

Children of Empire. Childhood, education and space in German South West Africa, c. 1880–1915

Jakob Zollmann*

Abstract

The article deals with the upbringing and education of children in German South West Africa. It focusses on the experiences of girls and boys who were born into and grew up in a colonial context where they were expected to assume roles or positions ascribed to them by parents, colonial bureaucrats or 'colonial society' in general. A history of (different) childhood(s) in GSWA is a research subject which can prompt historiography to question the 'natural' dichotomies established by the colonial state. Neither a sense of belonging nor a sense of superiority or racist convictions were given facts for a new-born individual, but were the results of educational efforts and experiences. Barely two generations of German pupils were born and attended German schools in GSWA. This historical context is an invitation to widen the research focus beyond questions of schooling in order to come to a meaningful analysis of the everyday experiences of children on the one hand and the underlying ideologies of their education on the other. The article sheds light on these problems by discussing the state of research followed by demographic developments in the colony, births, and child healthcare. Subsequent sections recount the educational experiences of children within the family and in the state or mission schools in the colony, followed by an overview of the connections between (child) labour, violence and language skills, while a final section examines the relevance of experiencing different (colonial) spaces, rural and urban, in shaping different childhoods in GSWA.

Introduction

Many histories of 'colonial' and 'colonized' women¹ and men² in sub-Saharan Africa have been published in the recent decades. However, little research has been conducted into

* Jakob Zollmann is researcher at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and currently visiting fellow at the German Historical Institute Paris. His research interests include the history of international law, African history, and colonial law. The author gratefully acknowledges the advice of Sonya Michel and three anonymous peer reviewers. E-Mail: zollmann@wzb.eu

¹ For an overview see: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Mechthild Leutner, (eds.), *Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien*, Berlin, Links, 2009; Katharina Walgenbach, "Die weiße Frau als Trägerin deutscher Kultur". *Koloniale Diskurse über Geschlecht, "Rasse" und Klasse im Kaiserreich*, Frankfurt/M., Campus, 2005; Laura Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2001; Anne Hugon, (ed.), *Histoire des femmes en situation coloniale. Afrique et Asie, XXe siècle*, Paris, Karthala, 2000; Nancy Rose Hunt, Tessie P. Liu and Jean Quataert, (eds.), *Gendered Colonialism in African History*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1997; Tabitha M. Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya 1900–50*, Oxford,

the experiences of girls and boys who were born into and grew up in Africa's colonial context where they were expected to assume roles or positions ascribed to them by parents, colonial bureaucrats or 'colonial society' in general. The upbringing and education of children in one of those societies is examined here. However, is a singular history of children and childhood(s) in German South West Africa (GSWA) possible? Under what conditions is it possible? What are the challenges and what are the benefits? First of all, the *situation coloniale* implies a distinction between African and (European) settler children. This means the analysis of their histories in a territory that was carved out between 1885 and 1890 by politicians in Europe, who did so without any consideration for cultures or languages. It might thus be possible to speak about 'German' children in GSWA, but the cultural and social contexts in which 'African' children were raised in GSWA varied so greatly that it seems impossible to generalize about their upbringing.³ To be sure, there were situations where this dichotomy was not fully accurate. 'Black' and 'white' children (and those who were considered neither 'really white' nor 'black') were differently situated, but – as we will see – they often shared and interacted in the same space, though experiencing it in different ways.

Furthermore, the source-based evidence for a history of children in GSWA is far more extensive for German (settler) children in an urban context than for African (or

Currey, 2005; Ghislaine Lydon, "The unraveling of a neglected source. A report on women in francophone West Africa in the 1930s", *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 37, 1997: 555-584; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, New York, Routledge, 1995; Ingrid Grienig, "Von Melkweibern, Hirtenweibern, Küchenweibern in Deutsch-Südwestafrika zu Landarbeiterinnen in Namibia. Eine historische Betrachtung", *Berichte. Forschungsinstitut der Internationalen Wissenschaftlichen Vereinigung. Weltwirtschaft und Weltpolitik e.V., Berlin*, 11, 1999: 58-74; Christine Obbo, *African Women. Their Struggle for Economic Independence*, London, Zed, 1980; Jane L. Parpart and Kathleen A. Staudt, (eds.), *Women and the State in Africa*, Boulder, Colo., Rienner, 1989; Awa Thiam, *Die Stimme der schwarzen Frau. Vom Leid der Afrikanerinnen*, Reinbek, Rowohlt, 1992; Ruth Weiss, (ed.), *Frauen gegen Apartheid. Zur Geschichte des politischen Widerstandes von Frauen*, Reinbek, Rowohlt, 1988; Luise White, *The Comforts of Home. Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990; Martha Mamozai, *Herrenmenschen. Frauen im deutschen Kolonialismus*, Reinbek, Rowohlt, 1982.

² However, it could be stated that early 'colonial history' is essentially a 'history of men', on this term see: Ute Frevert, "Männergeschichte als Provokation?", *WerkstattGeschichte*, 6, 1993: 9-11; idem, "Soldaten, Staatsbürger. Überlegungen zur historischen Konstruktion von Männlichkeit", in: Thomas Kühne, (ed.), *Männergeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte. Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, Frankfurt/Id., Campus, 1996: 69-87; Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan Miescher, "Introduction. Men and Masculinity in Modern African History", in: eadem, (eds.), *Men and Masculinity in Africa*, Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2003: 1-29; Sandra Maß, *Weißer Helden, schwarze Krieger. Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918–1964*, Köln, Böhlau, 2006; Daniel J. Walther, "Sex, race and empire. White male sexuality and the 'other' in Germany's colonies, 1894–1914", *German Studies Review*, 33, 2010: 45-71; R. Morrel, "Masculinity in South African history. Towards a gendered approach to the past", *Suid-Afrikaanse Historiese Joernaal*, 37, 1997: 167-177; David Killingray, "Gender Issues and African colonial Armies", in: David Killingray and David Omissi, (eds.), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c.1700–1964*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999: 221-248.

³ Namibia's Office of the Prime Minister states: "more than 11 languages are indigenous to Namibia"; main language "groups" are: Oshiwambo; Nama/Damara; Afrikaans; Otjiherero; Kavango; Caprivi; English; German; San; see: <<http://www.gov.na/languages-spoken>> [accessed 9 October, 2015].

indigenous, for the want of a more apposite generic term) children in a rural context. Even though most of this article's analysis will thus concern settler children, a number of relevant comparative or contrastive points about African children (in the specific historical context of GSWA) will be made, in order to develop a fuller understanding of children's experiences in GSWA. Considering the sources, these discussions will be limited to contexts in which African children lived in European-dominated spaces (missionary-run classrooms, German homes, German-controlled workplaces).

A history of (different) childhood(s) in GSWA is not merely a supplement to a social history of the *situation coloniale* in general or the German colonial period. It is also a research subject that can prompt historiography to question and go beyond the 'natural' dichotomies established by the colonial state. After all, neither a sense of belonging nor a sense of superiority or racist convictions were given facts for a new-born individual but were the results of educational efforts and experiences, the history of which has yet to be analysed. Considering the short duration of German rule, the case of GSWA might be particular in so far as barely two generations of German pupils were born and attended German schools in Africa. However, this specific historical context is an invitation to widen the research focus beyond questions of schooling in order to come to a meaningful analysis of the everyday experiences of children on the one hand and the underlying ideologies of their education on the other.

The following sections will shed light on these problems by discussing the state of research and the available sources, followed by demographic developments in the colony, births, and child healthcare. Subsequent sections recount the educational experiences of children within the family and in the state or mission schools in the colony, followed by a brief overview of the connections between (child) labour, violence and language skills, while a final section examines the relevance for children of experiencing different (colonial) spaces, rural and urban, in shaping different childhoods in GSWA.

State of research and sources

African and settler children and their upbringing and education within the family, by missionary or state institutions and the related policies are only now beginning to appear on the historians' research agendas. A decade ago, one historian stated that the "condition of youth [and children] in Africa" has long been "neglected by scholars".⁴ Indeed, "[i]n terms of African colonial history, we have a relatively limited understanding of the experiences of childhood".⁵ The subject is touched upon mostly in relation to the

⁴ Beverly C. Grier, "Child labor and africanist scholarship. A critical overview", *African Studies Review*, 47, 2004: 1-25 (2); remarkably, she excludes from this statement "the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education."

⁵ Antoinette Errante, "White skin, many masks. Colonial schooling, race, and national consciousness among white settler children in Mozambique, 1934–1974", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 2003: 7-33 (9); cf. Carol Summers, "Boys, brats and education. Reproducing white maturity in colonial Zimbabwe, 1915–1935", *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1, 2011: 123-153; Beverly C. Grier, *Invisible Hands. Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe*, Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2006; Frank

history of colonial education or the history of women and family in (colonial) Africa. This is all the more comprehensible when considering that human children are, by their nature, dependent – whether on parents, the state, institutions, etc. A ‘freestanding’ history of childhood without reference to these is thus impossible, and historians may have, albeit inadvertently, also been writing the history of childhood, though perhaps not advertising it as such. In other cases, the historians’ preoccupation with questions of African agency (most of all resistance) led them to focus on adolescents and young adults and their quest for independent livelihoods. In this way, conflicts between political factions and generations or the social practices that helped to prevent or limit such conflicts were analysed and children ignored.⁶

If the historiography on children in (colonial) Africa seems marginal, the European and (North) American counterparts are more voluminous. In fact, since the “discovery of the ‘history of childhood’”, most of all due to the impact of Philippe Ariès’ *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’ancien régime* (1960), research has seen “almost turbulent development”.⁷ The picture historians, ethnographers, psychologists and others have drawn resembles, more often than not, a tragedy that slowly evolves, however, positively. Most famous is Lloyd deMause’s verdict on childhood (and parents):

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused.⁸

It seems fair to question whether deMause has written little more than a history of child abuse. But irrespective thereof or of any evolutionary models that depict a history of decay or a history of betterment, the question also arises as to what extent the

Becker, “Soldatenkinder und Rassenpolitik. Die Folgen des Kolonialkriegs für die ‘Mischlinge’ in DSWA (1904–1913)”, *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift*, 63, 2004: 53-77.

⁶ Cf. Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel, (eds.), *Vanguard or Vandals. Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, Leiden, Brill, 2005; Erdmute Alber et al., (eds.), *Generations in Africa. Connections and Conflicts*, Berlin, Lit, 2008; Hélène D’Almeida-Topor et al., (eds.), *Les jeunes en Afrique*, 2 vols, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1992; Meredith McKittrick, “The ‘burden’ of young men: Generational conflict and property rights in Ovamboland”, *African Economic History*, 24, 1996: 115-129; idem, “Generational struggles and social mobility in western Ovamboland communities, 1915–1954”, in: Patricia Hayes et al., (eds.), *Namibia Under South African Rule: Mobility and Containment, 1915–1946*, Oxford, Currey, 1998: 241-262; Hélène D’Almeida-Topor and Odile Goerg, (eds.), *Le Mouvement Associatif des Jeunes en Afrique Noire Francophone au XXe Siècle*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1989; Phyllis M. Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995; Joseph-Achille Mbembe, *Les Jeunes et l’Ordre Politique en Afrique Noire*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1985.

⁷ Edmund Hermsen, *Faktor Religion. Geschichte der Kindheit vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*, Köln, Böhlau, 2006: 16-29 (16); Ariès’ book had a “Initialwirkung” (24), referring to a number of studies and critics, most notably Lloyd deMause; for an overview of this “revival of interest” see Nicholas Stargardt, “German childhoods. The making of a historiography”, *German History*, 16, 1998: 1-15 (1).

⁸ Lloyd deMause, “The Evolution of Childhood”, in: idem, (ed.), *The History of Childhood*, New York, Psychohistory Press, 1974: 1-71 (1).

historiography of colonial childhood(s) can benefit from the research that has been conducted so far on European or American childhood(s).⁹

It has been shown that “by 1900 [...] children and childhood had already become matters of national interest in the US and much of Western Europe”.¹⁰ As far as ‘German’ children in GSWA are concerned, the findings of research on children in Germany are often applicable; but there are also specificities: for contemporaries – as we shall see – questions of health or schooling in Africa at times required alternative emphases. The question of the relationship between research on children in (colonial) Africa and Europe, which will not be answered in full here, relates not only to the methodologies of analysis or the questions to be posed in light of the sources available, but also concerns the concept (and notion) of ‘childhood’ itself: a social (and historiographic) construction, varying in time and space, ‘childhood’ can have different meanings in different settings. “Childhood is thus to a considerable degree a function of adult expectation.”¹¹ In this article the term ‘children’ means prepubescent girls and boys, on average aged 14 and under.

The racialisation of childhoods in the colonial context is an example of how not only contemporaries, but also historians constructed differences. Years ago, sociologist Martha Mamozai in her rather polemical treatment of the role of women in German colonialism, surprised her reader with the caption: “There was no childhood”. This thesis claims that in GSWA indigenous children around 1900 did not live in their own cosy world but had to make an economic contribution to the family.¹² The fact alone that a child’s

⁹ For an overview cf. Dirk Schumann, (ed.), *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child. The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Berghahn, 2010; Miriam Gebhardt, *Die Angst vor dem kindlichen Tyrannen. Eine Geschichte der Erziehung im 20. Jahrhundert*, München, DVA, 2009; Edmund Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 16-29; Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood. Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, Cambridge, Polity, 2001; Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, London, Longman, 1995; Edward R. Dickinson, *The Politics of German Child Welfare from the Empire to the Federal Republic*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996; Katharina Rutschky, *Deutsche Kinder-Chronik. Wunsch- und Schreckensbilder aus vier Jahrhunderten*, Köln, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1983; Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, London, Pimlico, 1981. Cf. also Manfred Markelka and Bernhard Nauck, (eds.), *Handbuch der Kindheitsforschung*, Neuwied, Luchterhand, 1993; Ulrich Hermann et al., (eds.), *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der Kindheit, Jugend und Familie*, München, Juventa, 1980; on Ariès’ thesis of the “emergence of parental love” in late eighteenth century see: Rebekka Habermas, “Parent-child relationships in the nineteenth century”, *German History*, 16, 1998: 43-55 (45).

¹⁰ Sonya Michel, “Children and the national interest”, in: Dirk Schumann, (ed.), *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child. The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Berghahn, 2010: 27-49 (44).

¹¹ Heywood, *History*: 9; on the history of definitions cf. Brigitte Kerchner, “Kinderrechte und Kinderpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert”, *WerkstattGeschichte*, 63, 2013: 61-82 (63f.); on the (biological and social) definition of youth – in contrast to children cf. e.g. Michael Mitterauer, *Sozialgeschichte der Jugend*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 1986: 10-45; Grier, “Child labor”: 4.

¹² Mamozai, *Herrenmenschen*: 69, “Es gab keine Kindheit”. African children had “keine eigene behütete Kinderwelt, sondern sie mussten im Gegenteil schon sehr früh ihren Beitrag für die Familiengemeinschaft leisten.” Evidently, around 1900 child labour was prevalent for children around the world. Mamozai’s

contribution to the family income (child labour) is considered by this researcher as being contradictory to having a 'childhood', shows how little is to be gained analytically if one clings to the stereotypes of 'African' and 'European' childhoods. It is more apposite to speak of different forms of childhood. The differentiation between children of African and European parentage seems elementary for the colonial context, but – again – at times that differentiation is not applicable, or further 'ethnic' or 'economic' differentiation becomes necessary. Chances of survival, but also chances in life depended, to a large degree, on the parents belonging to specific classes.

However, do we have the sources necessary to analyse the history of children in GSWA? Hampered though historians are by the lack of source material on the subject, it is fair to say that material is available that enables us to gain insight into the socialisation of settler and African children: for example administrative or missionary reports, private letters, memoirs, photographs, or statistics.¹³ However, as is true for many works based on colonial and European archives, it is a great challenge to evoke with such material actual experiences of Africans; or even of the German children – all of these sources must be taken with a grain of salt, especially official reports and prescriptive literature (*prescription* does not equal *description*).

Demographics, births, and child healthcare

In 1897, 13 years after GSWA was declared a German *Schutzgebiet* (protectorate), there were 2,600 Europeans (the overwhelming majority male) living among an estimated 200,000 Africans; of the latter's gender and age distribution we know next to nothing. Of the Europeans only 1,221 were German men, the remainder being mostly Afrikaaner and British from the Cape Colony.¹⁴ It is not currently known how many children of European parents lived in GSWA at the time; probably there were very few. By 1903 the numbers had increased to 2,173 German men and 670 women. After the wars against Ovaherero and Nama (1904–08) the demographic situation changed considerably. In 1912/13, there were 14,800 Europeans (12,292 Germans) living in the colony (9,046

comment (in 1982) bespeaks her own, rather ahistorical, view that children should be 'little learners', not 'little earners'. There is a correspondent to this line of argument in the historiography on children in Germany: "Heidi Rosenbaum has argued that their routines and lack of toys meant that peasant children did not play either. Quite probably the economic conditions of the nineteenth century were worse for children of popular classes than the early modern period." (Stargardt, "German childhoods": 3, referring to Heidi Rosenbaum, *Formen der Familie. Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang von Familienverhältnissen, Sozialstruktur und sozialem Wandel in der deutschen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 1996: 93-97.

¹³ The German files of the Namibian National Archives, Windhoek, contain the most complete documentation on issues such as schools, missionary activities, statistics, but also court cases on labour issues that involve – in one way or another – children. To the best of my knowledge there is no particular collection on children in GSWA; on the general question of sources about children's own experiences and the importance of context see Stargardt, "German childhoods": 12.

¹⁴ Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, (ed.), *Kleiner Deutscher Kolonialatlas*, Berlin, Reimer, 1899: Map 5: Bemerkungen.

men; 2,808 women; 2,962 children; 61% men, 19% women, and 20% children) while the African population had fallen – due to the war – to around 140,000.¹⁵

In view of the oft-lamented “lack of [European] women” in GSWA the German Colonial Society paid subsidies – from 1899 onwards – to 2,036 German women to settle in GSWA. The implementation of this policy was, according to colonial enthusiasts, successful only to some degree.¹⁶ In Windhoek the clinic where ‘white women’ gave birth (*Elisabeth Haus*) was called the stork’s nest, and a flag was hoisted anytime a child was born – a symbol announcing that the colony had again become a ‘little bit more’ German. However, irrespective of the presence of more German women and children, German men continued to maintain sexual relations with African women¹⁷ – the forms of this ‘sexual economy’ ranging from rape to prostitution, concubinage and legally validated marriages (6.75% of all existing marriages of colonial men in GSWA [1902]). In GSWA ‘mixed marriages’ were banned in 1905.¹⁸ The number of children born to African women and German men in GSWA, the combination in the overwhelming majority in extramarital relationships, is hard to establish. Various political factions sought to exaggerate the numbers of these *Mischlinge* to over 5,000. They warned of a ‘demoralizing’ effect on the Europeans, called it a ‘disgrace’, and feared the end of the colonial order once there were ‘black Germans’ in the colony. Researchers estimate that in 1911 around 1,000 children of mixed-parentage were living in the colony.¹⁹ The children originating from such unions could be baptized in the ‘native churches’ by a missionary, despite the fact that the missionaries considered the children to be the result of sin. Missionaries did not hesitate to mention the father in the baptismal register. It is therefore possible to trace the ‘normalcy’ of such unions up to the highest echelons of the colonial administration. The *Landeshauptmann* (head of the adminis-

¹⁵ Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK), Nachlass Hintrager N 1037/9, Statistische Materialien betr. DSWA, Gesamtbevölkerung 1912.

¹⁶ Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, (ed.), *Deutscher Kolonialatlas*, Berlin, Reiner, 1914: 25, 27; Karen Smidt, “*Germania führt die deutsche Frau nach Südwest*”. *Auswanderung, Leben und soziale Konflikte deutscher Frauen in der ehemaligen Kolonie Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1884–1920. Eine sozial- und frauengeschichtliche Studie*, PhD thesis, Magdeburg, 1997.

¹⁷ Wildenthal, *German Women*: 2: “[O]verseas empire was important to German women, but German women were not initially important to the men who dominated that empire”; cf. Margarethe von Eckenbrecher, *Was Afrika mir gab und nahm. Erlebnisse einer deutschen Frau in Südwestafrika 1902-1936*, 8th edition, Berlin, Mittler, 1940: 252.

¹⁸ See Wolfram Hartmann, “Urges in the colony. Men and women in colonial Windhoek, 1890–1905”, *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 1, 2007: 39-72 (58); Daniel J. Walther, “Sex, public health and colonial control. The campaign against venereal diseases in Germany’s overseas possessions, 1884–1914”, *Social History of Medicine*, 26 (2), 2013: 182-203 (182, 189); idem, “Sex, race and empire”: 47f.

¹⁹ The contemporary debate about these *Mischlinge* (‘half caste’) and their legal status has triggered a historiographic boom over the last 20-odd years; cf. Becker, “Soldatenkinder”: 64; Birthe Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien*, Köln, Böhlau, 2003: 219-250; Hartmann, “Urges”; Ulrike Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen. Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika 1880–1914*, Frankfurt/M., Campus, 2011: 317-360, (328 FN 130: “Zahlen [sind] mit Vorsicht zu betrachten”).

tration), Major Curt von François, was noted in the baptismal register of Windhoek's Nama community to be the father of one Josephina. A few pages later Lieutenant Victor Franke's name appears; the future Commander of the *Schutztruppe* (colonial army) in GSWA had raped his wash maid and left her with a daughter, Catrina.²⁰

After examining the demography of a colony the settler community of which was growing as a result of immigration rather than high birth rates, we turn to the factors that influenced and often militated against natural growth in GSWA: "Being born and staying alive, at least for a while, is arduous", as sociologist Katharina Rutschky explains the first days of a newborn in her accounts based on eighteenth and nineteenth century sources from Germany.²¹ The situation was no different in southern Africa. However, statistics about African child mortality and life expectancy in pre-colonial times are just as impossible to obtain as those from colonial times. In fact, the overwhelming majority of all births in GSWA were never entered into the administration's records. The information available concerns almost exclusively European women and their children. To have a general impression, we can turn to statistics available for Germany: Average life expectancy reached 35 years in 1870, and 45 years in 1900. Mortality decreased from 1870, primarily due to the reduced infant mortality (1890: boys–24.2% / girls–20.7%; 1913: boys–20.2% / girls–17%). Still, these percentages were "startlingly high" compared with those of Great Britain, the Netherlands or France, where infant mortality was lower by at least one third. Furthermore, the "drastic" differences in the infant and child mortality between classes and confessions in Germany must be taken into account.²² Around 1900 women in Germany bore 5.5 children on average; from the 1890s the German birth rate began – much to the concern of many politicians and the press – to decline.²³ The average number of children born to German women in GSWA

²⁰ AELCRN, VI 36.1, Bl.13, Nr.13, Josefina, "zur Erziehung in Okombahe"; Bl.27, Nr.133, Catrina, born Oktober 97; cf. Hartmann, "Urges": 42, 52. In his diary Franke noted years later, when he encountered the woman and their common daughter: "I am quite satisfied with my efforts [Leistung]". Before, Missionary Olpp had refused to accept Franke as godfather due to his sinful behaviour, which caused a scandal; evidently, the soldier was not prosecuted. (Franke, *Tagebuch*, quoted in: Andreas Selmeçci and Dag Henrichsen, *Das Schwarzkommando. Thomas Pynchon und die Geschichte der Herero*, Bielefeld, Aisthesis, 1995: 80); cf. Nils Ole Oermann, *Mission, Church and State Relations in South-West Africa under German Rule (1884–1915)*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1999: 81f. Further examples cf. AELCRN, VI 36.2, Bl.39, Nr.14, getauft 18.10.03; AELCRN, VI 27.1, Bl.125: Nr.83, Rosina, "Vater: Spengler (Weißer)", getauft 16.6.07; Bl.459, Nr.168, Sara, Vater: Leutnant Schmidt, geb. 6.2.07; Bl.213, Nr.217, "uneheliches Soldatenkind", getauft, 17.2.01.

²¹ Rutschky, *Kinder-Chronik*: 6: "Zum Leben kommen, gar eine Zeitlang am Leben zu bleiben, ist schwer."

²² Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. IV, München, Beck, 2003: 231, "bestürzend hohe Werte"; "krasse klassen- und konfessionsspezifische Unterschiede"; cf. ibd., *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. III, München, Beck, 2003: 7-37, 493-546; after 1945 the child mortality rate in Germany remained considerably higher than in other industrialized countries, cf. Gebhardt, *Angst*: 10 FN 17, reasons for these differences might be sought in the missing and/or neglected health facilities, in particular lacking cleanliness.

²³ Peter Marschall, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte Deutschlands im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 1984; cf. Klaus Tennfelde, *Arbeiter, Bürger, Städte. Zur Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012: 237-239, 266.

has yet to be established. Such a calculation is, however, complicated by the fact that the period of German rule was relatively short (1884–1915), and the sojourn of many German women often even shorter. They may have had children before their arrival and they may have given birth to children years after they left the colony.

The demographic history of German colonialism also underlines the assertion that the “rise of the natalist state is to be understood in terms of the intervention of modern social and welfare policy.”²⁴ The German government aimed at increasing the number of Germans in GSWA, be it through immigration or births in the colony. However, bringing in more German women with public funds could only go so far, inasmuch as medical resources, as the most basic tools of welfare policies in GSWA were extremely limited. Missionary and state hospitals (where Europeans were segregated from Africans) were opened in the two ‘large’ towns, Windhoek (the capital) and Swakopmund (the main port); later, further hospitals were added. For civil servants and military personnel, medical treatment was free of charge in state hospitals. Privately practising doctors, who had a better reputation and who began to settle in the colony after 1900, were expensive. Africans also frequented the hospitals – western medicine was supposed to convince them of the promises of ‘civilisation’, and it appears that healing successes left Africans with the intended positive impression in some cases, while the ‘cure’ in particular of venereal diseases was often vigorously opposed due to the degrading of treatment of women.²⁵ Given to the enormous distances, however, emergencies could rarely be handled. While children living in towns could survive dangerous illnesses such as pneumonia (if the parents could afford a doctor),²⁶ those living in rural areas were particularly at risk. For example, the daughter of a police sergeant was injured in a fire, but the nearest medical doctor was 200 kilometres away. He was informed via telegraph, however, the five-year old died the next day, before the doctor could arrive.²⁷ Even without accidents infant mortality remained high in GSWA. In Windhoek, the inhabitants of the *Werft* (native compound) bitterly complained to the German medical inspector about their miserable living conditions which had led to unprecedented infant mortality. So high was the infant mortality among Africans that Governor Theodor Seitz felt obliged to demand of his administrators that they fight it with all available means.²⁸ Immunisation campaigns were initiated around 1912. But the other end of GSWA’s social ladder also suffered from infant mortality. Even the highest echelons of the colonial administration were hit, despite having access to the best doctors. In Windhoek the

²⁴ Stargard, “German childhoods”: 9.

²⁵ See Daniel J. Walther, *Sex and Control. Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1884–1914*, New York, Berghahn, 2015; Marion Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915–1945*, Basel, Schlettwein Publishing, 2002.

²⁶ BAK N 1408, Paul Rohrbach to Family, 14.3.1906, p. 1.

²⁷ *Keetmanshooper Zeitung*, 8.5.1913: 2; for a similar case see: Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 99.

²⁸ NAN BWI 37, E 1 g, vol.2, Bl.15, Gouverneur to BA Windhuk, 30.11.1911.

daughter of the *Bezirksamtmann* (district administrator) died in 1906;²⁹ and the son of the head of the GSWA police, Lieutenant-Colonel Bethe, died in August 1914 immediately after birth.³⁰ External factors also led to numerous deaths. In early 1915, when parts of GSWA were already occupied by South African forces and no ships with supplies had called at Swakopmund since August 1914, Windhoek's children were hard hit by a diphtheria epidemic. The influenza epidemic that reached South West Africa in 1918 led to an equally high death toll especially among the children.³¹

The life expectancy of Africans in GSWA is hard to establish. General estimates for sub-Saharan Africa during the nineteenth century assume an average life expectancy of only 20-odd years. Infant mortality was high; around one third of all children are estimated to have died during their first year. Historian Winfried Speitkamp asserts that, due to the constant threat of diseases, children were "extremely precious". He assumes that the age of the mother at her first birth was relatively high and that the intervals between the births were long.³² A woman therefore gave birth on average around six times (total fertility rate) in her life. Long periods of breast feeding, which were common for practical as well as health reasons, contributed to this situation. In the context of GSWA, researchers have also pointed to long periods of breast feeding and sexual taboos that "liberated" women from constant childbearing. Knowledge of contraceptives and abortifacients was widespread.³³ After the Herero-German War (1904–07), there were rumours that Herero women would no longer want to bear children since they would not like to see them growing up as the servants of German settlers. Since the economy of GSWA was facing a severe labour shortage (employers were forced to resort to migrant

²⁹ Philipp Zorn, *Deutsche Kolonialgesetzgebung. Text-Ausgabe mit Anmerkungen und Sachregister*, 2nd ed., Berlin, Guttentag, 1913: 300-304, "Impf-Verordnung des Gouverneurs von Deutsch-Südwestafrika, 30.7.1912"; BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 8.11.1906, p. 3.

³⁰ ADELK, Verzeichnis in Windhoek Verstorbener, Nr.369: Otto Eduard Bethe, gest. 23.8.14; Nr.371: Margarethe Ehrlich, gest. 18.9.14; Nr.367: Herbert Rosenbaum, gest.11.7.14; Nr.151: Luise Kuhfeld, gest. 9.12.07; cf. Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 145f. on her stillborn child. Elsewhere the situation was worse. In 1869 it was said of Angolan towns: "White women, there are none. Nor could there be, for they would die for sure, especially if they are still of age to give birth. Until now, there is not a single case in which a white woman or child has survived after delivery." (Quoted and translated by Jacopo Corrado, *The Creole Elite and the Rise of Angolan Proto-nationalism 1870–1920*, Amherst, Cambria, 2008: 16 FN 5).

³¹ Walther Suchier, *Deutsch-Südwest im Weltkrieg. Kriegseindrücke aus den Jahren 1914–15*, Berlin, Mittler, 1918: 79: "In Windhuk brach unter den Kindern eine Diphtherieepidemie aus, die zahlreiche Opfer forderte"; Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 226-233.

³² Winfried Speitkamp, *Kleine Geschichte Afrikas*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 2007: 66: "außerordentlich wertvoll"; cf. Louise Marie Diop-Maes, *Afrique Noire. Démographie, Sol et Histoire*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1996: 259-271.

³³ Mamozi, *Herrenmenschen*: 75; cf. Oscar T. Crosby, "Notes on Bushmen and Ovambo in South West Africa, Part I", *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 30 (121), 1931: 344-360. Crosby undertook a five month tour in SWA between Kaokoveld and the edges of the Kalahari Desert in 1927 and questioned his informants about social practices: "Birth Control. Abortion (generally for the unmarried girl) by medicines and by manipulation is quite frequently practiced, even though not suggested by famine. However, when she is taken regularly by a man, a girl's children may be duly born. Their destruction, before or after birth, is then determined only by threatening starvation" (p. 353).

workers), the low birth-rate among the African population before 1914 was considered a serious issue. Some called it an attempted 'race suicide'.³⁴ On the other hand, in 1910, the Chief Medical Officer of GSWA, Dr. Lübbert, provided "a relatively open-minded assessment of African expertise in pharmacology [...] and midwifery". He reported about "indigenous massage", which was used "as a means of promoting healthy pregnancies. African midwifery skills [have also been] investigated and given a measure of approval."³⁵

German family life and parental education

The colonial archives of GSWA between 1885 and 1915 contain very little material on German infants. The fact that they were born or their death is mostly all that has been noted in the files. This is not surprising, but it must be pointed out nevertheless. The preschool years, we can assume, belonged – in particular for the German middle-class – to the child, the mother, the nurse and the siblings. What role did fathers play in their children's care? Those that kept records, the colonial administrators and missionaries, had little say in this family life. All they desired was that the population should grow – the European population faster than the African.

However, the relevance of the first two years in the forming of an individual is indisputable: the discovery of oneself and others, sociability, language, movement, and motor skills/functions. Decades ago, historian Maurice Crubellier asked whether these 'acquisitions' can constitute historical objects. He responded that it is the attitude of the adults towards children's learning and growing up that is the object of historiography. The approaches to child-rearing and the related policies and ideas of 'socialisation' of children have certainly changed over time and varied widely from one 'culture' to another: alimentation, sleeping, learning cleanliness, discipline, language, walking, and sociability (and children's games) are the most basic aspects, all of which have a distinct history.³⁶ Only glimpses of these aspects, however, can be traced in sources or literature on GSWA. Fortunately, we have available a collection of private letters from Claire Rohrbach, the wife of the settlement commissioner Dr. Paul Rohrbach who lived with his family in Windhoek from 1904 to 1906.³⁷ She was a trained teacher and wrote extensively of the challenges of rearing her three little children in Windhoek. We will refer back to her writings throughout this article.

³⁴ Gesine Krüger, *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein. Realität, Deutung und Verarbeitung des deutschen Kolonialkriegs in Namibia 1904 bis 1907*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999.

³⁵ Marion Wallace, "'Making tradition'. Healing, history and ethnic identity among Ojijherero-speakers in Namibia, c. 1850–1950", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2003: 355-372 (368).

³⁶ Maurice Crubellier, *L'enfance et la jeunesse dans la société française 1800-1950*, Paris, Colin, 1979: 38, referring to David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History. The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France*, New York, Basic Books, 1970; cf. on the German case: Gebhardt, *Angst*: 17.

³⁷ Walter Mogk, *Paul Rohrbach und das "Größere Deutschland". Ethischer Imperialismus im Wilhelminischen Zeitalter. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kulturprotestantismus*, München, Goldmann, 1972.

Evidently, there were hundreds of other German families in GSWA who left far fewer traces than the well-educated class of high-ranking civil servants like the Rohrbachs. For example, of the 500-odd German policemen in GSWA, at least 100 were married in 1910; in 1913 the number had increased to around 200, and most of them had children. The colonial administration assumed that the “brutalisation of morals” (*Verrohung der Sitten*) among German men (including soldiers and police men) was due to the lack of German women and family life. The administration was therefore eager to see its personnel getting married (to German women of good standing).³⁸ From 1904, the colonial administration in Berlin allowed its out-going officials to be accompanied by their wives; transport and other expenses were mostly borne by the taxpayer. Private enterprises also followed this example and financed the sojourn of wives accompanying husbands who would be working for some time as technicians or businessmen in the colony.³⁹ However, civil servants, even those in the lower ranks, had to be enabled to lead a life in line with bourgeois standards. This included, according to self-imposed internal police regulations, a private apartment or house deemed adequate for a German wife and children.⁴⁰ The “drive to privatise family life” even in the lower social strata was unmistakable across Europe,⁴¹ and colonial officials were to be enabled to enjoy private family life according to (idealised) German standards. But more than that, their relatively high salary and favourable living standards (often better than what they had been able to afford back in Germany) were intended to guarantee their loyalty to their employer (the state) and the colonial undertaking in general. Given these motives, the Governorate in Windhoek was prepared to accept the considerable administrative difficulties and substantial expenses of procuring or building suitable apartments and police stations across GSWA.⁴²

The police regulations required the husband to keep “his wife and children under discipline and order”.⁴³ This provision also reflected the legal and culturally bourgeois

³⁸ Walgenbach, *Diskurse*: 128; cf. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002: 1, quoting Georges Hardy (1929), “one of the principal architects of French colonial education policy”: “A man remains a man as long as he stays under the gaze of a woman of his race’.”

³⁹ See H. Ziemann, “Über das Bevölkerungs- und Rassenproblem in den Kolonien und seine hygienisch-wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen”, *Koloniale Abhandlungen*, 67, 1912: 10; Leonore Niessen-Deiters, *Die deutsche Frau im Auslande und in den Schutzgebieten*, Berlin, Fleischel, 1913: 60.

⁴⁰ NAN BWI 155, L 2 a, vol.1, RVerf Gouv to BA Windhuk, 12.6.09.

⁴¹ Andreas Gestrich, *Geschichte der Familie*, Stuttgart, Kröner, 2003: 472, “Drang zur Privatisierung des Familienlebens”; cf. Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, (eds.), *Der bürgerliche Werthimmel. Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000; Hans Medick and David Sabeau, “Emotionen und materielle Interessen in Familie und Verwandtschaft”, in: eadem, (eds.), *Emotionen und materielle Interessen. Sozialanthropologische und historische Beiträge zur Familienforschung*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984: 27-54.

⁴² See NAN BWI 438, RVerf Gouv to BA Windhuk, 22.7.09; Monatsrapport der Ortspolizei Windhuk, 1.8.09.

⁴³ Bundesarchiv Berlin (BAB) R 1002/2692, Fassung der Dienstvorschrift von der Hand Heydebrecks, o.D. [~1908] § 18: “so sind die Verheirateten [police men] verpflichtet, Frau und Kinder in Zucht und Ordnung zu halten”.

understanding of 'family', with the father at the top of a hierarchy, and a clear distinction between public and private spheres, relegating the mother to the latter ('freeing' her from work outside the home, thus allowing a specific mother-infant relation. Such a relation (maternal love) seemed 'normal' and 'natural' to contemporaries at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, prior to the nineteenth century, it was almost unknown. Only with the rise of bourgeois society had new concepts of 'family life' and the related semantics of an essentialized "motherhood" become dominant in Germany (and in other Western European nations as well as North America) thereby reducing "children to the status of passive, willing, objects of this love".⁴⁴ Subsequently, this notion of bourgeois respectability was also imposed on non-bourgeois social strata by their 'social betters', but the extent to which the former embraced it – or had the financial and practical means to do so – depended very much on individual circumstances. Obviously, this is a much abbreviated exposition; suffice it say that in GSWA civil servants, including police officers, were meant to lead an exemplary public and private life as Christian heads of family. The majority of officials in GWSA upheld the same bourgeois norms of family life that prevailed in Germany at the time. At times, however, superiors were concerned about "an increasing number of cases in which policemen plan to enter marriages that are not compatible with their status."⁴⁵ Apparently, some men had chosen to espouse (former) German prostitutes. The head of police made clear that this was against the dignity of the police corps and threatened to dismiss any policeman who would not relinquish such engagement. While the reputation and social standing of the wives of civil servants in GSWA was thus (internally) debated, the children of civil servants or other aspects of their family life were hardly mentioned in the official files. One might assume that this meant that there were no major 'issues' with the 'discipline and order' of these children. However, it remains to be established what this discipline entailed and by which means it was maintained.

For contemporary bourgeois families it was considered normal to care for their babies and educate their young children according the latest scientific insights – or at least to attempt to. By the turn of the century 'the child' had become an object of scientific research as never before. At several European universities paediatrics was 'promoted' into the curriculum for medical students. Civil society organisations and other institutions set up children hospitals and kindergartens, organised congresses on children, and the book market was flooded with literature on children's health, education, and well-being. In 1900, Ellen Key announced *The Century of the Child*, an international bestseller that did not leave the reader in any doubt about past and present brutalities against children. As a means of combatting "ignorance" and "neglect", she demanded compulsory child

⁴⁴ Habermas, "Parent-child relationships": 46; cf. also Elisabeth Badinter, *L'amour en plus. Histoire de l'amour maternel (XVII–XX siècle)*, Paris, Flammarion, 1980; Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 140f; Michel, "Children": 37; for a summary of the state of research cf. Sarah Speck, *Mütter ohne Grenzen. Paradoxien verberuflichter Sorgearbeit am Beispiel der SOS-Kinderdörfer*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2014: 35-67.

⁴⁵ BAB R 1002/2431, Bl.4, Gouv to all District Offices and Police School (confidential), 21.6.10: "daß die Fälle sich mehren, in denen Beamte der L.P. beabsichtigen Ehen einzugehen, die ihrer Stellung nicht entsprechen."

nursing courses for women – at the same age and as long as military service for men.⁴⁶ “Debates about child welfare were transnational, long-standing, and bound to modernizing political rationalities.”⁴⁷

It is against this backdrop of the rise of scientific intervention in childhood that Claire Rohrbach’s concerns become more intelligible. Consistent with medical advice she paid particular attention to questions of nourishment and health in a non-European environment. Nurturing the newborn was a grave concern for settler mothers. Claire Rohrbach wrote to her family in Germany repeatedly about problems caused by the fresh cow’s milk which was apparently not sufficiently nourishing for newborns. More and more mothers, she wrote, would understand that they should not feed their babies fresh bovine milk from GSWA (causing diarrhoea) but use canned (and probably sterilised) bovine milk imported from Germany (interestingly, she pointed to similar experiences in Argentina where “infant mortality was terribly high” until canned milk was imported).⁴⁸ She expressed her contentment when a friend of hers was able to breastfeed. In 1906, the capital Windhoek seemed to be particularly dangerous, because of “the many prisoners of war and all the sick soldiers”.⁴⁹ Even though it was not clear how this affected the health of children, the wife of the prominent farmer, Gustav Voigts, who had spent some time in the town, explicitly returned with her children to the farm because of the health threats posed by their sojourn in Windhoek. Ensuring a healthy diet for their children remained a challenge for the mother (in line with contemporary mores only she was considered responsible for these questions as she was “the specialist”) even when the children were older. Claire Rohrbach mentioned repeatedly the lack of fruit and vegetables – or their exorbitant prices. She depended on the packages of dried and canned fruits which her family sent from Germany.⁵⁰ Needless to say, middle-class mothers like Rohrbach and Voigts attached a great “sentimental value” to their children.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ellen Key, *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*, Berlin, 12th edition, Berlin, Fischer, 1905: 353; cf. Gebhardt, *Angst*: 24; Hermesen, *Faktor Religion*: 176.

⁴⁷ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 120.

⁴⁸ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 6.3.1906, p. 7, in Argentina “war die Säuglingssterblichkeit eine entsetzlich große”; on nineteenth century “breastfeeding discussion in medical and educational literature” see Habermas, “Parent-child relations”: 49. It should not be considered surprising to read that numerous mothers in GSWA (and elsewhere) were not aware that fresh bovine milk was indigestive to newborns. Research on formula was still in its early stages. Only in 1912, Dextri-Maltose, a cow’s milk supplement, was commercialised in the United States, followed in 1921 by SMA, “the first all-in-one infant formula”. *Human milk formula was then still a “dream”* (Kara W. Swanson, “Human milk as technology and technologies of human milk. Medical imaginings in the early twentieth-century United States”, *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 37, 2009: 20-37 [29]).

⁴⁹ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 8.11.1906, p. 3: “die vielen Gefangenen und all die kranken Soldaten”.

⁵⁰ Gestrich, *Geschichte*: 595f.: “Spezialistin”; cf. BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 6.3.1906, p. 7; 26.6.1906, p.1

⁵¹ Heywood, *History*: 28.

As Catherine Hall has written, “If men’s imperial work was to ‘discover’, to explore, to conquer, and to dispossess others, women’s was to reproduce the race, to bear children, maintain their men, and make families and households.”⁵² This statement about the British Empire is equally true for the German colonial undertaking. However, how was one “to make” a German family in Africa? Well-off families like the Rohrbachs attempted to create small white enclaves for their households (but insisted that they needed to be run by African servants). They provided their children in Windhoek with everything (or more?) that children of their class would have enjoyed in Germany. ‘The home’ was the most important space for raising German children in the colony; it was dominated (most of the day) by the mother. A room of their own, a *Kinderzimmer*, was considered a matter of course. Colonial architecture adapted to the bourgeois notion of family and parental love just as quickly as Germany’s toys and textile industry or the book market. The Rohrbachs made their children read books like *Struwelpeter*, *Hans Hucklebein* or *Max und Moritz*. Next to these ‘classics’ a new category of tales was developed in these years, namely the “countless adventure stories for (male) children [...], which also involve the appropriation of foreign countries.”⁵³ At the turn of the century, German toys (often fabricated by children under horrific conditions – a bizarre constellation, as pointed out already in 1900 by Ellen Key) dominated the world market, and the Rohrbach boys demanded their share. But, as another negative aspect of colonial life for settler children (apart from being far away from loved ones, the health issues, or the dietary difficulties), was that they had to wait for parcels from relatives in Germany, since hardly any toys or sweets could be bought in Windhoek’s shops. Children’s clothes and books were also sent by relatives to GSWA.⁵⁴

The holidays were celebrated ‘German style’ with picnics in the African bush and weekend trips to one of the scenic viewpoints in the mountains around Windhoek. The idyll was completed by children looking for Easter eggs near the Windhoek *rivier*.⁵⁵ The difficulty of raising *German* children in an African environment and keeping them *German* was apparent to parents like the Rohrbachs. Reciting German fairy tales and legends was considered a suitable means of preserving the status of a ‘cultured’ family.⁵⁶ However, institutions were also necessary for children to enjoy and learn German sociability. A kindergarten that facilitated interaction with German playmates was opened in

⁵² Catherine Hall, “Of gender and empire. Reflections on the nineteenth century”, in: Philipp Livine, (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire. Gender and Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004: 46-76 (47).

⁵³ Jens Jaeger, “Colony as *Heimat*? The Formation of Colonial Identity in Germany around 1900”, *German History*, 27, 2009: 467-489 (487); BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 1.9.1906, p. 2; 18.9.1906. And a rather special, African, gift tradition had developed in GSWA among the well-off: Godfathers donated a cow to the child. All offspring of the cow would be the property of the godchild (BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 22.12.1906, p. 1f.).

⁵⁴ See Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 140; Key, *Jahrhundert*: 363; cf. Gestrich, *Geschichte*: 469f., 599 on the “Verhäuslichung” of bourgeois education in contrast with children who still played on the streets.

⁵⁵ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 21.4.1906, p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.10.1906, p. 2.

Windhoek in 1901 for younger German children,⁵⁷ and evidently schooling and most of all language education by professional teachers remained instrumental. However, “[i]n a [middle class] society in which the acquisition of manners and education were vital social assets, schooling went well beyond the desk and blackboard.”⁵⁸

With their high income, colonial administrators were better placed to create the desired ‘Germanness’. Paul Rohrbach repeatedly wrote of his family’s elevated quality of life in Windhoek. While a brutal guerrilla war was ongoing in the south of the colony, he described his life in Windhoek as “cosy and peaceful”.⁵⁹ He not only mentioned his high salary and nice villa, but also the “unlimited freedom of [his] children”.⁶⁰ Indeed, life for children of high-ranking bureaucrats could be comfortable to a degree their parents could not have afforded back in Germany. Children often had their own African nurses to take care of them all day long. Claire Rohrbach considered it “strange how nice and gentle the natives are to our children, whereas they treat their own children with boredom.”⁶¹ This comment raises several questions, whose qualified, i.e. source-based response, however, appears to be difficult: Why this perceived difference? How did African nannies treat German children in comparison with their own children? Was mother Rohrbach idealising about her household personnel? How were Germans looking at African family life in GSWA? And, most of all, how did ‘the natives’ know how to handle a German child in a way its mother would endorse?

Claire Rohrbach repeatedly mentioned how much their servants and nannies loved her three children, “Bubi”, Hans, and Nina.⁶² However, there is no record of the persons in question, the Africans or the children and their attitude towards each other or to their colonial experience. It would be interesting to know how settler children experienced governmental or parental attempts to raise their ‘racial consciousness’; or how they felt about seeing African children being given work and responsibilities while they had none, except, perhaps, to do their homework for school. However, it would be too simplistic to distinguish the two ‘forms’ of African childhoods by drawing a line between those who could play and those who could not (because they had to work). We will refer later to instances where the two groups found opportunities to interact.

The German’s arrogant treatment of African personnel was part of everyday family life in GSWA. While the flogging of workers was (socially and legally) acceptable, it was most regularly applied to farm workers in rural areas. However, there were also brutalities in urban settings. Claire Rohrbach, who also described her rather emotional attachment to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 30.4.1906, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Stargardt, “German childhoods”: 4.

⁵⁹ BAK N 1408, Paul Rohrbach to Family, 14.6.1906, p. 1: “Wenn Afrika nur nicht so weit weg wär – sonst wär’s an wenigen Orten so angenehm wie hier.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.2.1906, p. 3: “für die Kinder unbeschränkte Freiheit nach allen Seiten.”

⁶¹ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 13.6.1906, p. 2: “Merkwürdig ist, wie die Eingeborenen gut und zärtlich sind zu unseren Kindern, während sie ihre eigenen doch mit rechtem Stumpsinn behandeln.”

⁶² Ibid., 31.7.1906, p. 3.

her servants,⁶³ threatened a prisoner who was given to her as domestic worker with 25 lashes for working too slowly.⁶⁴ German children were exposed to this ‘handling’ of servants and copied it accordingly. Even Governor Seitz was appalled when he learned that German children mishandled, yelled at and humiliated Africans and were apparently of the opinion they could abuse any African simply because of their own ‘Germanness’. Children’s ‘consciousness of race’ depended largely on family and school socialisation, as the Governor knew. Without disputing the fact of their “belonging to a superior race”, he expected parents and teachers to educate their children to have a sense of duty vis-à-vis Africans, as he explained in a directive to all state schools.⁶⁵ The governor thus made it clear that the teachers’ duties to their pupils extended beyond the school walls (requiring them to take on a quasi-parental role). The governor’s reprimands were also an example of the necessity of “state intervention” due to what the administration considered “bad parenting”.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, we do not have any evidence of the teachers’ (or parents or children) response to this directive. The question how deeply the state could intervene into family life and details of education was not merely a normative one, that may or may not have exceeded government powers in metropolitan Germany. Given the *situation coloniale*, the question of the treatment of Africans by pupils became of public interest once it appeared that the mistreatment could threaten public peace and would tarnish the image of German colonialism and its ‘civilisational efforts’.

In recent decades studies on the upbringing of German children (in Germany) have brought to light a grim picture of ruthless parents and teachers who – across class divisions – constantly and from a very early age punished their children severely and most brutally. The results of this *schwarze Pädagogik* (black pedagogy) which valued above all else (and legitimated academically) obedience, subordination, orderliness, and cleanliness, were the subject of psychological research starting early in the twentieth century, and the conclusion was that the principles of authoritarian education caused deformed and submissive personalities, as critically depicted in the contemporary novels by Hermann Hesse, Heinrich Mann or Robert Musil, and later in the studies of the authoritarian personality.⁶⁷ The question as to how many archetypal nationalist ‘Diederich

⁶³ Ibid., 30.11.1906, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 26.6.1906, p. 2.

⁶⁵ NAN ZBU 940, J V c 1, Bl. 1, Gouv to State Schools (*Regierungsschulen*), 5.6.13. The Governor was concerned about “unangebrachte Tötlichkeiten” and “verwerfliche Schimpfworte”. “Den Kindern soll dabei durchaus nicht das Bewußtsein genommen werden, daß sie der übergeordneten und überlegenen Rasse angehören; doch sollen sie erfahren, daß die Zugehörigkeit zu einer bevorrechtigten Klasse auch Pflichten in sich schließt. Es ist unedel und unanständig, wehrlose Untergebene zu prügeln und zu beschimpfen.”

⁶⁶ Stargardt, “German childhoods”: 9; cf. Walgenbach, *Diskurse*: 205f.; Klaus H. Rüdiger, *Die Namibia-Deutschen. Geschichte einer Nationalität im Werden*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1993: 65f.; *Der Südwestbote*, 11. Jg., Nr. 39, 1.4.1914: 1.

⁶⁷ Katharina Rutschky (ed.), *Schwarze Pädagogik. Quellen zur Naturgeschichte der Bürgerlichen Erziehung*, Frankfurt/M., Ulstein, 1977; Reinhard Alter, “Heinrich Manns Untertan – Prüfstein für die ‘Kaiserreich-Debatte’?”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 17, 1991: 370-389. Peter Gay, *Kult der Gewalt. Aggression im bürgerlichen Zeitalter*, München, Beck, 1996: 224-8; for an early analysis cf. Erich Fromm, “Studien über Autorität und Familie. Sozialpsychologischer Teil”, *Erich-Fromm-Gesamtausgabe*, vol. II,

Hesslings' populated Windhoek and 'educated' their children accordingly cannot be answered here; more in-depth research would be necessary. In any case, it seems that the more liberal strand of the Wilhelminian mindset was also present in GSWA, at least as suggested by parents like the Rohrbachs, who did not boast – at least not in their letters – about beating their own children. According to contemporary assessments what was almost entirely absent from the social fabric of GSWA were German children growing up in utter despair and economic neglect that so many children knew “from such miserable conditions as those in German industrial centers.”⁶⁸

But childhood in GWSA was hardly idyllic; violence was an everyday occurrence. Weapons were commonplace, not only during the wars against Herero and Nama. Germany's military culture was omnipresent in the colony and German children were exposed to it not only by watching parades and seeing uniforms, but also by having access to guns from an early age. The oldest son of Paul Rohrbach, for example, who was still going to the kindergarten at the time, approached his father with a rifle and demanded that he explain how it worked.⁶⁹ This was not different in lower class settler families where, on farms or in businesses men (and at times also women) carrying guns were an everyday sight. When the five-year-old son of an innkeeper was hurt by stray bullets shot by drunken guests, even contemporaries asked whether such an environment was “appropriate” for a child.⁷⁰ But what education for German children in GSWA should be considered adequate? Given the (brute) conditions in the colony, it seemed clear to officials that education could not be left (solely) to the parents; as in Europe the encroachment of the state into family life became more manifest. Education in the colony turned into a question of politics.

Schools for African and German children

Of all the subjects that can be related to the history of children in colonial Africa, the content of school education has attracted the most interest.⁷¹ The school systems and

Stuttgart, DVA, 1980: 141-188; more critical about the thesis of 'schwarze Pädagogik' in early twentieth century Germany Gebhardt, *Angst*: 66f.; Stargardt, “German childhoods”: 4; Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 25 FN 42.

⁶⁸ Bernhard Voigt, “Grundlagen und Weiterentwicklung des Volksschulwesens im Schutzgebiet Deutsch Südwestafrika”, 1.9.1917, BAB R 1002/2125, quot. and transl. in Walther, “Creating Germans”: 42.

⁶⁹ BAK N 1408, Paul Rohrbach to Family, 28.2.1906, p. 3; also Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 223 writes that her boys learnt in Windhoek how to shoot.

⁷⁰ Otto Reiner, *Achtzehn Jahre Farmer in Afrika*, Leipzig, List, 1924: 84, “nur erschien mir die Umgebung für die Entwicklung des Kindes nicht geeignet.”

⁷¹ Cf. Summers, “Boys”: 123f.; Michael Anthony Samuels, *Education in Angola, 1878–1914. A History of Culture Transfer and Administration*, New York, Teachers College Press, 1970; on German colonies cf.: Ingo Krause, *'Koloniale Schuldfrage'? Die Schulpolitik in den afrikanischen Kolonien Deutschlands und Britanniens im Vergleich*, Hamburg, Kovac, 2007; Johanna Eggert, *Missionsschule und sozialer Wandel in Ostafrika*, Bielefeld, Bertelsmann, 1970; Bikai D. Galega, *Bildung und Imperialismus in Schwarz-Afrika. Historische und soziopolitische Hintergründe*, Münster, Lit, 1984; Christel Adick, *Bildung und Kolonialismus in Togo. Eine Studie zu den Entstehungszusammenhängen eines europäisch geprägten Bildungswesens in Afrika am Beispiel Togo (1850-1914)*, Weinheim, Beltz, 1981; idem, *Die Universalisierung der modernen*

education policies in GSWA (and under the South African administration which followed) have also been subjected to extensive research.⁷²

It is important to keep in mind that missionary schooling of African children predated German colonialism, starting in Warmbad as early as 1805. Among researchers, it is an old insight that the “appeal to rescue African orphans or slaves proved highly effective for raising funds in Europe.”⁷³ In pre-colonial times, however, missionaries in nineteenth-century Namibia were not particularly successful in their efforts at conversion, and this had repercussions for their schools. Only very few schools such as the *Augustineum* in Otjimbingwe (founded in 1866, re-established in 1890 in Okahandja) were opened and maintained for any length of time. Financial difficulties restricted expansion, as did the reluctance of the African population to convert. Prior to 1900 the number of baptisms was low. Historians have repeatedly shown that Africans were “using missionaries for their own purposes” and had varying reasons for attending mission schools.⁷⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, missionaries seemed important to many Africans most of all because of their access to modern goods (including weapons and alcohol) and their ability and willingness to teach reading and writing in the native languages. Due to the work of missionaries, texts written in African languages (including the widely spoken Cape Dutch) circulated (and were read) long before 1884.⁷⁵ Thus, the differences between the indigenous language and the colonial language were not as striking as has been described in other colonial contexts in Africa. The teachers/missionaries often preferred Cape Dutch as the language of instruction. Children learned reading and writing, singing and the bible.⁷⁶

Schule. Eine theoretische Problemskizze zur Erklärung der weltweiten Verbreitung der modernen Schule in den letzten 200 Jahren mit Fallstudien aus Westafrika, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1992; Christel Adick, Hans-Martin Grosse-Oetringhaus and Renate Nestvogel, *Bildungsprobleme Afrikas zwischen Kolonialismus und Emanzipation*, Hamburg, Institut für Afrikakunde, 1982; Wolfgang Mehnert, *Schulpolitik im Dienste der Kolonialherrschaft des deutschen Imperialismus (1884–1914)*, unpubl. Habil., Universität Leipzig, 1965.

⁷² Henning Melber, *Schule und Kolonialismus. Das formale Erziehungswesen Namibias*, Hamburg, Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 1979; C.P. Heese, “Das Erziehungswesen in Südwestafrika unter der deutschen Regierung bis 1915”, *SWA Journal*, Windhoek, 1986: 135; Cynthia Cohen, “The natives must first become good workmen’. Formal educational provision in German South West Africa and East Africa compared”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 1993: 115-134; Jürgen Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*, Münster, Lit, 2001: 243-250; Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 201-210; Daniel J. Walther, “Creating Germans abroad. White education and the colonial condition in German Southwest Africa, 1894–1914”, *European Education*, 44, 2013: 31-50 (33).

⁷³ Hildegard Binder Johnson, “The location of Christian missions in Africa”, *Geographic Review*, 57, 1967: 168-202 (178).

⁷⁴ Edward H. Berman, “African responses to Christian mission education”, *African Studies Review*, 17, 1974: 527-540 (527); see Tilman Dederich, *Hate the Old and Follow the New. Khoekhoe and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth-Century Namibia*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1997.

⁷⁵ Dag Henrichsen, “‘Iss Worte! Anmerkungen zur entstehenden afrikanischen Schriftkultur im vorkolonialen Zentralnamibia”, in: Laurence Marfaing and Brigitte Reinwald, (eds.), *Afrikanische Beziehungen, Netzwerke und Räume*, Münster, Lit, 2001: 329-338.

⁷⁶ Christel Adick, “Muttersprachliche und fremdsprachliche Bildung im Missions- und Kolonialschulwesen”, *Bildung und Erziehung*, 46 (3), 1993: 283-298 (286); Alvin Kienetz, “The key role of the Orlam migration

In 1876 Rhenish Missionaries established the first school for settler children in Otjimbingwe. After Germany took over the administration of South West Africa in 1884/5, the few German children were generally privately educated by missionaries or women, none of whom had specific teaching qualifications. However, it seemed clear to the authorities that achieving the intended 'normalcy' of German rule necessitated a German school for German children. Language learning, mathematics, geography and other subjects required an institutional framework with German teachers, curricula and a specific 'school' building. Throughout the German period, the structures of the German (mostly Prussian) curriculum served as the basis for the 'white' school system in GSWA. The first state school for German (and other 'European') pupils was opened in Windhoek in 1894, but in 1898 it had to close down. Two years later, GSWA had two state schools for children of German parents (one reopened in Windhoek, under headmaster K. Otto; one in Gibeon, under headmaster Herlyn, later headmaster in Swakopmund). In Otjimbingwe, pastor Johannes Olpp taught eight 'white' children in a private school that received state subsidies. Five years later there were six state schools in the towns of Windhoek, Gibeon, Keetmanshoop, Swakopmund, Karibib and Grootfontein. From 1906 onwards compulsory schooling for 'white' children above the age of six was introduced in more and more districts.⁷⁷ This included the children of Afrikaners. Their parents regularly opposed German schools because the children were taught in the German language and only occasionally had instructions in Cape Dutch.⁷⁸ On the other hand home-schooling arrangements (especially in the farm areas) coexisted with the state school system. As more children reached the age of 12 and above, *Realschulen* (secondary state schools) were opened in Windhoek (1909) and Swakopmund.⁷⁹ At the end of the German period there were 370 boys and 405 girls attending 17 state primary schools, two state secondary schools (both for girls and boys), and one Catholic

in the early europeanization of South-West Africa (Namibia)", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10, 1977: 553-572 (562).

⁷⁷ Cf. section on "Spaces. Rural and Urban childhoods" below; Zorn, *Kolonialgesetzgebung*: 558-560, "Gesetz betr. Einführung der Schulpflicht, 20.10.1906"; *Der Südwestbote*, 11. Jg. Nr. 4, 9.1.1914: 2 (Amtlicher Teil): „Regierungsschule“ headed by Rektor W. Rave. In 1914 the new school year started on 13 January.

⁷⁸ Eduard Moritz, *Das Schulwesen in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Berlin, Reimer, 1914: 5, 14; cf. also Gustav Lenz, *Die Regierungsschulen in den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, Darmstadt, Neues Gymnasium, 1900; B. v. König, "Die Eingeborenen-Schulen in den Deutschen Kolonien Afrikas und der Südsee", *Koloniale Rundschau*, Nos. 5, 7, 9, 12, 1912; 1, 1913.

⁷⁹ Johann Paul Müller, *Deutsche Schulen und deutscher Unterricht im Auslande*, Leipzig, Thomas, 1901: 372; Gerstenhauer, "Das deutsche Schulwesen in Südwestafrika", *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 22.1.1903: 34; *Der Südwestbote*, 11. Jg. Nr. 4, 9.1.1914: 2; cf. Walther, "Creating Germans": 35f.; on pp. 32, 44, Walther sees the introduction of the *Realschule* (with its main focus on 'practical education' – the pupils did not learn Latin and Greek) as an indication of the "very specific class nature" of the colony's educational system. However, the practical question as to whether there were 'enough' pupils for a *Gymnasium* (the school with the highest reputation in the German system) remains unanswered; furthermore, high ranking colonial officials (university trained lawyers who would have sent their children to the *Gymnasium* in Germany) also sent their children to the *Realschule* in Windhoek, where they met the sons and daughters of merchants and innkeepers.

secondary school for girls (numbers from 1913); all overseen from 1913 by the governor's school inspectorate.⁸⁰

While in metropolitan Germany the majority of schools, especially in rural areas, had only one classroom and one teacher for all pupils (in Silesia there were, Social Democrats complained, 22 schools with over 150 pupils per teacher)⁸¹, German pupils in GSWA were better provided for – a “distinct advantage” of which the teachers in GSWA were well aware.⁸² The *Kaiserliche Realschule* in Windhoek offered classes for girls and boys from Sexta (class 5) to Unterprima (class 12) in different classrooms with a number of teachers, including from September 1914 one woman, Margarethe von Eckenbrecher. Considering the importance attached to the ‘school question’, some administrators deemed even small numbers of German children at a particular place to be sufficient to justify the creation of a new state school. While members of the *Reichstag* in Berlin were concerned about the huge expenditure on the schooling of ‘white’ children in GSWA (most of all on the dormitories), public opinion in GSWA was not concerned by the costs in this context.⁸³

Up until 1904 children of African mothers and European fathers were entitled to enrol in the same state schools, but during and after the wars against Ovaherero and Nama they were relegated to the mission schools for ‘native’ pupils. Over the following decade, the segregation of ‘native’ and ‘white’ children developed into a tenet of German colonial school policy. Children of mixed-parentage assimilated, it was claimed by German contemporaries, the “poor characteristics of both races” and were thus a “disgrace for the father”.⁸⁴ Education in its very German meaning (*Bildung*) was to remain a ‘purely white’ privilege, and the quality of the mission schools was much inferior to the state schools.

⁸⁰ See Cynthia Cohen, “Natives”: 125f.; Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 201 states the first ‘white’ state school was opened in 1899; BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 6.3.1906, p. 1; Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, *Kolonialatlas*: 27; Martin Schlunk, *Das Schulwesen in den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, Hamburg, Friederichsen, 1914; Walther, “Creating Germans”: 42.

⁸¹ Dirk Mellies, *Modernisierung in der preußischen Provinz? Der Regierungsbezirk Stettin im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012: 81; see the speech by August Bebel (SPD), *Stenographische Berichte des Reichstags 1897/98*, vol. 1, session 8, 11. Dec. 1897: 162 (A).

⁸² Walther, “Creating Germans”: 42.

⁸³ Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 173, with a picture of “Die deutsche Regierungsschule” in Windhoek following p. 160; cf. Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 208 on the debate about expenses; German secondary education was subdivided into nine classes that were counted in Latin numbers from the highest to the lowest number: Sexta (=class 5), Quinta (=class 6), Quarta (=class 7), Untertertia (=class 8), Obertertia (=class 9), Untersekunda (=class 10), Obersekunda (=class 11), Unterprima (=class 12) and Oberprima (=class 13); cf. Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, *Geschichte der Erziehung. Einführung in die Grundzüge ihrer neuzeitlichen Entwicklung*, Weinheim, Juventa, 2000.

⁸⁴ Reiner, *Farmer*: 86; cf. Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 114: “Underwriting colonial anxieties was the sustained fear that children of mixed parentage would always remain natives in disguise, fictive Europeans [...], affectively bound to the sentiments and cultural affiliations of their native mothers.”

What goals was the administration pursuing with German children's (primary) education in GSWA? At the turn of the century, in Europe and America "[r]aising children meant raising (future) citizens in a much more systematic and comprehensive way than before".⁸⁵ However, in the imperial, colonial context, the intention to create 'good' (and healthy) citizens was more complicated. Like colonial schools elsewhere, those in GSWA were also supposed to transmit "the myth of colonial omnipotence".⁸⁶ Settler education aimed at instilling feelings of superiority and entrenching the role of (future) 'masters' into the pupils. The colonial narrative of white (in this case, German) supremacy was the corner stone of colonial education. "At issue was the learning of place and race."⁸⁷ How could this sense of German supremacy be taught? The children were born and grew up in foreign lands that were meant to be German. Many, if not most of them had never been to Germany and had barely any emotional attachment to the *Heimat*, knowing it only from hearsay. Thus, school was seen as the place where the children should learn to love their fatherland and learn about Germany, its history, geography, its (proper) language and its mores, like orderliness and discipline. As a result they were supposed to be educated "to think and feel" German, always ready to express their loyalty to Germany and their fidelity to the Emperor.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the children were to feel at home in GSWA, they were to develop into true and proud *Südwestler*; but under no circumstances should they (over-) adapt to Africa. The hegemonic discourses and the scientific 'knowledge' German schools transmitted were deemed to offer protection to the pupils against being 'corrupted' and physically and morally 'contaminated' by Africa and the Africans. Children of poor white families seemed especially exposed to this 'threat' expressed in the verb *verkaffern* (going native). As Ann Laura Stoler has remarked for the Dutch colonies: "Children were seen to be particularly susceptible to degraded environments, and it is no accident that colonial policy makers looked to upbringing and education, to schools and homes, [...] and thus to the quotidian social ecology of children's lives."⁸⁹ Furthermore, those 'white' children without German parents, mostly Afrikaners, but also British or Russian immigrants, were supposed to be Germanized by the German state schools. Before the number of German women immigrating to the colony began to increase after 1904, there were indeed districts with more Afrikaner children than German children. Later on Governor Seitz likened the situation to that in the east of the Prussian monarchy where Germans were living among a Polish majority. The estrangement/foreign infiltration of entire districts of the colony, especially the south, which was 'densely' settled by Afrikaners and close to Britain's Cape Colony, seemed imminent. German school education was seen as a means of

⁸⁵ Dirk Schumann, "Introduction", in: idem, (ed.), *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child. The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Berghahn, 2010: 1-23 (2).

⁸⁶ Errante, "White skin": 10 on Mozambique.

⁸⁷ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 112 on the Dutch Indies.

⁸⁸ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 205: "zu deutschem Denken und Fühlen erziehen", quoting *Kolonie und Heimat* 1911: 54.

⁸⁹ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 120.

preventing this from happening.⁹⁰ In 1901 one publication explained: “a German school abroad is [...] not only an important factor for the upswing of a colony, but the strongest pillar of German prestige and influence among natives of other nations.”⁹¹

The question as to how all these goals could be practically achieved was repeatedly discussed by administrators and colonial enthusiasts who projected “their values, beliefs and fantasies into [the colonial] childhood”.⁹² Several historians have analysed the attempts to transfer the theoretical principles of maintaining and creating ‘Germanness’ in GSWA into regular school classes. How could emotions such as ‘love’ for a territory most of the German children had never seen be fostered? The children were supposed to learn about metropolitan Germany in a way that imbued them with an unmistakable sense of *Heimat*. The subject *Heimatkunde* (*Heimat* or local studies), “which integrated history and geography in primary schools, was meant to convey a comprehensive knowledge of local conditions or, in the shorthand of the time, to ensure ‘the spiritual appropriation of Heimat’.”⁹³ Striking examples are the replicas (stuffed animals) of native German animals such as hedgehogs, hares and foxes which were shown to the children in GSWA to teach them about the ‘old’ *Heimat*. Similarly, children were shown pictures and photographs of objects and landscapes in metropolitan Germany (just as more and more teachers in Germany showed pictures of the colonies to their pupils; the syllabus reform of 1908 made the teaching of colonial knowledge compulsory in schools of all types.). Historian Jens Jaeger speaks accordingly of an “extraordinary confidence in images as a didactic device at the time of the Empire.”⁹⁴

But for the ‘children of Empire’ *Heimat* ought to include more than metropolitan Germany. The *Heimatkunde* taught in Windhoek or Swakopmund required the same “comprehensive knowledge of local conditions” in GSWA.⁹⁵ Children were supposed to know and recognise the German red fox and the South West African black-backed jackal.

⁹⁰ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 201-204; cf. Walther, “Creating Germans”: 35.

⁹¹ Müller, *Schulen*: xviii, quoting one Dr. Schwatlos: “Eine deutsche Auslandsschule ist, wie in immer weiteren Kreisen allmählich zum Bewußtsein zu kommen scheint, nicht bloß ein wichtiger Faktor für den Aufschwung einer Kolonie, sondern geradezu die festeste Stütze des deutschen Ansehens und Einflusses bei den Angehörigen anderer Nationen.”

⁹² Stargardt, “German childhoods”: 15.

⁹³ Jaeger, “Colony”: 484; cf. Walther, “Creating Germans”: 39; Walther, Daniel J., *Creating Germans Abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2002; Katherine Kennedy, “African Heimat. German Colonies in Wilhelmine and Weimar reading books”, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, 24, 2002: 7-26; Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of empire. Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871–1914*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, analyses how young Germans in Germany grew up and experienced (at times daily) various imaginary colonial encounters. On *Heimatkunde* cf. Hugo Wilhelm Conwetz, *Die Heimatkunde in der Schule. Grundlagen und Vorschläge zur Förderung der naturgeschichtlichen und geographischen Heimatkunde in der Schule*, 2nd ed., Berlin, Borntraeger, 1906: 30-42. He encouraged teachers to procure collections of stones, plants, animals, etc. Also school-gardens were considered relevant for the education of children.

⁹⁴ Jaeger, “Colony”: 485; cf. Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 203.

⁹⁵ Jaeger, “Colony”: 484.

However, the first proper 'South West African' textbook was not published until 1913. The school book *Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Land und Leute. Eine Heimatkunde für Deutschlands Jugend und Volk* (GSWA. Land and people. A local history for Germany's youth and people) was written by the Windhoek teacher and school inspector Bernhard Voigt, himself a native of Silesia, on request of the governorate. Structured in short essays, the book provided the pupils with an overview of GSWA's history, including the Herero- and Nama wars, followed by descriptions of the peoples of the colony, its different regions and their flora and fauna. Short stories about hunting trips and excursions into the 'wild' bush scenery of Hereroland were also included in order to provide the readers with the details and specificities of life in GSWA. Needless to say exoticism and stereotyping was rampant throughout the textbook. In his foreword, Voigt, who later continued his career as author of colonial literature back in Germany, expressed his hope that the book might "bring the country, which had become a new homeland for many Germans, closer to the understanding and heart of the old homeland." Thus, he also expected that, in the future, readers in metropolitan Germany would turn to his book (after all, it was printed in Stuttgart), irrespective of its explicit purpose to serve the needs of "Southwest African schools for a local study." To Voigt's understanding, love for one's fatherland was therefore a twofold affair: If GSWA was truly German this meant that not only the Germans living in GSWA must know about it and feel an affinity towards the colony, but also Germans back in metropolitan Germany.⁹⁶ Evidently, the question as to how 'successful' such attempts at creating 'Germanness' and love for a 'new' and an (unseen) 'old' fatherland really were, can hardly be answered. It appears that at least school inspector Voigt was not particularly happy with the "devotion to duty" and the "love for the fatherland" of many of his pupils. No doubt, "Voigt laid the blame squarely on the parents' shoulders", as they had neglected their parental duties.⁹⁷

For the curricula of secondary education it was deemed important to replicate as far as possible the subjects and standards of learning at schools in metropolitan Germany: German, English, history, geography, mathematics, music, sports. Religion was taught by the local pastor/priest. Children who went with their parents on 'vacation' to Germany (civil servants were entitled to three months' vacation after three years of service) were to be able to join classes in the 'old' *Heimat* without difficulties. Therefore, French was introduced in 1914 as the first foreign language, in line with the curriculum of the Prussian *Realschule*, despite its irrelevance in GSWA and the dominance of English in the economic orbit of South Africa.⁹⁸ Since most civil servants remained in the colony only a

⁹⁶ Bernhard Voigt, *Deutsch-Südwestafrika. Land und Leute. Eine Heimatkunde für Deutschlands Jugend und Volk*, Stuttgart, Strecker, 1913: foreword; all translations in Walther, "Creating Germans": 39, Voigt "wished to fortify the bond between the colony and Germany."

⁹⁷ Walther, "Creating Germans": 42f.; for an overview on the challenges of the 'history of emotions' in the context of German history see the round table discussion invited by Frank Biess, "Forum. History of Emotions", *German History*, 28, 2010: 67-80.

⁹⁸ Walther, "Creating Germans": 40. In late Imperial Germany, the necessity of teaching 'foreign languages' was increasingly disputed by conservative pedagogues who were concerned about pupils learning and using

few years, they naturally took great interest in having their children educated to similar standards as in Germany so that there would be no 'bad surprises' for their children upon return. A further argument for secondary schools in the colony was that young people would be estranged from GSWA if they had to spend years in Germany in order to receive a higher education. They might not even return. As in Mozambique, "[t]he education of White settler children required a delicate balance of loyalties between the metropole they were to revere and the colony they were to inhabit."⁹⁹

However, by 1914 the conflicting political interpretations of the meaning of being a German from GSWA had reached a level that resulted in conflicting identities for those growing up in 'New Germany'. They had to be German in culture, language, formal education and feelings, but at the same time they had to be proud colonizers, well versed in the narratives of the 'pioneers' of GSWA, their 'heroic suffering in the wilderness', and the taming of nature; some even argued for familiarity with the African languages spoken in the colony. In the end the ideas about the ideal future generation of Germans from GSWA were riddled with contradictions since these children had to be 'everything': Good Germans, who "remember in love the Heimat of their fathers and hold on to its language and mores", but also a little bit African in order to be able colonisers. What had to be avoided at all costs was that these children be assimilated into the African majority or adapt to the British or Afrikaaner way of live and language. Furthermore, the proud *Südwester* was not to develop into a separatist, viewing GSWA as the centre and Germany as the periphery; instead s/he had to remain a proud subject of Kaiser Wilhelm. Regular visits to Germany and even longer sojourns for high school pupils were deemed to be apposite means to that end.¹⁰⁰ Everyday life at Germans schools in GSWA has yet to be researched in depth. In particular an analysis of life at the 14 dormitories (in 1914) as state run surrogates for 'German' homes and places of Germanisation of Afrikaaner children, might offer further insights. With their strict house and language rules and a schedule that regulated every moment of the day to instil a sense of order and discipline, the dormitories in many respects resembled army barracks. Needless to say, transgressions against rules were also part of the experience of pupils and their teachers, as were the relevance of gender divisions and corporal punishment to teach 'obedience' and maintain school discipline – a highly politicised field of school policy in early twentieth century Germany.¹⁰¹

too many loanwords and losing the notion of the superiority of the German language, cf. Hans Spieser, "Fremdsprachen und deutsche Erziehung", *Blätter für deutsche Erziehung*, 12 (7), 1910: 100-102.

⁹⁹ Errante, "White skin": 20.

¹⁰⁰ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 210; Müller, *Schulen*: xviii: "stets aber in Liebe der Heimat seiner Väter gedenkt, an seiner Sprache und Gesittung festhält und ihm die Treue erweist, die es ihm schuldet".

¹⁰¹ Cf. Walther, "Creating Germans": 38 on the dormitories in GSWA; on violence against children see Rutschky, *Schwarze Pädagogik*; Jacob Middleton, "The experience of corporal punishment in schools, 1890–1940", *History of Education*, 37, 2008: 253-275; Joachim Döbler, "Blutige Spuren von unzähligen Ruthestreichen". Kinderelend, Schulzucht und Strafgewalt im vormärzlichen Hamburg", in: Thomas Lindenberger and Alf Lüdtke, (eds.), *Physische Gewalt. Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp, 1995: 303-356.

'Colonizing' was meant to be *Kulturarbeit* (cultural work), as the central colonial administration in Berlin repeatedly emphasized. In concrete terms this *Kulturarbeit* was supposed to result in the "education of natives to lead an industrious and ethical life". "Educating the natives" was considered the "main task" of every colonial official.¹⁰² Nevertheless in GSWA the schooling of Africans was left to the Lutheran and Catholic missionaries, who received small state subsidies for their "native schools". These were seen as useful instruments in bringing 'civilisation' to the African hinterland. While the administration of GSWA was heavily involved in the education of 'white' children, its role in 'native education' remained limited both financially (9,000 Marks p.a. for 'native schools'; 329,600 Marks p.a. for 'white schools' in 1914) and in terms of the supervision of teaching and curricula. As in other colonies the question as to whether African children should learn German as a foreign language or whether they should be taught all or most subjects (German, mathematics, history, geography/*Heimatkunde*, natural science, and singing) through German from an early age was a constant bone of contention in GSWA.¹⁰³

By 1912 the Lutheran Rhenish Mission, the oldest in the colony, maintained 35 schools with a total of 1,585 pupils. Primary schooling was to be conducted over four years (or six years if the attendance was intermittent). As in pre-colonial times, the missionaries continued to teach their pupils in their native languages, i.e. Nama, Otjiherero, and Cape Dutch (especially in the south of the colony); German was taught to more advanced pupils. The Lutheran Finnish Mission, which worked in Ovamboland in the north of the colony, had 2,228 pupils enrolled at 39 schools. German was not taught by the Finns, since Ovamboland was not included in the German administrative area; all instruction was conducted in one of the Ovambo languages. According to the historian Meredith McKittrick, children and youths played an important role in the spread of Christianity in Ovamboland, particularly following the devastating famines from 1911 to 1916.¹⁰⁴ The Catholic Mission (Oblate Brothers), having arrived in 1896, thus later than the other missions, was operating 12 elementary schools with 501 pupils by 1912. They taught exclusively in German. In 1915, there were 115 mission schools in GSWA with approximately 5,400 pupils. Among these were (originally) three separate schools for 'mixed-race' children (of African mothers and German fathers). Since 1902, the Oblate

¹⁰² NAN ZBU 694, F V f 1, vol.1, Bl.1, Colonial Department to Gouverneur Leutwein, 12.1.1900, "Erziehung der Eingeborenen zu einem arbeitsamen und gesitteten Leben"; Governor Leutwein was ordered to inform his subordinates that they had "ihrer Hauptaufgabe, der Erziehung der Eingeborenen, unter thunlichster Einschränkung des Gebrauchs von Strafmitteln gerecht zu werden"; on this trope see Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im deutschen Kaiserreich*, München, Beck, 2006: 79 f.; cf. Alexander Lion, *Die Kulturfähigkeit des Negers und die Erziehungsaufgaben der Kulturnationen*, Berlin, Süsserott, 1908.

¹⁰³ Adick, "Muttersprachliche und fremdsprachliche Bildung": 293; further details in Ingo Krause, *Schuldfrage?*

¹⁰⁴ Meredith McKittrick, *To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity and Colonialism in Ovamboland, Northern Namibia*, Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2002; see also Lovisa T. Nampala and Vilho Shigweda: Nampala, *Aawambo Kingdoms, History and Cultural Change. Perspectives from Northern Namibia*, Basel, Schlettwein, 2006: 85-89; on circumcision: 92; on naming ceremonies: 94.

Brothers had worked in Klein-Windhhoek with *Mischlinge* whom they considered superior to their 'purely' African peers. In 1904 the Rhenish Mission also opened a school for these children (the old *Augustineum*) in Okahandja. However, in 1910 the new Governor Seitz made it clear that he did not intend to recognise the 'special' position of the *Mischlinge*. He feared their sense of superiority towards Africans and claims to equality with Germans. Seitz intended to treat these children like any other African child, thus leaving no room for any assimilation (a fate that, he hoped, would prevent German men from fathering *Mischlinge*, as they would not wish to see their children growing up as Africans.) Therefore, from 1912 on, the missions no longer received state subsidies for their *Bastardheime*, as the schools and dormitories for these children were called. That same year the Rhenish Mission closed down its school for *Mischlinge* in Keetmanshoop; the Augustineum in Okahandja, however, was maintained as was the Catholic school for children of African and European parentage in Klein-Windhhoek.¹⁰⁵

Education for practical services was regarded by all missionaries as their main educational aim – an education that introduced at the same time a gender labour division according to European mores: handwork like carpentry for the boys and European style domestic skills like needlework for the girls. (Future) men were to be transformed (by education) into wage labourers and (future) women (by the same means) into good housewives. Missionary schooling efforts were overwhelmingly based on the “belief in the redeeming value of manual labour as a panacea for African indolence, slovenliness, and moral degradation”.¹⁰⁶ Advanced learning and more in-depth teaching of academic subjects were considered unsuitable for Africans. For contemporaries, ‘native schools’ were merely meant to ensure that Africans could “produce higher quality work. This should not be interpreted as a call to set up high schools for [Africans].”¹⁰⁷ German colonial officials objected to a ‘comprehensive European education’ for Africans which could have threatened colonial hierarchies. Knowledge, this was clear to all involved, could become a weapon and was thus to be withheld from Africans. “Ignorance should facilitate the colonial oppression”.¹⁰⁸

Like other contexts of European colonial rule, Germany’s colonial schools were “deeply implicated in the reproduction of colonial hegemony by their implicit and explicit transmission of images of White/European superiority and Black/African inferiority.” The question, first posed by Frantz Fanon, “how colonial hegemonies cultivated a pathological

¹⁰⁵ Becker, “Soldatenkinder”: 55-57; 66-68.

¹⁰⁶ Berman, “African responses”: 534; cf. Cohen, “Natives”: 125, 119-23, 126; Ulrike Schaper, *Koloniale Verhandlungen, Gerichtsbarkeit, Verwaltung und Herrschaft in Kamerun*, Frankfurt/M., Campus, 2012: 367.

¹⁰⁷ Ziemann, “Bevölkerungs- und Rassenproblem”: 10, arguing that “er [der Farbige] auch qualitativ höhere Arbeit leisten kann. Es ist natürlich nicht so zu verstehen, daß man höhere Schulen für Farbige gründen soll.”

¹⁰⁸ Schaper, *Verhandlungen*: 300f., “Unwissenheit sollte die koloniale Unterdrückung erleichtern”. She quotes a school essay by a boy from the Basel mission school in Duala, Cameroon (1912): “Um das Gebiet des Wissens, das uns die Weissen bringen, ziehen sie eine enge Grenze, denn sie wollen nicht, dass wir so viel wissen als sie.”

sense of longing and admiration in Africans for things European” is particularly relevant for the analysis of the school education of African children.¹⁰⁹ Researchers have established a so-called “deculturalisation” of Africans. It is said that missionaries “deculturalised the people and imbued them with Western norms and values [...] and thereby severing the local population from their traditional African culture, history and identity.”¹¹⁰ However, for the period under review (1884–1915) in GSWA it must be asked whether this was indeed the case. Considering the fundamental question how ‘culture’ can be reproduced, it seems self-evident that ‘culture’ and childhood stand in a reciprocal causal relation.¹¹¹

On the one hand, taking children out of their homes and communities (thus, their cultures) and placing them in formal classrooms to be taught the values deemed essential by the missionaries (and, to a lesser degree, by the colonial government) and the skills needed for employment by German settlers, must have had a social and cultural impact. On the other hand, these classes barely lasted more than four hours. Thus, the children were exposed to other, less ‘German’, influences most of the day. Furthermore, what was the intention of the missionaries in their educational efforts (and the colonial government subsidising these efforts)? “Assimilation” of Africans into the German culture was never a German policy. Africans were to work for Germans, but they were never meant to develop into “black Germans”.¹¹² German colonial policy did not seek to turn Africans into a “degraded version of the European or German”; rather Africans were expected to develop into “perfect natives”.¹¹³ Besides religious and language instruction, abstract key words describing behaviour have been mentioned to define these missionary intentions: Africans were to learn “obedience, diligence, honesty”. Further educational ‘goals’ were “manual work and hygiene”.¹¹⁴ The missionaries agreed that the “purpose of German language instruction” was to provide “children with

¹⁰⁹ Errante, “White skin”: 7f., referring to Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1968; cf. on this ‘longing’ e.g. the position of Angola’s literate elite during the nineteenth and early twentieth century: “these [African] families showed a keen interest in European standard formal education and schools” (Corrado, *Creole Elite*: 121).

¹¹⁰ George Steinmetz, “Precolonial and colonial subjectivity. Ethnographic discourse and native policy in German overseas imperialism, 1780s–1914”, *Political Power and Social Theory*, 15, 2002: 135-228 (165).

¹¹¹ See Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 4f., discussing the “Culture-Personality-School” and its shortcomings.

¹¹² H.J. van Aswegen, *Geskiedenis van Afrika. Van die Vroegste Oorsprong tot Onafhanklikheid*, Pretoria, Academica, 1980: 332: “In teenstelling met die Franse beleid van assimilasië en assosiasie, het die Duitsers egter nooit geprobeer om die inboorlinge politiek en kultureel te assimileer, m.a.w. om Swarte Duitsers van hulle te maak nie.”

¹¹³ Steinmetz, “Precolonial and colonial subjectivity”: 165: “The Herero were turned from fundamentally strange racial others into a degraded version of the European or German”; Andreas Eckert, “Die Verheißungen der Bürokratie. Verwaltung als Zivilisierungsagentur im kolonialen Westafrika”, in: Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, (eds.), *Zivilisierungsmissionen. Imperiale Weltverbesserung seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz, UVK-Verlags-Gesellschaft, 2005: 269-283 (278): “Was afrikanische Staatsdiener betrifft, so ging es Franzosen (wie auch den Briten) primär darum, gleichsam ‘perfekte Eingeborene’, nicht jedoch ‘schwarze Europäer’ zu kreieren.”

¹¹⁴ Cohen, “Natives”: 118, referring to Melber.

the knowledge necessary for their future employment” – and not more.¹¹⁵ These intentions were the result of prejudice, ignorance and a sense of superiority, all of which are clearly discernible from the sources. The often quoted “myth of the lazy native”¹¹⁶ resulted in prolonged debates among contemporaries about “how to educate the Negroes” to become “good workmen”.¹¹⁷ However, describing intentions must not be conflated with analysing realities on the ground in GSWA. Were missionaries capable of ‘deculturalising’ African children by carrying out their intentions of educating Africans to form a semi-skilled and obedient workforce? Assuming this as a fact would easily run the risk of telling a (post-) colonial ‘myth of omnipotence’ in which Africans have no active role to play.

With that in mind, a different history of the effects of missionary teaching and writings can be told. As historian Marion Wallace has pointed out, missionaries acted as “culture brokers”; their writings “reached directly into Herero communities through mission education. [...] Herero ethnic identity was shaped as much by Otjikerero-speakers as by state or mission.”¹¹⁸ One might even ask whether there was, in pre-colonial times, a general sense of a common bond between those groups that are today called Ovaherero. Considering these two conflicting versions of the effect of European education, ‘deculturalising’ vs. ‘identity’ construction for Africans, it seems wise to point out that the history of schools for Africans and their effects in GSWA has yet to be examined in detail. Cultural discontinuities, not to mention a break between the ‘traditional’ education and institutionalised schooling according to European patterns, can be assumed; but a thorough, source-based study is necessary to show how pupils, parents and teachers (missionaries) dealt with these issues on a daily basis – assuming the necessary sources are available.

African (child) labour, violence and languages

Parental and school education are two elements that are of great value when examining the conditions of children in GSWA; labour is another.¹¹⁹ Two aspects of labour are of particular relevance for an analysis: the (ab)use of children as workers, and their preparation for work at a later stage.

¹¹⁵ AELCRN, C I 1.25, Bl. 245, Protokoll der Missionars-Konferenz des Hererolandes, 2.5.09, der “Zweck des Deutschunterrichts” habe sich darauf zu beschränken, “den Kindern die nötigen Kenntnisse für ihr späteres Dienstverhältnis” zu geben.

¹¹⁶ Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native. A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*, London, Cass, 1977.

¹¹⁷ Alexander Merensky, *Wie erzieht man am besten den Neger zur Plantagen-Arbeit?*, Berlin, Walther & Apolant, 1886; cf. Conrad, *Globalisierung*. 79f.; Schaper, *Verhandlungen*: 367.

¹¹⁸ Wallace, ““Making Tradition””: 367; on Ovamboland, see Nampala regarding “Missionary Education and Tradition”, in: Nampala and Shigweda, *Aawambo Kingdoms*: 85-89.

¹¹⁹ Grier, “Child labor”: 2 describes the history of child and adolescent labour in Africa as a “neglected” area of scholarship; cf. 7f. on “Child labor in africanist scholarship”.

To contextualise child labour in GSWA it is necessary to outline the situation in Imperial Germany: Given the horrendous conditions in which children worked in factories and agriculture, the advantages and disadvantages of child labour became the subject of intensive debate in parliament and beyond after German unification in 1871. It is said that the majority of parliamentarians after 1885 (Liberals, Social Democrats and Catholic Centre Party) took it for granted that children “do not belong in the factory, but in school or the playground”. Amendments to the *Gewerbeordnungsnovellen* (Industrial Act) of 1878 and 1891 and the so-called “Child Protection Law” of 1903 provided some protection against labour in factories for children under 13 years of age. However, child labour in agriculture and family businesses (e.g. toy production) continued to be legal. In 1898, 12.8 per cent of all children in Berlin were in employment. Even in mines child labour remained widespread throughout Imperial Germany.¹²⁰ German historiography on these developments is old and detailed. Contemporaries, politically affiliated with the “labour movement, had systematically collected working class autobiographies” in the early twentieth century. Given the continued exploitation – despite all legislation –, they did not see state interventions like “youth ‘saving’ and child welfare” in a “liberal progressivist trajectory”, but “in much darker colours”.¹²¹

Against this background, it is no surprise that German settlers in GSWA had no qualms about employing (African) children on farms or in other businesses. The above-mentioned educational goal and “settler ideal of cultivating black labour” by teaching Africans ‘how to work’ served as further justification for exploiting this cheap labour source.¹²² However, one particular policy of employing children and adolescents did worry contemporaries: In GSWA a ‘tradition’ had developed over the years that almost every settler, soldier, policeman, administrator or farmer employed one, two or more ‘boys’ as his personal servants. These so-called *Bambusen* (they could be as young as 8 years old but also 18 or older) were tasked with cleaning, cooking or any other chores their German ‘master’ required of them. While Africans were supposed ‘to learn’ how to work hard, the colonial master was to be freed of most physical work. It had been rightly stated that the “colonial identity and status of these expatriate men and women became increasingly linked [...] to their Bambusen.” “From the soldier’s and officer’s point of

¹²⁰ Annika Boentert, *Kinderarbeit im Kaiserreich 1871–1914*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2007: 431, that children “nicht in die Fabrik, sondern in die Schule oder auf den Spielplatz gehörten”; Mellies, *Modernisierung*: 79; 68–74 on (agricultural) child labour in Pomerania, one of the poorest provinces of the Prussian monarchy. In 1896 22.5 per cent of all Pomeranian pupils worked regularly in agriculture (e.g. tending a flock, hay and potato harvest etc.); p. 71, quoting Superintendent Hildebrandt (1879) justifying child labour by underlining the reasonableness of children being prepared early on for their trade by working and learning; see Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, (ed.), *Die Familie. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Familie*, Frankfurt, Insel, 1996: 193–203 (on “Heimarbeit”, “Minderjährige im Bergwerk, 1911”); Gestrich, *Geschichte*: 590–594; a classic on children in factories: Jürgen Kuczynsky, *Geschichte der Kinderarbeit in Deutschland 1750–1939*, Berlin, Neues Leben, 1958, e.g.: 222–234; Gesetz, betreffend Abänderung der Gewerbeordnung, 1. Juni 1891, §135, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, vol. 1891, No. 18: 261–290.

¹²¹ Stargardt, “German childhoods”: 4, 6f. on this “distinctive [German] *Alltagsgeschichte* of childhood.”

¹²² Cohen, “Natives”: 118; cf. Grier, “Child labor”: 9; for a comparative view cf. Kristoffel Lieten and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, (eds.), *Child Labours’s Global Past, 1650–2000*, Bern, Lang, 2011.

view, to be able to have a Bambuse meant an individual as well as a collective status enhancement".¹²³ While it was also a tradition among officers back in Germany to have 'a boy', visitors from Germany and colonial civil servants were appalled to see that some officers in GSWA employed three or more *Bambusen* – supposedly to help with the daily workload and be taught how to work, but in fact to enhance the officer's prestige.¹²⁴

The infantilisation of Africans, i.e. the colonial notion and treatment of African women and men as children, is most evident in the contemporary language used to describe the *Bambusen*.¹²⁵ Although many of these servants were no longer children, they were constantly talked about and treated as if they were toddlers. Claire Rohrbach mentioned the joy caused by the military camels passing the family home in Windhoek. "Bambusen and children and dogs are one heart and one soul [in these moments]."¹²⁶ The formal education of the younger *Bambusen* was barely of concern to the 'master'. Being under no legal obligation to provide them with an education, many employers were very reluctant to send their *Bambusen* to school. However, the language proficiency of the *Bambusen* was important: Employers demanded that the children understand orders given in "'German' [dialect] of any of the [German] Federal States", as missionary Carl Wandres lamented. On the other hand, they were of the opinion that "a 'Kaffir' or 'Hottentott' does not need to go to school at all".¹²⁷ This resulted in high absenteeism among African pupils. Children were "often kept back from school, either by their parents who needed them to work [...], or by the white employers of their parents."¹²⁸

Being an African employed as a labourer by a German 'master' entailed the constant risk of being beaten. Working conditions on farms and in towns in GSWA were often characterised by violence, not only against African men and women, but also against their children who received little food and could often be severely punished for the most minor of wrongdoings. Violence against children exposes one of the most disturbing features of the colonial society: In their hatred of the African population, some settlers

¹²³ Dag Henrichsen, "Ozombambuse and Ovasolondate. Everyday military life and African service personnel in German South West Africa", in: Wolfram Hartmann, (ed.), *Hues between Black and White. Historical Photography from Colonial Namibia 1860s to 1915*, Windhoek, Out of Africa, 2004: 161-184 (174, 178).

¹²⁴ NAN GLU 313, Gen F III, vol.1, Bl.177, Governor to BG Lüderitzbucht, 1.9.1908; Oskar Bongard, *Staatssekretär Dernburg in Britisch- und Deutsch-Südafrika*, 2nd ed., Berlin, Süsserott, 1909: 92.

¹²⁵ See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996: 4; cf. Lindsay and Miescher, "Introduction": 4f.

¹²⁶ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 26.6.1906, p. 2: "Bambusen und Kinder und Hunde sind dann ein Herz und eine Seele".

¹²⁷ *Der Reichsbote*, 37. Jg, 2. Beilage zu Nr. 34, 10.2.1909 : Arbeitgeber stehen "vorwiegend auf dem Standpunkt, daß so ein 'Kaffer' oder 'Hottentott' überhaupt nicht zur Schule gehen braucht. Trotzdem aber verlangen sie, daß er das 'Deutsche' sämtlicher Bundesstaaten verstehen soll." See Jürgen Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte-Formen-Folgen*, 4th ed., München, Beck, 2003: 107.

¹²⁸ Cohen, "Natives": 123.

had lost any sense of proportionality.¹²⁹ Proud to be the *baas* (boss), many of them for the first time in their life, employers used and abused their legal entitlement to whipping on a regular basis. Corporal punishment was allegedly part of the general colonial efforts to 'teach' Africans discipline, obedience and work ethics. While this research has not unearthed documentary evidence of corporal punishment of African children at the hands of German missionaries in schools (which seems, however, likely given the everyday life in Germany's schools), it is manifest that some employers in GSWA – eager to defend their 'right to punish' – pointed to an alleged 'African tradition' of whipping that would be taken for granted by labourers. Others emphasised a German legal tradition of corporal punishment of apprentices by the master (and parents punishing their children in accordance with the German Civil Code – *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*). Missionaries were only seldom willing to raise their voice against these abuses. Colonial administrators were aware of the violence and occasionally reprimanded individuals. Still, the police stepped in very rarely. Rather the officers set out on patrols specifically to 'catch' Africans 'hiding' in the bush, among them children, who were then, together with their relatives, 'distributed' among the farmers of the police precinct. Furthermore, the colonial administration was not only unable to limit the violence against Africans, but contributed to it through its policemen and 'native courts'. There were cases in which courts sentenced 10 and 14 year old children to 40 lashes despite the fact that the ordinance regulating corporal punishment excluded women and children. In other cases children were sentenced to six months' imprisonment in chains.¹³⁰ To this 'legal' violence one must add the criminal behaviour of some settlers and administrators who terrorised the African population.¹³¹ Grim reports about colonial child labour (and punishment) even reached the German press, most of all *Vorwärts* (the most widely circulating Social Democratic newspaper), which quoted at length from published missionary accounts. The press in the colony – the examples were taken from German East Africa – was scandalised and spoke of *Entstellungen* (misrepresentations). Subsequently, the missionaries who had originally reported the grievances (which included

¹²⁹ On the Ohlsen case cf. NAN ZBU 2045, W III b 5, vol.1, Bl.81, E. Ohlsen to DChf v. Schwerin, 10.1.1912; Andreas E. Eckl, "Weiß oder Schwarz? Kolonialer Farmalltag in Deutsch-Südwestafrika", in: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Reinhard Klein-Arendt, (eds.), *Die (koloniale) Begegnung. AfrikanerInnen in Deutschland und schwarze Deutsche*, Münster, Lit, 2004: 109-124.

¹³⁰ Cf. Jakob Zollmann, *Koloniale Herrschaft und ihre Grenzen. Die Kolonialpolizei in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894-1915*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010: 107-126; 281f.; 303f.; Nils Ole Oermann, "The law and the colonial state. Legal codification versus practice in a German colony", in: Geoff Eley and James Retallack, (eds.), *Wilhelminism and its Legacies. German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930*, New York, Berghahn, 2003: 171-184; see also idem, *Mission*; Martin Schröder, *Prügelstrafe und Züchtigungsrecht in den deutschen Schutzgebieten Schwarzafrikas*, Berlin, Lit, 1997.

¹³¹ One of the most infamous cases was the rape of a 10-year old girl by drunken police sergeant Odenwald in Keetmanshoop in 1912. The girl died but the court refused to causally relate the rape and her death. The sergeant, who immediately lost his position, was sentenced to four and half year's imprisonment according to Sec. 176 III Imperial Penal Code (*RSIGB*). NAN ZBU 747, G I b 2, vol.1, Bl. 57, BA Keetmanshoop an Gouv, 9.5.1912; Bl.68 BG Keetmanshoop an Gouv, 5.5.1912; cf. Zollmann, *Herrschaft*: 208-211.

the lack of schooling opportunities) were attacked by farmers and their supporters in the settler press.¹³²

Labour and violence against African children is a stark reminder that – in German-controlled spaces of GSWA – the impression of racialized segregation of African children from the ‘white’ colonial state and its settlers would be incorrect. Labour regimes in GSWA as described above prove otherwise. When historians speak of the need “to gain a better understanding of how colonial experiences constituted forms of a shared culture”, the history of childhood in GSWA fosters this understanding of such “shared culture”. As Antoinette Errante has stated for colonial Mozambique: colonial “childhoods very often reveal the underbelly of the omnipotence myth.”¹³³ The daily lives of children growing up in the colonial setting indicate that clear-cut separations between ‘races’ with their narrative dichotomies of civilized/uncivilized, educated/uneducated were aspired to politically, but never achieved completely. The mixing and cross-cultural interaction between African and settler children and also between adults and children was not uncommon in the colonial period, irrespective of the intentions of German parents, teachers or officials and their legal provisions. Colonial society was more complex than foreseen by colonial enthusiasts around 1900 who simply assumed the colonies would develop into a ‘greater Germany’. The sharing and mixing of cultures, be it through labour or otherwise, for example, also had a profound influence on the language skills of children.

In 1889, when there was barely any ‘official language’ in GSWA, the missionary Carl G. Büttner remembered his time in pre-colonial Namaqualand (in the south of GSWA, 1873–1880) where “children of many whites [...] preferred to speak Namaqua among themselves”.¹³⁴ In the early nineteenth century the missionary Heinrich Schmelen, who was married to the Nama-speaking Zara, noted his own *Sprachverwirrung* (language confusion).¹³⁵ During the colonial period language learning and language mixing and confusion were everyday occurrences, and (in part) not the result of any colonial school or state intervention. Settlement Commissioner Rohrbach witnessed this with his own two boys as they were growing up in Windhoek. From their nurses and household personnel (*Bambusen*), they “learn the Nama language more and more. Recently, the [younger] boy enjoyed the fact that he knew something his father does not: counting in Nama from

¹³² *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, No. 3, 11.1.1911: 1-3, “Kinderarbeit”. Responding to his critics, missionary E. Müller wrote: “Ich kenne aber tatsächlich Pflanzungen, auf denen so wenige Erwachsene zu sehen waren, daß sie in der Menge der Kinder geradezu verschwanden. Das nenne ich [Pflanzungen, die] völlig auf Kinderarbeit basieren”; see *Usambara Post*, No. 45, 12.11.1910, complaining about *Entstellungen* and arguing that African children ought to learn how to work since this is part of their ‘education’.

¹³³ Errante, “White skin”: 8, 11.

¹³⁴ Carl G. Büttner, “Vorwort”, in: Johann G. Kroenlein, *Wortschatz der Khoi-Khoi (Namaqua-Hottentotten)*, Berlin, Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, 1889: VI. about Namaland where “Kinder vieler Weissen [...] am liebsten Namaqua untereinander [sprachen]”; cf. Walgenbach, *Diskurse*: 205.

¹³⁵ Ursula Trüpper, *Die Hottentottin. Das kurze Leben der Zara Schmelen (ca 1793–1831). Missionsgehilfin und Sprachpionierin in Südafrika*, Köln, Köppe, 2000: 35.

1 to 10!"¹³⁶ While purists put a great emphasis on the learning of German (in its purity) and advised German mothers to limit their children's contact with African nurses, Claire Rohrbach was not prepared to do this. She also did not follow the advice to employ a German nurse (and thus 'import' a future German mother to GSWA). Her older boy, she reported to relatives in Germany, could count up to twenty, "however, better in Nama than German. He sings in the Hottentott [Nama] language exactly like the natives, including real click-sounds. [...] When [the boy] plays with the people [it is not clear whether or not she allowed him to play in the street], I often hear him speaking in Nama exclusively."¹³⁷ She was amused to hear her three-year-old using the "rolling tongue-r of the natives".¹³⁸ Finally the two boys were speaking Nama to each other more often than German.¹³⁹ Mother Rohrbach apparently accepted the fact that her younger boy would learn "proper German" only once they were all back in Germany; "here he hears too much *Kauderwelsch* [mumbo-jumbo]. Articles and participles are terrible."¹⁴⁰ His German "is too similar to the one spoken [by the two servants]."¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the 'native servants' also learned German from living with the family. Rohrbach noted that her older son and their handyman 'Pensmann' "are reading and writing [German] together regularly – both are at the same level." While the advisability of children learning languages beyond the 'colour bar' was a matter of dispute, the main objects of this discussion were one step ahead of their educators; and in 1906, Africans who were able to read and to write were nothing unheard of. As the Rohrbach example shows, children and youths could learn one another's language without any school or educative effort. The main difference between the 'two sides' was rather that the German boys were playing and the servants (*Bambusen* – we do not know their age) were working while learning.¹⁴²

The implications of learning languages in a colonial context were not only cultural, but also political and economic. The reactions to German children speaking African languages (and thus playing with African children) were manifold; not everyone was as liberal as the Rohrbach family. Indeed, some recognised the political and economic advantage when the 'master' understands every word the 'servants' speak and can

¹³⁶ BAK N 1408, Paul Rohrbach to Family, 28.2.1906, p. 3.

¹³⁷ BAK N 1408, Claire Rohrbach to Family, 6.3.1906, p. 2; on children playing in the streets and (middle class) parents withdrawing them from there see Stargardt, "German childhoods": 14 with further references.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.5.1906, p. 2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.6.1906, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.7.1906, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.9.1906.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.6.1906, p. 2; see also Grier, "Child labor": 17; on the culture of writing in pre-colonial Namibia cf. Dag Henrichsen, "Iss Wortel!"; however, it seems almost impossible to estimate the literacy rate among Africans around 1900; language capabilities were also a matter of negotiation and depended on the circumstances: after the German surrender of GSWA in 1915, (German) boys in Windhoek repeatedly started brawls with British and Afrikaaner boys over the usage of the German language. There were "rascals who now pretended not to understand German" ("Bengel, die jetzt so tun, als ob sie kein Deutsch verstehen", Eckenbrecher, *Afrika*: 220).

communicate independently from interpreters; even colonial administrators were regularly asked to learn one of the African languages spoken in GSWA.¹⁴³ Others frowned upon the mixing of languages. It was seen as a danger to the children's 'Germanness' and the purity of the German language. As noted above, they foresaw the 'risk' that the children might end up 'going native'. Historical anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has pointed out that "European children in diverse colonial contexts often seemed to get their categories 'wrong'." They chose the 'wrong' language, chose to sit on the ground instead of on chairs, and chose the 'wrong' playmates, i.e. African children. "Socialisation in colonial norms was not as straightforward a transmission process [from adult to child] as [sociologist Norbert] Elias would have it", she writes.¹⁴⁴

The implications of Africans learning German ran even deeper. The ability to read and write the 'master's' language opened new opportunities, most of all the possibility of status enhancement especially for younger Africans.¹⁴⁵ These opportunities soon turned language education in the colonial context into a 'battle ground' of different views on language policies and 'native policies' in general. Missionaries, who had been active in the alphabetisation and literalisation of indigenous languages before the advent of formal colonialism, preferred preaching and teaching in African languages. Colonial administrators found it more difficult to develop a stringent language policy. On the one hand, they stressed the practical relevance of teaching German to Africans for upholding colonial rule; they pointed to the need for 'native labourers' and the economic advantage of a flawless communication between Germans and the Africans working for them. On the other hand, there were those who warned that teaching the language of the coloniser would undermine colonial rule as Africans would understand each and every German word; social and cultural barriers would be minimised. More intelligent individuals would be able to comprehend the fractures in German society (for example by reading the socialist *Vorwärts*). There were fears of a (new) African elite being created by colonial schools. In the end Africans would demand complete equality.¹⁴⁶ In 1909, Paul Rohrbach, no longer in colonial government employ but a well-known and well-connected publicist in Berlin, pointed with concern to Britain's Cape Colony where some "natives, in particular the talented Mischlinge", were able to read "European books and newspaper".¹⁴⁷ The 'strategic' advantage of speaking a language that was and remained incomprehensible to 'the natives' was undisputable – but the longer

¹⁴³ Jakob Zollmann, "Communicating colonial order. The police of German South-West-Africa (c. 1894–1915)", *Crime, History & Societies*, 15, 2011: 33-57 (45f.)

¹⁴⁴ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 120; cf. Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 196-201; Walgenbach, *Diskurse*: 212.

¹⁴⁵ Speitkamp, *Geschichte*: 191f.

¹⁴⁶ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 189 pointing to Eduard von Liebert, MdR, former Governor of GEA; Schaper, *Verhandlungen*: 301.

¹⁴⁷ "Welches Unheil aber entsteht, wenn Eingeborene, namentlich die begabten Mischlinge, es wirklich in einer europäischen Kultursprache soweit bringen, dass sie einem etwas gehobenen Unterricht halbwegs folgen, europäische Bücher und Zeitungen lesen können, das sehen wir jetzt an der unheimlichen Gärung unter den Eingeborenen in Britisch-Südafrika, vor allem im Kapland und in Natal", quoted in: Lindner, *Begegnungen*: 59f.

African children and adolescents were in German employ the better they learned the German language even without going to school. The 'detailed petition' written in German in 1905 by the Akawa about abuses by German administrators in Cameroon and sent to the Imperial Chancellor and the *Reichstag* (parliament) was the most staggering example how Africans could use their German language skills to challenge German rule.¹⁴⁸

Forty years ago the historian Henri Brunschwig pointed to the new group of Africans whose social status was based on individual qualities such as language skills rather than on (ethnic) heritage or identity. Brunschwig sets this rise of a new elite in the context of what he calls the 'ambiguous' term 'collaboration'. The modern state (including the colonial version) could offer more to children than just being their parents' successors. Instead, several career paths were more or less open to those who did not rebel, but mastered essential skills and were ready to employ them in different colonial contexts. Reading and writing were two of those skills essential for Africans to ascend the social ladder of colonial hierarchies: "*La collaboration commence avec l'alphabet et avec l'école du soldat.*"¹⁴⁹ The colonial state was thus caught in a dilemma: The administrators, "keenly aware of the weakness of their own authority" and the need for Africans to help them govern the colony, needed better trained 'native servants'.¹⁵⁰ The importance of loyal and literate African staff in maintaining colonial rule was indisputable; moreover, they were cheap in comparison to civil servants sent from Germany. On the other hand, there was the fear that these 'collaborators' could one day use the skills (which they learned in colonial schools) to challenge colonial rule. In the end, pragmatic arguments and everyday necessities prevailed. Africans who were willing to use their (German) language skills – whether they had acquired them in school or elsewhere – in support of the colonial government and the economy were "very much in demand."¹⁵¹

After 1907 German officials in GSWA were repeatedly ordered to "pay particular attention to the learning of native languages"¹⁵², and future settlers and those already present in GSWA were advised by colonial authors to learn indigenous languages at least to a rudimentary level in order to give orders to and understand their servants. At the same time, the colonial administration continued to require the missions to include German language instruction in their school curricula. With the enlargement of the colonial administration, former pupils of mission schools could assume low ranking clerical positions. After the wars, missionaries were pressed to increase their efforts as the administration was having difficulty finding adequate numbers of capable inter-

¹⁴⁸ Andreas Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel. Douala 1880 bis 1960*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1999: 51; see also Schaper, *Verhandlungen*: 208-211.

¹⁴⁹ Henri Brunschwig, "De la Résistance à l'Impérialisme Européen", *Journal of African History*, 15, 1974: 47-64 (59).

¹⁵⁰ Richard Roberts, "Review of 'Miers and Klein (Eds.), Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa, 1999'", *Journal of African History*, 41, 2000: 307.

¹⁵¹ Cohen, "Natives": 123 quoting Schlunk, *Schulen*: 125. cf. Kundrus, *Imperialisten*. 188-96.

¹⁵² NAN BSW 73, E 1 a 1, Gouv to BA Swakopmund, 30.6.11, Vice Governor Oskar Hintrager "erwartete [...], daß die Beamten auf die Erlernung der Eingeborenen-Sprachen ihr Augenmerk richten."

preters. 'Interpreter' was often a generic term for African boys and men working as clerks, messengers or servants with the governorate in Windhoek or the district, railway, customs or post administrations, the colonial army, the police or with private businessmen. Despite all efforts, the Governor complained in 1911 that interpreters were insufficiently trained. The district administrations were required to employ mostly those young Africans who had visited missionary schools and could read and write. Furthermore, German language instruction for African children in mission schools was to be increased.¹⁵³ The *Polizeidiener* (native police servants) in particular were required to speak proper German as they were among the first contact persons between the African population and their colonial administrators. Mission stations were therefore asked to educate boys specifically for later employment as police servants in the most important police stations.¹⁵⁴ Similar requests reached the Rhenish Mission from the post administration.¹⁵⁵ Throughout the period of German colonialism there was thus a strong connection between language skills and the (future) employment of African children.

Spaces. Rural and urban childhoods

The experience of the space surrounding them was another element which differentiated African from settler children. African children grew up in areas that had been known to their parents and their kin for generations, whereas settlers, many of whom had just arrived, rarely lost the sense of bewilderment and 'danger' vis-à-vis 'African nature'.¹⁵⁶ While urban areas were colonial spaces from the very beginning of German settlement, rural areas in GSWA developed into colonial spaces only over time as they were opened up with roads and railways and ruled over by soldiers, police, administrators and farmers.

In GSWA the regional distribution of white settlement was, as in most colonies, very uneven. Most farmers and urban settlers lived in the central region (Hereroland) where rain patterns were more favourable than in the (semi)arid south (Namaland), east (Kalahari), and west (Namib Desert). The entire north (Kaoko, Ovambo, Kavango and

¹⁵³ Cf. Zollmann, "Communicating": 47; Lindner, *Begegnungen*: 60 FN 119; NAN BSW 73, E 1 a 1, Gouv to BA Swakopmund, 30.6.11: Das Dolmetscherpersonal genüge "nicht den zu stellenden Anforderungen". "Als auszubildende Eingeborene sind [...] diejenigen, die als Kinder längere Zeit eine Missionsschule besucht haben und lesen und schreiben können" heranzuziehen.

¹⁵⁴ NAN ZBU 249, B I qu 4, Bl. 3, DA Bethanien to Gouv, 28.11.11; cf. Gesine Krüger, "Writing in images. Aspects of mission photography in Southern Africa", in: Wolfram Hartmann, (ed.): *Hues between Black and White. Historical Photography from Colonial Namibia 1860s to 1915*, Windhoek, Out of Africa, 2004: 241-258; Cohen, "Natives": 124.

¹⁵⁵ AELCRN, C I 1.25, Bl. 245, Protokoll der Missionars-Konferenz des Hererolandes, 2.5.09: "Im vorigen Jahre trat z.B. von Postdirektor Thomas die Anforderung an uns heran, fähige Knaben für höhere Dienstleistungen im Postfach (z.B. Schaltdienst für Eingeborene) zu stellen. Ähnliche Anforderungen sind schon öfter an uns herangetreten, denen wir z.T. entsprechen konnten und werden auch in Zukunft an uns herangetreten. Dieser Sache können wir uns nicht entziehen."

¹⁵⁶ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 138-162.

the Caprivi Strip) of the colony was closed to white settlement. The military did not maintain stations there; from 1909/10 two police border posts were established merely to underline German claims to these areas. The government refused to accept any responsibility for the life and property of those (e.g. itinerant traders) who chose to visit these (in part) densely populated areas.¹⁵⁷

Settler women and their children thus either lived in the urban areas where the *Bezirksamtssitz* (district administration) was located or they lived a rather solitary family life on the farms. The distances between these “islands of white”, as they have been described in colonial Kenya, were often huge.¹⁵⁸ A full day’s travel or even longer was not uncommon. While mission schools for African children were also opened in the north, mainly in Ovambo, the distribution of state schools mirrored the regional ‘development’ of white settlement in GSWA. Unsurprisingly, the first state school was opened in the capital Windhoek (1894). The improved infrastructure (building of railways and roads) facilitated the arrival of more women and families. As we have seen, additional schools followed in Gibeon, Swakopmund, Karibib, Grootfontein, Keetmanshoop, and Lüderitzbucht. For children arriving from farms, dormitories/boarding schools were set up. The expenses were partly covered by the administration; the remainder had to be borne by the parents.

The introduction of compulsory schooling in GSWA reflects the importance of space. Subsequently, the rural/urban distinction had a major influence on children’s lives.¹⁵⁹ Many teachers at the state schools complained of children not coming to school regularly. Apparently parents, particularly Afrikaners, were reluctant to send their children to school (because they needed them as workers, wanted to save money, did not want to have their children Germanised; or lacked interest in the formal education of their children – are all possible explanations). Bearing in mind the above-discussed goals of primary education in GSWA, Governor Friedrich von Lindequist decided in 1906 to make school obligatory for all children of ‘white’ parents living within a four kilometre radius of a school. This School Act applied to all children between the age of six and fourteen; guardians neglecting their duties faced a fine of up to 150 Marks or six weeks imprisonment. With the settler population growing in the farm areas further away from towns (and their state schools), in 1911 Governor Seitz extended the obligation to the entire colony, with the notable exception of those remote districts where there were no boarding schools. The spatial realities of the colony with its huge distances had to be taken into consideration, despite the importance accorded to educating young ‘German *Südwester*’. It is no accident that in 1912 of the 47 pupils at the Windhoek *Realschule*, only 17 were farmer children; the others being the children of civil servants, officers,

¹⁵⁷ Zollmann, *Herrschaft*: 306f.; see also Giorgio Miescher, *Namibia's Red Line. The History of a Veterinary and Settlement Border*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

¹⁵⁸ Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White. Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1987.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Tennfelde, *Arbeiter*: 312f.

doctors, merchants or other townsfolk, likely to return to Germany after a couple of years.¹⁶⁰

Among the differences between urban and rural 'white' childhoods up until the end of German rule in 1915 (and beyond) therefore would be the fact that one child had to go to school while the other did not. It is conceivable that most of the parents who were not obliged to send their children to school before or even after 1912 sent their children to friends or relatives in town or to a boarding school. For example, the daughter of a police officer who was on duty in a remote police station, lived with a neighbouring farmer family. It was also the task of the police to check that those children who had to go to school in fact did so and that they were immunised as required by law.¹⁶¹ In 1913 "out of a total of 775 pupils at least 732 (94 per cent) were attending government schools".¹⁶² Some Afrikaaner parents established their private schools as they were suspicious of German assimilation policies. However, it is equally plausible that, in the rural areas, there were not only African but also 'white' children in GSWA who never went to school. The lives and living standards of both were more similar here than in the urban setting.¹⁶³ To relate their history is evidently even more complex since 'the school' does not serve as a guiding 'template' for historians around which a rural child's biography can be reconstructed.

Settler children's life on southern African farms, whether they went to school (later) or not, would have to be told from a perspective other than that of the administrators with their educational target of maintaining the pure 'white race' (culturally) as far as possible. Two literary examples, from nearby countries and from a later period, shed light on the questions to be posed: Doris Lessing's autobiographical sketch *My Mother's Life/Impertinent Daughter* (1985) on her childhood in Southern Rhodesia and John Maxwell Coetzee's novel *Boyhood* (1997). Both authors – and others could be added here – relate very individual (yet completely unsentimental) accounts of how 'white' children perceived the relations with African workers and servants.¹⁶⁴ How attached did

¹⁶⁰ Kundrus, *Imperialisten*: 206f.; Walther, "Creating Germans": 36 on the School Act of October 20, 1906.

¹⁶¹ NAN BWI 160, L 2 i, vol.7, Police Station Hohenwarte an BAWindhuk, 9.2.15; cf. NAN.A424 – Private Accessions A. Heywood. Diary of Mrs. A.M. Gaerdes née Schlettwein, on her childhood at Farm Otjitambi before WWI.

¹⁶² Cohen, "Natives": 126 FN 62 referring to Moritz, *Schulwesen*: 46.

¹⁶³ Cf. Errante, "White skin": 28: "Of all the childhood experiences, the narratives of Whites growing up in [Mozambique's] rural areas are most similar to those of Blacks/persons of color growing up in rural areas." Quoting an interviewee: "Once a bush rat, always a bush rat."

¹⁶⁴ Derek Attridge, "Coetzee's 'boyhood', confession, and truth", *Critical Survey*, 11 (2), 1999: 77-93; Rita Barnard, "J. M. Coetzee's 'disgrace' and the South African pastoral", *Contemporary Literature*, 44 (2), 2003: 199-224; Joanna Scott, "Voice and trajectory. An interview with J.M. Coetzee", *Salmagundi*, 114/115, 1997: 82-102 (82): "Q: Let's begin with your early impressions of South Africa. What significant things in your education shaped you as a writer of fiction? A: If you mean my education, strictly speaking, if you mean what I learned in educational institutions, the answer must be, nothing. All that my schooling taught me was pity for children, or some of them – for those who could not cope with – what shall we call it? – the educational experience. Q: Why pity? What did those children lose because of their education? A: It's not so much a question of what they lost as of the deformations they underwent. The system was

the children feel to these women and men (and their children)? What balance of power did they experience and what was their own status within the political economy of the farm – and beyond? How did they perceive the immense spaces called ‘the farm’? How did they experience the (dangerous?) natural environment they grew up in and how did they react to the urban-rural divide, if at all? Did they experience a “charisma of place” in the colony?¹⁶⁵

A more recent analysis of “Patriarchy and paternalism on Afrikaaner farms in the Omaheke region, Namibia” in the 1990s by sociologist Renee Sylvain is also of value in examining children’s experiences on the farms. The overarching dominance of the farmer, the *baas* (boss), extends hierarchically to his son (or sons), the *kleinbaas*. On the other hand, the hierarchy did not prevent the children of the farmer and those of his workers growing up together. One of Sylvain’s interviewees, a farm-worker, remembered: “we were playing like we were all Bushmen. From them [the farmer’s children] I learned how to speak Afrikaans very well.” Such “[c]hildhood ‘playmate’ relationships are primarily a male experience”.¹⁶⁶ Traditionally, “on the farms, boy’s play is relegated to the outdoors, and girl’s play is largely housebound.” (A fact that does not excluded that girls interact with the house servants.) The worlds of farmer’s children and those of his workers “began to diverge radically” when, as one interviewee put it, “he started to go to school and I started working”. Once the former playmate returns from school and finally assumes *baaskap* (literally ‘Boss-ship, authority, dominance’) from his father, his playmates become his workers. “Unlike the farmer himself, his workers never acquire the economic independence or social status of ‘adulthood’.”¹⁶⁷ Differences and similarities to those experiences of class relations between farmers and their workers during German rule outlined in Sylvain’s findings rule have yet to be established. However, as can be seen from the previous sections, issues such as the infantilisation of Africans or the learning of languages through playmates, friendship or nannies have been mentioned in the German sources too.

When African (migrant) workers in the (new) colonial towns grew in numbers the above-mentioned notion of ‘foreignness’ in a ‘new’ space was turned upside down. While the majority of settlers were used to living in towns back in Germany, permanent settlements with more than 2,000 inhabitants were (for ecological reasons) almost unknown in the region of south-western Africa before 1880. The growing urbanisation of Africans in

authoritarian. It taught obedience. Obedience was, in a sense, its real subject-matter. Most it cowed; some it turned into bullies.”

¹⁶⁵ Errante, “White skin”: 25; on the history of farming in southern Africa cf. Charles van Onselen, “Paternalism and violence on the maize farms of the south-western Transvaal, 1900–1950”, in: Alan H. Jeeves and Jonathan Crush, (eds.), *White Farms, Black Labour. The State and Agrarian Change in Southern Africa, 1910–1950*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1997: 192-314; idem, *The Seed is Mine. The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985*, Cape Town, Philip, 1996.

¹⁶⁶ Renee Sylvain, “Bushmen, Boers and Baasskap. Patriarchy and paternalism on Afrikaaner farms in the Omaheke region, Namibia”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, 2001: 717-737 (731).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: 733.

GSWA, especially after the wars (1904–08), was intended by the colonial administration both for economic and security reasons. On the other hand, the social repercussions of these new settlement patterns caused grave problems for Africans and in turn for the colonial administration. This article is not the place to discuss the history of urbanisation in southern Africa; it suffices to point to the miserable living conditions for Africans in these “dual cities”.¹⁶⁸ The colonial administration attempted to spatially segregate the ‘black’ and ‘white’ population as neatly as possible – until 1915 without success, however. The ‘native compounds’ were squatter camps, unhealthy, stricken by alcohol abuse and poverty. Child mortality in Windhoek’s largest *Werft* with almost 4,000 inhabitants was high. The effects on children growing up in such an environment were generally devastating; however, lack of source material makes it difficult to better understand their experiences.¹⁶⁹ Colonial cities have been described as ‘vectors of modernisation’.¹⁷⁰ However, they brought not only new freedoms and new opportunities, but they could also have a destructive impact on individuals and their social environment, including the rupturing of family structures. The wars in GSWA and their aftermath led to a “general crisis” in African societies. Historians have spoken of a “decline of the social order”. Customary structures of social control lost their influence and the new racist hierarchies offered no equivalent. Historian Helmut Bley mentioned that Africans “could count less on one another than at any time before.”¹⁷¹

Contemporary German complaints were very common not only about disobedience, but also about ‘de-culturalised’ African children and adolescents in the colonial towns. The reasons for this phenomenon were sought neither in the social ruptures the wars had caused, nor in the mission schools, but in ‘modern’ town life and the way African servants were employed. In 1914, the colonial newspaper *Südwestbote* disapproved of businessmen (meaning Jews without mentioning it explicitly) who allegedly employed ‘natives’ for unproductive work in ‘stores’ and other services. At the same time, the newspaper deplored modern influences on children and youth.

It occurs that 10-year old boys can't distinguish between ram and bock, but know how to whistle 'la Marseillaise' or pieces from Wagner's operas. Here we are. 10 years ago Herero and Bergdamara were cattle farmers, their thinking and longing was focused on cattle. Today, the new generation of natives has no idea of cattle and prefers urban living with all its distractions (football and tennis are already desired games) over farm life. When Missis needs rolls for 5

¹⁶⁸ Horst Gründer and Peter Johanek, “Vorbemerkung”, in : eadem, (eds.): *Kolonialstädte – Europäische Enklaven oder Schmelztiegel der Kulturen ?*, Münster, Lit, 2001: vii-viii (vii).

¹⁶⁹ On the development of Windhoek’s “Werft” see Zollmann, *Herrschaft*: 219-258.

¹⁷⁰ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Ville coloniale et formation de l'état. Le cas de l'Afrique noire”, in: Hélène D'Almeida-Topor and Janos Riesz, (eds.), *Rencontres franco-allemandes sur l'Afrique. Lettres, sciences humaines et sociales, Group 'Afrique noire'*; Cahier 13, 1992: 11-25 (19; 22 f.); cf. also idem, *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara. From the Origins to Colonization*, Princeton, NJ, Wiener, 2005.

¹⁷¹ All quotes from Helmut Bley, *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Hamburg, Leibniz, 1968: 293, “kulturelle und Gesamtkrise”; “Verfall der sozialen Ordnung”; dass die Afrikaner sich “aufeinander viel weniger verlassen [konnten], als das je zuvor der Fall war”.

pence, or the bachelor opens a bottle of beer, the Bambuse needs to be on the spot.¹⁷²

This final quotation, in all its biased perspective of African ways of life and customs, in all its racist ignorance, summarises a number of contemporary issues that this article explores. Disputes raged over questions such as what a 'perfect native' should know about his own culture and the settler culture (cattle or operas). How should he or she be educated (if at all)? In what space should an African live his life as a colonial servant (urban or rural)? For what kind of labour should he or she be used (looking after cattle or opening beer bottles)? And how can the settler community influence his behaviour (playing football)? Interestingly the journalist's description of a "disintegration of the traditional milieu" did not mention missionary educational efforts (nor did he point to the effect of the [deplorable] social conditions of the urban environment).¹⁷³ However, by emphasising the 'mixing' and sharing of cultures (which he deplores) the author brings another actor back into the game: African children and youths who had their own ideas and possibilities for integrating their different experiences in the new colonial spaces.

Conclusion

Historians judge which aspects of history are more worthy of analysis than others. After all, they are (more often than not) free to decide on their subject matter. Thus, the question of the relative worthiness of the various aspects of the history of GSWA (1884–1915) has already been answered: Anyone with a slight knowledge of the historiography of that period is aware that questions of political, administrative, military, and missionary history stand in the foreground for most historians of GSWA. During the past century these focuses have had their own history – and change is evident. What may once have been considered the most unexpected or irrelevant subject has now found its historian. Subjects such as sexual relations in the colony, the German fear of 'going native', or the history of regions that – from a colonial perspective – were completely peripheral, have been analysed over the past decade.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² *Der Südwestbote*, 11. Jg. Nr. 1, 25.1.1914: 1: "oder daß gewisse Leute machen ein Geschäftchen?" [the grammatically incorrect inversion of the verb is an ethnic joke that points to Jews from Eastern Europe who were blamed to dominate the retail market in GSWA]. "Es kommt sogar vor, daß 10jährige Bengels nicht Hammel und Kapater zu unterscheiden wissen, aber mit Schwung die Marseillaise oder Stücke aus Wagnerschen Open zu pfeifen verstehen. Soweit haben wir's gebracht. Vor 10 Jahren noch war Herero und Bergdamara der Viehzüchter und -Halter, ihr [D]enken und Begehren aufs Vieh gerichtet. Heute ein heranwachsendes Geschlecht von Eingeborenen, das keine Ahnung vom Vieh hat, und dem einsamen Leben auf der Farm das städtische mit all seinen Abwechslungen (Fußball und Tennis sind jetzt schon begehrte Spiele) vorziehen. Wenn die Missis für 5 Pfennig Brödchen benötigt, der Jungeselle eine Flasche Bier entkorkt, so muss der Bambuse zur Stelle."

¹⁷³ Brunschwig, "Résistance": 59, "la désagrégation du milieu coutumier"

¹⁷⁴ Cf. e.g. Wolfram Hartmann, *Intimate Matters. Men and Women on the Colonial Frontier. Hereroland 1840s to 1905*, Ph.D. thesis, New York, Columbia University, 2002; Felix Axter, "Die Angst vor dem Verkaffern – Politiken der Reinigung im deutschen Kolonialismus", *WerkstattGeschichte*, 39, 2005: 39-53;

Historians of GSWA are freeing themselves from the focus on the colonial state, but at the same time historiography must not lose sight of the state's impact on the everyday life of people in GSWA. The history of children in GSWA can serve as an example. Here, as in other colonial contexts "authorities [...] did not cast their disquieted eyes on adults alone. Children were the focal point of their concerns about white poverty and politics, about sex and subversion, about the preferability of white endogamy over mixed marriages."¹⁷⁵

While children – outside the school – were seemingly distant from the colonial administrators, the latter certainly had a say in their history as the sections above have shown: The administration tried to influence demographics by attempting to induce more German women to settle in the colony and by providing them with a better medical infrastructure. The German colonial state invested heavily in (boarding) schools, but given conflicting interests and intentions its administrators found it exceedingly difficult to formulate a coherent policy as to what the aim of colonial education for German children should be. A sense of belonging to GSWA was to be instilled into the children, but their estrangement from Germany was to be avoided. Historian Jens Jaeger thus rightly speaks of the necessity to combine "the concepts of *Heimat* and colonial history [...]. Although the colonies are often described as a contrasting foil to the formation of imperial identity, the *Heimat* discourse is rarely related to the colonial situation." Colonial (school) policies and the means used for their realisation, however, were intended to "create variations of *Heimat* in order to prove that the colonies were an integral part of Germany." The debates about German children in the colonies as well as the sheer fact of their upbringing in GSWA underlined that for contemporaries "the possibility of a distant *Heimat* in the colonies appeared imaginable and obvious."¹⁷⁶

The goal of bringing German settler children from rural areas into the orbit of the colonial state in order to prevent them from 'going native' and to instil in them the desired sense of belonging to this *Heimat* is clearly discernible from the number of new schools and the money spent on dormitories. These state institutions were a response to concerns about the "sittliche Verwahrlosung" (moral dilapidation) of children which were, however, common enough not only in GSWA, but also in metropolitan Germany.¹⁷⁷ 'Dangers' loomed large not only in the rural areas, where parents, so it was feared, were less concerned with 'creating Germans' in GSWA; also in urban areas German children could become victims of parental neglect, as defined by administrators. (Older) children saw what was going on in bars and hostels, they learned about guns early on, spoke 'kitchen German', and entered 'native compounds'. Parents did not always prevent them from befriending the 'wrong' children and learning 'bad' habits. Once more

Lorena Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism. A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870s–1950s*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 112.

¹⁷⁶ Jaeger, "Colony": 476, 489; he analyses these questions from a metropolitan perspective, but the same holds true if seen from the colony itself.

¹⁷⁷ Mellies, *Modernisierung*: 73.

historians need to consider that “[c]hildren [...] are far from passive creatures; they made demands on their parents and parents are forced to operate within the context of these demands.”¹⁷⁸ Complaining about parental “neglect”, colonial administrators sought to intervene, but were only moderately successful.¹⁷⁹ In education, as is often the case in other policy areas too, administrators found it not only hard to define exact aims; also the implementation of policies on the colonial ground often did not show the intended results.

German officials were less concerned about the education of African children, a task left to missionaries. However, with the growth of the administration the need for more Africans with a good command of German also increased, and officials pushed the missionaries to improve language instruction; irrespective of the doubts some had as to the advisability of cultivating German-speaking among Africans. Considering conditions in Germany, officials accepted the employment of African children on farms and other businesses and, soldiers in particular, were not shy about employing *Bambusen* themselves. Paternalistic concerns about the ‘de-culturalisation’ of African children were uttered in a pseudo-conservative parlance, without, however, digging too deeply for the root causes.

To research the ways in which girls and boys were born into and grew up in GSWA’s colonial context means also going beyond the question of the colonial state’s influence on children and their education. However, as noted above, the lack of non-state sources is a serious obstacle in this respect. The letters of the Rohrbach family offer glimpses of settler children’s life outside state institutions, but additional source material is needed (and will certainly be found) to learn about the experiences of a more representative sample of German children in GSWA. The same holds true for African children, be it in rural or urban environments. The studies undertaken so far on other colonial settings, for example on the Dutch empire, and based also on memoirs and other private documents,¹⁸⁰ can provide ‘guidance’ for further research on the German colonies; thereby also opening the opportunity for comparative perspectives that will enable historians to better recognize path dependencies (if any) and to answer the question in what aspects the German case may have resembled or differed from other national contexts.

The relationships between Africans and settler children poses particular questions and serves as a reminder of the dichotomies caused by the colonial state. Certainly, officials as high up as Governor Seitz were concerned about German children being ‘too rude’ (in

¹⁷⁸ Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children. Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983: 270, quoted in: Habermas, “Parent-child relationships”: 46.

¹⁷⁹ See Walther, “Creating Germans”: 42; cf. *ibid.*: 34: “There was one instance when a thirteen year-old boy, August Martin, was expelled from the colony because it was feared he might exercise an unwanted influence on his classmate. It was reported that Martin lied, stole, and used lewd and inappropriate language. One of the explanations for his behavior was contact with indigenes”; Grier, “Child labor”: 17.

¹⁸⁰ The chapter “A sentimental education” in Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*: 112-139 is certainly still a leading example.

modern terms 'too racist') to Africans. In this respect, colonial education, be it transmitted via parents, schools, or the examples provided by other German members of colonial society, seems to have been 'effective'; providing the children with a firm sense of superiority over Africans, be they children or adults. On the other hand, concerns about German children learning African languages or about German children who might become 'too friendly' with Africans and might 'go native' without state-controlled schools, indicate that colonial hierarchies or dichotomies were at no point in time 'secured' or stable. All these skilfully erected borders between different spaces proved more permeable than anticipated: Africans worked in German homes, children played with children – no matter what their skin colour. When policy on children is said to be located in the area of conflict between "'protection' and 'liberation'",¹⁸¹ the history of children in GSWA, with its colonial particularities, shows that families and state authorities often struggled to protect the child from being 'immersed' in Africa and from losing his or her 'Germanness'. The concern expressed in such policies brings to the forefront once again the statement: "the way society looks at the child is the way it looks upon itself".¹⁸²

The history of education is overwhelmingly a history of adults thinking and writing about children. The history of children and childhood needs to be different from this in so far as children stop being the objects and become the subjects of the narrative and agents of the history being analysed.¹⁸³ The fact, however, that there is hardly a child's name mentioned in the colonial archive is merely an indicator of the general challenge in depicting individuality in this history. It is only to a limited extent that the history of children in GSWA is characterised by dramatic contrasts which can be analysed as struggles between conflicting interests or individual personalities (as is typical for political or military history). Similarly it cannot be narrated in the form of a modern institutional history (as it is typical for administrative or missionary history). Only insights into the variety of individual experiences, however, can bring about the openness needed by historians (and their readers) for the contingent, the unique, the unforeseen that eclipses generalisations about children in GSWA.

¹⁸¹ Kerchner, "Kinderrechte": 61, "im Spannungsfeld von 'Schutz' und 'Befreiung'", referring to the sociologist Kurt Lüscher; cf. also Gebhardt, *Angst*: 14: "So macht es einen gravierenden Unterschied, ob eine Kultur glaubt, Kinder für die Welt zurecht zu müssen, oder ob es dem Kind selbst freisteht, die Welt zu erkunden und nach seinen Vorstellungen mit zu gestalten."

¹⁸² Gebhardt, *Angst*: 12: "Man könnte sagen, wie die Gesellschaft auf das Kind blickt, so blickt sie auf sich selbst."

¹⁸³ See Heywood, *History*: 4; Hermsen, *Faktor Religion*: 21f; Stargardt, "German childhoods": 12, warning historians of the "danger" of shunning "the child's experience completely in the name of methodological sophistication."

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