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Special Issue on
Parents' Involvement in Children's Lives in Africa

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Contents / Sommaire
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Introduction: Parents' Involvement in Children's Lives in Africa

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A common phrase used when talking about child socialisation in Africa is that 'it takes a village to raise a child'. This phrase emanates from a context where a child is part of a larger network of people that extends beyond the nuclear and extended families to include members of the child's community. Such networks are possible in a relatively cohesive society found in rural communities where residential patterns are stable, local resources shared, and common descent claimed. These communities share a common language and social and ethical norms that govern daily interactions and practices. Needless to say, people in such communities know each other well. My own childhood memories of growing up in the early 1970s in a small rural community in Eastern Kenya are of my parents and grandparents being keenly interested and involved in my peers' school attendance and even reprimanding them for sneaking out of school to go to the local shopping centre during school hours. This attention was not only supported but also encouraged by the parents and relatives of those children, making it possible for an adult (not related to the child) to reprimand him/her when in the wrong and then report the incident to the child's parents who would in turn punish their child. I am sure this social practice is not limited to African societies but can be found in other societies where survival of a community is strongly dependent on, among other things, the role played by each member and private property ownership is not a highly developed phenomenon. Such a social arrangement would also thrive in a community with a worldview that embraces a collectivist, as opposed to an individualist, approach to life where one's individual aspirations are often suppressed for the sake of the goals of the larger community.

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With increased socioeconomic and political changes cutting across the continent as well as the increased urbanization of many of its countries, however, the socialisation of many children in Africa can no longer be undertaken in the same way that is expected to happen in the context of this proverbial village. African families and communities, just as it is in other societies, are constantly changing and readjusting to new ways of organizing social life in response to changes brought by local, regional, and global processes. Many of these changes have been as a result of national policies geared towards economic and socio-political development. Some of these development strategies have emphasized urban growth at the expense of agriculture and rural development leading to increased urbanization in Africa (Hope 1998) that has, to a great extent, been the catalyst for socio-cultural changes observable in the continent today. Improved health care and access to medication in many countries have also led to steady growth in population while higher levels of education and changing family structures have all shaped contemporary social relations in Africa. More and more Africans are moving to urban areas and more and more national policies are being defined by leaders whose experiences have been oriented by urban contexts. Now the question we ought to ask is 'what happens to the child when the village moves to or becomes the city'? For the most part cities, with their characteristic social patterns that promote individualistic, anonymous, and competitive patterns of living, are not conducive to any socialisation that allows for the full participation of community members in the private affairs of others. If anything cities can be important sites for challenging received normative principles regarding child socialisation. With continued correspondence and exchange between urban and rural areas, these challenges to social norms soon become societal and national practices. People become less and less wedded to the ideals of the small community (village) and prefer to have limited oversight from the community over their own individual lives.

Why this Special Issue?

This Special Issue of *Africa Development* brings together scholarship that speaks to the multifaceted roles played by parents in the lives of their children within the overall socialisation process specifically informed by these changing African realities. Cognizant of the fact that the raising of children and the position they occupy in society are to a great degree shaped by the relationships they have or do not have with parents, the papers in this volume have provided diverse examples of how parents' involvement or lack thereof in the lives of their children has been shaped by many factors. These scholars show that issues such as the changing social arrangements that have led to children having to choose between local economic activities or attend school,

youth and their parents trying to find a common ground through which to discuss matters of dating and sexuality, the motivation of children to attend and persist in school from observing their own parents enrol in adult literacy classes, and the reconfiguration of the traditional family make up when children independently sustain functional households, among others, all tell us a little more about child socialisation and help us understand not only the changing nature of African family relations but also its persistence and adaptability.

One major factor affecting parents' involvement in their children's lives is the reconfiguration of livelihood practices brought by modern economies and formal education. Now more than ever before, many parents are compelled to expend more time at work and away from home leaving them with few opportunities to spend meaningful time with their children. For many middle class families, for instance, work demands and lifestyle changes have led to childcare being relegated to house help, maids, or nannies, who not only attend to social and physical needs of children of their employers but also their educational ones including assistance with homework. In other cases, numerous children, who for various reasons have no parents immediately present in their lives, end up fending for themselves or are raised by non-filial caregivers. Many children also have access to information about modern life in ways that are not effectively controlled by their parents or the state. New technologies that have allowed for easier and wide access to cell phones, the Internet, FM radio, and cable television, have in some cases undermined the traditional roles parents and other adults in society play as sources of valuable information for individual and community survival and well-being. Critical life experiences gained by virtue of having lived longer than the youth are no longer what many communities call upon to solve their modern economic, social and political challenges.

These social changes have led to many studies of African families; seeing them as going through crises (Holborn and Eddy 2011; Ocholla-Ayayo 2000; Osirim 2003; and Weisner et al., 1997). Moreover, due to migrant labour, different economic and social arrangements, and changing structures of the family, other scholars have tried to explain the causes of the negative outcomes assumed to be emanating from contemporary family configurations in Africa. Questions such as why are there street children in urban areas, why are single parent families and divorce on the rise; why are more and more children using illicit drugs and engaging in premarital sex with multiple partners; and why are youth getting recruited into wars, have all led to different research questions and explanations. Recurrent themes such as women as household heads and the challenges their children face have been prevalent in many studies (Kossoudji and Mueller 1983; Kennedy

and Haddad 1994; and Monasch and Boerma 2004). Other scholars have argued that children whose fathers are absent from the households they grow up in tend to receive little or no support from their fathers (Richter 2004). Research by Madhavan, Townsend, and Garey (2005) carried out in Mpumulanga, South Africa, challenges this assumption, showing that children's co-residence with their fathers is neither an accurate nor a sufficient indicator of paternal financial support, that children are as likely to receive financial support from fathers who are not even members of the same household as from fathers with whom they are co-resident, and, that children who receive support from their fathers for any part of their lives are likely to receive support consistently throughout their lives. This kind of research that emphasizes social interactions or material transfers between households is important in expanding on what we know about parents' involvement in the lives of their children as well as in opening up opportunities to see such relations through a prism informed by African social realities rather than by assumed universal trends.

Challenging Common Assumptions about Child Socialisation

Contributions to this Special Issue offer theoretical perspectives and empirical insights (mostly based on field or survey research) that not only seek to respond to the challenges posed by new socioeconomic trends on the socialisation process but also look into the lives of children and youth in ways that open up their worlds and engage in issues that are not commonly expressed in scholarship about African youth and children. Cognizant of the fact that much research and scholarship on parents' role in the socialisation of children and youth in Africa have often tended to be shaped by values and interests emanating outside of the communities that are the focus of such scholarship, some of the contributions here provide research evidence that challenges such approaches. In her work on children heading households in the coastal region of Kenya, for instance, Bernadette Muyomi shows how these children lead autonomous lives that are stable and functional and that whenever they face challenges it is not due to their being children but because of hurdles set up by a system that only recognizes households headed by adults. She does this without minimizing the psycho-social challenges these children face. Moreover, work by Makusha, Richter, and Bhana challenges the assumption posited by many scholars about the key role played by resident fathers in their children's socialisation and wellbeing. Their research shows that not only is residency in a household not a good predictor of positive and extended financial and emotional support a father provides his children but also that in households where fathers are absent, other males are selected to take up a father figure role. They also show the need to expand on existing

methodological practices that have predominantly shaped studies of support provided to children by their fathers. Makusha, Richter, and Bhana argue for the value of gathering information from children, fathers, mothers, and other community members familiar with the child's support systems in order to understand a father's support of his children. Using such an approach themselves these scholars were able to establish that informal, local systems of family support exist that are used by men to support their children and that these support systems are often inaccessible to researchers who do not gather information from the affected fathers.

It is research such as this that allows us to see that while Western notions of childhood and the roles parents play or ought to play in the socialisation process have directly or indirectly shaped the way we think and write about childhood in Africa, African scholars have to continue to challenge these approaches through research that reframes these notions of childhood. Understanding such issues as child-parent relations, parenting styles, participation in paid or unpaid work, and certain definitions of childhood, within an African-centred and non-universalizing perspective will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the many socio-cultural practices associated with childhood in Africa today. If anything as has already been shown through anthropological research in Africa, scholars have to be cautious when trying to transpose cultural practices observed in other cultures onto African societies without carrying out in-depth studies of those African cultures themselves. Robert Levine's study of Gusii mothers of Kenya, for instance, shows that mothers speak to their infants mostly in commands and threats rather than in praises and interrogatives that have often been assumed (by most Western psychologists) to be important tools for raising emotionally stable children. These Gusii children grow up emotionally stable and become successful members of their communities just like their counterparts who are socialized in the 'normal' way (Levine 2004). Work among the Kpelle in Liberia and the Hadza in Tanzania have also challenged ideas about the assumed need for a prolonged period of socialisation deemed necessary for allowing children to acquire skills needed for basic survival. In the case of the Kpelle, Lancy's (1996) work shows that children require a very small inventory of skills to learn such chores as fetching water, pounding rice, caring for children, and washing clothes. Among the Hadza, Blurton-Jones, Hawkes, and O'Connell (1997) show that it does not take a long time for children to learn the skills necessary for foraging. Needles to say, African social practices cannot be fully understood if pursued through a set of tools developed for other societies. Even when it comes to studying practices such as Western education that has become a common presence in the lives of many Africans, the same kind of caution prevails.

Challenges Facing Parents in their Relations with Children

In many parts of Africa, Western-style schooling has continued to exert a powerful influence on the socialisation of children in ways that have far-reaching effects than the role played by parents. The school has now absorbed social norms and expectations that were once entirely part of parent-child socialisation experiences at the household level. Children now spend more time interacting with the school system than they do with their parents. Due to pressure to perform well in standardized tests, more and more students are spending even the time allocated for school breaks in school or in other instructional-related institutions of learning undergoing coaching and preparations to pass standardized national examinations. Even traditional peer and age-group systems that were utilized for inculcating values in children have been replaced by the school system, not to mention the learning or lack thereof that is mediated through such gadgets of modern technology as television, the Internet and cell phones. All these practices and avenues for providing information to children and youth continue to challenge and minimize the role played by parents in their children's socialisation. Moreover many children in Africa today return from school to an empty home because a parent or parents are away for different reasons. Such children spend long periods of time at home with little or no parental supervision. In situations where both parents are deceased or absent for all manner of reasons, these children take on the role of raising themselves and/or their siblings. Some of the papers in this volume have addressed this phenomenon and its negative effects on children's emotional, social, and economic wellbeing (see, for instance papers by Mildred Ekot, Paul Wabike, and Bernadette Muyomi). But there are other emerging issues regarding parents' involvement in their children's lives including challenges to assumed gender roles and social organisation.

As many African communities respond to and embrace various socio-cultural and economic changes affecting their societies, the idea that the care and teaching of young children is 'women's work' is no longer valid. Granted, women bear the bulk of childcare in most African societies but the number of fathers participating in the care of their children is growing and being encouraged as a result of personal preference, work arrangements, or egalitarian philosophies. More and more men are getting directly involved in the socialisation of their children and helping their wives with house work. Henry Kah's paper on urban residents in Cameroon in this volume as well as the work of African Fathers Initiative based in Zimbabwe (www.africanfathers.org) present a slice of these changing social and gender roles and identities of some men in mostly urban Africa. I have also mentioned that data regarding men's absence from their children's lives and the effects

that it has on children's social, emotional, and economic wellbeing, cannot be assumed to be universal but that even assumptions about residency for fathers in households and the effects it has on their children cannot go unchallenged. These studies will further expand our analysis and even our understanding of African households as well as men's roles in the socialisation and care-giving of their children. Admittedly, there is still a long way to go in this field of research but indications are that it is ripe for serious attention.

Studies of parents' relationships with children in Africa have not generated enough literature to form a corpus of scholarship that can be identified as a distinct area of study. Indeed, the few studies available on this topic are mainly focused on fatherhood and have mostly come out of Southern Africa (see, for instance, Madhavan et al., 2008 and Richter and Morrell 2006). Even studies of motherhood also focus on the biological function of giving birth than on the actual caring of a child (see, for instance, Keller et al., 1999 and Ringsted 2007). Alma Gottlieb's (2004) study of Beng infancy in Ivory Coast is an exception, outlining the specific activities that mothers carry out with their children during those early years when children are entirely dependent on their mothers for care. Indeed, Gottlieb discusses her own frustration with the US culture of child care where children are separated from parents for most of the time and shares her experience of using child rearing practices she learned from the Beng, such as carrying the baby for most of the time even when the mother is working, which she notes helped her crying son calm down significantly. When other studies talk of fatherhood, they primarily focus on the biological siring of children and the emergent reproductive health issues than on the socio-cultural relations fathers have with their child at the individual level (see, for instance, Bankole et al., 2004 and Magnani et al., 1995).

The bulk of the work on parents' relations to children in Africa has generally focused on families, going back more than four decades ago with the work of anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists. Today, as it was in the past, studies of African family structures have as much been a reflection of the prevailing perceptions of Africa and the family as they have been reflections of the social realities attendant in the populations studied. Assumptions about a better and more stable past, for instance, have led scholars and their interlocutors to bemoan the loss of the 'good old days' of the traditional African family where things were much better than they are today. Such studies have highlighted crises and challenges rather than adaptability and resilience in African families. In their edited volume titled *African Families and the Crisis of Social Change*, Weisner, Bradley, and Kilbride (1997: xxii) acknowledge that the crisis affecting the family is reflected in other areas of society such as the economy, ecology, politics, and development but that the threat to the stable African family is real.

A more recent work seeking to move beyond this focus on crisis is the volume edited by Oheneba-Sakyi and Takyi, which shows that African families have had to make rapid adjustments in both structure and function to respond to 'increasing modernization, rising levels of urbanization and migration, as well as widespread strains hastened by economic restructuring and the HIV/AIDS pandemic' (2006: viii). They, however, note that the survival of the traditional African family as we know it is also greatly threatened. These kinds of adjustments to social and economic changes that contemporary African families have to make are nothing new in Africa, as shown by the work of Beatrice Whiting. In her study of Ngecha village in Kenya, Whiting notes that contemporary Kikuyu mothers value both traditional social behaviour (obedience, respect for elders, generosity, and good-heartedness) and modern social behaviour (cleverness, confidence, inquisitiveness, and boldness) and that these mothers are expecting their children to be able to adjust to new social contexts without losing valuable traits from their mothers' traditions (1966: 29-30). Such an approach that recognizes continuity and adjustment is a much more fruitful approach to understanding African families as well as parents' roles in socializing their children than one that seeks to draw lines between stable traditional families and modern ones in crisis.

Generally, the roles played by parents of either gender in any family or community are a result of socio-cultural expectations, personal preference, as well contextual factors such as income, occupation, and family size. Among the Kokwet of Western Kenya, for instance, childcare is the prerogative of mothers and other females in the household because 'Kokwet fathers conceptualize their roles as fathers first and foremost in economic terms' (Harkness and Super 1992: 203). These fathers emphasize such values as ability to follow instructions, going to school and listening to teachers, obeying their fathers, and coming home straight from school to help with chores as the markers of good children. The mark of a good father entails paying school fees for his children, providing economically for the family, and disciplining his children. This study reflects social realities in many other parts of Africa where gender-based social roles of parenting are still very much preferred even in increasingly changing social dynamics that tend to favour nuclear families especially in urban areas. In Nigeria, research by Olawoye et al., (2004: 10) shows that:

> Male children are actually shown by direct instruction and devolution of authority and responsibilities, how to act, think, and behave as a man. Women provide the theoretical instruction while men provide the practical example by their behaviour in the home and community.

In Cameroon, child care is not necessarily the work of mothers especially in families or households with multiple children of different ages. As Nsamenang (2001: 1) notes

> The traditional childcare role of the Cameroonian father is nonspecific and not routinized, whereas the mother's is to keep the home, perform other domestic tasks, and more importantly, to oversee and supervise sibling caregiving rather than provide direct childcare herself.

It is in this context of care giving by siblings and children imitating their parents that much socialisation takes place in many African households and communities.

In cases where work obligations separate one or both parents from their primary household, the socialisation of children tends to be either negatively or positively affected. Hunter's (2004) work, for instance, investigates the gap between physical paternity and social paternity and the role of Zulu fathers, pointing out that men's power in certain spheres, such as the abandonment of women they have impregnated, is linked to men's disempowerment in other spheres, notably economic. Hunter continues to note that men are enormously frustrated at being able to father children physically but unable to accept the social role that being a father entails because of inability to pay 'inhlawulo', 'ilobolo', and acting as a provider. This study clearly shows the close link between fatherhood and economic power and responsibility and how men without stable economic lives are often considered less 'manly'. This leads to 'ambiguous fatherhood', a situation in which manliness is partly boosted by being able to father children and yet depriving men of the role associated with fatherhood. It is not surprising that even South African law clearly identifies fatherhood in terms of economic provision than care giving (UN 2001).

Other works such as a book that grew out of a Fatherhood Project initiated in 2003 by the Child, Youth and Family Development Project at the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, (Richter and Morrell 2006) explore fatherhood more deeply, looking beyond the sheer biological aspect of being a father and into the complexities that shape fatherhood in different socioeconomic contexts. Contributors to this edited volume address numerous topics including historical perspectives on fatherhood, media and representation, the realities and challenges of being a father in contemporary South Africa, and local and international policies and programmes shaping and being shaped by fatherhood. In their introduction to the volume Richter and Morrell rightly note that, 'fatherhood is a social role. The importance of this role fluctuates over time and the context of the role shifts' (2006: 1). They also argue that fatherhood was put on the spotlight through such popular media avenues as the *BL!NK* Magazine that was launched in the

2000s in South Africa targeting upscale black men as well as the case of Lawrie Fraser who took his ex-partner to court for seeking to give up their son for adoption even though they were not married. Such sites that seek to construct non-traditional roles of fatherhood are showcasing some of the processes of change facing many contemporary African communities as they adapt to changing social contexts. Papers in this current Special Issue are in a sense providing further examples of these changing social contexts and how they affect cultural practices relating to socializing children and youth in contemporary Africa.

Contributions to this Special Issue

Contributions to this volume represent a small part of papers prepared for a special theme on the role of parents in the socialisation of children, as part of CODESRIA's Child and Youth Studies Programme. The call for papers encouraged submissions that focussed on three sub-themes: education, children who spend substantial amounts of time unsupervised (often referred to as latchkey children), and men in children's lives. Surprisingly, there were very few abstract submissions whose research focused on the everyday relations that parents have with their children, the kind of relations that require extended research and a cultivation of intimate relationships between researchers and research participants. As an anthropologist, I have come to admire and value this kind of research that is anchored in ethnography because it allows the researcher's conclusions to be informed by very specific on-the-ground practices and sensibilities that capture the pulse of a community or society. Luckily, in this volume, we have a number of researchers whose contributions have either been informed by a long-standing association with the data presented here through repeated research on the same topic in the same location or by a close personal relationship with the subject matter. All the eleven papers included here fall under three general categories reflecting the sub-themes suggested in the call for submissions mentioned earlier. These categories include, parents' involvement in their children's education including matters of sexuality (Agunbiade, Kunnuji, Anyikwa and Obidike, Amenyah, and Loomis and Akkari), men in children's lives (Kah, Thupayagale-Tshweagae, Mgutshini and Nkosi, and Makusha, Richter and Bhana), and children with little or no adult supervision for long periods of time (Ekot, Wabike, and Muyomi). I now highlight each of these contributions here below.

Parents' Involvement in their Children's Education
Ojo Melvin Agunbiade's research on dating relationships among adolescents in Nigeria and their parent's awareness of such activities provides an

interesting prism through which one can view changing relations between parents and their children, especially in an urban context. Agunbiade's study shows adolescents in the study straddling two competing spheres, one in which they want to maintain a close and open relationship with their parents, and another in which they consider such matters as sexual behaviour as private and outside of their parents' purview. These adolescents are constantly being confronted with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed dilemmas that force them to negotiate boundaries between privacy and disclosure. Findings from the study show that gender and age were dominant factors in the disclosure and dating patterns of the adolescents with more females than males involved in dating, while older adolescents (aged 17–19) disclosing more about their dating relationships to peers than those between 14 and 16 years of age. The study further shows that when parents became suspicious of their children's dating activities, the children in turn distorted any information shared with their parents in an attempt to remain discreet in their activities as well as to maintain positive relations with their parents.

In a paper focusing on a similar topic, Michael Kunnuji explores the issue of parent-child communication on sexuality-related matters in Lagos, Nigeria, highlighting questions of gender differentials in parents' involvement in parent-child communication and in young people's involvement in parent-child communication. Using data from a survey of 1,120 youth in the city of Lagos, the study shows that mothers are more involved in discussing sexuality-related matters with their children than fathers, and where fathers are involved alone or in conjunction with mothers, the child is likely to be male. The study also shows that while parent-child communication may not prevent or reduce sexual activities among young people, it does not increase it either, but is significantly related to safe sex practices in the study population. In Both Ogunbiade and Kunnuji's work, we see sexuality as an area of interaction between parents and youth currently enrolled in a formal education system but who are not necessarily dealing with their sexuality from a specific educational perspective although the interaction is nonetheless educational.

Anyikwa and Obidike's paper titled 'Parental Involvement: How Mothers Construct their Roles in the Literacy Education of their Children' is an invitation to the reader to consider the 'hidden' role played by middle-class mothers in their children's literacy education. Using data from interviews and observations focused on ten mothers involved in their children's literacy education, the authors show invisible strategies that these mothers use as 'intellectual resources' in their children's literacy education. The findings show that traditional understandings of parental involvement may overlook

ways that middle-income parents deliberately involve themselves in their children's education, including high expectations of their children being successful in the future, monitoring what their children do in and outside of school, asking their children to complete their homework then grade and correct it, and providing distinct learning experiences such as pronunciation, spelling and meaning of words and sentences for their children in reading and writing. In a related study, Efua Amenyah's work in Togo on parents' engagement in adult literacy classes and their children's retention and performance in school, shows some of the ways in which parents can provide positive role modelling when they are themselves committed to schooling. In the study that gathered data from 132 adult learners and 20 volunteer teachers from ten different adult literacy classes in Togo, Amenyah shows that adults who are engaged in learning, and who perform and persevere while attending literacy classes, provide non-material incentives for their children's own education, constantly encouraging them to learn in order to perform better in school. The more their children see them committed to staying in school, the more motivated they are to persevere.

Still on the topic of parents' involvement in their children's education process, Colleen Loomis and Abdeljalil Akkari's paper on early childhood education in Madagascar addresses the challenges of taking parents' willingness to support their children's education and mobilizing it into participation in school activities and programmes. The paper focuses on parents' participation in early childhood education in Madagascar by placing it within an existing complex context of poverty, former colonialism, contemporary political instability, and international cooperation. Using data gathered in Anatanarivo, Sakaraha, Toliera, and Betioky, the authors show that there exists suspicion between the state and parents in general and that unless the school starts to affirm the value that parents bring to the school in enhancing early childhood education, children's learning will be negatively affected. There is also a need to go beyond the school and create opportunities for other actors in the education system (teachers, administrators, NGOs, and the government) to meaningfully value and engage parents' resources and create new ways for parent participation in the extractive model of schooling that is in place. Such a collaborative approach in early childhood education will be enhanced and advanced.

Men in Children's Lives

Henry Kam Kah's study of the changing nature of child care practices among urban Cameroonians shows how two parent families that have both the mother and father in economic activities that take up much of their time and keep them away from their home have led to a situation he regards as

'husbands stepping into their wives' shoes. As Kah argues, childcare has for a long time been the near exclusive responsibility of women and female house mates in Cameroon and other parts of Africa, but contemporary urban challenges have forced many of these women and house mates to engage in activities that limit their ability to fully devote time to child care. There is also a growing change in social attitudes among males that has led to a blurring of traditional gender roles, and as a result, some aspects of children's care have devolved to husbands or fathers. Kah's research challenges existing orthodoxies regarding gender roles by explaining new developments in childcare by fathers among urban residents in Cameroon, highlighting key factors that explain the increasing role men are playing in the caring of their children and the implications such practices have not only for household development but also for the society as a whole.

A substantial body of research has consistently concluded that children growing up with absentee fathers are at an increased risk of maladjustment, and co-parenting has an added benefit of modelling dyadic skills that include proving mutual emotional support, influence, and amicable resolution of disputes. Working from this position Gloria Thupayagale-Tshweneagae, Tennyson Mgutshini, and Zethu Zerish Nkosi in their paper titled 'Where is my Daddy? An Exploration of the Impact of Absentee Fathers on the Lives of Young People in Botswana', argue that co-parenting can have both direct and indirect or mediated effects on children. Through qualitative data obtained in 2009 from 45 final year students at the University of Botswana and a specific focus on personhood, the authors conclude that youth raised in father-absent families view their personhood as inferior, less guarded, and incomplete, relative to that of their counterparts who were born and raised in married-couple families. The paper concludes that living a full quality life eludes youth who were raised by mothers only, affirming the importance of fathers in the personhood of any individual.

In their paper titled 'Children's experiences of support they receive from men in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty in rural KwaZulu-Natal as reported by men, women and children', Tawanda Makusha, Linda Richter and Deevia Bhana challenge studies of fathers' involvement in their children's support that tend to collect data through men's self-reports, women's appraisals, or children's accounts of men's involvement by using data from reports by children, women, and men. Using in-depth interviews conducted with twenty focal children, twenty female caregivers and sixteen fathers/ father-figures nominated by the children in twenty randomly selected households in KwaZulu-Natal, they established that while men are important in children's lives, it was not mandatory that those men be related to the

children in order to offer the kind of support children needed. These findings show the value of having males present in the lives of children, but challenge any assumptions that those men ought to be the children's fathers.

Children with Little or No Adult Supervision

In her research on children in low-income families in Uyo, Nigeria, Mildred Ekot addresses the various strategies used by parents of these (latchkey) children to help them deal with periods of unsupervised care. Her findings reveal that latchkey arrangements are common in the area, and include hiding the house key at the backyard or other places for children to gain entrance to the house after school, dropping the key in a neighbour's house or shop, opening the house door through a window, or giving duplicate keys to their children to take to school. Some of the respondents also reported that their children, though home alone after school, are closely monitored by neighbours and other relatives, while others reported having children remain home alone without any form of supervision until either parent returned home, before proceeding to hawk, or monitored by older siblings. While many studies address latchkey experiences in negative terms, Ekot's study presents some positive effects of latchkey experiences, including the children learning to be independent and responsible and of self reliance and competence in household chores, especially for girls.

In contexts where parents are too busy to be with their children at home as needed, other social arrangements emerge where local economic activities are more amenable for children than the promises offered by formal schooling, as Paul Wabike's paper argues. Focusing on parental involvement in their children's lives among fishing communities in Tanzania, Wabike shows that children in the fishing villages are faced with clear social dilemmas that mitigate any desire to spend time in school: the father fishes the whole night and sleeps during the day while the mother sleeps during the night and sells fish in one of the local markets or works on the land during the day. This cycle of activities often knows no weekends or public holidays and allows little room for contact between parents/guardians and children. As a result, many of these children are forced morally and emotionally to raise themselves or/and attach themselves to any other available authority. Often, these children do not attend any formal schooling which leads them to be labelled *watoro* (absent from school) or rebels. The reality of their lives is that while the formal education system demands that children of school-going age be at school, the fishing community's social organisation and labour market follows different patterns that do not really allow for optimal presence of parents to raise their children. Moreover, with few jobs available for school graduates, these children see no immediate value in formal education.

Bernadette Muyomi's paper that explores the psycho-social dynamics present in child-headed households on the Kenyan coast completes this batch of papers. The children she studied have either lost their parents, their parents are unable to be with the children for criminal offences they have committed or precipitated by other situations in the lives of their parents that force children to take up social roles that are usually reserved for adults. While children have rights just like adults, their well-being is compromised without parents' involvement in their lives because of missing parental obligations and interventions. Children in child-headed households are forced to handle responsibilities that are not appropriate for their developmental age, often denying them a sense of childhood comfort and burdening them emotionally, socially and psychologically. Such children end up with numerous psychosocial challenges, including low self esteem, early marriages, exposure to child labour, prostitution, trafficking and social exclusion among others. And yet, as the paper shows, the inevitability of child-headed households due to many socioeconomic and political factors has led these children to lead very independent lives that in a way challenges received wisdom about family structure and organization in Africa.

Concluding Remarks

These papers are a good start to an important journey into research on parents' involvement in their children's lives beyond the provision of basic needs for survival. With the breakdown of culturally-sanctioned institutions that inculcate important social and cultural values in children and youth as well as the diminished role of the nation-state as a legitimate agent for socializing youth (Diouf 2003), parents have a critical role to play in the lives of these important members of society. Despite the increased role that technology may play in the lives of children and youth in Africa and the possibility that such a role may compete with the one played by parents in socialization, the foundations for the positive social citizenry that children and youth receive from parents and other committed care givers is unparalleled. Social scientists have all along identified the family as an important social unit where cultural and economic reproduction is nurtured and contributions to this Special Issue point to some of these roles played by parents in different countries. Whether it is in the realm of education where parents follow keenly the progress and practices of their children in school, the struggles and determination for parents and their youth to engage in a healthy discussion on sexuality, or the challenges of maintaining one's work demands while attending to the needs of one's children, scholars are here showing the importance of a sustained presence of parents in the lives of their children to offer guidance and support as they both navigate a world that is always changing.

For scholarship to faithfully capture this dynamic of contemporary Africa, our researchers have to have their ears to the ground, constantly aware of the value of sustained research in their ears and topic in order to produce a deep understanding of the dynamics of the research issue. In order to compete with the demands placed on the lives of children and youth in Africa today and capture clearly their cultural and political ramifications, our research has to go beyond fly-by-night or dive-by data collection practices that cannot provide tangible interpretations of the complex lives of children and youth in Africa today. Scholars have to invest heavily in the work of truly understanding children and youth and providing interpretations and representations that address deeper questions that can reveal trends, project possible trajectories of practices, and anticipate outcomes. For starters, scholars have to do more listening to children and youth, do more reflection on the role their own subject position as researchers plays in shaping their research, and spend more time thinking about how their work can best represent the desires and realities of the populations they study.

Since most of us live and work in contexts where the lives and aspirations of children and youth are greatly represented every day, we may be able to circumvent the challenges of limited resources for research by focusing our inquiry on areas we have easy and sustained access to by virtue of our roles and obligations. Schools, religious institutions, families, and other social institutions where the lives of children and youth are played out regularly are good places to start such a research endeavour. Such an arrangement may open up doors for long-term research as well as deeper studies on one phenomenon in ways that surveys and questionnaires may not capture.

Research topics that will continue to need some focus in the coming years will be those that seek to understand relationships between children and youth on the one hand and parents, guardians, and other care givers on the other, in such contexts as the home, school, work spaces, and in interactions mediated through cell phones, social media and television. As some of the papers in this volume have shown, there is still a lot to be learned about the role played by men in the lives of children and more scholarship in this area is needed. More importantly, researchers have to continue paying attention to the politics of knowledge production and be vigilant against the seductive promises of using ready-made research instruments and approaches developed in other cultural contexts (mostly Western ones) especially in trying to understand the contemporary realities of African children and youth. While such research instruments have great value in certain research approaches, a critical assessment of their viability in specific research areas and topics ought to be applied constantly to avoid the pitfalls of universalizing human experiences and expressions that are often shaped by local realities that are not reproducible elsewhere.

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Dating Practices and Patterns of Disclosure among in-School Adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Dating relationships are central to adolescents' lives. Dating and romance are major topics of adolescents' conversations and are linked to both positive and negative emotions. This study examined dating patterns, dating disclosure and parent's awareness in Ibadan metropolis using a mixed method design and found that adolescents are confronted with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed dilemmas in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure. Previous unsolicited sexual experiences and the media were influential in facilitating dating intentions. Gender and age were dominant factors in the disclosure and dating patterns of the adolescents with more females than males involved in dating, and older adolescents (ages 17-19) disclosing more about their dating relationships to peers than those between 14 and 16 years of age. This research also established that when parents were suspicious of their adolescents' involvement in dating because parents were apprehensive of adolescents' ability to manage dating relationships, most adolescents distorted the information they divulged.

Key Words: Dating relationships disclosure; parent-adolescent relations; cross-generational communication

Résumé

Les relations amoureuses occupent une partie centrale de la vie des adolescents. Le flirt et la romance sont souvent chez les adolescents les principaux sujets de conversations et sont d'ailleurs liés à des émotions tant positives que négatives. Cette étude analyse les tendances des relations amoureuses, dans quelle mesure le secret est partagé avec d'autres et les parents, dans la métropole d'Ibadan. Elle fait usage d'une combinaison de méthodes qui a permis de conclure que les adolescents sont confrontés à des dilemmes d'ordre culturel, religieux, conjonc-turel, et à d'autres qu'ils s'imposent eux-mêmes, car ils se demandent où situer la frontière entre le privé et le public. Les expériences sexuelles antérieures non sollicitées et les media ont servi d'importants catalyseurs au désir de sortir avec

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quelqu'un. Le genre et l'âge ont été des facteurs déterminants dans les tendan-
ces dégagées, montrant qu'il ya plus de filles impliquées dans le jeu de la
romance que de garçons, et que les adolescents plus âgés (17-19 ans) sont
enclins à partager plus avec leurs pairs sur leurs relations amoureuses que les
14-16 ans. Cette étude a aussi permis d'établir que lorsque les parents soup-
çonnent leurs enfants adolescents d'avoir une relation amoureuse, car doutant
de leur capacité à gérer leurs histoires amoureuses, la plupart de ces adolescents
ne disent pas exactement la vérité sur le sujet.

Introduction

Dating relationships are issues over which both parents and adolescents claim
jurisdiction (Smetana 2008). Many adolescents consider dating relations as
personal issues (Daddis & Randolph 2010) and often construct boundaries
delineating between issues that are legitimately subject to parental authority
and those that should be within their own jurisdiction (Daddis & Randolph
2010; Sullivan et al., 2010). Adolescents disclose less to their parents about
their romantic experiences and sex than they do regarding other aspects of
their lives (Smetana, Villalobos, Rogge, & Tasopoulos-Chan 2010) and are
more likely to talk about their intimate relationships with peers than with
parents (Cosedine, Sabag-Cohen, & Krisvoshekova 2007; Smetana et al., 2010).
With reference to gender, adolescent girls disclose more personal issues to
their mothers than boys do (Daddis & Randolph 2010; Smetana et al., 2010).

Recent research has highlighted the importance of understanding the
context of disclosure and non-disclosure of adolescent dating relationships
(Daddis & Randolph (2010). Kerr and Stattin (2000) argue that adolescents
who are more disclosing view their parents as more trusting of them. When
it comes to romantic involvement among adolescents many parents consider
it their duty to counsel and guide their children because the parents regard
themselves as more experienced especially having gone through the same
psycho-social stages in life themselves (Whatley & Henken 2000). In the
Communication Privacy Management theory, Petronio (2002) argues that a
delicate process exists in the coordination of disclosure and concealment
people perform continually in their relationships with others. As adolescents
increase in age and experience, intrusions into their everyday life become
more guided in their interactions with their parents, friends and others (Daddis
2008). As active social actors, adolescents may sift the information they
give their parents by telling them what they want them to know and keep
the remaining information to themselves.

Communication and trust building in adolescent-parent interaction occurs
within a web of many factors and contexts including the different degrees
of knowledge that parents have about their adolescents (Soenens,
Vansteenkiste, Luyckx & Goosens 2006), cohesion (Papini, Clark, Farmer

& Micka 1990), relationship enjoyment (Laird, Petit, Bates, & Dodge 2003) and trust (Daddis & Randolph 2010). These factors are not self-exhaustive but do point to the bi-directional nature of adolescent-parent trust and their influence in negotiating the boundaries of privacy and disclosure. The process of building and sustaining adolescent-parent trust is a continuum and multi-dimensional in orientation and practice (Petronio & Durham 2008). To investigate the dilemma revolving dating disclosure between adolescents and their parents, an understanding of the rule-based management system underlying this negotiation was sought in this study using a mixed method design. Research on the personal domain has consistently demonstrated that with increasing age, adolescents are more likely to assert personal authority, drawing boundaries between issues that are considered to be within their own and their parents' authority (Smetana & Asquith 1994). It is unclear, however, how this expansion of the personal domain is expressed in adolescents' interpretations of more complex issues such as romantic involvement. A qualitative study on dating experiences and relationships among urban African American adolescents showed that differences in parents and peers norms, attitudes and values could create conflict and tensions for adolescents in negotiating dating activities (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Parenting norms and values in a number of African communities tend towards autocracy with contestable prerogatives at the home front. Within this regulated context, discourses on sexuality are shrouded with terms meant to restrict children's knowledge (Izugbara 2008). A presumption may be that early exposure to sexuality knowledge could stimulate interest in early sexual activities. This presumption is compounded further by the increasing digital divide between adolescents and their parents in many parts of Africa. In a country like Nigeria increased access to information and media models of dating relationships, has made adolescents more likely to take up conflicting values capable of influencing their decisions regarding dating relationships. Given the challenges families face with the array of privacy concerns and prerogative negotiations, this study explores the meaning of dating, patterns, experiences of adolescents and how they navigate privacy boundaries in the disclosure or non-disclosure of their dating relationships to their parents. With insights from Regmi, van Teijlingen Simkhada and Acharya (2011), dating in this study was defined as a meeting between adolescent boy and girl or with adults for romantic and sexual purposes. It could be a chance meeting, leading to a short-term relationship, or planned meeting, which explores and develops into a longer-term partnership. The study also examined parents' dispositions and rationale for developing interests in their adolescent dating relationships. This was with a view to appreciating the dilemma adolescents and parents encounter in resolving dating disclosure or non-

disclosures challenges within a cultural framework. This understanding complements an existing body of knowledge focused on reducing communication tensions at the home front as well as preparing adolescents for dating and sexual practices that will promote their sexual health.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA). There are 11 LGAs in Ibadan; five are in the metropolis with the remaining six in the rural areas. Ibadan North LGA is one of the five metropolitan LGAs in Ibadan. Based on the 2006 National Population census figure, Ibadan has an estimated population of 3,570,000. Ibadan is the capital city of Oyo State located in Southwest Nigeria. It is one of the third largest cities in West Africa. There are a number of private and public primary and tertiary institutions in the city. At the tertiary level, the foremost are the University of Ibadan and Ibadan Polytechnic.

Based on the exploratory nature of the study, a mixed complementary method consisting of semi-structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion (FGD) was employed in generating relevant data on adolescent (14–19 years old) dating relationships and disclosure or non-disclosure to their parents. The qualitative data were collected to enhance the quantitative findings from the survey.

Respondents in the quantitative strand were recruited using purposive stratified sampling approach. The sampling frames consist of all adolescents (15–19 years) in secondary schools and parents residing in the Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA). At the initial stage, a list of all government-approved secondary schools in the LGA was obtained from the Local Education Authority. Within Ibadan North LGA, Bodija was purposively selected as one of the communities within the metropolis that has a high proportion of private and public secondary schools. Within this location, three schools were randomly selected from the private and public secondary schools for a relative representation of adolescents from different socio-economic backgrounds. In total, six schools were selected. Only adolescents in the senior secondary school level between 14 and 19 years of age were invited for participation. Despite the efforts to ensure relative representation of adolescents from different socio-economic backgrounds, adolescents in publicly owned secondary schools were 15 per cent higher. This may be associated with the inability of many parents to afford the high school fees private schools charge in Nigeria. In total, 450 adolescents that met the study criteria voluntarily participated in the survey.

In the qualitative strand, only adolescents (14–19 years) that had a boy/girl friend were invited for participation in the focus group discussion. An

average of three adolescents with such experience was invited from each of the six schools covered in the survey. From the six schools, 10 female and 12 male adolescents volunteered to participate. To reduce a possible influence of interviewer's gender bias, same sex researchers conducted the FGDs with the adolescents (Regmi, van Teijlingen, Simkhada & Acharya 2011). Four undergraduate students with relevant fieldwork experiences were recruited, briefed on the study objectives, and trained with the FGD guide. Two weeks after the completion of the survey, a list of parents' addresses with the support of the school authorities, was obtained from willing adolescents that participated in the survey. With the help of two teachers from the selected schools, thirty parents were invited for voluntarily participation in the study. Only 16 out of the invited parents participated in the interviews. After repeated visits by the researcher and the field assistants, 14 parents (4 mothers and 10 fathers) could not be interviewed due to their busy schedules. Only one eligible parent was interviewed per household.

Three research instruments consisting of a questionnaire, an in-depth interview, and a focus group discussion guide were adopted to explore the social context of disclosure or lack of it between parents and their adolescents. Based on insights from the literature, a two-page questionnaire was developed to examine the dating patterns of the adolescents and investigate the views adolescents have on factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not to disclose their dating relationships to their parents. Three psychologists and a sociologist with an interest in adolescent sexuality assessed the content validity of the questionnaire. Prior to the main study, a pre-test of the instrument was undertaken among 50 adolescents (14–19 years) in selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife. This was to check whether the questionnaire was understandable and pragmatic. The questionnaire included three sections. The first comprised questions that elicited respondents' biographical information, that is, age, parents' occupation, living arrangements and type of marriage. The second section comprised questions on dating patterns, factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not, parents' involvement in their adolescent dating relationships and the degree of information adolescents are willing to divulge to their parents on their dates. The questionnaire was self administered to adolescents (14–19 years) at the senior secondary level in each secondary school. To encourage valid responses and complete anonymity, a box was provided in each class where the questionnaires were administered without interference from their teachers and fellow students. After completing the questionnaires, respondents dropped the completed questionnaires in the box.

In the qualitative phase, additional insights into some of the responses elicited from the survey were sought through two focus group discussion

session with adolescents (14–19 years) and in-depth interviews with 16 parents. Qualitative methods have been useful in investigating sexual health issues among adolescents and parents' disposition towards sex education in Nigeria (Izugbara 2004, 2008). The focus group discussion provided an opportunity for the adolescents to discuss their dating experiences and the characteristics they look for in a boy/girl before entering into romantic relationships. Questions on how much adolescents disclose issues concerning their intimate relationships to their parents and their common dating patterns were asked. In addition, participants were asked to deliberate on communication challenges between adolescents and parents in disclosing dating relationships. The interviews with the parents were focussed on parents' positions and interest in their adolescents' dating relationships and examine the factors or situations that would facilitate parents' interest in their adolescents' dating relationships.

The focus group discussions with adolescents were conducted in English at preferred locations suggested by the participants. The in-depth interviews with the 14 parents were also conducted in English at locations suggested by the interviewees. All the interviews were recorded through audiotape. The focus group discussions lasted for an average of an hour and twenty minutes, while the in-depth interviews lasted for an average of forty-nine minutes.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16. The analysis was based on 416 valid questionnaires found among the 450 that were self-administered. Percentages were used to describe the demographic and socioeconomic situation of the adolescents, the dating patterns of the adolescents, and the views of adolescents on factors that could influence their willingness to disclose or not to disclose their dating relationships to their parents. The findings are presented in forms of both discussions and tables.

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the audio-taped interviews and the field notes were used to verify the transcribed texts, ensuring that they were correctly transcribed to preserve the meaning of the participants' words. The transcripts were read several times and emerging themes listed. Overlapping themes were noted, refined and used in focussing the coding (Ryan & Bernard 2003). Focussed coding entails the search for particular code categories derived from the literature, research experience and other related sources of knowledge acquisition (Patton 1990). Extracts were obtained from both the FGDs and in-depth interviews. A triangulation approach was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Approval from the school authorities was received. The study objectives were communicated to all the participants. All those who participated were recruited voluntarily. They were informed of the confidentiality of their identity and their rights to withdraw at any point from the study (Itlas 2006). Written informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

Results

Respondents' Profiles

The mean age of the survey respondents between 14–16 years of age was 15.2 years and that of respondents between 17–19 years of age was 17.5 years. A high proportion (65%) of the respondents was in a dating relationship. More female adolescents (76.3%) than males were involved in dating. More female adolescents (42.5%) preferred dating young people aged 21–24 years than their male counter parts (0.9%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variables	Female N =219	Male N =197
Age of Respondent		
14–16	87(39.7)	76(38.6)
17–19	132(60.3)	121(61.4)
Living arrangement		
With both parents	177(80.8)	158(80.2)
With father alone	7(3.2)	11(5.6)
With mother alone	21(9.6)	19(9.6)
With relatives	14(6.4)	9(4.6)
Online social network member		
Yes	179(82)	101(51)
Currently dating someone		
Yes 167(76.3)	103(52.3)	
Age of dating partner (years)		
14–16 21(12.6)	64(62.1)	
17–20 48(28.7)	38(36.9)	
21–24 71(42.5)	1(0.9)	
25–28 22(13.2)	-	
+29 5(3.0)	-	

Source: Focus Group Discussants and Interviewees Profiles

Twenty-two (10 females and 12 males) discussants featured in the FGDs. All the discussants were currently dating at least one person. The average age of the female adolescent was 15.8 years and that of the male was 17.2 years. Twenty among the FGD participants have their profiles on face-book, an online social network site. Sixteen parents participated in the in-depth interviewees. Nine mothers and seven fathers featured in the interviewees. The average age of the mothers was 42.3 years and that of the fathers was 49.1 years. Four of the fathers were in polygamous marriages. Only one among the mothers was in a polygamous marriage. All the interviewees had up to secondary level of education. Four out of the fathers had up to tertiary education at different levels. Only three of the mothers had up to tertiary education.

First Sexual Experience and Disclosure Dilemma
An analysis of the context that provides adolescents with dating opportunities revealed a number of factors. Some of the factors include peer pressure, media models of dating relationships, and previous unsolicited sexual initiations. Participants in the FGDs argued that the context of first sexual experience could have lasting impacts on dating intentions and disclosure negotiation. The participants described the experiences of some adolescents that had been initiated into early sex by family members and close adults. In view of this, some of the adolescent females argued that this represents a breach of trust and deviations from what the society preaches. The participants described the occurrence of child sexual abuse and the silence on it as worrisome. Victims and their significant others often prefer silence in handling known cases of child sexual abuse. Participants described such disposition as unhealthy as it affects adolescents' emotions and their confidence in others.

> How will you inform your parents? I have a friend whose uncle abused her sexually when she was 12 years old. Now her parents are reporting this girl to the same uncle that she has a boy friend. What do you expect from her? (FGD adolescent female).

> Some of us have had our genitals touched sexually by older girls in our neighbourhoods and in some cases they had asked us to touch their breasts without informing others. These experiences are still very fresh (FGD adolescent male).

From the above accounts, initiation into sexual relations might have prepared some of the participants for early dating and rationale for disclosure or non-disclosure of dating relationships. Participants' reference to trust breaching could affect disclosure or non-disclosure between parents and their adolescents.

Dating Dispositions and Patterns

Dating was normal and fashionable among the adolescents. The interest in forming partnerships with opposite sex in school is expected due to unsupervised interactions with peers especially outside school activities, which could increase the development of emotions. A high proportion of the adolescents described dating as a common phenomenon among their peers (Table 2). Among the respondents, dating entailed sharing love, feelings, pleasures, and problems. However, in response to the statement 'dating entails sharing love through sex', more females were quick to rescind the position than their male counterparts were.

Similarly, in the FGD, positions on what a boyfriend or girlfriend means ranged from 'having a boy to care for me', to 'having a girl I can have fun with'. Different terminologies were also used in describing girls and boys that have boy/girl friends and those that do not. Girls with boyfriends especially those with multiple boyfriends were described as 'omo to wake up' (popular girls) and adolescent males with girlfriends as 'bigger boys'. The drive to feel important among peers creates tension and competition for attraction especially through physical appearance. The jostling among attractive girls increases the number of choices to be made and the difficulty in making right choices or refusing many requests. Multiple dating was reported more among adolescent females between 17 and 19 years of age (Table 3).

In the qualitative strand, the FGD discussants argued that girls are culturally expected to make themselves available and as attractive commodities to the boys and men with the necessary emotional and material resources. Against this backdrop, the discussants argued that it was easier for girls than boys to have multiple dates as girls have more 'options'. A ripple effect is the conscious awareness of masculine hegemony and the competition over female adolescents as commodities among male adolescents. The perception of adolescent females as attractive commodities that should be wooed by males or older boys that are better positioned than adolescent males was captured in the words of some of the participants:

> You have to be a very big boy to have girl friends because you have to compete with university boys and unmarried young working men (FGD, adolescent male aged 17).

In addition, age preference in dating was cited as a favoured option for the females as adolescent males prefer younger girls while girls go for older boys.

> Who will go with those small boys? They lack what it takes to care for a girl. They are also interested in just sleeping with you [sexual intercourse] and the moment they succeed they go for another girl (FGD, adolescent female aged 19).

Table 2: Adolescent Dating Disposition and Patterns

Variables	Female(n=167)		Male(n=103)	
	14–16yrs	17–19yrs	14–16yrs	17–19yrs
I have a close friend that has a boy/girl friend	63(29)	104(47)	31(30)	72(70)
Are you into any intimate relationship presently	60(36)	107(64)	26(25)	77(75)
I have more than one boy/girl friend	15(9)	53(32)	9(9)	31(16)
Dating entails sharing love, feelings, pleasures and problems	43(26)	100(60)	21(20)	72(70)
Dating entails sharing love through sex	12(7)	33(20)	25(24)	75(73)
My parents will be disappointed in me when they know that I have a boy/girl friend	60(36)	104(62)	25(24)	74(72)
I have been dating a boy/girl friend for over a year without my parents' awareness	60(36)	106(63)	26(25)	75(73)

The interviews with parents also supported the position that adolescent females are the focus of several social actors as they receive advances from males both young and old. The commodification of the female adolescents was further depicted by portraying the inability of adolescent males as being poor in material and emotional resources in competing with older boys and men that are better positioned. In contrast, the adolescent females are socially positioned to accept the advances of the highest bidder.

> There are a lot of men, older men now, that are interested in these young girls of secondary school age, and most of them are very wealthy. In a situation where the girl's parents are poor, she doesn't even think twice about it, she just goes for it' (Mother of an adolescent aged 42).

Another mother said:

> Girls of these days are very greedy and covetous; they don't follow boys of their own age anymore. Especially those that enter the university early after their secondary school education, they now prefer men that are old enough to be their fathers (Mother of an adolescent aged 49).

Dating Context and Disclosure Challenges

In the adolescent stage, the consciousness that adolescent dating is not encouraged by the society and parents in particular came with diverse strategies as both adolescent males and females struggle to keep their dating secret until the occurrence of challenges or tensions that are self evident. Younger adolescent males often employ indirect measures in soliciting relationships with adolescent females. A striking approach is the use of material goods and academic prowess in securing a date with adolescent females. The use of short medium messages (SMS) aided with the availability of the Global system for Mobile Telecommunication in Nigeria was widely reported as a means to declaring intentions. As noted by some of the participants, the use of SMS was combined with frequent free mid-night calls provided by some of the Telecommunication operators in Nigeria:

> Sending a girl love text messages may go a long way in securing a relationship (FGD, adolescent male aged 16).

> A friend of mine started a relationship with a guy she met on Facebook (an online social network site). At the initial stage, it was just ordinary friendship and they have been seeing each other since then (FGD, adolescent female aged 17).

> If these girls can have more than one boyfriend, I can have like three of them at a time (FGD adolescent male aged 17).

The participants also argued that with a promise of helping them to pass their school leaving certificate examination, a number of female adolescents date their teachers and fellow students. With this common understanding,

adolescent males that are intelligent often attract more girls than those who are not. In all the scenarios narrated, all the participants argued that dating often happens without their parents' awareness in order to avoid the loss of the benefits that go with being a 'good' boy or girl.

In the event that parents become suspicious of their adolescents' dating involvement, the adolescents often employ denial and distortions when providing any information that would otherwise make them look bad or recalcitrant. The tendency to use denial and to distort information was also attributed to religious beliefs and the need to appear as a 'good' child. A number of the adolescents interviewed argued that over the years their parents have not relented in forcing them into active involvement in religious activities that they have come to terms with. Here are some examples:

> When such issues are brought up for discussion, you just have to form as if you have never heard of it and appear innocent (FGD adolescent female aged 17).

> On three occasions, I have found love text messages on my adolescent girl's mobile phone and she denied ever knowing the senders. I even tried calling the line but immediately one of the boys heard my voice he dropped the phone and switched off (Mother of an adolescent aged 47).

> Girls will only tell you about their date when they are in a fix. May be when they are pregnant or being threatened by a boy or their teacher (Mother of an adolescent aged 42).

On a few occasions, the participants argued that some adolescent females might provide information on a boy that was pestering them for a relationship. However, if it was a relationship of interest, they preferred remaining silent as most parents would frown at them being in a relationship. To avoid this, boys and girls would prefer self-care measures even when things are going out of hand especially in a relationship of interest. The male participants argued that most adolescents would prefer informing their parents later in the future if the relationship survives into a long-term one. However, the reality is that most of the adolescents complained of constant conflicts and tensions in their dating relationships and the difficulty in informing their parents.

Age, Masculinity and Femininity in Disclosure or Non-disclosure of Dating Relationships

As could be expected, a number of adolescents are concerned about their parents' knowledge of their dates, indicating adolescents' consciousness of societal and parental disapproval of adolescent dating. With this common understanding among adolescents, there will be unwillingness in divulging information about their dating relationships to their parents or people that

may oppose such an activity (Sullivan et al., 2010). In some circumstances, adolescent females between 17–19 years of age were more willing to disclose their dating relationships to their parents than their male counterparts (Table 3). Younger adolescent females (14–16 years) were also less willing to tell their parents anything about their dating relationships. Adolescent males were more willing to share their dating information with their peers than their female counterparts were (Table 3).

Findings from the two FGDs also revealed that boys do not open up to their parents on dating issues. They argued that boys view dating as very personal. The male participants argued that boys often avoid talking with their parents on matters that bring up such issues because boys like to 'be in control of their affairs'.

> A boy that goes about 'kissing and telling his parents' is not fit to be in a relationship, big boys don't talk to their parents about girls, small boys do that and they shouldn't even be in any relationship (Adolescent male aged 18).

The participants also argued that girls are more willing to share their dating experiences because most of the times they get confused due to the number of advances they receive. This may prompt them to talk to someone older, especially their mothers (depending on the existing relationship between them) so as to know the right step to take.

> My mum does not believe I should send any guy off, she just counsels me on what to do so that I don't find myself in any bad situation, I tell her stuff and she listens well, because we are very close. While my brother is also close to her, he hardly opens up about his dates (FGD Adolescent female aged 16).

Another female adolescent said,

> As you grow older, you become bold enough to own up to these relationships, you feel old enough to talk more comfortably with your parents about them (FGD Adolescent female aged 18).

Buttressing the position of some of the female adolescents, a father argued that:

> Girls are more willing to disclose because females are weak hearted. If a girl gets pregnant, she would eventually open up, but boys believe they can handle everything on their own. Even when they impregnate a girl, they prefer to cover it up before anyone knows about it. Boys are strong-willed and have a very strong sense of responsibility (Interview with a father of an adolescent aged 50).

The tension and conflict resolution of challenges in intimate relationships have psychological consequences for the adolescents. Often these issues

Table 3: Gender, age, and voluntary disclosure

Variables	Female		Male	
(n=60)	14–16yrs (n=107)	17-19yrs (n=26)	14–16yrs	17–19yrs (n=77)
At the moment, how much information are you willing to give your parents about your boy/girl friend				
Everything	21(35%)	46(43%)	2(8%)	24(31%)
None	39(65%)	83(57%)	24(92%)	53(69%)
At the moment, how much information are you willing to give your close friends about your boy/girl friend				
Everything	33(55%)	48(45%)	19(73%)	61(79%)
None	27(45%)	59(55%)	7(27%)	16(21%)

are kept among close peers and are hardly discussed with adults or parents as noted in the following excerpt from the FGD with adolescent males:

> I will never forget the day I was jilted by my first love. I wept profusely and became ill. At home, nobody knew what went wrong except my very close friend. I lost interest in helping my father in his shop (FGD adolescent male aged 18).

The required knowledge for safe negotiation of tensions and conflicts in adolescent dating cannot be easily accessed. Neither parents nor the society support dating in adolescence. Within this unfriendly setting, some of the adolescents preferred comparing notes with their peers and searching the Internet, which is increasingly becoming accessible to adolescents in urban areas in Nigeria. Moreover, with the availability of Internet access through mobile phones, browsing has become relatively affordable. Thirteen participants in the two FGDs narrated the relevance of online social network sites in sharing and accessing suggestions from other members when confronted with dating tensions and conflict resolution. Here is what one said:

> How will I ask my parents? In the first instance, they see me as a nice girl without a boyfriend. So what would I tell them? Facebook is there, in such challenges, I pose a question that appears general and within few minutes, different suggestions will be provided which I can decide to accept or reject (FGD adolescent female aged 17).

Parents' Positions and Interest in Adolescents Dating Relationships
Ten out of the interviewees were of the opinion that no adolescent should be in any intimate relationship because they are still too young and lacked the needed experience and maturity to manage intimate relationship challenges. The conception of dating as an adult terrain led some of the parents to describe adolescents that have boy/girl friends as unserious and irresponsible:

> Any adolescent that is in any intimate relationship lacks proper training and lacks focus in life (Clergy and a father of an adolescent, aged 51).

Two other parents argued that:

> I train my children properly, so they cannot enter into any intimate relationship at their tender age (Mother of an adolescent aged 46).

> When you train your child in God's way, they would not deviate and start following boys or girls (Mother of an adolescent aged 41).

However, more than two thirds (11) of the parents were anxious and worried over the kind of friends their children keep and their general freedom to associate with the opposite sex. Seven among this category of parents were also sceptical of their children' ability to maintain sanctity in such relationships. When a mother was asked if she had ever questioned her adolescents about

their association with the opposite sex, she said, 'Of course! Girls of nowadays are bad and might influence my boys negatively, so I question them regularly to know the state of things, but you see most times they hide the truth until things get out of hand'. As a way out of the fears of what becomes the fate of their adolescents in the future, some of the parents suggested regular discussion and faith in God as shown in these extracts:

> When you relate well with your children and talk properly with them, you would know what is going on and know if there is any problem; this would enable you know how best to tackle such problems (Mother of an adolescent aged 46).

> When you talk to them about sex, you know their level of knowledge on the subject, and you would know what areas you should concentrate on (Father of an adolescent aged 47).

> With the high prevalence of flirting among adolescents, it appears to me that some of them are possessed with evil spirits. Deliverance through prayers will work better (A Clergy and father of an adolescent, aged 51).

 The increasing prevalence of unsupervised interactions among adolescents was described as a situation that demands concrete efforts from the society and parents in particular. Some of the parents argued that adolescents have different mediums of interaction that are outside the purview of parents especially with the increasing economic challenges that takes most parents out of their homes. A number of the parents argued that as adolescents advance in age, there was need for more supervision. As adolescent females grow older, they attract the attention of members of the opposite sex. One of the major concerns in this regard is the fear of unintended pregnancy especially for the adolescent females:

> I am most times afraid because these children associate with one another too freely. This calls for concern for any parent that wants what is good for his/her children (Father of an adolescent aged 50).

> At the senior secondary school level every parent must monitor their children especially the girls because at this stage, they experiment more and make mistakes that can mar their lives forever (Mother of an adolescent aged 48).

This last respondent cited examples of adolescents that have made such mistakes and are now regretting it. Some of the adolescents also narrated the mistakes of other adolescents in their previous dates. They argued that if their parents can listen better and get closer to them, they would be more interested in this delicate aspect of their lives. One of the participants expressed dismay in the poor or lack of trust between adolescents and their parents:

> At times, you look so sad because a lot is going on and your parents do not even notice it, let alone proffer solutions (Adolescent female aged 16).

Some of the parents also desire trust and closeness with their adolescents but then regret the increasing difficulty in achieving this closeness. Parents advocated patience and prayers as a way of cultivating a desired level of closeness with their adolescent children while the adolescents believe in effective communication and extension of love towards them at all times.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study used a complementary mixed method approach in exploring adolescents' reasoning justifying disclosure and nondisclosure to their parents regarding romantic involvement. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data revealed dating as a common and fashionable practice among both female and male adolescents. However, disclosure of dating relationships was confronted with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed dilemmas in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure.

An important finding from the qualitative data analysed is the influence of multiple factors including previous unsolicited sexual initiations as platforms supporting early dating and restricted disclosure of dating relationships. More female adolescents than their male counterparts are at pressure as they go into dating for several reasons including material gains and the desire to pass their school examinations especially in their Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination. A reinforcement of this pressure is the commodification of the female adolescents' body as a product that should be possessed by young and old leading adolescent males to compete with older boys and men in a bid to have a stake in the lives of adolescent females. An immediate implication is the practice of multiple dating especially among the female adolescents. This observation supports existing literature that shows that adolescent females attract more partners than their male counter parts (Madsen & Collins 2011). Dating pressures and the practice of secrecy in adolescent dating is consistent with the literature (for example, Connolly, Furman, & Konarski 2000; Cosedine, Sabag-Cohen, & Krisvoshekova 2007; Madsen & Collins 2011).

The secrecy shrouding adolescent dating impairs disclosure of dating to parents except when there are self-evident markers or perceived threats from others. Adolescent females disclosed more about their dating relationships than their male counterparts (Daddis & Randolph 2010; Sullivan et al., 2010). While this is consistent with the literature, a number of participants in the current study argued that it also varies with age and context as earlier argued by Smetana et al., (2010), and Daddis (2008). In this present research, older female adolescents were more prepared to disclose their dating relationships than younger female adolescents did especially in the occurrence of self-evident outcomes like pregnancy. In

this regard, female adolescents would more readily inform their mothers than their fathers due to cultural values and expectations that shape communication between parents and their children. Certain cultural beliefs also portray the good child as belonging to the father as is the case among the Yoruba people where this study was conducted, where the stigmatisation of unintended adolescent pregnancy is prevalent and mothers are culturally expected to provide support for their daughters for having failed in their proper upbringing (Oye-Adeniran, Adewole, Umoh et al., 2004). Available evidence shows that recipients of partial information on dating and sexuality are ill equipped in safe sexual negotiations (Izugbara 2004; Whatley & Henken 2000).

An emerging trend in the realm of dating and disclosure among adolescents is the Internet and the use of short medium messages (SMS) aided by the availability of the Global system for Mobile Telecommunication in Nigeria. This has added the contraction of relationships and a shift to the cyberspace for wider interactions and knowledge acquisition on sexuality and dating issues. This is consistent with the study by Oluwole (2009) on the practice of cyber gossips among adolescents in Nigeria, which shows that with the gradual shift to the cyberspace, there are multiple options for relationship building outside the home.

The pressure to conform publicly to parents' religious beliefs and subsequent positions on relationships was also cited as a context that shapes denial or information distortion especially among younger adolescents. The position taken by many adolescents was in sharp contrast with the knowledge and purpose of religious activities as perceived by their parents. However, because they were dependent upon their parents materially, the adolescents argued that they needed to conform to their parents' wishes until they grew older and felt more independent. Based on emerging evidence of increasing adolescent dating, a number of the adolescents interviewed were as concerned about their parents' knowledge of their dates as the parents were concerned about the future of their adolescents, especially their daughters. Often times, such fears were expressed around unintended pregnancies than other risks associated with multiple dating and unprotected sexual activities. In line with their religious beliefs, some of the parents called for prayers, faith in God and patience as potent measures of building better relationships with their adolescents and securing their future.

The negative disposition and description of adolescent dating by some of the parents indicate an adherence to traditional viewpoints that could mar the needed adolescent-parent trust and disclosure of dating relationships. The argument of some of these parents that adolescents are not yet ready for intimate relationship is consistent with the literature (Smetana 2008;

Izugbara 2008). However, a few of the parents argued for more interest in adolescent dating especially through constant and open communication. This later group of parents are gradually coming to terms with the need for holistic consideration of issues affecting adolescent sexuality in Nigeria. As Izugbara (2004) has shown, parents who communicate well with their children are always interested in the affairs of such children and know when there are problems that need to be resolved. At the moment, the increasing availability of Internet access and foreign media in many homes in Nigeria exposes many adolescents to more dating models and alternatives than was the case in the past. Large-scale studies interrogating cultural influences on dating disclosure and adolescent-parent trust building would go a long way in articulating clearly better ways of understanding a changing socio-cultural phenomenon. The present research has attempted to contribute to an understanding of the context and rationale for disclosure and non-disclosure of adolescent dating relationships. These issues can be explored further among a larger population and other major ethnic groups (Igbo and Hausa) in Nigeria to achieve a broader understanding of adolescent dating and disclosure challenges.

Adolescent dating and its confrontation with cultural, religious, situational and self-imposed barriers in negotiating the boundaries between privacy and disclosure calls for more holistic measures at home and the society at large. With the increase in the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, sexual assaults, and emotional ill health associated with early sexual exposure and adolescent dating, participatory measures need to be taken to respond to these challenges. Establishing trust in adolescent-parent relations would facilitate the disclosure of privacy in dating activities as well as creating a sustainable response at the home front to the associated challenges with adolescent dating.

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Parent-Child Communication on Sexuality-Related Matters in the City of Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract

Several studies have documented how the sexual activities of young people and the social context in which these activities take place heighten youth susceptibility to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. There are contrasting findings on the role of parent-child communication (PCC) in shaping young people's sexual behaviour. This paper provides answers to questions on gender differentials in parents' involvement in PCC; age and gender differentials in young people's involvement in PCC; and the relationship between exposure to PCC and sexual activities. Using data from a survey of 1,120 young people in the city of Lagos, the study shows that mothers are more involved in discussing sexuality related matters with their children than fathers, and where fathers are involved alone or in conjunction with mothers, the child is likely to be male. The study further shows that while PCC may not prevent or reduce sexual activities among young people, it does not increase it either, but is significantly related to safe sex practice in the population.

Key words: Youth sexuality, young adult sexuality, sexual risk-taking, African sexuality, sexual socialization.

Résumé

Plusieurs études ont apporté des preuves documentaires tendant à établir dans quelle mesure les activités sexuelles des jeunes et le contexte social dans lequel elles se déroulent augmentent la vulnérabilité des jeunes aux maladies sexuellement transmissibles (MST) dont notamment le VIH-SIDA. Les conclusions sont assez contrastées s'agissant du rôle de la communication parents-enfants (CPE) sur ce que devrait être le comportement sexuel des jeunes. Cette étude fournit des réponses sur les différentiels sexuels dans l'implication des parents dans la CPE, les différentiels liés à l'âge et au genre dans l'implication des jeunes dans la CPE et le lien entre l'accès à la CPE et les activités sexuelles. Sur la base des

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données fournies par une enquête portant sur 1 120 jeunes, dans la ville de Lagos, l'étude a révélé que les mères sont plus impliquées que les pères dans les discussions liées à la sexualité de leurs enfants. Et dans les cas où ils sont impliqués seuls ou avec les mères, ces pères discutent plus souvent avec les garçons et non les filles. L'étude démontre par ailleurs que même si la CPE peut ne pas prévenir ou réduire les activités sexuelles chez les jeunes, elle ne les augmente pas non plus. Elle a cependant un impact non-négligeable sur les rapports sexuels protégés au sein de la population.

Introduction

The process of acquiring knowledge about sexuality and safe sex practices is an important aspect of socialization. Studies have shown that unsafe sexual practices contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS infection which is a leading cause of deaths in Africa. According to UNAIDS & WHO (2007), AIDS remains a leading cause of death and 76 percent of all AIDS related death in the world were recorded in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of the people infected are young people – given the fact that sub-Saharan populations are largely young (See, Ashford et al., 2006). In spite of the dire need for young people to be given the right knowledge on reproductive health and safe sex practices, parents hardly discuss sexuality with their children in a country like Nigeria (Esiet and Oyebola 2004). This study set out with the aim of unravelling a number of puzzles. First, it seeks to document the proportion of young people in the city of Lagos who see parents as their main source of information on sexuality related matters.

Secondly, the study seeks to explore the relationship between parent-child communication (PCC) on matters of sexuality and real life sexual behaviour. In more specific terms, this second research concern seeks to ascertain if young people who benefit from PCC on matters of sexuality are likely to exhibit a higher level of involvement in real life sexual activities as some have conjectured. Therefore, the study asks if exposure to information about sexuality through parents is likely to make young people take part in sexual experimentation.

In addition to the desire to explore the relationship between parent-child sexuality communication and involvement in sexual activities, the study seeks to establish empirically if there is a relationship between PCC about sexuality and safe sex practice using condom use at last intercourse as an indicator. In addition to these core concerns of the study, involvement of parents in sexuality communication with young people is viewed across the genders both for parents and for children. In order to clearly put these research concerns and the gaps in knowledge in perspective, a brief review of earlier studies on young people' sexuality and PCC on matters of sexuality is presented.

A study by Bankole et al., (2007) on young adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa shows differences in sexual behaviours across selected countries. The study shows that even among very young adolescents within the age bracket of 12–14 years, involvement in different sexual activities such as sexual intercourse, kissing, fondling or 'having a boyfriend or girlfriend' range from between seven percent to about 30 percent. The study further shows that the proportions of the adolescents with correct knowledge of ways of contracting HIV including misconceptions on HIV/AIDS range from two to 20 percent. According to the study, mass media constitute a major source of information on sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa. Parents often are the least mentioned of the sources of information on sexuality among adolescents in the study population. This suggests in a way that parents may not have as much influence on adolescents in their sexual behaviours as do their peers and the media (Makinwa-Adebusoye 1991). In a study of adolescents in Niger state, Nigeria, Sunmola et al., (2002) found that about 23 percent of the respondents said they obtained information about sexual issues from their friends while just 18 percent said their parents supplied them with such information. These studies suggest a low level of PCC on sexuality in Nigeria.

Nationally representative data suggest a high level of sexual activity among young people in Nigeria. The Demographic and Health Survey of 2003 shows that the median ages at onset of sex for men and women generally are 20.4 years and 17.3 years respectively while the median ages at entry into marriage are 26.4 years and 18.5 years for men and women (National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria] and ORC Macro 2004). The gap between the age at onset of sex and entry into marriage often makes adolescents vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections as reproductive health services are within some social contexts made available only to people in marital unions and some young people avoid approaching reproductive health centres for fear of being labelled immoral (Senderowitz 1999; Erulkar et al.,005; Wang et al.,007). For this and other reasons, use of condom at first sex is as low as 6.5 percent for girls within the age bracket of 15–19 years and 10.6 percent for boys (NPC and ORC Macro 2004).

The Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria made similar findings through a survey in 2006, showing further how vulnerable the group is. About forty-one percent and eighty-four percent of young females within the age brackets of 15–19 years and 20–4 years had had sex. Among boys within the 15–19 and 20–24 year age brackets, twenty percent and sixty-three percent had had sex. Among sexually experienced girls within the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups, thirty-five percent and seventy-three percent had had premarital

sex in the last 12 months preceding the study while among boys fifteen percent of those within the 15-19 age group had had sex in the last twelve months and fifty-three percent of young men within the age bracket of 20-24 years had had sex in the last twelve months. The study shows further that among sexually experienced youths (15-19 years), eight percent had contracted STIs in the last 12 months preceding the survey. For the 20-24 age group, one in ten had contracted an STI (Federal Ministry of Health [Nigeria] 2006).

Several studies have explored the nature and impact of PCC about sexuality across the countries of the world. A synopsis of the literature on PCC about sexuality can be viewed under three major sub-themes – contents, correlates of PCC, and effects of PCC. Rosenthal and Feldman (1999) showed through a survey of high school adolescents that parent-child communication about sexuality varies by domains of topics, with issues relating to sexual safety, physiological development and societal concerns receiving greater attention than experiencing sex and solitary sexual activities. In the same vein, Blake et al., 2001) also show that even where adolescents had been exposed to an abstinence-only school curriculum enhanced with parent-child communication, topics remain restricted largely to prevention strategies and consequences of sexual intercourse.

A recent study by Wamoyi et al., 2010) shows that parent-child communication about sexuality is usually initiated by the parents, and is often characterized by warnings or threats of the implications of sexual activities. On the whole, topics discussed often reflect the worries of parents and border on abstinence, unplanned pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Wamoyi et al., 2010) further show that parent-child communication often reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity which require premarital sexual chastity of the female and sexual prowess and experience from the male. Other researchers have noted that 'parental communication with young persons on sexual matters is often minimal and usually judgmental, restricting the access to sexual and reproductive health information' (Ladipo et al., 2003:1).

Studies have also shed light on the characteristics of parents involved in PCC and the children who benefit from PCC. Some show that mothers are more involved in PCC on matters of sexuality than fathers just as girls receive more parental communication about sexuality than boys (Nolin and Peterson 1992; Rosenthal and Feldman 1999; Raffaelli and Green 2003; Kim and Ward 2007). A recent study by Wamoyi et al., (2010) also shows that grandparents are more comfortable discussing sexual matters with their grandchildren than parents, although grandparents are often limited as they

do not have enough information on HIV/AIDS prevention and modern contraception. The researchers suggest that fathers may not be involved in the sexual socialization of their children if children are aware that their fathers and adult male siblings are having extramarital relationships and their advice may run contrary to practice. This is better understood when the traditional notions of masculinity are put in the picture. Men are judged by their sexual prowess and their sexual experimentation is often ignored. Yet, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and STIs calls for caution. For this reason, societies are beginning to require of fathers values they do not have.

Parental education was also found to be a factor in parent-child communication with communication increasing with education (Raffaelli and Green 2003). Another study by Ojo and Akintomide (2010) found that there is no significant relationship between parental education and parent-child communication. The study revealed, however, that younger parents are better communicators of sexuality-related matters than older parents. Language barriers were also found to be responsible for low parent-child communication about sexuality, although non-verbal cues may be employed in the communication of sexual values (Kim and Ward 2007). Regnerus (2005) draws attention to the role of religious affiliation and other variables such as age, race and gender in PCC about sexuality. On the one hand, outward involvement in religious activities tends to associate with low parent-child communication on sexuality. On the other hand, the researcher shows that parents who affiliate with traditional black protestant churches talk the most about sexuality.

Kim (2008) argues that the relationship between parent-child communication and sexual activity of young people is mixed and no causal relationship can be drawn from studies so far. Somers and Paulson (2000) showed for instance that a high level of parental closeness and parent-child communication are not significantly related to the sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of adolescents. Wilson and Donenberg (2004) suggest that the quality of parent-child communication and not frequency of such communication is significantly related to involvement in sexual risk-taking. The subjects included adolescents in psychiatric care only, however. A recent study of US teens by Albert (2010) shows that adolescents report that parents most influence their decisions about sex. Using an experimental design, Blake et al., (2001) showed that in-school adolescents who receive parent-child communication about sexuality in addition to an abstinence-only curriculum are more likely to report lower intention to have sex before completing high school. The study does not show whether the reports of intents turned out to be true, however.

Another dimension was introduced by Martino et al., (2008) who showed through a study of adolescents and their parents that where parent-child communication about sexuality involves repetition of topics, there is a higher likelihood of positive perceptions about ability to communicate with parents on the part of adolescents. This way, they show what may enhance the quality of PCC about sexuality. In another study by Weinman et al., (2008), PCC about sexuality was found to be a predictor of condom use among adolescents. A study by Kumi-Kyereme et al., (2007) reveals that parent-child communication is effective in checking premarital sexual activities among male adolescents in Ghana while among single female adolescents in the same society, it was found to be significantly related with being sexually active. Yet another study by Slap et al., (2003:15) show that 'sexually active students had lower scores for parent-teen connectedness, parent-teen activities, parental presence, and school connectedness'. Longo et al., (2002) argue that despite the risk posed by unprotected sex, the majority of parents talk very little to their children about sexuality. The researchers aver that factors such as supervision and feeling of warmth, love and care from parents and family are associated with delayed onset of sexual intercourse which is often associated with healthy and responsible sexuality.

Against the backdrop of this assertion, this study documents the proportion of young people in the study population who benefit from PCC. In doing this, the study explores the differences in gender of parents involved in PCC, gender of young people benefiting from PCC and the age factor. It should be noted that 'one of the main fears of parents and other adults is that giving adolescents information about sex will cause them to become sexually active' (Rosen, Murray and Moreland 2004: 6). One may ask then, 'Are young people exposed to communication on sexuality more sexually active than those who are not exposed to communication on sexuality?' This study also provides an answer to this puzzle. Furthermore, the study by Weinman et al., (2008) suggests that adolescents who benefit from PCC are less prone to involvement in sexually risky activities that are often attributed to adolescent years. This study sought also to put this assertion to test.

Methods

Participants
A survey of 1,120 young people, within the age bracket of 10 and 24, resident within the city of Lagos, Nigeria was conducted. The subjects include 587 males and 533 females, who were in-school and out-of-school youths of different ethnic origins in Nigeria. The respondents were selected through a multi-stage sampling exercise in which five Local Government Areas (LGAs) were randomly selected out of 16 LGAs in metropolitan Lagos.

From each selected LGA, streets were listed and sampled randomly while households were systematically selected before eligible respondents were randomly drawn. Informed consent was sought and obtained from adolescents 18 years and above while parental consent was obtained for adolescents below the age of 18 years before interviews were conducted. All interviews were conducted outside hearing distance of third parties and only successful interviews (that is, interviews in which reliable data were obtained on the core concerns of the study) were processed for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 10.

Procedure

A standardized interview schedule containing questions on respondents' background information, and several themes including youth sexuality and parent-child communication about sexuality was administered to all the respondents in face-to-face interviews. Only respondents who supplied usable answers to key questions were processed for analysis.

Measures

The independent variable in this study is parent-child communication which was measured in binary form (parents discuss sexuality related matters with subject versus parents do not discuss sexuality related matters with subject). Young people were considered as benefiting from PCC if they had such communication in the last six months preceding the survey. The study employs two indicators of the dependent variable – sexual behaviour. The first indicator of sexual behaviour is sexual activity which was also measured in binary form. The two categories of sexual activity are the youths sexually active and youths not sexually active. Subjects who reported experience of penetrative sexual intercourse were categorized as being sexually active while those who reported no experience of penetrative sexual intercourse were categorized as not sexually active. The second indicator of sexual behaviour is the use of condoms at last intercourse. This measure is applicable to sexually active subjects only. Age was measured first as a continuous variable (age in years at last birthday) and then as categories of 'early adolescence', 'mid adolescence' and 'young adulthood' for subjects within the age brackets of 10-14 years, 15–19 years and 20–24 years respectively.

Analysis

The simple frequency and percentage analysis is used in the description of the background characteristics of respondents, their exposure to PCC and involvement in real life sexual activities. Preliminary tests suggest that age and gender are predictors of sexual behaviour in the population. The study shows a Pearson's correlation of 0.455 (significant at 0.01 level) between

age and number of sexual partners ever had (which ranges from zero for young people not sexually active to twenty). Therefore further tests on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables were done controlling for age and gender.

Results

Background Characteristics of Respondents
The study includes 587 young males and 533 young females, accounting for fifty-two and forty-eight percent of the sample respectively. The minimum and maximum ages of the respondents are ten and twenty-four years while the mean age is nineteen years. The respondents were categorized into three developmental stages based on age. The first category is comprised of young people within the age bracket of ten to fourteen years. This category of people in early adolescence accounts for seven percent of the sample. The second category made up of people in mid-adolescence (15-19 years) accounts for forty-one percent of the respondents while the category of young adults (20-24 years) accounts for fifty-two percent of the respondents. About fifty-five percent of the respondents were in-school adolescents at various levels up to the tertiary level. More than seventy-one percent of the subjects had completed secondary school (i.e. twelve years of formal education) and some had higher qualifications. Forty-five percent of the subjects were out of school at the time of the study. Among these out-of-school young people, some were apprentices; some were gainfully employed while others were unemployed at the time of the study. About 98 percent of the respondents were single (never married) at the time of the study. The study shows further that 614 (fifty-five percent) of the respondents had had sexual intercourse at the time of the study.

Parent-child Sexuality Communication and Sexual Behaviour
When asked if either of their parents had ever discussed matters relating to sex with them, sixty-nine percent responded in the affirmative. When asked if they benefited from parent-child sexuality communication in the last six months, however, the proportion dropped to sixty-one percent. Among the youngest of the subjects, forty-eight percent had benefited from recent parent-child communication. The proportion rises to sixty-six percent among adolescents within the age bracket of 15-19 years while fifty-nine percent of young adults said they had benefited from this kind of discussion in the last six months. The study shows that among male youths, there is a significant relationship between age and access to parent-child sexuality communication (with $P < 0.01$). Male adolescents in the middle category are most likely to have experienced recent parent-child communication.

Among females, a similar observation is made with those in the middle category being the most likely to have benefited from parent-child communication, although the relationship for young females is not statistically significant. The study also shows a significant relationship between gender and parent-child sexuality communication with girls having a greater likelihood to benefit from such communication than boys. On the whole, sixty-nine percent of the female subjects benefited from parent-child sexuality communication while only fifty-four percent of the male subjects benefited from recent parent-child sexuality communication (Chi square $p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Percentage Distribution Showing Parent-child Sexuality
Communication by Age and Sex (%)

Age categories	Benefited from recent Parent-Child Sexuality Communication		
	Female (N = 533)	Male** (N = 587)	Total (N = 1,120)
Early adolescence (10 – 14 years)	62	24	48
Mid adolescence (15 – 19 years)	74	57	66
Young adulthood (20 – 24 years)	67	53	59
Total	**69**	**54**	**61**

** Chi square $p < 0.01$

The results of the study show that parent-child communication on sexuality begins at about age 11 years for the female child while for the male child it begins at about 12 years. Generally, a greater proportion of the female respondents reported that they had ever been involved in parent-child communication on sexuality. Recent parent-child communication on sexuality was highest among 16-year olds for male and female respondents, which provides an insight into the ages parents consider appropriate for parent-child communication on matters of sexuality. Responses to the question on whether one had ever benefited from parent-child communication on sexuality do not show the ages that are targeted by parents as a 24-year old may have been involved at age 14 or at any other time. The study reveals that as adolescents grow into young adulthood, their parents tend to communicate less with them on matters of sexuality.

The study also shows differentials in the sexes of the parents involved in parent-child communication on matters of sexuality. Generally, parents of the female gender were more involved in discussing sexuality related matters

with their children. More than half (fifty-one percent) of those who said they had benefited from parent-child communication on matters of sexuality mentioned their mothers only as the parents involved; about eleven percent mentioned their fathers only; while thirty-eight percent mentioned both parents. For the male adolescents and young adults who reported involvement in parent-child communication on sexuality, thirty-seven percent mentioned mothers as the parents involved in the discussions they had, a fifth mentioned their fathers while 44 percent mentioned both parents. Among the female subjects, 64 percent mentioned mothers, three percent mentioned fathers, while a third mentioned both parents. The study observes that mothers are more involved in the discussion of sexuality related matters with their children. This is more likely to be so when the child is a female child. Even in the socialization of male adolescents and young adults into sexual roles, a greater involvement of mothers than fathers was observed. From these results we can see that 'fathers only' are hardly ever involved in parent-child communication with their female children and that boys are more likely than girls to report involvement of both parents in parent-child communication as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender Differentials in Parents Involved in PCC

	Male (%)	**Female**	**Total**
Mother	133 (36.6)	266 (64.3)	399 (51.4)
Father	72 (19.8)	11 (2.7)	83 (10.7)
Both parents	58 (43.5)	137 (33.1)	295 (38.0)
Total	**363 (100)**	**414 (100)**	**777 (100)**

$\div^2$ **= 87.690; df = 2; P – value = 0.000**

The study shows that for both sexes, there is no significant relationship between parent-child sexuality communication and sexual experience. Among young males who had benefited from recent parent-child sexuality communication, 63 percent had commenced sexual activities. Among those who had never benefited from parent-child communication on sexuality, 58 percent were found to be sexually active. Among females, about 49 percent of those that had benefited from parent-child sexuality communication were sexually active while 46 percent of those that had never benefited from parent-child sexuality communication had had sexual intercourse prior to the time of the survey. Statistical tests show that these variables are not significantly related. These results provide an interesting perspective

especially in the light of claims made by some scholars and general commentators regarding sex education and the increase in sexual activity among youth. The one question that would have helped clarify this scenario, had it been asked, would be whether parental communication with youth on sexuality was preceded by sexual activity or if it triggered sexual activity. Either way the statistical difference between those who had parental communication on sexuality and reported being sexually active as compared to their counterparts who had not parental communication and reported being sexually active, is not significant.

Table 3: Involvement in Parent-child Communication and Sexual Experience by Gender

		Involved in PCC on sexuality	Not involved in PCC on sexuality	Total
Male respondents	Sexually active	228 (62.8)	129 (57.6)	357 (60.8)
	Not sexually active	135 (37.2)	95 (42.4)	230 (39.2)
Total		**363 (100)**	**224 (100)**	**587 (100)**
Female respondents	Sexually active	202 (48.8)	55 (46.2)	257 (48.2)
	Not sexually active	212 (51.2	64 (53.8)	276 (51.8)
Total		**414 (100)**	**119 (100)**	**533 (100)**

The study shows that there is an association between recent parent-child communication and condom use at last intercourse. Specifically, a significantly greater proportion (seventy-one percent) of sexually active young people who reported involvement in parent-child communication in the last six months preceding the study also reported condom use at last intercourse while less than fifty-eight percent of those who said they had not been involved in parent-child communication reported condom use at last intercourse. In order to take care of some intervening variables further tests were conducted. As stated earlier, there is a significant relationship between sex and parent-child communication, with females reporting greater involvement in parent-child communication on matters of sexuality than males. The study further shows that females reported greater use of condom at last intercourse. Age was also found to be a confounding variable as it

correlates significantly with exposure to parent-child communication. As shown earlier, the relationship is curvilinear with adolescents in the age bracket of 15–19 years reporting the highest amount of involvement in parent- child communication on matters of sexuality.

Further tests were conducted, controlling for age and sex. This creates a distribution too small for any reliable test among adolescents within the age bracket of 10–14 years as only few of them had initiated sex at the time of the study. The test results show that there is no significant relationship between recent parent-child communication and condom use at last intercourse among adolescents within the age bracket of 15–19 years for males and females. Among young adults within the age bracket of 20–24 years, however, the study shows that there is a significant relationship between recent exposure to parent-child communication on sexuality and condom use at last intercourse for both males and females. Among young adult males, seventy-five percent of those who reported recent parent-child communication on sexuality also reported condom use at last intercourse while just about sixty-three percent of those who had not benefited from recent parent-child communication about sexuality reported condom use at last intercourse. Similarly, about sixty-eight percent of sexually active female young adults who said they had benefited from recent parent-child communication reported condom use at last intercourse while only forty-two percent of those who did not benefit from recent parent-child communication about sexuality reported condom use at last intercourse.

Table 4: Recent involvement in Parent-child communication and condom use at last intercourse

	Recent PCC on Sexuality		Total
	Involved	Not involved	
Condom used at last intercourse	260 (71.4)	144 (57.6)	404 (65.8)
Condom not used at last intercourse	104 (28.6)	106 (42.4)	210 (34.2)
Total	**364 (100)**	**150 0)**	**614 (100)**

X^2 = 12.594; df = 1; P-value = 0.000

Discussion and Conclusion

Statistical tests show that PCC is higher among female adolescents and young adults than male adolescents and young adults. The study shows that among females, age is not a significant predictor of involvement in PCC as female adolescents and young adults across different age categories are relatively highly exposed to PCC. A major reason for this is the physiological landmark of menarche, the onset of menstruation which often necessitates a discussion on how to manage the menstrual cycle and the implication of sexual intimacy with people of the opposite sex. Oral literature abound in Nigeria on how mothers tell their female children at menarche that the meaning of what they have seen (i.e. menstruation) is that they could become pregnant if 'touched' by men. This form of parent-child communication abounds in Nigeria. The simple reason that boys do not experience such a landmark physiological change, may be partly responsible for the gender differentials in involvement in parent-child communication on matters of sexuality. In addition, females are the ones who carry pregnancies. For this reason, parents tend to discuss the implications of sexual intimacy with persons of the opposite sex with them since they fear that they might lose all they have invested in the education of their female children if they become pregnant at the 'wrong time'. It should be noted that pregnancy in adolescence often leads to the girl child dropping out of school even though the male adolescent's education may not be discontinued if he impregnates a girl. This finding agrees with the contributions of earlier studies (See Raffaelli and Green 2003; Kim and Ward 2007).

For male and female adolescents, PCC on sexuality peaks during the period 15 to 19 years and begins to decline although this trend was found to be significant only for the male subjects. Among the females, PCC does not significantly differ across age boundaries. For the male respondents, the reported involvement in PCC declines significantly with age. The decline may be as a result of the assumption that young adults are knowledgeable enough to take care of themselves. It could also be as a result of the fact that the likelihood to be living alone increases with age and many young adults who live alone may not have regular contact with their parents, the result being that their parents cannot discuss with them. The decline in experience of PCC with age for male young adults may also be due to the traditional notion of masculinity that expects a man not to remain sexually inexperienced. For this reason, the sexual activities of the male young adults may be overlooked. The study also shows that mothers are more involved in communicating with their adolescents and young adults on sexuality related matters as several other researches have shown (Nolin and Peterson

1992; Rosenthal and Feldman 1999; Raffaelli and Green 2003; Kim and Ward 2007). This is partly because the responsibility of raising children is considered a woman's responsibility, primarily. Among the South-West people of Nigeria, there is an adage that translates to mean that the wayward child is the mother's child while the well behaved child is the father's. Put differently, a mother is held responsible for the anti-social practices of the child. To avoid being considered a failure as a mother, therefore, women try to influence their children positively through PCC. For this reason mothers are more involved even in PCC with their male children.

This study shows that the fear that exposure to PCC on matters of sexuality can make young people become sexually active is unfounded as adolescents and young persons who had been exposed to PCC on sexuality were not found to be more sexually active than their peers who had not been exposed to PCC on sexuality. Failure to discuss sexuality related matters with children does not translate to sexual chastity. On the other hand there is an association between PCC on sexuality and safer sex practice using condom use at last intercourse as an indicator. Among young adults in particular, use of condom increases with PCC on sexuality. Although a similar pattern in which people exposed to PCC among adolescents reported greater use of condom at last intercourse was observed among adolescents within the age bracket of 15 to 19 years, the relationship was rather weak. This could mean that young adults who are involved in PCC on sexuality perceive that the society has come to terms with the fact that they are sexually active. Therefore, they perceive greater freedom to use reproductive health services and feel less embarrassed to ask for condoms.

While the association between these variables cannot be taken for causation, this study has shown that adolescents and young persons who are not exposed to PCC on sexuality are less likely to use condoms as a means of preventing sexually transmittable infections and unplanned pregnancies. Insights from the literature reveal, however, that there could be variation in the nature of PCC on sexuality in terms of contents. It might be assumed that parents who communicate with their adolescent children on matters of sexuality talk to them on the need to delay sexual activity while talking to young adults may assume that the young adults are old enough to be sexually active. Therefore, the communication may border on how the young adults should keep away from the troubles of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies. This is a plausible reason for the observed differences in how information and practices around sexuality occur in adolescence and young adulthood. Nonetheless, it is important for further studies to explore the effects of contents of PCC on sexuality and adopted PCC styles on the sexual behaviour of adolescents and young people.

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Mothers' Constructions of their Roles in the Literacy Education of their Children

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Abstract

This paper presents findings from a study that examined how mothers from a middle-income neighbourhood conceptualized their roles in their children's literacy education. Based on interviews and observations focussed on ten mothers involvement in their children's literacy education, a framework that expounds typical characterizations of parent involvement was developed which supports practices that are both traditionally visible and invisible to the school and highlights how parents act as 'intellectual resources' in their children's literacy education. The findings show that traditional understandings of parental involvement may overlook ways that middle-income parents deliberately involve themselves in their children's education. Challenges that these parents face in relation to their involvement in their children's literacy education were identified.

Key Words: Literacy education; Mothers' involvement; Invisible support systems

Résumé

Cette étude présente les conclusions d'une étude portant sur la manière dont les mères issues d'un quartier de la classe moyenne ont conceptualisé leurs rôles dans l'éducation de base de leurs enfants. Sur la base d'interviews et d'observations portant sur l'implication de dix mères dans l'éducation de base de leurs enfants, un cadre qui expose les caractérisations typiques de l'implication des parents a été élaboré, prenant en charge des pratiques traditionnelles visibles ou invisibles à l'école, et souligne comment ces parents agissent comme « ressources intellectuelles » pour l'éducation de base de leurs enfants. Les conclusions soulignent le risque de voir l'implication des parents -au sens où on l'entend traditionnellement- ne pas prendre en ligne de compte cette forme d'implication volontaire des parents issus de la classe moyenne. L'étude a identifié les défis confrontant ces parents pour leur implication dans l'éducation de base de leurs enfants.

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that for children to maximize their potential from schooling, they need the full involvement of their parents (Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Baker and Soden 1998; Muller 1993; Reynolds 1993; Stevenson and Baker 1987). Parents are children's first and best teachers, and parents can do a variety of things to support their children's literacy development. Parental involvement with children and the school are a critical factor that can produce great benefits for everyone concerned (Henderson and Berla 1997). A substantial body of evidence confirms the benefits of parental involvement in children's education and literacy activities (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez and Bloom 1993; Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Denessen 2007). Research shows that parental involvement has more positive effect on the education and literacy development of their children than other family background variables, such as social class, family size, and level of parental education (Flouri and Buchanan 2004); that it improves student emotional well-being (Allen and Daly 2002; Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Epstein 2005); that parents reading with their children at home yields positive results on language comprehension, reading achievement, and expressive language skills (Gest, Freemen, Domitrovich and Welsh 2004); and that parent involvement leads to improved educational performance, greater cognitive competence, and greater problem-solving skills and fewer behavioural problems (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis 2002; Fan and Chen 2001; NMSA 2003; Van Voorhis 2003). More research also shows that parents' involvement in children's learning positively affects the children's performance at school (Fan and Chen 2001; Morrison 2007; Feinstein and Symons 1999); improves pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe 1991); fosters better student classroom behaviour and fewer behavioural problems at school (Fan and Chen 2001; NMSA 2003; Melhuish, Symons, Siraj-Blatchard and Targgart 2001); and that parental involvement in their children's reading is the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy (Bus, van Ijzendon and Pellegrini 1995).

Parental involvement is the participation and support of parents at school and in the home, which directly and positively impacts the educational performance of their children. Dixon (1992), Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), and Gonzalez-Mena (2011) define parental involvement as a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and child. There are two broad categories to parental involvement namely: parents' involvement in the life of the school and parents' involvement in support of the child at home and school. The term parent

involvement is used when schools are the unit of analysis and children's academic achievement is the primary focus (Lawson 2003). Lawson argues that research on parent involvement looks at how parents are engaged in activities that are designed by the school and their involvement tends to be classified along a 'schoolcentric' continuum. On this continuum, parents have little power over school decision-making processes, and their involvement ranges from participating in extra-curricular school-sponsored activities to serving as classroom assistants or participating on a school council serving as partners in problem solving. Epstein (1996) created a typology that characterizes six categories of ways that schools can be involved with parents. He offered these types of school and family connections as a framework that schools can use in developing programmes to encourage relationships with parents. This widely accepted framework is proposed as a guide to help educators develop comprehensive family-school partnerships.

The six types of parental involvement identified by Epstein (1996) include:

(i) parenting (helping families with child-rearing and parenting skills);

(ii) communicating (developing effective home-school communication);

(iii) volunteering (creating ways that families can become involved in activities at the school);

(iv) learning at home (supporting learning activities in the home that reinforce school curricula);

(v) decision-making (including families as decision-makers through school-site councils, committees, etc.) and

(vi) collaborating with the community (matching community services with family needs and serving the community).

Epstein's typology validates the work that parents do in the home as well as the school in support of their children's schooling. But the types of connections identified privilege the school's role in determining what counts as parents involvement. However, it is not evident that this characterization of parent involvement begins with exploration of what parents do already for their children, in ways visible and invisible to the school.

Because parent involvement is most often evaluated from the school's vantage point, parents whose activities do not look like the traditionally accepted behaviours associated with parent involvement or are not visible in the school are often classified in the literature as being minimally involved and most often, low-income parents are classified in this way (Lawson 2003; Lareau 2000; Lightfoot 2004). Researchers vary on the ways they frame low-income parents' minimal involvement. Lareau (1987) identified three perspectives taken in the literature. Some subscribe to the culture of

poverty thesis, arguing that lower class culture has distinct values and forms of social organization, and thus lower class families do not value education as highly as middle class families. Others accuse schools of institutional discrimination, claiming that they make middle class families feel more comfortable than lower class families. Finally, some researchers argue that institutional differentiation, particularly the role of the teacher leadership, is a critical determinant of parental involvement in schooling. While these stances are different from one another in critical ways, they all operate from the schoolcentric model. That is, they seek to explain low levels of involvement among low-income parents from the vantage point of the school.

Building on this perspective, this research explored the ways parents can and do act as resources for their children's education. Through examining the activities of ten mothers, we asked the following questions:

(a) How do Nigerian mothers in a middle-income neighbourhood conceptualize their roles in their children's education?

(b) What are the challenges they face in enacting these roles?

Our purpose is to use concrete examples of parents' practices in relation to their children's literacy education to construct a framework for examining parent involvement and to illustrate ways that parents serve as intellectual resources for their children's learning. Our findings are not representative of all Nigerian mothers.

Methods
Ten mothers living in a middle-income neighbourhood located in Onitsha, Onitsha North Local Government Area in Anambra State, South-East Nigeria, whose children attend a public primary school in the area, participated in the study. It is important to note that while we speak to issues related to parent involvement, all of our data come from mothers. This is in line with Gadsden's position that mothers are often the default category in parent-child studies (Gadsden 2002). Although the mothers live in the same neighbourhood, there were distinct variations in their demographic variables such as age, level of education, employment status and household description (their ages ranged from 27–52 years, seven have Bachelors Degree, while three have National Certificates in Education; five had full-time employment while the rest are unemployed and eight lived in a two-parent household with two living as single mothers).

Data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the interview was to get specific and in-depth information from a representative of Nigerian mothers on their thoughts and experiences with their own and their children's literacy education, both in school and

out of school as well as details about their relationship/interactions with their children's school and teachers and the challenges, if any, they face in enacting this role. Each mother was interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes using a predetermined set of questions. Eight out of the ten interviews took place in the homes of the participants which allowed the researchers to observe practices and artefacts related to the parents' descriptions. The remaining two interviews took place in the school as requested by the two participants. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

We started the analysis by first reading through the interviews and field notes from home observations to identify the salient cross-cutting themes and patterns in the parents' perspectives and practices. Later, we looked for themes across parents. Our analysis of the themes shed light on a number of patterns in the ways these parents were involved in their children's literacy education that may not have been discovered using the 'schoolcentric' approach. We examined these themes in the light of Epstein's six types of involvement, looking for overlap, conflicts and additional types of involvement.

Results

The results of our study showed that some of the ways the participants were involved in their children's literacy education may not fit the 'schoolcentric' definitions of parental involvement, given that the ten mothers interviewed were highly involved in their children's education. We found that all the mothers played clear roles as advocates for their children's education and made personal efforts to identify and create opportunities for their children's learning outside of school. First, we explore the forms that their advocacy took and then consider the different ways the parents positioned themselves as advocates. Second, we look at the ways they created learning opportunities for their children outside of school.

Mothers as Advocates for their Children's Education
All the mothers interviewed took their roles as advocates for their children's education seriously. They showed evidence of thinking proactively and strategically with great expectations about their children's futures and the kinds of opportunities they wanted them to have. Some mothers indicated that they expected their children to grow up and become prominent people in society. A participant aged 39, who is a mother of three children aged eight, ten, and twelve said, 'I look forward to seeing my children becoming prominent men and women in the society. I want them to be doctors, lawyers, engineers or university lecturers'. Specifically, these mothers clearly expected their children to do well in school and become university graduates and get

good and well paying jobs. This position is supported by (Sailor 2004) who stated that majority of the parents want their children to perform well in school academically and behaviourally. However, most of them admitted that meeting this goal is an uphill task and would require overcoming considerable barriers. For instance, a participant aged 44 and a mother of two children aged eight and eleven said 'finding a good school for the kids, being able to pay the school fees, providing books and materials required and meeting up with school runs are quite a challenge'. This is why they all acknowledged the importance of education in the aspirations of their children.

The desires of these mothers were not limited to success in school. Several parents were clear about their responsibilities in raising their children in their particular social context. Independence was a strong theme in the voices of these mothers. A participant aged 40 and a mother of four children aged six, eight, ten and twelve said, 'I want my children to become independent so as to be able to do things on their own with or without help. I give them responsibilities for household chores as early as five/six years like sweeping the house, washing of plates, fetching water, emptying dust bins etc. They all indicated the importance of independence and self-reliance and expected their children to become independent and self-reliant from an early age. This informed the way they reared the children – some gave their children responsibilities which included household chores as early as possible.

The aspirations these mothers had for their children's futures made them play an advocacy role in their children's education. While only four of the mothers we interviewed were able to spend considerable amount of time at the school, all ten found ways to monitor their children's progress through checking daily school work to ensure daily note copying, assignment copying and passing of assignment for marking They checked for teacher errors sometimes, writing notes to teachers, visiting the classroom, discussing with the teachers and, assisting with homework, navigating the terrain of an unfamiliar approach to teaching literacy by discussing with the teacher in order to understand and learn a particular approach. They did so in order to teach it to their children and also ensure that they were doing it right, and found information or resources they needed to address gaps in their understanding through using encyclopaedias, CD software on reading and writing for children and also employing a paid teacher for extra lessons at home for their children.

Monitoring Progress
We noted how closely the mothers in this study monitored their children's progress in school. They had all developed strategies for gathering information about their children's school work on a regular basis and seemed to know

how well their children were doing at school and where they were having difficulty. A greater number of them used homework or some other activities to monitor their children's progress. A participant explained how she uses note writing to the teacher to clear up confusion over homework.

> Good morning, Aunty Nkem, Ugonna came back with his homework on reading comprehension, but did not understand exactly what he is asked to do with it. Could you please be specific so he will be properly guided?

Some mothers were able to spend time at school to monitor their children's progress while others explained that they used homework or other activities at home to monitor their progress and still some others used conversation and shared reading to monitor their children's progress and usually write notes to teachers to clear up confusion over homework.

Homework Assistance

As shown earlier, the participants indicated that they played a great role in assisting their children with homework. It was evident that most mothers had routines and structures associated with homework. They explained that they encouraged their children to do their homework alone, without assistance, and then they mark and correct them. Sometimes they hire a private lesson teacher at their expense to help with the school work when it became too difficult. That is, the participants employ a private teacher to teach their children difficult school work they do not have the capacity to handle at home after school on a number of agreed days in a week at a specific time.

Provision of Learning Opportunities Outside of School

Another pattern that cut across the entire participants is the extent to which they provided learning opportunities for their children outside of school that may not be visible to the school and may not be understood as parental involvement in the 'schoolcentric' definition. These opportunities took the form of daily, household, or family activities that the mothers saw as educational examples, teaching children certain words and pronunciation through games like Scrabble, Monopoly, and chess; through family activities like birthdays; Mothers and Fathers Day, cultural festivals like New Yam festival, Christmas and New Year celebrations where children are asked to write up a plan and their expectations for the party and a speech for the occasion; and during cooking, where children are asked to spell and read out the cooking instructions including ingredients and method of cooking. Some of these opportunities were spontaneous, while others were calculated and included purchase of educational materials. It is worthy of note that

these mothers provided distinct learning experiences such as pronunciation, spelling and meaning of words and sentences for their children in reading and writing, as well as other experiences that were not subject-specific; for example, taking them to the state library and zoo. All these examples are ways that enhance the literacy development of children which the home offers but not quite recognized as 'schoolcentric' activities.

In creating informal learning opportunities outside of school, three mothers explained that they ask their children to spell the various items in the home in general, writings on billboards and pronounce them properly to improve the literacy education of their children. They also buy books (for example, the Ladybird series), educational games and materials such as scrabble, give them books as gifts on their birthdays, watch literacy-related television programmes such as Sesame Street and purchase educational CDs and DVDs on reading and writing that fit the mould of school-based activities.

Discussion

This paper has looked at how Nigerian mothers in a middle-income neighbourhood conceptualized their roles in their children's literacy education. We found parents to be involved in their children's education in a variety of ways. Yet, the forms their involvement took were not typically recognized as parent involvement, particularly when articulated by those working in schools. The aspects of parental involvement of the ten mothers interviewed include involvement in children's learning and involvement in children's schooling.

By involvement in children's learning, we mean the ways that mothers work to structure, foster, support their children's learning in a variety of contexts, not just those that are related to school. All the ten mothers in the study engaged substantially in this form of involvement. For example, as mentioned earlier, some mothers reported using various items in their homes to improve the literacy education of their children. This is not in line with Lawson (2003), who observed that parent involvement when used by the schools is understood as activity that is visible to school officials and teachers, such as volunteering in the child's classroom or attending school meetings. However, this finding is supported by Epstein (1996), who included both schools and homes as sites for involvement.

Involvement in children's schooling refers to the ways mothers took active roles in supporting their children's progress in school. This includes assisting with homework and communicating with the teacher when difficulties arose. All ten mothers engaged in this sort of activity, but to differing degrees and in different forms and were able to monitor children's

progress in school, whether through the traditional modes of communication (such as volunteering in a child's classroom, notes between the teacher and parent, or report cards) or alternative avenues to check up on a child's progress.

Another finding that needs to be mentioned here is their active involvement in Parent Teachers Association (PTAs) which may be referred to as involvement in children's schooling. The ten mothers interviewed have an active presence in the school through volunteering and attending school functions especially during PTA meetings. We also identified significant challenges that parents faced with respect to being involved in the literacy education of their children. These include confusion in teaching the right spelling and pronunciation to their children by some unqualified teachers, work schedule, lack of time, taking care of other children, a dearth of reference books and how to help with their children's homework when it becomes difficult.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research was carried out to examine the ways mothers acted as intellectual resources in their children's literacy education. The findings revealed that these mothers acted as advocates for their children and created opportunities for their children to be literate through every day realistic situations for learning, even though some of their activities are not actually seen as school parental involvement based on some of the literature on parental involvement.

Parents are already making significant contributions to their children's development. It is the responsibility of schools to help parents expand upon what they are already doing. We therefore challenge administrators, educators and families to make education a genuine community enterprise. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that further research be carried out to understand the knowledge parents draw on in undertaking this work and to consider ways that the work of parents can supported within schools. It would also be useful to survey student learning outcomes based on two study groups – one of parents who are involved in their children's education and those who are not. This would allow for some clarification on the efficacy of parental involvement on student learning outcomes.

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Parents' Engagement in Adult Literacy and its Impact on their Children's Schooling

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Abstract

This study examined the positive impact of adults' engagement in literacy classes and its relation to the retention and performance of their children's schooling. It was hypothesized that adults who are pursuing personal goals by engaging and attending literacy classes when perceiving the instrumentality value of the learning activities have their children attend and succeed at their schooling. A mixed research methodology combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was used to collect and analyse data. Respondents included 132 adult learners and 20 volunteer teachers from ten different adult literacy classes across Togo. Results have shown that adults who engaged in learning and performed and persevered while attending literacy classes, show positive behaviours to their children and consequently were able to be involved in their children's schooling by encouraging them to learn for better achievement and performance in school.

Key Words: Adult Literacy; Performance and Perseverance; Education role models.

Résumé

Cette étude analyse les effets positifs de l'engagement des adultes dans les cours d'alphabétisation et son impact sur le maintien et la performance de leurs enfants à l'école. Le postulat est que lorsque qu'ils prennent toute la mesure de la valeur des activités d'apprentissage, les adultes -poursuivant des objectifs personnels à travers leur engagement et la fréquentation des cours d'alphabétisation- voient leurs enfants fréquenter régulièrement l'école et réussir. Les données ont été collectées et analysées selon une méthodologie mixte de recherche combinant approches qualitative et quantitative. Ont été interrogés 132 apprenants adultes et 20 enseignants volontaires empruntés à dix différents cours d'alphabétisation pour adultes à travers le Togo. Les conclusions ont permis d'établir que les adultes engagés dans un apprentissage, performants et persévérants pendant les cours avaient un comportement positif à l'égard de leurs enfants et étaient donc aptes à s'impliquer dans la scolarisation de leurs enfants en les encourageant à apprendre à faire mieux et plus à l'école.

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Introduction

A major change in educational settings is the increasing number of adults enrolling as students in educational programmes (Bourgeois 1996; Carré 1997; 1998) and in literacy classes (Thomas 1990; Comings 1995). In recent years, many African countries have also registered many adults as students in literacy classes, particularly adult women (Amenyah 2005; 2011).

According to Comings and colleagues (2000), adults choose to participate in education-based activities by making an active decision to engage and to learn. Paraphrasing Brookfield (1986) about purposeful learning in adult educational settings, it can be seen that adults make an active decision regarding their perspective to overcome significant barriers as parents to attend classes that require hundreds of hours of learning in order to acquire knowledge and skills.

Different studies based on adult education have shown that adults engage in education for the sake of learning (Balleux 2000; Villemagne 2011) but many do not persist while attending classes (Gartner 2005; Amenyah et al., 2010). Other studies have shown that adults engage in learning with personal goals (Bourgeois 1998; 2009), because they have perceived the value of learning activities (Eccles and Wigfield 2002; Phalet et al., 2004) and they have tried to determine their outcomes or benefits and performance to themselves and their families. So, when adults students decide to attend classes and persevere in learning, it is because of the value related to its impact (Monnoye 2007).

The present study explores the relation between adults' engagement in literacy classes and its impact on their children's retention and performance in school. We postulate that when adult students, exclusively women, engage in literacy classes because of their perceived utility value, their behaviours serve and encourage their children to perform and succeed at school.

Engagement in Learning

Regarding the Expectancy-Value model, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) indicate that individuals engage in learning activities because they have perceived the value of the task and believed in their chance to succeed (expectancy). The value construct refers to the beliefs individuals have about reasons they might have to engage in the task and it includes mainly four components: importance, interest, utility and cost. The expectancy construct reflects individuals' beliefs and judgments about their capabilities to do the task and to succeed. Both, value and expectancy are seen as important predictors for individuals' future choice behaviour as: engagement, persistence, effort and achievement when considering their motivation to engage in learning (Pintrich

and Schunk 2002). In learning situations, choice, behaviour and persistence are seen as successful patterns and positive predictors to succeed (Feather 1982; Eccles et al., 1983; Dweck and Leggett 1988) and to achieve learning (Pintrich and De Groot 1990; Guan 2004).

Research based on Expectancy-Value model indicates that individuals engage in learning because of they have perceived the value of the learning task and believed they can succeed (Feather 1982; Eccles et al., 1998). In this regard, individuals refer to a question like 'why should I do the activity?', and responses include interest (I am interested in the activity), importance (the activity will help me to improve my self-image), utility beliefs (this topic is useful for my future or my different various activities) and cost (if I take this class, I will not be able to go to farm or sell my products). According to authors, importance, interest and utility are perceived to correlate positively with engagement, performance, persistence and effort; while cost is seen as the negative component (Wigfield and Eccles 1992; Pintrich and Schunk 2002). When considering importance, interest and utility of an activity, learners are confident that they can and will do well while engaging and persevering for achievement (Simons et al., 2004).

For many adult students who attend literacy classes, the first purpose they pursue while they engage in learning is to succeed in their economic activities in order to satisfy their primary family needs. In this perspective, there were many who choose to learn to write and to calculate as these two instrumental learning outcomes can help them in their daily activities. When adults decide to enrol in literacy classes, their first option is not to support their children in their schooling but this only comes later as a consequence of the learning content and beliefs.

According to Lens (2001), learning, performing and achieving in school, in educational programmes or elsewhere, are all intentional and goal-oriented activities. This intentionality can vary from the very simple (one single goal) to the very complex (multiple goals). For example, children or adults in learning have many, multiple or varied reasons to engage in a task while for the author, the individual goals that are striven for and which determine learners' motivation can be situated on two dimensions: intrinsic versus extrinsic goals and immediate versus future goals. The total motivation to learn is the combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and immediate and future time perspectives.

In literacy classes, adult learners were intrinsically motivated when they engaged in learning but they were more extrinsically motivated because the learning activities were done for the sake of the outcomes or other rewards that could be used for other different activities as their income-based activities that greatly contributed to sustaining their family needs.

Engagement in Literacy Classes

In literacy classes, adult students choose to engage in learning because they have perceived the value of the learning task and expected to succeed (Phalet et al., 2004) and because they were extrinsically motivated (Porter et al., 2005). Adults who attended literacy classes have not engaged because they were only motivated to learn (Vallerand and Thill 1993; Viau 1994) but because they have perceived that learning activities are significantly useful accomplishments in their own standing. In many African countries, literacy classes are generally associated or coupled to small credits that many adults can benefit from to increase their economic activities when they are invited to attend classes. This strategy has been set up to assist local community adults in which learning activities' perceived value is related only to its instrumentality or utility value. Recent research has, however, shown that perceiving the value of learning in literacy classes implies judgments on importance, interest and utility as adult learners are motivated by personal and extrinsic goals for engaging in learning and also their looking forward to possible outcomes to be earned (Simons et al., 2004; Stamler 2007).

After all, many adult learners (if not all) engage and participate in literacy classes with different and multiple goals (Sansone and Harackiewicz 2000). It is not because adults are extrinsically motivated that they choose to engage and participate in learning whose outcomes are seen as advantageous to their future careers or their other current activities (Carré 2001).

The objective of literacy classes is to teach adults to learn to write, to read and to calculate in their local language and also to acquire 'skill-based learning'. Through the new development, literacy classes are organized to target local populations in their communities and classes have to be available and reachable (Unesco 2006). Thus, classes are organized in market places in urban areas and community centres in rural areas to facilitate access (Amenyah 2005).

Instrumentality Value of Literacy Classes

For many adult students, engaging in literacy classes means to learn to write, to read and to calculate with the perspective to succeed on their economic activities (Vella 2002; Comings 2007). For many adult learners, engaging in literacy classes means to benefit from the loan that is needed for their economic activities' success. The focus while performing learning activities which are supported by their personal goals is their family basic needs. But it seems that adult learners who are extrinsically motivated are exploring other different aspects of the learning activities that can help with special outcomes and benefits for themselves and also their family (Bourgeois

2006,; 2009; Bourdon 2010). In this view, Aubret (2001) assumes that when adult learners engage in learning activities, they perceived learning in the perspective of their career, their relation to themselves and to others. How then do adult learners' own attitudes towards learning and persistence in school influence their own children's education? Certainly, adult learners' primary choice is related to their work and also their relation to others importantly their children.

Children's Retention and Performance in School

In the past decades when adults engaged in literacy classes, their personal goals were oriented to instrumental learning and importantly to writing and calculating learning. But once they persevere on learning and engage in skills-based learning activities that are taught, the goals they pursue change in direction and intensity as their learning progresses. With skills-based learning activities, they are able to explore new relations with their children.

In recent research, psychologists and sociologists have been interested in parental expectations about their children's achievement in school and their future occupational attainment (Salkind 2008). Most research tends to characterize parent expectations as realistic beliefs and judgements that they have about their children's future achievement. Surely, every parent has the same concern and illiterate parents attending literacy classes too have concerns about their children's retention and performance in school. Some empirical studies have also shown relations between parental expectations and student achievement. It is important to note that once parents have started to learn in literacy classes, they understand that they can relate their learning achievement to other goals that are not identified while engaging in learning.

In that regard, parents who hold high expectations for their children's performance in school or grades on examinations, their children tend to subsequently receive higher grades, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, hold higher aspirations for their future educational and occupational attainment and persist in their schooling (Boekaerts et al., 2000). At the same time, when adult parents are succeeding in their own learning, they are able to ascertain their children's learning and performance in school.

With literacy classes, parents too have expectations for their children's achievement in school and future occupational attainment, but most of them are illiterate and unable to follow subsequently their children's progression or improvement during their schooling. In recent research, Robinson-Pant (2004) concludes that illiterate women are likely to send their children to school as literacy programmes are designed to address the perspective.

Other field research investigates the positive aspect of the persistence in learning (Lebel et al., 2007) and demonstrate that when adults persevere in literacy classes, benefits and skills acquired are directly oriented to their children's retention and performance in school.

In summary, adult learners engaged in learning in literacy classes with personal goals. With learning progression, they too will have expectations for their children's educational achievement in school. To attain their objective, they have to strive to achieve all learning activities that were taught in classes and to persevere while performing learning activities and persevere while attending classes and try to behave in a way that encourages children in their own schooling. By doing so, adult learners relate their own learning achievement to their children's learning retention and performance in school and they try to behave in ways that encourage the children in their schooling because their own attendance serves as model and example. To understand the relation between adult learners' engagement in literacy classes and its impact on their children's retention and performance in school, field research was conducted during April/May 2008 and used a mixed methodology to collect data.

Methods

To understand the positive relation between adult learners' engagement in literacy classes and its diverse impact on children's children retention and performance in school a mixed methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches was used to collect and analyse data. The positive aspect of the methodology used was to cross-analyse data collected in order to appreciate their relevance and effectiveness. Respondents included adult learners, volunteer teachers and their supervisors from 10 literacy classes reached across Togo, in West Africa. Descriptive and correlation analyses were used for quantitative data while in-depth analysis presented in form of monographs, was used to analyse qualitative data.

The sample distribution (see Appendix 1) covered the 10 literacy classes and it comprised 152 respondents of which 132 were learners, exclusively women. Ninety-seven learners were from rural areas and 35 were reached in urban areas. On the whole, there were 20 volunteer teachers of which 30 percent were women. Within a sample of teachers, 25 percent were supervisors. Data were collected in April and May 2008 by interviews and questionnaire. The questionnaire focussed on individual characteristics and applied to respondents whereas interviews were conducted at either individual or group level. In total, 52 individual and 10 group interviews were conducted; this was combined with quantitative data for all the 152 respondents.

Learners' ages ranged from 20 to 70 years and teachers' ages ranged from 25 to 56 years. Respondents were single, married, divorced or widow. Learners' educational level covers three parameters: no instruction, primary level and secondary level. The time spent in attending classes varied a lot. Four categories were identified: up to 3 months (short-time period, SP), up to 6 months (average period, AP), up to 9 months (long-term period, LP) and indefinite period (IP) as some learners do not remember the number of months spent.

Variables examined through interviews included different and various topics among which learners' engagement in learning, learning achievement behaviours and learning outcomes for their immediate family such as children retention and performance in school.

Results

Prior to focus on variables measuring learners' engagement, achievement behaviours and learning outcomes for the direct family, such as their children, descriptive and correlation analyses were used to determine learners' mean age (M = 43.6 and SD = 11.72) and teachers' mean age (M = 41.9 and SD = 8.36). Seventy-eight percent of learners were married and the others were divorced, single and widow. Ninety percent of teachers and supervisors were married; ten percent were single. In terms of prior learning, a little over half of the learners (53 percent) have never had any formal education whatsoever; 33 percent had primary education; 14 percent had secondary education. Eighty percent of the learners in rural areas had no prior formal education while there were 52 percent of respondents from urban areas who had no prior formal education either. Among the teachers and supervisors, 50 percent had primary education and 50 percent secondary education. One teacher had high school education (Advanced level) and one supervisor had university education level. Main characteristics of learners are summarized in Appendix 2.

Engagement in Learning

Four specific learning activities were reported as taught in literacy classes because they are related to personal goals pursued (learning outcomes) by adult learners. They include: writing, reading, calculating (arithmetic) and a 'discussion' of life issues. The first three activities were referred to as 'instrumental learning' (numeracy, literacy and writing skills); and the fourth one was referred to as 'skills-based learning'. The following scripts represent some learning goals as described by a representative sample of adult learners engaged in literacy classes.

I have followed the literacy classes to learn how to do calculation [arithmetic] so that if I see cars' registrations number; I can read them and so they [car drivers] cannot 'cheat' me anymore when I charged the products (Afi, Hanoukopé).

We have attended literacy classes to learn to know certain things, like writing and signing with my name, that we do not know before, so we can educate ourselves and others (Eugenie, Atsokou).

Analyses of learners' learning goals show that many (if not all) were extrinsically motivated when they were engaging in literacy classes. Lots of learners were oriented to outcomes to be earned from learning activities. Each learning goal pursued is associated with one or more learning activities to achieve. Learners who engaged in literacy classes attributed their learning behaviour to specific learning goals that they have perceived the value. We found too that adult learners have engaged in literacy classes in order to achieve 'instrumental learning' [or acquire basic skills in writing, reading and calculating] as they were related to their economic activities and to acquire 'skills-based' learning. They strove to achieve learning a they perceived learning to be 'important', 'interesting' and 'useful'.

Analyses show too that learners engaged in learning, perceived the value of 'instrumental learning' for their economic activities and for their self-image. Learners who perceived the value of 'skills-based' learning, orient outcomes to achieve their family concerns. We found that many learning engaged in literacy with these specific perspectives. In sum, they have chosen to engage and to attend classes to achieve learning activities as they present outcomes for their economic activities, their family and particularly for themselves.

Learning Achievement Behaviours

Results showed that the time spent attending literacy classes varies considerably. Three forms of persistence were observed with adults engaged in learning: low attendance level (14 %), average attendance level (72 %) and high attendance level (14 %).

Analysis shows that learners with average and high level of persistence in literacy classes present positive behaviours patterns in achievement of the goals pursued while engaging in learning. We have found too that when learners persevered with learning, the perception they have on learning value are wide and in many cases it is in favour of their relation to their children attending school and the whole family. In clear, with these two attendance levels, learners were not only focussed on 'instrumental learning' directed to their economic-based activities but they were also able to show strong

interest in their own learning achievement and retention because, with the time spent in literacy classes and by perceiving the value of 'skills-based learning', they orient directly to the outcomes on the family and importantly to their children's performance at school and their future career.

The following short monographs of two learners, one with an average attendance level in a rural area and the other with a high attendance level in an urban area, show how the perception of the value of learning activities varies to focus on their children' schooling:

Dovi: A learner with a continuous participation

Regarding Dovi, her engagement in literacy classes occurs in Atsokou village where she is a native, mother of five girls and a member of the women's local association. The interview was conducted while she was still attending literacy classes after many breaks and at the time when the number of learners has decreased considerably. She engaged in literacy classes to learn principally to write in order to be able to benefit from the credits which were granted to women members of the association. Formerly, she had to put her fingerprint as all the other members whereas she had attended primary school in her young childhood but had given up at the elementary second year (CP2). After a few months of classes, she signs today with her name to receive the credits and to save funds on an account she has opened with the local cooperative. During the classes, Dovi saw some changes in her personal goals like supporting her daughters on their schooling; the fight against cheating in the market, so on. From time to time, Dovi cannot attend the classes because she is obliged to remain at the disposal of the sharecroppers whom she engaged to work in her farm. Like the others learners, she has to manage in order to reconcile learning activities and her agricultural activities in the farm which is the principal income for her family. In this way, Dovi is not able to attend her learning classes on a regular basis but she has noticed that while she was attending the literacy classes, her daughters too like going to school but when she stopped, they too are lazy going to school. So Dovi cannot remember the time spent to attend classes because she is shifting between her literacy classes and her agricultural activities but she did not drop out. Presently, she paid extra time learning work for her daughters in order to help them succeed in school. Today, Dovi felt herself totally valorised by learning achieved by attending classes since she shows a new image of herself to her daughters and, consequently, she is perceived differently in her family and also makes future plans with them all.

Améyo: A learner with successful achievement

Regarding Améyo, her engagement in literacy classes happened in Adawlato market, the biggest and quite famous market of Lomé where various goods are traded. Améyo has not attended school because she was placed in her childhood with relatives and she was only authorized to go to market with her supporter. At the moment of the interview, she had already finished the classes and had obtained the certificate. Améyo engaged in literacy classes in order to learn to read the Bible so she will be able to read it at church and also follow the schooling of her children. Améyo had no prior education as she had never been to school but she had admired her supporter's children in their uniform and with their shoulder bag attending school. Although, she did not know anything about school but she has to make it understandable to her children who are attending school that they should study, study hard to succeed with distinction. While attending literacy classes, she said she tried out what she was asking and requiring from her children but at the same time she is seeing a decrease in their learners' number day to day. She persevered in learning as she had a positive image of school and had too to show the example to her children and finally she had too to achieve her personal goals. During the interview, she showed full satisfaction and the pleasure she had gained during the literacy classes, especially the adjustment of the learning schedule which did not prevent her from trading and the possibility of counting on her neighbouring sellers during her classes. Today, Améyo complained a lot because literacy classes were over and she would wish that they reorganize them with the same scheduling. She reads, writes and calculates but she had not enough reading learning achieved since the pursued goals which brought her to engage in literacy classes were not attained. At end, she preserved good relationship with others learners. In her family, she developed new relationships with her children who are satisfied with her. But for her, learning is largely insufficient because she would strongly like to continue the classes in order to be able to read.

Analyses of learners' learning choice, achievement, behaviours and persistence, point to diverse findings regarding goals attainment, learning performance, achievement beyond pursued goals and their influences on their children retention and performance in school. Concerning the first case, when the learner tried out to drop out from literacy classes, the behaviour displayed affects directly the daughters' retention in school as they too tried to withdraw from school. With the second learner, without having any prior education, the learner encourages and requires from her children to study hard and to succeed at school and that is what they are doing because it is their mother's expectations for them. In this way, literacy

classes constitute an opportunity for her too to experiment and to insist on her wishes. In both cases, the learners have a positive image of school and of educational achievement. We found too that learners engaged in learning in literacy classes attend classes not only to learn and to achieve the goals pursued but also to replicate what school attendance recommends and to serve their children's interest. They have recognized that the effects of their personal behaviours while attending literacy classes are not neutral in their children's educational achievement as, they, parents are their first model. And consequently, the way they behave when they chose to persevere on learning and to perform has direct positive or negative effects on their children's retention in school.

As can be seen in the preceding paragraphs, the first learner is still attending the literacy classes with lots of breaks while the second learner completed the classes over the fixed period. The first learner came from a rural area where agricultural activities are dominant in cyclical periods and the second learner was a trader in the big market in urban area where selling activities require six days attendance per week. Learners' local context and personal goals pursued are different but literacy classes' objectives are the same and focus on similar and predefined activities which include 'instrumental learning' and 'skills-based' learning.

Learning Achievement and Outcomes

Analyses show that both learners have performed different and specific learning activities which were supported by their personal goals. Dovi, the first learner writes and signs with her name to receive credits and/or to save money with the local cooperative. Améyo, the second learner reads, writes and calculates and she can also use a calculator to do some operations in her selling activities. In both cases, learners engaged in literacy classes have experienced 'instrumental learning' that they have desired to learn and to develop with literacy classes. Moreover, learners have also performed 'skills-based learning' as they have persevered while attending and achieving learning activities. It is important to note that none of learners have engaged in literacy classes by pursuing goals that related to 'skills-based learning' that they have achieved because they imply discussion about 'life issues' such as girls' education, immunization, water and sanitation, and so on. However, learners who have persevered with learning were able to perform them because they were not only able to participate in discussion but that help them to have broad understanding of different issues including in learning activities and through which they have reinforced their comprehension of educational achievement and performance to attain in school.

We found too that learners engaged in literacy classes have achieved the goals that have motivated them to learn. More specifically and on her side, Dovi achieved goals that have motivated her to engage and to learn in literacy classes. That can be a sufficient reason for her to withdraw from classes but she has considered her girls' retention in school. And for that reason, she has to continue attending literacy classes as they are still on. On the one hand, Dovi has improved her knowledge by achieving 'skills-based learning' which was oriented toward her daughters' educational achievement in school. On the other hand, Améyo has performed all 'instrumental learning' activities taught in literacy classes as her goal was to learn to read only but she has not achieved the goals pursued while engaging in literacy classes because she is not able to read the Bible at Church. But she has acknowledged that she has gained, and literacy classes have positive impact on her children's educational achievement in school. Finally, achievement attained, performance realized and persistence observed by learners are considered as positive outcomes which are relevant and determinant in their children's retention and performance in school. In summary, learners engaged in literacy classes to learn have achieved in different ways 'instrumental learning' activities of reading, writing and calculating and they have also picked up 'skills-based learning' activities which were observed to resulting from their persistence, choice and performance that have direct impact on their children in school.

Discussion

The contribution of this paper is to show the relation between adults' engagement in learning in literacy classes and children's retention and performance in school. It appears clearly from different results that adults' engagement in learning, participation, choice behaviours, achievement and persistence in literacy classes are motivated and supported by different factors that are determined by learners' immediate and direct environment, personal goals pursued and the perspectives they clearly have or not concerning their own life's improvement and their children's future achievement and aspirations.

As noted by Brookfield (1986), 'adults engaged in purposeful learning' and for Lens (2001), 'adults chose to participate in learning for its instrumentality value'. As indicated by our results, goals pursued while adults choose to engage and to participate in learning are strongly and extrinsically motivated by their economic activities, their social life aspiration and other personal goals oriented onto themselves. However, looking forward to influence on their family life's conditions and importantly their children's educational achievement, the goals pursued while adults are entering in learning have changed in direction and in intensity into 'skills-based learning' (Forster et al., 2001; Bourgeois 2006).

Within Expectancy-Value Model, Eccles and Wigfield (2002) and Feather (1982) indicated that individuals have different reasons for engaging in different achievement tasks. When extrinsically motivated, individuals engage in activities for instrumental or other reasons. In-depth analyses of interviews have shown that adult learners have had different reasons that lead them to engage in learning in literacy classes and they were extrinsically motivated as goals were principally oriented to activities related to their basic needs and the improvement of their life existence (Bourgeois 2009).

Our results are consistent with the Expectancy-Value model in such a way that choice behaviour, performance and persistence are achieved toward learning activities. How do these findings relate to Feather (1988) who worked mainly on adults' engagement in learning? In the current study, learning achievement was positively related to the extent to which performance to attain had subjective value. The results of our study add to the evidence that supports links between goals pursued and value of outcomes of learning activities.

One issue that will require further conceptualization and research is the process around persistence by which adult learners participate differently in learning activities. Therefore, findings related to persistence showed some similarities to Comings (2007) and Porter and colleagues' (2005) research which demonstrated discrepancies in attending adults' literacy classes. Our results showed three different types of attendance levels. Variation in attendance level has much influence on learning activities' achievement. The findings revealed that learners who attended literacy classes during a short period were not able to deepen their knowledge with 'skills-based learning' which would help them to focus their own learning achievement with regard to their children's educational achievement. But learners who attended literacy classes during the average or long period were able to emphasize their own performance achieved in regard to their children's performance.

An important finding from this study is that the perception individuals have from one's self and from others. Within Expectancy-Value Model, authors deal with self-concept (Feather 1982; Wigfield and Eccles 1992; Eccles et al., 1998; Fredricks et. al., 2004). Our study results showed that adults who engaged in literacy classes felt uncomfortable about the image they showed of themselves to themselves and/or to others and of how they were perceived by themselves and by others (including their children). For themselves and for others, they were looked at as individuals or parents with no prior education and in many cases that conflicts with the 'ideal' self-image some children would like to have of their parents. The second

idea deriving from this finding concerns the parents' behaviour regarding educational settings. As children copy mostly from their parents because they are the primary care providers and first educators or models (Salkind 2008), children are highly influenced by parents. When Dovi withdrew from her literacy classes it influenced her children's retention in school. Améyo has a strong esteem for learning and has transmitted it to her children. Finally, when learners attend literacy classes, the perceptions they have of themselves and others have on them and the image they show of themselves to others are positive and they are full of self-confidence and they behave in such a way that their children rely on them and can involve themselves in their educational achievement.

Last, our results have practical implications in that they imply that engagement in adult literacy classes has a positive impact on children's retention and performance in school. Adults engaged in learning do not only provide an example to their children but also change the perception of the image their children have of them. Our findings shed light on many aspects regarding learning achievement, choice behaviours, performance and persistence in adult educational settings (Wigfield 1994; Pintrich and Schunk 2002; Amenyah et al., 2010). And different aspects will need further conceptualization and development in another paper.

Finally, this paper concludes by reporting that a positive relation between engagement in adult literacy classes and children's retention and performance in school exists. Further improvement and also discussion are needed in order to orient the debate towards the perspective to reverse trends by focussing on school enrolment rate in developing countries. In another way, advocacy and interventions can be undertaken in order to encourage adults to engage in learning in literacy classes in order to directly influence on their children's retention and performance in school.

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Appendix 1

Learners and teachers and their supervisors' number per site visited

	Site	Indicators	Numbers	%
Literacy classes	**Urban**	Abattoir	9	5,9
		Adawlato	9	5,9
		Attikpodzi	11	7,2
		Hanoukopé	6	4,0
		Teacher & supervisor	2	1,3
		Sub-total	**37**	**24,3**
	Rural	Agbodeka kopé	9	5,9
		Atsokou	15	9,8
		Gboto	51	33,6
		Klologo	12	8,0
		Kpavou	3	2,0
		Plakomé	7	4,6
		Teacher & supervisor	18	11,8
		Sub-total	**115**	**75,7**
Total	**--**	**--**	**152**	**100**

Appendix 2

Learners and teachers and their supervisors' number per site visited

	Site	Indicators	Numbers	%
Literacy classes	**Urban**	Abattoir	9	5,9
		Adawlato	9	5,9
		Attikpodzi	11	7,2
		Hanoukopé	6	4,0
		Teacher & supervisor	2	1,3
		Sub-total	**37**	**24,3**
	Rural	Agbodeka kopé	9	5,9
		Atsokou	15	9,8
		Gboto	51	33,6
		Klologo	12	8,0
		Kpavou	3	2,0
		Plakomé	7	4,6
		Teacher & supervisor	18	11,8
		Sub-total	**115**	**75,7**
Total	**--**	**--**	**152**	**100**

From the Will to the Field: Parent Participation in Early Childhood Education in Madagascar

Colleen Loomis* and Abdeljalil Akkari**

Abstract

Among state and international actors there is consensus that early childhood education (ECE) is important for future well-being of the child and that parent participation in various school activities is relevant. The willingness of actors in formal education to encourage parents to participate in their school activities varies. There remains a challenge of how to take the will of parents and mobilize it into participation in the field of ECE. In this paper we focus on parents' participation in ECE in Madagascar, placing that participation within an existing complex context of poverty, former colonialism, contemporary political instability, and international cooperation. We report on data gathered in Anatanarivo, Sakaraha, Toliera, and Betioky to show that there is suspicion between the state and parents in general and that unless current actors (parents, teachers, administrators, NGOs, and government) value parents' resources and create new ways for parent participation in the extractive model of schooling in place, the ECE cannot be enhanced and advanced.

Key Words: Early childhood education; school-parents relations; parent ethnotheories

Résumé

Les acteurs locaux et internationaux s'accordent à dire que l'éducation de la petite enfance (ECE) est importante pour le bien-être futur de l'enfant, et que la participation des parents à diverses activités scolaires est bien indiquée. Chez les acteurs de l'éducation formelle, ce désir d'encourager la participation des parents aux activités scolaires est variable. En effet, reste la problématique de prendre en charge la volonté des parents, puis la mobiliser pour la transformer en participation à l'éducation de la petite enfance. Dans cette étude, l'accent est mis sur la participation parentale à l'éducation de la petite enfance à Madagascar,

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alors même que cette participation doit se dérouler dans la complexité du contexte actuel caractérisé par la pauvreté, le passé colonial, l'instabilité politique contemporaine et la coopération internationale. Les données glanées à Antananarive, Sakaraha, Toliera et Betioky nous ont servi de base pour démontrer la persistance, en général, d'un soupçon entre l'Etat et les parents : l'éducation de la petite enfance ne pourra ni s'améliorer ni avancer tant que les acteurs actuels (parents, enseignants, administrateurs, ONG et l'Etat) ne valorisent les ressources parentales et trouver d'autres voies et moyens de faire participer les parents au modèle extractif de scolarisation en place.

Introduction

Imagine parents' participation in their children's formal education around the world, and then focus on sub-Saharan African contexts. Consider the context of poverty in which many families live and the limited resources that schools have from government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As anyone familiar with sub-Saharan African countries knows, there will be many differences in parents' participation in the school systems their children attend across the continent. Some will invest their time and money in their child's school, others will expect professionals to be solely responsible for educating their children, and still others will have no input at all because schools do not create opportunities for them to participate. If we narrow our focus to Madagascar where the majority of the population lives in extreme poverty, with 89.6 percent of the population living on less than $2 (USD) per day (World Bank 2011) and where many parents have very few years of formal education, then the situation is even more complex. Given this context, we need to ask what types of parent participation in early childhood education (ECE) exist and which forms of parental involvement are missing.

Research studying parent participation in Madagascar is hard to find so we draw on the extant literature. Parents' participation in their children's formal education has been found to be positively related to children's academic performance (Fan and Chen 2001; Jeynes 2003; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino 2004), is widely considered a hallmark of quality education (UNICEF), a stronger predictor of parental involvement than race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, and Aupperlee 2009) and important for engendering local community values and rendering education relevant to contemporary society (Kruger 1996). When there is a high quality relationship between the parent and the educator research shows that children have had enhanced academic learning and social outcomes (Dekkar and Lemmer 1993) even after controlling for quality of teacher-child interactions and parental characteristics of education level and educational activities at home performed with the child (Powell, Son,

File, and San Juan 2010). However, there are at least two studies recently conducted in the US that did not find a strong relationship between parent involvement and academic outcomes, though a positive relationship was found for social and behavioural outcomes; one with a sample size of over 11,000 (Graves and Wright 2011) and the other with over 1,000 students from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal 2010).

Strategies for advocating for parent participation are increasingly promoted by parents, schools, and NGOs (for example, *Aide et Action*; USAID) in developed and developing countries, but research on the role of parents in ECE is scant, perhaps because parent participation is under valued or not done effectively, as was the case found in a study of South African pre-school programmes (Bridgemohan 2002). Examining the role of parents and quality of ECE interventions is a new line of research (Britto et al., 2011) and therefore more research is needed.

Most of the research on parent participation comes from studies conducted in developed countries and in the developing country of South Africa, although recently there are high quality studies being published on the Madrassa pre-school programmes located in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania/Zanzibar (Malmberg, Mwaura, and Sylva 2011; Mwaura, Sylva, and Malmberg 2008). The Madrasa programme focuses on delivering high quality early childhood education with culturally appropriate content and parent involvement, but the primary focus reported to date is on children's developmental outcomes. The studies reported above are important to the topic of understanding parents' roles in ECE, yet research on parents in Madagascar is missing from the literature, so our goal here is to report on our research in Anatanarivo, Sakaraha, Toliera, and Betioky, Madagascar where we spoke with parents and grandparents about their participation in the affairs of the pre-school where their children attend.

In Madagascar interest in and support for public early childhood education is in the early stages of development, mostly through the support of NGOs. One organization in particular, *Aide et Action*, has recently focussed its efforts on capacity building so that communities may develop and sustain pre-school classrooms. The efforts of Aide et Action directed towards ECE were launched in 2011 with a focus on increasing the presence and intended positive effects of pre-schooling. A critical component of this organization's strategy is mobilizing parents. One of the organizations providing funds to Aide et Action for ECE in Madagascar (which requested anonymity) asked us to conduct research relevant to the initiative. We are engaged in a three-year research endeavour to examine the impact of public school ECE on

children, families and communities in Madagascar within the context of poverty, former colonialism and contemporary political instability and international cooperation. With decentralization of state bureaucracy more responsibility, and consequently participation, is demanded of parents. In this paper we report on findings from one of our first studies in which we collected data in May 2011 with a goal of describing parents' participation in ECE. We organize this report first by reviewing parent participation in ECE, next presenting our research questions, followed by method, findings, and discussion.

In the literature both terms 'parent involvement' and 'parent participation' are used in various ways. For the purpose of this study we use the term 'parent involvement' to refer to parents' participation specifically in their children's educational processes either in home or at school (for example, reading with their child or supervising homework) (Griffiths and Hamilton 1994). Parent involvement in this sense is consistent with the conceptualization that parents are partners with educators in the formal and informal education (Kruger 1998; Wolfendale 1989). Further, in some places, such as South Africa, parental involvement means that parents ensure their children attend school while they are within the required age range. In this way, parental involvement is compulsory by law. We use the term 'parent participation' to represent parents' interactions with children, teachers, and other actors to support the school.

Models and aspects of participation are many and varied. In South Africa research shows that clear, effective two-way communication from school to parent and parent to school is an important form of parental involvement which when used properly, can make a positive impact on the partnership (Lemmer and van Wyk 2004). Models of partnership are also important to understanding parental participation in schools. Again, we find the work of Eleanor M. Lemmer (2007) very informative in this regard. She presents various models of partnership and draws on the Epstein's (1987) theory to create a training programme to prepare parents for their involvement with schools. Joyce Epstein's theory centres on responsibilities that may be separate, shared or sequential between families and schools.

The literature is clear that having parents participate in multiple domains in effective ways positively impacts the livelihood of the school and children's academic and social learning. The question is not 'do we need parent participation', but rather 'how' do we do it considering parents' context. This question becomes more challenging when families live in impoverished conditions, the state does not care, and powerful and influential NGOs have an outsider perspective, such as is the case in Madagascar.

Research Context

As this study occurs within the context of Madagascar it is important to understand its context of poverty, former colonialism, languages, contemporary political instability, and international cooperation. The country of Madagascar gained independence from France in 1960. Since then there have been periods of political stability and the government's ability to provide education to all has varied over time, as have philosophies about education, particularly those concerning the role of languages and cultures, in which the concept of multiculturalism remains a sensitive topic. In this case multiculturalism refers to the 18 Malagasy tribes, Comorans, Indians, Chinese, and French and particularly extends to the choice and use of language. Malagasy is spoken throughout the country, though in the form of several regional dialects that differ significantly from the national dialect and from one another. The country has also experienced shifts in the language of instruction in schools from French to Malagasy, to incorporating English (in 2003) and reducing English (in 2010). Although these languages co-exist there is an educational and social stratification between the Malagasy and French, with French speakers having more formal education and being employed in positions with higher pay and power than those who do not speak French. Malagasy is the predominant language used in private and professional spheres and reports from the field show that knowledge of French is instrumentally used only to obtain a position of higher status while Malagasy is the language used in day-to-day business operations. With shifts in educational policies concerning languages, educators have variable ability in the French language and teaching practices using French vary widely, particularly in ECE.

In synthesizing the literature we argue that understanding parents' participation requires consideration of at least four aspects of this complex relationship among actors involved in ECE (parents, children, schools, and governmental and non-governmental organizations). Accordingly, in the current study our research objectives were to document parents' current participation with schools concerning pre-primary education and to describe parents' ethnotheories (that is, beliefs about how their children develop and learn), their hopes for and fears of formal schooling, and their expectations from government and NGOs.

Method

This research used an observational and survey study design. We collected data in May 2011 in Madagascar. During three weeks we visited seven pre-school centres, which were located at primary school sites in four locations. The number of pre-school centres visited follows in parentheses the name

of the city in which they are located: Anatanarivo (3), Sakaraha (2), Toliera (1), and Betioky (1). We conducted a focus group at each of the sites, except one in Sakaraha where logistical issues prohibited it. There were six focus groups with a total of 54 parents and grandparents who self-selected to participate in this study. Caregivers of children in pre-school were invited orally by local school staff to come to the school to talk with researchers in a group setting.

Interviews were conducted in the Malagasy language with the aid of and through a translator (a retired professor and former school commissioner from the southern region) who is also a member of the research team. The interview guide consisted of questions about forms of participation, thoughts on why pre-primary education is important, child development ideas (parent ethnotheories), and expectations from government and NGOs. The ordering of the questions varied (i.e., unstructured) in order to follow a conversational flow with the research participants. The interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours with two researchers leading it and a third researcher audio recording and taking field notes. We (the co-authors) of this study conducted the data analysis and interpretation.

Findings

In this section we report the findings from the group interviews, determined by our four research questions.

Document Current Involvement with Schools Concerning Pre-primary Education

Parental involvement is primarily in the management of the pre-school. A decentralized educational policy in Madagascar opened opportunities for parental involvement in school management with the committee representing the parents of school children playing an important role in the operationalization of decentralization. This is an important lever of parental involvement.

In the sites visited, we found that parental involvement ranges from passive participation (Sakhara rural site), to an average attendance (Tulear), and active participation (Sakhara urban site). In an urban school in Sakhara, we observed that the parents' association, which includes some merchants from the city, is very active and fully involved in decisions made about pre-school. For example, parents are sometimes involved in decisions on the construction of pre-school classes and other activities such as keeping the school kitchen. With the exception of Betioky, parents also participate in the financing of pre-schools, paying a fee in all sites investigated. The fee paid is variable, higher in Tana (4000 Ariary per month), lower in other regions (5000 Ariary every two months).

Parent Ethnotheories
During interviews with the parents we tried different ways to talk with them about their conceptions of education and early childhood. Despite conducting interviews in Malagasy or a local dialect by our translator, parents seemed very resistant to the idea of sharing with us their cultural conceptions of pre-school. Similarly, parents did not share with us their concepts of childhood, such as at what age a child is able to perform a particular household task or learns a special custom or aspect of local knowledge.

Parents' Beliefs, Hopes, and Expectations for Formal Schooling
In all the school sites visited (urban, rural, Tana Capital, South), we found a real passion among parents for schooling, pre-schooling in particular. Few parents explicitly refer to the importance of establishing a strong link between home and school, but they want their children to obtain a formal education. When asked about the desired model for pre-school, all parents interviewed in the focus groups described an urban model of private pre-school. Even though this model is out of reach for those parents of modest means, the private pre-school is the model of reference. Parents believe their children deserve schools and pre-school classes that resemble those of the city. Even at the level of architecture and organization of classes, the model based on the use of modern building materials cement and classes of the urban model are favoured. Parents also emphasized their right to enjoy the same public services as those that exist in urban areas.

Regarding the language of instruction, parents interviewed discussed the importance of pre-school using French, rather than Malagasy, which is spoken at home and in the local community. The reasoning of the parents, even if it seems unrealistic, is simple. Attending school regardless of the age of a child is seen as the only way out of poverty and moving ahead in life. But this perspective of this benefit from schooling is always thought of as outside of the local community. The expectations of parents in the development of the pre-school are linked to various reasons: they can focus on their daily tasks, have a primary preparation for their children, and a place for cultural imitation of the privileged, private and urban areas.

In interviews with parents of the rural school near Sakhara, many wished that the school would help their children to leave the community. It is true that this community lives in poverty and with subsistence agriculture, mining activity and sporadic insecurity (even in this rural town), many parents are very pessimistic about the future of their children. This uncertainty in the lives of parents and communities has a direct impact on schools. The permanence of children in school is low since the size of the school according to the director fell from 30 to 40 percent between the beginning and the end of the school year.

In all the sites visited, education is never seen as a means of developing the community from within. The pre-school is not seen as a way to improve the lot of the community but rather as a tool for individual advancement, forcibly removing children from the community for their own good. For this reason, we can present parents' conceptualization of formal schooling as an extractive model.

Parents' Expectations of Government and NGOs

Parents have high expectations from the government in infrastructure, construction of classrooms and teaching materials. On one of the school sites visited (rural school Sakhara), an interesting discussion ensued regarding the possibility that parents are involved in the construction of the class for the pre-school. Despite the fact that parents are building their own houses using local materials, very few have been willing to put their skills to building the pre-school. During our fieldwork, we observed high expectations of parents towards their governments and cooperation agencies. Expectations concerning priority infrastructure, school materials, support teacher salaries, and food were central to parents' remarks. Parents have explicitly requested that their needs are relayed to policy makers involved.

Discussion

Most of the international declarations and recommendations from research emphasize the importance of parental involvement in schooling. This involvement is particularly highlighted when it comes to pre-school, a turning point in the child's life between family, community and school life. Our field survey shows that the situation in Madagascar does not support a successful collaboration between parents and school in pre-school. Several reasons explain this finding. First, there is suspicion between the state and parents and an extractive model of schooling is in place. Not only is there international pressure to have ECE, there is also internal pressure in Madagascar both nationally and from parents. In South Africa two-way communications were found to be essential in fostering parental involvement (Lemmer and van Wyk 2004). Constrained communications in Madagascar in the education sector across all actors may be part of the problem we observed. A related second point is the resistance of parents to see a possibility of connecting the school to their cultures or their cultural conceptions of childhood. The pre-school is seen as a way to remove their children from the community by ensuring student success. Addressing parents' belief is critical so that the outcome is not a child lost from a community. One approach to doing this is to engage parents in educating children in ways that are both connected to the local community cultural resources and extended to multicultural knowledge.

The implementation strategy of Aide et Action is very original in the context of international cooperation. Not only does this organization emphasize the commitment of local employees, but it also implements a work methodology based on the mobilization of local communities. We found in Madagascar that Aide et Action employees are near to or present in the field. They have a thorough understanding of local realities and live close to the targeted communities. Central to their approach is the mobilization of parents. There may also need to be a mobilization of school actors to encourage parents to participate in meaningful and effective ways. However, the extreme poverty of the communities does not give these parents enough leeway to take action leading to the posture of waiting that we found among community members who participated in the study. Parents are waiting for more powerful actors to act on their behalf. Moreover, the mobilization of parents in the pre-school is difficult despite efforts by Aide et Action. Indeed, to mobilize sustainable development for ECE there must be many cultural resources and physical material which is not the case in the communities studied.

NGOs are dominant actors in the field of education in Madagascar and can play an important role in realizing the possibility for more and different types of parent participation. Yet, much work remains to be done. Without building on culture we do not have quality schooling, which is indicated by having appropriate schooling (Tawil, Akkari, and Macedo 2011). A duality exists in the relationship between community and school. On the one hand, both parents and teachers do not value local cultural resources – even parents say they want a French-speaking model of ECE. On the other hand, parents say that this type of schooling has no relevance to their lives and a child succeeding in school is lost to the community. This dilemma plays out in a complex history of colonialism and political instability that affects educational policies and practices. Unfortunately, we did not observe these and other cultural issues being addressed by NGO's conceptualizations of parental participation.

Paradoxically, we find that within the context of extreme poverty, parents' involvement with schools is mostly on the financial level and other forms of participation are rarely seen. The State, by the weakness of its resources (transport, teachers, funding), is virtually absent and cannot even pay the salaries of pre-school teachers. Consequently, one commonly used form of parent participation is to pay fees that pay teachers' salaries, among other things. School administrators also ask parents for financial support of the school in general, cooking, or bringing water to school and sometimes engaging them in administrative aspects such as constructing and maintaining buildings. This finding in Madagascar is similar to that found in South Africa

(Lemmer 2007). In Madagascar, it is clear that parents sustain the infrastructure of existing schools in their current modes of operation.

Limitations

As in all research this project has limitations that may guide future research. One limitation is the position of the researchers as a heterogeneous team of cultural insiders and outsiders (that is, not Malagasy, or if Malagasy not from the local region, even if familiar with it). This research was conducted collaborating with indigenous university professors and having former Malagasy teachers working as research assistants. It is impossible for us to give a native insider's account, but we have some resources to draw on that help us to understand structural inequality.

This study was not successful in hearing the voices of parents on their beliefs about what children know and do at varies ages of childhood, so we were unable to document parent ethnotheories. It may be that interviewing parents at a school does not facilitate communication on these topics if they consider it as a community issue rather than related to the school. A related methodological consideration is the cross-cultural interactions with strangers. It may be that in order to disclose this information parents need to have more time with researchers and develop individual conversations with researchers rather than in groups among peers and educators. Future research may want to consider conducting individual interviews on the topic rather than focus groups. Another aspect that may be important is for a researcher, including researchers from Madagascar, to spend time engaging with parents and developing a trusting relationship in advance of asking questions on this topic, and perhaps conducting future interviews with parents at home might make a difference in their willingness to share their beliefs about child development. Interviewing mothers in their homes in Madagascar has been used successfully by Mingat and Seurat (2010), who studied child development and parenting at home, so this approach may be adopted to investigate parents' beliefs on child development and ECE.

In our interpretation of the findings, a highly plausible explanation for a lack of disclosure on this topic may be that parents may erroneously think that outside knowledge is superior to local community knowledge (a form of internal colonization). This belief may be exacerbated by the limited ways in which parents participate with schools. We observe that schools ask parents to participate solely in management of material resources and salaries for teachers, so as a result parents may not feel like allied partners in the education of their children, excluding or at least undervaluing, their knowledge and role in informal education as part of children's schooling. These factors may contribute to parents' reluctance to share with indigenous and outside

researchers their views on child development and their observations at home and in the community (i.e., outside of the school). There is some evidence to support this explanation; parents defer to school actors and wait for others to initiate school activities. Understanding parents' wisdom about how children develop in their local culture can inform pre-school curriculum content and processes of engaging students. Our research team will step up efforts to talk to parents on this very important issue for the pre-school.

Conclusions

In Madagascar, ECE is situated in a context of extreme poverty that includes issues of food security, health, and sanitation. Working in solely one sector at a time (for example, health only or education only) renders the possibility of broad-based impact almost impossible. What is needed is a multi-sectoral approach that addresses health, food, and education together, as well as some shifts in ideologies and power sharing.

We are not naïve in what is required to change parental participation in ECE in Madagascar. It can be enhanced and advanced if current actors (parents, teachers, administrators, NGOs, and government) value parents' resources and create new ways for parent participation in Madagascar. Ultimately, valuing diverse resources is about power. Parent participation is about power and parents have less of it than other actors in ECE. Even though the state is weak it has bureaucratic power. The power of NGOs is largely in the form of money. Parents in Madagascar currently have no power. We propose that progress can be made in power sharing among ECE actors when parental participation is comprehensive.

A comprehensive conceptualization of parental participation is comprised of two models: an infrastructure model and a cultural resource model. Participation in an infrastructure model has a goal of making up for Madagascar's national problem of extreme poverty that includes issues of food security, health, sanitation, and education. In this model parents contribute significantly to the financial operations of ECE in schools. They bring water to school, cook, build classrooms, pay money, and find more money to pay teachers, and so on. The infrastructure model of participation is important and necessary but it is not sufficient. Participation of parents in a cultural resource model also is needed. In a cultural resource model parents would come into the classroom to speak about local trees, farming, herding, weather cycles, languages, cultural activities, etc. Yet, our data shows that all actors are ambivalent about the role of cultural resources in ECE. Although parents are living in impoverished circumstances, they still have resources that are untapped by schools. Parents may have lower levels of formal schooling, but in fact they still have education and ideas about early childhood

development and care and ECE. Parents are experts in local languages (or dialects), community, and religion, yet we found no evidence of school administrators and teachers engaging parents in co-educating children within a school setting or inviting parents to work with teachers in order to inform the curriculum and suggest educational activities that may be similar to those engaged in at home. Admittedly, there are areas of development for parents as well, as we found that some parents hold the idea that a child succeeding at school is a loss for community.

Addressing this belief is critical to changing school processes so the outcome is not a child lost from a community and one approach to doing this is to engage parents in educating children in ways that are both connected to the local community cultural resources and extended to multicultural knowledge bases. The education of children can be enhanced and advanced if current actors (parents, teachers, administrators) value parents' resources and create new ways for parent participation. We conclude that using both an infrastructure model and a culture resource model can provide a foundation for comprehensive parental participation that would contribute to reaping many benefits for all stakeholders in ECE.

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Husbands in Wives' Shoes: Changing Social Roles in Child Care among Cameroon's Urban Residents

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Abstract

Childcare has for a long time been the near exclusive responsibility of women and female house mates in Cameroon and other parts of Africa but contemporary urban challenges have forced many of these women and house mates to engage in activities that limit their ability to fully devote time to child care especially in urban contexts. There is also a growing change in social attitudes among males that has led to a blurring of traditional gender roles. As a result, some aspects of children's care have devolved to husbands or fathers. This paper challenges existing orthodoxies regarding gender roles by explaining new developments in child care by fathers among urban residents in Cameroon. What factors explain the increasing role that men are playing in the caring of their children and what implications do they have for household development and society? This paper addresses these issues using historical, anthropological, psychological and sociological methods and techniques of data collection and analyses.

Key Words: Fathers and childcare; changing gender roles; Urban life in Cameroon

Résumé

Depuis fort longtemps, l'éducation des enfants a été presque l'apanage des femmes et des femmes colocataires au Cameroun et dans d'autres régions d'Afrique. Mais les contraintes d'aujourd'hui ont poussé plusieurs de ces femmes et femmes colocataires à s'engager dans des activités qui réduisent le temps qu'elles peuvent consacrer à l'éducation des enfants surtout en milieux urbain. Le comportement social des hommes change aussi de plus en plus au point de rendre floue la frontière entre les rôles traditionnels dévolus aux uns et aux autres. Ainsi, certains aspects de l'éducation des enfants reviennent aux maris ou pères. Cette étude remet en cause les orthodoxies actuelles concernant le rôle réservé aux différents sexes, en analysant une nouvelle situation où les pères participent à l'éducation des enfants en milieu urbain au Cameroun. Quels facteurs expliquent le rôle croissant joué par les pères dans l'éducation de leurs

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enfants et quelles en sont les implications pour le développement des ménages et de la société ? Cette étude analyse ces questions, en utilisant des méthodes historiques, anthropologiques, psychologiques et sociologiques ainsi que des techniques de collecte et d'analyses des données.

Introductory Background

This paper was motivated by an interesting phenomenon: the fact that two colleagues in the same office leave the office early for home because they have to assist their wives with childcare. One of the colleague's wives had delivered twins while the other's wife was attending school. Every day both colleagues come to the office to talk about how they were helping in washing their children, preparing them for school, or taking them to the hospital. Before 2:00 pm they were out of the office to collect their kids from school, take them home and prepare something for them to eat. The colleague whose wife had twins had additional work to do with the children because the wife works far away from where they live, in Bamenda. The experiences of these two colleagues are indicative of the changing childcare roles that are happening to many families in urban Cameroon. In Douala, Yaounde, Bamenda and Buea where this research was conducted, there are many cases of husbands performing childcare activities hitherto unknown before the crippling economic crisis of the mid-1980s. This crisis together with an ever evolving urban milieu has fundamentally changed childcare today.

Research findings on childcare have generally painted a picture of women as the principal care-givers who also spend more time with children while men generally play an insignificant role and spend little time with these children, exceptions notwithstanding (Richter and Morrell 2004). This is probably because when children are young, men have generally low levels of engagement in their care (Lewis and Lamb 2004). It could also be due to the fact that when a man commits himself to childcare as the case in Mali, he is considered weak in front of his wife and people would tease him. Fathers in most cultures across the world have been seen to frequently play significant roles in socialising young children (Coltrane 1988:1085; Jaeckel 2006:3) rather than in their home care. The status quo in childcare roles between fathers and mothers is strengthened by the argument that mother's roles have been monopolised and transferred to their daughters in a never ending cycle of transfer (Jackson 1989:215).

This general picture of a domineering influence of women in childcare is not without exceptions. Even in some areas where this was the rule some decades ago, the situation is changing. Among the Aka Pygmies of the northern border of Congo, for example, fathers do more infant childcare than their mothers. They take children with them to spots where palm wine

is consumed and usually hold them close to their bodies for about two hours during the day. They continue at night by comforting and nursing the baby. In addition, the Aka fathers clean the bodies of their babies and wipe their bottoms. When their wives are away in the farms or other economic activities, they will offer their nipples for their babies to suck at least temporarily. They also carry babies on their hips as women prepare the evening meal and still take care of them even when their mothers are idle and chatting. This care-giving role of Aka fathers over their children challenges the orthodox view that fathers across different cultures carry out very little childcare activities.

Similarly, the changing perception about the role of fathers or husbands as care-givers has been informed by several factors which are eco-cultural, geographical, historical, and socio-cultural. These are also informed by a changing culture of work, worsening overall health conditions like HIV/AIDS, urbanisation and its challenges, migration, low levels of education, widespread poverty, legal changes, high unemployment and the general economic crisis (Nsamenang 2000:1; Calves 2000; Eggebean 2002:486; Bankole et al., 2004:15). The result is that in some societies fathers are engaged in about 800 percent more care of their infants and young children than their own fathers ever did (O'Brien 2004). Besides, as a wife's proportion of work outside the home increases, the proportion of a man's childcare rises (Pleck 1997). Research by Casper and O'Connell (1998) has revealed that men are more likely to provide care when the family income is low and when there is no overlap of maternal and paternal work schedules. In fact, recent experiences in different parts of Africa show that some fathers look after their children to enable their wives to work. Other fathers read bedtime stories to their children (Ramphele 2002). Some fathers' concern for their children is a result of a powerful motivator for personal change in terms of personal health, a way of reducing domestic violence and cutting criminality and risky behaviour.

In different parts of Africa, as it is elsewhere in the world, parental roles in childcare are understood within the general context of marriage as well as the social and collective enterprise which include parents, kin, older siblings, neighbours and friends (Nsamenang 2000:9). Collective fatherhood is a characteristic of traditional African society where fathers are expected to support mothers and children but some biological fathers do not act like fathers and fail to support their children.[1] Some of the fathers who neglect their functions of childcare within the society have turned to drinking and dating other women as a solution (Ramphele 2002) yet they have ended up more frustrated.

In Cameroon, while the communitarian spirit guides family responsibility including childcare, healthcare, and security, the changing sociological and urban environment has impacted on this in diverse ways. Women are generally the engine of the society in that, be it in the rural areas or cities, they get up early to prepare breakfast for the family, prepare children for the school, get to the farm or other places of work and after work stop at the market to obtain groceries for the evening home meal. In fact, there is a general tendency for women to be responsible for the overall well-being of Cameroonians including preparing meals and taking care of healthcare, childcare and household management. The way the Cameroonian family structure functions does not clearly give fathers specific childcare roles (Nsamenang 2000: 1).

In spite of this picture, there are a growing number of husbands across social classes who are involved in childcare activities. In the year 2002, the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) organised a study on children and women's health, status and well-being. The findings of this study showed that fathers in Cameroon spend less on themselves but more on their families. It was also observed that the concern of men about the situation of their children was a motivator for personal change in personal health, a way to reduce domestic violence and cut down criminality and risky behaviour. These developments can also be attributed to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family that continues to preach equal gender roles although its limited budget has affected its activities in this direction.[2] For several years now, the UN Convention protects the rights of children. In Article 7 of this convention, every child has the right to know and be cared for by his/her parents. To strengthen this resolve, in March 2004 the UN Commission on the Status of Women made a strong call for an increased male involvement for the attainment of gender equality and to support children's growth and development. These changes notwithstanding, some Cameroonian men like others are responsible and others are irresponsible (Njopin 1997:11). Responsibility depends on the environment, class, experience and the existing economic climate.

The importance of husbands' contribution to childcare in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular cannot be over-emphasised. Their involvement in childcare can be a buffer when mothering fails or when mothers are not available as a result of long working hours (Grotberg 2004:2). Several factors may explain the failure of mothering, which include ill-health and abandonment of the child after delivery. The contributions of mothers and fathers are equally central to the needs of the child (Khunou 2006) and should be encouraged for the proper upbringing of the child. With an increasing number of mothers engaged in paid jobs due to education and the challenges on extended family systems the world over, some fathers have been forced to

care for their children, a domain initially preserved for women and their daughters. The importance of fathers to their children welfare is crucial because experience shows that when this care is absent, children face increased risks in almost every dimension of their lives. Fathers care for their children, make them to manage stress better and also develop better peer relations. Fathers revive the home, give strength, diligence, warmth and respect to their family. They are also economic providers, playmates for the psychological maturity of their children. They tell stories, help these children to sleep and love them for life (Uttal 1988; Allen and Daly 2007:1-4). It is therefore important to study how their role in child upbringing can positively influence their children as they grow up.

Experience has also shown that fathers' care for their children has led to better performance in exams, higher education qualification, greater progress at school, better attitudes towards school, better behaviour at school, greater self-recognition and greater ability to take initiative and direct their own activities. This is especially so in that the father-child relationship is a two way process with the potential for creating effects that are as significant for Africa's fathers as they are for their children. There is also a broad consensus that fathers are important contributors to both normal and abnormal children outcomes. It has been argued that a wide range of social problems which include child poverty, urban decay, societal violence, teenage pregnancy and poor school performance are caused by poor childcare activities on the part of fathers (Lamm et al., 2007:375). Their involvement can go a long way to mitigate these negative influences on these children.

The importance of engaging fathers in childcare related activities is because they have often been neglected and excluded from programmes and services for young children by organisations concerned about child welfare. There is a compelling need to include them especially during this era of HIV/AIDS pandemic and the crisis of care for children in many homes. The involvement of men in childcare is also pertinent nowadays because wives and mothers as gatekeepers need to invite men in and encourage them to take responsibility for children's care. As long as society and the women see childcare as exclusive to them, it will be difficult for changes to take place in this area of parental control of their children (Beardshaw 2004; Allen and Daly 2007:13-14).

Children who are deprived of paternal contact as they grow may not have a secure male model and may receive less parental support and supervision. It is certain that children who have little or no contact with their fathers are likely not to fare well compared to those who maintain an on-going relationship (Furstenberg Jr. et al., 1987:696). If fathers therefore have an important role to play in the life of their children, it is important that

adequate attention be given to this and fathers encouraged by mothers, society and relevant government services to do so. It will give the children a psychological boost and make them exploit talents to the best of their ability. In a general sense, two parents provide better guidance and teaching than single parent families. Both have the social power to teach children socially acceptable behaviours through parent-child communication as a core of child socialisation. In fact, childcare and parental monitoring constitute a significant pathway whereby environmental and personal factors impact on child development, making childcare a key factor protecting children from risk to adversity (Bray and Brandt 2005:2).

Research Methodology and Data Collection

The main objective of this study is to interrogate the view that women are responsible for childcare and men have very little or nothing to do with childcare within the Cameroonian urban environment. The study also examines other related issues to this central argument such as the nature of childcare in traditional Cameroonian society, and the role of women in childcare as seen by society. Further, the study discusses the changing environment of childcare especially in the urban milieu in the country and the implications of these on the security and stability of the household and the larger Cameroonian society in the twenty-first century.

This study relied on several methods in the collection, analysis, and presentation of data. We selected four main cities in Cameroon, namely Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda and Buea and focussed our observation on the phenomenon of childcare in these chosen towns and cities. The first two are the main cities of Cameroon located within the French speaking part of the country and the last two are located in the English speaking region of the country. Douala is the economic capital of Cameroon and Yaounde the administrative headquarters. In addition, Douala is the main commercial centre and also the gateway into Cameroon from abroad. Bamenda is one of the largest towns in the English-speaking region and Buea was the capital of German Kamerun, British Southern Cameroons, West Cameroon state and now the regional capital of the South West. All these cities and towns are cosmopolitan in nature drawing people from different social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Interviews were also conducted with inhabitants of these cities and towns but due to the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, the people demanded anonymity and confidential treatment of the information collected from them. This led us not to present their names in this paper.

A total of two hundred and forty people were interviewed in the four cities of Bamenda, Douala, Yaounde and Buea over a period of three months lasting from October to December 2011. In each of the cities, we interviewed

twenty youth, twenty women and twenty men. We carefully selected our informants on the basis of their level of education, age, gender, occupation and residential areas. For each of the three category of people interviewed, we ensured that five people were selected based on the criteria set from the beginning making a total of twenty for men, women and men respectively. In each of the towns we employed the services of five persons who administered structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

We asked the same questions to all our informants and the questions asked included the following: Why was childcare the near exclusive responsibility of women and female house-mates in Cameroon in the past prior to the 1980s? What is the level of men's involvement in childcare and related activities today? What factors explain men's concern about childcare in urban areas in Cameroon? What categories of men are involved in childcare as husbands or fathers? What can be done to make sure if possible that many more men become involved in childcare? In what ways has the involvement of men in childcare contributed towards the stability of the households and the Cameroonian society? From these questions we received varied answers depending on sex, age, level of education and residential area.

Apart from conducting interviews we also observed childcare activities in homes that we visited formally and informally, in schools, hospitals, restaurants, churches and other public places like the Savannah Botanic Garden in Bafut and the Botanic Gardens and the Zoo in Limbe where children are taken to for relaxation by their parents. Those we observed gave us the permission to do so and during the period of observation some questions were also posed for clarification. We settled on these places on the basis that they were frequented by families for one service or the other. In schools family members went to pick up children, in the hospitals sick children were attended to by their parents and in churches families attend together. The Botanic Garden and Zoo are places for excursion by rich families on a more regular basis. These observations lasted for four weeks during which we tried to establish the role husbands and their wives played in the care of their children outside the home setting. From observation and participant observation, we were able to evaluate the level to which men participated in child caring activities. There was generally a trend towards changing roles never imaginable in the past and especially after independence up to the mid-1980s when the world economic slump set in and the globalisation of capital took on a very aggressive dimension. From our observations, we also appreciated the changing parental roles which was not limited to a particular class although some people had, through interviews, given the

impression that it was mostly among the educated. We witnessed both the educated and the uneducated, higher and lower social status people take up childcare responsibilities.

The last method we employed in this study was to critically interrogate the available literature on parental role in child upbringing. Very little scholarly work exists in Cameroon on this area of study but there is a plethora of data on other parts of Africa, especially South Africa. While stereotypes continue to exist on the near non-involvement of men in childcare, some literature is critical of the lapses in studies and other programmes designed for childcare all over the continent. Still some literature point to areas and reasons why men should, more than ever before be engaged in childcare as a matter of proper upbringing of children. This paper is along these lines. While it does recognise the role of women in the upbringing of their children, it is concerned with the changing socio-economic climate in towns and cities that have contributed positively towards men's involvement in childcare in Cameroon with prospects for an increased role in the near future.

Analysis of Data Collected

Following interviews and focus group discussions in the four towns of Bamenda, Buea, Douala and Yaounde, several reasons were advanced for the noticeable change childcare roles between men and women. Some informants argued that women were made to believe that their job was essentially to take care of the house and the children while their husbands either idled away or were at work to fend for their families. Other informants contended that women were considered to be inferior in certain parts of Cameroon like in the Muslim north and their place was in the home and to attend to the needs of children. This inferior status accorded to women made the patriarchal society to see them as good only for the care or upbringing of their children and nothing else. In addition, they were assisted in this task by female relatives and house-mates for those who could pay their services.

Still another group of informants claimed that women were excluded from public affairs and as a result were not expected to do any other thing out of the home but for childcare which came to be attributed to them as their own activity. Another reason advanced was that many women in the past up to the first two decades of independence were uneducated and due to this they were not permitted to function outside the home by their husbands. Their husbands feared that these uneducated wives might embarrass them through their action in public places. There was also the general belief among women and men that it was a man's responsibility to work and bring food to the table while their wives took care of the children

together assisted by other family members. Above all some informants argued strongly that Africans had the ideology that women were responsible for childcare and that eventually became the norm that was hard to change.

Closely related to the degree or level of involvement of men in childcare, were the categories of the men. From our field interviews and observations, we concluded that all social categories of men were involved but that some of them were more involved than others. Quite a reasonable number of people among those we interviewed or discussed with argued that the literate and educated men were very concerned about the welfare of their children which made them encourage and assist them when they were sick. Some informants opined that all men, no matter the social class, who were attached to their children for one reason or the other took good care of these children to the extent that even when their mothers were around these men would still be the ones to bathe the children, give them food, take them to the hospital and school among other commitments related to these children. In this connection, one woman in Yaounde, in appreciating the role of husbands in childcare said that:

> When I had my first child, my husband was the one who provided for all the needs of the baby and even took care of the baby. The only thing I did was to breast feed the child. The husband was the only one who was teaching me how to train the child. Thus the child grew up in a moral way for without my husband, I could not have been able to train him up to acceptable standard. Since then, we have had three kids and my husband's assistance has remained the same. He is conscious of the need to train children in the right way while they are still young so that when they are old they will not depart from it.

The experience of this woman with the husband who has taken up the responsibility of assisting her in childcare and proper upbringing is one out of many others in Douala, Buea and Bamenda. This is because these husbands are aware that the urban environment is unlike the rural environment and to survive or build family men must give their wives the necessary assistance in childcare.

Another group of informants were of the opinion that fathers or husbands who knew the value of children in their later life were concerned about their welfare from birth to when they were grown-ups. They pointed to people like teachers as falling in this category. Such parents did not wait to be told or invited by their wives to take care of their children. They were with their children, encouraging and correcting them. In spite of their busy schedules, they would create time to chat with these children. This is because constant communication is good for information sharing and for proper conduct. Other informants and participant observation led us to also note that some

husbands who were morally and financially capable of taking care of their children did not hesitate to do so. Through this, they have demystified the stereotype view that childcare is the exclusive responsibility of the wife or woman. There is still another category of people who are concerned about childcare and they include the unemployed who spend most of the time at home to baby-sit children while others either go to work or school. This has been made possible especially in Douala because of the difficult and unreliable economic climate where many semi-skilled or unskilled workers from the rural areas of the North West and West regions are finding it difficult to obtain permanent jobs.

In spite of the increasing involvement of some husbands in childcare, some informants and observations show that there is need for improvement so that many more husbands can take up childcare as a rewarding activity for their families. One of the recommendations was for the government of Cameroon to enact a law that will compel husbands to create enough time for their children because this will help to unite families and the children will enjoy the affection of both father and mother for their psychological and socio-cultural development. Still others recommended the use of the television, radio and the print media to educate husbands on the need to assist their wives in proper child up-bringing considering that the economic environment requires both parents to work and raise an income for the upkeep of the family and the education and health needs of the children. Besides, there were those who thought that public sensitisation and talks in churches, socio-professional and cultural groups would change stereotype views still prevailing among some husbands who seem not to be aware that the urban environment has its own challenges which are different from those of the rural area and that need to be tackled through the collective responsibility of the father and mother over their children and the household as a whole.

The increasing involvement of men in childcare activities has implications for their welfare and family development as a whole. Urban fathers have joined their wives in childcare because they expect these children to grow up as responsible children who will care for their younger ones and the parents in old age. In our discussions with one couple in Buea on the degree of husbands' involvement in childcare in the urban environment today, the husband said among other things that:

> I spent time with my wife working together to educate our children, look after them at home and provide them with good medical care. We were also concerned about the way they performed in school and what they did there as well as guiding them in the activities they were involved in at home. We they grew old and I fell sick, my

grown up children mobilised resources and flew me abroad for adequate medical care. Thank God I came back healthy and now my children are happy with me and their mother for bringing them up in the right way which has made them not to be able to depart from it.

From what this man said – and which is a reflection of the views of other people we interviewed – it is clear that some husbands are increasingly conscious of the fact that when one invests in proper child up-bringing, the rewards come back to him and his younger children in their lifetime. If this man had failed to share in the burden of childcare, these children might not have been able to mobilise resources to treat him out of the country where there are better medical facilities. Today, he is strong and still given the care that children can give their father. Such a spirit of care can only help a family to be self-sustaining and share resources among different members to help one another become successful in life.

Besides, fathers' involvement in childcare related activities have contributed towards promoting communication and good conduct in their children. This view came out strongly in the four towns where we conducted our interviews and engaged in focus group discussions. One person through her personal observation outlined the benefits of fathers' childcare activities. She told us that:

> I live very close to a Christian family in Bamenda and have seen a father who is more caring for the family and children than the wife. He is in constant communication with his children and the wife in a very friendly manner. The women of this neighbourhood talk positively about the man and the children are proud of their father too. Through his friendly disposition and various forms of assistance to his children, he and the wife are able to correct bad character in their children in a way that these children appreciate. I deeply admire the sense of unity and stability in this family which make the children successful. These children are being brought up in the culture of free discussion and receive assistance from their parents. This has enabled them to share in the joys and frustrations of the family together and learn to love one another.

What else does a family expect than its stability, love and concern for one another? This example of a Christian family is one among many although some husbands feel that a man who spends a lot of time with the children and wife is an idle person. Such thoughts and the influence of education are gradually giving way to a sense of reason and it may not be long when many more couples will actually share responsibilities over the up-bringing of their children in Cameroon's urban sphere.

Following observation in the Great Soppo neighbourhood in Buea, we were able to establish that husbands who are always at home after work or some other business ensure that their children come back home early. This

gives them an opportunity to spend the evening together discussing the activities of the day and sharing experiences as a family. These fathers also use their availability at home to assist their wives in the kitchen which was once the preserve of women, and others have been teaching their children or assisting them in their assignments as their wives prepare food for the evening meal. Some of the children have grown up to follow the footsteps of their fathers. They return home early and are spared the evil practices of the night which include drunkenness and sexual promiscuity. Some of these men through rigour have instilled discipline in their children. With discipline these children have grown up to be of great service to the country and society because they work with devotion. There is a common saying in Cameroon that, 'tell me your family and I will tell you your character and attitude to work'. While this may not hold true in all circumstances, experience has shown that in many cases, it is true.

Many other vices of society like child trafficking, drug abuse and corruption have not affected families that have been blessed to have both parents live together with the husband working hand in glove with the wife to give the children the attention they deserve from a very early age. Regular cases of child trafficking in Africa are the result of improper child up-bringing. Drug abuse has also largely been associated with children who were abandoned to themselves while young and came under the influence of other children. Many husbands are aware of the negative impact of abandoning children to themselves or exclusively to their mothers' influence and are increasingly coming into the sector of childcare nowadays so that they can spare their children the negative consequences of being abandoned to themselves.

Conclusion

This paper has examined an increasingly emergent phenomenon in the urban milieu in Cameroon which is husbands or fathers' involvement in childcare which was once almost the exclusive domain of women, their daughters and female house-mates. Several reasons, including geographical, socio-cultural and economic ones, have been responsible for this evolution in childcare in the family. We observed that this phenomenon cuts across different social classes and depends on different experiences of the people in the different towns that we studied. The debilitating economic situation and the strain on urban families have made it increasingly difficult to keep a large extended family in town. For this reason, many couples are beginning to manage life in the cities and towns without relying on the services of house-mates which are also scarce to come by. This is because different faith-based communities are educating families against child abuse and parents

from the rural areas are no longer very willing to send their children to towns as house-mates as was the case prior to the past twenty years. Other associated problems of keeping house-mates who eventually turn out to be the second wives of their masters have also worked against the institution of house mates.

Fathers have no option than to agree with their wives who are also workers or students or market women to share in the responsibility of childcare. The degree of involvement varies according to the degree of challenges, level of education and other socio-economic forces in the urban area. While there is still a feeling of allowing women continue their monopoly of childcare related activities by over 40 percent of the people we interviewed, there is at the same time a move away from this. Many husbands have broken with tradition and now do the things they would never have done to their children and this has paid them off through success and stability in the family and the society. They are now not only actively involved in childcare activities but have begun to educate some of their friends on the benefits of proper child upbringing through the involvement of fathers.

Notes

1. See Richter, L. & R. Morrell, eds., 2004, *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa*, Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC available at http://africanfathers.org/item.php?i_id=18
2. See, for instance, the work of the ministry here: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/general.../Cameroon.pdf

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Where is my Daddy? An Exploration of the Impact of Absentee Fathers on the Lives of Young People in Botswana

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Abstract

A substantial body of research has consistently concluded that children growing up with absentee fathers are at an increased risk of maladjustment. This paper argues that co-parenting can have both direct and indirect or mediated effects on children. Co-parenting has an added benefit of modelling dyadic skills that include proving mutual emotional support, influence, and amicable resolution of disputes. Through qualitative data obtained in 2009 from 45 final year students at the University of Botswana, the authors conclude that African personhood is a larger-than-self conception, which also includes more than the physical being and shows that young people raised in father-absent families view their personhood as inferior, less guarded, and incomplete, relative to that of their counterparts who were born and raised in married-couple families. Living a full quality life eludes youth who were raised by mothers only, affirming the importance of fathers in the personhood of any individual.

Key Words: Absentee fathers; youth personhood; co-parenting

Résumé

Elles sont nombreuses les études qui concluent systématiquement que les enfants grandissant en l'absence de leurs pères sont plus susceptibles d'être des inadaptés sociaux. Cet article a pour objet de démontrer que la coparentalité peut avoir des effets à la fois directs et indirects ou intermédiaires sur l'enfant. La coparentalité permet en plus de façonner les aptitudes relevant des deux conjoints dont le soutien émotionnel et l'influence réciproques ainsi que le règlement des

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disputes à l'amiable. Sur la base des données qualitatives obtenues en 2009 auprès de 45 étudiants en dernière année à l'Université du Botswana, les auteurs ont pu conclure que la notion d'Africanité transcende le concept de la personne et embrasse plus que l'être physique. L'étude démontre que les jeunes qui ont grandi dans des familles monoparentales où le père est absent se considèrent comme inférieurs, moins choyés et non-épanouis, comparés à ceux qui sont nés et élevés dans des familles avec des parents mariés. Les jeunes élevés dans une famille monoparentale, formée uniquement de la mère, sont loin de mener une vie qualitative. Ainsi, la présence du père est indispensable et structurante de la personnalité de tout individu.

Introduction

Historically, men's role in the upbringing of their children was limited primarily to their economic contribution (Burgess and Russell 2004), leading fathers often to be invisible or overlooked in parenting programmes and activities that extended beyond their role as a bread-winner. This has been a trend in both developed and developing countries (Daly, Ashbourne and Brown 2009). The changing trend in men's participation in care is influenced by the dynamics of the world today, such as men's employment status (O'Brien and Richter 2011) that place fathers in positions to be involved in a wide range of parenting roles. The benefits of father involvement have been suggested across cultures, family structures and the types of parental relationships with some, including Pruett et al., (2009) suggesting that children who are supported by their fathers show lower levels of child neglect. The contribution made by fathers in the upbringing of their children differs from country to country. The increasing understanding of the importance of the role fathers play in children's development is coupled with enhanced awareness that fathers' parenting roles have changed in recent years (Pruett et al., 2009). Anderson et al., (1999) posit that males provide substantial amounts of care and resources to children and their absence can have a range of detrimental effects on the psycho-social development of the child.

This is especially noteworthy within the African context where rates of father absenteeism appear to be on the increase. O'Brien and Ritcher's (2011) study underlines this observation by presenting findings that show that up to 39 percent of children within South Africa grow up without their fathers. The issue of father involvement has been sparsely studied in Botswana (Maundeni 2000; Beardshaw 2006; and Dyer et al., 2011). Even so, the few published works, including Maundeni (2000), confirm a noteworthy decline on the quality of life for children who have no contact with their fathers, especially children from divorced families and the never married. Beadshaw (2006) offers a contradictory view and argues that absenteeism related to fathers' working can in fact have a positive influence on their children. The South African picture is contradicted by other countries, for example, in

Jamaica, fathers are responsible for raising their children regardless of the custodial union and in that regard marriage status does not become a determinant on father involvement in parenting (Wanda 2009). Notably, the changing roles of women and men within the workplace appear to be giving an impetus to a new set of dynamics in the roles played by men within parenting. In the Canadian context, for example, men have greater flexibility within the workplace and as a result, they have increased opportunities for taking an active role in parenting (Daly, Ashbourne and Brown 2009). In the US, women who work with health care disciplines spend comparatively more time than men in work and as a result, men have increased participation in parental and domestic activities (Hoffman 1998). O'Brien (2011) and Richter and Dorrit (2004) reveal similar patterns in Norway, especially in the increase in men's participation in domestic activities. A closer analysis of this study area seems to illuminate a trend that points to many parts of Africa as having quite contradictory patterns to other parts of the world in terms of the roles played by fathers in raising their children. O'Brien (2011) and Richter and Dorrit (2004) offer some insights into the South African experience but clearly need to be augmented by comparable studies within the continent. Informed by this trend in scholarship on fathers' role in their children's socialisation, the current study explores the emotional and social impact of growing up in father-absent families within a university student population in Botswana.

Methods

A qualitative study was designed to explore the emotional and social impact of the absence of fathers on young adults raised in father-absent families. The study used five focus group discussions conducted over 30 days to elicit information from participants on the emotional and social impact of being raised by their mothers without a father figure. Flyers were placed around the University of Botswana inviting would-be participants. The flyers clearly stipulated that those eligible to participate must be age 21 years and above and have been raised in single parent households where there was no father figure. A telephone number and email of the principal investigator was also posted for further clarity on the study.

    The Ministry of Health Review Boards approved the study before data collection and a detailed leaflet explaining the study was given to all prospective participants. The leaflet explained the purpose, activities, duration and the expectations of the study. A consent form was also drawn up which participants had to sign if they agreed to participate after reading the leaflet. A statement on confidentiality was included that no names or identifying data would be included at any stage of the study and for any publication that might emerge from the study. The statement on voluntarism and withdrawal

from the study at any time during the process of the study was included and it clearly delineated that such students would not be treated unfairly or prejudiced in any way. Each participant was required to fill out a self-developed demographic form indicating gender, age, knowledge of their father and father's involvement in their lives.

Data Collection

Data were collected by means of focus groups. There were five focus groups held which lasted for two hours each and were conducted over 30 working days. The focus group discussions were audio-taped with the consent of the participants. A focus group guide developed by the principal investigator was used to guide the discussions. The principal investigator led all the discussions and the second co-author took notes and noted any observations. Focus group discussions were grouped into categories as suggested by Krueger (1998b) under the following headings: Opening, Introduction, transition and closing.

The opening began with the Principal investigator introducing herself and allowing the co-authors to introduce themselves. This was followed by the PI asking participants why they volunteered to participate in this study. This was to relax participants and allow for openness in the discussion. The grand tour question for the discussion was, 'Tell me your experiences about growing up without a father'. The tour question was supplemented by other questions such as: 'Let us discuss how your emotions have been affected by the absence of your fathers in your lives; 'Are there any social benefits derived from having a father?'; Are there any cultural expectations from children growing with and those without fathers?; Let us talk about how having a stay-in-father would have helped you; Let us discuss some of the positive and negative effects of having a father or not having a father; Are there any positives or negatives that you have experienced by not having a father?

All these questions were followed by many probes such as 'expand on what you mean when you said your mother wants you all to herself', and others such as 'Has any other person experienced the same thing?'

Data Analysis

Content analysis adopted from Krueger (1998b) was used to analyse data from focus group discussions. Audio tape recordings were transcribed verbatim by a consultant knowledgeable on transcription. Field notes taken during the focus group discussions were also examined. Data analysis was done by the PI, co-author and the consultant. Transcripts were read by the PI, co-author and consultant independently and then comparing notes through a three step process of content analysis, identification of emerging patterns

and developing sub-themes. Where there was no consensus the theme was dropped or the PI and team members went back to the transcripts until consensus was reached.

Results

Demographic Characteristics
A total of 45 fourth year university students participated in the study. The participants were aged 21 to 25 years with a mean age of 23. A total of five focus groups were conducted. The groups were arranged in the same gender cohorts with the first and second groups consisting of a male group of nine participants each aged between 21 and 23 and third group consisting of males aged between 24 and 25. The fourth group was all females aged between 21 and 23 and there were 12 participants in this group. The last group consisted of six female participants aged between 24 and 25.

Themes
A number of themes emerged from these focus groups that in turn led to even more sub-themes as shown in Table 1 below:

Emotional Impact
All the five groups expressed stress and depression as noted emotional effects that they experienced for not knowing who their fathers were. However, all the female groups verbalized anger and hate towards their mothers for the absence of their fathers in their lives. This was best exemplified in the quote below by a 23 year old female student who said: 'I at times hate my mother for denying me the opportunity to know my dad'.

Social Impact
A clear distinction emerged between female and male participants in their perceptions of the social impact that the absence of their father brought to their lives. Male participants were mostly concerned about the cultural practices that involve fathers, such as getting married and filling out official forms. Female participants were mostly worried about the possibilities of dating one's own brother and just not feel a sense of belonging. Some selected quotes that validate the social effects experienced by participants are provided here:

> Filling forms that requires you to mention your father is very uncomfortable or directly being asked about your father, you have to say, 'I do not know', or 'is dead' or something, you feel excluded' (23 year old male participant).

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Relevant Quotes From Participants
1. Emotional impact	a. Protective nature of single mothers b. Assumption of ownership by mothers c. Topic avoidance	My mother is too possessive; I am not even allowed to ask about my father. I am always reminded that she has raised me single-handedlyMy mum calls me his baby, I know she means well but it's like she owns me. Talking about my father (if I have one is taboo in our family, my grandmother does not even want me to ask her about my paternity).
2. Social Impact	a. Social exclusion b. Inferiority complex c. Inability to freely socialise	In our society not having a father makes you less than your other peers I am very poor at dating, because. I am never surethe boy am going out is my brother or my kin that I do not know. You are never too sure of anything.
3. Cultural identity	a. No name ownership	I use my mother's name and always wonder who am I? I do not know what I will tell my children if I do marry. What will I tell my wife and in-laws who I am, I do not belong
4. Father's Responsibility	Economic responsibility	He paid for my school fees until I was 18 years old

I am thinking of getting married in the near future, but who will negotiate my marriage? Who would I tell my wife is my father, how would I answer if she wonders about my ability to be a proper father because I have never known one? (25 year old male participant).

> You need to have a sense of belonging. One day I was writing my mom's name on my desk calendar and my friend said, 'Is your dad so bad that you do not write him on your desk calendar?' I got so angry (22 year old female participant).

> I do not know who to blame – I dated a girl and went all the way only to hear rumours that she was my sister. I no longer date. I feel like a social misfit (24 year old male participant).

Cultural Identity

Participants verbalized the fact that in an African culture like Botswana, a person is culturally identified by his father's name and generally belongs with his father's people. Participants felt that using their mothers' name is not proper hence they do not feel a sense of belonging and tended to see themselves as having no identity. This was best exemplified by the quote from a 24 year old male who said:

> I use my mother's name and always wonder who am I? I do not know what I will tell my children if I do marry.

Fathers' Responsibility

The father's responsibility also emerged as a theme. Generally, the participants' fathers had no role in their lives. There were those participants who knew their fathers but the fathers were not involved in their upbringing as exemplified in the following quotes from some of the participants:

> My mother once said she will shoot me if I ever look for my father (21 year old male participant).

> Mum calls me his baby. I know she means well but she is so possessive of me (23 year old male participant).

> I was told that my father paid for my school fees through the district commissioner until I was 18 years old. That was the only way he was involved in my care (24 year old female participant).

Discussion

Although it is apparent that the involvement of fathers in their children's lives is changing, there is need for more rigorous steps to be taken that encourage men to be more involved with their children right from birth. In the current study participants did not know their fathers and voiced the desire to meet them in order to have an identity that they could pass on to

their children. This desire is compatible with the African Personhood theory that contends that an African being represents a system; an orientation inextricably connected to community or an ethnic group, or a cultural practice. The embodiment of an African person is the essence of the organization of being inherent in the organization's ontology, directing the understanding of how a person conceives of him/herself (Fairfax 2008).

There is an assumption that a father need not do certain chores for his/her children, including grooming, feeding and other menial duties that encourage bonding between parents and their children. This notion is more pronounced in Botswana (Thupayagale-Tshweneagae, Seloilwe and Dithole 2005). However, Fairfax (2008) contradicts this notion in his African Personhood theory that an African-centred idea of a human person, stipulates that a man is a man if he does not let go of his responsibility and that a person not exhibiting moral and ethical behaviours deemed to be morally correct by their culture is an aberration of personhood. Fairfax's notion of personhood is in this study stretched to show that what most of the participants sought was the social presence of their fathers so as to give them a concrete social identity. Following these findings we can therefore imply that fatherhood as a symbolic entity (where the father is present in the child's life irrespective of the material chores he performs) contributes to the child's sense of self and personhood.

The involvement of a father extends overtime and is often regarded as interaction availability and responsibility (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov and Levine 1987:125). In the current study, participants decried the fact that not knowing their fathers socially excludes them from fully participating in cultural practices. Steinmetz and Day (2000) assert that the benefits of father involvement hold across cultures and family structures. The findings of this study further confirm what is already known in research that male children are likely to communicate with mothers and female children are more comfortable with their fathers (Guerrero and Afifi 1995). Females in the study were angry at not knowing their father for personal reasons, whereas male participants acknowledged the dual roles of their mothers and only wanted fathers for identity and extension of their lineage. Doucet (2006) is of the view that men should be more involved in their children's lives and be emotionally involved in their children's lives. As our study has shown, in cases where fathers do not have any role in their children's lives the children exhibit or report low-self esteem or feelings of an inferiority complex. This finding is congruent with findings from a study by Finley and Schwartz (2007) that found that young adults from families with both parents had high self esteem, were positive about the future and were generally satisfied with life.

Participants also stated that using their mother's name was inappropriate and made them feel 'nameless'. This finding is supported by Kiernan (2006) who asserts that unmarried fathers that are named in their children's birth certificate are likely to continue personal and emotional involvement with their children even when separated from their mothers. Depression, anger and hate were emotions occasionally experienced by participants over their absentee fathers and occasionally over the mothers who they blame for their not knowing who their fathers are. In some incidences, the topic about one's father was avoided. This may also have contributed to the participants' experience of depression and anger. There is ample literature on the benefits of participants knowing who their fathers are both from a social and a mental health perspective (see, for instance, O'Brien 2004; Lamb 2010).

Peer-victimization through name calling by those who are involved with their fathers was also mentioned by the participants. There are numerous studies that associate peer victimization with depression, anxiety, poor self esteem and a poor self concept (Hawker and Boulton 2000; Flouri and Buchanan 2002). All these negative feelings were experienced by the participants in this current study. Overall, the study results show that the psychological well-being of young adults is positively related to the involvement of fathers in their lives. It was also clear from the findings that there is a need for fathers to get more emotionally, socially and financially involved with their children. Amato (2004) also alluded to the fact that adults who were close to their fathers are more likely to do well at school, at work and have higher levels of psychological well-being and be content with who they are compared to their counterparts without a father in their lives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from the stories of young people in Botswana that there is a need for father involvement in their lives or the children's lives in general. For any meaningful involvement of fathers in the children's lives there must be policies put in place that will encourage men's involvement in the children's lives. Doing so will give the children an identity and issues such as marrying your brother or sister and feeling of insecurity will be minimized. The authors therefore recommend that such policies should include a policy that recognizes a child's paternity by including the name of the father in the birth certificate even if unmarried. The current practice in Botswana for the most part is for a child of a single mother to use her mother's maiden name. Studies (Kiernan 2006; Carlson and McLanahan 2010) show that fathers whose names appear in their children certificates are likely to continue contact with their children.

Paternity leave is another policy that the researchers recommend for Botswana. Currently there are sporadic organizations that are considering paternity leave. Giving paternity leave will encourage fathers to take responsibility of their offspring from the beginning and it would in some way encourage responsibility for fathers and reduce the mother's possessiveness over the children as found in the study. O'Brien (2009) argues that paternity leave may encourage fathers to become attached to their children and subsequently reduce the possibility of leaving them. It would also help fathers to become more supportive to the mothers.

Historically, the men's role in raising of their children was limited to economic contributions by policy makers (Burgess and Russell 2004) leading to situations where fathers are often invisible or overlooked in parenting programmes and activities. This has been a trend in both developed and developing countries (Daly, Ashbourne and Brown 2009). The trend in men's participation in care is changing following changing dynamics of the world today, such as men's employment status so that fathers are expected to be involved in the parenting role (O'Brien and Richter 2011). The benefits of father involvement in the socialisation of children hold across cultures, family structures and types of parental relationships (Pruett 2000). It is therefore apparent that a policy that encourages non-resident fathers to be involved in their children's lives is long overdue.

The presence of a policy, such as a family strengthening policy that would encourage involvement of fathers in their children's lives should also entail a reorientation of the prevailing cultural norms for mothers and fathers. The dominant Tswana culture assumes that a woman's social status is built through her ability to manage her household and raise her children (Suggs 1996). Mothers in Botswana, therefore, still adhere to the rigid traditional model, where a mother is the primary caretaker. With changing cultural structures brought about by a modern economy and social roles, both mothers and fathers need to rethink their social roles and start by having an equal share in the raising, care giving, and nurturing of a child.

In some Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland, parental leave exists for both mothers and fathers. Similarly, in Slovenia the Parenthood Protection and Family Benefits Act of 2006 provides 105 days of maternity leave, 260 days of childcare leave and 90 days of paternity leave, with each parent entitled to half of the childcare leave (Robila 2008: 5). In the United Kingdom and the United States of America where there are family policies that encourage father involvement, fathers have been seen to take keen interest in the welfare of their children (Cowan 2008). As one of the most stable and modernizing countries in Africa, Botswana should be a place where both mothers and fathers take up full responsibility of socialising their children.

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Children's Experiences of Support Received from Men in Rural KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

Studies of fathers' involvement in their children's are usually based on men's self-reports, women's appraisals or children's accounts of men's involvement. This paper explores men's support of children aged 9-10 years living in rural KwaZulu-Natal, as reported by children, women and men. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty focal children, twenty female caregivers and sixteen fathers/father-figures nominated by the children in twenty randomly selected households. We find that men are important in children's lives. The nomination of a father-figure by all children, even if the man was not their biological father, ascertained that all children receive some support from men. Our data highlight the influence of biological ties, co-residence, family social network, and marriage or father-mother relationship on fathers' involvement with their children – financial and the quality of their interaction. This study improves methodologies and addresses the validity, reliability and interrelations of children, men and women's reports of men's involvement in providing support to children in a South African context. We were able to determine the informal, local systems of family support and the variety of contributions made by men in supporting children. In this way, the study provides a basis for research on local father involvement and for future comparison.

Key Words: Father's involvement in childcare; social fatherhood; co-resident fatherhood

Résumé

Les études de cas où les pères s'impliquent dans l'éducation de leurs enfants sont généralement basées sur ce qu'en disent ces derniers, sur les appréciations des femmes ou sur ce que disent les enfants par rapport à l'implication des

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hommes. Cette étude baséee sur les déclarations des enfants, des femmes et des hommes se penche sur le soutien apporté par les hommes aux enfants âgés de 9 à 10 ans vivant dans la zone rurale du KwaZulu-Natal. Des interviews poussées ont été menés auprès de groupes d'études constitués de vingt enfants, vingt femmes s'occupant de dépendants proches et seize pères/ou figures de pères nommés par les enfants dans vingt foyers sélectionnés au hasard. Il a été établi que la présence des hommes est importante dans la vie des enfants. La désignation de celui qui fait figure de père par tous les enfants, même s'il ne s'agit pas de leurs pères biologiques, est la preuve irréfutable que tous les enfants reçoivent une forme de soutien de la part des hommes. Nos données permettent de souligner l'influence des liens biologiques, de la cohabitation, du réseau social familial et du mariage, ou tout au moins, de l'impact des rapports entre pères et mères sur l'implication des pères dans l'éducation de leurs enfants – du point de vue à la fois financier et de la qualité de leurs interactions. Cette étude améliore les méthodologies et examine de près les questions relatives à la validité, la fiabilité et aux relations réciproques qu'entretiennent enfants et pères ainsi que les déclarations des femmes sur l'implication des hommes dans le soutien apporté aux enfants dans le contexte sud-africain. L'étude a mis au jour les systèmes locaux informels de soutien à la famille et la diversité des contributions faites par les hommes pour soutenir les enfants. Ainsi, l'étude produit une base de recherche pour étudier l'implication locale des pères et à des fins de comparaison future.

Background

Men in families represent one of the most important resources for children's well-being. Men's presence and involvement – responsibility, availability and engagement (Lamb et al., 1985) – in large part determine the social and economic resources of the household (Richter and Morrell 2006). Having an involved father living at home is an important factor in the life of a young child in South Africa, as in many other countries. For one, the household in which they grow up is likely to be better off (Desmond and Desmond 2006), while households without men are worse off, more so when affected by HIV and AIDS (Denis and Ntsimane 2006; Richter et al., 2010). There are also indications that children and women in the household may be more secure with respect to the potential predatory behaviour of men from outside the household (Guma and Henda 2004).

Studies of fathers' involvement have frequently questioned the validity of men's self-reports, women's appraisals and children's accounts of men's involvement. This paper explores men's support of 9-10-year-old children living in rural KwaZulu-Natal. It does so by exploring the intersection between children's reports of support they receive from men, men's accounts of the support they provide to children, and women's views of the roles that men play in supporting children in general and this man's support of this child, in particular. The aim of the study was to improve current methodologies with respect to men's involvement, in that data were collected from children,

mothers and fathers about their perceptions of fatherhood and acts of support. To understand fathering and fatherhood it is critical to obtain the perspectives of those most intimately involved.

Men and Children in the Context of HIV/AIDS and Poverty in South Africa

Most families throughout the world include men. However, arrangements in which men live, and the roles that they play, are diverse and complex (Desmond and Hosegood 2011). Although many different roles have been documented for men in families, the understanding of men's roles in families in South Africa and Africa at large is narrowly circumscribed in family studies, which focus almost exclusively on the father role as economic provider.

Non Co-resident Biological Fathers
While father involvement, particularly by biological fathers who reside with their children, has been linked to positive child and adolescent outcomes, including school achievement, behaviour, and adjustment (Carlson and McLanahan 2004), the benefits to children from their biological fathers who are not co-residing with them has not been systematically evaluated. Most studies of non co-resident father involvement have focused on the frequency of father-child contact, despite the evidence that it is the quality of the relationship, not the frequency of contact that determines the impact of the father-child relationship (Carlson 2006).

In South Africa, the role of men in supporting children has been shaped by the country's complex social, historical, political and economic processes, including the discriminating effects of Apartheid (Hosegood and Madhavan 2010). Historically, labour migration and race-based access to residency and land were the main causes of the low rate of co-residence between fathers and their children in southern Africa. Initially, men migrated to towns and cities to find work leaving their wives and children at home. Later, women also sought work away from the rural homestead, with children remaining in the care of older relatives or siblings. Many households functioned as 'stretched' residential units, with family members 'dispersed' between different households for reasons of work, care, support and housing (Ramphele 1993; Hosegood and Madhavan 2010). These patterns have become entrenched and continue to influence contemporary domestic and labour environments.

Large numbers of biological fathers are absent from South African households due to death, migrant labour or other reasons. Low rates of marriage (Richter and Panday 2006; Hosegood et. al. 2009), often the consequence of cultural norms, such as *lobola* (bride price), which frequently

has the effect of delaying marriage, also contribute to the social and residential separation of biological fathers from their children (Townsend et al., 2006). The majority of young children born to unmarried parents live with their mothers, often in extended households headed by maternal kin (Russell 2003). Such living arrangements pertain until the parents can conclude the intra-family marriage negotiations and afford a wedding. In 2009, 34 percent of children in South Africa lived with both their biological parents; 39 percent of all children – more than seven million children – lived with their mothers but without their fathers. Only three percent of children lived in households where their fathers were present and their mothers absent. Twenty-four percent of children lived with neither biological parent, although not necessarily because they were orphaned (Statistics South Africa 2010).

Nonetheless, many children live in families where men are unrecognized sources of support for women and children, and popular perceptions frequently cast men as perpetrators of violence, oppressors of women and children, absent or uninvolved in children's lives, and 'generally uncaring and disengaged' (Richter et al., 2004). Also, surveys seldom capture the contact and types of involvement between children and biological fathers living elsewhere (Townsend et al., 2006), or information about why the child's biological father is not present – divorce, death or work. Yet, given the scenario of extended family relations, having children living apart from biological fathers does not automatically mean that children are neglected by their biological father, that the man is irresponsible, nor does it necessarily equate to a break in social connectedness between a father and child. Non co-resident fathers can make substantial contributions to their partners and children through remittances, social visits and calls, and they may also support other children who are not their own biological offspring – such as the children of their sister. Therefore using co-residence or even shared household membership as a proxy to indicate 'father involvement' is not an adequate measures of father involvement in the lives of their children in South Africa (Madhavan and Townsend 2007; Madhavan et al., 2008).

Co-resident Social Fathers in South Africa
It is also important not to restrict enquiries into fatherhood only to men who are biological fathers. Throughout southern Africa, like elsewhere in the world, it is recognised that the person fulfilling the role of father may not always be a child's biological father. Such 'social fathers' – a term that includes, amongst others, stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers and mothers' partners – are a common feature of many social and cultural contexts (Mkhize 2006; Bzostek 2008) due to high rates of labour migration, union instability and orphaning due to paternal death (Hosegood and Madhavan 2010).

Men may take on a social fathering role for the children of new partners, the children of female relatives, and their own younger siblings or grandchildren. Unfortunately, despite the strong justification for collecting data about social fathers – to provide a more complete account of children's experience of fathering and social protection – this information is hardly ever collected in surveys or population cohorts and social fathers can seldom be distinguished from biological fathers even when details about the father are collected.

While most biological fathers may be absent from rural households partly because of HIV/AIDS and poverty, research indicates that involvement by resident social fathers is as beneficial for child well-being as involvement by resident biological fathers and that frequent contact with the child's non co-resident biological father does not diminish the positive residential social father-child involvement (Bzostek 2008). Understanding father-child relationships in families where there is a social father is important because the number of children living in such families is large and increasing over time, and the effects of living with a social father have important implications for child well-being. In this study, we explored the roles of men in the lives of children, regardless of residency, in the context of the relationships they had with children, and the children's mothers. Perspectives were provided by all role players – children, their mothers or caregivers, and the men the children nominated as their primary father-figure, whether biological or social.

Methods

This study was situated in the Msunduzi municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, an area characterized by high rates of household poverty, HIV/AIDS, parental illness and death. The public antenatal HIV prevalence in 2009 in the province was 39.5 percent, while in the same year; the prevalence in the general population was 25 percent (Department of Health 2010). None-theless, the population is not atypical, enabling some extension of the findings to the country as whole. The distribution of the municipality's population of 553,210 individuals is virtually identical to the national distribution, with 49–50 percent living in urban areas, 26–28 percent living in tribal areas and 19–23 percent living in informal/sparse settlements. Household income distributed across the full range of income segments is virtually identical to national statistics, with 21–23 percent of households reporting no income and 7–8 percent reporting very low income levels. In all areas, over 95 percent of the low-income population is Zulu, and we thus confine our research sample to this population.

Data were collected from April to July 2011 as part of a larger Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) project on child and family well-being

in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty, 'Sibhekelela izingane zethu' (SIZE). SIZE is a community-representative, repeated measures study of 1 800 households and children in 24 randomly selected school communities (12 rural and 12 urban) in the Msunduzi municipality. SIZE is being undertaken by a team of researchers at the HSRC in South Africa, New York University (NYU) in the USA and collaborators locally and internationally, and includes government officials and representatives of civil society organizations.

For the purpose of qualitative in-depth interviews, one rural school community was purposively selected from 24 SIZE school communities. The rural school community was selected because it is typical of all 12 rural communities in SIZE, and it is near the HSRC offices in Sweetwaters and therefore easy to access. In this rural community, SIZE enrolled 76 eligible households with children aged between 7 and 10 who were randomly selected from 17 designated clusters in the community, each with 30 visiting points. Further specification of households was done by child's age of 9–10 years. Children in this age range of the SIZE baseline study were included in this qualitative study as it was expected that they would be more likely to be able to engage with the questions posed than younger children.

Of the 76 eligible households, 38 households had a focal child aged between 9 and 10 and therefore qualified to take part in this study. Of the 38 households which met the above criteria, 20 households (10 boys and 10 girls) were randomly selected to participate in the study. From the 20 randomly selected households, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 children, 20 female caregivers and 16 father-figures. Only 16 father-figures were interviewed because one older female caregiver stated that she did not want her son to be included in the study, two father-figures kept on postponing the interviews and the other father-figure stated that he did not have time to take part in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative data collection instruments (child, female caregiver and father-figure interview schedules) were designed in English, with semi-structured and open-ended questions. The data collection instruments were then translated into isiZulu by an isiZulu-speaking research assistant with previous qualitative research experience. After the translations of the instruments from English to isiZulu, six HSRC project research staff back-translated them into English in order to determine the quality of the original translation and to identify difficult questions which required further consideration. The in-depth questions explored children's varied relationships and interactions with men occurring through co-residence, household and social connection, the roles of men in providing and contributing to various forms of support

for the children such as basic needs, costs of schooling, health care, emotional support and guidance for children.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in isiZulu by a trained and experienced interviewer/translator. The desired outcome of translation in this study is for meaning rather than a literal equivalence, therefore the process relied on the knowledge and understanding of the cultural context of the interviewer/translator and the concepts specific to it in order to provide comparable translations. Hence, it was important that the translator engaged in the study was a first language isiZulu-speaker, who lived in the study area and was able to contribute insight and context-specific knowledge and interpretation.

Scheduling of interviews was done telephonically from the SIZE contact list of female caregivers. The order of interviewing a triad was that interviews were first conducted with the focal child, followed by the female caregiver and finally the father-figure. All interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and transcribed into isiZulu. The transcripts were then translated into English. Data was analysed as soon as the first interviews were completed using constant comparative analysis. Detailed information about socio-demographic factors and men's accessibility, responsibility, involvement and engagement in a child's life were coded using NVIVO 9 and analysed in household sets, comprising the triad of child, mother and father or father-figure. These dimensions broadly included children's varied interactions with men occurring through co-residence, household and social connection, food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, play and emotional support for children from men.

Ethical Issues

The SIZE protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the New York University Institutional Review Board. We also received ethical clearance to conduct this qualitative study from the University of KwaZulu Natal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0982/09D). Internationally accepted ethical standards of conducting research were observed, which include getting written informed consent from adult female caregivers and father-figures, as well as for their child's participation, and assent from children, including that they had been briefed about and understood what the research involved, and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of participant information.

Each household and the respondents were provided with a unique identifier for the study. Their real names were replaced with pseudonyms. One master list of all households with the names of participants and their unique identifiers

is retained in a separate electronic password-protected file. All transcripts and audio files have been electronically password-protected and only those working directly with the data have access to them. Informed consent forms and other paper records have been stored in the data archive at the HSRC.

Results

Of the twenty households interviewed, five children had co-resident biological fathers who were married to their mothers, with the other fifteen children living in households in which their biological fathers were not present. Of the fifteen children living in non co-resident biological father households, four children had deceased biological fathers, one child did not know her biological father's whereabouts, seven children had non-resident biological fathers due to separation from their mothers and three children had non-resident biological fathers due to them not having paid *lobola*, but who were in ongoing intimate relationships with the mothers of their children (see Table 1). In this sense, eight out of sixteen children whose fathers were alive had mothers who were still in intimate relationships with their biological fathers. Thirteen of the sixteen children with biological fathers alive had shared residency at one point in time (five were co-resident while the other eight were non co-resident with their fathers).

Of the sixteen biological fathers who were alive, eight took part in this study (five co-resident and three non co-resident biological fathers). Where biological fathers were deceased, of unknown location or uninvolved, children identified other men such as uncles, mothers' partners and grandfathers as social fathers and these men were approached to take part in the study (five co-resident and three non co-resident social fathers). Social fatherhood in this study was defined by the child's perception, usually according to social relations of co-residence, reciprocity and norms.

Women as Primary Caregivers

Most children equated the concept of caregiving with the basic care, support and residency associated with their mothers or other primary female caregivers. As one child explained, her mother was the primary caregiver 'because she lives with me, she is the one who takes care of me. She is the one who does everything for me' (Sandisile, female). However, one child indicated that both his parents were primary caregivers. Similarly, most women, with the exception of two who reported that both parents were caregivers, viewed themselves as primary caregivers of the children because they spend most of their time with the children. As Zomakahle's mother stated: 'Women are the primary caregivers because we make sure that children eat, they have bathed, and are dressed properly'.

Women also reported that men are usually absent from households due to work, delayed marriage or separation, therefore making it difficult for them to assume basic caregiving roles for children on a daily basis. One woman reported that:

> .. men are too busy, they do not have time, they are rarely at home to do caregiving work, it is always women who have time to make sure that the child has eaten, bathed and dressed well to go to school. Men leave the house early and come back from work very late (Thabiso's grandmother, his primary caregiver).

Data from men indicated that fathers contribute far less time than women to direct child care, although there were variations among the participants. One father reported: 'Men are too busy to care for their children. Most of the time mothers are close to their children. Fathers do provide financially but they are too busy, but the person who takes care of the child is the mother' (Nhlalwenhle's co-resident biological father).

Focusing on non co-residency as an obstacle to men assuming caregiving roles, one father stated:

> I do not do a lot for him because I do not live with him. It is his mother who is the primary caregiver because she is with him every day. She is the one who knows if he is not feeling well, what he has eaten and makes sure he is clean for school (Asanda's non co-resident biological father).

However, one particular father indicated that both he and his wife were primary caregivers for their child. He reported that:

> You cannot differentiate between the mother and father here in this house because we almost do all the chores together. If she is not there I take responsibility, if I am not there she takes responsibility. Fathers now clean after their kids, we wash napkins. You see we are also caregivers (Njabulo's co-resident biological father).

Father-mother Relationship and Residential Patterns

Father-mother relationships (i.e. wife/girlfriend/ex-wife/ex-girlfriend), together with residential patterns (whether the father is co-resident or non co-resident), were both analysed because these are crucial to understanding father-child involvement. Children, women and men agreed that there were associations between mother-father relationships, residential patterns, and father-child relationships. In this study, fifteen women lived in their own parents' households because they are not in any relationship with the fathers of their children, because the child's father had died, or because the spousal relationship has not yet been formalized by the payment of *lobola*.

All children, women and men reported that a conflicted mother-father relationship discourages father-child involvement, whereas an amicable relationship supports healthy father-child interaction. They reported that stable, well-functioning marriages or ongoing relationships were extremely

Table 1: Basic Household Characteristics

Primary Caregiver for Focal Child	Biological Father Presence	If not Present, Freason for Absence	Father-figure Relationship With Focal Child	Residency of Father-figure Finterviewed	Biological Father-child Residential Patterns and Contact
Grandmother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	M.U	Same household as focal child	Non co-resident but father anchild hare residency during visitations
Mother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	P.U	Does not stay inthe same household as focal child.	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations
Mother	Present	N/A	B. F.	Same household as focal child	Co-resident
Grandmother	Not present	Not married to the mother but still in a relationship with her	B.F.	Does not stay in the same household as focal child	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations
Mother	Present	N/A	B.F.	Same household as focal child	Co-resident
Grandmother	Not present	Father deceased	P.U	Same household as focal child	N/A
Mother and grandmother	Not present	Not married to the mother but still in a relationship with her	B.F.	**Does not stay in the same household as focal child and refused to take part in the study	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations
Grandmother	Not present	Father deceased	M.U	Same household as focal child	N/A
Foster Grandmother	Not present	Father's whereabouts unknown	N/A	N/A	Non co-resident and do not share residency at all
Grandmother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	B.F.	Does not stay in the same household as focal child	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations

Table 1: Basic Household Characteristics (continued)

PPrimary Caregiver for Focal Child	Biological Father Presence	If not Present, Freason for Absence	Father-figure Relationship With Focal Child	Residency of Father-figure Finterviewed	Biological Father-child Residential Patterns and Contact
Mother	Not present	Not married to the mother but still in a relationship with her	B.F.	Does not stay in the same householdas focal child	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations
Mother	Not present	Father deceased	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mother	Present	N/A	B.F.	Same household as focal child	Co-resident
Mother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	M.U.	Same household as focal child	Non co-resident and do not share residency at all
Mother & father	Present	N/A	B.F.	Same household as focal child	Co-resident
Mother & father	Present	N/A	B.F.	Same household as focal child	Co-resident
Mother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	M.P.	Does not stay in the same household as focal child	Non co-resident and do not share residency at all
Mother	Not present	Father deceased	M.G.	Same household as focal child	N/A
Mother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	M.U.	Does not stay in the same household as focal child	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations
Mother	Not present	Never married to mother and is no longer involved with the mother	N/A	N/A	Non co-resident but father and child share residency during visitations

M.U = Matrilineal uncle; **P.U.** = Patrilineal uncle; **B.F.** = Biological father; **M.P.** = Mother's partner; **M.G.** = Matrilineal grandfather

important for engaged fatherhood because the mother and father are able to communicate, plan and share responsibilities harmoniously. There was a strong assertion from all participants that where the mother-father relationship was not good or it was non-existent, it was most likely to result in minimal, if any, support for the child from the father. One woman stated that: 'if a man is now involved with another woman he usually forgets about the other (previous) woman and his children, but if they are together, they do things together to support their children' (Zomakahle's mother). One father stated: 'You cannot run away from the truth. Men perform far much better when married to the mothers of their children' (Mzwenhlanhla's co-resident biological father).

Another father reported that conflictual or non-existent father-mother relationships and non co-residency are not ideal for supporting children because 'it is difficult to provide financially for a child you do not stay with because you do not actually know if the money you are contributing is being used for the benefit of the child, especially when you are not in good books with the mother' (Tumelo's non co-resident biological father). Such experiences and perceptions affect non co-resident fathers' willingness to contribute financially to their children. The problem of monitoring how their contributions are benefiting their child seems to be related to the father-mother relationship and father-child residency.

One child indicated that he felt his father mistreated him because his mother and father were not married and not staying together. He reported that: 'When I went to stay with him he used to hit me and did not bring me anything but brought some nice things for his other children. I wish my father was married to my mother and that he does not only support his other children but also supports me' (Zomakahle, male). One child indicated how his parents' unhealthy relationship had negatively affected his relationship with his father. Because his parents are not on speaking terms, he has not been able to talk to his father ever since his cell phone was damaged. 'I do not talk to him anymore because he used to call me on my cell phone but ever since it was damaged he does not call because he does not want to call me on my mother's cell phone' (Anele, male).

Father-child Residential Patterns and Contact

While eleven children with biological fathers still alive do not live in the same households with them, eight children indicated having shared the same household with their biological fathers, through visits on weekends and school holidays and have regular father-child contact.

However, the nature of children's connection to their biological and social fathers differed according to father, mother and child residency patterns.

While most participants (seventeen of the twenty children, fourteen of the twenty women and all sixteen men) spoke of regular biological and/or social father-child contact, they also reported a closer child-father contact when children co-resided with both their fathers and mothers, or lived in the same area with non co-resident father compared to non co-resident fathers who children saw only occasionally.

Three children and six women in non co-resident biological father households indicated no biological father-child contact. In three households both the children and women's reports concurred that there was no father-child contact; in one household the biological father's whereabouts were unknown, in another household the biological father did not want anything to do with the child and her family, and in the last household the biological father had cut ties with the child ever since the child was taken to stay at his mother's house (see Table 2). The other three women who reported no father-child contact did not have amicable relationships with the biological fathers of the children and their variance from children's responses may be attributed to this.

Fathers' Financial Support of Children

All children, women and men in households where biological fathers co-resided with the children reported regular financial support from the fathers for children. More children (eight out of eleven) than women (three out of eleven) in non co-resident biological father families also reported financial support from their biological fathers (see Table 3). All three non co-resident biological fathers also reported regular financial support for the children. Two children, three women and men living in social father co-resident households reported that the social fathers provided financial support for children. In one co-resident social father household, where the child reported no financial support from the social father, all three participants (child, mother and social father) agreed that the social father was not able to provide financially for the child because he was old, unemployed and not getting an old pension grant from the government.

The variance between children and women's reports on non co-resident biological fathers' regular financial support for children may be attributed to current father-mother relationships. The three women who reported non co-resident biological fathers' financial support for children were in intimate relationships with the biological fathers. The other eight women were no longer in intimate relationships with the non co-resident biological fathers, hence might have under-reported the financial roles of the biological fathers. The differences in children and women's reports may also be because fathers bought things directly and gave them to the child or paid for the child when

Table 2: Informant report of Biological and Social Father-child Residential Patterns and Contact (with Reference to 16 Bbiological Fathers and 8 Social Fathers)

Father-child Contact

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Biological Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number
Regular biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	5/5*	Biological fathers	5/5*	Biological fathers	5/5*
	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number
	Biological fathers	8/11*	Biological fathers	5/11*	Biological fathers	3/3*
No biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	3/16*	Biological fathers	6/16*	Biological fathers	0/8*

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Social Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number
Regular social father-child contact	Social fathers	5/5**	Social fathers	5/5**	Social fathers	5/5**
	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number
	Social fathers	3/3**	Social fathers	3/3**	Social fathers	3/3**

Table 3: Informant Responses on Men's Financial Support to Child (with Respect to 16 Biological Fathers and 8 Social fathers)

Men's financial Support to Children

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Biological Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number
Regular biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	5/5	Biological fathers	5/5	Biological fathers	5/5
	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number
	Biological fathers	8/11	Biological fathers	3/11	Biological fathers	3/3
No biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	3/16	Biological fathers	8/16	Biological fathers	0/8

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Social Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number	Co-resident	Number
Regular social father-child contact	Social fathers	2/5	Social fathers	3/5	Social fathers	3/5
	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number	Non co-resident	Number
	Social fathers	2/3	Social fathers	3/3	Social fathers	3/3

they went out together, rather than making payments for child support to the mother. Children may also wish that their fathers provided financially for them, and reported that this was the case.

While thirteen children reported that their biological fathers provided financially for them, two children with deceased biological fathers indicated that their co-resident uncles had assumed the provider roles, while the two other children reported that their mothers had assumed the provider role from the time their father had passed away. One child with an uninvolved father stated that his mother had assumed the provider role ever since he moved into her homestead from his father' home; another reported that her non co-resident social father (mother' partner) was supporting the family, while the last child indicated that her non co-resident foster-uncle was financially providing for her and the family.

Most co-resident biological fathers tended to associate the role of the father as the head of the household with providing financially for the needs for the family as well as providing managerial oversight and supervision of children. One father stated that:

> My biggest role is to support the family because I am the head of this household. I am the head of this household so I am the one who has to pay when someone is sick, buy food and all that. I even sell my livestock when I do not have money so that my children can further their education (Mzwenhlanhla' co-resident biological father).

All three non co-resident biological fathers, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of financial provision for their children as they had little other role; they did not spend most of their time with their children to be able to supervise and assist them with their daily needs. One father indicated that:

> It is important for me to see that my daughter gets everything that she needs. I call her everyday to find out if she has everything she needs for school. I make sure that every month I buy enough food to last a month in her mother' house. This is my duty as her father to make sure that my child is happy. I cannot be there for her all the time but I try to get her everything she needs (Nonjabulo' non co-resident father).

However, while most men spoke about strong cultural expectations that a father, regardless of residency, must provide financial support for his children, they also highlighted how difficult it was for them to make substantial financial contributions for children' upkeep because many of them were unemployed or working for low wages.

Father-child Residency and Interaction
In order to measure father-child interaction, participants were asked about the time children and men spent together and the activities they engaged in during that time. Data from this study indicate high co-resident biological

father-child interaction. All five children, women and biological fathers who live in the same households reported frequent, regular and pleasurable father-child interaction. Njabulo' father reported a close and loving relationship with his children when he stated:

> We play boxing even in this room; we also play soccer and snooker. Do you know that they can drive a car? Njabulo can drive. He is nine years. The other one is a real driver now. I am sorry to say that because they are minors, they are not supposed to be driving, government will take me to jail but you see I am trying to give them whatever love I can (Njabulo's co-resident biological father).

However, children, women and men agreed that there was low social father-child interaction regardless of residency. There were variations between children and women' reports on non co-resident biological father-child interactions (see Table 4). Six of the eleven children, three of the eleven women and all three non co-resident biological fathers reported regular non co-resident biological father-child interactions. These differences in responses between children and women' reports may be because the children were reporting on the time and activities they engaged in when they visited their non co-resident biological fathers, which women may not be aware of or may overlook.

Although many of the children spoke of their happiness that their biological fathers provided financially for them in terms of buying presents such as bicycles, giving them pocket money, buying clothes and sweets when they came back home or when they visited them, five children expressed the need for more biological father-child interaction. These children reported that their biological fathers were 'too busy' and rarely available to spend time with them. One child spoke of low biological father-child interaction when she stated that 'my father is always not there. He sometimes comes back home late at night and leaves early in the morning, so I spend most of the time with granny, helping her doing the dishes and cleaning the house'.

Like the children, most women rejected singular definitions of fatherhood based on men's economic support, which includes providing money for food, payment of school fees, buying of school uniforms and clothes and providing money for the child's health care. Instead they advanced notions of fatherhood that encompassed the fathers' engagement, availability and accessibility to their children as well as other expressions of love and care. One mother stated that:

> Men think that being a father is just about taking money out of your pocket and giving it to the mother. No! It's not like that! The child needs a father who takes him out, maybe the child and the father can go and watch soccer. Maybe go to Wimpy and eat, just to say 'my boy I love you'. Well, giving money only does not show a child that you love him; you need to be always there for your child (Zinhle's mother).

Table 4: Informant Responses on Father-child Interactions

Father-child Interactions

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Biological Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	**Number**	**Co-resident**	**Number**	**Co-resident**	**Number**
Regular biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	5/5	Biological fathers	5/5	Biological fathers	5/5
	Non co-resident	**Number**	**Non co-resident**	**Number**	**Non co-resident**	**Number**
	Biological fathers	6/11	Biological fathers	3/11	Biological fathers	3/3
No biological father-child contact	Biological fathers	5/16	Biological fathers	8/16	Biological fathers	0/8

	Child Respondents		Women Respondents		Social Father Respondents	
	Co-resident	**Number**	**Co-resident**	**Number**	**Co-resident**	**Number**
Regular social father-child contact	Social fathers	1/5	Social fathers	1/5	Social fathers	1/5
	Non co-resident	**Number**	**Non co-resident**	**Number**	**Non co-resident**	**Number**
	Social fathers	1/3	Social fathers	1/3	Social fathers	1/3

Despite a few children and women reporting low levels of interaction between children and non co-resident biological father and social fathers, some children, women and men also highlighted how fathers who usually did not interact regularly with their children, nonetheless spent quality time with their children when opportunities came up. Social fathers may have low interaction with children because these men might have their own families and children whom they also spend time with.

Social Father-child Relationships

The reported absence – due to death or separation, and non-involvement of biological fathers – provided opportunities to get information about the role of social fathers in supporting children. All eight nominated social fathers reported that they had assumed the father-figure roles in the children's lives for one or more of the following reasons: because of Ubuntu (the spirit of communalism); society expected them to; they felt it was their duty; they wanted the experience of having to care and provide for a child; they had to so as to strengthen their bond with the child's mother who was their partner; they viewed these children as their own, or they wanted to secure their own financial protection in their older years, or that of their children, and hoped that the child would reciprocate the support they provide them when they were grown up. One man stated that:

> So like generally in our community, in the African community, you look after your brother's children or your sister's children. I know now we are in a modern society but there is something which we cannot deviate from even though living in a modern society, like looking after our brothers and sisters' children when they are dead. We still have to look after them (Thabiso's co-resident paternal uncle).

However, for some women there was a conflict between the support they receive from social fathers and the trust they had of them regarding the safety of girl children around these social fathers, especially when the men were not part of the mother's family. Even though social fathers were providing financial support for the mother and her children, some women still found it difficult to leave their girl child in the man's care. One grandmother stated that:

> I taught her that this is not her biological father; she has to know that he is not her biological father. Actually she should not spend too much time with him because men are not trustworthy. You can't leave your granddaughter with a man who is not her father. You don't know what men think and what they will do when you are away (Sinenhlanhla's grandmother, her primary caregiver).

This indicates the dilemma women face in accepting social fathers as providers for their children while they do not trust them as caregivers.

There was also some scepticism about social fathers expressed by men. One biological father thought it was 'impossible' for a mother's partner to be the substitute for an uninvolved biological father, and become the father-figure to the women's child. He stated that:

> I agree that an uncle can assume that role, because an uncle is the child's blood, that's why I agree. I do not agree with the mother's [boy] friend taking over the role of being a father for one reason. What happens in our Zulu culture is that blood shows who is the father of the child. Even if he [mother's partner] laughs with the childall he likes, it is not enough. Even if he can educate the child until the end there will always be a missing part because if we want to perform any ritual with that child we look for Mr Mkhize even when he [mothers boyfriend] is around in this house. That means his role is not viewed as an active role (Neliswa's co-resident biological father).

Men's Provision of Moral Guidance to Children

While all men spoke of providing moral guidance to children as a key role of the father as a 'moral figure', the data from children, women and men indicates that moral guidance was linked to both father-child residency and gender of the child. Where a boy child was residing with his biological father or father-figure, the man usually provided moral guidance. If the child was a girl, despite father-child residency, data from all children, women and men indicated that the mother of the child was expected to provide moral guidance. One mother who has a boy child with a co-resident biological father stated: 'the father teaches him to behave like a boy since he is the man of the house. He knows how a boy should behave' (Mzwenhlanhla's mother).

The way in which fathers reinforced socially masculine qualities is exemplified by the following:

> I cannot advise a female child; the female child has the mother to offer advice, like a mother cannot advise a male kid because there are things a man must talk about with other men. I have strong words for my boy children, they must know, we don't do this; if we do this we will encounter such a problem but I can't tell my girl child that when you start your menstrual circle you need to be careful of boys you see? No! I feel embarrassed. But my boys I teach them to be tough (Njabulo's co-resident biological father).

However, in single-mother households, children and women reported that female primary caregivers had assumed the role of providing moral guidance despite the child's gender, especially in a context where the child's father was deceased or uninvolved. One mother reported that:

> Right now Zoma is too young, maybe at the age of 15 that's when he would need
> moral guidance from men, maybe because I will not be able to talk to him about
> everything in his life since I am a woman. Surely he will need his father around that
> time. But I think since my brothers are around they will be able to talk to him. But
> as for now, I give him advice on everything he needs to know (Zomakahle's mother).

This statement highlights that in households where biological fathers are absent, a child's gender only comes to the fore regarding moral guidance when a child is in his adolescent years.

Correspondence Among Reports From Children, Women and Men About Father Involvement

When conducting research on men's involvement in children's lives; children, women and men's perceptions are pertinent. Effort was therefore made to avoid relying only on children and women's reports for information on men's involvement in children's lives as this leads to a gender deficit model, where men's experiences are invalidated as a result of being excluded from the study. However, difficulties in recruiting men, particularly non co-resident biological fathers, led to concerns over the reliability and validity of men's reports. Low response rates led to a lower sample of fathers as compared to children and women (twenty children, twenty women and only sixteen men took part in the study). Fathers who participated in the study may be more involved and stable than non-participants, and hence, the data may have over-represented positive involvement.

Results indicated greater discrepancies were present in children, women and men's reports of biological father's financial involvement when parents did not co-reside and were not in intimate relationships. While all children, women and men who were co-resident biological or social father households reported positive financial involvement from both biological and social fathers, some children and women in non co-resident biological father households gave differing reports on financial support from biological fathers, with more children compared to women reporting financial involvement from their biological fathers.

All children, women and men in co-resident social father households and in co-resident biological father households reported regular social father-contact. Eight of the eleven children, five of the eleven women and all three biological fathers in non co-resident biological father households, also reported regular biological father-child contact. The difference in correspondence of reports between children and women in non co-resident biological father reports may be attributed to the fact that father's contact might more easily occur outside of the mother's knowledge as they do not reside in the same household.

While eleven of the sixteen children with biological fathers who are alive and all eight biological fathers who were interviewed reported regular biological father-child interaction, only eight of the sixteen women with children who had biological fathers alive – all of whom were either married or in intimate relationships with the biological fathers of the children – reported regular father-child interactions. Most children and women who reported low biological father-child interactions spoke of children's intense hunger for a secure, abiding and constant father-figure. Children and women highlighted children's 'father-need' for safety, respect and companionship provided by men. While discrepancies were found between children and women's reports on biological father-child interactions, high levels of correspondence were identified among reports from children, women and men on both the regularity and level of social father-child interaction.

The fact that a much higher proportion of residential versus non-residential triads agreed on biological father involvement in children's lives, implies that women's reports of non-co-resident biological fathers' involvement should be treated with greater caution among unmarried and separated families. Compared to women who were no longer intimately involved with the non co-resident biological fathers of their children, married women and those in intimate relationships with the biological fathers of their children generally reported greater father-child involvement regardless of the residency of the biological father. On the other hand, fathers' reports on their involvement may have been influenced by self-serving bias. Just as women may be biased to under-report men's involvement, fathers' reports may be biased upward. However, children and fathers consistently reported higher levels of father-child involvement than mothers, although their reports followed very similar patterns and were quite highly correlated.

Discussion

Men are an essential component in the lives of children and they can and often do significantly influence the development of their children in both positive and negative ways. In this paper, we highlight the perspectives of children, women and men concerning the roles that low-income, rural, South African fathers play in the lives of their children and families in a context of poverty and high HIV prevalence.

The micro-level, in-depth data available in this study generated insights into the contextual, and subjective aspects of rural South African fatherhood and how it is experienced by children, women and men. We explored seven themes that emerged from the study on the roles of rural South African fathers in supporting children: (i) women as primary caregivers; (iii) father-

mother relationships and residential patterns; (iii) father-child residential patterns and contact; (iv) fathers' financial support to children; (v); father-child residential patterns and interaction (vi) social father-child relationships; (vii) men's role in the provision of moral guidance. Overall, these themes consider the influence of biological ties, co-residence, family social network, and marriage or father-mother relationship on father's investment and perceived investment in their children.

Agreement among children, women and men on the impact of father-mother relationship and residential patterns highlight the importance of well-functioning families on father-child involvement. Data from this study indicated that children brought up in households where both parents have an amicable relationship generally have greater access to their fathers' resources than children reared in other arrangements. Results also indicated that children in families where father-mother relationships are bad often suffer as they are found in between the father-mother conflicts and this usually affect the support they receive from both parents.

Community context and opportunities shape the lives of rural South African fathers. In this study we found that because of the isiZulu cultural expectations for men to pay *lobola*, without which the union between a man and the child's mother is not recognized by their families and community (Richter et al., 2010), a number of the children did not have daily contact with their biological fathers due to low rates of marriage (Hosegood et al., 2009). These cultural norms together with high rates of separation and deaths make for flexible fatherhood with men seeing their children when they can, and other men assuming fathering roles regardless of their relationship with the child. Also, in situations where children are raised by single mothers or grandmothers, responsibilities often associated with fatherhood, such as financial support and moral guidance, are taken on by women. It is however clear that children and men, as well as mothers would all like closer biological father-child relationships.

This study has several strengths. It improves methodologies and addresses the validity, reliability and interrelations of children, men and women's reports of men's involvement in providing support to children in a South African context. Our study enabled us to discern the informal, local systems of family support and the variety of contributions made by men in ways that less-intensive research methods cannot provide. Therefore, this study provides some basis for research on local father involvement and for future comparison.

The reports obtained from each household can be developed to provide good contextual information and also provide a perspective of the different

support dynamics for children. The open-ended nature of the data collection also facilitated the participants to report on the different kinds of support children are receiving from men from their own perspective. Although the sample is not strictly representative of the South African population, the participants were randomly selected. Thus, the findings are at least theoretically, if not statistically, generalisable to the rural community sampled. The aim in this research was not merely to generalise but rather to demonstrate the wider resonance that the findings in this context imply for households and individuals experiencing similar situations and contexts.

By providing data on the roles that both biological and social fathers are taking in providing support to children in a rural context South Africa, this study facilitates the development of empirical knowledge, services and practice to strengthen men's support for children. The more proactive inclusion of men, women and children in research on support that children receive in families and specifically from men has the potential to inform the development of new programmatic approaches and services which may more appropriately engage children's concerns and needs. For example, while stable father-mother relationships and well-functioning marriages are considered to be important for good fathering and fatherhood (Richter et al., 2011), in this rural South African context, where marriage rates are low and with many families separated, efforts should be made to promote healthy father-child relationships that allow fathers to be more involved in their children's lives regardless of parents' relationship or co-residency status.

To conclude, all children nominated a father figure, even if the man was not their biological father, and it was ascertained that all children receive some support from these fathers. Children, women and men were mostly in agreement that residency and father-mother relationships were very important for father-child involvement. Co-resident biological father households had high levels of correspondence among children, women and men, while some children and women in non co-resident biological father households gave differing accounts on father-child involvement. This can largely be attributed to father-mother relationships; women who were either married or in intimate relationships with the fathers of the children tended to report positive father-child involvement regardless of residency, while it was not always the case where women were no longer in intimate relationship with the children's fathers. Since this study is one of the few studies that explored children, women and men's reports on the role of men in supporting children, more studies are encouraged, especially examining men's involvement in children's lives from different backgrounds.

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Latchkey Experiences of School-Age Children in Low-income Families in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the Latchkey experiences of school-age children (5-13 years) from the perspectives of mothers in low-income families in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A proportionate stratified random sample of 200 was drawn from high density areas of the five strata making up the study area. Data collected were analysed using frequencies, percentages and means and revealed the latchkey arrangement common in the area including, hiding the house key at the backyard or other places for children to gain entrance to the house after school, dropping the key in a neighbour's house or shop, opening the house door through a window, while only two per cent reported giving duplicate keys to their children to take to school. Some of the respondents also reported that even though their children were home alone after school they were closely monitored by neighbours and relatives. Other parents reported that their children remained home alone without any form of supervision till either parent returned home, or were monitored by older siblings. While this social arrangement was not the preferred mode of raising children, a number of positive effects were attributed to it including learning to be independent and responsible, self reliance and competence in household chores for girls.

Key Words: Latch-key children; low-income mothers; After school care

Résumé

Cette étude s'est focalisée sur les cas d'enfants en âge de scolarisation (5-13 ans) rentrant seuls de l'école ou laissés seuls à la maison, sous l'angle des mères issues de familles à faible revenu vivant à Uyo dans Etat d'Akwa Ibom au Nigeria. Il a été établi un échantillon proportionnel et stratifié de 200 individus sélectionnés au hasard dans les zones à forte densité des cinq strates constituant le champ d'étude. Les données collectées ont été analysées, en utilisant les fréquences, les pourcentages et les moyennes et ont permis de découvrir un système généralisé dans la zone où les enfants rentrent de l'école ou sont laissés à la maison tout seuls, la clé de la maison est cachée dans l'arrière-cour ou à

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d'autres endroits pour que l'enfant puisse entrer dans la maison après l'école. Sinon, elle est laissée dans la maison ou la boutique du voisin, ou encore on ouvre la porte d'entrée de la maison en passant par la fenêtre, alors que seulement deux pour cent des personnes interrogées ont déclaré avoir remis des doubles de clés à leurs enfants pour qu'ils l'emportent avec eux à l'école. Certains ont aussi déclaré que même si leurs enfants restent seuls à la maison après l'école, les voisins et les amis veillaient bien sur eux. D'autres parents ont reconnu que leurs enfants restaient seuls à la maison sans aucune forme de surveillance jusqu'au retour de l'un ou l'autre des parents sinon des frères plus âgés veillaient sur eux. Même si cette organisation sociale n'est pas la forme privilégiée pour assurer l'éducation des enfants, on lui prête toutefois un certain nombre de vertus en ce sens qu'elle permet d'apprendre à être indépendant et à assumer des responsabilités, à être autonome et à développer des aptitudes en travaux ménagers pour les filles.

Introduction

Care of school-aged children is becoming a major challenge to many families in Akwa Ibom State as in other parts the world. This is because of the increasing number of dual earner families, with both parents and the single parent, as the case may be, being gainfully employed in formal employment or engaged in various livelihood activities outside the home. As a result, many school-aged children remain home alone and care for themselves after school hours. According to Santrock (2006), latchkey children typically do not see their parents from the time they leave for school in the morning until about six or seven o'clock, that they are usually given the key to their home to take to school, and then use it to let themselves into the home while the parents are still at work. Shumow (2011) explains that 'latchkey child' was a term coined to describe children who wore or carried house keys to school so that they could let themselves into their home when they returned from school, but that currently, the term self care is used to refer to elementary and middle school children who are without adult supervision during the after-school hours whether they are at home, at friends' houses, or in public places.

It is reported that in the United States, about one third of all school-age children, an estimated five million, between ages five and thirteen, are so-called latchkey children (City of Phoenix 2011), while an estimated 40 per cent of children are left home at some time, though rarely overnight (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 2010). Leung, Robson, Cho, and Lim (1996) and Ruiz-Casares and Heymann (2009) argue that self-care might be more common in developing countries because of poverty (poor economic and social environment), women entering the formal labour market, and limited public self-care programmes, while Makungu (2011) confirms that other factors such as a high dependency on women's labour in the agricultural sector and the breakdown of extended families may increase the possibility of self-care arrangements in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

Many school-aged children in both low-income and high-income families in Nigeria in general, and Uyo in particular have had the latchkey experience at various times, not necessarily because they are given the keys to their homes to take to school, but because they return from school to an empty house without either parents and remain without adult supervision and parental care till late in the evening. The economic and livelihood demands on parents have left majority of families with no option than the latchkey arrangements. The trend however appears now to be more rampant in low-income families because a majority of school-aged children in low-income families attend public primary/junior secondary schools often without after-school lessons to keep them in school for extra hours as commonly obtained in private schools. These children therefore return home from school much earlier and remain without parental supervision much longer than those in private schools everyday, and at times for a whole day during holidays. Also, a majority of parents in low-income families lack the financial resources to engage the services of teachers for private lessons for their children at home after school, which is common in high-income families. House helps are also scarce in the state because of the free and compulsory education, and where available not within the reach of low-income earners. Moreover, the absence of structured after-school programmes in the state for children as commonly found in advanced countries, coupled with the disintegration of the extended family system have significantly increased the number of home alone or self-care children.

Many parents in low income families work as artisans, labourers, and other poorly paid jobs, while others engage in farming and petty trading, thereby finishing their from jobs or farms as late as 6:00 pm, while the petty-traders may close as late as 9:00 to 10:00 pm. At times either parent returns home earlier, while in other cases, the children may join both parents or a single parent at their market just before dusk and remain with them till closing time later in the night. Many low-income families reside in high density neighbourhoods in large compounds housing at times upward of six to eight households. This usually allows for interaction between the children from the different households, who may play, watch television, hang out and at times eat together without adult supervision, or at times under the supervision of one or two unemployed adults who may be home in one of the many households in the compound. Some children from households with strict discipline and well-defined rules may, however, remain alone in their apartments and carry out household chores and assignments without much interaction with others in the compound, at times under the care of an older sibling. These arguments support Vandell and Shumow (1999) that after-school programmes are more beneficial for children from low-income

families and for children who live in high-crime neighbourhoods than for children in suburban neighbourhoods and middle-income families. However as Brandon and Hoffreth (2003) observe, many parents, particularly single mothers, enlist the services of neighbours and other relatives to keep an eye on their self-care children, while others monitor them through phones. In these ways the children are less likely to experience the negative effects of self-care (Galambos and Maggs 1991).

Past studies on the effects of latchkey experience or self-care of school-aged children have mostly been done in the United States and other advanced countries and have produced conflicting results. Some report negative consequences including fear, academic under-achievement, poor behavioural development, ill-health and physical injury (Dwyer, Richardson, Danley, Hansen, Sussan, Brannon, Dent, Johnson, and Hay 1990; Leung et al., 1996; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, and Llyod 1996).

Research reveals that children who start self-care in the early elementary years are vulnerable to older self-care children in their neighbourhoods who may hurt or even sexually abuse them. These children are also more poorly adjusted in terms of peer relationships and school performance and tend to be less socially skilled and to have behavioural problems (Pettit, Laird, Bates, and Dodge 1997; Bee and Boyd 2007). Posner and Vandell (1994) investigated the effect of unsupervised time with peers and found that the amount of unsupervised time children spent with peers predicted behavioural problems at home and school as well as lower academic functioning.

A study by Mulhall (1996) concludes that young adolescents in self-care use alcohol far more often than young adolescents who are always supervised by an adult after school. In her longitudinal qualitative study of children in Boston, Belle (1999) found that the children were more likely to be lonely, bored, afraid, and unengaged in productive activities during the time they spent in self-care than when supervised.

Family and neighbourhood characteristics have been related to problems of self-care for children. Self-care has been associated consistently with problematic adjustment among children who live in distressed circumstances such as low-income families and dangerous inner city neighbourhoods (City of Phoenix, 2011). A study by Marshall, Coll, Marx, McCartney, Keefe and Ruh (1997) found that children from lower-income families are associated with greater externalizing problems such as conduct disorders, restlessness, disorganisation and hyperactivity and academic problems, while children from middle- and upper-class families are no different than their supervised peers. Moreover, low-income grade-school children in self-care had more trouble, as measured by behaviour problems, than did supervised children, whereas middle-class children in self-care did not (Vandell and Shumow 1999).

It has also been argued that when children/adolescents spend time with each other without adult supervision, they have opportunities to engage in sexual activity (Cohen, Taylor, Martin, and Schuster 2002; Miller 2002). A study in the United states by Roche, Ellen and Astone (2005) showed that adolescents who were in self-care were more vulnerable to early sexual initiation in out-of-school hours than children who remained at home with adults, and in Slovenia the main factor associated with early first heterosexual intercourse among boys was less parental supervision (Klavs, Rodrigues and Hayes 2006). Also a study in Kenya on the prevalence of sexual intercourse among school going adolescents showed that parental supervision was a protective factor among female respondents (Rupatsisikira, Ogwell, Siziya and Muula 2007). It may be argued that parental or adult supervision controls the behaviour and activities of children, limiting their association with high-risk peers which invariably decrease their children's exposure to sexual relationships.

The study by Posner and Vandell (1994), found that children in informal care spent more time watching television or just hanging out. Santrock (2005) confirms that many children spend more time in front of the television set than they do with their parents, and that many nine year olds in the US watch television more than five hours a day. Studies by Padila and Landreth (1989) as cited in Berk (2001) and Leung et al., (1996), also report that self-care children suffer from low self esteem, anti-social behaviour, poor academic achievement and fearfulness. Bee and Boyd (2007) reveal that self-care children are more poorly adjusted in terms of peer relationship and school performance, and without limits and parental supervision, self-care children find their way into trouble more easily; possibly stealing, vandalizing or abusing a sibling; and ninety per cent of the juvenile delinquents are latchkey children (Santrock 2006).

Age also plays a part in the detrimental effects of self-care. Loneliness, boredom and fear are most common for those younger than ten years of age, while there is a greater susceptibility to peer pressure potentially resulting in such behaviour as alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and smoking in the early teens (Barlow & Durand, 2008). Positive effects of being a latchkey child include independence and self-reliance at a young age (Leung et al., 1996). Others argue that being left home alone may be a better alternative to staying with baby-sitters or older siblings (Belle, 1999; Ruiz-Casares, 2010). But other studies did not find any developmental benefits associated with self-care as self-care children were not found to be more competent or mature than their counterparts who were supervised (Goyette-Ewing, 2000). Vandell and Shumow (1999) argue that when the time is short, the neighbourhood safe, the child mature and the family rules clear, staying home alone after school could be a good thing.

Most of the studies on latchkey or school-aged children who are left alone to care for selves after school hours have been conducted in USA or other countries outside Nigeria. Very few studies on the subject have been conducted in Nigeria and in Akwa Ibom State in particular (Ekot 2011). The implications of school aged children being left at home alone especially in low-income families as a result of dual-parental involvement in paid employment or livelihood activities outside the home have not been given attention in previous research or media. This study sought to fill this gap by investigating latchkey experiences of school-age children in low-income families in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study sought to provide an understanding and awareness of the effects of latchkey or self-care experiences on the lives of children and the society as a whole from the perspective of mothers in low-income families and to contribute to the empirical literature on the subject.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of the study was to investigate the latchkey or self-care experiences of school-age children in low-income Families in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to:

(i) Identify latchkey arrangements commonly made for children in low-income families in the area;

(ii) Establish the factors that parents take into consideration before leaving their children in self-care after school hours;

(iii) Identify the type of arrangement put in place by mothers for self-care children to be supervised in the absence of parents after school hours;

(iv) Find out the percentage of parents who use the phone to monitor the activities of their children after school

(v) Establish the arrangements made for children to contact parents in case of emergency; and

(vi) Identify the effects of latchkey or after-school self-care of children in low-income families in Uyo.

Research Questions

(i) What are the latchkey arrangements commonly made for children in low-income families the area?

(ii) What factors do parents take into consideration before leaving their children in self-care after school hours?

(iii) What arrangements are made by respondents for self-care children to be supervised in the absence of parents after school hours?

(iv) Do parents get in touch by phone to monitor the activities of their children after school?

(V) Do parents make arrangements for children to contact them in case of emergency?

(vi) What are the effects of latchkey or after-school self-care of children in low-income families in Uyo?

Design and Area of the Study

A survey research design was adopted for the study focusing on Uyo, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State, one of the oil rich states south-south, Nigeria. Uyo is mostly inhabited by the Ibibio ethnic group who are mostly Christians, a predominantly civil service city with the Government being the major engine of growth and those outside the public sphere being mainly traders, artisans and farmers.

Population and Sample for the Study

The population comprised mothers in low-income families in Uyo metropolis. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting 200 mothers for the study. The area was stratified based on the five major roads leading to the city centre popularly called plaza, which include Abak, Aka, Ikot Ekpene, Oron roads, and Wellington Bassey way. The sample was drawn from high density residential areas of these roads and adjoining streets, and mainly from compounds occupied by many tenants commonly referred to as 'face me, I face you' compounds, from road side petty traders and women found doing odd jobs along the roads. Forty respondents were randomly drawn form each strata, giving a total of 200 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which also served as an interview schedule for non-literate respondents. It was made up of two sections. Section A contained questions on the personal data of the respondents, while section B was based on the objectives of the study. The instrument was validated using Cronbach's Alpha technique to determine the internal consistency of the items using 20 sample subjects, and a co-efficient of 7.6 was obtained, indicating a high reliability of the instrument.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed by hand to 200 respondents in the study area with the help of two research assistants. The questions were interpreted into the local dialect to non-literate respondents and their responses ticked in the appropriate columns in the questionnaire.

The instruments were completed and returned on the spot thus recording a 100 per cent return rate, and administration of the instrument to all the five strata lasted three weeks. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and mean scores. For the Likert scale questions, a decision mean of above 2.5 was used to accept the responses, while any mean below 2.5 was rejected and considered as unfavourable response by the respondents.

Results

The findings revealed the following results:

The personal information of the respondents showed that 36 per cent of the respondents were school certificate holders, 56 per cent were holders of First school leaving certificates, while eight per cent had no formal education. Forty per cent of the respondents were petty traders, 24 per cent were in low-paid employments, 12 per cent were doing odd jobs, eight per cent were farmers, and 16 per cent were engaged in trades such as hair dressing and tailoring. Over 94 per cent of them had between two and more children, while six per cent presently had one child. The distribution also showed 88 per cent of the respondents indicating that their children finished school between 1-2:00 pm, while the rest (12%) of the children left between 2.01-3:00 pm. Their husbands or other adults returned home at various times between 3:00 pm and 8:00 pm, while majority of the women returned home between 5 and 7 pm, and some of the respondents closing as late as 8 pm.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Responses on the Latchkey Arrangements Common for School-age Children from Low-income Families in Uyo

Latchkey Arrangements	Frequency	Percentage
Hiding the key at the backyard or other places	96	48
Dropping the key in a neighbours' house or shop	68	34
Opening the door through a window	32	16
Giving the duplicate key to children	4	2

Table 1, shows that the latchkey arrangements that are made for children to gain entrance into the house after school hours include hiding the key at the backyard or other places (48%), dropping the key in a neighbours house or shop (34%), opening the door through a window (16%), while only two per cent of the respondents actually gave duplicate keys to children to take to school and use it to enter the house after school.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Responses on the Consideration of Parents before Leaving their Children Alone after School Hours

Parents' considerations	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the children	92	46
Sex of the children	57	28.5
Kind of neighbourhood	45	22.5
Behavioural history	24	12
Matter of necessity	126	63

Table 2 shows that 63 per cent of the respondents considered the self-care arrangement as a matter of necessity, 46 per cent gave consideration to the ages of their children, 28.5 per cent considered the sex of the children, 22.5 per cent considered the kind of neighbourhood they lived in (whether there are other people in the compound), and only 12 per cent considered the behavioural history of the children.

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Responses on the Type of Arrangement Put in Place for Children to be Supervised in the Absence of their Parents After School

Arrangements made for supervision of Children after School	Frequency	Percentage
Children are supervised and monitored by neighbours	40	20
Children stay alone without adult supervision and monitoring till either parent returns home	96	48
Children stay alone for 1-3 hours before going to hawk or join me at my market shade	36	18
Children are supervised and monitored by oldersiblings or relations in the household	28	14
Total	**200**	**100**

From Table 3, 48 per cent of the respondents indicated that their children stay all alone without adult supervision and monitoring till either parent

returned home; 20 per cent of them revealed that their children are usually supervised and monitored by neighbours; 18 per cent indicated that their children stay alone for one to three hours before going to hawk or join them at their places of business; while 14 per cent claimed that their children are usually supervised and monitored by older siblings or relatives in the household.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Responses on whether the Respondents have House Phones for Either Parent to Get in Touch and Monitor the Activities of their Children after School

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	6
No	188	94
Total	**200**	**100**

Table 4 shows that only six per cent of the respondents have house phones for either parent to get in touch and monitor the activities of their children after school before returning home in the evening while 94 per cent have none.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Responses on How the Mothers expect their Children to Reach Either Parent in Case of Emergency

Emergency arrangement	Frequency	Percentage
Leaving behind phone numbers of parents for children to call in case of emergency.	68	34
One of the children will run to parents shop or place of business	36	18
Rely on intervention by neighbours	25	12.5
emergency anticipated	71	
Total	**200**	**100**

Table 5 shows that 34 per cent of the respondents leave behind their phone numbers for children to call in case of emergency; 18 per cent indicated that one the children would run and call the parents in their places of business; 12.5 per cent said they always rely on the intervention of neighbours; while 35.5 per cent did not anticipate any emergency and did not make any arrangement for such till either parent returns.

Table 6: Mean Rating of Responses on the Negative Effects of Latchkey or After School Self-care of School-age Children as Observed by Mothers in Low-income Families in Uyo.

S/N	Items	Means	Decision
1.	Self-care children usually form anti-social behaviours such as stealing money to buy things, hanging out, etc.	2.7	Agreed
2.	Siblings' fighting and physical abuse of sibling are common among self-care children in low income families	3.2	Agreed
3.	Self-care children in low income families engage in long hours of television viewing after school hours	3.3	Agreed
4.	Sexual abuse of siblings is common among self-care children in low-income families	2.1	Disagreed
5.	There is increased risk of sexual experimentation among younger children and sexual promiscuity among teenagers in self care arrangement	3.1	Agreed
6.	Younger self-care children are vulnerable to sexual abuse by older self-care children in the neighbourhood	3.0	Agreed
7.	Children from dual earner or and only parent earner low - income families have academic under- achievements because of their parents' absence to help them with home work	2.9	Agreed
8.	Self care children from these families suffer from fear and loneliness, e.g. fear of kidnappers and robbers.	3.4	Agreed
9.	Latchkey arrangement makes children more vulnerable to alcohol, smoking and drug experimentation or abuse than those supervised by an adult after school.	3.1	Agreed
10.	Self care children in low income families generally suffer from low self esteem	2.2	Disagreed
11.	Latchkey children from low income families are associated with greater externalizing problems such as conduct disorders, restlessness, and hyperactivity	2.6	Agreed
12.	Initiation of children into witchcraft through eating from neighbours is more common among latchkey children than those supervised by adults especially in low-income families.	2.8	Agreed
13.	Physical abuse of self care children by older children in the neighbourhood is common	2.4	Disagreed

In table 6, the respondents agreed to 10 out of the 13 items on the negative effects of latchkey or after-school self-care of children. The items agreed to were 1(2.7), 2(3.2), 3(3.3), 5(3.1), 6(3.0), 7(2.9), 8(3.4), 9(3.1)11(2.6), 12(2.8); while they disagreed to items 4(2.1), 10(2.2), and 13(2.4).

Table 7: Mean Rating of Responses on the Positive Effects of Latchkey or After School Self-care of School-age Children as Perceived by Mothers in Low-income Families

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Latchkey children learn to be independence and self-reliance at a younger age	3.0	Agreed
2..	Girls in self-care achieve competence in household chores much earlier than others	2.9	Agreed
3.	Self-care children in low income families are generally more competent or mature than their counterparts whoare supervised	2.7	Agreed
4.	Being home alone is now a better alternative to staying with housemaids or older relatives	2.2	Disagreed

Table 7 shows that the respondents agreed to three out of four items identified as positive effects of after school self-care of children with a mean score of 2.7 and above, and disagreed to item 4 by scoring a mean score of 2.2 which is below 2.5.

Discussion of Findings

From the results of this study, 88 per cent of respondents indicated that their children leave school between 1-2:00 pm and the rest (12%) of the children leave between 2.01-3:00 pm. Their husbands or other adults returned home at various times between 3:00 pm and 8:00 pm, as majority of the women returned home between 5:00 and 7:00 pm, while some of the respondents left work as late as 8:00 pm. This shows that majority of the children stay alone between 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm – a total of 2 to 6 hours – without adult supervision. This supports Santrock (2006), who argues that some school-age that children are largely unsupervised for two to four hours a day during each school week, and may be unsupervised for entire five days a week during summer months.

Results from the study also reveal that the latchkey arrangements commonly made for children to gain entrance into the house after school

hours include hiding the key at the backyard or other places (48%), dropping the key in a neighbour's house or shop (34%), and opening the door through a window (16%). Only two per cent of the respondents actually give duplicate keys to children to take to school and use it to enter the house after school. This shows that latchkey experiences in Uyo involve school-aged children opening their house doors to enter and taking care of themselves after school without their parents or other adults. This does not imply taking their house keys to school to use in letting themselves into their homes while the parents are still at work. This supports the work of Shumow (2011) that shows that the term latchkey or self-care now refers to elementary and middle school children who are without adult supervision during the after-school hours.

Our research findings also show that 63 per cent of respondents considered the self-care arrangement as a matter of necessity and that the majority of the respondents give little consideration to the age, sex, behavioural history of the children, or the kind of neighbourhood they live in before deciding on latchkey arrangement. Instead, the respondents mostly consider their economic demands contrary to expectations that parents should give consideration to certain factors such as age and sex before deciding on after-school self-care of children (American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry 2010).

From the result of our study we also see that 48 per cent of the respondents indicated that their children stay all alone without adult supervision and monitoring till either parent returned home; 20 per cent of them revealed that their children are usually supervised and monitored by neighbours; 18 per cent indicated that their children stay alone for one to three hours before going to hawk or join them at their places of business; and 14 per cent claimed that their children are usually supervised and monitored by older siblings or relatives in the household. The finding that 42 per cent of the children stay alone in the house corroborates research by other scholars such as Berk (2001), Santrock (2006), and Ekot (2011a).

Results from Table 4 show that only six per cent of the respondents have house phones for either parent to get in touch and monitor the activities of their children after school before returning home in the evening. The use of cell phone is now very common in the state, but many low-income families cannot afford to provide any for their homes, making it impossible for them to call and monitor the activities of their children after school. Consequently this increases their children's vulnerability to the negative effects of self-care.

Other findings of the study show that the respondents agreed to ten out of the thirteen items listed as the negative effects of latchkey or self-care experiences of school- age children in low- income families in Uyo, with the item that self-care children suffer from fearfulness and loneliness, scoring

the highest mean score of 3.4. This may have strong links to the current spate of violence, armed robbery, political killings and kidnapping of children in the state. Another negative effect shown in the study is that of latchkey or self-care children engaging in long hours of television viewing after school hours with a mean score of 3.3. Long hours of television viewing is detrimental to school-age children because it takes them away from home work, makes them passive learners and provides them with violent models of aggression (Santrock 2005). With less parental supervision over periods of time latchkey children also fall into sibling fighting and physical abuse of siblings as was identified by some of the respondents in the study.

Other negative effects rated highly by the respondents include alcohol and drug experimentation/abuse, increased risk of sexual experimentation among younger children and sexual promiscuity among teenagers, academic under- achievements, forming anti-social behaviour such as stealing money to buy things or hanging out, and vulnerability to sexual abuse by older self-care children in the neighbourhood. There were also fears registered by respondents of the initiation of children into witchcraft through eating from neighbours when left unsupervised by adults for long periods of time especially in low-income families. This finding is explained by cases of witchcraft accusation of children, which is rampant in the state. Some children in self-care usually eat food from neighbours who at times may use such opportunity to initiate them into witchcraft, as many of the confessed child witches claim to have been initiated through consuming food from their initiators, and the majority of the cases involve children from low-income or less privilege backgrounds. The state government has however recently enacted the Child's Right Act to protect the interest of accused children and punish offenders, which the researcher hopes will reduce the incidence (Bartholomew 2011; Akwa Ibom News online 2011).

The respondents in the study rejected other negative effects of latchkey or self care of school-age children identified in the literature such as sexual abuse of siblings, physical abuse of self-care children by older children in the neighbourhood, and the believe that self-care children in low income families suffer from low self esteem. These findings are at variance with other findings such as Padila and Landreth (1989) as cited in Berk (2001), and Leung et al., (1996) who reported that self-care children suffer from low self- esteem. The positive effects of latchkey experience as identified by respondents in the study include learning to be independent, responsible and self-reliant, achieving competence in household chores much earlier than others, and being generally more competent or mature than their counterparts who are supervised. These findings support Leung (1996); Belle (1999); Ruiz-Casares (2010) that learning to be independent and self-

reliant at a young age were positive effects of latchkey experience, but disagrees with Goyette-Ewing (2000), who did not find self-care children to be more competent or mature than their counterparts who were supervised. The finding that girls in after-school self-care achieve competence in household chores much earlier than others agrees with Ekot (2011a) who recorded a similar finding, and Rice (1995), who observed that girls in dual income families benefit more from the image of self competence. This also may be because girls in self-care are responsible for cooking or warming food for their male and younger siblings, thereby making them learn and practice cooking and housekeeping earlier than other girls. The respondents in the study also disagreed with the finding that being left home alone may be a better alternative to staying with baby-sitters or older siblings (Belle 1999; Ruiz-Casares 2010). Leung et al (1996) argue that such wide variations in reported consequences in latchkey children might reflect differences in the maturity of the children and in the parent-child relationships prior to entering the latchkey arrangement.

Conclusion

It has become commonplace in Uyo in particular and other parts of Nigeria for children to remain home alone and take care of themselves after school hours, when both parents or single parents take up paid employment, trade, or engage in other income generating activities outside the home. The study investigated the latchkey experiences of school-age children from low-income families in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria This study has shown that latchkey arrangements commonly made for children to gain entrance into the house after school hours involve children staying alone and taking care of themselves after school hours and not necessarily hanging the keys or going to school with the key as previously understood. It has been revealed that many mothers consider latchkey arrangement as a matter of necessity, without much consideration to other important factors as age, sex and behavioural history, and that a good percentage of the children stay all alone at times more than for to six hours without adult supervision and monitoring till either parent returned home. Many of the parents neither contact their homes on phone to monitor their children, nor leave behind their numbers for children to call in case of emergency. The study has also revealed the negative effects of latchkey arrangement, and a few positive effects, showing that latchkey arrangement is not completely bad, though the negative effects outweighs the positive.

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'Arming the Rebels for Development': Parental Involvement among Fishing Communities in Tanzania

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Abstract

 The reality of life for children in the fishing villages of Tanzania's inner lakes is: the father (or the head of the family who often happens to be a man) is fishing the whole night and sleeping during the day. The mother sleeps during the night and is either selling fish in one of the markets or is working on the land during the day. This circle often knows no weekends or public holidays and allows little room for contacts between parents/guardians and children, forcing children to morally and emotionally raise themselves or/and attach themselves to any other available authority. These children do not attend any formal schooling and are often are labelled *watoro* (absent from school) or 'rebels'. While the formal education system demands that children of school-going age be at school, the fishing community's social organisation and the labour market follows different patterns that do not really allow for optimal presence of parents to raise their children. This paper looks at the present state of families with school-age children in rural Tanzania and the problems they face in engaging fully in their children's lives. Using the theories of Parental Involvement (PI) and Cultural Capital (CC), a survey carried out for this study found out that being present or absent from school for the children is not always a question of lack of time; it has often to do with what is considered important in the society on one hand and the demands exerted by the nature of income generating activities such as fishing, business and farming, on the other.

Key Words: Socializing low-income children; Economic incentives for schooling; rebel children

Résumé

Les enfants des villages de pêcheurs situés dans le voisinage des lacs intérieurs de Tanzanie sont confrontés à une dure réalité . En effet, le père (ou chef de famille, qui souvent est un homme) passe toute la nuit à pêcher et la journée à dormir. Quant à la mère, elle dort la nuit et vend du poisson au marché ou

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travaille la terre le jour. La plupart du temps, ce cercle vicieux ne connaît ni weekends ni jours fériés. Il laisse peu de temps aux parents/tuteurs et enfants d'avoir des contacts, obligeant ainsi les enfants à s'assumer tout seuls moralement et émotionnellement, ou à se rallier à toute autre autorité disponible. Ces enfants ne sont plus scolarisés normalement. On les surnomme en général des *watoro* (ce qui signifie absents de l'école) ou « rebelles ». Alors que le système éducatif formel impose à chaque enfant en âge d'aller à l'école d'être scolarisé, l'organisation sociale de la communauté des pêcheurs et le marché du travail suivent un modèle différent qui ne prévoit pas véritablement la présence optimale des parents pour assurer l'éducation de leurs enfants. Cette étude examine la situation actuelle des familles ayant des enfants en âge de scolarisation dans la zone rurale de la Tanzanie, et les problèmes qu'elles rencontrent à vouloir se consacrer à la vie de leurs enfants. Utilisant les théories sur l'Implication parentale (IP) et le Capital culturel (CC), une enquête conduite dans le cadre de cette étude a établi que la présence ou l'absence à l'école des enfants n'est pas toujours liée au manque de temps ; il relève plus souvent de ce que l'on considère comme important dans la société d'une part et des exigences liées à la nature des activités génératrices de revenus telles que la pêche, les affaires et l'agriculture d'autre part.

Introduction

> 'My father leaves for fishing in the evening and comes back in the morning. He then takes a rest before he starts preparing his fishing gear for the evening's fishing round. My mother collects fish from the landing site and goes on to sell it to one of the markets here or to the next village. She does this the whole day.'

This statement is from fourteen-year-old Evelina Ntabona of Mwakizega village in Kigoma region, western Tanzania. The statement reflects the reality of life for many young people in fishing villages in and around the inland lakes of Tanzania. Evelina goes to the local primary school and has three more siblings. Her family depends entirely on fishing. The reality of life in the fishing villages of Tanzania's inner lakes is: the father (or the man in the family) is fishing the whole night and sleeping during the day. The mother sleeps during the night and is either selling fish in one of the markets or is working on the land during the day. Many young adults join this business as well either because they have to help their parents or they do this to earn some money. This circle often knows no weekends or public holidays, except for nine to ten full moon days. Apart from fishing many families engage in other socio-economic activities such as farming and petty trading. This labour organisation means there is often minimal contact between children and their parents leading the children to either morally and emotionally raise themselves or/and attach themselves to any other available authority.

The Rebel Context

Among fishing communities in Tanzania, owning one's own fishing gear is the important thing in the industry. While other activities such as attending school are considered of some relative importance, few invest time and money in them. 'Rebel' is a term used here to denote children who leave school due to the lack of proper parenting, counselling and encouragement. These children drop out in order to pursue other goals in life and quite often end up on the streets in the nearby towns or join the labour market at an early age and without any proper education. And yet for many children, attending school is part of the compulsory system of the government, consequently putting children at the crossroads of two systems operating along each other: the formal education system where a child should attend school during the compulsory education age and the social system where achievement is measured in terms of social representation and material gains such as housing, fishing boats and the number of people in one's family, irrespective of one's age.

Most parents engage fully in fishing/farming activities and have no time to participate fully in their children's upbringing. The choice is then often left to the children: go to school (where you do not see a future in it) or join the 'production activities' such as fishing, farming and handicraft (and be called a rebel by the formal education system). Why are the parents not there then to help children choose where to go? There are many factors contributing to this situation and the big question is whether these can be reconciled with the way of life for many fishing communities in order to provide these children with the skills they need in life. This paper looks at five fishing villages of Kigoma Rural in western Tanzania in order to try and understand the reasons behind poor parental involvement and the culture surrounding the provision of education to the children.

Livelihood in Fishing Villages along Lake Tanganyika

Lake Tanganyika lies at 773m above mean sea level; has a length of 673 km and a surface area of 32,900 km^2 with a maximum width of 48 km and maximum depth of 1,470 m, making it the second deepest lake in the World (Bilame 2011; Jorgensen et al., 2005). The lake has an average depth of 570 m and the water volume stands at 18,800 km^3 (Coulter 1966). The fish catch from the lake contributes up to US$ 26 million to the economy for the countries in the basin (Bilame 2011; FAO 2000). The lake basin has very fertile soil and many subsistence agricultural activities take place here as well (Mung'ong'o 1999).

There are about ten million people living within and around the Lake Tanganyika basin, many of whom engage fully in fishing activities and almost entirely derive their livelihood directly from the basin (Jorgensen et al., 2006). The lake basin supports a wide collection of subsistence and commercial activities and has a colourful assemblage of tropical flora and fauna (Mung'ong'o 1999), including highly diverse populations of endemic fish (Bilame 2011). Fishing and agricultural activities have a similar pattern among rural communities who share the lake. There are four countries sharing the lake basin in terms of surface area: Burundi (8%), DR Congo (45%), Tanzania (41%) and Zambia (6%). Among these countries, the population obtains about 25 per cent to 40 per cent of the protein needs from fish (Jorgensen et al., 2005). The most known species, the 'Tanganyika Sardines' (*Stolothrissa tanganicae*, locally known in Tanzania as *dagaa*) makes an important part of the economic activities in these four countries. Tanganyika Sardines account for between 55 per cent and 90 per cent of all commercial fisheries which mainly feed the export market and between 80 per cent and 99 per cent of traditional artisanal fishery (Rufli 2001) that supports both local commercial activities and local consumption. The second highest catch per annum is the *Luciolates stappersii* (locally known in Tanzania as *migebuka*) which is sold fresh as well as smoked and twisted to form a circle before being packed for transportation.

Traditional and artisanal fishery generally uses three types of boats: the dugout canoe, the planked canoe and the catamaran, with the planked canoe (57%) being the most frequently used (Leendertse and Horemans 1991). These boats are basically made in many villages and can be customized according to the fishers' needs. The fishing gear is often determined by the kind of boat used for fishing. The three common types of gear used are beach seines, scoop nets and lift net. Other types of fishing gear used to a lesser extent are the gill netting and hook. These types of gear are local in nature and entirely used for subsistence (Kigoma Socio-Economic Report 2006). The major crops that are cultivated include palm trees, cassava, beans, maize and bananas. These crops provide local households with subsistence food with the surplus being sold to earn money for buying other households needs such as kerosene and foodstuff. The palm tree is the most multi-purpose agricultural plant with a divergence of products such as palm oil (known as *mawese* in western Tanzania), the extract of which local beer is made (*malovu*), soap and fodder. The tree branches are commonly used for house construction and the trunk provides the major source for cooking charcoal, fuel wood for smoking fishes and other indoor uses.

Other livelihood activities in and around Lake Tanganyika are trade and travel where several commercial and passenger ships ply their trade from

Bujumbura in Burundi to Mpulungu in Zambia and Kalemie (DRC) to Kigoma in Tanzania. Tourism activities have substantially increased, especially on the Tanzanian and Zambian sides where the Gombe Stream, Mahale National Park (Tanzania), Kasaba Bay and Ndole Bay (Zambia) attract a number of tourists every year. Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi and Uvira and Kalemie (DRC) have tourists attractions as well.

Conceptual Framework: Parental Involvement (PI) and Cultural Capital Theory (CCT)

In order to understand the underlying factors regarding the importance of parental involvement in the general development of their children, two concepts have been used that particularly suit the fishing communities surveyed. They are parental involvement (PI) and culture using the Cultural Capital theory. There is an abundance of literature on PI in the education of children and the effects that this involvement has socially. Research on the effects of parental involvement has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes (Epstein 1995). Studies have also shown that parental involvement is associated with student outcomes such as lower dropout and truancy rates. Whether or not PI can improve student outcomes is no longer in question (Sui-Chu & Williams 1996 in Kloek 2007). While PI in children's education is often seen as a natural responsibility (Dermirbas et al., 1995, in Kloek 2007), there is a shortage of literature on parental involvement, especially away from school including when children are at home or at any other place besides school or other matters outside of those concerning schooling.

PI in the child's education comes in many forms and shapes. Basically it means 'an active involvement of the parents in the education of their children' (Peters 1974: 27) and can be seen as institutional and non-institutional involvement (Smit 1991). Institutional involvement depicts how a parent is involved in the running of the school by joining in parental organizations and school councils while non-institutional involvement is more concerned with the creation of the right environment for the child to be able to learn. Such an environment might include things such as a keen follow up of what the child is doing at school and helping him/her with homework (Peters 1979) and creating a learning space at home where children can comfortably focus on their education (Lareau 2000; Epstein 1995).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) further discuss the theory of PI away from school by arguing that PI is a function of a parent' beliefs about parental roles and responsibilities, a parent' sense that he/she can help his/her children succeed in school, and the opportunities for involvement provided

by the school or teacher. It is here argued that PI should be the choice of a parent in the first place and that the school and/or teachers can offer opportunities for the parent to participate fully (Harber & Schweisfurth 2002; Davies & Kirkpatrick 2000; Moggach 2006, in Mncube 2009). The idea that PI is a question of belief derives from the notion that when parents are involved fully in what is happening to their child' education then the children' schooling is affected through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and an increased sense of confidence that he/she can succeed in school (Epstein 2001). However other studies have suggested that PI is not always a question of choice. Sometimes the role of education and the presence of facilities on offer from the school play a major role. In a study in one of the fishing villages along Lake Tanganyika, Mung'ong'o (1999) discovered that while there was a small number of students who went on to join secondary school after primary education, the general mood among parents was that education did not really matter much as there were no positive examples of those who went through the primary education system (p. 8). Mung'ong'o noted that at a primary school with an annual intake of 453 pupils, there were only six teachers leading to overcrowded classes. Many parents see more problems at schools in rural fishing villages than advantages and as a result provide their children with fishing skills and farms to eke a livelihood. Children are needed by their parents to help out with fishing activities rather than staying at school where the future is never secure.

Studies have consistently shown the positive side of education involvement arguing for the link between a child's achievement and the parents' keen involvement. Among these studies are those that show that children whose parents are involved in their education, achieve higher grade point averages (Gutman and Midgley 2000), are less prone to dropout (Rumberger 1995), often do not need or get into retention and special education placements (Miedel and Reynolds 1999). Other studies have shown a visible improvement in writing skills (Epstein, Simon and Salinas, 1997), in mathematics (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow and Fendrich 1999 in Mncube 2009) and an increased reading capacity (Senechal & LeFevre 2002).

Epstein (1995) distinguished six forms of PI in their children education as: (i) Parenting, (ii) Communicating, (iii) Volunteering, (iv) Learning at Home, (v) Decision-Making, and (vi) Collaborating with the Community. Parenting refers to parents' actions that foster the children's learning and cognitive development, not necessarily tied to school. Communicating covers all home-to-school communication regarding children's academic development and other academically relevant information. Volunteering includes parental attendance in a variety of school events ranging in scope from classroom activities to school-wide events. Learning at Home is more schoolwork-

specific than Parenting (form one). It involves assisting with homework, encouraging hard work in school, and emotionally supporting the child in her/his academic challenges. Decision-Making reflects how much parents advocate for their children's interests and influence the school environment. Collaborating with the Community refers to the degree to which parents know about and use community resources that support children's learning (Epstein 1995, 2001).

PI thus requires a full understanding of parents' responsibilities towards the child's education (Demirbas et al., 1995) and the community participatory disposition that allows for parents to believe in the effects of involvement for the future of their children (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997). The involvement of parents with their children's education, though starting fundamentally at home, can be enhanced through active participation at community and organizational levels. This is because parents who participate in the decision-making process on how schools are run and how their children are being prepared for the future, experience greater feelings of ownership and are more committed to supporting the school's mission (Jackson & Davis 2000). This ownership reflects Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)'s idea of participation by belief. Once parents understand their part in their children's consequent future careers they develop a greater appreciation of their role (McBride 1991).

The discussion above assumes that the environment at school and at home is conducive for parents to get involved and that pupils and teachers communicate well enough to allow parents to understand what is expected of them. However there is little research on parents' involvement at home. Many studies show the effects of parents involvement at home in relationship to education achievement (Epstein 1995), but observation shows that especially in fishing communities, the relationship of the parents and children at home is defined by culture. The culture at home however is not always what the children are taught at school, creating disharmony in the child's learning process (Ringenberg, McElwee and Israel 2009). Labour organisation among fishing communities means boys go with their fathers to fishing activities and girls join mothers. In this situation one could speak of full parental involvement in imparting to their children's economic activities skills and knowledge. The problem of this style of involvement is that parents do not often have time for their children. In studies conducted in South Africa, for example, parents (especially male parents) spend much of their time away, working on mines and other income generating activities. The result is having fathers who are gone for most of the year and mostly interact with their families by bringing a remitted share of their meagre pay. These fathers do not and cannot offer regular guidance or love as the children grow (Sparks

1991). Among fishing communities 'fathers' are away fishing for most part of the year (October-March) and slow down during low season (April-September). The low season is equally busy as they often combine subsistence farming with fishing (Bilame 2011). Since there are no other means of income sustainability, work on both fishing and agriculture is constantly being done, leaving little room for parent- child interaction in other areas than fishing or farming.

Fishing is strictly divided along gender lines, causing problems for parents to be involved in their children away from school. If fathers are mostly out of the home and only have a chance to interact with their children minimally during the low season then we can assume that such interaction often happens during farming and that such interaction is restricted to boys due to gender segregation in farming practices. According to reports by the Government of Tanzania on education (URT 2005), girls perform better than boys at school (Mbelle 2006). This comes as a result of a girl-friendly school environment, counselling and a special encouragement to female pupils to join and stay at schools (URT 2004). The big question here is whether these girls get the girl-friendly environment at home in order to pursue their education undisturbed. This is a cultural phenomenon whereby boys are traditionally given the role of the bread winner from an early age on. Previous research on Tanzanian girls' performance both at home and at school have consistently shown that girls are affected by the way they are valued, encouraged and advised at home. It has been shown in Tanzania that girls receive negative expectations about their studies, from teachers, peers and the community at large (Malmberg and Sumra 2000). There is a relation between school achievement and self-concepts. Studies have shown that high-achieving students at school have a more positive academic self-concept and higher self-esteem (Skaalvik, Valfins & Sletta 1994; Korpinen 1990), relating to parents being involved in their development (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997).

Cultural Capital Theory

Cultural Capital Theory (CCT) refers to Bourdieu's (1983) theory explaining the relationships of the specific background of an individual to that of the environment in which they find themselves. Although in essence CCT is a very general theory and proves difficulty in pinning-down the relative influence of particular cultural factors among fishing communities, it is useful for the general concept of the cultural sphere of influence for the children in the surveyed area. The theory specifically uses the concepts of field, *habitus* and cultural capital (CC), which will be applied here in order to conceptualize the role of culture in the involvement of parents. Because

the theory is applied in relationship to PI in education, the field will represent the school and the environment and the norms that are expected and valued within that operational environment. Habitus includes the individual's values, the lens through which the individual sees the world, and one's consequent actions. Habitus is home to one's mind. The degree of fit between the field and habitus determines the level of cultural capital the parent has within that particular field (school). The more the habitus differs from the field, the greater chance there is for misunderstanding, suspicion, and a devaluing of the individual (Ringenberg McElwee and Israel 2009). Education (school field) among fishing communities often feels disembodied from the actual habitus.

While it is understood that parents in fishing communities understand the importance of education (Regional Socio-economic Development Report 2006), the actual environment (habitus) differs directly with that of the school (field). In a community where status and security defines the person's well-being and is shown in the possessions people have (Mung'ongo 1999; Bilame 2011), the value of education is seen as secondary to more urgent matters at hand. Whether gender bias plays a part on whether girls and boys will get an equal chance at an education depends on community cultural views on gender. It now comes down to how much parents value education or are educated themselves. These studies have established that the higher the educational level of parents, the higher their children perform at school and the more the likelihood of pursuing further studies (Malmberg and Sumra 2000). However these studies have not been very specific to, for instance, community-specific labour organization such as that of fishing communities. They also fail to capture the consequences of cultural practices to the degree to which socio-economic activities and education are valued. In Tanzania, for example, the educational level of parents has an impact on whether students apply for non-government schools or government schools, whether the child receives individual classes (tuition, as they are known in Tanzania) from the teacher after regular school hours, or whether the child is assisted doing homework (McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Subramamian 1994). This could be due to parents' ignorance of the system or the lack of resources. Added to that are the parents' attitudes and involvement towards their children's learning which often vary considerably according to educational levels (Malekela 1994; Mganga & Mizambwa 1997 in Malmberg & Sumra 2000: 208).

Primary Education Delivery and PI in Tanzania

The structure of the formal education and training system in Tanzania uses a 2 - 7 - 4 - 2 - 3+ system, meaning there are two years of pre-primary education (year 1 and 2); seven years of primary education (divided in

standards I-VII); four years of secondary ordinary level education (divided in forms 1 to 4, also known as O Level); two years of secondary advanced level education, known as A Level. From this level students can join a college or a university for three or more years of education. The official school attending age ranges from 5–6 for pre-primary, 7–13 for primary, 14–17 for lower secondary, 18–19 for upper secondary and 20–24 for university education (MoEVT 1995).

The general guidance for the provision of education in Tanzania is stipulated in the National Education Act of 1978. Primary education is mandatory in Tanzania and every parent is under the legal obligation to ensure that his or her child attends school without failing. The 1995 Education and Training Policy provide an overall outline for the delivery of primary education (Mbelle 2006). Enrolment is predominantly primary in nature (87.5%) while other enrolments are from pre-primary at 6.8 per cent, secondary level 5.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent from teacher education (URT 1995). Primary education is grouped into pre-, a two-year education at home or at a nursery or kindergarten and takes the age group of four to six years. After this period, pupils join primary school for seven years of study. From 2007, every primary school should have a pre-primary school (MoEVT 2008) to allow access to education for many more children. While this looks like a good plan, its implementation has proved elusive especially among fishing communities due to the nature of their socio-economic activities.

The government is the principal provider of primary education with a 99.1 percent of all enrolled pupils (URT 2005), leaving the private primary with a 0.9 percent enrolment. Private providers of primary education are entirely found in towns where facilities such as transportation and electricity are available. This means for many villages in Tanzania the government is the only provider of primary education and often with only one school and heavily under-staffed. Although the Education and Training Policy (1995) states clearly that the objective of primary education is 'to lay the socio-cultural foundation and to prepare every citizen for lifelong education and learning process' (p. 4), this objective seems to conflict with the actual situation in the field, in reference to Bourdieu's (1983) Cultural Capital theory (see, Lee & Bowens 2006). Generally the cohort wastage (dropping out) problems have seen primary schools efficiency called into question. While the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) calls for full completion of primary education for both genders by 2015 (UNDP 2003), completion rates have been worrying in Tanzania. In 2003, for example 27 percent of pupils dropped out of school, meaning a quarter of all enrolled pupils in 1997 did not complete the full cycle (Mbelle 2006).

In June 2002 the government launched the 'Primary School Compulsory Enrolment and Attendance Rules 2002' that made it a criminal offence for parents not to enrol any seven year old into the first year of proper primary school. The rule prescribes several possible punishments for parents who allow their children to drop out of school before completing the full primary school cycle (seven years). The sentences range from a fine of Tanzanian Shillings 30,000 to 50,000 (about $20 and $32 respectively in 2011) which were at the time equivalent to half a minimum of the average monthly salary for civil servants. These fines could be substituted by a jail term of up to nine months or both fine and jail term for the failure to enrol a child, with an increment of 40 percent of the fine and up to nine months jail or both for allowing a child to dropout of school. The fact that many studies still point to cohort wastage in primary schools and the lack of evidence that parents have actually been punished and the effectiveness of such a punishment, if any, shows the weakness in such regulations (Mbelle 2006). The regulation does not take into account the actual circumstances and the labour organisation of different communities, making it ineffective in some quarters like in fishing villages. A wider approach that would fully involve parents or create an environment where parents can fully participate would be more effective than the financial punishments.

In 2002 the government started to implement a five-year Primary School Education Development Plan (PEDP) aiming at encouraging more girls to access a free and compulsory primary education. The question here is whether parents are involved and how much importance is accorded to education.

Background to the Study

This study looks at the involvement of parents in the upbringing of their children among fishing villages along Lake Tanganyika. Among other work, Bilame's 2011 study showed how gear owners and fishers together accumulate wealth, but paid little attention to their children's education (Bilame 2011). The study makes an inventory of parent's participating, not only financially, but to a large extent emotionally and morally to the well-being of their children. The word 'parent' is used synonymously with (biological) parent, guardian, or any other older person (legally or circumstantially) taking care of a child effectively up to eighteen. The five villages researched along the lake are Ilagala, Bulombora, Mwakizega, Muyobozi and Kaseke. All of them share common characteristics as they are all primarily fishing villages with agricultural activities coming a distant second and chiefly occupied by women. The inhabitants of these villages comprise diverse ethnic groups with the Ha as the largest group, averaging between 60 percent and 70 percent of the total population. According to the

Kigoma Region Socio-economic Report (2006) this area is further populated by the Bwali from DRC, Wiremeni and Watongwe.

There is an active movement of people across social and geographic boundaries caused by the nature of fishing activities such as landing at a site other than one's home village (Reynolds et al., 1999) and establishing a semi-permanent home there and the frequent political unrest in neighbouring DRC and Burundi. There are no records that exactly show the beginning of these settlements, but the available village data show that as early as the nineteenth century there were settlements here that were only created in their present state in the 1950s and 1970s (Mung'ong'o 1997, 1998, 1999). This survey was conducted on the villages in Kigoma Rural. The 2002 census data show that there are about 450,000 people living in Kigoma Rural District with 72,085 households averaging 6.8 inhabitants per household (URT 2002). This is an increase of 4.1 percent compared with the national census of 1988. The district has 75 villages with a further total of 471 sub-villages. The sex ratios stood at 93 males for every 100 females, a decrease at a rate of 0.02 in comparison to the census of 1988 (Regional Commissioner's Office, Kigoma 2006). The district has a dependence ratio of 1.09:1, which looks low, but varies largely from one household to another. The well-to-do families have normally a low dependence ratio.

Aims and objectives

The study is undertaken to understand how parents among fishing villages of Tanzania' inner lakes can be involved in their children's upbringing. The study aims at establishing a common ground where parents, educators and village leaders can operate on a platform beneficial to the future generation: the children.

Research Methods

Sampling

This research was conducted among 50 households and 50 rebels'. The households were selected according to the following criteria: (i) number of people in the household (using the 2002 national census data and current village records), (ii) presence of school age children and (iii) at least one person engaging fully in fishing. The 'rebels' were divided into two: those now living in urban centres and those engaging in fishing or farming. All villages are found along the same coast with relative proximity and it was hoped that trading among them would offer an interesting perspective in other economic activities. Transport issues were as well considered in choosing villages lying along the same route. Although Kigoma Rural has

many more villages ('Background to the Study'), the other villages are predominantly farming villages.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with family representatives (often the head of the family), and individual rebels. Using ranking preference method, participants ranked what is important to them in relationship to PI and CCT. Many interviews were semi-structured and the settings were often informal at home, recreational and social meeting areas known as *vijiweni* and at economic and business meeting points such as at landing sites and at the local markets. This was because landing and initial transactions often take place early in the morning. The rest of the data were from primary schools, regional and village governments and religious institutions' records.

Limitations and Quality

Although the data were verified more than once using a feedback loop and cross-checks, there are several weaknesses which can be observed in the data collected. First, the age of respondents or other family members among surveyed household may not always be accurate. Birth and marriage data from religious organisations made a useful estimation where age did not exist at all. Certain cultural practices were a barrier to properly collecting data. People who had passed away and extended families beyond the current ones (*nyumba ndogo*) for example, were included in respondents' responses even though they culturally should not form a subject of discussion. Over-emphasizing was another problem. Respondents often gave large figures of the sizes of catches (fish), field sizes, number of domesticated animals, number of children (especially in polygamous families) and incomes, but after cross-checking, there was less than what was previously mentioned. There was, however, no evidence found to suggest that there was deliberate manipulation of the figures provided; it is more down to the respondents' illiteracy and, at times, incomprehension of the specific information required.

Results

Social Infrastructure

Education

All five villages have a primary school averaging 450 pupils per school. The gender parity does not show a big gap between boys and girls at an average of 45 percent females to 55 percent boys (compared to the national 51.1 percent for males and 49.1 percent for females). Data from the 50 households surveyed show that the majority of the respondents (70%) had finished

primary school and only a few had managed to continue to secondary school. Although respondents did not want to mention whether they left school earlier than the needed seven years, present data show that cohort wastage is still a problem. The data available from school records (year 2010) show that at some villages, cohort wastage was as high as 44 percent. The regional data estimate that the district dropout rate in the year 2006 was 50 percent (Kigoma Socio-economic Report, 2006).

Dropout rates are even more alarming when pupils complete primary school and join secondary schools. In 2005 there were 4818 pupils who sat for their examination among whom only 35 percent was selected to join public secondary. The following year represented a significant increase where among 4821 pupils; 51.2 percent was selected to join secondary schools (Kigoma Socio-economic Report, 2006). The school enrolment rate is at an average of 95 percent for school age children. Pre-school education is limited in availability and, except for a few religious centres children often stay home up to the age of seven and sometimes at nine before they start primary education. Kigoma Rural had in 2004 a total of 51 pre-school facilities of which 17 were owned by the government and the rest were run by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), mainly religious organisations. In a complete reversal, the district has 219 primary schools and none is owned by an NGO (Kigoma Regional Commissioner's Office).

This survey did not establish immediate reasons for the delay to start with primary school or the dropout except for the demands of fishing activities that involve every member of the family. Boys had generally a higher dropout rate compared to girls. This is often explained by the fact that boys were more likely to take over their fathers' work. Other factors are the presence of intensive Islamic schools known as *madrasat* which are attended often by boys. A study conducted in a nearby village in 1999, showed that as many as 50 pupils from every intake dropped out before finishing the seven years of primary education as a result of lack of school fees, household demand of labour for fishing, and Islamic demands on the youth to attend madrasat (Mung'ong'o 1999: 8). The government has however made some effort to offer primary education for those who did not have it, a project called MEMKWA (*Mpango wa Elimu Maalum Kwa Watoto Walioikosa* – The Primary Education plan for the children who missed it).

Health and Sanitation

The inhabitants of these villages have access to primary health facilities. Survey shows that health and sanitation facilities are available with villages recording averages ranging from 90 percent to 97 percent accessibility by the local population. The facilities here included pit latrines, clean drinking

water (boiled water) and health personnel. There is often an acute shortage of medication and health personnel rendering the present facilities not very useful. The Kigoma Socio-economic Report (2006) shows that Rural Kigoma has only 4.8 percent of water tanks at primary schools, a massive shortage of 95.2 percent (10 tanks out of 220) of the needed water tanks. There is a 24 percent shortage of pit latrines for primary schools as well, meaning that there are schools without proper toilets. This survey did not visit all villages, so the actual number of tanks in 2011 was not yet known.

Although those interviewed said that there were health services, many of the households (75%) had had someone in the family referred to the regional Maweni Hospital in Kigoma town due to lack of proper facilities and medical personnel. Similar researches have previously shown that in fishing communities the use of pit latrines is limited and people often defecate, wash clothes, wash farm produce and clean boats, fishes, fishing tools and household appliances in the lake (Mung'ong'o 1997). At the same time, the lake is also the major source of drinking water. Education and health information generally does not reach fishing men, especially because they often do not attend these meetings. In a study on health and sanitation in the region Mung'ong'o observed:

> Women in particular were observed bathing and washing clothes and dishes in the river from which drinking water is taken. Most households (97%) do not boil their drinking water, due to fuel wood shortage, lack of proper filtering equipments and an age-old belief that boiled water tastes different from 'natural' water. The frequency occurrence of diseases such as diarrhoea, bilharzia, malaria and cholera especially during wet seasons could be explained by this phenomenon. The most common complaints result from the lack of proper sanitation (Mung'ong'o 1999: 6).

Household Characteristics

Families are typically headed by men, with a few exceptions of widows and divorced women. The survey shows that among the 50 households interviewed, 96 percent were headed by men and not always the husband, sometimes an elder son (20%), an uncle (15%) or an elderly family member (3%). The system of extended families is widespread and the well-to-do can afford to take care of more family members which may explain why they were larger than the poor families. Typical well-to-do families were as well characterised by polygamy, although the exact numbers of wives or husbands could not be established.

Fishers are almost all men, aged between 16-50 years. Although household interviews show that almost all respondents had completed formal primary education, the rate of school dropouts would suggest otherwise. These fishers use different landing sites according to the catching season

and they have a permanent family in one of the communities. The dominance of men in the fishing industry has consequences on how families are organised. Often the man sleeps during the day and is awake around three in the afternoon to start preparing for the next round of fishing. For some Muslims, fixed prayer times mean they take a rest and wake up for prayers. In well-to-do families, there are often more children, both relatives and employees (house girls and houseboys) who often do not go to school.

Labour Organisation

Fishing was found to be the biggest income generating activity (81%), although respondents also mentioned farming (51%) as an important source of income. Men mentioned fishing as their main activity while women often do a combination of both, except actual fishing. The fishing industry is an intensive business in Kigoma rural and often a family-run activity. This means that while the actual fishing (going with boats to the open water and casting nets or using fishing rods) is undertaken by men, the other activities are often left to women and children. These include collecting fish at landing sites, smoking or drying fish and selling it on local markets, as well as packing the fish for transportation to markets in other villages and towns away from the lake shores. As the government report for the region shows:

> Small-scale operators who are sometimes the fishermen themselves and their families carry out-processing. The losses incurred through these rudimentary processing methods are rather high in that they may reach the 15–20 percent level especially during the rain season. (URT, Kigoma Region 2006:60).

Male children often help their parents disentangle fishing nets, clean fishing boats as well as transport fishes to selling points or to the next means of transport. Girls often help their mothers clean up and dry the fishes as well as stand on marketplaces or at a stand at home selling the fish. Both boys and girls often do this in combination with schooling. This arrangement neither offers children a chance of attending formal education nor does it leave parents with enough time for their children's academic needs.

'Rebels'

Of the 50 interviewed dropouts (rebels), only 20 percent still lived at home, the rest were either working in the fishing industry with different landing sites, married or had moved to nearby Kigoma urban in search of jobs. The phenomenon could be explained by the fact that people who leave school without completing carry the label *watoro* (AWOL, where the term 'rebel' is derived from) and it is thus often the case that the 'rebel' does not remain in the same household. The group coincided with the low education of the parents and most significantly 87 percent of this group said both parents

were fully engaged in fishing and farming activities. There are a few school dropouts (21%) who hail from wealthy families such as gear and shop owners who basically were never encouraged to continue with schooling because 'there was enough to do at home'.

For those who went to urban areas in search of jobs, 56 percent said they are from a fully fishing and farming family and the rest came from a combination of fishing-farming-business families. Often these young people did not get any formal skills in life except for the learning-by-example style. Since labour is almost exclusively divided along gender lines, there is little interaction with between mothers and their male children and fathers (for girls). Even in well-to-do families, male heads of families were more concerned with their investments while letting 'the money take care of the family'.

Asked as to why the parents did not see the importance of constantly being involved in their children's education, the interviewees agree that education does not help their children cope with life. Culturally, owning a fishing boat, size of the family, owning palm oil trees and/or a shop ranked higher than education. Education is clearly not seen as one of the vehicles towards solving problems related to the improvement of the livelihood of the people in the study. The importance of moral and emotional support as well as imparting basic life skills ranked as high as 89 percent among households respondents, although rebels deny having been properly guided during upbringing.

There was good news from the side of the 50 young people (rebels). Seventy-eight percent said they now understand the importance of education especially that they have seen people who are educated getting good jobs often in urban areas. This group of young people is in favour of labour diversification. Those who left for urban centres unanimously agree that education is the solution for their labour woes. This could be a result of the example they see in towns and the diverse of activities, which is a sharp contrast to the localized view of life framed by fishing activities back at home. Rebels also were typically raised by individuals other than their own parents: 25 of them were raised by grannies while the rest were either roaming from house to house or went to live with other relatives away from the village of birth. They also indicated that school environment was not conducive to stay there: overcrowding, lack of attention from teachers and parents, lack of money for school uniform and books and lack of transportation (for those living in small communities without own primary school).

Discussion and Summary

Households, regardless of their income generally seem to be run on a recognizable pattern. Clearly, two things have a bearing on whether parents will be there or not: culture and fishing. While fishing communities engage at times fully with fishing for all able-bodied, PI is often left for women to do, who too are busy with fishing activities. Fishing activities have odd cycles: happens often in the night, while transactions happen during the day. This means by the time children wake up in the morning, the one is either at the landing site already or at the market and the other is pulling ashore readying himself for sleeping (for households with two parents). By the time children go to bed, the cycle of activities for parents is then completely reversed. These cycles can be broken by labour diversification, improved means of fishing, availability of education for adults and importantly a change in the rigid school times, since these times do not allow parents to be there when needed. Other factors influencing PI include education of the parents and attitudes towards education.

The Poverty and Human Development Report of 2009 for Tanzania shows that overall results for the education sector continued to expand in access to pre-primary and primary education. For the surveyed villages, however the expansion is not more than an existential upward push for gross enrolment rates, while nothing is done on cohort wastage, effectively educating equally few people. The involvement of parents in education (adult education and lifelong learning) would help the parents understand the importance of getting involved in their children's education. Studies have consistently shown that parent involvement at home has a more significant impact on children than it does in school activities (Christenson & Sheridan 2001; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich 1999; Trusty, 1999). Still this is almost unachievable if the parents and indeed the community do not see the importance of being there for their children.

The lack of PI among fishing communities is thus not always the question of lack of time or money. This research shows that parental preferences more often lie elsewhere than being there for the children. Also culturally, mothers are seen as having the sole responsibility of being there for their children. Where mothers engage in fishing and farming, there is often no one at home to give guidance to children. It is a vicious cycle: on one hand parents have to work hard to earn a living, but on the other they should be there for the children as well. One fishing boat observed in Mwakizega was written: 'Kushindwa shule siyo kushindwa maisha' (Kiswahili for: failure at school does not spell failure in life). This sums up the general view of education, while giving a hint on the present substitution to schooling. Since

social organisation in the five villages is collective in nature, parents who do not seem to be fully involved in their children upbringing in some areas, are actively there in other areas considered important in the eyes of the community (ownership of property and transferring their skills and resources to the children). Although the incomes may seem stable at times, fishing is seasonal and there are examples where families fell in abject poverty when there were changes in income generating activities such as the loss of boats through piracy, the death or departure of the breadwinner, extended dry periods and poor catches in some seasons.

Policy Implications

Fishing. While owning more boats seems to be the most attractive thing to do, fishing is monotonous and unstable. Re-investments of the fishing proceedings in order to diversify both labour and sources of income would help many parents be there for their children. Fishing activities are so labour-intensive that investment in new fishing ways, other sources of livelihood and in education would provide a relief for many interviewed households. This may need education and training and the availability of financial assistance.

Education. Both the local communities and the government need to see education as a vehicle towards the search for solutions for some of the socio-economic problems. If education remains a distraction instead of the goal in itself, few parents will advise their children to attain it. The study shows that many parents are lowly educated themselves, making it important for the investment in adult learning, which corresponds with the fishing community's way of life. There should be training to fishing villagers on the importance of education, improvement of education facilities and investment in social infrastructure. The government needs to make a follow up on regulations listed in the Education Act, 1978 and the 1995 Education and Training Policy.

Culture. The culture of fishing communities is based on the rigid times fishing activities take place, the household organisations (having a man as head of the family) and the culture of here and now. Education seems to be good for long term investment, but few parents are willing to take on that journey. It has been observed during this survey that respect from peers and the community comes from owning fishing boats and palm oil trees. Only when PI attains the same status can parents fully engage in their children's lives.

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Forced into Adulthood: An Exploration of Psycho-Social Dynamics in Child-headed Households

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Abstract

Child-headed households are a common family arrangement in the coastal region of Kenya and beyond. These households are mainly precipitated by situations in the lives of parents that force children to take up social roles that are usually reserved for adults. While children have rights just like adults, their well-being is compromised without parents' involvement in their lives because of missing parental obligations. Children in child-headed households are forced to handle responsibilities that are not appropriate for their developmental age, often denying them a sense of childhood comfort and burdening them emotionally, socially and psychologically. Such children end up with numerous psycho-social challenges, including low self esteem, early marriages, exposure to child labour, prostitution, trafficking and social exclusion, among others. The situation is a vicious cycle, bound to recur since such children also become parents at an early age. This paper uses data from coastal Kenya to show the inevitability of child-headed households and the need to treat such households as part of the larger repertoire of nuclear family set ups in the society.

Key Words: Psycho-social dynamics; child-headed households; alternative family units

Résumé

Les foyers dont le chef est un enfant sont une forme d'organisation familiale que l'on trouve assez fréquemment sur la région côtière du Kenya et au-delà. La plupart de ces foyers sont le fait d'événements inattendus survenus dans la vie des parents et qui obligent les enfants à assumer des rôles sociaux normalement dévolus aux adultes. Si les enfants ont en principe des droits au même titre que les adultes, leur bien-être se trouve néanmoins compromis sans l'implication des parents dans leur vie ; ils sont ainsi privés des devoirs parentaux à leur égard. Les enfants des foyers dirigés par un enfant sont obligés d'assumer des responsabilités incompatibles avec leur âge. De ce fait, ils ne peuvent souvent profiter du confort insouciant de l'enfance, révélant ainsi un poids émotionnel,

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social et psychologique dont ils souffrent. Ces enfants finissent par développer plusieurs types de troubles psychosociaux dont notamment la perte d'estime de soi, le mariage précoce, la vulnérabilité au travail, à la prostitution, au trafic d'enfants et à l'exclusion sociale. Il s'agit d'un cercle vicieux et forcément récurrent, dans la mesure où ces enfants eux-mêmes deviendront aussi des parents à un jeune âge.

Introduction

The Kenyan Coast is a high tourist destination (Akama 1999; Dieke 1991; Sindiga 1999) with the majority of the activities around the coast related to tourism and use of natural resources around the beaches and other marine bio-life. One prevalent source of livelihood for many in this region is fishing (Ochiewo 2004). Many people also explore the ocean for shells that they easily hawk to tourists and local visitors at the coast as others are involved in mining activities especially in Kwale, Kilifi, Mombasa and Magarini districts. With the prevalence of tourism and other forms of socioeconomic activities along the coast, there is a general assumption that employment can easily be found there, and that tourists will readily spend money on simple chores like local tour guiding and domestic work. As a result many people migrate from other parts of the country to seek employment in the tourism industry only to arrive and realize that there are few lucrative economic opportunities available (Oucho 2007). In reality, the majority of the jobs available are casual jobs like working on mining farms, domestic work, small scale businesses and basic beach operations. These jobs provide very meagre pay and often force individuals to consider alternative livelihood sustaining mechanisms, some of which are quasi-legal such as commercial sex work and making local brews. This mismatch between expected economic boom and the reality of low paying jobs leads to a number of social challenges including high rates of poverty, HIV/AIDS and family disintegration that have left many children without the care of parents. This has contributed to the existence of child-headed households.

The 2001 Children's Act of Kenya[1] defines a child as a human being under the age of eighteen years while a child of tender age to be one below the age of ten. Our research confirmed that there are many households with individuals that fit this definition who have full control over their households. Children in these households assume an adult role of nurturing, fending and caring for themselves and others. These households provide a new model of the nuclear family that contradicts traditional African child rearing practices where children are fitted in an extended family setting and taken care of by an adult, even in the event that they lost both parents. This is not to say that there are no traditional familial or organized systems of taking care of children

in the coast region. However, a number of interacting factors have triggered the emergence of these kinds of households that call upon social scientists to rethink the nature and structure of the African family.

For a long time, parents and guardians have been considered a mandatory figure in the lives of children. With socioeconomic, political, and even structural changes as witnessed during the course of our research for this project, this notion is changing as some children enter into social arrangements where they are able to live alone and still make ends meet. What needs to be explored are a few issues, including, first, whether this is a comfortable setting for children considering the implications of taking up responsibilities before their rightfully perceived developmental stage for these kinds of tasks. Second, is the need to understand the development issues that children encounter because of these circumstances and ask whether they are forced to undergo various development stages at the same time or if they miss out on some of the stages; and third, how this affects their lives even when they become adults. Granted, children and parents have distinct roles and responsibilities that are outlined in the 2001 Children's Act of Kenya as follows:

(1)… 'parental responsibility' means all the duties, rights, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and the child's property in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

(2) The duties referred to in subsection (1) include in particular-

    (a) the duty to maintain the child and in particular to provide him with:

        (i) adequate diet;
      (ii) shelter;
     (iii) clothing;
     (iv) medical care including immunization; and
      (v) education and guidance;

    (b) the duty to protect the child from neglect, discrimination and abuse;

    (c) the right to

      (i) give parental guidance in religious, moral, social, cultural and other values;
     (ii) determine the name of the child;
     (iii) appoint a guardian in respect of the child;
     (iv) enforcement of rights.

This Act emphasizes the role of parents in the lives of children and confirms that children in child-headed households are overwhelmed by responsibilities that are not rightfully theirs even when they cannot avoid them. In this paper I explore the various realities of child-headed households and the ways in which they assist us in understanding the changing nature of the African family, especially when it comes to the role of parents in socializing children into members of their communities.

Methods used to Collect the Data

Data for the study were collected through structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. Two-hundred and fifty children were interviewed in the study in Magarini, Kilifi, Malindi, Kwale and Mombasa districts in Kenya's coastal province. Further, eight social workers from different organizations within the coast province were also involved in a focus group discussion that focussed on the psycho-social dynamics of children in child-headed households. The social workers were also engaged in participant observations on 24 selected households in the mentioned areas.

Child-headed Households as Stable Social Units

As child protection systems are emphasized by the government through the children's department and by both local and international organizations, child-headed households are gradually gaining stability and semi-independence. With various organizations focusing on different areas supporting children such as educational sponsorship and provision of other basic needs, many children are finding a way to fend for themselves even in the absence of parents. Social workers from various organizations actively offer such services as guidance and counselling and link children to essential health care services through government and private facilities. Some parts of the coastal region in Kenya rely on relief food and children in child-headed households are given priority where they are known to the local administration. It is rare to find children with malnutrition at the Kenyan coast because of the availability of certain foods that provide a balanced diet. Fruits like mangoes, paw paws, pineapples and coconuts grow readily in different parts of the region. Wild vegetables can also be found easily, while fish is accessible to those who live near the Indian Ocean shores. Children are able to get starch from rice, maize meal and cassava which are staple foods at the coast. All these go to show that eve when children are living in households where they do not have adult care and supervision, they are likely to survive. The existence of these households is propelled by various interacting dynamics that affect the day-to-day lives of people in the coastal region including diseases, access to land, imprisonment, and peer influence, as discussed here below.

Diseases

HIV/AIDS continues to claim many lives in sub-Saharan Africa. The Kenyan coast in particular has high rates of HIV/AIDS infection because of its focus and often dependence on the tourist industry. While the industry does provide a large share of the national income it 'has failed to deliver significant benefits and employment for host communities', and as a result exacerbated and increased the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation (Jones 2006:vi). The area has also attracted many employment seekers and has many fisher folk, a high prevalence of commercial sex workers (both children and adults) and intravenous drug users, all of whom are most at risk of contracting HIV. These risky socioeconomic practices often lead to the death of both parents leaving children to fend for themselves. With poverty levels at the Kenyan coast going as high as 65 percent in some districts,[2] it is not unusual for a family to consider it economically burdensome to take care of HIV/AIDS orphans because of high treatment and nutrition costs. As some scholars have shown, 'in communities where death due to AIDS has forced many adolescents to take on adult roles, the transition from childhood to adulthood is disappearing' (Ondimu 2005:5). While it is common practice and even expected that orphaned children will be taken in by relatives, migrant families that have kin in other parts of the country present some challenges for these children. Indeed it may be that some orphaned children may find it hard to migrate back to their ancestral homes if their parents had migrated to the coast and had claims of home in another location in the country. Moreover, some of the children are born after the parents have moved from their ancestral homes and may not be known to their kin and vice versa. As a result, these children do not have any attachments to their families. As some of our focus group discussions revealed, many children can have a stronger bond with neighbours as compared to their relatives, some of whom they are likely not to have ever seen.

When it comes to legal considerations, however, the children can only be taken care of by a close family member in the event that their parents are not there. Non-family members are discouraged from taking care of children who are not related to due to the current complicated procedures of adoption, fostering or giving guardianship that are stipulated in the country's laws on child care. It is for such reasons that most of the children prefer to remain in their homes and take care of their household than go live with relatives. Even when communities may have local mechanisms of taking care of such children, those children whose parents migrated from another part of the country may not benefit much since they are seen as foreigners and not beneficiaries of community resources. This is closely linked to the fact that the majority of the parents are likely to have been casual workers and

considered a minority in the community they live. Stigma also affects the response of individuals towards HIV/AIDS orphans. Some people assume that their own family members are likely to be infected if they interact closely with HIV/AIDS orphans. This limits the chances of orphaned children being prioritized in their immediate community and in traditional social protection mechanisms.

Access to Land

The land question within the Kenyan Coast is complex due to its peculiar historical and legal origins. The process of land adjudication and registration under the Land Titles Act (Cap 292) in Kenya deprived many members of the indigenous Coastal communities of their land. This led to the area having the largest single concentration of landless indigenous people living as squatters. It also gave rise to the problem of absentee landowners (Session Paper 3 of 2009 on the National Land Policy)[3].

These loopholes make it easy for children to settle in a given place where they put up simple shelters with no one evicting them from the land. Moreover most of the traditional coastal houses are made from locally available materials – mud walls and the roofs from pine leaves – making it easy for these children to construct their own shelter inexpensively. With the availability of warm and friendly weather almost year round, it is also easy for children to live without the need of much covering to protect them from harsh weather. Those living around the ocean can fish for food. These factors together with availability of food in some places make it easy for children to survive in a subsistence way, despite the absence of their parents.

Imprisonment

Children have also been left without parents who may have been sentenced to spend time in prison for both criminal and civil cases. This is likely to happen if the parents of the children have relocated to the coast from a different place, leading them to being socially excluded by other community members who often label them in relation to the crimes that their parents committed. Sometimes parents are jailed because of reasons related to the children, leaving their children without a parental figure. This reality was expressed in focus group discussions with the social workers, who revealed that they were giving psycho-social support to children who were living alone because their parents were sentenced to jail for a crime related to their children, such as defilement, child neglect or even physical abuse. Quite often these children are shunned by family members who perceive them as traitors and inconsiderate to their parents. The situation is made even worse when the children are witnesses in court testifying against their parents.

Given this complex social relationship, as our focus group discussions revealed, many families choose to downplay or even not report at all any cases of abuse to child protection authorities. They instead prefer to solve the issues amicably and will not treat the children involved kindly, should the children cooperate with authorities to pursue the cases legally. Should the children get support from the authorities, family members refuse to provide for them while the parents are serving their sentences and even discourage those who are willing to help them for fear of being shunned from the extended family. It is not uncommon for organizations to step in and offer to assist these children through the provision of basic needs and education, but their relatives will often not support them and may even take away the things they are given and use them for their own personal gain. This kind of frustration makes the children choose to leave their homes and begin surviving on their own as they enjoy relative peace.

Negative Modelling from Peers
Some of the children interviewed ran away from home and quit school because of what they considered extreme pressure to meet academic obligations from their parents. Some of the children said that they perceive working on the beach as an option since they may be lucky enough to meet foreigners from the West who would provide resources that would transform their lives. To this end some hang around the beach and wait for tourists to come by, and earn their living from giving tourists directions on the beach, or take tourists for boat rides to see fish in the deep ocean. They may also be involved in illicit business like selling drugs and even prostitution. In the course of all these, there are those who get married or end up in close intimate relationships where their partners provide for them fully. This kind of lifestyle is often discouraged by many parents who acknowledge the negative consequences of such behaviour. The children consider it a short cut to getting the life they desire and hence run away from home to pursue this life. It is through these and other related issues that we find many child-headed households in Kenya's coastal region. Such tasks of heading households for children maybe the only or even a better option for many children but they do come with many psycho-social challenges as we will see below. Some of the psycho-social challenges push children further into autonomy and increase the number of households with no adult caregivers.

Psycho-social Issues of Children in Child-headed Households
Children, adolescents and adults differ from each other in their style of thought, emotional experience and expression, and behaviour (Corey 2005). Children and adolescents tend to manifest several of the thought styles

associated with cognitive distortions in adults. Dichotomous thinking, over-inclusive thought, idealized rather than realistic appraisal of situations, and catastrophic thought are common among young people (Dattilio & Freeman 2000). The realization that children can make ends meet against all odds can boost their self esteem and motivate them to find solace in the kind of life they live. As Maxwell notes, 'When children experience breakthroughs, they're able to move further down the road toward the fulfilment of their full potential. Sometimes, the breakthrough enables them to choose the better fork in the road. Other times, the breakthrough allows them to overcome an obstacle or potential obstacle with relative ease, and it gives them an extra burst of energy that speeds them on their journey' (Maxwell 1996:4). But often, it is reason enough to harbour anger, vengeance and despair in life in retaliation to their experience. This raises the questions: Do the circumstances of children in child-headed households magnify or compromise their dignity as children and what is the worth of a parent in a child's life? While a child is entitled to his or her basic human rights just like an adult, there are limitations that arise because a child is below the age of consent for many issues. A child cannot represent him/herself in certain areas, making it a hindrance to the full realization of his/her rights. A child cannot fully engage in work or access financial services, among other challenges. Even free and mandatory services like health care, are usually given through the National Health Insurance Fund, upon provision of a parent's identification documents. Children's rights cannot be isolated from parental responsibilities. This makes it difficult for children to depend wholly on themselves and enjoy their lives in the absence of a parent or guardian. Children in child-headed households undergo various psycho-social challenges where they are not only burdened with the stress of fending for themselves but also with the challenge of medical care, social exclusion and violation of basic rights.

In traditional African culture, children who lose both parents are taken care of by other immediate family members. Usually, different relatives opt to stay with the children and to provide for them. The children grow up with their own relatives without necessarily going through cumbersome legal adoption procedures. In Kenya for example, according to the nations Children's Act of 2001, adoption orders are only issued by the High Court of Kenya and not any lower court. Once issued, the order is served on the Registrar-General (Marriages and Adoptions Office) for entry into the Adopted Children's Register and issuance of the Adoption Certificate. If the parents had property, it is given to the selected people to manage it on behalf of the children. Sometimes the children are not even aware of the property, nor do they understand their entitlement to it. As a result, they do not follow

up on it even once they become adults. The property may be sold before the children attain the age of consent, or the children may simply be sidelined during the sharing of the property. On realizing that they have been cheated by their relatives some children move from their patrimonial home and live alone. Seventeen households involved in this study, for instance, reported mistreatment from extended family members after the death of both parents.

When children are left by their parents for whatever reason they become vulnerable to employment practices even as they take advantage of the available labour market (though illegal). According to 2007 findings on the worst forms of child labour in Kenya

> … children primarily work in the informal sector. They work, often with their families, in subsistence and commercial agriculture, on tea, coffee, rice, and sugar plantations. Children also work in herding and in fisheries. Children also work in domestic service, construction, transport, quarries, and mines, including gold mines. In urban areas, some street children are children who managed to escape from abusive domestic service situations.[4]

Children are engaged in commercial sexual exploitation and are reported to engage in prostitution in bars, discos, brothels, massage parlours, and on the streets. While the majority of children exploited in prostitution are between 13 and 17 years, children as young as nine are reported to be involved. Many girls who hawk or beg during the day reportedly engage in prostitution at night (Jones 2006). In the agricultural sector, girls are sometimes forced to provide sexual services in order to obtain plantation work. Sudanese and Somali refugee children are also alleged to be involved in prostitution in Kenya. The growth of the tourism industry has been accompanied by an increase in children's involvement in prostitution, including in the coastal towns of Malindi, Mombasa, Kilifi, and Diani.

In their responses to questions about livelihood opportunities posed during interviews for this study, children who work in salt mines were not aware of their rights as labourers and worked without realizing that they were being exploited. Many consider it a privilege rather than a violation of their rights to be employed. When children work to provide for themselves, they automatically fail to go to school and are not able to enjoy their right to education. During participant observation sessions, children from child-headed households were found to spend so much time looking for money that they did not get time to play and socialize with other children as compared to children from parent-headed households. Some undergo physical bodily harm, some of which may even cause them to be physically compromised or even lead to disabilities, more so if they are exposed to heavy labour and to toxic substances as it is in urban areas where children pick scrap metal

for sale that exposes them to tetanus. Even if employed these children are not given medical insurance cover by their employers. Children in such situations undergo intense self pity and feelings of helplessness when preoccupied with the thoughts of providing for themselves. Many despair and end up in depression. However, children are not to be blamed for this predicament. At times parents involve their own children to work on the farms and mines. In our study, 43 children working in the salt mines on a weekday were interviewed in the Magarini salt mines at Gongoni sub-location. Some of the children interviewed had this to say:

> There is no need of staying with a parent if you can also provide for yourself just like they do.

When I come out here to help, I feel good because we can get more food at home…

> I would rather tire on the farm for myself than to contribute to the family because I still can't get everything I need from home.

While some children were found to be working alongside their parents, others had chosen to work independently and use the money on themselves rather than to pool their money to a family basket.

There are other forms of work that lead to child exploitation and call for more intervention from adults. Child prostitution is a common phenomenon at the coast even despite the intervention of various stakeholders on how to mitigate the menace. 'The children who sell sexual favours to tourists tend not to be a homogeneous group. Sex work is transient and mobile and children will move to where there are greater opportunities, particularly children orphaned or forced to leave home for economic or other reasons' (Jones 2006). Child-headed households can partially be attributed to this. Children are highly vulnerable because they are considered cheaper sexual prey as compared to adults. In the study conducted 86 children aged between 11 and 17 confessed to be repeatedly involved in sexual intercourse in exchange of food (for themselves alone or the entire household), clothing or money. Similarly, it is worth noting that incentives are not the only reasons for children to be involved in prostitution. Many children may be exposed to sexual exploitation when they seek out opportunities that can offer them a sense of belonging. As I have shown elsewhere

> ... poor interpersonal relationships at home can cause learners to have close interpersonal relationships with their peers, teachers or other people. Everybody needs a place to belong. The first ideal place where one should get love is at home. In the absence of love at home, an individual finds himself clinging to any other relationship that will provide this feeling of belonging and acceptance (Muyomi 2009:51).

When not lured into prostitution some children, especially girls, are likely to consider marriage as an option of solace for themselves and their siblings. Responding to the question of what options they are considering to improve their well-being, a girl of 14 years responded: 'At this juncture I find it better to get married then move to my home with the younger children. I would not turn down an offer from an understanding man'.

When they get married, their siblings move with them to their matrimonial home. They mix and play with other children in the home and also contribute to the day to day activities of the home like tilling their garden, fetching water and even babysitting. In exchange for these services, they receive accommodation and food. Children in such marriages are, however, highly prone to abuse. According to a study by UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre, 'women who married at younger ages were more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife and were more likely to experience domestic violence themselves'.[5] Their spouses are usually aware of their dependence and may take advantage of the fact that the children do not have a home to return to. This was pointed out by four respondents in our study who had been married then left the marriage after their spouses turned abusive. One respondent said, 'He kept on reminding me that he was everything to me and I had nowhere to go. He forgot that he found me living alone with my siblings and we were not going through the kind of mistreatment he was exposing me to'. Children do not have the authority to protect them from getting married no matter their age and child rights abusers take advantage of this loophole. During focus group discussion, the social workers participating mentioned that the inability to negotiate for a dowry was another factor that may predispose children to marriage at an early age. Cultural demands of making this commitment are less since the children may not have anyone to negotiate on their behalf. Such children may therefore be considered an easy prey for marriage.

Another area of concern is education. In Kenya, it is easy for children in child-headed households to access basic education since it is free (Mondah and Ngo'ngah 2004). In rural areas, it is even easier since there is little emphasis on correct school uniform because of the high levels of poverty. This is helped by the fact that the children are likely to get assistance from various organizations that meet the academic needs of children. The greatest challenge that these children are likely to experience is the lack of parental involvement in their education. Such children may also not get much attention from teachers who are aware that there is no parent to follow up on the academic performance of the child. The children may also be ridiculed by others during play and may be intimidated when others laugh at them for not having parents. From our research, we noted that despite free primary

education in Kenya, many children aged between five and nine were not attending school for various reasons including mockery from other children and the persistence of teachers that children should bring their parents to school for various reasons. We also noted in our participant observation sessions that most of the children who were socially withdrawn during child play were children from child-headed households. Out of 180 children observed, 57 were socially withdrawn and 32 of them were from child-headed households.

In other cases we also noted that older children had to forfeit their own education to allow younger ones to attend school, not because they understand the significance of education in the lives of their siblings, but because of certain factors articulated by respondents at our interviews. First, older children get time to engage in socio-economic activities without thinking of the safety of the younger ones who may wander off to play. Second, those engaged in dehumanizing and embarrassing activities like child prostitution do not want to expose it to younger children. Moreover, some schools have feeding programmes that assure some children of eating at least one meal a day, simply by being there. As studies in other parts of the country have shown, 'The effects of the school meal programme on the well-being of rural Kenyans cannot be overstated. Through providing daily meals, schools are able to meet immediate food needs, provide future safety nets, and offer long-term assistance and empowerment to children, families, and communities' (Langinger 2011:36).

Children are pushed to criminal activities for survival when they lack a way out. They may be involved in petty theft or even be used by adults to engage in more serious crimes for which they are rewarded with money or exchange of other basic needs. One of the children interviewed said, 'You cannot just sit and watch your siblings suffering when you have a way of helping them'. Social workers also revealed that at least one of the children in the child-headed households they were supporting had been involved in crime, mostly theft, to support his/her siblings. This becomes a habit and even though the children may not face serious charges and consequences because they are children protected by the law they will later face minor juvenile charges or even be put on probation.

Children receive a lot of social, physical and psychological security from parents. But a lack of this assurance makes a child feel handicapped, uncertain of his own abilities, fearful and therefore on the defensive. When failing to provide emotional security to the children, parents cause unhappiness, lack of loyalty and tension (Wanda 2007:53). Children from child-headed households are likely to miss this kind of security. They develop defence

mechanisms to protect themselves such as aggressive behaviour when they play with other children as noted in our participant observation sessions. The remote awareness that they have to stand up for themselves makes them aggressive in order to control the situations around them. This way they become bullies. As Crosson-Tower highlights the residual effects of family maltreatment leads having difficulty trusting others, having low self esteem, anger, impaired objects relation, impaired parenting abilities, lowered intelligence, impaired development, verbal inaccessibility, inability to play, difficulty with relationships, abuse of alcohol and drugs and perception of powerlessness (Crosson 2000:374).

Children from child-headed households are also targets of child trafficking where they become domestic workers or used as sex pets. When perceived to be desperate and in need of basic needs, they become all the more vulnerable to this predatory behaviour. As noted by other scholars, such children are vulnerable to being misused because, 'In an attempt to preserve what resources they retain, they become passive or withdrawn and tend to seek reassurance from others' (Dattilio and Arthur Freeman 2000:67). The people who entice such children either employ them directly or give them out to work for other people while receiving the payment on behalf of the child. In the end they do not use this money to benefit these children.

Loss of human dignity brought by these experiences of abuse interferes with the self worth and self concept of children. When they are required to provide for themselves at an early age, survivors of neglect might be expected to develop some degree of proficiency. Although past victims demonstrate an ability to survive despite incredible odds, they lack a true sense of trust in themselves. Not only have they lacked encouragement and stimulation to develop a positive self image but they have modelled themselves as parents who thought little of themselves also (Crosson-Tower 2005). Children are in several cases forced to go without some basic provisions, something which compromises their dignity. For example, some female children do not wear inner linen or use sanitary towels because of the opportunity costs involved. They are forced to choose between buying food and other basic provisions and their personal needs. Such difficult situations can make children grow up with feelings of bitterness and may be at times overwhelmed when faced with other challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear that there are situations in which the existence of child-headed households cannot easily be avoided, and that some of these social arrangements are successful in their own right. There is a need, therefore,

to recognize this as a family unit that needs to be supported in the absence of the traditional form of family where parents or adult guardians are present. Scholars and practitioners in children's issues are encouraged to rethink assumptions about children being powerless and incapable of assisting themselves. This does not, however, mean that child-headed households should be encouraged as a new form of social arrangement but that they be recognized as possible sites for child socialization that can act as bridges to adulthood or to traditional family set ups. Rather than discouraging them or being oblivious to their existence scholars and caregivers alike ought to seek ways of providing psycho-social support for children in such households. Moreover, organizations that assist such children should not only focus on the material needs of such children, but also on their psycho-social well being through the provision of counselling and mentoring programmes. Although children can live without the direct involvement of parents, the significance of parents' involvement in the lives of children cannot be ignored. The failure of parental guidance exposes children to many challenges and unless this cycle is broken, more child-headed households will emerge.

Notes

1. Children's Act of Kenya, 2001.
2. See Coast Rights Forum for statistics of poverty in Malindi district at http:/coastrightsforum.orgindex.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=43.
3. Ministry of Lands, Government of Kenya, Session Paper 3 of the National Land Policy 2009, available at http://www.lands.go.ke/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=81&Itemid=46.
4. See Findings on the worst forms of labour at, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOL,,KEN,456d621e2,48caa47941,0.html.
5. See, UNICEF, 2005, 'Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice', available at www.unicef.org/publications/files/Early_Marriage_12.lo.pdf.

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