

**DRINKING, DESPAIR AND THE STATE**  
***AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF A BREWING SUBCULTURE IN RURAL***  
***KENYA***

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*Nawashukuru sana.*

## A Glossary of Kiswahili Terms

*Bangara* – a local brew produced by cooking the ingredients which are pounded maize, sugar, water, and the fruits from *Kigelia Africana*, the sausage fruit tree, which are known as *muratina*

*Bangi* – cannabis

*Baraza* – a community meeting with elders and often the chief or subchief present where community issues can be discussed and addressed

*Baridi* – cold

*Boma* – an enclosure made of thorny scrub to hold cattle or other livestock

*Chai* – weak, milky, very sweet tea

*Chang'aa* – A type of cooked beer produced illegally and widely sold throughout Kenya

*Dawa* - medicine

*Dudu* – insect

*Fundi* – literally 'an expert', but usually used to identify a workman or builder of some sort.

*Gunia* – a 50kg sack

*Hoteli* – roadside café or kiosk serving basic food

*Jua kali* – literally meaning hot sun, but usually used to identify the informal sector, or untrained workers

*Kangara* – Similar to *bangara* but without the *muratina*

*Karibu* – welcome, but it also means close to or nearby

*Kanga* – a brightly coloured wrapper worn by women and another word for a *lesso*, so called because *kanga* also means guinea fowl which are brightly coloured and patterned

*Kijiji* – A village, but for the purposes of this thesis I am using Kijiji as a pseudonym for the study site

*Kitu kidogo* – literally meaning something small, but often used for 'bribe'

*Kutasa* - Meaning to spit, is a Taita (tribal group) word for the ritual of spitting beer on to the skulls of the ancestors in a performance to remove anger or badness from the heart of the performer

*Lesso* – a brightly coloured patterned wrapper worn by women

*Mabati* – iron sheet roofing

*Makuti* – palm thatched roofing

*Malaya* – a prostitute

*Mama Pima* – literally meaning ‘Measuring Woman’, the female proprietor of an informal bar or brew den, and so called because she ‘measures’ out the drinks

*Matatu* – minibus public transport, so called because when they first started, any trip cost three shillings (*tatu* is Swahili for three)

*Mganga* – a witchdoctor or herbalist. They sometimes detect and ‘cure’ witches (*wachawi*, witchcraft-*uchawi*) or they use herbs and/or animal derived ingredients to cure sickness or perform cleansing rituals

*Mitinidawa* – literally translated it means ‘tree medicine’, but is a local brew made by cooking granulated sugar, *jaggery* sugar (unrefined, black, like molasses), and a tree root. It is yellow in colour and smells like cider

*Mitungi* – usually a 20L capacity plastic jerry can, but sometimes larger or smaller than this

*Miraa/khat* – a drug which is the stems from a bush. Chewed, it will keep you awake for hours

*Mjinga* – a stupid person

*Mlevi* – a drunkard

*Mnazi* – Palm wine made in coastal areas, also the Swahili word for a palm tree

*Msara* – Taita, meaning ugali, the stiff maize flour porridge staple food

*Muringa* – a versatile local grass



*Mzungu/ wazungu/ mzungus* – singular/ plural/ swinglish plural of the Swahili word meaning white person. Swinglish is a combination of Swahili and English, and we usually add an S on the end of the singular form to make it a plural

*Nyingine* - another

*Panga* – machete

*Piki piki* – a motorbike

*Pombe ya kienyeji* – literally meaning local alcohol, refers to any home brewed alcoholic concoction, both fermented or distilled

*Shamba* – a small farm or cultivated garden

*Sufuria* – a tin cooking pot

*Vijana* – youth, or young people

*Wawukamana* – Taita greeting meaning good morning

*Wazee* –elders, respected older people

## A Cast of Characters

**Constance** – my ‘host mum’, ‘sister’, and best friend in the village. She looked after me, fed me, and helped out with the research where she could. She used to sell *mnazi* from her house where I lived with her and her husband, before I lived in a tent and subsequently built my house. She now runs a small grocery shop from her house. Constance helped me especially by using her position as a respected member of the community and the proprietor of a popular but tiny general store (essentially a shelf at the front of her house) to recruit participants for my focus groups, and to keep people updated about my research activities.

**Gift** – husband to Constance, my research assistant, and general Mr Fix It. His knowledge of the local drinking scene was invaluable in locating brew dens, informal bars, and friendly Mama Pimas. His role consisted of introducing me to people within the subculture of home brew who were willing to speak openly with me, driving me around on his *pikipiki* to the remote bars in the bush which we could not easily reach on foot or in the car, and translating where needed.

**Justice** – my research assistant and translator. He is a nephew of Constance and has completed secondary level education meaning that his English is pretty good, making him an ideal translator. He came with Gift and me on most days when I was conducting fieldwork and was on hand when I got stuck with Kiswahili and especially the local language (Kitaita) which I do not speak (with the exception of greetings and a few nouns).

**Emily** – eldest daughter of a Mama Pima. Emily is Constance’s niece. She has taken over from her mother as brewer and seller of *bangara* at their bar and home since her mother is getting older and Emily has been learning this work since she was a young child.

**Patience** – a Mama Pima who runs a *mnazi* den. She became the first woman who I worked for serving the brew, and this allowed me an entrée into the sub-culture of local brew in the area. She put me in touch with other Mama Pimas who helped me with my research.

**Mama Mercy** – a Mama Pima and close friend of Patience who allowed me to work for her serving *mitinidawa*.

**Honour** – another Mama Pima for whom I served *bangara* which she makes at her house.

**Tina** – a young mother who is a regular drinker. She allowed me to record her life story.

**Malemba** – the mother of Tina and a regular heavy drinker. She was a sex worker and served *kangara* at one of the informal bars.

**Mbogo** – a good friend who would occasionally help with focus group organizing. He often hung out at the same bars as me when I was conducting research.

## Abstract

Home brewed alcohol is responsible for a significant proportion of alcohol related harms across Africa, yet in Kenya where the problem receives much media attention, *pombe ya kienyeji* (home brew) has been significantly under-researched. Existing research offers limited information regarding the personal stories and daily lives of people within this sub-culture which would inform us about the social and political contexts of alcohol.

This thesis is a description of the sub-culture of home-made fermented beers in a rural, geographically isolated and politically marginalised region of southern Kenya. The research was conducted using a mixed methods ethnographic approach including participant observation, focus groups, informal interviews, drawing exercises with children, body mapping, life story interviews and oral histories, community mapping, reflexive focus groups, photography, and the ethnographer working as a Mama Pima (the woman who serves the beer).

Research took place over a period of three years from 2011-2014, with around 24 months spent in the field. Home brewed beers are an integral part of the local economy, providing employment and financial independence for many women, enabling them to send their children to school and look after their families. The study uses the concepts of structural violence, and demasculinity, as analytical perspectives to explain and rationalise the behaviour of drinkers, brewers and other relevant actors within 'Kijiji', the study site.

These chapters make the case that state level structural violence is a precipitator of alcoholism, and that domestic violence witnessed from an early age is normalised in many households. For the women who brew, a climate of mistrust and fear of the authorities pervades everyday life. Focus group discussions shed light on the changing role of alcohol within society and the different meanings ascribed to it since independence. Life stories indicate that violence witnessed and suffered in childhood are precursors to problematic drinking behaviour in later life. There are clearly defined gender roles in production and consumption of alcohol with women primarily undertaking production and sale of brew, and men dominating the drinking scene. A full description of the brews and brewing process, environments, and drinking dens are recorded. Whether actual levels of consumption have increased in real terms is beyond the scope of this study.

The empirical results demonstrate that structural violence is deeply embedded in rural Kenyan society and provide an alternative to the commonly held belief that brewers and drinkers are deviant or

criminal. Brewers and drinkers still manage to create for themselves a meaningful life within this context and construct realities in which they can express self-worth and respect. This study makes an addition to the existing body of literature concerning alcohol and health in East Africa, and provides a detailed insight into the daily lives and motivations, local realities and challenges for people within the sub-culture of home brew in rural Kenya.

**Keywords:** home brew, violence, alcohol, beer, rural, Kenya, structural violence, stress, ethnography.

## Introduction

This thesis explores structural violence and its effect on alcohol consumption in contemporary rural Kenya. In doing this, the thesis examines the problems and the value of using mixed methods ethnography to approach the phenomenon of widespread production and consumption of home brew in Kenya. This research contributes to public health narratives about alcohol by presenting personal stories as evidence, rather than statistics, to understand whether the way that alcohol is consumed in modern Kenya is more or less of a problem than it might have been previously. The goal of this thesis is to show that alcohol consumption in rural Kenya is symptomatic of structural violence; that is, state and social structures that cause people to remain in poverty or ill health, or generally undermine wellbeing.

Alcohol consumption and brewing is a complex and sophisticated set of issues. To view the sub-culture of home brew as a set of individualised harms, i.e. to find individuals wholly responsible for the harms they inflict on themselves and others through alcohol, would further victimise people for whom this is a way of life. I believe that we need a broader understanding of home brew. These ‘harms’ must be seen in the context of the failure of the state, economic and social change, and a whole history of alienation and exclusion.

Much of what we know about the extent of local brew manufacture and consumption is statistical, with qualitative data being less common (NACADA, 2010; Papas, 2010). Research by NACADA (The National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse – a Kenyan government institution) indicates the extent of consumption countrywide and stresses that this is an important topic for further research (NACADA, 2010; NACADA 2012). Yet statistical data are understood to be problematic, with consistent inaccuracies in both methodology and results (Randal and Coast, 2015). This is especially true in the context of countries in the global south where data collection is incentivized, and enumerator bias is common (Randal and Coast, 2015). Furthermore, Theodore Porter (1996), states that statistics, as useful as they are in many scenarios, often serve to obscure the really important human factors in some situations and we need more qualitative, anthropological input in public health methodologies to reveal the vital factors influencing alcohol harms.

“Kenya is one of the few African countries that makes brewing of traditional style beers illegal” (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979: 80) and post-colonial Kenya has a history of uncertainty surrounding the legal status of such brews. Traditional brews are still controlled in Kenya today. The Alcoholic Drinks Control

Act introduced in 2010 was, according to the government, designed to improve the quality, hygiene, and safety of home brews in Kenya, and seems to indicate the Kenyan government's recognition of widespread problems caused by unregulated brewing (NACADA, 2010). It has however proved difficult to implement (Papas et al., 2010). The government states that the purpose of regulating small-scale brewers is to reduce harms associated with home brewed beverages.

In Kenya, it is the worst kept secret that alcohol is widely produced from people's homes, in their back yards, or at their *shambas* (farms) and sold, often illegally, to a ready market of drinkers (NACADA, 2007; NACADA, 2010; NACADA, 2014). I use this term, 'worst kept secret' because it is known to be illegal, and people are secretive about their brewing activities, especially with those they consider to be outsiders or potential officials. Yet most village inhabitants will know where all the informal brewing dens are in their local area. To local residents, brewing is hidden in plain sight. This is also why I refer to brewing as a sub-culture - it is there if you know where to look but a visitor to the area might struggle to spot a brew den or informal bar. It is not usually openly discussed because of the illicit nature of the activity but it is a feature of the majority of Kenyan towns, villages and cities, and so is still a significant part of contemporary Kenyan culture.

If we look more widely at alcohol in a global context, we can see that it is in LAMIC<sup>1</sup> that alcohol consumption is most rapidly on the rise (Benegal et al, 2009) but still the extent of alcohol harms especially in rural populations, and their social setting, remains largely unknown. The secretive nature and complexities of brewing may well be responsible for this lack of knowledge (NACADA, 2010). Rehm et al. (2007) state that unrecorded consumption of alcohol accounts for about 28% of total global consumption of alcohol, and in more recent research by the WHO it is reported to be around a quarter (WHO, 2014). A proportion of this global unrecorded consumption will certainly be alcohol brewed within informal settings such as Kenyan home brew. Due to the harms associated with alcohol consumption, and the widespread consumption of homemade brews in LAMIC (Willis, 2002), it is important that research investigates, and helps us to understand, the reasons for alcohol brewing and consumption within these communities in order to inform interventions and health policy, and to address the gap in our knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Low and Middle Income Countries

In Kenya, alcohol is widely produced from people's homes, in their back yards, or at their *shambas* (farms) and sold to a ready market of drinkers (NACADA, 2007; NACADA, 2010; NACADA, 2014). Home brews play an important role in the economies of rural communities, as well as a form of exchange (although possibly less so now) for communal works such as house builds or farming (Read, 1956; Ogot, 1966; Boserup, 1989). Home brewed alcohol is ascribed ritual and symbolic significance in Kenya, both currently and historically (Ogot, 1966; Harris, 1986; Willis, 2002), and hence alcohol has a deep level of meaning for communities. These rituals include brewing and drinking during celebrations of birth, circumcision, marriage, deaths, and community festivities. Historically, *tembo*, a form of local brew, played a significant role in Mau Mau initiation and oathing ceremonies during the Emergency in Kenya in the 1950's (Hewitt, 1999). It has been widely noted that in post-colonial societies, brewing beer has evolved from an activity practiced for special occasions to an income generating activity vital for rural livelihoods and local-scale economies (Edwards and Whiting, 2004; Dancause et al., 2010).

### **Aims and Objectives**

Initially, my focus was the women who produce the brews and to use interviews and some observations to look at the social determinants of health. I realised from previous experiences within this community, and from the literature, that poor hygiene probably contributed to the spread of disease within brew dens and that the women who make the brew could be agents of change. My personal academic background is in anthropology, and from the early stages of my PhD I knew that what I really wanted was to undertake an ethnographic study of home brew.

My research evolved and, as with much ethnographic research, new ideas and concepts were revealed along the way, which contributed to the shaping of the research. As Van Maanen explains, "Accident and happenstance shapes fieldworkers' studies as much as planning or foresight" (Van Maanen, 1988: 2). The more I read and the more fieldwork experience I gained, I realised that the focus on 'harms' should become a focus on *identities*. I want my thesis to describe it as it is now and to identify the problems that local residents associate with it. The sub-culture of home brew in rural Kenya is sophisticated and complex and a study of individualized harms alone cannot help us to understand these complexities of identities within this changing social world. My aim is therefore to contextualize alcohol within structural violence.



## Connections

When I was 18, I spent four months as an Africa Venture volunteer in Kijiji, the site of my research. With a small group of other teenagers I painted school classrooms, and made teaching aids. It is ten years since I first arrived in this community and so my relationship with the community is well established. After my gap placement in the community, I have returned every year since, often more than once, for extended periods of time in holidays from University and in-between jobs. I have been involved with assisting various groups in the area, trying to promote a small eco-tourism project, and conducted fieldwork for my undergraduate and master's dissertations, both on very different topics.

My interest in *pombe ya kienyeji* comes from my time spent in the community whilst undertaking original research for my masters dissertation. The topic of the master's research was the social implications of electricity, yet while I was in the study site I lived with my friend Constance. I slept on the floor of her tiny house, from which she sold *mnazi*. *Mnazi* is a type of *pombe ya kienyeji*. It is a palm wine brought up by *matatu* (mini-bus public transport) from near the coastal city of Mombasa. In the evenings, Constance would have her veranda full of drunken men who would buy drink after drink, cigarette after cigarette, and not leave until very late. She stored the *mnazi* in plastic buckets inside the one-room house and would sleep on the floor right next to it with her husband, Gift. I could not bear the smell and insisted on sleeping at the opposite end of the little room but even so the smell would cause my stomach to churn every evening when I crept onto the square of grubby foam which once-upon-a-time might have been a mattress. Constance saved the money she made from selling *mnazi* and took out a microfinance loan and now runs a small kiosk selling basic groceries, and owns a *pikipiki* (motorbike). Gift uses the *pikipiki* to run a taxi service. This brief period of exposure to the alcohol culture in the area ignited my interest and caused me to want to investigate the meaning of alcohol for this community.

## **Internal Conflicts and Methodological Struggles**

### **'The Study Site'**

Firstly, I want to explain why I am not naming the community. Some of the subjects discussed within this thesis are very personal to the people who told their stories to me. Some of the activities mentioned here are illegal. If the community was widely identifiable, the people who have told me these stories would be socially or legally compromised if local politicians, church leaders, or police were to read it. They may not be able to continue making their livelihoods from brewing beers. I am not willing to risk their safety or wellbeing by openly naming the location, although those readers who know Kenya well might be able to identify the study site. Similarly, I have changed the names of all the individuals within this thesis since I would not want to jeopardise individual's safety by exposing identities.

I realise that by thinly veiling the people and places under pseudonyms I am not entirely able to protect this community. Ethnographer Nancy Scheper-Hughes comments on this practice of anonymity for participants and communities. In her experience she found that it is all too easy for those with a keen interest to discover the identity of a location or individuals within a community. In Scheper-Hughes' opinion, this practice "...fools few and protects none – save, perhaps, the anthropologist. And I fear that the practice makes fools of us all – too free with our pens, with the government of our tongues, and with our loose translations and interpretations of village life" (Scheper-Hughes, 2001: 12). Rather, she encourages ethnographers to treat people on paper as we would face to face, with empathy, courtesy and friendship, since "...they are not our subjects but our companions and without whom we quite literally could not survive" (Scheper-Hughes, 2001: 13). I hope that in this account of the sub-culture of brewing, I have achieved both anonymity of, and respect for my companions.

From here on the 'study site' will be referred to as Kijiji (Kiswahili for village), which I think in this case works well enough as a substitute name for the actual group of villages concerned.

### **What Is Ethnography?**

Ethnography can be described as the "written representation of a culture (or selected aspects of a culture)" (Van Maanen, 1988: 1). Ethnography (the term for both the process and the product) is an in-depth examination of one or more aspects of a culture, usually different from one's own. It involves richly describing observed behaviours and ways of doing things, and spending prolonged periods of time

in the study site. It is a detailed way of making “sense of strange surroundings and pass[ing] on our understandings to others” (Van Maanen, 1988:ix). It is a qualitative method of cultural representation, producing location specific studies which are focused on contextualisation of the cultural behaviours (Pottier, 1993: 2). Ethnography illustrates the variation within a culture by describing a social group’s environments, including something about the physical, biological and social, the things they do and their beliefs (Agar, 1996: 53). Ethnography is “an experientially rich social science” (Agar, 1996: 58).

There are several main processes of conducting ethnography, and as a researcher one might use them all, or a combination of several, during time in the field. Participant observation is where the researcher observes behaviours, but also participates in community activities. Observation is where the ethnographer records what is observed but does not participate. The researcher can also be a participator, implying full immersion in the studied culture. Each of these activities can be covert or overt. Most commonly, overt participant observation is employed as the prime method of data collection for ethnographic research, with varying degrees of participation and observation at different stages of the research. For example, at the beginning of the fieldwork, it is likely that the researcher will be more of an observer than a participant, getting to know the people, the place, and social prohibitions. Towards the end of the research, the researcher might be more of a participator since what is expected of them will be much more familiar by this time. The ethnographer may assume a number of roles and be perceived as a “professional stranger” (Agar, 1996), a loner, an uninteresting outsider, or even a fully-fledged member of the community (Van Maanen, 1988: 2). This depth of interaction with the research subjects is unique to ethnography.

The actual process of conducting ethnography can be described as follows:

“[Ethnography] In its most characteristic form...involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 1).

An ethnographic approach allows the researcher to *see* what people do and not just what they *say* they do. It is usual that observations and research activities would be recorded in a field diary and a thematic content analysis of this would take place following the completion of the fieldwork. According to Conquergood (1989: vii), ethnography makes strangers we might never meet into friends. It prevents us from looking at fellow humans as mere specimens and retains the humanity and personality of subjects by allowing them to speak through our writing (Conquergood, 1989: vii). Ethnography’s strength lies in

the rich contextualisation of data, and so also in the common humanity that it creates and perceives. In Bourgois' case he used this method effectively to "place drug dealers and street-level criminals into their rightful position within the mainstream of U.S. society. They are not "exotic others" operating in an irrational netherworld" (Bourgois, 1996: 326).

Traditional ethnographic methods can be combined with other qualitative methods such as biographies, focus groups, and interviews. These are more likely to be independent of the social contexts in which they are produced or used and so should be supported by participant observation and prolonged time spent in the field. "It is this sense of social exploration and protracted investigation that gives ethnography its abiding and continuing character", making it very different from other forms of social research (Atkinson et al., 2001: 5).

The practice of combining different methodologies from both quantitative and qualitative disciplines produces a mixed methods ethnography. This prevents us as researchers from seeing something "through one lens only" and allows us to "recognize the limits and potential that each method offers" (Brannen and Moss, 2012: 789). Using mixed methods allowed me to see different things, to interrogate existing logics, and to "challenge accepted thinking" about how an ethnography should be undertaken (Brannen and Moss, 2012: 798).

In a traditional ethnography, it is common for ethnographers to approach their research topic with participants by sitting, watching, listening and learning from them and by asking questions. This approach to research:

"...implies lack of hurry, patience, and humility...the outsider is a student; and listening implies respect and learning. Many of the best insights come this way. Relaxed discussions reveal the questions outsiders do not know to ask, and open up the unexpected" (Chambers, 1983: 202).

I was keen to hold fast to the tenets of traditional ethnography whilst combining these techniques with less traditional, more formal methods such as focus groups and mapping exercises, to allow for triangulation and interrogation of results and findings.

The style of ethnographic writing and presentation varies, from realism where everything is written down and the researcher is at pains to portray the "native's point of view" (Van Maanen, 1988: 66), to confessional accounts where the ethnographer might portray "the social gaffes they commit or secrets they unearth in unlikely places" (Van Maanen, 1988: 77; Pool, 1994). Some accounts may even be

impressionistic and poetic in style (Van Maanen, 1988: 101; Conquergood, 1989). There is no fixed way of presenting ethnographic research.

Indeed, some ethnographies are particularly creative in their presentation of fieldwork data. In Conquergood's *Hmong Lifestory*, he reports the narrative in verses of between two and six lines (Conquergood, 1989). In his opinion, oral narratives are a form of dramatic poetry rather than prose. There is a great performative aspect to oral narratives which should not be forced into an inappropriate form just to fit our preconceptions. Furthermore, he says that "To acknowledge respectfully the beliefs and practices of people different from ourselves is simply human decency and deserves no special praise. To use these other beliefs to question our own assumptions is a step toward the development of a critical consciousness. Ultimately, a genuine dialogical encounter with 'the other' should deepen self-understanding" (Conquergood, 1989: 77). The use of ethnographic methods is, therefore, not just a means to gather data but a way to "enlarge and enrich ourselves through dialogue with others – others whose differences challenge our complacencies and open to us new boundaries of human experience in our shared world" (Conquergood, 1989: 77). These lived experiences impact considerably not just on the research and the ability to understand and question the data, but it also allows us to look for meanings in places where we might not have expected to find them.

### **The Role of the Ethnographer, and the Role of Emotions in Ethnography**

Moving from my status as a volunteer to that of a researcher in Kijiji had its confusions. People regularly came to me to ask me to 'promote' them, or to 'make a project' to bring money into the community. This was a source of continual frustration for me having seen the lack of benefit, and sometimes damage, done by NGO's within Kenya. Yet villagers believe 'projects' to be of great value to them. They struggle to understand why research is of any use because they want to see changes immediately. If the change is not instant, they are less interested. Trying to explain to them the value of research was difficult, but this did not seem to hamper willingness to participate. I suspect that the novelty of taking part in a focus group, or watching a white woman serving alcohol at the local informal bar may have encouraged participation.

A similar relationship between ethnographer and study site is discussed by Burbank in her ethnography of stress in an Aboriginal community in Australia (Burbank, 2011, 5). Reading her ethnography helped me to see that this is not a phenomenon unique to my research and other ethnographers have had to

negotiate changing roles within their study site. It demonstrated that my position, although difficult, was workable and had been overcome before by other ethnographers.

I often feel conflicted in my role as an ethnographer. People see me as a source of help, new knowledge and assistance. So what am I? An impartial observer? Do I help people as I see fit and when situations present themselves? I often feel like an intruder, as Scheper-Hughes did in her experiences of turning up on doorsteps to ask questions in a community where she was an outsider (2001: 21). I find myself referring to many of my participants as friends, as indeed Nici Nelson does in a paper from her research about female brewers in Muthare, Nairobi (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979: 79).

It is important to critically examine my role as 'friend' and researcher. Such considerable investment of time and emotion can be "a highly successful, if not lengthy, means of engaging" with participants (Hailey, in Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 91). However, "the mere presence of external facilitators [in this case, me as a researcher] can influence outcomes and the shape of discussion" (Hailey, in Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 94). Factors such as groupthink and the Abilene Paradox can mean that groups unintentionally agree with the researcher when they might not have done so on an individual basis (Cooke, in Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 108). Indeed, in focus group discussions even when I was trying not to give away my own opinions, it may be the case that participants were agreeing with what they perceived I wanted to hear, but unconsciously and without meaning to. It may therefore follow that if questioned individually they might have offered different opinions. People present themselves in different ways in different social situations, and such presentations can be seen as forms of performance (Goffman, 1959). This must be kept in mind when examining my interactions with people in Kijiji.

There are real benefits to being enmeshed in the community and the depth of detail and insight portrayed in my work demonstrates this. However, as Scheper-Hughes reminds me, "...my primary obligation was not to 'science' or to the academic community at large, but to the community – protecting the villagers' dignity, reserve, and sensitivities, and guarding them from embarrassment or emotional injury of any kind" (Scheper-Hughes, 2001: 68). I have tried to keep this in mind throughout my fieldwork and writing.

One considerable conflict that I have struggled with is my portrayal of the study site. It feels too clinical to call it this, and so I feel it more appropriate to refer to it as Kijiji. It is not a laboratory where social interactions are scrutinised. It is a real place, a group of villages, full of real people who are born, live, struggle to survive, procreate, and care deeply for each other. I worry that I am not showing the

community in its best light. I can see how somebody reading this would think that it is a horrible place full of violence, strange customs, drunken behaviour, laziness, and illegal brewing dens. This is not the case. The community is much more than that.. The reader should keep in mind that I am examining this society through a very narrow focus. As a visitor it would be hard to spot the drunken men asleep by the roadside in the middle of the day; the cows left wandering at night because the men are too busy out drinking to bring them home; the illegal brew dens hidden in remote spots out in the bush. I am *looking* for this sub-culture so I will be more attuned to notice these events and locations. Kijiji is a beautiful place with lush green forests on the mountainside, dramatic panoramas, vast empty bush, red soil, and welcoming people who are industrious, business minded, and many who are abstainers from alcohol, to whom I am forever grateful for allowing me to become part of their community in even a small way.

I am not just an observer and because of my established relationship with the people of Kijiji, I cannot be impartial. Furthermore, the knowledge of what I am researching will influence what people tell me and how they tell me things. Of course my prolonged exposure to people in Kijiji meant that I became a regular acquaintance to most and a friend to many, indeed often mine was the role of agony aunt because people knew I was unable to divulge their personal information to others in my role as researcher. This relationship with its complexities will have a bearing on what I see and what I am told.

Furthermore, merely 'gazing' or observing are the primary pursuits of a tourist. As an ethnographer I am keen to distance myself from this privilege. Once one moves away from mere observation, other senses must come to the fore, and I have included sensory observations other than what I saw, something which is increasingly common in contemporary ethnography (Thurnell-Read, 2011: 40). By utilizing sensory descriptions and experiences, a more dynamic picture evolves of the performative aspects of research and engagement with participants, and gives a first-hand insight into the research process. Similarly, the emotions I felt are useful analytical tools in ethnography (Thurnell-Read, 2011: 41), pointing towards sociological indicators in the sub-culture of home brew. "Through engaging with and reflecting on the senses of the field, the researcher can generate insights which go beyond those possible through visual observation" (Thurnell-Read, 2011: 41). The body becomes a tool for research and for epistemological understanding and analysis (Thurnell-Read, 2011: 42).

Numerous ethnographers have utilized sensory experience and emotive reactions to understand their personal positionality in the context of fieldwork (Thurnell-Read, 2011). Sharing embodied experiences with participants helps researchers to develop closer connections with them, something that I

continually tried to do throughout my research in my role as ethnographer. However, as Thurnell-Read found, despite these efforts, we will always remain in some senses outsiders, experiencing something which is only partial and personal to us. Shared experiences are crucial in nurturing relationships with participants. My primary role was that of the investigator and my experiences, although shared and embodied with participants, will remain a partial one.

This research is not intended to be representative of the Kijiji community as a whole. This is not the point of ethnography and the ethnographic process. It is representative of *these* people's lives, at *this* time, in *this* place. I am not trying to document every person in the community. I am not even trying to convince you that I have spoken to every Mama Pima in the area, because I have not. Many are very shy and aware of the illegality of their work and so do not want to speak openly about it. Much like Nici Nelson's work in Mathare in Nairobi<sup>2</sup>: due to the nature of the work and the "active opposition these women face from the outside society", they were sometimes unwilling to talk to me, and so the sample was not a random one (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979: 93). As with Nelson's work, trust was a major factor in whom I spoke to and what they told me.

### **Home Brew in the Media and Public Consciousness**

Reports appear regularly in Kenyan national newspapers telling us how many have died in the latest incident of a poisoned batch of home brew, and this has in the past been noted in research (Willis, 2003). Many people are said to have gone blind. One recent news article, entitled '*Binge drinker falls into sewage*' tells how a drunken man staggering in the main road in Ongata Rongai, Nairobi, "had taken too much liquor from the neighbouring Kware slums". He was "in the middle of the road, causing a traffic snarl-up" until he fell into the sewage outlet. Luckily for him, "Good Samaritans rescued him from the sewage" (Anon: The Nairobiian, 2013).

Further newspaper articles tell stories of misery in drinkers' families. A teenager hanged himself in Baringo after "a drinking spree". According to the newspaper, the incident "brings the number of alcohol-related deaths in the area to four." The boy, aged sixteen, "consumed local brew in the neighbouring Ngelecha village before he hanged himself" outside his home (Kiplagat, 2013). In another article, telling how a woman who had been abandoned by her "drunkard husband" committed suicide, President Uhuru Kenyatta promised to sack administrators who refuse to effectively fight alcoholism

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<sup>2</sup> Nelson wrote about women who produce homebrew



and drug abuse in Kenya (Anon, The Standard, 2013). Kenyatta said, “We will meet and each of you [administrators] will bring a report of what you have done in your respective areas. If you have been unable to deal with the menace then you should step aside for others who are willing to work” (Anon, The Standard, 2013).

It is clear that the problem of alcohol drinking and production in Kenya is of national importance and recognised at a governmental level. The woman who committed suicide, according to the news article, “led a life full of misery due to the drunken habits of the husband”. The local MP told the authorities that “they have a day to close the den and arrest the owners or he will lead his constituents in its demolition”. Furthermore, a Senator “has asked the youth to shun drinking...[and] asked the provincial administrators to crackdown on illicit brewers, terming them a threat to the development and future of the county” (Anon, The Standard, 2013). Nyandarua County has even gone to the extent of annulling all bar licenses to curb the negative effects of alcohol consumption in the area, “local leaders [expressed] concern over the increase in the consumption of the illicit brews...” so the County Government revoked all bar licenses. The Deputy Governor said, “We have noticed that these drinks sold to residents are composed of methanol and other poisons and this has turned our youths into zombies”. Furthermore, the article reports that “brewers were taking advantage of youth in the area who are jobless to sell low cost alcohol”. The chairman of a local initiative said that “cases of alcoholism in the county were gradually increasing and pointed an accusing finger at the provincial administration, saying that they had been unable to tame the vice”. A local chief died following a drinking spree, precipitating the action (Munyeki, 2013).

In Nakuru, the houses of suspected brewers were burnt down by irate residents (Anon, The Standard, 2013). The brewers were “intercepted by the public as they were transporting over 100 litres of chang’aa”. Also in Nakuru county, Chiefs were warned by the County Commissioner to stop allowing illicit liquor to be produced. The article (Nation correspondent, Daily Nation 2013) shows a photograph of home brew being poured out into the gutter. Weapons were discovered in a “house-cum-bar” in a slum area. The house was a drinking den, indicating that drinking dens are sometimes used as trading places for illicit goods. An article from The Nairobiian indicates how widespread the problem of alcoholism is in Kenya, describing how “Alcoholism has become a national phenomenon as the youth across the country have made drinking a national passion” (Anon, The Nairobiian, 2013).

These reports are not uncommon. Home brew is clearly a problem across Kenya. In May 2014, the newspapers were full of reports of deaths from a poisoned batch of brew. 105 people died and 113

were hospitalised across several districts (NACADA, 2014). It is often said to me by Kenyans, there's a place just near here where *the same thing happens*. "It's everywhere, that stuff". Cooked or distilled, it is found in every corner of Kenya. This phenomenon is clear from the number of newspaper articles concerning home brew, alcoholism, and brewers.

Within this sample of media reports it is possible to identify some of the attitudes that I hope to influence in the writing of this thesis. These attitudes present a skewed picture of what is happening in Kenya and perpetuate uninformed ideas about brewers and drinkers and the social worlds they inhabit. The articles always discuss the criminal activities surrounding brewing, including the brewing itself, and the women (or sometimes men) who brew it. They tend to describe the brewers and drinkers as deviant, feckless or lawbreakers who have little regard for the harm they inflict upon their families. Often the drinkers are described as being lazy and the brewers unmotivated to get a 'proper' job. Usually it is the brewers who are blamed for the excessive levels of alcohol consumed by drinkers. This misery clearly does occur and is common, but if we only approach alcohol as a social pathology we will have an imbalanced understanding of it.

The media rarely consider, for example, the larger structural<sup>3</sup> forces which might be influencing or impacting the behaviour of people within the sub-culture of home brew. These structural forces, and the understanding of their influence on individuals, is a key argument of this thesis. Structural violence is where state level policies or practices impact negatively on individuals and their wellbeing, causing or contributing to poverty, deprivation or hardships. Two key authors of this argument are Phillippe Bourgois and Paul Farmer. Structural violence is a theme running throughout this thesis, explaining the importance of contextualizing drinking behaviours within a broader frame of reference. Part of this broader frame of reference is the historical context of home brew in Kenya.

### **Historical Narratives of Home Brew in Kenya**

*"Nostalgia is denial - denial of the painful present... the name for this denial is Golden Age Thinking - the erroneous notion that a different time period is better than the one ones living in - it's a flaw in the romantic imagination of those people who find it difficult to cope with the present."*

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<sup>3</sup> Structural, in that this is violence specifically related to government or social 'structures' which maintain or cause poverty, illness, or reduce wellbeing in some way.

Another important aspect of this thesis is the narrative of ‘golden age thinking’. This term, coined by Owen Wilson’s character in the 2012 Woody Allen movie *Midnight in Paris*, is the idea that life was better in the past, as he explains in the above quote.

In the case of the inhabitants of the study site, I am not implying that this notion is entirely erroneous but merely presenting the idea that we all have a tendency to view the past with rose-tinted spectacles. It is important to keep this in mind when reading what participants told me about their historical recollections and/or notions of home brew.

Historically, home brew was used as a key part of rituals and ceremonies in East Africa. It played an important role in celebrating births, marriages, circumcision ceremonies, and at work parties, funerals, and meetings of elders (Read, 1956; Harris, 1986). It was brewed by women (Ogot, 1966) and there were strong proscriptions determining who could drink, when, and how much.

There are several key pieces of work to consider here which contribute significantly to my understanding of the historical narratives of home brew in Kenya, and these are vital when considering the significance of participants’ portrayals of the past. Haugerud (1995) describes how the changes in traditional beer brewing and consumption began with the spread of wage labour. Young men under colonial rule were able to purchase their own beer, or save up their cash to produce their own, instead of ascribing to traditional proscriptions (Haugerud, 1995: 87). She says that drinking patterns changed dramatically under colonial rule and the authority of elders gave way to the authority of chiefs and district officials appointed by the colonial government. This meant that those traditional roles surrounding brewing and drinking beer were undermined.

The push to make brewing beer in Kenya illegal began in earnest with the advent of the Moi era. Beer banning *barazas*, where politicians hyped their audiences into supporting the banning of beer and distillates produced informally, were one way of pushing the political agenda of President Moi. He touted an ascetic image, drawing on popular stereotypes of abused women, families living in poverty, and alcoholic men neglecting their families (Haugerud, 1995: 86). If people supported the banning of brewing local brew, then they were perceived to be loyal to the Moi regime (Haugerud, 1995: 91). These *barazas* would shame and humiliate drinkers and create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and perceived temperance, yet in reality, “changing habits of beer consumption were a symptom not a cause of tensions between the generations” (Haugerud, 1995: 87). Fears of social disorder and drunkenness were increased and perpetuated.

Similarly, there are a number of articles and essays by Justin Willis supporting the notion that home brewed alcohol in Kenya, and in other East African countries, has undergone significant changes in its role within society during and after the colonial period. Among the Nyakusa of Tanzania, the balance of power shifted from elders to chiefs prior to independence, and this disruption caused changes in authority. In the wake of this, and numerous other colonial events, the public practice of a number of rituals decreased, leading to a curtailment in the use of beer in such rituals (Willis, 2001:382). Beer selling and production had, in colonial East Africa, always been ambiguous and marginal, and in 1949 a permit system for beer selling was introduced by colonial powers. This firmly established the nature of beer as something that should be controlled, and that authorities had power over. Beer drinking in the past was associated with elder men and rituals, but it came to be associated with commercial brews and potential danger (Willis, 2001).

In another of Willis' papers, he discusses how the contemporary and post-colonial uncertainty over the law regarding informal brews has allowed power dynamics to lead to bribery and corruption (Willis, 2003). Home brews are perceived by the government as an affront to development, modernity, respectability and orderliness (Willis, 2004: 245). Informal beers or distillates can be legal in one area but illegal in another. This 'fuzzy' status indicates that the state is politically factionalized and uncertain regarding traditional brews (Willis, 2003: 259). When historically men gained more control over resources, women began to brew and sell alcohol and this became the "single most widespread form of income" (Willis, 1999: 354). It was transformed from a ritually significant practice, to a potential vice.

Much of my knowledge of traditional brew and rituals historically in Kijiji came from an ethnography by Grace Gredys Harris, first written for her doctorate in the 1970's, but published as an ethnography in 1986, exploring the traditional religious practices of the area. Her fieldwork took place in the Taita Hills, not too far from Kijiji. In Harris's ethnography she describes the fundamental purpose of the key rituals of Taita religion which is to 'cast out anger'. It was in this book that I first learnt about the skull shrines.

In Taita Hills, according to Harris, the dead elders of the villages would be buried for a period of time after they died and subsequently their skulls would be exhumed. These skulls would then be taken by a traditional healer and placed in a sacred cave. There are many caves in these hills, which are regarded as consecrated ground by local people: only certain people go there since it was the place where all the elders finally rested. This was also where one must go if there was a problem in the village, if anyone was sick, or if one needed to pray to the elders for their continued benevolence and blessings.

From what I had already learned from Harris, and from conversations with the village elders in Kijiji, I knew about the ritual uses of alcohol historically. If a man was sick, he must surely have something bad within his heart, local belief would say. The man would first have to visit the *mganga*, or traditional healer, to request assistance and to act as an intermediary between himself and the ancestors. Beer would be brewed. This was essential for the ensuing ritual. This beer would be carried in a pot up to the sacred cave of the ancestors by the *mganga*, accompanied by the sick man. Upon reaching the shrine, the *mganga* would say prayers, requesting the ancestors to look kindly upon this man. Then the man would take the beer into his mouth and spit it over the skulls of the ancestors, thereby removing what is bad within himself, his heart, and his body, giving it instead in the form of a beer-offering to the ancestors. Any remaining beer would be left in the clay pot in the shrine as an offering. These practices I learned initially from Harris's ethnography but I subsequently found out more from specific local knowledge supplied by the village elders.

I asked about this ritual in my focus group discussions and found that only the older people had heard of it. *Kutasa!* They would shout. Haaiiiiiiii! How do you know that?! *Kutasa*, meaning to spit in Taita, is the name for this ritual and they were always amazed to hear me say it. I only knew the word by reading about it from Harris's ethnography but it was as if by using this term I had discovered a kind of key to the details of the ritual. People would then explain it to me in as much detail as they knew.

One old man told me that he really believed in the ritual because when he was younger, his daughter had been missing for nine years. Eventually, after almost giving up hope of her return, he went with a *mganga* to perform *kutasa* at one of the skull shrines and the following day she returned. Many of the older women remembered the ritual being performed and said that until relatively recently it was a regular occurrence. Even, they said, if you did not want to climb all the way up to the shrines, it was possible to perform the ritual at the graveside of your ancestor if they were buried close to the homestead. Some said that it was performed with locally brewed beer and others said they recalled a type of liquid mixed with charcoal and water. The younger focus group participants had never heard of it, leading me to believe that around twenty years ago most people stopped believing in the ability of *kutasa* to help them with their problems.

I got the opportunity to climb the mountain to one of the caves. This allowed me to understand a little more about the historical uses of local brew in Kijiji and the meaning which would have, in the 'old days', been associated with it. It was not for getting drunk, or for behaving badly. It had a status as a spiritual liquid, almost like a medicine, and was part of the accoutrements of the *mganga* and his ability to

perform miracles: to bring back missing daughters for example. As such it would have been viewed with much more respect and wariness than it is today where its status within local society is much altered. It was clear that the strength of these historically vital rituals and beliefs are being weakened drastically under the social norms of the present.



**Above:** Skulls of the ancestors at the skull shrine

**Below:** a skull (left) marks the entrance to the cave (right)



### In The Shadow Of The Mountain

The study site is located in Coast Province in the South of Kenya and consists of a group of villages on the lower slopes of a mountain. The mountain itself is verdant with cloud forest, but the surrounding villages struggle for water. The villages are generally sprawling and with no formal boundary between each of them - their *shamba* (farms) stretching out to the dry plains beyond. The people in Kijiji are mainly farmers or herdsman, with goats, cattle, and fat tailed sheep. They grow maize, various bean varieties, cassava, *sukuma wiki* (kale)<sup>4</sup> and mangos. They often supplement their diet by keeping chickens for eggs and meat, and some people keep rabbits for slaughter.

The inhabitants live in compounds, which are groups of houses occupied by members of the same, but extended family, sometimes described as a 'household'. This term is in itself problematic since such groupings are mostly psychological constructs rather than genuine reflections of the reality of living arrangements in this context – a 'household' is much more fluid than a fixed notion of dwelling arrangements allows for and does not necessarily encompass the true extent of networks (Randall and Coast, 2015). But, generally speaking, a husband and wife might live with their baby in the same house, but a little distance away across the clearing their elder son might reside with his grandmother. Many people living in close proximity are related, and help or social life is always just down the path.

Houses are made of mud wattle on a wooden frame, with a grass thatch or, now more commonly, *mabati* (corrugated iron) roof. Local middle class families can afford to build larger houses from cement with glass in the windows and impressively painted exteriors.

Most families own at least one *shamba* (farm). This can be anything from a few square meters to many acres depending on wealth and status. Crops are often unsuccessful due to low levels of rainfall and poor soil fertility. Because of this, people are dependent on other sources of subsistence and encouraging diversification and a move towards off-farm incomes. There is widespread unemployment with little or no industry in the area, little being produced, and no major employer. It is a rural, geographically isolated place. There is a long history of aid in the area, with an established World Vision program of food handouts in exchange for people working to improve their farming practices.

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<sup>4</sup> Sukuma wiki literally translates as "push the week" – it is a cheap vegetable which can be afforded when there is very little money left at the end of the week.

In one of the villages, the economic hub of the area, there is a small health centre with a skeleton staff, shops, *hoteli* (road-side cafes), and a handful of bars selling bottled spirits, beers, cigarettes and sodas. There are numerous churches, including Pentecostal, Anglican, and Methodist denominations. There are butchers, vegetable sellers, second-hand clothes dealers, tailors, a hardware store, and shoe repairers. There is a local chief and sub-chief looking after the social and administrative affairs of the location. The rest of the villages tend to be much more dispersed and compounds are further away from each other. There is less of a village centre, with some villages having none at all.

The main village is also the centre of a growing trade in gemstones. In the semi-arid savannah area between Kijiji and the Tanzanian border there is a productive seam of semi-precious stones including garnets, green, yellow and pink tourmaline, and rubies. Government employees or other wealthy individuals own mining concessions, and many workers come from other parts of Kenya or Tanzania to dig for gemstones. This influx of other tribes sometimes causes tensions, especially in conjunction with the Somali community in Kijiji.

Somalis come to herd their cattle, often illegally on the community land, ranches, and inside the national park. The Somali community is not welcome in the village, but fear of guns and beatings prevents locals from taking action against them, and it is rumoured that there is considerable Somali involvement in elephant poaching in the area. There is now a Somali-built mosque, school, and 'shopping centre' where very few locals (non-Somali) purchase goods. General feeling among Kenyans is very anti-Somali, especially since Kenya has sent armed forces into Somalia to try to deal with the group Al-Shabaab who, it is claimed, are responsible for numerous terrorist attacks across the country in recent years. The village has, therefore, a transient community of men who come to herd cattle or work in the mines, who drink *pombe ya kienyeji* and use sex workers. In 2013 the Kenyan army GSU (General Service Unit) were drafted in to remove the illegal Somalis from the area and now there are just a few remaining. Their shops lie largely abandoned.

This is the place in which I have been living and learning about the women brewers who dominate this social setting. Their brew dens often serve as meeting points for people involved in these varied livelihood strategies. This thesis is the story of the daily lives of brewers, the lives of the drinkers of brew, and the social world they inhabit. From these stories, it will examine the role played by structural violence in behaviours considered locally to be harmful. The purpose of the thesis is to redefine such behaviour in the broader frame of reference of structural violence, poverty and destitution.



## Chapter One

### A Review of the Literature

#### **Part One: Alcohol in Africa**

##### **Introduction**

This section of the literature review will discuss key research in an African context to attempt to establish the extent of alcohol use. Arguments surrounding the accuracy of statistical data will be presented. The law in Kenya regarding alcohol production and consumption will be briefly outlined. Traditions surrounding the production and consumption of alcohol in Africa will be considered, since these formerly and currently play a major role in cultural proscriptions about alcohol, defining who can or cannot drink, and when. The burden of alcohol and health will be discussed in order to define the health problems specific to an African context and the potential barriers of dealing with them, including key literature detailing communicable and non-communicable diseases associated with alcohol use. Although this thesis is not a picture of home brew viewed through a public health lens, it is important at this stage to outline the public health literature regarding alcohol in Africa in order to provide a wider context in which to situate my work.

##### **The Extent of Alcohol Use in Africa, and the Trouble with Statistical Data**

In this section, I will outline the reasons why we still do not know the extent of alcohol consumption in Africa, and why existing statistical data are problematic.

There is a paucity of recent population level data concerning health throughout Africa, and therefore finding data on levels of alcohol consumption is difficult. Any data in existence should be viewed with caution. According to the existing and most recent literature on the subject, the most extensive problem with survey data of any kind is either over or under reporting (Sandefur and Glassman, 2015; Jerven and Johnston, 2015). “Systematic discrepancies” exist between data from different sources, ostensibly reporting on the same key indicators of development (Sandefur and Glassman, 2015: 116). DHS (Demographic and Health Survey) data are more strictly standardized and the surveys more rigorous in their implementation than official national statistics in African countries, because it is sponsored by USAID who oversee fieldwork and analysis (Sandefur and Glassman, 2015: 117). For these

reasons, DHS data are perceived as being more accurate than other forms of statistical data in these contexts.

With government-led national data collection, much of the work is incentivized, and/or self-reported. In incentivized cases, administrators and data collectors are paid for their performance so of course their incentive is to report in their own favour. As Sandefur and Glassman discuss, this can, and indeed does, lead to corruption, misreporting, and undermining of the integrity of such data, leading us to question the very basics of development data. Kenya and Rwanda are described as “two of the worst offenders” in terms of data inaccuracy (Sandefur and Glassman, 2015).

These studies indicate that NGO’s and other external powers have usurped state functions (Broch-Due, 2005), in this particular case in terms of the state’s responsibility to produce accurate, reliable statistical data to demonstrate development progress or lack thereof. It is suggested that better financial resources for survey work, if put in place, would improve veracity of data and build the capacity of countries so that they can produce better quality data in the future (Carletto et al., 2015). However, this is seen as necessary in conjunction with a fresh look at the incentives that existing donor data requirements offer (Jerven and Johnston, 2015). Ultimately, it is the responsibility of governments and nations to re-establish control over the accuracy of their own statistics and data.

As well as these very clear discrepancies between government and non-government data sets, there are major issues with survey design at a fundamental level. Any data which are self-reported, or gathered through rapid assessment by researchers, are less likely to be accurate (CGAP, 2015, Randall and Coast, 2015). This should be kept in mind when critically assessing the existing data on alcohol in Africa. Although it may not be reliable, these are the only data available to us.

Alcohol is a particular problem for young men, with research indicating that trauma deaths in young men are often alcohol related (Odhiambo et al., 2013). The data for this research were gathered using verbal autopsy reports which were completed by local health workers when visiting the family of the deceased. Although self-reported, the health worker would be local and possibly more trusted than an outsider. The research found that in many cases the families were unsure of the exact cause of death of their family member and may have been unaware of the true extent of their drinking. However, the research showed that there was a strong correlation between accidental deaths and alcohol.

Unrecorded alcohol consumption in Kenya is estimated at 5 litres of pure alcohol per capita per annum for population older than 15 years (WHO, 2004). Beer was the most commonly consumed alcoholic beverage, followed by spirits (WHO, 2004; WHO, 2014). The WHO states that 51.5% of respondents were concerned about alcohol use in their households. 20% of respondents were male frequent drinkers, versus just 2% of female respondents. This strongly indicates that men in Kenya use alcohol to a greater extent than women. Adolescent males were five times more likely to consume alcohol than girls, and that 18% of patients attending primary health centres were alcohol dependent. Of these, the vast majority were men (WHO, 2004). Despite these very official sounding statistics, much WHO data are collected in-country by local enumerators and research assistants. The enumerators may well be underestimating to portray their country in a more favourable light.

Young people's levels of alcohol consumption are a cause for particular concern in Sub-Saharan Africa (Page and Hall, 2009; Atwoli et al., 2011). Research estimates that in Uganda, around 5-10% of the entire population is dependent on alcohol, and that alcohol abuse affects 70% either directly or indirectly (Nazarius and Rogers, 2005). According to McCurdy et al. (2007) the increase in alcohol consumption during the latter half of the last century may well have been influenced by socioeconomic changes. Despite a general paucity of data, it is clear from that which is available that alcohol use in Sub-Saharan Africa is widespread and damaging.

In Kenya, alcohol use is defined as a major problem (NACADA, 2010). The recorded alcohol per capita consumption for Kenya from 2006-2010 was listed as 'stable', with very little increase or decrease over this period (WHO, 2014: 41). In a national study of alcohol in Kenya, 79% of male respondents aged 25-34 were reported to have very high levels of consumption<sup>5</sup>. Women consistently consumed less than men (NACADA, 2010). Social issues arising from alcohol consumption in Kenya include inability to meet financial obligations, suicides, road traffic incidents, multiple sexual partners, and domestic violence (NACADA, 2010). A report from Kenya conducted in 2007 found that attitudes were positive towards legal substances, with 69% of respondents holding a positive attitude to traditional brews (NACADA, 2007). It is estimated that 13% of people from all Kenyan provinces were current drinkers, and the median age of first use of traditional brew was just 9 years (NACADA, 2007). Around 40% of alcohol users were reported to misuse family resources to pay for their habit. The report states that despite the willingness for users to change their behaviour, there will be little success due to the lack of availability

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<sup>5</sup> Although it is not clarified what the report means by 'very high levels' of alcohol consumption

of treatment and rehabilitation services (NACADA, 2007). This indicates a need for locally-focused intervention strategies.

NACADA data, as explained in the Introduction to this thesis, present us with a particular set of issues arising from the nature of the organisation itself and the purpose of their research output. Their data support a historical and contemporary narrative of “modern-good, tradition-bad” in Kenyan politics (Haugerud, 1995). NACADA data lends fuel to this pseudo-scientific fire, which is, crudely put, propaganda to support state objectives.

It is thought that 80% of alcohol consumed in Kenya is informally produced or home brewed (McCurdy et al., 2007) yet this cannot be confirmed by reliable statistical data. It is certain that traditional brews hold a large proportion of the alcohol market in Africa (Willis, 2002). Accurately recording alcohol consumption is difficult where home brews are concerned since measures are not standardised in the same way as commercial alcohol (Willis, 2002; Martinez et al., 2011; Macintyre and Bloss, 2011).

In the most recent WHO report, data shows a decrease in alcohol consumption levels since the 1970's to the present day but also states that there is no national monitoring system for alcohol consumption in Kenya (WHO, 2014: 111). This makes it difficult to find accurate, current data that can be considered reliable, and causes us to further question the sources of NACADA and other nationwide statistical information. It makes data used by McCurdy et al (2007) highly questionable and makes it very difficult for the state to accurately assess for themselves the extent of the harmful effects of alcohol on their country.

The NACADA report from May 2014 shows a steady rise in the number of deaths from illicit brews and the report may have been prompted by the recent spate of home brew related deaths. The data come from areas of central Kenya, meaning that it is not representative of the country as a whole, but this is the area where most reports of recent ‘illicit brew’ related deaths have occurred. From the specific cases noted in the report, deaths are often linked to home brews or to ‘second generation’ drinks - usually spirits produced and packaged cheaply, sold commercially to local markets (Willis, 2003).

Within the NACADA report there are no details of how the data were collected. It is implied that data were gathered by each county and relayed at a provincial level, similar to other studies conducted by NACADA in the past. This does not give us great confidence in the accuracy of the data because we still do not know who collected it or how it was conducted, particularly since we know that Kenya has no national monitoring of alcohol and health (WHO, 2014).

Papas et al (2010: 836) investigated the alcohol content of traditional brew in Eldoret, Kenya, and documented evidence that there is no “standard drink”. Many drinkers reported spending around 500/= per day (the equivalent of around £4, which is a significant amount relative to average daily wages, which for an informal labourer would be around 350/=) at home brew drinking establishments (Papas et al, 2010: 837). Alcohol content of each sample was much higher than standard drinks in the UK – a typical serving of *chang’aa* was equal to 3.5 UK standard drinks, and *busaa* (distilled spirit drink) was equal to 2.3 UK standard drinks (Papas et al, 2010: 842). They found that all brewers in their chosen area were female without exception. They report a selection of serving vessels for home brew, including Jam tins and tin mugs, further compounding the problem of determining the amount of alcohol consumed, since not only do batches differ in alcohol content, but the vessels in which the beverage is served are not of a standard size (Papas et al., 2010). This must be understood when considering alcohol use in Africa. A large proportion of consumption may go unreported, as there is no standard size or quantity of beverage serving.

Data documenting the true extent of alcohol production, sale and consumption in sub-Saharan Africa are limited and dated. The methods of data collection tend to be from surveys or questionnaires since this is a practical and fast way to collect large amounts of data. With the exception of studies by Papas (2010) and Willis (2002) data tend to be self-reported and so less reliable. The current situation may be quite different but because of the lack of data it is impossible to know for sure.

It is important to have accurate data and a comprehensive understanding regarding alcohol and the extent of consumption in sub-Saharan Africa because it is in these countries where the associated harms are likely to be more significant due to compounding factors such as poorer access to health care and health education.

### **Trauma and Alcohol in Africa**

Alcohol consumption is a major cause of deaths and injuries in Sub-Saharan Africa with a proportionately higher mortality rate than elsewhere globally of 2% of all deaths being alcohol related, versus 1% in the rest of the world (Murray and Lopez, 1997: 1440). Alcohol in Sub-Saharan Africa is strongly associated with road traffic incidents (RTI’s). There were a high number of reports of drunkenness while driving since there is no specific law or policy concerning drink driving in Nigeria (Dimah and Gire, 2005). In Kenya, it is thought that 85% of RTI’s are due to human error, with a strong possibility that alcohol was the underlying contributing factor (WHO, 2004; Odero, 1998). Following

road traffic accidents, 23.4% of those admitted to hospital in Eldoret had alcohol in their blood, and 12.2% were intoxicated. Almost all drivers affected were male aged 25-34 or 45-54 years (WHO, 2004).

In South Africa, there is further evidence reported that alcohol is a causal factor for RTI's, and that one of the root causes of violent and accidental deaths is thought to be alcohol abuse (Garrib et al., 2011). Other violent or trauma related deaths such as assault are closely associated with alcohol consumption, and a study in Kenya found that a third of all injured adult respondents aged 15 or above had consumed alcohol shortly before their injury occurring (Odero et al., 2007). In a regional hospital in South Africa, a study of RTI victims was undertaken and of 305 patients assessed, 8 were under the influence of alcohol (Parkinson et al., 2013). These data can be considered reliable since they were collected using patients' medical records. However, there is little recent research available regarding trauma and alcohol in Africa.

Alcohol is closely associated with domestic violence. Husbands who consumed alcohol significantly increased the risk of a wife experiencing physical or sexual assault (Kimuna and Djamba, 2008). In Western Kenya, research from a rural health centre found that alcohol use was common among individuals presenting with violent injuries, and that men were considerably more likely to have used alcohol than women, and 45% of victims of violent injuries were thought to have used alcohol prior to the injury event (Ranney et al., 2009).

Abbink, who undertook an ethnographic study of alcohol in Ethiopia, recalls a conversation where he told one group that he was going to visit another group, their response being: "What? Why do you want to go to these people? They are difficult and violent, and especially when they drink beer the whole day. You will have no food, no bed, nothing. And are you going to drink that beer of [produced by] them?" (Abbink, 1997: 7). Within rural Africa, alcohol is known to be a catalyst for violent behaviours.

It is clear that alcohol is a major factor in trauma, accidents, and violent death in Africa, contributing substantially to the public health burden, and that more current, reliable data is urgently required. It is not just about the need for data to inform intervention strategies. The problems caused by a lack of data are much more complex and without it we are unable to fully understand what is happening in Africa regarding alcohol and health. We need reliable data, and we need to know how these data have been collected. This is essential before even thinking about intervention strategies.

## **Alcohol and the Burden of Disease in Africa**

I want to, as briefly as possible, outline the public health literature on alcohol and Africa to demonstrate the broader debates and received wisdom. This is important to contextualize my approach to the subject and my decision to distance myself from these approaches and narratives, and to take an ethnographic approach.

### **Alcohol and Tuberculosis in Africa**

Alcohol consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa is linked to infectious diseases, causing a substantial burden of harm on the continent. Two of the main communicable diseases with consistent associations to alcohol are TB and HIV.

The link between alcohol and TB is thought to be due to poor hygiene in informal drinking environments where customers sit in close proximity to each other, and where many individuals have compromised immune systems (Rehm and Parry, 2009; Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). This creates a perfect environment for the spread of disease. Alcohol is responsible for impairment of the immune system (Szabo, 1997), and this, combined with a close, unhygienic drinking setting, enables TB to spread readily in such environments. Customers, brewers and sellers are living and working in often rapidly urbanising rural or peri-urban areas where HIV is common. Research has shown that factors leading to alcohol abuse also lead to increases in HIV infection (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). Individuals with HIV have reduced immunity, allowing for easier spread of TB. In Samburu, Isiolo and Marsabit in northern Kenya, brewing was linked to TB – 10% of women in a survey of TB infected individuals were brewers, whilst a further 18% were from households where brewing took place (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011).

In Kenya, female proprietors of informal bars are especially at risk from communicable diseases since they are working in an unhygienic environment in close proximity to customers, usually in a smoky 'kitchen'. Research has indicated that they might have sex with customers for a little extra money (Kawewe, 2001; Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). They may also be drinkers themselves (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). The prolonged and chronic exposure that these women have to smoke is a cause of respiratory disease, arresting nutrient absorption, and depressing immunity (Szabo, 1997). Lack of water prevented cups and bottles from being washed, further contributing to the spread of TB and communicable diseases (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). 2010 estimates were that around 9% of TB cases in people aged over 15 years in Kenya, were attributable to alcohol in some way (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011).

## **Alcohol, HIV/AIDS, and Sexual Harms in Africa**

Research has demonstrated that “Sub-Saharan Africa carries a massive dual burden of HIV and alcohol disease, and these pandemics are inextricably linked” (Chersich et al., 2009: 1). Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest burden of HIV/AIDS globally (Kalichman et al., 2007). HIV infection and risky sexual behaviour has been consistently and clearly associated with alcohol brewing and consumption in Africa (Hargreaves et al, 2002; Edwards and Whiting, 2004; Zablotska et al., 2006; Luginaah, 2008; Chersich et al., 2009; Othieno et al, 2009; Ranney et al, 2009; Martinez et al, 2011). Some studies link alcohol use to reduced adherence to anti-retroviral therapy (Rehm and Parry, 2009; Otieno et al., 2009). Studies have shown that individuals are less likely to engage in safe sex after drinking (Dimah and Gire, 2005). Risky sexual behaviour due to loss of inhibitions following harmful drinking behaviour is clearly a major factor for HIV infection rates in Africa.

Alcohol was found to play a key role in sexual assaults, and women who had been sexually assaulted were significantly more likely to have consumed alcohol prior to the assault event (Kalichman and Simbayi, 2004). Drinkers of home brew in Ghana exhibited risky and violent behaviours, and women described men as transformed from hardworking and loyal, to abusive and violent (Luginaah, 2008: 811). Alcohol was used by young men to allow them to rape girls without them struggling due to their level of intoxication. Teenage pregnancies became more common and girls would be beaten up if they refused to have unprotected sex. Unsafe, casual and sometimes violent sexual relations were blamed on the local gin in Ghana (Luginaah, 2008). Disempowerment of men<sup>6</sup> was also found to be a factor leading to sexual risk taking (Silberschmidt, 2001). This has implications for HIV transmission. Alcohol is used as a currency in transactional sex and sexual exchange, and in some settings, both men and women understand that acceptance of an alcoholic beverage bought by a man for a woman implies consent for sexual favours (Watt et al., 2012).

Chersich et al. examined the use of alcohol among female sex workers in Kenya, and the link between alcohol consumption, risky sexual behaviour, STI's and sexual violence. They found that “...drinking patterns in much of Africa are characterised by sporadic heavy episodes of drinking, often in the form of weekend binge drinking” (Chersich et al., 2007:764). Male prostitutes working in Kenya were more likely to be victims of interpersonal violence if alcohol was a factor (Luchters et al., 2011), indicating that

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<sup>6</sup> Meaning when men feel unable to fulfill the roles socially or traditionally expected of them, leaving them with feelings of hopelessness.



sex workers put themselves at risk of sexual violence when consuming alcohol excessively, regardless of gender.

A study examining data concerning the prevalence of alcohol use and abstinence in African women found that the differences between African countries were vast (Martinez et al., 2011). In Malawi just 1% of women drank versus 30% in Burkina Faso. A range of harms and public health issues caused by or strongly associated with alcohol use were documented: mental health problems, substance dependence, depression, breast cancer, HIV infection and transmission, and domestic violence. The study found that alcohol was a high risk factor in the transmission of HIV. They found that single people with a higher socioeconomic status and higher levels of education were more likely to be regular users of alcohol, either in terms of binge drinking or regular high level users. This is surprising since it is a departure from the more typical link between poverty and alcohol use.

Hargreaves et al. examine this link between socioeconomic status and HIV transmission rates which Martinez et al mention. Their study, undertaken in Kisumu, Kenya, tested around 2000 women and men (approximately the same number of each) and of these, 19.8% of men and 30.2% of women tested positive for HIV. "Drinking alcohol...was significantly associated with HIV infection for both males and females aged 25-49 years" (Hargreaves et al, 2002:798).

### **Alcohol and Tradition in Africa**

In this section, ethnographic literature will be presented which discusses the role of alcohol in African societies both past and present, and how this is changing. The role of tradition and alcohol in sub-Saharan Africa is vital for my research because the problems being experienced now stem from generations of culture and tradition surrounding alcohol, and a colonial and post-colonial history of stigmatization of those who brew and sell home brew (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979). Alcohol was and is central to African societies, and in the past it held a positive role in cementing social relationships. During the colonial era, alcohol was deemed to be the cause of "deviant behaviour" and a threat to the social order (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979: 93) resulting in moves to curtail production and consumption, most recently culminating in the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act. This context is essential in understanding the current problems facing the relationship between alcohol and public health in Africa.

## Ceremonial Uses of Alcohol

Nazarius and Rogers' study found that in Uganda alcohol's ceremonial functions included consumption at births, deaths, marriages and circumcision celebrations (Nazarius and Rogers, 2005: 17). Sorghum beer in Uganda is a primary source of nutrition due to its porridge-like consistency and high calorific content (Dancause et al., 2010).

In Kenya home brew was used to celebrate births. "When he was told of the birth he sent word that the beer should be given freely to people to celebrate. The brew was made from honey so we called the baby Nzuki [Kiswahili for 'bee']" (Ndambuki and Robertson, 2000: 46). This is still the case today although this practice may have become less common. Dimah and Gire propose that alcohol is significantly different from other addictive substances because it is legal, socially acceptable, and seen as culturally significant: "Important life transitions and events...are usually celebrated with a generous supply of alcohol" (Dimah and Gire, 2005: 45). This is also the case in Uganda, where sorghum beer was brewed for births, weddings, funerals, for feeding work groups, and as ceremonial ancestral offerings (Dancause et al., 2010: 1123).

Use of traditional brews to celebrate an occasion is also recorded by Pool (1994). He notes that palm wine is significant for almost every social occasion in Cameroon: "...a calabash of palm wine [was] an indispensable part of any social visit in Tabenken, and indeed, as I was to discover, an indispensable part of life in general (newborn infants are often given palm wine before they receive their first breast milk, and it is sprinkled on the ground before social drinking so that the ancestors will not go thirsty)" (Pool, 1994: 7).

Heath et al. also describe the ceremonial connotations and significance of home brew. Historically, "...home brew was important for male socialising, female status and independence (as brewers and sellers), as a gift to both gods and ancestors, and in various other important ways. As it was progressively displaced by factory-made bottled beer, women lost status and wealth, men lost an important form of recreation and socialisation, and links with ancestral and other spirits have been significantly attenuated" (Heath et al, 2003: 156). Pool explains that traditional brews are part of everyday social niceties, and that "As a sign of hospitality the *fon* [chief] would have to provide us, and anyone else who happened to accompany us, with palm wine. Such visits mean free drinking and word spreads quickly" (Pool, 1994: 43).

In Ethiopia, the type of beer determines its ritual usage. One type of beer is very thick and is used as a substitute for a meal, especially when travelling. It is used for 'work parties', where people come together to help to prepare land for planting, or to harvest a crop. If home brew is provided then more people will come to help. It is known as a field inauguration (Abbink, 1997: 16). Home brew is also used as a reconciliatory drink – "The two opponents have to drink it cheek to cheek from one calabash..." (Abbink, 1997: 17). Abbink explains that some of the spirits which are more complicated to produce, requiring considerable skill, are often given as gifts. This exchange is seen as a sign of status and wealth. It is reported that in Malawi people of different classes would drink together in the same house but from different containers to denote their social status (Read, 1956: 82).

Pool explains that ritual and social prescription surrounds the practice and performance of drinking traditional brews in a Cameroonian village:

"Pius returned with the 'calabash', which turned out to be a plastic jerry can with a label reading 'DANGER, weed killer: this container is not to be used for any other purpose and should be disposed of after use', and three glasses. From the jerry can he poured himself a full glass of the white, sour smelling liquid and drank it down in one gulp. He then filled our glasses...All social drinking starts with the host drinking the first glass before offering the wine to his guests. This is a precaution against accusations of poisoning. If the host does not taste the wine first and one of his guests becomes sick then the host will immediately be suspected of having poisoned him. However, if he tastes the wine first in the presence of other guests, no one can accuse him of deliberate poisoning" (Pool, 1994: 7).

Problems of hygiene and 'poisonings' are commonly associated with home brews in Africa, and the link to communicable diseases such as tuberculosis has been discussed in the literature (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011). Poisonings are regularly reported in Kenyan media, and noted as contributing to the public health burden of alcohol in Kenya (NACADA, 2010; NACADA 2014). For this reason, it is common that brewers are seen to publicly try their brew before serving it to others.

Read (1956), whose study was conducted in Nyasaland (now Malawi), further supports the notion that locally brewed beer was historically consumed as part of ritual or ceremonial occasions among the Ngoni. Despite the age of this ethnography it is relevant in particular to shed light on changing roles of home brew in African societies. Other writers have commented that traditions of consumption of home brew during ceremonies or rituals have disappeared (or are disappearing) leading to greater problems of drunken behaviour (Dimah and Gire, 2005; Heath et al, 2003).

Read describes how beer brewing, consumption, and dancing go hand in hand in Ngoni society. If a celebration was planned (this could include an important visitor, marriage, funeral or birth celebration)

then beer would be 'cooked' in advance. On the day of the celebration a dance would take place. She describes how a visit from the most important chief in the area was a cause worthy of beer brewing and dancing (Read, 1956: 60,66).

'Royal' women were not required to undertake any of the household duties expected of lower status women, and instead spent their days "...dressing their hair..." or going down to the river to wash. "They also drank beer and some gruel, and afterwards danced *ngoma* in the house where the beer was brewed...They began to drink in the morning until the afternoon, but not in the evening" (Read, 1956: 82). In this case, home brewed beer is used to denote social status and the performance of drinking sets the drinkers apart from other people in the village. Beer also played a vital role in offerings to ancestors at a funeral.

Changes to the traditional role of beer brewing and drinking in Ngoni society came with Christianity, although Read demonstrates that some sections of society maintained their traditions concerning alcohol and ceremonies:

"No beer was made in the household as it was against the rules of the church to which they belonged. In other Ngoni households of subordinate chiefs and *alumuzana* [royal clan] who were not Christian, the brewing of beer was a time-absorbing part of the household tasks and was shared by the different wives under the supervision of the big house...When he knew beforehand that guests were coming who would expect beer to be offered to them as part of the Paramount's hospitality, he told his *induna* [official] to see that beer was made in one of the village households..." (Read, 1956: 107).

This change in the role of alcohol in African societies, from a drink with ritual significance, to a commodity and a source of income, is typical of changing attitudes and changing beliefs during and after the colonial era (Haugerud, 1995).

### **Alcohol: Social Taboos, Proscriptions, and Gender**

Different varieties of alcoholic beverages have particular cultural proscriptions, restrictions, and connotations. In Ethiopia, Abbink found that some of the drinks were classed as harmless with a low alcohol content. They are difficult to produce and require considerable skill; those which are classed as 'local' beers, are thick and similar in consistency to a fluid porridge, made by women, and generally classed as uncivilised; and finally, there are very strong spirits considered to be 'bad' or 'harmful' drinks, which take skill and special equipment to produce (Abbink, 1997). The beer itself holds meaning for the community, although it would be impossible to generalise, as these meanings will be culturally specific and localised.

In Ethiopia, “Alcohol, with its apparent potential for generating trouble, is used as a theme to belittle, patronise, and differentiate people, also...in the context of divergent ethnocultural traditions and exposure to state narratives of ‘civilisation’ and governance” (Abbink, 1997: 7). Abbink says that alcohol is in many cases assumed to be harmful in local discourses. Colonial rejections of traditional home brews have given commercial alcohols greater prestige than home brewed beers and spirits (Abbink, 1997: 10), which has encouraged more people to aspire to drinking bottled beers and spirits over traditional beers.

In central Nigeria, drunkenness was not tolerated or socially acceptable, but “Ironically, although drunkenness is discouraged, consumption of large quantities of alcohol, so long as it is not associated with behavioural evidence of intoxication, is generally seen as desirable” (Dimah and Gire, 2005: 46). The study found that consumption of alcohol is a highly prevalent social activity, often among people with secondary education or lower, and drinking is not done with spouses but with friends.

Women are stigmatised for using alcohol (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979). Traditionally it was rare for African women to drink but it seems that more binge drinking and regular high consumption is becoming common (Martinez et al., 2011). However, some research challenges the source of these ‘traditional’ female stereotypes, instead suggesting that in Kenya they were more recently introduced by the rhetoric of the Moi era when the president’s ascetic predilection encouraged the widespread adoption of such ideals (Haugerud, 1995: 86).

In some African societies the senior women in a household (since there were traditionally several wives) were the ones to decide when to brew the beer. This was an important job because it was considered vital “...for entertaining important visitors whose coming was expected so that beer could be prepared in advance...[The senior women] went out to greet visitors, to go to the beer drink, to take part in the dances, and to perform the ritual connected with births, deaths and marriages” (Read, 1956: 125). In Read’s study, women often consumed alcohol. Abbink also found that it was women who controlled the production of alcoholic beverages (Abbink, 1997).

Women were less likely to be drinkers in Kenya, but more likely to be Mama Pimas (from *Kupima*, meaning to measure: women who brew and serve the beer). A study by Papas et al. found all brewers and Mama Pimas in their study site to be female (Papas et al, 2010). In contrast, drinking was a regular occurrence for women in Ngoni society, but this depended on age sets. Younger women “...were inclined to keep apart from the older women, sometimes on the grounds that they did not drink the full-

strength beer, and therefore clustered round a pot of 'sweet' beer when they knocked off work" (Read, 1956: 151). It was both age and sex that determined who could drink in Read's study site.

However, it has been consistently reported that drinkers in Africa are more likely to be male than females (McCurdy et al., 2007; NACADA, 2007, 2010; Dancause et al., 2010; Papas et al., 2010). "In many places, alcohol consumption is associated with masculinity: men meeting for drinks in the evening are increasingly common" (McCurdy et al., 2007). This is often done in a public space, such as the centre of the village, "...where men congregated to sit and talk and drink beer" (Read, 1956: 101).

It is clear that attitudes to alcohol have undergone a dramatic change, and in a study by Edwards and Whiting from Kenya, "old women admitted to missing elements of the past now gone. They missed the occasions upon which a woman could drink beer and eat meat, the beauty of their youth, and the dances" (Edwards and Whiting, 2004: 205). This may indeed be true, that things were better in the past, but it may be an example of golden age thinking. Women reported that they felt a need to form closer bonds with each other. "They had many reasons to be keenly aware of the value of female solidarity, since their men often spent their leisure time among other men, socialising in the bars in town..." (Edwards and Whiting, 2004: 115). The changing attitudes to alcohol, especially the breakdown in social proscriptions and taboos, meant that gender roles were reversed: women became the main breadwinners, assuming roles previously fulfilled by the men in the community. The study reported that women became agents of social change as business women and entrepreneurs in their communities (Edwards and Whiting, 2004).

This change in gender roles has been reported (by Luginaah and Dakubo, for example) as the underlying cause of drinking in rural Africa. Men, unable to make their farms or traditional income generation strategies pay, turn to drinking to relieve 'stress' and as solace. This in turn prevents them from fulfilling basic culturally prescribed gender roles, for example, being the main breadwinner in the family, decision making, and acting as respected patriarchs, with traditional responsibilities in their community. They lose their identity, feel helpless and inadequate, and have low self-esteem, and become addicts (Luginaah and Dakubo, 2003: 1757). Furthermore, this behaviour is forcing women not only to take on more work to fill the gap left by the men of the community, but also to turn to drink themselves as a coping mechanism for this stress (Luginaah and Dakubo, 2003: 1757). Dynamics between age sets are changing and the community is also in turmoil, but research into this is lacking from the body of literature.

Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmental activist, said, "I think that when we talk about the position of women in Africa and see how miserable it is, quite often we forget that these miserable women are married to miserable men" (Wangari Maathai, in Gordon, 1995). The focus has in the past been female disempowerment, but where alcohol is concerned male disempowerment is taking hold of individuals and is equally destructive for a community's welfare and health (Silberschmidt, 2001).

Dancause et al. conducted a longitudinal study in Uganda, with fieldwork beginning in the late 1990's. The Karimojong people made a liquid beer to sell, but retained the porridge-like sorghum beer for their primary source of nutrition and ritual use (Dancause et al., 2010). Beer was regularly given to children to aid sleeping and to help them to "forget about their hunger" (Dancause et al., 2010: 1126). Individuals working for brewers were often paid in beer, and families who did not own cattle usually participated in beer brewing or selling to make ends meet. The use of beer for rituals and ceremonies was now competing with commercialised brewing: "...elders would have been preferentially given special traditional beer in the past, but now women are conflicted between social obligations and the risk of losing profits" (Dancause et al., 2010: 1128).

Willis and Mutisya's study of 'Budget Drinking', which documents the social realities and settings of home brew drinking in two towns (one in coastal, and one in central Kenya), describes how most of the owners and proprietors of the bars were female. They talk about the lack of research into home brew, despite it being of primary concern in the media and national consciousness. They question the ability of selling and producing local brew to lift women out of poverty (something which Nelson says that with careful work, women can in fact do) but they say that such businesses provide women with economic autonomy (Willis and Mutisya, 2009). The women who were interviewed were mostly divorced or widowed so home brew provided them with an income with which to support their families.

With the colonial period came changing attitudes to alcohol and the breakdown of social proscriptions and taboos leading to the production of alcohol for sale. Coupled with these changes in attitude, was an increased in wage labour: "With the spread of wage labour, young men who were once prohibited from drinking acquired the cash to purchase their own beer" (Haugerud, 1995: 87). In Ethiopia, substantial profits could be made on market days when many people travel from outlying areas to visit the town or village centre, and so there was ample opportunity to sell home brew to these visitors (Abbink, 1997: 15). Indeed, in the coastal area where Willis and Mutisya's research took place, the large numbers of people passing through will undoubtedly have a bearing on the success of the business. Abbink found that tastes were changing too, with stronger spirits becoming increasingly popular: "...[people] simply

like it because of its physical effect: giving (the illusion of) warmth and strength, at least initially” (Abbink, 1997: 18).

### **The Alcohol Law in Kenya, and Breaking It**

As I briefly outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, in 2010, the Kenyan government passed a bill to legalise the production and sale of some home brews in licensed settings, under certain regulations and policies, as a response to the harms associated with unregulated brews. This has been a topic of regular discussion during my fieldwork, in personal discussions with various stakeholders, and was controversial given the recent implementation of the Act when I began my fieldwork, around a year after it was introduced.

The Act mainly focused on home brews, or informally brewed alcoholic beverages. The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act, commonly known as the Mutotho Law (after the Naivasha MP who proposed the bill, who is now the head of NACADA) limits the hours of drinking of alcoholic beverages to six hours on week days (5pm-11pm) and 9 hours on weekends (2pm-11pm). It stipulates that any homemade or traditional brew must be hygienically packaged in a sealed bottle with the appropriate health warnings clearly displayed on the bottle, and the nutritional content. Furthermore, beverages should be inspected and certified by the Kenyan Bureau of Standards. The Act defined permitted alcoholic content of these beverages, and stipulated that they could not be sold to under 18's. The drinks are supposed to be packaged in glass bottles.

There is a problematic lack of clarity surrounding the 2010 law, not least in regard to *mnazi*. *Mnazi*, a palm wine, is openly consumed at the coast in Kenya and yet is classed as a home brew. It is given no specific mention in the Act and so are we to assume that it is legal, or illegal? People are afraid of their businesses being closed at will and at the discretion of officials. This lack of clarity leaves the situation open to interpretation and therefore bribery is widespread. It is clear that this ‘fuzziness’ of the law surrounding home brew has been an issue since independence, with Nelson describing this exact situation in her 1979 paper. Furthermore, Haugerud explains that in the lifetimes of the various post-independence governments, bans and laws have been changed and introduced on numerous occasions, as a function to legitimize new regimes at times of political transition (Haugerud, 1995: 99). Despite the initial enthusiasm for such moves, “subsequent enforcement of [bans] was sporadic and selective (Haugerud, 1995: 91) and often the public support for such initiatives ultimately waned. This lack of clarity or understanding maintains high levels of uncertainty.



Macintyre and Bloss say that the Act is unlikely to be adequately implemented due to the secretive nature of home brewing and the number and location of these casual venues from which the brew is sold. Quite simply, it is not feasible for small-scale producers to adhere to these laws (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011), encouraging brewers to be more secretive and making bribery of government officials their only option for the survival of their businesses. There is a paucity of literature investigating the success or failure of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act and since this is considered a significant issue for public health in Kenya, it is vital that impartial research is conducted in this area to assess the current situation and make recommendations for increased efficacy, if indeed such a ban is to be utilized.

Willis and Mutisya found that *mnazi*, which at the time of their writing, was in actual fact legal, was rarely sold from a licensed bar and there was little regard given to the lack of necessary permits (Willis and Mutisya, 2009). It was freely sold and produced in coastal Kenya, as I have also found in Kijiji.

Mbilinyi says that “a growing number of women are actively rejecting ‘old’ forms of male dominance” (Mbilinyi, 1984: 296). Mbilinyi, whose research mirrors observations recorded by Nelson in 1979, reports that:

“Women beer brewers confront police and other state officials all the time, seeking bribes one day, and violently spilling their product on another – and they go right on brewing and selling home brew beer. It pays more for the labour input than farming as a poor peasant, and has a ready market in the community” (Mbilinyi, 1984: 295).

This is a fairly common occurrence today, with regular press reports documenting the spilling of vast quantities of the brew, and goes some way to explaining how and why brewers feel a need to flout the law in Kenya regarding traditional alcohol production, sale and consumption.

In the ethnography of the life of a Kenyan woman, by Ndambuki and Robertson, Berida was a very poor woman trying to support her family through farming in Machakos district in Kenya. Berida found life became even harder in the drought because of food scarcity. These factors led her to begin producing and selling home brew:

“I began in business by brewing beer to sell when we were at Mwala. If I had bought sugar at ksh.2 I could brew and then sell a 1-kilo tin at ksh.4. I would put water and sugar in it and stir, also *miatine* [fruits of *Kigelia Africana*]. You brewed secretly so no one saw. It might be stopped for some time when people were drinking too much. The chief or assistant chief might stop it. But the efforts to stop it did not always succeed. You could brew secretly and then sell to people in cups, hiding it. Then they went home quietly instead of singing drunkenly so that they were not caught. They are usually noisy because they are arrogant and it’s a habit; you can be quiet like I am if I drink something” (Ndambuki and Robertson, 2000: 60).

By making money from brewing, Berida was able to save up and start a bigger business offering bigger profits, and she became a dealer in dried staples such as beans and peas. Brewing allowed her a step up in her local economy. This is supported by Dancause et al who found that during times of poor harvests, women brewed and sold beer to supplement incomes since it was inexpensive to set up, and yielded higher returns more quickly than other informal activities (Dancause et al., 2010). Macintyre and Bloss also observe that brewing is a means of providing a better life for oneself and one's family, and Nelson found that, with careful planning, women could improve their financial situations through brewing and selling alcohol (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979). Macintyre and Bloss found that brewers sent their children to good schools and improved their living conditions using money made from brewing. This sometimes caused tensions within the community because the money had come from illicit means (Macintyre and Bloss, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

It is clear from the literature that alcohol in Africa is a significant contributing factor to the burden of harm for public health. Alcohol is of ritual significance in many parts of the continent, and was and still is used in a ceremonial capacity. Alcohol is considered to be detrimental in the transmission of HIV and STI's due to loss of inhibitions and increased sexual risk behaviours. Alcohol has been linked to sex work and increased risk taking. Lack of access to health facilities further compounds this problem and contributes to the HIV epidemic that Africa is facing.

Public health literature demonstrates that alcohol is a source of morbidity and mortality in Africa. In Kenya it is unclear (due to insufficient research) whether the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act is enforceable. Existing research claims that it is untenable but further research is required to assess the current status of the Act and its ability to reduce alcohol harms. Home brew has been, since the colonial period in Kenya, a controversial subject used regularly as a tool for political leverage, encouraging loyalty to regimes through large scale opposition to its sale and production (Haugerud, 1995). Structural violence is a major factor in the sub culture of home brew in Africa, and continuing to produce 'illicit' brew is both defiance of political hegemony, and an act of entrepreneurship in an environment where there are few economic options.

However, all of this is said with a caveat: the data that we are working with are weak. The exact nature of the problem is less obvious than we would understand from the public debate, and we do not have a

very good forum for understanding it. What we can say for sure is that it is clear that alcohol is problematic, but that our understanding of the nature of the problem is limited by the data we have available to us.

## **Part Two: Kijiji**

### **Introduction**

Kijiji is a rural area, geographically isolated, with most families farming small plots and suffering the effects of drought conditions. There is considerable human-wildlife conflict. The area is under-researched, and this section of the literature review will discuss the available relevant studies, and briefly discuss other research which has been conducted here in the past. This section aims to demonstrate why further research in Kijiji and similar areas is important, and to help address the gap in the literature.

### **Kijiji: A Review of the Literature**

There is scant research conducted in Kijiji itself, and even less anthropological research. One anthropologist, Kay Milton, conducted her doctoral fieldwork in a neighbouring village in 1977-1979. Her insights from this time were later included in her book *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory*. Milton describes the tensions between traditional and Christian beliefs in the community, as well as the problems of youth reportedly showing less respect to their elders, pregnancy outside of marriage, and no longer being able to expect help from kin without payment (Milton, 1996: 121). Milton's reporting of tensions between the traditional and the modern concur with the reports from Bravman (1998) and Harris (1986), both of which were studies conducted in the neighbouring Taita Hills.

Harris says if a person died a violent death, they were considered to become a 'shade', which would be dangerous if not placated with offerings, or if the appropriate rituals were not performed. In these cases, elaborate rituals involving beer were conducted. *Kutasa* with beer was performed on the path leading to the *Ngomenyi* (skull shrine), and it was performed at the house of the subject by a group of male participants. A calabash of beer was passed around and each man took some in his mouth. When everyone had some, they would all spit the beer together, offering prayers to the shade for him to cast

the anger out of his heart, allowing his descendants to live peacefully. The remaining beer would then be shared out among the men present (Harris, 1986: 86-7).

For an older man, a ritual might be performed to enable him to live the remaining years of his life peacefully. An ox would be killed in a specific way and beer played a primary role in this ritual:

“Men other than elders took in and spat out ordinary beer while elders used aged beer (*nyarigi*) from the lineage shrine centre; most women used unfermented cane juice but some past childbearing used beer...The other non-elders got their beer from a common pot in which beer contributed by the subject was mixed with beer requested of kinsmen and brought by the latter’s unmarried daughters” (Harris, 1986: 88).

Women who took part in the ritual of *kutasa* spat their beer or unfermented cane juice over the hearth stones while reciting prayers to the spirits who might cause the retiring man trouble. Women’s drinking was determined by their age: elder women would be allowed to use beer and younger women would use unfermented cane juice. The remaining beer was then given as an offering to the spirits.

If a husband and wife had problems in their marriage, or their children had been sick or died, the wife was required to brew beer for the husband to perform *kutasa*, and the wife would perform *kutasa* with unfermented cane juice. Beer was brewed and drunk as a part of rainmaking rituals and rituals to ensure a good harvest, during which it was important to add beer which each family produced to the common pot. This is a visual illustration of the communal nature of the benefits that Taita would gain from a successful rainmaking or harvest ritual.

Harris writes in the past tense, and the ethnography reads like an historical account. This, she explains, is because of the time that has elapsed since her research was conducted: another generation has grown up since (more than one, now), and she explains that politics has changed the Taita district. She says: “The picture given here is of Taita religion in the middle of the twentieth century, as we observed it during fieldwork” (Harris, 1986: vii). Things have changed. Taita has changed. It would be misleading to assume that home-made beers are a part of contemporary Taita religious practices. The usefulness of this ethnography in the context of this literature review is in the evidence it presents for the use of home brewed beer as a crucial part of past Taita religious ritual and performance.

Harris’s research was conducted for her PhD from 1950-1952 in the main Taita Hills massif of Dabida<sup>7</sup>. The focus of the research is on the religious beliefs, and although some detail of the role of the alcohol is

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<sup>7</sup> Dawida, or Davida, depending on which spelling you use

provided, this is not discussed in any great depth, nor the production of it, indicating a gap in knowledge of locally brewed alcohol in this region. The evidence presented here indicates that home brewed alcohol was a central part of important religious rituals, lending credence and vital context to this PhD research.

Bravman's ethnographic social history of the Taita Hills also presents evidence to indicate that women could not take alcoholic beer when taking part in a *kutasa* ritual, and his research was conducted more recently than Harris's. He says that this was because women could not be elders and did not have the same knowledge, hence the privilege of beer was denied to them. It was considered too powerful (Bravman, 1998: 41). Speaking in 1988, an interviewee told Bravman of his progressive ideals: "Those elders who were *Watasi* [the people who spit], they spent a lot of time making prayers with beer...I do not say they were just drunks, it was that drinking was a part of praying..." (Bravman, 1998: 188). He reports that from the 1930's onwards, Christianity was associated with progression and development, and the traditional religious practices were associated with drunkenness and laziness. It was perceived that Christian men worked harder than non-Christian men (Bravman, 1998). It is clear that this is a community experiencing times of change where alcohol plays a potentially crucial role in maintaining identities of tradition and a sense of belonging.

Smith's ethnography of development, witchcraft and social change in the Taita Hills is also relevant to research conducted in Kijiji. He found that the growth of Pentecostal churches in the region, and the re-emergence of witchcraft and possessions were phenomena which indicated an internal struggle to maintain identity in the face of government development schemes (Smith, 2008). This struggle manifested itself in misunderstood and misguided community members who had been taken advantage of becoming "cynical, alcoholic, or corrupt" (Smith, 2008: 242). This situation was created, perhaps unwittingly, by development schemes which encouraged individualism. The overarching monolithic discourse of development hid the realities of "political abuse and economic inequality" (Smith, 2008: 243). Smith argues that "It is only through such close ethnography that we can see politics in Africa as an exciting moral drama in which original efforts to produce social justice and development are fuelled by the injustice and maldevelopment of corrupt regimes, and flourish because of the incompleteness of any single governing authority" (Smith, 2008: 243). The use of witchcraft in Taita was a way for people to disrupt "the flow of historical time to create alternative futures" and to "sabotage visions of order" (Smith, 2008: 247). Put simply, witchcraft and widespread Pentecostalism enabled Wataita to respond to their current situation by reasserting their identity as a community and control of their own futures.

## **Conclusion**

The available literature presents a picture of changing social, economic, cultural and political dynamics. Alcohol has in the past played a key role in traditional beliefs for the Wataita, and this is an important factor to consider when examining contemporary alcohol production and consumption in the area. The historical functions of alcohol in the region, and the growth of Pentecostalism, are important for the background to this thesis in providing context for alcohol and its uses today.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Unmasking of Ethnographic Authority:**

#### **The Ups and Downs of Conducting Ethnographic Research in a Rural Kenyan Village**

*“I am openly on the side of the destitute sick and have never sought to represent myself as some sort of neutral party. (Indeed, I have argued that such ‘neutrality’ most often serves, wittingly or unwittingly, as smokescreen or apology for the structural violence described here).”*

*(Paul Farmer, 2003: 26).*

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will discuss the problems faced when using ethnographic methods, hoping they would be more sympathetic to local culture and with the anticipation that they would be more acceptable to local ways of thinking and doing. I will explain the different methods used to conduct the fieldwork and discuss the relevant ethical problems and principles faced when using these methods in a rural Kenyan community. I want to make the ways of conducting ethnography more explicit in order to give clarity to my methodological approach.

#### **‘Doing’ Ethnography and the Characteristics of an Ethnographic Method**

##### **The Ethnographic Voice**

I decided to write this thesis in a confessional-impressionist style because by using a more accessible style, papers written from this thesis will in turn be more accessible. I want this to be an engaging piece of work for people from varied backgrounds and feel that academic language can limit the audience.

Confessional tales are highly personal with self-absorbed mandates, explicit about the process of fieldwork, and portraying the character flaws and mistakes of the fieldworker (Van Maanen, 1988: 73). The confessional tale unmask the fieldwork setting, describing cultural knowledge through the personal experience of the fieldworker. The reader can identify with what is happening and the thoughts and feelings of the researcher. It is a difficult thing to write because it is hard for the writer to maintain “in print this paradoxical, if not schizophrenic, attitude toward the group observed” as the feelings of the researcher change depending on numerous internal and external factors (Van Maanen, 1988: 77).

Impressionist tales almost go hand-in-hand with confessional tales. These are not about what usually happens, but about what *rarely* happens (Van Maanen, 1988: 101). They present the process of 'doing' fieldwork, allowing the audience to see, feel and hear what the researcher experienced. It is, says Van Maanen, like having a ringside seat. This style of ethnography reads like a novel.

Realist tales are the most widely used form of writing in ethnographies (Van Maanen, 1988: 45). They are mostly third person narratives that present the 'data' with almost no mention of the author. They tend to be a bit dry and appeal only to those with a keen interest in the area under study. There is characteristically attention to minute detail and writers in this style are at pains to produce an account of the 'everyday', giving a supposedly 'representative' account of daily life in the culture. The process of fieldwork and the role of the researcher are all too often hidden from the reader of an ethnography. Ethnography should be transparent and show these important factors in conducting research rather than presenting the data as if the researcher and the fieldwork process did not exist. It is important to show how 'data' were collected and by whom so that the readers can judge for themselves whether the methods are 'good enough', and where any biases might lie. The Confessional-Impressionist style is an accepted, although seldom utilised form of ethnographic expression, since it is criticized by many as sounding too personal and not analytical as academic writings should be.

In the case of Kijiji, ethnographic methods were facilitated because of my existing, established relationship with people. The methods are not so contrived as more formal methods allowing for more natural everyday conversational interactions with people who I already know. It allowed for these relationships to progress and to develop in a much more organic way without the awkwardness of interviewing or questionnaires. It allowed for trust to develop and for me to see life simply happening, as it happens every day, or as close to this as possible under the watchful eye of the resident anthropologist. As I discussed earlier, my presence will have been a factor in what people told me, how much they told me, and what they chose to leave out (Cooke, in Cooke and Kothari, 2001). My established relationships with some of the village elders and the chief will further have influenced what I was permitted to see and experience, but by using methods which allow for more natural social interactions I hope to have in part mitigated some of these effects.

Ethnographic methods made it easier to adapt to new situations and to meet and include new people within the sphere of the research without having to design new interview questions or dramatically alter a questionnaire. It made it simpler to negotiate and renegotiate my role as researcher as new situations



arose. I asked people to teach me about their lives and this more humble approach, typical of ethnography, turns the researcher into the student and the participant is in control.

Ethnographers conduct their research, data collection, and undertake analysis all at once, rather than these being “separately scheduled parts of the research...The process is dialectic, not linear” (Agar, 1996: 62). It is not about hypothesis testing (Agar, 1996: 65), it is creative (Agar, 1996: 66), and it is certainly not a “2 week fact finding tour” because such rapid research does little more than scratch the surface (Agar, 1996: 111). Some early ethnographic research has been criticised as nothing more than “low level generalisations” with insufficient neutrality (Clifford, 1983: 122). Furthermore, Clifford says that it was not until anthropologists like Malinowski that participant observation and ethnography was established as a valid technique (Clifford, 1983: 123).

One of the strengths of ethnography is that it honours “diversity in an increasingly homogenous world” (Van Maanen, 1988: xiv) and seeks to document the intricate ways of understanding of individuals, groups and indigenous perspectives. Mosse has been critical of conventional social science methods which he accuses of being “Bound to tight time frames...” forcing them to depend “...substantially upon working assumptions” (Mosse, 2005: 29). Pottier agrees, stating that:

“An ethnographic understanding of local conditions reduces the risk that false assumptions creep in...The risk is high at the stage of ‘problem identification’, especially given the often limited time...Put crudely, not everything is visible from the open window of a Land Cruiser.” (Pottier, 1993: 3)

Pottier makes the point that a less in-depth method of data collection might miss vital meanings (Pottier, 1993: 4). Indeed, these insights from ethnographic studies may have “enormous implications for intervention and prevention programs” in the context of alcohol harm research (Marshall et al., 2001). For example, from a social science or public health perspective, alcohol might be perceived as a harm. Ethnography on the other hand would look at these behaviours within their cultural context, in order to ascertain social norms before defining behaviours as harmful (Hunt and Barker, 2001).

Ethnography is a method by which a richness of detail can be recorded in such a way as to be both understandable to the researchers, and the subjects of the research (Pottier et al, 1993; Cohen and Odhiambo, 1989). In order to do this, ethnographers usually spend long periods of time in the study site relative to quantitative or other qualitative researchers. Bourgois justifies this time, saying that:

“Only by establishing long-term relationships based on trust can one begin to ask provocative personal questions, and expect thoughtful, serious answers. Ethnographers usually live in the

communities they study, and they establish long-term, organic relationships with the people they write about. In other words, in order to collect “accurate data”, ethnographers violate the canons of positivist research; we become intimately involved with the people we study.” (Bourgois, 1996: 13)

The use of first instead of third person is characteristic of ethnography. Writing in the third person, common throughout social science research, presents the study “as if the scientist(s) who carried out the work had no involvement in the process” (Webb, 1992: 748). Webb goes on to argue that “Using this form of language conveys, and is intended to convey, an impression that the ideas being discussed have a neutral, value-free, impartial basis” (Webb, 1992: 748). This of course cannot be true since the researcher’s presence alone will impact on the attitudes and behaviours of participants. “Writing in the third person is therefore a form of deception in which the thinking of scientists does not appear, and they are obliterated as active agents in the construction of knowledge” (Webb, 1992: 749).

How then can we define rigour, if we admit that the researcher impacts the outcomes of a research encounter? It is a question that anthropologists aim to answer through postmodernist approaches of *credibility* and *reflexivity*. By describing or interpreting an experience or situation faithfully so that it is easily recognisable by people who experienced it, anthropologists and ethnographers in particular aim to give a true and honest account of their role in the research (Webb, 1992: 750). Ethnographies are highly personal accounts, and “What happens within the research will be strongly influenced by the personal investment which researchers make in the project. Their contribution will be unique, and events would inevitably turn out differently if other researchers had taken part in the project. This being the case, the deception involved in writing up such a research report in the distanced third person would be enormous” (Webb, 1992: 751).

“In order that other researchers can follow the decision trail, the development of events in the study must be presented so that their logic may be understood, and the original researcher must describe and justify precisely what was done and how this was accomplished” (Webb, 1992: 750). Using the third person “...constitutes a form of mystification in which the social elements of the research encounter are hidden from scrutiny, preventing readers from evaluating the adequacy of the research” (Webb, 1992: 750). Including emotions in fieldwork accounts and in analysis contribute to a deeper level of contextualization, as well as providing important insights into the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participants (Thurnell-Read, 2011). Ethnographies are subjective, not objective, and Webb describes writing in the first person as “essential” for the credibility of such research, or indeed for any qualitative research (Webb, 1992: 750). In this way, credible ethnographic accounts can be constructed with the necessary level of scientific rigour.

Reflexive research is also a part of establishing rigour in ethnography. Unlike other research methods, with ethnography the researcher engages with the research subjects and the readers of the research (Singer, 1993). An ethnographer must not be detached – there is not the same distance between the researcher and the subjects of the research as there is with traditional social science or quantitative research (Webb, 1992: 750), and there is characteristically “collaboration with the Other” (Singer, 1993: 15). In reflexive research, participants may be asked to comment on the progression of the research, or their portrayal within it, since Western academic hegemony could be perceived as “neo-colonial dominance” or “imperialism by other means” (Singer, 1993: 16). This is another demonstration of the openness and honesty characteristic of ethnographies where the researcher will often admit to numerous cultural or social *faux pas* which she has committed (Van Maanen, 1988; Singer, 1993).

The use of reflexivity within ethnographic fieldwork, promoting the “indigenization of theory” allows the ‘other’ to have a say and share opinions with the researcher (Singer, 1993: 16). This is not a role reversal as such, but certainly it can be described as a relationship on a more equal footing than that which is characteristic of other research methods. Singer says “the research is not the problem *per se*, but rather the replication of exploitive social relations through outsider-centred research on low income or otherwise disadvantaged populations struggling for self-determination” (Singer, 1993: 19).

From these key papers and books, I have established the defining characteristics of an ethnographic method. The depth of insight gained by using ethnographic methods has been made clear, as well as the ability to include and engage with the participants throughout the research process. However, ethnographic research does take time. It is an investment of time with participants which allows for trust to be built and relationships to be formed. Contemporary ethnography attempts to break down the barriers to understanding between researcher and participant, and dismisses the Western academic and intellectual hegemony common to other methods of data collection which draw a clear line between the academic and the research subjects.

### **The Choice of a Writing Style: A Confessional-Impressionist Tale**

This is not an unusual way to present my ethnographic data. Other anthropologists also “...draw heavily on personal experience. [As with my research] These are things I have seen with my own eyes. They are partial accounts, but they are eye-witness accounts” (Farmer, 2003: 27). It is these eyewitness accounts which make the art of ethnography so personal and enlightening, two of the traits particularly

associated with such accounts. As long as we are aware that they are *partial* and *personal*, we can accept them and judge them as such.

“The omniscient and invisible Western narrator with a totalising vision of the exotic other was a pathetic anthropologist, a product of Enlightenment discourse arguing, at best, for a kinder, gentler administration of colonialism” (Bourgois, in Sanford et al., 2006: 9). This is not surprising since ethnography has its roots in colonialism. Bourgois says that during the last thirty years changes in the method of doing and styles of writing ethnographic accounts have helped to unmask the ethnographic process, making for greater transparency and ease of judging the worth of such accounts (Bourgois, in Sanford et al., 2006: 9). Writings in what Van Maanen refers to as the Confessional style (Van Maanen, 1988: 73) have indeed contributed to our ease of engaging with ethnographic accounts.

Confessional-impressionist ethnographies use language perhaps more commonly associated with novels or journalistic articles to evoke the atmosphere of a place, time, space and event in order that the reader may become absorbed into the world inhabited by the people or group concerned and, at one time, the ethnographer. The language allows the reader to see what the ethnographer saw, to experience what the ethnographer experienced, all the confusions, sudden realisations, relationships being built, and the wonders of the time spent ‘in the field’.

I feel that confessional accounts go hand in hand with impressionist tales since “confessional writings concern how the fieldworker’s life was lived upriver amongst the natives. They are concerned primarily with how the fieldwork odyssey was accomplished by the researcher” (Van Maanen, 1988: 75). Such rich description and honesty of everyday doings and actions of an ethnographer in the field work together to display openly the agency of the researcher and lay bare the processes of fieldwork.

Confessional tales “attempt to explicitly demystify fieldwork or participant-observation by showing how the technique is practiced in the field” (Van Maanen 1988: 73). Confessional tales are written in “highly personalised styles” with “self-absorbed mandates” (Van Maanen 1988: 73). Such tales tend to express “Considerable worry...about the obvious lack of a theory of description that might help legitimise an enterprise premised on the delicate good faith assumption, the assumed self-evident value of exploring little-known social worlds, and the presumptive use of natural science notions concerning the power of observation” (Van Maanen, 1988: 74). However, “...the reader who wonders why the confessional writers don’t do their perverse, self-centred, anxiety work in private and come forward with an ethnographic fact or two are, quite frankly, missing the point” (Van Maanen, 1988: 93).

The use of these alternative styles of writing and presenting ethnography are further explored by Goodall (2000). He says that such tales which show the personal experiences and emotions of the ethnographer are almost autobiographical in style (Goodall, 2000: 90) but that because of this break with tradition, it is possible that such writings could be, and indeed are, dismissed out of hand by some academics because it is “virtually indistinguishable from writing done in the name of *literary journalism* or *creative nonfiction*” (Denzin, 1997, in Goodall, 2000: 77). He says that some arguments might question the actual nature and validity of confessional and/or impressionist tales as ethnographic writing and representation. Clair (2003) demonstrates that many ethnographers are writing in more creative and novel styles, using poetry, personal narratives, and journalistic styles to present their research in contemporary ways, including Conquergood who utilized poetic forms and presentation to tell his *Hmong Life Story*.

Like Scheper-Hughes, I present my “hopefully good-enough ethnography...as close to the bone as it was experienced, hairline fractures and all” (Scheper-Hughes, 1992: 30). All of this description of feelings, problems, successes, and context surrounding the central ethnographic theme are part of what Ricoeur (1973) termed *textualization*. They are the means by which the writer engages with the reader and opens him or herself up to thorough judgment with regards to the quality of the processes used to formulate the fieldwork and its conclusions. If such thoughts and feelings are hidden, then we are back to the bad old ways of Bourgois’s “pathetic anthropologist” entrenched in Enlightenment discourse. It is only by using such textualized forms that data yields to analysis (Van Maanen, 1988: 95). I want to make clear the reasons why I have chosen an untypical way of presenting my research and to demonstrate that although it is unusual, it is an acceptable form of writing in ethnography and has been used before. I want to engage and interest the reader and I want to distance myself from the Enlightenment myth of the detached anthropologist because in practice this is not how ethnographic fieldwork occurs.

So what is so special about the way in which anthropologists like Farmer and Bourgois write their ethnographies? They both write about issues of health and inequality in marginalised communities, and Farmer is a medical doctor as well as an anthropologist. They both write about structural violence, the concept of governmental structures pushing people into (or forcing them to remain in) poverty and criminalising their behaviour.

A recently published ethnography by Alice Goffman<sup>8</sup> is also of note here. Goffman writes about marginalized black Americans living in a ghettoized community where the police presence is a source of fear rather than comfort. She includes much of her method and her role in the research throughout her study, and at the end of the book she writes a chapter thoroughly exposing the way in which she conducted the fieldwork and her role within her study site. Her study, her methodology, and her writing style are in the same vein as mine, and my study contributes to this genre of ethnography.

The reason why I find the writing of anthropologists like Goffman, Farmer and Bourgois so exciting, moving, and provoking is because there is so much anecdote, personal experience, and emotion within their research. They are angry at social injustices. They experience this first hand and combine it with high quality research to engage with the reader so that it matters and is powerful.

### **Consent and the Ethics of Conducting Ethnographic Research in Rural Kenya**

Instead of more formal consent processes, it was more appropriate to explain to participants that I wanted to learn about the culture of homemade alcohol in their community, and I wanted them to teach me about it from what they knew. This is the usual process with ethnographic research. I did not visit every household to tell people individually, because in Kijiji, news spreads very fast – we call it ‘bush telephone’: “Hey, have you heard what that crazy *mzungu* is doing now? Research about *pombe ya kienyeji!*” I knew it would not take long after the *baraza* for the entire community to know exactly what my plans were. People were soon coming to me requesting that I visit the place where they drink, or saying, “My wife is a brewer, welcome at our place!”

Whenever I conducted a focus group or an interview, or whenever I visited a new brew den, I would explain once again briefly what the research was about and the implications of taking part. Many of the drinkers spend all day, every day, drinking and so finding them sober would have been difficult. Yet I hoped that the *baraza* had done its job and word had spread far enough that most people already knew what my research activities involved.

Gaining informed consent or using forms are *not* the norm for ethnographic research. I was aware of this before I left and knew that consent had to be negotiated along the way. It is not practical, and makes for unnatural interactions with potential participants and causes awkwardness, none of which an

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<sup>8</sup> On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City. Goffman, 2014.

ethnographer wants if the 'data' are to be collected in an organic, natural way in a 'typical' social environment. It was clear as I arrived that my concerns had been justified and so I had to think again about how to fairly explain the research to people in Kijiji so that they could judge for themselves whether they wanted to be involved or not. I learned to negotiate consent as the research progressed, often by people being curious about me so I always had an opportunity to explain the research.

In practical terms, I often had to make decisions as I went along regarding my own safety and the safety of my participants. I had to make sure that we were protected. I always had a research assistant with me who acted as a 'body guard', not that there were any serious dangers to me, except from being groped by drunken men. I made sure that any conversations where I thought we might talk about sensitive or personal subjects were conducted in private away from others who might hear or listen. Any personal information given to me was never repeated and recordings were destroyed after transcription. Transcribed files were backed up on secure hard drives and removed from my computer. This ensured, in practical ways, the safety of my participants. I also made sure that I informed Constance what time we would return if we knew we were going somewhere with no mobile phone network so that if she was worried about us she would know where we had gone and roughly what time we would return. If we didn't come back she would have sent her brother on his *pikipiki* to look for us. In terms of my personal safety when driving in the bush alone I made sure I had a jack and I am capable of changing a tyre alone. I also had my dog with me most of the time who would protect me from intruders either at my house, my tent, or even people he did not recognise at Constance's shop.

## **Methods**

In this section, I want to clarify the methods that I used to gather data, and to explain the ways in which these methods were successful or unsuccessful in adding to my knowledge of home brews.

### **The Field Diary**

Writing my field diary was a nightly exercise for me. I did not often take notes while 'in the field' because of suspicion of my notebook ("What is that weird *mzungu* writing about me?") So in the evenings, I'd go back to my tent/Constance's house/wherever I'd decided to sleep and turn my torch on and write down as much as I could remember in as much detail as possible. I tried hard to describe places and people in great detail so that when I went back to the diary entry months later I would have a

much clearer picture in my head of what had happened that day. If I had recorded anything with my Dictaphone I usually sat down the following morning and transcribed it, along with any observations I had noted at the time. When it came to writing my thesis, any field diary extracts are from my personal field diary. They are predominantly as they were initially with minor changes.

### **Interviews**

I had planned to interview drinkers and Mama Pimas but found that this method of data collection was problematic. I felt that people were telling me what they thought was the 'right' answer, or what they thought I wanted to hear rather than what was reality. In particular, hygiene practices were one topic which I knew the women were falsifying. They would tell me bottles were washed after every use with hot water and soap, yet I observed something quite different. I did not feel that information gleaned from interviews was detailed or reliable, and felt that I was probably asking the wrong questions given my initial lack of knowledge of the brewing sub-culture. I suspect that it is not only difficult for someone to explain their tacit knowledge of daily routines but also they felt interrogated and nervous when being interviewed since it is a much more formal technique. The information gleaned from interviews formed a good basis to my knowledge but remained superficial.

### **Oral Histories**

I conducted oral history interviews with three women who have strong connections with home brew – either women who drink, sell or produce it. These were only possible once a certain level of trust had developed. These interviews were useful as they allowed an insight into the childhoods of these women and helped to explain their involvement in the home brew industry.

### **Informal Conversations**

Since community members were aware of my role as a researcher of *pombe ya kienyeji*, they would often come and speak to me about their experiences or tell me stories that they had heard about drinking or brewing. Drinking or brewing would come up in casual conversation and if there was an especially good story then I would ask people if they minded me including it in my research. Invariably they did not mind and much of this anecdotal evidence has contributed to my understanding and to this thesis.



## Focus Groups

As part of a mixed methods ethnography, I chose to conduct focus groups. These, I hoped, would augment the knowledge learned during my time as a volunteer Mama Pima and allow me to understand more general community views and perceptions surrounding brewing and drinking of local brew in the area.

The focus groups took place over a number of months and were conducted in two phases. The first phase was the initial groups to obtain basic information on local opinion and perceptions regarding brewing and drinking. The second phase involved revisiting this information and also discussing issues arising from things I had observed. The second phase of groups was important for reflexive research. I discussed my findings with group members and asked for feedback. Themes emerged during my time working as a Mama Pima which I was able to discuss at greater length and in more depth in the context of these focus groups.

The groups consisted loosely of the following age and gendered groups: females aged 18-25, 30-45, and 50+; Males aged 18-25, 30-45, and 50+. In reality many people do not know their age so this was a difficult task to be specific with but for practical purposes we asked for *vijana* (youth), middle aged married people, and *wazee* (old people or elders). I organised the groups this way because I was aware of local proscriptions regarding who can speak in front of other people, so by categorising groups thus, participants could feel more free to talk openly because the other group members were roughly of the same age set and always of the same sex. This would also prevent or at least partially mitigate any embarrassment.

Constance used her position as shopkeeper, social networker and extrovert to find participants for me. Groups consisted of between seven and fifteen participants which at the upper level is perhaps more than a usual focus group would consist, but often people would be offended if they were left out and just joined anyway. Sometimes we would wait for hours to start because no one ever arrives on time, and we would always cook food for participants and drink *chai* as payment for attendance. Sometimes participants would come and go while a group was in progress, typical of the style of a *baraza* or community meeting. This was not considered rude, just standard practice. If you feel bored, you leave and do something else for a while, and maybe you come back later. I always used a Dictaphone in focus groups since discussion is often fast-paced and I could not keep up with writing. I always explained what the device was and my reasons for using it. Because of the group situation people did not mind being

recorded, but when I was one-on-one with participants in other situations they would feel uncomfortable so I refrained.

Focus groups were useful for gathering lots of information at once and for getting a good general idea of community feeling towards drinking, brewing, drinkers and brewers and were largely a success.

Through these focus groups, I was able to get an idea of what the general community felt were the social norms and ideals relating to drink. The information gathered here was not detailed, nor was it personal, but this was not the purpose of a focus group. The groups helped me to understand how attitudes to drink and drunkenness had changed over the years, how people in the community react to or deal with drunken behaviour, and what they wish was different in their community with regards to alcohol.

People spoke with a degree of openness and with the help of my research assistant or translator, we made sure that questions were always open, forcing the members to come to their own conclusions and voice their own opinions instead of simply agreeing with me.

The drawbacks are that, like an interview, I suspect that participants to some extent say what they think you want to hear. They are eager to please, and maybe fearful to speak in front of others, or maybe they perform because of others egging them on. Obviously when participants know what the research is about they will focus on the topic much more, so that tacit knowledge may be embellished. For example, in one focus group participants told me with relish and enthusiasm about one particular bar where the brew is so strong that “you must tie your trousers” at the ankle before beginning a drinking session, the implication being that it will give you diarrhoea. I do not for a moment believe that people *actually* tie their trousers at the ankle before drinking there! It is just a creative and amusing way of explaining to me how strong the brew is. That people cannot always be taken literally should be considered when looking at research results.



**Above:** older women gather for a focus group

### **Mapping**

The mapping exercise took place during the second phase of focus groups. It was the first task which I asked group members to collaborate on at the start of each session. I brought A3 sized plain paper, coloured crayons (since I was unable to purchase coloured pens or pencils locally), marker pens and ballpoint pens. I asked the groups to work together to produce a map of their village and then to mark on it places which they considered harmful to the health or wellbeing of the community, or places which they considered to be dangerous in any way. I asked them to participate equally, to discuss amongst themselves what to draw and how to draw it, the positioning of each landmark, and I explained that there were no wrong answers or 'bad' drawings. Initially, some participants were shy and held back, but after some encouragement, hilarity invariably ensued and everyone took part in some way. Often one group member would take the lead and it was interesting to see group dynamics evolving.

The mapping task was sometimes completed very quickly, but other groups took several hours (especially the older women) to finish the task. The groups knew the subject of the research and some cottoned on very quickly that what I really wanted was for them to draw brew dens on their maps and mark them as 'dangerous' for the health of the community. Other groups did not do this. Eventually every group marked brew dens on their maps amongst many other potential 'dangers', including *porini* (the place of the bush, where there are dangerous wild animals which can injure or kill you or your livestock), *barabarani* (the place of the road, where cars, *matatus* and *pikipikis* travel very fast on the dirt surface and can injure children or animals), the seasonal river (which can wash you away, especially if you are drunk), and some people even noted the lack of health care or law enforcement as affecting the health and wellbeing of the community.

The mapping exercise was insightful for understanding how community members perceive their village. It was interesting to see where landmarks were placed on the hand-drawn maps and the relative importance ascribed to some places over others. It was not so useful for the home brew side of the project since I had to explain what the research is about and so participants were semi-aware of what I was expecting them to draw. It was interesting to see which places were drawn first, or given priority, as perhaps this indicates what participants perceive to be most important within the community as detrimental to health or wellbeing. When each group had finished drawing they then explained to me what they had drawn and why. The two surviving maps can be found in Appendix 2 on page 186.

**Clockwise from top left:** mapping exercise with teenage girls, young men, middle aged women, and older women



### **Children's Drawing Exercise**

Following on from the first phase of focus groups, I felt that children's experiences of alcohol, and their ideas about health and alcohol, should be explored and documented. I had learnt that children were probably being affected by the behaviour of drunken family members, and seeing alcohol being brewed and served, and drawing exercises are a useful way to allow children to express their views and experiences. To do this I attended an after school homework group in order to access participants.

One of the major difficulties is age. People do not know their age. This is a widespread phenomenon in Kenya and since birthdays are not celebrated, people only really know roughly how old they are. This is especially true for older people, but children also only know roughly how old they are from the year they are in at school. When I designed the research in Liverpool, I had almost forgotten that this would cause issue. I planned that my focus groups would consist of individuals aged x to y. When I came to conduct the groups, I realised that this would actually be impossible because people only know roughly

how old they are. It was the same with the children's drawing exercise. Taking part in research is novel and people want to be involved. I had to let them take part so as not to cause offence and so they were included. This is just one of the ways in which my research methods were forced to adapt to the social environment and just one of the many difficulties (although easily overcome without any detriment to the research) of undertaking research in a rural Kenyan village.

For this particular task, I would estimate that the children were all aged between eight and twelve. Despite my requesting of their teacher that they be older, they were all so keen to take part that I allowed them to do so. They would have been very disappointed to be excluded.

I arrived at the after-school class which was held in the compound of the teacher where sixteen children took part in the drawing exercise. The teacher explained to the children what I wanted them to do and I explained that I did not want them to sit together or to copy each other. I also told them not to write their names on their work because I wanted their drawings to be anonymous.

They understood and completed the body mapping task first. I had given them a sheet of paper with an outline of a genderless body drawn on it (which I unskillfully did myself and then photocopied). I asked the children to take one each of these and to draw on to their 'body' what might happen to someone when they drink alcohol. I asked each child to come up to me individually when they were finished to explain their drawings. I then numbered their drawing, and on a separate sheet of paper wrote down their corresponding description of what they had drawn. These drawings can be found in Appendix 3 starting on page 187.

The second part of the exercise was what I called 'free drawing'. I gave the children another sheet of paper each, this time blank, and asked them to draw anything which they wanted or could think of to do with alcohol. They, once again, sat apart from each other and did not copy.

To preserve the anonymity of their drawings, as with the first half of the drawing task, I marked a letter or number on each and on a separate piece of paper wrote down the corresponding description which each child gave me. I never asked for any of the children's names, or wrote their names down if I knew them. The children waiting with their drawings stood far enough back that the child speaking and explaining their drawing to me could not be heard. They mostly folded their drawings or held them to their chests so their peers could not see them.

In terms of consent for each child, I asked their teacher what the procedure should be for her to get consent from parents for such a task. She told me that she had a parents' meeting the following day and would be able to ask them there. I made sure that she understood the purpose of the drawings and what I planned to do and she assured me that she would pass it on to their parents or guardians who, she said, would not necessarily have been able to read a letter or sign a consent form anyway had I produced one. The drawing exercise took place a few days later and she informed me that all the children present at her after-school class had been given permission by their parents to take part.

I deliberately did not let the children go home with their pictures because of the nature of many of the drawings. I certainly did not want them to get into trouble with their parents for essentially 'airing their family's dirty linen in public'. Such problems are mostly not talked about and a complaining wife is seen in the community as trouble and to be avoided. I did, however, later make scanned copies of the drawings and laminated them to use in the reflexive focus group to provoke discussion. It is possible that some of the focus group participants were parents of the children who drew the pictures for me but I made sure that they knew that these were only a selection of the pictures, and so it would have been difficult for the parents to identify which drawing might belong to their child unless the situation depicted was personal or specific which I do not think they were. The situations depicted were 'everyday' occurrences. For further discussion of this method, see Chapter Five. The drawings can be found in Appendix 1 from page 177 to page 185.

**Below:** a participant in the children's body mapping exercise



### **Photographs and Drawings in Reflexive Focus Groups**

I wanted to use some of the photographs which I had taken during my observations and my time as a volunteer Mama Pima, to provoke debate within reflexive focus groups. I wanted to use the children's drawings to encourage participants to engage with the potential impact that brewing and drinking has on the next generation of their community. I printed and laminated photographs which I chose because of their subject matter. There were photos of men drinking with their friends, photos of men drinking and chewing *miraa*, photos of women drinking with their children around them, photos of men passed out having soiled themselves, and photos of the brew being made and served. I deliberately hid as much of the background of the photographs as possible, and also covered the faces with black squares to avoid recognition or identification of people or locations. I did not want individuals to be embarrassed or the subject of local gossip. The children's drawings were also printed and laminated. I chose a small selection of these, paying particular attention to ones which were easier to interpret without a long verbal explanation. I removed any writing which may have identified the child in order to maintain their anonymity. I hoped that in these ways I had negated any need to gain consent from the people in the photographs or from the children and their parents whose drawings I planned to use. I



had planned that we would look at the pictures in each focus group and discuss what they show and then I hoped that this would elicit debate.

I presented the photographs to focus group participants first. I explained that I wanted them not to try to identify people but to think about what is happening in each photograph and tell me how it makes them feel, or what their thoughts are about the photograph. Despite this introduction, participants immediately began identifying individuals in photographs: “Hey, look! It’s Juma! He’s so drunk, look at him!” It was very difficult to hide identities because people tend to wear the same clothes, so it is very easy for fellow villagers to see who is in the photographs, which I had not anticipated. On reflection, I wonder if I should have gained consent first from the people featured in the photographs since using them in a focus group within their own community and publishing them in an academic context are two very different things. The latter was understood by the participants before agreeing to have their photographs taken but since then the methods had evolved. I did not realise at the time of taking them that I might use the photographs in reflexive focus groups. The logistics of locating the people in the photographs, some of whom may well be transient community members involved in mining, was certainly a factor in my decision not to request their consent prior to using the photographs.

Eventually focus group participants understood what the purpose of the task was and began to discuss the situations presented in the photographs. It provoked much debate and the photographs were passed around for everyone to see. Many participants were shocked by the ‘bad behaviours’ which they saw in the pictures, but photos of men drinking in groups was deemed to be ‘just having fun’. The men chewing *miraa* and drinking was described, especially by the women, as ‘spending money on two bad things’. Women drinking or holding their kids while drinking was ‘shame for the community’.

It is possible that because of the group setting, participants might have held back on expressing their opinions or may have responded with what they thought I wanted to hear because of embarrassment or because they wanted to give me the ‘right’ answers. However, this was a very useful tool which provoked debate and discussion around the subject of home brew, and allowed ideas and opinions to be aired. It also allowed participants to comment on the research and to give me feedback. It is possible that seeing these pictures might change drinker’s behaviour since many of them visibly recoiled to see photographic evidence of unhygienic conditions of brewing. They also said that they were shocked by the dirty appearance of drinkers and perhaps by seeing their community, to some extent, through a researcher’s eyes, they better understood some of the social and health issues related to home brew. This reaction may show evidence that the participants wanted to be seen as ‘different’ from the people

in the photographs, and does not necessarily mean that they are in reality. Furthermore, I am aware that the realisations of the drinkers regarding the levels of hygiene at brew dens might undermine the brew trade and business for Mama Pimas in Kijiji. I got the impression that some of their reactions were exaggerated for my benefit and since many of the focus group participants have spent time at brew dens they will already be aware of levels of hygiene in the production process. I am not sure that I can resolve this tension between these two points of view, but it is necessary to acknowledge it.

The children's drawings shocked some participants, and others seemed sadly resigned to the fact that this is the reality experienced by children in the community. They all felt that it was very sad for a child to grow up in such an environment and domestic situation. I suspect, from the expressions on participants' faces, many of them have grown up in just such an environment with drunkenness, domestic violence, and parents arguing over alcohol related incidents being a common feature of childhoods in the area. Participants seemed to be embarrassed by the drawings; not surprised, and treated them with a sense of normalcy. They may well have been embarrassed that I had been shown by the children, through their honest drawings, what happens in their home lives. For further discussion of this method and the results it yielded, see Chapters Four and Five.

### **Photographic Diary**

Using a notebook and Dictaphone was something of which people were wary. As soon as I asked if I could write things down or use a Dictaphone, they would guardedly say yes, but I could tell that they felt uncomfortable and their attitudes changed. They were much less forthcoming with information and would be visibly wary. I gave up after just a couple of attempts and instead asked if I could take photographs.

My camera was greeted with excitement. People wanted to be in the photographs, despite my explaining that these pictures would feature in my 'book'. They didn't mind. Drinkers would shove each other out of the way to get into a picture, and most of all they wanted to be in photographs with me. This made it more difficult to document 'everyday' situations, but as people got more used to seeing me with my camera, they seemed to notice it less. I used my camera almost like a diary. Each evening I would upload my photos to my computer and use these to jog my memory for my written diary.

I am not sure why people were so much more comfortable with my camera than they were with the Dictaphone or with hand written notes. Perhaps, because of the history of volunteers within the area, they were more familiar with *mzungus* taking pictures. The novelty of being in a photograph and seeing it on the digital screen was an attraction. In this way I was able to record what was going on in informal bars as I witnessed it without making people feel uncomfortable. I always made sure I asked before taking photographs and initially they were much more 'staged', but as people got used to me snapping away they ignored me, and photographs were more a record of the everyday, and can be found throughout this thesis.

I made sure I always explained the purpose of taking photographs and also the way in which they would be used. To ensure anonymity of individuals and locations is maintained I hid faces where necessary. There are, despite this, potential ethical implications arising from consent in terms of photographing participants. Many of the people of whom I took photographs were drunk and may not have been able to give proper, considered consent to have their photographs taken. I hope that by conducting the *baraza* where a large number of community members were present and informed, and by returning to the same bars at different times of the day and on numerous occasions, anyone who really did not want to be involved or to have their photographs taken or used would have had the opportunity to tell me this. The problem of people being recognised in photographs used in focus groups is one which I had not anticipated and if I further disguised the people in the photographs it would make it more difficult to determine the situations depicted.

### **Becoming a Mama Pima**

I realised very early on that there was no way for me to understand the lives of Mama Pimas without spending some time living and working as they do. Becoming a Mama Pima was confusing at first, and I wondered what I was doing. Soon I began to realise I had been asking the wrong questions. In fact it was wrong to ask questions at all from women who did not really know me and who had no reason to trust me. Better to work for them, begin to understand how they do the brewing and the serving, the difficulties of it, the problems they face, and the laughs they have doing it, to become a part of that life and then to start asking the questions. I asked questions while we were working together so it did not seem like an interview, as though I was finding out more about the job. I realised that I only had a right to know these things if I had experienced some of her life. How could I expect to be told the intimate

details of her daily life without a bit of give and take? Why should she tell me anything unless I did something for her in return? How could she make me understand unless I had lived in her shoes?

Bourgois rallies anthropologists “to venture into the ‘real world’ not just to ‘interview’ people but to actually participate in their daily life and to partake of their social and cultural reality” (Bourgois 1990: 45, in Sanford et al., 2006: 6). Ultimately it is the use of these “ethnographic methods [which] gives us the lived experience of those hidden behind the numbers of economic and population growth” which we are so used to reading about with regards to Africa and so-called poverty stricken societies (Sanford et al., 2006: 6).

I am still referred to as *mzungu mama pima*. When I drive or walk through the village lots of the men who drink at the places where I volunteered yell it at me and smile and wave enthusiastically. I am still a novelty and always will be to some extent. Perhaps this is why the women warmly invited me to work for them, because they knew the novelty would be a draw for customers. Whatever the reason; without becoming a Mama Pima I would never have the understanding that I have now of what it takes to be one.



**Above:** working as a volunteer Mama Pima

## **The Performance of Ethnography**

I want to discuss in this final section of this chapter the performative aspects of gathering ethnographic knowledge. It is a phenomenon I identified on numerous occasions, notably within the men's focus group setting discussed later on in Chapter Four. Importantly, this is a phenomenon that has been identified by other anthropologists, and Robert Pool discusses it at length (1994). He describes exchanges between himself, his research assistant/translator, and participants as "an enactment, a making present, of cultural knowledge...knowledge was being produced, rather than simply called up from some cognitive reservoir" (Pool, 1994: 22). Much of what I record here is a record of performance: things said and done for the benefit of the audience: me. This does not mean that much of it was not genuine either. As Pool found, it is difficult but not impossible to distinguish between performance and serious enquiry, but this is not really the salient point. Pool's presence alone could provoke the motive and the occasion for such a performance (Pool, 1994: 26). Interpretations and meanings are fluid and the important point to glean from these episodes is that perceptions and interpretations will change depending on the 'audience', which, in these accounts from my fieldwork, was me. Interpretations are embedded within cultural and political contexts and the presence of a researcher will always provoke a particular answer. My own feelings on a subject, the same as in Pool's experience, were probed by my fellow villagers, and I suspect, like Pool, that people would then answer my questions based on what they knew about my personal opinions. The use of multiple methods will have gone some way to negating the effects of these performances to get at the 'real' and the 'everyday' but performance remains an integral part of the process of 'doing' ethnography.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explained the reasons why I used certain methods and ways of conducting practical fieldwork, as well as showing how these tasks were achieved. The way in which I planned my fieldwork and its subsequent evolution into more practical methods while in the field is an important and integral part of understanding the research process. I used multiple methods in order to triangulate data, to be able to delve deeper into what was happening in Kijiji, and to provide rigour in my research.

The style in which I have chosen to write has been explained with the support of work by fellow anthropologists and ethnographers. My aim was to unmask the all too often hidden processes of 'doing' fieldwork and conducting practical ethnography in order to clearly present to readers the how and the

why. In this way, I hope that my thesis will be judged on its relative merits and the ways in which the data was collected since I have made these transparent and clear for any reader to see. I believe that if ethnography is to be taken seriously in the public health sphere, we must make our methodologies transparent and show the rigor of the research process. This might not be a key argument of my research but it is certainly vital in providing a context for it. Goffman, in her 2014 ethnography, has used the same process and this provides a fascinating insight into the way in which an ethnographer conducts fieldwork, allowing us to see her mistakes and successes, and her awkwardness in adjusting to life in a community so different from the one in which she grew up (Goffman, 2014: 213).

## Chapter Three

### Negotiating Survival

#### Introduction

The chapter will discuss the actual process of brewing the various types of beers which are 'cooked' (rather than brewed) in the community. This chapter will detail the different types of beer brewed in the village and the ways in which they are served and sold, describing the informal bars and the social settings of drinking and brewing. This chapter will explore the environmental pressures on and problems with traditional livelihood strategies, as well as more general fiscal scarcity, which has led brewing to become an essential part of local economies. Finally, people's perceptions of the job of a Mama Pima will be discussed: both the perceptions of the Mama Pimas of their job and livelihoods, and also the perceptions that others have of them within and outside of the community. This chapter aims to give an account of why the Mama Pimas do what they do, and why the environment, their social status, and other local realities are pushing or pulling them into this lifestyle.

#### Typology of Brews

In Kenya, there are many different types of homemade alcoholic beverages. These fall into two categories: cooked beers, and distilled spirits. They are given different names depending on the region where they are produced. For example in Kijiji there is a drink known as *bangara*, but elsewhere it is known as *muratina*, *mratina*, or *miratina* but the ingredients are, as far as I can establish, the same. There are three types of alcohol produced within Kijiji, and one which is produced elsewhere but sold in Kijiji. I did not find any distilled spirits available within Kijiji, only cooked brews. The following is a brief description of each variety. At the time of writing, the exchange rate fluctuated around 140/- KSH to £1, and so you will see from the prices of the drinks that they are very affordable. Just to give further context, an average daily wage for an unskilled labourer is between 300/- and 500/- and for a skilled worker in Kijiji it would be between 500/- to 1,000/- depending on the work and the employer.

#### ***Bangara***

Probably the most widely produced and most popular local brew in the community. *Bangara* is a cooked brew made by boiling pounded maize, sugar and water, and then pouring the strained liquid into

a vessel containing the dried fruits of the 'Sausage' Tree, *Kigelia Africana*. After around 24 hours, the drink has fermented enough to serve.

It is served in 250ml glass or plastic bottles, at 10/-, or in plastic mugs which, when filled to the brim (as they usually are in a typical Mama Pima measure), contain 500ml. The usual price for a mug of *bangara* is twenty shillings: around 15 pence. It is consumed straight from the cup or bottle without a straw.

### ***Kangara***

*Kangara* is much less widely produced in the villages. It is, however, even easier and cheaper to make than *bangara*, since it contains no *Kigelia Africana* fruits. It is made in exactly the same way but left to ferment without the addition of the sausage fruit. It is also served in the 500ml plastic mugs which cost 20/- or in 250ml bottles which cost just ten bob (the colloquial term for shillings: ten bob is around seven pence) each. It is drunk straight from the cup and there is no need to use a straw.

### ***Mitinidawa***

*Mitinidawa* literally means 'tree medicine', apparently to disguise the illicit nature of what is really being consumed. The drink is made from *jaggery* sugar which is raw, unrefined black sugar which comes in cone shaped blocks from Kisumu in Western Province in Kenya. This is cooked with refined sugar and the root of a tree (which no one knew the name of or perhaps wanted to keep secret). The pieces of tree are boiled with water and then poured through a sieve into a container. This is then mixed with cold water, and the two types of sugar added. It is a similar process to that of making *bangara*, but the final product is left for longer, around four days, to ferment before drinking. The liquid is bright yellow and smells similar to cider.

It is served in either 10/- bottles of 250ml, or 20/- plastic mugs of 500ml. The liquid is drunk straight from the cup or bottle without a straw as it is passed through a sieve several times before making its way into the serving vessel.



**Below:** cones of black unrefined jaggery sugar (**left**) go into the *mitinidawa* which is poured through a sieve (**right**) before being transported in a smaller plastic barrel to the bar to be sold



### ***Mnazi***

*Mnazi* literally means coconut, and is the least processed of all the local alcohols served in Kijiji. It is produced at the coast, and bought by Mama Pimas (and sometimes Baba Pimas, because a few men sell it too) from the village and transported by *matatu* or *pikipiki* to their homes. It is a palm wine made from the tapped palm flower and is a milky, slightly grey and sometimes slightly yellow colour, depending on the age of the batch. The longer it is left, the more alcoholic it becomes. It rapidly becomes very smelly and after a week is undrinkable (although people at the coast say that it has to be consumed fresh within a day or so of production and would never drink it after a week.) Possibly due to the lack of availability in Kijiji, it is regularly consumed when over a week old. It is a very popular drink and drinkers tend to chew *miraa* (or *khat*) at the same time as drinking *mnazi*. It is also the most expensive of the local brews at 30/- for 250ml (around 25p) or 60/- for (around 45p) 500ml. It is served in old glass or plastic soda or spirit bottles with a straw to filter out any sediment. These straws are made of a dried hollow local grass called *muringa* with a mesh of coconut fibre fixed onto the base as a filter.



**Above:** a fresh consignment of *mnazi* arrives at the bar on the back of a *pikipiki*. It has come from the coast

### **The Brewing Process and Environment**

One of the first things I did when I began my fieldwork was to visit a Mama Pima to see how the drink was made. Gift knows many people who brew and who were happy to talk to me. His brother-in-law is married to a Mama Pima and they live close by. Their eldest daughter, Emily, does much of the brewing and selling work. They did not mind me visiting them. This field diary entry describes the setting in which *bangara* is typically produced and consumed in the community, as well as detailing the process of production.

#### *Field Diary Extract – At Emily’s Bangara Bar:*

The compound is large and sprawling with charred tree stumps all around. As we arrive on the *pikipiki* it looks as though they have been clearing the *shamba* to plant maize, but everything is dead in the hot sun. We park behind the ramshackle array of buildings, under a tree. There are two main buildings and a type of shed. Beyond is a shade of *bougainvillea* and a cluster of plastic chairs and wooden benches. There are rowdy, drunken men sitting there. One is trying to explain something to the rest and is drawing on the ground with a stick in the dirt to make his point clear. The smaller of the two buildings seems to be a kitchen, with no visible windows

from the front and a low door. It is built in the typical style of an interwoven stick frame packed with mud and small stones, and a *mabati* roof. The second building is right next to the kitchen and is in the process of being built. In fact, as I approach, I see *fundis* working on the internal walls. They are masons and are happily working away with mud bricks, cement and plumb lines. The front 'door', still very much a hole in the wall, leads to a number of smaller rooms with sheets hanging from string acting as dividers. There are already beds inside despite the lack of roof or floor. Sitting within the first room, watching the progress of the *fundis*, is the family who owns this plot. The husband, Constance's brother, is helping the progress of the wall construction by mixing cement. He has the stub of a cheap cigarette lingering between his lips, and is drunk. It is 11am.

Within the house, there are several children of varying ages sitting or standing and staring at me. The eldest daughter who is around eighteen or twenty years old has her own baby on a sheet of polythene on the ground.

The wife (who is the Mama Pima here) tells me that they have to make and sell alcohol to support their family and to pay for the building of this new house. It pays for everyday necessities and it pays for the children to attend school. I don't ask her how many of the numerous, grubby little ones flitting in and out are hers, but I assume she has to support quite a number of them. She tells me that she tries to keep her job a secret because it is illegal but that she must do it because there is no other option (I remember the dead state of the *shamba* and have to agree with her).

Shortly, I am led by the daughter, Emily, into the kitchen to see how she makes alcohol. Inside it is extremely hot and unpleasantly smoky. My eyes begin to smart the instant I am inside and I wonder how Emily can spend much of her day here. It is a really uncomfortable environment and I cannot see very much until my eyes adjust to the gloom. It is very dark since there is only one window on the far side with a wooden shutter. The shutter is closed, making it even more unhealthy. I'm keen to get out.

First, Emily shows me a low brick stove with two small apertures at the bottom side by side. This is where the wood goes. In the top are two round openings where the *sufuria* can sit. As she is showing me, there is a knock on the shutter. Emily straightens up, opens it, and an arm is thrust into the gloom holding a green plastic mug. Emily takes the mug as the disembodied arm lolls nonchalantly through the open window. As the miserable little aperture allows a couple of rays of bright, white light in, I notice that there are sacks, *mitungis* and large black barrels, buckets and *sufurias* of varying descriptions littering the room. Emily puts the green mug on top of one of the barrel lids, grabs a jug out of the smog and litter of assorted plastic vessels, and scratches around for a sieve. The jug is dipped into a bucket and the milky looking liquid is rapidly poured through the sieve and into the green mug until it is precariously full. At this point the green mug continues on its journey by being unceremoniously thrust back into the hand attached to the disembodied arm. The mug disappears as quickly as it appeared and is replaced

by another arm, presumably belonging to the same person, which drops some small coins into Emily's waiting hand.

Above our heads is a mezzanine type structure which I have seen before in so many Taita houses: it is a maize store. The idea is that the smoke from the kitchen fire below will keep *dudus* [insects] out and the heat will dry it faster. Emily shows me a stack of large white sacks in one corner. Some contain sugar, others pounded maize, and some are full of dried peas. The two large black barrels are used for storing the *bangara* when it is ready, for this is the type of alcohol they make and sell here. There are several smaller yellow buckets for carrying water, and a few bags of *mtama*, or millet flour.

Emily shows me how she starts the process of brewing *bangara*. First, she takes around two kilos of pounded maize which she measures out of the sack with an old plastic tub. She places this in a clay cooking pot and pours around three litres of water into it. Emily places this gently on the stove, adds some more wood to the fire, and allows most of the water to boil away.

While we wait for the water to boil, we sit outside under the bougainvillea with a group of around ten customers. They are all male and in varying states of drunkenness. Many are smoking local tobacco which comes in small pods wrapped in dried banana leaf. They roll their tobacco with scraps of newspaper and smoke it right down to the dregs. They must burn their fingers, I think to myself. I ask Justice [my translator] to ask if I can take a photo of them. They tell me to buy a round of drinks in exchange. This is the first big dilemma of my fieldwork so far – should I buy them drinks in exchange for information, cooperation and photographs? If I don't, they will think I am mean. If I do, not only are the photographs almost staged (because they will be holding drinks that I bought them), but also am I not contributing to the problem? Is it like bribery?

Emily calls me back into the kitchen. The maize in the clay pot has boiled and is ready for making the *bangara*. She uses a plastic cup to scoop the cooked maize out of the pot and into a bigger bucket. She saves the water which is left in the clay pot. She adds cold water to the maize and then puts about half of it into another plastic bucket, the same size as the first. She adds water here too, and the liquid remaining in the cooking pot, and then begins to rub handfuls of the maize together, cleaning it thoroughly in the greyish water. This takes her some time and after she has finished, she scoops the maize out of both plastic buckets with her hands, squeezes it dry, and leaves it in the cooking pot. She later throws the maize away.

Next, Emily places a very large *sufaria* of water on the stove. She allows it to warm and measures between two and three kilos of sugar into each of the two plastic buckets. She pours the warmed water into the mixture and stirs. This allows all the sugar to dissolve, and as I watch, the liquid changes colour, becoming slightly more brown, and much more clear. She mixes some more and then opens one of the large black barrels. After removing the lid, she shows me that it is almost two thirds full with *miratina* fruit, from the sausage tree (*Kigelia Africana*). This makes the *bangara* alcoholic by causing fermentation, and in the morning it will

be ready to drink. The smell is very strong. Emily tells me that the *miratina* can stay in the barrel for around a year or more. If you want to clean the barrel, you can take out the fruits, dry them in the sun, and place them back in when the next batch is ready. But you cannot leave them wet with no *bangara* because they will rot and they are expensive to buy. Gift tells me later that one costs around 30-40/=, the equivalent of about 25-35 pence. Given the number required, this must be an expensive outlay for Mama Pimas or prospective Mama Pimas.

Finally, Emily pours this warm mixture into the barrel containing the fruits, and stirs it once more with a big stick. "Morning time it will be ready", she assures me.

While she has been cooking the beer, Emily has been constantly taking and refilling empty plastic cups from grubby hands thrust in through the little window. She pours the grey liquid into the empty cups, hands it back and receives a few coins. Some people hand her coins first and the cup second, but it doesn't seem to matter much.

When Emily has made sure everyone has full cups, I ask her if she wouldn't mind answering some of my questions. She says she doesn't mind. We sit under one of the few remaining trees in the compound. It offers little shade. I notice that Emily's mother, reclining on the polythene sheet near the house, is sipping her own cup of *bangara*.

Emily tells me that they have to do this job because it is the only work for them to do. They use the money for food, for school fees, and to build their new house. Has she been doing this for long, I ask? Yes, since she was a child she has been helping her mother to make *bangara*. Probably since she was around ten years old, she thinks. Is it a tough job? Yes, the worst bit is carrying water. It's heavy and the process requires a lot of water, and then she has to bend and mix the alcohol, and clean the maize...she suffers from a bad back because of this, she says. I notice that the whole family cough a lot, and especially Emily. "Because of dust maybe, or *baridi*", she tells me.

Emily tells me that this job is exhausting and tiresome. The sugar for the alcohol is expensive and they use a lot of it. Fetching the water takes a lot of time. She has to work long hours to help her family. It is difficult to fit a proper family life around such a job, since customers have to come first, never mind what else she is doing. She might be cooking supper or trying to eat and customers are demanding more alcohol. There is no time for housework either. It's true, I observe that the compound is generally fairly untidy and in a state of disarray, especially with the building work going on. Customers are noisy, shouting, fighting, or refusing to leave when it is closing time (around nine every night). They are abusive, she tells me, but what can she do? She needs their money.

But what about the Alcohol Act, I ask her? Is she aware of its existence? Yes, she replies, but it has no effect on her. Sometimes 'MP's people' [referring to some kind of representatives of the local Member of Parliament] go around to the *bangara* places and ask for *kitu kidogo* [literally, something small: a bribe] to turn a blind eye to illegal brewing activities. If the brewer pays up, they get left alone and the next time the police are coming to check, they get warned so that

they have time to hide their 'stuffs'. If they cannot pay, they are threatened with bigger fines or even arrest. I wonder who are these mysterious bribable envoys from the MP?

Emily tells me that some local people are not happy with the job she does, because she is making money from something illegal. There are rumours and gossiping in the village about her and her family. It is the men who are drinking, and they are supposed to be earning money for their families, so many of the village women do not like the Mama Pimas because their husbands are always drunk and useless. But, she says, people like to come and drink here because she is very hygienic and the *bangara* tastes good. This is what attracts customers to her place, she says.

I ask her if she ever has women coming here to drink, and she says perhaps one per month, but not many. And because everyone is drunk, nobody cares if there are women there. People come at any time in the morning to drink, but she stops serving at 9pm. Emily says she often has trouble getting them to leave. She is much busier over weekends. The money she makes from making and selling *bangara* supports the whole extended family of more than ten people. There are four generations supported from doing this work.

I ask her how much money she makes, and she doesn't mind me asking. Per one *mitungi* of *bangara*, around 20L, they make approximately 1,500-1,700/= . That's around £12-£15. However, I worked this out to be more like 800/= (around £6). Perhaps she was using a different sized *mitungi*, or she miscalculated. Either way, it is not a lot for all the hard work she puts in, but enough to support her family and it's a better income than any casual labouring job. At least you can stay at home all day which, if you have children like Emily, is pretty important.

Finally, I thank Emily for her time and for showing me her work. She says I'm welcome, anytime, to come and visit them again. As we leave, Gift tells me that the reason why none of these 'bush bars' get closed down ever is because the 'big fish' can make plenty of cash from regular bribes, but also because many of the MP's were schooled on the proceeds from such businesses. He reckons they have a soft-spot for the Mama Pimas.

We can see from the field diary extract how *bangara* is brewed. *Mnazi* comes from the coast and is not produced within the study site, but it is a palm wine tapped from the flower of the palm tree.

*Mitinidawa* is produced within the study site, and one Mama Pima explained to me how she makes it.

**Below:** the equipment for pounding maize

**Below (Right):** coarse pounded maize ready to be made into *bangara*



**Below (Left):** the coarse pounded maize is mixed with water

**Below (Right):** this is cooked on the brick stove





**Clockwise from top left:** the maize mash is removed from the stove and mixed with water. The Mama Pima squeezes the mash in the water and eventually the mash is drained and removed. This is discarded and the water is retained

**Below:** the mixture is stored in barrels with the fruits from *kigelia africana* which aid fermentation. It is ready after 24 hours and is decanted into smaller buckets for ease of serving







**Above:** *bangara* is served here in ‘pound-pound’ cups costing 20/- each for 500ml

*Field Diary Extract – Making Tree Medicine:*

In the village, we find a small room, barely more than a cupboard, where the *mitindawa* is kept. Mama Mercy shows me how she pours it from the big, black *mitungi* into her smaller 30L *mitungi* using a plastic bucket and an old bottle as a funnel, placing a sieve in-between to remove the bits of tree fibre left inside the liquid. She tells me that it is made here in the village, and that they have to buy the pieces of tree from the nearest large town, but she does not know the name of the tree. The pieces of tree are boiled with water and then sieved into a *mitungi*. It is then mixed with cold water and sugar is added, as well as very dark brown raw sugar which has to be bought from Kisumu. It is so dark, almost like molasses, and known as *Jaggery*. Then it is left for four days to ferment. Mama Mercy puts her *mitungis* of *mitindawa* into the car and we set off for her place again.

The final variety of alcohol produced locally is *Kangara*. This is not so widely produced or consumed as the other types of home brew, but I visited one informal bar where *Kangara* is made and sold.

*Field Diary Extract – At The Kangara Bar:*

One drink costs only 10/= for 250ml, the same as *mitindawa*. Malemba [who works here on an informal basis serving the brew] explains to me how *kangara* is different from *bangara*. There is no *muratina* used in the process, and it is made with water, sugar, and pounded maize, cooked and left to ferment. Malemba is serving the *kangara* from a 20L *mitungi* and there are around six 5L bottles of it too. It is served either in 250ml bottles, the type which have previously contained vodka or brandy, and it is also served in ‘pound, pound’ cups, plastic mugs which contain 500ml and cost 20/= (20/= is also known as ‘pound’ here).

From the description given to me by the Mama Pima who owned these premises, it seems that *Kangara* is very similar to *Bangara* in terms of production.

### **The Selling Environment**

The local brews are sold in a variety of locations. Some are hidden down crowded alleyways deep within the hustle and bustle of a village. Others are far out in the bush, isolated and surrounded only by farms. Some are within people’s compounds, where they live; others are in makeshift huts or rented rooms. *Bangara* seems to be brewed and consumed more openly within villages rather than out on people’s *shambas*. The following field diary extracts describe some of these varying locations.

*Field Diary Extract - At The Kangara Bar:*

The *Kangara* place is quite far and Gift and Justice do not know where it is, so we spend about half an hour with Mama Mercy explaining exactly how to get there. Eventually we leave and go with the *pikipiki* instead. We ride out to where we think the *Kangara* place should be. We cannot find it. We squeeze down narrow, bush lined tracks and ride across dry *shambas*, stopping every now and again to see if we have missed it. We spend another hour riding around and asking directions but eventually I spot it – I know it because there is a group of men sitting under a tree holding bottles. It has to be a *pombe ya kienyeji* place. We have come quite far from the village and are in the depths of the community land, surrounded by small compounds and farms. The informal bar consists of a group of low mud walled buildings with *mabati* roofs which may or may not consist of a home to a family – it is hard to tell from the jumble of sheds

within the compound. To the front of these buildings is a shady area with low wooden benches which are fixed into the ground. There are men seated here and also a small distance away under another tree. The compound is fenced with thorn brush and a narrow gateway leads back to the path on which we came.

*Field Diary Extract - At Mama Mercy's Mitinidawa Bar:*

The *mitinidawa* place is much more remote than I had expected. It takes a good ten minutes in the car to reach, down dusty cow cart tracks and sandy lanes with big acacia and *terminalia* trees growing at the sides. When we finally get there, it is just a little one roomed place surrounded by farmland with very little shade or trees or bushes. There don't seem to be many people living nearby either. It feels quite far from anything and yet there is a big crowd drinking here today. It is a mud house with an even smaller house next to it which I suppose to be a store of some kind. There are low wooden benches and a fence made of *makuti* shielding the drinkers from the 'road'.

*Field Diary Extract - At Honour's Bangara Bar:*

Honour's place is not far from Mama Mercy's, but harder to find. We get to it by following little winding paths alongside *shambas* full of dead, brown maize stumps. The informal bar consists of a couple of mud and *mabati* buildings, a few scraggy looking bushes for shade, and an assortment of rocks and logs to sit on. There isn't much around it except for more dead maize and smouldering tree stumps. Honour's husband has proudly been clearing more space to plant more maize. There are a handful of drinkers sitting in the shade and Honour immediately put me to work pounding more maize for the production of her brew, *bangara*. I am surrounded by yellow *mitungis*. There are bees everywhere, attracted by the sugar, and I can hear them buzzing from behind the ragged curtain in the fetid little kitchen, as I work away at the maize.



**Above:** men drinking *bangara* at Honour's place. 'Pound-pound' cups cost 20/- and the glass bottles containing 250ml cost just 10/-

In contrast to these places, I visited several *bangara* bars which were located much closer to villages and even within the village. One was tucked away behind a shop, in the small dusty clearing of the owner's house. Another was Emily's place, from the earlier field diary extract. It is not far from the village and located within their compound. Yet another *bangara* place was more remote, but not far from another bush bar. The owners live there and serve brew from their house. The *mitinidawa* place, however, is not where Mama Mercy lives. It is only where she works. She has a house in the village too. The *mnazi* place, where I spent much time working as a volunteer Mama Pima, run by Patience is right in the village, run out of the room she rents down a mucky little alleyway. She also runs, or works at (it was never quite clear and I suspect she wanted to keep this ambiguous), another two places also within the village. These are both small purpose built shacks, tucked away behind other shops, specifically for providing shade while drinking.

All informal bars tend to have some kind of outside shady area, either under a bougainvillea, or under a tree, which also helps to shield the customers from prying eyes or potential trouble. Sometimes purpose built thatched shades are constructed in compounds where there are no shady trees or

bougainvillea. There is usually an assortment of low wooden benches to sit on, or in some informal bars there might be some plastic chairs. Sometimes there will be just a couple of logs on which the customers park themselves with their drinks. Often customers sit on rocks on the floor. “This is how we stay to drink *bangara!*” one enthusiastic customer told me, indicating his rock on the ground. The brew dens are often grubby, always very dusty, and there might not be a toilet, necessitating customers to use nearby bushes.

The nature of the varied locations, I suspect, depends largely on the resources of the brewer or seller. It is important to be able to visualise the locations of these informal bars in order to understand the secretive and hidden nature of the culture of home brew. These visualisations of the locations and environments relating to home brew help to unveil the social settings in which such activities take place. These locations illustrate that brewing is considered to be *haramu* (illicit) and so people keep their businesses hidden from view in order to continue to make money with minimal hassle from the authorities and the wider community.

**Below:** Patience’s bar with assortment of seating options and men chewing *miraa* (far right)



**Below:** Mama Mercy's bar frequented by women and men



**Below:** washing bottles in murky water outside Patience's room



### Fiscal Scarcity, Environmental Pressures and Looking For Work

From my time spent in Kijiji I have seen that farming there is not easy. It is located in a dry, semi-arid area of Kenya where there is very little rainfall throughout the year. Average rainfall for the closest town is 588mm per year<sup>9</sup>. Usually, there are one or two very heavy rains each rainy season and the rest of the year is dusty, windy and hot. There is no piped water but villagers are lucky that there is water on the mountain. This is stored in tanks on the mountainside and villagers can purchase their water at a number of water points (small kiosks with a tap). For much of the year these are dry and only one has water. Some years even this one runs dry.

Every year, as soon as the rains come around April time, people rush out to plant maize and different types of beans on their *shamba*. By July, most *shambas* in the area are yellow and brown and dead. World Vision (a global NGO and aid agency working in the area) encourages people to prepare their *shamba* properly by paying cash or giving food aid to women who dig ditches to prevent soil erosion. Many people depend on the handouts of yellow maize flour, split peas, and palm oil from World Vision and despite digging trenches on their *shamba* to prevent soil erosion during the rainy season and to fulfil the requirements to get their food aid, many *shambas* are left uncultivated. There is little evidence of people trying new crops or mulching heavily to prevent moisture loss from the ground. Trees are cut down on *shambas* to provide wood for charcoal burning and crops are left with no shade.

From conversations with villagers, especially the older generations, I found that there has been a loss of traditional knowledge and farming practices. Around a hundred and fifty years ago, the elders told me, people lived high up in the mountain because they were justifiably afraid of the large numbers of rhino, buffalo, lion and other predators roaming the plains below. They kept cattle in 'caves', specially built gated *bomas* set into the rock. This kept them secure at night and safe from predators, and the Maasai raiders who were in the area and stealing cows. People lived precarious lives balanced on the rocky ledges of the mountain, keeping their chickens, goats, cows, and living quietly to avoid skirmishes with other neighbouring tribes or wild animals. They were also arable farmers. On the mountainside can be seen remains of dry stone walled terraces used for farming and to prevent soil erosion, which must have been on a much smaller scale than farming today in the community, but was apparently more productive. Being higher up, farms would have benefitted from the moist air from clouds which lie low over the mountain during the early morning. When most of the wildlife had been either killed or chased

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<sup>9</sup> [en.climate-data.org/location/11120/](http://en.climate-data.org/location/11120/)

away from the surrounding plains, the people moved down to live what they thought would be an easier life on the flat, fertile land surrounding the mountain. This land has now been heavily farmed and people are forced to encroach even further out onto the plains away from the mountain in order to grow anything<sup>10</sup>.

Whether or not failed crops are due to poor practice, or lack of rainfall, farming does not provide enough food to feed large families in the community, unless the water point is very close to the *shamba*, or if families can afford to purchase large quantities of water for storage within their compound. Water storage facilities are expensive. The purchase of guttering for rainwater collection, and brick built or plastic tanks, are all expenses that most ordinary families cannot afford. Without this, farmers have to rely on the rainy season to water their crops. Farming alone is unable to support the growing population in the community. People have to look for other options.

Some women take out microfinance loans to start businesses. This has helped primarily women with a head for business to start shops, tailoring businesses, or cafes serving basic local food, but from what women have told me, often their husbands will demand a share of this money for drinking and the women cannot refuse. There is also a limit to how many grocery shops and tailors there can be, yet many people in Kijiji try similar businesses.

There are community members who live and work elsewhere and send money back to their home village and their families. These people are, I think, what keeps the community alive and fed. Even with small amounts of cash, women can feed a large family, supplementing what little they might have gleaned from their farms with bought vegetables and maize. They can make sure the children are sent to school as often as possible and ensure that the house is habitable. Some families can even afford smart new houses with the money sent home by their children and extended family. People are now beginning to understand that by educating their children they are ultimately providing for their entire family. Many people view education as an investment and a form of wealth. However this does mean that families in Kijiji are heavily reliant on absent children, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, to support them and provide the majority of their income.

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<sup>10</sup> Information on local history from Fortress Conservation, Brockington, 2010; Mwehe, 2016, unpublished manuscript.



There is also a thriving basket weaving group in the area. The members are all female and make colourful baskets from locally produced sisal cord dyed with tree barks. The baskets are sold locally but recently, buyers from the UK, Europe and America have been placing orders which a local middleman buys and ships. This has created a fairly regular income for some of the women in the community but this is only the case for a minority. For these women however, it has given them a way to educate their children, build new houses or improve old ones, and start businesses.

The area, being geographically remote, has poor communications and fairly poor transport links although the latter is improving. The Rural Electrification Program has taken its time to bring electricity to the area. In 2007, electricity reached the main village but bypassed another. It has been extended further around the mountain now but few people can afford it. There is only mobile phone reception in the main village and hence the rest of the villages' inhabitants must travel there if they want to make a phone call or use the intermittent internet. It is usually only possible to purchase yesterday's newspaper. Communications and links to the rest of Kenya are poor. I have even been told before by community members that the study site 'is not really Kenya' due to its geographically remote location and the lack of interest shown in it by outsiders. Most other Kenyans have never even heard of it.

### **Gemstone Mining, Poaching, Prostitution and Brew Dens**

One other option to scrape a living in the community is to head out to the bush to mine for gemstones. Most mining concessions are small scale and consist of a group of village men with bicycles and *pikipikis* heading out to the bush together, often very far from the villages (several hours on a *pikipiki*), and digging holes. They live in small camps made of plastic tarpaulin and pieces of *mabati*, and must take all their own food and water with them. It is a tough existence. Not only is the work hard, hammering away at the rock all day in the sun, but the environment is dangerous: a report in The Standard newspaper from the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013 described how a miner was crushed to death by a rock collapsing on him in a small scale mine very close to the study site (Anon, 2013). He was prospecting for gemstones at night. Snakes, elephants and lions represent other dangers when mining. I have been told some tall tales (and seen scars) from encounters with various creatures of this ilk at the informal mining settlements. The men can stay out in the bush for several weeks at a time and have to rely on people back in the village to deliver supplies to them. There is no mobile phone reception there either and if someone gets sick or injured, they are far from medical help. Some of the concessions are much larger and better established, with one very large operation well inside the border of a local national park, which is illegal. Locals say that this particular mine is owned by an MP. Getting to work on a very

productive site is a matter of knowing the 'right' people. I have heard that they are almost like a members club, where individuals have to pay a fee to join and be invited by an existing 'member'. Some people get to work on lucrative mines, and others do not.

Back in the village, men trudge in to local bars and informal home brew bars with bags of their latest hauls from the bush. They are of the age group which I have observed to be drinkers – 18-45. They are the working aged men who are traditionally responsible for bringing money into the homes. Their hauls mostly consist of low-grade stones which have poor clarity and will not fetch a high price. Also frequenting bars, and more often the informal bars selling local brew, are the 'middlemen'. These men are dealers and purchase the stones by weight from the miners, pay cash, and sell the stones on elsewhere. Groups of men tend to split their money from mining equally among all those who helped with each particular haul. Although it is a tough job with little income to be made, it is the only industry in the local area offering spasmodic employment to men. Kijiji has, in recent years, become the front line of the mining industry, catering for the needs of all the people drawn to the area by the gemstones.

One of the needs of the workers is catered for by the local prostitutes who usually base themselves at informal bars to find their customers. Another is the desire for bush meat which is cheap, tasty and widely available in the area. The influx of Somali herders has compounded the problem, with increased cases of poaching being blamed on herders who herd their livestock during the day and hunt wildlife at night. The influx of herders in the area has led to increased poaching and snaring of small game by the herders, for food or sale. Bush meat is sold in traditional brew dens or door to door. These informal bars provide meeting points for herders, gemstone miners, prostitutes, poachers and middlemen. They are a strategic point of contact for people on a social and economic front line, making them not only vital sources of income for the women running them and working there, but also as a centre for other illicit trades and sub-economies.

The community also has many hardworking teachers, farmers, government workers and shop keepers, as well as community members who live and work in Mombasa or Nairobi and send money back to their families, but this sub-culture of home brew, prostitution, poaching and mining is the one on which this thesis is focused so one must bear in mind that this is a minority group looked at through the narrow lens of this ethnography and not representative of the community as a whole. Furthermore, those operating within the sub-culture of homebrew, and other illicit economies, create their own moral economy and sense of self worth in order to construct an honourable reality (Goffman, 2014).

In March 2014, locals reported problems with mining. Men returned from the bush with no money reporting that the 'rules' have become stricter on possession of mining permits and licenses. It is unclear who exactly has been enforcing these rules, and perhaps it is the larger mining rackets putting pressure on small-scale miners, but it is clear that it is now a struggle to 'get away' with informal mining activities. This recent reduction in small-scale mining activities, for whatever reason, has had a knock-on effect at the informal bars because it is from the miners that the bars get much of their business. The two industries are very much dependent upon each other, the bars for the miners' money, and the miners for the brew in order to 'relax' when they return from the bush.

All of these factors, the remoteness, the lack of industry, the large informal sector, the illicit trades, combine to make many women feel that brewing is an attractive option to support their often very large families, joining in the illicit trades and become part of the informal economy. Most Mama Pimas who I spoke with had not been to school, or had only been for a few years because their parents were very poor too. Brewing is cheap to start, easy to do (particularly since many women grow up helping their mothers to brew), and there is a ready, guaranteed customer base. It is the most obvious thing to do. But women do not do this just to scrape by. There is a complexity to the identity of a Mama Pima which must be acknowledged.



**Above:** men arrive from the mines on a *pikipiki*, grab a drink of *mnazi*, and leave again

## **Brewing and Social Improvement, Financial Independence and Gendered Local Economies**

Women know that brewing is a thriving business and that they can make good money from it. They know that brewing is a way to get something better out of life. It is not necessarily a job they will do forever, but it is one where they can, in a fairly short space of time, earn a relatively decent amount of money. Most of the stories of brewing were positive ones, where women made profits. Certainly there were some women who did not do as well as others, but the vast majority of brewers who I spoke to reported favourably. Furthermore, for many women brewing is just one of a number of livelihood strategies which may change over time or with the different seasons.

I heard a story about one lady in the community who was asked by the local chief to stop brewing because it is illegal and she should not be doing it. She responded that she was doing it in order to be able to send her daughter to school, so the chief said that she could continue until her daughter graduated but then she must stop. She agreed. Her daughter recently graduated from university abroad and the lady no longer makes home brew.

In the field diary extract earlier in this chapter, Emily says that they are using the money they make from brewing to build them a new house. They have a large family and are able to pay for several children's secondary school fees with the proceeds of their *bangara*. Without the '*bangara stage*', as these informal bars are often referred to, it is unlikely that the family could afford to have several of their kids in high school.

One woman who I spent time working with now has several *hotelis*, informal bars, and deals in all sorts of illicit goods, which makes her a very good income with which she schools her children and supports her mother and the rest of the family. Another who used to work as a prostitute as well as a Mama Pima now owns several shops and bars selling commercial alcohol instead and is very financially comfortable.

These cases illustrate some of the ways in which women (and sometimes men) use brewing and a combination of other illicit trades to progress financially and socially. They might become part of Kenya's growing middle class. They send their children to school and so the family is better educated. Ultimately they are better able to support themselves. If husbands want a drink and their wife is a brewer, they have a constant supply of alcohol at home. The wife might lose out in terms of the quantity of alcohol remaining to sell, but at least she gets to keep more of the money she makes if her husband is drinking at home. He will not be asking for as much money to go out drinking elsewhere.

Brewing of alcohol provides women with the power over the rights to and disposal of these drinks, and furthermore a kind of power over the men who drink them (Green, 1999). By brewing beer, women are causing money to flow from men to women (Helmfrid, 2010: 195).

Helmfrid has written that incomes in rural Africa tend not to be pooled within the context of a household, rather they are “subdivided into male and female domains, meaning that men and women control their own incomes and are responsible for gender-specific expenses within the household” (Helmfrid, 2010: 195). I can only partially agree with this point – indeed, I can concur that women and men’s resources are divided and often men and woman are responsible for different aspects of domestic expenses. I disagree, however, that men and women are in “control” of their own incomes. Rather, I have found that women must defer (oftentimes) to the male household head, their husband, when spending their own money. Women repeatedly told me, without prompting, that this was the case, and female brewers said that they would secrete funds without the knowledge of their male partner in order to ensure its security for essential expenses (school fees, food etc) and to prevent it being taken from them by their husband for him to spend on alcohol or what the women considered to be frivolities. Helmfrid does note that these structures are localized and hence will differ between locations and cultural settings.

Kenyans from outside these communities, or with less knowledge of this sub-culture, often tell me they see these women as bad people who are “doing a bad thing”. They are morally ruining Kenya because they are encouraging drinking. The job they do is an illegal one and they should stop. Maybe they should keep chickens and sell the eggs, one man told me. Another said, “Why can’t they just survive off their farms like everyone else?” There seems to be little understanding that these families do not have the capital to invest in chickens, and that the crops die every season because it is so dry and because farming practices are inappropriate and unsuccessful. The brewers in the study site brew on a very small scale. Most other business ventures require an investment of capital, however small, that many people do not possess. “Why can’t they get a microfinance loan and start a business?” I was told on one occasion. Brewing is cheap to set up, anyone can do it, and it can be done anywhere. It does not require much capital and provides enough income to support a family (Nelson, in Caplan and Bujra, 1979). There are cases where brewing does not provide enough to support a family, and others where the Mama Pima becomes relatively wealthy. Such variations are down to various factors including individual qualities, inequalities (age, class, etc) and the economic success of their family farm (Helmfrid, 2010: 219).

We should be careful not to allow descriptions to become over- simplistic. Mama Pimas seem to, in some cases, enjoy the status that their job gives them. They have a joking relationship with customers with much flirting and innuendo, and thrive on the power their job gives them of being in control of the quantity of alcohol which men are consuming. These descriptions of the role of the Mama Pima and the possible reasons behind brewing should all be considered as valid rather than assuming that these women are morally corrupt, feckless criminals. The reality is that the identity of a Mama Pima is complex. Much of the reason for brewing, I suggest, is social mobility, or wanting to provide something better for the family but possibly only a few Mama Pimas achieve this. Yet even those who are just scraping by enjoy their status and relationship with customers and are at least able to feed and clothe their families, despite what community members think: “We are not seeing much development there!” participants in focus groups commented when asked about the potential benefits which they perceived in being a brewer. They thought that the brewers were not, on the whole, making much money from the job, yet some commented that the brewers were profiting from an illegal business which, they said, was wrong. These contradictory comments are in tension with each other and represent the mixed feelings which the community has about Mama Pimas and their potential to improve their lives or to acquire a new social status.

### **Women and Gender: Voiceless Victims or Self-Reliant Heroines?**

As you read this thesis, it will become clear that I have been conflicted over my portrayal of the brewers with whom I worked. Typically, women in sub Saharan Africa are portrayed as “voiceless victims of multiple oppressors or as assertive and self-reliant heroines, role models for western feminists” (Helmfrid, 2010: 198). Others also recognize this common stereotyping of African women as “marginalized, downtrodden and docile chattel[s] of an exploitative social system” (Chinery-Hesse, in Bryceson, 1995: 4). Bryceson observes that attitudes have ranged from “admiration of their autonomy and strength as agricultural producers...to disdain for their ‘lack of mastery’ of technology” (Bryceson, 1995: 3). These diametric interpretations sit uncomfortably with an intersectional feminist approach to gender. Privilege conceals itself from those who are the privileged few, and as one of those who is privileged enough to have been born into a white, middle class family, I want to be careful not to portray black Kenyan women as subordinated, “voiceless victims” (Helmfrid, 2010), further enforcing established patriarchal and racist analyses. Equally, I do not want to ignore the hardships experienced by the women with whom I worked, or to portray them as models for feminists elsewhere in the world. I also do not want to presume to speak for them, and have used much of their own words in this thesis.

Furthermore I have identified that throughout the literature, there is a continual focus on identifying 'African women' as a homogenous group rather than as individuals. Either they are 'rural African women', 'poor African women', or 'African farming women'. There is little acknowledgment of the agency of individuals and such discourses serve to perpetuate stereotypes of inferiority. In reality, women's roles are complex and adapt to the various influences of change and continuity (Bryceson, 1995: 18).

Women who make alcohol are affected by multiple factors of both oppression and liberation simultaneously. They experience the 'grey areas' in-between these two diametric analytical discourses. It is hard to accurately express how these women experience the intersection of various oppressive and liberating factors in their lives including, but not limited to, economic and market trends, sexism, government interventions, accepted gender roles, and environmental factors, against a backdrop of patriarchal social institutions (Helmfrid, 2010: 219). These factors I have tried to keep in mind during my fieldwork and data analysis.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described, using conversations with community members or observations, some of the reasons why brewing 'traditional' beers might take place in a rural Kenyan village. By describing the geographical remoteness, the lack of work, the harsh and arid environment, and the potential which brewing offers to families, I hope I have made clear some of the pushing and pulling factors relating to brewing. Yet it is also the case that some girls inherit their role as Mama Pima. I observed that they often grow up learning to help their mothers with the brewing and serving of homemade alcohol in the same way as children grow up learning to help with cooking, cleaning and other domestic duties. It is important to understand these intersecting factors of environment and unemployment in order to view the Mama Pimas with cultural relativism, so as not to criminalise people already living (in many cases) in poverty. In terms of the women themselves, I have tried to outline a more intersectional feminist approach to their portrayal in order to avoid wrongly representing them and their experiences. Alcohol sales play a key role in the long-term livelihood trajectories of brewers by providing financial independence from men, since it is mostly women who are brewers, and by creating relatively secure and reliable incomes. "Women are vital to, and not merely present in, drinking (Van Wolputte et al., 2010: 22).

There are other forces at work that many people choose to ignore, instead labeling the brewers as deviant, criminal, lazy or greedy. These forces furthermore affect working age men who constitute the

vast majority of drinkers. As anthropologists we must delve deeper to understand the broader concepts and reasoning which may be affecting these phenomena to avoid misconstruing behaviours that are far more complex than they might superficially seem.



## Chapter Four

### Violence and Abuse in Everyday Life

“How can anthropologists in particular (and academics in general) fail to engage with the fear, suffering, and hope that infuse our conversations with repressed people?”

(Skidmore, in Sanford et al., 2006: 55)

#### **Introduction**

Violence within the community is a common occurrence for people whose lives are connected in some way with alcohol, be that brewing, selling or drinking. This chapter will explore some of the dimensions of violence which I witnessed personally, or violent episodes reported by members of the community, and how these violent acts are related to alcohol. These acts of violence, abuse and disrespectful behaviour are not isolated incidents unconnected with the rest of society, nor are they ‘harms’ performed or experienced by individuals with flawed or sinful characters.

The individuals in the following episodes may be unaware that their lifestyle choices are made within a context of fiscal scarcity, environmental pressures, and rapid urbanisation, and such factors might remain tacit knowledge, but their behaviour is an outward expression of these issues of structural violence, and as a protest against it (Scott, 1985).

The following extracts illustrate daily life within such contexts. Violence can be seen as a result of social dislocation and demasculinity. Indeed, much commercially produced alcohol in Africa is specifically marketed towards a representation of maleness which is strong, wealthy, and erotic (Roberts, in Van Wolputte et al, 2010). Conspicuous consumption of alcohol is one way in which men in Africa construct their masculinity: drinking to excess, sharing drinks, and engaging in casual sex are other ways (Fumanti, in Van Wolputte et al, 2010: 273), and I argue that alcohol and violence play a role in this identity too.

The lives of these individuals display how, in some cases, violence is just one way that they are able to assert their existence by “...deploy[ing] violence as a...weapon to force through their own desire to belong by destroying similar claims of belonging by the victims” (Broch-Due, 2005: 17). The field diary extracts in this chapter illustrate this principle. First, however, I want to give more context to the way in which I became so enmeshed within this subculture of home brew, and to demonstrate how I came to witness and hear about the normalised violence which is so much a part of daily life in Kijiji.

## **Becoming a Mama Pima**

It has been suggested that “female researchers could assume a privileged access to the oppressed by virtue of their ‘double consciousness’...[and] easily cross and mediate the boundaries between them” (Armbruster, 2008: 6). If we ignore the use of the term ‘oppressed’ (I am not convinced of the reality of this term in these contexts), it is possible to see that Armbruster identifies female anthropologist-researchers as being uniquely and powerfully situated, with the potential to traverse boundaries between the researcher and her participant. This is because women are more comfortable speaking to other women and despite the anthropologist’s status as an outsider, relationships can be developed more rapidly than between female participants and male anthropologists. I hoped to undertake such a task. To understand what life is like for a woman who chooses, or feels forced to work as a Mama Pima, brewing and selling local beers, I decided to become one. At this point, all I have said regarding my position within the community is particularly relevant. Silences and awkwardness spoke as loudly as any graphic descriptions or what were to me shocking disclosures. Importantly, my existing relationships with people in Kijiji, such as Constance, the Chief, and other local community members, will have had an effect on what I was and was not told, and the ways in which information was revealed to me. Furthermore, knowledge of my research may have contributed to what was revealed to me.

I asked several women in the area whose job it is to brew and sell homemade beer if I might work for them, filling bottles, taking money, washing cups and pots, taking photographs, and chatting to the women and the drinkers at the same time. They all agreed, and I worked for three different women helping them with their daily tasks. This not only gave them a bit of a break (since it was pretty easy – once they showed me what to do, I was able to get on with it largely unattended which was very trusting of the women since I was the one taking the money for them), but it also allowed me to see what they do, to experience it almost as if I were the Mama Pima myself. Obviously it was not the same for me – I am lucky enough not to have to do this job as my primary income generating strategy. I got to go home after the chaos of serving at a drinking session, whereas these women usually live where they brew and sell. They cannot leave when it gets noisy, when the men get rowdy, or when they are sick of being groped and teased.

I learnt that it is an exhausting job. Dealing with drunk customers, if you are sober, is exhausting, and after six or eight hours of it, I was ready for a break. It is unhygienic. There is no running water in the area, so everyone has to collect water from the village water points. This makes washing anything,

including hands, a laborious process. The places where the brew is made and served are always out of the way places, and most are quite dirty, the ground littered with rubbish.

Drinkers inadvertently spit you on when they push their faces right into yours when they want to speak to you. I was groped, had my clothes pulled, and was shouted at for requesting they pay first before I gave them their drinks. I realised that the Mama Pimas are extremely clever business women. They manage to maintain a sort of 'tab' system for the customers they trust, and the customer pays at the end of the session, but I could not remember how much each had had to drink and so, to be sure, I asked them to pay before each drink was served. This caused both hilarity and frustration. The Mama Pimas are able to keep this tab in their heads. Either that, or the whole system is reliant on goodwill and is 'fuzzy' and inaccurate (Willis and Mutisya, 2009), with the Mama Pimas potentially taking advantage of their inebriated customers to extort more cash than they have really spent. I (who have struggled my whole life to add two single digits together!) was totally incapable of using this system and felt happier requesting payment prior to serving each drink. I did not want to short-change the Mama Pimas.

I learned that this is a pretty tough and unpleasant job for the women who do it and they are daily exposed to verbally abusive outbursts by customers, and have to 'chuck out' people who are too drunk, or liable to physical violence.

The first day I met Patience and visited her bar, I recorded in detail what it was like. I had heard about her through Gift as he knows most people in the community, and knows Patience well because he drinks at her place sometimes.

*Field diary extract – At Patience's Mnazi Bar:*

The *mnazi* bar is hidden from passers-by down a narrow alleyway. To find it, one must weave one's way between a bar selling commercial alcohol, and a kiosk selling cigarettes and mobile phone chargers. Gift leads and I follow. The narrow path is dusty and pieces of plastic sweet wrappers, plastic bottles, and metal bottle tops crunch under foot. The path is short and widens quickly into a clearing between a row of rental rooms on one side, and a store on the other. Both are long, squat, brown buildings built of cement with *mabati* roofs.

In the clearing is an assortment of broken chairs – plastic ones, wooden ones, and a low wall beyond. The ground is littered with the detritus of a rural Kenyan existence: cigarette butts, bottle tops, batteries, pieces from a child's broken toy. Looking further still, there are some trees in the dusty space, their branches joined together by washing lines sagging heavily under the weight of children's clothes, *kangas*, and second-hand jeans. Beyond is a decrepit toilet

block, the smell of which is occasionally carried towards us on the stifling breeze. Its doors are painted peeling yellow and are hanging lazily from their hinges.

In the clearing, the block of rented rooms has a step which is built into the walls reaching about 2 feet up from the base. On this step is a cluster of old glass brandy bottles, the ones shaped like a hip flask, accompanied by a couple of plastic ones. Poking out of these are what look like brown narrow twigs. There are flies gathering at the necks of the bottles. Next to these are a couple of reused glass soda bottles. These are larger than the others. Next to these is a clear plastic bucket with a yellow handle. It is half-full with murky, pale grey water, and some more bottles are floating inside. Some leaves from the nearby trees have blown into the water and are mingling on the surface.

On the low wall to the back of the clearing is a yellow bucket. A lid loosely covers the top but the sun shining through reveals that there is a jug floating inside in a milky-coloured liquid. There is a line of washed bottles next to the bucket, and a plastic cup holding more of these narrow twigs.

There is the muffled sound of *matatus* sounding their horns to tell potential passengers that they are leaving soon, and the chatter of people going about their daily chores. Occasionally a car or a lorry passes with a rumble. The sound of chickens is all around, mingled with the squeals of delight of children playing, and the hot breeze offering little comfort rustles the branches of the trees.

In the clearing, a motley group of men are lazing around. They are lolling out of chairs, or sprawled on the low wall. There are seven men present. Their clothing ranges from ragged, barely-there t-shirts, coupled with filthy ripped jeans, to pin-striped shirts, suit trousers, and shining 'yellow-gold' watches, enormous on their wrists, the faces surrounded by glinting diamantes. They are drinking from the bottles using the narrow twigs, which I now understand to be straws made of a local dry grass. The smell of the drink is strong and indescribable, but something like a sour, yeasty concoction. The smell permeates the air around the men: it escapes from their pores and hangs strongly on their breath. The men are young and middle aged, some sitting quietly, presumably lost in thought or too drunk to respond, others chatting, laughing, telling jokes, sharing stories. Some are chewing *miraa*, holding huge newspaper-clad bundles of it in one hand and holding sticks of it in the other hand, stripping the outside with their teeth and frantically chewing the remainder with a mouthful of Big G chewing gum (the taste is too foul without it). I notice there are no women drinking here.

A woman emerges from through the door of the last rented room in the low block. She is, I estimate, probably in her thirties and has yellow-blond curly extensions in her hair. There is kohl around her eyes. She is wearing a revealing blouse, red and glittery spandex stuff, and tight jeans. Massive plastic leopard-print earrings hang from her ears. She sits down on a plastic chair, tells me "*Karibu*", and, picking up her own bottle, slurps noisily a large quantity of the and swallows with gusto. She smacks her lips and with an "Ah!" replaces the bottle on the ground

by her side. As she smiles at me, I notice she has false gems on her teeth. She is joking with the men, who are transfixed. Her laugh is loud, gravelly, accompanied by slapping hands with the men (like a “low-five”). They seem to have a joking relationship and this atmosphere clearly attracts people to her and fuels her business selling *mnazi*. She is the Mama Pima.

With the door to her room open, I catch a glimpse inside. A low bed is partially hidden behind a sheet held up on a piece of string, acting as a make-shift curtain. The floor is blue and silver linoleum with a square pattern. There appear to be several large bags of what looks like screwed up clothing shoved roughly down at the end of the bed. There is a television playing a loud, Nigerian soap opera on a small, round table, surrounded by bottles of hair oil and tubs of skin cream. The dramatic music from the soap opera permeates the conversation going on outside.

One of the men says something to her, from which I catch, “*Nyngine*”. She pushes herself out of her chair and approaches him, taking from his hand the empty bottle he is holding out to her. She saunters over to the yellow bucket, removes the lid and reaches inside. She pulls the straw out of the bottle and places it on the low wall next to the bucket and the clean bottles. Next, she fills the man’s bottle right up to the neck using the jug full of the foul smelling milky drink. When it is full, she replaces his straw, some of the drink spilling out over the top and down the neck because it is so full. She puts the lid back on the yellow bucket, places the empty jug on top of the lid, and hands the fresh drink to her customer. There is no exchange of money. I find this very odd, and ask why he hasn’t paid. “He’ll pay later”, she explains. I realise that she is doing this for most of the customers present, almost like a tab system. She must have an excellent memory to be able to keep a track of what each person owes her.

For an hour or so I watch what is going on. A handful of men arrive, down a drink, and leave immediately, but most hang around longer. They seem to enjoy the atmosphere of relaxed joking and messing around with her. She even has a wrestling match with one of them, resulting in that gritty laugh and more hand slapping. The men drink one drink after the other, usually fairly steadily. I find that small bottles of 250ml cost 30/- each and a large bottle of 500ml is 60/-. She seems to have a couple of other girls working here too, but I don’t really understand the dynamic and am a little confused. I whisper to Gift, who whispers back that the girls are *malayas* (prostitutes) because she can’t afford to pay them but they get good business here “selling their vaginas”. They are mainly sitting around, laughing with the men, and doing each other’s hair. Occasionally they get up to serve drinks or to wash bottles in the murky, grey water from the bucket on the step. One of the girls goes into the second room along in the block, which seems to be another bedroom, and emerges with a screaming toddler, its face covered in snot. The girl is wearing a t-shirt which has ‘I like your boyfriend’ printed on it. The snotty toddler calms down and sits in the dirt between her mum’s legs, picking up bottle tops and sucking on them. Soon, her little blouse is covered in dirt-coloured dribble and finger-wipes.

One of the men is short of funds and is trying to persuade a friend to buy him a drink. The friend eventually gives in and pays for a small bottle of *mnazi* for himself and the begging friend. This seems to be a popular strategy for those who have no money, since they promise their friends they will pay them back in kind when they have money coming in.

I ask her to show me around her place, to give me a guided tour. She downs her drink and takes me over to the bottle-washing area. She explains that she always has to replace the straws because when the men get drunk they chew and break them. The straws are a locally available dried grass with a mesh of coconut fibre over the base to filter out any flies or unwanted invaders in the drink. Then she takes me inside and we sit on her linoleum floor. It is peeling up around the doorstep.

Her name is Patience. She says she has been a Mama Pima for a long time now and that this little room is her house. She rents it. This is her place, where she lives and works. I ask her some basic questions about her work and she answers in a bored fashion, rubbing skin cream on her arms. Yes, she is very hygiene conscious, she says. Bottles always get washed in hot water. People come to her place to drink because she runs a good business and because it is clean. I don't feel like I'm doing anything other than scratching the surface. Patience isn't guarded, but she seems to be telling me half-truths and I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere. It is frustrating. I try a different approach. I ask her if I can come and work for her as a Mama Pima. She lights up at this suggestion, grinning widely and showing her false-gem-endowed-teeth. Can I come tomorrow? Yes, I reply, of course I can. Patience grabs my hand and clasps it firmly between hers. She is thrilled and is thanking me profusely. Whether this is the novelty factor of having a white girl work for her, or because she needs a break, I'm not sure. I suspect the former. But she is open, welcoming, and inordinately helpful. We leave, she hugs me, I smile and thank her. She insists on holding my hand and walking back to the roadside with me. Patience is bouncing up and down in anticipation of my return. "But she is somehow half-crazy", Gift warns me. I don't care. I'm relieved to have found such an enthusiastic Mama Pima to work with.



**Above:** Women help to serve the *mnazi* at Patience's bar. A mother with a baby works to support her young family

By spending time with Patience, serving for her, and giving her a break, we got to know each other well. She put me in touch with other Mama Pimas who, because of the link between Patience and me, were willing to let me talk to them and visit their homes and informal bars. I had to constantly consider the safety of my participants and especially so when they were describing violence. This could be upsetting for them, get them into trouble, or get me into trouble if the perpetrators of that violence wanted to conceal their identity and actions from me. I always made sure that my participants were in a safe, quiet location away from prying eyes or ears when discussing personal and sensitive topics. By these violence episodes being discussed with a degree of openness between my participant, and myself this act potentially put them and me in danger. I was aware of this and the need for discretion, privacy and anonymity, and these were ethical issues of which I was constantly aware and reassessed throughout the fieldwork process, and at the writing stage. This, I hope, meant that participants in my research and myself were protected from risk and harm.

## Mama Mercy and the 'War' Next Door

After I had been in Kijiji a couple of months, I made a contact with a Mama Pima who I found through Patience. Her name is Mama Mercy and she brews and sells *mitinidawa* from a small house on her *shamba*. Patience had introduced us and Mama Mercy welcomed me to her place to help serve the brew, to 'pima' for her. Mama Mercy is probably around 40 years old and always wears elaborate wigs and weaves in her hair. She has a grown up family who live elsewhere. She dresses in the western style of many of the successful women locally, mostly in jeans and t-shirts, with makeup, denoting her status as a businesswoman who is doing well for herself. Mama Mercy lives in the main village but her business is run from her *shamba*, about twenty minutes' walk from her home.

**Below:** serving *mitinidawa* for Mama Mercy. Many women frequent her bar, and bring their children with them. A bottle like this one costs 10/- . Food is prepared (behind), often boiled meat, and sold to drinkers



### *Field Diary Extract – At Mama Mercy's Mitinidawa Bar:*

I drive to Mama Mercy's with Gift and Justice in tow ready to translate if I get stuck and generally to give me moral support in awkward situations. These often arise when the men are drunk and I'm a bit of a novelty there, being a young white woman. I've been groped, poked, and generally mauled about by men to whom I'm serving alcohol. Mama Mercy's 'place' consists of a small mud house with a *mabati* roof on her *shamba*. Her own home is in the next village but this is her place of work. The house is flanked by a small store, also made of mud



with a *mabati* roof. Behind the store is the toilet, a very broken down mud structure with a hole in the ground inside and a door, or rather a curtain of sorts, made of a very ragged old cement bag. The roof in the toilet is so low that I hit my head every time I go to pee. Next to this is a grass thatched screen where the men can pee straight onto the ground. Surrounding this cluster of buildings is a garden of sorts where the maize has all died and the sun-scorched stumps poke out of the ground in sad little rows. There is a large tree next to the house providing a little shade and there are three simple benches for customers to sit on. The backdrop to this scene is quite spectacular with the mountain rising out of the dry plains directly behind us, covered in green forest and black rock, the top shrouded in cloud. It is raining up there, but down here it is dry and dusty and painfully hot.

As I arrive, Mama Mercy greets me warmly with a big hug. She is, as always, wearing jeans and a t-shirt with a black scarf wrapped around her head. She doesn't dress like the other village women and I have never seen her in a *khanga*. She is a curvy woman who is probably in her forties. She wears a wig, like many of the more middle class local women, which is black and copper coloured with neat short waves.

I spend the remains of the morning serving customers. There aren't many around, but as time creeps by, more arrive. Mama Mercy chats with those who are still capable of a coherent conversation and laughs at those who are not. Soon, a young girl arrives and greets me with an extended hand and a muttering of "*Wawukamana*". I can tell that she is very drunk. She tells me that her name is Tina and that she has been drinking the whole night. She is wearing a faded purple t-shirt with Chanel logos on it and a long pale grey, pleated skirt. Her face is round with narrow eyes and full lips. She tells Justice that she wants me to hear her life story, so we sit together on the low wooden benches and she begins to talk. She downs one drink and immediately asks for another.

Tina begins to tell me a very confused (and for me, confusing to follow) story about the time when she stabbed her boyfriend's lover and went to prison for it. It is a complicated tale, made more difficult to understand because she is drunk and Justice is finding it hard to follow in his translation and has to check details with her. When I return home later to write up her story, I find that I cannot make sense of it and decide to ask her about it again when she is sober.

When Tina went to jail she was already two months pregnant, she tells me. Her baby was born in prison and stayed with her there until she was released. Her first-born is here, which I assume is the baby born in jail. He is running around and stealing cheeky glances at me while we talk. He is too afraid of me, or too embarrassed, to come and say hello, but hides around the side of the store and peeks out at me, giggling each time. He is very shy. Tina asks for another drink. 250ml bottles are only 10/- each and so people can afford to drink much larger quantities than they could of commercial beer. One commercial beer (500ml) costs the same as around 13 of these 250ml bottles of *mitinidawa*. The drink is handed to her by Mama Mercy in a bottle which must formerly have contained whisky or brandy.

Tina has her baby with her. He is three months old and called Robert. He is very tiny and she is breastfeeding him. She tells me that when she left prison, the devil made her pregnant. Her baby looks odd. He is small, thin, with wide, staring eyes, and his skin is covered in pimples. He grabs my finger and shoves it in his mouth. I worry that she doesn't understand why I am asking her questions, but she seems happy enough to talk to me and we did explain that I was here doing research into *pombe ya kienyeji*, but she is so drunk that I am concerned about her telling me her story. She says she is not married and I ask her if she drank alcohol when she was pregnant. Tina says that she drank a lot, and also smoked a lot of *bangi*. Justice is beginning to get annoyed with her because he is asking her my questions but she regularly goes off topic, talks about something totally different, and starts yelling. I tell him to try to be patient with her; she can't help acting like this because she is drunk. Her baby won't feed properly and is agitated.

I ask Tina how old she is. She says she is twenty. She asks for another drink and one swiftly arrives. Tina has put her finished bottle on the bench next to her and her baby, Robert, has grabbed it and is sucking on the opening, tasting the dregs of the liquid.

Tina is bored of speaking to me and Justice now. She is dancing around to the tinny guitar music on the radio, which crackles in and out with bad signal. She has her eyes closed and is pulling at her t-shirt and swaying her hips. Mama Mercy asks if we could give her a lift to the next village in my car. She needs to pick up more *mitinidawa* from her store because she is running low. As I've been speaking to Tina, more customers have arrived and the alcohol is selling fast. I agree, and grab my stuff. I'm keen to get out of there anyway and gather my thoughts. As we walk to the car, Tina grabs my arm and refuses to let go, squealing, "Wakesho [my Taita name], I laaav you, I laaaaaav you!" I tell her I will come back soon and she releases my arm. I turn to walk away and she wanders towards her house, swaying and missing steps as she goes. Her house, luckily for her current state of inebriation, is only about a hundred meters away from Mama Mercy's place.

Mama Mercy climbs into the front seat of the car, and Gift and Justice get in to the back, and I drive to the next village. It takes about five minutes to drive there. Mama Mercy tells me where to stop in the main street (I call it this, but there really is only one dirt road) and I pull off to park. She leads us through a dilapidated looking bar with blue and grey paintings of zebra on the crumbling walls, out to a courtyard area behind. There is a group of drunk young men in their twenties sitting on a low wall. They yell at me, "Hey! Mzungu!". 'Hey white girl' isn't a great chat up line, and a source of immense irritation to me, so I ignore them and try to concentrate on what Mama Mercy is doing. She unlocks a small padlock on a door and ushers me into what is little more than a cupboard. Gift is outside talking to the drunken hecklers, and Justice is with me, squashed into the tiny room, helping to translate.

Inside the room, there is an assortment of plastic containers. The smell of *mitinidawa* is strong and enveloping. Again, I am reminded of cider. Mama Mercy shows me how she pours the alcohol from the big black barrel into the smaller, yellow *mitungi*, using an old plastic bucket and

a plastic bottle with the bottom cut out as a funnel. She places a sieve over the bottle to remove bits of the tree left inside the liquid.

I want to know more about how it is made and she tells me that the alcohol is made here in the village. The tree which is the key ingredient is bought in town, but she cannot remember the name of it. The pieces of tree are boiled with water and then this water is sieved into a *mitungi*. This is then mixed with cold water and sugar is added, as well as the very dark *jaggery* sugar which comes from Kisumu in the west of Kenya. It is extremely dark, almost like molasses, and there is a big plastic *gunia* (sack) of it on the ground. It comes in cone shaped blocks. When this is added to the mixture, it is then left to ferment for four days.

Mama Mercy finishes collecting her *mitinidawa* and locks up the room again. The men on the wall leer at me again as I leave with her, Gift and Justice, and tell me to buy them drinks. I tell them no, and head for the car. They laugh and chatter as I leave. We haul the heavy *mitungis* into the car and set off for Mama Marcy's place again. The car smells strongly of alcohol.

When we arrive, Mama Mercy asks Gift and Justice to help her to carry the *mitungis* to her house. They're pretty heavy, and since we are planning on leaving to go back to Constance's for our lunch, I wait in the car and fiddle with my camera. As I am sitting there, getting hotter and sweeter, and looking at the photos I've taken during the course of the morning, I hear shouting. I'm engrossed in the photos and pay little attention. Suddenly, Justice rushes up to the car. "There is a war!" he shouts breathlessly. He's been running. "You must come, and bring your camera". I am sceptical. Justice can be dramatic sometimes, so I get out of the car and walk, following him. "Hurry", he urges me.

We are heading towards Tina's house, where I saw her staggering earlier. It is the house she shares with her mother, Malemba. I can hear shouting coming from the direction of their house. I've never been to their house before and am shocked when I finally see it. The ground all around is littered with rubbish – bits of torn clothing, discarded plastic toys, bottles, containers, toothpaste tubes, plastic bags. The house itself is a mud-on-a-stick-frame affair with a *mabati* roof. It looks as though it is two rooms, both reached through external doors. One of these doors is hanging off its frame and is made very simply from a sheet of *mabati*. It is creaking as it barely hangs from the twisted top hinge.

Tina and her mother are fighting. Tina has kicked the door down and she and her mother are beating each other with sticks, big sticks that are more like branches. Gift is standing next to me. "You have miss the best part already!" he eagerly assures me. "She [Tina] have lift up her skirt to show the mother she doesn't have HIV in her vagina!"

Tina's mother, Malemba, is inside the room on the right, the one with the door hanging off its hinges. They are still yelling at each other. Malemba storms out, looking fairly terrifying with a thunderous expression on her face and her dull, lifeless eyes fixed on her daughter, and her shoulders hunched. She looks ready to pounce and I move back away from her and her screaming daughter. Malemba picks up her stick again and lashes out at Tina with it. Mama

Mercy is here, and tries to break up the fight. Tina is egging her mother on, it seems to me, and Mama Mercy has to hold her back. Mbogo has put the older child down and is attempting to calm Malemba, but she is having none of it, pushing him out of her way when he tries to get between the fighting women. They continue to shout at each other and at this stage I have little idea of what is going on. Tina comes over to me and, through the snot and tears, shows me wounds on her head and arm. I can't understand what she is saying to me, but I assume that these have been caused by her mother.

Tina's face is swollen and there are splinters in the wound on her temple. She and her mother are very drunk and I can smell the alcohol on them both. Tina is wailing and throwing her arms around dramatically. The whole episode reminds me of a pantomime. Her face is covered in dirt and snot and tears and I am confused. I am aware that they are both drunk and that they must be fighting like this because they are intoxicated, but I don't understand what started the fight. It is too noisy and there is too much going on for me to ask anyone yet. My ears are full of the sound of the women shouting at each other and babies screaming, onlookers yelling at them to stop, and the door being kicked repeatedly.

Mama Mercy seems to be quite the diplomat and in the last few minutes, has managed to calm the situation considerably. Onlookers are still standing under nearby trees, watching. The ground is littered with broken bits of timber and sticks from the fight.

After what seems like an age, Tina is persuaded to leave. Malemba is inside the house now and from what I can see, is lying down on her bed. Perhaps she is exhausted from the fight. Tina, Mama Mercy, Justice, Mbogo, Gift and I wander back to Mama Mercy's house with the children in tow. Tina goes inside amongst the barrels of alcohol and lies down on the decrepit iron frame bed. The filthy foam mattress sinks almost to the ground. She is asleep within minutes, her baby at her side.

I drive back to Constance's for lunch. Inside the car we are silent. It is half past two. As we come through the main village, I see a guy lying beside the road face down. I pull up to see if he is OK. Somebody yells "Mlevi!" (drunkard), and I ask the face-down guy if he is alright. He turns his face to me, and looks blankly through me. I notice that his trousers have fallen down exposing his underwear. He feebly reaches down in an attempt to pull them up and save a little dignity, but fails, and passes out again.

The owner of the internet cafe comes out of the building behind where the guy is lying. I know him a little, and ask if the guy is alright, or if I can do anything to help. "He is a stupid!" he says. "He have make urine inside my cafe so I have beat him", he tells me proudly, and laughing, he prods the guy with his foot. So now, the drunk guy is lying outside on the ground in a pool of his own piss, which I now notice, and is too drunk to do anything about it. People all around are laughing at him and saying "Mjinga sana" (he is a stupid person).

When we return to Mama Mercy's place, it is four in the afternoon. There are still largely the same crowd sitting and drinking with a few additions. There is a *mzee* (older man) who must

have heard the fight because he tells me "Let's be lovely in this world. When I see fighting, I think they are like baboons or dogs!" I tell him I think that is a very nice sentiment. He is wearing a mucky brown flat cap and his teeth are yellow and brown and broken but his smile is contagious. His face is like a raisin, all wrinkled and bronzed, with a scrappy white beard populating his chin and upper lip. He is telling everyone, in spectacularly correct English, how he had a career as a soldier. The *mzee* says of Mama Mercy, "This lady, her posture is just like a soldier!" He spits slightly in my direction as he speaks and I wriggle back in my seat as politely as I can. His grandson is here also having a drink. He introduces himself to me and says that he is a waiter in Casablanca, a notoriously seedy nightclub in Mombasa. His grandfather jumps up from where he has been sitting on the low wooden bench and declares: "Let's do the long jump now! I'm not drunk!" I think perhaps he is.

I have brought with me some first aid things to clean Tina's wounds. She is inside the house and sitting on the mucky bit of foam mattress which has sunk almost to the floor, meaning that when I sit next to her, I am almost sat on top of her. She has sobered up considerably since this morning's events and is able to talk much more coherently. She claims that her mother wants to kill her. I am cleaning her head with Dettol and cotton wool. I pick the splinters out of her head and stick an Elastoplast over her clean graze. I realise how she must trust me to allow me to do this for her. The wound on her wrist is strange and I wonder how it was caused. Later, Gift tells me that Malemba bit her and drew blood.

Justice is sitting opposite us, amongst the yellow *mitungis* of *mitinidawa* and buckets of empty, washed bottles. There is a dirty *sufuria* on the floor with the remains of *msara* inside it. Flies buzz around us. Tina is trying to breastfeed her baby but he is reluctant despite being hungry and crying.

As I leave the house Tina has already fallen asleep again on the bed with Robert sleeping beside her. Malemba is hanging around outside. She is drunk and shelling green peas into a basket slung across her shoulder. She seems to have forgotten the fight and I leave her sitting under the tree, waiting for her next drink.



**Above:** Malemba and her grandchild at Mama Mercy's bar



**Above:** Tina and her baby, drinking *mitinidawa* at Mama Mercy's bar

**Below:** Tina crying outside her house following the fight with her mother, Malemba. The wound on her arm is a bite mark inflicted by her mother during the fight



### **Men (and Women) Behaving Badly**

Female drinkers were in a tiny minority compared to male drinkers. This has been well documented throughout African drinking contexts: “in the past, women were not allowed to drink and particularly not in public. Even at present there is some stigma attached to women drinking” (Helmfrid, 2010: 214). I often witnessed men fighting. I heard women complaining in passing that their husbands would come home drunk and cause an argument, perhaps throwing the supper out, or angry that money they wanted to spend on alcohol had been spent elsewhere on domestic expenses. I would overhear women at Constance’s shop telling her that their husband had gone to Mama Pima’s to get drunk and forgotten the cattle or goats, which were, by evening time, supposed to be safely shut away in their *boma*. Instead, the animals were left wandering around alone, easy prey for hyenas or dogs, or liable to be hit by a *pikipiki* in the dark. I know many of these husbands, and have seen them at all times of the day staggering around, muttering to themselves, sleeping on the ground, yelling, fighting, and urinating in the street.



**Above left:** Constance's brother following a drunken fight at a bar

**Above right:** a man is beaten for urinating in an internet cafe and passes out by the roadside having soiled himself

I wondered how widespread this was, or if I was merely seeing it because I was *looking* for it. I was finding that some of the men in my social circle were regularly getting into fights or having accidents, and I would see them some mornings with fresh wounds from the previous evening's drinking session.

To find out whether this was widespread, I organised focus groups. In the focus groups, most participants, and especially the middle-aged women, reported experiences of violence. They told me that it was not just they who had experienced it, but many, many other women. I did not ask specifically about violence at any time. I wanted to leave the questions very open and so I asked each group to think about and then tell me what were the good things about home brew and what were the bad things. And it was in this way that the theme of violence kept reoccurring. It is, they tell me, very common, but that it is shameful for a woman to talk about it because if she married the man, she must put up with his behaviour or be branded a disloyal wife. I also heard this same comment from men, who told me that stories of violence were common but that most women would not talk about it. This indicated to me that although the women feel that violence is wrong and 'bad', it is an accepted and normalised part of daily existence in Kijiji.



Women who divorced their husbands or left them were seen as cowardly, and women who fought back were unheard of. If they did fight back physically, they were probably bewitched or mentally deranged. This was the view of both men and women.

Younger girls and boys, in their late teens, were recruited by my translator, Justice, from his own peer group. They said that they thought the behaviour of their parents and relatives who drank was shameful. In the boys' focus group, they described instances where drunk men would end up fighting because of their intoxicated state, and that they often saw men drunkenly shouting in the street and verbally abusing their neighbours. The boys told me that if a man comes home drunk, it is likely that he would end up fighting with his wife, especially if the wife is also a drinker. They concluded that fighting is a "common thing" to people who drink alcohol.

The boys said that because their fathers and uncles drink, there is no example for them to follow, and that if their father tells them not to drink alcohol, they will not obey him because they have no respect for someone who behaves in that way. One teenage boy said: "How can my father tell me anything? He have ask me to buy for him one [drink] and he is telling me not to drink alcohols. So how can he tell me anything? And our fathers and uncles, they are the same". So, it seems that the boys are growing up experiencing violence, and seeing their parents or relatives drinking, and many are following the same pattern of behaviour. It has become normalized, yet as children they are rejecting it.

The girls said that violence was common among men who drink and that there is "no any good reason" for a man coming home and beating his wife. The reason, they said, is just because he is drunk. They say that they hear drunk people using abusive language to others, and that the Mama Pimas are to blame. This, they believe, is because the Mama Pimas are encouraging drinkers to drink more alcohol and this leads to unnecessary levels of violence. Furthermore, the girls noted that if a woman drinks, she is unable to control herself, or understand the behaviour of people around her and this, the girls thought, may lead to sexual abuse and rape.

In the middle-aged men's focus group I felt more than the other groups the pantomime of collective performance, something which Pool (1994) found in his study. This phenomenon is discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Pool explains that situations may indeed have been enacted for the benefit of the audience, which was the researcher, Pool himself. Genuine opinions and ideas may be expressed, interwoven with more performative discourse. The performative aspects are entertainment both for the actors and audience – me, in this case.

The men who took part are men who I often see drunk, or drinking at one of the informal bars in the area. I have served some of them. These men of working age, between 18 and 45, are the ones who, as we have seen from newspaper articles and my observations, constitute the vast majority of drinkers in Kijiji and countrywide. In this focus group, they did not talk about violence much and claimed that none of them were heavy drinkers, yet a few of them are notorious alcoholics within the community. They were evasive when it came to discussing violence but they did say that some people (not including themselves) might go home after a drinking session and start quarrelling with their wives, or they might start fights with their friends after drinking alcohol. They excluded themselves from these statements, instead claiming that they do not drink enough alcohol and perhaps they should drink larger quantities.

The older women made some very interesting points about violence and alcohol, and they all had experience of violent men or verbally abusive men who had drunk what the women perceived to be too much alcohol, making them this way. They said that if a man drinks too much, he will fight with his wife. They believe that if a man wants to fight his wife, he is too shy to do so without a drink inside him, so he will go to the Mama Pima, drink alcohol, and return home just to have a fight with his wife. They said that the way some men react when they are drunk is abnormally violent.

The older men did not talk much about alcohol and violence either, but said that when someone drinks alcohol, he thinks that he is “a great person”, and this may cause some fighting in the family because when he comes home, he behaves arrogantly.

The focus group with middle-aged women talked about violence more than any other focus group. They said that when they were children, men drank less, but now they say that people (mainly men) drink until they are abusing others. They said there is greater fighting at night than in the day time and that when men return home at night “they are very harsh, they just want to beat their wives, and the reason? There is no any good reason for beating their wives”. The women mainly spoke about their own experiences, despite me telling them that I wanted them to speak *generally* about alcohol. It seemed they felt comfortable talking about alcohol and violence and their own experiences, as if this was a topic they often discussed amongst themselves, and it became almost a support group atmosphere. One woman said that her husband is forever coming home with his clothes torn from fighting after drinking too much, and they blamed the brew for this behaviour. They claimed that their husbands would come home and start throwing all their belongings out of the house and trying to destroy everything, including smashing up the house itself.

The middle-aged women believed that the Mama Pimas are adding 'something' to their brew which causes drinkers to behave in an excessively violent manner. I did not see any foundation for this claim when I watched women brewing the drinks, but I cannot dispute nor verify this claim. Women view Mama Pimas with caution and sometimes hostility. They blame them for much of their husband's behaviour.

The women said that the reason why husbands become angry with their wives when they return home from a drinking session is usually about money. One woman said that the men will complain if the wife takes some money to buy clothes for the children, or other things for the household, and there is nothing remaining for him to use to buy more alcohol:

*"So, by the time he comes [home] and says, 'Where is the money?' and the woman says, 'I have buy this and this and this for the children', the man becomes very angry. But when he takes that money and goes to take bangara, he doesn't feel anything and thinks that is OK. But if the woman takes that money, maybe just buying food and doing things for the children then he thinks it is bad." (Middle aged woman)*

<sup>11</sup>Another point made by the middle-aged women was that children are afraid of their fathers when their fathers have been drinking.

*"So by the time they are doing their homework maybe their father comes in and he is drunk, so some of the children when they hear that, they are going to panic and not do their homework. So that leads to maybe the children not performing well in school because they have not done that homework and they have no freedom of being in their home and doing their homework in peace." (Middle aged woman in the Middle Aged Women's Focus Group)*

All the adult focus group participants claimed that they could see no way of changing the behaviour of drinkers. They unanimously agreed that the government should do something to stop the violence associated with drinking, and the drinking behaviour. I challenged this statement since the likelihood of the government being capable of assisting at this level is slim, and would require some kind of welfare policy, which is not currently in existence, and asked what a local solution to the problem of drinking and violent behaviour might be. All groups said that drinkers should have more self-control, drink less, and work harder to prevent them having little to do. The purpose of asking this was to identify what people living with these realities feel might work to precipitate change. The problems of

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<sup>11</sup> This was also reported by Burbank in an Aboriginal community where she reports participants complaining that men spend all their money on *ganja* and *grog* (cannabis and home brew/ cheap alcohol) and intoxication leads to violence in many instances (2011: 91).

unemployment, fiscal scarcity, political flux, and environmental pressures were all mentioned in passing but not in any detail and were largely ignored. Instead drinkers who were violent were accused of not being able to hold their drink, or not knowing how to drink properly.

The girls' and boys' focus groups both agreed that it might be possible to change the attitude of the next generation through educating school-aged children about the dangers of alcohol for health and society. They all commented, however, that those people who already drink would be unlikely to change their behaviour since they do not believe that their behaviour is a problem. Violence, disrespectful behaviour, and 'not looking for their families' (not looking after or providing for the family) were the most important issues reported again and again by members of the community. Health risks were relatively unknown and violence or abuse were seen to be much more harmful to the cohesion of the community than 'problems inside the body'.

### **Children as Witnesses**

Children in Kijiji have become so used to violent outbursts by their fathers that they are neither embarrassed nor frightened to talk about it. Violence has become normalised. I used body mapping and free drawing exercises to explore children's understandings of alcohol and the body, and their understanding of the phenomena of drinking and brewing local brew within their community.

Very few children drew specific internal body problems or depicted alcohol related diseases. They drew what they can see happening to drinkers in the community, and most of the drawings had violent elements. Many depicted bleeding from injuries or fighting, broken limbs from *piki piki* accidents, and one child drew a drunkard with one ear cut off by a *panga* (machete). It was difficult to know whether these were incidents children had witnessed first-hand, or if they were merely drawing things they had heard about, but I was surprised at the violent nature of their drawings. Interestingly, all the children referred to their drawings as male. They also called their drawings *mlevi* meaning a drunk person. This possibly indicates that children believe that men are more commonly drinkers and that female drinkers are rare, as I had observed. Children explained that their *mlevi* was, in many cases, suffering from burned or shrunken intestines or stomachs because of alcohol (BM3, BM5, BM6, BM7, BM8, BM9). I cannot give an explanation as to why this description and depiction was such a popular one amongst these children and their drawings. The children made their drawings dramatic, usually with much spurting of blood or bruises or wounds. These can be found in Appendix 3.

When given a blank sheet of paper and coloured pencils, and asked to draw anything they could think of to do with alcohol, most of the children drew the same thing: daddy beating up mummy because he has been drinking at Mama Pima's. Some elaborated on this general theme: daddy smashing up the house (CD1, CD6, CD10, CD16); daddy urinating in the street (CD17); daddy fighting with his friend (CD3, CD4, CD10, CD17); daddy asleep in the forest because he couldn't find his way home (CD4); daddy throwing the supper out (CD3); daddy shouting at mummy (CD3, CD5, CD8, CD9, CD11, CD12, CD14, CD15, CD16). Some of the drawings were not explained as being specifically the parents of the child who had done the drawing, but most drew drunk husbands beating their wives, and most children described this as being their own parents, or they explained it as "This is the mother and this is the father". Although in the drawing captions I have referred to the individuals depicted as 'men', most children actually used the word for 'father' when describing their drawings.

The children drew some fantastic and honest, if disturbing, drawings of alcohol and domestic violence, and when they came individually to explain the drawings it became clear that the men in the drawings were their fathers, and the women their mothers. There were some very sad depictions of their fathers beating their mothers with various implements including sticks (CD15), a rock (CD12) and a machete (CD7). There are many other related acts of violence or destruction within the home. One little girl narrated her drawings: "My mother is coking [cooking] and then my father is filtering [the beer – indicated by her detailed drawing of a brewing set-up]" and below: "my father bite [beat, 'i' is pronounced like an e in Swahili, and this is clarified by her drawing]", and finally: "my mother is carrying are [our] water". Her drawing (Appendix 3, CD5) showed me that the women do most of the domestic duties like cooking of beer and collecting water, yet are often subjected to domestic violence by their husbands. I was very disturbed by these images since all the children drew pretty much the same thing. Domestic violence, where the husband is physically and verbally abusive to his wife, was pervasive throughout these drawings, and fathers and husbands behaving badly after drinking local brew was also a common theme.

These drawings highlight the pervasiveness of violence in Kijiji and its relation to alcohol. In terms of the 'truth' of what children had drawn for me, it is difficult but important to ascertain whether these are real, lived experiences or if they are imagined scenarios. For example, I am pretty sure that the elaborate spurting of blood from wounds gained while under the influence of alcohol is not something which many (or any) of these children have witnessed but they were being creative and enjoying the chance to exaggerate and use their imaginations. Having said this, the evidence from other methods of

data collection used in this research indicates that violence related to alcohol is pervasive in Kijiji and I suggest that these drawings, especially from the latter half of the exercise where the children were free to draw whatever they wished, show real, lived experiences.<sup>12</sup> Witnessing violence at an early age has repercussions in later life (Sousa et al., 2011) and this will influence the next generation of children growing up in Kijiji.

Several drawings featured drunken husbands trying to get into their houses but the wife is afraid so she has locked the door, but he is breaking the door down with his feet and fists. This was the case in the majority of drawings.

The children did not seem to be embarrassed or nervous or shy when telling me about their drawings. There was much giggling, and nervous laughter, but mostly when they had drawn a drunkard having urinated on himself or in the street. This, clearly, they found embarrassing. Mostly, however, they were very open about what their drawings depicted and freely explained the scenes without hesitation.

#### **A History of Violence: The Life of a Mama Pima**

The extract that follows may seem like an exceptional case of systematic violence, beginning from early childhood and lasting until early adulthood, but it is impossible to tell. Cultural proscriptions and prohibitions prevent women from speaking out. It is taboo within this community, and probably in most of Kenya, to discuss such intimate partner violence, and it causes embarrassment. Patience is, then, to be considered somewhat different from other women. Despite the upsetting nature of her story, and through tears, she told me quite openly and very honestly, her life story.

I explained to her that her story would be featured in my 'book' and that I would make sure she was given anonymity. I said that lots of people in other countries might read it and she was enthusiastic about telling me. I think the idea of being featured in a 'book' was such a novelty to her that she was happy to tell me. All I asked her to do was to tell me the story of her life. I asked her to start right at the beginning and let her speak freely. I had not planned any specific questions or topic areas and so the story unfolded precisely as she wished it to be told. I certainly did not plan on finding out about violence when I first asked Patience to tell me her story, and I never directly asked her about it. This goes some

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<sup>12</sup> A selection of these drawings was used to promote debate in the second phase of focus groups. When considering the 'truth' of the drawings, focus group members decided that the children were drawing things which they had really seen, rather than situations they imagined or heard about.

way to demonstrating how she trusted me. When you understand this, it makes what follows even more striking. I recently asked Gift if her story was as common as I had always believed – no one had ever said, but I got the feeling that violence of this kind was not as uncommon as one might hope. “It’s not uncommon”, he told me, “but you know, those weemens [women], they are not allowed to say. And so, it is like a secret. But it happens”.

This is her life, her highly personal account, and her deepest secrets about which very few people know the details, even within her own family. The profound trust she must have in me to tell me these things is something which I do not take for granted. I feel that without her story, it would be harder for others to understand the pervasive violence in her life, and the shock I felt as I began to understand what she was telling me.

When I feel conflicted about re-telling Patience’s story, or anyone else’s’ story, or indeed showing any of the photographs of my fieldwork, I am reminded of a quote from Bourgois and Schonberg’s moving photo-ethnography *Righteous Dopefiend*, where one of the homeless heroin injectors they worked with tells them they must show a photograph of her face. “If you can’t see the face, you can’t see the misery” (*Nickie*, in Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 11).

I think it is the same with the details of Patience’s story – if it remains unknown, her sufferings and successes remain invisible. Indeed, by not allowing Patience’s words to speak for themselves then I would have to ask myself, whose voice am I privileging? If this thesis was made entirely of my own perspectives or if I paraphrased all of the insightful transcripts I collected, it would be even more partial than it is now. As discussed earlier, I cannot hide behind “the veil of positivist ‘objectivity’” (Geros, 2008: 112) and can only write from my own point of view. It is my hope that by including as much of the original words of my participants as possible, I am moving towards greater transparency and engagement with subjects: “the prioritization of people’s experiences of inequality and subordination in the ethnographic texts might be a significant point of departure for exploring the power relations that saturate not only the interactions between the ethnographer and her subjects, but all interactions within these societies” (Geros, 2008: 113).

At no point was Patience under any pressure from me to recount her story. I had brought up the subject of her life story on one previous occasion where she keenly volunteered to tell it to me. Had she really wanted to avoid talking to me, she could easily have done so. No amount of persuasive friendliness on

my part would have convinced her to tell me if she did not wish to – as Bravman found in his research in the Taita Hills (Bravman, 1990: 333).

Some of Patience's story will be paraphrased here for the sake of length and to ease understanding – sometimes the Swahili/English combination translates badly in a transcript and needs more succinct handling. But the majority of her story will be told here by Patience herself. I will italicize her own words.

*Patience's life story:*

Patience was born close to where she now lives, and her family struggled to send her to the local school. She attended school up to standard three but left to attend to her siblings due to the behaviour of her violent father:

*"...he was too much drunkard. So sometimes he comes home, beat my mother, hit her, so she was forced to go to her mother [Patience's grandmother]. So I was living like the one who is the mother, taking care of the small sisters and brothers."*

I ask Patience a little more about her childhood and what it was like for her growing up with a father they were all so frightened of:

*"Sometimes he would come home drunk. He didn't beat us [children], only my mother, and he would tell my mother 'can you move out with your fucking babies?!' and we used to go and sleep at the bush and in the morning, when he was sober, we would come back. But if we went to a neighbour for the night, my father would just come and start shouting 'why have you given them accommodation here?' So we were feeling really painful about it. How can our father do this to us?"*

*"When he was coming home at night, there was a certain song he would sing and we would know 'there is to be a war tonight' so we would just run, taking the food and clothing and we would just take that and go. We think he was cursed. He once beat his own father and his mother when they came for tea! So we are thinking that maybe his father cursed him and from that moment he have a lot of problems."*

She recounts several other violent outbursts from her father during her childhood including times when she and her mother and her siblings tried to leave and her father refused to allow it, smashing up the house and shouting at them.



Patience's teachers at school tried to encourage her mother to allow her to return, but there just was not the time for her to care for her younger siblings, and attend school, and her family was the priority. Her mother wanted to move out of the family house permanently but felt that until Patience was married, this could not happen:

*"my mother said: 'Patience, you are the one who makes me stay here, so if you are married, then even me, I am leaving'. I was fifteen years of age"*

Patience was introduced to a man by her mother:

*"my mother found him and brought him and said 'this is the man which you are going to marry' but I did not love that guy. But I was forced to go with him because of the problems at home. He was thirty years of age. And then my mum left"*

*"I was a virgin at that time and it was very painful for me to have sex first time. By that time I was feeling very painful and sore, and having a lot of problems, and I wanted to go home. But my mum said 'don't come home, stay with your husband' so I stayed and had three children, the first when I was sixteen years"*

I asked how old she was when Patience had first drunk alcohol. What I thought would be a fairly innocuous question seemed to liberate an aspect of her life that she had not revealed to me, or indeed to many others, before.

*"My husband, when I was fifteen, he used to make me drink alcohol. He used to make me drunk so that he could...use me. I didn't know anything then, I was a virgin, I knew nothing about love, relationships, anything...but my husband, he used to smoke bangi and gave me to try but I didn't like it, I didn't like the way it affected me."*

Patience told me how he would put *bangi* in the children's porridge to make them sleep while he took advantage of her. She was repeatedly raped by him and desperately wanted to leave.<sup>13</sup>

After the birth of her third child, she returned to her mother's house with her children.

*"That family [of her husband] was not happy so they came and took all the children. Then from there my mother told me 'I think you are now a grown-up, you can just go maybe look for a job...just leave'"*

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<sup>13</sup> He was arrested and is now in prison because he was sexually abusing the eight year old son of his new wife.

She implies that her husband had hoped that by taking the children away from her, she might return to him, but she refused. Instead, she went to Mombasa to find work and had little contact with her children during this time. [Her former husband is more willing to let her see her children now because he has another wife.]

*“When I worked at that [beauty salon] in Mombasa, the money was very small and my friends there, they had boyfriends, many boyfriends, so they were prostitutes. They said to me maybe I could get one, so I thought to myself now I am an adult I can choose the one I want, and I got one, an Arab. That Arab, he looked after me and got me a house for like 2000/- per month [around £17, relatively expensive]. Some of my friends at the saloon, they were...they were not happy because he kept me well, so they forced me to move out from that saloon, so I used to stay with that Arab.”*

*“That Arab, he went to UAE...Arabia...and I was left at Mombasa with no job. By the end of the month, that landlord, he want money, and I couldn't afford to pay. That Arab, he communicated to his friend, a Kikuyu [central Kenyan tribe] and said ‘can you maybe give Patience some money?’ so sometimes he comes, sometimes he doesn't and I had to look for another [man].”*

There follows some fighting between the wife of the Kikuyu man and Patience, after the wife finds out about her husband's arrangement with Patience:

*“She said ‘I'm telling you, if you stay with my husband I will pay some people to come and kill you!’ so I was frightened and I just came home again to my family”.*

At some point over the next few years, she wanted to move back home, or to visit her family. Patience started a small business in her home village, making food and selling it to people passing by. Then, she found her second husband:

*“He was a Somalian, a Muslim. From that time I met my husband he had a business. But that business was illegal – you know the business of sandalwood? I did that business for two years and though it was illegal I was cutting those trees [with her husband]. I was transporting it so I was taken to court. The court said I was to pay 200,000/- [around £1700] to be released but my husband would not pay. So my brothers and some Somalis contributed a lot of money so that I was released. I was in prison for two years and my family said I was not to go back to that husband because he refused to pay – he convicted me to do that job and he didn't care what happened to me.”*

From the time she was released, Patience found a new job:

*“My brother had a small business of selling mnazi, and he used to bring like one plastic [container] and many people used to come and drink. They would come and ask ‘where is that bangara’ and I would have to say ‘oh, it is over [finished]’ and they used to keep on complaining that here was only small [quantities of] mnazi and they needed to drink a lot. So my brother told me I could just continue that business if I contributed some money, so that's how I came to start selling mnazi”*

## **Mama Pimas at Work: Customers, Violence and Abuse**

During a typical working day, a Mama Pima will most likely experience some form of abuse from customers. This is usually in the form of verbal abuse, or customers starting a physical fight amongst themselves, as in the case of Tina and her mother, Malemba. I asked the Mama Pimas who I worked with what their experience of violence or verbal abuse from customers was.

Most Mama Pimas who I spoke to said that often, customers are noisy, shouting, fighting, or not wanting to leave when it is closing time. One Mama Pima said that customers can be abusive to her, but she says she cannot stop them coming because she needs the money. She often has trouble getting them to leave because they want to continue drinking past the time when she needs to close. She has several children who in such a noisy environment find it difficult to sleep.

I asked if the women ever have cause to stop serving customers. They generally said only if they are abusive or fighting with other customers. It is a business, so they cannot afford to stop serving unless customers are fighting. Mama Pimas were not able to be concerned about the welfare of their customers, even if they were injured in fights at their informal bar, because the primary concern of all Mama Pimas was scraping a living together from their work in order to provide for their family or to send their children to school. They cannot afford to throw violent or abusive customers out, generally speaking, and have to put up with much verbal abuse while maintaining a cheerful disposition. Some customers, however, are not financially worth putting up with, as I found in this case at Patience's place:

### *Field diary extract: - Difficult customers:*

On my second day of working for Patience, a 'short wire' came in (someone who is not quite all there), and was being a real pain "just talking sheet", according to Patience. So she marched him out into the street. But he wasn't having any of it, and a short while later he returned. I asked her if I should throw him out and she said "yes!", so I marched him out, but he wasn't happy about that either, and it was a struggle to get his grip off my wrist. I was frightened momentarily that he would hurt me because he was much stronger than me and clearly not all there, or just thoroughly drunk. He let go, but still did not want to leave so Patience brought a big stick and threatened him, in a jovial sort of way, that if he didn't leave she would hit him. So he eventually left, but not before he was threatened by almost every other customer at the informal bar. Patience was concerned that if he remained present, he would affect the

enjoyment of other customers because he is notorious for not paying for drinks, being a drunkard, and becoming verbally abusive.

It seems as though it is usually a financial decision to let verbally or physically abusive customers stay, or to throw them out.



**Above:** Patience has to throw a customer out for 'disturbing' her business

### **The Life Story of Tina**

Tina, who I introduced earlier as the young mother involved in a drunken brawl with her mother, later told me her life story. We made a date to record her telling her story and, as with Patience's story, there were violent episodes, parental abandonment, drinking, and taking drugs. We met at Mama Mercy's place and Tina sat on a bench in the shade of a tree and talked. She was quiet and, I think, sober.

Tina was born and brought up in the area. Her parents are of different tribes, and her mother and father had a big fight when she was very young, resulting in them both leaving and so she was abandoned. Her grandmother had to take her in. She lived with her grandmother for seven years. She was the last born so her grandmother was taking care of her siblings too. She recalls her mother and father drinking a lot and fighting. When she lived with her grandmother, she helped to take care of her siblings, an unusual task for a last born child.

When she was about 12 years old, she decided to go to Mombasa without telling her grandmother. Her older sister was there and so she got her a job with a Somali, as a house girl, doing cleaning and laundry. She had a relationship with a man and quit her job. At this point, she was fifteen years old. She and her partner argued because she found out that he was sleeping with other women. She fought with one of the other women and was jailed for stabbing the woman in the leg:

*“That man was mine, and she was interfering, so we just fought”*

When she was in jail, Tina continued to smoke a lot of bangi. She says it helped the time to pass. She talks again about her mother:

*“When we were children, our mother would sometimes leave us, go away for like a week, and we would have nothing to eat. We would just go to the neighbours and ask for something but sometimes they were harsh and would chase us away.”*

Tina implies that her drinking is as a result of her mother’s drinking:

*“We had no example”.*

## **Conclusion**

These individual accounts, focus group discussions, conversations, and children’s’ drawings demonstrate that violence is a strong and pervasive feature of society and existence in Kijiji. The many different layers and means of gathering data all point to the same conclusion – violence mediates and is caused by alcohol. This is a key finding and one which was discovered using rigorous methods since “...getting multiple kinds of documentation [is essential], so that evidence does not rely on a single voice, so that data can become embedded in their contexts, so that data can be compared” (Atkinson et al., 2001; 34). By triangulating this important result, the constant recurrence of violence as a theme within the research, I can confidently state pervasive and perpetual violence has been normalised within Kijiji.

“The ethnographer’s ability to penetrate the secrets of his or her subjects becomes a major stake in the ethnographic quest” (Lovell, in McLean and Leibing, 2007: 56). Although I did not expect to do so, I did become something of an agony aunt – in the case of Tina and Patience, they were both aware that I had promised to keep their identities secret and so they could have a degree of freedom to unload their problems or stories onto me. However, as I have explained previously, my existing position within Kijiji, as a foreigner who converses freely and in public with the chief and sub-chief, and with other local officials, means my role is not without its complications, and this will clearly have some degree of

influence on what people do and do not tell me. These stories must be seen within this context. The production of knowledge is always influenced by factors on both the side of the storyteller and the listener. I do not believe that I coerced the women into telling me their stories but “intimacy may be knowingly shared for some [or] forcibly revealed...by others” (Lovell, in McLean and Leibing, 2007: 60). There is, of course, a concern that my participants revealed their personal stories to me unintentionally but I did as much as I could to ensure that “conscious agency and intentionality” (Lovell, in McLean and Leibing, 2007: 62) were utilised in these story-tellings.

The relationships I formed with my participants were intimate, based upon time and chores shared, conversation, gossip and jokes. All of this constituted part of the ‘ethnographic dance’, where I negotiated and carefully tended my relationships with potential participants. “This negotiation occurs in every ethnographic exchange. It constitutes the “art” of the method, a kind of dance mediated by social distance, rules of politeness, and the anthropologist’s ethical concerns about exploitation and rudeness” (Waterston and Rylko-Bauer, in Mclean and Leibing, 2007: 43). So although I think of my participants as friends, they are simultaneously teachers and informants, and their offerings of snapshots of memories are tempered by their knowledge of this partial relationship, and their awareness of the history of my presence within Kijiji, combined with their perceptions of me as both a researcher and human.

My history and relationship within Kijiji was certainly an advantage in some situations, whilst it may have proved to be a hindrance in others. Indeed, Leibing and McLean explain that in McLean’s work, “her personal involvement gave her privileged access to some data, while simultaneously blinding her to other data – and inflected her findings, questions, and interpretations” (Leibling and McLean, 2007: 6).

From this chapter, I have demonstrated that violence is not an individualised harm. It has far reaching social effects. Alcohol-related violence is linked to many other aspects of local life within Kijiji, including parenting and childhood, the workplace, domestic life, and marriage. Violence is witnessed or experienced by many and for these people it is often an accepted, but not acceptable, part of their existence. It is a social and cultural phenomenon, linked to every aspect of local realities. What the community may not realise is that these forms of alcohol-related violence are perpetuated by state institutions, corruption, fiscal scarcity, environmental pressures, and the political climate. This will be demonstrated in the final chapter of this thesis. This is what Paul Farmer terms Structural Violence. Violence within the community is part of the construction of identity and the reimagining of traditional social roles. Alcohol fuels violence in many cases, and is responsible for the escalation of violence in others. It does seem, from the accounts collected and presented here, that drinking has escalated and is

more of a problem now than it has ever been. I do think that this is the case, rather than a perceived increase in harms. A reduction in the importance placed upon traditional roles, respect, and obedience seem to be factors that people give in account for this.

## Chapter Five

### Drinking Norms, Stress and Forgetting

*“Wanasumbua sana” (They are really disturbing [us])*

*- Constance, talking about drunkards at her shop.*

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters it has been demonstrated that drinking of home-made brew in Kijiji is common and widespread, in particular amongst men from 18-45 years of age. In this chapter I want to explore the reasons people gave for drinking and what might be considered ‘drinking norms’. Much of this information came from casual conversations with drinkers and Mama Pimas or from focus groups with community members. It arose as a topic in focus groups with both drinkers and non-drinkers, and the reasons given were all much the same, suggesting that the responses given were likely to be indicative of normative behaviours. The perceptions of different sections of local society will be presented, the possible extent of alcoholism will be discussed, and these will be discussed alongside local taboos or cultural proscriptions regarding drinking. These taboos may be more of an ‘ideal’ than a reality, but it is important to discuss them and then to examine why it may no longer be possible to maintain these traditional rules and regulations regarding drinking practices, behaviours, and norms. This chapter aims to address further the consensus amongst the Kijiji community that drinking has become more widespread and more harmful, and whether there was a past in which drinking was seen as unproblematic.

#### Why Do Drinkers Drink?

I began by asking people in casual conversation at the informal bars why they liked coming to a particular Mama Pima’s place, and why they enjoyed drinking. Mostly, these were men aged between about 18 and 45. I interviewed the only doctor at the local health centre in order to gain an opinion of a local stakeholder and someone who probably has a good idea of the health of the community in broad terms. He told me that he sees lots of RTI’s (Road Traffic Incidents) where drunken *pikipiki* drivers have been injured and he said that mostly they are from this age group and all male. Some who are seriously injured have to be referred to the nearest government hospital, about seventy-five kilometres away. He told me that there are no government statistics on alcohol and trauma or alcohol related harms. From



his personal experience in Kijiji, he regularly sees men of this age group injured because they have got on a *pikipiki*, when both driver and passenger have been drinking, and have had an accident.

In conversation with drinkers, the primary reason given for drinking alcohol was stress. They feel stressed. *Niko na stress*, in Kiswahili, literally meaning *I am with stress*. But stress is a relatively new word and concept in the Kenyan cultural scene and furthermore, something of a Western term. I wondered where the use of this word had come from and what it really meant to people. I will come back to this later in more detail because it is important in understanding the underlying reasons for drinking behaviour and drinking patterns. Here I want to examine the definitions which drinkers ascribe to the term *stress*. I repeatedly asked in focus group discussions how my participants might define the word *stress*. Since you all use it, I said, could you give me some specific examples of situations which might lead to a person becoming stressed. Yes, of course, they answered, and were only too happy to give me detailed descriptions of disagreements with neighbours, land disputes, children behaving badly, arguments with their wives or husbands, lack of food, money, crops, rain, school fees, and other similar situations where they would use the word *stress* to describe how they felt.

Burbank, in her *Ethnography of Stress* cites words used by aboriginal populations which can be broadly used to describe symptoms or feelings of stress, yet they do not use the word *stress* itself. Words and phrases include “sad”, “worry”, “upset”, “sit and crying”, and “bad”. But not *stress*. She describes situations where people have these feelings which we might refer to as *stress*, as reasons for drinking *grog* and smoking *ganja* (Burbank, 2011: 19). She talks about the words which her participants use which we might classify under the broader term of *stress*. Sometimes they might see it as a physical affliction. People in Burbank’s study site remarked that these feelings were a result of challenging, threatening, or harmful conditions, which in turn encouraged drinking as escapism (Burbank, 2011: 79). I found that people gave similar justification for their drinking in Kijiji.

The next most common reason drinkers gave for drinking alcohol was that it helped them to relax. Participants told me that they were much better at telling stories when they had been drinking and were relaxed. Story telling is an important part of local culture and learning. An older person, typically, will tell a story about something which has happened to them or which they have overheard and then they will discuss it with their peers so that they can all ‘get a news’ or learn something from each other. Traditionally, storytelling was the way in which the elders of the community would pass on their knowledge to the younger generation but it seems now that although it is still important to tell stories, it is more a part of being sociable than a part of essential learning for people in the community. Usually

these stories or discussions would be on the topics of family or village life, according to drinkers. I heard some of them discussing these topics while I was present. One drinker told me: “you must take small small [drink a bit] and then discuss about life”. It is really about being sociable and when people have had a bit to drink, the words and stories flow more freely. A young man who sometimes drinks with his friends at the local informal bar says that he does so because he will not feel shy and will be able to talk easily with anyone and tell stories. It makes them feel free, he said, and they have a lot of fun, laugh a lot and feel happy. He said it is just part of their social life.

Female drinkers said that they are stressed, too, but after finding out a bit more about them, these were often women who have been abused as children or have had a rough time recently in life, either with a failed marriage, or struggling to make ends meet. Women who drink often told me that there were quite specific reasons why they were unhappy and ‘stressed’ and they tended to drink to forget these upsetting incidents in their lives. Several told me that drinking a lot of home brew helps them to sleep at night because they have problems sleeping and struggle to do so without alcohol. Malemba told me that she often wakes up in the night, usually around 4am and must have another bottle of local brew since without this she is unable to get back to sleep.<sup>14</sup>

Other women began to brew alcohol prior to drinking it. These women said that because it was readily available, coupled with having to taste it to check if it was ready, they started drinking regularly. Other Mama Pimas told me that drinking helps them to keep awake and alert when they are at work. Some of the men said this too, that without a drink they struggle to be productive in their work, but after drinking they feel active and strong.

Despite this, I do not want to imply that all women in Kijiji who drink are doing so for these reasons. Some women drink because they enjoy it and do not feel constrained or limited by tradition or normative behaviour. Different social classes have different alcohol cultures, and in general homebrew seems to belong firmly to the working class. This is not only for economic reasons, but also to feel connected to a shared history of ritual preparation and drinking of alcohol common to rural

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<sup>14</sup> Later, in an interview with Dr Sinkele of SAPTA (Support for Addictions, Prevention and Treatment, Africa) in Nairobi, he explained that with drinkers who regularly consume excessive quantities of alcohol, it is difficult to sleep through the night without another drink. He told me that the reason for this is that the body will begin to detox and will crave another drink as soon as blood alcohol levels fall below a certain point, preventing the addict from sleeping.

communities in the past. More recently, drinking has acquired class segregations and gendered meanings different to those from the past.

The middle aged men gave me many reasons for drinking alcohol. Most of them are drinkers themselves and so their answers were much more personal in nature rather than as observers of other peoples' behaviour. However, their responses were framed as if they were talking about other people and they maintained that none of *them* drink very much at all compared to *others* in the community. They said that the reason for many people going to drink local brew is because "they are just staying idle", in other words they have nothing better to do. They said that a lot of drinking is for social reasons and that "when you are feeling something, you go from your home to the *bangara* place and you can sit and talk and get a message, maybe something like that". It is a time and place for discussing life and for "elders telling stories from the past". Another reason they gave was shyness. They said that men, especially the younger men, feel shy when meeting girls and if they have a drink "they are not going to feel shy. He is going to have the motivation to talk to that girl". They also remarked that some of this may be due to peer pressure and that some youngsters might start drinking because all their friends are drinking. Given the large number of young men who are unemployed in the area, this last suggestion would not surprise me.

Research by Willis and Mutisya (2009) noted similar reasons for male drinking behaviour. They found that men would drink in the same groups each day and so had a regular group of 'drinking mates'. They mainly cited social reasons for their drinking behaviour and (since the research was conducted on the coast) said that *mnazi* was cheap. Because it is a 'natural' product they said that it was healthy. I also heard talk of this concept. People explained that it was a good thing to drink because it is local and natural and there are no 'chemicals' added. Therefore, according to local opinion, it must be healthy. This was the case for all local brews and people told me that they would prefer to drink home-made brew because they perceived it to be healthier than commercial alcohols 'because with those, you do not know what is inside'.

Willis found that people had regular drinking 'joints' where they would have a good relationship with the Mama Pima and would often be allowed to drink on credit. Because of this informal record keeping and drinking on credit it seems as though customers will befriend one Mama Pima and then frequent her place, the same as the informal bars where Willis conducted his research. Many of the people who drink describe themselves as casual labourers or farmers and so do not have any guaranteed income, further forcing them to frequent a limited number of informal bars because of credit arrangements.

This was also the case in Willis's research (Willis and Mutisya, 2009), supporting my notion that the study site is not atypical. The sub-culture of drinking is widespread across the country and there are likely to be many similarities.

### **Men, Drinking and 'Stress'**

The primary reason for drinking which people spoke about was stress. I pushed this point with the middle aged men in the focus group since I was keen for specific examples, and they told me this:

*...because of the economic status, because the economic is very high, and because inflation it is very high. So the money you have per month it is not going to get you everything you need in your house. Maybe you need things for your children. So maybe the amount of money you have it cannot pay for everything, the children and maybe food. So...that might be a reason because you know that amount of money is not going to satisfy me. Let me take maybe one hundred and drink bangara. By the time you come home you can be stress-free.*

The reason behind this 'stress' is that men are being made miserable by financial difficulties. Because of the lack of work for men and the fact that basic goods are relatively expensive, they are unable to financially support their families. This is the traditional role expected of them by their community: the man must be the respectable, strong, head of his family, and the main breadwinner. He is expected to be both financially and morally the mainstay of the family, yet with poor farming methods, exhausted soils, exceptionally dry and hot weather, traditional methods of income generation are no longer enough to sustain a family. More families are living in what we in Western framed discourses might term 'poverty'. Men who have a little money in their pockets believe that this cannot make any headway in paying for school fees or buy much in the way of groceries. Instead they think, "let me take maybe one hundred and drink *bangara*". By the time they have spent all their money, they have forgotten how miserable they are and they no longer care very much that they are not performing the traditional role expected of them as heads of their households. They are "stress-free".

All the other focus groups mentioned stress as being the primary reason for people drinking alcohol: older women, teenage girls, middle aged women, teenage boys, and older men. This is not an isolated phenomenon or a reason given by a small group of drinkers. The whole community gave stress as the reason for drinking and when I delved deeper into what they really mean by 'stress', perhaps a better term for this set of problems is *demasculinity*.

The word 'stress' is a key organising principle of peoples' accounts and there was a need to dig deeper than their initial responses. When I did so I found articulate accounts of wider social forces which are

messing up peoples' lives. I succeeded in eliciting this information because of my role as a kind of village agony aunt – I am within the village, but not of it (as it were) and I have enough understanding of their lives to understand their problems, and yet I am not their 'kin', so I have enough distance both socially and culturally that I am not a threat. My ability to elicit such information from people demonstrates their level of trust in me and I hope, as I have said throughout this thesis, that I have represented them fairly and kindly. Their accounts were entirely understandable and in basic terms cited national issues such as the economy, or environmental degradation, as being either partially or wholly responsible for their feelings of 'stress'.

These individuals responses and experiences show that individually 'sick' or 'stressed' people are simply responding to wider forces: 'stress' is concealing the 'system', which is making people unwell. It is a larger problem, which should be tackled at the highest levels and not reduced to individuals. Their use of the word 'stress' implies a deeper level of understanding of the social factors affecting their relationship with alcohol than has previously been acknowledged. This is not merely tacit knowledge, but articulately described situations where ordinary people are living in 'stress' as well as relative poverty because of factors which they correctly associate with the government of their country. This could, and should, change attitudes of the government towards the working and unemployed rural population, and the focus of NGO's and charities. If the rural populations understand the root causes of poverty, then it follows that they understand that 'aid' is merely a sticking plaster over a wound that needs to be properly treated, not concealed. It is clear that most drinkers who display harmful levels of alcohol consumption in Kijiji do so because they are 'stressed' and feel they have no other way to relieve this stress. Drinking is their solace and escape from the stresses of rural poverty.

### **Drinking to Forget: Women Drinkers and Community Perceptions**

Since it was quite unusual to see a woman drinking at an informal bar or local brew den, I was interested to document some of the reasons for this. Firstly, to understand why women are in the minority of drinkers of local brew, and secondly to understand the reasons why they drink, and if their reasons were different from those the men gave for drinking local brew.

From information gleaned from focus group discussions it is clear that there are many cultural barriers to women drinking. The community said that it was shameful for a woman to drink. This, they explained to me, is because women are mothers and should be setting a good example to other women, to their children, and should be seen to be caring for their families. It is the woman who is expected to

clean the house, cook the food for the family, dig the *shamba*, and make sure the clothes are washed, and that the children attend school. Women have a great deal more responsibility in the domestic sphere than men and so if a woman is drinking she is perceived by those around her to be incapable of fulfilling the socially prescribed tasks expected of her. There is a very strong gendered division of labour in the village and the woman is, in practice, the head of her household. Although it is said that the man is the head of the family, this is meant in a more moral sense and he is the one who should be responsible for the majority of discipline. He disciplines his wife, his children, and makes sure that his family is financially provided for, whereas the woman is in charge of the day-to-day domestic smooth running of the household. If a woman is drinking then not only is she perceived to be an inadequate mother and caregiver to her family but her husband is also seen as being unable to control her or discipline her. She would be viewed by the community as 'out of control', 'wilful', and 'selfish'. Any drunken behaviour from women is regarded as immoral or shameful because they are the ones who should be setting an example to the next generation of mothers and married women in the village. Community members worried that drunkenness would be copied or passed on to future generations of women and girls if this is seen as acceptable.

My observations of women drinkers were similar to findings by Willis and Mutisya (2009) who observed that women tended to sit apart from the men at informal bars, either talking to other women or to the Mama Pima. They found that in terms of perceptions, it was deemed to be more acceptable for women to drink commercial alcohol. Although nobody told me this explicitly, it seems to be the case in Kijiji too. Women drinking commercial brew were not uncommon and although they might have some people commenting on their behaviour, it is much more socially acceptable than a woman drinking home brew. A woman who drinks home brew would do so in a much more furtive manner or drink quickly and leave, whereas women drinking commercial brews would, I observed, do so far more openly.

I spoke to three women drinkers in detail about their drinking and life histories. Their histories, as we saw in the previous chapter, are harrowing and often had both the women and me in tears. I underestimated the effect which such stories would have on me and often went to bed at night in a state of shock and gratitude that I have lived such a safe and privileged life, especially during my childhood. From their stories it appears that their drinking is part of a process of forgetting episodes of abuse, or sexual or physical violence from their past.

One of these women, Malemba, is a sex worker who is paid either very little, just a few shillings, or in drinks. Her daughter is Tina, whose story features in the previous chapter. She was very difficult to

interview and her answers were hard to follow, often heading off on long tangents and never coming back to where we started. She had lived as a drinker her whole life, as long as she could remember, she told me. Her father did not drink, she thought, but she could not say for sure. Ever since she was young she had drunk alcohol regularly. She had been married and divorced a couple of times, and had children.

It seems that since her second divorce, her drinking became more problematic. She began working as a sex worker to be able to afford to buy alcohol and to get a little cash to feed herself. It seemed that she was not financially responsible for her family and her daughter was able to help me to piece together a little more of their family's story. By getting some money as a sex worker, she was able to look after herself and continue drinking. It makes her work a bit easier if she is drunk, she told me, and she enjoys the chatter and banter at the brew dens where she also works as a casual labourer serving the brew. She insinuated that she finds her customers in this way but it was difficult to understand her since she was very drunk at the time of interview.

I would often see Patience drink but since she is a Mama Pima, she would always tell me that she had to taste the booze or else her customers would think it was not good to drink. This is something which I heard a lot from Mama Pimas. Her drinking is perhaps less problematic than that of the other two women. She has her own businesses, makes plenty of money to live a comfortable life style and enjoys a joking relationship with her male customers. She never behaves in a drunken way and seems to be able to have fun without drinking 'over-size'.

These life histories helped me to understand some of the reasons for women's drinking. They are, of course, not representative of the whole community, but they do give an idea of why women might drink alcohol despite the social taboos surrounding women and drinking, discussed earlier in this chapter. I observed that women tended to drink in the more remote bars, further out in the bush, where they were unlikely to be seen by large numbers of community members. The only people frequenting these bars were heavy drinkers or the occasional farmer passing by, whereas bars located closer to the village would have much more passing 'traffic' with neighbours dropping by to greet the Mama Pima and customers. In these bars it would be less common to see women drinking. I noticed that some women would arrive at an informal bar, be given their drink, and immediately 'down' it and leave. Perhaps they did not want to be seen by others, or maybe they were busy with other tasks and had just come to the bar for their dose of *dawa*, as I heard some refer to it. It was clear that women were in the minority of drinkers.

When asked, some male drinkers said that they did not care if they were drinking with women because they all drink so why should it be any different just because they are female. When asked in a focus group setting, men said that drinking with women was not good because you had to be much more polite in your topics of conversation and that they could not feel so free in their behaviour. However, from observations I saw that when the men are drunk they do not seem to be quite so concerned about their behaviour or conversation in front of women drinkers, but in terms of drinking norms and socially acceptable behaviour, it is not considered appropriate for a man to drink in front of a woman, and *vice versa*.

By making use of various types of data collection, including storytelling, observations, and focus groups, to determine the social norms regarding women's' drinking behaviour, I was able to validate each piece of information which I gathered. I did not accept these at face value but took them back and re-evaluated them through the thorough use of other methods.

### **Reflexive Focus Groups and Community Mapping**

Having completed the bulk of my focus groups and observations, I began to think about what all the information I had gathered meant. I then consolidated these ideas into a short conclusion and conducted another round of focus groups using the same groupings: teenage girls, teenage boys, married middle aged women, married middle aged men, older women, and older men. I wanted to explain what I had found so far to the community and then to ask for their feedback, to see if they thought I was on the right track with my conclusions or if I was wrong in any way.

Within these reflexive focus groups I wanted to exhibit some of the photographs which I had taken during my observations and participation as a Mama Pima. I printed the photographs, after blacking out faces to prevent identification of individuals (to avoid embarrassment) and also I cut out much of the background from photos to avoid identification of specific locations. I laminated these photographs so that they could be passed around within group discussions and I hoped they would provoke debate about what the people in the pictures were doing, be it brewing, drinking, women with children working as Mama Pimas, or women drinking with their children present. There were photographs of drunken men talking and laughing, chewing *miraq*, and one photograph of a man passed out in the street having urinated on himself. I also printed and laminated a selection of the children's drawings to encourage debate about the effect of drinking behaviour on children and families in the community.

Finally, I prepared large sheets of paper and coloured pens in order to conduct a mapping exercise. I



wanted the focus group participants to think about the layout of their community and then to discuss amongst themselves and to mark on the map the places which they felt were dangerous or might be harmful to the peaceful running of the community or to their health.

The mapping exercise was very interesting. It made people work together and think about where things in the village are located. It was clear, especially for the older women, that this was not something they had ever had to think about and the school ended up being the wrong side of the church, the road in the wrong place, and houses and trees were drawn as if looking at them from the ground. It was fascinating to see how the different groups had entirely different perspectives on their village and the way things look. The younger groups tended to draw what could be recognised as a map, but the older groups struggled to get things in the correct order and there was much debate about locations of places or what they should look like. These maps tended to be much more pictorial.

Every group marked home brew dens on their maps as being detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the community. This is probably because they knew the subject of my research and wanted to be 'correct' or to give me the 'right' answer. However, they also marked *porini* (the place of the bush) as dangerous because of mining, wild animals, and lack of water. The forest was marked because of the steep, rocky paths where one might easily fall and also because of the prevalence of snakes. The road was commonly marked because of 'over-speeding' of *pikipikis* and *matatus*. Two of the maps can be found in Appendix 2. The relative danger of home brew dens to the community seemed to be ranked as one of the most important and dangerous places due to the sheer number of dens (which I had not realised before since their locations are only known by word of mouth) and the fact that these were usually the first thing that participants drew. However, this must be viewed in the context of participants' knowledge of the subject of my research.

I asked participants to look at the photographs. The women and girls tended to be more shocked: despite seeing drunken men wandering the streets, many have never been to a brew den and so have little knowledge of what goes on there. They were especially shocked and saddened to see women with children drinking or serving the brew. The men seemed to be quite sobered by the pictures, some of them depicting themselves, drinking and behaving 'badly', as they called it. 'This is bad behaviour!' many participants would say. It is bad to see people behaving like this, it is shameful, they would add. Yet the pictures drawn by the children had the greatest visible effect on participants, especially the men. The women were saddened to see the drawings, but said, yes, we know it is like this because this is what we experience. The men were very quiet and said, yes, they are drawing what they had seen, it is bad

that they grow up experiencing this stuff. The drawings seemed to have the biggest effect on participants, and also the photograph of the man covered in his own urine sleeping in the road. “If this is what drinking is”, said one older man, “then there is no any reason to drink.”

I went on to discuss the reasons that I could see for drinking behaviour and brewing of home brew in the community. I explained that I wanted their feedback, to tell me if I was right or wrong or whether they thought that there was anything to add. I explained that I thought that the reason why men drink is because there are not really any jobs so they are idle. They maybe have problems at home or worry about their families, and because they are unable to fulfil their traditional role as the strong, male head of their household, they drink to forget these problems. The women make the brew because there are no jobs and because they might not have enough money to start a different type of business requiring more capital. It is an easy way to make enough money to support their families. I made sure that I explained these ideas in simple terms so they could be easily translated.

The women all agreed with me immediately with little discussion amongst themselves. I asked them not to be shy in telling me if I was wrong about anything but they said, no, you are right, you have really understood our problems with alcohol here. The group of older women apologised that I had seen their community as it really is and then thanked me for living with them long enough to really understand them and to become a part of their community. The men agreed with me on the whole, but the teenage boys’ group, perhaps because of bravado, said that they thought I was wrong about why men drink. They said that it was just to be sociable and to have fun, but really this comes back to being idle and having no jobs since if they were busy with work there would be less time for drinking, as the women’s groups stated. The groups also pointed out that they do not see ‘much development’ in families of Mama Pimas, leading them to believe that the money made from brewing is really only enough for survival and sometimes for school fees.

### **The Probable Extent of Drinking**

From observations and living within the community I feel quite sure that drinking of home brew is a widespread phenomenon in the area, yet I wanted to find out from the brewers more about footfall and quantities sold in order to determine whether this was really the case. I visited ten brew dens in the community to ask the following questions (in Kiswahili) of the Mama Pimas:

- How much brew do you sell per day or per week on average, either in terms of volume or in terms of cash sales?

- What factors affect sales levels and do sales fluctuate throughout the year?
- How many customers do you have on average per day?
- Do you have a regular customer base and if so, how many people would you regard as your regular customers?
- What time of the day or week is the busiest for you?

Some women will only brew occasionally due to other commitments. Perhaps they have money sourced by means other than brewing, or because of a lack of water. Brewers do not always brew every day or they might only do it occasionally to boost income and because of this, it is difficult to find out exactly how many informal bars there are in the area when they might not be a permanent business venture.

*Field Diary Extract: Identifying brew dens*

I realise that there are some common features which I am able to spot from a distance, making it very handy when we struggle to find our way back to dens which we have visited before as all of the paths look the same. All the brew dens seem to be a group of mud-walled, *mabati*-roofed buildings in a cluster, with a tree adjacent to them, or some kind of shade, under which there are usually some low wooden benches with a group of men sitting on them chatting. There is usually a group of bicycles or *piki pikis* parked in the shade too. I find the more I hang out in brew dens, the easier it is to spot them from a distance, which proves handy today since we spend the vast majority of the day trying to find them.

Everyone I spoke to said that their busiest time is *jioni* (evenings), weekends, and *mwisho wa mwezi* (the end of the month, i.e. payday). Usually from 6pm until around 2am, especially on weekends, the Mamas said that their bars were very busy. They also all concurred that during the rains it tends to be only evening time that people come to drink because during the day people are working on their *shambas* and making the most of the wet weather for planting. The number of regular customers varied but was generally fairly low compared to the total number of customers since Mama Pimas said that customers tend to come and go unless they are heavily dependent on credit. They arrive, buy a drink, drink it and chat for a while, and then move on to somewhere else, something I have observed on many occasions. Most women reported that they tend to have between two and five regulars but that they do not always come every day.

Everyone commented on the problems related to mining which cause the local brew industry to suffer. According to local gossip, the 'officials' (it is unclear who these officials actually are) have become much stricter about possession of valid permits for mining activities and so many men have returned to the village to avoid punishment. This means that men have much less cash to spend on alcohol and so business at informal bars has been 'low'. It is difficult to give an exact level of footfall in these bars because of the factors which affect business but generally speaking, Mama Pimas said (and I observed) that the number of customers each day can range from just a couple to fifteen, twenty, or more if it is the end of the month or a weekend.

If there is a drought, as there was in March 2014, then women are not able to produce as much beer and customers have less money to spend. The quantities which women said that they produce were likely to be relevant to times when they are busier. The average volume of local brew sold each day in local brew dens was 40L. Women usually gave me two figures – one was the amount they usually sell on days when business is 'low', and the second was the amount sold on a day when business is 'up'. I then took an average of these two figures for each brew den, but figures ranged from just 5L to 100L.

I then took the average number of customers as reported by Mama Pimas for each day in their informal bars. They often gave me a range for this too so I calculated the average since they would give me a figure for when business is busy and another for when it is 'low'. Some bars are more popular than others and this will obviously affect the overall number of customers, and amount sold, on an average day.

The average number of customers overall for each bar was 19 per day. I then took both of these figures (average amount of alcohol sold per day, and average number of customers at these same informal bars per day) and calculated that on average, each person consumes 2.1 litres of local brew per day on a given day. The standard price for a 500ml cup of *bangara*, *kangara*, or *mitinidawa* is 20/- which means that the average spend would be 84/- per person. To put this in to context, a skilled *fundi* would earn around 500/- per day.

One must bear in mind that these figures refer to individual bars and drinkers may visit a number of places on a given day. The women were self-reporting and so may have estimated incorrectly, or not wanted to give me an actual figure. However, most of the women know me and would not really have a reason to lie to me. They know their identities are safe and that they will not be exposed. This is a relatively small and non-representative sample. The figures they gave me were a range, indicating times

when they are busy and times when they are less busy. By taking an average of these figures I hope to show a figure which is closer to the 'norm'. An average spend at each bar of 84/- is well within the realms of possibility, especially since drinkers themselves reported that if they have 100/- in their pockets they would probably go and spend it on local brew. Also, we must bear in mind that a Tusker beer is 500ml, so to consume a couple of litres is only to have the equivalent of four commercial beers. However, I suspect that local brew has a higher alcohol content than a commercial beer like Tusker, and when drinkers are probably visiting a number of bars we must be aware of the potential levels of alcohol actually consumed.

These figures give a rough idea of the extent of drinking at ten bars in Kijiji. They help us to understand normative drinking behaviour in Kijiji.

### **Death and Drinking**

During my final day of fieldwork I heard that Malemba had died. The last time I met with her, she told me that she had been vomiting blood and was in a very confused state. She struggled to understand or answer my questions and was very drunk indeed. She had been working at a *kangara* brew den and was being paid in drinks for her time. When I heard that she had died I asked the Mama Pima who owns and runs this particular informal bar what had happened to her. She told me: "It was yellow fever. She was sick for quite a few months and then she died. She had been vomiting blood and then she just died but it was yellow fever."

Like Carter, one of Bourgois' informants in *Righteous Dopefiend*, ultimately Malemba must be seen as having been failed by the grander scale systems of society. Carter, a reformed heroin addict, died after a relapse when he felt he had not got the support he needed to keep clean. The reasons behind how and why this happened are political and social, and the root causes of these are at a governmental level. Bourgois and Schonberg do not comment explicitly on what happened to Carter but the implication is that the welfare structures in place were not sufficient to support him, leading to his relapse into drug abuse and ultimately his death from an overdose.

It is a similar situation, I think, with Malemba. Bourgois and his team could not protect the homeless addicts of Edgewater Boulevard from their own destructive behaviour. They describe the "useless suffering ...imposed politically and institutionally on the socially vulnerable" (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009; 298). What many of the drinkers who I have worked with are experiencing is self-punishment. They are drinking as a way to forget, and harming their bodies in the process of doing so. They are

unable to access medical care without stigma, or simply unable to access it because of the poor standard of care available at the local health centre, and the geographical distance from anything better. I was unable to locate any suitable counselling service for Malemba any closer than Mombasa – a journey of about half a day by *matatu*, costing around 700/- (around £5) putting it beyond the reach of most working class people. How could Malemba have accessed help had she wanted to? Would she even know that help was out there for her to access? This episode demonstrates how desperately poor the current health care system is in Kenya and how it is repeatedly failing the poorest and most vulnerable members of the population.

Malemba's family and the community were ill equipped to help her and so she died. There is little understanding of or support for sex workers and alcoholics, and the overall attitude is to sweep it under the carpet. This in itself is a major factor. Had there been welfare, and better health care facilities that would not discriminate or stigmatise people with addictions or workers in the sex industry, then perhaps her story would have had a happier ending. As it is, she is not unique, and her story is being repeated across Kenya and will continue to be if the health and welfare system continues to be poor, unsupportive and inaccessible. I know that I am not the first or only anthropologist to have encountered such a situation and in doing so, I should do what Bourgois and Schonberg have done, which is use her story to demonstrate powerfully how change is needed and what this change might look like.

## Chapter Six

### The Rural Narcopolis:

#### How the Social Underworld of Home Brew and Grand Structural Forces Collide

*“When it is a matter of telling the truth and serving the victims, let unwelcome truths be told. Those of us privileged to witness and survive such events and conditions are under an imperative to unveil – and keep unveiling – these pathologies of power”*

*(Farmer, 2003: 22).*

*“We're waiting for a glance or a word, some acknowledgement that we are here.”  
— Jeet Thayil, Narcopolis*

#### Structural Violence in Context

In this chapter, I will discuss the themes of the research and link them to wider issues. As anthropologists, we must develop “theoretical explanations without losing the meaning of the experience...for social subjects” (Sanford et al., 2006: 7). This thesis is almost entirely based upon individuals’ stories and community discussions, and these human experiences are powerful communications of the reality of brewing and drinking in rural Kenya. It is important to contextualise these personal narratives in terms of wider national and global discourses and issues of governance, economies, culture and the environment. By doing so I hope to provide explanations for brewing and drinking behaviour in the study site, moving away from the narrow focus of the local and looking more at some of the upstream causes.

These wider issues which I explore in this chapter will show that these are not the random actions of a group of people with flawed characters who do not care if they harm themselves or others in the process of pleasure-seeking, but the (albeit tacitly) considered reactions of a group of despairing citizens suffering in an atmosphere of Post-Colonial social dereliction who have few other options within the wider framework of the state, economy, and the environment. The trend identified throughout this thesis indicates that Kenyan rural drinking cultures may indeed be seeing real increases in harms. This does not seem to be merely a perception based upon memories of the past and golden age thinking. It may be the case that my focus groups were wrong, and that drinking was problematic in the past, that women did not only produce beer for rituals but produced it to sell (Helmfrid, in Van Wolputte et al., 2010: 200) but I do think that if this was the case, locally produced alcohol made purely to sell has been a growing industry in the last one hundred years, and more rapidly so in the past fifty years. Evidence

collected in the course of research for this thesis indicates that harmful drinking behaviour, whether in terms of health or social harms, seem to be more commonplace and widespread than in the past, and driven by a more dangerous context.

Two key writers for me in relation to my research have been Paul Farmer and Philippe Bourgois. Farmer, a medical anthropologist and medical practitioner, writes about health inequalities and social justice from his unusual perspective of both anthropologist and physician. His work identifies numerous cases of structural violence.

Bourgois is an anthropologist and ethnographer who has worked for many years within the field of substance use. Two pieces of his work have been especially influential for me: one, an ethnography of Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem, and the other, a photo-ethnography of homeless heroin injectors living on the streets of San Francisco. As I explained in the introduction to this study, Bourgois uses the concept of structural violence to explain what had in the past largely been dismissed as deviant or criminal behaviour. Instead, Bourgois says that “Substance abuse in the inner city is merely a symptom – and a vivid symbol – of deeper dynamics of social marginalisation and alienation” (Bourgois, 1996: 2). He believes that the problem is not always the substance use, but other underlying issues which first need to be addressed such as gender or class inequality, health care, government policy, and basic educational needs. His point is that it is not *peoples’ actions or behaviours* which are problematic, but the larger scale forces at work in their lives which are causing problems at *a deeper societal level*.

In Alice Goffman’s ethnography *On The Run*, she describes the illicit activities of a group of marginalized black Americans in a ghettoized neighbourhood in Pennsylvania. She demonstrates that the law and policing strategies compound the problem of drugs and violence in the inner city, and aggressive policing tactics serve to alienate communities and divide family and kin bonds. Goffman presents a convincing and compelling argument that illicit economies and violence are perpetuated and indeed magnified by structural violence.

This discussion will, therefore, be in the vein of Paul Farmer, Alice Goffman and Philippe Bourgois, with whom I feel my work has numerous similarities both in terms of style and method, and the topics covered. Their work helps us to understand that individual behaviours must be viewed as part of the context in which they are enacted, and in some cases these contexts contain elements of structural violence. These forces acting within individuals’ lives will have an impact, and work by Farmer, Goffman and Bourgois helps us to see that individuals’ actions are influenced by these larger structural forces.



Individuals do not make choices divorced from external influences in their lives: these behaviours which might at first glance seem to be illogical, deviant, destructive, or criminal are in fact influenced by external forces and moralized within the locally constructed reality.

Structural violence is a term which I will employ throughout this discussion to explain the larger forces at work in individuals' behaviours and everyday lives. However, the structural forces involved appear to be either tacit knowledge, or entirely unknown to the people in Kijiji. This, it would seem, is not an isolated phenomenon since Bourgois tells us that people are often "...unable to fathom the structural forces affecting them" (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 316). I did find though that after encouragement I was often given articulate accounts of the ways in which individuals' lives are impacted by these grand structural forces (e.g. "because the prices of basic foods are rising and wages are low, it is a struggle to feed the family." This demonstrates a tacit – an inferred - understanding of economic forces impacting individuals).

The problems associated with alcohol in rural communities in Kenya are not just on a local scale. The drinking behaviour described here is as a result of broader cultural, political and economic issues which might not be immediately apparent to observers and actors. It is time that local brew production and consumption is seen as part of wider national (and indeed global) issues, not confined to 'ignorant' populations, nor should brewers or drinkers be branded 'greedy', 'sinful', or characteristically flawed.

### **Drinking, Despair, and the Post-Colonial State**

This study has charted my experience within the sub-culture of brewing and drinking in a rural village which, like the areas in which Paul Farmer has worked which include twenty years in rural Haiti, could be described as a community on the edge (Farmer, 2003). Such communities of people who are sick or poor, or indeed both, bear the brunt of human rights violations globally (Farmer, 2003: 19).

Within such a community, Vigdis Broch-Due, a fellow Kenya-focused anthropologist, says "...social, economic and political forces mobilise deeply rooted issues of being, belief and desire to belong. Individuals and groups call on cultural and historical narratives, arguments and ideologies, to challenge established parameters and reinforce their claims to legitimacy" (Broch-Due, 2005: 11). These forces informing and creating feelings of belonging reinforce behaviours, such as drinking sub-cultures, as legitimate and valid, creating new identities for those who are marginalised or hopeless. In Post-Colonial Kenya, "where once they [the people] felt included in an imagined modern world and its 'progress', they now feel utterly excluded" (Broch-Due, 2005: 4). My focus groups identified a sense of

despair amongst the community, and a feeling that they no longer believe in the state to provide assistance. “Tunaomba serekali”, they would tell me (we are requesting the government [to help us]) and yet, when questioned further, they no longer believe that they will. As Broch-Due explains, widespread state corruption from the lowest to the highest levels has demonstrated to citizens “the inability of African states after independence to live up to the expectations of their subjects to provide welfare, security and prosperity” (Broch-Due, 2005: 3). There is a feeling of disappointment and of helplessness and people are cynical, no longer believing that they can rely on the state for assistance. When they say “tunaomba serekali” it is always with a sigh and a look of abandonment.

It is within this context of state failure, corruption and a lack of welfare, security or prosperity, that we must view individual agency of drinkers and brewers of home brew. These are not feckless, deviant criminals, but people for whom the Post-Colonial state is no longer, or has never been, a beacon of hope. They must do something to make a living. The drinkers rely on alcohol to reduce feelings of abandonment and lack of hope for the future, and the brewers rely on the drinkers for their income from producing the brew. They have the community of the village and their kin, but are in other ways marginalized. It is these broader social forces of governance, policy, and fiscal scarcity, which are impacting on individual agency and behaviour. By looking at these state-level forces we can identify the root causes of such actions. These forces are what Bourgois has termed ‘Politically structured suffering’ (Bourgois, in Sanford et al., 2008: ix), and these politics and power relations are responsible for the way that subjects experience and respond to poverty. This is the critical argument of my thesis: stress causes problematic drinking behaviour, and stress is as a direct result of structural violence.

As “anthropologists, [we] can make the connections between macro forces and intimate social relationships” (Bourgois, in Sanford et al, 2006: xi) and in the case of the individuals within the study site, I suggest that the despair felt by many demonstrated by their drinking behaviour is as a result of the failure of the post-colonial state of Kenya. Their agency and behaviour is just a response to the situation in which they find themselves.

### **The Concept of Stress, and Structural Violence**

Stress is “an inherent physiological mechanism which prepares the organism for action, and which comes into play when demands are placed on it” (Helman, 1994: 296). It is not always a bad thing and often helps the organism to be stronger if faced with the same stressor on subsequent occasions.

However, if the organism suffers from exhaustion following repeat exposure to stressors then 'stress' may become problematic, leading to illness or even death (Helman, 1994).

People who are experiencing stress might "resort to chemical comforters" (Helman, 1994: 297) which is what I have witnessed with many of the drinkers with whom I spent time. The primary reason they gave for their drinking was stress, as I have discussed in earlier chapters. However, following further enquiries as to the meaning which they ascribe to stress, I discovered many different reasons behind the term which can be described as *stressors*. These stressors included family disputes, problems with neighbours, and many, many aspects linked to poverty such as drought ruining crops, food and water shortages, lack of work, and not having enough cash to provide everything the family needs. And so, the drinkers told me, we drink to reduce our stress and to forget our problems. "These responses – as well as the *meanings* people give to their stressful experiences – are all influenced by the individual's personality, education, social environment and cultural background" (Helman, 1994: 297).

It would be tempting to think that the people are the ones with the problem – after all, why can they not find a better way to cope with their stress? Why do they not save their cash which they are spending on alcohol and spend it on their families instead, surely this would solve some of their problems? As Helman eloquently explains: "...the focus on these decontextualised 'stressors' and their physiological effects may lead one to ignore the larger economic and social forces acting upon the individual, which may also have an adverse effect on health" (Helman, 1994: 297). If we simply look at the individual behaviour we are really missing the point.

Furthermore, Helman says that stress can be exacerbated or indeed caused by the paradoxes of striving for modernity and the issues that this can cause, not just within the new, desirable culture, but between the new and the traditional (Helman, 1994: 309). This is what is happening in Kijiji where the post-colonial environment has propagated a desire for Western culture, especially pop culture amongst the youth. There is a love of American hip hop music, culture and fashion, as well as movies from the USA and Europe, and obviously there will be pressure on young people and their peers to fit in to this exciting new stereotype. Young men wear their jeans very low, don Rasta hats and Rasta colours, own shiny, fancy headphones for listening to music on their mobile phones, and wear 'bling' jewellery. There is bound to be a certain amount of pressure to conform to this image and those who cannot for financial reasons will feel the stress of being marginalised, even in a small way.

The underlying problem is actually at a much more structural level and if we look at the reasons why these people are living in poverty and feeling stressed, we will find the source of their stress – government policy (in terms of criminalising brewing, and in the case of health services for substance users, the lack of policy or programs), economic structures, rapid Westernisation, and social degradation – as identified and described by my participants.

Therefore I suggest that stress is the physiological embodiment of structural violence. Furthermore, I suggest that the use, by drinkers of home brew, of the term ‘stress’ to rationalise their behaviour is a tacit and limited understanding of this structural violence to which they are subjected. They may not call it structural violence, yet the stressors which they describe as reasons for their drinking fit easily into a model of structural forces with their “...choices [being] shaped by institutional, structural, and political-economic forces” (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 306). Similar findings are described by Burbank (2011). They do not fully understand the structural forces affecting their lives and this creates additional stress.

I expected people to describe problems of money, family disputes or lack of work pushing them into solace drinking, but I had not predicted that people would use the English word *stress* as an umbrella term for these issues. Kalichman et al (2007) mention stress in an African context but in relation to drinking and increased rates of HIV transmission. The paper cites the “stress of poverty” as a precursor to drinking alcohol in Cape Town, and assumes ‘stress’ to be an umbrella term for a number of stressors much like I found, including money worries, lack of work, family issues, neighbourly disagreements, and relationship problems (Kalichman et al, 2007).

Importantly, one factor related to these feelings of stress was the change in gender roles. Women reported having to do everything now, whereas in previous generations the man would have been responsible for financially supporting his family (Helmfrid, in Van Wolputte et al., 2010). The men feel disempowered and unable to fulfil their traditional role in society, and women feel overwhelmed with responsibility. This finding is supported by work by Luginaah and Dakubo (2003) who found that male demasculinity due to changed gender roles was responsible for increased drinking behaviour. Ekejiuba discusses the same phenomenon, adding that the concept of a household with a man and woman as co-parents is probably outdated, and the assumption that this western-centric model fits African contexts is incorrect (Ekejiuba, in Bryceson, 1995: 49). Women are under greater pressure to provide for their families, and female headed households, or single mothers, are not unusual in Kijiji.

## **Unemployment as the Embodiment of Structural Violence, the *Jua Kali* Sector, and the Economics of Brewing Beer**

As I have touched on throughout this thesis, there is a huge problem of unemployment in Kenya, not only in the study site but countrywide. Unemployment statistics from Kenya are likely to be unreliable, particularly with such a thriving informal sector of workers who do not pay tax or who have no business permits because they are unaffordable for people with very low incomes. The often illegal nature of their work (since they lack the relevant permits) would render it very difficult indeed to gather accurate information on the precise extent or proportion of the populace involved in this sector. However, “In 1993 the informal sector accounted for a remarkable 50 percent of the country’s employment” (Undugu, 1994: 39, cited in King, 1996: 25). This proportion is likely to be much higher now and involve many more workers since the population has experienced rapid growth. The Institute for Economic Affairs said, in September 2012, that 77% of employment was estimated to be within the informal sector. This seems to be the most recent and reliable statistic but with the rapid growth in population it is likely to be even higher now, in 2014. Over 60%, the IEA say, are youth and so this sector of the economy is vital for young Kenyans.

This informal sector in Kenya is called *Jua Kali*, meaning hot sun, since these jobs are usually carried out without premises and therefore under the hot sun by the roadside so that passers-by can easily view their wares. The term *informal sector* was first coined by Keith Hart in 1971 in a paper about Frafra migrants from northern Ghana working in Accra, yet it came into wider use the following year when it was adopted as a policy priority by The Kenya Mission for their Employment Mission in 1972 (King, 1996: 7). Certainly during the Moi era, the *jua kali* sector was seen as potentially being the answer to the seemingly insurmountable problem of unemployment and Moi himself, after visiting *jua kali* workers in central Nairobi, pledged to provide *mabati* (corrugated tin roof) shades under which the workers could retreat from the heat of the sun.

“For a nation struggling with structural adjustment...it is the informal sector that is the ordinary economy in which the bulk of Kenyans gain their livelihood...[and] the formal sector which encompasses such a small portion of the economically active population” (King, 1996: 25). Brewing is simply another type of informal sector employment in Kenya and in light of the probable proportion of the country’s population being involved in working in this sector, “...the *jua kali* sector can be considered the saving grace for hundreds of thousands of Kenyans, for whom life is a constant struggle to earn daily bread, for themselves or their families” (Undugu, 1994: 39, cited in King, 1996: 25). If brewing is simply another

*jua kali* sector job, then similarly it should follow that brewers must no longer be criminalised for their production of *pombe ya kienyeji*.

Many people in Kijiji have either given up entirely on farming, or find that their yields are so low that they must do something else to provide financially for their families. Some of these people have ventured into the *jua kali* sector, with brewing being just one of a number of small informal business ventures in the area. Brewing is part of this local economy of *jua kali* sector workers which is vital to Kijiji. Without brewing and its related *jua kali* 'industries' of gem stone mining, bush meat and other poaching activities, and prostitution, I suggest that the local economy would be far worse off than it is. Although it might be good for the economy, it does not necessarily follow that brewing is good for the community. Yet the increasing commoditization of locally brewed beers that has occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, (Willis, 1999) has been necessary in the context of these wider issues.

As I have discussed throughout this thesis, beer brewing allows women to have an income independent of men within their family, and the beer is cheap to produce and purchase, meaning that there is a strong market for these beverages amongst the working class (Heap, in Van Wolputte et al., 2010: 112). The economies created locally surrounding beer brewing cause money to flow from men to women, especially benefitting poorer households (Helmfrid, in Van Wolputte et al., 2010: 195). As I have documented, some women seem to be more successful than others in terms of the financial rewards from beer brewing and selling, sending multiple children to school, purchasing more livestock, and undertaking home improvements, where others seem to just make enough with which to 'get by'. To return to the concept of depictions of African women brewers, it really is not possible to categorise them or describe them in one way alone. They are a diverse group of businesswomen, and as with any human anywhere in the world, some excel in business where others do not, yet I found that in Kijiji women are largely doing well from brewing or selling home brew.

Earnings varied considerably, which Helmfrid also found, and the women undertook the task of brewing because "no other commercial activity was as lucrative" (Helmfrid, in Van Wolputte et al., 2010: 210). It is a seasonal economy, as I have discussed, and largely reliant on the farming calendar and the rains. Whatever the financial rewards, the economy of home brew is key to rural working class populations.

Bribery and protection money seemed to be mentioned by most of the brewers I spoke to. Most have experienced some kind of pressure from authorities to provide financial 'gifts' to allow them to remain in business. These will have an impact on potential profits, and women stated that in some cases, they

had lost a large proportion of their profits to bribes, meaning that they had nothing to show from an entire batch of beer in some instances. I cannot provide specific details since discussion of bribery surrounding brewing was limited, and women did not like to discuss in detail, but most women with whom I spoke had experienced the payment of bribes in order to maintain their businesses. This was an expected and acknowledged part of being a brewer.

There is already much rural to urban migration from the area of people looking for jobs. The problems of urban poverty are well known and those who do go to the towns or cities to find work are generally educated to secondary level. There are a great many who are not and so moving to a town or city to find work may prove to be a fruitless task which would isolate them in a new place away from friends or family. Even those who do go are by no means guaranteed to find work and often return disappointed and out of pocket. Some might suggest that microfinance would be a way to start a business, but what business, when the local market is saturated with small *dukas* selling basic groceries, a few metal workers, carpenters, tailors, butchers, and car mechanics, the latter catering mainly for local *matatus* and vehicles going to and from the mines? The basic needs of the community are met and so any other business venture would have to find its own niche in the market. In addition, microfinance loans require some kind of capital to use as a guarantee against non-payment of scheduled instalments, and many either do not have anything to use as their guarantee or they do not wish to be tied to such a scheme. There is little left if these factors are taken into consideration.

As an anthropologist, I cannot continue problematising a community suffering more than its fair share of structural violence, but these illegal industries make significant contributions to a local economy which is limited by its geographically remote location, lack of resources, and the harsh environment in which it is situated. As anthropologists we should look more at the reasons for the behaviours which others might classify as 'illegal' or 'harmful'. The lack of other modes of employment in the area, and a glaring paucity of government support, are forms of structural violence which *push* people in the study site to drink local brews and to produce it.

When we consider the lack of legal employment within the study site, we must understand the reasons which might push or pull people into producing local brews and drinking them. Those who drink are "...easing their physical pain and social dislocation with...gin" in much the same way as Bourgeois describes mid-nineteenth century peasants doing in England during the industrial revolution (Bourgeois and Schonberg, 2009: 317). They feel similarly abandoned and lost and are quenching their thirst for employment or something to do with booze instead of work, because there are not enough jobs to

satisfy each household's needs. The (more often than not) women who brew are doing the one thing which they believe will give them economic stability and independence, and many of them enjoy the status which their work gives them.

I discussed with Vigdis Broch-Due (in conversation in Kilifi, Kenya, 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014) the need to avoid oversimplistic explanations of brewing and drinking behaviour, and the reasons why women brew are not limited to poverty alone. Take, for example, the Mama Pima in the study site who was asked by the chief to stop brewing because it was damaging to the community. She agreed with him that she would stop when she had finished educating her daughter, and she did. Her daughter studied at an American university and now works there. The daughter now supports her mother and the rest of her family financially since her mother no longer brews or sells home brew. Her education was an investment for her family.

### **The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act (2010) and Structural Violence**

In this section I will discuss the specific laws in Kenya relating to the manufacture and consumption of alcoholic drinks. As we have seen both throughout this thesis and within this chapter, there are some very clear, structural reasons why people in Kijiji are pushed by the state into brewing. I now hope to explain, using the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 itself (NACADA, 2013), and with reference to my own findings, why this brewing is, and will remain, illegal in the eyes of the Kenyan law makers. I suggest that the Act is impossible to adhere to for small scale brewers and furthermore that the Act is designed to criminalise these *jua kali* producers of local brew. It is complex and for an illiterate brewer, would be impossible to both access (online, which is the only place I have been able to read it in full) or understand.

It is a law which is inapplicable to the brewers within the study site, and I suspect across most of Kenya, other than medium or large scale brewers of commercial alcohol. It does not take into account the fact that the majority of brewers of home brew undertake such work because of financial impediments to other forms of income generation. It is cheap and easy to begin, but to do so within legal parameters would be very expensive and beyond the financial and intellectual reach certainly of brewers within Kijiji.

The Act (NACADA, 2013) is really not designed to improve standards for small-scale *kiyenyeji* (local) brewers or to improve the health of its drinkers. There is room for improvement in the ways in which brewing is conducted, especially in terms of hygiene. The current Act does little to address this in a



practical sense and this is something which could, with greater understanding of the lives of those within this sub-culture, be fairly easily rectified, subject to educating Mama Pimas on the legislation.

The Act states that “...any person manufacturing an alcoholic drink is prohibited from selling alcoholic drink at retail or to consumers” (NACADA, 2013). This immediately criminalises all the brewers within Kijiji, yet not the sellers of *mnazi* since, as Willis states, *mnazi* was legalised in 2003 (Willis, 2009) and furthermore the sellers within Kijiji are only selling it, not manufacturing it. However, the other brewers within Kijiji all seem to brew *and* sell, so if we take the Act into account, what they are doing is illegal. Section 4.1 goes on to say that “...no premises shall be licensed to sell alcoholic drink for consumption on the premises which are also residential premises”. Despite the confusing grammar, this means that anyone brewing or selling alcohol must not live at the same location. This criminalises almost every Mama Pima in Kijiji since most live where they brew and/or sell booze. Honour, for example, lives in a small house next door to the store where she makes *bangara* on her *shamba*. In order to legalise what they do, the Act states in section 4.1.1 that those wishing to brew or sell alcohol must obtain the following documents in order to apply for a license: ID, business registration documents, PIN certificate (for tax purposes), a VAT certificate from KRA (the Kenya Revenue Authority), a Public Health Inspection certificate, and the list goes on. For the brewers and sellers in Kijiji this would be impossible because they do not have the funds available to register their business, let alone the understanding of the very complex system surrounding legal brewing.

The bureaucracy involved in the process is exhausting and there are a number of perfectly good reasons why brewers of home brew would be incapable of acquiring these mandatory documents. Firstly, many are financially very poor. The reason why they brew is, as I have explained, often due to a lack of other jobs and because with as little as 100/- capital (Willis, 2009) they are able to start a business of their own to give them economic independence. Most will not even possess a PIN number (the individual identification number required for paying tax, like the British National Insurance number) since the business is by its very nature informal and they do not pay tax. Many would not know how to go about acquiring a VAT certificate, or a public health certificate, and I need not draw attention to the problems those who are illiterate would face in attempting to procure such documents. It is as if the Act is designed so that these small producers are unable to meet its requirements, automatically criminalising their activities.

In section 4.2, the Act states that the license is “applicable to all persons brewing or manufacturing (or intending to manufacture) any alcoholic drink whatever the method of production”. Furthermore, it

states in section 4.2.2 that “no license should be granted for the manufacture of an alcoholic drink within a residential area or in residential premises”, thus making all production of brew within Kijiji illegal since most is produced at the home of the producer or within close proximity to other homes and compounds. This particularly applies to those brewers and sellers of brews who are within the villages, such as Patience who is right in the village centre down an alleyway between two buildings, rather than those who are based a little further out amongst the *shambas*, like Mama Mercy and Honour.

Section 5.2 prohibits persons under the age of 18 from serving or brewing alcohol, and says that children under the age of 18 are not allowed within the production site. This would cause a problem for the Mama Pimas since their children are usually involved within the process of brewing, helping their family out in the same way that kids tend to help on the *shamba* or help by herding goats or cattle.

Remember, for example, Emily, whose mother is a Mama Pima? Emily is a young mother herself and grew up helping to make and serve the brew, just as her children will now do. Helping their mother is part of their obligation to her. Since the brew dens are mostly located within or very close to the Mama Pimas own house, there are most often children around, playing or being cared for by the family or the Mama Pima herself.

Finally, the Act goes on to state that manufacture of *chang’aa* (which appears to be the same as *kangara*, but distilled) must also conform to the Act and furthermore it should be bottled in glass bottles only, sealed, and with the KEBS (Kenya Bureau of Standards) sticker, with a health warning printed on the bottle. This would be impossible since it would require large capital to begin with, to either set up a bottling plant or to send the brew very quickly after production to a bottling plant.

Diageo, one of the leading alcohol beverage companies globally, is the first commercial brewer to start bottling ‘home brew’ in Africa and realistically it needs to be a company of this size with deep pockets because of the initial high expenditure essential to such a process. Small scale brewers in Kijiji, like Mama Mercy, Honour, and Patience would never be able to afford to do this. Diageo have started producing a beer called Senator Keg in Kenya which they claim is an affordable alternative to illicit brew. They are also involved in bottling traditional sorghum beer in South Africa and so are bridging the gap between traditional brews and commercial alcohol. Legally this is obviously a good thing because in terms of Kenyan laws, a commercially bottled beer is deemed to be safer and would be sold in a more controlled environment (commercial bars are much more visible and therefore have to adhere to the Act). However, this will still be more expensive than the informally brewed traditional beers since these producers are doing so with very basic equipment and few overheads. Although companies like Diageo

are going some way to bridging this gap, commercial brews will always be more expensive and less readily available than informally produced home brews and so home brew will still be the drink of choice for people with less cash to spend, and in remote areas.

I suggest that the law in relation to the production of alcohol is unreasonable, unrealistic, and impossible to adhere to for these small scale brewers within Kijiji and across Kenya. It does not take into account the cultural, social and economic contexts of *jua kali* brewers. The Alcohol Act criminalises brewers and drinkers of home brew and furthermore leaves the door open for widespread bribery of officials. Many of the Mama Pimas told me that they had at some point had to pay a bribe of some sort to officials to remain in their jobs. Since most people, including police and officials, understand that there is no way for these brewers to adhere to the law, they know that they can easily extort money from them since they have to earn their living. In reference to 'new generation' drinks that bridge the gap between commercial alcohol and home brew, but equally true for home brew, "bans are announced, and forgotten, and announced again: and the drinks continue to be sold" (Willis, 2003). It is never really clear what the current legislation is. Perhaps this is a deliberate confusion to leave ample room for bribery. Attempts to control and legislate locally produced beers are ways in which the government attempts to raise revenue and levies from rural and urban working classes and poor populations (Heap, in Van Wolputte et al, 2010: 127).

The acquisition of a license requires a plot number for the premises or a certificate of purchase. There are no plot numbers within Kijiji since the area has not yet been assessed by the commissioner for lands, and in addition most people live on land which has been in their family for generations. In such cases, there would be no certificate of purchase, official or otherwise.

I suggest that the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 and its blatant criminalisation of people living in poverty is just another example of structural violence, and that such an Act is no solution to any problems of public health or social degradation caused by brewing and drinking of home brew. Mama Pimas in Kijiji repeatedly reported paying bribes to officials and being threatened with closure if they did not pay up. Data from NACADA used to justify the Act is of questionable quality, and state-sponsored survey data is known to be notoriously unreliable (Randall and Coast, 2015).

Currently, the Act will not help Kenyans to solve any of the problems associated with alcohol production and consumption. However, Willis does not believe that full legalisation is the answer either (Willis and Mutisya, 2009). A middle ground should be found where the primary concern of legislation is to

improve public health and wellbeing of communities, rather than criminalisation of the rural and urban poor, and extraction of bribe money.

It is "...policy debates and interventions [which] often mystify large-scale structural power vectors and unwittingly reassign blame to the powerless for their individual failures and moral character deficiencies" (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 297). Not only do these debates mask the real reasons for harmful behaviours, in this case drinking and brewing, but it is these "...deeper forces that distribute misery unequally" (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009: 297). In the case of policy here, the Act is serving mainly to criminalise marginalised groups and to hide the real problems which need addressing. The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act is an embodiment of structural violence.

### **The Role of the Anthropologist and Ethnography**

By reflecting on the role of anthropology in public health, in the same vein as Robert Pool's *Dialogue and the Interpretation of Illness* (1994), we can learn that anthropology serves two functions. Firstly, it is useful as a tool for health programs to achieve what they want and to improve effectiveness of interventions. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, anthropology serves as a tool to prevent the problematising of individual and group behaviours. As anthropologists we are used to looking at situations with cultural relativism. Words such as 'poverty', and terms like 'a dollar a day', or 'subsistence farming' have some very western connotations which are really not helpful. If we look at the people whose lives are in some sense documented throughout the course of this thesis and do not use cultural relativism, we might end up using some of these terms. 'A dollar a day' is not helpful since it encourages us to think as if we were in Europe, or indeed America, where to live on a dollar a day would be impossible. However, relatively speaking, it is not impossible in rural communities such as Kijiji. A dollar, or a hundred shillings, can and does feed a family. Of course they will struggle to acquire everything they need for a hundred shillings a day but this will be enough to feed them, perhaps with some money left over.

I use this example to show that if we look at behaviours or situations using western concepts of 'poverty' then we are going about it in the wrong way entirely. Not everyone wants a tap in their house providing them with fresh water. There is a whole social aspect about meeting at the village water point to hear the village news. While it might be easier to collect water with a tap in every home, but the strong sense of community and caring for each other might well be lost. There are many 'hidden' aspects which might not be revealed unless we employ a culturally relativistic approach through

anthropology to examine the complex meanings behind behaviours instead of problematising them with a harm minimalisation approach. Anthropology can contribute to "...an agenda for research and action grounded in the struggle for social and economic rights" (Farmer, 2003: 18) since by examining not only the agency of individuals but the wider social and structural forces affecting these behaviours, it is much more likely that we will better understand why behavioural phenomena, such as home brew production and consumption, occurs. In this vein it is vital to examine the wider social forces impacting on peoples' lives by looking beyond the narrow field of vision of 'harm' discourses to stop further problematising communities already suffering from structural violence, and anthropology can be used as a tool to accomplish this.

So what, then, is the role of ethnography in this research? What can I say that I have learned as an ethnographer? And one very important question which I need to at least admit that I am asking myself, if not to provide some kind of answer to, is this: if, by employing ethnographic methods, I have caused the community to realise the negative effects of alcohol in all their lives, what purpose does this serve? Am I now responsible for a rise in solace drinking, because now people have had attention drawn to the ways in which their lives are depressing and hopeless sometimes? How does one go about answering that?

I feel that my research has gone some way to leading the community into unmasking the forces behind suffering within their midst. Kenyans in general tend to be very forgiving and peaceful people and there is little sense of politically motivated activism in Kijiji. They are very accepting of whatever might befall them, whether that is politically, domestically, socially, economically or environmentally. If there is a drought, it is usually *bahati mbaya*, (bad luck) or *shauri ya mungu* (God's affair). *Tunaomba mungu* (we are praying to God), or, *tunaomba serekali* (we are requesting the government), are also common responses. Having said this, drawing attention to these problems and unmasking some of these structural forces behind individuals' or communities' suffering is highly political and potentially powerful. Either people will realise that they have been neglected by various structural forces which are forcing them to remain in poverty, and then they will feel like they need to act in some way to bring about change, or they will accept it and go on with their lives, feeling less satisfied.

I have a feeling it will be the latter, simply because people in Kijiji are very willing to accept their 'lot' in life, but I do feel responsible for having made these issues clearer without being capable of offering any solution. As Bourgois points out, people who use drugs and alcohol in deprived communities "...internalise their rage and desperation. They direct their brutality against themselves and their

immediate community rather than against their structural oppressors” (Bourgois, 1996: 326). In a way, I hope that my conversations with people in Kijiji have impressed on them my belief that it is the fault of these systems, not individuals. The government, policies, and economy are largely to blame and I would hope that my discussions on this topic with friends and neighbours might make them more upbeat about their situation: that it *can* be changed through improved governance. Realistically though I think that people will just go on with their lives. They haven’t the energy or time to expend worrying about what the *wakubwa* (big people) are up to. I do not believe that my research will have had a long-lived effect on drinkers, although possibly more so on their families. I have made some headway in making this subculture visible to people outside of Kijiji, since without this first step, nothing can ever change.

### **Catharsis**

There is no quick fix or easy answers. This has become abundantly clear throughout my research. If this was an easy set of problems to fix then the people of Kijiji would have done so, or an NGO would have done it for them. This is a highly complex set of interconnected issues and any solution must be equally complex and sophisticated. I cannot explain this so well as Bourgois does, so I will recount the final words from his ethnography *In Search of Respect*:

“There is no technocratic solution. Any long-term paths out of the quagmire will have to address the structural and political economic roots, as well as the ideological and cultural roots of social marginalisation. The first step out of the impasse, however, requires a fundamental ethical and political re-evaluation of basic socioeconomic models and human values” (Bourgois, 1996: 327).

Once again I need to consider the question: what is the purpose of my research? If it is not to suggest solutions to these issues, as the people in Kijiji wish, then what is it *for*? I have resisted the temptation to document my ideas of how to ‘fix’ Kijiji’s destructive relationship with alcohol because they seem inadequate.

The inescapable reality is that these issues are so entrenched in Kenyan culture, and the structural violence inflicted upon Kenyan people is so embedded that any solution has to come from the top. Anything else is merely a sticking plaster over a big infected wound which will continue to fester unless something decisive is done about it. The purpose of this research must be to educate people from outside Kijiji about the local realities faced by its’ inhabitants in order that those who are in a position to bring about change can do so with a better understanding of the complexities of these profoundly embedded problems. It certainly cannot be solved overnight. This will be a long process of changing attitudes, policies, laws, taboos, culture, and re-education if any change is to last.

Willis and Mutisya (2009) have tentatively suggested full legalisation of home brew, as in Uganda, but admit that this is not necessarily the solution since this might lead to even fewer health regulations and could encourage increased levels of consumption or higher numbers taking up the drinking of alcohol. Perhaps this would be a good place to start and would at least stop people already living with the shame of poverty from being further criminalised or branded as deviant by the rest of society.

The Mama Pimas, like Bourgois' drug dealers, or Goffman's young men *On The Run*, are risk-taking, hard working, entrepreneurs who are brave enough to nurture their businesses in socially marginalised areas where the destruction of their economic independence could be just around the corner. The attitude, determination, and business acumen of these relatively poorly educated women and men who serve and make home brew in Kijiji just goes to show that success and business skill is often a matter of trying hard and having a good work ethic.

I will always struggle to reconcile the drinkers' violence with the Mama Pima's lifestyle. My role as researcher, highlighting problems of drinking to my participants, are tensions within the role of an anthropologist. Others before me, like Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Elenore Smith-Bowen (in *Return to Laughter*) have encountered similar difficulties. We can only do our best to negate the effects of these issues by making them clear and by creating transparency in our work. The personal stories of women like Patience give me hope in Kijiji because despite the domestic violence that she endured, Patience has come out of it determined to support her children, and to give them a better chance in life than she had. She is a skilled businesswoman who has a great head for numbers and is a clever saleswoman. Kijiji might wait a generation or more for the real structural changes that need to take place to change the drinking culture. In the meantime women like Patience and Mama Mercy will continue to feed their families, send their children to school, and lead fairly comfortable lives benefitting from home brew. They will continue to care for each other, look out for their neighbours, and eke out a living. People will continue to live their lives embedded within the sub-culture of home brew, in the beautiful rural villages of Kijiji, remote both geographically and politically, on the margins of society.

It is only those who are responsible for improving infrastructure, education, health, industry, law, commerce and employment, who can make a real difference to the people of Kijiji who welcomed me with love, affection and gratitude.

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# **Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Children's drawings**

**Appendix 2: Community Mapping**

**Appendix 3: Body Maps**

## Appendix 1: Children's drawings



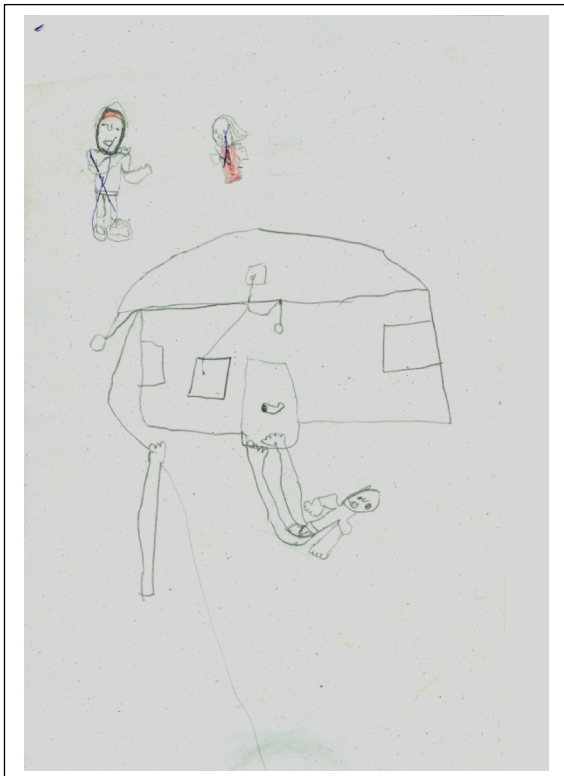
### CD1

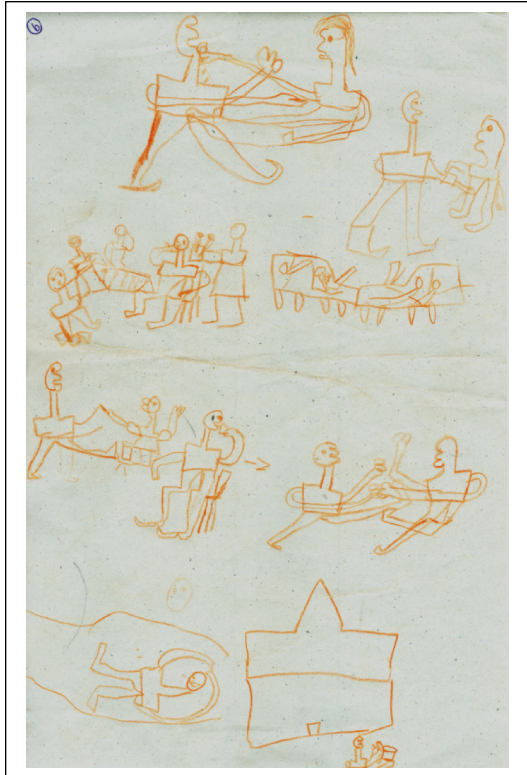
Left, from top –

- Man beating his wife;
- Drunken man passed out in a ditch;
- Drunken man shouting and breaking the door down; his wife has locked him out because he is late and drunk.

### CD2

Right: A man is trying to kick the door to his house down because he is drunk and his wife has locked him out.





### CD3

Top left: Husband and wife fighting;

Top right: Men fighting over drinks;

Upper middle: Drunk drivers crash their cars;

Lower middle, left: Men fighting because one has knocked over the other's drink;

Lower middle, right: Men fighting;

Bottom left: Drunken man passed out in the road;

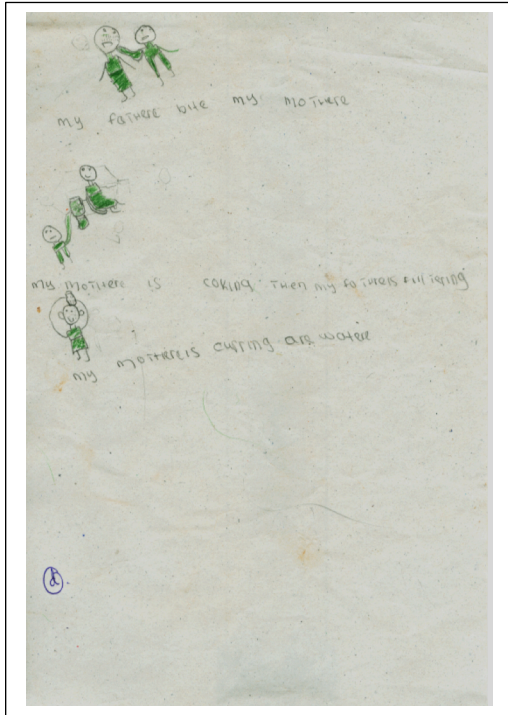
Bottom right (only partly visible): A man kicks over the cooking pot of food made by his wife, because he has returned home drunk and angry.

### CD4

Clockwise from top left –

- 'Wanapigana' (they are fighting);
- 'Wanakunywa' (they are drinking);
- Two men drinking at 'Mama Pimas';
- A man has passed out drunk in the forest;
- A drunkard has been shut out of his house and kicks the door;
- A drunken man shouting and abusing people in the street.





### CD5

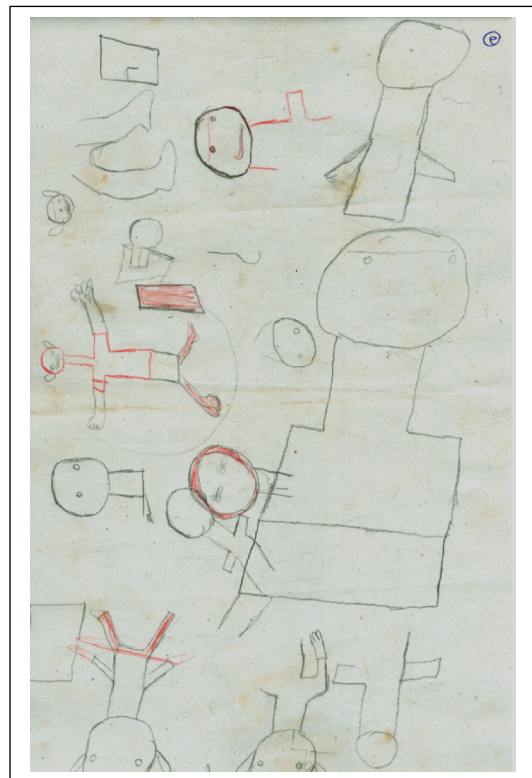
Top: Husband and wife fighting (the child has written "my father [beat] my mother");

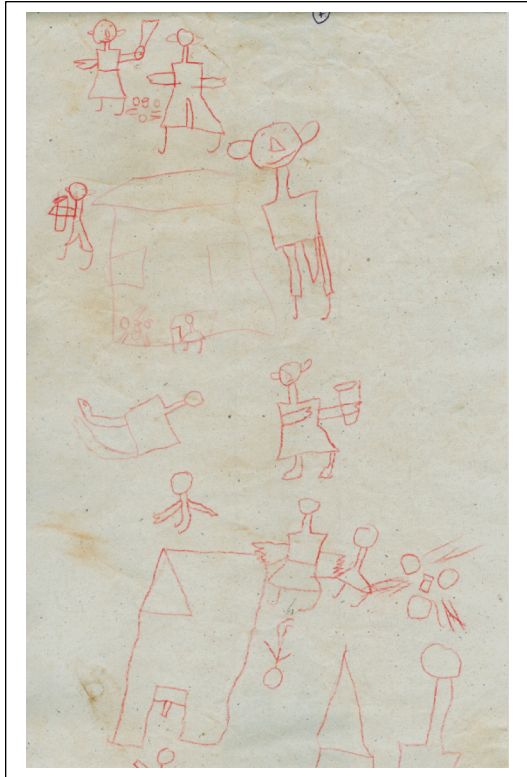
Middle: The wife is cooking but the husband wants to throw away the food (he is suffering a hangover). The child has written "my mother is cooking then my father is filtering [the beer]";

Bottom: The wife is bringing water. The child has written "my mother carrying [our] water".

### CD6

A drunkard is kicking the door and destroying the house.





### CD7

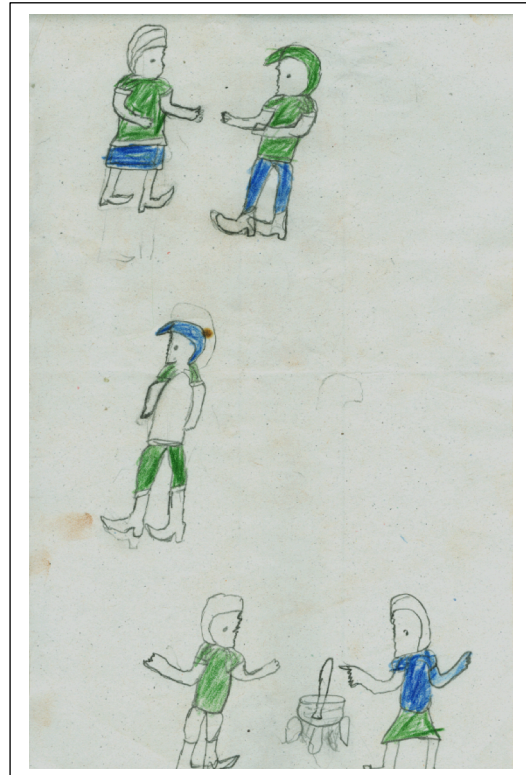
Shows –

- Man and woman fighting with a *panga* (machete);
- Man with a bottle of alcohol;
- Going home from *mama pimas*;
- Fallen over.

### CD8

Top to bottom:-

- Husband and wife fighting;
- Husband staggering;
- Husband finds wife cooking and starts a fight.







### CD9

Top: Husband and wife arguing because he is drunk;

Bottom right: Husband kicking the door down;

Bottom left: Husband falls in a ditch.

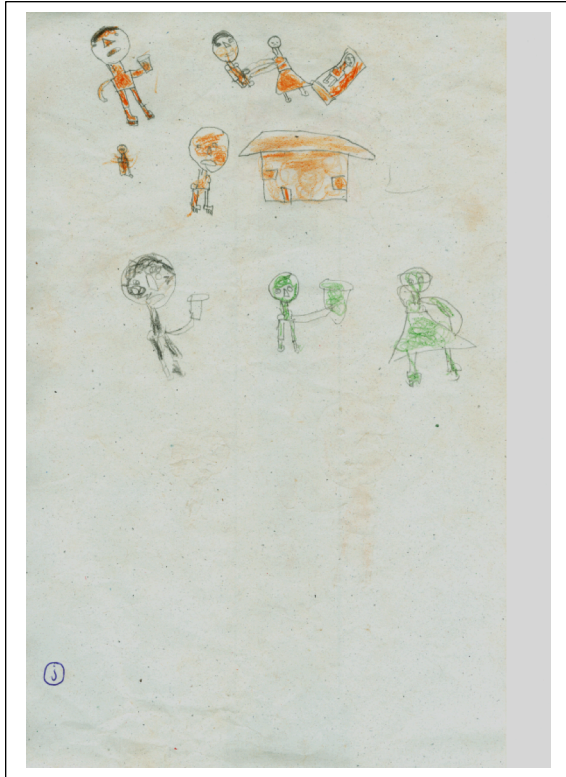
### CD10

Top: Two men fighting (because one has knocked over the other's drink);

Middle: A man is drinking while walking;

Bottom (part obscured): The wife is cooking and the husband kicks over the *sufuria* (cooking pot).





### CD11

Clockwise from top left –

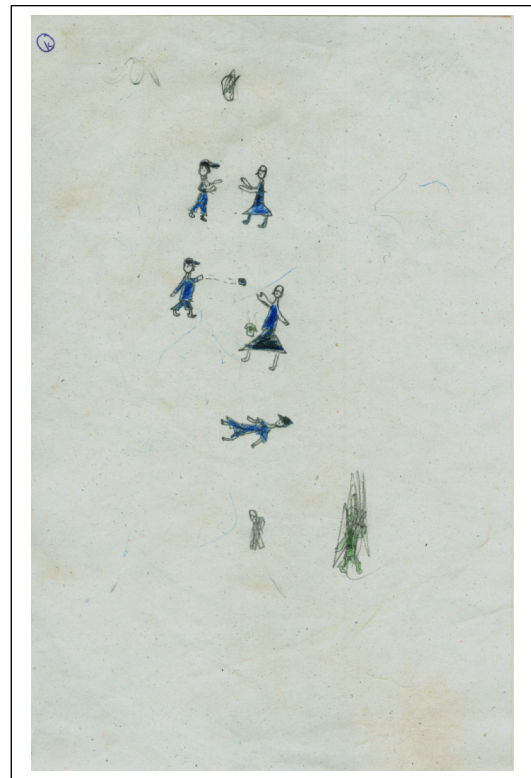
- Man drinking;
- Man and woman fighting, while a child is in bed;
- Drunk man locked out of his house;
- A man drinking and arguing with his wife;
- A man drinking.

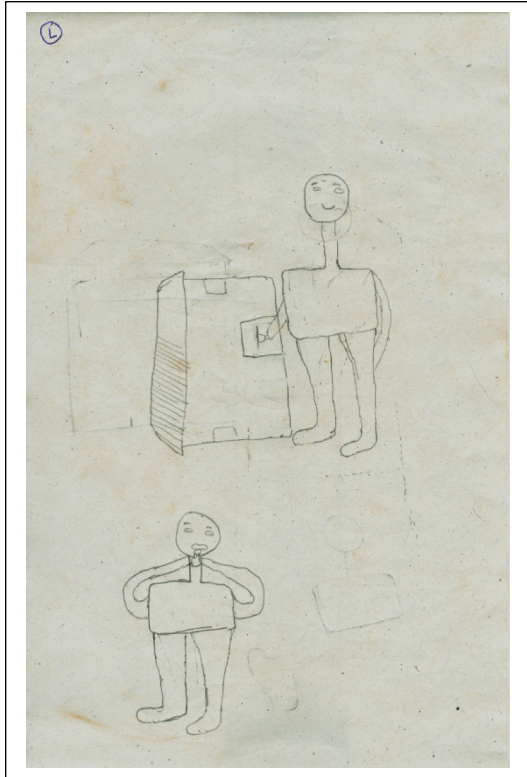
### CD12

Top: Husband and wife fight because he is drunk;

Centre: Husband throws a rock at his wife, who is cooking;

Bottom: Husband passed out drunk.





### CD13

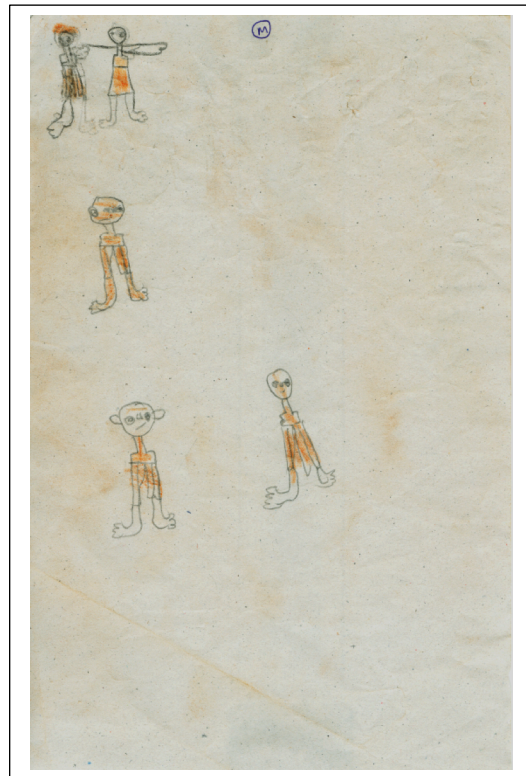
Top: A drunken man kicks down the door;

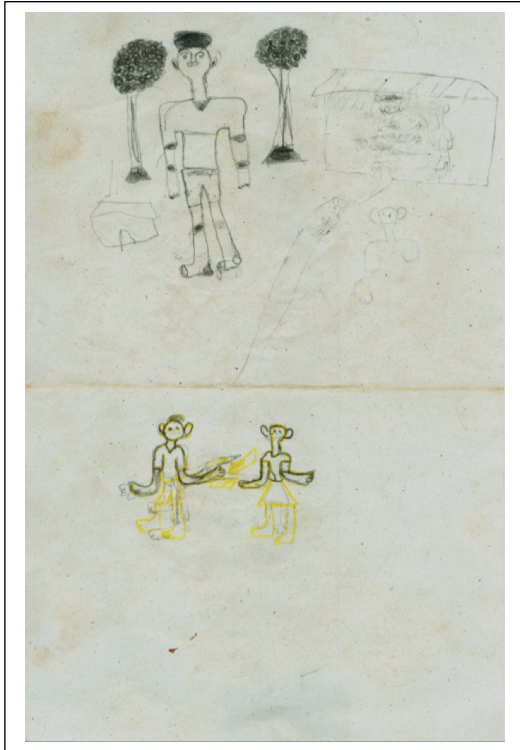
Bottom: Man drinking beer.

### CD14

Top: Husband and wife fighting;

Centre and bottom: Customers returning home from *mama pimas*.





**CD15**

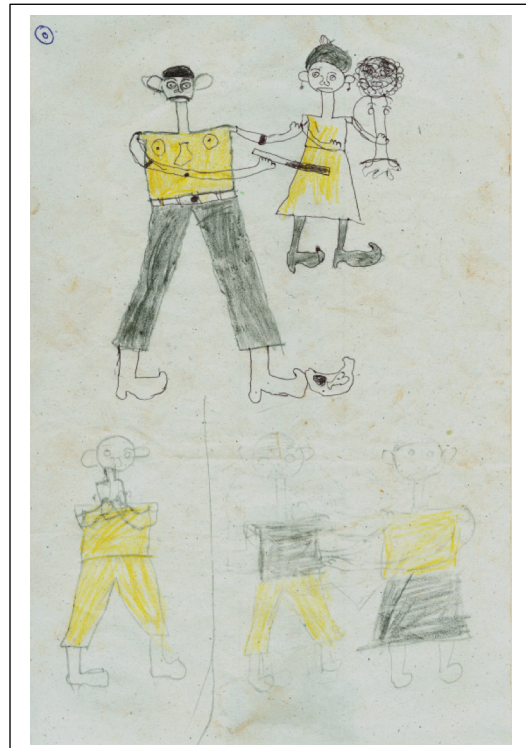
Top: A drunken man bumps into a tree in the forest

Bottom: Husband and wife fighting.

**CD16**

Top: A husband beats his wife with a stick and kicks over the cooking pot;

Bottom: Drinking and fighting (husband and wife).



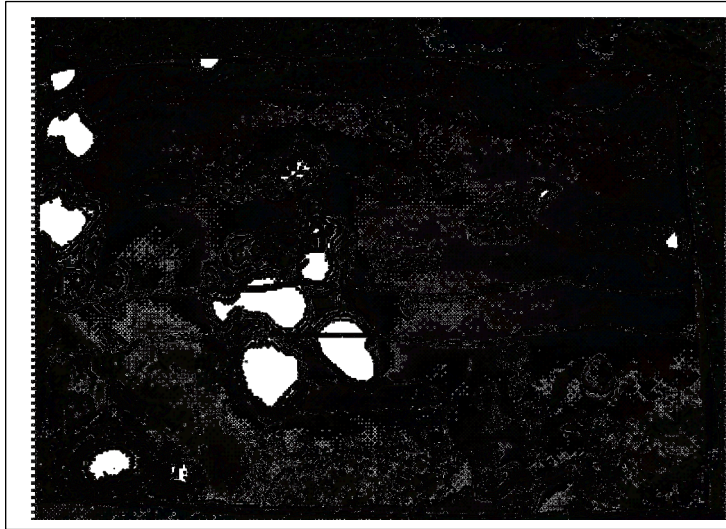


## CD17

Themes illustrated:-

- Fighting;
- Falling into trees;
- Kicking door down;
- Difficulty walking;
- Staggering home;
- Falling over;
- Disoriented (unsure which way home);
- Fighting;
- Urinating in the street.

## Appendix 2: Community Mapping

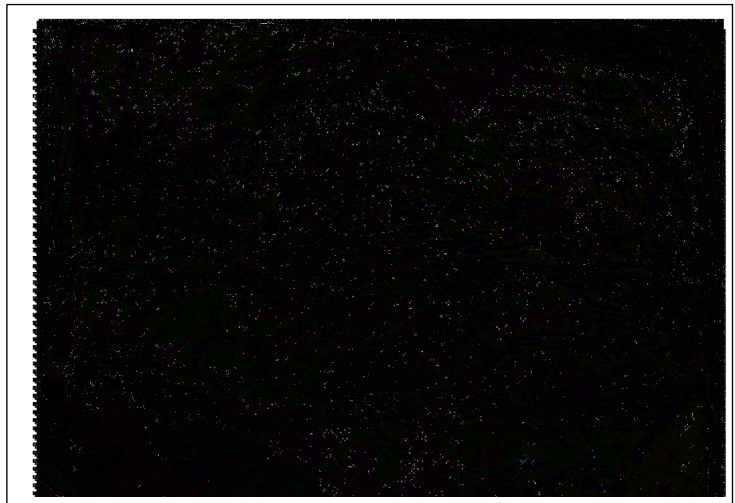


### CM1

Community map drawn by middle aged men. They drew detailed trees and the outline of the mountain in the background. Brew dens, narrow steep mountain paths and remote places in the bush frequented by wild animals were amongst the places they marked as dangerous on their map.

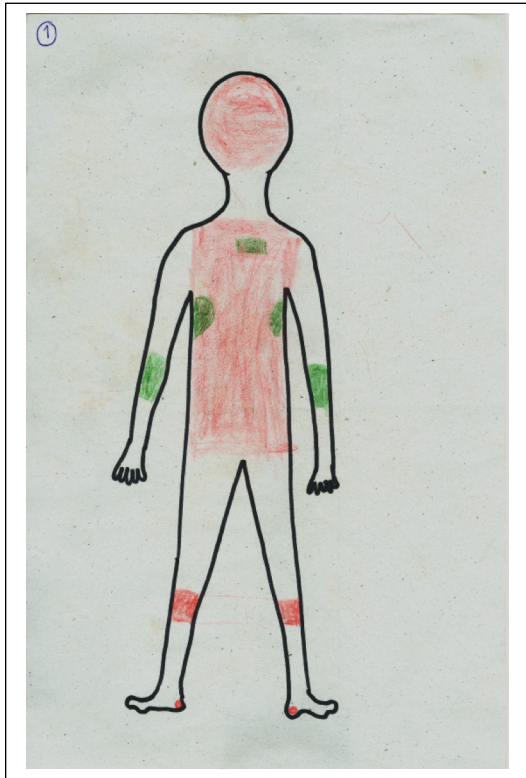
### CM2

Community map drawn by the older women's group. They marked fast flowing season rivers, and the remote bush places as dangerous. The school and church are incorrectly situated on their map.



The other four drawings from the mapping exercise were damaged before I was able to photograph or scan them.

### Appendix 3: Body maps

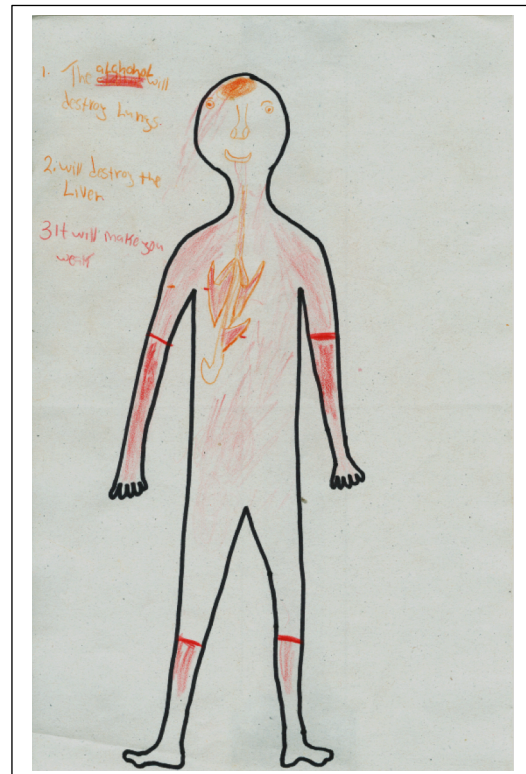


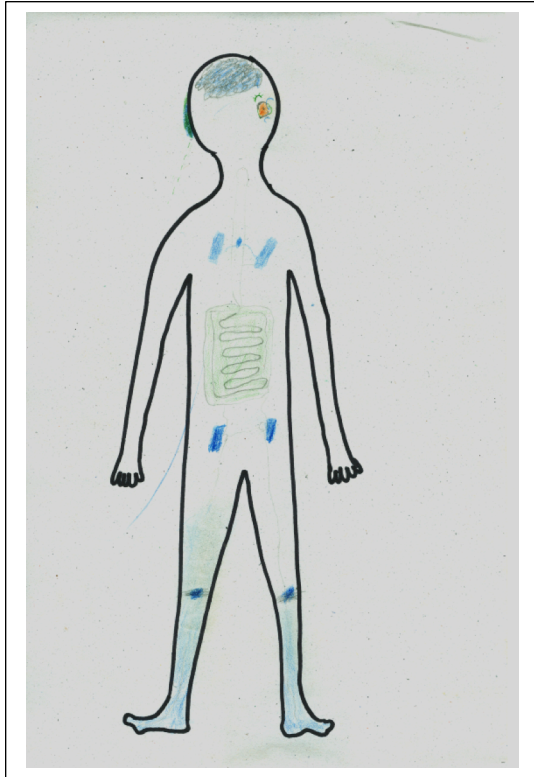
#### BM1

- Injuries to knees from falling down after drinking *bangara*.
- Other injuries all over the body.

#### BM2

- Drunkard has fallen and is bleeding from a head injury.
- BM indicates beer going down oesophagus.
- The man has been fighting, resulting in broken arms and legs, and abrasions to the knees from falling over.
- Alcohol has caused damage to liver, from which pain is felt.



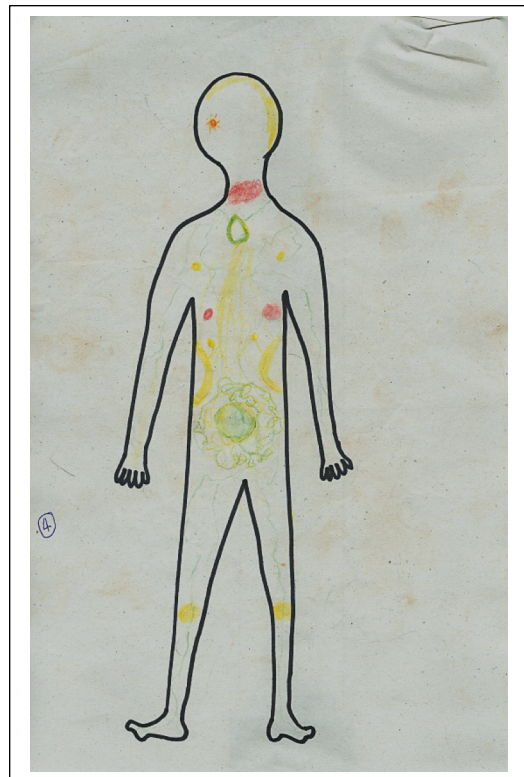


### BM3

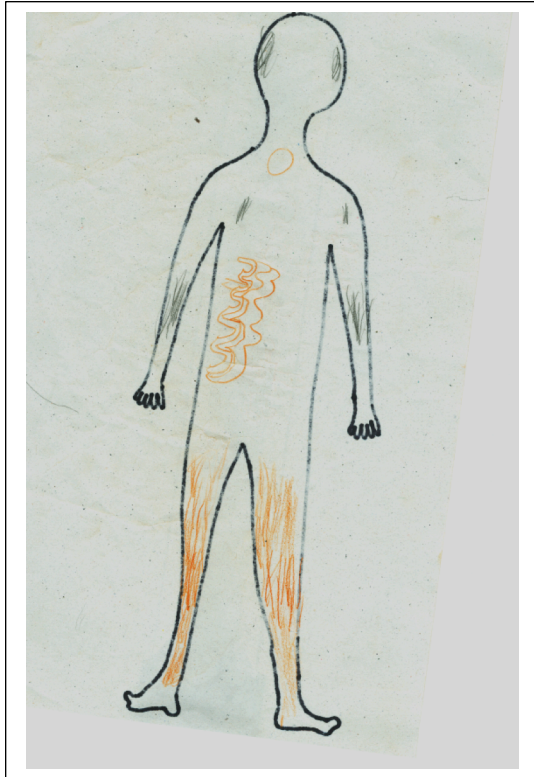
- The brain has been affected by alcohol, so he is falling over with blood spurting from his head.
- Eyes are red from an excess of alcohol.
- Lungs are diseased, causing difficulty in breathing.
- Alcohol has caused the intestines to shrink.
- Kidneys have failed because of alcohol.
- Knees are injured from falling over.

### BM4

- Head, neck and knee injuries from falling.
- Red eyes from excess alcohol.
- Heart affected by alcohol, leading to disease.
- The lines are veins with water in them, not blood, because of too much alcohol.
- Injuries from falling into the wall of his home.
- Kidneys affected.
- Stomach is making noises because it is empty.





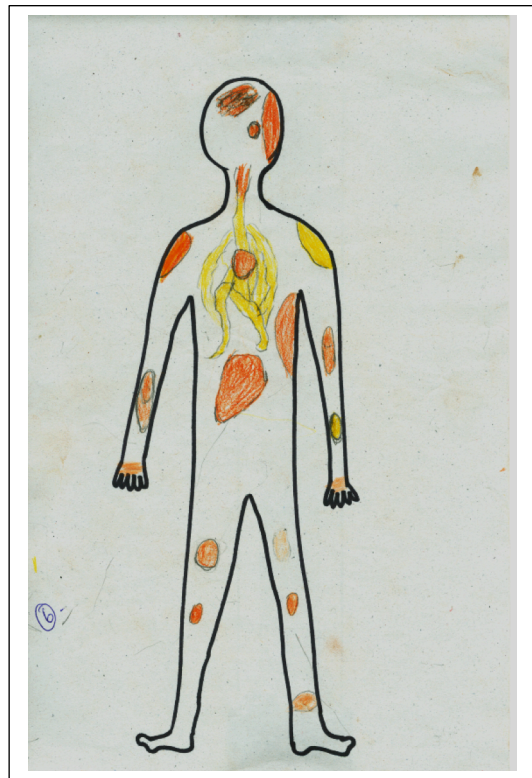


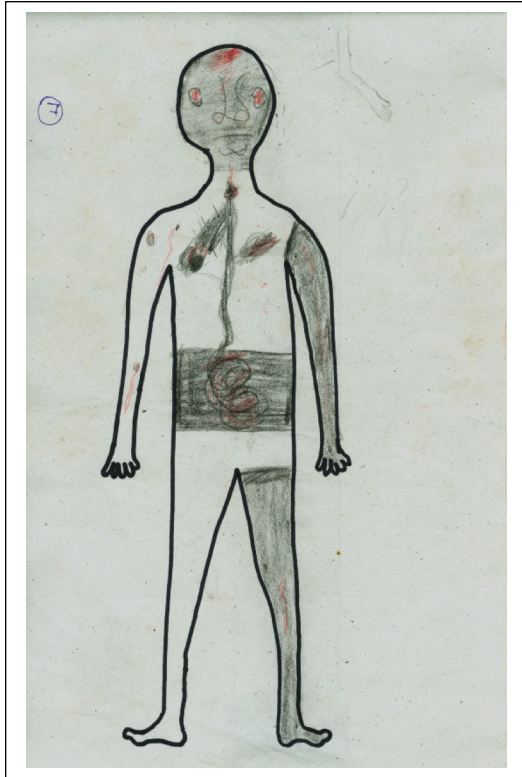
### BM5

- Ears are bleeding where someone cut them off with a *panga* in a drunken fight.
- Wound from falling after drinking too much alcohol.
- Injuries to arms from being beaten.
- Stomach burned by alcohol.
- Leg injuries from falling after drinking.

### BM6

- Head and various other injuries from falling while drunk.
- Red eyes from too much alcohol.
- Intestines burned by too much alcohol.



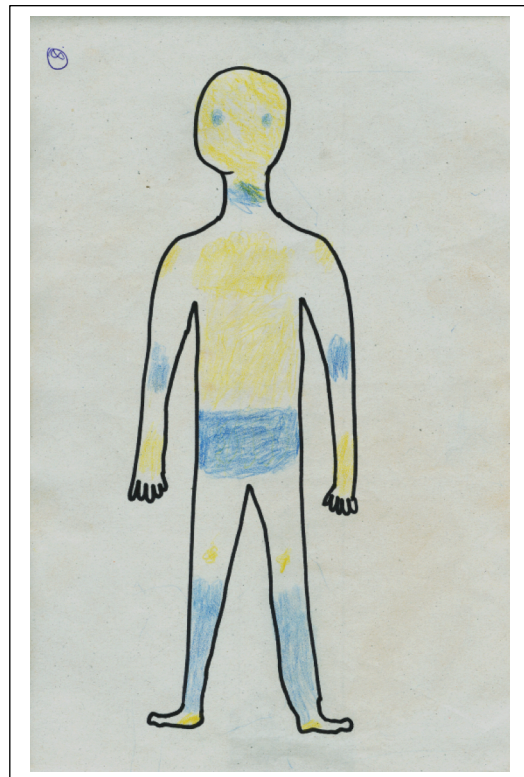


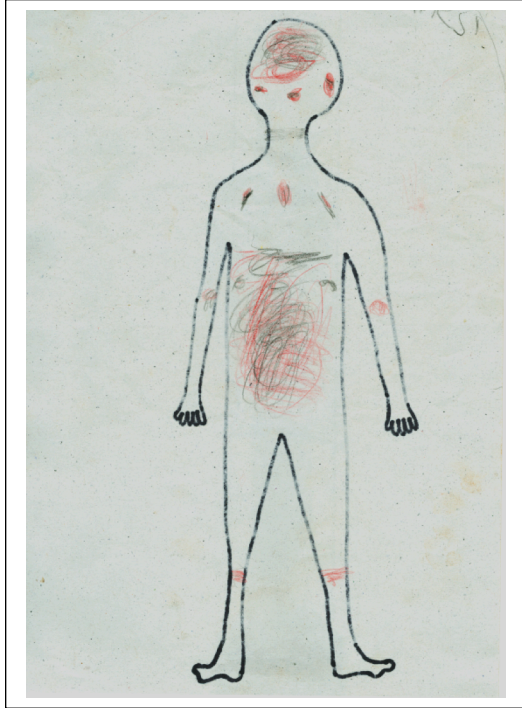
### BM7

- Head injury from fighting while drunk.
- Red eyes from too much alcohol.
- Heart affected.
- Intestines burned and shrunk from alcohol.
- Cut leg and arm (bleeding) from falling over.

### BM8

- Head, neck and leg injuries from falling while drunk.
- Sight affected by alcohol.
- Broken arms.
- Intestines have shrunk from excess alcohol.



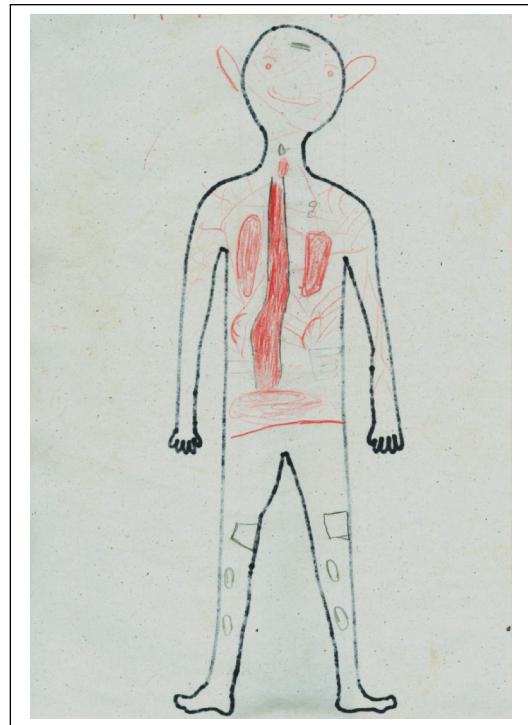


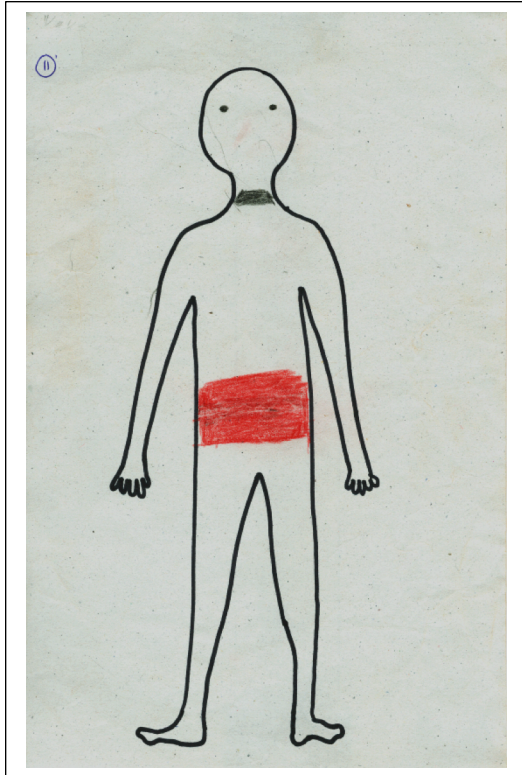
### BM9

- Blood dripping from head wounds.
- Intestines burned by alcohol.
- Elbows injured from falling.

### BM10

- Injuries from falling.
- Stomach affected by alcohol.
- Liver is falling out.



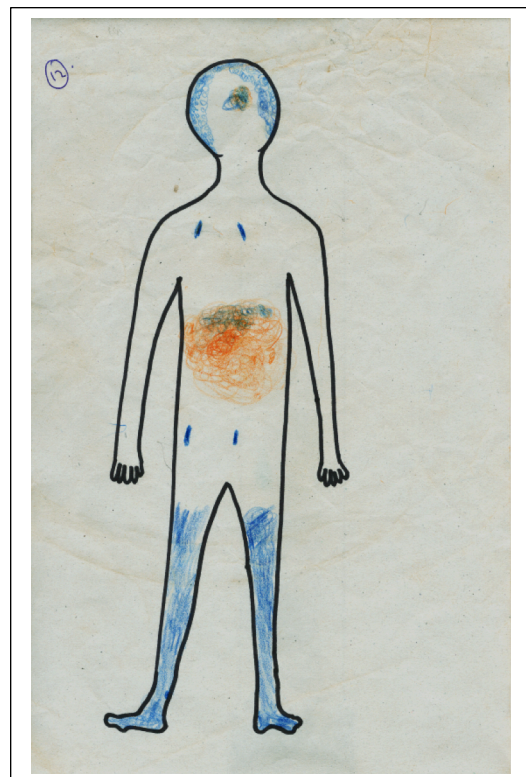


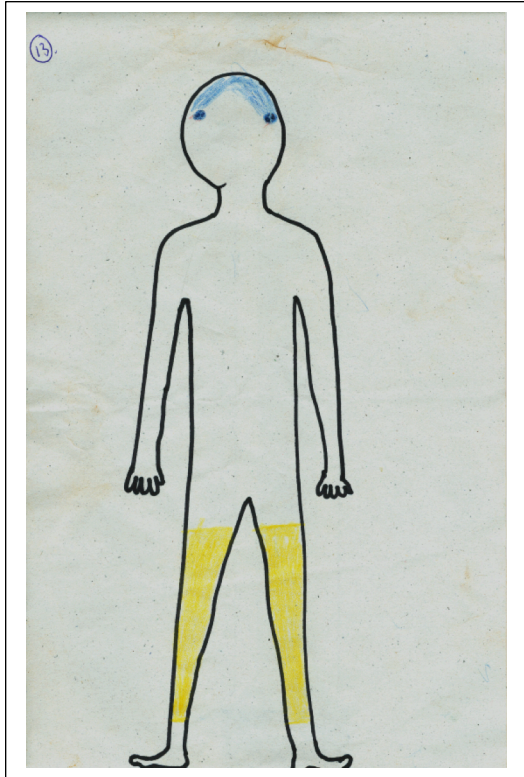
### BM11

- Blind from drinking.
- Chest injury.
- Stomach wound from falling.

### BM12

- Blood coming from head wound.
- Eyes injured.
- Various wounds and injuries from falling over.
- Alcohol has affected the stomach.



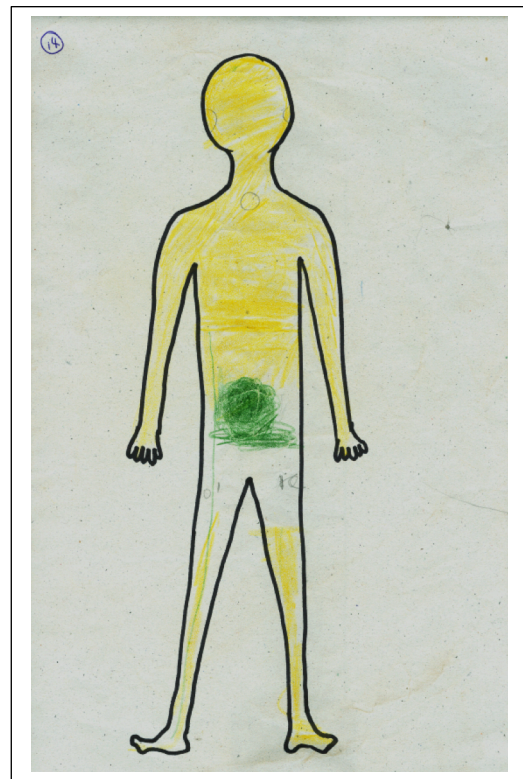


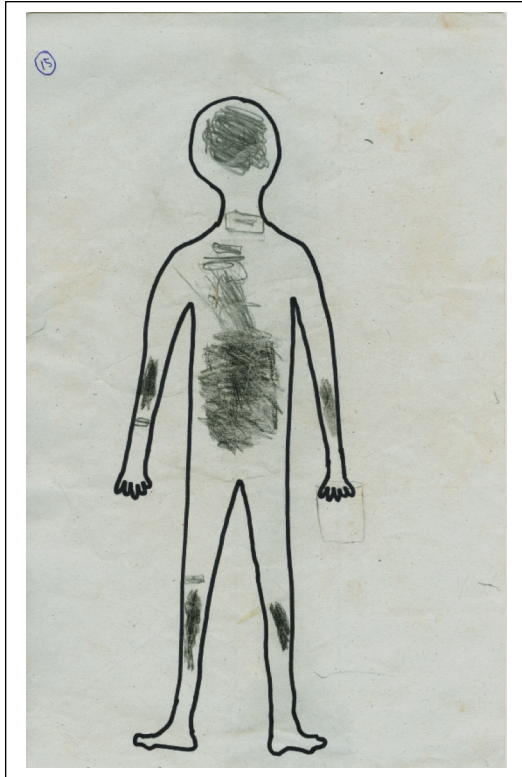
**BM13**

- Red eyes from too much alcohol.
- Head and leg injuries.

**BM14**

- Wounds affecting whole body.
- Eyes not working.





### BM15

- Head wound from falling down.
- Holding a cup of *bangara* in his hand.
- Wounds on entire body.