Imagining migration: placing children's understanding of 'moving house' in southern Africa.

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Abstract

Research pertaining to children's geographies has mainly focused on children's physical experiences of space, with their 'imagined geographies' receiving far less attention. The few studies of children's imagined geographies that exist tend to focus on children's national identities and their understanding of distant places. However, children's lives are not necessarily static and they often move between places. Research has not so far considered children's images of these transitional spaces or how such images are constructed.

Through an examination of over 800 thematic drawings and stories, regarding 'moving house', produced by children aged 10 to 17 years in urban and rural communities of Lesotho and Malawi, this paper explores southern African children's representations of migration. The research considers how ideas of migration are culturally-constructed based on notions of family, home and kinship, particularly in relation to the fluid family structure characteristic of most southern African societies. The results suggest that most children imagine migration as a household rather than an individual process, rarely including micro-migrations between extended family households in their drawings. Further, children's images of migration are place-rooted in everyday life experiences. Their representations concentrate on the reasons for migration, both negative and positive, which are specifically related to their local social and environmental situations. The paper concludes by exploring the implications of these conceptualisations of moving house for children's contemporary migration experiences.

Key words: children, migration, place, imaginative geography, southern Africa

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Introduction

Drawing on research with children in four southern African communities, this paper explores the meanings that children attach to migration. Specifically, the paper aims to understand how migration, as a social process, is played out through transitional spaces and how it is constructed in relation to familiar experiences and surroundings. Further, the paper explores the implications of these imagined conceptions of migration in light of changing patterns of mobility across the region. We focus on the views of southern African children for three reasons.

First, migration research has neglected children's migration principally focusing on the movements of adults or families (McKendrick, 1999; Young and Ansell, 2003). Despite this, children do engage in migration (Dobson and Stillwell, 2001; Young 2004). Their experiences are not only valid, but often different from those of adults and therefore worthy of consideration.

Second, there is a long history of migration throughout southern Africa, with mobility often highlighted in the academic literature as one of the essential and intrinsic features of everyday survival (Position paper, 1999). Therefore, extended family and household structures are highly fluid and it is not uncommon for children to move (with or without other household members). It is not unusual for them to live away from their parents and birth place for extended periods (Barnett and Blaikie, 1992).

Third, the incidence of migration among children is rapidly increasing in response to the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic across region. Previous research has demonstrated that children increasingly move place because of their role as carers; in order to receive care; or to make a living. Robson (2000) discusses the caring role of children highlighting that households often rely on extended family networks, where girls engage in rural- urban migration to care for sick relatives. Recently, the informal social security system that operates in the form of extended family obligations has increased migration within many AIDS-affected communities (now also urban-rural), as orphaned children are often cared for by relatives (Munthali and Ali, 2000, Young and Ansell, 2003). There is a clear need to understand, not only the patterns of migration undertaken

by children in such circumstances, but also the context of cultural meanings within which migrations take place and the implications of this for potential future movements.

The paper beings by considering two literatures, which have illustrated the need for research to address children's imagined migration experiences: the call for more culturally-informed migration research and the emerging work on children's imaginative geographies.

Migration research

Since the early 1990s there has been a move among population geographers to begin engaging with the cultural circumstances surrounding migration and calling for greater awareness of the rootedness of migration within everyday life experiences rather than simply focusing on statistical assessments of demographic change (Findlay and Li, 1999; Halfacree, 1995; Halfacree and Boyle, 1993; McHugh, 2000; Skeldon, 1995). Prior to this, little work focused on explaining and understanding such links, despite Fielding (1992:201) noting that migrations are 'culturally produced and culturally expressed'.

The last decade has, however, witnessed the emergence of a culturally-informed literature with authors heralding the importance of ethnography in migration research (see for example, Gutting, 1996; Findlay and Li, 1997; Lawson, 2000; Potts, 1995). Migrants' experiences are increasingly understood as socially-constructed and politically, economically and culturally situated (Lawson, 2000). More recently, Englund (2002a) has called for research regarding migrants' lived experiences to transcend the usual place boundaries of origin and destination, illustrating the emplacement of migrants' 'other' global identities within their migrant locality. Similarly, this paper argues that we should not only be interested in the roles of place and culture in directly shaping migrants' experiences (cf Gustafson, 2001; Meijering and van Hoven, 2003; Walters, 2000), but also how they shape wider discourses surrounding migration. For this reason, we consider how particular place-related and culturally contextualised experiences influence local perceptions regarding what it means to migrate and how perceptions of the imagined 'other' are implicated in children's understandings of decisions to move.

Children's imagined geographies

Research pertaining to children's geographies has mainly focused on children's physical experiences of space and place, with their 'imagined geographies' receiving far less attention. Recently, a few studies have emerged considering children's images of 'other'

places, both familiar and unfamiliar. The former have, for example, focused on street children's conception of 'home' (Beazley, 2000), where romanticised notions of a welcoming, happy environment submerge memories of the changing circumstances and difficult situations which prompted migration to the street. Hengst (1997) also draws on imaginings of the familiar for German children's constructions of national identity. Hengst (1997) however, argues that children's construction of national identities is based on their differentiating 'self' from 'other'. He illustrates this with interactions between European children in their home country and immigrant children.

Children's understanding of, often unfamiliar, distant places has also been the focus of work seeking to consider imagined geographies of 'other'. Drawing on Said's (1995) work regarding imaginative geography, Holloway and Valentine (2000) consider how British and New Zealand children imagine each other's life experiences and national identities. They illustrate that these imaginings are defined by previous experiences and stereotypes gained through media and entertainment, which produce over generalised pictures of other people and places.

Although Hengst's (1997) paper demonstrates that notions of the other are often constructed in relation to migrants' identities, discussions relating to children's imagined geographies are related to static, fixed conceptions of space. As Hengst (1997) hints at, children's lives are not necessarily static and they often move between places. This is particularly important within the southern African context where migration is central to daily life and families are stretched across space. The mobile aspect of children's lives in this context, where they move between households of the extended family, has received little attention and currently remains under-researched. Therefore, although consideration of migrants' lived experiences have begun to infiltrate migration research, no attention has been given to how children construct their image of these transitional spaces or how such images are constructed have not yet been considered.

Contextualising 'migration' in Malawi and Lesotho

Like most southern African countries, where societies are frequently characterised by more than one form of migration (see Frayne and Pendleton, (2002) for an example), Malawi and Lesotho have long histories of both internal and external migration. Historically, both countries supplied the mines elsewhere in southern Africa, and in Malawi internal plantations, with plentiful labour. This mainly took the form of long-term

(but temporary) male labour migration. The Government of Malawi reduced the external migration substantially in the 1970s following independence, although migration to internal plantations still continued (Englund, 1999). Lesotho's external labour migration was mainly to the South African gold mines. Crush *et al.* (1999) note that during the 1980s, when the mining industry was at its most productive, an estimated 60% of Lesotho's male workforce were migrants. The end of apartheid and changes in the mining industry have, however, reduced the flow of migrant workers to South Africa from elsewhere in the region. The number of Basotho men working in South African mines halved over the decade from 1990 (Turner, 2001), and migration from Malawi to the mines ceased completely following a dispute over HIV testing (Crush, 2000). Despite this, the populations of both countries still engage in considerable spatial mobility although the processes influencing this migration have changed. The result is a complicated and diverse understanding of what it means to move in both places.

The Malawi 1987 Population and Housing Census recorded that nearly 50% of the population were currently residing outside their birth district (National Statistical Office, 1994). Although now rather dated, this nevertheless demonstrates a high level of mobility within the country[1]. Migration to internal tea, coffee and tobacco plantations in the southern and northern regions exemplify rural-rural migration (Kydd and Christainsen, 1982). Plantations are often perceived as a source of employment and in some areas labour migration is viewed nostalgically because in the past it brought wealth to rural areas (Englund, 1999). Englund (2002b) points out that Malawi's urban areas have also expanded since independence and that rural-urban migration has formed a major part of this increase. In this instance, Englund (2002a, b) does not illustrate migration as a permanent transition but rather as a simultaneous urban/ rural experience, noting that a migrant's stay in town is related to aspirations to improve their village life.

Migrants' experiences of their home place are usually favourable. Urban areas are not considered places of belonging and migrants often have idealised notions of their village origin, ultimately expecting to return. Those who express no desire to return to their birth-place usually relate this to conflict and hostility prior to their migration, which is often associated with witchcraft (Englund, 2002b). Englund (2002a) further explores how migrants' previous experiences are 'emplaced' within the social and cultural spaces of their new locality and how this can create subsequent sites of contestation. In particular,

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[1] It should be noted that although illustrating mobility there are several cautions to be noted with this data. The figure misses out any multiple migrations since the first move out of the birth district and similarly excludes those who have returned to their district of origin - a common aspiration among Malawian migrants (Englund, 2002b).

he draws on the conflict between Muslim migrants and locals in Chinsapo township in Lilongwe. The resistance of migrants to accept the traditional occult-based rituals, because they conflict with Islamic religious beliefs, creates internal hostility in the township. This illustrates how cultural baggage impacts upon migrant's experiences (Meijering and Van Hoven, 2003).

Although in Lesotho fluidity has always been an important characteristic of the extended family system with members moving between households, migration has historically been perceived as labour migration (most notably to the South African mines). Particularly during the 1970s and 1980s such external labour migration was a way of life for many families, where men spent long periods absent from home (Murray, 1981). Today, in light of tightening immigration policies and recent retrenchments there are fewer Basotho working in the mines. Migration between Lesotho and South Africa is, however, still extensive as the country's complete enclosure within South Africa means border controls are fairly relaxed (Sechaba Consultants, 2002). Although men still cross the border to engage in farm labouring, migrants to South Africa are now increasingly likely to be female in order to trade and engage in business (Dodson, 1998). Migration to the border areas within Lesotho is attractive for similar purposes.

Another issue which has recently received attention concerning migration within Lesotho is the impact of cattle raiding which is particularly acute along the border area, as raiders steal from villages on the other side, but also further into the mountains (Kynoch and Ulicki, 2001). This has had a significant impact on rural communities and households. Livestock holdings and production have reduced leaving many families in difficult situations and escalated fear, tension and mistrust among village communities, with the poor invariably stigmatised. Neighbours implicate each other in stock thieving and many are now abandoning their villages to seek work in South Africa or other Lesotho towns (Kynock and Ulicki, 2001). Internally, the rural and mountainous areas of Lesotho are losing population to the three northwestern districts of Maseru, Leribe and Berea (Kingdom of Lesotho, 1998). It is estimated that Maseru is growing at more than 7 percent a year, associated with employment opportunities (mainly taken by women) in the rapidly growing garment industry (Sechaba Consultants and Geoffrey Payne and Associates, 2002; ILO, 1998). Further, young people are migrating into the towns to seek employment and better access to services. Currently 25% of Maseru residents were born in other districts and have latterly moved to the urban centre (ILO, 1998). Lesotho is thus witnessing changes in migration patterns.

Mobility within southern Africa extends beyond family and/or labour migration, households being marked by a 'fluid family structure' (de Haan, 2000:10, see also de Haan, 1999). Barnett and Whiteside (2000) state that these fluidities result in constantly changing forms, meanings and relationships within the extended family: patterns explored among the Basotho by Murray (1981). Households are spread out, through and across communities, sharing labour and food among disparate family members. In such societies the household can refer not only to those residing within a single physical compound, but also to the wider extended family. Extended families tend to have both urban and rural members and a high level of interaction occurs between the two.

As noted in the introduction, children are particularly migratory within these fluid structures, moving to assist relatives, for education or to undertake chores. In Lesotho, some boys spend several months a year at remote cattle posts looking after the household's livestock. Recently, migration has increased (including between urban and rural areas) within many AIDS-affected communities, as children move to stay with relatives (Young and Ansell, 2003).

The research

Within a wider study concerning the experiences of young people migrating as a consequence of the AIDS pandemic, we sought to explore the differing meanings young people attach to migration. The research was conducted in urban and rural locations in two southern African countries. Malawi, with its relatively long-standing experience of AIDS-affected communities, was selected for comparison with Lesotho, which is only now beginning to feel such impacts. To explore a range of places and environments, one urban and one rural community were selected in each country. In Malawi, research was conducted in Ndirande, a high density township of Blantyre, the main commercial centre; along with Mpando village in Thyolo district, a major tea growing area in the Southern Region, approximately 80km south of Blantyre. The urban participants in Lesotho were from Maseru, the capital city, located on the border with South Africa. Most were residents of the city's low to middle income suburbs. The rural location was ha Tlali, a village located in a rural area in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains, about 60km from Maseru.

The research was conducted with children attending school in each community. In all, approximately 800 children, aged between 10 and 17 and mainly in upper Primary classes, participated. Following a class discussion exercise in which the various meanings of migration, or 'moving house', were explored, children were invited to complete questionnaires about their migration experiences. These exploratory questionnaires were designed to find out children's involvement in migration and revealed that between 30% and 60% of children had themselves migrated in each of the communities, and even more had experience of relatives coming to live with them. Following this, the children were invited to draw or write (in English or a local language) about 'moving house' - drawing on personal experience or their imaginations. It is these unstructured images of migration that form the basis of this paper.

In asking children to draw or write about 'moving house', the intention was to tap into their perceptions of migration through personal experiences or those of their relatives and acquaintances, and also wider notions of what migration means within the society in which they are growing up. Although children were asked to explain their drawings, it is clearly not easy to disentangle these various strands from the pictures they draw and the words they write: to determine whether a drawing reflects 'real' experiences, or whether, for example, it represents their family's aspirations, or local folk myths. In some instances children's drawings clearly illustrated the experiences they related in their questionnaire responses. Maria, for example, tells us she moved 'because the house was expensive'. In describing her picture she writes:

> "This people migrate because was not paid the rent, so our landlord came hurry hurry and start to took the things in their house. The people came angrily and went to the office and said may I borrow a car and took the things in our house. So they took a car and took the thing in our house. The people said the moving to Mzuzu." (Maria, aged 11, Ndirande Primary School, N111) [2]

Although it cannot be assumed that the story she tells is her own, it appears that she is using the opportunity to relate a more vivid account of her own experience of migration.

In other examples, the pictures told quite different stories from those presented in the questionnaires. Where the reasons given for moving 'in real life' contradicted those portrayed through pictures, the pictures commonly told more aspirational migration

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[2] Where the children wrote their stories in English, their direct words are quoted here. The stories written in Chichewa (Malawi) have been translated by Lloyd Chitera and those in Sesotho (Lesotho) by Motselisi Motsieola.

stories. Precious says on the questionnaire that he moved 'because my father is died'. In relation to his picture, he tells us:

"…We migrated because the first house was so small, and we moved to a bigger house. Also because the bigger house is surrounded with beautiful trees and flowers." (Precious, aged 16, Mpando, T5)

Whether this reveals that Precious is reluctant to say more about the move that he undertook as a consequence of his father's death cannot be determined. It might be that he found the experience traumatic, or shameful, or that it simply did not correspond to wider expectations about moving house. There could be a number of reasons why the picture that he drew was easier. In interpreting the children's images, it is important to be aware of the contexts in which they were drawn/written. Although the intention was to allow children maximum freedom to express their ideas, the images cannot be taken as simple projections of experience or imagination, but must be recognised as having been filtered through a particular lens[3]. Nonetheless, they tell some interesting stories.

Children's images: the moving household

Given that children's independent migration more often occurs as micro-migrations between the households of the extended family, it might be expected that this would inform children's images of migration. However, micro-migrations were seldom featured. The images children presented suggested they saw migration as something that moved people away from the various households of their extended family. Migration was viewed as a movement *of* rather than *within* the family, each extended family dwelling being seen as the home of all its members. In rural Lesotho the suggestion that these movements may also be migration was adamantly refuted by the standard six teacher, who argued that if you go to stay with your grandmother, for example, this cannot be migration because 'she is also your family'. Consequently, children's ideas about migration were related to factors influencing a household, which were often related to their place-specific surroundings[4].

Migration was portrayed by children as undertaken by the household, usually in response to one or more of a number of factors. The most commonly represented

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[3] It is probable that the images reflect the nature of the task, the institutions in which they were produced, and children's attempts to produce what they thought was expected of them.
[4] The data set revealed little difference between images constructed by children in relation to age, gender, whether they had moved house or other variables.

reasons for moving related to environment-related factors, both physical and human. These ranged from natural disasters to soil infertility and from lack of amenities to problems of overcrowding and difficult neighbours. A second set of reasons related to the need of the household for a larger, better, cheaper or more secure house, either because of the changing needs and circumstances of the household, or the fact that their previous house had been destroyed. A third group of causes related to opportunities arising elsewhere - most commonly a new job or transfer of employment. In these cases, it was usually the father who was portrayed as having found a job and taken the family to live close to the new workplace. Occasionally, as in Figure 1, the job seeker apparently moved alone, leaving his family behind, but in almost every case was male.

Figure 1

"The man is moving from his house to look for riches. He is going to the mine." (Mokhantso, aged 13 years, St. James High School, M57)

A few children drew pictures of individuals having to leave the family home. In almost all such cases the individual was a woman, who had to move because she had failed to pay rent (Figure 2), was 'chased away' because of a 'bad reputation' or because she was beaten by her husband.

Figure 2

"It is not good to live in a renting house without having enough money because if you don't pay money to your landlord, the landlord will be angry and chase you and you will be ashamed. See at this picture, the old woman has been chased because she did not pay rent and it is good to have your own house." (Gladstone, aged 14 years, Ndirande Primary School, N16)

"This person was moving her clothes because her husband was beaten her every day." (Relebohile, aged 15 years, St James Primary School, Maseru, M102)

Very occasionally the cause of migration was represented as the death of a parent or parents. In almost no cases, however, did children refer to moving from the home of one relative to another within the extended family, although other research methods revealed that many had this experience.

The choice of migration images portrayed by children illustrates how migration is perceived within their communities. They draw on familiar experiences and conceptions

of what it means to migrate or 'move house' rather than discussing their own personal experiences outside these specific cultural constructions. Given this, the paper now delves deeper into the social and cultural construction of migration by examining the way migration is situated within each of the four communities and their everyday life experiences. Through this, we seek to show children's understandings of migration are shaped by their social, cultural and physical surroundings.

'Placing' migration in Southern Africa: images from Malawi and Lesotho

The importance of familiarity and experience to children's imaginings is demonstrated through their differing constructions of migration. In the same way that children in Holloway and Valentine's (2000) paper drew on familiar media representations for imagining other places, the children in each of the four communities discussed here, also drew on the familiar for constructing an often distant abstract process. The four communities focused on in this paper were diverse in terms of their setting, activities and migration experiences. These social, cultural and physical environments in which the children were situated clearly impacted on their images of migration, highlighting the relationship of migration to wider lived experiences (Findlay and Li, 1997). This paper turns now to explore how children's images represent the migration processes occurring in their local environments.

Ndirande, Blantyre, Malawi

Blantyre is the main commercial centre of Malawi. Located in the Southern Region, the city is a rapidly expanding industrial and commercial area, experiencing a constant influx of people from surrounding rural areas. The communities around the city are in a state of continual flux as people and families move in and out depending on the state of employment opportunities. Within the city, Ndirande township is the largest of Blantyre's high density suburbs and has high levels of unemployment and poverty. It is host to a fairly mobile population, with many of the current residents having moved here from elsewhere in search of employment in the city. At Ndirande Primary School, the largest Government school in the city with nearly 9,000 pupils, just over 220 children participated in producing images of migration. The children attending this school are mainly from poor to very poor households and many have moved into the area with parents or to stay with relatives. Of those participating 58% had moved at least once, demonstrating high levels of mobility in the township.

In Ndirande, the images of migration children constructed were linked to the everyday experiences of their transient township community. The most common issues identified regarding 'moving house' related to living in rented accommodation with more than one quarter of the children highlighting this as a reason why people move. Renting was seen as a temporary state and not a state of 'belonging' to that particular place. The strong attachments rural migrants have to their villages are drawn upon here with children illustrating the temporary nature of urban living for many in their community.

Fielding (1992) notes that there are two contrasting views of migration experience. On the one hand there are positive aspects related to excitement, new beginnings, opportunities and freedom and on the other there are problematic experiences based on failure, loss and rootlessness. Some pictures illustrated people (usually men) migrating into the township with the hope of securing employment in the city. This was depicted as a positive move, necessary for survival. Given that the expanding population of Ndirande is related to people seeking employment opportunities, it is not surprising that many children saw this as an important reason for moving house.

> "A man was transferring from Thyolo to Lilongwe because of [a] job opportunity." (Goodwin, aged 14, Ndirande Primary School, N142)

> "Some move from villages to towns to seek jobs." (Lazaro, aged 12, Ndirande Primary School, N189)

However, more of the pictures drawn by children in Ndirande suggest that the association of migration with failure is strong. More than half the Ndirande images displayed negative aspects of migration which detailed the difficulties faced by migrants after arriving in the city as causes for onward migration. The prospect of finding work often gives way to the difficulties rural migrants experience where they find themselves living in poverty and very marginal situations. The Ndirande children clearly illustrated this as symptomatic of those living in their township. Englund's (2002a) illustration of conflict between locals and migrants is well represented in the Ndriande images which featured witchcraft and problems with neighbours and landlords as further reasons for moving. Children also mentioned people moving because of a bad reputation: women were usually the subjects of these stories illustrating the greater difficulties faced by female migrants in securing formal work. Figure 2, clearly demonstrates this sense of migration as failure where the 'evil' landlord is described as chasing the tenant as she had a bad reputation within the area and was unable to pay her rent.

"We migrated because the house was so small and also because the landlord was difficult because he never allowed someone who rented his house to have more than four children and he could also increase the rent every month. But when we moved people [there] got worried because they [had] got used to us." (Emily, aged 14 years, Ndirande Primary School, N202)

This sense of failure, and the stigma associated with it, is further emphasised by those who described the abusive songs sung by neighbours when a household moved away.

"Recently, in Achanaka village [part of Ndirande township], some people moved because of untidiness. So while moving they just carried a small basket only, and children were singing 'Movers have forgotten panties on the roof'[5]. And the movers are pitiful and they go back to their home village and they had the reputation of being untidy." (Iness, aged 14 years, Ndirande Primary School, N7)

"…A person is moving in a car, going back to his home village in a car, after being laid off at work, while people are singing 'He has moved because he didn't pay his rent!'" (Issa, aged 15 years, Ndirande Primary School, N30)

A further issue, which demands attention here, is that more children in Ndirande than any of the other communities depicted migration in response to disasters such as floods, famines and war. Although it was not possible to determine exactly why this should be the case,[6] it may be related to the devastating floods and resulting famine that ravaged parts of the Southern Region and Mozambique during 2000. For these communities, Blantyre is the nearest large city and it would not be problematic to assume that ruined subsistence crops would result in temporary migration measures for some people.

The situation of migrants, however, was not always portrayed negatively. Moving to a bigger or better house was also presented as a reason for moving, although on fewer occasions. Thirteen percent of the children mentioned this, which again was often associated with leaving rented accommodation. In this case moving house carried an association of success, as tenants were moving to a more permanent home, having secured employment. Again this demonstrates the temporary condition of renting, the lack of stability it brings and the importance of owning a home. Figure 3 illustrates the importance of permanency suggesting that the newly built house they are moving to is beautiful.

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[5] This 'song' was repeated by several Ndirande pupils.
[6] It is possible that some of the children had learned about migration in class. However, if this was part of the curriculum it would be expected that it would also have featured in the other Malawi community, which it did not.

Figure 3

"These people are migrating because the house is small. Their goods are being carried in a car... Now they've migrated and have built a new house and [it is] beautiful." (Elicy, aged 11 years, Ndirande Primary School, N210)

Migration into places like Ndirande township is portrayed very much in relation to promoting the well-being and improvement of the rural family. Migration into the township was in relation to escaping devastation and to increasing household income through cash employment. However, Ndirande is a poor community where not all migrants have succeeded in their goal of improvement. The relative fluidity of the Ndirande population, a high incidence of renting, and failure to succeed in the city, features throughout the children's images. This illustrates how the everyday experiences of a community influence ideas regarding migration and how migration itself is linked to these everyday experiences (Lawson, 2000). The negative portrayal of migrants is also constructed as oppositional to that of local residents, who improve their situation by building permanent dwellings.

Mpando, Thyolo District, Malawi

Rural Malawi's estate areas contain mobile populations, attracted to the estates for work. Thyolo district in the Southern Region is principally a tea growing area and home to numerous large tea and coffee estates. However, unlike the urban township of Ndirande, Mpando village has a relatively stable local population as well as many migrants from within the local area who have come to work on the estates. Despite this, Mpando village area is host to many poor families, some of whom were very badly hit by 2001's poor maize harvest[7]. Approximately 190 children participated in constructing images of migration, accessed through Nankhulumbo Model School, the local Government-run school serving the village area. Despite the relative stability of the population, 58% stated that they had moved – although in some cases this was only to a new house within the village.

The images produced by children in Mpando were related to their sense of belonging to the village, with more than half focusing on their non-migration because Mpando was a good place to live, with nice houses and a good school, despite the obvious poverty of

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[7] Maize is the staple food, and even those employed on the tea estates still survive partly on subsistence farming. The poor maize harvest also increases the price of maize for those who have to buy their food.

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many families not directly linked to working on the tea estate (and therefore not entitled to an estate house). Representations of the rural village as the place where people have ancestral attachments and therefore belong (Englund, 2002b), was overwhelmingly displayed here. Even some children who said they had moved house, drew pictures of their homes insisting that they did not [want to] move. In such cases, more detailed qualitative research illustrated that moving was often associated either with a change in dwelling (and not movement out of the village) or the children had previously lived elsewhere but had subsequently moved back to their home village. For example, Rhoda (aged 16) had moved as a young girl to live with her uncle in Blantyre but had now returned to her grandmother's village and the place of her birth. This overwhelming assertion of not wanting to move, such as is illustrated in Figure 4, reveals the importance of having a sense of place related to your home village and how migration disrupts this.

Figure 4

"We did not migrate because it is where we originated, so I don't dream of migrating since it's a very beautiful place." (Maliwo, aged 14 years, Nankhulumbo Model School, T149).

A further set of images (15%) illustrated migration as the moving of a household within the village area. Here very positive constructions of migration could be identified, similar to those mentioned in Ndirande, which featured locals moving to a larger dwelling. Here positive migration images were still not associated with leaving the home place but rather rural improvements.

The remaining Mpando images, which did focus directly on migration, mainly illustrated two aspects, with approximately 12% of images relating to each. Employment prospects were highlighted but to a lesser extent than in Ndirande. Although some of these pictures related to opportunities in the urban centres, the importance of the estates for generating employment was also associated with moving in Mpando. The creation of employment through the tea estate had clearly influenced Mpando children's imaginings of migration.

Rural to rural migration also featured but again in relation to people moving into Mpando because of problems in their own village. In particular these pictures and stories discussed migrants having destroyed crops, poor land or not enough land in the previous place, very much 'rural' reasons for moving. Inability to produce enough food may be

related to the recent excessively heavy rains which had affected the Southern Region. Follow up discussions with children revealed that some families had moved to the area from further south due to floods and poor harvests. Thyolo had escaped most of this devastation and therefore received some of the migrants. Figure 5 demonstrates one boy's understanding of why his family had moved.

Figure 5

"We migrated because our land for cultivation is not fertile" (James, aged 16 years, Nankhulumbo Model School, T166)

What is evident from the Mpando images of migration is their direct relation to the satisfaction the children have with their village area. Placing migration within this context revealed that few young people aspire to leave their rural birthplace. Further the much reduced direct experience children have with migration (outside those movements which are contained within the extended family), and the particular social, economic and cultural circumstances they face in their village are clearly reflected in constructions of migration. There is less experience of 'the other' to draw upon in imagining the transitional space of moving form one place to another. In both Hegnst (1997) and Holloway and Valentine's (2000) work, children drew on familiar images in their constructions of other places. In Mpando the relative lack of migration is illustrated in some children's unwillingness to imagine migration.

Maseru, Lesotho

Lesotho has few major urban centres. However, many of the towns along the border with South Africa are rapidly expanding as people engage in cross-border trade. Such towns are currently the major receivers of migrants within the country. Maseru is the largest border urban centre in Lesotho and therefore host to a fairly large migrant population. The 201 children who participated in the research here were accessed through St. James Primary and Secondary school, located in the heart of the city. This is the largest school in the country with the Primary having a roll of over 3000 pupils. The children who attend are from a mixture of medium to poor households and are drawn from several parts of Maseru, primarily suburbs which house both stable and in-migrant populations and contain a mix of owned and rented accommodation. This is reflected by the fact that 48% claimed to have moved at least once.

The mix of children from medium to poor households and from stable and migratory communities, explains the greater diversity of responses related to their images of migration. Several children highlighted issues of renting, but rather than focusing on the negative concerns of being unable to pay rent and conflicts with neighbours, more of the children constructed positive images of migration, moving from rented accommodation into a permanent home. Figure 6 illustrates this well showing people moving from 'the lines' (rented accommodation) into a new house. A sense of belonging to a community was demonstrated in this movement out of temporary accommodation into a permanent home. Given that the Maseru children come from varied backgrounds but are generally not from the poorest localities, a number of their guardians will have steady employment and be able to build a permanent home. How these children see migration is related to their communities' status as harbouring successful migrants. This is in direct contrast to the Ndirande renting images, which strongly associated migration with failure.

Figure 6

"[S]he is migrating because they've built a house." (Rethabiseng, aged 10 years, St. James Primary School, M156)

Job opportunities featured in several of the pictures and stories. This was linked both to the industrial and commercial work that is available within the city, as in most urban areas, but also to cross-border migration to South Africa in search of better employment opportunities. Both Dodson (1998) and Sechaba Consultants (2002) illustrate the importance of the border for Maseru people's livelihoods and this is clearly important to children in Maseru.

In a few cases the importance of the South African mines for Basotho employment opportunities is also represented. Although now much reduced with more retrenchments occurring than jobs created, the historical significance of the gold mines is not forgotten. Figure 1, illustrated earlier in the paper, highlights how labour migration brought wealth to Lesotho. The contexts of employment differ between the urban images from Malawi and Lesotho reflecting how children's imaginings of migration are drawn from the communities' different lived experiences.

Despite Maseru children's generally positive representation of migration, over a quarter of the images suggested moving was problematic, or associated with a dislike of the

previous place. In many cases migration was portrayed as risk-laden. Breakages and loss of possessions featured as problematic while theft was represented, both as a stimulus for moving, but more often as a risk associated with the move. Makhauta's statement reveals that even within the process of moving employing assistance is a risk that may result in theft of belongings. The fact that this was a common perception in Maseru may relate to Lesotho's high crime rate.

"Moving house is moving from place to place. I think it is not good at all because you will have to look for new friend." (Rethabile, aged 12 years, St James Primary School, M146)

"... Load all the furniture into the car you trust when you move house, because it could happen that the person who is helping you might not be trustworthy and thus disappear with your belongings." (Makhauta, aged 12 years, St James' Primary School, M174)

The higher income levels of the Maseru children's families (compared to those in Blantyre), and the communities in which they live, was clear from their imagining of migration. Migration was either related to their increased wealth and ability to construct a permanent dwelling or negatively associated with the destruction and theft of possessions. Employment opportunities were important for increasing migrants' status and wealth yet this was particularly related to particular types of labour migration experiences. South Africa, as a place of opportunity was mentioned in relation to this illustrating the importance of border trade and business for Maseru inhabitants. Theft (especially cattle theft) is now important for border communities in Lesotho, acting as a catalyst for migration into town (Kynock and Ulicki, 2001). However, although a few images mentioned movement into the city because of this, it was much more a feature of the Tlali experience of why people move. By looking at these images, the everyday experiences of communities can be seen to influence how transitional spaces such as migration are constructed.

Ha Tlali, Lesotho
Tlali village, in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains, is a community based on subsistence agriculture and remittances from family members employed elsewhere. Although having a fairly stable local population, migration is not uncommon. Close proximity to Maseru and South Africa means that male labour was (and to a lesser extent still is) employed in South African mines. Now, with the retrenchment of miners, Maseru is a popular destination for family members seeking paid employment, particularly given the good transport connections to the city. The 195 Tlali children who participated were

drawn from the local Roman Catholic primary school and high school and 31% stated that they had experience of migration.

The images the Tlali children presented of migration were also influenced directly by their lived experiences, in the Lesotho foothills. This was particularly striking given their location between the remote highlands and the more urbanised lowlands. Many children will have experienced both environments or been in contact with friends and family members who have. Despite this children still did not really relate their understanding of migration to their movement within the extended family. Drawing on their experiences of these environments they particularly illustrated why the foothills themselves act both as a home place and a transitional place, with people moving into and out of the village. More than two thirds of the images were directly centred on this. The images concentrated on the harshness of the mountainous environments illustrating people leaving due to limited access to water taps, electricity, shops, transport and other 'urban' facilities. For some Tlali was the ideal village because of its proximity to the urban lowlands (Figure 7) while for others Tlali itself represented mountain living from which people migrated (Figure 8). This suggests the proximity to both urban and rural environments had influenced the children's images of what were important aspects of survival and home life. Proximity to urban Maseru may have inspired their desire to live an 'urban' life.

Figure 7

"This village is up in the mountains, there are no cars here and life is difficult. We are often hungry because we have no food to eat.... It's very nice in this village, there are cars and schools and the people are nice." (Mokone, aged 15 years, St. John's Tlali Primary School, T74)

Figure 8

"We migrated [to town] because there is no transport and no water taps." (Tlala, aged 17 years, St. John's Tlali Primary School, T172)

Theft was strongly imagined as a reason for moving from mountainous areas. In the highlands and border areas cattle rustling has become a particular problem in recent years and close to a quarter of the children mentioned people moving into Tlali (or in fact closer to Maseru) because of cattle thieves in more remote areas. Kynock and Ulicki's (2001) discovery that cattle theft is affecting rural livelihoods in Lesotho and forcing people into urban and semi-urban living, is accurately demonstrated here. They also

maintain that cattle theft is resulting in community disharmony with people blaming their neighbours. The children's images also represented these conflicts as influencing migration in Tlali.

"We migrated because thieves stole our cattle." (Pinki, aged 15 years, St. John's Tlali Primary School, T136).

Migration within Tlali itself was represented in a similar manner to that in Mpando where people moved to a new house. This was represented as moving because the current dwelling was broken rather than to a larger dwelling. Many people in Tlali reside in homes built from local materials - stone and mud with heavy thatched roofs. It is fairly common for such homes to be destroyed, often as a consequence of lightning storms.

The Tlali imaginings of migration demonstrate how everyday experiences influence conceptions of migration. However, it further demonstrates how the proximity of Tlali to both mountainous and urban living can impact differently on children's imaginings. Closeness to the urban centre and therefore contact with the services and employment opportunities that exist there generated positive images of migration as something that would benefit the family economic situation. The mountains were associated with harsh living, cattle theft and amenity poor environments from which the 'softer' urban living was an escape. While some children used these justifications for moving *to* Tlali from remote highland villages, others saw these same problems as part *of* Tlali and therefore viewed migration as a positive move into the urban areas.

Imagining migration: implications and conclusions

The images of migration analysed in this paper reveal that southern African children imagine the transitional spaces of migration in different ways depending on the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the communities in which they currently reside. Drawing on their knowledge of the moving experiences of those around them, migration is constructed in relation to particular understandings of home and family, and place-related experiences.

In the transient township of Ndirande migration is linked to aspirational prosperity but also to migrants' failure to improve and the difficulties associated with urban migration. Despite Englund's (2002) assertion that migrants reconstruct the village in the city and

maintain links between these spaces, many children saw return migration related to an inability to succeed. The context of this migration can be realised by comparing it with rural Malawian imagined experiences. The Mpando children's desire to remain in the village reinforces the idea that migration is something for improving rural living and highlights the importance of the home village for identity. The village appears to be a defining element for Malawian's sense of belonging. As Crang (1998:102) suggests 'people do not simply locate themselves, they define themselves through a sense of place.' These notions of 'belonging' to particular places, therefore, inevitably impact upon how migration is understood, where migration is related to a desire to improve the rural experience rather than leave it behind.

In Lesotho the imagined migration experiences illustrated some parallels with those in Malawi. Although the urban images were drawn from a slightly more affluent and stable community, where issues related to damaged belongings became more apparent as a negative impact of migration, successful migration was also aspired to. Moving from rented to owned accommodation and the lure of better job opportunities featured. This was contextualised within place specific experiences including the proximity of the South African border for creating employment and Maseru's high crime rate. This impact of local experiences for understanding migration is best explained by the Tlali imaginings. Although far fewer children claimed to have moved, their proximity to both urban and mountainous environments revealed that people either moved to urban areas for rural improvement or because of the devastation of cattle rustling for their livelihoods.

The paper demonstrates that children construct migration based on their own experiences and those of the communities around them. This is noteworthy given that people construct their identities, not only in relation to the (static) places they inhabit, but also in relation to their experiences of movement between places. In southern Africa, for instance, it is possible to belong to more than one home place. People's identities are produced in relation, not only to the places they leave or move to, but also to the places they aspire to be. Hence perceptions and constructions of migration contribute to the identities of those who have not migrated, as well as those who have, and play a particularly important role in shaping new migration experiences.

Returning to the aims set out in the introduction, this paper sought to explore these images of migration in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is exacerbating children's migration. Based on the conclusions presented here, it is important to

recognise the role played by migration in the construction of identity, in order to appreciate the implications of the increasing numbers of children who are likely to migrate as a consequence of HIV/AIDS.

Overall, children's imaginings of transitional spaces evoked positive feelings particularly in relation to their sense of place in their communities, through improving the permanency of their 'place' in society (e.g. through moving from rented accommodation to an owner-occupied dwelling) or moving into an area where they were previously residing. Negative attitudes were often associated with the lack of permanency of rented accommodation, or having to leave due to forces beyond people's control such as war, famine or floods. In particular, children expressed a fear of having to leave their current community with which they had formed place attachments, unless it was to areas that they perceived as demonstrating a better quality of life. This has particular implications for the increasing numbers of children who are moving in response to HIV/AIDS: such migrations are unlikely to increase children's permanency within a community and create positive migration experiences, but are more likely to be seen as related to forces outside their own control.

It is appropriate to recall at this stage that children's images of migration tend to focus on migration of households and not individuals; in particular, not individual children moving from the home of one part of the extended family to another, which is often the case among children affected by HIV/AIDS. The absence of such micro-migrations from children's images raises several questions. It would seem highly unlikely that children are unaware of the possibility of moving to stay with a relative, as the research has demonstrated that this is a relatively commonplace practice. If they do not (wish to) think of such forms of migration, but prefer to imagine their whole family moving house, this might indicate that intra-family migration is problematic for the children who undertake it.

If, on the other hand, children do not regard moving to stay with a relative as 'moving house', because they are not leaving the family to which they belong, this may indicate that such a move is considered relatively unproblematic: that it is simply accepted as a normal part of everyday life. Is it then to be inferred that change of place is an unimportant aspect of migration for southern African children? This clearly is not the case: not only was place a prominent element of many of the children's drawings, but research conducted with children who had migrated revealed that having to deal with a new place was a significant experience for them (Young and Ansell, 2004).

The difficulty here may be one of semantics: that despite attempts in the classroom to encourage children to see such migrations as 'moving house', the terms '*ho falla'* and '*mu samuka'* used in Lesotho and Malawi respectively, simply exclude such notions. In such a case it seems inevitable that children's images of migration will fail to encompass micro-migrations of this form. The fact that children do not think of moving to relatives when asked about 'moving house' does not mean that they do not think about it at all. Semantics this may be, but it does demonstrate that an understanding of cultural diversity is essential to understanding migration processes. It may explain why children's unaccompanied migration, taking place largely within the extended family, is often hidden and excluded from consideration.

The third aspect of this paper that has implications in relation to children's AIDS-related migration is that relating to place. Broad distinctions were observed between the migration images of urban and rural children. Among urban children, the common perception was that people moved from rented accommodation into their own home or because they were unable to pay the rent. In the latter case migration was indicative of failure. In rural areas, once again there was an apparent expectation, either that it was best to remain living where you were, or that migration meant moving to somewhere with a better environment and better amenities. For young people migrating as a consequence of AIDS the reality is very different. It is unlikely that urban children will move to a larger or better house in town. More often, orphaned children move back to their grandparents' rural home. Such a move is in the opposite direction to the moves imagined by most children, both urban and rural.

It is, nonetheless, important to recognise that migration images are culturally constructed, and cannot necessarily be generalised. For example, the generally greater family income associated with the Maseru children is apparent in their images of people moving to their own homes in the city. The images from Ndirande, in contrast, reflect the lack of employment opportunities which result in failure to pay rent and subsequent migration back to the village. Thus while migration in both urban areas is directly linked to renting, the underlying socio-economic circumstances are different, producing different meanings in the residents' migration geographies.

The images produced by children in the four Southern African communities discussed here illustrate the diversity that exists in migration geographies. Through an examination

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of divergent urban and rural lived experiences this paper has demonstrated relationships between place, culture and ways of seeing migration. Migration is socially and culturally constructed through a sense of belonging to a specific community and the importance of specific life experiences. The difference in migration images from the four communities illustrates how way of life impacts on why people migrate and how this is viewed by those around them. This paper demonstrates that it is important to consider the impact of 'place' both migrated from and migrated to, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of migration as a social process.

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