

LAND OF HOPE
Charting Development and Children's Lives in Uganda Through Education

by

Zachary Kopkin

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Gregory Reck, Ph.D., Thesis Director

Kelly Williams, Ph.D., Second Reader

Leslie Sargent Jones, Ph.D., Director, The Honors College
(Omit if only doing Departmental Honors)

For Ted and Ethel Kopkin, who have supported and believed in my work and who have shown me how to live bravely and gracefully

For Sarah, my best friend and soul mate. Thank you for all you do every single day to make life more beautiful than I ever thought possible.

To my family, for their confidence in my personal, academic and professional pursuits

And to my teachers, for sharing their wisdom and their stories, and encouraging me to make my own

Land of Hope: Charting Development and Children's Lives in Uganda through Education

Riding late at night in the front seat of one of Kampala's ubiquitous blue and white taxi-vans, I travelled with my school group from the Entebbe airport to a lodge about forty-five minutes north along the pothole riddled highway. I immediately noticed the self-aware use of language on signs and vehicles: the rear window of taxis displayed phrases like "God is Good" and "Never Loose Hope", and school signs bore mottos like "Struggle for a Better Future". I took pictures of impressive Mandela National Stadium in the distance, which would later surprise my relatives with its modern appearance. Our first night I slept little in spite of my exhaustion; a live event with the most exuberant praise music I had ever heard kept me entertained and curious to learn more about this unfamiliar place so overflowing with human energy. I already knew that my knowledge of Uganda's population statistics, political history, and culture could not contain the reality of life there.

This is a paper about Ugandan people's hopes and struggles for an indefinite but better future through education, which deeply reflects on the wider social, political, and economic contexts in which education in Uganda is embedded, namely discourse about development and human rights. Therefore, the paper begins with a review of critical development literature with the aim of deconstructing mainstream discourses about development and education. Next, I will review the pre-colonial,

colonial, and postcolonial historical setting of Uganda in order to understand current hopes and efforts to forge a brighter future through education. This section also functions as a case study deconstructing the universalizing language of development, education, and human rights from a particular historical vantage point. Finally, I will describe my personal experiences in Kitoola, Uganda during the summer of 2014 as well the local response to development and education. My primary concern in this section will be to debate if and how Ugandans, within their social and material confines, might express agency when hoping for a better future through education. This question has significant implications for anthropology, critical development studies, and development practice.

Uganda is the world's youngest country and one of the poorest, and education is the central component to the country's national development goals. A 2013 government report states, "Uganda's overarching goal is to become a modern and prosperous country by the middle of the century", but the country has thus far been slow in enabling all children to complete primary schooling (United Nations Development Programme). If Uganda were to achieve its educational objectives of truly universal primary education and drastically increased access to education beyond that level, the country's political leaders expect Uganda would then realize its economic and health goals as well. But children, education, and development are much more complexly related than that. In the news, government documents, and everyday discussions many Ugandans characterize the nation through metaphor as being a child – young and developing (Cheney 2007: 42-43). Almost universally, adults define the role of children based not on their past, but on the children's

future, and so it is with the Ugandan nation whose past suffering from poverty, war, and disease has not defeated the overall will to pursue a brighter future.

Childhood, according to the idealized Western conception epitomized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is also a period of dependence and socialization, which strongly factors in Ugandan development discourse. Uganda's president since 1986, Yoweri Museveni, has therefore taken steps to gain international legitimacy with the "Adult North" (Meinert and Valentin 2009), or 'developed' 'Western'¹ countries, by signaling that his country is committed to Western-inspired human rights agreements like the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, unlike earlier dominant paradigms in development, which were based on aggregate economic growth, human rights-based development promises to deliver the results of 'modernization' to everyone. So, according to Prince and Conrad (2005), Ugandans who have confidence in national development see themselves as part of a nested hierarchy in which success is the nation's success and vice versa. The institutions of education, development, and human rights are, of course, fraught with contradictions when viewed from the perspective of everyday life in the so-called Third World. Emphasizing the restricted exercise of agency within the constraints of a system of development imposed by external factors tied to the colonial and postcolonial experience, I will explore the hopes of the people of Kitoola and students of the village's Hopeland Primary School, whom I met through

¹ I use apostrophes throughout the text in place of the expression "so-called" in order to call attention to terms' common discursive uses that do not accurately reflect objective factors. For example, when I talk about the 'West', I acknowledge that it is not a geographical place but rather a constructed category separated from 'the rest'.

YOFAFO during the summer of 2014. They must locate a sense of purpose within conditions that often make the above institutions' promises nearly impossible. I will also suggest potential implications of the Ugandan situation for our overall understanding of development vis-à-vis education.

Complicating Development vis-à-vis Education: In Search of a Better Future

When embedded in the seemingly unquestionable set of bourgeois values such as equality and progress, education and 'development' can actually result in inequality by reproducing the labor class and enabling capitalist exploitation (Harvey 2009: 255-56; Illich 1971). Furthermore, when formal education becomes a prerequisite for upward social mobility, it can pose an insurmountable barrier to mainstream success for people unable to acquire educational credentials. Levinson, Foley, and Holland (1996) write that the main work that schools do is to transform children's symbolic roles in society by conferring culturally preferred appearances, credentials, and privilege. Their analysis refutes the commonsense idea that education simply transfers knowledge equally and apolitically, and they therefore expose a further contradiction in Ugandans' hopes for education to generate simultaneous local and national prosperity. Relatively successful democratic and economic growth under Uganda's current president, Yoweri Museveni, bolsters people's hope, yet uncertainty prevails as people attempt to navigate concurrent local and national civic responsibilities in the process of seeking identities appropriate for their changing society and their own changing expectations resulting from education (Durham 2002).

Current ideas and practices of education take place within broader conversations² about development. Both the discourse and practice of development and education appear in their present form as the product of history, as I will show through analysis of Uganda's precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial conditions. Arturo Escobar, in his famous book *Encountering Development*, analyzes development discourse as a "regime of representation" that "results in concrete practices of thinking and acting through which the Third World is produced" (1995: 11). This dominant representation of the 'modern' world's counterpart makes it difficult to imagine the so-called Third World without picturing destitution, thus disqualifying non-Western ways of knowing. Gustavo Esteva elaborates:

Disvalue transmogrifies skills into lacks, commons into resource, people into labor, tradition into burden, wisdom into ignorance, autonomy into dependency. It transmogrifies autonomous activities embodying wants, skills, hopes, and interactions with others into needs whose satisfaction requires the mediation of the market. Helpless individuals, whose survival is necessarily dependent on the market, was not an invention of the economists, nor were they born with Adam and Eve, as the economists contend. They were historical creations. (Esteva 2013: 131-32)

It is easy, then, in Uganda to overlook people's creative versions and critiques of development. Desire abounds in Uganda for the trappings of 'modernity', an ambiguous category created through its opposition to a presumed pre-modern stage of cultural development. This Eurocentric perspective incorrectly assumes that

² I borrow the analytical term "discourse" from Arturo Escobar to describe institutionalized ways of representing the world. But, with terms like "conversation", I attempt also to show that discourse becomes a part of ordinary language and imaginaries that are always in the process of being remade. Escobar emphasizes that discourse is material, for "modernity and capitalism are simultaneously systems of discourse and practice" (2007: 22).

cultures all must undergo the same process of development leading to the most civilized, rational pinnacle stage, called 'modernity'. Nonetheless, political bodies like the United Nations continue to disseminate the logic of modernity, and encourage 'underdeveloped' nations to imitate their more developed counterparts in order to achieve prosperity. In addition, foreign aid is often preconditioned on the recipient nation enacting policies preferred by wealthier donors.

James Ferguson (1994) pushes Escobar's analysis a step further by examining the unintended "side-effects" that result when development projects do not question how they represent the so-called Third World, such as in the case of 'modernity' or universal human rights which are both based on 'Western' (generally capitalist) ideals and the belief that the 'Third World' is deficient. Whether interventions succeed or fail, Ferguson argues, is irrelevant because their assumptions about what the basic problems are lead to unprecedented intrusion into the lives of local people, which unpredictably changes life beyond projects' brief timeframes. For example, Olga Nieuwenhuys (2001) describes how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child prompts non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to depart from earlier charitable approaches to 'street children', who are uncritically deemed a problem because they do not fit the image of the ideal child who is innocent, dependent, and supervised. The issue of "improper" childhood is often blamed on local culture rather than NGOs considering that the exclusionary concept of proper childhood could be blamed on their own cultural bias. Regardless of projects' success in 'empowering' children and providing tools for 'self-reliance', their presence strains relations between children, their

families, and their communities by making children choose either “moral reformation” and the organization’s support, or commitment to others (Nieuwenhuys 2001: 544). In this way, groups promoting seemingly non-political universal rights produce deeply political, yet unplanned consequences, leading Ferguson to call development the “anti-politics machine”.

I stress that from the perspective of a Ugandan person’s everyday life, development takes on a different role, one that is more complex and acutely contingent. An outsider could perceive many Ugandans’ apparent faith in development’s ‘goodness’ as an uncritical act of submission, but I would argue that it is possible that people see development simply as a more viable vision for how to live than less concrete alternatives. This hypothesis reflects Susan Reynolds Whyte’s (2002) observations of eastern Ugandans’ responses to HIV/AIDS. In these cases, people would tend to utilize what she calls “situated concern”, which orients them not towards retrospective concerns about causes but rather towards prospective concern about how to deal with life conditions.

Based on my experience in Kitoola, the people there might also use “situated concern” to make sense of educational obstacles. Popular sayings like “hard work pays”, which is Hopeland Primary School’s motto, make economic success seem attainable for anyone with enough persistence. Yet Valence, the director of YOFAFO and at one time the only student from his area to earn a college degree, acknowledged that many of the young men he met at Makere University in Kampala had not worked hard at all to go there. Part of Hopeland’s purpose, then, must be to show that education *should* be an empowering opportunity for anyone who tries

hard and that education *can* belong to the local community. Prior to YOFAFO's existence, very few people in Kitoola aspired for education, but today many in the community believe it is attainable and rally around the chance to change their circumstances.

Valence's point-of-view demonstrates that cultural capital was the real source of privilege at Makere. Stacy Leigh Pigg's article is an excellent resource for illustrating the process of social stratification based on cultural capital, showing how social relationships in Nepal are determined in large part by how much symbolic development people have, which is based on factors including education, clothing, home location, and career. All people are agents constrained by limiting factors such as cultural capital, which Pierre Bourdieu says reproduces class through stratified access to cultural "styles" that denote socially recognized "intelligence" (Levinson, Foley, and Holland 1996: 6). Therefore, it is important for anthropological research to identify local critiques of development (and its subsequent stratification) vis-à-vis education that could provide "multicultural, inclusive, and deeply political" alternatives to the insufficient, often disempowering, options currently available to Ugandans hoping for a better future (Mutua 2002: 207).

Lotte Meinert writes, "[Even] though schooling policies and hopes create conflicts and problems when they meet local realities and aspirations, there is more hope in the encounter and friction between these different worlds than if there were no encounter and engagement at all" (2009: 4). The people of Kitoola, with their school, Hopeland Primary, intentionally act from the juncture where the past and

future meet yet diverge; where local families' hopes wrestle with universalized international and national development goals for the aggregate population; where opportunity meets exclusion; in the liminal space where neither success nor failure are guaranteed and all one can do is to have faith³ that education will truly be transformational.

The people of Kitoola, especially the children, are no exception to the conflicts inherent to such a juncture. I suggest that, using the friction of these conflicts to produce new cultural meanings and social identities, the people critique their lack of control over their physical circumstances. I believe they defiantly speak and act as if from a position of hopeful confidence in spite of uncertainty, thus asserting some level of agency in their lives. Therefore, it is important to continue to expose development as a regime of representation in order to reveal one of education's great potentials: to contribute to an alternative, as yet uncertain future in which human rights convey local relevance rather than cultural dominance.

³ I use "faith" here in a secular sense, meaning a confident sense of purpose and ethical commitment to a specific plan of action within a grander design despite available proof that it will produce the desired outcomes. I will show, though, that religious faith at Hopeland is also very significant and often connected with the secular disposition.

Ugandan Pre-colonial and Colonial History

Buganda, the kingdom covering the southeastern portion of present day Uganda, was a powerful, complex, and independent civilization until 1894, when it became the administrative center of a British Protectorate that would eventually combine with nearby societies to form Uganda.

The Buganda kingdom was formed into a unified state in the last quarter of the 14th century and shared power among many clans through intermarriage and representative democratic elections of the *Kabaka*, or king, who delegated local administration to many chiefs. In addition, the state had the equivalent of a parliament called the *Lukiiko*. Banana permaculture provided stability because farmers could grow the same crops year to year, and this crop led to the centralization of power (Scherz 2010: 35). Power in Buganda was directly tied to land ownership in this political system; in a manner often incorrectly compared to feudalism, the chiefs would provide land and protection in return for obedience, service and tribute (McKnight 2013: 244). This system is unlike feudalism because elite positions and related land ownership (as well as lower social ranks) are not inherited but rather temporarily granted based on community approval, as I will elaborate later. The chiefs, also involved in reciprocal obligations, exchanged their service and tribute with the *Kabaka* for land and protection. The kingdom's clans could demonstrate significant combined military force and boasted a trade system with connections throughout the region.

In addition, pre-colonial Baganda⁴ applied an informal education system of production learning: “children were taught by doing, and by doing, they performed services or produced goods that were immediately useful to society” (Cheney 2007: 77). The system also emphasized knowledge of the structure and history of Buganda society and the child’s clan, which functioned as a type of “cultural citizenship” (77). The nearby Acholi ethnic group to the north, from which descended Milton Obote who led Uganda to independence in 1962, also demonstrated an effective yet informal (in a ‘Western’ sense) customary education system that “enabled young people to acquire a variety of skills which made them productive in many ways” (Adeyemi and Adeyinka 2003: n.p.). In fact, currently influential educational theorists including Paolo Freire and Maria Montessori argue for pedagogical techniques that much more closely resemble those of the Baganda and Acholi rather than the highly structured colonial British. Undoubtedly Baganda society and the surrounding region displayed many aspects of a European conception of ‘civilization’, which is not a moral judgment but rather an observation of the way colonial categorizations can be divorced from real conditions.

Colonial Ugandans had seen the potential of European 'civilization' to help fulfill their own pre-existing national development goals and educational desires. For example, Terence Ranger writes, “There is no question but that in Buganda the desire for literacy and training in mechanical skills long pre-dated the arrival of the Church Missionary Society in 1877” (Ranger 1965: 59). As contact with outsiders increased, primarily with Muslim traders from Zanzibar who prized literacy, the

⁴ Ethnic group native to Buganda, "Baganda" may also be used as an adjective and be shortened to "Ganda". Luganda is their language.

Kabaka recognized the power of written communication to expand the kingdom's trade, advance its technology, and accelerate its progress into the international arena. Furthermore, Islam offered a “universal explanation of life with all its opportunities and problems” to fit Buganda’s expanding extralocal connections (Ward 1991). Thus formal education, religion, and economic expansion were interrelated components that produced a historically-specific conceptual framework of progress similar to ‘national development’ today. Pre-colonial Buganda had not pursued territorial expansion since about 1800 but had a strong standing military, and the state’s leadership was later receptive to accepting a sub-imperial role with British partnership. In other words, in addition to providing protection in exchange for political concessions, England and Buganda coordinated to expand their control of the region. Together, they brought many surrounding lands and peoples into the colony.

These aspects of Buganda’s history reflect the Ganda cultural values of social mobility, progress, and individual achievement: “Ganda are taught that one’s future is not determined by one’s status at birth or position in society ... Individuals can succeed by working hard” (Mwakikagile: 2009: 37). Any male could rise to hold an honorable position in his clan if he cultivated the proper social affiliations and adopted respectable behaviors, so the significance of mobility did not undermine obedience to authority but rather strengthened it. These values clearly correspond to current capitalist ethics in many ways.

While many people from ‘developed’ nation-states assume that ‘traditional’ societies in the ‘Third World’ uniformly promote communal values and collective

identity over individualistic tendencies and that they are 'backward-looking', Ganda culture belies that construction of 'traditional' society. Nonetheless, it was not a capitalist society; its patron-client model of economic interdependence provided clan connections and security alongside competition for social mobility.

Furthermore, there was not the same individualistic concern with accumulation of wealth required for capitalism's success: "Land was also tied to ... [temporary] local offices and not individuals, and was thus seen as a symbol of political power, not an end in itself" (Green 2010: 17). It has been commonly noted that Bugandan economic exchange had many similarities to earlier British feudalism with established production and trade of agricultural products, especially bananas, and patron-client land tenure customs. But this analysis is flawed because the European feudal system described by Adam Smith involved pre-determined class structures with public power and land concentrated in private hands, whereas the Bugandan system did not. Even so, the British acclaimed Buganda as an exceptional kingdom for its perceived structural similarities to England, and they took advantage of the opportunity to colonize an area that they hoped could be molded in the British image with relatively little intervention. Ironically, Elliott D. Green recognizes, the 1900 Agreement that formally established Uganda as a British protectorate actually created the class and property stratifications that Europeans had thought already existed (2010: 24).

Colonial (Under)Development and Education in Uganda, or The “(Re)Making” of Third World Identity

Colonial Ugandan elite, predominantly in the urban areas in Buganda, differed from the colonized people of other British holdings because they exerted considerable control over educational provision. Ugandan elite obtained an education that prepared them for prestigious administrative careers. Common Ugandan people, no longer afforded access to social mobility through traditional paths due to colonial implementation of private land holdings, demanded that they receive an equal education rather than “adaptive” education, which would only equip them for inferior livelihoods. They wanted to become ‘civilized’ to gain stature and access to the resources of Europeans, so eventually these common people, for whom the promise of development under colonialism had rung hollow, fulfilled their own desires by operating independent schools.

Through the decades the colony’s history still consisted primarily of subservience, dependency, and perceived underdevelopment (Cheney 2007: 77). Its largely agrarian economy did not adjust quickly enough to compete internationally, which illustrates the risks brought about by a ‘modernized’, global capitalist economy. Pieter de Vries highlights the need for an alternative, “reflexive” modernization, saying, “What modern citizens therefore have in common is not a collective, transformative social project but an awareness of shared vulnerability to low-probability, high consequences types of risks” (2007: 28). Today this very same discourse that has consistently fallen short of its promises and led people throughout the country to a state of severe poverty continues to hold sway, insisting

that new variations of development will transform Uganda. From a structural perspective, “this new form of governance directed to the reconstruction of entire societies in the South is in essence an extremely authoritarian kind of project ... [geared towards] containment of ‘barbaric’ Southern populations” (de Vries 2007: 30), and education is a prime tool for civilizing the children of underdeveloped ‘savages’ (Meinert and Valentin 2009: 23).

However, depending on their appropriation of development messages, some children seem to welcome the possibility to comprehend their chaotic lives and perhaps understand their material poverty in order to move forward. Lotte Meinert (2009) met several of these boys and girls, and they had proudly reduced incidences of sickness in their families by sharing school health knowledge, which reinforced their belief that education can produce tangible results. These children see themselves foremost as students within a larger national development plan (Price and Conrad 2005; Cheney 2007). The gaps between privileged and spurned students’ outlooks illustrate how concepts can take on different meanings depending on how a person or social group takes possession of and uses available cultural resources (Meinert 2009: 9). The meanings constructed when education is utilized for spreading modernity are not uniform; policymakers and pupils (and subgroups of pupils) differ in ideas about education and the positive or negative changes they expect it brings.

The legacy of colonialism has remade Uganda symbolically and materially into the image of a stereotypical impoverished ‘Third World’ nation-state. Using

discursive analysis, we can stand outside the present-day practice and meaning of development and education to see more clearly how they rest upon a long history of shifting social organization, conflict, and power relations.

To begin understanding the construction of underdevelopment in Uganda, it is important to note that the area may not necessarily have been the “jewel of Africa” as Winston Churchill proclaimed. Whether the Buganda kingdom was more or less egalitarian, life was uncertain in many ways. For example, “Buganda’s bananas did not provide the constant diet with minimal labor that many of us have been led to believe” (Brantley 2007: 119). In addition, diseases related to poor housing conditions and water quality such as plague and dysentery were the greatest causes of ill health. And although the division of power seemed allow for reasonably equal opportunity, the *Kabaka* exercised ultimate authority. The common people’s plight and elite desires for concentrated power appear to have contributed to Buganda’s interest in establishing a colonial relationship with England.

In some situations, British documents show an explicit acknowledgment and appreciation for Buganda’s complex society, but in many others such as British Special Commissioner Harry H. Johnston’s negotiation of the 1900 Agreement, it is clear that the British were trying to provide ‘salvation’ to what they perceived as an inferior Buganda. Furthermore, the contract demonstrates that European categories could not easily symbolically contain a black society that displayed certain evidence of ‘advancement’ at the same time as other ‘traditional’ characteristics.

Buganda and surrounding kingdoms had only limited western contact related to coastal slave trade and subsequent exploration of the East African ‘great lakes’

region before the rapid acceleration of contact in relation to the 'Scramble for Africa'. This new era of Western exposure in Buganda began in the 1860s when the recently instated *Kabaka* Muteesa, fearful of the Egyptian army to the north and thus in need of outsiders' advanced technology, opened the kingdom to Muslim traders from Zanzibar (present-day coastal Tanzania) as well as successive caravans from around the world (Ward 1991: 2). Thus, slave and ivory trade initiated great change within Buganda, specifically driven by unfamiliar religion and education.

Newfound Muslim influence in the 1860s, and to an even greater extent competing Catholic and Anglican Christian interests in the 1870s, eventually fractured state unity that had been held together for centuries by universally shared cultural characteristics (Green 2010: 23). The trade, intended to further concentrate Buganda's power by streamlining increased economic activity in a fashion reminiscent of modern national development and international trade agreements, ironically allowed the chiefs to circumvent reciprocal obligations of land and traditional religion that limited their power by tying them to the *Kabaka* position (McKnight 2013: 244). Muteesa expressed a sincere interest in Islamic culture and religion, even converting, but overall his responsibility was still to maintain political control and unity. Student-pages at his court who received education from Muslim missionary/traders adopted the religion and gained literacy skills, which enhanced their administrative performance to the benefit of state authority. But more crucially, the student-pages learned that God commands ultimate respect above any king or locality, so they began disobeying Muteesa's orders. In response, Muteesa ordered the execution of roughly two hundred Muslim converts to squash disloyalty (Mass

1970: 182). In this aspect and others, Muteesa became wary of education's potential to subvert his political authority. The potential for education to either oppress or ignite "conscientization" (see Paolo Freire) would significantly shape colonial relations.

The great lakes region of East Africa was one of the first interior areas of Africa seriously researched with 'civilizing' intent and figured significantly into the era of New Imperialism from 1870 to WWI due to its peoples and strategic geographic location at the source of the Nile River. To neutralize Muslim influence Muteesa encouraged further outside contact in the aftermath of the recent executions. In 1876 the Welsh explorer H.M. Stanley, who had already famously found David Livingstone in Tanganyika, circumnavigated Lake Victoria and identified it as the source of the Nile River. During his exploration he was received by *Kabaka* Muteesa and reported back to Europe that Buganda would be an ideal country in which to establish missions (Ward 1991: 3). According to Ugandan journalist Joseph Ssemutooke, Stanley's letter indicated, "It is not the mere preacher, however, that is wanted here. It is the practical Christian, who can teach people how to become Christians, cure their diseases, build dwellings, teach farming, and turn his hand to anything, like a sailor" (Ssemutooke 2012). Anticipating practical, technological benefits through increased trade and education, Muteesa ushered in a focused development effort by welcoming the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1877 followed by the French Catholic White Fathers two years later.

Likewise, the British and French perceived the remarkable Bugandan political structure as an ideal starting point for 'civilizing' missions throughout Africa, if not

for its complexity then for its orderliness, which they presumed would be easy to control (Musisi 2002: 98). The fertile and strategic region suggested significant economic rewards as well (Jones 2014: n.p.). So, to further encourage economic development and extra-regional partnership, the British created the public-private Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) in 1885 to build a railroad from Lake Victoria to the coast.

Kabaka Muteesa's death in 1884, though, had already thrown the kingdom's leadership into disarray. His son Mwanga inherited the throne at age 16 feared that the delicate balance of order between the many groups involved in Buganda would be lost unless he asserted his authority (Ward 1991: 5). He quickly targeted the educated class, ordering the execution of at least thirty Christian converts in 1886 for refusing to abandon their faith (Jones 2014: n.p.). Ugandans observe Martyrs' Day in remembrance of the risks of tyrannical rule and the importance of education and faith to combat oppression. Unlike Muteesa, he could not eliminate the subversive effects of religion and education produced by missionaries. Although education can expose power and inspire revolution, like all institutions it cannot possibly be politically neutral. Education is a process in identity formation, and "when a whole community undergoes change, acquisition of its new collective identity is likely to be marked by the creation of a new social order" (Goodenough 1965: 99). In the aftermath a violent civil war erupted in which the young *Kabaka* was overthrown in 1888. The power vacuum cleared the way for Protestant Anglicans, Catholics, and Muslims to vie for control of the kingdom.

When the Protestants led by the CMS and the educated students from Mwanga's

courts defeated the Muslims in 1889 and reinstated the *Kabaka* as a figurehead with far weaker political powers, the victors capitalized on the opportunity to garner popular support by “[setting up] boarding schools to bring peasant children into the fold” (Cheney 2007: 79). Meanwhile the civil war continued, and, with the support of the IBEAC and British Military Administrator Frederick Lugard, the Protestant faction prevailed. Educated Muganda, sensing they could continue to elevate their regional status, “deliberately changed the nature of their own identity”, and Uganda became a British Protectorate in 1894 (Mino 2011: 57). Jacob Maas elaborates, “In effect, through their coup d’état, a cadre of [Ganda] ‘modernists’ took control of the state machinery. With optimism they then proceeded to negotiate ... a colonial protectorate ... by which Buganda could enter a new era of even more rapid social change” (1970: 184).

The context of this transition once again belies the generalized sequence of colonial events, for the nobility of Buganda exerted significant power in the negotiation of terms with Britain. Prior to the arrival of British imperial interests in East Africa, “the Buganda kingdom ... itself was a colonizing empire that conquered and subordinated other ethnic groups to its rule”, and the new oligarchy resulting from the *Kabaka*’s decline had its own national development plans (Mino 2011: 55). Buganda was not unlike its supposedly more ‘modern’ European partner in this respect. Lugard and the IBEAC’s decision to allocate small, easily controlled pockets of land to the defeated Catholics and Muslims shows that political control of Buganda had much less to do with religion than imperial strategy and security (Ward 1991: 7). Both nations, using their particular assets, pursued ambitious

visions for the future.

Still, scattered violence persisted until The Uganda Agreement of 1900 between the British crown and landed Ugandan elites instituted a more indirect rule in which the British governed by installing local leaders into new administrative positions and overseeing their operations. Glenn H. McKnight closely analyzes this agreement as an intentional development effort to develop a “moralised capitalism” based on “the idea that certain ends can be achieved if only the right conditions are created” (McKnight 2013: 234). This moment represents British treatment of Uganda as a social laboratory for moral intervention in accordance with the sentiments of ‘White Man’s burden’. Fundamental economic and social changes did follow this agreement, but complex social interconnections produced far different results than planners anticipated using oversimplifications of African society. The landscape of education in the young colony evolved in tandem with this inauspicious outset of formalized development.

Walter Rodney’s “Education for Underdevelopment”, Ugandan Spirit Deflated

I base my following analysis of development and education in colonial Uganda on Walter Rodney’s revolutionary, neo-Marxist book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1982). Pre-colonial African informal education was fully integrated into everyday life as well as ideals of productive citizenship. As states like Buganda became increasingly stratified and technologically advanced, education did develop to accommodate more formal specialization. In addition, the colonial ruling class tried to infuse self-glorifying historical propaganda into lessons and folklore as much as

possible (59). Rodney underscores, “The colonizers did not introduce education into Africa: they introduced a new set of formal educational institutions which partly supplemented and partly replaced those which were there before. The colonial system also stimulated values and practices which amounted to new informal education” (60). The success of this informal inculcation is clear when Ugandans talk about Europeans ‘bringing education’ to their country (Cheney 2007: 77).

Like all European colonizers, the British authorities obliged their subjects’ requests for expanded educational opportunities, but only with nationalist propaganda, trying to convince Africans that their true loyalties should lie with their European leaders. They withheld, on the other hand, the technical knowledge that would have provided colonies technological advances that would have put African societies on too nearly equal economic footing with Europeans, thus upsetting their policies of economic extraction (Rodney 1982: 70). The ‘backwards’ educational systems that colonial administrations provided rewarded students for accepting cultural brainwashing and knowledge detached from any practical use other than “packaged ... credentials” in their society (Illich 1971). Thus, students’ success or failure was predicated on their acquisition of a certain comportment and identity, or subjectivity. This process of “cultural production” (Levinson, Foley, and Holland 1996), the “new informal education” described by Rodney, set educated people apart based on appearances and possession of credentials rather than knowledge and ability to contribute to society. Pierre Bourdieu also argues that privilege is based in schools’ valuation of cultural styles and competencies, “which enabled dominant groups to maintain their economic advantage” (Levinson, Foley, and

Holland 1996: 5). He calls this cultural base of privilege “cultural capital”. Ugandan schools played and continue to play a role as “social and symbolic sites where new relations, new representations, and new knowledges can be formed, sometimes against, sometimes tangential to, sometimes coincident with, the interests of those holding power” (ibid 23). The dual nature of education within development discourse is that schools’ real work is to facilitate the production of educated subjects, so schools can potentially be sites of resistance or acquiescence.

Even progressive colonial educators could not change the fact that colonial education was based on exploitation. For example, attempts to include women equally in education did not produce the desired outcomes of women finding responsible jobs at equal pay rates of men: “Nowhere did the cash-crop economy or the export of basic ores make provision for educated women” (Rodney 1982: 78). Also, in the aforementioned spirit of experimentation using African societies, “Early educational commissions also accorded high priority to religious and moral flavouring of instruction - something that was disappearing in Europe itself” (80). The church served colonial goals and stressed the value of humility rather than equality. The emphasis on morality is today a staple of development discourse even in local NGOs and independent schools, but morality can be mobilized very differently depending on who is in control.

The main reason that reforms failed to empower learners and transform African society is that schools’ increasing level of control and commodification of learning destroys the idea of freedom once indispensable to effective non-institutionalized education (Illich 1971). Besides, it is antithetical to the true meaning of ‘liberation’

that it could possibly be “the product of an institutional process” (1971: n.p.). So it appears that by the time of independence, Ugandan people, once proud of their education embedded in local cultures, lacked autonomy and were alienated from commodified education used for colonial exploitation. To support this claim, I now turn to specific educational reforms and other historical events particular to Uganda.

Educational Policies, Moralization, and Ideological Representations

The British colonial curriculum did not reflect the aspirations of ordinary Ugandans, as it was meant to serve colonial interests. Until 1924, though, missionaries entirely operated formal education in Uganda. Protestant education provided by the Christian Missionary Society focused on practical skills as *Kabaka* Muteesa had requested, but the missionaries, well-respected Alexander Mackay in particular, insisted that people would be better equipped to learn technical work if they were literate. In addition, literacy was a necessary component of CMS’ evangelical objectives (Ssemutooke 2012). Gradually, western education based in reading, writing, and arithmetic enhanced its students’ economic and social status. Today it is easy to spot learning workshops based on technical and academic skills, often supported by foreign donors, along urban roads.

Educational policy shifted in 1924 when the British administration initiated the Phelps-Stokes Commission, which found that there was a need for vocational training based on local community needs. Clive Whitehead exposes the hidden agenda of the assessment: “What colonial governors were keen to avoid at all costs was responsibility for the creation of an intellectual proletariat or ‘babu’ class such

as had bedevilled India” (Whitehead 2005: 442), and Jesse Jones, leader of the Commission, “feared nothing more than the political activation of the black population” (Bude 1983: 351). The research commission suggested a new educational model called “adapted education” to support the use of primary schools as engines of rural development for a “peaceful evolution of traditional African societies ... without losing [their] soul” (Bude 1983: 343). As Ward Goodenough noted, though, when education changes collective identity, the society must abandon previous values or face psychological dissonance. As a result, Ugandan common people voiced harsh complaints upon education reform that essentially abandoned valuable western skills in favor of preaching hygiene, gardening, and handwork (Bude 1983: 343). According to a shared imaginary of development in Nepal, one of the most visible differences between inferior, traditional ‘villagers’ and modern, developed subjects is supposed to be freedom from burdensome physical labor (Pigg 1992), and in Uganda I have observed the same expectations.

Ugandans were demanding progressive education rather than adapted education, which was promoting the very lifestyle they wanted to escape, but the white colonizers deemed Ugandan desires too revolutionary and independent (Ranger 1965: 68). In Southern Rhodesia, another British colony implementing adapted education, children expressed their dissatisfaction with the disavowal of what they believed was education’s responsibility to expand students’ worldview (68). Colonizers implicitly taught Africans that civilization meant to be like Europeans, yet they were telling them that Africans could not be like Europeans. In response, common Ugandans demanded “modernization, but modernization under

African control” (66), thus accusing Baganda ruling elite, who exercised a substantial level of control over educational provision, of not being Africans. With great sacrifice and effort, and no colonial assistance, these protesters opened independent, African controlled schools on a large scale in the 1930s. That spirit of progressivism and radical devotion to educational self-determination survives today in the countless local education organizations like YOFAFO found throughout Uganda.

In light of Ugandan resistance to policies of underdevelopment, what did European colonizing societies imagine was their purpose in colonizing and how did they imagine their colonial ‘subjects’? Of course, the ‘Scramble for Africa’ was motivated by power and global expansion, not as a purely good intentioned attempt to accept the accountabilities of imperialism as a noble enterprise ‘bringing light’ to ‘the dark continent’: what Rudyard Kipling would call in 1899 “White Man’s burden”. Nonetheless, British involvement in colonial Uganda produced fierce debates about moral and ethical responsibilities (Musisi 2002). For example, prominent British physician Dr. Albert Cook was deeply concerned that the Baganda needed to be saved from dying out as a race, a clearly imaginary concern arising from European racial supremacism that implied Africans would fail if they attempted to become too modern. Cook applied scientific, medical ways of knowing to identify moral deficiencies and cultural backwardness as the culprits of Baganda decline. Women’s gendered work in Buganda includes carrying heavy loads, a task deemed improper for Christian women, and it was this work that Cook argued caused the women to have “deformed” pelvises. Modernization simultaneously had freed women from traditional family restrictions, which was equally improper and harmful to health.

Musisi shows, “The perception that Buganda was in a state of moral crisis lent force to the new ideology of social engineering” (2002: 107). In other words, essentializing discourse and the construction of the ‘other’ through scientific knowledge allowed British colonizers to intervene in previously private matters with a sense of legitimacy. Representation could be wielded in new ways to decide what is best for people in ‘cycles’ of sin and poverty. Arturo Escobar comments on the later expansion of this principal: “[In the mid 1940s] “medicalization of the political gaze... [meant] that the popular classes began to be perceived not in racial terms, as until recently, but as diseased, underfed, uneducated, and physiologically weak masses, thus calling for unprecedented social action (Pécaut 1987, 273– 352)” (paraphrased in Escobar 1995: 30). I assert that this perception and ideology contributed significantly to the emergence and practice of the current paternalistic human rights paradigm in development, which also heavily shapes today’s education policies.

Postcolonial Education in Uganda

Trends in education policy continued without major conflicts until Ugandan independence in 1962. The Professor Edgar Castle Uganda Education Commission argued in 1963 that “the pre-existent education system was not geared towards the objects of producing skilled Africans for the African economy, but rather, skilled workers for the colonial industries” (*Review of Education Policy in Uganda* 2012: 6). This commission shaped policy until 1992. Even though political sectarianism and nearly constant civil war until the mid-1980s generally prevented the independent

state from directing efforts towards implementing universal education, this era is a crucial component of Ugandan cultural memory as well as current attitudes towards children and education. Cheney explains, “Because of this violent past, Ugandan childhood is constructed in everyday discourse as a primary space in which national prosperity will either be made or broken” (2007: 2).

Milton Obote, president and dictator from 1966 to 1971 and 1980 to 1985 recognized the political significance of children, so he somewhat supported education but avoided any lessons critical of state power. The infamous Idi Amin, on the other hand, openly disapproved of education. It was not until the presidency of Yoweri Museveni and the current National Resistance Movement regime that Ugandan children’s education once again became a national priority.

The 1992 Government White Paper on education, a guiding framework in the NRM era, placed a strong emphasis on quality of education for all people, agricultural standards, technical education, adult education, teacher training for primary education, and “Africanisation” (*Review of Education Policy in Uganda 2012: 6*). Along with that plan, Museveni has decentralized education provision to fall under the management of District Councils, part of a larger plan to promote more engaged citizenship. In 1997, to great fanfare, the national government began a program called UPE (Universal Primary Education) to provide free primary education to all of the country’s children, but the system has been overwhelmed by the numbers of students and also must charge certain fees for things like school supplies and uniforms, which can be prohibitive for many families.

Following decades of postcolonial Ugandan civil war and destruction, directly precipitated by ethnic divisions, a power vacuum, and an unviable market economy created through colonial management, the great majority of Ugandans live in severe poverty. But the country's more stable government led by Yoweri Museveni since 1986 is working hard to live up to UN Millennium Development Goal commitments and emerge as a prosperous nation on the world stage, escaping its violent past. The popular comparison of national development to a human life cycle holds sway in Ugandan international relations and has contributed to Uganda's enthusiastic acceptance of Western-inspired agreements as a way of signaling its commitment to modernization and "signaling its legitimacy in relation to other nations" (Cheney 2007: 6, 42-3).

Other nations try to aid Uganda towards their shared goals, and international agreements like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Uganda ratified, hold Uganda to certain universal human rights standards. Numerous cultural critics, though, have objected to the constructed nature and power relations inherent in the metanarrative of *universal* human rights.

In spite of these debates, NGOs from near and far work all over the country to supplement government services and address development 'needs' that government cannot. International, governmental, and non-governmental spheres emphasize the education of and production of proper, "productive citizens" (Bwambale 26 Feb. 2013) out of Ugandan children as paramount to Uganda's goals for development, international status, and prosperity. Similarly, children and families frequently cite the utmost importance of education for their futures.

The Ugandan government led by Yoweri Museveni initiated its Universal Primary Education program in 1997 in order to give equal opportunities to all children and to produce a more skilled, modern population. As early critics warned, issues of accessibility abound, and Uganda's quest for development, abundance, and prosperity still lags behind many of its targets. NGOs like YOFAFO have stepped in to supplement government education and lead Ugandan children to the better life, promised by education and development, that they desire. NGOs and human rights discourse present their own conflicts because they are often concerned with access to development rather than alternatives to development, and thus may actually complement a neoliberal, global capitalist agenda.

A Historical Perspective on NGOs and Human Rights

Children powerfully symbolize hope for Uganda's future, and, as Kristen Cheney highlights, they are "pillars of tomorrow's Uganda" (Cheney: 2007, 2). The nation is like a child, young and developing, but also, perhaps more significantly, childhood is constructed as a time of innocence uncontaminated by the violence and disappointment of the past. From this perspective, Ugandan adults project their visions of a good life onto their children. Cheney reminds us, though, that the relationship between development and childhood in "underdeveloped" countries is influenced by many levels of discourse: "This focus on children is not just about sentiments for a peaceful and prosperous future; it is also about the centrality of children in hegemonic international rights discourse" (Cheney 2007: 11).

The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 was a

critical event in the pursuit of universal human rights, and enrollment nearly doubled in two months after it was introduced. The state's commitment to education, which is directly connected to conceptions of development, "has boosted people's optimism and hopes for education to transform life trajectories" and "[at] village level as well, where concerns focus on tangible benefits instead of policy, the UPE registration was a significant event in many children's lives, marking the potential beginning of personal transformations into educated persons- for better and for worse." (Meinert 2009: 46, 3). Unfortunately, the school system is to this day unable to provide quality services and keep up with demand without excluding many children, plus the economic development goals the schools teach conserve class structures rather than liberate students from them. Such demands for a different type of education have long been ignored.

We can see the very same situation occurring in Udo Bude's article and many others including Terence Ranger, James Ferguson, and Stacey Leigh Pigg. Bude writes that Ugandans expressed their needs to British researchers involved in the Phelps-Stokes Commission evaluating education policy, but the needs that did not correspond with those of experts were seen as confirmation of the people's 'false consciousness' (Bude 1983: 351). 'Third World', marginalized peoples' voices tended to be dismissed by scientific experts and other authority figures like teachers, which Bradley Levinson argues can lead to self-silencing behavior (1999). Terence Ranger, on the other hand, catalogues a long history of East and Central African communities' outspoken criticism against British and missionary educational offerings. The region claims a long history of independent, locally run formal schools

during the colonial era, and this legacy is embodied today by NGOs like YOFAFO and Empower a Child. These organizations have overcome significant obstacles in order to offer educational alternatives that are responsive to community needs and objectives.

Community members of the NGO YOFAFO have shaped Hopeland Primary School in Kitoola, Uganda in response to the shortcomings of UPE. Community empowerment NGOs today must grapple with their responsibilities to provide tangible works, such as the latrines I helped build, while avoiding the historical pitfalls of development. Contemporary concepts of sustainable development permeate through charitable organizations' operations but cannot ensure a direct translation of policy into 'empowerment'. In studying street children and children's rights in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Olga Nieuwenhuys observed the contradictions in universal children's rights discourse demanding parental protection at the same time as "self-reliance" and "autonomy", which the NGOs often narrowly equate with empowerment (Nieuwenhuys 2001). In practice, these well-intentioned organizations strain existing social, especially family, relations and produce new forms of dependence.

By abandoning a frictionless view of uninhibited global progress that anticipated that it would elevate all people to 'modernity', and thus capitalist morality and prosperity, we can begin to untangle the jumble of "heterogeneous and unequal encounters [that] lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing 2005: 5). NGOs work with communities who have not climbed the 'evolutionary' ladder of progress as scholars of globalization expected in the 1990s, yet many, like

YOFAFO, remain optimistic about the potential of development. YOFAFO's vision statement eagerly imagines "an empowered, healthier and prosperous future generation of Uganda." In Kitoola, women, one the population segments hurt worst by World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs (Kyamureku 1997: 21), are undeterred by obstacles. They embrace the promise of development, having expressed desires for education, literacy, and "developing" skills that would allow them to support themselves and their families (Spirit 2014: 22). Still, the reality is for many Ugandans, that they will not be able to realize that bright future, which contradicts international and local traditions of desire for class mobility (Cheney 2007: 85).

Couched in poetic terms of salvation still highly evocative of 'White Man's burden', development interventions have grown more and more scientific, and portray themselves as objective. The religious overtones in documents like the 1949 Colombia Comprehensive Plan for Development seem to imply there is one path to national redemption: reason, efficiency, and technology supposedly devoid of political motives. This past plan and others like it were the forerunners to the World Bank's current Structural Adjustment Programs, which particularly influence Uganda, basically forcing the government to adopt certain economic policies favorable to the global free market in order to receive loans and stay financially afloat.

The concern for development in the 'Third World' has shifted in the past fifteen years, with the conversation now dominated by a concern for universal human rights, which is less overtly Eurocentric but still founded on the same

principles as the earlier development paradigm. Universal human rights like those codified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) have become “a global frame of reference in legal, political and professional terms for the treatment of children”, particularly the abnormal, political child (Wyness 2006: 211). Although the UNCRC makes beautiful statements that grant rights like “The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (Article 29.1.a), it normalizes a particular type of ideal childhood and family life. For example, Michael Wyness points out, “The convention seems to respect cultural differences, [but] ... there is an ambiguity in the way that children’s interests are to be framed within the secluded borders of family and school” (2006: 213). The projects aimed at street children that Olga Nieuwenhuys researched display this bias. In addition, the name of the convention emphasizes the individual ‘child’ as an “individual bearer of human capital” (214). These contradictions and intrusions are examples of the obstacles to empowerment that children face in ‘underdeveloped’ countries.

One way that a nation can demonstrate that it is achieving development goals is by adhering to the concepts of “ideal child subjectivity” that undergird children’s rights discourse and signal whether or not a nation is ethical, ‘modern’, and worthy of international legitimacy (Cheney 2007: 93). In other words, having ideal children constitutes a form of national cultural capital recognized internationally. An ideal child should be innocent, at play, and free from burdensome work and other responsibilities. Children often have no choice about their work, though, and their ability to play and appear carefree depends heavily on economic needs and cultural

norms, which in Uganda often contradict ideal child subjectivity.

Nevertheless, Kristin Cheney wondered how anyone could possibly disagree with human rights messages like this one promoted in Uganda by UNICEF: “I believe that all children should be free and should grow up in a healthy, peaceful, and dignified environment” (2007: 50). In Kitoola and elsewhere throughout the ‘Third World’, children and their families hear these perhaps unjustifiably optimistic messages and deal with their persistently uncertain realities. These existing conditions, debates, promises, and desires have begged me to delve deeper into the role that education plays in the discourse of development and how education really affects the lives of young subjects of development around the world.

I witnessed firsthand the excitement and hope embodied by education in Kitoola, Uganda, and I draw upon interviews and observations to further understand the personal impact changes related to education have had on people’s lives. In the next section I address the following questions: Taking Ugandan children as a case study, what kind of life and society is universal, formal education preparing them for? How do Western criticisms of development conflict with the real needs and desires of people in so-called developing countries? What are the possibilities for children amidst these factors, and how have they appropriated the concept of ‘development’?

Eastern Ugandan Subjectivities and Experiences of Development and Education

“We know the way into the land of enlightenment has thorns, creepers, vales, and mountains; Come what may we shall overcome; For the glorious times to come,” sing Ugandan schoolchildren, donning brightly colored yet serious-looking uniforms, during the National School Anthem. In the vocabulary of national development discourse, these students express great optimism for their own life-chances and the future of their country. They work persistently for freedom, empowerment, and significance where before, according to Whitaker, the Ugandan director of a local empowerment NGO, their society “lacked hope”. Another song sung by adult members of YOFAFO in Kitoola, Uganda, declares that the community and its students are “leading the way for Africa”. These appealing and affective statements simultaneously support and argue against the way Escobar says that development discourse represents the ‘Third World’. These songs declare that Uganda’s present conditions are indeed inadequate, but also that Ugandans are groundbreakers. My experience in Uganda took place in the midst of this crucial moment of outward hope and self-confidence mixed with urgent everyday concerns.

Observations while Volunteering with YOFAFO – June 2014

I felt mixed emotions seeing relatively elderly women adorning brightly patterned traditional dresses with dramatic high shoulders and young men in button-down shirts, slacks, and leather shoes along the dusty city streets, while

around the corner sat tiny 'hotels' and street food booths made of scrap wood, and houses constructed with mud plastered over frames of wooden strips. I saw a man and several enormous vultures, Marabou Storks, scavenging through a garbage pile next to the Lugazi market where people gathered to purchase *matooke*, a large plantain-like fruit that tastes somewhat like a potato and is the staple of the eastern Ugandan diet, as well as pineapple, secondhand clothes, tools, building materials, and time at the internet cafe.

Leaving Lugazi and driving towards Kitoola to meet the students and parents involved with Hopeland Primary School built and operated by Youth Focus Africa Foundation (or YOFAFO, based in Lugazi), we drove through land jointly owned by the federal government and Mehta Group where the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited produces 60,000 metric tons of sugar, 17% of national output. Many men from Kitoola work in the sugar fields, in what YOFAFO's director Valence often criticizes as dead-end jobs even though "the company's mission is to help accelerate the nation's economic development" (The Mehta Group). In the irrigation canals people bathed and washed their motorcycles, known as *bodabodas*. After a couple kilometers we turned onto what looked like a footpath disappearing into the thick foliage, rounded past an enclosure of cattle, and suddenly found ourselves in the middle of three school buildings in various stages of construction, still sitting in our taxi.

A group of women ran up the hill to greet us, clapping and singing a song of welcoming in Luganda. As we got out, everyone exchanged hugs before names and then we were led down the hill to a row of plastic chairs that had been arranged just

for the occasion. The schoolchildren came pouring out of their classrooms to grab the white people's, or *mzungus'* hands, but they were instructed to stand aside as we were seated. The women sang several songs, which are fuzzy in my memory now, but I remember the repetition of one word, *weebale*, meaning "thank you". Valence showed us where we would be building a new latrine from locally produced bricks with the help of YOFAFO's engineer as well as nearly every student and woman in the school community at some point throughout the following weeks.

I noticed several images and the school motto painted on the newest building. The wall displayed two conspicuously white children happily skipping, an abstract image of several generations of figures reminiscent of nesting dolls in the center of the African continent, and the school logo also featured on every student's uniform. The logo contains a combination of the material indicators of education as well as a reminder of how to earn them: a backpack, pen, star, and the words "Hard Work Pays". The school mission below states, "To raise morally upright, God fearing, informed, creative, passionate & patriotic future leaders." "Sex can wait" was painted next to the door to the second grade classroom, and similar statements about the importance of personal responsibility, hygiene, and obedience can be found along the other walls. The sheer quantity of these maxims and images was overwhelming, but even more striking was the contrast of the humble surrounding village and small farms with the centrally-located school's painted brick and concrete, corrugated steel roofs, groundwater pump and well-dressed, "smart-looking" students and teachers. Our taxi, still sitting twenty yards up the hill, and our very own presence, having travelled thousands of miles apparently just to lay

brick, further set this place apart from the backdrop. The sense that the school brought hope and progress was palpable, and we eagerly accepted the community's welcoming.

On Sunday we attended a religious service for students, teachers and guests held in the largest school building at YOFAFO's "children's village" boarding school for struggling and orphaned children. Bringing education to these types of children is crucial to national education goals because "as of 2005, about 2 million - or 16 percent - of Uganda's children have become AIDS orphans" (Cheney 2007: 20). The preacher asked us to find a spot in the front row of desk/pews as the service began, and then he launched the hall into an energetic, thankful song, getting everyone on their feet dancing. A keyboard just recently purchased with a generous donation from an American church accompanied the singing with a groove that reminded me of elements of Cuban salsa, reggae, and South African gospel. It was a real party! The mood tacked between joyous praise and an active, future-oriented attitude ("with God anything is possible"), and subdued, heartfelt reflection on the grace that had led us all to being together in unity at that moment.

We finished singing and sat for several people to "say a word". The preacher asked my professor, Dr. Tiffany Christian, who had developed a nearly decade-long relationship with YOFAFO, to speak. She said that everyone can achieve what Valence has if they believe it, and she paused for a moment before telling the children that people in America and around the world are praying for their success, pointing to the new keyboard as a sign that they are not alone. Finally, the pastor made an intense sermon explaining that if we ask something of God, we will receive

it, and that delays are not failures. We cannot be certain of the details of God's plan, he said, but we can be certain that He has one.

After the service we went outside to play with the children, and they were in awe of us. One young girl told me she thought she would like to be a *mzungu* like me, and all I could do was to deflect and tell her that she is already very special and can do many great things. The void between what she wanted (she also hoped to become a nurse) and the words I could offer was painful for me, but she seemed unfazed and we continued to jump rope with the others.

A couple weeks later, during a break from the hard work of laying brick on the now nearly complete latrine structure, I shared a long conversation with Valence's brother Innocent, a successful, educated leader who had studied Rural Community Development at nearby Uganda Christian University and had dedicated himself to raising up the community of Kitoola where he grew up. Among many topics, we settled on coffee for a while. Although it is one of Uganda's most valuable exports, Innocent told me he generally disliked it and preferred tea, but that he had once had to drink coffee just to stay awake and study for his seventh grade Primary Leaving Exam (PLE). The PLE is a standardized test administered by the government that students completing primary school must pass with very high marks in order to have any chance at continuing on to secondary school, which is far more expensive and often farther away from home, requiring students to live in dorms. But Innocent was determined he would succeed, and he only went home for a couple hours each day that year to eat and make coffee to bring back to school and drink while studying all night. His hard work earned him great scores, and he was

able to complete a bachelor's degree with some financial assistance from Valence. Valence, had been the first person from Kitoola to ever receive a college degree, in large part thanks to a sponsorship he had received from a British man he met through a public health organization. Both of them expressed to me their deep sense of purpose, fate, and faith that their work would be worthwhile, all of which led them to return to their home areas to support the hopes of the new generation. Innocent wore his nicest clothes every day to build the latrines because he wanted all the children to see that they too could make something of themselves and make a difference.

Obstacles, Contradictions, and Uncertainty in the Pursuit of Better Lives

Despite the incredible gains that Museveni's government has achieved since 1986, half the country still lives in absolute poverty (Evans 2001, 63). As one parent put it to Cheney, 'Poverty is almost like another war'" (2007: 22). Despite Uganda's impressive public health response to the AIDS epidemic, the disease has ravaged the country's adult population. Together with soaring birth rates, children make up an increasing proportion of the population, with the latest revision of *The State of Uganda Population Report* showing that fifty-two percent of the population is below the age of 15 and seventy-eight percent below the age of 30 (UNFPA Uganda 2013). This population dynamic in historical context has proven essential to Uganda's unique pursuit of ever-elusive development through the education of young people. Among competing discourses and material disadvantages, Hopeland students continue to pursue their dreams, demanding the brightest future possible.

The social imaginary of development in Uganda is composed of images of the “dark” past and “bright” future, containing a distinct linear temporality that belies the contradictions between development desires and realities. Within this conceptual framework, children and education represent the future and mark a departure from the past. Children have the potential to perceptibly change their social identity by adopting “schooled identity” and gaining English proficiency among other factors that could be identified locally in additional participant-observation research. Hope is a persistently future-oriented attitude, and in isolation is therefore an insufficiently realistic mode of constructing meaning for Ugandans to pragmatically strive for a better future. Ugandan-born artist Zarina Bhimji’s work, particularly the short film “Out of Blue”, depicts the sights and sounds of Uganda’s landscape, evoking “the way in which the past and present intersect; how time does not always have a straightforward linear trajectory” (Correia 2012: 359). The specters of the past complicate the present and are inherent components of it, and Cheney’s child informants demonstrated awareness of the way their lives are embedded within history and of the fragility of their hopes.

The shockingly large portion of Uganda’s population below the age of 15, fifty-two percent, factors greatly into the nation’s development plan and family hopes for prosperity. Uganda’s population continues to be ravaged by HIV/AIDS even though it has been a relative success story in its response to the epidemic. The current rate of HIV infection in 2012 still stood at 7.2 percent, which according to Avert.org is approximately 1.4 million adults and nearly 200,000 children. The country’s economic potential is highly promising (tourism, natural resources, and

human and biological diversity) but the legacies of devastating civil war, ongoing though decreased violence in the northern region, and political corruption refuse to be suppressed. Even youth that do manage to find formal employment typically face dead-end jobs. According to the 2013 State of Uganda Population Report, “at least 83% of [Ugandan youth aged 18-30] have no formal employment” and “education is the most important tool for social and economic emancipation” (92-93). Ugandan children hope that diligently applying themselves to their studies will liberate them from hard manual work associated with ‘pre-modern’ village life (Pigg 1992); if you ask students will often tell you they hope to transform from villagers into doctors, lawyers, and teachers, or even engineers.

The harsh, everyday realities of a postcolonial state at horrifying civil war until the mid- 1980s cannot be denied. Understandably, many Ugandans consciously and willingly desire the post-World War II message of development set in powerful terms of salvation and hope for a future free of despair (Escobar 1995: 25-26).

James Ferguson points out that by making ‘Third World’ populations appear “isolated” this optimistic message is portrayed as purely apolitical. Thus development officials honestly believe that ‘innovations’ can bring about ‘transformation’ when those innovations have in reality already been there, and the poverty they see is actually the product of structural violence and political subordination (Ferguson 1994: 176-77). Nonetheless, to understand Ugandan adults’ and children’s experiences of development, we must take seriously their desires, hopes, and nuanced appropriations of ‘development’, which largely focus on the potential of the nation’s children and their education.

Children: Agents or Victims of Development?

I interviewed a man born in western Uganda who has been able to realize his dreams through education and has reached out to help other struggling children by starting his own NGO. Whitaker grew up in the slums of Kampala but “made a huge turn for [his] life” at age six when an American family sponsored his education. The sponsorship also enabled him to have things at home like mattresses, blankets, and clothes. It made him feel “loved” by someone he had never even met. He had a feeling of “fulfillment” when he had something that “belonged” to him. His sponsor would send encouraging, loving messages that “kept him going”, and without that support he says he would have “meandered off, or been lost in different lifestyles”. Whitaker’s narrative of his childhood also reflects a linear directionality away from a hopeless past to a situation in which it is possible for him to “be somebody” through school (Luttrell 1996).

Whitaker vehemently supports education for all children because he believes it is a “key that unlocks unlimited possibilities”. This metaphor implies that education is something one can possess and use to achieve better things than before, which is reminiscent of the concept of cultural capital.

Currently, Whitaker lives in the United States and directs an NGO aimed at equipping children with the skills to live “good lives” and be leaders in developing Uganda. Therefore, he tries to understand development and how children can contribute to it and benefit from it using education. He defined development as boosting the economy in terms of infrastructure, healthcare, and income-generating industries. Furthermore, he equated development to “growth”, which with the right

leaders, he said, can help everyone. Development can be accomplished by investing in “man-power” (most importantly education, but also roads and industries) to create good “citizens”.

From a national perspective, Whitaker drew many parallels between development and the idea of a good life – job opportunities, life-saving health systems, and political stability. But for an individual, he told me a good life is only partially related to national development. Education and business skills are a necessity, but he focused mostly on the larger ideas that of which education is only a part: character and integrity directed towards positive social behavior. One should use his or her education and skills to uphold community values while bringing development to the community, which provides new opportunities and hope for other individuals to live good lives.

It is very significant to note that Whitaker has been able to live out the good life he described because of the opportunities his educational achievements afforded him. Very few people who began in his situation (one of fifteen siblings, living and working for money on the streets of Kampala’s slums) have the good fortune to earn a college degree and all its privileges. Therefore it is important to keep in mind that “school ethnographies miss the prime movers of street culture: dropouts” (Bourgeois 1996: 251). Bonnie L. Prince and Conrad W. Snyder (2005) studied the difference in struggling and successful students’ experiences of education. They noticed that among students taking the extremely high stakes Primary Leaving Exams after their seventh year of primary school, there is a stark contrast between students who express a sense of agency in their pursuit of education and a feeling of belonging in

the nation's development versus students who express suffering and powerlessness in the face of poverty and fate. The latter utilize the metaphor of "examination fever ... that in its function of juxtaposing dissimilar spheres, is ideal for expressing the perceived dissonance between their aspirations and despair" (Prince and Snyder 2005: 23).

Kristin Cheney, for instance, met a sixth-grade boy named Asir, who had experienced ousted President Milton Obote's violent tactics towards civilians, that signed his papers, "Learner Asir Owora" (Cheney 2007: 104). He felt belonging in the nation's development and saw his role participating in cosmopolitan society very clearly. Asir told Cheney that children must succeed to "pay it forward" to the next generation, and, through his connection to the school and use of "the English of a Ugandan person", he believes he is an integral part of the nation's progressive advance towards development (112). Asir also feels agency in his local environment: "I [will feel] like a member of my tribe when I qualified to have grown up and complete my degree and get employed to get enough money to help my tribe move towards development" (162).

While Whitaker was the only child in his family to succeed in school, Asir had the opportunity to see his older sisters set an example of success before him. Thus, Whitaker did not express the same sense of agency until he received a sponsorship and was able to own personal possessions that really made him feel like somebody. His religious faith, he said, affirmed that God knew him and had plan for him. Although Cheney and Lotte Meinert generally avoid discussions of faith in their ethnographies of Ugandan children, my observations and research indicate that

faith, both the religious principle and the secular attitude, is critical in generating a pragmatic sense of agency, hope, and connection to broader development goals.

Uncertain Hopes for a Better Future via Education

Children's negotiations with contradictory experiences of education and unlikely promises for a better life take place within macro-level discourses about international development, nationalism and citizenship, human rights, and empowerment. These discourses construct social imaginaries and "outside meanings" about success and failure and progress (Mintz 1985). Meanwhile, people in communities like Kitoola reinterpret those meanings by adopting locally significant certain cultural forms such as school prayer, modern 'smart' clothes, and musical expression, as well as simply talking and thinking about the future from their own perspective. In broader terms, concepts take on different meanings when appropriated and enacted by various social actors, and all people are agents constrained by limiting factors such as cultural capital. Therefore, the adults of Kitoola (who themselves consist of diverse subgroups and individuals who can appropriate concepts differently) have hopes of education that differ from policymakers' and from their children's: "[Appropriation] situates agency in the person as she or he takes possession of and uses available cultural resources (Rockwell, 1996, p. 302)" (paraphrased on Meinert 2009: 9). Using the ideas of appropriation and situated meaning, we can see the possibility for children, often portrayed as currently incompetent yet invaluable future adults, to respond to the way they have been constructed as discursive objects in relation to national

development and to participate in national development.

Despite current anthropological research's lack of sustained insight into children's experiences independent of adult expectations, we can still critically analyze the YOFAFO and the Kitoola community's appropriation of national development and response to contradictory experiences. I have most directly observed the performance of religious services as well as local dance and music traditions as they relate to ideas about education and empowerment. I argue that in Kitoola faith, a confident sense of purpose and ethical commitment to a specific plan of action within a grander design despite available proof that it will produce the desired outcomes⁵, is an integral way that children relate to the promises of development in addition to more ambiguous hope (Meinert 2009), uncertainty (Durham 2002), and the subjunctive mood (Whyte 2002). The everyday school activities I observed at Hopeland Primary School in Kitoola, Uganda during June 2014 distinctly exhibit the many hopes and contradictions of education locally, and they indicate more general gaps between dominant development discourse and subjective appropriation of meanings throughout the 'developing' world.

Within development's "regime of representation", visible markers of difference and the cultural capital that appears through identity play a vital role in how people achieve success or fall short. This high stakes cultural identity politics create a great tension between the rural and urban, traditional and modern, communal duty and individuality. Although we objectively know these binaries do

⁵ Throughout the rest of the paper, "faith" refers to this attitude rather than a religious belief, although religious faith is a very significant form of expression as well and the two are often connected.

not exist, they undeniably shape the lives of young Ugandans. This observation has led me to ask whether the students and YOFAFO leaders in Kitoola are practicing “counterdevelopment” by struggling “in opposition to [prevailing] societal mechanisms and processes” (Gow 2008: 139). I have slowly come to understand, though, that I was asking the wrong question. The people cannot stand completely outside of development and human rights’ universalizing gaze, but neither can they entirely live the development ideal every day from their local position. Furthermore, the negative social and economic consequences of refusing development would risk ruining any chances to survive well in a country where ‘modern’ economic opportunities are expanding but ordinary people remain highly vulnerable.

It would nonetheless be absolutely inaccurate to characterize the people of Kitoola or Uganda in general as passive victims of circumstances stacked against them. Their persistent, hopeful attitude closely reflects David Gow’s observations of the indigenous Juan Tema community of Colombia, “[their] self-conscious, constructivist view of culture ... [provides] the foundation for its major project – elementary education, really a political project around which the community can unite” (year, 132-33). Thus children’s rights and educational attainment can actually develop the whole community together. Children are thought to represent the community and the country, so, as children grow and change, families can change, livelihoods can shift, infrastructures can rise, and new opportunities can emerge.

Armed with this logic, the people of Kitoola articulate a multi-generational collaborative plan to combine local and extralocal strengths to progress towards a brighter future. NGOs and donors offer the tangible things that communicate love

and hope; they are the systems that deliver access to new opportunities and make a better life feel possible. They bring money, clothing, economic supplies like livestock and medicine, and of course formal education. Western meanings of development arrive via these organizations, yet Ugandans' primary experiences of indigenizing the meanings associated with development occur via the same medium. Gustavo Esteva argues, "Localization is the best defence [sic] against the worst effects of globalization, and at the same time the best disseminator of its best effects ... [because local groups of citizens] are in control. Localization means accountability" (2013: 126). In Kitoola, people are able to feel some sense of agency because they do have control over many aspects of their school and their resources.

The people own these institutions in some ways, but in others they depend on them and become subjects of them. For example, schoolchildren express conflicting viewpoints that to them school is either an empowering step to a better life or an insurmountable obstacle (Price and Conrad 2005). Education can either enable social mobility or further disempower those who are already on the outside, which is why a group of recovering child soldiers Cheney met in Northern Uganda "expressed skepticism about the resources available to them ... despite hopes that [education] will provide a means of mobility" (Cheney 2007: 97).

In Kitoola, parents and the unschooled are still very much welcome to be a part of the wider empowerment project. Many of the women that work every day to feed the students, and support the school and the community cannot read or write and do not speak any English. In this way, the institutional power of the school at Hopeland does not reflect the "stick of modernity" (Gold 2010) because it accepts

tradition and integrates everyone into its mission. In addition, on several warm evenings I had the joy of learning Luganda song and dance with community members of all ages in the classrooms.

On the other hand, the school's physical presence and the activities within its classrooms enforce 'modern' subjectivity and visibly represent the 'goodness' of modernization, thus downplaying 'tradition'. The buildings have been constructed using to a large extent the labor and financial resources of international volunteers, which are enthusiastically welcomed. In this way, the people of Kitoola seem to indicate desire for inclusion in 'modernity'. In addition, the adults' involvement in YOFAFO, including entrepreneurship and public health initiatives focused on women, consistently emphasizes that it is all in support of the children. As described by (Luttrell 1996: 108), that perspective downplays women's own skills and the possibility that they envision alternative lives for themselves. These women can be considered 'successful' without education or formal jobs by putting their children's needs ahead of their own, but they lose the chance to be valued autonomously of their gender role and generational status. This situation illustrates one of the many morally ambiguous conflicts between local self-determination and restrictions imposed by development as a regime of representation.

Despite such conflicts, the people of Kitoola maintain what I have been calling "faith", the sense of purpose informed by a moral vision of the future that cannot be certain in the given context, a modality of orientation to life's obstacles and mystery. Still, their hope that the future can continuously become better remains far from a moral certainty. According to Deborah Durham, especially in

places where democracy and economic growth have been relatively successful such as Uganda under Museveni, uncertainty prevails as people attempt to navigate concurrent local and national civic responsibilities in the process of seeking identities appropriate for their changing society. The narrative form is a powerful framework informants have used to understand their process of becoming in relation to contradictory societal expectations. Often this narrative takes the form of a bildungsroman, an archetypal story of self-discovery that pits the protagonist against society until eventually he or she finds a positive way of existing within it. My acquaintance Whitaker whom I interviewed recounted his life history in a way that closely followed this archetype, but it worth noting that he is now in his 30s and has been very successful due in part to his education in Uganda. The clarity of hindsight allows him to follow a clearer, cohesive plot whereas children currently facing an uncertain future express their lives very differently.

Prince and Conrad conducted a study of 7th grade Ugandan students written responses to a prompt about whether Primary Leaving Exams (PLEs) were good or should be abolished. Students study tirelessly for these advanced and highly competitive exams in hopes that they will be able to continue their education in secondary school. Price and Conrad noticed that students who supported PLEs wrote using metonymy to express their feeling of belonging within the nested hierarchy of national development that I mentioned earlier. But on the other hand, students who expected to be pushed out by the competition or other factors limiting their chances for educational success described the exams as a source of sickness that could literally make students nauseous and delirious.

The very frequent use of this sickness metaphor relates to Susan Reynolds Whyte's analysis of Eastern Ugandan actions in response to HIV/AIDS. In these cases, people would tend to utilize what she calls "situated concern", which orients them not towards retrospective concerns about causes but rather towards prospective concerns about how to deal with life conditions. In this move, Whyte noticed the frequent use of the "subjunctive mood" which suggests intentionality, emphasizing the "[direction] rather than the conclusion" (174). When children express the idea that testing is a sickness, they are suggesting that there is something to be done about it. They are pointing out that it is not rational but rather an unjust method of determining people's futures that is hidden within bourgeois values such equality and progress. When embedded in this seemingly unquestionable set of values, education can serve inequality by reproducing the labor class and capitalist exploitation.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have described Ugandan people's hopes and struggles for an indefinite but better future through education, and reflected on the wider social, political, and economic contexts in which education in Uganda is embedded, namely discourse about development and human rights. The reality of pursuing development vis-à-vis education is complicated but fruitful as various groups of people creatively attempt to achieve their own hopes for the future. That future remains uncertain, but its uncertainty allows for alternatives.

Social interdependence and the limits of shared cultural and material

resources are some of the only certain aspects of human life, but purposeful educational goals can contribute to a promising process of rethinking 'development', what Escobar calls "post-development" (2007). He says that globalization might not be the last stage of capitalist modernity, but "out of the wrecked emancipatory promises of modernity" it can be the beginning of something new (Santos 2002: 14 quoted on Escobar 2007: 27). 'Third World' peoples' "desire for development both masks its impossibility and reveals a utopian dream [that goes against the historical project of capitalist modernization]" (de Vries 2007: 36), a utopian dream that could use "the very development apparatus ... to cultivate subjects of *diverse developments* and *diverse modernities?*" (Escobar 2007: 26). As I have noted, the oppressive and exclusionary practices propelled by development discourse and complementary discourses stand in the way of "diverse modernities", but continued attention to locally lived experiences in places like Kitoola can reveal surprising alternatives already in progress.

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