

EDITOR'S PREFACE

The papers in this volume were all presented at the workshop GLOBALIZATION AND CHANGES IN CULTURES OF SURVIVAL AND CARE, jointly organized by the Institute of African Studies and scholars from Bergen University, October 10-12, 2001. They cover a wide range of topics and issues from different disciplinary perspectives.

The first paper, by Kari Waerness, is on the ethics of care and the social research and political theory which have been developed around this subject in northern academia. She first poses the basic question: what kind of social research needs to be promoted in view of the tremendous challenges that problems of globalization and changes in the cultures of survival and care represent for all the world? She discusses this very important question in the light of her three decades of pioneering research on the topic of care carried out in the context of a well developed Scandinavian welfare state. She stresses the need to develop knowledge which will be an influential tool in creating better care policies and practices and which will among other things counteract the potentially dominant and powerfully influential market oriented discourse which stresses quantifiable efficiency and carer productivity. Of course, theoretical discourse on care takes us into the heart of feminist scholarship and gender debates and of necessity into considerations of power. She reminds us of her concept of the rationality of caring, which has been found fruitful in empirical research on public care systems and calls our attention ultimately to the need to reach consilience among the major disciplinary approaches.

The second paper, by John Anarfi, clearly points to the link between the globalizing forces of international labour migration, sexual vulnerability and health risks in the West African Sub Region. He calls attention quite graphically to the consequences of this wide scale spatial mobility of populations both female and male in terms of the speed and directions of spread of sexually transmitted disease and death in the region. The link between labour movements and health risks is illuminated, a link which was already clear more than a decade ago but which international and national organizations chose to neglect. Professor Anarfi's message is very clear. These linkages and risks will continue to be ignored at our peril. Moreover labour, gender and health issues are seen to be inextricably linked and requiring multifaceted, holistic solutions.

The third paper by Christine Oppong also looks at the impacts of globalizing economic and demographic transformations, in terms of their impacts on gender roles and family systems. The disruptions and conflicts caused and the reproductive/productive squeeze increasingly suffered by women in their child bearing years are viewed as impacting the quality of care that mothers and other care takers are giving to their children. This is perceived as having disastrous consequences for infants in terms of under nutrition. Levels of under - nutrition in infants in Africa are high and even rising at the present time, even in countries at peace not war and as yet not heavily affected by the scourge of HIV/AIDS. The aim of the paper is to motivate more researchers to carry out the needed studies of carer - infant interactions and contexts, which could serve as bases for more effective policies and programs to enhance infant development.

The fourth paper by Albert Awedoba is about health seeking and coping strategies in onchocerciasis afflicted communities in Ghana. He notes how impacts of globalization include an eclecticism, an ingenious blending of diverse approaches and traditions in health seeking behaviour as people are influenced not only by indigenous knowledge but also new information from various sources from far away as well as near. Effective choices are seen to be based on knowledge, perceived efficacy, consultations with others, personal

experience, location of facility and cost effectiveness of seeking help from a particular facility.

The fifth paper is about tree planting in the Chiana district in the Kasena-Nankani area in the Upper East Region of Ghana and about care and use of trees which are of course crucial to human survival in so many ways. Kojo Amanor examines environmental discourses and women's empowerment. He notes that a major rhetorical emphasis of post-Rio global environmental programs has been on promoting community participation, especially of women and respect for indigenous knowledge and traditional institutions, and with an emphasis on building local capacity to manage programs. In contrast he found that environmental programs may rather erode local capacities to manage the environment by imposing programs on them that do not make sense in local contexts, eroding local knowledge. Local community groups become clients of environmental coalitions and rely on their inputs. Yet he maintains there is only a very minor trickle down of resources to the communities and community groups. He finally urges the need to recognize environments as anthropogenic and to understand the linkages between humans and their environments, making the natural assets, not foreign technologies, the basis for building new strategies on how to care for the environment, integrating the production and livelihood needs of the local producers.

Gro Lie's paper is based on long term, in depth work in East Africa. It is about how people talk about their experiences of the HIV epidemic and the way metaphors are used in response to HIV/AIDS. It is based on a multidisciplinary qualitative study. Metaphors in vogue included social engineering and war as well as building and the family. The paper comes to life with a vivid description of interactions in Lusaka where several women had become concerned about the care of the growing number of AIDS orphans. As they say they are planting the seeds of love in these children so that they will grow up to be caring persons. Many eyes were wet as Professor Lie closed her presentation.

In the seventh paper Kodjo Senah writes of globalization and health care delivery in Ghana. He describes the commodification of health care in Ghana, examining historical developments from the colonial system onwards. As he notes, the post-colonial health status of the nation is not encouraging. He recounts the inadequate financing of the health system and the impacts of user fees on potential patients. He remarks that the commodification of health care has led to the fetishizing of pharmaceuticals. Drugs are widely available and often used without adequate supervision, leading in some cases to illness and death. In conclusion he emphasizes that the false sense of security emanating from the prevalence of drugs has reduced their impetus to mobilize for promotion of environmental health and sanitation. Yet prevention of diseases by social improvements and environmental management is a more promising avenue for enhancing health than merely increasing expenditure on medical technology. It is argued that major determinants of health are likely to be nutritional status and quality of the environment, but in globalizing the health care system he notes that this seems to have been forgotten.

In the last paper, Misonu Amu calls attention to the potential of songs and music as vehicles for important health messages and underlines the potential of entertainment for education.

Christine Oppong,
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