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## School holidays: examining childhood, gender norms, and kinship in children's shorter-term residential mobility in urban Zambia

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### Abstract

This article discusses a practice of child residential mobility in Zambia that is frequently overlooked in migration studies and difficult to capture through standard survey methods: the practice of ‘going on holiday’ to the homes of relatives during breaks in the school term. Drawing on child-centered and quantitative research, this article examines the multiple dimensions of ‘going on holiday’ for children living in a low-income urban settlement in Lusaka. Findings suggest that the practice was gendered and may map onto changing norms in schooling in Zambia. Within a context where resources are severely constrained, going on holiday may serve as one means for cultivating reciprocity, sharing the burden of care and household labor, and strengthening kin ties. This work further demonstrates the importance of using locally meaningful terms and practices in survey research where general questions about children's mobility may fail to capture the nature and extent of children's movements.

### Keywords

children's independent mobility; urban childhoods; gender; mixed methods; schooling; family

Increasingly, research in sub-Saharan Africa has focused on the experiences of children who have moved to the homes of relatives, the streets, or institutions for reasons of poverty, parental death, and other political and environmental crises (Rosen, 2007, Young, 2003, Young, 2004, Young and Barrett, 2001). Because of the magnitude of the HIV epidemic, recent research has examined children's migration patterns when parents or other family members become sick or die (Ansell and Van Blerk, 2004, Ansell et al., 2011, Yamba, 2005, Young and Ansell, 2003). The research on children's migrations often aims to inform programs and policies to assist children in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Because of

this, children's long-term, long-distance, and crisis-related migrations receive primary attention in both research and policy. However, still missing is an understanding of children's shorter-term and less-sensationalized residential mobility (cf. Christensen et al. 2011 and Pooley, Turnbull, and Adams 2005).

We suggest that, if the aim of recent children's mobility studies is to understand the types of care and kinship forged under duress, then a focus on shorter-term and more unmarked forms of mobility offers a much needed angle into children's lives and livelihoods. This article examines a form of child mobility in Zambia that is so short term and normalized that it might easily be overlooked within the current paradigm. The form of mobility we examine is the practice of visiting relatives' homes during school holidays, locally referred to as 'going on holiday'. In Zambia, the word holiday—spoken in English—refers to school breaks. There are three, month-long holidays in the Zambian school year (April, August, and December). Each holiday represent an opportunity for movement from children's usual homes to the homes of relatives.

As in many countries in southern Africa, Zambia contends with pressing economic, epidemiological, and demographic issues, which include, but are not limited to the effects of the HIV epidemic. In 2012, the country ranked 163 out of 187 countries on the human development index, a summary measure of life expectancy, standard of living, and education (UNDP, 2013). Zambia also has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 46.2 percent of the population under the age of 15 years (PRB 2010).

During the past decade, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which laid out a blueprint for 'ending poverty,' have made achieving universal primary school enrollment and completion an explicit focus of change in Zambia. A 2011 MDG Progress Report in Zambia reported that the primary education target of 100% was met (United Nations, 2011). Primary school completion rates are reported to have risen from 64% in 1990 to 91.7% in 2009 (United Nations, 2011), and primary school enrollment has reached near gender parity (Ministry of Education, 2010). This was largely due to the removal of primary school fees in 2002 and the increased construction of schools. Yet, the report also outlined challenges related to resources and the quality of education and also declining adult literacy rates (United Nations, 2011).

The main objective of our examination of children's 'holidays' is two-fold: (1) to raise attention to how a study of shorter-term visits may offer insight into emerging livelihood practices in this context of economic and epidemiological change (cf. Langevang and Gough 2009, Hansen 2005 on young people's daily visiting); and (2) to examine social action in the context of dramatic increases in school enrollment in Zambia.

The observations and data we present in this article extend from 18 months of ethnographic research in a lower-income, urban residential area in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. The ethnographic research included 12 months of in-depth household and child-centered research methods carried out with 38 children in 25 households and also a questionnaire administered to an adult in 200 households at the end of the study period. The questionnaire was designed to examine more broadly the trends identified in the in-depth household and

child-centered research and included questions about children's household activities, schooling, and short- and long-term mobility. Because of the frequency with which children participating in the earlier research talked about going on holiday and engaged in holiday mobility, the questionnaire inquired about whether children in the household had gone on holiday during a time period that encompassed one school break. In this article, we focus primarily on an analysis of the questionnaire data in an effort to describe the contours of children's shorter-term mobility during school holidays.

Our analysis aims to address gaps in knowledge about children's movements by exploring patterns in children's shorter-term movements. The questionnaire data, combined with observations from the child-centered research, present an opportunity to characterize a form of mobility that is ubiquitous in many parts of Zambia. Far from singular to Zambia, children's shorter-term mobility during school holidays may occur more broadly in sub-Saharan Africa (Notermans, 2008, Ungruhe, 2010). Our analysis suggests that an examination of such shorter-term movements may provide insight into broader issues, such as gender norms and inter-household reciprocity.

### **Children's household roles and residential mobility**

In Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), children's movements between households were so common that anthropologist Elizabeth Colson (1958) once claimed: 'The majority of children by the time they have reached puberty have had the experience of adjusting themselves to life in a strange household' (p. 258). She suggested that their migrations were part of broader kinship strategies, and they also related to schooling. Because of the distribution of schools, children often had to move to cities or towns to receive an education, and parents sought out relatives or benefactors who lived near schools to accommodate them (Hansen, 1990, Lancaster, 1981). Further, declining opportunities in rural areas increased the value of educating children, particularly boys (Pritchett, 2001). Migrations for schooling, as well as school enrollment in general, have long been shaped by gender expectations and responsibilities. More boys migrated for and remained enrolled in school, while girls were expected to stay close to home, fulfill domestic responsibilities, and marry (Colson, 1971).

Even though gender disparities in primary school enrollment have lessened in the current era in Zambia and elsewhere, girls still may face substantial challenges in attending and remaining in school. This is clear in data from Zambia that continues to show low secondary school completion rates for girls (United Nations, 2011). Further, research carried out by Porter and colleagues in Ghana has shown that enrollment does not necessarily equate with attendance. They suggest that the length of everyday journeys to school may affect girls' attendance because of girls' increased domestic workloads and their perceived vulnerability (Porter et al., 2011).

The evidence presented in the historical and present-day scholarship suggest that, to understand children's school-related mobility, we must situate their movements within broader conceptualizations of childhood, gender norms, and children's household and family roles and responsibilities. In a review of the literature in southern Africa, Bray and Brandt identified that children's household and familial roles are characterized by an

interdependence between children and adults (Bray and Brandt, 2007). This notion contrasts a Western model of childhood, in which children's needs are to be met regardless of their actions, and adults are perceived as independent and children dependent. In southern Africa, children—especially girls—assist women's (and men's) livelihood efforts through their domestic work and care for younger children (Hansen, 1990, Reynolds, 1991). Such efforts contribute to household maintenance, and may be indispensable within the context of strained resources and HIV (Skovdal and Ogutu, 2009, Skovdal et al., 2009, Young and Ansell, 2003). Children themselves expect to participate in household domestic activities. They may carry out particular tasks in an effort to cultivate stronger claims to household resources and compel adults to meet their social and financial needs (Hunleth, 2013b, Reynolds, 1991).

A prime assumption underpinning recent international development policies and practices is that increased access to schooling might decrease children's workloads, their migration for work, and their exposure to situations where they might be exploited (see Liebel 2007 for critique of the ILO's treatment of work and school). However, children may work in order to go to school and are often expected to carry out domestic tasks when they are fostered for the purpose of going to school (Bledsoe, 1990). In Ghana, Hashim has argued that the negative aspect of education and migration may 'relate not to children's work but, paradoxically, to the increasing aspiration to education. Some children actually migrate for work in order to access educational opportunities; in doing so they risk exposing themselves to abusive and exploitative work conditions' (Hashim 2007: 927). In other work we have conducted on children's domestic labor in Zambia, we observed that the promise of schooling provided strong impetus for children to move into situations where they carried out extreme levels of household work, and children were usually not sent to school as promised (Bond et al., 2012).

This range of observations unsettles deeply entrenched assumptions about work, schooling, and migration. It also raises important questions about how children and their families manage schooling, work, and other social obligations within economic and epidemiological uncertainty. To date, however, most inquiry into children's school-related migrations has focused on rural-urban migrations to attend school, as well as the experience of going to school in rural areas. This attention maps onto the uneven distribution of schooling and educational opportunities in many places in Africa. However, it has left unanswered how children growing up in urban areas—where involvement in agricultural production is not part of children's livelihood options—access resources, contribute to household economies, and cultivate relationships within a life organized by school schedules and requirements. Attention to children's mobility during their school breaks may offer insight into the ways in which children fulfill kin and household responsibilities and attain support while also going to school. It may also draw attention to how households, families and children navigate different gender expectations and norms.

## Background

This research was conducted in the settlement of George, which is located in the northwest corner of Lusaka. Informally settled at Zambian Independence in 1964, George is now home

to more than 120,000 residents, and is connected to Lusaka's city center through a system of minibuses that regularly run to and from the largest outdoor market in George, facilitating daily and extended mobility into and out of the settlement. Residents face shortages in amenities and resources related to healthcare and sanitation, and the settlement is consistently characterized as an area in Zambia most heavily affected by waterborne and infectious diseases (UNICEF, 2008). Housing tends to be crowded. Several households frequently share a pit latrine and bathing shelter. In most parts of the settlement, there is no indoor plumbing, and householders collect water either from shallow wells or a standpipe system constructed in the 1990s with funding from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Rates of unemployment in the formal sector are high, and informal employment is the norm. With limited access to agricultural land, most people carry out service-related work, sell items in the markets in George or Lusaka city center, or engage in short-term, casual labor, such as loading trucks, breaking stones, and other low-paying activities. Women's formal employment options are even more limited than men's because of their lower literacy rates and societal expectations that women remain close to home and care for families (Schlyter, 2009). Most children only participate in wage activities in limited and sporadic ways, such as assisting women in selling goods from home or in the market. Children's primary household contributions tend to revolve around domestic chores and childcare.

The international and national attention to primary schooling is evident in George, where there are seven Government schools in the settlement and approximately 44 private and 40 community schools. The introduction of free primary education has strained Government schools in George, which do not have the resources to accommodate increasing numbers of children. Private and community schools in the settlement aim to fill the gaps. Whereas private schools in Zambia provide education at varying costs, community schools are intended to cater to the most vulnerable children in Zambia, especially girls and children affected by HIV and AIDS. Qualitative research in the settlement, however, suggests that there is no clearly perceived hierarchy among these types (Government, private, and community) in preference or quality of schooling. For example, some community schools were considered to be better than private schools, and children and their guardians attempted to transfer among schools depending on their satisfaction and household resources (Hunleth, 2011). Further, in George, as elsewhere in Zambia and southern Africa, children and their guardians remain hopeful that an education will position them for better opportunities in the future, even though future work opportunities often do not match educational aspiration (Ansell, 2004, Hansen, 2005). The setting of George raises questions about how children manage schooling and household responsibilities within a broader global and national push toward schooling that is pitted against pressing livelihood challenges, including HIV and AIDS and the limited availability of wage labor.

## Methodology

This article is based on data collected by Hunleth during an extended, ethnographic research project on children's intra and inter-household responsibilities and relationships in urban Zambia. The ethnographic study was set in George and included both child-centered

research in 25 households and a broader 200-household questionnaire. The child-centered research consisted of 10 to 12 months (depending on time of recruitment) of participant-observation and participatory research methods with 20 girls and 18 boys between the ages of eight and 12 who lived in the 25 households (Hunleth 2011, 2013a, 2013b). Alongside two research assistants from George, Hunleth visited each of the households approximately four times per month. The household visits included participatory techniques such as drawing and child-led, recorded interviewing and storytelling. During this part of the study, children repeatedly discussed issues related to going on holiday in ways that prompted Hunleth to systematically observe and ask the children questions about the practice. In addition to participating in research activities in their homes, the children also participated in two out of six total 'children's workshops,' where the children came together as groups to discuss and carry out role plays on issues related to childhood in George. During the last set of three workshops, they discussed going on holiday, answering questions such as: What is holiday? Why do children go on holiday? What do children do on holiday? What do children bring home from holiday?

The main observations collected during the child-centered research formed the basis for questions included in a broader questionnaire administered to an adult in 200 households in George (May to July 2008). The questions were related to children between the ages of six and 14 years living in the surveyed households. The age range was expanded beyond the years of inclusion for the child-centered research to examine variability and attain a larger sample size.

Because George is composed of formal and informal housing, there were significant challenges in using typical sampling methods to gather a representative sample of households. To address these challenges, Hunleth utilized census data collected by JICA to assist them in managing the standpipe water system in George (described in the background section). JICA divided the settlement into zones, which varied in population size. Quotas were set for each of the 14 zones that made up 'George Proper,' based on the size of their population as a proportion of the total population of that area. Local research assistants from George administered the questionnaires with every fifth household until they reached quotas based on the population within each zone. Interviews were conducted in Cinyanja, Cibemba, or English according to interviewee preference. Respondents were chosen based on their familiarity with the children's movements and activities and their availability to complete the questionnaire. Our previous experience administering questionnaires has shown that women tend to remain closer to home and have a more detailed knowledge of children's activities than men. Out of 200 questionnaires, 188 were administered to a woman living in the household, many of whom were either the household head or the wife of the reported head of household. The research assistants administered the remaining 12 questionnaires to men heads of households.

There are important limitations to the questionnaire data. First, reports on children's activities and holidays were given by adults. Their responses may not be representative of the ways in which children would respond to such questions. Second, there are three extended school breaks during the year (April, August, and December). Our questionnaire only considered the April school break because it was the most recent school break. Thus

our data are unable to account for the variation in children's mobility across seasons. Third, our analysis is descriptive and aimed at gaining a general profile of children's holidays as a form of shorter-term mobility. Our use of bivariate analysis is limited in assessing variability among multiple aspects and levels of analysis and our limited sample and clustering of children within households limits our analysis. While acknowledging these limitations, we argue that our study is strengthened by the use of child-centered research and participant observation.

This article is primarily focused on the questionnaire data. However, we bring in observations from the child-centered research to demonstrate how the earlier research informed the questionnaire and also helped us to interpret a quantitative line of inquiry. This article, therefore, contributes to the increasing practice of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in children's geographies (Dyment, 2005, Gwanzura-Ottmoller and Kesby, 2005, Woldehanna et al., 2008).

All research activities were approved by Northwestern University's Institutional Review Board, and the University of Zambia's Research Ethics Committee. Data analysis was approved by Washington University's Institutional Review Board.

## The data, measures, and analysis

### Household demographics

General household demographic questions were borrowed from a validated household questionnaire.<sup>1</sup> This included questions about household headship (including age, years of education, and length of time in George), the size and ownership of the house and the number of people who regularly slept and ate in the house. Health in the household was measured through questions about deaths in the household over the past two years and major sicknesses<sup>2</sup> experienced by any household member during the past one year. Household wealth was measured by the sum score of eight assets—a car, refrigerator, sewing machine, bicycle, television, DVD player, cell phone, and radio—that were only counted if they were in working condition.<sup>3</sup>

### Child demographics

For each child, we asked age, relation to the head of household, location of mother and father, last year of school completed, current and past school enrollment, and length of time each child had lived in/with the household. If the child was not considered to have 'always lived in/with the household,' we asked respondents to state the reason they moved into the household. These reasons were grouped and coded (e.g., death of parent). We also asked whether the child had left the household for more than a week during the past year, a

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<sup>1</sup>This research tool was informed by a validated household demographic questionnaire used by the Zambia AIDS-Related TB Project (ZAMBART).

<sup>2</sup>Sickness was left broad and subjective to include any sickness that occurred over the prior year that the respondent found relevant.

<sup>3</sup>These assets have been analyzed using Principle Component Analysis by other ZAMBART-affiliated researchers (Boccia et al 2009). In accordance with the literature (Filmer & Pritchett, 2001, Boccia et al 2009), we completed Principle Component Analysis on the asset data in order to develop a more weighted score. PCA scores were then compared to raw binary sum scores, such that the correlation coefficient  $r > 0.9$ . Based upon the similarities between the raw sum and the weighted sum, we chose to report the raw binary sum for ease of interpretation.

question used in household questionnaires in Zambia to assess population mobility in relation to public health issues (Bond, 2011).

### Children's activities

To assess children's roles in their households, we collected information on the frequency with which children carried out a list of 27 activities during the past month. This list was developed based on a range of household responsibilities recorded during the earlier ethnographic stage of the study, including activities such as washing pots/plates, cooking *nsima* (the staple food in Zambia), washing clothes for other household members, collecting medication for someone in the household, and providing personal care for a sick person (feeding, bathing). We examined the activities individually, assessing whether children did each activity at all during the past month. We also calculated a sum score for activities that fell within two categories: household chores and caring for the sick. Higher sums reflected more activities and a higher frequency of activities.<sup>4</sup>

### 'Going on holiday'

Respondents were asked whether or not each child aged six to 14 had gone on holiday during a time period that encompassed the April 2008 school holiday. If the child had gone on holiday, we asked a series of questions about where they had gone and the child's relationship to the head of household. Based on the child-oriented research, in which children identified holidays as a time to both receive gifts or money from relatives and perform domestic work for them, we asked respondents to answer questions about the reasons the child went on holiday and if the child brought gifts or money upon return.<sup>5</sup> To learn more about decision-making, we asked respondents to categorize who was most responsible for the decision that the child should go: the child, an adult in the sending household, or an adult in the receiving household.

### Data analysis

SPSS version 21.0 was used for statistical analysis. Analyses were conducted at both the individual and household levels. The household-level analyses aimed to assess the general household characteristics of the sample and inter-household differences. Descriptive statistics were generated to explore bivariate associations. To determine associations across categories (e.g. children who had gone on holiday versus children who had stayed home), Chi-square tests were utilized and, in cases where  $n < 20$ , Fisher's exact p values were used to determine significance. Pearson's r tests were used to determine correlation between continuous, non-categorical variables. We used *t*-tests to explore means across group membership. When appropriate, random case selection analyses were generated and reported to adjust for cases where non-similar frequency of group membership and

<sup>4</sup>The scale to measure household chores was found to be reliable ( $\alpha = .834$ ) and included the following 10 items: washing pots/plates, washing own clothes/uniform, washes others' clothes, sweeping inside or outside, cooking relish, cooking *nshima* (maize meal porridge), drawing water from a well/standpipe, minding children, gardening near house, and cultivating on a plot away from home. The scale to measure chores to help the sick was found to be modestly reliable ( $\alpha = .617$ ) and included the following 5 items: Accompanying sick person to clinic/hospital/healer, bathing, feeding, toileting sick person, carrying out household chores for a sick person, reminding sick person to take medicine, and collecting medicine for a sick person (e.g. clinic, tuck shop, drug store, healer).

<sup>5</sup>We did not ask whether the children brought gifts to their holiday households. Observations during the qualitative research suggested that this was not a common practice in George. However, this line of inquiry bears further investigation.



heterogeneity of variance occurred simultaneously. Results were considered significant at alpha .05 level.

## Questionnaire results and discussion

### Household and child characteristics

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics on the 200 surveyed households as well as the children aged 6 to 14 living in the households. The surveyed households ranged in size from one to 15 members. Seventy-six percent of households had one or more children between the ages of six and 14 for a total of 313 children. The children lived in households of varying composition and headship. Children were related to the heads of household as children (65%), grandchildren (25%), siblings' children (4%), siblings' children's children (2%), younger siblings (1%), or more distantly-related kin (4%). Most children (85%) were considered to have 'always lived' with the surveyed household. Forty-seven children (15%) moved into the surveyed households at some point after birth for the following reported reasons: the death of a parent or caregiver (n=23, 50%), some other form of hardship (e.g., illness, marital problems, insufficient food/resources) in their previous household (n=12, 26%), because the child or someone in the household wanted to live together (n=5), to help with chores or childcare in the surveyed household (n=4, 9%), and to go to school (n=3, 6%).

### Who went on holiday and where did they go?

Seventy-one children from 54 of the 200 households 'went on holiday' during the April school holiday. Children who were enrolled in school ( $p=.006$ ) and are girls ( $p=.002$ ) were significantly more likely to have gone on holiday. Table 2 presents further descriptive statistics on characteristics of the children who went on holiday, including their age, relation to the head of household, whether they had always lived in the household, whether their mother or father lived in their household, and their activities sum scores.

Holidays appeared to center on visiting relatives and, in particular, closely-related kin, such as maternal or paternal aunts/uncles (n=35, 49%), grandparents (n=21, 30%), older siblings (n=5, 7%), or mothers/fathers (n=4, 6%). Only six children (8%) were reported to visit more distantly-related kin. Most children visited kin within Lusaka, both outside of (n=44, 62%) and within (n=9, 13%) the residential area of George. Fewer children went on holiday outside of Lusaka (n=18, 25%). At the household level, households in which heads were born in George or Lusaka were more likely to have had a child who went on holiday than households with heads who had moved to George from outside of Lusaka [43.4% and 26.1%, respectively ( $p=.027$ )]. Perhaps households more established in George also had a greater number of kin living in the area for the children to visit.

When taken together, these findings suggest that children were more likely to go on holiday to the homes of closely-related kin and stay within Lusaka. This corresponds with the findings in the in-depth household and child-centered research, where children also visited closely-related kin and remained in or near Lusaka. In this part of the study, several factors limited children's more distant movements: the time and transportation expenses of sending

a child to distant locations, the need for an adult or older sibling to escort the child to the holiday household, and concerns about children's safety when travelling too far from home.

The propensity to visit closely-related kin indicates one way in which children and/or the sending and receiving households are selective about children's holidays. These findings may suggest that holiday, as a form of mobility, is more available to some children living in urban settings than others.

### **Why did children go on holiday?**

The most common reason offered for why children went on the holiday was 'to get to know their relatives' (n=50, 70.4%). This aspect of going on holiday corresponds with the ways in which children described the practice in the children's workshops. When asked to define holiday, they said that holiday was a time to, in the words of a 9-year-old girl, 'get to know your relatives and see how they live.' They suggested that getting to know relatives involved a range of productive and exchange activities, discussed in later sections. It also included shared meals and celebrations. For example, a 10-year-old girl captured the pleasure of holiday in a pencil drawing she provided upon her return from her Granny's house. The drawing included relatives who came for a Christmas party. When describing the drawing, she pointed to a radio and emphasized: 'We listened to traditional Zambian music and danced.' In her work with young people in South Africa, Patricia Henderson (2012) captures the importance of shared celebrations for affirming and constructing relationships across households, especially in the face of deaths due to HIV.

In the questionnaire, adult responses to questions about why children went on holiday also indicated the needs that motivated some children's holiday visits, such as to help with household chores, take care of children, receive financial help, or forget problems in their usual homes. Figure 1 offers a breakdown of the reasons for children's holidays by the sex of the child.

### **Forms of exchange during holiday**

Research in Zambia, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, suggests that children's circulation between households of kin may represent a form of exchange in labor and resources (Lancaster, 1981, Pritchett, 2001, Colson, 1958, Epstein, 1981). Such circulation may be more or less beneficial to the children involved (Hansen, 1990). The following offers a description of two forms of exchange that were captured in the questionnaire data on children's holidays.

**Giving gifts**—Throughout the child-centered research, the children expressed that holidays were times to attain school needs, such as shoes, uniforms, bags, pencils, and books. The broader questionnaire findings affirmed that receiving gifts from the holiday households was an important aspect of holiday. The questionnaire included two questions about gifts during holidays. The first question asked whether the child brought back gifts or money for themselves. Almost every child (n=67, 94%) who had gone on holiday was reported to have done so. The second question asked whether the child brought home gifts for the explicit purpose of sharing with their households. Fewer children (n=31, 43%) brought back gifts or

money to share. We did not assess the amount of money or kinds of gifts given to either the children or their households, and we do not know how well-off the visited households were. In the child-centered research, we observed that children tended to visit relatives who were also quite poor or who were only slightly better-off than the households from which the children came. These children brought home gifts or money of varying amounts, with partial tuition or new shoes being among the most expensive gifts.

It is possible that holidays provide an opportunity for children to secure some money, supplies, and clothing for their schooling. The household questionnaire findings demonstrate the resource shortages in George that might make even minor inputs into children's schooling quite substantial. For example, household asset ownership was low (mean assets=2.7 in men-headed households; mean assets=1.38 in women-headed households). Private and many community schools charge tuition fees, and government schooling has costs, such as uniforms, shoes, schoolbooks, and pencils. Even pencils and notebooks can be prohibitive, and it was common for children in George to be 'chased' from school at the beginning of terms for not paying tuition or having the appropriate attire and supplies.

In the child-centered research, children expressed that holiday visits were a main way of holding relatives accountable for promises of material assistance. Consider 10-year-old Steven Banda,<sup>6</sup> who lived with his parents and older sister. At the time, Steven's father was suffering from several illnesses that left him debilitated and out of work. A month before Steven's school break, his father's sister visited the Banda's household and asked Steven to come to her home for holiday. When Steven's father told Steven he could not go for the holiday because he needed Steven to help with his care, Steven strongly resisted, telling his father that he needed school shoes. In Steven's case, and in the child-centered research in general, it seemed that the children's presence as temporary members of the household compelled relatives to provide for them in ways that did not happen when they lived apart.

**Children's contributions**—Going on holiday is not a one-sided process. The questionnaire findings suggest that children's contributions to household chores may be an integral aspect of holiday visits.<sup>7</sup> The second most common response as to why children went on holiday was to carry out household chores and/or childcare (n=15, 21%). In the child-centered research, children said that they expected to become embedded in the division of labor in the households during holidays. During a children's workshop, a 9-year-old girl explained, 'When they go for work, you sweep their house and wash plates.' Carrying out household chores was part and parcel of visiting and even 'getting to know' relatives. In the words of a 10-year-old girl in the same workshop, 'children go on holiday to see how they are living on the other side and to help them with house chores.' The children further highlighted that holidays provided times for them to care for ailing grandparents, newborn babies, and sick relatives. They indicated the importance of such caring and domestic activities and took pride in their ability to contribute. But they were also wary of going on holiday to the homes of relatives who might take advantage of their productive labor or fail to reciprocate through affect, food, or gifts.

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<sup>6</sup>All names used are pseudonyms.

<sup>7</sup>Because many children stayed within the urban area during their holiday, there was little emphasis on agricultural activities.

Our questionnaire found that the children who went on holiday had higher household chore sum scores than children who did not go on holiday ( $p=.020$ ). We are cautious about placing too much emphasis on this finding. However, it may suggest that children more accustomed to household chores were viewed as valued visitors or, at the least, less of a burden on the households they visited. These points were brought home during the child-centered study when 29-year-old Sarah became critically ill and was no longer able to care for herself or her one-year-old son. Sarah's sister's children, 12-year-old Precious and 8-year-old Godwin, came to stay with Sarah and sons during their school holiday. During their holiday, Godwin helped Sarah's own 10-year-old son accomplish many domestic tasks, and Precious took on primary nursing activities for Sarah and her youngest son. Sarah attributed her recovery to the children, and affectionately called Precious 'my mother' to emphasize Precious's caregiving role.

### Gender differences and holiday

Previous research on children's school-related migrations in Zambia suggests that boys are more likely to engage in migrations for and because of schooling (Colson, 1971, Hansen, 1990, Pritchett, 2001). There have been substantial changes in primary school enrollment since these studies were conducted. For example, our data on gender parity in school enrollment parallel those in the Zambia Demographic Health Survey findings of a net attendance ratio of 80% for both boys and girls (Central Statistics Office et al., 2009). Further, rather than seeing more boys moving during holidays, our findings suggested that girls were more likely to go on holiday ( $p=.002$ ).

The questionnaire data demonstrate that girls carry out more routine household chores than boys and they do so with greater frequency. For example, when activity scores were summed and broken into two categories (household chores and caring for the sick), girls had significantly higher sum scores for household chores ( $p<.001$ ) and sick care activities ( $p=.040$ ). Girls' and boys' differing domestic and caregiving responsibilities may suggest that girls and boys face different expectations that both compel their holiday visits and structure their time during holidays.

We also identified gender differences when comparing questionnaire responses about whether the child or an adult (in either household) made the decision that the child would go on holiday. Boys were more often perceived as making their own decisions to go on holiday ( $p=0.050$ ) (see Table 3 and Figure 2 for breakdown).<sup>8</sup> This finding is supported by recent research on child migration in sub-Saharan Africa that shows that girls are less able than boys to assert their movement preferences (Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009, Boyden and Howard, 2013). In the qualitative study, parents and guardians monitored girls' movements much more heavily than boys. While boys tended to roam farther from home, girls were expected to stay close for safety and to carry out domestic chores. Such responses to questions about holiday decision-making may indicate gendered ideals about controlling (or attempts to

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<sup>8</sup>This is admittedly a rough sketch of a decision-making process that is much more open to negotiation and contestation. Further, there may be a high degree of self-presentation in the answers to this question, and respondents may have based their responses less on a reflection of actual negotiations and more on understandings of childhood and gendered decision-making in George.

control) children's movement. It may also indicate that girls' holidays and the activities they carry out while on holiday relate more directly to household and familial needs.

The gender differences noted above may point to a range of issues, including familial struggles over girls' labor and also the current pressures girls face to provide care and service to adults and also remain in school (Skovdal and Ogutu, 2009). In the child-centered research, girls and their parents or guardians placed high value on girls' education and avoided movements to relatives' (or nonrelatives') homes that would jeopardize their education unless they had few other choices. Sending girls to carry out labor in relatives' households during shortened visits such as school holidays may, in fact, serve as a tactic to protect girls' schooling while also fulfilling a range of care and assistance across households.

### **Is holiday different from other patterns of child mobility?**

Our quantitative examination of holiday mobility raises a key methodological observation about the importance of identifying locally meaningful practices and terminology. Comparisons between responses about holiday and the initial mobility question asked in the questionnaire are particularly revealing in these respects. The initial mobility question asked whether or not a child had gone away from George for a week or longer during the past year. Forty-two children (13.5%) were reported to have left George for more than a week over the past year. The reasons given by respondents for these reported trips were to 'go on holiday' (n=21), 'just visit' relatives, sometimes with other members of their households (n=15), or return home during school holiday when children were in school elsewhere (n=3). These open-ended answers validate that 'going on holiday' is a known practice and a common reason for shorter-term mobility. But they also suggest something else: shorter-term mobility is difficult to capture and general questions about mobility may hide the extent of children's shorter-term mobility.

The disparate responses about children's shorter-term movements may be suggestive of the social evaluations associated with child movement today that may shape recall about and responses to questions about child mobility. In southern Africa, the characterization of child movement in the media as well as in social policies and programs has been largely negative (Meintjes and Bray, 2005). Still more, images of child vulnerability circulated by aid agencies may in fact produce forms of 'othering'. The children in the child-centered research expressed a view that children who move are perceived as vulnerable, uncared for, or unloved (Hunleth, 2013b). The moral and social judgments about different forms of child movement in George are best illustrated through an example from the children's workshops. When discussing child movement in general, the children tended to invoke ideas of vulnerability, need, abuse, and neglect, describing issues of parental death and financial need in both sending and receiving households. However, when the topic of holiday was introduced, children became animated and jumped out of their seats to define the practice. The actual practice of going on holiday may be more complicated than such sharp distinctions imply. However, such observations suggest that going on holiday is not subject to the same stigma and social evaluations currently assigned to other forms of child movement.

## Conclusion

Many have argued that extended family support for children is critical in the context of HIV and related crises (Richter et al., 2009). However, the story that is most often heard is of family breakdown, with children moving to places where they do not receive adequate care, take on substantial burdens of work, or drop out of school (cf. Meintjes and Geise, 2005 and Meintjes and Bray, 2006 for critiques). Such assumptions not only situate child mobility and family relations in a negative light, but they may also work to disguise local practices of care, new ways of cultivating kin relations, and factors in addition to HIV and AIDS that promote change (cf. Madhavan 2004 for a critique of the over-emphasis on HIV in child fostering).

We do not dismiss that children and families face extreme challenges and vulnerability in Zambia. There are real and pressing cases in which children do move to places where they do not receive care or, conversely, do not move because they have no other place to go (Yamba, 2005). In fact, it is possible that children's shorter-term visits during school holidays may hold wider relevance within the context of HIV. For example, in a study conducted in Lesotho and Malawi, Young and Ansell (2003) posed the possibility that frequent visits to extended family may help children cope if a parent has died.

We suggest that 'going on holiday' extends from longstanding practices, more recent needs in a setting affected by poverty and high burdens of illness, and the changing role of schooling in children's lives. The increased schooling and the increased access to and emphasis on schooling for girls have occurred alongside certain health and financial crises. It is possible that changing school enrollment and the overt emphasis on children's schooling has altered the timeframes and opportunities to visit relatives in important ways. In his work in Northwestern Province, Zambia, Pritchett (2001) observed that increased schooling may cause declines in children's longer-term residential mobility. He noted: 'Unlike in the past, the child may have to forgo, or at least delay, taking up residence with uncles or relatives elsewhere in the district' (p.103-104). The implication of this decline, he suggested, was that schooling may affect kin obligations. He was particularly interested in the effects schooling may have on the matrilineal obligations of mother's brothers to support their sister's children as well as receive reciprocal help and support from these children. Perhaps in George, holiday visits offered one measure to manage kin obligations and needs and cultivate ties within a context where schooling is valued but remaining in school requires effort and resources. Shorter-term holidays may enable kin to meet some obligations in a context where resources are stretched and children's domestic contributions are often necessary. Because the provision of clothing and food has long made tangible social relations across households (Moore and Vaughn, 1994), offering gifts and food during holiday may serve the larger purpose of solidifying relationships between household and generations.

Our findings add a different dimension to current concerns about the growing insularity of households in Zambia, in which it is suggested that fewer kin are viewed as willing or able to care for children of extended family as they had in the past (UNICEF, 2004). Holiday may in fact serve as one means for cultivating reciprocity, with kin encouraging and facilitating schooling and children and their sending families offering needed shorter-term

labor. It may be more critical or one-sided when extreme needs of children or the sending and receiving households drive children's holiday visits. There are likely many different forms of 'going on holiday,' or shorter-term visitation more generally, that cannot be fully explored in this study, even with the introduction of some of our qualitative findings. Our preliminary work, however, shows the necessity of examining shorter-term mobility as well as local understandings and practices of child circulation in an effort to understand practices of kinship and care.

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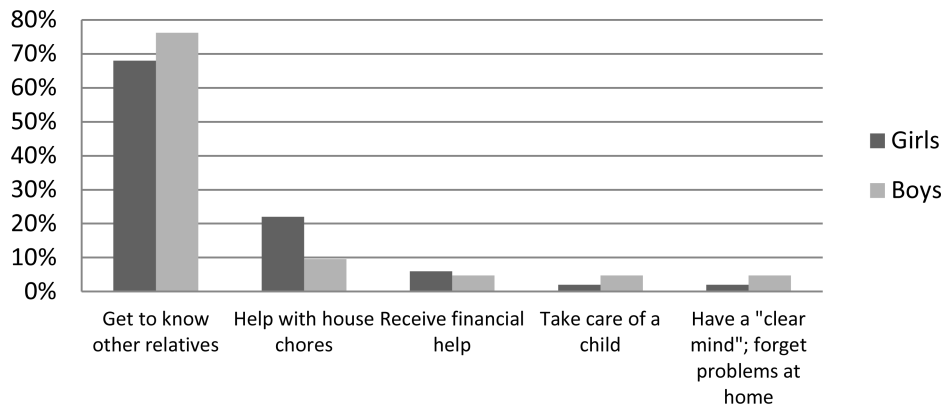
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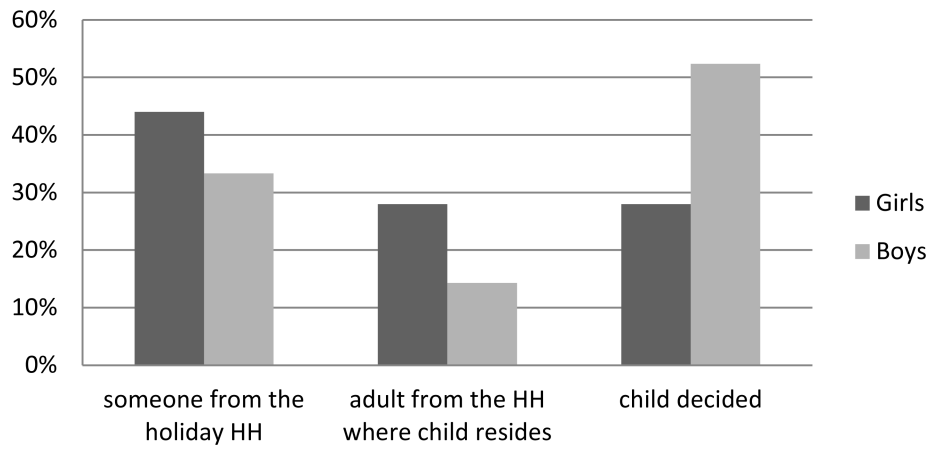
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**Figure 1.**  
Reason child went on holiday, by sex of child.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of who decided child would go on holiday, by sex of child.

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**Table 1**

## Description of the Study Sample

| <b>Household (HH) Characteristics (N=200)</b>              | <b>Percent<sup>1</sup></b> |
|--|----------------------------|
| Age of head of HH in years *                               | 45.5 ± 13.2                |
| Woman-headed HH  | 23.5%                      |
| HH head's last year of schooling completed *               | 8.0 ± 3.3                  |
| Number of rooms in home *                                  | 2.6 ± 1.42                 |
| Number of assets, out of 7 assets *                        | 2.5 ± 1.63                 |
| Any child moved out of HH within past 2 years <sup>2</sup> | 12.6%                      |
| Home owned by residents                                    | 47.0%                      |
| Major sickness in HH during past year                      | 24.5%                      |
| Death in HH in past 2 years                                | 19.0%                      |

| <b>Characteristics of children 6-14 years old living in HH (N=313)</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--|----------------|
| Age in years *   | 10.1 ± 2.54    |
| Girls  | 54.6%          |
| Currently enrolled in school   | 80.2%          |
| Mother in HH   | 76.7%          |
| Father in HH   | 58.5%          |
| Mother deceased  | 9.6%           |
| Father deceased  | 19.2%          |
| Away from George for 1 week during last year                           | 13.5%          |
| Resided in another HH prior to living in surveyed HH                   | 15.7%          |

<sup>1</sup> Values are percents unless otherwise indicated.

\* Values are mean ± SD.

<sup>2</sup> Child defined as ages 6 to 14 years.

**Table 2**

Characteristics of children (ages 6-14) who 'went on holiday' (n=313)

| Characteristics                           | Went on holiday Total N=71 | Did not go on holiday Total N=242 | p value <sup>†</sup> |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Age in years</b> *                     | 10.4 ± 2.4                 | 10.0 ± 2.6                        | .242                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                                |                            |                                   |                      |
| Male                                      | 29.6%                      | 50.0%                             | .002                 |
| Female                                    | 70.4%                      | 50.0%                             |                      |
| <b>School Status</b>                      |                            |                                   |                      |
| Currently enrolled                        | 91.5%                      | 76.9%                             | .006                 |
| Not enrolled                              | 8.5%                       | 23.1%                             |                      |
| <b>Last completed year of schooling</b> * | 3.6 ± 2.3                  | 3.0 ± 2.4                         | .052                 |
| <b>Relation to head of HH</b>             |                            |                                   |                      |
| Child of                                  | 70.4%                      | 63.2%                             | .264                 |
| Other relative                            | 29.6%                      | 36.8%                             |                      |
| <b>Residence in the HH</b>                |                            |                                   |                      |
| Always lived with HH                      | 85.9%                      | 83.9%                             | .679                 |
| Moved in                                  | 14.1%                      | 16.1%                             |                      |
| <b>Parental status in home</b>            |                            |                                   |                      |
| Mother in home                            | 77.5%                      | 76.4%                             | .858                 |
| Mother not in home                        | 22.5%                      | 23.6%                             |                      |
| Father in home                            | 66.2%                      | 56.2%                             | .133                 |
| Father not in home                        | 33.8%                      | 43.8%                             |                      |
| <b>Activities sum scores</b> *            |                            |                                   |                      |
| Household chore                           | 15.8 ± 9.1                 | 12.6 ± 10.5                       | .020                 |
| Helping the sick                          | 2.1 ± 2.6                  | 2.2 ± 2.5                         | .795                 |

<sup>†</sup> p value based on t-test or  $\chi^2$  value comparison with children who did not go on holiday.

\* Values are mean ± SD.

**Table 3**

Visit characteristics of children who 'went on holiday'.

|  | Percent |
|--|---------|
| <b>Location of holiday household (HH)</b>            |         |
| Within George  | 12.7%   |
| Within Lusaka (not in George)                        | 62.0%   |
| Outside of Lusaka                                    | 25.4%   |
| <b>Relation of holiday HH head to visiting child</b> |         |
| Parent's sibling                                     | 49.3%   |
| Grandparent  | 29.6%   |
| Mother or father                                     | 5.6%    |
| Child's sibling                                      | 7.0%    |
| Other relative                                       | 8.5%    |
| <b>Reason stated for holiday visit</b>               |         |
| To get to know relatives                             | 70.4%   |
| To help with household chores                        | 21.1%   |
| To get financial help                                | 5.6%    |
| To have clear mind/forget problems at home           | 2.8%    |
| <b>Person who made holiday visit decision</b>        |         |
| Someone in visiting household                        | 40.8%   |
| Adult from where child resides                       | 24.0%   |
| Child made the decision                              | 35.2%   |
| <b>Brought home gifts or money for him/herself</b>   | 94.4%   |
| <b>Brought home gifts/money for their HH</b>         | 43.7%   |

Note: Percents are out of 71 children who went on holiday.