Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICAN CHILDHOOD

Constructions, Histories, Representations and Understandings

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Edited by De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway, Awo Sarpong and Charles Quist-Adade

VERNON PRESS
SERIES IN SOCIOLOGY

Olukemi K. Amodu

Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale

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Introduction

De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway

Background and Focus of Study

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This edited volume, titled *New Perspectives on African Childhood: Constructions, Histories, Representations and Understandings*, contains multidisciplinary works of scholars in the humanities and social sciences that interpret and present accounts, ideas, notions and portrayals about African childhood constructions, histories, representations and understandings. The focus of the studies includes analyses of the depictions of African children and their lived childhood experiences in wars and movies, especially Western-made ones; interpretation of conceptions of creative writers and novels, both African and non-African, about African children and nuances in African childhood; and reinterpretation of the meanings of being an African child and living the life of one in the context of indigenous cosmologies and knowledge systems and how such meanings are similar to or different from certain universalised Western-spawned notions. Other concerns of the studies include the articulated ideas, creativity and agency of children in relation to labour; notions of African health and wellbeing lifeways and their interrelations with African children and their childhood experiences; and representations of the postcolonial African childhood. Despite the fact that each study is not an exhaustive coverage of the subject, a synthesis of the views that they present offers a rich addition to the burgeoning area of childhood studies especially within and for the African context and needs.

The academic inquiry into the area of children and their experiences in social settings and the aetiology and ontology of the notion and state called childhood is steadily and encouragingly attracting various conceptualisations, interpretations and reinterpretations, historicisations and case studies. Thus, research is becoming internationalised, expressed through international conferences, research cooperation and transnational projects which have yielded monographs, anthologies, journal articles and visual and performing arts products such as paintings, poems, songs and drama. Some strands of the interrogation have manifested in different chronological frames or revolved around interesting thematic poles or proceeded from novel theoretical perspectives. Also, others have either explained issues within a single geo-cultural space or comparatively analysed them within geo-cultural spaces. Despite this process, it is apparent that Africa, which hegemonic discourse

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arbitrarily considers as part of the so-called "Global South", in comparison with the so-called "Global North" of European and North American societies, has not received a lot of attention in the global context of investigative works in childhood studies. In other words, research has been conducted on childhood globally but there is still opportunity and ample room for a higher level of studies to be conducted to bring out more of the contours of the area and stories as they apply to the African historical and contemporary contexts. Indubitably, the several important works that have been produced from childhood studies for the Western terrain – European and North American societies – help to deepen academic and public understanding about children and their lived experience and how adults define and categorise them in the West. Relatively, the case for and in Africa is not so despite the fact that the continent has a large youth population, with a significant percentage of that demography being children. Thus, the need for extensive production and amplification of works that probe into aspects of African childhood, such as childhood belongings and the cultures of childhood, is important.

The scarcity of such works in the African context should not exist because African childhood is real, and as Agya Boakye-Boaten has shown and argued, there is childhood in Africa.[1] The concept and state of childhood can be found in what he calls "traditional Africa, which is the unadulterated Africa, that is prehistoric Africa, and contemporary Africa, that is Africa after the period of slavery, colonialism, and post-independent Africa."[2] Within the cosmology of traditional Africa, children were seen as spiritual beings who had reincarnated after living and dying in previous generations. Thus, they were accorded respect by members of the society; however, children were also deemed human beings who were biologically vulnerable and in need of help and direction, protection and proper socialization to perpetuate their family and cultural legacies. This trapped the childhood period and its political and social spaces and meanings in a socializing mode.[3] However, as he shows, the delicate concept of childhood continues to undergo transformations and redefinitions that even impact society's obligations to its children, because of economic, socio-cultural and political dynamics,[4] including the cultural ef-

[1] Agya Boakye-Boaten, "Changes in the Concept of Childhood: Implications on Children in Ghana," *Uluslararası Sosyal Arastırmalar Dergisi, The Journal of International Social Research,* 3 (10), (2010): 114 (104-115).

[2] Ibid. 107.

[3] Ibid. 109.

[4] Boakye-Boaten, "Changes in the concept of Childhood".

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fects and forces of colonialism, globalization, HIV/AIDs, corruption, civil and ethnic unrests and neoliberalism and commercialization of children.[5]

It can be concluded from the foregoing that it is important and necessary for attention to be given to Africa's situation through childhood studies. As Benedict Carton has demonstrated in "Africa" in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society,* where he attempts to briefly trace the rise of scholarship on African childhood, "research on African childhood gathered momentum in the 1980s with the publication of *Maidens, Meals, and Money:* [*Capitalism and the Domestic Community*]"[6] (1981), by Claude Meillassoux (1925-2005), the renowned French neo-Marxist economic anthropologist and Africanist. According to Carton, Meillassoux's work of anthropology which examined elder and youth interactions in Africa south of the Sahara, similar to *Centuries of Childhood* by Philippe Aries which was a significant work of history about Western family and childhood, offered a good model that depicted the various age shifts and changes within "precapitalist" local environments including simple agrarian communities to "preindustrial" states which world religions and international trade amalgamated.[7] However, as Carton observed, certain crucial questions, such as: "When did adults reckon that children succumbed to 'original sin'?" and "When did parents turn childhood into a stage of indulging innocent individuals?", were not asked or adequately addressed by Meillassoux's work.[8] Thus, African childhood and the multiple ways in which it can be understood required and still requires further explorations as studies like "Beyond Pluralizing African Childhoods: Introduction"[9] and "From the singular to the plural: Exploring diversities in contemporary childhoods in sub-Saharan Africa"[10] have shown. What this means is that inquests which reconsider childhood from multifaceted angles are needed to cause a detour in the trajectory of some of the extant scholarly studies about the lives of African children and African childhood, which have become sterile and repetitive in a tradition that has often looked solely at children as victims of social injustice and exploitation and peripheral subjects of the world

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Benedict Carton, "Africa," in Paula S. Fass (ed.),*Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society,* (New York: Thompson Gale, 2004), 30.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Tatek Abebe and Yaw Ofosu-Kusi, "Beyond Pluralizing African Childhoods: Introduction," *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research,* 23 (3), (2016): 303-316.

[10] Afua Twum Danso Imoh, "From the singular to the plural: Exploring diversities in contemporary childhoods in sub-Saharan Africa," *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research,* 23 (3), (2016): 455-468.

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of adults. What is true, and which the underlined need for a detour supports, is that there are more regions of African childhood, obviously happy and hope-giving ones, worth interrogating. These include, but are not limited to, creative expression in childhood, perceptions of happiness in childhood, childhood versus adultism, childhood spirituality, hijacked childhoods and brave negotiations of safe havens for self-expression, and child(ren) constructed understandings of the African childhood. More especially, opening up discussions about African children and childhood within an interdisciplinary space will enrich the area of childhood studies within the African context. It will offer broader insights into the area from an interdisciplinary perspective where the voices of history, political and social studies and literature, along with visual and performing arts and other subfields of the humanities and social sciences, such as psychology and sociology, and education in combination will use the broader exchange of concepts and ideas to enrich the growing understanding about children and their childhood in the African context. Thus, as Tatek Abebe and Yaw Ofosu-Kusi have also opined aptly, "The future for African scholarship on childhood and children must be hinged on greater collaboration and cooperation on childhood research and studies regardless of which part of the continent takes as a vantage point"[11]

Moreover, there is the need for critical windows, especially scholarly ones, to be opened to the world to have an analytic and broader insight into African childhood to balance the journalistic print and media ones, many of which often provide sensationalist stories about poverty and pain as the characteristics of African children and childhood. This will contribute to bringing forth the understanding that not every child in Africa is hungry, sick and terrorised by civil unrest; for others who have limited views and perceptions about the African situation, such new windows can make them appreciate the fact that African childhood is not static but dynamic and with a long history, a versatile present and negotiable and promising future. They will know that African childhood also manifests aspects that have similarities and differences because of the different geographical regions and cultural zones on the continent.

Childhood can be a happy one and can be a sad one. While chores like fetching water, taking care of younger siblings, herding, gathering firewood or farming to support the family characterise some rural-based childhoods, there are some childhoods that are devoid of these because they manifest in certain urban spaces where such activities do not exist. While some childhoods feature income earning activities like hawking, work in the fields and

[11] Abebe and Ofosu-Kusi, "Beyond Pluralizing African Childhoods: Introduction," 314.

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prostitution, others are free from such activities. As such, studies like what this volume contains and offers serve as windows and new perspectives into and about aspects of childhood making, representations and understandings in the African situation.

For the African context, Steve Howard has aptly observed and reminded us in his fine seminal and pioneering bibliography of children and childhood in Africa that there generally exists a dearth of reference matter and textbook material on the area under discussion.[12] Boakye-Boaten also laments about "the paucity of research on the concept of childhood in Ghana specifically *and Africa by extension*" (italics mine).[13] In walking us through the few extant works of his bibliographical compilation, Howard explains them as being predominantly works "produced by either intergovernmental agencies or nongovernmental agencies and are often annual statistical compilations", or general summaries of "background, definitions, and social context for discussions of childhood", or works that offer "reviews of literature on a large topic in the field, such as children and work" or provide a sketch "of methodological techniques for researching children".[14]

In making a case for more studies that specifically focus on excavating understanding about the lives and childhoods of children in Africa to be undertaken, Howard was correct with his observation that while a number of anthropological and related studies provide some knowledge about life in rural African society and a sense of the systems that take care of socialisation of children and lead them into adulthood, only a "few" are specifically centred on children. This is because most of them secondarily append children or mortise them into wider contexts of discussions and examinations of "African families, communities, and the wider society."[15] Furthermore, because of an existing privileging of political history and economic history, two areas where children and their lives have not been necessarily foregrounded, much of the literature of historical studies too have not offered in-depth points and facts about the lives of children and childhood.[16] Consequently, we reasonably agree with Howard's implied observation that there is more room for the production of scholarly research and reference and textbook material on the subject of children and childhood in

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[12] Steve Howard, "Children and Childhood", Oxford Bibliographies, http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846733/obo-9780199846733-0045.xml. Accessed on February 19, 2018.
[13] Boakye-Boaten, "Changes in the concept of Childhood".
[14] Howard, "Children and Childhood".
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

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Africa because despite the fact that few scholars have made the historical study of children and slavery a significant field, and some have focused on children basically through the extension of institutions, such as health and education, there exists a dearth of material on the topic.[17] Even the limited-in-circulation literature on socioeconomic development of African children as administered by governmental, nongovernmental, and private-voluntary organizations has an "in-house" nature which makes it difficult to catalogue or collect.[18] Thus, regarding the African terrain and context, it is ultimately time and imperative for more works to be done to showcase the situation and provide insights, views and ideas about it to African and global scholars, policy makers and readers, and enrich, amplify and complement debates about children and childhoods in the corpus of works and researches done globally for intellectual, public and academic consumption.

History of the Evolution and Trajectory of Childhood Studies. A Short Introduction

We can trace the genesis and genealogy of the contemporary academic enterprise known as Childhood Studies to different historical moments. However, it is a product of the academic twists and turns of the so-called West or Western societies. Thus, its origins in the West are anchored in the Enlightenment process and era which promoted a strong interest in understanding human nature and by extension that of "children". Drawing insight from David Kennedy's *The Well of Being: Childhood, Subjectivity, and Education*,[19] Gareth Matthews and Amy Mullin aptly aver in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* that: "But exactly how the conception of childhood has changed historically and how conceptions differ across cultures is a matter of scholarly controversy and philosophical interest".[20] Philippe Ariès, for example, argued, "partly on the evidence of depictions of infants in medieval art, that the medievals thought of children as simply 'little adults.'"[21] By contrast, Shulamith Shahar had evidence-based reason to aver that "some medieval thinkers un-

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] David Kennedy, *The Well of Being: Childhood, Subjectivity, and Education*, (Albany: SUNY Press 2006).
[20] Gareth Matthews and Amy Mullin, "The Philosophy of Childhood", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/childhood/. Accessed on 6 February, 2018.
[21] Ibid.

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derstood childhood to be divided into fairly well-defined stages".[22] The Age of Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Jacques Rousseau, for example, saw – imagined and constructed – the child as an object and a symbol for their "adult" ideas of governance.[23] The romanticized notion and figure of the child took the centre of the intellectual works, political debates and prose, poetry and other literary productions of many thinkers, policy makers and creative writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. Such ideas of the child, produced from the Romantic thought, influenced adult literature such as that of William Wordsworth, the English Poet Laureate from 1843 to 1850. "Often credited with discovering the Romantic child" by creating "a cult of childhood during the Romantic era, which continued well into the Victorian period and beyond", the "Wordsworthian child most often act[ing] as a child of nature" was "the product of the adult's nostalgia and memory as much as he or she is the product of nature."[24] British Romantics often figured children in adult literature and poetry because of their conjured ideas about the child's closeness to nature and innocence. "The child, some Romantic poets believed, had access to a unique worldview, precisely because a child has not yet rationalized and assimilated the workings of society the way an adult has."[25] As Stephanie Metz has aptly observed, the romanticised notions and figure about the child continued and "The literary and political influence of Romanticism retains its potency even today as it still colors our perceptions of children *in European societies and also non-European worlds where European cultural imperialism and colonialism promoted Europeanisation and Westernisation*" (emphasis rendered in italics are mine).[26]

Cultural discussions about children even reified the child as an observable object, a material of inquiry, which could be used to explain racial superiority or inferiority. For example, G. Stanley Hall, the renowned psychologist and

[22] Ibid.

[23] John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, from *The Works of John Locke*, Vol. 5, (London: Sharpe and Son, 1823); Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans., Charles Frankel, (New York: Hafner, 1947).

[24] Stephanie Metz, ""The Youth . . . still is Nature's priest": Wordsworth and the Child of Nature," http://web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/wordsworth-and-the-child.html. Accessed on 6 February, 2018.

[25] Stephanie Metz, "Romanticism and the Child: Inventing Innocence," http://web.utk.edu/~gerard/romanticpolitics/childhood.html. Accessed on 6 February, 2018.

[26] Ibid.

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arguably the "leader of the 'child study' movement in America",[27] endeavoured to rank "races" according to their supposed advancement alongside an evolutionary range analogous to individual human development – with some in childhood, some in adolescence, and some in adulthood – in his opus magnum *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (1904). This effort by Stanley, who held the opinion that "The child and race are each keys to the other" whereby the adolescent point, a time of "storm and stress", represented also the sprout of promise for the race because it was the significant exemplifier of the past of the race, was a form of evolutionary theory. This theory held the view that the development of races from the supposed primordial type to the so-called well developed in that progression could be understood by observing the growth of children.[28] Sigmund Freud's area of psychoanalysis, as Kenneth Kid has concluded, also paid attention to the child only due to the fact that psychoanalysis obtained some of its growth and insights because it explored books for children. Arguing that "Freud and Jung make a compelling case for the intimacy of childhood and the fairy tale," Kid reveals that psychoanalysis then used ideas from children's literature to express and demonstrate its topics and methods by using folklore and fairy tales, and materials from psychoanalysis of children and children's literary texts, such as the classic stories of *Peter Pan* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.[29] Thus, children were not actually studied to understand children. Rather, studying the child was a reification of them into tools and an attempt to theorise, explain and comment on them as subjects of many isolated studies of particular subjects to elucidate and make sense of the world of adults. Primarily then, they were not studied to understand them and make sense of their world. Ignoring prevailing ideas and opinions that understanding children could shape better relations between adults and children, some early European scholars in the mid 19th century rather believed that knowledge produced by academics about children could offer understanding about the genesis and evolution of human beings. Even Jean Piaget (1896-1980), the Swiss epistemologist known for his pioneering work in child development and the formulator of the theory of cognitive development and epistemological view known

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[27] Review of G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education, by Alexander F. Chamberlain, American Anthropologist, New Series, 6 (4), (1904): 539, (539-541).

[28] G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education, 2 Vols, (New York: Appleton, 1904).

[29] Kenneth Kidd, Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

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as "genetic epistemology", was interested in studying children to have knowledge about how we came to comprehend and perceive the world. Still, for some investigators, understanding the development of children was necessary for comprehending development in general than what it could tell us about children. But the interest in children by the turn of the 20th century also produced other aspects of inquiry and interests. Knowledge about children produced an aspect of scholastic concern in which scholars sought to use their lessons to engineer educational, social welfare and management policies and theories. Thus, some scholarship in the humanities, as well as the social and behavioural sciences, became committed to a utilitarian comprehension of children in a quest for an enhanced knowledge of children and their life experiences and a need to engage with the lives of children in order to be able to dictate how such lives should be shaped. This led to the expansion of both the disciplines of child psychology and child development under the umbrella of developmental psychology as dominant providers of defining academic discourses in relation to children.[30] They also largely focused on mining for biology-determined laws of childhood behaviour and using knowledge about genetic formations and conducts to understand the actions and development of children.[31] Nonetheless, other disciplines in the social sciences, namely sociology and anthropology, started to centre children instead of leaving them on the periphery of their epistemic interrogations of family, household and community. This centring was fundamentally driven by a desire to know about how children are prepared for adult life and as adults in society. To the sociologists and anthropologists, this preparation was done through the process of "socialisation" which Talcott Parson's functional structuralist theoretical perspective supported.[32] However, when Anne-Marie Ambert, a sociologist, realised and opined that "socialisation" was not actually about children at all, but was about how adults and their adult society transformed them into adults, and the studying of children was not a major route to becoming famous in sociology,[33] it contributed in making clear the fact that there existed a real, but blurred and camouflaged, lack of interest in children in sociology and even anthropology. Thus, a defining moment for a new academic interest in

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[30] W. Kessen, *The Rise and Fall of Development*, (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1990).
[31] J. Morss, *The Biologising of Childhood: Developmental Psychology and the Darwinian Myth*, (Hove: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1990).
[32] T. Parsons, *The Social System,* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1951).
[33] Anne-Marie Ambert, "Sociology of Sociology: The Place of Children in North American Sociology", in P. A. Adler and P. Adler (eds.), *Sociological Studies of Child Development,* Vol. 1, (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1986), 24 (11-31).

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children and childhood started to emerge gradually as Childhood Studies. However, this emergence did not emanate from one specific source, rather through and from a variety of sources and trajectories of thought. The map of the genealogy of Childhood Studies is, therefore, a complex one to read because of the multiple geneses of the inspiration, the variegation in chronology of its beginnings and the numerous pioneers of this interest. For example, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime* published in 1960[34], known in English by its 1962 translated version as *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life,* by Philippe Ariès,[35] is definitely one of the early decisive works citable as a pioneer initiator that heralded a turning point in promoting a novel academic concern for children and childhood. Ariès was a historian, a social one at that, and not a social scientist per se, who had an interest in the lives of children and their social meanings, characterisations and manifestations in history. For history, Ariès's work mortised the lives of the so-called ordinary person, in this case, the child, into the narratives and concerns of social and cultural history. This fertilised a growing awareness of the historical nature of childhood and promoted the practice and tradition where childhood came to be studied as a state which had different spatial and temporal manifestations and representations in and across history. Some works of non-historians, like anthropologists, energised this awareness with the views that they provided to shades of childhood systems and experiences outside the Western experiences. Such views, which offered more illumination to this awareness about children and childhood, assisted in promoting and sustaining a growing interest in the thought that childhood was not a naturally constructed and determined universal phenomenon as was conceived by many in the West, but relative to and produced and shaped by and from specific historical, cultural and social experiences and circumstances. For example, the earlier ethnographical study done by Margaret Mead in Samoa offered a discourse that suggested that as part of childhood, stress in adolescent girls was induced by "cultural conditions" and not universally-experienced phenomena.[36] Thus, unlike Piaget who claimed that "his subjects [in Europe], Swiss children in the first half of the 20th Century, were animistic in their thinking (Piaget, 1929)",[37] Mead's work which supported the view that the notion of a child is both historically and culturally conditioned "presents

[34] Published by Plon, a French book publishing company in Paris.

[35] Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life,* trans., Robert Baldick, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

[36] See for example Margaret Mead, *Coming in Age of Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation,* (William Morrow & Company, 1961).

[37] Matthews and Mullin, "The Philosophy of Childhood".

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evidence that Pacific island children were not".[38] Moreover, a work like *Children* of *Their Fathers*: *Growing up among* the *Ngoni* of *Malawi* by Margaret Read, which aimed to show how adults brought up children to fit into Ngoni society and assimilate and keep alive their cultural values,[39] had demonstrated that the cultural conditions in and of a society and the need by the society to shape, perpetuate or discard them were key factors that determined and gave character to childhood.

Additionally, when earlier staple epistemic normative conclusions and "specialized" assertions of psychology of child development were attacked and deconstructed as domineering and potentially dangerous in the latter half of the 20th century from post modernist perspectives,[40] it also consequently encouraged a new movement of scholars in the UK, Europe and US from the 1980s to engage and interrogate the way scholarship approached and made claims about children and childhood in the areas of sociology, anthropology and child psychology.[41] For example, some scholars charged psychology with the fault of confining childhood within its strong alliance with medicine, education and government agencies,[42] and criticised Piaget's entrenchment of contemporary understandings of the child in positivism and rigid empiricism.[43] Proposing a new childhood sociology, scholars like Alan Prout and Allison James said that childhood should be understood as a social construction which is a variable of social analysis; secondly, children's social relations and cultures should be studied in their own right and their agency in constructing and determining their own lives and those around them recognised; and a new childhood sociology was a necessary response to the process

[38] Ibid.

[39] Margaret Read, Children of *Their Fathers*: *Growing up among* the *Ngoni* of *Malawi*, Case studies in Education *and* Culture, (New York & London: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).

[40] S. Greene, "Child Development: Old themes, New directions," in M. Woodhead, D. Faulkner, and K. Littleton (eds.), *Making Sense of Social Development*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

[41] C. Jenks, *The Sociology of Childhood: Essential Readings*, (London: Batsford, 1982); C. Jenks, *Childhood*, (London: Routledge, 1990); A. James and A. Prout, (eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood,* Second Edition, (London: Routledge/Falmer, 1997); B. Mayall (ed.), *Children's Childhoods: Observed and Experienced*, (London: Falmer, 1994).

[42] A. James, C. Jenks, and A. Prout, *Theorizing Childhood*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 17.

[43] Ibid. 19.

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of reconstructing childhood in society.[44] In this trajectory, they opined that children were active actors and agents instead of passive recipients of socialisation, and that nature did not bequest childhood, rather it was constructed by society. Childhood, therefore, varied in cultural, geographical and time frames. Accordingly, in Europe a scholarly call for a new sociological thought about childhood also emerged and was amplified from the 1980s through the 1990s from the academic views of the Finnish Early Childhood Education scholar Leena Alanen[45] and some sociologists,[46] and it helped to birth the "childhood as a social phenomenon programme", a project whose "task was to map out childhood as a structural form in its own right to illustrate the place children occupy and the roles they play as social actors".[47] Furthermore, some scholars in the US became convinced that children and childhood had to be properly inserted into sociological studies thematically and conceptually. It was in line with this thought and realisation that an essay such as "Is there sufficient interest to establish a sociology of children?" was written in

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[44] A. Prout and A. James, "A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood? Provenance, promise and problems", in A. James and A. Prout (eds.), *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood,* Second Edition, (London: Routledge/Falmer, 1997), 8.

[45] See, for example, Leena Alanen, "Rethinking childhood," *Acta Sociologica*, 31(1), (1988):53-67; Leena Alanen and Marjatta Bardy, *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon: National Report, Finland,* (Vienna: European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, [1990], 1991).

[46] J. Qvortrup, M. Bardy, G. Sgritta, and H. Wintersberger, *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*, (Aldershot: Avebury Press, 1994). Additionally, a work like J. Qvortrup, W.A. Corsaro, and M-S Honig (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) will also sustain the momentum of interest in Childhood Studies.

[47] See, for example, Anne-Marie Ambert's book reviews of *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon,* and *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics* edited by Jens Qvortrup, Marjatta Bardy, Giovanni Sgritta and Helmut Wintersberger, in *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 56 (4), (1994):1043-1045. Ambert explains that the Childhood as a Social Phenomenon project was initiated in 1987. The project was sponsored by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna. It was characterised by "meetings and collaboration among scholars from 19 European and North American countries". *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon* (16 National Reports and Statistical Compendium), constituting a key publication of the project, was published between 1987 and 1994. Additionally, *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics* was published in 1994.

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1991. The writer, Gertrud Lenzer, also argued for "a genuinely interdisciplinary multidisciplinary new field of study".[48]

The radical views of sociologists and other scholars in the UK, Europe and the US about childhood and children did acknowledge children holistically as persons with agency, advocated for the study of the plurality of childhoods, and pushed for the study of childhood in cultural contexts. Yielding the fledging disciplinary perspective which became labelled by many as the " 'new sociology' or 'new social studies' of childhood"[49], this radical conviction and advocacy added more verve to the materialization of "Childhood Studies" as a new disciplinary viewpoint that gives children conceptual independence and expressly centres them as the principal personages of study. Having been produced primarily from efforts in Western academia, its orbit and function were mainly concerned with children and childhoods in Europe, North America, UK, Australia and New Zealand. Thus, its current status and plans for its future trajectory have largely been subjected to the historical, social and political needs, movements and environment of the academy in the European and American areas.

Childhood Studies, in both the global "North" and "South" now, is, thus, a fairly burgeoning multidisciplinary endeavour that spans various epistemologies and methodologies. There have been several recent reflections and groundbreaking studies from this field such as the papers included in Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan (eds.), *Researching Children's Experience: Approached and Methods* (2005),[50] Ginger Frost's *Victorian Childhoods* (2009),[51] and articles included in J. Qvortrup et al.'s *Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (2009).[52] Others are B. Mayall's *A History of the Sociology of Childhood* (2013),[53] David Oswell's *The Agency of Children: From Family to Global Hu-*

[48] Gertrud Lenzer, "Is there sufficient interest to establish a sociology of children?," *Footnotes of the American Sociological Association*, 19 (8), (1991): 8.

[49] P. Christensen and A. Prout, "Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives on the study of children," in Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan (eds.), *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*, (London/California/New Delhi: SAGE, 2005), 42 (42-60); M. Woodhead, *The Case for Childhood Studies*, (Dublin: Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, 2003).

[50] Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan (eds.), *Researching Children's Experience: Approached and Methods*, (London/California/New Delhi: SAGE, 2005).

[51] Ginger Frost, *Victorian Childhoods*, (Westport, CT/London: Praeger, 2009).

[52] Qvortrup, et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies.*

[53] B. Mayall, *A History of the Sociology of Childhood*, (London: Institute of Education, 2013).

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man Rights (2013)[54] and Markus P.J. Bohlmann's *Misfit Children: An Inquiry into Childhood Belongings* (2017).[55] They offer us varying degrees of understanding about transformations of children and childhood in society as well as methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of children and their childhoods from the 19th to the 21st century through historical, theoretical and interdisciplinary lenses and perspectives. Additionally, the list of venues for the promotion of research findings and studies that produce seamless analyses, interesting histories, novel research methods and approaches, and rethink staple narratives and theories about childhood studies in the non-African world has continued to grow. These include *Childhood: A Journal of Global Child Research*, *Childhoods Today*, *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, and *Red Feather Journal*.

A Brief Overview of the Scope of Works on Childhood Studies in Africa

Contrarily, except for a few cases, the research focus on children and childhood in Africa are not clearly and profoundly situated and labelled under the scholarly and academic category called Childhood Studies. Apart from *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (2009) whose clear-cut mandate is about encouraging holistic approaches to the understanding of issues impacting children and childhood in Africa, which is published online on a bi-annual basis by The Institute for the African Child at Ohio University, only a small number of journals exist in Africa with mandates that are clearly marked out for the subject like that of the journal *Childhood in Africa*. We can extract from the bibliographical compilation of Howard the fact that "academic journals on the subject of children and childhood in Africa are few". These include *The Journal of Tropical Pediatrics and African Child Health*,[56] *Mwana: Africa Region Newsletter for Early Childhood Care and Education*,[57] *Defi des EJT*,[58] *African Journal of Farm Child and Youth Development*,[59] *Child*

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[54] David Oswell, *The Agency of Children: From Family to Global Human Rights*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[55] Markus P.J. Bohlmann (ed.), *Misfit Children: An Inquiry into Childhood Belongings*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).
[56] Offers medical and health reports on children in Africa.
[57] This bulletin offers professional reports of educational facilities and their impact on communities.
[58] Produced annually by African Movement of Working Children and Youth, which is based in Dakar, Senegal, it offers news about projects that are linked to education and protection for children in the workplace.

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Abuse Research: A South African Journal,[60] *South African Child Gauge*[61] and *South African Journal of Child Health.*[62] However, due to lack of funding and being under-researched, some of "these journals have had short lifespans in many cases".[63]

Furthermore, the majority of other few extant works that deal with African children and their lives and agency and their culture emanate from different disciplines and research interests. Such works, which mainly consist of individual and scattered studies from the fields of education, culture, sports, public health, economics, social geography, psychology, labour rights, ethics and education, are largely books, book chapters, memoirs, and journal articles. By engaging with popular and dominant themes related to children and childhood such as children and health,[64] children and education or schooling,[65] problems

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[59] The Research and Development Network of the Children-In-Agriculture Programme (CIAP) in Africa produces this annually to focus on child labour issues in African agriculture and education and training initiatives for child workers.

[60] Encouraging multidisciplinary professional education on topics of relevance in the field of child abuse, it also promotes research and exchange of information among professionals involved in the field of child abuse.

[61] Focusing on a different theme each year it reports and monitors the situation of children in South Africa, especially the realisation of their rights.

[62] A medical journal *devoted* to child health.

[63] Howard, "Children and Childhood".

[64] Mario J. Azevedo, Gwendolyn S. Prater, and Daniel N. Lantum, "Culture, Biomedicine and Child Mortality in Cameroon," *Social Science & Medicine* 32(12), (1991): 1341–1349; Barthélémy K. Defo, "A real and Socioeconomic Differentials in Infant and Child Mortality in Cameroon," *Social Science & Medicine* 42 (3), (1996): 399–420; Victor Lotter, "Childhood Autism in Africa," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 19(3), (1978): 231–244; Robert W. Snow, Jean-Francois Trape, and Kevin Marsh, "The Past, Present and Future of Childhood Malaria Mortality in Africa," *Trends in Parasitology* 17(12), (2001): 593–597; A. van Rie, N. Beyers, R. P. Gie, M. Kunneke, L. Zietsman, and P. R. Donald, "Childhood Tuberculosis in an Urban Population in South Africa: Burden and Risk Factor," *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 80(5), (1999): 433–437; Johan P. Velema, Eusèbe M. Alihonou, Timothé Gandaho, and Félicien H. Hounye, "Childhood Mortality among Users and Non-users of Primary Health Care in a Rural West African Community," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 20(2) (1991): 474–479; Hilary N. Fouts and Robyn A. Brookshire, "Who Feeds Children? A Child's-Eye-View of Caregiver Feeding Patterns among the Aka Foragers in Congo," *Social Science and Medicine* 69(2), (2009): 285–292; John K. Anarfi and Phyllis Antwi, "Street Youth in Accra City: Sexual Networking in a High-Risk Environment and Its Implications for the Spread of HIV/AIDS," *Health Transition Review* 5 suppl. (1995): 131–151; Catherine Campbell, Andy Gibbs, Sbongile Maimane, Yugi Nair, and Zweni Sibiya, "Youth Participation in the Fight against AIDS in South Africa: From Policy to Practice," *Journal of Youth Studies* 12(1),

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of the African Girl Child,[66] children and labour,[67] children and media, popular culture and sports,[68] children and politics,[69] children and social development,[70]

(2009): 93–109; Joseph L. P. Lugalla, and Colleta G. Kibassa (eds.), *Poverty, AIDS, and Street Children in East Africa*, Studies in African Health and Medicine 10, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2002); Frederick Mugisha and Eliya M. Zulu, "The Influence of Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Abuse on Sexual Relationships and Perception of Risk to HIV Infection among Adolescents in the Informal Settlements of Nairobi," *Journal of Youth Studies* 7(3), (2004): 279–293; Arvind Singhal and W. Stephen Howard (eds.), *The Children of Africa Confront AIDS: From Vulnerability to Possibility*. Research in International Studies, Africa Series 80, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003).

[65] Gina Porter, Kate Hampshire, Michael Bourdillon, et al. "Children as Research Collaborators: Issues and Reflections from a Mobility Study in Sub-Saharan Africa," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 46(1–2), (2010): 215–227; Andrew I. Epstein, "Education Refugees and the Spatial Politics of Childhood Vulnerability," *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2(1), (2010): 16–25; Ali A. Abdi, "Education in Somalia: History, Destruction, and Calls for Reconstruction," *Comparative Education* 34(3), (1998): 327–340; Nathan Chelimo, "Transitions in Pastoral Communities in Uganda: Classes under the Trees," *Early Childhood Matters* 107 (2006): 36–37; Nardos Chuta, "Conceptualizations of Children and Childhood in Bishoftu, Oromia," in Eva Poluha (ed.), *The World of Girls and Boys in Rural and Urban Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Forum for Social Studies, 2007),119–156; Alan Pence and Jessica Schafer. "Indigenous Knowledge and Early Childhood Development in Africa: The Early Childhood Development Virtual University," *Journal for Education in International Development* 2(3) (2006): 1–17.

[66] Saheed Aderinto, "'The Girls in Moral Danger': Child Prostitution and Sexuality in Colonial Lagos, Nigeria, 1930s to 1950," *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 1(2) (2007): 1–22; Seema Agarwal, Memunatu Attah, Nana Apt, Margaret Grieco, E. A. Kwakye, and Jeff Turner, "Bearing the Weight: The Kayayoo, Ghana's Working Girl Child," *International Social Work* 40(3), (1997): 245–263; Susan S. Davis, "Growing Up in Morocco," in Donna L. Bowen and Evelyn A. Early (eds.), *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, (Indiana Series in Middle East Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); 24–35; Uché U. Ewelukwa, "The Girl Child, African States, and International Human Rights Law—Toward a New Framework for Action," in Obioma Nnaemeka and Joy N. Ezeilo (eds.), *Engendering Human Rights: Cultural and Socioeconomic Realities in Africa*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 131–156.; Doris D. Khalil, "Abuses of the Girl Child in Some African Societies: Implications for Nurse Practitioners," *Nursing Forum* 41(1), (2006): 13–24; Elizabeth M. King and M. Anne Hill (eds.), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits, and Policies*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Shula Marks (ed.), *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Simeon H. Ominde, *The Luo Girl: From Infancy to Marriage*, Custom and Tradition in East Africa, (London: Macmillan, 1952); Elizabeth H. Boyle, *Female Genital Cutting: Cultural Conflict in the Global Community*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Grace Osakue, "Violence against Women and Girls: Breaking the Culture of Silence," *Exchange on HIV/AIDS, Sexuality and Gender* 2 (2006): 1–4; Lidwien

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[67] For example, see G. André and M. Godin, "Child labour, agency and family dynamics: The case of mining in Katanga (DRC)", *Childhood*, 21(2), (2014): 161–74; Loretta E. Bass, *Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004); Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds (eds.), *Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1986); Assefa Admassie, "Explaining the High Incidence of Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Development Review* 14 (2), (2002): 251–275; Osita Agbu (ed.), *Children and Youth in the Labour Process in Africa*, Codesria Book Series, (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2009); Jens C. Andvig, "Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa—An Exploration," *Forum for Development Studies* 25(2), (1998): 327–362; Morten Bøås and Anne Hatløy, "Child Labour in West Africa: Different Work—Different Vulnerabilities," *International Migration* 46(3), (2008): 3–25; Eftetan O. Farrag, "Working Children in Cairo: Case Studies," in Elizabeth W. Fernea (ed.), *Children in the Muslim Middle East* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 239–249.; I. M. Jimu, "An Exploration of Street Vending's Contribution towards Botswana's Vision of Prosperity for All by 2016," *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 18(1), (2004): 19–30;

[68] Awo Sarpong and De-Valera, N.Y.M. Botchway, "Freaks in Procession? The Fancy Dress Masquerade as Haven for Negotiating Eccentricity during Childhood. A Study of Child Masqueraders in Cape Coast, Ghana," in Markus P.J. Bohlmann (ed.), *Misfit Children: An Inquiry into Childhood Belongings,* (Lexington Books (Rowman and Littlefield), 2017), 175-196; De-Valera, N.Y.M. Botchway, "Gyama Songs in Ghanaian Schools: A Note on a Students' Musical Creativity," in Tobias Robert Klein (ed.), *Schools and Schooling as a Source of African Literary and Cultural Creativity,* (LuKA (Literaturen und Kunst Akrikas) Series 9, (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT), 2017), 3-31; Nicholas Argenti, *The Intestines of the State: Youth, Violence, and Belated Histories in the Cameroon Grassfields*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Gary Armstrong, "The Lords of Misrule: Football and the Rights of the Child in Liberia, West Africa," *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 7(3), (2004): 473–502; Nongenile M. Zenani, *The World and the Word: Tales and Observations from the Xhosa Oral Tradition*, ed. Harold Scheub, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Bernard van Leer Foundation, "South Africa: Hey Mum, That's Me on the Radio!," *Early Childhood Matters* 103 (2004): 48–49; Muluembeat Kiar, "Children in Ethiopian Media and School Textbooks," in Eva Poluha (ed.), *The World of Girls and Boys in Rural and Urban Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Forum for Social Studies, 2007), 157–180; Francis B. Nyamnjoh, "Children, Media and Globalisation: A Research Agenda for Africa," in Cecilia von Feilitzen and Ulla Carlson (eds.), *Children, Young People and Media Globalisation*, (Gothenburg, Sweden: Nordicom, Gothenburg University, 2002), 43–52.; Norma O. Pecora, Enyonam Osei-Hwere, and Ulla Carlson (eds.), *African Media, African Children*, (Gothenburg, Sweden: International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, 2008).

[69] G. André and M. Hilgers, "Childhood in Africa between Local Powers and Global Hierarchies," in L. Alanen, et al. (eds.), *Childhood with Bourdieu. Studies in Childhood and Youth*, (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015), 120-141; United Nations Children's

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children and war[71] and children in the productions of African literary arts,[72] and childhood and streetism,[73] welfare and future of children in society,[74] such

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Fund, *Children on the Front Line: The Impact of Apartheid, Destabilization and Warfare on Children in Southern and South Africa* Second Edition, (New York and Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Children's Fund, 1988).

[70] See, for example, Lorenzo I. Bordonaro, "'Culture Stops Development!': Bijagó Youth and the Appropriation of Developmentalist Discourse in Guinea-Bissau," *African Studies Review* 52(2), (2009): 69–92; Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space," *African Studies Review* 46(2), (2003): 1–12; Jude Fokwang, "Youth Subjectivities and Associational Life in Bamenda, Cameroon," *Africa Development* 28(3), (2008): 157–162; Eric Gable, "The Culture Development Club: Youth, Neo-tradition, and the Construction of Society in Guinea-Bissau," Special Issue: Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa, Part 2, *Anthropological Quarterly* 73(4), (2000): 195–203; Stephen O. Gyimah, "Polygynous Marital Structure and Child Survivorship in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Empirical Evidence from Ghana," *Social Science & Medicine* 68(2), (2009): 334–342; Awan Abdulwasie, "Conceptualizations of Children and Childhood: The Case of Kolfe and Semen Mazegaja, Addis Ababa," in Eva Poluha (ed.), *The World of Girls and Boys in Rural and Urban Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Forum for Social Studies, 2007), 39–66; Martha Kamwendo, "Constructions of Malawian Boys and Girls on Gender and Achievement," *Gender and Education* 22(4), (2010): 431–445; Marjorie Shostak, "A !Kung Woman's Memories of Childhood," in Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore (eds.), *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbors*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 246–277; Misty L. Bastian, "Young Converts: Christian Missions, Gender and Youth in Onitsha, Nigeria 1880–1929," Special Issue: Youth and Social Imagination in Africa, Part 1, *Anthropological Quarterly* 73(3), (2000): 145–158; Paul La Hausse, "'The Cows of Nongoloza': Youth, Crime and Amalaita Gangs in Durban, 1900–1936," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16(1), (1990): 79–111.

[71] Susan McKay, "Reconstructing Fragile Lives: Girls' Social Reintegration in Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone," in Ahmad A. Sikainga and Ousseina Alidou (eds.), *Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa*, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006), 149–168; K. Amone-P'Olak, N. Garnefski, and V. Kraaij, "The Impact of War Experiences and Physical Abuse on Formerly Abducted Boys in Northern Uganda," *South African Psychiatry Review* 10(2) (2007): 76–82; Theresa S. Betancourt, Jessica Agnew-Blais, Stephen E. Gilman, David R. Williams, and B. Heidi Ellis, "Past Horrors, Present Struggles: The Role of Stigma in the Association between War Experiences and Psychosocial Adjustment among Former Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone," Special Issue: Conflict, Violence, and Health, *Social Science & Medicine* 70(1), (2010): 17–26; Pamela D. Couture, "Victims, Perpetrators, or Moral Agents: Children and Youth Survivors of the War in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Journal of Childhood and Religion* 2(2), (2011): 1–17; James Garbarino, Kathleen Kostelny and Nancy Dubrow, "Mozambique's Children: Dying Is the Easy Part," in James Garbarino, Kathleen Kostelny, and Nancy Dubrow, *No Place to Be a Child: Growing Up in a War* Zone, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 60–82; Alcinda M. Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

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Press, 2005); Carol B. Thompson, "Beyond Civil Society: Child Soldiers as Citizens in Mozambique," *Review of African Political Economy* 26(80), (1999): 191–206.

[72] Camara Laye, *The Dark Child*, trans.,James Kirkup (New York: Noonday, 1994); Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*, (New York: Macmillan, 1986); Wole Soyinka, *Aké: The Years of Childhood*, (London: Methuen, 2000); Uwem Akpan, *Say You're One of Them*, (New York: Little, Brown, 2008); Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions: A Novel*, (Banbury, UK: Ayebia Clarke, 2004); Athol Fugard, *My Children! My Africa!* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2010); Uzodinma Iweala, *Beast of No Nation*, (London: John Murray, 2005); Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2012); Sindiwe Magona, *To My Children's Children*, (Claremont, South Africa: David Philip, 1990).

[73] Agya Boakye-Boaten, "Street Children: Experiences from the Streets of Accra," *Research Journal of International Studies* 8 (2008): 76–84; Judith Ennew, "Difficult Circumstances: Some Reflections on 'Street Children' in Africa," *Children, Youth and Environments* 13(1), (2003): 1–18; Paula Heinonen, *Youth Gangs and Street Children: Culture, Nurture and Masculinity in Ethiopia*, Social Identities 7, (New York: Berghahn, 2011); Philip L. Kilbride, "A Cultural and Gender Perspective on Marginal Children on the Streets of Kenya," *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2(1), (2010): 38–47; Macalane J. Malindi and Linda C. Theron, "The Hidden Resilience of Street Youth," *South African Journal of Psychology* 40(3) (2010): 318–326.

[74] For example, see Tatek Abebe, "Interdependent rights and agency: The role of children in collective livelihood strategies in rural Ethiopia," in K. Hanson and O. Nieuwenhuys (eds.), *Reconceptualizing Children's Rlights in International Development: Living Rights, Social Justice, Translations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 71–92; Manzoor Ahmed, *Within Human Reach: A Future for Africa's Children*,(New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 1985); Kofi Marfo, Alan Pence, Robert A. LeVine, and Sarah LeVine, "Strengthening Africa's Contributions to Child Development Research: Introduction," *Child Development Perspectives* 5(2) (2011): 104–111; Pamela Reynolds, *Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and Society in South Africa*, (Cape Town: Eerdmans, 1989); Alan R. Pence and A. Bame Nsamenang, *A Case for Early Childhood Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Working Papers in Early Childhood Development 51, (The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2008); Leslie Swartz, and Ann Levett, "Political Repression and Children in South Africa: The Social Construction of Damaging Effects," *Special Issue: Political Violence and Health in the Third World. Social Science & Medicine* 28(7), (1989): 741–750; Kristen E. Cheney, "'Village Life Is Better Than Town Life': Identity, Migration, and Development in the Lives of Ugandan Child Citizens," *African Studies Review* 47(3), (2004): 1–22; Jude Fokwang, "Ambiguous Transitions: Mediating Citizenship among Youths in Cameroon," *Africa Development* 23(1–2), (2003): 173–201; Jill R. Brown, "Child Fosterage and the Developmental Markers of Ovambo Children in Namibia: A Look at Gender and Kinship," *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1(1), (2009): 4–10; Kristen E. Cheney, "Expanding Vulnerability, Dwindling Resources: Implications for Orphaned Futures in Uganda," *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2(1) (2010): 8–15; Nancy Kendall, "Gendered Moral Dimensions of Childhood Vulnerability," *Childhood in Africa: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2(1) (2010): 26–37; Philip L. Kilbride and Janet C. Kilbride, *Chang-*

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works provide some light on different aspects of the life experiences of African childhood. From these emerge strands of degrees of comprehension of the meanings that adults place on children's innocence or competence, and from that can extractions of understandings of the notion of childhood as a social category be made. Nevertheless, there are many other areas, themes and issues that can receive broader attention for further enlightenment. These include Childhoods Constructed around given Names; Childhoods of Unnamed Children; Experience of Birth and Coming to a Family; Body Experience in Childhood; Childhood belonging mediated by Languages and Cultures; Creative Negotiation of Harmonious Co-existence of Divergent Beliefs of the Individual Child and Convergent Group Beliefs; and Play, Worlds of Play and Social Learning. Other areas that can attract inquiry are Childhoods Marked and Unmarked by Ritual and Rites of Passage; Eccentric, Ill-adjusted, Misfit and Evil Childhoods; the Disabled and Vulnerable Childhood; Sexual Identification and Confrontations with Sex; Digital Technologies and Conceptions of Self and Community in African Childhood; Health and Wellness in Spirit, Mind, Soul and Body; Childhood around Secret Societies and Forbidden Associations; Children's Notions of Childhood; Hijacked Childhoods and Confrontations with Adultism and Games-shaped Childhoods and Creativity. For example, the inquiry into the area of childhood and creativity in the African context recently received a fine addition from the anthology of Tobias Robert Klein (2017), which gathered writings that explored the peculiar significance of schools and schooling in Anglophone African countries as a trigger of literary and cultural creativity animated by African children as part of their childhood. This includes the creation of the popular music genre of Djama (Jama or Gyama) by students in Ghana, and the writing of novels, poetry and autobiographies from childhood memories and experiences about schools in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.[75] Anoth-

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ing Family Life in East Africa: Women and Children at Risk, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); Alice Lamptey, "Children Creating Awareness about Their Rights in Ghana," in Victoria Johnson, Edda Ivan-Smith, Gill Gordon, Pat Pridmore, and Patta Scott (eds.), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process,* (London: Immediate Technology Publications, 1998), 86–87; Anthony Hodges (ed.), *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-Up Call; Situation Assessment and Analysis, 2001,* (Abuja, Nigeria: National Planning Commission, 2001); Sahaya G. Selvam, "Capabilities Approach to Youth Rights in East Africa," *International Journal of Human Rights* 12(2), (2008): 205–214; Laurent Fourchard, "Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920–60," *Journal of African History* 47(1), (2006): 115–137.

[75] Tobias Robert Klein (ed.), *Schools and Schooling as a Source of African Literary and Cultural Creativity,* (LuKA (Literaturen und Kunst Akrikas) Series 9, (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (WVT), 2017).

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er interesting addition is Awo Abena Sarpong and De-Valera Botchway's study of the history of child masqueraders in Cape Coast and interrogation of how the children, using their creativity and agency,[76] "escaped entrapment and socio-cultural pressures to conform to childhood that may not be theirs". The study shows how the children use the masquerade parades to acquire a licence to demonstrate their freakishness and eccentricities which are prohibited from their lives on "normal" days by adults. It shows how the wearing of the mask, strangely enough, allows the child masqueraders "to tap into the multiple facets of their selfhoods that the mask of childhood innocence forbids them to wear."[77] Additionally, the area of childhood and agency has lately been fertilised by papers in Yaw Ofosu-Kusi's edited volume, *Children's Agency and Development in African Societies,* in 2017. The work does not, as Ofosu-Kusi argues, hold the view that the African situation can be dissociated from the global context of childhood studies because it is a futile exercise; however with the conviction that it is imperative to anchor emerging discourse on African specificities of children's agency and development, the book, made up of sixteen chapters (some written in English and others in French) that are "steeped in research around the continent, variously examines issues like children's agency, the inherent contradiction and vulnerabilities, their search for identity and representations and development".[78] The chapters also throw various illuminations on the competencies, skills and creativity of children to respond to experiential and existential needs in spheres of activities such as migration, urban working, rural farming, and schooling. Additionally, we get a sense from the study that regardless of the plethora of challenges that African children face, these persons steadfastly strive to resolve them by applying and utilising their hardiness, discernment of economics and politics and dynamic competence to undertake challenging responsibilities above their chronological age.

Furthermore, a study like M. Bourdillon and G.M. Mutambwa's edited *The Place of Work in African Childhoods* (2014)[79] not long ago illuminated the complex topical terrain of childhood and work. It provided interesting ideas and viewpoints on how work enters and affects the lives of children and

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[76] Sarpong and Botchway, "Freaks in Procession?"
[77] Markus P.J. Bohlmann, "Introduction," in Markus P.J. Bohlmann (ed.), *Misfit Children: An Inquiry into Childhood Belongings,* (Lexington Books (Rowman and Littlefield), 2017), xxvii.
[78] Yaw Ofosu-Kusi, "Introduction: Children's Agency and Development in African Societies," in Yaw Ofosu-Kusi (ed.), *Children's Agency and Development in African Societies,* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2017), 2, (1-14).
[79] Michael Bourdillon and Georges M. Mutambwa (eds.), *The Place of Work in African Childhoods,* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2014),1-20.

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young people in Africa taking not for granted neither the traditional values surrounding children's work, nor international standards against it.[80] The fourteen chapters in the book offered empirical studies of the lives of African children, the work that they did and its place in their lives and what the children said about it from places like Accra (Ghana), Kisangani and Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Cameroon, Brazzaville (Republic of Congo), Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire), Lome (Togo), Kalaban-Coro (Mali), Central Kenya and Saint Louis (Senegal). Still, G. Spittler and M. Bourdillon's edited *African Children at Work* (2012) also offered a collection of ethnographical studies that paid attention to children's own experience of work and their views about it.[81] Lately, Mwenda Ntarangwi and Guy Massart's edited *Engaging Children and Youth in Africa* (2015), offered a fair analysis of empirical data and methodological and phenomenological issues in African-centred research on children and youth. Drawing on representations of researches from East, Central, West and Southern Africa, the study helps us to consider how our perceptions about African childhood and youth should be made to transcend the common limiting non-African conceptions and ideas, especially Western ones, "of vulnerability and innocence (especially for children)". It also reminds us to consider how ongoing technological advancements, strengthening of global processes and weakening of the nation-state "provide a valuable lens through which to study social change . . . and new and complex ways to be children and youth in Africa *or being an African child*" (Italics are mine).[82]

These researches and works help to unveil understandings and notions of childhood in the African context. Any work that purports to contribute to knowledge about African childhoods should, therefore, focus on Africa's children with the view to finding and understanding their agency in constructing their own world, comprehending the cultural narratives of the adult world about the independence or dependence of the children, and knowing how the so-called dependent child is an imagined being. As Markus P.J. Bohlmann said of the child, "The child is the product of the adult". Drawing on his experiences and knowledge in the history of childhood in the West, he opined that adult

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[80] Bourdillon and Mutambwa (eds.), "Introduction," *The Place of Work in African Childhoods*, 2.

[81] G. Spittler and M. Bourdillon (eds.), *African Children at Work: Working and Learning in Growing Up for Life,* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012).

[82] Mwenda Ntarangwi and Guy Massart (eds.), "Introduction," *Engaging Children and Youth in Africa: Methodological and Phenomenological Issues*, (Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG, 2015), 2-3 (1-30).

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thoughts, symbolizations and typifications rather than existing conditions or facts motivated it. Consequently, he averred that with the inherited Romantic notion of the "innocent child", "children are [thus] professed to be angels and to possess a purity that adults have lost. Children have come to embody the potentiality and the futurity of humankind. They are its cherished future, but also its venerated past".[83]

Can such views be imagined in and about our knowledge about children and childhood in the African context?

Consequently, this volume seeks to once again expand what we know of African children and their childhood. It takes a diversion from the traditional examination of the child solely to the exploration of childhood in the African context. It explores the manifestations of African childhood and depictions and understandings of it. It offers a congregation of chapters that present original research from African and Africa-centred and Africa-friendly perspectives, rationalisations and conceptions about the psychology, sociology and history of aspects, ramifications and conditions of childhood in the African world. The analysis and interpretations and stories and case studies about various aspects of childhood and the child(ren) actor(s) that are at the centre and across the different stages of personhood development and community life and times within the African continent and African world spaces in this volume emanate from scholars of the humanities and social sciences who focus on African society, culture, education and history.

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Organisation of the Volume

In terms of structure, this book is organized into ten chapters, excluding this Introduction and the Conclusion. The volume enters into the conversation with Chapter One, that is Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale and Olukemi K. Amodu's paper titled "*Omo boti* and *Omo pako*: Social Construction of Childhood, Livelihood and Health in Southwestern Nigeria", to explore the social construction of the privileged (*omo boti*) and vulnerable (*omo pako*) childhood among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. It provides a contribution to the growing understanding about the issue of childhood formation. Omo boti and Omo pako are two ends of socially structured divides that emanate from social perceptions of people on what is considered as ideal childhood norms, values, symbols and imagery, in relation to the prevailing circumstances and times. In all this, the chapter shows how livelihood determines different categories of childhood in the Yoruba society. Centring and emphasising the social

[83] Bohlmann, "Introduction," xv.

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constructions of livelihood, childhood and health in the discussion, the paper argues and points out that in the case of the Yoruba, the constructed Omo boti and Omo pako childhoods and child beings are associated with certain constructed dietary lifeways that potentially exert health and ill-health impacts. They may predispose the Omo boti and Omo pako to health problems, like obesity and malnutrition respectively.

Following the discussion about how the social construction of livelihood and childhood pattern revolves around certain Yoruba value systems, and how, over the years, this has had implications on the health status of children and government health policy in Nigeria, Samuel Bewiadze and Richard Awubomu's paper, which constitutes Chapter Two, takes us to Ghana to interrogate an aspect of childhood there. Titled as "Our Stones, our Livelihood: Urban Working Children's Survival Strategy and its Implications in the Daglama Quarry Site in the Ho Municipality of Ghana", the paper's argument revolves around a childhood that is framed by economic production which is animated by and through children's agency for their survival and that of their families, even in the face of certain health dangers. Bewiadze and Awubomu introduce the area of stone quarrying as one field of economic activity for children in Ho, Ghana. While the authors argue that this economics-determined childhood is one which is not animated by passive and inactive children, they, nevertheless, point out that despite the fact that the children are agents in their own right, the economic activity at the quarry affects their health and education immensely. This "endangered childhood" has implications for the future development of the municipality and the country as a whole.

Chapter three and four and five deal with representations and misrepresentations of childhood. In Chapter Three, which is titled "Childhood in Africa: Health and Wellness in Body, Mind, Soul, and Spirit", Waganesh A. Zeleke, Tammy Hughes and Natalie Drozda deal with the issue of mischaracterisation and unilinear representation of childhood in Africa. Taking a detour from what it calls "the narrow lenses of Western ideals", the chapter's argument offers a multidimensional perspective on children and childhood in Africa and advances a logic about how it has been possible for an entire continent to thrive given such longstanding adversity. It argues that in the situation where Africa is commonly compared to a Western standard, its childhoods will be singularly understood by deficiency, and descriptions of African childhoods will be without reference to personal, spiritual or creative community richness. Thus, the chapter broadens the conceptualization of Africa's children and their childhood experiences by elaborating on the building blocks of healthy child development and resilience, including how those experiences are discernible in Africa. By reviewing the status of child health and wellness in Africa, describing a theory of health and holistic wellness applicable to the African context, re-conceptualizing African

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childhood based on a holistic wellness theory, presenting points of resiliency and protective factors, and discussing implications for future research, practitioners and policy-makers, the chapter brings us to a rich engagement with contexts that support African child development and a valuable understanding about African children's strengths.

In Chapter Four, Andrea Y. Adomako engages with questions of how African children discover the meaning of their African identifications in a postcolonial context in her paper "Efua Sutherland and African Children's Literature: Representations of Postcolonial Childhood". She opines that as the field of childhood studies evolves, it demands for more understandings about the varying representations of postcolonial childhood as projected to children through African children's literature. She argues that the postcolonial African child is a subject born into a system that sustains the hierarchies introduced by colonialism and is simultaneously trying to resist such power structures. They are born already as hybrid subjects, collapsing the boundaries between notions of "Western" and "African" yet, interpellated by external systems of White domination. Consequently, she projects the perspective that African children's literature articulates African pedagogy, and it is a unique archive and opportunity to grapple with postcolonialism as it relates to the subjectivity of African children. She explores African children's literature as a sociopolitical tool through the lens of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial framework which turns to literature and calls for stories and texts for Black children to aid them to combat the violence imparted by colonial education and programming, and support them to enunciate their subjectivities and assert their Blackness and social participation. By so doing, Adomako resurrects Efua Theodora Sutherland in the field of postcolonial African children's literature, because her work represents the hybridity of the postcolonial African child while also presenting opportunities for a gender analysis that rarely happens in this space. Efua Theodora Sutherland of Ghana is one of the early and most influential African authors to Africanize the content found in children's literature in Ghana. Adomako engages with Sutherland's *A Voice in the Forest* (1983) which addresses cultural tensions between Western and African values and reflects the impact of White domination on the sociopolitical climate that confronts postcolonial African children. Adomako brings it in dialogue with Fanon's postcolonial theory, amplified in *Black Skin, White Masks,* about how postcolonialism affects Black identity formations and African children's literature. While Adomako's work reveals how *A Voice in the Forest* classically reorients postcolonial African children as subversive figures, it also serves as a cultural product that shows how African adults attempt to make sense of the world for African children. Adomako discusses how the text defies the boundaries and norms created by the colonial society and ideology, and how child-

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like figures in the text subvert discourses of dominance and power tied to Western patriarchal values. Moreover, Adomako discusses the work as a critical text that provides understanding about diasporic notions and representations of postcolonial Black girlhood. Using a postcolonial and transnational feminist lens, Adomako argues that Sutherland's postcolonial girl character is part of a legacy of Black girls whose hair, body and behaviour have been politicized and policed. However, the analysis of the chapter also highlights and bears witness to how a postcolonial African girl exercises resistance and agency as she negotiates around and against the masculine strains of colonialism. Thus, Adomako asserts that given the historically masculinized nature of the colonial forces that subjugated Ghanaians, the very gendered independence represented in *A Voice in the Forest* symbolises postcolonial African girlhood as an anticolonial function. Moreover, postcolonial African children are complicating pre-existing binaries and necessitating a re-articulation of what African childhoods can entail.

Following Adomako's paper is Debbie Olson's "On the Innocence of Beasts: African Child Soldiers in Cary Fukunaga's *Beasts of no Nation*". Constituting Chapter Five, the paper also focuses on the issue of the adult-mediated process of representing and making meanings of African childhoods and identifications in a postcolonial context. It steps into the area of Western media and examines the issue of depiction of the postcolonial African child, the African child soldier, and their childhood. Olsen analyses and critiques the depiction of the African child soldier in Cary Fukunaga's 2015 adaptation of Uzodinma Iweala's novel *Beasts of No Nation.* Using the adapted *Beast of No Nation* to illustrate her point, she argues and demonstrates how it has commonly become difficult to see positive and meaningful representations of Black children in popular media, particularly Hollywood cinema. Such depictions, as Olsen shows, are linked to long-held Western notions propagated about Black children, mostly males, as "inherently violent", corrupt, "unable to achieve the promise of childhood innocence", and "ultimately unredeemable". Thus, the image of the African child soldier, as Olsen argues, has come out as a "persistent and complex representation of both real-world, war-time atrocities affecting African children", and Western media's detached (lack of positive and meaningful representation of Black children) passive-aggressive relationship with Black children. Olsen's paper gives us an understanding about how the "discursive nature of cinematic images of African children (and childhood) positions them as furthest from the Western ideal of childhood innocence and perfection—the blonde, blue-eyed, wide-eyed, curly-haired, angelic White child". In Olsen's view, this angel-demon dichotomy of children, popularised in the US by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the contrast between the Black slave girl Topsy and the White girl Eva, is used to uphold what she, using Marina Bradbury's expression

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in “Negotiating Identities: Representations of Childhood in Senegalese Cinema”,[84] identifies as “West as eternal adult and Africa as eternal child”. Olsen depicts how modern “digital media have been used to foster a transnational circulation of disparaging images of Black children”, particularly Black males, “from both the Global North and South”. She argues that in the end, the Black child image serves as a “temporal mirror that separates projected Western “White childhoods” of the “now” from the “primitiveness” (i.e., backwardness) of Black childhoods”. Such a demarcation “distorts the recognition of real Black children as children, an odd reversal of the West’s perpetual depiction of Africa and its adults as “children” incapable of handling their own affairs”. A common feature in many “coming of age” narratives is that White children are depicted as easily transcending to “adulthood through knowledge acquisition, something the Black child is both historically and cinematically rarely allowed to achieve”. “The Black child is often cinematically frozen in the interstice between child and adult—an oscillation rooted in the racist discourse of the colonial era”. Olsen analyses how the cinematic child soldier, Agu, in Fukunaga’s *Beasts of No Nation* is depicted as an entity that “elicits both *sympathy* and *fear”* and, thus, becomes an example of the “suspended oscillation between child and adult”. Olsen argues that in Iweala’s novel, Agu navigates and resists events that happen to him and works to reconcile his belief in his own goodness (and innocence) even when forced to commit atrocities. The Agu persona in the film is a radical departure from the one in Iweala’s novel. This departure, Olsen argues, “perpetuate[s] the notion that Black children are not like ‘real’ (White) children at all, and are in fact the ‘beasts’ the West has always believed them to be”. Ultimately, such a postcolonial moment cinematic depiction reinforces the West’s historical ‘Africa-as-chaos’ narrative through the eyes of an ‘already-guilty’ boy soldier name Agu”. Olsen’s paper, therefore, offers a new critical perspective that ultimately challenges cinematic myopic views and depictions of the African child and childhood that lack political correctness.

Komlan Agbedahin’s paper “Boys and Girls in the Bush, Bosses in Post-conflict: Liberian Young Veterans Rising to Power”, which produces a discussion in Chapter Six, moves away from depictions and representations of African childhood in media to real-life situations of Liberian children in the post-conflict moment in Liberia. The chapter examines the place of agency in Liberian young veterans (children formerly associated with armed forces and groups) rise to power. Accordingly, the chapter contributes to the debate on the nature of involvement of children in post-war reconstruction and reinte-

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[84] Marina Bradbury, “Negotiating Identities: Representations of Childhood in Senegalese Cinema,” *Journal of African Media Studies* 2(1), (2010): 13.

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gration in African war-torn countries. It argues that the Liberian civil war (1989 to 2003) saw a massive involvement of child soldiers playing various roles. Owing to the manipulative recruitment and induction ceremonies and subsequent war experiences, former child soldiers predictably were expected to become social misfits in the post-conflict society. Some failed to overcome the post-conflict predicaments despite humanitarian assistance offered by local, national and international agencies; however, there were young veterans who were able to create for themselves some survival space. Based on their own stories and within an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework, this chapter offers a new perspective about Liberian childhood by highlighting how young veterans' agency immensely contributed to altering power relations with their former jungle bosses. The chapter argues that, whether in a war context or not, opportunities can be made available to young veterans, but if they fail to exercise agency to seize such opportunities, their living conditions may remain the same or worsen. Cases of young veterans who emerge as counsellors, creators of NGOs, and peace campaigners in Liberia, attest to this. While the available body of writing has acknowledged the agency of such children during the war, the debate on their agency towards the post-conflict reconstruction has been underemphasised and at times unduly overshadowed by skewed discourses of humanitarianism. Ultimately, the chapter offers positive accounts of the involvement of young veterans to rectify such epistemic imbalances.

In Chapter Seven, Ivo Mhike's work "White Poverty, State Paternalism and Educational Reforms in Southern Rhodesia in the 1930s" offers a contribution to the histories of African childhood by examining childhood issues which the Great Depression of the 1930s produced in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It analyses how child citizenship and belonging became predicated on the (re)embracing of particular educational values promoted by the state. According to the chapter, the emergence of a delinquent class of male juveniles and youth unemployment symbolised a national crisis which threatened to imperil colonial designs because the White male in an African country, transformed into a White settler colony, was set on a pedestal as the breadwinner and defender of the British Empire. The state therefore reformed its youth educational policy to combat the twin "evils" of White poverty and attendant moral decay in Southern Rhodesia. The colonial regime was concerned with the development of White males who were growing to adulthood without a useful education and skills necessary to meet the expectations of White society. Social planners considered this as an ominous sign of the fragility of the White race in the face of the Black race in Africa. Thus, in 1936 St. Pancras Home was set up as a juvenile rehabilitation institution for boys. It became a primary instrument of state social engineering which advanced the

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emergent social model of child education and child development; the model emphasised the cultivation of a productive masculinity through skills training for blue-collar jobs and the fostering of a "rural mindedness" for agriculture sector jobs. Being an institution which signified a practical step towards separating the White lower class and redefining its role in colonial economic development, St. Pancras Home also represented an aggressive form of state paternalism towards the children of the working class. Thus, Mhike's chapter argues that it reconfigured and shaped social policy and the meanings of childhood during the 1930s and 1940s. Mhike's analysis of the constructions and perceptions of childhood in the settler colony of Southern Rhodesia offers an enhanced appreciation of the rich diversity of childhoods in colonial settings and how the interaction between the different races constantly transformed the meanings of childhood in Africa.

Chapter Eight takes us from childhood issues of the colonial South Rhodesia period to one of both the colonial period and "post-apartheid" era in South Africa. In the chapter, Zethu Cakata offers some interesting perspectives about aspects of African childhoods that are characterised and shaped by language and land. Her paper, which is titled "Childhoods Rooted in the Land: Connecting Child Development to Land Using Cultural Practices of the IsiXhosa Speaking People of South Africa", argues that in all cultures life begins with childhood but for colonized lands in Africa, citing those of the AmaXhosa to illustrate and support her point and argument, an understanding of what childhood is has been distorted and diluted with enforced colonial and neo-colonial understandings. This disruption is because of the foregrounding and idealisation of social-cultural systems of the colonisers, such as language, on one hand, and the peripheralisation of those of the colonised on the other.[85] However, language, as Zethu argues, is resistant, for as long as it is alive its knowledge and the cosmologies and keys to the comprehension of practices and know-hows and know-whys that it carries to bind people to their lands can be reclaimed. Thus, Zethu's paper explores childhood formulations by the speakers of isiXhosa language in South Africa and the imperativeness of land possession to child-human development.

In Chapter Nine, Awo Sarpong and De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway bring an interesting perspective on African childhood from Ghana. Their chapter, "'Adults are just Obsolete Children . . .': Child Fancy Dress Parades as a Carnivalesque Suspension of Adultism in Winneba, Ghana", unveils an urban space-based "power" politics between children and adult residents in Winneba, a littoral town and

[85] See, for example, Russell H. Kaschula, "The Oppression of IsiXhosa Literature and the Irony of Transformation," *English in Africa* 35 (1), (2008): 117-32.

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the capital of Effutu Municipal District in the Central Region of southern Ghana, through their shared artistic medium of Fancy Dress. Winneba is nationally acclaimed as one of the six powerhouses and citadels of the Fancy Dress culture in Ghana. It holds annual interclub Fancy Dress competitive parades; these parades and national and popular celebrations in Ghana feature the Fancy Dress spectacle, with active child participation. The Fancy Dress masquerade act, which synthesises "special" fashion, music and dance, evolved during the colonial era, c. 18th century, within a patriarchal cultural terrain. It was first an adult male only dramatic merry-making parade; however, by the mid-20th century the adult monopoly had been dissolved by a revolutionary enrolment of children into clubs and a burgeoning wresting of the adult's control and sole ownership of artistic self-expression in the masquerade parades by children. This chapter examines the politics of change and the cultural ramifications it has exerted on the terrain of adult and child power relations in the urban life of Winneba. It discusses the agency of children in Fancy Dress art expression to dissolve adultism and mediate a town that thrives on the input of children. It argues that children performers of Fancy Dress easily slide into the adult category even though they are not adults, and that makes them, and by implication confers on children in Winneba, the status and right to be co-owners of the present and not just a mass of persons whom traditionally adults have dismissively thought and said of as future leaders.

In Chapter Ten, Mawuloe Koffi Kodah's paper "Mending the Broken Fences: A Study of the Socialized and De-socialized Child in Laye's *The African Child* and Kourouma's *Allah Is Not Obliged*" engages the issues of socialization and de-socialization of the African child and in African childhoods. Kodah does this by examining the depiction of these processes and the impact of the interplay of African and Western child-socialization and de-socialization at work in two works of African literature – Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* (1953),[86] translated into English as *The African Child*[87] and *The Dark Child*,[88] and Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé*,[89] translated as *Allah is Not Obliged*[90] (2006).

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[86] It was published in 1953 and was awarded the Charles Veillon literary prize in 1954. However, in this work references will be made to the following edition: Camara Laye, *L'Enfant Noir*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954) and the translated English versions of the work.
[87] Camara Laye, *The African Child,* trans., J. Kirkup, (London: Collins, Fontana Books, 1959).
[88] Camara Laye, *The Dark* Child, trans., J. Kirkup, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969).
[89] Ahmadou Kourouma, *Allah n'est pas obligé*, (Paris : Seuil, 2000).

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The authorial voice of child-narrators has often been used by African novelists, such as Laye and Kourouma, as a mark of objectivity and value judgment in fiction in African literature, considering the perceived naivety, innocence and mere ignorance narrative stance of a child. Moreover, the authorial narrative is an eye-witness account of events akin to the lived-experiences of the narrator, difficult for anyone to contest the credibility of such an account to a large extent. Consequently, Kodah critically examines the upbringing, roles and character of two authorial child-narrators in the two narrative texts within the framework of socio-critique theory and establishes the significance of African child-socialization in a harmonious African communal social setting in the former text, vis-à-vis that of African child de-socialization in a dysfunctional African individualistic social setting in the latter, in view of mending the broken value-fences around the African child and their childhood. Finally, the Epilogue of this volume is written by Charles Quist-Adade.

Although this volume has endeavoured to contribute ideas to the burgeoning interrogation of African childhood in full light, it cannot declare or has no posturing of grandeur; it has not also aimed at completeness. As for us, we hope that the chapters in this volume will put the reader on the way to a more comprehensive interest in and consideration for the subject of African childhood; that is why we share the thrill of the *new perspectives* in this volume with a broader scholarly and reading audience. Clearly, there is a wide multiplicity of aspects of the African childhood theme to investigate, albeit with the need for many more fresh insights.

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[90] Ahmadou Kourouma, *Allah is not obliged*, trans., F. Wynne, (London: Vintage Books, 2006).

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Chapter 1

Omo boti and *Omo pako*: Social Construction of Childhood, Livelihood and Health in Southwestern Nigeria

Mofeyisara Oluwatoyin Omobowale and Olukemi K. Amodu

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Introduction

Omo boti and Omo pako[1] represent the ends of two social divides, constructed via social perceptions of the Yoruba on what is considered as ideal childhood norms, values, symbols and imagery, in relation to the prevailing circumstances and times. Although the precise period for emergence of these categories is not known, it is in common knowledge that the demarcation is a post-colonial phenomenon. Despite the fact that childhood is often contested, one cannot deny the fact that childhood is also contextual. The complex chain of social, cultural, economic, political and, even, geographical space in which one lives as a child determines frameworks within which common notions of childhood are produced.[2] This study examines the construction of privilege and vulnerable childhood and its relations to health and ill-health among children of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. The study utilises the idea of contextualised elitism in explaining the construction of childhood among the Yoruba. Locally defined elitism is used in the social construction of hierarchy and class. These are internally generated stratification reproduced by social differences through the dynamics of everyday struggle of everyman to establish their personalities in the society.[3]

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[1] *Boti and Pako* are two words that can be interpreted as privileged child and vulnerable child respectively. They are used by the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria to describe the world of a child or the childhood experience of a person.

[2] Peter Kraftl, "Building an idea:the Material Construction of an Ideal Childhood," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (4), (2006) : 488-504.

[3] K. Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town,* (London: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 1991).

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Additionally, this study discusses how the means of living of parents, that is, parental livelihood, define the childhood and social construction of a child being among the Yoruba. Consequently, the centrality of livelihood in the social construction of childhood and health is emphasized in this discussion. The primary concern here is the initial social synthesis, which is essentially a matter in the discourse of childhood and health experience. Parental livelihood determines the lifestyle that will be given to a child and experience of his/her childhood, reflected in the provisioning of basic needs of life like clothing, food and shelter, all of which may have long-term implications on the social classification and health status of children. For instance, among the Yoruba, where a child is normally associated with the status of his or her parents, it is not strange that the name of the father or family of a child informs other people's perception about that child and consequently shapes their relationship with him or her. Thus, the Yoruba maxim *ki ri omo oba ka ma ri amin oba lara re* which conveys the idea that "a king's child will always reflect royalty", for example, philosophically articulates and explains the reality of this situation aptly.

The social perception of the reality of what constitutes an ideal privileged and vulnerable child cannot be overemphasised when it comes to the study of childhood development and health.[4] Studying livelihood and childhood social construction implies an examination of how social forces shape social understanding of people and actions toward social ranking, social differentiation, social change, overlapping social group relations, scarcity, abundance, provision, hardship, ill-health and health.[5] It is an exploration of the effects of class, race, gender, language, technology, culture, political economy, institutional and professional structures, norms and values in shaping the knowledge base which produces assumptions about status, and social classification of childhood.[6]

According to Akanmu G. Adebayo[7] in his analysis of grouping among the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Akan of Ghana, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed the emergence of newly defined elite and middle classes offered

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[4] Jocelyn A. Hollander and Hava R. Gordon, "The Processes of Social Construction in Talk," *Symbolic Interaction* 29 (2), (2006):183-212.

[5] P. Brown, "Naming and Framing: The Social Construction of Diagnosis and Illness," *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, Extra Issue: Forty Years of Medical Sociology: The state of the Art and Directions for the Future, (1995): 34-52; S. Aderinto, "Researching Colonial Childhoods: Images and Representations of Childhood in Nigeria Newspaper Press, 1925-1950," *History in Africa* 39, (2012): 241-166.

[6] Chiara Saraceno, "The Social Construction of Childhood: Child Care and Education Policies in Italy and the United States," *Social Problem* 31(3), (1984): 351-363.

[7] A.G. Adebayo, "Currency Devaluation and Rank: The Yoruba and Akan Example," *African Studies Review* 50 (2), (2007): 87-109.

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by government policies of currency devaluation and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), all of which have, in a way, led to other types of classifications and constructions in childhood development among the Yoruba, as it is in the case of *omoboti* and *omopako*. The influence of government policies on social hierarchies has received attention from several scholars.[8] They have all analysed social hierarchies and social construction of reality regarding gender, power, space, health, politics, history and economy to mention few perspectives of their analyses. Despite these enormous studies, it is also important to examine the world of the social construction of the privileged and vulnerable childhood among the Yoruba, especially in this era of globalisation.

It will be unproductive discussing childhood outside the livelihood of the parents of children whose childhood is the interest of this study. Livelihood, as it were, comprises capabilities, skills, space, people, income and diet[9] through which a child or family acquire their vital necessities of life. For instance, diet is a vital necessity for child survival; it determines the nutritional status of a child, even its physical and psychological growth and development through a lifetime. A child fed on a diet that is not balanced, and exposed to insanitary and vulnerable conditions in the environment is likely to experience wasting and stunting, and be underweight. The livelihoods of parents largely determine the pattern of childhood development and hierarchy into which their children will be categorised. This also goes a long way in the formation of the perception of the society on the class within the context of childhood. Thus, while pointing out that an imperative paradigm towards the study and understanding of children and their childhood, that is, children's relationships and their cultures, in recent times is the critiquing of the social construction of childhood and peripheralisation of children as beings without agency by adults, Claire O'Kane[10] also states two points aptly. First, children actively participate in constructing and determining their social lives and those of other people and the social environments in which they live. Second,

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[8] O. B. Lawuyi, *Moral Imaginings of the Nigerian Elite: Playing Satan and God in Performance,* (Ibadan: University Press Ibadan, 2014); G. Clark, *African Market Women: Seven Life Stories from Ghana,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); D. Badejo, "African Feminism: Mythical and social Power of Women of African Descent," *Research in African Literatures* 29 (2), (1998): 94-111.
[9] R. Chambers and G.R. Conway, "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st century," *IDS Discussion Paper* 296, (1991): 1-105.
[10] C. O'Kane, "Street and Working Children's Participation in Programming for their Rights," *Children Youth and Environments* 13 (10), (2003): 167-183.

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> because children's experiences of childhood are diverse, childhood as a variable of social analysis can never be entirely separated from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity.

The above implies that (in)equalities in families status and the style in which children from different social blocs are raised, socialized and are sustained are historically important in the construction of livelihood and childhood in Africa.[11]

Methodology

This which paper, which contributes some new insights to the discourse on childhood in Nigerian history, draws on salient and relevant information from literature related to childhood, livelihood and health to formulate aspects of its narrative and analysis. Furthermore, qualitative techniques of data collection were used in this study. The qualitative data were generated from January 2015 to June 2016, through observation of social media chats via Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram. The observation was done to monitor the trend of discussion on the construction of ideal childhood among Yoruba people. In-depth interviews were also conducted in purposively selected areas within the metropolis of Ibadan. This involved two local government areas, namely Ibadan North and North East. Their selection was based on the mixed nature of socio-economic classifications of its population. Newspaper stands[12] and market spaces in the selected areas were also purposively selected for interviews because they are common places of convergence of various people and social consciousness.[13] In all, 21 in-depth interviews and 12 informal interviews were conducted with male and female informants across different social, economic classes and ages. All data were subjected to relational content analysis.

Social Construction of *Omo boti and Omo pako*

Omo boti, as revealed from the data are also called several names among which are: *ajebota* or *ajebo* (butter consumer), *omo-get-inside* (a child restricted to indoors), *mimi pin* (I swallowed pin), *omo-mummy* (mummy's

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[11] See Saraceno,"The Social Construction of Childhood"; Aderinto, "Researching Colonial Childhoods".

[12] Newspaper stand in Ibadan is a space where different people meet to discuss different social issues. See Footnote 17.

[13] See A.O. Omobowale, M.O. Omobowale, and H.O.J. Akinade, "Newspaper Stands as Centres of Social Consciousness in Nigeria," *Malaysian Journal and Information Sciences* 18 (1), (2013): 79-86.

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boy/girl), *adire-goloba*[14] (Glover's cockerel), *agric, golugo* (gullible), *asoo* (western), *foreign, tokunbo* (from over the seas), *omo olowo* (child of the wealthy), *omo torise* (child of the philanthropist) and *omo pampers* (a pampered child). On the other hand, *Omo pako* (a child born with a wooden spoon) also attracts other names like *ajepako* (wood consumer), *paki* (cassava), *lokii* (local), *tiwa-n-ti-wa* (indigenous), *talika* (pauper), *talikuta* (very poor) and *ibile* (traditional). Looking at these names literally and critically, they speak volumes on the social perceptions and expectations of the two divides. These nomenclatures are types of yardsticks for identifying and measuring the pattern of childhood a child possesses. They also signify symbolic framing of childhood among the Yoruba. All these names notwithstanding, this study has adopted the use of *Omo boti and Omo pako* for easy explanation and also because they have gained more popularity than other names that refer to the same issues arising from the data collected.

Boti in Yoruba parlance simply implies butter: a smooth, creamy, edible fat made by churning milk or cream for cooking and table use.[15] It is not indigenous to the Yoruba but it is believed to have been popularised by British colonialists, even though it has always been in Nigeria, especially among the Fulani pastoralists. It became more visible in the early part of the nineteenth century as a special diet among the urban dwellers and elites who had contact with the colonialists and their diets. This was also the period when butter making contributed significantly to the economic development of the world.[16] At this time, butter consumption was almost solely the affair of the colonialists, urban dwellers and elites. It was one of the edible items used as a status symbol by the indigenous elitist class because it was eaten by the colonial masters; it was imported and expensive. Commonly eaten as a spread on pastries, especially bread, it was popularly considered as food for the well-to-do in the urban areas. This perception was partly explained in a Yoruba adage that *omo oko ti yoo je buredi, yoo fi ibepe ranse si ara ile. Bota ki i se onje obo* (a village dweller that wants to eat bread will send pawpaw to those in the city. Butter is not a morsel of food for the poor). The consumption of butter (and also margarine, which at times was referred with the blanket term *butter* by

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[14] It is generally believed that Western breeds of cockerel were introduced to Nigeria when Sir John Glover was the colonial governor of Lagos Colony from 1863-1872. These foreign breeds were regarded as weak compared to local breeds.

[15] A.G. Adebayo, "Taming the Nomads: The Colonial State, the Fulani Pastoralists and the Production of Clarified Butter Fat (C-B-F) in Nigeria, 1930-1952," *Transafrican Journal of History* 20, (1991):190-212.

[16] J.M. Jensen, "Butter Making and Economic Development in Mid-Atlantic American from 1750 to 1850," *Signs* 13(4), (1988) : 167-168.

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some of the masses because of its creamy look and butter-like consistency) in pre-independence Nigerian society increased with its advertisement on television and newspaper.[17] Having inserted itself into the dietary ways of some of the Yoruba since the colonial period, butter became a preferred condiment to bread to those who could acquire it. Consequently, bread and butter have come to be commonly seen as going hand in hand among many Yoruba. This is even reflected in one of the children's rhymes among the Yoruba that goes thus: *Buredi and butter, odu pupo, maje ko gbona, maje ko tutu, omo oloja ki lo mu?* (Bread and butter are delicious. Make it warm. Which one will you opt for?). There are also times when people and things that are gorgeous among the Yoruba are described as *opatarishio* meaning butyraceous. The essence of bringing in this rhyme and these parlances is to show that butter at a time in the colonial history of the Yoruba, in particular, and of Nigeria, in general, was the pride of the elites and the rich and was made popular by the British imperialists. Butter, as gathered through oral interviews, was for a long time the diet of the elites and the rich who could afford to buy it and its other products, like buttered biscuits which were exported from England. However, dry and tough unbuttered biscuits, the *pako* (hard like wood) types of biscuits, were commonly found with the low-income earners and so-called ordinary locals.

Pako in the common knowledge of the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria is literarily translated as wood, a hard fibrous lignified substance under the bark of a tree; the term also stands for a hard or rugged thing, or an act of being determined, tenacious and relentless; it also symbolises a substance that can withstand uncomfortable situations. Wood is indigenous to the Yoruba physical environment; its usage predates colonialism. For instance, it has been used to construct many different secular and religious objects. For example, its existence and importance are felt in the religious space and belief system of the Yoruba where it is an item for the production of sacred sculptures of deities and other spiritual forces. In the economic space, it is relevant and useful in the construction business of the Yoruba. Furthermore, when wood is burnt it may end up as charcoal, a product of second-hand significance because it is the remains of an incinerated "destroyed" wood; yet the charcoal will still be of both domestic and economic value. This is reflected in one of the informant's statement as stated below:

[17] Lawuyi, *Moral Imaginings of the Nigerian Elite:..*

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> When you are addressed as *Pako,* it simply means that you are rugged, can pass through fire and even when people think you are destroyed you still come out *bouncing* and elastic[18]

Boti and pako as nomenclatures evoke various contextual meanings and imagery – the former representing privilege and the latter signifying vulnerability and marginality. Apart from employing the nomenclatures as a socio-construction, their meanings can be decontextualized and inverted. In other words, one can be referred to as being an *Omo boti* if he or she is in a state of vulnerability because it is a position of softness and physical weakness. There are other yardsticks constructed around the duo, regarding securing major necessities of life such as clothing, shelter, food, water, education and security. The significance of these major necessities to livelihood and formation of childhood will form the central topical platform for our discussion shortly in line with the objective of this study. In the words of an informant:

> *Boti* children are children whose parents are always there for them, they don't allow them to go out, there is a kind of food they eat, there is a kind of school they go, there is a kind of place they live in, there is a way they do their things, they are not very rugged.[19]

This view was further corroborated by another informant as relayed below:

> *Boti* is ignorant of the reality of life. They are born with silver and golden spoons. They are children who do not have a feel of hardship… they are given everything; they are satisfied with all that they are given, they do not know what is happening, they have not had experience of hardship. They wear nice cloth, live in a well-built house, go to good schools, taken in their parents' car to school every day, live in Government Reservation Area, or well planned and fenced neighbourhoods and [have] good hygienic water supply, like borehole.[20]

To further corroborate the social expectations on *Boti,* the informant below added that:

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[18] Male, Student, 27 years.
[19] Female, Informatics Engineer, 35 years.
[20] Male, Civil Servant, 42 years.

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> *Ajebo* children are very sluggish, they act anyhow, though they are usually good-looking, they wear real designer and not fake designer clothes, but they are not very sharp. They are not that strong, even in the heart. They are very smart regarding media, Facebook. You know those social media..., but when it comes to street life they are less smart.[21]

From the above statements, *Boti* (Butter) in social construction and expectations are children who are provided with all necessities of life by their parents. Being *Boti* is defined by material wealth provision, for example, good clothing and access to the latest technological equipment. Regarding non-material provision, they are shadowed about and are trained to be less sensitive to hardship. It is believed that *Boti* children lack the physical and emotional resilience to withstand change, particularly the negative kind. Further explanation to the construction of the privileged and the vulnerable child is reflected in the quality of education received by many children. According to some of the informants:

> A *Boti* child will attend private school. Moreover, the kind of skills the child will acquire will be bigger than his age. For example, while a *Boti* child in Nursery 2 can read 2 to 4 letter words, his *Pako* counterpart will still be struggling with ABC to Z.[22]

In another interview, an informant equally enumerated the differences as follows:

> You don't need to go far, just call a *Boti* and a *Pako* together, tell them to sing a rhyme. You will begin to hear *twinkle, twinkle little star* being sung in Queen intonation, while *Pako* will sing rhymes with local intonation, like calling airplane *Eropileni*. Then ask them to speak English, you will listen to all manners of *Ibon* (Yoruba argot for grammatical blunders in English) while a true *Boti* will speak correct English. [23]

In another response, the informant revealed that:

> A *Boti* will never live in a slum; they live in GRA (Government Reservation Area), well laid out environment, fenced house, with business minding neighbours. Some of them have never witnessed violence. They are set of children that will watch and think cartoons; they also

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[21] Male, Banker, 31 years.
[22] Female, Teacher, 37 years.
[23] Male, Technologist, 43 years.

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> watch the news, documentaries and children programmes and not funny home videos, like violence filled *Agbeleku or Koto orun* that an average *omo pako* will watch and act like on a daily basis.[24]

The above responses present the construction of the post-colonial society around being *Boti,* which is about the value systems of access and denial to necessities of life. The preceding transforms into perceptions and actions of ideals and reality. This access and denial of ideals and real value system are also strongly reflected in the construction of health and vitality, as discussed below in the next section.

Pako and Boti in the Context of Child Nutrition and Health

The data revealed that constructing health and nutrition of *Boti and Pako* from societal perspective may be ambiguous. The world of this ambiguity, in itself, reflects a sort of explanation for social realities of childhood and health. In terms of diet, many informants believed that the *omo pako* children were usually physically stronger than *the omo boti* ones. Some of their explanations are written below:

> An *ajepako* may eat plenty yam and the stomach will be filled, *ajebota* cannot eat such, he/she will rather eat one or almost two slices of yam with tea. That is why *ajepako* is stronger, aggressive and rugged.[25]

In another interview, the informant hinted that:

> *Ajepako* people may not eat balance diet o, but they eat plenty food, unlike *ajebota* that will be fed three square meals, with balanced diets according to their dictates at times.[26]

Another informant added that:

> *Ajebota* will eat cornflakes, noodles, spaghetti, salad, tomato ketchup with chips and chicken, cereals of different manners, bread with real butter not margarine, correct fried/jollof rice, go to KFC (a fast food restaurant), imported chocolates, sweet, chewing gum, and juice and

[24] Male, Taxi Driver, 52 years.
[25] Female, Cleaner, 49 years .
[26] Female, Medical Student, 22 years.

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> so on. While *ajepako* eats more of eba,[27] amala,[28] rice, ogi,[29] beans, fufu,[30] and other carbohydrate-laden diets. That explains the reason why they are strong and filled with energy. Though many *ajebota* are always very fat due to the fatty and sweet food they eat.[31]

Yet, another informant stated that:

> *Ajebota* does not eat anyhow, they are selective in their food, and that is why they are healthier than *ajepako*. An average *Boti* will look fresher than the finest *ajepako*. They always look chubby and robust, not *topala* (thin).[32]

The contradiction shown here is that the general constructions of "being strong physically" and "being healthy" are not equal to each other. A child may be rough and aggressive, which is not the hallmark of health but the social, environmental disadvantage of the low class. What is obvious from the statements above is that *ajebota* (*omo boti*) and *ajepako* (*omo pako*) diet is one of the socially constructed sharp markers of differentiation. The type of diet that a child is exposed to will determine, in the end, which side of the divide a child will be placed socially. Hence, diet plays a critical role in the development of the child. Going by the general perception of the diet pattern of the duo, *ajepako* is at the risk of malnutrition, while *ajebota* is at the high risk of developing obesity. This is embedded in the interpretation of "fineness". Thus, right from birth, many *ajepako* children may experience stunted growth, and even deformity, due to their diet, while their *ajebota* counterpart will grow normally with all parts of their body well developed. Meanwhile, there are other critical questions raised by these socially constructed views that will be discussed later in the course of this discourse.

Furthermore, the environment in which a child is born and raised is a very significant factor in health and child development. A child born to a "strug-

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[27] It is a staple food eaten by the Yoruba and other West African ethnic groups. It is made from dried grated cassava flour commonly known as gari.
[28] Indigenous Yoruba food made from cassava and/or yam flour. It is rich source of carbohydrate.
[29] It is a type of fermented pudding from Nigeria. It is traditionally made from maize, sorghum or millet.
[30] This local food is from pounded starchy food crops like cassava, yams or plantains and cocoyams.
[31] Male, Lecturer, 43 years.
[32] Female, Student, 24 years.

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gling family" whose parents can hardly afford all necessities of life, like "decent" accommodation, is considered *ajepako* (*omo pako*). Excerpts from the information gathered from informants describe a child living in:

> A crowded neighbourhood…not laid out, with many face-you-and-face-me apartments… slum-like, dirty, waterlogged, all drained blocked with all sort of dirt thrown into the drainage whenever it rained…, high crime-prone neighbourhood, with a high presence of traditionality, impoliteness, and public life that generate unnecessary noise pollution.[33]

According to the statements by informants, any child born and raised in this type of environment is surely an *ajepako.* The implication of this on child health is obvious as a dirty environment will certainly breed illness-causing germs, like bacteria, and raise the incidence of infections, among other afflictions, which may prove very devastating to the health of children growing in such an environment. Another serious health problem is the mass breeding of malaria-causing mosquitos in environments such as the one described above, which poses a danger to the health of both children and adults. This also has its health and economic dimensions in that people or parents in such environments will spend more of their scarce income on treating diseases afflicting their children, instead of investing it in life improvement. This has also given the opportunity to drug abuse, wrong treatments, quack health practitioners, and misuse of herbs to thrive in such environments. All these have a devastating effect on child development in the geographical and cultural space featured by the study. This explains a slow decline in under-5 morbidity and mortality in Nigeria. This is further corroborated by an informant as shown below:

> It is not a good thing to be *ajepako*. It is like a curse; you can never achieve a neat environment. Even when you are neat, people around you are dirty they will frustrate your effort and make sure all is not well. They cannot reason like a normal person; they see thing from the awkward side of life. They will rather blame witches and wizards for their self-inflicted illness, and especially when, through carelessness, they kill their children, and pollute the environment than face the reality of life.[34]

[33] Composed from snippets of information from the views of different respondents.
[34] Male, Cook, 48 years.

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Another informant observed that:

> *Ajepako* child will grow up in an environment where a child is free to roam around, play with all sorts of dangerous things, eat anything, even *igbe aran and iyepe* (goat dug and sands) and even play a lot with dirty things, while *ajebota* will be raised in clean environment and cannot eat any dirt.[35]

A child exposed to dirt will be prone to the danger of infectious diseases, while a child "over-protected" against germs may lack immunity against infections, all of which are not of positive implication for child development, even though the latter seems better than the former.

A child born into a family of *ajebota* people will be part of the *omo boti* children and will automatically be called *ajebota*. He or she will be expected to live and socialise in a well-built neighbourhood where almost all houses are fenced and residents enjoy utmost privacy in well planned and neatly laid out surroundings where they suffer little or no noise and environmental pollution. As described by all informants, with many giving specific examples, the environment of an *ajebota* child is just the opposite of that of *ajepako*. The health implication for this is not hidden; many parents in the *ajebota* category will spend fewer resources on the treatment of illness and disease during the childhoods of their offspring; they will have more income to invest on other childhood necessities. They are also expected to be more civil in their treatment of illnesses, especially for their children, and many of them may not abuse the drug, or patronise quack and fake herbal doctors, for these undesirables may not even surface in such neighbourhoods.

One important issue to be noted here is that the categorisation of *Boti* and *Pako,* as it were, is not rigid in its classification. There are others who are neither *Pako* nor *Boti*. Such cases may be better appreciated from the class performance angle, that is, those who are especially fighting being classed as low and in reality are not in the middle or upper class, but have, over the years, accumulated material wealth that could place them and their children into a *Boti* classification. The reality is that from the data gathered, no one desired to be *Pako* or raise *pako* children. Every informant claimed and desired to bring their children up as *Boti* with little change in values. The emphasis here is that it is important to recognise that the gap between *Boti* and *Pako* is not empty, but is filled with many performing "being *Boti*", while in the real sense their value system still

[35] Male, Civil servant, 44 years.

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places them back to the disadvantaged group. Drawing understanding from Marek Ziolkowski's "Individuals and the Social System: Values, Perceptions, and Behavioral Strategies" we are of the opinion that the significance of this is the variance in how the individual adapts to the social system which includes, "values, perceptions, and popular explanations of . . . reality, attitudes towards the system, and declared behavioural strategies… [v]alues [in] images of objects, events, [place and space], state or processes that are considered right, just, moral and desirable…used in measuring the gap between the ideal and the real."[36] Likewise, the state of health of a *Boti and a Pako* child lies within this value system even when they fall within the gaps.

Conclusion

Omo boti and Omo pako, the privileged child and vulnerable child respectively, are largely in the world of the value system of the Yoruba societal construction of the ideal and reality of livelihood and childhood. The categories are largely defined and determined by access to and provision of necessities of life and their utilisation within a value system. Thus, the construction points to internally generated stratification that establishes essences of being. Moreover, this construction also has a way of impacting on the state of child health and ill-health experienced among the Yoruba in southwestern Nigeria. Finally, it is worth mentioning however that childhood among the Yoruba is contextual, its definition and construction are ambiguously applied contextually.

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