker, Neckerman, and Muller 2005:10). Results may have occurred because the children involved in this study were younger (12-59 months) than the children who were recruited to participate in the present study. Despite the difference seen in illness prevalence, no differences were found in treatment seeking behavior between the two groups of parents (Sarker, Neckerman, and Muller 2005:10). Lack of difference in treatment seeking behavior suggests that although orphans are reported to be sicker more often, their caregivers may have the ability to meet their healthcare needs. A study investigating children in Zimbabwe found poor health to exist in orphans (Watts et al. 2007:12). In Zimbabwe, orphans and other vulnerable children were more likely to have reported recent episodes of diarrhea or respiratory tract infections (Watts et al. 2007:12). Similar to the previously discussed study, these results were found to occur in children less than 5 years of age. Therefore, as discussed above, it is possible that the difference in health could be due to the young age of the children studied.

On the other hand, many studies investigating the impact of orphanhood on health have failed to find a relationship between orphan status and poor health. These studies have not found a correlation between the morbidity and/or mortality of children who have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS and those who have not (Crampin et al. 2003:17; Kamali et al. 1996:8; Parikh et al. 2007:21; Ryder et al. 1994:8). A study in western Kenya found no significant difference between a recent history of fever or malaria between orphans and non-orphans (Lindblade et al. 2003:8). No difference was found in the incidence of disease between orphans and nonorphans living in Uganda (Bridge et al. 2006:74).

This paper aims to add to knowledge regarding orphan health through several means. A more comprehensive approach to child health will be taken in this paper. Clinical histories and physical exams will allow for an investigation of overall health as well as commonly reported disease symptoms. Males and females will be investigated separately, which will allow for the investigation of health to be gender specific. Finally, length of orphanhood will also be investigated as a covariate to determine its impact.
on orphan health. This paper examines the impact of orphanhood on the health of Luo children through the use of a clinical history and physical exam. Specifically, orphans were hypothesized to have poorer health as determined by a clinical history and physical exam than non-orphans. The differences were expected in both males and females.

METHODS

Study Population

This project was conducted in Nyanza Province, Kenya from June-July 2007. With a 6.1% HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among adults aged 15-49 years, Kenya is the 17th hardest hit country in Africa (UNAIDS 2006). Approximately 1.1 million orphans live in Kenya (UNAIDS 2006). A large majority of these children are currently living in Nyanza Province, where 30-39% of adults are infected with HIV (UNAIDS 2006). This prevalence rate is one of the highest on the continent of Africa (UNAIDS 2006). In Nyanza Province, it is estimated that 19% of children less than 15 years of age have lost one or both parents to AIDS (United Nations 2005). The primary residents of Nyanza Province, the Luo, are members of the third largest ethnic group in Kenya (National Council for Population and Development 1999).

Sample

Four hundred eleven children (age 9±1 yr) were recruited from 17 schools in the Nyando District and Kisumu Rural. Both Nyando District and Kisumu Rural are located within Nyanza Province and were chosen because of current affiliations that Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine has with community leaders in the area. The headmaster at each school was contacted and asked to select male and female children that could participate in the study. It is unknown as to what criteria the headmaster used to select study participants nor if the children selected were representative of the school’s student body. Approximately half of the children invited to participate in the study were orphans and half were non-orphans. An orphan was defined as a child who had lost at least one parent to AIDS or another cause. This definition of orphanhood is consistent with that accepted internationally as well as locally in Kenya (Nyambedha, Wandibba, and Aagaard-Hansen 2003:57). Consent for participation in the study was obtained from a parent/guardian and assent was obtained from the children in accordance with Ohio University’s Institutional Review Board and the Kenya Medical Research Institute. Consent and assent were obtained in Dholuo. Approval has been granted for this research by Ohio University’s Institutional Review Board, and Kenya Medical Research Institute’s scientific and ethics committees. Orphans and non-orphans were frequency-matched for age and gender. Selected sample characteristics are displayed in Table 1.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Children between ages 7-11 years and residents of Nyando District or Kisumu Rural were included in the study.

A child was excluded from the study if after the clinical history and physical exam he was thought to be potentially infected with HIV/AIDS. These children were referred to a local clinic per the recommendation of the clinical officer. This exclusion criterion is part of the study because this paper is part of a larger research project investigating the impact of orphanhood on Luo children. One aspect of this research investigated child nutritional status, which would be impacted by HIV/AIDS infection. Similarly HIV/AIDS can affect health because treatment for this disease not readily available or affordable to most Luo. HIV/AIDS children were excluded to prevent any bias.
Table 1

**Sample characteristics, Mean(SD) or %**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Orphan N=210</th>
<th>Nonorphan N=197</th>
<th>Total N=407</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9.5(1.2)</td>
<td>9.2(1.4)</td>
<td>9.3(1.3)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9.2(1.2)</td>
<td>8.9(1.3)</td>
<td>9.1(1.2)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height (cm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>134.2(8.0)</td>
<td>133.5(9.4)</td>
<td>133.9(8.6)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>134.3(9.5)</td>
<td>132.1(8.6)</td>
<td>133.2(9.1)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (kg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28.5(4.8)</td>
<td>28.1(4.5)</td>
<td>28.3(4.7)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28.3(5.6)</td>
<td>26.9(4.9)</td>
<td>27.6(5.4)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15.9(2.7)</td>
<td>15.7(1.4)</td>
<td>15.8(2.2)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15.5(1.5)</td>
<td>15.3(1.5)</td>
<td>15.3(1.5)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of orphanhood (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.6(2.4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.6(2.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Clinical History and Physical Exam

The questions asked in the both the clinical history and the physical examination were determined with the help of an American Osteopathic pediatrician. Evaluation of health is equivalent to that performed with an American child of similar ages.

A clinical history was obtained for each study participant by an Osteopathic medical student and a local research assistant. Each child also participated in a physical exam performed by an Osteopathic medical student and a local clinical officer. The training that a Kenyan clinical officer receives is equivalent to that of an American physician’s assistant. Two groups of medical students and clinical officers performed the exams. Examiners were blinded to orphan status. Both sets of examiners performed the same physical exam in the same order. The clinical history and physical exam were not oriented to be nutritionally focused.

The clinical history and physical exam investigated the following systems: cardiovascular, respiratory, eyes/ears/nose and throat, gastrointestinal, urinary, musculoskeletal, endocrine, neurological and integumentary (skin). For example, during the nose portion of the clinical history children were asked if they had recently experienced a runny nose or stuffy nose. When the respiratory system was being examined during the physical exam, lungs were auscultated to identify potential pathologies, i.e. wheezing (indicative of asthma) or rales (indicative of pneumonia). In addition to providing general health information, the clinical history and physical exam were also utilized to identify children potentially infected with HIV/AIDS. The “Revised World Health Organization Clinical Staging of HIV/AIDS for Infants and Children under 15 Years” was used to identify potentially infected children (World Health Organization 2005).

To prevent stigmatization, the clinical history and physical exam were conducted in private areas within the research site (typically a church or school). All information obtained during the clinical history and physical exam was kept confidential and was only available to the principal investigator and the Osteopathic medical student and the research assistant/clinical officer who performed the history/exam.

Abnormal (pathological) findings in the clinical history and physical exam were recorded. For example, in the clinical exam, complaints of nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea were recorded as abnormal findings for the gastrointestinal system. A rash or fungal infection observed during the physical exam was reported as

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Orphan</th>
<th>Nonorphan</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N  Mean(SD)</td>
<td>N  Mean(SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical history</td>
<td>100  5.9(1.2)</td>
<td>90  6.2(1.0)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical exam</td>
<td>98  2.1(1.2)</td>
<td>91  2.2(1.3)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
an abnormal finding for the integumentary system. Data were entered in PalmPilots® using Entryware® software. Each abnormal finding was recorded and a system was considered to be abnormal if at least one pathological finding was reported per system. The number of abnormal systems was summed for analysis. A total of 9 systems were investigated during the clinical history and the physical exam, therefore the number of abnormal systems could range from 0-9. The same process was repeated for clinical history and the physical exam. A similar analysis has occurred in recently published work investigating Luo elders (Author 2008:23).

Interview

Participant interviews were conducted in Dholuo by a trained Luo research assistant. Orphans were also asked how many years they had been orphans. Non-orphans were asked if and how many orphans lived in their homestead. Data were entered in PalmPilots® using Entryware® software.

ANALYSIS

Prior to analysis, four children were excluded from the study: two children were excluded because of questionable HIV status; one child was excluded because age was undeterminable; the last child was excluded for both factors, leaving 407 children in the analysis.

The clinical history and physical exam scores were compared between orphans and non-orphans using a t-test. Using confidence intervals of 95%, a p-value of p≤0.05 was considered indicative for a significant correlation. The clinical history and physical exam were analyzed separately so the difference between subjective and objective findings could be investigated. Male and female children were analyzed separately.

In order to determine if an association existed between the clinical history and physical exams scores, and length of orphanhood, a partial correlation analysis was used. Age was entered as a control variable in this analysis because of the relationship that exists between the age of the child and his length of orphanhood. The analysis was run separately for male and female orphans. Alpha=0.05 indicated a significant association. All analyses were performed using SPSS 15.0® statistical software.

Results

No significant differences were detected between the two groups of males for the clinical history and physical exam (Table 2). Similarly, there was no significant difference for the clinical history and the physical exam between the two groups of females (Table 3).

Common complaints emerged during both the clinical history and physical exam for males and females regardless of orphan status. Male children often reported symptoms that could be due to a viral infection or the common cold. They reported having a cough (72.6%), sore throat (61.1%), runny nose (74.2%), stuffy nose (74.7%), and red eyes (75.8%). Two gastrointestinal complaints, diarrhea (54.7%) and abdominal pain (77.4%), were often reported by male children. Male children also reported suffering from dry skin (70.5%) and a rash (55.8%). Female children also reported many findings representative of a cold. They reported suffering from a cough (76.3%), sore throat (66.5%), runny nose (80.5%), stuffy nose (82.8%), and red eyes (71.6%). Abdominal pain (76.7%) and dry skin (50.2%) were also reported by females. Neurological complaints were common complaints mentioned by the female children. They reported that they were acting differently (50.7%), crying (56.7%), sleeping more (65.1%), and were often inconsolable (54.9%).
Headaches (54.0%) were another common complaint from the females.

The physical exam yielded several common findings. Lymphadenopathy (swollen lymph nodes) was common finding among both groups of male (74.60%) and female children (77.21%). Rashes were also commonly seen in all children. Most rashes were described by examiners as being either dry or crusted.

Partial correlations indicated that there is no relationship between the clinical history and physical exam scores, and length of orphanhood. This was true for both males and females.

**DISCUSSION**

The data presented here suggest that no difference exists between the health of orphaned and non-orphaned Luo children. Furthermore, no association was found between length of orphanhood, and the clinical history and physical exam scores. These results support much of the current orphan literature which suggests that there is no difference between the health of orphans and nonorphans (Bridge et al. 1996:74; Lindblade et al. 2003:8; Parikh et al. 2007:21; Ryder et al. 1994:8).

Cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, watery eyes, and abdominal pain were symptoms often reported by both males and females regardless of status. These complaints are similar to those reported by the Kenyan Ministry of Health (2004) as being common in Kenyan children. A study investigating the self-treatment of adolescent children found the most commonly reported complaints to be cold, abdominal issues, injuries, and headache (Geissler et al. 2000:50). Many of the complaints reported by the children in the present study may have been symptoms of a “cold.” Abdominal issues were also a common complaint in the present study sample. Other subjective complaints among the females included acting differently, crying, and sleeping more. They also reported feeling inconsolable as well as having headaches. The females were not questioned in depth concerning these complaints, however, it is possible that these symptoms could be the result of depression. Male and female children also reported having a rash, most often described as being dry or crusted. Overall, many of the subjective complaints made by the Luo children who participated in this project are very similar to those often seen in American pediatrics clinics.

Fungal and parasitic infections were the most common findings in the physical exam. Tinea infection was frequently reported by examiners. When present on the torso and extremity, tinea can appear to be dry skin, which was a commonly reported subjective complaint of both male and female children. Parasitic infestation was also seen in many children. The Kenyan Ministry of Health (2004) reported that the occurrence of parasitic and fungal infections in children is high. All children who participated in this study were treated with mebendazole (100mg), an anti-worm agent. Lymphadenopathy or swollen lymph nodes were commonly noted by examiners during the physical exam. Swollen lymph nodes commonly represent previous or current infection. Therefore it is probable that many of the children who participated in this study may have been recovering from an illness. No other physical exam findings were commonly identified in this sample of Luo children.

The children in this study, regardless of orphan status, were healthier than expected. Several reasons could account for the unexpected results obtained in this study. One study investigating the health of Luo schoolchildren suggested that illnesses were frequently experienced by the study participants, however, self-treatment was prevalent among these children (Geissler et al. 2000:50). Treatments reported
by children were herbal remedies or the purchase of pharmaceuticals (Geissler et al. 2000:50). Dealing with illness was thought to be an “adaptive skill” as opposed to an event that would hinder their daily routine (Geissler et al. 2000:50). It is possible that the Luo children in this study are employing similar means of treatment. Similarly, it is also possible that illness is a part of life for Luo children they have adapted to live with.

Some literature suggests that grandparents may not have the ability to provide adequate care for their orphaned grandchildren (Nyambedha, Wandibba, and Aagaard- Hansen 2001:38; UNICEF 2003). The present study suggests that elderly caregivers and the extended family do have that ability. Results from several studies in Africa indicate that the extended family is capable of providing adequate care for orphans (Crampin et al. 2003:17; Sarker, Neckerman, and Muller 2005:10; Ryder et al. 1994:8). It is possible that the orphans in this study are living in high socioeconomic status homesteads, which has been reported to be a common characteristic of the homes where orphans live (Bicego, Rutstein, and Johnson 2003:56; Parikh et al. 2007:21). The fact that all children in the study were in school supports the theory that they came from homes with high socioeconomic statuses. Older children may also be working to help provide a household income or means for adequate healthcare.

The limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The current study is cross-sectional and therefore does not yield information about the long term effects of orphanhood on children. Age determination was difficult to assess in this study as birth records are not normally kept in Luo society, which means that children outside of the study’s desired age range may have been included. It is important to recognize that these results cannot be generalized to all Kenyan children as the children in the study were mainly Luo. The results should also be interpreted carefully within the Luo community itself because only children from two districts within Nyanza Province were recruited for participation in the study. It is possible that the headmaster at each school may have created a bias as it is unknown as to the criteria he used to select study participants. Since children were recruited from schools, it is not possible to generalize these results to orphans, as many times orphans are forced to drop out of school to perform household chores, care for sick family members and/or work. As previously mentioned, it is highly probably that these children live in homes with a higher socioeconomic status than the general population because they are all attending school. These children and their family members may be more likely to be taken to a clinic and receive treatment because they have the money for healthcare. Although the clinical history was carefully translated by a native speaker of Dholuo, it is possible that many of the children had difficulty with understanding the questions being asked about their health. The overall assessment of health was subjective and it is possible that physical exam results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Orphan</th>
<th>Nonorphan</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical history</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>5.8(1.2)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical exam</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2.0(1.3)</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
would differ between clinical officers. Furthermore, since this was a pilot study other confounding factors that could impact health were not investigated. As mentioned above, socioeconomic status is one such factor. Others include sex of guardian as well as guardian age. Future studies will further investigate these and other potential confounding factors.

Despite the limitations this study presents, it adds to the already existing literature investigating orphanhood and its impact on the health of children. The majority of literature investigating orphan health suggests that there is not a strong correlation between orphan status and health. The present study supports this idea. The age range investigated in this research is different from that in much of the current literature, thus this project increases knowledge about the impact of orphanhood on older children. Furthermore, the sample size in this study exceeds that of many current studies looking at orphans. Additionally, this study utilized a clinical history and a physical exam allowing for a more comprehensive look at health.

Results from this study indicate that the health of orphans is similar to the health of non-orphans. The majority of children were diagnosed as suffering from parasitic infections. Health interventions targeted at this age group should include health education, i.e. strategies to clean water, and ways to improve hygiene. When considering findings from the physical exam, education on fungal, parasite, and malaria prevention and treatment would be beneficial for this population. Access to healthcare should also be improved and made more cost effective to ensure that children living in the most interior of the rural areas are also able to obtain preventative education and treatment.

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine (OUCOM)/Research Award, OUCOM/OU Challenge Award, OU Graduate Student Senate Grant for Original Work and the OUCOM D.O./Ph.D. program. The project infrastructure was additionally supported by the National Science Foundation (Grant No. 0515890, P.I. Author). It was conducted in collaboration with the Kenya Medical Research. Much appreciation goes to the Kenyan field team, as well as the communities and people of the Nyando District. Thank you to the American field team and to Jaja Yogo, M.S., M.S. for all of his work with translations and organization while in Kenya. Thank you to Karen Montgomery-Reagan, D.O. for her help with the clinical history questionnaire and the physical exam assessment.

REFERENCES


Crampin, Amelia C., Sian Floyd, Judith R. Glynn,


Abstract:

In this paper, I argue that the evolutionary processes that Africa has been going through translate into the worsening childhood conditions the continent is presently experiencing. By surveying literature on children before, during and after colonization of the continent, it becomes a necessity to further conclude that of the remnants of colonial discourses, ‘othering’ ourselves remains pervasive to the extent that we disown our children from the way we talk to the way we act. In its totality, this leads to incompetent and malfunctioning plans and policies designed to address the worsening children’s conditions in contemporary Africa.

Introduction

For history enlightens us, Orwell writes “Who controls the past, [...] controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’ And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered”.¹ In fact, history not only helps us understand the present and future, and thereby plan effectively towards achieving goals, but also opens up the possibilities to even revert to some past experiences if possible and when necessary. A policymakers’ reflection into where things might have begun and their gradual worsening, or rather any developments thereof, becomes a call of necessity. Referring back to history does absolutely help us resolve some ambivalence regarding social problems we are experiencing today.

Relating it to theory and implementation of various policies designed to avert it, this essay discursively revisits the problem of street children (for lack of a better word) in contemporary Africa by looking at the present conceptualizations in relation to the past. As numerous ethnographies suggest, I support the claim that pre-colonial African childhood experiences were far better compared to colonial and post-colonial periods.² The paper advances the claim that with time and changing socio-demographic conditions, African childhood experiences became deplorable. I gradually transition from the past, through the dated foreign imposition of the African continent and I lastly investigate the various childhood experiences in independent Africa. Before going too far, we need to note at least one point regarding the position the paper takes: childhood conditions and experiences in general have worsened in Africa, especially beginning the 1990s when massive budget cuts on social spending became a policy until present,³ and has left a majority of parents and children quite helpless.
We better focus our attention on how the different childhood discourses have evolved. To begin with, the work examines the appropriateness and impact of such definitional terms as street children, which are currently in use. I will engage in the rich anthropological discussions of how different African societies under different systems cared for their young ones. This is in order to build the idea that most African societies raised their children better than during colonial domination and after independence. Despite the fact that formal colonialism lasted for less than a century, the abrupt social change it brought has resulted in some long lasting detriments that affect the continent until present. I will then analyze these impacts and relate them to the current situation in order to get a nuanced picture of how these experiences are connected and affect whichever social outcomes we are battling today.

“Street Children” Conceptualized

In late decades, different people – both expert and lay alike – have been trying to understand the concept of childhood in many varied but still connected ways. This struggle occurs amidst their quest to find solutions to the aforementioned growing world-wide problem. Despite the good intentions that I believe we all have, this difficulty in wording affects the ways stakeholders design interventions to avert this derailing matter of human concern. It is a shame for humans to abandon their fellow human beings; but despite the noise made so far, there must be people in some uneasily identifiable spaces saying ‘who cares’ and after all ‘everyone on his own’! This brings us to at least one important question: can children depend on themselves? Let us note that, humans are known for their long-term dependency compared to other mammals.

As humans we consciously or otherwise make mistakes, and admitting these mistakes is humane. I call the above term, the widely used one, a mistake based on common sense. Let us ask ourselves a few questions: Do streets bear children? How so? We obviously have answers to these simple questions, and the answer is NO! But surprisingly, we do still stick to this wrongful construction by holding up to that syntactic qualification without picturing the broad implications such framing could cause. In short and as is discussed in subsequent sections, doing so does in fact detach people, communities and governments from the problem that we claim we are determined to solve. What a controversy!

In an increasingly competitive world where even governments have come to focus more on protecting and promoting trade and accordingly reducing budgets on social spending, these conceptual difficulties would adversely affect policy making and implementation of programs aimed at averting the problem of difficult childhood. If we do not have the responsibility and ownership of the street children problem, we would consequently lack the urge to judiciously deal with it.

Throughout human civilization, however, all communities have participated in the production and reproduction of these social relations through their socio-economic systems. The way we talk affects the way we do things, and the vice-versa is true. This very principle applies to the way we talk and deal with the problem of children living under difficult conditions from family, to community, society, national and even to international levels. It makes the society not have full responsibility over the matter. And although childhood issues are seemingly a world concern, the situation in developing world is quite worrisome. Children there face double oppression from their own complex systems and from companies flocking into the developing world in search of cheap labor; a problem partly attributed to disharmony of labor standards across nations. Due to states’ desire for
increased investment, Miller and Levy allege that “Most extreme forms of child labor are perpetrated by private actors with the acquiescence of public officials.”6

Though with some obscurity, we see the impact of the above analogy occurring at the broad implementation level. For example, despite the fact that most recent development reports show peripheral countries’ progress towards bettering their provision of health and educational services to their children, there are a multitude others that are not even half-way the extent reached by their fellows.7 Reading the accounts carefully one would surmise that the situation in Africa, for example, is still worse than what the reports present. The language of the publications seems to appease the victim countries after decades of continuously accusing them of not performing well in child-related matters.8 Along these lines, it becomes logical to claim that even some reputable international organizations could also be missing the point. They seem to escape the reality: They avoid things like the ever-growing wealth gap between parents and how it affects children’s access to crucial services like health and education, in that regard. Moreover, the warnings they usually give are not critical enough while the picture of efforts they have been painting of African governments’ in promoting child health is quite overstated. They emphasize on the role of private investment and increased primary school enrolments, for instance, but they barely say where the children go to after completing primary school at a tender age. The agencies also overlook the fact that private investment’s contribution to social projects is a small fraction meant to win social support for the investment cause.

Discursively, it then follows that if we call them street children and disown them, then who will be responsible for them? The deficiencies I have discussed above lead to self-alienation of individuals and the society at both national and international levels. The tendency cripples both policy making and implementation, now that we regard ourselves not being part of the problem but are keen to solve it. Quite a controversy!

**African Childhood Stories through Present**

Perhaps the issues regarding difficult childhood and the problems we are experiencing today existed previously in some rather different ways. No society would remain dormant anyway, but a community’s organic development and its determination of its own fate would make it evolve organically and in a situation more beneficial to and manageable by the domestic population. We need, then, to recall our past and its impact on the present conditions. This subsection presents three broad overviews of childhood experiences before, during and after the advent of colonial domination and the possible causal link between them.

**Experiencing pre-colonial childhood in Africa**

Because children do not depend on their own and form an indisputably the core of any society, we are urged to understand the larger framework under which they were housed in pre-colonial Africa. At least one thing stands out in studying pre-colonial African societies: matrilineal tendencies maintain presence in most parts of the continent.9 Not all communities retained this attribute, but most societies did. We are informed of the still-enduring Asante matrilineal tendency in present-day Ghana; we are moreover informed of the same tendencies in most parts of Southern and Eastern Tanzania.10 In fact, even the groupings that favored patrilineal cultures still placed a higher role on mothers in raising children and caring for their homes. Although things have changed over time, this tradition continues today.

On the material basis, matrilineal system guaranteed
children of their protection from hunger and other forms of material insecurity for “relatives on another family were a key resource during times of difficulty...”11 All this contributed to better upbringing despite the high mortality rates that could have existed prior to the societies’ access to modern technology, but life expectancy at birth was similar to that in developing countries.12 Whenever fathers of the children were unable to provide for their families, the mother’s side came in to their rescue. Even after marrying, women themselves secured more protection through the sustained closeness to their families. A woman could run to her brothers and other siblings whenever there were any signs of danger or acts of maltreatment from the husband. In this respect, we can explain the matrilineal tendencies as a survival strategy to mitigate any potential dangers that children could face. The societies emphasized mainly on social values than economic ones.13 This obligation went through to touch even on issues of inheritance: children were entitled to their mother’s lineage and inherit property from that line. In all, in most societies African women assumed a higher role in the past than in present times,14 and this guaranteed them of their own welfare and translated into the welfare of their children.

Because of the situation explained above, not surprising that some societies did not have words to describe situations like orphans and, not to mention street children. Ethnography of the various African societies reveals, for example, that most communities used to offer guardianship to children who had lost their parents.15 Such cases of one losing his or her parent(s) were quite few in number, and the community took a collective responsibility over the children in question. The people there regarded children as a community property and were to be cared for by the entire society, let alone their close relatives in the event that the children lose their parents.

In Islamic West Africa where religious domestication had completed its round and Islam became an integral part of the people’s culture there,16 things also proved way better than they are today. Islam itself and the cultural-religious mix characteristic of the region, worked to the advantage of children and their mothers. Islam is known from its doctrine for elevating women and protecting them and children alike;17 though at whims, human deeds could go contrary to the religious teachings. For those who have been exposed to and consequently know the Holy Quran they would definitely affirm that Islam requires its followers to provide children with security, guidance and maximum care possible. In other words, Islam considers children as spotless beings whose grooming could determine who they would become in the future. The way we raise our children today determines their fate tomorrow.

The child-friendly situation explained above changed abruptly following a sudden-but-steady shift which put most of these societies in the hands of foreign domination. Since people’s autonomy became no more, their traditions were seriously injured, now that they are no longer free to live the way they used to when freedom was in their hands.

The colonial transformations

Colonialism should, of course, be regarded as a damaging experience which altered peoples’ ways of living wherever and whenever it occurred. With the advent of foreign occupation, natives had to work for somebody else rather than for themselves and for the welfare of their society. From colonial occupation to the introduction and implementation of its economic policies, the locals suffered the most and benefitted nothing. Imperial tendencies of the colonizing powers treated the colonized as extras.18 Incidents of hunger, colonial wars, forced labor, forced taxation and labor
migrational ravaged the entire continent from east to west, and north to south. Women and children were part and parcel of all these sufferings. In fact, the sad experience greatly emanating from this transformation continues even after independence: it has nearly become an everyday experience from academia to the least complicated endeavors.¹⁹

Stories of colonial brutality directed toward children are widely documented. During the infamous Tanganyika’s Maji Maji War of resisting the German colonial occupation in 1905-1907, for instance, pregnant women had their stomachs ripped open as part of the colonizer’s war strategy.²⁰ Also, in labor migrant regions and colonies most families were left without men as all men were taken to work in mines and agricultural plantations at distant places not to know when they would return home, if that was to happen at all. Most of the migrant laborers died or were alienated for good from their land and people. Botswana serves as the best example for this type of human suffering in which most of its men went to work in South African goldmines.

The infliction of hunger, public hangings and wars against the colonized were also commonplace. Hearing a story on how German colonial officials and their native allies treated children and women during the Maji Maji war, one would wonder how such things could happen, and most importantly could be committed by people on an evangelizing mission. As a deterrence not to rebel against the imposed administration, the German colonizers forced children to occupy the front row during public hangings of the people who fought against the colonial power during the infamous Maji Maji anti-colonial war of 1905-1907 in German colonial Tanganyika.²¹ As if it was not enough, the colonial wars of occupation employed horrible methods such as burning of native people’s food crops and harvests as a winning strategy. It was all misery from sunrise to sunset, and the whole night. There is no way one can explain this experience as better or civilizing.

However, the above situation was not the end. Taxation, forced cultivation of crops and the general monetization of African economies in their totality – in a way alien to the colonized subjects – also damaged the pre-existing African social relations, including children’s welfare of course, though most historical accounts happen to overlook this. In order to establish absolute control, this destruction aimed primarily at clearing of African economies and their general ways of living, and thereafter establishing alien sociopolitical structures be them culturally European or the ones the colonizer favored most.²² But it is usually forgotten that those structures are composed of people and are instituted to cater for the needs of the people, including children. Mothers could not stay at home to look after their children; children were thus denied of their right to parental care and guidance. It is worth noting that most African societies by then had their own ways to educate themselves, especially by passing on parental experiences to children.²³ So, the colonial system also denied African children of their right to education. However less is spoken about this – a socio-historical gap we would rather call to scholarly attention.

This inhuman experience that the society and children had experienced during colonialism translated into who they were to become after attaining independence.²⁴ After all, even the independence we are jovial about was determined by the colonial powers and administrators themselves; and these now-grown embattled children had to continue following orders. This later claim applies mostly to countries like Ghana, Tanganyika and the like which received independence almost ‘peacefully’.²⁵ Since then, colonial subjects, especially Africans, have always been treated like perpetual teenagers by indirectly being given orders from the former
colonizer and its allies for them to follow. Until today, the relationship between the former colonizer and the former colonized was and still is like a thief sympathizing with the victim he or she has stolen an item from. It all derives from this crippled childhood experience and its everlasting mental impact that we tend to ignore; deliberately overlooking them and now suffering the never-ending irreparable damages.

Childhood in independent Africa

The abrupt but systematic shift from the peoples’ original ways of life and thinking to the colonial one that dominates until present has resulted into detriments which are here to stay. This analogy remains true despite the widespread claims that colonialism is not to blame for everything happening in Africa today. Of course, Africans have their own share in the problems, but the corrupt-mindedness, the dependency syndrome and many other problems we are facing today do largely emanate from this over-half-a-century experience of foreign domination. It produces children already condemned to poverty due to the situation in which they were conceived and will be living in.

In fact, in most African countries the plight of street children increases year after another. While the problem escalates, the policies and implementation regress. There is a sharp mismatch between the two. It seems to be the case that less is done at the grassroots level, or that governments are overwhelmed by budgetary constraints and high fertility rates. Consequently, the number of school-aged children currently in school has been diminishing significantly. Despite doubling net enrollment of school-age children in public schools for example, Uganda’s 1997 Universal Primary Education (UPE) Program, initially prescribed that only four children from one family could enroll at once. After six years of implementation, the policy changed and allowed all children of school age to enroll in school despite the number of such children a family could register.

As a result, this situation leads to a few interventionist policies to address the situation. Despite the inadequate number of such strategies, most policies – like those claiming to provide free education – happen to be short-lived, fail to deliver empirically, and due to many hidden charges they result in high rates of school dropouts. On the Uganda case again, Bashaasha, Magheni and Nkoya report a 55% school dropout rates, for instance. Had there been the commitment to honest dealings in regard to children’s welfare at all levels, contemporary Africa would not be in its current mess.

Saying that nothing is being done will be not only damaging, but also unfair; but most of it is not done in the right way. Most of the intervention techniques are not well thought of: it has become to be the case that governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations pay more attention to donors than to local conditions. They preach the importance of using participatory approaches in social and development endeavors and assessing the needs of a particular community but they themselves do things differently. This mismatch has been there all around and exists everywhere, except that in countries less corrupted by colonialism sound policies and better implementation are at least in place.

From the early 1960s when most African countries attained independence until present, the burden of raising unhealthy children has been escalating. The situation was quite better a few years after independence until late 1970s after which, due to successive world economic malperformances, most underdeveloped countries had their immature economies almost collapsed. The countries could no longer continue with their broad welfare policies which ensured free provision of social services,
including education, health and clean water.\textsuperscript{31} The countries could not help it. The situation continued to worsen until late 1980s when, after the collapse of the USSR and the triumphing of Western powers, African countries surrendered to conditions that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had put forth for them to secure loans and any sort of economic assistance from the West.

The countries, YES, secured the loans from these institutions but have never been able to sufficiently address the situation, especially the ones pertaining to their peoples’ welfare. Foreign assistance has distanced the governments in many \textit{third world} countries from the people they are supposed to serve. Since then and until today social spending has significantly reduced, and has negatively impacted the social service provision. Women and children – the ones who are structurally less vocal – suffer the most. In general, this remains the biggest problem to-date, and surprisingly neither governments nor the donors would come out right to say the truth that the best investment a country could make is investing in people,\textsuperscript{32} for labor innovations and critical mindedness would always come from them.

Most population control programs are currently defunct or not given the emphasis they deserve, for instance. We do not hear much of family planning and related sensitization campaigns nowadays as it used to be in the early 1990s. Also, the intermittent universalization of primary education in some African countries is but more of a political game aimed at winning majority votes. It is more of selling of our own people for individual benefits. We do not also know what plans are in place to empower these primary school graduates since most of them would not have attained the working age if they happen not to continue with secondary education. These impeded policy making approaches result in some more damaging consequences than we might think.

The existing social disconnect has to be bridged.

\textbf{Implications and way forward}

Much has happened in contemporary Africa since the countries started embracing the socially unfriendly policies. Massive retrenchments of workers went hand in hand with budget cuts in education and health; and children as a special group suffer the most. While income is reducing and unemployment in increasing, the cost of living has more than doubled. In fact a randomly or unplanned marketization works to the disadvantage of the African countries’ majorities and affects children a great deal since their voice is not loud enough to be heard. Thus, ensuring the good of their parents does significantly translate into the general welfare and upbringing of the children.

For development depends immensely on a country’s healthy and well educated populace,\textsuperscript{33} we would then repeat a popular call for African governments ‘to bring the social back’ if they ever want to develop. But it is until we change our mindset about how we perceive development and the ever-increasing child insecurity in most African countries that these people-centered policies will be mended and implemented. Investing in human capital will guarantee children of some better childhood security and a bright future that would enable them to contribute to their national development during their adulthood. Considering the ever-increasing wealth gap between the \textit{haves} and \textit{have nots}, a return of greater role by the state to provide for its citizens is much needed to save our children from the hostile world if they get there unprepared.

On bidding farewell upon our eight-week service at a center for \textit{street children} in Dar Es Salaam– Child in the Sun (CIS) – one social worker reminded us of a collective responsibility towards the creation and
saving the lives of vulnerable children. He asked, “Street children in [...] whose responsibility?”, and on my mind the question remains unanswered to-date. The need to re-attach ourselves back to our children is an absolute necessity. After all, there is no single adult who hasn’t passed through childhood.

Conclusion

This essay has briefly narrated the different childhood experiences in the African continent from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Of the claims it makes includes the deduction that child rearing and childhood experiences in general were better before the alien invasion, and that the advent of colonialism serves as a turning point for the deterioration of the African social conditions from which point life has become miserable. African children were not saved from the humiliation suffered during that time, and whose effects continue until today. This horrible experience has impacted on the way we think, talk and act on addressing children’s issues today: I have made a claim that while the society seems to have detached itself from the problem at hand as if the problem is not a product of its deeds, we hypocritically claim as trying to address it. It is this improper approach that leads to bad policies and implementation. I have warned, moreover, that with this behavior of disowning the problem, we show no real commitment to solve the problem, and no tangible outcome should be expected thenceforth.

NOTES

(Endnotes)


3. It started as Structural Adjustment Program (SAPs) and has now changed to national fiscal policies under the Washington Consensus.

4 Idea adopted from Mr. Yusuf Makamba, the then Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner in Dar es Salaam city, Tanzania.


6. Ibid, 668.


8 Ibid


12. Anthony G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West


17. See verses 233 of sura 2, and 6 of sura 65 in the Holy Quran on protecting lactating mothers.


25. Otherwise known as ‘Silver Platter Independence’.


29. Ibid.


31. Generally, all these policies took place under the auspices of the policy identified as developmentalism as it spread across the African continent immediately after independence.


33. Ibid.