

ARTFUL TACTICS: BECOMING AN ARTIST IN WESTERN KENYA

By

Betsy Ferrer Okello

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ABSTRACT

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Kenya, like many African countries, has a large youth population with high rates of literacy but also high rates of unemployment and few livelihood opportunities. Growing numbers of child nurses, street children, ethnic gangs, and youth workers in *Jua Kali* (the informal economy or “hot sun”) demonstrate that Kenyan youth increasingly take on adult roles and responsibilities and have fewer resources to draw on for support. Although more students have been able to access formal education through the provision of free primary and secondary education, they face obstacles to formal employment. Therefore, many youth seek out jobs in the informal economy and remain stuck in a liminal state of youthhood – unable to attain adult status.

In its national policies and system of education, the Kenyan state positions youth as both the problem and the solution. Youth energy and potential, if not contained, may lead to violence and idleness; thus, youth should participate in education, empowerment, and employment. These portrayals are reinforced by the media and many youth hold themselves accountable for their success or failure. Despite significant economic, political, and social constraints, youth are not without agency. The goal of this dissertation is to document and analyze how Luo students use tactics in their everyday practices to learn fine art, build social networks that enable them to join an artistic community of practice, and transition into work in the informal sector.

This dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Kisumu, Kenya from 2011 to 2013 centered on Imani Art School, a three year, non-formal art college founded in 1987. Imani means faith in Swahili, and its founders chose that name to reflect the school’s

purpose: to provide training in fine art to youth from the community of Nyalenda who cannot afford to pay high fees and have had difficulty accessing higher education. Imani is the only art school in Western Kenya and is considerably more affordable than art academies in Nairobi. However, Imani constantly struggles to resolve its central contradiction: how to make education affordable, accessible, and flexible but also legitimate, recognized, and sustainable.

This dissertation's theoretical framework draws on de Certeau's notions of strategies and tactics and space and place and Lave and Wenger's classification of learning as legitimate, peripheral participation. Lave and Wenger argue newcomers through legitimate peripheral participation become part of a community of practice transforming themselves as well as the communities. Using this frame, I analyze how current and former students interact with each other, become participants in the community of practice of local artists in Kisumu, and build networks to help them transition into work.

I use de Certeau's ideas about strategies and tactics and space and place as a lens to explore multiple ways of knowing and making do that young Luo students employ as they become artists and adults. de Certeau's ideas allow me to ethnographically detail what happens to these young students in the process of becoming artists – to record and analyze their production of material culture in the form of visual arts, poetry, playmaking, and storytelling. These examples of material culture provide evidence of youth's multiple ways of knowing and making do as they navigate the liminal space of Imani Art School and the marketplace to create a meaningful life for themselves.

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Ezekiel Odiour Okello and to all of the current and former artists trained at Imani Art School.

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Johnson Odwuor

I¹ went to primary school in Nairobi. My dad died when I was going to join secondary; I was around 13. Before my dad died, I wasn't that serious with anything because during that time everything was just nice. Now I started seeing the way people say welcome to Africa. So, my father died, and I continued with my school. I really started working hard, so much that I had a chance. I didn't go to a very good school in secondary. I went to a public school also in Nairobi, and I did my O levels there. In my school they didn't have art, so it was majorly self-taught. I could just draw daily. I was so good in biology drawing the heart, so people were encouraging me, you should do this, but I didn't know anything about art. The only thing I knew was pencil work. I completed secondary in 2007.

Between secondary and Imani, I enrolled myself in graphic design. I applied for fine art, but they told me I didn't have the grades. So they told me I could do graphics. During the end of my certificate course, I would choose graphics or fine art. But I didn't complete my course because of lack of fees. They told me I couldn't do final exams because I hadn't cleared my fees. So it was like I didn't even do graphics there because at the end of the day I didn't have anything. So, I had to wait a little bit. During that period I said as an artist I cannot just sit idle, so I decided to go to Kisumu. I came to Imani in the middle of 2010.

I was just perusing the daily papers and then I saw this story about this art school, they had a feature about art in Kisumu. So I decided maybe this could be cheap, and I saw it was run by the Catholic missionaries. I had already applied for Buro Buro Institute of Fine Arts in Nairobi also run by the Catholic missionaries. But, the fees were so much that I had to let go of

¹ The students' stories were constructed from two sets of semi-structured interviews I conducted

that opportunity. I went to Kisumu to find the art school. That was the main reason I went there. I didn't even know anyone in Kisumu.

After finding the school, the second hurdle started. There was no place for me to live. I didn't have relatives in Kisumu; I didn't have anyone. So I applied, and I was going to travel back that evening. There was this woman, I didn't even know her, I was just sitting in the stage and she was selling groundnuts, so I bought some. Then we started talking and I told her the reason why I'm there. She told me she also comes from Nyalenda and she'll see. So I left her with my contacts. I went to Nairobi, and I had already lost hope again because I waited for another two months. I thought, let me go and try to do another course. I even went to a technical school now because I was desperate. I had applied to do welding, metal work. At least I wanted to use my hands. I didn't want to wear suits; I hate suits. I had already paid the registration money, and I was going to look for money to buy overalls so I could start school the following term. But one day this woman calls me back, "Oh, we have found a place!" I went to Kisumu and I paid for the house, I bought a mattress, and by Monday I was going to school. That's how I started art school.

When I came to Imani at first, I was really down. I couldn't imagine that I could become a painter. There were some former students who graduated much earlier. I had never sketched on a canvas. So I was wondering how can a man do that without sketching? The level of confidence with them was there. Other students have really helped me, and Steven has helped me too. When I came here, he was the first person who put the confidence in me that I can become an artist. Because of the fellow artists and the artistic environment, the experiences, I really improved in Imani actually.

The batch that graduated recently, they are painters in Kisumu town here. They're just painters and they really inspire me. When I pass there, I see, I get encouragement. I just feel I can do it. I can also do it. They're earning a living because they're not doing any other jobs, just the brush. James, I've visited him in his studio. He's working seriously. I've seen him starting painting until the end, the techniques he uses. I've seen all of it. And also Victor, I've visited him so many times. If you don't find somebody to mentor you, you never learn art.

The first thing Imani gave me was self-confidence. You enter Imani, if you are the shiest person, at the end of the day your confidence is so high. Also the unity that is there in Imani, you saw love everywhere around. Even if somebody pisses you off in the morning, before evening, you've already mended fences. You go home happy. That's why I enjoy being around artists. Artists never get pissed off or hold grudges with you. The open policy allows you to express yourself. You're an artist. You're told: express yourself. So you find through performing classes, the way you are handled, you are given a chance to talk your mind. Also during Bible sharing, you are told share with us the word, so that gives confidence to talk before people. So those kinds of things really help us to express ourselves and really helped the majority of us.

When I was in art school, I used to weave. I was being given a few shillings here and there. The guy who taught me, I used to go to his place so he could help me weave and then he would give me a few shillings. So that's how I used to pay my fees. In Kisumu I stayed with other art students. We were neighbors, three of us. The environment was an artistic environment. We were usually painting, and we even influenced the landlord there. He used to buy my paintings. Sometimes I would give him a painting and he'd say this month, don't pay.

When I started art school, my uncle used to support me. He said, "You're in art school. I'll support your college education." One day he decided to come to the art school to see if this

kid really does go to art school. It brought some issues. He thought I was doing survey work like my dad who was a surveyor. I used to say “I draw.” They used to see my dad drawing, so they thought maybe I was also doing land surveying. But what they saw was different so they said ah, if I decide to do something serious one day, they’ll decide what to do. But I decided, I won’t stop now. I started seriously weaving to pay rent, and my mom sometimes if she got a few coins here and there she could send them to me and say, “Push with that kidogo.”² That’s how I pushed for the years in Kisumu.

My relatives don’t understand art. First of all, you have to explain what you really do because to them the only art they knew was sign writing, the majority of people around here just know art is sign writing. “Oh, you just write on walls.” And then I said, “No, I do fine art.” Some people say you just went to study things like hobbies. People find art like a hobby here. “Oh, you could have done accounting and that thing you do is just a hobby.” I told them, “I don’t want to do that as a hobby, that’s my profession. I love this thing to death.” So it has been really difficult for me, even people say that kid is not serious. He just jokes around with his life. He just wants to do art. But I say I must make a living out of art because people have made livings out of art. So I’ll keep on. I’ll never leave art, no matter what.

When I finished, I’ve never thought of being employed. Never. I even wanted to leave school during standard eight when I was merely 13 years. I wanted to go and paint. So I’ve never thought of being employed. I just want to paint. I was born to do this thing. I don’t do it for money. I just do it. To me, that’s my only option, to go and to start my own business. The government says self-employment is the new thing. The major challenge is unemployment right now. Even the government told young people right now there are no jobs. You have to think of a

² Swahili: a little. In Swahili, people use the term “push” to get by using little money. The staple food most people eat is called *sukumawiki*, a kale. The literal translation is to push the week.

way to create jobs yourself as an individual. Right now in our country white collar jobs are finishing. One day even graduates will want our odd jobs because there are no white-collar jobs. That's why I did art. No one will ever steal my job from me.

Youths were so much thinking of white-collar jobs before but few youths thought art could feed them; especially in Nairobi, very few people can imagine to do arts. Maybe if they come from very bad backgrounds, like in the ghettos. That's whereby they can think, "Oh, I'm also talented." You can find people who are not from those very hard, very bad backgrounds can never think of doing other jobs. Also the majority of us are youths. So even if one job appears, there are 1,000 youths wanting that job so you find who you know makes it better. You'll find that the municipality police are harassing you all the time, so they're not favorable to youths. You'll find youths trying to start a small business, but again those people want bribes. Every time they come, "Give us something small." You'll find that environment very difficult.

Right now I'm in Nairobi again. I came after finishing my art school days. I decided to come back to Nairobi to try and settle myself in the art field. When I came, my mom was the one who could have given me support but she relocated to the rural village so she's based there. We are four -- me and three others -- so we are a total of four. I'm the third born in that family. Even my brother is also struggling to get by. Currently in Nairobi I'm living with a friend. I told him the situation and he told me, "Okay just come. If you peak, it's nice. If you don't peak again, it's also nice."³ At least I gave it a trial. He's also working doing odd jobs. So when we are there we have to do half/half of everything like pay rent, do whatever. And also because my mom nowadays is at home, I have to at least help her kidogo. I usually send her something kidogo nowadays. I can say food will do for me right now. Food and also I'll say credit and materials.

³ Johnson's friend told him this to alleviate pressure: If he makes it as an artist, great. If not, they can still stay together and it will be okay.

But I'm sure one day I will establish myself. So here I'm just doing odd jobs right now. I paint houses, do construction just to earn and I also brought some weaving with me. So I want to start weaving before it's too late, but the problem is now getting the site. It has really stressed me up for awhile. I haven't really seriously started painting. It has just been a month since I came, so I haven't started really seriously painting.

I'm part of this group in our neighborhood for the youths. After school we started the group. When I came back, I found people had already left, some people went to their rural homes, so my plan right now was I really want to use that group to put an art center for the youth. Art can really help the young people right now. So, I had already talked to the chairman. We can engage ourselves in artistic activities, even to transform our place. That's currently my plan: to transform that thing to become an artistic youth group where artistic youth with different talents can come together.

Its purpose was to empower us financially after school. We wanted to open car washing activities, football, places where people can watch football, so we were engaging even in garbage collection in our neighborhood. The majority of youths in Nairobi are currently unemployed, and that means they are just idle in the neighborhoods. Even in Kisumu, that was the main problem I saw, there are so many youths around and they were just idle. So if there were an art center where youths can engage in artistic activities, you can't even know. Maybe that youth who's drunk, he's even a good spoken word artist, even a good musician, he's never been given a chance. He doesn't even know where to go. Art can do that to people. And also political purposes, instead of engaging ourselves in some unlawful activities whereby there's a lot of tribalism because of politics, we can express our feelings through our art. For example, cartoonists, they can express political opinions because of art just by their caricatures. They will

express themselves, instead of doing drugs or engaging in criminal activities, they can come together.

Youth right now are the backbone of the society. Because the people born in the 80s and 90s are the majority right now who are unemployed. You find the people born from 70s, 60s and 50s are older people. So the people born from 80s are the people who will drive this economy. The development of this country depends on them. Without them being involved, this country will just fall apart. If this country develops, the middle class goes up, people will start appreciating art. We should not force people to appreciate art. Art is not for everyone. Ever since the early days of Van Gogh, they never used to paint in the street for just anyone. They used to paint in the president's place, the king's, even for Michelangelo. So I once told my friend that, in this country, if one day God helps this country so we have a larger middle class, the majority of us artists will get employed as in we'll just be at least somewhere. People will appreciate art.

Chapter One

Youth and Becoming

Johnson's story reflects the stories of many youth growing up in Kenya who seek out livelihoods without familial and financial support. Without such support, many youth find themselves "idle in the neighborhoods" with few options to earn a meaningful, stable living as they become adults. In response to such conditions, politicians, the public, the media, and scholars have become increasingly concerned about the state of youth, particularly in Africa as the world's youngest continent. Given recent developments such as the Arab Spring, student movements, and youth participation in armed conflicts, many programs, policies, and practices have been created to channel youthful energy and potential to more productive ends. Youth are seen as both the problem and its solution through empowerment, education, and engagement. However, political, educational, and economic exclusion have made youth skeptical of formal institutions and their ability to achieve adulthood through these structures. Thus, many youth remain stuck in a state of ambiguity or "endless liminality" (Sommers, 2012, p. 3).

In the summer of 1997 as an undergraduate anthropology student, I had my first experience with Imani Art School, a non-formal art college situated within the informal settlement area of Nyalenda in Kisumu. I lived and volunteered in Nyalenda, primarily helping with the nursery school. However, I began to interact with young art students since I lived on the same compound as the art school. In contrast with dominant media and government discourses that portray youth as "idle" and problematic, in working with and observing these young artists I was struck by how hard they worked with limited resources to earn a living through art. Seeking to understand this contradiction, I wanted to explore the ways in which youth make use of informal spaces, activities, and their own social networks to produce and sell art and make do amidst difficult circumstances.

This dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Kisumu, Kenya from 2011 to 2013. The bulk of this work centered on Imani Art School, a three year, non-formal art college founded in 1987 as part of the larger NGO - the Kisumu Community Project (KCP). Imani means faith in Swahili, and its founders chose that name to reflect the school's purpose: to provide training in fine art to youth from the community of Nyalenda who cannot afford to pay high fees and have had difficulty accessing higher education. Imani is the only art school in Western Kenya and is considerably more affordable than art academies in Nairobi. However, Imani constantly struggles to resolve its central contradiction: how to make education affordable, accessible, and flexible but also legitimate, recognized, and sustainable.

It is difficult to provide exact enrollment figures since daily attendance fluctuates due to the flexible nature of the school. The maximum number of students Imani can support is 18. During the period of my fieldwork, there were as many as 18 students on some days and as few as four on others. The age of the students ranges from 18 to 24. The students are predominately male. Only two female art students attended regularly during my fieldwork and far fewer females than males have graduated from the school. Although the school does not keep track of their alumni and has irregular record keeping, Father Bart (the school's founder) estimates approximately 150 artists have been trained through Imani. There are seven graduates who operate stalls in town and who were frequently mentioned by current students as influences and inspiration. In total, I interviewed 22 current and former students of Imani, Steven (the Luo head art teacher and administrator) and Father Bart (the Dutch founder of the school).

Relevant Literature: Youth, Schooling, and Society

Much of the literature on youth around the world focuses on how -- even as they resist the structures that constrain them -- they end up reproducing their own circumstances. This

social reproduction perspective lays out a clear and convincing explanation of how schools reproduce inequality (e.g., Willis, 1981; MacLeod, 2009). Students enter school with different levels of cultural capital based on class. Schools privilege upper class students by operating under the norms and rules of their discourse. The dominant discourse is the language of instruction that allows upper class children to succeed and mystifies lower class children who cannot understand the code (Bourdieu, 1991; Delpit, 1988). Thus schools mirror the social hierarchy of society and ensure that the upper class retains a hold on power. Social reproduction theorists demonstrate how schools exacerbate inequality through legitimizing meritocracy, reproducing class-consciousness, and creating a correspondence between school and work.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) showed how schools use the concept of meritocracy to obscure their reproductive function. Schools perpetuate the belief that success in school and beyond is based on merit, that is, students' cognitive ability, and not on ascribed characteristics such as race, gender, or class. Thus – the logic goes -- students have equal opportunity to pursue academic goals. The individual accomplishments of students who succeed despite challenging personal experiences are essential to the maintenance of this narrative. Those who succeed possess the greatest cognitive ability, and thus deserve their success.

However, Bowles and Gintis ignored the ways students used agency to resist this socialization. Reproduction is not automatic or pre-determined, but instead mediated through culture. Cultural production focuses on agency, conceptualizing culture as a process, performance, and practice (Foley, 2011). As Willis (1981) argues, this cultural production has three characteristics: symbolic systems and articulations including language, physical interactions, attitudes, and ritualized behaviors; forms of cultural production carried out by

informal social groups as they create a representation of the world and their place within it; and the construction of subjectivities and identities (pp. 172-173).

In his ethnography on working class “lads,” Willis demonstrates how through their resistance to school knowledge, social mobility, and credentials, the lads produce the unintended consequence of ending up in working class jobs. These students internalize outside structures and class relationships and then make decisions based on these sources of meaning and identity.

Willis asserts that this cultural reproduction is both pessimistic and optimistic:

It is pessimistic in suggesting the irony that it is in the form of creative penetrations that cultures live their own damnation and that, for instance, a good section of working class kids condemn themselves to a future in manual work. It is optimistic, however, in showing that there is no inevitability of outcomes. (p. 174)

Willis leaves room for the possibility of opposition and agency, seeing the lads as active participants, who in this case, reproduce existing structures, but who – under other circumstances -- might also challenge and even overthrow them.

This cultural reproduction happens not only through the institutions of schools, but also through the many empowerment projects that target youth, common throughout Africa.

Empowerment is closely associated with the values of hard work, independence, and formal employment (Durham, 2007, p. 102). These values are associated with individual actors rather than communities. Durham argues that, in Botswana, the government has emphasized the need for people to develop themselves rather than relying on government assistance:

While people continue to ask the government for money for this and that, they also generally support the idea that individuals are responsible for their own development, and

attribute failures to individual faults (laziness, drunkenness, “just playing,” or jealousies) and not to structural conditions or government failures. (p. 104)

This acceptance of individual responsibility for development and empowerment make it more difficult to challenge the structural conditions that keep people in poverty, thus resulting in reproduction rather than revolution.

De Boeck and Honwana (2005) argue in conceptualizing and analyzing youth, “the shift from a European to an African context matters” (p. 6). Youth, as a social and cultural construct, is not the same everywhere. In the context of Africa, they argue, rites of passage, initiation ceremonies, and age groupings channeled rebellious behavior by children and youth. Rather than threaten social structures, these activities strengthen them. De Boeck and Honwana call for a more agentive approach of youth activities in social, cultural context: “We must move beyond Gluckman’s processual framework to a more action-oriented analysis of young people’s individual strategies and aspirations while simultaneously placing individual actors in a broader, diachronic social context” (p. 6). In their edited volume, De Boeck and Honwana focus on a series of studies concerning youth in Africa as the “makers and breakers” of their communities.

As agents, young people actively participate in economic, social, and political spheres. However, agency does not always lead to positive outcomes. Sometimes their participation allows them to be “makers,” using creativity, play, and inventiveness to develop their identities. But they can also be “breakers,” engaging in risky activities -- including drugs, alcohol, violence, and unsafe sex. And they engage in these activities inside of broader structures that produce tensions and constrain their action. “Children and youth are pushed, pulled, and coerced into various actions by encompassing structures and processes over which they have little or no control: kin, family, community, education, media, technology, the state and its decay, war,

religion, tradition and the weight of the past, and the rules of the global market” (p. 3). Youth must learn to navigate this complicated terrain and get along within various systems as they attempt to become adults.

Anthropologists have analyzed youth in this complicated process of “becoming” in settings such as barbershops, salons, and group television viewing (Weiss 2009), ice cream parlors, restaurants, and colleges (Lukose 2009), and choirs and performances (Durham 2005). “Becoming” is the social process through which youth by actively participating in social, economic, and political life construct their own identities. Youth are “beings-in-the-present...social actors with an identity of their own” (De Boeck & Honwana, 2005, p. 4). Through this participation youth contest and negotiate their identities and sense of belonging in categories such as consumers and citizens, “makers and breakers,” and consumers and self-producers. These studies demonstrate that, despite significant constraints (poverty, disease, war, violence, lack of employment opportunity and access to higher education), youth find ways to participate and to imagine new possibilities for their futures. As Weiss notes, young barbers in Arusha interact with popular culture, not passively consume it, as a means of self-production and finding a sense of belonging.

Across these accounts, scholars recognize a kind of youth agency that has its limitations. In her analysis of child-soldiers, Honwana (2005) refers to them as “tactical agents,” who act within constraints to seize opportunities to cope with the violence they have experienced and participated in even though they are unable to escape it. As she acknowledges, “their actions, however, are likely to have both beneficial and deleterious long-term consequences” (p. 33). In his work with youth in Sierra Leone, Lahai (2012) describes “agentive survival strategies” youth use in the informal economy to access opportunity (p. 48). Analyzing Christian cultural

competitions in Ghana, Coe (2012) argues that youth reproduce discourses that position them as problems *and* also claim authority for themselves as youth as they perform in school organized “development morality plays” (p. 128).

These studies reveal youth experience their everyday lives within a complex, ambiguous space. Paradoxically, they replicate and reproduce their own circumstances *and* act as agents, not just consumers or passive recipients, of global culture. Through these acts, youth do not always act in their own best interests or as the revolutionaries we as scholars wish for them to aspire toward. Their actions replicate and reproduce -- but also allow them to “make do” -- in the face of contradictions, ambiguities, and significant constraints.

Turn toward the Tactic

Following De Boeck and Honwana, in analyzing the everyday practices of young artists, I focus on an action-oriented analysis that allows me to attend to both the individual agency of these youth and the larger structural and social contexts within which they operate. Theories of social and cultural reproduction allow us to see how structures are reproduced; however, they miss how individuals exercise agency and uniquely respond to the circumstances that constrain them through their everyday practices. My interest here is to document and analyze what happens to youth along the way to becoming artists – to trace the paths youth forge and their ways of making sense and meaning. Throughout this dissertation, I use de Certeau’s ideas about strategies and tactics and space and place as a lens to explore multiple ways of knowing and making do that young Luo students employ as they become artists and adults. de Certeau’s ideas allow me to ethnographically detail what happens to these young students in the process of becoming artists – to record and analyze their production of material culture in the form of visual arts, poetry, playmaking, and storytelling. These examples of material culture provide evidence

of youth's multiple ways of knowing and making do as they navigate the liminal space of Imani Art School and the marketplace to create a meaningful life for themselves.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) explores these various ways of “making do.” de Certeau is concerned with the everyday practices of people who are already embedded within systems and structures that constrain them. Building on the work of Foucault who was concerned with the mechanisms of discipline and how they act on people through institutions, de Certeau is interested instead in the “makeshift creativity” (p. xiv) of people who are already “caught in the nets of ‘discipline’” (pp. xiv – xv). Foucault and de Certeau are both interested in everyday life; however, Foucault explores structures of power that impact daily practices and subjects, whereas de Certeau explores what people make and do in their everyday lives with products and situations imposed on them by the powerful. Using popular culture, de Certeau analyzes consumers, which he refers to as dominated but not passive or docile, and the use they make of the products that are imposed on them by a dominant economic order. de Certeau seeks to understand how ordinary people “make do” by finding small cracks or fissures in economic, political, and cultural structures that work to constrain them. And how this makes it possible for people to live within situations that are imposed on them by “reintroducing in them the plural mobility of goals and desires – an art of manipulating and enjoying” (p. xxii). For de Certeau, people use these cracks to seize opportunities to create for their own purposes, which do not match the purposes of those in power over them.

Take, for example, television viewing. As de Certeau notes, this appears to be a passive activity. Consumers watch shows that are imposed on them by the powerful. The viewer has no way of writing his or her interpretation onto the screen and seems to only play the role of viewer or consumer. Yet, as Weiss (2009) demonstrates, consumers make use of these broadcasts for

their own ends, which might be quite different from what the television producers intended. Drawing on de Certeau, Weiss demonstrates how group television watching in Arusha is a “productive action” (p. 181). Weiss argues, “Audiences do not merely interpret or reflect on the possible meanings of the spectacles they consume, but also remake the reality of fields of social activity they inhabit” (p. 196). Thus watching soap operas became “educational” for Arusha audiences as they aspire to participate in the worlds they watch and also debate local ideas about marriage, family, wealth, and fashion inspired by the content of the soap operas they watch.

In the case of Imani, young artists use the structure of the school to pursue an education in fine arts. However, their goals and desires do not completely align with the administration’s goals for them. Therefore, artists learn to seize cracks of opportunities that open up within the structure to pursue their own goals such as learning to weave, to play the guitar, to act. Students pursue these learning opportunities outside of Imani covertly since the administration would close down these openings if they became aware of students’ activities outside the compound of Imani and beyond its scope.

de Certeau distinguishes between strategies, employed by the powerful to produce and impose by establishing proper places, and tactics,⁴ employed by the “weak” to use and manipulate the space of another. de Certeau defines a strategy as “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated” (pp. 35-36). Strategies operate from an official place from which they can exert power and will. This place is important because it allows the powerful to build on what they have acquired and to see and predict foreign forces that might threaten it. A tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a

⁴ Although I recognize there is a military connotation to the terms strategies and tactics, throughout this dissertation, I use these terms in the everyday sense that de Certeau does.

proper locus...it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power” (p. 37). Unlike a strategy, a tactic has no place to build up its advantages and must take advantage of opportunities that appear in the cracks of the systems of power.

One of the central examples de Certeau uses to illustrate tactics is *la perruque*, which he translates as “the wig.” *La perruque* is work that a worker does for him or herself disguised as work done for an employer. In this situation, what the worker “steals” is time, not materials, from the employer “for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit” (p. 25). de Certeau cites several examples of this such as a secretary writing a love letter at work or a cabinetmaker using a tool to make a piece of furniture for himself. Rather than for profit, these activities signify workers’ own abilities, establish solidarity with other workers, and allow them to exercise some creativity without leaving the place where they have to be.

Importantly, de Certeau describes these tactics as artful. For de Certeau, the order that constrains individuals is similar to the rules of meter and rhyme for poets or the rules of music on the piano or the guitar for improvisational jazz musicians. Tactics require improvisation, play, and creativity as well as knowledge of the structures and situations within which they operate. In addition, according to de Certeau, “there is a certain art of placing one’s blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space” (p. 18). In describing the art of the tactic, de Certeau often uses Levi-Strauss’ term *bricolage* since consumers work with “scraps” of products that were originally created for different uses. de Certeau is interested in what consumers do with the products imposed on them and not made by them, what uses they find through makeshift creativity and inventiveness. “The ‘everyday’ arts no more ‘form’ a new product than they have their own language. They “make do” (*bricolent*)” (p. 66). de Certeau also describes tactics as an “art of being in between” (p. 30). Workers on the job find space to create for themselves,

creating a kind of leisure when they should be working. Tactics work in ambiguous spaces, the in between, when people can learn to improvise given different possibilities at the intersections of mobile elements.

Young artists encounter several strategic actors – the Kenyan government, national and international NGOs, the Kenyan media, and the administrators of Imani – who each operate from positions of power and place constraints on youth agency and possibility. For example, through its National Youth Policy, Constitution, and education policies, the Kenyan government defines youth, establishes the terms for youth political participation, creates the conditions for youth loans and programs, and determines who can access what type of education and who should pay. International and national NGOs create programs for youth and determine which youth are categorized as “vulnerable” in need of protection. The Kenyan media reinforces representations of youth as the problem – noting youth involvement in gangs, violence, and marking youth as “idle” and “drunken” and the solution – charging youth with the future development of the nation and encouraging youth participation in development, education, and employment. The administrators of Imani establish the curriculum of the school, rules, and norms for learning art.

In response to these constraints, Kenyan youth develop tactics to pursue their own goals and desires. Youth responses sometimes replicate the discourses of the state – note for example Johnson’s story in which he assumes individual responsibility for finding his own employment and opportunity. However, they also challenge stereotypical portrayals of youth – reimagining a youth who is drunk as a potential spoken word poet. Youth engage in these tactics covertly so as not to attract attention of the strategic actors who would shut down these efforts. Thus, the gains they make are temporary.

The distinction between tactics and strategies becomes blurred in the context of Imani Art School given its flexible nature. As a non-formal art school situated within the community, the school responds to students' needs and circumstances. Although the school is committed to teaching visual art, Steven (the head teacher) allows students to learn other artistic skills such as music, writing, dance, and drama during breaks. However, this flexibility has its limits. Once students' priorities shift away from visual art and students miss class to pursue other opportunities outside of Imani, Steven reasserts his authority. If students want to continue to pursue these outside learning opportunities, they must learn to engage in tactics so that Steven does not become aware of their activities. Artists' use of tactics becomes clearer once students graduate and enter the market. In the marketplace, artists must contend with municipal city council members who are much less flexible and understanding than Steven.

Further complicating the distinctions, Imani is part of a larger Kenyan NGO that runs several projects for the community. Steven is in a strategic position over the students, but he is in a tactical position within the Kisumu Community Project. The project managers require Steven to collect school fees from the students before they will release funds for Steven to buy materials he needs for the school. Thus Steven engages in tactics of his own to find art materials, educate the students, and stay on good terms with the KCP administration.

de Certeau notes that the kinds of knowledge and practices involved in tactics "have no legitimacy with respect to productivist rationality" (p. 69). He describes the historical process of knowledge becoming separated from people who made products themselves so that it could be "perfected" by machines. de Certeau argues that what is left is a kind of "know-how" that survives through stories. "Detached from its procedures, this knowledge may pass for a kind of 'taste,' 'tact,' or even 'genius.' It is accorded the characteristics of an intuition that is alternately

artistic and automatic” (p. 70). Because this knowledge is not recognized or owned by consumers, they are “the renters and not the owners of their own know-how” (p. 71). This further weakens their position since, if they do not own the knowledge, they have no means of appropriating it and using it to their own advantage. Since tactics depend on time, they also require being able to act at the right moment, taking advantage of opportunities they cannot create. Thus people must be constantly on the watch for possibilities that present themselves.

For the artists in Kisumu, “know-how” is represented as “talent.” Artists perceive themselves as talented but not educated. Even though they attend an art school, because it is non-formal and they do not receive a government certificate, artists think of the school as a place to further develop their God-given, natural talent rather than a place to pursue an education in fine art. Additionally, artists operate within a cultural context that devalues their skills as “playing around” or wasting time rather than producing art that is of cultural and economic value.

Stories become the repository of this “know-how.” Through listening to tales and legends, people recount successful moves, or tactics, for future use. “The formality of everyday practices is indicated in these tales, which frequently reverse the relationships of power, and like the stories of miracles, ensure the victory of the unfortunate in a fabulous, utopian space” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 23). These stories, because they are tales of the weak, do not become inscribed in histories, which recount the strategies of the powerful. However, they survive through retellings, become part of a collection of possible tactics woven into the folklore. These stories are passed down orally, rather than inscribed in history like the strategies of the powerful.

Within Imani, stories also play an important role in learning tactics for future use. Steven often recounts the tactics of successful artists who were able to attend school full time and also earn money during their free time to support themselves and their families. In these narratives,

Steven acknowledges that life is hard. To deal with this hard life, students should work hard, avoid idleness, and work as a family. Students contribute their own ideas into these narratives by adding their own details. Students cope with a difficult life by working hard, which means coming to school when they can and skipping school to hustle to make ends meet. Working as a family means identifying friends who show loyalty and trust – who they can rely on for a loan or a place to stay. Students draw on these ideas as they transition into the market, find trusted business partners, and patch together different opportunities within the field of art to make a living.

In examining strategies and tactics, it is also important to carefully distinguish place from space. de Certeau defines place as “the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence” (p. 117). Places are proper and stable with specific locations and definitions of purpose. For example, a city street laid out by urban planners is a place. Spaces, on the other hand, are “composed of intersections of mobile elements” (p. 117). Spaces allow for different possibilities according to different situations. To illustrate the difference, de Certeau uses the example of walking in a city. The street is a place defined by urban planners who create paths, streetlights, signs, and maps. However, walkers create a space within this fixed place through improvisations - by making their own way through the city, perhaps choosing to walk off the designated path, taking a short cut, or creating street art or graffiti. However, these spaces are only temporary and close down again. Paths taken by individual walkers through a city can be traced, but they leave out the activities of walkers, and thus, “a way of being in the world” is forgotten (p. 97).

Just as with strategies and tactics, the distinction between space and place within Imani is complicated. de Certeau thinks of place and space as binaries; however in the case of Imani,

place and space is more of a continuum. As an institution, Imani is a place with an established curriculum, school fee schedule, and rules and norms for operating. However, the ethos of Imani and its day-to-day operation is closer to a space. Students learn artistic skills outside of the formal curriculum from each other, Steven is flexible about when students pay their fees, and students and teachers promote and participate in collaborative, communal learning. The contradiction between wanting to be a formal institution with legitimacy and an informal space that responds to student needs creates a confused sense of priorities.

Although these tactics and opening up of spaces offer pleasure for the dominated by allowing them to insert a measure of creativity into everyday activities, this pleasure is fleeting. These acts provide a temporary respite or escape but not a permanent escape from the strategies of the powerful. The tactic “takes advantage of ‘opportunities’ and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep” (p. 37). Since tactics lack a proper place and depend on constantly watching for cracks of opportunities they cannot create, the advantages are temporary and often covert. People must learn to “make do” and “how to get away with things,” using clever tricks (p. xix) inside of structures that are already established. de Certeau acknowledges the power of structures but also makes room for creative agency that does more than reproduce. Part pleasure, part play, and part covert weakness, this creative agency allows people to temporarily escape oppression. However, this agency lacks the power to overthrow these structures and disturb systems of power.

Imani as a place/space also has its limitations. It allows young artists to develop a flexible sense of artistic identity and access affordable training in the arts but it cannot take advantage of the benefits of formal schools. Imani grants students an internal diploma but not a government

certificate. This keeps down costs but limits the legitimacy of the school. Imani relies on its alumni to teach and interact with young artists, yet it struggles to keep accurate records. Students engage in tactics to navigate being learners and laborers. This allows them to “make do” while in school, but they run the risk of leaving school before they can fully develop as artists. In the marketplace, artists team up to pay rent, taxes, and sell their work but they operate within a larger cultural and economic context that devalues their work and limits their markets.

Tactics of the Young

In this dissertation, I engage de Certeau’s theory as a lens to understand the strategies, tactics, spaces, and places navigated by a group of 18-24 year old Luo artists in Western Kenya. Using this frame, I argue young artists engage in tactics that they first learn in art school and expand in the marketplace to “make do” within significant political, economic, and social constraints. My goal is to speak back to oversimplifications of youth that position them as the problem and the solution by closely examining their everyday lives and activities in the process of becoming. This study demonstrates how youth become caught in larger systems of education, national policies, and economic constraints that they cannot control and did not produce and how they use tactics to make sense, pursue livelihoods, and find temporary joy. Studies of cultural reproduction are important in critiquing how these situations are produced and perpetuated. The everyday stories of youth are equally important in demonstrating how youth find meaning and purpose nonetheless. Like Weiss (2009), who argues “even those who suffer under these very real constraints still often find the world a place of possibility, even hope” (p. 14), I argue these young students use artful tactics to find makeshift means of producing art despite and within art school and the marketplace.

My aim also is to de-romanticize images of the oppressed and the artist as activist. Rather than becoming revolutionaries, these young artists want to create art that has deep personal meaning and significance for them, that allows them to express themselves, and that earns them a modest living. This dissertation records a way of being in the world that might otherwise be forgotten, as de Certeau would argue, that is fleeting. Central to this recording are the cultural products the artists produce – their visual art, poetry, and ways of telling their own stories of how they became artists.

Also central to my story is how youth navigate several ambiguities. The Kenyan National Youth Policy defines youth as a vulnerable priority group in need of protection while also charging them with finding their own sources of economic opportunity through hard work. Parents promote education as the key to economic mobility while schools promote self-reliance in finding employment in the informal market. Young artists internalize these ideas and see themselves as “talented” but not educated, which leads them, like Johnson, to see starting their own business as their only option. The art school acts both as a place and a space in de Certeau’s sense. As a place, Imani has a structured curriculum, fee schedule, rules for behavior, and standards for students. As a space, Imani – with its “open policy [that] allows you to express yourself” -- promotes a flexible curriculum, student-centered learning, and encourages students to learn as many skills as they can to survive. Students pursue art in a cultural environment that perceives art as either a technical, vocational skill (i.e., signwriting) or an unserious hobby (i.e., “playing around”) rather than a profession. As de Certeau suggests, this “art of being in-between” provides a rich, albeit complicated, context for youth to become adults.

However, this in-betweenness also produces tensions as young artists are pushed and pulled in different directions. During art school, many are both laborers and learners. The ability

to earn money through their art sometimes tempts them to leave school prematurely, before they can fully develop as artists. In the market, artists take on additional commercial work to help them survive and provide for their families. Taking on this work, not always related to the art they want to produce, artists run the risk of ruining their reputations as fine artists. Working in a seasonal, unpredictable market, these artists also enter into uneasy relationships with international clients who promote, but also control, their work.

The young artists I portray are not attempting to be activists. They lack the resources, time, and political and critical consciousness to use their art as a means of critiquing and overturning the structures that constrain them. In many ways, as Johnson's story demonstrates, they buy in to the government's rhetoric that the nation's development depends on them and they have no choice but to create their own jobs as individuals. The institutions that exert power over them – schools, the government, the media, and the municipal council – engage in strategies from positions of power and official places to control and constrain them. Youth internalize these messages and perceive themselves as talented but not educated and responsible for their own futures through hard work, discipline, and avoiding idleness.

And yet they are agentic in de Certeau's sense. Through learning to become artists in a non-formal art college, they also learn tactics through stories and communities of practicing artists that help them make do inside of significant political, economic, and educational constraints. These tactics allow them to hustle to survive and participate in art school, to make art with limited resources and materials, to partner up to shoulder the burdens of working in a difficult market, and to build makeshift stalls to display and sell their work.

They also respond to their constraints uniquely as artists. They have crafted an artistic identity, found a community that supports that identity, and find joy in their work. Although they

still face significant hardships, they find temporary reprieve in the creative. As Johnson says, “I’ll never leave art no matter what.” Artists are under no illusions that art will give them a way out of poverty, though some dream, as Johnson does, that a rising middle class will bring more opportunity.

However, as de Certeau notes, these gains and joys are temporary, lacking a proper base on which to build. As they become adults, artists seek a more legitimate, stable place in their communities. This legitimacy is difficult to attain. There are no permanent galleries or places to sell their work, they have an internal diploma from a non-formal institution that is not recognized by the government, and despite efforts to organize, have no recognized network to advocate for themselves. Thus the arts remain, as de Certeau claims, an “art of the weak.”

Structure of the Dissertation

In this introduction I have described the context of the study, reviewed relevant literature on youth, schooling, and society, and established the theoretical framework. In Chapters 2 and 3, I lay out the political, economic, and educational constraints facing youth in Kenya. Chapter 2 focuses on the construction of youth as a social category and its liminal nature. The Kenyan government, international and national NGOs, and the Kenyan media participate in the construction of youth as the problem and the solution and thus in part determine what possibilities youth have to access livelihood opportunities and participate politically. Youth occupy an ambiguous social position between children and adults. On the one hand, youth are perceived as needing protection from adults who attempt to exploit them such as employers, elders, and political leaders. On the other hand, youth are held accountable for violence and charged with the development of the nation through active participation in employment, education, and engagement.

In Chapter 3 I provide historical context to the education system in Kenya. I examine how schools have changed in structure, curriculum, and financing as well as shifting ideas about the purpose of education. Kenya has struggled to provide free primary and secondary education to all its citizens and despite the passing of Free Primary Education, Free Secondary Education, and the Basic Education Act in 2013, parents continue to pay school fees making it difficult for children from poor families to complete their education. This also impacts their ability to access jobs in the formal sector leaving many youth to believe they must create their own job opportunities.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I focus on Imani Art School. Chapter 4 describes the founding of the school, its philosophical roots and commitments, and the structure of the curriculum. Here I analyze how Steven and the students co-construct the ethos of Imani through discourse. The administrators of Imani, in a strategic position, set up structures for student learning. The students, in a tactical position, respond to these structures making use of them to learn art and finding cracks within these structures to pursue their own interests beyond the scope of the school. In Chapter 5 I use Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas of learning as legitimate peripheral participation to explore how young artists join a community of practicing artists through Imani to learn art. Students learn with and from each other as well as from graduates of Imani. Students also use tactics to find their own artistic mentors who are outside of the Imani network and may lead them to pursue careers outside of the visual arts that the school privileges.

In Chapters 6 and 7 I follow students out of Imani and into the marketplace. In Chapter 6, I tell the stories of four recent graduates and analyze their transition from the supportive, flexible environment of Imani into the marketplace where municipal council members enforce strict daily taxes and artists must learn tactics to make do. I also describe the stalls of the five most

successful Imani graduates and how they use tactics to keep a stock of expensive materials, produce art, and sell while also supporting their families. Chapter 7 describes the everyday arts that Kisumu artists produce and how the aesthetic of this art is influenced by economic constraints including the expense of art materials and the absence of a vibrant market. Artists use tactics to produce and sell their art and enter into uneasy relationships with international volunteers, which gives them access to international markets but limits their control over their own products. I conclude suggesting the contributions using de Certeau's ideas as a lens to analyze the everyday practices of artists makes to the field of educational anthropology and to policy makers who work with youth.

Multiple Ways of Knowing

Throughout this dissertation I draw on ethnographic data (semi-structured interviews, field notes, and participant observation) as well as forms of art (portraits of individual artists, poetry, playmaking, and visual art). In doing so, I argue both kinds of evidence are equally important in understanding the everyday practices of young artists. The forms of art are evidence of the multiple ways of knowing and ways of making do that youth engage in as they become artists. As de Certeau (1984) argues

These narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a "supplement" to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics. They are not satisfied with displacing the latter and transposing them into the field of language. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it. (p. 116)

The narratives I present here are not merely supplements but records of the journey youth make toward becoming artists and adults. These narratives form a common text: youth discover an

interest and a talent in art, find out about Imani Art School, convince family members and friends this is worth pursuing, and find ways of making do to graduate from Imani and start selling their art. However, their journeys are not identical and paths they take along the way diverge.

For the portraits, I have selected three young artists who occupy different social positions and represent different paths into and through Imani Art School. Johnson is from Nairobi, had no family connections or friends in Kisumu, and had to find his own place to live and support himself through school. Simon lived with both parents during his time at Imani and continued to live at home after completing Imani. Betty stays with family friends while in art school and visits her father at home during weekends and breaks. Each of these students experiences different constraints and develops overlapping but not identical tactics to navigate them. For example, Johnson had to pay his own rent and often missed school to learn how to weave. He constantly defended his absences to Steven and made several excuses to continue to miss school. Simon was able to attend school regularly without worrying about his upkeep. Thus he was elected as student chairman and also relied on his family connections through church to market his art and find livelihood opportunities. Betty stayed with family friends who restricted her movements – insisting she return home immediately after school. Betty depended on receiving financial support from her father, which did not always arrive at the time she needed it. Thus she pursued work through a Bulgarian NGO to supplement her father's support.

According to de Certeau (1984) “maps, constituted as proper places in which to *exhibit the products* of knowledge, form tables of *legible* results. Stories about space exhibit on the contrary the operations that allow it, within a constraining and non-“proper” place, to mingle its elements anyway” (p. 121). The stories, poems, plays, and visual art presented here show the

operations of artists – how they open up spaces within the constraining order to make art and become artists.

Simon Osano

I was born here in Kisumu and went to primary school in Kondele. For secondary school, I went to Kisumu Day where I completed my O level form four and finished in 2007. I never took art, it wasn't offered in our school. I joined Imani in 2010.

Before joining Imani, I was still participating in the church activities too. I was contributing, offering myself, giving back to society by participating in creating awareness on issues that may affect youth. That was with a local based organization called OLPS Our Lady of Perpetual Support. I was posted in a primary school and a secondary school, too. I was creating awareness on the life cycles, the problems affecting us as the youths. So, briefly the topics were adolescence, reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, the pandemic diseases too. It was nice because that was the point that I learned that children sometimes cannot be free with their teacher, but with maybe a youthful teacher or a youthful teenager, they share out the problems they may be going through. So we talked a lot and we really shared. It was an open forum.

Before I joined Imani, I used to take my pieces to a framer; he's close to our home in Migosi. There are some pieces I used to work on. So, it came a time that when I presented some of my pieces to him, and he told me that if I can create time, I can even meet one of the artists. So I created time and one day when I visited him to frame my pieces, I met Kevin, the eggshellist.⁵ And there was also another former student here. So they briefed me about Imani. They told me, "Simon, actually you have the talent. There's talent in you also, but make an attempt to visit Imani Art School." So he briefed me from there. And that is how I found myself in Imani Art School actually.

⁵ Kevin is a graduate of Imani and is well known locally for his artwork using crushed eggshells.

In Imani, I've gained knowledge. There's difference since I joined. I'm improving in art, I'm also getting experience from other artists or the students and more so the experience from the teacher. I've learned based on the model drawing. With model drawing, we've been advised by Father Bart, it's based more so on concentration you look for what to be seen. It has helped me a lot in various fields now like in landscape paintings. We have to work hard at least also to match the standard of the other students. I'll also accept criticism from freelancing artists outside because it builds. At least I advance in this art because I understand that the greatest enemy of an artist is fear. I want to put aside fear, and accept the criticism.

I can recall very well there was a time when I just joined Imani and there was an exhibition to be held in Nairobi. I just gathered courage enough and confidence. There was a piece I worked on, it was basically the sticky sticky art; we call these arts kete kete⁶ arts. So I just aligned my piece with those that were selected to go to Nairobi. And we had those who had graduated, the former students here, but I only had a week in art school. But I also arranged my piece there. Surprisingly enough the piece was sold. The exhibition was in Nairobi. The piece was sold there. Imagine, some of those who graduated never sold. So with art we also have to do away with our greatest fear.

In my role as a chairman,⁷ I have to represent the student body, so in case if there's a problem, there's a dispute amongst us as the students, I'm like their leader. So they can approach me, we can sit down, tackle the issue if it was maybe an internal feud or enmity that cropped up,

⁶ Kete kete means sticks in Luo. Artists refer to art that uses stick figures as kete, kete. Imani artists generally think of this type of art as "naïve," and a sign that the artist has not been formally trained. Simon is suggesting that this was an early piece before he had had formal art training in school.

⁷ The Imani students elected Simon to serve as their chairman. As chairman, he organizes students, listens to their concerns, and makes sure they carry out duties such as cleaning the school.

we can sit down as a team and share the whole meaning before it explodes. Yes, so it's something good. There are difficult problems like some of the students don't want to cooperate. And you know in our institution, it's not good sometimes to be a leader and you force the students to undertake some duties they are aware that they should undertake. It's not good. So such challenges are there.

Imani exists to nurture the talents, more so those who never made it to secondary schools as a result of maybe financial constraints, there are some who are orphans they couldn't make it, but they had talent and it is this talent that they will nurture. In the future they can start their own business, be their own bosses, with the talent they have in art. If it is in the performing arts, they can even be good instructors, to lead dramas, theaters, poems, and it's good and from that will be a source of income.

I don't stay alone. I stay with family members, my parents. I'm the oldest, the oldest son. We are only two sons and four sisters. We are six in number. I get assistance from my parents for school fees, food, and transport. But also I do also help them in case I make a sale of an artwork. There's a brother of mine, the youngest; he's the last-born. He's in form four right now. Actually he's sitting for his exams, so we hope well for him. There was a time an exhibition was arranged. I presented an artwork then the art piece it was sold. So they sent the money back. And that money I organized to pay the fee with it. Also half of it I assisted my brother with it.

Our family has a Christian background actually. So when I was still young, I used to attend Sunday school. I grew up on the doxological faith, the Christian faith that God exists. So, in church my father, and he's still alive, too, he used to sing bass, my mom up to now she's singing soprano. My brother is singing tenor, and the other sisters of mine, the two are singing alto, but now one also is a good drummer. Now I've taken the footsteps of my dad and now I'm

on the bandwagon of bass.

Some of my neighbors are aware that I'm an artist and even some of the church members. So it's from there that sometimes I do get an order and also my sisters, they also advertise me outside. So it's also a good forum. When I have money, I do wait on entertainment because I have to focus first on the materials. It's expensive. So the small amount I get, I go for the small paints, just locally. It does not necessarily mean that I have to get the most expensive materials in order for me to get the capital. I can start with the products that are around, maybe take on leaves, the ash, then maybe apply the ash, I'll take a piece of wood or plywood, pour some glue, or ash on top then I do the winnowing, it's good. Sometimes I don't have to go with the expensive materials but consider nature. If it is eggs, I can take the eggshells and crush them. Then I apply glue, the piece will become artistic.

If God gives me a chance, I plan to go to university because from diploma courses I can attend to the degree courses. So bit-by-bit as I graduate from various courses I can become an art instructor. As a teacher, I'll be in a position to listen to the students. I'll make sure they improve on their skills that they have in the art field, and let them know that with art, there comes a time that you can see light at the end of the tunnel. Because it's a talent, so they shouldn't let that talent go away, but create awareness of that.

I've visited the Imani graduates in their various stalls. Some are free lancing, some advanced, they've extended their education to the universities and various institutions. I've been to the small Maasai market along Nairobi Road. Also I've visited Michael Ochieng', Thomas Arts in Kondele, Tom's and James's place behind Mega Plaza Nakumat, and Kevin's place. There's also a good friend of mine, he's an artist too that is free-lancing. I also do frequently visit him in his stall.

I do perform with the youth organization creating awareness. Now there's a big problem that is also experienced along the coastal region of Kenya. You find that a number of youths are passing on since there is lack of an employment. There's that high rate of unemployment, so some are venturing into various activities, illegal activities that are even affecting their health, using drugs. So, I do attend to such forums and call some school youths and they do turn up. So the problem they have is the low rate of employment so I share with them what drug abuse is all about.

In Kisumu here, youths are facing a number of challenges, high rate of unemployment, so a different team of youths will gang up themselves. So it's like I just accompany them blindly. So it's from there that some do organize crimes, theft, and thuggeries. That is why now there is a high rate of crime in Kisumu. In Kisumu, it's good when people you know recognize your potential. And they also appreciate whatever you are doing because in Kisumu, we have latent talent in abundance, but now we lack exposure. Here you have to work tooth and nail to get a small income that can push you through, but locals don't appreciate art. As an artist sometimes you come up with an abstract and somebody comes and says, "Eh, what is this all about?" They don't understand and also they lack patience. They can't even sit down and get what it is all about. They are ignorant. They lack patience. Art requires patience. There are times when you can just come up with a piece, and we should not put in the back of our mind as artists that I need to sell this piece. If I have 100 pieces and I've not even sold, I become demoralized. They should just relax and it will come, they'll sell the pieces. But they should not put money first. If money comes by their way, it's good.

Chapter Two

Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Youth

In his ethnography on urban Tanzanian youth, Weiss (2009) makes a useful distinction between identity “the forms of representation through which social beings come to know (that is, to identify) themselves and others” and personhood “the relative ability to participate in, and so define oneself through, processes of social construction (including identity formation)” (p. 111). In this dissertation, I explore youth in this process of social construction, a process of becoming artists. Complicating this becoming, Kenyan youth’s participation in political, economic, and social life is fraught with tensions. Youth are included, often as vulnerable, special groups, and excluded, youth living in poverty struggle to access education, employment, and livelihood opportunities. Youth are positioned as both the problem and its solution. The period of youth is not just an age; it is a stage of transition between childhood and adulthood. This stage has been extended indefinitely as youth find it more difficult to attain the markers of adulthood (Sommers, 2012) and see disadvantages to claiming adult status, limiting their access to government programs and assistance (Durham, 2007). Youth is a time of ambiguity, liminality, and in-betweenness.

In this chapter, I introduce a set of strategic actors who impose their power and will over Kenyan youth: the Kenyan government, international non-governmental organizations (NGO), and the Kenyan media. These actors are strategic in de Certeau’s sense: they have the will and power to impose definitions and representations on and create policies and programs for youth. The government has the power to define youth and create national policies that determine how youth should participate in political life, what protections they should be afforded, and what responsibilities they have. NGOs have the power to create projects that target youth, who can access these projects, and what counts as empowerment and success. The media control

portrayals of youth that enter the national imagination and determine how youth are perceived and treated.

I argue the Kenyan state, media, and development agencies use their strategic position to create two operational portraits of youth: youth as not quite adults in need of protection and empowerment and youth as criminal threats in need of control. These oversimplified portraits fail to capture the more complex realities of youths' lives. They also determine the types of programs and assistance available to youth. These representations influence the way youth see themselves and their future possibilities. Youth must use tactics to insert their own details about their possibilities, though they lack the power to insert these details into official representations (such as newspapers) or changes in policy. As they navigate their interactions with development agencies, government institutions, media, and their communities, youth learn to get along with and work inside these structures and to use tactics when they can to seize opportunities.

First I will describe how the Kenyan government has signaled out, defined, and de-gendered youth as a vulnerable priority group in the 2010 constitution, its national youth policy, and programs aimed at empowering youth. Along these lines, I will also analyze NGO discourses on programs for youth. Then I will explore how youth are portrayed in the media, primarily through accounts from Kenya's largest newspapers, *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. Finally, I describe Luo ideas about the place of youth and their responsibilities and how young artists internalize and critique these representations.

To place these reports in context, Kenya has a long history of ethnic tensions rooted in colonialism. The British colonial administration divided Kenya into eight provinces along ethnic lines (Alwy & Schech, 2004). Kenya has 42 ethnic groups and citizens believe the president gives advantages to his particular ethnic group. Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, was a

Kikuyu, Kenya's largest ethnic group. During his presidency, Kikuyus were economically and politically dominant (Haugerud, 1997). Under Moi's presidency, beginning in 1978 and ending in 2002, Kalenjins gained advantage. Kibaki's presidency in 2002 returned Kikuyus to political and economic power. The 2007 elections were a tight race between Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the Luo leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). When Kibaki was declared the winner, widespread accusations of vote rigging and corruption surfaced leading to violence, particularly in Kisumu. The violence lasted more than 100 days, resulted in 1,133 reported deaths, and the displacement of 350,000 people (Kimani, 2010). The violence ended on February 28, 2008 with the signing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act by Kibaki and Odinga. This act created a power sharing agreement making Odinga the prime minister of Kenya. Odinga ran for president again in 2013 and lost to Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Kenya's first president. Although some questioned the results of this election and it created controversy (Kenyatta faces trial by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity for his role in the 2007 post-election violence), the 2013 elections were peaceful. Given this history, many Kenyans refer to "tribalism" in politics and a strong sense of national identity is complicated by ethnic tension.

Government Discourses on Youth

Youth, as we have seen, is an ambiguous category and different nations and development organizations define youth primarily by age. These age categories start as young as 10 and as old as 35. For example, the Kenyan National Youth Policy defines youth as between the ages of 15 and 30, the 2010 Constitution as between 18 and 35, and the United Nations as between 15 and 24. In addition, youth is an ambiguous social category: youth are not quite children and yet not fully adult. As Stambach (2000) notes, "Youth are perceived as a socially malleable group that can be controlled and transformed through education, through family planning programs, and

more subtly, through the media and popular culture” (p. 141). As children, youth need protection and they need to be shaped, controlled, and transformed into adults rather than engaging in their own process of becoming.

In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution and devoted a section specifically to youth. According to the constitution

the State shall take measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that the youth (a) access relevant education and training; (b) have opportunities to associate, be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life; (c) access employment and (d) are protected from harmful cultural practices and exploitation. (Republic of Kenya, 2010, Article 55)

In order to guarantee representation, the constitution calls for two members (one man and one woman) to be elected to the Senate to represent the youth (Article 98). In addition to youth, this article sets aside seats for two members of persons with disabilities and 16 women. Youth are thus invited to participate, but as youth, not as adult members of the Senate.

In 2002, the Kenyan government crafted a National Youth Policy (NYP) aimed at improving conditions and opportunities for young people. The policy focuses on the following strategic areas: employment creation, health, education and training, sports and recreation, environment, art and culture, youth and the media, and youth participation and empowerment. The policy also specifically concentrates on vulnerable youth as “priority groups,” including youth with disabilities, living with AIDS, out of school, street children, females, and the unemployed.

NYP defines youth as between the ages of 15 and 30 and acknowledges that young people make up a significant percentage of the population (75% are 30 or younger) who face

challenges, such as pressure from high population growth, lack of appropriate skills, unclear and uncoordinated youth policies and programs, resource constraints, and low status (NYP, 2002, pp. 4-5). The policy also lists unemployment and underemployment, health-related problems, increasing school and college drop out rates, crime and deviant behavior, limited sports and recreation activities, abuse and exploitation, limited participation and lack of opportunities, limited and poor housing, and limited access to information and communication technology as additional challenges youth face (pp. 6-7).

In addition to a specific policy for youth, the government has created several agencies and programs. First in 2005 they established the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs (MOYA). In 2008, they expanded this ministry to include a department of sports, creating the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MOYAS). In addition to the ministry, the government created the Youth Enterprise Development Fund in 2007, *Kazi Kwa Vijana* (Work for Youth) project in 2009, the National Youth Council Act in 2009, and the Kenya Youth Empowerment Project in 2010. The youth policy sets the agenda for the agencies and programs and aims to empower youth through active participation in the economy and cultural life. Through this participation, the government hopes youth will not only develop themselves, but also the nation.

In order to combat the challenges youth face and to facilitate participation, the National Youth Policy focuses on the following goals and objectives:

- To sensitise national policy makers on the need to identify and mainstream youth issues in national development
- To identify ways of empowering the youth in order to exploit their potential
- To promote a culture of volunteerism among the youth

- To explore and suggest ways of engaging the youth in the process of economic development
- To identify constraints that hinder the Kenyan youth from realizing their potential
- To propose ways of mentoring the youth to be just and morally upright citizens
- To promote ethos of honest hard work and productivity among the youth. (p. 8)

Although the policy specifically targets youth, the authors also acknowledge the responsibilities of adults and parents, the state, and the private sector to help secure opportunities for youth and protect them. For adults and parents, the policy focuses on strengthening family relationships that have been “eroding slowly” (p. 9). For the state, the policy advocates supporting and implementing the youth policy and creating opportunities for internships and ensuring youth rights (thus programs like the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and *Kazi Kwa Vijana*). For the private sector, the policy calls for job creation and avoidance of exploiting youth. In the national policy, employers pose the greatest risk to exploiting youth.

Participation and empowerment are noted throughout the policy and the constitution as important ways to involve youth in development programs. The policy section on arts and culture states, “The Youths in Kenya find themselves at cross roads between the western culture and the remnants of traditional culture that has been watered down” (p. 14). To address this concern, the policy advocates the following strategies: establishing more cultural and community resource centres, facilitating forums for the young and old to share ideas, promoting and protecting local arts and culture, lobbying for more coverage of youth issues and role models from the media, lobbying for affordability of existing theatres and clubs, investing in training, advancement, financing, and empowerment of young artists, and enforcing legislation to curb proliferation of obscene material (p. 14).

Although the policy acknowledges corruption and nepotism as barriers to employment for youth, the authors do not assign responsibility for these barriers, only indirectly suggesting responsibility to employers. The policy does not discuss ethnic groups or ethnic identity and advocates for youth to “be patriotic and loyal to Kenya and promote her well-being” (p. 9). The constitution also acknowledges the need to protect youth from “harmful cultural practices and exploitation” but does not assign agency to these practices. Thus, the government de-politicizes the problems of youth and focuses on technical solutions (Ferguson, 1994). Through these policies, the Kenyan government promotes technical solutions to the problem of youth including education, employment, and empowerment largely through formal channels controlled by the state and imposed on youth. If they are unable to access these solutions and empower themselves, they only have themselves to blame.

However, youth are growing skeptical of the ability of these formal structures to lead to economic, political, and social opportunity. As Durham (2000) argues, “the potency and potential of youth are extracted to sustain the power of those in authority while young people themselves feel increasingly unable to attain the promises of the new economy and society” (p. 113). Youth, as we will see, face significant barriers to accessing education, employment, and empowerment that the state offers as solutions. Although the government implemented free primary education in 2003 and free secondary in 2008, schools continue to charge fees placing schooling out of reach for the poorest families. Formal jobs are increasingly difficult to attain and Kenyan youth face the highest employment rates of any age group. Youth have critiqued programs such as *Kazi kwa vijana* with their own slogan: *Kazi kwa vijana, pesa kwa wazee*, Jobs for youth equals money for elders.

The Constitution and NYP, in defining youth by age, leave out gendered constructions of youth. According to the 2010 Kenyan constitution, youth is “the collectivity of all individuals in the Republic who have attained the age of 18 years but have not attained the age of thirty five years.” However, the constitution also defines “vulnerable groups” as “women, older members of society, persons with disabilities, children, youth, members of minority or marginalized communities, and members of particular ethnic, religious, or cultural communities.” While none of these groups is meant to be mutually exclusive (i.e., one can be an older member of society and disabled), youth and women are often separated in policies and initiatives and compete for the same resources.

Non-Governmental Discourses on Youth

Smith (2008) argues that, in the early 1990s “international and local NGOs took on many of the development responsibilities that citizens had formerly expected from the state” (p. 34). NGOs have been actively involved in creating and implementing various youth programs in Kenya. The organizations include the World Bank, UNHabitat, Kenya-Italy Debt for Development Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the Youth Empowerment Network, the Department for International Development, UNICEF, CARE International, PACT, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Population Council, Oxfam, Terra Nuova, Nairobi, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), DSW Kenya, Kenya Women Finance Trust, African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT), and Informal Sector Business Institute (ISBI) (EDC, 2009, pp. 28-29).

Here I focus on one report, *Cross-Sectoral Assessment for At-Risk Youth in Kenya*, as a window into NGO constructions of Kenyan youth. I chose this report in particular because in

addition to focusing on youth, the report team consisted of 12 youth leaders who assisted in the report's data collection and writing. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) commissioned the report in order to address the question "What are the specific sources of vulnerability, marginalization, and disaffection among Kenyan youth, particularly in areas affected by the 2007-2008 post-election violence, and how can they be countered?" (EDC, 2009, p. 1). Unlike the NYP and Constitution, this report was specifically created to address youth issues in order to curb violent activities such as those undertaken by youth in 2007.

In the report, EDC analyzed reasons why Kenyan youth have been marginalized and their vulnerabilities as well as ways to counter these conditions. The report focuses on youth between 16 and 24 years and notes other areas of vulnerability including relatively high rates of literacy (over 90%) but high rates of unemployment (75%) (p. 6). The report defines Kenyan youth as "at-risk" according to the following conditions:

Those whose aspirations and realities are in conflict; namely, those who (i) have had to drop out of school and training; (ii) are not able to earn a decent livelihood and cannot depend on parents or relatives for support; (iii) have been victims of abuse and/or violence; (iv) have to make a living by, in their words, 'doing bad,' such as using and dealing drugs or engaging in protection and extortion rackets and prostitution; and (v) have been recruited into gangs, militias and criminal networks. (p. 30)

These conditions are the reverse of the measures promised to youth by the constitution: access to education, the right to participate, access to employment, and protection. Like the NYP, this report does not assign agency or explore the factors that have created these conditions. Politicians, rather than employers, are seen as the exploiters of youth. They lure youth into

violent activity by paying them as “a relatively cheap and effective way to mobilize for political rallies, to gather votes through persuasion or threat, and to intimidate the opposition” (p. 6).

The report highlights NGO programs that target youth, including vocational education and training, conflict resolution, involvement in public decision-making bodies, and HIV/AIDS education and prevention. Youth cited in the report criticize many of these programs as “brief case NGOs” that care more about their publicity and funding than helping youth (p. 44) and provide “hit and run” trainings with little to no follow-up (p. 44).

Youth relationships with elders, tribal leaders, and politicians are viewed as dangerous and problematic. The authors caution that, “in rural areas elders, tribal leaders, and politicians appeal, through ethnic youth age groups, to perceived and actual historical injustices, calling on youth to defend the homeland” (p. 36). Youth are quoted as criticizing their parents and elders for fostering a “negative ethnicity” (p. 44). Elsewhere in the report, ethnic identity is linked to gang participation and corruption made worse by abuse of government authority and lack of accountability.

Elders, parents, and tradition are also portrayed as holding youth back from advancement and opportunity. The authors argue that traditional practices such as land inheritance limit the economic opportunity of youth since they cannot inherit land until their fathers pass away. The authors frame circumcision as a traditional practice that youth do not want to undergo and “know can be harmful” (p.55). They categorize the relationship between youth and elders as tense: “the elders want to maintain absolute authority and control while the young people yearn for their own opportunities” (p. 51). In this debate, the authors, solidly on the side of youth, argue that if elders do not listen, young people may feel cut off from their communities leading to increased violence and criminal activity.

In describing the life of street children, the authors use an excerpt from CNN's website rather than the narratives elicited from youth participants or from any of the youth they interviewed. The CNN story focuses on a young girl named Joan who was forced into the streets by an early pregnancy. Although the story uses quotes from Joan, her story is told from an American's perspective who describes scenes from Joan's life: "The street kids sniff the glue into oblivion. After a while, a small group of boys gather around Joan with the vacant look of wasted futures" (p. 40). Despite claiming to focus on youth perspectives, the youth involved in the report were not in sole control over their own representation.

Media Discourses on Youth

The EDC report focused on youth as a way to prevent violence. As the report stated, "youth were at the center of the 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV), both as direct perpetrators and victims" (p. 1). The report linked participation in violence funded by politicians to the vulnerabilities youth face. Because youth have so few opportunities, the authors argued, they are ready and willing to join criminal gangs.

Perhaps not surprisingly then, youth were featured prominently in Kenya's largest newspapers, *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, during my field work (June 2012 through December 2012). Leading up to presidential elections on March 4, 2013, many citizens were concerned about the outcome given the widespread 2007 post-election violence, riots, ethnic tensions, protests, and shootings of politicians. Articles about youth primarily took one of two forms: articles detailing presidential aspirants' promises to youth and articles warning the public about the increasing criminality of the youth.

Many presidential aspirants courted the youth vote promising job opportunities and access to loans. Uhuru Kenyatta, the eventual winner, "called on Kenyans to elect youthful

leaders during the forthcoming elections, as it is only them that will ably drive the country forward” (Odongo & Opiyo, 2012). William Ruto promised to expand tourism to create job opportunities for youth and to provide loans to women and youth interest-free (Rono, 2012, p. 6). Peter Kenneth avowed that youth empowerment would be his main focus, appealing to the youth by using Sheng (a slang language combining Swahili and English popular among youth). In fact, his campaign slogan was *Tunawesmake* (“We can make it”) (Opiyo, 2012, p. 24). In these articles, youth are the solution to the problems facing the nation and are central to the country’s development and future.

But underlying this focus on youth empowerment is fear about what youth will do if they continue to face unemployment and poverty. This leads to the second type of article typified by concern over the increase in youth criminal activities. In articles such as, “The decline of youth power, the rise of youth criminality” (October 5, 2012) commentators warned, “today’s youths paint a pathetic picture, wasting away in an alcoholic haze instead of playing an active role in politics and elections.” Other articles focused on youth involvement in current conflicts in Kenya, especially along the Coast (a predominately Muslim area) and in Kisumu. In the coastal region, the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) engaged in violent acts hoping to secede from the rest of Kenya. The media categorized these youth as “machete-wielding” (October 20, 2012, pp. 2, 5), “thugs” (October 7, 2012, p. 6), “crazed youth who have been slashing people at rallies and attacking police stations” (October 21, 2012), and “armed” (October 21, 2012, p. 13). These alarmist images associate youth with violence and masculinity and create a strong assumption that youth are men.

Building on this theme, some articles explicitly warned that recent youth activities, if not tempered, would again result in post-election violence. In an editorial to *The Daily Nation*, a secondary school teacher warned,

During the post-election violence, it is they [youth] who took up machetes and hacked to death, injured, raped, plundered, and evicted their neighbours...there are no reforms which can change the attitude of youth towards fellow Kenyans or give them a sense of belonging. Instead, there is a sense of marginalization, discrimination and neglect among them. This makes them vulnerable to crafty politicians, who would like to misuse them for their dirty work. (September 14, 2012)

The Standard reported on September 28, 2012 that Nyanza provincial police boss Joseph Otieno warned politicians against using youth gangs to aid their campaigns. He cautioned, “We will not watch Kisumu be destroyed like in the last elections” (p. 7). To this end, Nyanza police arrested seven people who belong to two criminal gangs, China Squad and American Marines, who are thought to be offshoots of the older gang Baghdad Boys. Instead of engaging in this type of activity, the Central Organization of Trade Unions Secretary General Francis Atwoli advised the youth “to use available resources to develop themselves instead of engaging in criminal activities...young people were focusing on politics at the expense of improving their economic status” (p. 7).

The image of youth as violent gang member was also prevalent after the killing of politician Shem Onyango (also known as Kwega) in Kisumu on October 29, 2012. In reporting on the incident, the media blamed China Squad and American Marines, who were purportedly working alongside the police as the perpetrators. According to news reports, “the gangs are thought to have their roots in the volatile political turf wars of the 1990s when the then ruling

party Kanu and the opposition mobilized youth to bolster their respective campaigns or protect their perceived strongholds” (Wanga, November 4, 2012, p. 11). These gangs have also been blamed for the murders of two other high profile Kisumu residents, director of a security company Fanuel Marwa and a senior CDC researcher Dr. Joseph Odhiambo. Additionally, the gangs extort money from *boda boda* (bicycle taxis) and *piki piki* (motorcycle taxi) operators, other motorists, small shop owners, and demand handouts from politicians and others who will hire them. These incidents have led to increased security measures in Kisumu.

In reporting on development assistance for youth, the media often separate youth and women. Note, for example, recent articles in *The Daily Nation*: “Projects seek to create jobs for the youth and women” (March 12, 2013); “Women, youth leaders laud fund allocation” (June 15, 2012); the creation of funds such as the Women and Youth Fund; and studies such as “Are the youth and women in Kenya ready for business?” (Conducted by the Centre for Enterprise Development in Nairobi). Coupled with media portrayals that describe youth as machete-wielding, crazed, and armed have led to the use of the concept youth to describe male youth.

Tensions between men and women (or boys and girls or youth and women) over development assistance can be clearly seen in a piece written by Clay Muganda, who is a regular contributor to *The Daily Nation* with his own section called Claycourt, in October of 2012 entitled “Boys a threatened species while girls hog all the NGO attention.” In this piece, the columnist argues boys are neglected in favor of the “girl child” by the media, NGOs, and the government:

These girl child-related bodies spend years talking about equality, but their programmes espouse only inequality and inculcate in the minds of girls the idea that they are

disadvantaged, discriminated against. As a result, they grow up expecting the so-called patriarchal society to uplift them or give them what it owes them. (p. 4)

Clearly Muganda believes that focusing on the rights and needs of women and girls unfairly excludes boys (hence his qualifier “so-called”) and breeds a sense of entitlement in girls and women that the government “owes” them funding and resources. The “boy (child)” on the other hand is told, “he is a man and should take things in a manly way” (p. 4). Muganda is reminding readers that boys are also children. These arguments are not just discursive; there are real consequences at stake for opportunities for loans, assistance, and potential livelihoods.

As these government policies, initiatives, and media representations make clear, youth are seen as the hope for the future if they work hard, participate in economic, self-reliant activity, and become empowered. In tension with that, male youth are also seen as threats to the security of the nation if they remain idle, violently engage in political activity, and resort to criminal activity. Youth are caught in an ambiguous position. They are in need of protection and are thus the objects of development, but they are also made responsible for education and employment and held accountable for violence. Thus, they become subjects. Gender adds additional ambiguity to the term youth. Separating programs for youth and women results in tensions between the groups, which harms rather than helps gender relations and opportunities for both male and female youth. Tensions also emerge between youth and adults. Rather than advocating mentoring relationships or intergenerational partnerships, in these discourses, adults lure youth into violent, criminal activity, exploit them, or hold youth back from opportunity in favor of tradition.

Local Discourses on Youth

Kenya's third largest and poorest city, Kisumu, is located in Western Kenya and home to the Luo, the country's second largest ethnic group. Despite their size, Luo residents have perceived themselves to be excluded and geographically and politically marginalized throughout much of Kenya's history (Shipton, 2007, p. 72). Luos speak DhoLuo, a Nilotic language, as opposed to the dominant Bantu languages spoken throughout most of Kenya.

Gender and life stage ambiguities are also present in Luo culture. These ideas reveal underlying cultural assumptions about the needs, rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for girls and youth. Linking girl with child emphasizes the need for protection, care, and immaturity while associating youth with violent images emphasizes young men as the problem that needs to be contained and controlled. As Shipton (2007) notes, "It is not uncommon...for schoolgirls, at whoever's initiative, to be impregnated or passed sexually transmitted diseases by their teachers or headmasters. Everyone knows secondary school children who have come home from school pregnant, and it is not unheard of in primary either" (p. 89). During my fieldwork, a man in his 30s was accused of raping a ten year-old girl. Thus, many NGOs who work to prevent abuse against girls and young women, early pregnancy, rape, and violence use the term "girl child" to highlight their vulnerability.

Girls also often take on adult roles and responsibility early, particularly related to childcare. "A girl as young as three or four begins to imitate older children in caring for infants...This is not just babysitting...but nearly total caregiving and surrogate parenting" (Shipton, 2007, p. 82). This type of role results in terms such as "child nurses," demonstrating the unclear distinctions between adulthood and childhood. Girls are alternatively seen as children to be protected or violated and young women who need to take on female roles in society as

caregivers. This role also involves young girls in a visible and recognized form of labor; thus the term “idle youth” rarely refers to young girls.

Luos do not have a history of publicly marking transitions from childhood to youth and youth to adulthood. Unlike most ethnic groups in Kenya, Luos have never circumcised boys or girls, widely seen as a rite of passage in East Africa. In the past, Luo men had their six lower incisors removed, the closest equivalent to a Luo rite of passage. However, Shipton (2007) argues that school exams, graduations, and responsibilities for childcare currently represent the transition into adult responsibilities:

School exams and graduations, now a central part of Luo cultural identity as a ‘tribe’ of scholastic high achievers have rendered tooth extraction, the nearest standard Luo counterpart to group circumcisions, all but superfluous. But Luo need not rely on schools for their maturity and dignity. Children are entrusted with the care of younger children; they do nursing and child care tasks that in other parts of the world would be legally if not morally restricted to adults, and thus grow up fast. (p. 41)

Given these realities and ambiguities, it is unclear when and how one transitions from being a “girl child” to a youth (if girls ever become youth) and then a woman or from a boy to a youth to a man. Marriage and having children, generally viewed as markers of adulthood, are also complicated in Luo culture. People “recognize different stages and degrees of marriedness” (Shipton, 2007, p. 156). In order to be culturally recognized as married, a man must pay bride wealth to his wife’s family. Traditionally, this has involved cattle, though now there is usually some combination of cattle and cash. Given high rates of poverty and unemployment, paying bride price can take several years. Under these conditions, the position of youth and the rights, responsibilities, and supports afforded them remain ambiguous.

Youth Discourses on Youth

Given the government reports on youth, media portrayals, and my own observations and interactions with Luo youth, I was curious to learn how youth saw themselves. How would they define youth? What use do they make of these strategic representations imposed on them?

Most of the young artists defined youth as an age within the range of 18 to 35, though one went as young as 13 and two placed the end of youth around the age of 25. All of the respondents represented youth as a stage of becoming, though they had different terms for this (“becoming matured,” “being discovered,” “venturing into life”). They thought of themselves as growing into the responsibilities of adulthood, not yet fully adults. Youth view their becoming as a time of exploration and energy preceding a period of independence and full responsibility.

Johnson and Simon both demonstrate awareness and internalization of these discourses on youth. Simon works with youth through his church and advises them not to engage in criminal activity and drugs. Similar to the NYP and Constitution, Simon attributes these “challenges” to unemployment. By using their talents, Simon argues out of school youth and orphans can overcome financial constraints to “start their own business, be their own boss.” Thus Simon participates in replicating government messages that youth are responsible for their own futures. They can overcome challenges and employ themselves or they can engage in criminal activity and drugs.

Johnson also believes his “only option” is to start his own business. He accepts the government’s charge to “think of a way to create jobs yourself as an individual.” Like Simon, Johnson also participates in a youth group aimed at empowering them financially. Johnson points out the danger of idleness leading to criminal activity and engaging in drugs. Similar to Simon’s focus on talent, Johnson sees art as a potential way out. Though he replicates discourses about

idle, drunken youth, Johnson also inserts new details that make room for alternative possibilities. For example, the drunken boy he sees in the neighborhood has the potential to be a good spoken word artist or a good musician. Johnson also sees a role for art to express political opinions rather than resorting to violence. Recall also that Johnson critiques the exclusion of artists from participating in the global economy and notes barriers from the municipal police who “harass” youth wanting bribes. Although he can point out these critiques, he is not in a position of power to change these conditions or overthrow this system that he operates within.

These discourses trap youth into perceiving themselves as the problem and the solution. National and international development initiatives have named idleness as the disease ailing youth. Empowerment, largely through formal education and employment, is seen as the cure. These initiatives argue, “Providing the relevant education and training is a critical factor for youth engagement and development” (Hope, 2012, p. 229) and “large numbers of idle youth create a ticking time bomb for the country” (p. 233). Therefore, youth should focus on productive, economic activities that will transform them from ticking bombs into “entrepreneurs...for their own positive personal development as well as for the country as a whole” (p. 234). If they don’t work hard to develop themselves and the nation, they will end up as criminals or gang members.

As de Certeau (1984) argues, strategies “conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own ‘proper’ place or institution” (p. xx). Through these discourses, policies, programs, and representation, the state, NGOs, and the media mask their role in creating these conditions and lay out the strategies within which youth have to learn to operate. According to these actors, the strategy for youth is

to work hard, avoid idleness, and seek to empower yourselves through education, training, and employment.

Chapter Three Education

I finished primary education in the year 2008 and my mother told me, “Thomas, there’s no money, there’s no fees for you to go join secondary school.” So, I didn’t go to secondary school because of lack of money, but my mom discovered that I have a talent. I can draw, I can act, so that’s why my mom decided to put me in this school of fine arts and performing. Then I found myself in art. – Thomas Omolo, 2012 Imani graduate

You see how the education system setup in Kenya is, if you have not performed, you have no place. – John Ochieng’, 2013 Imani graduate

In addition to policies and programs targeting youth, the Kenyan government creates strategies through the institution of the school. Since gaining independence in 1963, the Kenyan government has strategically determined who can access what type of education, what students learn in school, and who should pay. Since the 1980s, schools have focused on technical, vocational skills and limited access to higher education to top performers on national exams who have the financial resources to pay.

Throughout its history, Kenya made three attempts at offering free primary education. Each of these efforts coincided with a political change. In 1974 Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya’s first president, introduced free primary education, Moi reinstituted FPE in 1979, and Kibaki reintroduced FPE in 2003. The development of and access to secondary education took longer. Kibaki instituted free secondary education in 2008 and in 2013 Kenya passed the Basic Education Act making primary and secondary schooling free and compulsory.

Yet, as Thomas’s story illustrates, all along parents have continued to pay school fees for their children. In a 2011 survey of 626 households, parents and families in Nyalenda reported spending between KSh 400 and KSh 200⁸ per month to send their children to school (Maoulidi,

⁸ About \$4.60 – \$2.30; 53% to 63% of Kisumu residents live below the urban poverty line of KSh 2,648 (\$33) per adult, these are considerable expenses for families in Nyalenda.

2012, p. 21). Nyalenda is an informal settlement with high rates of poverty, as high as 78% in some areas; these costs represent a significant portion of parents' resources (p. 17). In January of 2014, the Kenya National Association of Parents filed a suit against the government over schools continuing to charge fees in defiance of the Basic Education Act (*Daily Nation*, January 8, 2014). These costs have impacted school enrollment and access.

Since the 1980s in the wake of structural adjustment reforms urged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the Kenyan government has emphasized vocational and “practical” skills at all levels of education and encouraged youth to focus on self-employment and self-reliance rather than relying on government assistance. Non-formal schools, such as Imani, helped meet the educational needs for youth who could not access formal schools because their families could not afford to pay school fees. Although more students have been able to access education, whether formal or non-formal, many youth continue to face obstacles to formal employment.⁹ Given these realities, what opportunities exist for youth to attain productive livelihoods? In this chapter, I chronicle changes to the structure of education and demonstrate how these changes in structure and financing have constrained learning and employment opportunities for Kenyan youth.

History of Educational Developments in Kenya

The formal education system in Kenya has experienced significant transitions from a segregated, unequal system during colonial rule, to cost sharing in the era of structural adjustment, to the opening of access through free primary education in 2003. Throughout these developments, notions of who can access what type of education and who should pay have shifted. Although many more students can access education than ever before, the value of that

⁹ The proportion of Kenyans who hold a formal job decreased from about 13% in the early 1970s to 9% in 2010 (UNDP, 2013, p. 11).

education is increasingly in question with a 40% youth unemployment rate and a growing lack of opportunity.

Prior to missionary educational initiatives and British colonial rule, indigenous education served several purposes, including transmitting and preserving wisdom and knowledge from one generation to the next, helping children adapt to and use their natural environment, understanding communities and ethnic traditions, and becoming members of their communities (Bogonko, 1992, pp. 1-2). Much of this learning was informal although more formal teaching opportunities came through learning a trade, which was largely done through individual apprenticeships, and initiation rites marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood (p. 5).

Prior to colonial rule, Christian missionaries brought Western education to Kenya around 1895 (Bogonko, 1992, p. 18). The building of the Uganda Railway from Mombasa to Kisumu in 1901 enabled missionaries to have a broader influence throughout the county (p. 18). The Mill Hill Missionaries, who eventually started the Kisumu Community Project in 1979, first came to Kisumu in 1904 (p. 19). These missionaries established schools whose aim was to evangelize, but they soon also taught literacy skills and basic education due to local demand. By 1910, there were 35 mission schools throughout Kenya (Alwy & Schech, 2004, p. 270).

During the colonial period, the Frazer Report of 1909 established separate education systems for Europeans, Asians, and Africans (Alwy & Schech, 2004, p. 270). European and Asian students attended seven years of primary school and four years of secondary. These schools excluded African students – for whom few schools existed (mostly supported by missionaries) (Colclough & Webb, 2012, p. 264). The colonial government began to provide financial assistance to mission schools in 1915 for technical education (Bogonko, 1992, p. 23). African students had to pass the Common Entrance Exam (CEE) after grade four and the Kenya

African Preliminary Examination (KAPE) after grade eight to qualify to attend secondary school, whereas European and Asian students did not have to take exams until after grade seven (Somerset, 2011, pp. 484-486; Somerset, 2009, p. 234).

These segregated schools also offered different curricula. The European schools' curriculum was based on the United Kingdom grammar school model; the African schools' curriculum focused more on non-academic subjects: basic literacy and numeracy, manual and practical activities, and religious and moral instruction (Somerset, 2011, p. 485). The European schools were funded by the colonial government, while the African schools received either mission or community support (p. 485).

In 1949, the Beecher Report reduced the time in primary school from seven years to four. Students would attend four years of primary, four years of "intermediate" school, and four years of secondary (Somerset, 2011, p. 486; Bogonko, 1992, p. 67). At the end of primary school, students took the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to advance to the next level. Few African students were able to pass this exam. In 1956, there was only a 32.9% continuation rate from grade four to grade five (Somerset, 2011, p. 487). After completing the intermediate level, students took the Kenya African Preliminary Examination (KAPE) or ended their education at this level. At the intermediate level, students took courses in English and mathematics, as well as practical subjects such as agriculture and "homecrafts" (Bogonko, 1992, p. 67).

Kenya gained independence on December 12, 1963 and the following year under Kenya's first president all students were able to access seven years of primary education, eliminating the CCE exam after grade four. The government also ended segregated schools and integrated them into one national system, though high fees meant continued segregation in practice (Bogonko, 1992, p. 111). After grade seven, students were required to pass the new

Kenya Primary Education (KPE) Exam (changed from the Kenya African Primary Exam) in order to proceed to secondary school (Somerset, 2011, p. 489). This change resulted in higher numbers of students completing at least seven years of primary school. Numbers of students taking KPE increased from 62,000 in 1963 to 133,000 in 1966 (Bogonko, 1992, p. 111). Kenya continued to follow the British system of seven years of primary school (increased from four), four years of lower secondary, two years of upper secondary, and three years of university education (Buchmann, 1999, p. 102). Students had to pass the Cambridge O level exam after lower secondary and the A level exam after upper secondary to continue to advance.

Also beginning in 1963, Kenya instituted technical education to prepare students for various jobs. Secondary technical and vocational schools were primarily developed to meet the needs of primary school leavers who were not able to pass exams to qualify for secondary schools. In 1968 2,212 students were enrolled in these schools that prepared them for the City and Guilds and Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice Examinations (Bogonko, 1992, p. 161). The government also started Harambee Institutes of Technology (HIT) to help unemployed youth and offered courses such as building trades, electrical and mechanical engineering, garment making, food processing, home science, irrigation, agricultural engineering, business studies, and business administration (p. 162).

In the wake of independence in 1964, the Ominde Commission on Education promoted the teaching of social values, including a sense of nationhood, national unity, social equality, social obligation, and responsibility (Wainaina, Arnot, & Chege, 2011, p. 183). The Commission also advocated using English as a common language of instruction and bringing students of different geographical and cultural backgrounds together in boarding schools to promote unity

(p. 184). The report also prevented primary schools from offering subjects in agriculture and vocational subjects (Bogonko, 1992, p. 118).

Recognizing the need for well-trained people to take on roles in the newly formed government, the state also focused on expanding secondary education for African students, quite limited under colonial rule. Before independence, some secondary schools were created through a *Harambee* (“Let’s pull together” in Swahili) movement. Local communities raised funds to build their own secondary schools and by 1974, there were over 600 Harambee secondary schools across the country (Buchmann, 1999, p. 98). However, these Harambee schools faced challenges, as some teachers were both unqualified and failed to follow the national curricula, and the schools had lower student performance on exams than government schools (Colclough & Webb, 2012, p. 265). The government began to take over these schools as provincial state schools, allowing secondary schools to grow faster (Bogonko, 1992, p. 125). The curriculum of secondary schools focused on science and mathematics in the hopes of producing skilled workers to stimulate the economy. To foster a sense of national identity, African history was taught in place of European history and schools taught African literature and languages (Bogonko, 1992, p. 124).

In 1974, Kenya made its first attempt at free primary education, allowing students to attend the first four years of primary school without paying school fees. This was eventually extended to upper grades and, by 1980, students could attend primary school free from fees. This change resulted in increased enrollments. Grade one enrollments increased from 380,000 in 1973 to 950,000 in 1974 (Somerset, 2009, p. 236). Although there were no official fees for school, parents and students were asked to pay non-fee charges for school buildings and teacher housing. Communities were still responsible for raising these funds, which they did largely through

harambee (self-help) initiatives and paying taxes (p. 237). Increased enrollments also led to recruitment of untrained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and shortages of textbooks and materials (p. 238).

In terms of the curriculum, in 1976 the Gachathi Commission Report recommended teaching Social Education and Ethics (SEE) as a separate subject in schools focusing on “social values such as marriage, chastity, virtues such as ‘fortitude’, ‘perfection’ and ‘active sacrifice’, as well as the importance of traditional gender divisions in the home and the policing of peers” (Wainaina et al., 2011, p. 184). These additions were in response to increased corruption, a declining economy, and political oppression (p. 184). The report reinforced English and Kiswahili as the common languages to be used in schools. In contrast with the Ominde Report, this 1976 report advocated pre-vocational studies in primary grades in order to meet the needs of school-leavers as well as students who went on to secondary school (Bogonko, 1992, p. 120).

A year after becoming president, Moi passed a measure that schools could only raise money through self-help activities and could no longer rely on parents for financial assistance (Somerset, 2011, p. 490) and introduced a free school milk program (Somerset, 2009, p. 238). Just as in 1974, the elimination of school fees and taxes on parents resulted in increased enrollment. This marked Kenya’s second attempt at free primary education; however, these gains to free access to primary education and reliance on self-help initiatives would be relatively short lived.

During the 1980s, Kenya’s economy was in decline, prices were rising, and unemployment was high (Buchmann, 1999, p. 102). In response, Moi’s government encouraged “education for self-reliance.” This impacted the curriculum of schools to include more vocational and practical subjects in preparation for employment in agriculture or the informal sector rather

than for higher education or a government position (pp. 103-104). However, these changes also resulted in increased costs including building workshops and hiring new teachers. Due to high levels of national debt, foreign aid from sources such as the IMF and the World Bank required reduced government spending. Thus, in 1988 Kenya began a cost-sharing program in education as part of the structural adjustments urged by the IMF and the World Bank (Somerset, 2011, p. 490). Under this system, the government paid teacher and administrator salaries while parents were responsible for tuition, textbooks, and exam fees (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 22). Because of these costs, enrollment in primary schools declined.

The 1980s also saw a change in school structure. In 1985 Kenyan schools switched from the British system of seven years of primary, six years of secondary, and three years of university to the American system of eight years of primary, four years of secondary, and four years of university (Somerset, 2009, pp. 241-242). The government believed these changes would provide more room for vocational subjects, more time to cover the curriculum, and an improved ability to meet all students' needs (Bogonko, 1992, p. 121). "It was hoped that the consequence of such policies would enable larger numbers of secondary school-leavers to be absorbed into public employment, self-employment and in the informal urban and rural sectors of the economy" (p. 129). The government, concerned about youth leaving school without the necessary skills for employment, integrated education with rural development.

These changes in structure and finance impacted the curriculum as well. While the focus on civic education continued and Social Education and Ethics (SEE) was extended into the secondary school curriculum, they competed with new neoliberal concepts in line with structural adjustment including the economic value of education, individual development, and well-being (Wainaina et al., 2011, p. 185). "By the late 1980s, there was a definite shift in emphasis which

placed citizenship education alongside new economic emphases on self-reliance and self-employment (a shift that reflected the growing unemployment of youth)” (p. 185).

At the elementary school level, subjects were expanded from 7 to 13, including art and craftwork in an attempt to focus on practical, pre-vocational skills (Somerset, 2009, p. 242). These new vocational subjects again signaled a shift from thinking of education as a means of transmitting social values to education as a means to gainful, self-reliant employment. They also shifted the responsibility for employment from the government to the students themselves. These subjects focused on the possibilities of self-employment and the reality that many children would only complete primary education. The following is an example from a standard seven textbook in business education written by Gatama in 1986:

You do not need to stay idle in your father’s home simply because you have no job in which you are paid regularly. You should actively keep yourself busy by engaging yourself in one of these activities. In other words, when you finish school, the question should not be: WHO WILL EMPLOY ME BUT HOW WILL I EMPLOY MYSELF? (King, 1996, p. 164, emphasis in original)

Messages about self-employment appeared in other core subject texts as well. Consider this excerpt from a 1985 standard eight primary science textbook by Berlutti:

Soon you will be leaving primary school. You will have to decide what to do. There are many possibilities:

1. Self-employment

This means you work for yourself. For example, you could start a small business such as making tools, rearing chickens, trading or growing vegetables.

To be self-employed, you need to have courage and skill. You need to work hard. (King, 1996, p. 165).

As early as primary school, children were socialized to think of future employment as their own responsibility. This is evident in Johnson's story. As he notes, "You have to think of a way to create jobs yourself as an individual." Placing this responsibility for work on children causes them to hold themselves responsible for their success or their failure rather than understanding the systemic and structural problems that lead to unemployment and poverty.

At the secondary level, students took courses to prepare them for the new Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exam including English, Kiswahili, mathematics, biological sciences or biology, physical sciences or physics and chemistry, geography, history and government were all mandatory. In addition, students chose one subject from each of the following: Group Two – Christian religious education, Islamic religious education, Hindu religious education, and social education and ethics; Group Three – home science, agriculture, woodwork, building, construction, power mechanics, electricity, and drawing and design; Group Four – French, German, art and design, music accounting, commerce, economics, typewriting with office practice (Bogonko, 1992, p. 135). This curriculum was designed to provide a broad education that would prepare students for further education and work.

The year following Kibaki's election, he re-introduced Free Primary Education (FPE), officially eliminating both direct and indirect costs to parents and families (though parents continued to pay various fees) (Somerset, 2011, p. 491). This led to significant increases in enrollment in primary school of about 17.6% (Wainaina et al., 2011, p. 186). Also in 2003, SEE was dropped from the secondary school curriculum and was replaced by Religious Education (RE) (Wainaina et al., 2011, p. 186). Parents pushed for this change and "rated the subject as the

‘least useful’ [on the 1999 Needs Assessment Survey on the Secondary Education Curriculum] in terms of helping young people access the labour market” (p. 186). Again we see the linking of education explicitly with the prospect of economic mobility and the job market.

In 2008, Kibaki extended free education to secondary school by introducing Free Secondary Education (FSE). This raised secondary school enrollments from 1.18 million students in 2007 to 1.3 million in 2008 (Arnot et al., 2012, p. 91). While these advances led to increased enrollments and enabled more students to access education, they did not eliminate costs for parents. Parents and guardians were still responsible for costs such as room and board, school uniforms, and transportation (Wainaina et al., 2011; Maoulidi, 2008). These related educational costs still place schooling out of reach for many of Kenya’s poorest children. Currently due to the Basic Education Act of 2013, education at primary and secondary levels is free and mandatory. According to this act, “No public school shall charge or cause any parent, guardian, or any other person acting in *loco parentis* capacity to pay tuition fee for or on behalf of any pupil in a public institution of basic education and training” (GoK, 2013, p. 26). Parents who do not take their children to school face fines of KSh 5,000 and/or one year in prison. However, as we have seen, claims of a free public education do not align with the realities students and their parents face.

The current structure of schools in Kenya consists of pre-primary school, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Pre-primary education consists of three years: Baby, Nursery, and Pre-Unit and students generally begin at age three. Primary school consists of eight grades, referred to as standards. Students take language, mathematics, history, science, geography, and religion (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 27). At the end of standard eight, students take the Kenya Certificate

of Primary Education (KCPE) Exam which determines whether they can attend secondary school and which school they will attend.

Secondary schools are divided into three categories: public (government) schools, harambee schools, and private schools. Government schools consist of national, provincial, and district schools, which are heavily subsidized by the government, tend to be unisex, and boarding schools. National schools select the top students from the KPCE exam across the country. Provincial schools choose top performers from their respective provinces (Kibera, 1995, p. 60). Private and harambee schools are mixed gender, generally day schools, and admit students with lower scores on the KPCE. Secondary school lasts for four years, referred to as forms. Students study: communication (English, Kiswahili, foreign languages), mathematics, science (physical and biological), humanities (geography, history, government, religious education, social studies), applied education (agriculture, industrial education, wood technology, metal technology, business education, home science, etc.), and physical education (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 32). At the end of form four, students take the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Exam. Scores on this exam determine their future possibilities for education or work. Tertiary education lasts between two and four years and students can pursue a certificate, diploma, or bachelor's degree.

As this brief summary demonstrates, the purpose of schooling in Kenya has shifted from learning to become part of a community and a good citizen to learning technical and vocational skills that lead to self-reliant employment. Higher levels of education are more difficult to attain, particularly for poor youth and families. These “school leavers” are encouraged to pursue technical, vocational training and find their own employment in the informal sector. As education has become more accessible, it has also put significant strain on schools and teachers,

including overcrowded classrooms, high teacher to student ratios, and shortage of materials (Maoulidi, 2008; Somerset, 2009). It has also consistently put pressure on parents and guardians who, despite assistance, still shoulder significant costs, including fees for computer charges, exams, school trips, and perhaps most importantly, tutorials which is a growing industry for students concerned with passing the state tests (Somerset, 2009, p. 245). Despite growing rates of unemployment, parents still spend significant resources to send their children to school believing that education is the path to economic mobility.

A good example of this is tutorials. Many parents pay for tutorials, particularly leading up to the high stakes Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam at the end of standard eight, which is seen as an important gateway to economic mobility. “The most important determinant of a student’s academic progress is passing the highly competitive exams at the end of primary and secondary school” (Buchmann, 1999, p. 105). Due to the high stakes of these tests, parents and students spend significant time and resources preparing for these exams. During the period of my fieldwork, teachers went on strike from September 3-24, 2012. Schools were closed and students and teachers were supposed to remain at home. However, due to the pressure of the KCPE, many standard eight pupils and their teachers met in secret to prepare for exams. Standard eight pupils and teachers from Kibuye Mixed Primary School used the community hall at Nyalenda (on the compound of Imani Art School). Students’ parents or guardians paid teachers for their service, and teachers risked disciplinary measures from the union.

Girls and Women’s Opportunities for Employment and Education

The issue of education and future employment is, like youth, in part also shaped by issues of gender. Instituting Free Primary Education (FPE) and changing communal and familial

attitudes toward the education of girls led to increased enrollment of girls in school. Girls now participate in primary education at about the same level as boys. Girls' access to secondary education occurred more slowly than to primary (Bogonko, 1992, p. 126). From 1964-1970, girls' enrollment in school fluctuated between 30 and 25% (p. 126). According to UNESCO, in 2011 the Gross Enrollment Rate for girls in secondary school was 37% compared to 45% for boys.

However, girls' achievement is lower, particularly in mathematics and science (Somerset, 2009, p. 247). In part, scholars explain this as a result of the continual marginalization of girls in school as compared with boys who are encouraged to take leadership roles (p. 247). For example, Kubow's (2007) study found teachers "found it hard to encourage girls to ask questions confidently in class in a culture where they were taught not to answer back in the home" (Wainaina et al., 2011, p. 187). Therefore, while girls have increased access to education, their experience of schooling differs from boys and tends to reinforce cultural expectations of obedience and respect.

In terms of employment opportunities, according to the U. N. Development Program's (UNDP) report on youth unemployment in Kenya (2013), "the proportion of females with a job, formal or informal, is lower than that of males for all ages" and the most difficult age to access an informal job is around the age of 25 (p. 24). The report identifies limited employment opportunities for women as the root cause of this problem and also women's responsibilities as "home-makers" and lower rates of secondary and tertiary school completion as additional challenges (p. 25).

Initiatives such as Education for All, an international initiative launched in 1990 to ensure every citizen of every society has access to education, and the Millennium Development Goals,

eight goals developed by the U.N. to meet the needs of the world's poorest citizens by 2015, emphasize education as the path toward employment and empowerment for young women. The hope is that by providing free primary education and support for girls to complete schooling, they will be able to access employment and overcome economic and social conditions that keep them in poverty. However – as is the case with other aspects of school reproduction -- Chege and Arnot (2012) argue that these programs often ignore the ways in which education often transmits and perpetuates gender inequalities and traditional ideas about the role and place of girls and boys in their communities. It may very well be, as is the case with youth in general, the efforts to change the power relations actually simply reinforces them.

Education in Kisumu

According to the 2009 Census, Kisumu is the third largest city in Kenya with a population of 404,160 (Maoulidi, 2012, p. 10). Youth predominate; 66% of the entire population is 25 or younger (p. 16). The city is divided into 25 sub-locations grouped into 10 main locations (p. 10). Various types of educational institutions are available in Kisumu including pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, non-formal, and adult literacy schools. Primary-aged school children (6-13) make up about 21.7% of the population, secondary school-aged (14-18) make up about 14% (p. 16).

Pre-primary education is not compulsory and in 2006, Kisumu had 404 Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 18). Of these, 210 are public and 194 are private (p. 18). These schools are spread throughout the city; most ECDs in informal settlement areas are private schools (p. 18). In 2006, 25,398 children were enrolled in pre-primary schools (p. 24).

Primary schools have eight standards, culminating with the KCPE exam. Students typically enter at the age of six. In 2006, 90% of the primary schools in Kisumu were public and

10% were private; however there are more private schools than public in informal settlement areas (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 21). The implementation of Free Primary Education in 2003 increased enrollments in Kisumu primary schools from 44,179 in 2002 to over 70,278 in 2006 (p. 21). As was the case throughout Kenya, these increases led to large class sizes, unqualified teachers, and shortages of textbooks and materials.

Secondary schools have four forms and end with the KCSE exam. Students typically enter at the age of 14. Enrollment in secondary school is lower than in primary; in 2005, only 24.6% of the urban population had completed secondary school (p. 32). A major reason for this was that until FSE was introduced in 2008, all secondary schools charged fees. As noted above, even with FSE parents and guardians are still responsible for fees such as transportation, tutoring, and school trips, which increase in secondary school. There are three categories of secondary schools: national, provincial, and district. National schools receive the most funding and have the most difficult admissions standards followed by provincial schools and then district. In 2006, there were no national schools in Kisumu, eight provincial and 20 district schools (p. 32). In addition, Kisumu has eight private schools (p. 18).

Kisumu has two public universities: Maseno University and Great Lakes University. In addition, Moi University, Jomo Kenyatta University, and the College of Accountancy offer courses in Kisumu (p. 36). Kisumu Polytechnic, Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology, Tom Mboya Labor College, and several other private colleges offer technical, industrial, vocational, and entrepreneurship courses. The cost of these schools is often quite high due to the expense of labs and materials. In 2006, the annual fee for attending Kisumu Polytechnic was over \$33,450 per year (p. 39).

For out-of-school youth, Kisumu has non-formal schools designed for children aged 6 to 13 who were not able to attend formal school. Many of these students have been marginalized and disadvantaged, including street children, orphans, child workers, and adolescent parents. The term “non-formal” was first used to refer to schools that did not require uniforms located in informal settlements (Maoulidi, 2008, p 39). Some of the earliest non-formal schools in Kisumu were established and run by missionaries. There has been significant growth in non-formal schools: in the 1990s, there were three schools serving approximately 250 students and by 2006, there were 21 schools with enrollments of 2,580 students (p. 40). Non-formal education providers are classified into three types: non-formal schools (offering a full, formal curriculum), non-formal education centers, and community-based organizations, which offer modified curricula.

In 2005, Kisumu had an adult literacy rate of 48% (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 43). Twenty adult literacy centers are scattered across the city, generally housed in churches, community halls, and schools (p. 44). The centers provide instruction in literacy and numeracy, language instruction (English and Kiswahili), leadership skills training (women and youth groups), and basic life skills training (vocational training in carpentry, fishing, and bicycle repair). The centers have low enrollments (in 2005 enrollment was only .253%), with a student population consisting largely of prisoners, female youth who dropped out of school due to pregnancy or to help care for family members, farmers, and petty traders (p. 43).

Kisumu faces several challenges in providing quality education for all students. First, the poverty rate is high, 47.8% in 2009 (USAID, 2009) and over 60% of residents live in informal settlements (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 10). The Kenyan government estimates that 53% to 63% of Kisumu residents live below the urban poverty line of KSh 2,648 (\$33) per adult per month (p.

13). Second, there are significant health risks and concerns in Kisumu. In 2006, approximately 15% of the population of Kisumu was HIV positive (double the national rate of 6.1%) and many also suffer from malaria, cholera, typhoid, and diarrhea (p. 11). HIV has had a significant impact on schooling. According to the District Education Staffing Officer in 2006, three teachers die of AIDS related deaths every month (p. 45). HIV/AIDS has also led to increasing numbers of orphans in schools: 3210 in ECD centers, 6901 in primary, and 1048 in secondary schools in 2006 (p. 45). In terms of infrastructure, housing shortages and lack of water and sanitation facilitates present challenges (p. 11). The high rates of unemployment exacerbate the situation; most working adults earn their living from subsistence fishing, agriculture, or in *Jua Kali*, the informal sector (literally Hot Sun in Swahili) (p.11).

Education in Nyalenda

An estimated 60% of Kisumu residents live in informal settlements such as Nyalenda (Maoulidi, 2012, p. 8). Nyalenda is the second largest informal settlement in Kisumu and is divided into Nyalenda A and B. Nyalenda has the highest rates of poverty in Kisumu and residents lack access to many basic services including access to clean water, basic sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel, and passable roads (p. 14). There are over 30 pre-primary schools, seven public primary schools and two public secondary schools in Nyalenda (p. 11, 21). According to a 2011 survey of 626 households in Nyalenda and Obunga (another informal settlement in Kisumu) found 83.7% received some formal education, and 16.3% have never attended school (p. 20). 52% attended primary school, 21% studied in secondary school, and 8% attended university (p. 20). Across all levels except pre-primary, more males than females attend school and fewer women than men have received post-primary education of any kind (p. 20).

As we have seen, throughout their history Kenyan citizens have struggled to access quality education. Colonial administrators first created an unequal, segregated system along racial lines. The Kenyan government desegregated this system and opened access to more African students; however, high fees limited access for students living in poverty, and girls faced barriers such as cultural preferences for educating boys and expectations of girls working at home. The public secondary school system of national, provincial, and district schools creates a competitive schooling environment. Scores on the KPCE exam determine admission and access to better education and opportunity; thus many students repeat grades and parents pay for tutorials in the hopes of attaining high marks. Students who do not score well attend inferior private schools, enter technical/vocational training, or look for opportunities for self-employment in the informal sector. Youth growing up in communities like Nyalenda face significant barriers to accessing affordable, quality education, and as we have seen, accept responsibility for creating their own sources of employment and opportunity.

Thus the Kenyan government, operating from a strategic position of power, has established a proper place – the school – and has determined who can access it, what they can learn, and who should pay. Youth growing up in Nyalenda have access to inferior schools, are taught primarily vocational, technical skills, and struggle to pay. Many youth were only able to access primary education so that their families could send their younger siblings to primary school rather than spending all their resources on one child.

Betty Awiti

I was born in Nairobi and lived there for around eight years. I came to Kisumu in 2002. My father wanted us to come and stay here so that we could stay with his mom. His mom was now alone. In standard one up to seven I learned in a school called Karen C Primary School, it's in Nairobi. When I was in primary, I did art up to class five. Then art was cancelled. So, I used to draw cartoons, whatever, I liked those. Then after that I came here to finish primary school. I rewinded class eight because my mom passed away when I was in class eight so I didn't perform well. For secondary I learned in a mixed [co-educational] school in Kisumu. I was interested in art from secondary.

I came to Imani in 2010. My secondary school principal was the one who attached me with this school. When doing art you express your feelings. You can do what you like. I like things like abstract forms and flowers. My favorite courses here have been graphics and clay. I've learned many things especially from Michael. With clay work, I didn't know how to do it but they taught me and I'm seeing I was just with students at the same level. In my room, I have drawings some of them are cartoons, some of them are realistic animals and flowers, and I've even made a success card¹⁰ of my own. When I enter the room, they just make me happy. I know who I am.

When I'm not at school, mostly I just stay in the house. I don't go outside. Maybe at home I spend time with my brothers and sister. I do see friends from school like Michael, Tom Odero, and Maureen. We can chat. Apart from chatting, we learn some things. They teach me how to paint. Most of the time, I met Maureen at the Nakumat and we spend some times or I even go with her at home.

¹⁰ Success cards are very common in Kenya. Particularly around exam time, students send each other success cards to wish them luck on exams.

I have two siblings, a younger brother and sister. My sister is in form one and my brother is in class eight. Sometimes I help them with homework. There are six of us all together, we three plus my stepmother's children who are also three. My father pays my school fees for Imani. Sometimes my father gives me pocket money then some I get on my own, maybe when somebody gives me money. Like last holiday I went home. Then the principal called me and I painted for him the gate and wrote the name of the school. I did some things there and then it brought me some money. When I was working there, I brought some paintings, and he took three of them at KSh 1,000 each. I don't have a bank account, but I do use M-Pesa.¹¹

I'm coming from very far, so I stay at home there with, I call him my father, but he's just like neighbors. I'm just staying there so my father brings some things there. Sometimes staying with people is not easy. At times you don't even have money, so you struggle and maybe you call at home and he doesn't have money at that time so you don't get money at the right time.

When I finish Imani, I want to go to another course and maybe if it is going to be possible, I'll go for that. I wanted to do food and beverage after this, so maybe my father can change his mind but I don't know. When I finish, there's a friend of my father that wants to take me to be a manager of a restaurant somewhere in Kisumu here, I don't know where. He has another branch here and one in Nairobi. So maybe I'll go to one of them. So that's why I want to learn food and beverage so when I do it, I can display my art works there. If I do that, I'll do that plus my art. I can't leave art.

At first, my family didn't want me to study art because I was supposed to go for that course. Then my principal came and told my father that the time for going there is not yet, I can come to Imani first. So my father decided that I could come here first. But now he likes it

¹¹ M-Pesa is a mobile banking service where people can send and receive money through their phones.

because even some of his friends like art so he likes introducing me to them.

I am a youth. Youth is like a group of people together trying to make something grow into something big or to make people be in one terms. Youth can organize groups to bring peace, contribute maybe money for a project, if they want to make a project, or even open banks for themselves so that each and every individual person can help himself or maybe if somebody in the youth group gets any problem, they can help with the money. So youth is important. Some people don't like that because they don't like sharing their ideas or views with people, some people. So, like Luos, they don't love each other, some of them don't love. Maybe when you are rich, they don't like it. They want you to be in poverty whatever. That is how they feel it must be. But if you have something that is giving you money, they feel jealous. So they don't like it.

In the future, I hope to be strong and be able to do something. Like in art, they don't believe that girls can do it. We want to show them that we can do it. They only see that boys can write the sign writing and whatever but even girls can do it. It's only that us girls some of them are afraid to do it. But if you have courage you can just do it. And even to compare with the boys because there are some boys even they don't know it very well. They say that girls are not suitable for this type of work. Ladies don't like things like art, drawing, they disgrace you to be in a lower class. They like working in some institution like offices whatever where they, they dress smartly, and you see in art you have to dress like an artist. Maybe when you are doing clay, you don't have to be clean.

Most people don't like art because they think art is just like wasting time. In the community of Luos, if you are a doctor, nurse or doing whatever it's when they see that you are doing something. They have no experience that art is also money. So in our class, we have a motto that artists, we are poor millionaires. If somebody looks at what we are doing, they say it

is simple, it's like it cannot earn money. But you from outside,¹² when you come, you see it is nice and we can sell it expensive or any price that suits the item, and you see, if somebody sells a piece at 5,000 or 3,000, if you tell somebody here, they cannot believe it. I hope I will be a big artist, the first lady. Something like that. A happy future.

¹² Foreigners who come to work in Kenya.

Chapter Four

Imani Art School

It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by. Surveys of routes miss what was: the act of passing by. The operation of walking, wandering, or “window shopping,” that is, the activity of passers-by, is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map. They allow us to grasp only a relic set in the nowhen (sic) of a surface of projection. Itself visible, it has the effect of making invisible the operation that made it possible. These fixations constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 97).

de Certeau argues that strategies are successful because they establish a place of power, and from that position of power can create systems and discourses (p. 38). Official places allow strategic actors to build up their advantages and see and control potential threats. The Kenyan government, as a strategic actor, has established official places (schools, programs, policies) and created systems and discourses about youth. Through these strategies, the state has constructed youth as “responsibilized” citizens “deployed to produce governmental results that do not depend on direct state intervention” (Ferguson, 2009, p. 172). Youth should empower themselves through education and employment.

These systems of education and discourses impact the daily lives of youth; however, they cannot completely determine them. In the following chapters, I ethnographically detail the impact of these constraints on youth by closely examining the everyday lives and practices of young artists. Much like walkers making their way through a planned city, these young artists animate and make places habitable. They create an “anthropological, poetic, and mythic experience of space” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 93). What follows records a specific way of being in

the world, making visible the operations of young artists attempting to find their space in an ambiguous landscape.

Art, as Johnson, Simon, and Betty's stories detail, is an unconventional subject for students to choose. This choice puts them at odds with family members and friends who see art as "wasting time" or "playing around," rather than leading to productive livelihoods. These stories also reveal the assumption that education should lead to a career that leads, in turn, to financial sustainability and membership in a higher class.

If these are dominant cultural values, why then do these students choose art? How does an art college fit within a national education system that increasingly pushes students toward technical, vocational skills so they can start their own businesses? How does it fit within national and local ideas about youth who need to work hard to avoid idleness? In this chapter, I describe the founding and history of Imani Art School, its curriculum, and how it is currently run and operated. My goal in this chapter is not to evaluate the school's curriculum or teaching, but instead to analyze how the teachers and founders of Imani Art School create strategies for students to learn art and become adults. I also explore how through these strategies, teachers attempt to help youth attain a productive livelihood through art but, at the same time, constrain and contain what youth can actually do. Youth develop tactics as they navigate and negotiate the school's curriculum, physical place, and stories of how to succeed to their own ends.

Kisumu Community Project (KCP)

Imani Art School has its roots in a larger organization, the Kisumu Community Project (KCP), which started in March 1979 as a Catholic mission supported by Mill Hill Missionaries. Father Bart, the Dutch founder of the school and the organization, arrived in Kisumu in 1977:

After the Second Vatican Council, it was clear that the missionary enterprise had to be readjusted, renewed, so I worked out a new way of being a missionary in an urban context. And so when I came in '77...I wanted to live in the community and ask the community members, leaders, people, what they wanted me to do. Quite a few people joined me in that, some of them were whites, or Europeans, Americans also; some of them were locals. So we formed a team, and we lived as a family for many, many years, sharing everything, sharing food, sharing space, sharing money, sharing interests, sharing religion, sharing ignorance, sharing fate, and that made a very deep impression on me. So for about 18 years, I lived there in a kind of commune context, a family context, children around me all the time, women, men, old, young.

Initially, Father Bart and three local community members lived in a communal setting in the informal settlements of Nyalenda and Pandipieri, engaging in an integrated, community approach to development. They asked the local community to gather in small groups to identify and find solutions to spiritual, social, economic, health, environmental, and cultural challenges. Over time, the organization grew to have centres in four areas -- Nyalenda, Pandipieri, Magadi, and Milimani -- organized around three main departments: health, children's services, and education.

Each department offers a variety of services. For example, under the health department, community members have access to a clinic, HIV/AIDS testing and counseling, child counseling, nutrition, and environmental health and sanitation. The children's services department offers a rehabilitation project for street children, a non-formal primary school, and child rights and advocacy. The education department includes an early childhood development

center and vocational training for youth including a girls' domestic school, carpentry, graphics and computers, and the art school.

Eventually, KCP transformed into a secular, Kenyan non-government organization, continuing to offer services in these three areas. Today, KCP focuses on providing resources for the most vulnerable members of the informal settlement areas of Kisumu, highlighting participation and empowerment in this process: "These shall be done through an integrated framework for community empowerment and participation for sustainable development" (KCP website). Although no longer a missionary project, KCP still offers religious services, including Catholic Mass every Sunday. However, the administration explicitly states these services are open to anyone, regardless of religious affiliation.

A community-elected board of directors governs KCP. Members are elected every three years at an annual meeting and serve as volunteers without pay. The board appoints the management team, including the program director and program officers for the three main departments, a program accountant, and human resource officer. Currently KCP's head is Sister Bridget, an Irish Mill Hill missionary, and five Luo community members make up the management team. The organization is supported by donations from individuals (particularly from the Netherlands) as well as from other organizations including USAID, which helped sponsor the health clinic.

About eight months before I arrived to begin my fieldwork in 2011, three program directors were chased away from KCP for stealing money. KCP ran a bank for the community, and when people went to collect their money, they realized it was missing. Several donors pulled their support once they learned of this corruption, and KCP faced a financial crisis. In response to the crisis, the girls' domestic school was turned over to the government, KCP began to focus

on income-generating opportunities among its projects, and the organization became stricter about collecting school fees (which were also increased). For example, the fees for the art school increased from 2,000 to 3,000 shillings¹³ per term in 2012.

Imani Art School

Imani Art School falls under the department of education and was founded in 1987 during the era of structural adjustment and cost-sharing policies in education. During this time, many youth were out of school and Imani wanted to offer them an affordable alternative to the formal school system. According to a 2006 UN-HABITAT (Maoulidi, 2008) report, about 60% of Kisumu's population lives in informal settlements like Nyalenda (p. 4). The Imani students live in Nyalenda A (with a population of 23,731 and a population density of 8,475 people per square kilometer), Nyalenda B (population 25,644, density 4,204 per square kilometer), Manyatta A (population 41,910, density 20,955 per square kilometer), and Manyatta B (population 21,027, density 6,372 per square kilometer) (p. 7). These areas have the highest poverty rates in Kisumu, with 77.6% of residents living below the urban poverty line, and KCP serves approximately 100,000 people living in these areas (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 13; KCP website).

Recall the stories of Johnson, Simon, and Betty. As their stories show, many youth, especially from poor families, have difficulty accessing formal education. Imani was started to offer these youth an alternative to the formal education system and to provide an opportunity for them to explore and develop their artistic talents. Of the 22 Imani students I interviewed, seven were not able to complete secondary school because of lack of resources for fees; three were orphans who were supported in school by KCP, Compassion International, and an elder brother; and ten had lost at least one parent. Five stayed on their own and had to support themselves to

¹³ About \$23 to \$34.

pay rent and buy food, though all had some support either from relatives or KCP to pay school fees.

Father Bart studied art in Europe for 12 years in addition to his training as a priest. He hoped to use that training in his work in Kisumu, but it was not immediately clear to him how to do this. Julie Maren, an American sister of Notre Dame de Namur, wanted to volunteer at KCP, and she had been trained as a professional artist. KCP also hired Steven Obuo, a Luo man who had some professional art training in Nairobi, and together they began the art school in 1987. As with the other projects of KCP, the art school came into existence because Father Bart was constantly on the watch for opportunities to enrich the community by taking advantage of the talents of people who were willing to help. As he explains,

The method that we had was trying to grab the chance that passes by, like an artist does. An artist sees chances in the matter that is at hand, and he grabs that chance. And the training of an artist is also training of the eye that he sees the possibility in the material that is in front of him, the dramatic possibilities. And so that happened with the way we started our programs also. We said we must grab, keep the eyes open for the possibilities that offer themselves. So when that sister came, who had artistic qualities, pounce on her, grab her. And so we pounced because these are all gifts. People come with gifts. You must not demand, we want this; we want that. No. Our method is to hope for possibilities to flow by, interesting possibilities, and grab them.

Father Bart was working under economic constraints. KCP could not afford to hire a large staff, and so they depended on willing volunteers who had skills that might meet the community's needs. Father Bart seized the opportunity, a tactical move in de Certeau's sense, to start an art school using the talents of Sister Julie, Steven, and his own artistic training.

From its inception, the central purpose of Imani was to develop the artistic talent among the youth. From my interviews and conversations with current students, graduates, Steven, and Father Bart, there is wide agreement that Imani exists for youth who have not had access to other opportunities through formal schooling but who have talent. Imani is the only art school in Western Kenya, and KCP wanted to locate the school within Nyalenda to ensure that youth could access and afford to attend an art college. According to Father Bart:

In Nyalenda, there are Leonardo da Vincis, there are Rembrandts, there are Van Goghs, but who picks them up? At the best of times, they sit in the middle of the town making ashtrays for tourists or making the same giraffe 300 times over. Those are the Leonardo da Vincis, the Michelangelos reduced to such a state of servitude because there is no such thing as Nyalenda art school. So my hope is that through art school, those talents will be able to assert themselves. I can do more than just make a little giraffe. And I know that we do that. We have trained in the past about 150 artists, people with artistic quality, that otherwise would have remained dormant.

From the beginning, Imani's roots in a communal living experience are also evident. Inspired by this experience, the founders of the art school extended this idea of community to the structure and curriculum of the school. As Father Bart explains,

We all are full of talents, if we get the chance to nurture them. I've seen how very simple people became very talented people, how complete strangers became very great friends. And so it is that discovery that your own talents fit on with other people's talents and that together you can be better than you were by yourself. That I think was a very great discovery [and] very unsettling also because we all have been educated with the idea that if I'm on my own, I am best of all. And that is very bad in our culture.

And so the school began by gathering people together who had common interests and talents in art. They began to paint, create sculptures, and also paint murals and work in local churches and community centers. The art school was intended to be part of the larger community, and so the school reached out in these ways. Instead of separating students into different classes, teachers had them mix together so they could see how their talents fit together.

Although it is located in the community, Imani is a difficult place to find. Along Ring Road, there is a battered sign that points the way to the Nyalenda Catholic Centre and lists the art school among many other projects. Imani Art School is located within the larger compound of Nyalenda Catholic Centre, about a five-minute walk along the unpaved Nyaori Road past several *dukas* (informal shops or stores), makeshift churches, homes, and informal, private Early Childhood Development centres (ECDs). The school is not visible from the road and can only be seen upon entering the compound.

The compound is surrounded by a large fence and has a small *duka* at the entrance to the right and a covered space where cobblers sit to fix shoes to the left. Upon entering, there is an informal carpentry shop to the right where carpenters make furniture (the art students also pay these carpenters to make frames). The center of the compound is the community hall that is used for various events and for Catholic Mass on Sundays (said in the *DhoLuo* language). Several church-related activities take place in small meeting rooms next to the large hall including choir practices, meetings of different small, Christian community groups, youth groups, and religious instruction for children.

The Ogola family also lives on the compound in a small house next to the art school. The heads of the family, Mama Beatrice and her husband Jonathan, are among the founding members of KCP who lived in the original community with Father Bart. Jonathan worked for KCP for

many years and is now retired and lives in the family's rural home in Ligege, which is close to Busia near the border with Uganda. Beatrice and Jonathan have eight children; the youngest, 16, attends a boarding school in Yala. Some of the children live on the compound (while I lived there four of the eight stayed at the centre), and Beatrice also cares for her five grandchildren.¹⁴ Beatrice is in charge of the compound and of caring for various volunteers and visitors who come to stay.

Volunteers and visitors, mainly from Europe, stay in a two-story, dormitory style building on the left side of the compound, directly across from the art school. I lived in this building during two of my three field visits. Each room has a small bed, desk, and room to store clothes and other belongings. The doors are locked for security. Visitors eat all their meals with the Ogola family in the common room, which has a large table and around ten chairs. Mama Beatrice cooks all of the meals (usually assisted by two of her daughters), cleans the compound, and hosts the visitors and guests. The compound also has three pit latrines, and two outdoor showers next to the two-story building for visitors and the Ogola family. A bustling community, on any given day passersby can hear the choir singing and many local children playing.

The art school is to the right of the compound and consists of Steven's office and a large classroom (about 30 x 60 feet). The obvious trappings that signify schooling in Kisumu are absent here: there are no uniforms, no large, hand-painted signs, and very few students. The outside of the school is a concrete, permanent structure and has been painted and decorated by students who painted -- Imani Art School, School of Fine Art and Design -- in blue, capital letters. The doors and window shades are also painted with bright, abstract designs including a

¹⁴ Grandparents raising their grandchildren is becoming increasingly common throughout East Africa. The children's father works in Malindi and is separated from his wife. He also worked for KCP and is one of the people who was accused of stealing money.

sun and figures drumming. On the wall between Steven's office and the classroom, students created a mural from broken glass with the KCP logo, an abstract figure dancing and drumming. Students usually create these decorations in their third year as a graduation project. In fact, during my fieldwork students discussed the possibility of creating new signs to make Imani more visible. Steven's office door, also painted by students, depicts the KCP figure, abstract figures of art students, and pencils and paintbrushes in vibrant colors. Inside, Steven's office is a modest sized room with a desk, chair, and computer, small library of art books, samples of student artwork, and a table with four handmade, woven chairs for visitors and parents to sit around and take tea.

Inside the classroom, there is a long table and stools where students and teachers gather each morning. On the wall to the right of the table is a large mural painted by students of people fishing and selling goods near Lake Victoria. The wall space behind the head table is used to display all of the artwork from the week for Friday critique. At the far end of the table is a large blackboard teachers use to demonstrate art techniques and write notes. Along the long wall are lockers that students mark with nicknames and designs, and fired sculptures from clay modeling lessons. Several easels stand at the back of the classroom used for painting and model drawing. An open space on the roof allows natural light into the school, enabling artists to see their work and providing a source of light when the school lacks electricity. The school was without power for about four weeks in 2011, and students climbed trees with *pangas* (machetes) to cut back the branches that blocked the light. There is a tap in the back of the classroom, but in 2012, the water pipe to the school was shut off to save money. Students took water from the compound tap or the

borehole (when the entire compound had no running water in November 2012).¹⁵ Across from the school is a small storeroom where additional supplies are kept along with a kiln for firing clay sculptures.

During school hours, the doors to Steven's office and the classroom are always open. Interested students may join Imani at any time. Most hear about the school by word of mouth and come to meet with Steven. Steven asks about the student's interest and background in art and calls the student chairman to show the potential student around the school. Every year the students select a chairman to be responsible in the absence of the teacher, to organize the students for cleaning, and to represent the students to the administration. After this, Steven explains a bit about the school's history, the curriculum book, the rules, and fee structure. Steven tells the student to return with samples of his/her work and instructs the student to visit the main offices of KCP (which are located about a 20 minute walk from Nyalenda at the Pandipieri Centre). Next, the student visits the KCP office, pays the initial fee, and brings the receipt to Steven. Steven sets up a still life for the student inside the classroom to evaluate his/her art skills and admits the student on a one-month provisional basis. Students may be admitted without completing secondary school. The criteria for admission are the student's interest and skill in art, willingness to pay fees, and adherence to school rules.

The curriculum of Imani consists of a three-year course of study focused on the following topics: drawing, clay modeling, watercolor painting, acrylic painting, graphics and advertising, and a study on space and form. Father Bart formalized the curriculum and put it together in a book in 2009, and students receive a copy when they join Imani. Each topic is divided into a 12-

¹⁵ On November 15, 2012, the government came through Nyalenda and demolished parts of Nyaore Road to make way for diversion of a road. In the process, the pipes that provided water were torn out and when I left on December 3rd, the road was still torn up and the pipes had not been restored. All the residents of Nyalenda had to collect water from boreholes.

week course (one term). At the end of each term, students take an exam, which consists of a pen-and-paper theory exam and a practical exam during which students prepare a piece (i.e. watercolor painting, acrylic painting, etc. depending on the term). At the end of the year, students receive a report with their scores in the following sections: drawing and painting (reality, imagination, fantasy, applicability of art); specialization (students choose an area of their specialization); presentation; model drawing; clay work; art history and theory; and sketching. Students keep a portfolio with samples of their work and Father Bart and Steven evaluate these portfolios to determine when they are ready to graduate.

Upon graduating, students receive an “internal diploma.” This diploma is recognized by the school but not by the government, which requires a formal exam to receive a diploma in fine art. The administration of Imani decided not to administer the government exam because the cost would be too high for the students. Yet, exams are an important feature of Kenyan schools, and Imani has also started to give exams at the end of every term. However, compared with the government exams, the stakes are not as high and students are evaluated more on their practical work than on their theoretical knowledge of art. In fact, some students, especially those who did not complete secondary school, did not attend on the day of exams and were not asked to take them later.

In his conversations with students and me, Steven emphasized the school’s uniqueness, focusing on three areas: spiritual instruction, the school’s identity as a non-formal, non-governmental school, and focusing on learning rather than obtaining a degree. KCP also notes these unique features, claiming programs like Imani are successful because they provide instruction in the “mother tongue of the youths” (*DhoLuo*), use local materials and teachers, teach using “youth-centered methodologies,” and a curriculum that is not “overloaded with [a]

national curriculum covering many subjects of which some are not relevant to the learners,” and provides options for formal and self-employment (KCP website). These features set Imani apart from many formal schools in Kisumu that students perceived as “very stressing” with “lots of discipline.” Many of the students experienced strict discipline in primary and secondary school including caning, physical punishments, and an authoritarian teaching style that positions students as passive recipients of knowledge (Stambach, 2000; Coe, 2012).

These qualities that make Imani unique (no uniforms, student-centered curriculum, Bible sharing, a caring teacher, and a non-formal school) also make Imani less visible and less legitimate within the Kenyan national education system. Although it provides opportunities for youth from the Nyalenda and Manyatta communities to access art education, because it lacks national recognition, it limits graduates’ opportunities.

Teachers and Staff

Given its non-formal and communal roots, it is perhaps not surprising that the teachers in Imani Art School – primarily Father Bart and Steven -- adopt a quite different demeanor than the authoritative style found among many teachers in East Africa. Typically, “lessons are organized around the transmission of official knowledge through methods emphasizing note-taking, rote memorization, and oral and written regurgitation. Such pedagogies are generated by the all-important examinations that determine young people’s progress through the ever-narrowing gates at the next educational level” (Coe, 2012, p. 132). In contrast, teachers at Imani use methods such as peer learning, group critiques, and practical assessments.

Father Bart is a towering figure, not only in stature (he is around 6’4” tall), but also in reputation. Many in the community refer to him as *jaduong*’ (the *DhoLuo* word for elder), he is now 87 years old; he has lived in Kisumu for over 30 years, speaks fluent *DhoLuo*, and has

delivered and/or baptized many children in the community, including some of the art students. He has shock white hair and now walks with a cane. To recognize his work in the community, Father Bart was formally given the title of Luo Elder in 2013.

In his early days as a priest in Kisumu, Father Bart was fond of organizing long walks to raise money for KCP, including leading a walk from Kampala, Uganda to the parish of Milimani in Kisumu in 2003. He arrived in Kisumu with a PhD in Philosophy, and a background in fine art. In his dissertation, he explored the importance of play, an idea that deeply influenced his priesthood and the way he organized and structured the art school:

Art for me is almost synonymous with play; art is one aspect of play. And for me the essence of play is that you are contemplating your own quality. I can do this. Damn it.

Artistic contemplation is the same to me. Reality looks like that damn it. How good, how beautiful, and it has to do with me with my eyes, with my adventure in life, my light and dark, my struggles to bring equilibrium in things, they're all artistic qualities and play qualities. So I hardly think about art by itself. I always think about it in the context of play. And play for me is of the maximum importance.

Play is evident in the way Father Bart interacts with the art students. Although formally retired, he continues to teach model drawing every Friday morning, except for three months when he returns to the Netherlands each year (June – September). He jokes with the students and keeps the atmosphere light while giving them helpful feedback. Students are fond of repeating his sayings such as “Do you see with your nose or with your eyes?”

Steven is a Luo man in his early 50s who lives in Manyatta -- the largest informal settlement in Kisumu, about a 25-minute bicycle ride to Imani -- with his wife and three children. His first wife left, leaving Steven to raise their daughter, and he recently remarried and

had twins in 2012. Although Steven has worked for KCP for many years and highly values religious instruction such as daily Bible sharing, he is not Catholic but instead a member of the African Independent Church. Steven is a jovial man, around 6 feet tall with a stocky frame, and pedals his bicycle to school every day.

Like Father Bart, Steven often jokes with students and tells them, “Don’t apply the high sign of respect for teachers. Be free with us, joke with us. Be artistic.” In saying this, Steven is – of course – not giving students free reign; he still maintains a sense of discipline (though much more relaxed than what is typically found in Kenyan schools), largely through providing or denying opportunities to students and reminding them that he ultimately decides whether and when they will graduate.

This balance of caring and discipline is tricky in practice. Steven shared with me on many occasions that he has to understand the youth from the community and not push them too hard or they will leave. Steven is also in the difficult position of being the intermediary between the students and KCP. Often KCP pressures Steven to collect school fees before he can purchase school supplies. However, Steven understands that not all students can pay fees on time. Therefore, he has to “make do” in order to obtain the materials he needs.

Last term I had to teach through recycling some of the past pieces already made because I could not get the materials. So I had to be creative enough to make things move. I have friends in town, some own shops, and at times I talk to them, they give me some materials, I have to come with some of my personal materials just to give students to make things move so they don’t look at it as if it’s almost collapsing. I don’t want to portray that in their mind cause when they see, that will demoralize them and will kill or lower their spirit of fighting.

As he explains, Steven conceals the ways he “makes do” from the students so they won’t lose faith in the institution. However, the tactics he uses to make do are evident in his teaching and interactions with the students as we will see.

Although he develops close relationships with students, Steven also maintains social distance from them, spending time in his office to work on other tasks related to the administration of the school, such as working on budgets and reports. Steven took tea in his office everyday. James, a volunteer teacher, and I would sometimes join him, but Steven would also bring tea to us in the classroom so we could have tea while we interacted with students. Steven felt it would be inappropriate for him to take tea inside the classroom because it would undermine his status as head teacher. Steven controls students’ access to important materials such as art supplies (which are expensive) and books from the office library. When he did engage in his own artwork (on only rare occasions), he would work in his office, explaining that he did not want to influence students’ work and style. Like Father Bart, Steven believes that students have to work closely together to share their talents.

Artists cannot be separated because they’re all talented; it’s only the level that differs. So an institution of art that separates years, to me that institution is not doing the right thing cause as artists, I would like to know something from you. But if there is a blockage, there is a barrier between me and you. I only see you over fence, then we cannot talk freely. But if we are put together, maybe I’m year three and you are just year one, I would like to sit closely with you and tell you what I’ve experienced. But maybe that little you know, maybe I did not know, you will tell me that. And I have to encourage you to be at my level. So in that way we have to be close. There are things that I cannot teach them direct like music, but they can learn from each other. So Imani makes that happen.

And so Steven spends time away from the classroom not only to complete his own administrative work, but also to give students this time to learn from each other.

Two other figures who have been important to the instruction at Imani are Pieter and James Osiemo. Pieter, also from the Netherlands, has been formally trained as an artist and was a teacher for many years. He came to Kisumu as a lay missionary with KCP and taught in the art school alongside Steven for about seven years. Pieter is also tall (over 6 feet), has white hair, is in his 70s, and due to medical reasons, does not spend much time in Kisumu anymore. When he does come, he gives advice to the art students and always buys them a snack (usually chapatis, an unleavened flatbread commonly eaten in Kisumu, causing some students to refer to him as the “chapati man”). Pieter also gives financial support to the school and pays school fees for the students most in need selected by Steven.

James Osiemo was one such student who received financial support from Pieter. James, a 2008 Imani graduate, began teaching at Imani in 2012. Due to KCP’s financial difficulties, James was hired and paid by Pieter.¹⁶ James is tall, thin, and almost always wears a cap. James has had no pedagogical training and did not complete secondary school. However, he is one of the most successful graduates of Imani, maintaining his own stall in town and selling several pieces to international clients. James has also had several exhibitions in Nairobi and internationally in London and the Netherlands. When I asked the current students which artists inspire them, every student mentioned James.

By contrast with Steven, James often worked closely with and alongside students in the classroom. Students have more access to James, whose role as a teacher is less formal than Steven’s. Steven’s legitimacy comes from his official role as head teacher, while James’s comes

¹⁶ Pieter also paid James’s school fees while James attended Imani and paid for him to attend a graphics course at Pandipieri after graduation.

from his standing as a successful and well-respected local artist. In addition to teaching at Imani, James operates his own art stall in town, attends adult education classes, and is married with two children. Because of his busy schedule, James also took advantage of time during the break to work on his own projects. This was not by design: Steven did not instruct James to share projects with students, nor did James intentionally use this work as a model. However, working on products for clients allowed students to see what types of products clients commission, how James works as an artist in the informal sector, and glimpse a potential future for themselves as artists in the informal market.

Art Class in Imani

The school day at Imani begins at 8 (though students often do not arrive until 9) and begins with Bible sharing. When Steven arrives in the morning, he sets the radio to Jesus is Lord FM (105.3), a religious station that broadcasts from Kakamega. The announcers use both English and Kiswahili and focus on prayer dedications and religious songs. Steven turns off the radio for Bible sharing. These sessions consist of three readings from the Bible according to the Catholic liturgical calendar.¹⁷ Typically, one reading is chosen from the Old Testament, another from the New, and one is a Psalm.¹⁸ Steven chooses different students to read each selection and then invites sharing. At times, students share readily; however, more often than not, Steven leads and dominates the sharing. In his reflections, he connects the spiritual readings to his objectives for the students, including explicit and implicit messages about overcoming hardships, discipline, being a family/team, and working hard to avoid laziness.

¹⁷ Even though the institution has its roots in Catholicism, Steven is not Catholic (He belongs to the African Independent Church) and several of the students are also not Catholic. In explaining this process to two new students who joined the art school in 2012, Steven emphasized that all religions are welcome and the institution will not force students into Catholic beliefs.

¹⁸ The art school uses a small Bible with the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs; The Holy Bible (The Gideons), and The African Bible (Paulines) all written in English.

When students have finished sharing, Steven asks students for announcements and discusses the day's plan. The typical schedule involves some direct instruction from Steven, followed by time for students to work independently or in groups. Afterwards, Steven typically returns to this office, switching the radio back on.

Students then disperse to individual tables divided into three rows. The students tend to sit in the same place each time. After a few minutes, a student goes into Steven's office to change the station, usually to KISS 100 (92.5FM). This station plays Kenyan and Western music (also switching between English and Kiswahili) with artists such as Rihanna, Katy Perry, and Bruno Mars, and during lunchtime, broadcasts an advice show featuring "Doctor Love" where listeners call in and receive relationship advice. On occasion, some students also listen to their own music by attaching headphones to their cellphones. Students start out working independently and the atmosphere is light: music plays, students joke, stand up and dance or stand to get a new perspective on their work. Periodically, students go into the office to get materials or to borrow a book from the library, such as *Pocket Book of Animals* or *The Great Artists: Picasso*, to help them with their sketches.

While students work independently, Steven generally works in his office, checking in with students periodically. Students go in and out of the office freely to ask Steven questions or find materials. There is a morning break around 10:30 for 30 minutes (though again, in practice sometimes the breaks are longer and sometimes students work through the break), followed by more independent work. During breaks, some students stay in the classroom and listen to music and chat. Others use the space around the compound to learn other artistic skills such as playing guitar, making shoes, writing poetry, etc.

During work time, students frequently walk around to see each other's art and help each other. Students have a lunch break from 12:15 to 2 (though again, sometimes longer) and return in the afternoon for more work. According to the timetable, the last hour of the day (4-5pm) is reserved for performing arts; however, when I am at Imani, I teach a performing arts class from 2 to 5pm. In my absence, students either continue to work on their art or play the drums and dance.

As is the case for most schools in Kenya, the students are responsible for cleaning the school. They sweep the school every morning and evening and mop once a week, usually on Mondays. The cleaning tasks are divided by gender: the female students always clean Steven's office, while the male students clean the classroom and cut back branches. Students attend computer classes twice a week (on Mondays and Wednesdays) and are taught by a government teacher at the vocational school across the road from the art school. This center, also part of KCP, houses the girls' domestic school. Every Friday morning, the students practice model drawing, a class taught by Father Bart when he is in town. The models take six poses and the students draw for 20 minutes. On Friday afternoons, the students engage in critique. They display all the work from the week along the wall and sit in front of the work. Each student takes turns talking about his/her piece and responding to questions from Steven and the class.

November 2, 2012

Students are engaged in Friday critique. They are all seated at tables facing the wall so they can see the work from the week: acrylic paintings of "Slum Life", the project Steven assigned them earlier in the week. Students went out into the community, chose a spot to sit, and observed and sketched scenes from everyday life. Students take turns talking about their paintings. When it is their turn, they stand at the front of the room, point out their painting, and answer questions.

Silas: Here is my work.

Steven: You are the one with the pregnant lady.

Silas: Yeah.

Steven: Did you really [see] that woman?

Silas: Yeah, I saw her.

Steven: Or [did] you have the picture of a pregnant...

Silas: I took a sketch when she was passing by

Steven: You sketched her?

Silas: Yeah

Steven: Do you still have that sketch?

Silas: Yeah, it's...my friends here saw that sketch

Steven: (laughing) so a ghost came and stole it? You people, you make some quick sketches and then you create a lot on your own and when you're asked to produce sketches," oh I left it at home, oh I kept it in the store." Good excuses. Sawa [okay]. .

Silas: The problem which I saw here is, the work is unfinished because the ground was difficult for me and the way Father Bart¹⁹ said it, we have to apply strokes, so you see here I tried but I don't see how it's coming.

Steven: We talked about that today too after seeing that you all tried, and now Father Bart was repeating the same. How long will you people listen and apply what you have listened to? That's the big question. Because sometimes when he comes and sees this work, it's like we don't tell you this. We don't teach you on how to do it while it's something we've been preaching, preaching, preaching. I personally have been preaching these things even James you have seen it

¹⁹ Fr. Bart conducted a mini-critique on the same pieces that morning pointing out that students were coloring (just smearing the same color) instead of painting (every stroke should be different).

in some of his works. He learned here. This is something that is giving us the real, the real what? Touch of art and instead you smear it, it is like a wall. Then your painting because more like that a photo, a photograph, a picture. You know? But we are artists. We have to apply some crazy, crazy strokes that separate it from pictures. You have a good composition in fact one of those that are a bit balanced. But now how do you paint, look at the roof, the iron sheets, now look at that line, what is that line doing? Look at my hand. (Steven goes to Silas's painting and illustrates what he means using his hand) This then this. Now, why, were you really seeing that as a white line?

Silas: It's something like a reflection of the sun

Steven: A reflection - look at the roof behind - you see that small shape, it's just enough. It's very good - you don't see those strong lines, you only see a shape that separates the light from the dark and that it good. You know, when I look at your work, most of the ladies there have very wide hips. The one in the trouser. (students (laughing)) Did you sketch these figures or you are exaggerating? You are adding your own style?

Silas: Here in Kisumu, I see women like these.

James: But she doesn't have a neck. What can you say?

Silas: I say that I'm trying cause because of absenteeism I've not reached where I'm supposed to be.

James: You have missed most of the lessons so due to that...

Silas: It's a must [that I attend classes] (students laughing)

Steven: You say it's a must and [you want to] start life with art on a serious note

Silas: You know it's when I go out there that I will gain more experiences. Yeah, even here I will gain experience but out there I'll gain more experience.

Steven: So when you will be out you will gain more experience through selling, working and selling, isn't it?

Silas: It's not a must I sell.

Steven: Okay. Exhibiting

Silas: Yeah

Steven: And do you think you can also learn and exhibit? We have one person in Nairobi who every year organizes exhibitions. Have you ever participated in that exhibition?

Silas: No.

Steven: No. Why? And this is the third year since that project started, the Lake Basin Art. We've been featuring them, we've been sending our articles, and we've been really trying to promote, I think Simon²⁰ has sold a piece in Nairobi. David²¹ also sold a piece this year in Nairobi. How much [did] that painting cost?

David: 30,000²²

Steven: 30,000, so David sold a piece at 30,000 Kenya shillings in Nairobi during that show. Don't you think that if you put much of your time and embark on a serious study you can be actually leaving this place ready now to face the real artists outside?

SILAS: Yeah, but the only problem is that how will I survive? Because even now it's a problem that's why I've not caught up with the rest, the materials, I was absent, when I see there's a talent, I'm talented in this.

Steven: You're talented, of course, that's why we have started with you. And you know I personally won't like to see you not doing art after leaving this place. I would like to see you like

²⁰ Third year Imani student

²¹ Second year Imani student

²² about \$350

James, like Victor Omondi²³, there's so many. Look, Tom Odero after school was painting isn't it? And he was having that small kibanda²⁴ near Tuskys.²⁵ But he felt that there was something that he was missing that he had to come and learn for three years. Three good years. He never made a shortcut. Don't you think that he saw the importance of coming to a school of art and just learn with everybody?

Silas: The way I can see, I'm not far from the others.

Steven: I'm not saying that any art that you produce or he produces is bad, no. That is your creative piece. We should be respectful of any viewer. But you know there's something that we call experience, experience is everything here. Like let's say somebody comes from outside and gives you a full box of materials and tells you, bwana,²⁶ paint with this. I think you can just organize yourself. You see John Ochieng' is not here, and John is not surviving from anybody. You know he works a bit for people and that's how he gets his money to eat and to pay the rent. You know that. Because the grandmother was supporting him but she cannot do that anymore but he's still coming. He still squeezes himself to come.

Silas: Even John is a single²⁷ and I-

Steven: I know, but what I'm trying to tell you here is just a matter of creating your own time. Creating time does not matter whether you are two or one. You see? You can still do it. You can still do it because in this school we have had a family man and Calvin's brother²⁸ can tell you surviving in Kisumu without a relative and a time he could work at night. And he has made it to

²³ James, Victor, and Tom are all Imani graduates who have art stalls in town.

²⁴ Swahili, kiosk

²⁵ A popular supermarket in town

²⁶ Swahili, mister

²⁷ Silas is from Kisii (not Kisumu) and is married with two small children. He stays alone in Kisumu

²⁸ Current first year student whose brother is a graduate of Imani. Calvin's brother now teaches visual and performing art at an international school in Tanzania.

the highest level. It is only the seriousness that you have to put in your studies and you will make it. Believe in yourself. Believe you can make it. When you want to believe in something, don't bring in other things again to distort it. Make it somewhere separate and put it there and believe that you can make it. You can make it, you have the talent, we can see, this is a great talent. No one can just paint a pregnant woman and give us the highlights and the shapes, you see? You just gave me the shape of my better half,²⁹ you know, she's just like that. I don't know whether you saw her? Yeah, so that is unique. You have the talent, my friend, so be serious. I'm not saying you put aside all the challenges you are facing. What you are experiencing, I'm also experiencing. Besides my family I have my mother to take care of. You see? I'm second to my elder brother so when he's away in Nairobi, sometimes we hear he's in Tana River, I'm the one they have to approach every time there is an issue there. So those problems, sometimes if I can always put them in front of me, they will always block my way. So at times I know they are there but I ignore them and then I work on them step by step. You know? You start with you then you extend. Just believe in yourself and you will make it. Think about that. Sawa?

Strategies and Tactics for Becoming

In many ways, Imani can be seen as a place playing as a space. To return to de Certeau's (1984) distinctions, a place is "the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence" (p. 117). A space is "composed of intersections of mobile elements" (p. 117). As a place, Imani has the power to create a curriculum, set rules for student behavior, collect fees, and establish criteria for graduation. However, in practice, Imani often acts like a space with the flexibility to negotiate curriculum, rules, the payment of fees, and graduation requirements. However, this flexibility disappears when students stray too far from

²⁹ Steven's wife was pregnant at the time

the staff's goals for them as fine artists. Steven is also in a complicated position. As a teacher, he has power and will over the students and is thus in a strategic position. As an employee of KCP, he has less power and must use tactics to get the materials he needs and advocate for his students. These ambiguities create a complicated place/space for students and for Steven. Students have to learn what the boundaries are and the limits to the school's flexibility. Steven has to enforce the strategies laid out by KCP and also prepare students for a future he knows will be difficult with limited resources.

Through discourses such as the one above and stories told during Bible sharing, Steven and the students co-construct the ethos of Imani. Together they create a specific environment to learn art, highlighting community engagement (learning with and from each other) and taking advantage of possibilities. In de Certeau's terms, the teachers of Imani create strategies for students to become artists. They have created a proper place, the art school, and have established rules, a curriculum, and a structure for student learning. These strategies of Imani help us understand the possibilities available to students. As we have seen, Imani was designed to be flexible, to take advantage of opportunities, and to help students learn from each other. Despite this flexibility, students still find aspects of Imani confining, particularly when their personal goals differ from the institution's. Steven and the students negotiate this through dialogue and students use tactics to improvise and work within the strategies to create additional possibilities that overlap with but are not identical to Steven's goals for them.

As its mission and history suggest, Imani is not only interested in training artists, but also in shaping them into a particular kind of artist and adult. Steven sees his role as an art teacher, and also as an adult trying to shape these youth into good people:

I'm not here just to teach you how to do art, but how to be a good person in future. I won't like my student to be a robber, a gangster in future, but a fighter in art. I hope that Imani graduates settle somewhere, be good people in the society, people who are stable financially because when you are not stable financially, you can get tempted to do other things that you won't like to do in your life. So financially you have to be smart. So if they can be like that, then all graduates of Imani should have the same spirit of fighting to get what they can, what they deserve.

Steven's goal is to train artists and help youth stay on a path that will lead to stable livelihoods, lives that avoid "temptations" – drugs, alcohol, earning money through criminal activity. Each part of the day serves a role in this regard. During Bible study every morning, Steven explicitly mentions life is hard, and to deal with this, students need discipline, to work as a united family, and avoid laziness. Steven believes that if students learn these lessons from his stories and spiritual instruction, they will become good artists and "good people in the society." During art instruction, critique, and teacher-student interactions, Steven reinforces these messages through his teaching style and disciplinary practices. Students are encouraged and rewarded for working together and pushed to avoid laziness.

Using de Certeau (1984), I argue Steven's stories and students' responses function as a "repertory of tactics for future use" (p. 23). Through Steven's stories of past Imani students and his own experiences, students learn what tactics have been successful in the past and which might benefit them in the future. Life is hard. In response, artists should develop discipline, work together, and avoid laziness. Students internalize these messages and thus hold themselves responsible when they are not able to overcome difficulties through discipline, teamwork, and hard work. As we have seen, these ideas echo ideas in the National Youth Policy and educational

reforms that have created “responsibilized” citizens that do not expect or depend on government assistance (Ferguson, 2009, p. 172). They also reflect the Catholic, missionary history of Imani. Steven has also internalized these messages as a product of the Kenyan educational system and as a man with deep ties to a Catholic organization. He also believes these qualities will help students pursue an art career and have a successful future.

Although they internalize these messages, students do more than reproduce them. Literally and figuratively, they speak back to the core messages, contributing their own ideas about what qualities are necessary for their art and futures. They take advantage of, rather than create, the stories told during Bible sharing to insert their own details about what makes a good artist. According to de Certeau, inserting these details “authorizes (makes possible) a reversal, a change in order or place, a transition into something different” (p. 87). Students work within the stories Steven tells but make subtle changes to make these stories work for them.

“Life is Hard,” Version 1

Steven acknowledged the hardships students encounter and encouraged students to discuss these openly. In fact, Steven shares personal information about students to help them understand each other. Sometimes these conversations happen while the student is present. For example, in 2012, a new student, Daniel, who suffers from epilepsy, joined Imani. Steven explained his condition to the students and advised them to walk home together, “making stories”³⁰ to show solidarity. At other times, Steven shares information when students are absent. One day, for example, John Ochieng’ did not attend afternoon classes. Steven explained that John stays alone and needs to work in order to maintain himself and pay his fees.³¹ Steven also

³⁰ This is the term students use for talking to each other freely about their day, activities, etc.

³¹ This student worked in graphic design and made cards, posters, etc. in town.

talks about John's circumstances during critique noted above. To overcome hardships, Steven urged students to have courage, not to lose hope, and to have faith.

In the critique dialogue, Steven shares his own hardships with students. Steven shows Silas that he understands where he is coming from and what it feels like to have family responsibilities. He talks about managing his responsibilities as a husband and a son by setting them aside and working on them slowly. Steven does not want Silas to allow his challenges to distract him from his studies or limit his future possibilities as an artist. In doing so, Steven is trying to guide Silas's development as an artist and his transition from a youth to an adult with family responsibilities.

Steven also made the obligations of giving back clear to the students. As part of the Imani family, they are responsible for passing on what they have learned to a new generation of young artists. "Imani means faith. Let the light in you shine brightly. You come with the talent and that talent has to be enhanced. If you have gathered a lot of knowledge and keep it to yourself, that is selfishness. You have to share. You haven't learned it on your own. Don't be a selfish artist. Artists are happy to share their ideas." This idea of giving back, assisting others is deeply embedded in Luo culture and life (Shipton, 2007).

However, this sharing needed to be done with humility and caution. Steven explains that "some people are just jealous of development" and students should be careful about the advice they receive from others. Many Kenyans use "development" to mean wealth, property, or opportunities of any kind (Smith, 2008, p. 33). Imani graduates working in town echoed these cautions, telling me stories about how jealousy and competition resulted in sabotaging sales, not sharing information about upcoming exhibitions, taking credit (and money) for someone else's work, and keeping shared profits for themselves.

Discipline, Version 1

According to its rules and regulations, Imani expects students to be self-disciplined, cooperative, and open. Imani's mission statement reads:

We believe that self discipline (sic) of a student guarantees a great commitment, dedication and motivation. As a student, he/she is in a privileged position. Co-operation and openness among students and teachers creates a fruitful and artistic atmosphere that benefits both.

Additionally, Imani art students are expected to comply with rules such as arriving on time, attending school daily, paying school fees on time, giving prior notice for absences and reasons for missing school, completing school projects on time, caring for materials and the classroom, respecting teachers and fellow students, and refraining from using an alcohol or drugs at school. The rules are laminated and posted on the wall of Steven's office, and all students receive a copy when they join the school.

Steven frequently used Bible sharing and the announcement time that follows to reinforce the school rules, especially coming to school on time and regularly, paying school fees, and keeping the space clean. This focus on discipline and obedience to the rules takes one of several forms: Steven lecturing students directly and/or rewarding or punishing students. Steven goes beyond school obedience and focuses on obedience to family and community through Bible readings, life experience, and responsibilities and rights as citizens. For Steven this is about more than just obeying the rules of the school. If students can develop self-discipline, they can perhaps avoid the temptations and dangers that wait just beyond the gates of Imani. If students obey God and their elders, they can access a stable future and be good people. Because life is hard, students need to develop discipline.

In terms of direct messages, Steven lectured students to be on time and present, pay fees, and take care of the classroom and materials. He emphasized that when students disobey the rules, they “cheat themselves” and also create conflict between Steven and the administration. He explicitly told students “you are putting me in a problem with the administration. Don’t add more to my problems.” KCP has told Steven that they will not give him money to buy materials until all the students have paid their fees. Because of this pressure, Steven frequently talks about school fees. Though he does not signal out specific students or send students home,³² some feel embarrassed by this and purposefully come to school late³³ to avoid these lectures.

This focus on school fees led not only to lateness but also to absences.³⁴ Some students do not live with family members and have to look for their own food and rent.³⁵ Because of this, students have to miss school to “hustle,” selling a variety of items, including some they make themselves (sandals, jewelry, furniture, and paintings) as well as repaired cell phones and electronics. According to the school’s policy, if a student sells a piece of artwork (made inside or outside of school), he or she must give KCP 80% of the sale and may keep 20%. Because of this, students sell their work outside of school either by bringing their work to another artist’s stall to display or trying to sell them online (one student created and maintained her own website).

Given his connections with Kisumu artists,³⁶ Steven often found out about students’ economic activities outside of school and strongly expressed his discontent. While many of these

³² In the formal school system, students are sent home from school if they haven’t paid fees and cannot return until the fees are paid.

³³ According to the timetable, school begins at 8; however, on most days Bible sharing does not start until 9 and Steven does not arrive until after 8.

³⁴ There was a notable increase in both in 2012 as compared with 2011.

³⁵ A small room without electricity in the shanty areas of Nyalenda would cost approximately 800 shillings.

³⁶ Steven has been the head teacher of Imani since its inception and has trained many of the working artists in Kisumu.

activities require self-discipline and represent hard work, Steven saw them as disobedient and leading students down the wrong path. Steven cautioned students that selling pieces “is just the beginning. You still have a long way to go. Study more.” Steven did not want students to leave school prematurely because they started to earn money as artists. In the short term, this allows them to survive, but in the long term, it limits their success as fine artists.

Additionally, Steven held up former students as examples of the kind of student (and eventually, artist and adult) he wants them to be. For example during critique, Steven told them the story of Tom Otero who had a stall behind Tusky’s Supermarket in town before he came to Imani. Even though he had a stall and was selling, according to Steven, Tom recognized the importance of education and spent “three good years” in Imani. John balanced working and coming to school. Calvin’s brother worked at night. Steven would often tell stories of students of the past as examples of dedication, work ethic, and discipline. For Steven, the strategy of going to school and working is to create time to do both.

Reinforcing these explicit messages, Steven rewarded and punished students based on their behavior. For example, although all students were charged with maintaining the cleanliness of the school, these tasks most often fell to the latecomers. Late students had to sweep the compound; clean the storage stalls; clean the toilets; climb the trees to cut back branches that blocked the light from the school; and clean cobwebs among other chores. However, he often assigned these tasks in a light, joking manner and students usually undertook the tasks without complaint. The students who arrived on time were able to start on their artwork for the day while the others cleaned.

Sometimes these rewards and punishments were directly tied to learning and opportunity. On one Friday afternoon, several students decided not to return after the lunch break.³⁷ Instead of conducting critique, Steven taught the students to work with pallet knives that Father Bart had brought from Amsterdam as a reward (the knives and acrylic paint are expensive and so used with care in the school). When students returned on Monday, Steven displayed the pallet knife pieces and told students this “should send a warning to you. It is good to be in school.” At times, Steven would not repeat instruction or directions for late students. Perhaps most significantly, Steven based decisions on which students to promote for certain opportunities on their attendance and behavior. The Ministry of State for National Heritage and Culture held a workshop for visual artists in Nyanza. Steven was allowed to send five students. He chose these students based on their adherence to school rules. Also, when organizers of events (such as the Kisumu Peace Festival organized by UNESCO or a Bulgarian NGO interested in hiring artists) approach Steven, he recommends students who are the best behaved. He tells students that sometimes he tries to promote them but becomes disappointed if they do not follow through. Steven told students, “The opportunity you have here you might not get again and you will regret. I pity you people who don’t take this school seriously.” Steven advocates for the students in dealing with KCP and other organizations who hire artists. He wants students to take school and these opportunities seriously.

Finally, Steven makes connections between obeying school rules and becoming disciplined in other areas, particularly in their homes and as citizens of the nation. When reflecting on a Bible reading about needing to adhere to God’s law, Steven noted, “we also have

³⁷ Friday afternoons were usually reserved for critique. Students and Steven would formally and publicly critique the work from the week. Some would purposefully skip this time choosing not to come back to school.

laws to guide and control us. You often go against the laws of the school, and you need to be self-disciplined.” On another occasion, Steven labeled students who do not follow the rules as “pretenders” and warned “for you to be on the safer side obey the laws.” This safer side isn’t just about school obedience but staying on the safer side of the police by avoiding criminal activity. Steven extended this obedience beyond the school itself and linked it with the constitution, which was passed in 2010. Steven emphasized the active participation of the community in creating the constitution and told students they have the opportunity through Imani to “make a U-turn” and turn their lives around. Though these comments may seem harsh, Steven often delivered them in a joking tone and also told students, “In art school we have rules, but we break the laws and that doesn’t make us not a part of Imani.” Because of these contradictions, students sometimes had difficulty predicting whether or not Steven would get upset with them for missing school.

Family, Version 1

Many of the Imani students came to the school through alternative paths and have had differing experiences of family life and support. Some, like Simon, still live with both parents who support them by paying fees and upkeep. Others are raised by single parents, mainly, though not exclusively, mothers, while the minority stay either with relatives, close family friends as Betty does, or on their own, like Johnson. Steven is aware of each student’s family situation and often uses family metaphors to create bonds of friendship and family to support students in their work.

Steven refers to the students as a family, connected by art, their work as a team, and fortified by sharing the Bible. He refers to himself as a parent “trying to nurse you like an egg.” Steven also implores students to treat each other as brothers and sisters “in a united family.” If

students do not act “with a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood,” they run the risk of creating chaos and weakness, not just in school but also in their communities. In addition to fostering a sense of family, Steven raises family related issues with the students tied to current events in the community. Domestic violence, disrespect of family members, teenage pregnancy, adoption, and infanticide are all part of the cultural landscape and Steven, in raising these issues, challenges students to think about their own responsibilities and positions. For instance, Steven cautioned, “It’s a warning to you. One day you might have a son who goes against you. How will you handle it? How will you control your anger? Those who can’t control their anger run into things that can kill them - *pangas*, guns – because they can’t hold it any longer.”³⁸ Through these conversations, Steven hopes to shape these young art students into good members of the community and broader society and help them avoid the temptations and dangers he knows first hand are present in their communities.

Lazing Around, Version 1

Finally, Steven most frequently and insistently focused on the value of hard work to avoid idleness. Again, Steven links the ideal of hard work to the Bible (“Abraham worked. He wasn’t lazing around. How about you?”), current events (“In Nigeria many people have degrees, but few have jobs. There are opportunities for artists who work hard.”), and self-discipline (“If you’re lazing around, then you’re cheating yourself.”) In addition to working hard, Steven emphasized believing in oneself, self-discipline, and concentrating on success instead of failure as key strategies to becoming successful artists. Lastly, Steven posited laziness as the enemy of talent: “Talent hides in us. The more you try, that talent slowly comes out. It goes with interest. If you don’t have interest, it can die. It is laziness that makes talent die. Why do you want talent

³⁸ Here Steven is also referencing a play students wrote in 2011 called *Can’t Hold It Any Longer* about the conflict between maintaining tradition and becoming modern.

to die? Know why you're here. Let's work hard." The central strategy for avoiding laziness is working hard in school.

Through these lectures, stories, disciplinary practices, jokes, and actions, Steven tries to shape these youth into ideal Imani students and to prepare them for an uncertain and difficult future. To deal with a hard world, students need to be self-disciplined and obedient children; sharing, humble brothers and sisters; and hardworking. Steven believes these are the ideals necessary for students to become artists and adults.

However, students do not passively accept these messages. Instead, as de Certeau argues, the students develop tactics that allow them to literally and figuratively, speak back to the core messages and strategies. One tactic involves when students appear in class. Some will avoid Bible study, while others avoid critique. While these choices can have consequences (more turns washing the toilets or trimming trees, less time with pallet knives and acrylic paints, for example), the openness of the environment allows for them to make these choices. Having to clean or do various chores if they were late did not deter them. Coming to school late or not at all enabled students to earn money they needed, care for sick family members, attend to other responsibilities (as members of church youth groups, choirs, or other performance groups), or just skip school. Because students valued these activities, they did not mind being lectured by Steven (who often used humor) or having to do chores. As noted above, those who did mind intentionally came late to avoid lectures about fees and lateness/absences.

Life is Hard, Version 2

Building on Steven's modeling and their bonds of friendship, students were willing to share their personal hardships. Students' hope and suffering were evident in these personal stories. For example, John Ochieng' told the class his own version of how he now lives alone

because his parents died and his grandmother is paralyzed. He acknowledged the difficulty of this, but also his belief that God is on his side. He advised his fellow students to “learn to be strong and appreciate whatever you’re doing. Despite the fact that I get low grades, no one should look down upon me.” Tobias, an orphan who has been supported by Compassion International through primary, secondary, and now higher education, noted that despite growing up poor, “My future is brighter.” Students drew strength and inspiration from these shared stories.

During the critique dialogue, Silas brings up the challenges he faces as a father trying to raise and support two children and attend school full time away from his family. While he was the only married student, others also lived alone and supported themselves. Students in this situation tried to support each other and would share information about work opportunities. In times of need, students would also lend each other money. Like Steven, students were also aware of the challenges they face and tried to support each other.

Discipline, Version 2

Like Steven, students lectured each other about their behavior; however, the content differed. Students never made comments to each other about paying school fees, but they did emphasize the importance of coming to school on time and regularly, particularly when not doing so impacted the group. For example, the student chairman, Simon Osano, reminded students that it is especially important to be disciplined during performing arts because when one student was absent or late, it impacted rehearsal. Students also encouraged each other to do their part in caring for the classroom and materials, to be responsible, to respect the teacher, and to “stay close to the people you want to emulate.” For students this was less about obeying school rules and more about showing loyalty to each other.

And again like Steven, many students used humor in delivering these messages. Simon was particularly skilled at this. He told me he did not like being chairman because he did not want to come across as a “dictator” or “force students to undertake duties they are aware they should undertake.” Instead, he saw his role as keeping the peace –making sure students stayed on good terms with Steven and each other. Simon was well liked and respected by all the students. Therefore, they responded well to his example and joking reminders.

Family, Version 2

Students often mentioned the importance of supporting each other, working together, and being friends. Compared with Steven, students were less likely to use family terms (brother, sister) to refer to each other; however, they did acknowledge the power of friendship and working together to support each other. As Michael Ochieng’ shared, “In life sometimes we love shortcuts. We have a promised land in our future. We have to go through it together and encourage each other. We will be proud of each other. We went through the desert, we fought, and this is what we achieved.” This spirit of togetherness was perhaps best exemplified when Tobias was accepted into Moi University. The other students expressed their pride in him and connected his success with his willingness and ability to help others: “Success is achieved when you help others succeed.”

Also like Steven, students saw helping each other as part of their responsibility as artists. In helping others, the students highly valued teaching, encouraging each other, and acting with humility. Students viewed their talent as God given and thus, “You should give thanks to God. If you have an ability, you should teach others.” While teaching, an artist should never be proud and should be willing to share with anyone.

Students did not just talk about these values; they also enacted them. While working on a piece, it was common for students to walk around, view each other's work, and to help each other by sketching something for someone else, mixing colors, or painting. During breaks, students would teach each other to play guitar, to make jewelry or shoes, or to share a new picture of a painting through their cell phones.

Lazing Around, Version 2

Students did remind each other of the importance of working hard in order to be successful. Julie told her fellow students during one Bible sharing session, "we are taught, but to excel, you need to put forth effort and that is for you to decide." However, sometimes students' ideas about effort did not match Steven's. Julie is perhaps the best example of this. She rarely came to school before 9 am and often missed several classes a week. Some absences were due to doctors' visits but others were so she could buy materials and work on her own paintings (she maintained her own website and had an aunt in Texas who would sell paintings for her) and work with a Bulgarian NGO on a puppetry project for which she was paid.

Of all the categories, this one of working hard shows the largest disconnect between Steven and the students. For Steven, working hard happens in school and students demonstrate this by coming to school on time and regularly and completing school projects on time. The strategy is to create time to do both. For the students, working hard also happened outside of school and was part of their survival. This not only included work directly in the art field but also hustling to earn a living. The tactic is to create time by skipping class when necessary and making up suitable excuses. Students learn to read Steven and recognize which excuses he will and will not accept. Although Steven was aware of these activities, he associated them with

disobedience and feared that making money would tempt students to leave school early before they had fully developed as artists.

The critique dialogue also demonstrates these differing ideas of lazing around/working hard. First, Steven begins by teasing Silas about his excuses for not having sketches. Silas and the other students respond by laughing, and Steven also laughs suggesting his critique is not meant to be threatening. Steven next focuses on aspects of Silas's work (i.e. his use of a white line and exaggerating drawing of women), but the conversation soon shifts when Silas mentions his absenteeism. Steven responds by instructing Silas to take advantage of opportunities to exhibit his work in Nairobi and by comparing him with current and former students. Silas carefully corrects Steven that his interest is in exhibiting, not necessarily selling. Silas knows Steven disapproves of selling within Imani. Steven brings up the idea of selling but within the sanctioned place of an official exhibition the school has supported rather than students trying to sell on their own. The students Steven signals out as having participated in exhibitions (Simon and David) both live at home and have parents who can support them with materials and upkeep. When Silas hints at this by bringing up questions of his survival, Steven shifts his comparison to former students who are married with families (Victor, James), and John, who stays alone like Silas. When Silas brings up that John is single, Steven again finds examples of former students with families who were still able to go to school. While Steven might be amused at Silas's excuses for not having sketches, he will not accept any excuse for not attending classes. According to Steven, attendance, seriousness, working hard, and believing in oneself are the keys to success.

Strategies and Tactics

Through the interactions with students described above, Steven lays out his strategies for helping them succeed. Students learn to read these strategies and test out their boundaries by engaging in tactics. Steven lays out these rules and qualities and students learn “to get along” inside of them (de Certeau, 1984, p. 18). As de Certeau notes, tactics are often an “art of being in between” (p. 30). As we have seen based on its history and commitments, Imani is an in between space in many ways. It is linked to the larger institution, KCP, that applies its own rules and structures to the school, but Steven also uses tactics of his own to get around them. There are structures in place, but those structures are designed to be flexible. Yet this flexibility has its limits. All of this ambiguity mirrors the larger liminal space these youth find themselves in: a national context that protects youth at the same time as it fears it.

During Bible sharing, students learn the kind of behavior Steven wants to see. At times, they emulate this behavior, showing him they respect the school and each other and see themselves as part of a family. However, they also learn how to get away with things. They come to school late to avoid lectures on fees. They figure out when and how often they can miss school to seek out other opportunities while still staying on good terms with Steven and the institution.

These stories illustrate that Steven has more on his mind than training artists; he is also training youth to become adults who are hard working, disciplined, serious, and confident. These values find expression not only in his explicit messages to students during Bible sharing but also through his teaching and interactions with students. He hopes that students will use these strategies as they learn art, transition into work, and make their way through a difficult terrain. In order to deal with a hard life, students should discipline themselves to keep working and avoid

temptations. As members of the Imani family, students should team up to ease the burdens of working in a difficult market.

However, students do not simply passively receive these messages. They learn to read them and respond by developing a range of tactics that help them pursue their own goals. For them, working hard means going to school and hustling. Being a family means finding friends that show loyalty and trust. As we will see, students do make use of these tactics both in school and in the field. Yet, as de Certeau notes, tactics are fundamentally an “art of the weak” (p. 37). These tactics allow students to temporarily escape Imani to hustle without leaving it to earn enough to “make do” in their daily lives. But doing so has its costs. The pressure of surviving limits how intently students can focus on school and fully develop as artists to stand out in a difficult market.

Chapter Five

Becoming an Artist, Part I: School

I am from a peaceful homeland
From lights and darks
I am from green leaves
Swampy and rich soil
Healthy and fresh from the river

I am from creative minds
From bottom to top
Empowering my life and dignity of knowledge
I am from color schemes to matching
From my dressing code and make ups

I am from locked grounds.
Working hard to achieve my goal
I am from low class to high class
From hustling and striving
I am from sleepless nights and stressful moments
Full of helpless questions.

I am from white yummy pieces
Boiled and sweet smell
With a tasty taste that makes my mouth
Long for home – Betty Awiti

This poem, written by Betty, sets the context for how students find themselves at Imani. Students live and learn within national and local discourses about youth, education, the promise of empowerment, and the place of art in Kenya. Many, like Betty, find their way to Imani through word of mouth: they met a graduate who has an art stall in town; their art teacher connected them; their mother sings in the choir on the compound. They arrive at Imani, seeking to “empower their lives and dignity of knowledge” by developing their creativity. As we saw in the last chapter, Imani has unique features that set it apart from formal schools in Kenya: providing religious instruction in a non-formal setting, ensuring poor youth from the community have access to the school, teaching using a flexible curriculum, and focusing on learning in a

collaborative environment. Students hope that this non-formal art school might free them from some of the constraints they experienced in primary and secondary school. As Raymond, a second-year student, explains:

When you're brought up since childhood, many people picture schooling as very stressing. We went to primary [school], the bell, strict, lots of discipline, caning, not just discipline, caning, but here you come to learn that you have to make your personal decisions. It's a very free environment. You socialize with people, so Imani has been like home.

Unlike formal schools in Kenya that separate students into standards (in primary) and forms (in secondary), Imani keeps first, second, and third year students together. While there is a curriculum with designated topics and particular norms and routines, the environment is one of flexibility. Topics change in response to opportunities that arise (for example, an upcoming exhibition), and to student needs (for example, if Steven, the head teacher, recognizes all the students need more practice in watercolor before moving to acrylic). In addition, Steven believes students should learn from each other and spends a great deal of time out of the classroom, leaving the students to work in the classroom on their own.

Yet students “come to learn they have to make their personal decisions” in an environment that is fraught with tensions and competing pressures that make these decisions quite difficult. Many come to school “hustling and striving” to support themselves and their families, pay school fees, and seek out opportunities that will help them survive. While the teachers understand these pressures and want to support students in learning art and earning a living, they also experience pressures from operating an art school that is part of a larger Kenyan

NGO that has its own priorities and funding challenges. Students navigate this difficult terrain through building community and learning tactics as they try to learn art and become adults.

In the last chapter, we saw how students interact with Steven, James, and Father Bart through structured time such as Bible sharing and critique. The purpose of this chapter is to focus attention on the everyday practices of the students in the art school. This chapter details how students use less structured time and describes how and what students learn within and beyond the structure of Imani. Additionally, using Lave and Wenger (1991), I demonstrate how Imani functions as a community of practice, and how students learn tactics to operate within it. This community of practice and flexible peer curriculum has a limit. Many students must seek livelihood opportunities while still in school to pay rent and survive. These opportunities take them away from school and the communities the school has tried to establish. In this chapter, I show how students learn tactics from each other that help them negotiate the tensions between earning money for survival and completing their art education.

Learning Interactions

September 13, 2012

Five students are in attendance (four males and one female). James, an Imani graduate and volunteer teacher, starts the class by instructing students to work on compositions. On the board, he writes, “no sticky figures and must be in two dimension forms.”³⁹ After a brief period of clarification and instruction from Steven and James, the students move to their individual tables to begin their sketches. Students sketch on thin manila paper with pencils. After circulating, Steven goes into the office to bring Mark a book on perspective to help his sketch. Steven also sits alongside Mark and draws a figure on his paper to show him how to add

³⁹ The artists refer to stick figures as *kete kete* art. The teachers discourage students from drawing this way because it represents “tourist art” and gives the impression that the artist is untrained.

dimension. Then Steven works with George and shows him the same book he shared with Mark to help his perspective. James shows Simon how to draw a hand by drawing his own example of a hand on the chalkboard. Steven goes to his office to make tea and take his break.

During the break, James works on his own project, the board game Kisumopoly. This is a monopoly style board game for an American client. The locations around the board include Kiboko Bay, Laughing Buddha, and Mon Ami, restaurants popular among tourists located in Kisumu town. Several students gather to watch James at work.

After the break, James gives students small cardboard cards so they can transfer their sketches to these cards. The students sit at their tables facing the blackboard and work quietly. James circulates and Steven works in his office. Mark and David walk around to see everyone's work. Mark first goes to Betty and David visits Simon and then George. Simon is working in his sketchpad and has not transferred his sketch to the card yet. Betty walks over to see what Simon is doing then moves to George and David. Betty and Mark are the first to start painting their cards with watercolor. James paints a watercolor card as a model for Mark and George who stand and watch. James explains that with watercolor, an artist must make a first, second, and third wash to achieve the desired outcome. David leaves the classroom to see Steven in the office and returns with a book. Betty and David come over to watch James's informal watercolor lesson. James sketches for David and narrates what he's doing as he works.

Art class

Recall from the last chapter that each school day begins with Bible reading, announcements, and a limited amount of instruction, often led by Steven. Then Steven goes into his office and the students begin to work independently at their own tables. Eventually, the students start walking around to see what others have done. This walking is neither random nor

aimless. Students have goals for their interactions, which take several forms. Sometimes they seek advice and feedback from a fellow student they considered to be an expert in a given skill (i.e. pencil work, painting technique, mixing color, etc.). Walking around helps them survey people's work to find the person best suited to help or to find someone they can assist. For example, Betty was struggling with drawing human figures, making tentative, short lines with her pencil. David walked over to Betty's table and first showed her his own sketch and pointed out the difference between their lines: his lines were longer and lighter while hers were shorter and heavier. David took the pencil, held Betty's hand over his, and drew the lines on her paper showing her how to create longer, more flowing lines by holding her hand more freely instead of tightly gripping the pencil.

Experts were identified not by the level of education they had attained (even within Imani), but by the skills they demonstrated in their work. For example, during model drawing classes on Fridays, students walk around to view each other's charcoal sketches and listen to Father Bart's feedback. Based on these observations and conversations, David is considered to be one of the best students at model drawing, hence Betty allowed him to help her draw longer, more flowing lines when she struggled. Critique on Friday afternoons provides another opportunity for students to evaluate their work by comparing it to their peers and listening to feedback from Steven. As students work through different mediums, they are able to strategically identify experts in each one and seek advice and observe those artists while working in that medium.

At other times, students stand behind another student observing him/her at work. The students often gathered around James to watch him work. When the students began working on acrylic paintings, James sat at a table in the back of the classroom and took a small cardboard

card to make a composition of a woman carrying water in the foreground with two houses in the distance. As he painted, James explained what he was doing to Johnson, David, Betty, and George who stood behind him watching him work. He told the students, “Touch on different pieces of the painting instead of finishing one and then moving to the next.” James got up from the table and stood back to see how the painting was coming. He used white paint to bring out further detail on the figure. He advised the students, “Don’t force it to come out. Pay attention to the direction of the light and how it plays on objects.” After watching James for several minutes, the students returned to their own paintings to try out James’s advice.

Students also engage in a mini-critique before the work is finished, not only on Fridays. One of the walls in the classroom is dedicated to placing work side by side so that students can critique each other’s work. This happens formally on Fridays, but also occurs more informally during the week while the work is in progress. For example, when students were working on acrylic paintings based on sketches they had done in the surrounding community, they gathered to talk about how the paintings were coming.

Musa: I am having trouble mixing colors, especially darker colors and human skin.

John: Use your testing paper to get the right color.

Johnson: Don’t over mix. Keep the colors pure.

[Next Calvin talks about his own painting]

Calvin: This is my first time working with this medium. I also had a hard time mixing colors.

Johnson: The land is so small.

John: The land is also straight. In reality, land is sloped.

Calvin: I will add some bushes to the land to make it less flat.

David: You could put some different colors on the tree.

Simon: Keep in mind the differences between the foreground, background, and middle ground so you can see the distance and perspective.

In this dialogue, two students mention they had difficulty mixing colors. The first exercise they were given in this unit on acrylic painting was to practice mixing colors on a paper. Steven gave each student three primary colors (red, yellow, blue) and then instructed them to make as many different colors as possible on the paper balancing warm and cool colors and keeping colors pure. The students played with different colors and walked around to see the colors others had made. During this exercise, they were able to identify which students were skilled at making pure, interesting colors and students asked each other for help in making certain colors.

Norms had also developed. Second and third year students consistently checked on and offered advice to new students, particularly if these students were young. In July 2011, a twelve-year-old orphan joined Imani. Although Imani does not normally accept such young students, the directors of the orphanage felt this young boy was too sensitive to do well in a formal school setting and they wanted to see if an art school would be a better fit. Steven agreed to let him try and set up a still life of a flower in a pot for him to draw. Raymond knew the boy because his mother works at the orphanage. He helped the new boy get settled and feel comfortable. Thomas and Geoffrey each checked in on the new student at different times and offered advice on how to draw the flower and pot using perspective. George joined Imani just before the unit on acrylic painting. He commented that he found it difficult to use the brushes. Johnson and Simon, both third year students, encouraged him. Johnson advised, "I love the colors but the shapes are too crowded" and Simon added, "You are just beginning, so get the basics first."

Porous Boundaries

The doors of the school were always open and Imani graduates regularly dropped in to visit Steven and see what the current students were doing. Sometimes they brought their work to share and current students solicited their opinions about their work in progress. For example Job, an Imani graduate now attending a university to study art and design, came back during model drawing class. He volunteered to be a model. During breaks in the drawing, Johnson showed Job the jewelry he had been making to get his feedback. Job also looked at the sketches students had made and gave them advice.

Three Imani students who went off to universities (two at the University of Nairobi and one at Moi University in Eldoret) would come back during breaks and join lessons. Clifford told students what he learned from visiting the art galleries in Nairobi and talking with the artists. He advised, “We should have a signature. People should be able to know your style. Paint daily. Use big surfaces. Art can be a career, not just a hobby. As an artist, be social and don’t be jealous of others who are coming up.” Interacting with these students allowed current Imani students to find out about artists and art markets in Nairobi as well as university courses and life.

Some of the most senior Imani graduates would come to the art school to tell students about exhibitions in Nairobi. Several graduates and current students are part of an organization called the Lake Basin Art Group that organizes exhibitions in Nairobi twice a year.⁴⁰ Vincent, a 1996 Imani graduate and one of the group’s organizers, visited Imani to report back about a recent exhibition. He told the students they have an advantage at Imani because they learn several topics in fine art (watercolor, acrylic, clay modeling, graphic design, etc.) compared to

⁴⁰ These exhibitions alternate between the Nairobi National Museum and the Village Market. The Lake Basin group organizes the exhibitions and transports the artwork from Kisumu to Nairobi, though often the pieces are damaged in transit and the artwork is held for as long as two years before they are returned to the artists.

other art schools that have students choose a specialization. Vincent emphasized that the variety will serve them well at exhibitions since clients appreciate having a range of styles from which to choose.

Community of Practicing Artists

Through these interactions and norms, students participate in a social process of learning and through this participation learn art, tactics, and begin to build their identities as artists. In *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* Lave and Wenger (1991) demonstrate learning as a social practice, notably in contexts outside of traditional schooling – midwives in Mexico, tailors in Liberia, navy quartermasters in the United States, butchers in the United States, and “nondrinking alcoholics” in Alcoholics Anonyms (p. 65). Newcomers to the practice engage in what Lave and Wenger term “legitimate peripheral participation.” The participation is legitimate since they have officially joined the community of practitioners and it is initially peripheral. Peripheral participation refers to the learner’s location in the social world. At first, the learner participates at the edges of the practice. They take on tasks that are authentic to the practice but have partial participation. Over time and through interactions with others, the learner moves toward full participation. “A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p. 98). The community of practice consists of members at various levels of mastery: newcomers, near-peers, masters, old-timers, and requires access to a wide range of activity as well as to practice and products of the practice.

Using Lave and Wenger I argue through the interactions and norms described above, Imani students engage in legitimate peripheral participation, a social process that allows them to

learn art by interacting with other members of the community at different levels of mastery and membership, which ultimately leads to full participation in the community.

In the case of Imani, students gain legitimacy when they officially join the art school. As we saw in the last chapter, Steven grants them this legitimacy. At first, they participate at the edges of the practice. Steven has them work on drawing still life compositions before they are ready to engage with more complex topics such as acrylic painting. The community of practice includes Father Bart (the Dutch founder of the art school and teacher of model drawing), Steven (the Luo head teacher and administrator), and James (a 2008 Kisii Imani graduate and volunteer teacher); Imani graduates who are practicing artists in Kisumu; and the current students. As described above, the members of this community interact with each other to learn art in and through social practice, which involves both silent observation and dialogue.

For instance, students have a shared experience of instruction from James and Steven. They are given a task: to make a composition without “sticky figures” and in two-dimensional forms and a brief explanation of how to go about creating it. Steven and James circulate providing individual help, particularly focusing on students who had recently joined, and then students begin to interact on their own. By walking and observing others at work, students gain access to each other’s practice of creating art. When Mark visits Betty, he might notice that she uses her pencil to measure to make the proportions more accurate. When David visits Simon, he might see how he has blocked the foreground, middle ground, and background to plan the composition. The activities of walking and observing help students grow in their understanding and knowledge of art by interacting with others who are more skilled than they are.

Dialogue is also an important aspect of this social learning. In the dialogue above, the students talk about the problems in their own paintings and get advice, suggestions, and

encouragement from others. James also describes what he is doing as he paints so that the students have access not only to his practice, but also to his thinking. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue “learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants” (p. 105). Through these conversations, students begin to socially construct ideas about what makes a good painting and how to talk about their artwork as mature artists do.

These activities and dialogues contribute to students’ emerging identities as artists. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert, “learning involves the construction of identities” (p. 53). Learning is an evolving form of membership. Through participation and interactions with members of a social community, the learner becomes a specific kind of person. Through their participation in Imani, students are not just learning how to make art but how to *become* artists. Their goal is to gain full membership into the community of practicing artists. Interactions with members of the community at different stages of development grant these students insight into the mature practice of art they are trying to learn. During critique, for example, students view their work compared to others and can evaluate their work against newer and older artists. Steven and James also participate in the critique and students learn from their assessment of the work and through listening to their comments, how artists talk about artwork. This kind of talk helps distinguish these artists from self-taught artists in the market and helps students understand what is important to notice and talk about in a work of art (i.e. source of light, composition, balance of colors, etc.).

Interacting with graduates is an important aspect of this becoming. In fact, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue becoming a full member of a community “requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information,

resources, and opportunities for participation” (p. 101). Having porous boundaries ensures Imani students have access to a wide range of practicing artists. Recent and older graduates return, check in on the school and the students, and share their experiences. When these artists bring their work to share, they show current students that there is a field for the mature practice of art they are learning in school. These interactions also teach students how artists dress, walk, talk, carry themselves – an artistic way of being in the world.

An important feature across all of these interactions is that they have shifting centers. Lave and Wenger (1991) recognize this as well: “Given the complex, differentiated nature of communities, it seems important not to reduce the end point of centripetal participation in a community of practice to a uniform or univocal ‘center,’ or linear notion of skill acquisition” (p. 36). Thus, members gain full, rather than complete, participation. As noted above, students judge each other by the ability they demonstrate in their artwork, not by their year in art school. At times, Steven, James, and Father Bart are central to the practice as full members of the community of practicing artists. However, at other times, when students are working in a medium less familiar to one of the teachers or in performing rather than visual arts, they rely more on graduates or fellow students. These shifts allow different students to act as “experts” in different mediums and encourage students to see each other as resources. This helps build their identity and confidence as artists.

Community of Practice and Gender

As we have seen, Imani students interact with graduates who are working as artists and from these interactions learn artistic and entrepreneurial skills that help them transition from school to work. During my fieldwork, only two female students, Betty and Julie, attended regularly and the community of practicing artists from Imani is predominately male. There are

no female Imani graduates who operate their own stalls and sell their artwork in Kisumu markets. There are far fewer female graduates of Imani than male; it is difficult to cite an exact number since the school does not keep records of all its graduates. The two women who Steven talks about as the most successful teach fine art in private secondary schools, one in Kisumu and one in Nairobi. Therefore, young female art students have fewer examples of working female artists and fewer networks to draw on than their male peers.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the importance of “exemplars” (including masters, finished products, and more advanced apprentices) in becoming full members of the community of practice. It is through these exemplars that nascent artists learn “who is involved; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk, walk, work and generally conduct their lives” (p. 95). For Betty and Julie, these exemplars both inside and outside of Imani are almost exclusively male. Thus, they have few opportunities to see images of themselves as full members of the community of practicing artists. Likewise, many of the markets where artists sell their works are deeply gendered. It is most common to see women selling fruits and vegetables, clothes, and fabric while men work in repairs (of cars, electronics, etc.) or sell shoes or electronics. As Betty notes in her story, “They say that girls are not suitable for this type of work.”

In their analysis of apprenticeship learning, Lave and Wenger do address the problem of access but do not cite gender as a barrier to access. This is especially interesting since many of the apprenticeship models they study are divided by gender, for example midwives (all women), tailors (all men), butchers and naval quartermasters (predominately male), and alcoholics anonymous (mixed gender). Like these apprenticeships, many vocational education programs in Kenya constitute a single gender. For example, the other non-formal education projects

supported by the Kisumu Community Project (KCP) include a domestic school (all women) and a carpentry school (all men). The dominance of one gender in specific jobs reinforces ideas about men and women's work, making it more difficult for men and women to break into markets that have been dominated by a single gender. Although young women are not barred from entering art school, they have significantly limited female models and networks on which to rely and have to overcome cultural assumptions about the nature of men and women's work. In order to work within these constraints, male and female artists must develop a set of tactics.

Learning Tactics

Within Imani, students are not only learning art through legitimate peripheral participation. They also learn a set of tactics in the same manner that they will need to be able to become practicing artists in a market that is seasonal, unpredictable, and informal. de Certeau (1984) defines a tactic as "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (p. 37) and a strategy as "the calculation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats can be managed" (pp. 35-36). Tactics allow people to take advantage of systems in which they are already embedded to exercise agency without having the power to overturn the system. Tactics make use of cracks that open up within these systems but do not have a proper place or base to build up any advantages. Yet, people use tactics as a way of "making do" by recognizing and acting on opportunities for creativity and agency within the larger constraints of the system.

As we have seen, Imani promotes a flexible, student-centered curriculum that allows students to teach one another, learn a variety of skills, and make use of time and resources. In contrast to the formal school system, Imani, as Raymond describes at the start of this chapter, is a

“free environment,” free from the constraints of bells and strict discipline where students can make personal decisions. However, when the priorities of students shift away from visual art and towards other artistic skills that take them away from the school compound, the institution reasserts itself and constrains students’ freedom to pursue artistic skills and opportunities they desire. Given the permissive, free environment, these sudden constraints take students by surprise and they must learn how to navigate pursuing opportunities for their livelihood and survival and obeying the rules of the art school.

Students do not just seek out these opportunities to learn. Some depend on them for their survival in art school. Although all the Imani students live in the slum communities of Nyalenda or Manyatta, they are different ages, have different living circumstances, educational backgrounds, family lives, and access to resources. These differences situate students differently within the school and play a role in how they interact, how they learn, and what opportunities they seek out.

Perhaps the most apparent and significant difference among students is their living circumstances. Of the 15 students enrolled in 2012, eight lived with relatives (single mother/father, uncle, brother, family friend), four lived with both parents, and three lived alone. Two of the three who lived alone rented small rooms on the same compound and would come to school together. Silas, one of these students, is from Kisii and has a wife and two children at home. The students who stayed alone largely supported themselves, though one had an uncle who paid his school fees. These students missed school more frequently to find temporary work (in their terms, hustling). Thomas, a 2012 Imani graduate, whose father died when he was young, explained how staying alone posed a challenge for him in art school:

When I was in school, I was a little bit aggressive because I used to paint, when some

visitors came, they can admire my painting. I can sell cards. So, the money I got from those clients and the money my mother will just look for somewhere, I will put them together and I will pay my school fees to survive. Life was a little bit difficult. To get a house, accommodation, it was a bit difficult. Even the house that I stayed in, it was a house of hens. I just removed all [the] pens of those hens and I catered it to be a house. I'm sharing those sides of walls of other sides of houses as my house.

Ben, a 1999 graduate, also recalled his difficulties at Imani. "I was coming from very far, I was not having any parents, so it was a bit difficult for me, and also what to take for lunch. It seemed to be very difficult." These students were responsible for paying their rent and upkeep in addition to being full time students.

Betty also had to make living arrangements to attend art school. Betty's father (now remarried with five children at home) lives outside of Kisumu city, so Betty stays with a family friend. This man is not a blood relative, but Betty refers to him as either uncle or father ("I call him my father, but he's just like neighbors. I'm just staying there so my father brings some things there"), and she travels home to see her family on the weekends and during breaks. Betty's father pays her school fees and gives her "pocket money" for transport and upkeep.

Unlike the young male art students who do not have relatives in Kisumu and stay alone, Betty stays with family friends, which she describes in her poem as "locked grounds." Betty feels this arrangement restricts her ability to move freely and worries about being financially dependent on her father who is not in Kisumu. "Sometimes staying with people, it's not easy. At times you don't even have money, so you struggle and maybe you call at home and he doesn't have money so you don't get money at the right time." Betty tried to compensate for this by participating in the Kisumu Artists for Children's Program (KACP), which paid her to work with

children. This program started in 2011 and describes itself as “A European project aiming at the local artists training and projects funding, encouraging the importance of art for social change” (Kisumu Artists for Children Facebook page). A representative from this organization, a female set designer from Bulgaria, came to Imani during my fieldwork to recruit Imani students to join. She asked the students to design a logo for their organization and selected the students with the best designs to participate in the group. She chose Betty and two male students (Julie was already working with the organization).

Having enough money for food is another challenge and source of stress for students. During lunch breaks, several students would go to a local hotel called Never Surrender to eat mixed *kubwa* (large) or mixed *ndogo* (small), a mixture of rice, beans, and chapiti, which costs about 60 cents. Although these meals were not very expensive, some students could not afford to buy lunch and would stay at Imani during the break rather than taking lunch. The students who stayed with both parents did not have to worry about meals, upkeep, and rent. Therefore, they had more opportunities to focus on their artwork and could attend school every day.

In the context of the examples above, we can see how students and graduates engage in activities that become tactical when Imani begins to restrict what they can do in the name of “learning art” at school. When James works on *Kisumopoly* during the break, he takes advantage of both time and space. Given his busy schedule (James takes adult education classes, is married with two children, operates his own stall in town, and teaches at Imani), James must take advantage of any opportunity he can find to work on his art. Imani students see him doing this, showing them that artists cannot always rely on having a place to paint in their own stalls or large blocks of time to complete a work in one sitting the way they can in art school. Therefore,

through this interaction, students see not only a product of a successful, working artist but also the tactics involved in producing it.

Observing other artists and listening to critique represents another potential tactic: taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from a peer who is skilled in a particular medium rather than waiting for direct instruction on that topic. Students learn to see each other as potential resources. Steven is a skilled, mature artist, but he is not a master in every medium. As Kevin, a 1999 Imani graduate, describes he saw Imani as a “hub,” consisting of opportunities to learn from others.

Imani Art School during our stint was a hub where you found so many talented brains together. So other than the teaching, we learned a lot from each other. During our time it wasn't about the teachers. It was about us, the artists, the students, because during our time, there was lots of good talent. We could learn a lot from each other rather than the daily programs of the art school. So it was a good opportunity, it was a hub that brought us together, and made us learn a lot from each other.

While Imani has a curriculum with a set of established topics, a particular student may be enrolled who is an expert in a medium outside of that curriculum (in mixed media or “junk art,” for example). Other students take advantage of this opportunity to learn from each other. This becomes tactical as they expand those opportunities beyond the compound of the art school.

“Benign Community Neglect”

Although students have opportunities to learn from teachers within Imani and to interact with graduates, students spent several hours working in and out of the classroom without Steven or James whose commitments took them away from the compound. Lave and Wenger note “under these circumstances learners may have a space of ‘benign community neglect’ in which

to configure their own learning relations with other apprentices” (p. 93). These learning opportunities happened inside of the classroom as described above but students also used places outside of the classroom during breaks and when Steven was away from school to engage in artistic activities outside of the school’s curriculum. These artistic activities included learning to play the guitar, making jewelry, making shoes, and writing poetry.

Again, these learning opportunities were not formally structured but did follow patterns that matched the patterns students used to learn visual art in the classroom, i.e. helping each other through observation and dialogue, older students helping younger ones. They also occupied a different physical place within the compound. Lessons on music, jewelry, shoes, and poetry were not formal parts of the curriculum; however, they were of interest to students who recognized that in order to earn a living as artists, they needed to acquire skills in multiple artistic fields. Students learned these skills from each other, and they used the area behind the classroom during breaks to engage in these activities. As third year Imani student, John, explained to me, “I cannot say that my artwork only will enable me to meet my upkeep because it is very tricky in this field of art, especially in Kisumu. Not every individual appreciates art. What I can say is I venture in the field of hustling.”⁴¹ Thus, students learn to make other products that they will sell (or “hustle”) when they do not have clients for painting. These products also allowed them to earn money while still in school that they used to pay their rent, buy food, and clothes.

For example, Michael learned to play guitar from Patrick while both were students at Imani. As he explains:

⁴¹ In Kisumu, youth use the term hustling to mean that they do not have a formal job, but they work hard to earn money through casual labor to eat, buy clothes, and pay rent

We came to be a band in art school. When I came to art school, I met my friends, Patrick and Richard. Richard showed Patrick some few skills on guitar and then I learned from Patrick. So we decided to come together and play together.

During my first phase of fieldwork in 2011, I would see Patrick and Michael use the area behind the school during breaks for guitar lessons. They chose this location in part because if they were in the more public, official place of the classroom, other students would want to play with the guitar and would get the guitar out of tune or break a string. Additionally, learning behind the school separated this activity from the school's formal curriculum focused on visual art.

Other students would sit with the cobblers at the gate and "make stories" or use other areas of the compound to write, draw, record spoken word poetry, or learn jewelry making. Julie was often absent and outside of school, mainly worked on her paintings and did not socialize with current students or graduates. Both Julie and Betty were hesitant to attend events outside of school, particularly in the evenings. After we performed a play in town, I had a cast party for the students. Betty did not attend, saying she did not think the family she stayed with would like it. Julie came for the beginning but left early stating her mother worried about her being out after dark. Compared to the male students, the female students had much less freedom to socialize and spend time with artists outside of school and organized events.

Especially when Julie was absent, Betty would use the break time to socialize with young women her age who lived on the compound. Sometimes she would help them in the kitchen, they would braid hair, and sometimes watch soap operas on the TV in Mama Beatrice's house. Because her activities outside of school were restricted, Betty especially appreciated this time to socialize with female friends. When I asked Betty what she does outside of art school she responded, "Mostly I just stay in the house. I don't go outside. Maybe at home I spend time with

my brothers and sister.” Again, compared with young male art students, Betty does not spend much time socializing with artists in the informal sector. She does visit with another female Imani graduate, Maureen on occasion. They usually meet in Maureen’s home (she is married and has one child) or at Nakumatt, a popular Kenyan supermarket chain.

Beyond the Compound: Tactics of Alternative Spaces

Although they may not be formal parts of the curriculum, all of these activities occurred within the official place of Imani. However, in addition to the compound place, students also sought out opportunities to learn from other masters outside of Imani. For example, Johnson learned to weave chairs from hyacinths by working alongside craftsmen who weaved by Lake Victoria. Johnson also learned jewelry making and would bring his necklaces to Imani to show the other students. Johnson would often miss school to engage in these other learning opportunities. Calvin and John worked with a theatre group called Ziwa Arts⁴² and missed a week of school to attend a training on theatre for development in Busia (for which they were paid). Through Ziwa, students learned skills in dancing and acting. John left school at the lunch break every day to work as a graphic designer in town, and Calvin left at the same time to work with Ziwa.

Julie started a website and painted frequently to earn extra money; however, this was more a question of “pocket money” than making a living. For example, when I asked Julie what she spent money on she replied, “I usually buy shoes, I buy make up, and jewelry. I really like clothes, but sometimes I usually buy novels⁴³ that I read and sometimes I just keep the money in

⁴² Another third year Imani student and two graduates are also members of this group (Ziwa means Lake in Swahili. Many of the Kisumu artists refer to themselves as Lake based artists due to their proximity to Lake Victoria.

⁴³ Books by Chinua Achebe, Obama’s *The Audacity of Hope*, and books in the Goosebumps series.

the bank account.” Julie also made use of her family’s network, which extended out of Kenya into the United States.

I still don't have a place to display, but, I usually paint then some of my paintings I send them to Texas so that my aunt can sell them there then she sends the money to me. I've sold through the website and okay, I advertise myself then my auntie she also advertises me in Texas. Then the people from Texas some of them might be interested in the paintings so my aunt just tells them the name of the website then they search for the best paintings that they want. So I draw them then I export them there. I send them through this, some parcel. I just, fold them then I put them in a parcel form and I have many relatives also who usually go there from time to time so it's usually an advantage. So that when they go, they carry the parcels, the paintings in their suitcases and go with them.

Through her aunt and relatives who visit, Julie accesses an international market that allows her to sell her paintings at a higher price and sell without having to open a stall that would subject her to the burdens of paying daily tax, the gender constraints of the market, the commitment to be there full time, and the seasonal and unpredictable nature of the art market in Kisumu.

Two Imani students planned to visit James on the weekends to learn to make their own frames. James learned from a carpenter because he was once hired by a client to produce five pieces but the carpenter did not make frames for him in time to deliver the paintings. James informally apprenticed himself to a carpenter for three weeks. He paid 200 shillings⁴⁴ a day in order to learn to make frames. Now James teaches other Imani students (without charge) at his home on the weekends. Several students visit James’s home on weekends to learn new skills, see James’s paintings, and receive feedback.

⁴⁴ About \$2.30

While these activities allowed students to learn new skills and have access to different communities of practice, they often put students in conflict with Steven and James who did not approve of students missing class to seek out these opportunities, even though they both understood students' circumstances since they live in the same community. As James shared with me, "We have students here [who get] a job outside to do. It's good of course to look for something to earn and give you something to buy food, but also [they] have to plan. This is the time of Imani. I have to set it aside. It's a must." As we have seen, Steven and James want students to develop the strategy of creating time to attend school and to work. James wanted students to organize their time so they can attend class and seek out opportunities just as he did when he was a student and continues to do as a working artist who also manages to take continuing education classes, volunteer at the school, operate his own stall, and provide for his family.

Steven cares about teaching students art and also helping them attain productive livelihoods. He understands that for many, this will mean combining several artistic talents to make a living. "Since art also is being looked at differently by the community, you have to be aggressive for your future development in art. So when they [students] come here we don't only teach them art but we advise them on other areas that can make them survive." Yet, Steven is also responsible to KCP that supports the project and wants to ensure students pay school fees and attend regularly. When Steven asks for art supplies from KCP, he is told he must wait until all students have paid their fees. As a teacher, Steven also wants to make sure students do not get pulled away by these brief, enticing opportunities to earn money before they complete their studies and become fine artists.

Steven expressed his disapproval of Julie's attempts to sell her artwork outside of school. One day during Bible sharing, he made the following remarks after learning Julie had created her own website to sell her work:

Let us not cheat one another. You are studying; you are making money. If you aren't careful, you won't make it. When you think you're good, you can spend hours doing work for a client but you are still being supported by someone. Be a serious student. When you are cheating, you are cheating yourself. The pride she puts before us spoils her talent. Let's try to put pride aside. We are here to learn and three years is short. For example, Tom went to Kisumu Boys [secondary school], and he already had a stall behind Tuskys [popular supermarket in town] and he still came to Imani and supported himself. You are here. Please learn. The opportunity you have here you might not get again and you will regret. I pity you people who don't take this school seriously. The art school is one of the most expensive projects. Let's make use of this opportunity.

Julie was not in attendance when Steven made these comments, but it was clear to the class that they were directed at her, particularly the comment, "The pride she puts before us spoils her talent." Steven also expressed his disapproval of male students working outside of school but not in terms of pride. Here, Steven characterizes Julie's attempts at earning a living through art as prideful, not merely disobedient. Steven was especially defensive about opportunities that would link students to international markets fearing this would lead them to quit school before they became full members of the artistic community and he would have fewer funds available from school fees to order materials and maintain the school. Steven's comments also reveal underlying cultural assumptions about class aspirations. Julie lived with her mother who paid her fees and did not need to earn money to survive. Interestingly, Betty raised similar concerns in my

interview with her, though not directly speaking about Julie or her own desire to earn a comfortable living through art. “Some Luos don't love. Maybe when you are rich, they don't like it. They want you to be [in] poverty. That is how they feel it must be. But if you have something that is giving you money, they feel jealous. So they don't like it.” Many young artists echoed these same ideas that if they did too well, especially in international markets, they would be perceived as “showing off” or “too good” for their community. Julie did not express any concern about what her peers thought of her creating and opening the website and a few students talked with her about how they could do the same.

Students, including Julie, were aware of Steven and James’s disapproval and wanted to attend school, but they also felt pressure to learn skills that would help them earn a living. As John explained,

“I'm supposed to be in class, [but] it is very hectic because the teacher sees the potential in you, but maybe you are never present each and every time. So, it is tricky venturing fully into [a] job because now some people want you full time, but you have class. So you'll have to maybe [miss] some of your class lessons, which is very wrong, but now how will I do it? I have to.”

This comment reflects the tensions many students expressed about pursuing work while still in school. In order to successfully manage this, they had to learn “clever tricks” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix), which often involved lying about where they were when they missed class.

Students also felt that times had changed since James was a student. The cost of living and the school fees for Imani have increased and some students did not have friends or relatives to support them while they were in school. Some live alone and were responsible for paying their own rent, school fees, and upkeep. Graduates also acknowledged that fees had increased since

their time and there was decreased support from outside donors. Kevin acknowledged, “I can’t blame them, because if I was to source for my upkeep and the fee fully, then I would have also had to always be away from school because I understand currently they pay more.” Therefore, many current students miss school to find money to pay their fees and upkeep as a matter of survival and find ways to explain their absences to remain in school.

As these examples illustrate, “the practice of the community creates the potential ‘curriculum’” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). The classroom inside Imani represents a shared place where students have common goals in learning visual art both from teachers and from each other. Students animate the spaces behind and beyond the classroom to create the potential curriculum, which depends on the particular constellation of students who are enrolled in Imani at that time. What and how students can learn in these spaces depends on the skills students have and their willingness to share those skills. This curriculum explicitly teaches students additional artistic skills and implicitly teaches them how to make use of both time and space that students do not completely control. Students do not have the ability to create the official curriculum nor can they control which students currently enrolled in Imani possess which skills, but they can take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. As Michael described, he was able to learn to play guitar because other students knew how and were willing to teach him. Therefore, students explicitly learn different artistic skills from each other while they implicitly learn tactics: to constantly be on the watch for opportunities that arise and this skill will become even more important and tactical as they transition into work.

Because students use tactics to learn these skills (they are not official parts of the curriculum) they gain the knowledge but lack an official certification in the form of a diploma or certificate, important in securing formal employment in Kenya. Imani graduates receive a

diploma that lists their training in visual art, performing art, and graphic design. While their training may include many other skills as described above, these skills are obscured. Michael now knows how to play the guitar. He can demonstrate his skill but he cannot produce a diploma that certifies it.

As students venture beyond the compound of Imani, they choose their own masters and create communities of practice that overlap, but are not identical, to the community of practicing artists from Imani. Thus, Johnson's community of practice includes artisans (the weavers of Lake Victoria), Calvin's includes actors (members of Ziwa Arts), and Michael's includes musicians (the band he plays with at the restaurant). Membership in these communities contributes to artists' sense of identity. As Lave and Wenger assert, "learning and a sense of identity are inseparable" (p. 115). Most Imani graduates identify primarily as visual artists but also have a flexible sense of an artistic identity that includes other art forms such as musician, comedian, dancer, actor, and can make use of these identities when opportunities for employment arise. For example, Michael learned to play guitar in art school and became close friends with other students who already knew how to play. This enabled them to form a band that ultimately led to a source of income: the band was hired to play weekly at a popular restaurant in Kisumu. John's interest in graphic design led him to seek out opportunities to further his study in town and this led to jobs such as making flyers to promote bands and plays happening within Kisumu. Johnson's interest in weaving led him to Lake Victoria to learn to make chairs. He was able to sell the furniture he made to pay his rent and fees in art school.

However, seeking out these opportunities comes at a cost and students must use tactics to earn money to support themselves through art and stay in school. While Imani is a non-formal school with flexibility and a permissive stance towards student-directed learning, it is a school

with a structure, set curriculum, and relationship to a larger NGO that holds it accountable for student attendance and fees. Imani is primarily a visual art school. This is evident in its curriculum (the written curriculum only contains visual art topics even though the diploma, school mission, and timetable also include performing art), its use of time (visual art is taught in the morning, after lunch students either continue work or do performing arts), and its use of its official place (the main classroom is reserved for visual art, other activities take place around the compound). Steven insisted students come to school for visual art instruction in the morning and was more flexible about students missing class in the afternoons.

Students are embedded within the structure of Imani. To use de Certeau's (1984) terms, they use tactics to "escape it without leaving it" (xiii). Students learn how to improvise within a set of rules and expectations as they figure out how to miss school to engage in other types of work and still remain enrolled students. Students often do this by making up reasons for their absence including being sick, visiting sick relatives, caring for young siblings, going on errands for family members, etc., so they can engage in learning and livelihood opportunities for themselves and avoid conflict with the school administration.

To return to Kevin's point at the start of this chapter, Imani can be viewed as a "hub" in that it occupies a central place for current and former art students who have created a community of practice based on their shared experiences of learning art. The structure of the curriculum, stance of the teachers and students, and physical layout of the school provide opportunities for students to learn other artistic skills and have access to a wide range of practices. These learning opportunities allow students to try out different artistic identities: visual artist, musician, dancer, weaver, actor, as they learn and become artists and adults. Imani can also be seen as a space where students learn "how to get away with things" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix) as they navigate

the places within and around, and spaces beyond the school to find opportunities for their learning, development, and livelihood. Just as students expand their communities of practice as they enter work and become artists, they also expand their set of tactics that help them navigate the constraints of the informal economy, which are more confining and less forgiving than Imani.

Interlude: Becoming an Artist

TOM: I was brought up by parents who believe science is the in thing. I was not given room to make my own informed decisions of who I wanted to be.

GEORGE: My mom said, "Don't waste yourself in that." She was trying to get me to join the army. She even assured me of everything. My brother and sister said, "You are just playing around."

VICTOR: My mom really wanted me to be a teacher, to get a good employment, something salaried. I applied, but I never got a chance.

JOHNSON: My family said, "You could have gone and done accounting and the thing you do is just a hobby."

JULIE: The grades I had in high school were high. I could do courses like nursing, medicine.

RAYMOND: Art is like a technical subject. My family wanted the professional. I had a sister who is a teacher. She said, "I need you to do CPA. It's a business course."

BETTY: I was supposed to go for that course in food and beverage. People think art is just wasting time.

JAMES: My uncle wanted me to do electronics. So I said, "Electronics?" I was doubting.

Something was pulling me behind.

Don't say yes.

Don't say yes!

Something was burning in me.

I want to do art.

JOHNSON: Me, I do fine art.

JULIE: I told my mom I want to do art

JAMES: My uncle said, “Art? Do you want to be a sign writer? If you’re a sign writer, people don’t take you serious.”

JOHNSON: The art they knew was sign writing. “Oh, you just write on walls.”

TOM: Their assumption is art is all about sign writing.

JULIE: When I told my mom I want to do art, she was like, “What? No. Art is not something nice.”

JOHNSON: I don’t want to do art as a hobby. That’s my profession. I love this thing to death.

VICTOR: Sometimes when you are painting you are in a world of your own. You don’t want to talk. That’s okay I’m just in my own world.

RAYMOND: My sister had to come to learn that I have to do art. It’s my life.

GEORGE: This is me. You give me a chance and wait and see.

JOHNSON: I’ll never leave art.

No matter what.

Chapter Six

Becoming an Artist, Part II: The Market

When we graduate, when we go outside there, we find it hard. You can think, “Oh, why am I suffering like this? What should I do? Should I go back to Imani again? Because here [at Imani] you can waste your time just sitting here, but outside there, now you have to search, to look for a living from what you are taught in Imani. You find it difficult. – Thomas Omolo 2012 Imani graduate

As the interlude shows, many parents and relatives are concerned that pursuing a career in art will not lead to a productive livelihood. Many young artists recounted conversations with family members and friends who tried to convince them to pursue more stable, “professional,” and formal options such as accounting, medicine, teaching, and joining the military. For these young people, art is not just something they choose because they have no other options. Many could have pursued other jobs and had the family support and connections to do so. Likewise, some working artists in Kisumu left more lucrative, stable, professional jobs such as teaching because those jobs did not leave room for painting.

Despite this expressed preference for “professional” jobs, most of the residents of Nyalenda, where many of these artists grew up, are employed in the informal sector. Over 40% reported their major source of income as “other” including activities such as selling various goods in the markets, operating *boda bodas* (motorcycle taxis), and brewing and selling illegal alcohol. Other common jobs include selling items in kiosks, tailoring, hairdressing, construction, furniture, and shoe repair (Maoulidi, 2012, p. 35). As we have seen, the formal education system pushes those who cannot access higher education into these technical, informal positions to look for their own employment.

In Kenya, these informal jobs are often referred to as *Jua Kali*, meaning hot sun in Swahili since they take place outside in open-air markets. At first the term applied to male

blacksmiths and metalworkers but it gradually expanded to encompass other outside workers including car mechanics and eventually for a Kenyan version of entrepreneurship different from multinational corporations and Asians living in Kenya who own a large portion of the formal businesses (King, 1996, p. 25). According to King,

The term, therefore, has been important not just in Kenyanizing the concept of informal sector but in communicating a feeling that it is the informal sector that is the ordinary economy in which the bulk of Kenyans gain their livelihood. It is not the informal sector that is somehow special and extraordinary, but the formal sector, which encompasses such a small portion of the economically active population. (p. 25)

Many youth in poor communities have internalized responsibility for their own employment and accepted that their futures lie in this informal sector rather than in the formal economy.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze what happens to young artists as they transition from Imani into work in the informal sector. As Thomas explains, life outside of Imani is hard. In many ways, Imani is a safe haven for these young artists where they are supported in learning art and surrounded by people who also value and understand art and their identity as artists. Once they graduate, artists face a more challenging, constraining environment. They search to find a place to display their work, struggle to learn the necessary skills to operate a business, and have to maintain a stock of expensive art materials and pieces to sell.

Between field visits in 2011 and 2012, a batch of students graduated from Imani. Then again between 2012 and 2013, a new group ventured into the market. Here I tell the stories of four Imani graduates as they enter work, two from 2012 and two from 2013. Two of these students, Simon and Michael, lived with both of their parents during art school and their parents paid their fees. The other two, Johnson and Thomas, lived alone in art school and struggled to

balance being laborers and learners. First, I will describe what has happened to these young artists since graduating from Imani. Then I will detail the market places of the five most successful Imani graduates who work as full time artists in Kisumu. I will analyze how young graduates draw on the ideas of communities of practice and Imani as a family developed in art school to learn new skills they need in the market. Finally I will analyze the strategies municipal city council members impose on artists as well as the tactics artists use to make do in these difficult places.

Leaving Imani

In 2012 Thomas Omolo and Michael Ochieng' graduated from Imani. The following year Johnson Odwuor and Simon Osano graduated. Simon and Michael continued to live at home and had the financial support of their parents. Thomas, no longer able to afford the rent on his own small room, moved in with his aunt. Johnson, also unable to afford to continue to live alone in Kisumu, returned to Nairobi to live with a friend. Thomas and Johnson, as explained in the last chapter, used tactics to work while in school. As de Certeau notes, tactics have no base of power. Johnson and Thomas were unable to build up savings either of money or of pieces to sell. When they finished school, they had no resources to start looking for their own stalls. Michael and Simon could rely on the support of their families as they sought out new opportunities. Of these four, Thomas is the only one who has attempted to open his own stall to sell his artwork.

When I first visited Thomas in June, he was staying with his mother's sister in Migosi. He hung his paintings along a wall beside the road; however, this area did not get much traffic and because it was not on a main road, most passersby were on foot. Thomas did not have much success selling.

When I visited him again in October, he had moved to Kondele, just past Kibuye market.⁴⁵ Thomas spent about 400 shillings to construct a basic stall to display his art. This stall was along a main road, and therefore received a lot more traffic. Thomas had made friends with youth in nearby stalls who were selling second-hand clothes, and he was teaching them a few skills in painting. There was no place for Thomas to store his paintings, so he had to set them up and take them down everyday and would walk from Migosi (about a 25 minute walk) with his pieces when he could not afford transport.

Just as he did in art school, Thomas combines different opportunities to make a living, making *jikos* (small charcoal burning stoves) and *sufurias* (cooking pots), acting, and painting. Thomas received some training in performing arts. He attended a 10-day training through APHIAplus (AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance), a USAID funded project aimed at improving health in Western Kenya. The training involved using Theatre for Development (TfD) techniques to create short, interactive plays about topics such as HIV/AIDS to educate the community on better health practices. Thomas was paid for the training and for subsequent outreach he and his group conducted in Kisumu. While a student at Imani, he was also involved with two theatre groups, Ziwa⁴⁶ Arts and Kombe Kombe Theatre for Education.⁴⁷ Additionally, Thomas started performing with a group of comedians to perform shows at Mega City, a major shopping mall near Nyalenda. As Thomas explains, “Apart from art, I can do performing. I’m an actor, I’m a comedian. I’m doing both. I make sure at the end of this thing,

⁴⁵ The largest, busiest market in Kisumu (one of the biggest in Kenya and all of Africa).

⁴⁶ Swahili: Lake. A youth theatre group that performed free-style plays and made some DVD recordings

⁴⁷ A youth organization made up of former street children who use theatre to make presentations to secondary school students and street children about topics such as alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and life skills. They used the Luo term *kombe kombe* to refer to a honeycomb explaining it’s difficult to extract the honey, but once you do, it’s sweet.

there's a living on my table." The flexible artistic identity Thomas developed at Imani allows him to be on the watch for opportunities and seize chances to perform.

I first met Michael when he was a third year art student at Imani in 2011. At that time, he was the student chairman and was a clear leader in the school. When I returned in 2012, Michael was working at the Lutheran Childhood Development Center and was playing guitar and singing with the Six Strings Band, made up of seven members (three of whom were graduates of Imani.). By 2013, Michael was working at the Kisumu Arts Gallery.⁴⁸ A Dutch woman (and longtime Kisumu resident) decided to turn her compound into an art gallery. She hired⁴⁹ Michael to be in charge of visual arts. He replaced another well-known Kisumu artist (not an Imani graduate) who had had a falling out with her. This woman also provided resources such as canvas and art materials. Like Thomas, Michael made use of the music skills he learned at Imani in addition to his visual art training to find work as a teacher and musician.

I first met Simon when he was a second year Imani student in 2011. When I returned in 2012, Simon was in his third year and had been elected by the students to serve as their chairman. By 2013, Simon would occasionally visit the art school and bring his artwork. He was painting on his own, still living with his parents, and still very involved in activities in his church, particularly the choir.

Like Michael, Simon lived with both of his parents in art school, and they were able to help support him through fees and his upkeep. Therefore, Simon could attend school regularly

⁴⁸ The woman calls the space in her compound a gallery; however, it is not a gallery in the traditional sense. It is an outdoor space with paintings propped against trees and under some canopy spaces. Her home is in the Milimani neighborhood of Kisumu near the Kenyan Red Cross. There are no formal art galleries in Kisumu. Many people (including working artists) are not aware that this space exists since it is inside of a gated, private compound.

⁴⁹ Perhaps hired is not the best word. She does not pay Michael a regular salary, but provides space for him and fellow artists to exhibit and provides materials such as canvas and paints.

and was always in good standing with Steven and the administration. However, Michael and Simon both started painting their own art pieces while in art school to help supplement their parents' contributions. Simon also created economic opportunities for himself through his family and church connections and participated in theatre productions through Ziwa Arts.

I first met Johnson when he was a second year Imani student in 2011. When I returned in 2012, Johnson was in his final year, though he was often absent from school. In fact, Steven wanted Johnson to repeat his third year because of his absences, but Johnson refused. When I returned in 2013, Johnson had returned to Nairobi and took on odd jobs such as painting houses and construction to make ends meet. I went with him to visit one of the major art studios in Nairobi, the GoDown Art Centre in South B. We talked with Patrick Mukabi, who we had both met at an art exhibition in Kisumu in 2012. Johnson would like to join as one of Mukabi's students, but he has not done so yet.

Recall that while at Imani, Johnson learned to weave from the weavers near Lake Victoria. He plans to use this skill to help him start as an artist in Nairobi. He says, "I brought some weaving with me. So I want to start weaving before it's too late but the problem is now getting the site. It has really stressed me up for awhile." Johnson has been struggling to find a place within the informal markets of Nairobi to exhibit his artwork and weaving. Although he grew up in Nairobi, his artistic community is in Kisumu making the transition more difficult.

Imani Graduates

Recall from the last chapter how students participate and become socialized into a community of practicing artists. In school, this community consists of the head teachers: Steven, Father Bart, and James, the current students, and the graduates who frequently visit the school. In the field, the community of practice centers on Imani graduates who have opened their own stalls

in various locations in Kisumu. The key members in this community of practicing artists are James Osiemo, Tom Odero, Victor Omondi, Ben Opiyo, and Kevin Odek.

The sense of place has also changed. Imani is a central place for artists. Current students, Steven, and graduates interact daily in flexible locations where students have access to a variety of practices and members of the artistic community. In the market, artists are separated by physical distance and much more constrained by their place of work. Because they depend on seizing opportunities, they can never be sure when these opportunities will arise. If they close their stall to visit another artist, they might miss out on a client. Here I describe the places where artists work and the artists themselves to establish the terrain through which artists move and interact.

James, as we have seen, was a part-time, volunteer teacher at Imani. James graduated in 2008 after spending only two years in art school. The administration felt his skills were so strong that he did not need to spend any more time in school. When he finished, James, just like the more recent graduates, was unsure how to start working as an artist. James recalls how he got his first job:

It was one year after graduation. I used to sit outside where I was staying with my uncle painting. It was just on the road, so people were passing by looking at me and there was a lady who used to pass there every day. She was working at a Lutheran church. They had visitors who were coming, their donors. So they wanted some cards that they could give as a present to them. So this lady came to me, “We have a job, but before you do that job you have to at least make a sketch. And before you make a sketch, you have to meet the boss.” The boss now came and said, “We want thirty cards. We are going to give you some verses from the Bible, you make some illustrations according to the way you

understand the reading. But you have to do some samples.” I said, “No problem.” I did the samples, then I presented them and I was given the job. The job paid KSh 11,500 - ⁵⁰ at that time it was really good money. So I really worked hard. I presented them, and they said, “Wow, these are really nice pieces.”

James seized on, rather than created, this opportunity. With this start and finding similar jobs, James eventually saved enough money to build his own stall.

Tom Odero graduated from Imani in 2010. Before joining Imani, Tom studied fine art in secondary school and once he graduated, opened his first art stall near Tusksys, a popular supermarket in Kisumu town. He referred to this as “naïve art” since he had no formal training. One of the teachers from Imani passed by his stall and convinced him to join art school.

James and Tom met at Imani and realized they had similar work ethics, so they tried working together. In 2010, they built their own stall, The Village Art Centre, located in Kisumu town behind Mega Plaza, one of the largest shopping areas in town. The stall is situated along a row of similar stalls where vendors sell *mitumba* (second-hand clothes). It is also a transportation hub: Colorful *tuk tuk*s line up alongside the road punctuated by *piki pikis*, or *boda bodas*.⁵¹ The drivers and their conductors call out to shoppers exiting Mega Plaza and compete for customers. Between the constant calling and revving of engines, this is quite a noisy, bustling area. Because of this, the Village Art Centre gets a lot of traffic, though customers do not always buy. Tom explains the benefits of this location:

I decided to move to town because at least once in a day you cannot miss somebody who

⁵⁰ About \$132

⁵¹ Three of the most common forms of transportation in Kisumu. A *boda boda* is a bicycle taxi – passengers pay around 10 shillings to sit on a cushion behind the peddler. A *piki piki* is a motorcycle taxi – passengers pay around 30-60 shillings depending on where they want to go. A *tuk tuk* is a rickshaw taxi – passengers pay as much as 150 shillings if they are the only passengers or 20 shillings if they ride with others.

has never seen an artwork. Obviously you must bump into some visitors everyday and that's healthy. Even if they don't buy, you initiate contact, he or she may not need an artwork today, but tomorrow he or she might need. So obviously, they will look for you.

Tom and James built the stall themselves using wood and a piece of blue tarp for the roof. A large tree stands toward the back of the stall and its roots come up through the wooden planks on the floor. Tom and James constructed a makeshift desk with a bench to sit so that they can paint or read, though they often paint standing in the stall or behind the stall in the shade of the tree. They have placed a guestbook on the counter so visitors can write their contact information and comments. They display their paintings along the outside and the inside of the stall.

Tom arrives by 9am each morning to open the stall. Tom and James made an arrangement with the owner of the place to rent a storage unit in a secure area away from the road behind the stall to keep their art. They pay 1,000 shillings per month in rent for the stall and 1,500 shillings per month for storage. Tom unlocks the padlock, removes the paintings, and sets them up each morning. He stays in the stall until 5 or 6pm each evening, takes the paintings down, and locks them back in the storage unit.

On a typical day, Tom works on paintings, interacts with clients, and socializes with *piki* *piki* and *tuk tuk* drivers and other vendors. Around lunchtime, a woman comes to ask if he's taking lunch that day. Tom typically buys *mandondo*,⁵² a meal of rice and beans that costs around 50 shillings, and drinks a plastic bag of water. The drivers, vendors, passersby, and children often stop to watch Tom paint, still an unusual sight in Kisumu. Sometimes Tom is

⁵² A Sheng (slang language blending Swahili and English) word popularly used by youth to refer to this kind of meal.

commissioned to make particular pieces by clients including portraits⁵³ and landscapes. The stall is closed during the weekends so that Tom can have a break and James can spend time with his children.

Although Tom and James own the stall together and share in the profits from all the sales, Tom usually operates the stall alone. This allows James to work as a teacher at Imani, take adult education classes, paint at home, and take care of his two young children. Originally from Kisii, James continues to live in Kisumu with his children. His wife is a schoolteacher stationed in Kisii. In addition to his artwork and teaching, James takes adult continuing education classes in the hopes of completing his secondary education. Tom is still single and lives alone in a small house in the informal settlement area of Manyatta.

Victor Omondi and Ben Opiyo also met in art school (they both graduated in 1999) and began working together in 2001. They are both married and have children. Victor first heard about art school through his mother who attended Mass at Nyalenda Centre on Sundays. After finishing secondary school, Ben was farming. He heard about art school through his brother, who was working as a photographer. After finishing Imani, Victor and Ben got their first job as artists from Father Bart and it took them two years to raise enough money for their own stall. As Victor explains,

It took about two years because immediately from graduation, Father Bart hired us to do some church paintings. He rented a place for us in Magadi, so we stayed there. But we were tired of just doing the same thing. We took photos of pieces and then photocopy and then paint, paint, paint. We were a bit tired of that and then we wanted to have our place of display, though he [Father Bart] was not happy at first. He was not happy about that

⁵³ Portraits have become increasingly popular with local clients in Kisumu. Many order portraits of a couple as a wedding present.

because it was under a tree in town opposite Kisumu Hotel. He used to come there and somehow he was discouraging us but we kept on. Then eventually he accepted it.

This original location opposite Kisumu Hotel was part of the designated curio market in Kisumu referred to as Maasai Market. Father Bart at first objected to the location because he feared the informal location would leave the artists vulnerable to having their stalls demolished without warning. In fact, the city council did force the artists to move and have moved this market three times to its current location across from Kisumu Museum.

Because of its proximity to the museum, buses of tourists often stop here to buy souvenirs. There is a rough road separating the two sides of the market and about twenty stalls are tightly packed along each side. Vendors sell a variety of goods including jewelry, handbags, furniture woven from hyacinths, soapstone sculptures, and sandals. Some of the vendors make these items themselves, though many sell items they purchased in Nairobi or from other craftsmen and women. Victor and Ben are the only painters in the market who sell their own work (though other vendors sell paintings they bought elsewhere). High tourist traffic is an advantage because many visitors pass through this area intending to buy gifts and souvenirs; however, the artists also worry that it devalues their art to be placed alongside such curio items. Ben also finds it difficult to paint in the stall because it is “too much exposed to interferences.” Tourists often stop in the stalls to take photos of the artists and their work interrupting their painting and vendors call to tourists and follow them throughout the market hoping to convince them to buy their goods.

Like James and Tom, Victor and Ben constructed the stall themselves from wood and have woven mats and iron sheets for a roof. The entrance to the stall has two long wooden tables to display work. These artists do not have as much space to hang artwork as Tom and James;

therefore, they have piles of canvas on the tables that customers can sort through. Toward the back of the stall, each artist has his own workspace where he can stand to paint and store materials. The artists also have a guestbook where visitors can write contact information and comments.

Victor arrives by 8:30 each morning to open the stall. Victor and Ben divided their stall in two and each pays 2,000 shillings a month in rent that covers the cost of renting the space and storage. Ben joins Victor in the stall on the weekends, but during the week, he teaches fine art at Kisumu Senior and Junior Academy. On a typical day, Victor paints in the stall and interacts with customers and other vendors. Tourists sometimes come to watch him paint and ask if they can take photographs of his work, which he allows.⁵⁴

Like Victor and Ben, Kevin Odek also graduated from Imani in 1999. Kevin is married and has three children. Originally from Busia,⁵⁵ Kevin was working as a sign writer and drawing caricatures after finishing secondary school. He heard about Imani from fellow sign writers who had done work in Kisumu and came to art school in 1997. After finishing, Kevin tried to find his own place. “When I graduated, I therefore just went fully into business by trying to find working spaces within town. So I’ve moved from one space to another looking for a strategic place.”

Eventually, Kevin saved up enough resources to open his own shop, *Takataka*⁵⁶ *Treasure Arts: Eco-Art Production*, opposite the Kibuye Market. Kevin rents this place from the owner of the adjacent bamboo shop for 2,500 shillings per month. In contrast to the other stalls, Kevin’s shop is built with more permanent materials: brick and iron sheets. He has a window opening at

⁵⁴ The artists at the GoDown Art Centre and Kuona Trust do not allow photographs of their work. Artists frequently copy each other, especially when they know a certain style sells.

⁵⁵ In Western Kenya, almost to the border of Uganda.

⁵⁶ Takataka means trash in Swahili. Kevin uses what others would discard (eggshells) in his art. He refers to this process as recycling, hence the eco part of the title.

the front of the shop that allows him to interact with clients passing by and an entrance to the left of the shop. Inside, he has space to display his work.

Recently, Kevin was identified as an upcoming entrepreneur by Maseno University's Business Incubator Programme, and he pays 5000 shillings per month in rent for an office space in Maseno University. Maseno University is located in Varsity Plaza in the center of town. It is a large, multi-storied building that has space for classrooms and offices. When I went to meet Kevin, I waited at reception so he could take me to his office, which would have been impossible for me to find without him. His office is in another part of the building mostly used for apartments. While this office has the advantage of being in a permanent building in the center of town, people do not pass by and Kevin must invite people to come to the office to see his work. Kevin has displayed his paintings around the office and has a desk with a computer, space for storing materials, a large milling machine for grinding eggshells and making peanut butter, and a balcony that allows him to paint outside in the natural light. He arrives around 8am each morning and works until 5 or 6pm. When he is using the Maseno office space, he hires someone to take care of the Takataka shop.

Taking advantage of his connections with Maseno University and his location in town, Kevin has organized two art exhibitions in the open area in front of Varsity Plaza. This area has a lot of traffic because of its location in the center of town. Kevin exhibited his own work and invited many other local artists, including current students and graduates of Imani, to add their pieces. Although they did not sell many pieces, Kevin felt it was successful in terms of networking. The artists exchanged contacts with several people, including hotel and restaurant owners who might be willing to purchase their pieces later.

Through this program, Kevin also receives further training in business skills and has opportunities to network with other entrepreneurs. Kevin was assigned two students through the Kenyan Private Sector Alliance and the Kenya Youth Empowerment Program. Through these programs, youth are sent to entrepreneurs in their chosen field for further training and development. Kevin receives 3,000 shillings per month per student to cover their transport, welfare, and materials. The students remained with Kevin for three months. One had studied art in secondary school and the other had no prior training in art.

All five artists have had success in selling their work and marketing themselves as artists. James and Victor have both exhibited outside of Kenya⁵⁷ (James in London and the Netherlands and Victor in Luxembourg), one of Victor's pieces was chosen as the cover of the *2013 Kenya Arts Diary*, an annual calendar published by the Kitengela Glass Research and Training Trust which was started by glass artist Nani Croze. All proceeds from the diary go to a fund for promising young artists for apprenticeships and internships. In addition to being on the cover, Victor was one of the featured artists. In addition, Victor and Ben were both chosen to participate in the *Moko Mach*⁵⁸ exhibition sponsored by the Little Art Gallery, AfricanColours.com, and DeroArts in Kiboko Bay in September 2012. This was a very selective exhibition and many of the artists selected were from Nairobi, not Kisumu.

Kevin has been featured in Kenyan media, including a full-page story in *Business Daily* (September 2, 2013) and a feature on CitizenTV (May 2012), and Tom's work has been featured in several exhibitions in Kisumu and Nairobi. James, Tom, Victor, and Ben were hired to paint a series of stamps to raise funds for breast cancer. In August 2013, a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer

⁵⁷ Their work was taken outside of Kenya but James and Victor did not travel – neither has left Kenya.

⁵⁸ *Moko Mach* means light a fire in Luo.

commissioned a series of paintings from Tom, James, Victor, and Ben. She traveled back to the U.S. with these paintings, opened a Facebook© page for the four artists (called 4 Creative Strokes Arts), and instructed them to set up a joint bank account so she could send them money from sales of their art. She plans to travel throughout the U.S. to display and sell the pieces. All of these artists have had financial success and have sold pieces for as much as KSh 80,000.⁵⁹

Artist Interactions

As they venture into work, these recent graduates occupy a new position in the community of practicing artists. In school, as third year students, they were closer to the center of the practice and often helped newcomers learn art. In the market, they are newcomers who need to learn how to operate within this new place. In school, students participate in the community as they learned art and how to be artists. As they graduate and transition into work, artists use this community to find business partners, share opportunities for exhibitions and sales, and learn new skills needed in the marketplace. Based on their interactions in school, artists determine who would make a good, trusted business partner. These artists have been socialized into a way of learning that is communal (recall Steven's stories about Imani as a family) and to see each other as experts in different artistic fields. In becoming artists and adults, they must learn new skills such as the responsibilities of operating a business, full time work, and raising families. Therefore, these artists seek new mentors and alternative spaces (increasingly online) to continue to interact and organize their own opportunities to learn.

As a nascent owner and operator of an art stall, Thomas receives advice and emotional support from the older graduates. Thomas describes advice he received from Kevin after returning from an exhibition. Kevin told him, "you are really doing good work, but what I can

⁵⁹ Approximately \$944.

advise you is don't use so much white paint. It makes your paintings a bit dull. It's changing the original color of the piece. Use just a little bit of white and apply the original color." Just as in art school, this kind of advice helps Thomas continue to develop his skill as a visual artist. While I was visiting Thomas in his stall at Kondele, Brian, an Imani graduate who owns a stall near Impala Park stopped by. He advised Thomas that tourists find it difficult to take pieces in frames because they get damaged in travel. He suggested that Thomas use canvas instead because it can be easily rolled and transported. This advice helps Thomas learn more about the market and how to interact with tourists. Additionally, Thomas notes that graduates are "really leading a good life" and that he would "like to reach where they are." Because Thomas sees these artists as "just men like me," he can imagine a future for himself as an artist. Through these interactions with practicing artists, Thomas continues to learn and to become an artist.

Like Thomas, Michael started selling his artwork while still in school to supplement school fees and to pay for lunch and materials. Once he graduated, Michael combined sources of income from the Lutheran Childhood Development Center, playing once a week as a musician, selling his artwork through Victor and Ben's stall, and eventually working at the Kisumu Arts Gallery. Michael was also temporarily a member of Ziwa Arts and engaged in some theatre performances with the group. Additionally, he took on shorter-term projects such as painting murals at the Lutheran center. As Michael emphasizes "we can't just rely on fine arts alone." Therefore, he takes on additional art-related projects to earn a living.

Like Thomas, Michael began learning from his peers in art school. "You may find this person will know this thing that you may not know, so sharing ideas has really helped us." In Michael's case, he learned to be a musician, which as we saw was not formally a part of the school's curriculum. After graduating, Michael continued to learn from exhibiting his paintings

and taking them to friends in the market. He continued to grow as a musician by playing weekly. Unlike Thomas, Michael did not attempt to start his own stall after graduation. Instead, he brought his work to Victor and Ben. They would display his work, notify him by phone when it sold, and take 30% of any sales.

Also like Thomas, observing and interacting with working artists gave him confidence that it is possible to earn a living as an artist in Kisumu. As Michael says, “artists in Kisumu, they’re not doing that bad. They can pay their bills comfortably.” In Lave and Wenger’s (1991) terms, learning “that there is a field for the mature practice of what they are learning to do” encourages these artists that they were wise to invest in the development of their artistic talents (p. 110).

Before ever joining Imani, Simon had connections with graduates and these connections led him to the art school. Simon explains how he met Kevin when he brought some of his early work to be framed. “I met Kevin and he briefed me about Imani. He told me, Simon, actually you have the talent. Make an attempt to visit Imani Art School. And that is how I found myself in Imani.” Meeting and talking with Kevin at the framer’s shop was the beginning of a strong mentoring relationship between the two. Throughout Simon’s time in art school, he continued to visit Kevin and learn from his example. Once in art school, like the other artists, Simon found that working alongside other artists made him “work hard at least also to match the standard of the other students.” Simon also took advantage of opportunities to exhibit his work alongside graduates’ pieces and gained confidence when his work sold. Like all the other artists, Simon visited working artists in Kisumu while he was still a student and was inspired by their example.

Like Thomas and Michael, Johnson was inspired by the success of Imani graduates who were working as full time artists, earning from “just the brush.” While in art school, Johnson visited these artists in their stalls and at their homes to continue to learn. He also displayed one

of his paintings at the Village Art Centre. Because he found it difficult to find accommodation in Kisumu, Johnson returned to Nairobi to rely on friendships he had there including his friend with whom he shares a living space and a youth group he helped start after finishing secondary school. He remains in contact with the Kisumu artists through SMS messages and Facebook© interactions. He is also attempting to build new artistic networks by visiting the GoDown Art Centre as well as Kuona Trust.⁶⁰ These interactions with working artists give Johnson the confidence to pursue fine art as a profession.

These recent graduates rely on the community of practicing artists that began in art school to help them seek out opportunity and continue to learn. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, “to become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation” (pp. 100 – 101). As we have seen in these stories, these artists first encountered other students in art school and had the opportunity to compare their work with that of more experienced students. Visiting Kisumu artists in their stalls, meeting them at exhibitions and in the markets, and attending and exhibiting their own work gave them access to working, professional artists. Through these interactions these more experienced artists also shared information, resources, and opportunities to help the newcomers move closer into full participation.

Community as Tactic

The more experienced artists also rely on each other through this community of practice. Notably, several of the artists have teamed up together. Working as partners eases the “burdens” of working in a seasonal market, the unpredictability and constraints of work places, and the

⁶⁰ Another well-known gallery in Nairobi that provides studio space for working artists and is open to visitors.

expense of materials. Partnering with Tom allows James to finish his secondary education and partnering with Victor allows Ben to also work as a teacher. Although Kevin operates his office alone, he is connected to other entrepreneurs through Maseno University and has connections to other artists who run Takataka Treasures for him. These partnerships also allow artists to share the profits from the sales to cover the expense of the stalls. Tom explains his relationship with James as “symbiotic,” highlighting a relationship that is mutually beneficial and intimate:

Our relationship is symbiotic. When we sell a piece, there is a percentage that is left to manage the stall. For the stall, when you sell a piece, 10% goes to the stall automatically. And the amount you can share with your friend, that now depends on your willingness. When James has clients that want particular piece and he knows I am good at that, he will always call me. *Bwana*⁶¹, bring me that. And surprisingly if a client wants a particular piece that he saw earlier, and the piece was sold and he’s busy, he would even trust you to email you the image, if you can, you produce. And use that money. A quality that sometimes amazes me; he is a very free man.

Ben expresses a similar sentiment: “We work together so [we can sell more] like twelve pieces where we are three majorly. We are sharing.” Victor agrees: “When we sell, of course here we sell as a group because we sell and then we take the 30%. So if I sell a painting, they have to take the 30% to give the others. And most of the money goes to the material first and then the rent [for the stall].”

As partners, the artists share profits, clients, space, and materials and these symbiotic relationships allow them to continue to work as fine artists and to provide for their families. As Tom’s comments imply, at times there is as much competition in the art market as there is

⁶¹ Swahili: man

cooperation. In my interactions with Kisumu artists, I often heard stories of artists attempting to sabotage each other, including taking credit (and money) for another artist's work at an exhibition, withholding information or giving misleading information about an exhibition to limit competition, and widespread copying of other artists' work. Thus, trust is essential in making these partnerships work (recall the emphasis on loyalty and friendship in the students' stories). James trusts Tom enough to reproduce his paintings for a client if he doesn't have time to do it himself. As we saw with young artists in Imani, these relationships began in art school as artists developed friendships and trust over time. In this way, art school is not only a place where one learns art, but also where one begins building professional networks, which are essential to their livelihoods and future possibilities.

Based on their experiences in school, these artists still value working alongside each other so they can continue to learn. All of the artists in this group named each other as a source of local inspiration. They visit each other's stalls as their schedules allow and share information about upcoming exhibitions, events and fluctuations in the market, and give each other advice and encouragement. When it is not possible to visit in person, they share SMS and Facebook© messages to stay connected.

In 2012, Kevin attempted to formalize these connections through the Kenya National Visual Artists Association, an initiative sponsored by the European Union to register all Kenyan artists. Kevin serves as the Nyanza representative and the deputy treasurer of the national office. He brought papers to Imani to register all the current students and visited all the graduates in town to ensure everyone registered. Here he explains his hopes for what such an organization might help artists achieve:

This should connect artists and help us champion for courses as a unit, other than going for an opportunity as an individual. There's no art gallery in Kisumu, these are things that I might go as an individual and address it but it may not have the impact that it would have if we went there as a team under some umbrella that has a national office as well. Then we go there and talk to them and tell them that we have the national office but we are the local chapter so this is what we want you to help us address. We have no galleries and we need that as soon as yesterday because with the coming of the counties and the expansion of the Kisumu Airport to international status, the tourists who are our potential clients will be landing here directly. So we need somewhere where the artists can be found. You come to the airport, you ask where to find artists, and maybe where you can buy artworks as souvenirs when you're going back home, you are brought to a hub where all artists are under one roof. So if we have a united front, then these are things I believe we can go for and get. So that strong voice that comes with a united team is a major focus that the network should be addressing.

Here Kevin attempts to leverage the community of practice so that artists can advocate collectively rather than individually. The artists use the community as a tactic. They take advantage of partnership possibilities that appear and use these partnerships to "make do" in the market. Kevin hopes that making this community official with government recognition would transform it to a strategy with the power to build up advantages beyond daily survival. Although many Kisumu artists registered, when I returned in 2013, they had yet to see any benefits from joining the network.

In part it is difficult to organize artists because of the unpredictable and tactical nature of their work. Artists hesitate to close their shops to attend a meeting because they are never sure if

they will miss a client who will purchase several pieces. According to Kevin, “when you want to get somebody to sit for some minutes and discuss future issues, then people tend to feel like they’re wasting their time other than producing and selling such that they get their daily bread.” This also limits their ability and willingness to connect with other artists and visit each other’s workspaces. As James explains, “Sometimes I do decide to visit them to see what they’re doing, but it’s rare. Most of us don’t do that because you’ll find that we are glued to our jobs.” As we have seen, this includes jobs outside of the informal market. For example, Ben feels he must balance spending time with the teachers from his school as well as with artists. Just as these artists have different sources of employment, they also belong to different networks, artistic, social, religious, and familial, that make demands on their time and resources.

Their work as artists is tactical in that it depends on seizing opportunities that pass by. As de Certeau illustrates, the artists are not able to create these opportunities for themselves. They must constantly be on the watch for opportunities and possibilities that they can seize on to make a living. Closing the stall to attend a meeting also closes off these opportunities and these artists cannot afford to miss a chance at making a sale.

Yet, these artists still value opportunities to learn from other artists and to connect. Increasingly, they seek these opportunities online through their phones, allowing them to connect without leaving their shops. All of the artists have Facebook© accounts that they use to display their work and connect with other artists and organizations, including two prominent galleries in Nairobi (GoDown and Kuona Trust) and the Kenya National Museum. Through these connections, they view each other’s work and also learn about exhibitions and events. Kisumu artists are also exposed to the work of other upcoming artists at exhibitions in Kisumu and Nairobi. Additionally, they purchase art books (including books on history, theory, technique,

and biographies of specific artists) to continue their learning. Tom has amassed a small library in his home of around 100 books. He also obtained the art syllabus from Kenyatta University and follows it on his own. He reserves Fridays in his stall for reading and improving his knowledge of technique and theory.

Market Constraints

Although partnering and working as a community help, artists still face significant challenges in owning and maintaining their stalls and selling their art. Markets in Kisumu are governed by the municipal city council that controls the places and the daily taxes artists must pay. The stalls described above are informal structures that the artists build themselves. Although they pay rent, the municipal government can decide to demolish the stalls anytime, the artists do not own the land, and have limited knowledge of their rights. As mentioned above, the artists in Maasai Market have been moved three times. Tom and James currently have a notice from the city council to move their stall:

We have a notice to move from that place. They say the road is small, and they want to widen it a bit. In fact all the hotels, everything they have to be demolished. And they don't tell you where to go. It's up to you. They don't care about the money you've spent. And they come at night too to destroy, they don't come in daytime because they know they'll have that opposition and people will not allow that. So they always use police and they come at night with those big tractors so you wake up early in the morning and you find that all the stalls are flat. Plus everything inside there is just destroyed. So you have to start from afresh, that's why you see some people go mad.

In addition to monthly rent for the space and storage, the artists also have to pay a daily tax to the municipal government of 30 shillings. If they do not pay, the tax collectors take one of their

paintings as payment. Tom tried to buy a license for the stall at 4,500 shillings per year. He was denied and claimed the government makes more money from the daily tax than selling a license.

The market is a place, in de Certeau's sense, in that municipal officials control it. They determine who can stay, how much they will pay, how long they can stay, and where the stalls can be. Compared to Imani, the constraints of the market are much more confining. Rather than a place that sometimes plays as a space, the market and officials exercise power over the artists making it more difficult to find cracks of opportunity within these places. Municipal officers collect tax everyday, regardless of the circumstances of the artists. Unlike in Imani where students can negotiate with Steven, artists have to learn new ways of making do inside the structure of the market.

More recent graduates find this transition especially challenging. Thomas explains the difficulty he had in paying daily tax:

When we are here in the field, we have some municipal council who collect tax, 30 bob every day, 30 shillings. They are actually harsh. They come, and they don't care if even you try to explain to them that today the market was bad. They cannot understand. They just take the money and go because they are municipal people. They can demolish this stall if they want. They can take all these things down if they like. They can do it while I'm watching. So you need to respect the municipal council because if you fail to pay them, they will go and report you.

Recall that in Imani, students often negotiate absences with Steven and explain their circumstances (sometimes true, sometimes exaggerated) to pursue other opportunities and stay in school. Thomas has not yet fully learned the tactics of the market and was forced to close his stall since he could not make enough money through sales to pay this daily tax.

Older artists have learned and developed tactics to help them navigate these constraints. As we have seen, partnering allows them to share costs and profits. Artists also have to learn how to manage money through bank accounts and other means such as *M-Pesa*, a mobile-phone based money transfer system. While in school, very few students have bank accounts. The hustling they engage in allows them to live “from hand to mouth” but not to create savings. As artists have more success in the market, they learn to open accounts that allow them to budget their money and prepare for slow seasons. Sometimes clients require artists to open bank accounts in order to pay them. For example, as James noted, his first job was through the Lutheran church and they paid him by check.

When it came to the time of payment, they said, “We are not giving cash. We give checks.” That was another headache. With a check you must have an account. So I said, “Wow, what is this?” An idea just came to my mind, let me just open an account. And then I went to my friend and asked him, “What's the process of opening an account?” He told me, “Go to Cooperative, you take the forms, and you fill the forms, and after that you have your account number.” I did that. Then they wrote me the check, they presented it to the bank, and then I was rich with 11,000 shillings! So, I remember opening of the bank account really helped me a lot because I wanted to see more money in my account. So, the little I get from doing other things, I could even take 100 shillings to the account. I remember taking just 100, queuing, waiting to pay only 100. I was not afraid of that.

As James’s story demonstrates, these artists had to learn to interact with clients (especially international clients) and to manage money. Through these early opportunities and experiences, they learned how to interact in the market and built their reputations and businesses. They were not prepared to handle these business skills in art school, and so initially they

struggled with how to set their prices, negotiate, and understand the market. As Victor explains, “We graduated from Imani, but we never learned how to deal with money. It was very challenging for us the first time. We never knew the pricing well, we never knew how to handle customers so it was a bit challenging.” Eventually through experience and interacting with other artists, these artists learned the entrepreneurship skills they needed to operate their stalls.

These skills include understanding the importance of saving, planning for the seasonal fluctuations of the market, and combining their work as fine artists with other arts-related activities. Tom explains how he learned the importance of saving:

Life has taught me the importance of saving. So the little you get, you balance it 50, you keep 50 because you never know what tomorrow will be. Art is seasonal, we have the peaks and the lower seasons so when the sales are very good, having a bank account helps. You can store something and use later.

In addition to seasonal fluctuations, artists also have to maintain a stock of expensive materials to continue creating their paintings. James explains how he budgets for this:

The first thing, I have to look at are the materials because if I don't have materials, then I will not have another job. So my material has to be there. The rent is another thing. I have to maybe pay for two months or three months. If I do that, now I know at least if I don't sell within the two months, I'm sure I'll get another job to do. That's how I've been surviving and I'm really happy about it.

Opening bank accounts and creating savings help artists make do in these market places; however, they have also learned that it is not possible to earn a living from fine art alone and the savings disappear quickly. As Ben explains

Most of the money we use for buying the materials again and our food, clothing, transportation back and forth to the house and at times we get to do a bit of development. We can buy some iron sheet and build at home and we pay school fees from the money. But it's very difficult to save, because even if you save, when it's a low peak, then you have to use the money you saved.

Just as art students pursue multiple opportunities to support themselves at Imani, graduates also take on more than selling their artwork in these stalls to support themselves and their families. Recall from the last chapter how students develop a flexible sense of artistic identity as they learn skills such as visual art and music, weaving, and acting. What happens to working artists' sense of identity as they pursue economic opportunities in the field?

Tactics and Identity

As we have seen, when students first transition into the market, they often take on jobs such as painting murals and working for church organizations. As Ben notes, "We started by doing murals, sign boards." This type of work contributes to the perception expressed by students' families in the interlude, that artists as sign writers who are not well respected as professionals. As they advance in their careers, artists are less willing to take on these types of jobs that devalue their skill and reputation. Although they see the need of taking on these positions to help them pay their bills and support their families, this raises tensions. Artists have to negotiate supporting themselves and their families without ruining their reputation as fine artists or having this other work take up so much time that they no longer have time to devote to their own art.

Artists combine work in areas both inside and outside of art and in informal and formal spaces. As mentioned above, Ben teaches fine art in a private school in Kisumu. James is a

landlord. He used the profits from selling his paintings abroad to build his own home in Kisii, which he rents out to a group of students. Kevin invested profits from his art in the purchase of a costly millet machine⁶² for grinding eggshells and groundnuts to make peanut butter, which he then packages and sells. These jobs are more adult, professional, stable, and earn artists better incomes than engaging in the casual labor available to youth. However, the artists still see more value in their fine art and would rather be able to do art full time. When I asked Ben if he liked teaching, he responded, “Not so much. It’s a bit hectic, there’s a lot of work there, especially with the young kids.” Another Imani graduate left teaching because he found he did not have time to paint.

Victor and Tom work in their respective stalls full time. However, they also do other arts-related work aside from their paintings. Victor started hand-painting shoes at the suggestion of the U.S. Peace Corps volunteer. Tom was hired by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission⁶³ (IEBC) to create watercolor paintings that promote peace. They paid him KSh 2,000 for each painting; then they scan the paintings to create posters that they place around Kisumu. Tom referred to this work as “chapati money,” and described the art as “childlike” because to him it was more like a child coloring in a coloring book than an artist composing a painting on canvas.

⁶² He paid 75,000 Ksh

⁶³ Charged with ensuring free and fair elections in Kenya



Figure 6.1: Violence



Figure 6.2: Peaceful discussion

This type of work allows him to earn some extra money to sustain him, but Tom does not take as much pride in this work as he does in his paintings. Tom and Kevin, who both had moderate success as artists before joining art school, were both careful to distinguish the kind of art they did prior to Imani from the kind of art they do now. Tom referred to his earlier work as “naive art” which he defines as “art without the formal skills taught in college, just art for its own sake.” Kevin qualified his early work as art from “inborn talent” compared with the fine art he produces now as a result of skills and training.

Official recognition as professionals becomes increasingly important to these artists as they move from youth to adults. Ben and Victor both mentioned the limitations of having an internal diploma from Imani. Although they appreciated the skills and training they received, having a diploma that is not officially recognized by the government limits their opportunities and legitimacy. Ben explained: “If possible, the government should have recognition for it so that the certificate is recognized in the country. We get a lot of knowledge from there but when you present the certificate, no one knows about the school.” Victor agreed: “They have to make it [the diploma] really recognized. The government doesn’t recognize it, so it doesn’t help.”

In sum, the seasonal nature of the market, the expense of materials and maintenance of spaces, and the threat of losing their stalls keep these artists' lives uncertain, making it difficult for them to maintain savings that would allow them both to focus on their art full time and have sufficient funds to support themselves.

These artists use tactics to help them navigate the constraints of the market. However, because they are tactics, there is no place to build up their advantages. When artists make a good sale, they can put money into a bank account for savings; however, those savings quickly disappear when the market is slow. Artists can team up to have enough money to pay daily tax, yet that investment does not lead to any advantage since they do not own the place and it can be demolished at any time. Artists depend on taking advantage of opportunity. As these stories show, these artists were able to seize possibilities (James getting his start from the Lutheran Church, Fr. Bart assisting Victor and Ben, Michael working at the art gallery) but could not create them for themselves. These artists are not only the renters of their own stalls but also “the renters and not the owners of their own know-how” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 71). Based on the cultural values expressed in the interlude and in national and education policies, the knowledge these artists possess has limited perceived value and is dismissed as “playing around,” “wasting time,” and “just a hobby.” Engaging in these tactics allows artists to exert a measure of creativity into their daily lives; however this agency lacks the power to overthrow the economic and cultural constraints of the systems in which these artists are embedded.

Only time will tell whether or not Thomas, Simon, Johnson, and Michael will become the new generation of working artists in Kisumu. Of the approximately 150 graduates of Imani, only seven have opened and continue to operate art stalls in town. As we have seen, the life of an

artist in the market is hard, and though tactics help, there is still no permanent, legitimate place for artists in the community.

Chapter Seven

Art of the Everyday

The performance space of the artist stands for openness; that of the state, for confinement. Art breaks down barriers between peoples; the state erects them. Art arose out of the human struggle to break free from confinement. These confinements could be natural. But they can also be economic, political, social, and spiritual. Art yearns for a maximum of physical, social, and spiritual space for human action. The state tries to demarcate, limit, and control. – Ngugi wa Thiong’o

I do hope that I will live to see that we have a place where artists can work together here in Kisumu with no restrictions, yeah, no restrictions. – Victor Omondi, 1999 Imani graduate

Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition, disease and political instability, African cultural productivity grows apace: popular literatures, oral narrative and poetry, dance, drama, music and visual art all thrive. – Kwame Anthony Appiah

In the run up to the March 2013 presidential elections, anonymous graffiti artists in Nairobi spray-painted their political critiques on walls in highly visible, public places. One of the most striking examples was spray-painted on a crumbling wall on Muindi Mbingu Street near the City Market in Nairobi’s Central Business District (see Figure 1). A Kenyan politician, depicted as a vulture, sits on a throne atop a Kenyan woman’s back next to a sign reading “MPs⁶⁴ screwing Kenyans since 1963.” On the left, the artists listed their accusations against the government, including land grabbing, political assassinations, tribal clashes, the Wagalla massacre⁶⁵, Goldenberg⁶⁶, drug dealing, post-election violence, Kazi Kwa Vijana⁶⁷, famine, tax evasion, and the like. On the right, artists listed the qualities they want in their leaders: visionary, patriotic, intelligent, honest, competent, courageous, dedicated to serve, noncorrupt. A month

⁶⁴ Members of Parliament.

⁶⁵ A 1984 massacre of ethnic Somalis by Kenyan security forces.

⁶⁶ A political scandal – Kenyan government subsidized exports of gold by paying Goldenberg International 35% more than their foreign currency earnings. Reportedly cost Kenya more than 10% of its annual GDP. High ranking officials under Moi and Kibaki were implicated.

⁶⁷ In 2011, a World Bank review of the project found misappropriation and mismanagement of funds, unaccounted for funds, and improper procedures.

later, the painting and the wall were gone. This painting lasted longer than most. Another graffiti protest painting (by the same group) on the wall of public toilets on Koinange Street on the way to Parliament lasted only 10 hours. The City Council ordered workers to repaint the wall blue (NTV Kenya, March 20, 2013).



Figure 7.1 Graffiti art

This was not the first government censorship of artistic expression and protest. Kenya has a strong history of art as protest, particularly in the work of celebrated author Ngugi wa Thiong'o. On October 2, 1977 Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the community of Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre performed the play *Naahika Ndenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* in Gikuyu, representing "the first meaningful challenge to imperialist cultural domination in Kenya" (Ndigirigi, 1999, p. 72). Despite several successful performances, the Kenyan government banned further performances on November 16, 1977, Ngugi was arrested on December 31, 1977, and the open-air theatre was destroyed on March 12, 1982 (Ngugi, 1986, pp. 57-59). Artist Wanja Kimani (2010) argues "the Kenyan government today, recapitulating the role of the British in the colonial era, is the prime violator of freedoms in Kenya" (p. 253). Kimani goes on to cite a number of unsolved murderers of human rights activists and poets.

Artists are clearly in a tactical rather than a strategic position. The strategic power of the state has ensured that the protests are short-lived and the artists swiftly punished. Artists have difficulty building up any advantages since both the art and the spaces it opened up are destroyed.

Despite these forms of repression and the economic constraints discussed in the previous chapter, art persists and even thrives. But as Barber (1997) argues, forms of popular, everyday art have often been obscured by a scholarly focus on art forms that are either “traditional” or “elite” (p. 1). I would add to these binary categories scholarship that focuses on art as activism. Of particular interest here is in the everyday art that the young artists from Imani produce for local and global markets and for themselves. These forms of art, while not examples of outright activism, “are about things that matter to people...[that] talk about matters of deep interest and concern to the people who produce and consume them” (Barber, 1997, p. 2).

In this chapter I argue that the constraints artists face in the market and the tactics they develop to operate within them influence the aesthetic of cultural production. As de Certeau (1984) claims, these constraints are “the equivalent of the rules of meter and rhyme for poets of earlier times: a body of constraints stimulating new discoveries, a set of rules with which improvisation plays” (p. xxii). Artists work within these constraints and make new discoveries of materials and forms of art. However, ultimately they cannot escape the constraints, remaining dependent on seizing rather than creating opportunity. Nor can they keep the temporary advantages they win.

I begin by describing how artists use “makeshift creativity” to produce art. Because they cannot afford expensive art materials, artists improvise as they experiment with new and used materials. Next I focus on the local and international market for art in Kisumu. Artists cannot

control the market, but they learn to read it so as to seize opportunities. This includes an understanding of local and global markets, tastes, and actors. Tactics allow them to manoeuvre within while not overthrowing these market constraints. Finally, I analyze the art these artists make for themselves, the everyday art of their daily lives and experiences.

Bricolage

As we have seen, artists “make do” in figurative ways. They use tactics to respond to national, international, and local discourses that position them as problems and solutions; to operate within economic, political, and social constraints; to make their way through art school and transition into work; and to construct an identity as artists. Here, artists literally “make do” to produce art with limited resources. Researching workers in *Jua Kali*, scholars have recognized resourcefulness, ingenuity, and confidence required for workers to produce goods, often from limited resources, to sell. King (1996), researching workers in Nairobi, calls this “technological confidence” defined as “a kind of ‘can-do’ attitude to be found in several of the more innovative entrepreneurs...an attitude of mind that was ready to figure out how something could be made” (p. xvi). Drawing on de Certeau, Swigert-Gacheru (2011) – also researching artists in Nairobi -- calls this ability “jua kali ingenuity” defined as “the way artists, living on a shoestring, use their imagination to create works of art that display their originality, adaptability, resourcefulness and improvisational style of ‘makeshift creativity’” (p. 129).

de Certeau describes this way of making do as *bricolage*: “The ‘everyday’ arts no more ‘form’ a new product than they have their own language. They ‘make do’ (*bricolent*)” (p. 66). The young artists of Kisumu - like their counterparts in Nairobi, other jua kali workers, and de Certeau’s consumers – use “scraps” of products originally designed for other purposes to make art.

As we saw in the last chapter, artists in Kisumu face significant economic constraints and must keep a stock of expensive materials. Canvas and acrylic paints are difficult to find and are expensive in Kisumu. Nairobi has more options, but not many artists can afford the time or expense of a seven hour bus ride. One tactic artists develop to deal with these financial constraints is to find cheap (or even free) materials to use. Thomas explains how he uses bed sheets instead of canvas: “Materials are expensive, especially canvas. I just buy one bed sheet, because we are not able to get the original canvas.” Artists bargain for second-hand bed sheets in large, open-air markets like Kibuye. They look for heavy material -- bed sheets or sometimes curtains -- prime the material to make it strong, and then use it as canvas. Some have experimented with different textures and designs of sheets and use them as part of the painting itself. Note for example this piece of Michael’s where he has painted over batik fabric and Victor’s where he has used a blue sheet and allows the color to come out in the painting (see Figure 7.2):



Figure 7.2 Paintings incorporating canvas

Paints are also expensive, so artists buy small tubes from vendors in jua kali. These paints are typically coke bottles or alcohol bottles filled with emulsion paint that people would use to

paint walls. Artists can buy these tubes for around KSh 100 versus buying a can of emulsion paint from a hardware shop at Ksh 600 (pictured below in Figure 7.3 on the left). At Imani, artists learned how to mix colors, so they only buy primary colors, white, and black, and create the rest of the colors they need. In the photo below, the artist washed out and repurposed a container that had wrapped meat from the store as a makeshift pallet.



Figure 7.3 Makeshift materials

Artists also use free materials, such as eggshells, scraps from tailors, and old CDs that might otherwise be discarded. Kevin explains how and why he first started to use eggshells in his art:

Where we are in Kisumu, you realize that for us to acquire the artist material, you have to source from Nairobi. That will involve the transport and the art materials are also not so cheap; they are expensive, especially when you are going for quality material. So, I tried my hands in eggshell mosaic production. I had to stretch some fabric material on plyboard, So, I had to extract this plyboard from my bed because I didn't have enough resources to do this. So I got a board from my bed, split it, and made my very first pieces.

Kevin has had success with this material and other artists have started to use this technique as well. Below is an example (see Figure 7.4). Kevin stretches black fabric over plywood, sketches the design with glue, and then applies the crushed eggshells over the glue:



Figure 7.4 Eggshell art

Kevin gets the eggshells from vendors who sell boiled eggs and from local restaurants that would otherwise throw them away. Victor has experimented with using old CDs and scraps of *kanga* from tailors to create mixed media pieces. These have also been quite successful and many local artists have emulated this style. Victor has also started to use excerpts from local newspapers in his art. He enjoys finding new uses for materials but also worries about the impact of copying. As he explains, “When I start to do it a lot [using newspapers in paintings], it will start to be like these, the Maasai and the cloth, so everybody sees it and then everybody does that.”



Figure 7.5 Art from found materials

The dresses of the Maasai women in Figure 7.5 are made from scraps of *kanga*. The tires of the bicycles are made from old CDs. Using materials such as eggshells, bed sheets, old CDs, and scraps of fabric save artists money, but they also add to the art's aesthetic. Many of the artists use these materials to add different textures and layers of meaning to the painting. For example, in the painting *Clothesline*, James painted a woman hanging laundry but also glued a piece of string to the canvas and painted over it. The string is still visible on the surface and creates new lines in the painting. In creating these pieces, Kisumu artists participate in a growing artistic movement in Kenya of “junk art,” scavenging for materials that others discard. This is also referred to as recycled art or making art from found objects. These materials allow artists to experiment with new designs and try to invent new uses and styles to avoid copying each other. These artists also paint on found objects such as old jeans and pairs of shoes. Such styles are increasingly popular with tourists given the rise of eco-tourism and fair trade movements. Kevin capitalizes on this calling his art “waste recycling for artistic production” and “eco-art production.” Artists are constantly on the watch for new materials and novel uses of old materials.



Figure. 7.6 Clothesline

Despite the recognition of scholars (Swigert-Gacheru, 2011; King, 1996), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the International Labour Office (ILO), and the Kenyan government, this kind of skill and inventiveness is often referred to as “talent” or “ingenuity,” but not as knowledge. As we have seen, in Kenya, art is generally perceived as a technical, vocational skill requiring little education and lacking in prestige. Artists are assumed to be sign writers rather than professionals who studied art theory, technical skills, or abstract knowledge. Even in Levi-Strauss’s original definition, a *bricoleur* is “someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man” (pp. 16-17). For Levi-Strauss, the *bricoleur* is inferior to a scientist or an artist, as devious and pragmatic.

de Certeau describes this skill as “know how” and the historical process that separated knowledge from people who made products by hand so machines could perfect them. As he

argues, workers “bear witness to it without being able to appropriate it” (p. 71). The “know how” often belongs to the interpreter rather than the artist. Thus, jua kali artists and their work are dismissed as “just playing” and “wasting time” rather than engaging in cultural production that has economic, social, and political value.

Market Tactics

In *African Art and the Colonial Encounter*, Kasfir (2007) distinguishes among different types of tourists who buy African art as souvenirs. Kasfir argues that these consumers do not just represent different classes and thus different tastes, but also have contrasting levels of educational capital, travel experience, and ideas “about what counts as an authentic representation of their encounters with alien cultural landscapes” (p. 269). Within Kenya, Kasfir classifies tourists into three types: wildlife safari tourists “earnest and educated seekers of species”; Swahili Coast tourists “who buy inclusive packages to the beach hotels”, and student backpackers “traveling alone or in the Saharan overlander trucks, never on the package tours their parents might take” (p. 269). These tourists look for souvenirs that reflect their experiences and values. As such, their souvenirs have private and public meaning. For the individual, the souvenir is “an object of memory” (p. 275), private and individual, a keepsake to remember a particular experience. But souvenirs also have social meaning, “something that affirms and legitimates the memory for other viewers as well as for its collector” (p. 276).

I propose yet another subcategory of tourist: the volunteer tourist, common in Kisumu. These tourists represent a subcategory rather than a completely separate one since they often go on safari, visit the coast, or both after their service/volunteerism is complete. I argue these tourists look for souvenirs that legitimize their engagement and experience as volunteers, that represent Kenya as a place in need of the Western assistance they came to provide. They look for

art that speaks to the issues they have worked on as volunteers (corruption, poverty, HIV/AIDS, etc.) in settings such as hospitals and schools. This impacts the art produced and sold in Kisumu, as well as the relationships artists sometimes develop with these volunteer tourists who promote, but also then control, artists' work.

Tourism is big business in Kenya, accounting for about ten percent of GDP. Tourists are drawn to national parks such as Amboseli and Hell's Gate; national reserves such as Maasai Mara; cities like Nairobi; and the coastal city of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean. Despite its location on the shores of Lake Victoria and small parks such as Impala Park and Ndere Island National Park, Kisumu does not attract many tourists. However, Kisumu has high rates of poverty, over half of the residents live in informal settlements, and about 15% of the population lives with HIV/AIDS, more than double the national rate of 6.1% (Maoulidi, 2008, p. 44). Thus Kisumu has many volunteers and aid workers such as U.S. Peace Corps volunteers, Tenteleni volunteers (a volunteer organization in the UK that sends students to Kisumu every year), students, and religious/missionary related groups.

Many volunteers have stayed on the compound of Imani art school, as described in chapter four. During my two stays at the centre, I encountered various volunteers, including two different Tenteleni groups from the UK, and four students from the Netherlands. These volunteers typically stayed between three and six months and worked in various projects operated by the Kisumu Community Project, including the non-formal school, with street children, and in the health clinic. Imani art students often interacted with these volunteers since they lived within the same compound. Some volunteered to model for figure drawing classes on Fridays and, through these interactions, art students learned what the volunteers came to do and how they perceived Nyalenda.

Thus, artists at Imani and graduates working in town interact with these tourists and learn what themes and issues they care about. Victor, whose stall is at Maasai Market and gets the most tourist traffic, meets many volunteers and aid workers. Maasai Market is directly across from the Kisumu Museum and tourist buses often stop. Additionally, the children's remand home (a juvenile detention center) is on the opposite side of the market, so many volunteers who work there walk through the market. Victor describes the volunteers he typically meets:

The people who come here are mostly the volunteers and then we have *wazungus*⁶⁸ who do stay here, some are working like doctors, some have projects, but those who are staying are those guys who are in charge of that project. So they stay for quite a long time.

Artists have started to paint social issue pieces that express their feelings about the problems in their society and appeal to these volunteer tourists. Consider Figure 7.7:



Figure 7.7 Social issues in hospitals and schools

James's painting (left, above) depicts people waiting in a long line in front of a hospital above a sign that reads "Corruption Free Zone." He explains the painting and the client who bought it:

⁶⁸ White people/English speaking people.

I had this painting of corruption free zone. It's a painting with the patients sitting at the hospital. That's not the first one. I did the first one and people really liked it and it was bought. This is the second one. There's many, I really like doing that one of free corruption zone, the hospital one. The man who bought it was not an African, he was a guy from I think USA, but he's working with hospital things here in Kenya so he was like, "Wow, you have depicted what I like." So, he bought it.

I visited James's stall with a man from the Netherlands who had lived in Kisumu for a year. He had been working on various projects within the Kisumu Community Project and wanted to buy a painting. He also chose this corruption free zone piece and wanted it to spark conversations with people back in the Netherlands who would see it hanging in his house.

The second piece, also by James, shows a group of children in front of a school with "Free Primary Education" written on the wall. Tom, who painted a similar piece, explains this message. "They say education is free. If you look at the classroom, it is dilapidated, children sit on stones, the environment is not conducive to learning and they claim education is free." Volunteers working in Kisumu are attracted to these themes that legitimize their experiences. It is a symbol and reminder of their work on issues of poverty and corruption.

Artists are also commissioned by organizations to create art for various causes. Sometimes artists call this "NGO art." Kevin has done a series of these paintings, including paintings about gender equity, child abuse, and family harmony. Two Imani students attended a Rotary event sponsored by USAID, entering some of their paintings for exhibition. They were told to paint about youth issues. Patrick Mukabi, one of the most successful artists in Nairobi, also got his start by painting a piece on HIV/AIDS:

They said there's a show coming up; at that time they were doing AIDS education and family planning control. They had discovered that when they asked people to paint about AIDS, they used to do very horrifying pictures, which did not serve the purpose. Nobody looked at them for more than two seconds. And I had done a piece, which talked about AIDS, but you couldn't see anything about AIDS. There was a coffin, but it was almost covered completely with a lady on it, lying on it. And she was in like very nice bright clothes. So only after some times you could notice the corner there, "Eh! She's lying on top of a coffin." So they took that piece for the show.

Artists take advantage of these opportunities to paint pieces that will sell to international tourists and organizations. This determines the theme, but artists still use their own styles to create unique pieces, as Mukabi describes above. Mukabi is known for his depictions of Kenyan women in bright clothes, so he creates a piece in keeping with that style and adds the coffin to make it fit the theme.

This style of art differs from the art found in areas that have higher numbers of safari tourists or coastal tourists. For example, when I visited Mombasa, it was common to see paintings lined up along the beach:



Figure 7.8 Mombasa art

These paintings commonly depict Maasai figures, still considered to be the most authentic or “exotic” example of ethnicity in Kenya, animals, and orange sunrises or sunsets. The Kisumu artists refer to this style of art as *kete kete*, or “sticky, sticky” art. They try to avoid painting in this style to demonstrate that they have training in fine art. This type of painting also legitimizes a different kind of experience: those of coastal tourists, who as Kasfir suggests “are usually there for a tan and in some cases a possible sexual adventure, as if they were at a Caribbean Club Med instead of in Africa, surrounded by the archaeological ruins of Swahili Coast Culture” (p. 269). Volunteer tourists, who stay for longer periods of time and work on various issues, want to show they went to Kenya to do more than tour; they came to help.

Since they stay in Kisumu for longer blocks of time, some artists have also developed relationships with volunteer tourists. We saw examples of this in the last chapter. A U.S. Peace Corps volunteer commissioned several paintings from Victor, Ben, Tom, and James and created a group called 4 Creative Strokes Arts. While still in Kenya, this volunteer encouraged Victor to start painting shoes to sell to clients and hired the four artists to paint stamps for breast cancer

awareness. Since leaving Kenya, she has exhibited the work of the artists around the U.S. and opened Facebook[®] and Etsy[®] accounts to sell their work online.

Michael met Anne, a retired woman from the Netherlands, through one of his band members. Anne decided to use the open area around her compound to exhibit paintings and called it the Kisumu Arts Gallery. Michael was in charge of visual art; he displayed his own pieces and convinced other artists to exhibit their work as well. Anne did not pay Michael directly, but did supply him with materials such as canvas and paint and allowed him to store his things and sleep in a room in her house when he needed a place to stay. Michael lives in Manyatta, about a 40-minute bicycle ride. In 2012, Michael was walking home at night and was robbed and beaten by a group of men. They took his money, phone, cut his ear, and left him bleeding. Since then, Michael has been cautious about walking at night. When he worked late, he would stay there or with friends in Nyalenda, rather than traveling back home at night.

Although these relationships expose artists to international markets they might not otherwise access, they do place artists in a dependent relationship. Swigert-Gacheru (2011) refers to these relationships as “donor dependency” and argues that, “instead of acting out a sense of agency, they wait until they get told what to do by the donor, and then become a mouthpiece for that point of view” (p. 139). Swigert-Gacheru critiques these artists for being dependent rather than self-reliant. These relationships do place artists in a vulnerable position since they are in a tactical rather than a strategic position. They depend on the place (the physical place of Anne’s compound and on the online marketplaces) of those with power to sell their art. They do not control how their work is displayed, priced, marketed, or sold. They give their paintings to volunteers to take abroad in the hopes they will be sold and have no way to build up their own advantages. In Michael’s case, Anne recently moved from Kisumu to Kitale, about 100 miles

north of Kisumu. Michael lost his place to display, access to materials, and a place to sleep and store materials. Yet, many of these artists do maintain active online presences, mainly through Facebook©. Though they usually do not sell through these sites, they do post pictures of their work and tag international friends (including me) to get their photos seen by people outside of Kisumu.

These constraints and dependencies are not unique to international relationships; they exist in local contexts as well. Unlike international clients, local art customers typically buy art that is framed behind glass (rather than on canvas) and, increasingly, commission artists to make portraits of friends or family members. James explains the differences he sees between international and local clients and how he accommodates both:

I haven't sold any piece to an African, as in, big as in canvas, but they like paintings, which are on a glass, and mostly they prefer prints. So, I can make a nice painting, big one, then from there I take a photo, then I print it, then I reproduce it in small sizes then I put them in glass, as in frame it. That one I sell to Africans. They like that one. Nowadays Africans have started appreciating art. They take art as a present to their friends, so we have a lot of sales.

Many artists report that local clients want art at lower prices, so they sell prints of their canvas pieces rather than the paintings themselves. Additionally, artists have started painting portraits, particularly of couples, as wedding presents. This preference for portraits makes sense given the style of most homes in Kisumu. When visiting homes, it is rare to see pieces of art. Typically families display photos of family members including wedding pictures, graduations, and even certificates such as marriage certificates. Rather than souvenirs, these paintings

represent family relationships and the authenticity comes from the artist's ability to accurately capture the person's likeness and the couple's connection.

In terms of exhibitions, Kisumu artists often depend on local organizations such as the Lake Basin Group to coordinate transportation of their paintings to Nairobi and the display and sale of the paintings. The chairman of the group works at the Nairobi Museum. This group usually organizes two exhibitions in Nairobi for the Kisumu-based artists, usually at Nairobi Museum or the village market. Several artists have sold through these exhibitions and appreciate the opportunity to have their work exhibited in Nairobi, where sales are generally higher and more people appreciate and buy art.

However, Kisumu artists give up control in this situation as well. As Victor explains:

The Lake Basin group okay, it's a good one, but I think in making those big decisions they need to bring artists together. Because they say, "We are having an exhibition in Nairobi, bring your paintings." I personally don't think it's right, because every now and then we have to give them paintings; sometimes they stay with the paintings for a long time. So I think it's a good initiative, but the layouts were not really planned well, especially the decision-making structure. I have some of my paintings over there, but when I want to go and take them it's like, "No, no just hold them I'm going to sell some for you." So you don't want to be left like you're the only one who wants his paintings to be brought back because everybody has paintings.

The last time the Lake Basin Group organized an exhibition, they kept the paintings for two years before returning them to the artists. Additionally, several paintings were damaged in transit. Artists have also complained that when their work is displayed, particularly in the

museum, there is no representative to explain the work or negotiate price. Again, artists have limited control over the display, marketing, and sale of their own work.

Everyday Art

Within these constraints and despite their inability to build up advantages, artists continue to make art. The art they make for themselves and value most is the art that reflects their everyday lives and experiences. For these artists, art is about more than earning a living. It is a form of expression, a means of becoming, and a way to find meaning in their lives. As Tom explains:

I do art to express myself, that's the main reason why I do art. I do art to express myself. The aesthetic value of it comes later. If somebody's impressed by what I've done, let him buy. But currently, I don't spend so much time knowing which kind of art sells, which one doesn't. Because in a way, that's my own perspective, I feel, if I know what sells, I'll always be tempted to do that a lot. And that is a wrong direction for an artist. We should do art. Art can be done even for posterity, not necessarily to be sold. In as much as we would want to get something to sustain ourselves, we must also do art to express ourselves.

Many of the artists I interviewed expressed similar sentiments. They felt that if they paid too much attention to which art sells, they would just copy pieces rather than create art. Copying is widespread, particularly in areas that have high tourist traffic. Driving along the road to national parks or walking along the coast in Mombasa, it looks as though a single artist produced every painting since they are so similar in style and subject matter.

As we have seen, artists in Kisumu do create pieces that cater to tourists and to local clients. However, the art they make for themselves and the art they most value is the art of the everyday. Tom explains what inspires him as an artist:

My art is inspired by my everyday happenings in my surrounding. I like painting women. Women are artistic even in their structure; that is one. And then their clothes are kind of artistic, like an African woman washing plates in front of a slum with a *kanga* around her waist. Picture that. That is very good art. So I love doing artworks around women and my themes are day-to-day happenings in my society.

Women at work are commonly portrayed in paintings in Kisumu. While at Imani, students would do field work assignments. Steven instructed them to go sit in a location in Nyalenda, close to the school, and observe and draw what they see. Commonly these scenes involved women: washing clothes, plates, hanging clothes, sweeping. Many of these artists also have close relationships with women in their lives; several were raised by single mothers or grandmothers and frequently express their gratitude to these women for raising them. Below are some examples of art featuring women working:



Figure 7.9 Women at work

Though the themes are common, the styles vary. It is clear that each piece was painted by a different artist. These paintings depict women washing, carrying water, and selling fish and vegetables – common activities for women in Kisumu. The artists find and express beauty in these everyday activities. And express the communal and social nature of this work involving groups of women rather than working as individuals.

Given their proximity to Lake Victoria and the importance of fishing to the local economy, many Kisumu artists also paint images of the lake. In these paintings, men are typically portrayed as fishermen while women sell the fish. Again starting in art school, artists have done fieldwork by the lake and continue to visit the lake to sketch and get inspiration. Artists have a strong identification with the lake evident in the names of various art organizations, for example *Ziwa Arts* (*ziwa* means art in Swahili) and the Lake Basin Art Group.



Figure 7.10 Lake scenes

Finally, artists do work that helps them express their own feelings for private, rather than public, display. Every artist I interviewed had at least one painting that they kept at home and did not want to sell. They kept these paintings for different purposes. Some kept their very first painting to remember how they started. Others kept a painting that brought them success. For example, Victor kept the painting that was featured as the cover of the *Kenya 2013 Arts Diary*. Ben kept a painting he did after the post-election violence of 2007:

There's one that I did in watercolor. It's the only one that I have in my house. It has stayed for very long. It was a painting of Kisumu town during the post election violence. So the town was destroyed, things were flown everywhere, so I took a photo, then went to the house, sketched the photo, then painted it in watercolor. It's still there.

For these artists, art is not just about selling, though they certainly hope to earn a living and survive through their art. It is also about expressing themselves and finding beauty and meaning in their everyday lives and experiences. As de Certeau notes, tactics are not just about survival. They are about finding small escapes, moments of joy, and making a difficult world habitable. These artists face hard, uncertain circumstances. The state, NGOs, the municipal city council, and sometimes their own family members have imposed a set of rules and expectations

on them that make it very challenging to earn a living. As Kevin notes, “Art is what you do and enjoy. And especially if you’re doing it and you know that eventually it will sell and make you earn your living, then I think it will be very sweet. It will be sweeter than I find it now.” Making art allows these artists to find a temporary reprieve from these constraints that is not just about survival but about expression. These artists are not focused only on becoming self-reliant entrepreneurs but on becoming artists.

Chapter Eight

The Art of Being In Between

Practice any art, music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, fiction, essays, reportage, no matter how well or badly, not to get money and fame, but to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow. – Kurt Vonnegut

I'm telling youths, if they have something in the name of talent, let them use that talent. Look at yourself. Discover what kind of talent do you have in you? If it is to carry watermelons along the street, do it. If it is to paint, paint. If it is to sing, do it. Do it with passion. Even if there's no payment, just do it. People will see you, discover you, and know who you are. – Thomas Omolo, 2012 Imani graduate

When I returned to Kisumu in 2013, the Imani students had been asked to write a play in honor of Father Bart who was celebrating his 60-year jubilee as a priest. Because we had engaged in collaborative playwriting in the past, the students asked me to help them write a play that they would perform at the jubilee celebration. The play unfolds much as the story has here: A young man with talent but no financial resources for higher education loves to draw. He has a group of friends in the neighborhood who like to drink and gamble and tease him for drawing. He happens to meet an artist walking on the road one day and that artist directs him to Imani. He joins Imani, meets friends, learns art from Father Bart, Steven, and other students, and graduates. At the play's end, the young man has graduated and now searches for a place to sell his work. His final speech is composed of the ideas each art student expressed about what art means to them:

OTIENO: Art is hope

Imani gave me hope

Imani exists to nurture the talents of youth

To make artists

As the name suggests, it brings hope to artists like me

And that's why it's Imani...faith

We have talent; we were born with talent

Mwalimu Steven has really helped me.

He put the confidence in me that I can become an artist

Father Bart has done a lot by sharing and feeding out his wisdom and his experience of art.

He has inspired and developed many with the spirit of art in different approaches.

He is a mentor of many current and former students and has touched many others.

Here in this community art has really changed people.

We are helping each other through art.

You'll find art changing people.

Art is an expression.

Art is creativity,

Art is a talent,

Art is spiritual.

In a human being, there's a spiritual level, that's why we seek God.

The physical, that's why we seek love,

And the aesthetic, that's why we love art.

Art is my life,

And I must live it.

At the end of the play, Otieno has not achieved fortune and fame as an artist. He has not gone to Nairobi, Europe, or the U.S. to seek new opportunities. He stays in Nyalenda, and he has become an artist. Even in this fictional space where students could imagine any ending for this character

who represents them, the students supply the ending they want for themselves: to live by “just the brush.”

Like Otieno, these young art students are in between. They are neither children nor adults. They take on caregiving roles for their younger siblings, yet they have no real political power. They are held accountable for violent activities and charged with their own empowerment, yet they are positioned as vulnerable – needing protection from corrupt politicians, nefarious employers, and traditional elders who lure them down dangerous paths. These ideas are reinforced by media portrayals of youth as responsible for the development and future of the nation and as ticking time bombs wasting away in an alcoholic haze.

Growing up in Nyalenda, these young artists face several challenges. Their families live below the poverty line; they lack regular access to electricity, clean water, and passable roads. Of the 22 Imani students I interviewed, seven were not able to complete secondary school because of lack of resources for fees; three were orphans who were supported in school by KCP, Compassion International, and an elder brother; and ten had lost at least one parent. Five stayed alone and had to support themselves to pay rent and buy food. Students have friends outside of Imani who pressure them to drink and tease them about their art. As John explains,

I could be a very bad drunkard because most of my friends do drink, I shouldn't lie for that, and some of them really tease me in different ways. Some of them really want me to take a sip but because I do have my own principles, I have my own integrity, I still think that I need to be somebody myself.

Imani is a safe haven in many ways. When students join, they do not just enroll in an art school. They join a community. Steven teaches them art and understands through his own experience the challenges they face. He knows life is hard and tries to instill qualities he believes

will help them deal with this hard life: self-discipline, working as a family, and avoiding laziness. Students are surrounded by peers and graduates who also deeply value art. They learn from each other and together create their own ideas about how to deal with a hard life: becoming loyal, working as friends, and hustling by working inside and outside of school.

As students graduate, they face new challenges in the market. They need to find a place to display their art and keep a stock of expensive materials and products to sell. They rely on their connections started in Imani, but struggle to make ends meet while dealing with municipal city council members who require daily tax and can demolish their stalls at any time. Artists learn to read local and international markets and clients and produce art that will sell and that also reflects their training and status as professional artists. They are able to “make do” as artists but still have not achieved ways of earning a stable living from “just the brush.”

Strategies and Tactics

In navigating their in between status as youth, young artists are confronted with a strategies imposed on them by those with power and will: the Kenyan government, NGOs, the media, the municipal council, the administration of KCP and Imani, and volunteer tourists. As de Certeau argues, these strategies constrain youth and are able to discipline and dominate, as well as create discourses and systems within which youth have to learn to operate.

However, these constraints cannot completely determine or repress youth action. As de Certeau (1984) demonstrates, “he can find *ways of using* the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation” (p. 30, emphasis in original). Youth use tactics to create unexpected results from their situation. They do this literally when their financial

constraints lead them to look for new materials to create their art. And they do this figuratively when policy and educational constraints lead them to look for ways of becoming artists. Though these tactics allow them to find temporary, creative reprieve from these constraints, artists are still not able to escape them.

Many of the policies and programs aimed at youth are based on these strategic oversimplifications of youth that position them as both the problem and the solution. These oversimplifications narrow the types of programs and policies available and limit the extent to which they actually help improve youths' lives and opportunities. A close examination of the everyday practices of youth reveals the tactics they use to navigate their complex and ambiguous positions. Attending to these tactics may help us use them as the basis for policies and programs that stand a better chance of improving youth well-being.

The Strategy of Self-Reliance and the Tactic of Partnership

The dominant strategy in youth policy, education, and NGO initiatives is rooted in the individual self: self-reliance, self-discipline, self-employment, and self-empowerment. Youth should solve their own problems of unemployment by working hard in school and creating their own jobs. Youth should be empowered and protected from other people and forces that might lead them down the wrong path of drinking and violence. If youth are unable to find jobs, access education, or empower themselves, they have themselves to blame.

For artists in Imani, Steven focuses on the need for students to be self-disciplined, to work hard for their own development. Scholars such as Swigert-Gacheru (2011) critique artists for becoming dependent on others and advocate for self-reliance. Swigert-Gacheru tells the story of Jak Katarikawe, a self-trained Ugandan artist who was discovered by Ruth Shaffner, the German-American owner of Gallery Watatu in Nairobi. Like the artists in the last chapter, Jak

allowed Ruth to promote his work abroad, which led to success abroad. However, Jak grew dependent on Ruth and was left with nothing after she died. As Swigert-Gacheru argues:

Other artists have learned from Jak's mistakes. For while he had become the *golden child* of Ruth and the envy of many artists who admired the way Ruth marketed his work abroad. Still his big mistake, they [the *jua kali* artists] have told me, is not learning self-reliance – a basic tenet of *jua kali*. Instead, he'd become a dependent who turned into a helpless orphan after Ruth was gone. (p. 140)

Rather than relying on others, artists should help themselves.

However, this rhetoric of self-reliance runs counter to the lived experience of youth and to longstanding, deeply rooted Luo notions of entrustment. Shipton (2007) defines entrustment as an obligation. It involves borrowing and lending of economic and non-economic kinds, implies trust, and happens over time (p. 10). Entrustment establishes social bonds and builds up trust among people. Shipton explains that Luo youth are taught “not to be too concerned with getting their own backs as individuals, but instead to share generously with kin and also with strangers in need” (p. 46).

The young artists portrayed here engage in various forms of entrustment. In school, they lend each other money and supplies and help each other in non-economic ways as well. They allow each other to stay in their homes free of rent and share information about exhibitions and opportunities. Some students, like Betty, stay with family friends. Steven also participates in entrustment helping students find places to stay, allowing them to pay school fees late, and finding them sponsors for school.

In the market, as we have seen, the artists who are most successful do not work alone but as partners. As Victor notes, “I encourage the artists from Imani and any other artists to try to get

in contact with other artists so that you don't have to feel all that burden of doing it by yourself.”

Victor and Ben and James and Tom partner to share resources, clients, and space. These partnerships give them more flexibility and allow Ben to teach art and James to finish his secondary education. Though Kevin does not have a partner, he relies on his connections with Maseno University and other artists to get information about exhibitions and share ideas.

The Strategy of Youth and the Tactic of Community

As we have seen, youth have been singled out as a vulnerable group and special funding, programs, seats of representation, and policies have been created specifically for youth. As Durham (2007) argues, “while various government policy moves contributed to a new sense that youth are citizens, or citizens at risk, these policies responded to new concerns as much as they created them” (p. 106). Organizations, research, programs, and policies have proliferated to deal with the problem of youth. In these policies and programs, youth are separated from women and adults, which as we have seen raises tensions. Youth and women compete for funding and resources, and adults are portrayed as threats who hold youth back in favor of tradition or tempt them to engage in violence and corruption. To access funds, youth are encouraged to established youth groups, not intergenerational partnerships. Some youth delay claiming adult status since they have access to funds as youth until the age of 35.

Again, youth do not experience their lives in isolation from other generations. Entrustment involves exchange with multiple generations. Many youth are not only responsible for themselves but also for their younger siblings. For example, Thomas, raised by a single mother, describes the responsibility he feels toward his young siblings. “All of my brothers are still at home. I still have small siblings at my back. They really need what we call an English education. Now I'm a first-born. I'm like their father because our father died. So I have to work

hard just to lead them where they should be heading.” As Shipton (2007) notes, it is a common expectation in Luo life that once the older children establish themselves, they will help pay their siblings’ school fees. Additionally, youth are responsible for sending money to older parents to support them. As Johnson explains, his mother has left Nairobi and gone back to their rural home. He sends her money when he can, “I have to at least help her *kidogo*. I usually send her something *kidogo* nowadays.”

As we have seen at Imani, community plays a central role in helping students develop their identities as artists. Steven acts as a surrogate father to the students, nursing them like an egg. Several of the art students lost one or both parents and have been raised by single mothers, grandmothers, or other relatives. Few have adult males as a regular part of their lives. They seek advice from Steven, not just about art, but also about how to manage their family responsibilities and grow to be good people. Interacting with the graduates helps young artists learn art and what it looks like to live as an adult artist. All of the artists working in the field except Tom are married and have their own families. Young artists learn from their example how to make art that helps them provide for their families. The older artists see their role as mentors as a form of entrustment: a way to pay back the education and support they received at Imani.

The Strategy of Entrepreneurship and the Tactic of Becoming Artists

In the National Youth Policy, art is seen as a potential source of income and empowerment and the policy focuses on training, advancing, financing, and empowering young artists. In the education system, art is treated as a technical, vocational subject leading to employment in the informal sector. Locally, artists are seen as sign writers and casual laborers. Swigert-Gacheru (2011) sees jua kali artists as part of a “rising creative class” (p. 141). These portraits focus on art as a source of income and a form of entrepreneurship.

As we have seen, the artists here certainly want to earn a living wage as artists. They display a range of entrepreneurship skills as they learn how to operate within local and international markets. Kevin, James, and Ben have done well enough as artists to support their families and pay their children's school fees. However, they make very little money.

For the Kisumu artists, art is also about expression and becoming. This is evident in the way they talk about their training and their craft. In the monologue from the play, Otieno says the purpose of Imani is "to make artists." Johnson talks about how after joining Imani, he started to believe "I can become an artist." Betty describes seeing her own artwork on the walls of her bedroom and says when she sees them, "I know who I am." Significantly, these artists do not say "I studied art" or "Imani teaches art." Their engagement with art is much deeper than a subject they've studied.

As Lave and Wenger (1991) note, learning is about the creation of identity. As students learn art by interacting with each other, teachers, and graduates, they learn to become artists – in their dress, in their walk, in their way of being in the world. As de Certeau demonstrates, being in between and engaging in tactics are forms of art. Artists learn to use "clever tricks" to get around the constraining order and achieve unexpected results. However, these tricks only get the artists so far. They can "make do" but remain caught inside of larger systems and structures that continue to constrain them. Perhaps attending to the tactics these young artists use – partnerships, community, and art as a form of becoming – will allow policy makers to create programs and policies that view youth as more than just development indicators or unemployment statistics but as social beings engaged in a process of becoming.

I started this dissertation wanting to understand how youth learned in a non-formal art school, and I end with a much more nuanced understanding of how youth try to find their place

in the world as artists. This story is not just about art. It is about becoming. Youth are confronted with an ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult terrain. They have lost family members, experienced violence, struggle to support themselves, in short, suffer real losses. Yet they find and create beauty. These artists look at their surroundings – living in poverty with very limited resources – and use tactics to create. And that, truly, is the work of art.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:
Living in Somebody Else's Language:
Notes on Method

During my time in Kisumu, I had many conversations with Father Bart. Like me, he was an outsider who wanted to understand Luo life from the perspective of insiders. Also like me, he had spent much of his life contemplating the importance of play. As a result of that contemplation, Father Bart has developed a philosophy about the importance of play: the body longs to create life, the mind longs to create language, and the heart longs to create a home even when it's only temporary. Play is the way we develop our bodies and realize what we are capable of. The equivalent of play for the mind is poetry since it allows us to play with language, and the equivalent of play for the heart is adventure since it is through travel and new experiences that we come to realize home.

Each of these aspects of play was important in my own story. I had an embodied experience of Kisumu – my status as an outsider was quite clear as a white woman living in a predominately Luo neighborhood. Every time I left the compound to walk along the road, children would sing out, “*Mzungu!* (white person in Swahili) How are you?” I was supposed to respond, “I’m fine,” though sometimes I tried it in Luo (*Adhi ma ber*) or Swahili (*Nzuri sana*) instead and tried (unsuccessfully) to teach children to call me by my name instead of *mzungu*. The art students and I played with language by writing poetry and plays. I developed deep friendships and relationships in Kisumu, which now feels like home.

When I first interviewed Father Bart, I asked him about his greatest challenge working in Kisumu. He responded,

Language is the house of your existence. See, and in language, a person lives. So you may move into an African house, but you continue to live in your European mental house

in the language. And so you must try to start living in that language. That, I find, is the biggest challenge, to start living in somebody else's language.

It took me a long time to learn how to live in somebody else's language. And that learning for me came in the form of dialogic performance – entering into genuine conversations with young artists through collaborative playmaking. Throughout this process, I was both a teacher and a learner and in these roles, I navigated what Dwight Conquergood (2013) calls “the intersecting axes of ethnographic tensions. The vertical axis is the tensive counterpull between Identity and Difference, the horizontal between Detachment and Commitment” (p. 70). As Conquergood argues, the extreme points of each axis are dangerous areas that result in “four ethical pitfalls: The Custodian's Rip Off (a strong identification with the other combined with extreme detachment), The Enthusiast's Infatuation (too easy identification with the other and enthusiastic commitment), The Skeptic's Cop-Out (detachment and difference), and The Curator's Exhibitionism (emphasizing difference and the exotic with romantic ideas about the other)” (p. 70). For example, identifying strongly with the students and having an intense commitment to them, I ran the risk of falling into “The Enthusiast's Infatuation,” trivializing and glossing over the differences between myself and the students (p. 72). At the opposite end, emphasizing the differences and staying detached from the students and their lives would result in “The Skeptic's Cop-Out,” because I am different I should not attempt to understand, identify with, or be committed to Luo youth.

Conquergood suggests that the way out of these pitfalls is dialogic performance – genuine conversation. Thus, learning how to live in somebody else's language is not just about literally learning the language but about entering into genuine conversations that allowed me to understand students' perspectives and to reflect on my own. Here I reflect on my own

ethnographic praxis. First I explain the ethnographic methods I used in the field to understand how and why Luo youth choose art and how they use tactics to make do in difficult circumstances. Next I explore what I learned through conversation both in the field and through analyzing data, writing, and returning. Finally, I reflect on how my role as a teacher and my commitment to my students informed my own cultural construction of youth and my own subjectivity.

Beginning a Conversation: Ethnographic Praxis in the Field

As Conquergood (2013) argues, “one cannot build a friendship without beginning a conversation” (p. 77). My conversations with young Luo artists first began in 2011. During my first two field visits to Nyalenda in 2011 and 2012, I lived in a small room on the compound across from the school. I shared all of my meals with the Ogola family. I cooked with the daughters, I played with the grandchildren, I went to Mass in the community hall on Sundays, and I spent time getting to know everyone in the community. In 2013, I stayed in a small house in Nyalenda, about a 15-minute walk from Imani. At first people, including the Ogola family, were concerned about my security since I had left the safety of the compound that had a locked gate and a security guard at night. But I was happy to have a stronger sense of the rhythms of everyday life that everyone around me experienced. I shopped at the market, cooked my own food, collected and paid for water at a neighbor’s tap.

Living in a Luo house gave me insight, but it was playwriting in multiple languages that really allowed me to learn. When I arrived in Kisumu in 2011, I intended to study Theatre for Development (TfD) efforts using ethnographic methods, primarily participant observation. I had first visited Kisumu and the Kisumu Community Project (KCP) in the summer of 1997 as an anthropology undergraduate student. I stayed in Nyalenda for eight weeks and mainly helped in

the nursery school, creating materials for and working with children. However, I spent some time in the art school and remembered students writing and performing plays about what they then referred to as “the big disease:” HIV/AIDS. I had kept in touch with people at KCP and they granted me access to the art school and students. Initially, I wanted to interview students about their participation in Tfd and observe their performances. Once I arrived, I met Steven (the head teacher) and after we talked about my interests, he told me that I would be teaching performing arts classes and my first class would begin that day at 2pm. I was completely unprepared, but very willing, to teach.

One of the first challenges I faced was figuring out how I fit into this new community. I was not the only outsider – several Europeans also stayed at the centre while I was there. Typically, they were young college students, mostly from the Netherlands, who had come to volunteer, though there was also a retired Dutch man who stayed as well. There are also many international volunteers in Kisumu and many establishments (hotels, restaurants, bars) cater to these visitors. Occasionally, I would socialize with these volunteers and go to these places; however, being on my own had its advantages. I wanted to develop trust with the students, and so it was important to me to spend a lot of time with them in the places they frequented, inside and outside of school. These relationships developed slowly. During my first visit, they mostly centered on the school and the compound. I did go to “Never Surrender,” a local restaurant that offered simple meals of rice and beans, to eat lunch with students. They were surprised I wanted to come and were concerned I wouldn’t like the food. During my second and third visits, students started to let me in to other spaces: community halls where they rehearsed plays, restaurants where they played music, stalls where they sold art, and their own homes.

Within Imani I had two primary roles – participant observer of visual art classes in the mornings and performing arts teacher in the afternoons. As a participant observer, I watched student interactions with peers and with Steven, took extensive field notes, and attended to the norms of teaching and learning art. Every morning, I would enter the school with my notebook. I associated freely with students and they quickly became used to my presence.

Starting in 2011 and continuing until 2013, I became a daily participant observer in Imani. In the mornings, I would take field notes and interact with the students. At first, the students were not sure what to make of me. Some called me *mwaliimu* and thought of me as a teacher. Others called me Betsy and were unsure about my role. Most teachers in Kenya, including Steven, do not spend all of their time in the classroom with students. They have an office and after giving instruction, spend significant time outside of the class. I was interested in staying in the class all the time to observe students and get a sense of their interactions. While at first they found this unusual, over time they got used to me being there and carried on with their normal activities.

What I thought was going to be a study about theatre quickly changed to a broader definition of art to include both visual and performing arts. It became clear to me that students had a flexible sense of artistic identity. While in the U.S., “artist” tends to refer to a visual artist, in Kenya, students felt being an artist meant every type of artistic endeavor: actor, painter, sculptor, musician, poet, comedian, etc. Therefore, I also became interested in students’ visual art – how and what they created -- and what that might tell me about the way they saw themselves, their community, and their place in the world. I watched students paint, draw, and learn from each other through dialogue and observation as they created art. I observed their

weekly critiques of each other's work and followed them into the community when they went out to do fieldwork – sketching scenes from “slum life.”

After several weeks of daily observations and interactions, I started to conduct semi-structured interviews with the students. I waited several weeks to give students time to get to know me and to feel more comfortable being interviewed. I started off asking fairly straightforward questions about the meaning of art. However, students tended to respond with answers they had memorized in school. For example, when I asked Michael how he would define art, he answered, “Art is a human ability to make forms creatively for aesthetic and utilitarian purposes.” This was the definition his art teacher had him memorize in school. I realized I needed another strategy to get beyond such answers, so I started asking students to bring some of their artwork to the interviews. I would start those interviews by asking students to describe the piece. Then I moved to questions about how they created it and what they hoped to express. These interviews were longer and they felt more genuine, grounded in conversations about how students made art with limited resources, and what they were trying to express about themselves and their community through it. These interviews began opening my eyes and mind to new ways to understand their art and lives.

In the afternoons, my role shifted to performing arts teacher. As a teacher, I had greater insight into the challenges Steven faces. As a researcher, it made sense to me that students would skip school to earn money to pay their rent, but as a teacher trying to direct a play, I became frustrated with frequent absences. Each of these roles gave me different insights and helped me build trust with the students and local artists.

Before I came to Kisumu, I had read widely about Theatre for Development and was particularly influenced by the work of Augusto Boal and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Through their

work, I believed in the power of theatre as a means of countering oppression. As Boal (1979) argued, theatre is a “rehearsal of revolution” (p. 141). Boal’s method is:

to change the people – ‘spectators,’ passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action...the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or to think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action. (p. 122)

While my goals were certainly not as ambitious as Boal’s, I was interested in having the students take an active role in writing their own stories. During my first class with them, I asked the students what they wanted to do with this performing arts time. They expressed frustration that the dominant mode of theatre in Kisumu was development plays – 10 to 15 minute dramas about HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, etc. – or student plays for the Kenya Schools Drama Festival, a yearly competition of plays performed by students. The art students brought several examples of scripts for me to read. Below is an excerpt typical of this style:

We are living in times when the current generation is cursed, they have forgotten about the taboos that had been set by the community, the values that were highly respected by the community. For this reason they are bound to suffer, and forever they will suffer in pain as a result of their sinful nature. And unless they change from their sinful nature they will remain a cursed generation.

The students wanted to tell a more complex story about the challenges they faced and their own experiences.

Before we did any writing, we engaged in a series of theatre games and activities to build community and trust. I happened to have one resource with me: *Theatre for Community, Conflict*

& Dialogue: The Hope Is Vital Training Manual by Michael Rohd. I used the activities in this book along with some others I knew to start our classes. We played classic theatre games such as Zip, Zap, Zoom and Minefield to warm up. Then we started activities that involved improvisation and storytelling. Students were still impacted by the post-election violence in 2007, so we did an exercise where they each wrote a monologue from different characters' perspectives. Each student chose a character and then wrote and performed a monologue about whether or not they participated in violence that day and their reasons for their actions.

Eventually we settled on writing a play we called *Can't Hold It Any Longer*. The play's action centers on a family with three children: Pendeza, Miruka, and Selina and their parents Jaduong' and Roslida. Pendeza works with his father on the *shamba* (family farm) while Miruka dreams of becoming a writer and Selina dreams of becoming a doctor. Miruka runs away with the reluctant help of a retired professor who lives in the village. He ends up living with two young men (Simon and Sebi) who give him a new name *Defre* (using Sheng – a mix of English and Swahili) to signal his new identity as a city youth versus a youth from the village. Miruka gets into trouble with Simon and Sebi. They abandon him leaving him beaten in the street. Jaduong' learns of his son's fate and goes to the city to bring him home. When he sees the conditions Miruka has been living in, he realizes what his son was willing to sacrifice for education and allows him to pursue his studies.

While writing the play, we tried to make the characters complex rather than simple. In writing Pendeza's lines, we aimed to capture reasons why someone in his position would make the choice to work on the *shamba* and follow in his father's footsteps. In writing Miruka's lines, we wanted to show how the desire to become a writer would take him down a different path that had its own challenges and temptations. Through engaging in this type of playwriting, I learned

how students perceived their lives – what they valued and what they wished they could change. I also learned quite a bit about Luo culture. For example, when a character entered a room, it was important that he/she greet each person. Of course I had seen the norm of greeting in my interactions with students and the community, but the importance of this in establishing social bonds and showing respect became clear to me while writing. Students insisted the greetings stayed, even if it didn't make for good stage direction.

Language became important in telling the story. The students wanted to write the play in English so it would have broader appeal. While Swahili is the national language, English is the language of instruction and Luos (as Nilotic rather than Bantu speakers) sometimes have difficulty with Swahili. We used Luo when writing about life in the village and Sheng once Miruka arrives in Nairobi and starts interacting with youth who grew up in the city. These language shifts also signified important distinctions among characters. For example, the father only spoke in Luo, signifying his position as a Luo elder who lived in a rural area while Miruka at first speaks Swahili and slowly learns Sheng as he becomes closer to Nairobi youth.

In doing this work, I discovered the potential of playwriting to elicit cultural information. Students would tell me stories in a playwriting context that they would not have shared in the more formal context of an interview, or that I would not have thought to ask. As Turner (1982) argued, the anthropologist is often a kind of "Ethnodramaturg" (p. 99), who ensures the script's faithfulness to described facts and anthropological analysis of the group's structures and processes. Building on this role and recognizing that much of cultural life is performative rather than informative, anthropologists have viewed performance as "a mode of acquiring cultural knowledge through ethnography" (Fabian, 1990, p. 257) and "a forum for reconfiguring social relations" (Askew, 2002, p. 23). Scholars have found that working with theater groups provided

an open space for participation and access (Barber, Collins, & Ricard, 1997) and have collaborated with theater groups to analyze both the process of producing a performance and the performance itself as text. My research builds on this idea of performance not as a static, finished product but as a dialogic process of producing a play, interactions between the audience and actors, and conversations between actors and ethnographers.

During our performing arts classes, I gave my film camera and video camera to the students and asked them to decide what they thought was important to document. We wrote several scenes, tried performing them, and edited them based on feedback from the group. Students also asked me to help them write poetry and we had many writing sessions where they experimented with different styles of writing. They also incorporated their skill as visual artists into the performance work and painted flyers, a book cover for the script, and backdrops for the performance. We performed the play for an audience of community members at the hall in Nyalenda.

When I returned in 2012, students wanted to try a completely different experience with theatre. They had written a play themselves, many had participated in “free style” theatre (improvisational performances) but they had little experience with scripted theatre. They knew I had taught Shakespeare and directed Shakespeare plays as a high school English teacher in the U.S. Many had read *Merchant of Venice* in secondary school, and so they asked if we could try Shakespeare. I was hesitant at first, especially given the legacy of British colonialism, but I told them we could try it out. We started with class monologues from *Taming of the Shrew*, a play I knew well and had directed before. Students really took to the language and to the challenge of working with Shakespeare.

We decided as a group to set the play in Kisumu rather than its original location in Padua, Italy. Again, language played an important role. We changed the Latin in the play to Swahili and the Italian to Luo but kept most of the Shakespearean English. We changed the locations to areas in the province of Nyanza and changed other details such as one of the suitors playing a *nyatiti* (traditional Luo instrument similar to a guitar) instead of a lute. Working through the play also elicited cultural information. For example, the plot of *Taming of the Shrew* involves the father's decision that the younger sister cannot marry until the oldest sister weds. This is also a custom in Luo culture, and we had many discussions about what this would look like in a Luo context. For example, George explains the plot and how it relates to Luo tradition:

The taking away of the brides, the girls, from their home. Many guys were after Bianca but Bianca is the younger sister to Katherina, and Katherina is this wild lady. She's like keeping all men away so these guys who are after Bianca, they have the wealth, they have the eloquence, but as a tradition, the first daughter, the elder daughter, should go first. Even in Luo, that's how it is in Kisumu.

As we worked through the play, students began to feel comfortable inserting their own perspective, language, and spin on the characters, setting, and plot. As Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) argue, "Creating classroom learning spaces where a sixteen-year-old student can see herself as something to say to an author like Shakespeare is itself an empowering act that has implications not only for future readings of Shakespeare but for future engagements with any texts that have the aura of immutability or ultimate authority" (p. 53). In this context of a non-formal art school in Kisumu, students also had the experience of having something to say to Shakespeare and playing with a canonical text. Reflecting on this experience, Johnson explained

We had to add some characters, even during the final play the way we used to put our local languages even the way we carried ourselves while acting, we did in an African way. But we used Shakespeare's words, we did it our way in Africa, the way we could have done it on a normal day in Africa, that's how we did it. To do Shakespeare, was like to see a Van Gogh painting live, like Shakespeare was the master of playwrights.

Through this experience, students reimagined the original play in their local context and added their own interpretations to what they perceived as a masterwork of art.

Students again engaged with the play as visual artists. We cut the scripts into strips, glued them to canvas, and students painted their own interpretation of characters, scenes, and themes on top of the text, allowing some of the words to peak through. We displayed these paintings during the final performance, which we held in Kisumu town hoping to draw a larger audience. Below in figure A.1 are examples of this work:



Figure A.1 Student interpretations of the play

When I returned in 2013, I was not planning on teaching. I was in Kisumu for only eight weeks and wanted to spend time with artists working full time in the market. However, the Imani

students had been asked to write a play in honor of Father Bart's 60-year jubilee as a priest. They asked me to help them, and I agreed. We ended up writing the most personal play yet – the story of a young man who wants to study art and become an artist. Writing this play gave me the opportunity to see how students wanted to represent the stories they had been telling me since 2011 about how they came to art school and why they want to be artists.

Observing students and learning about them as youth and as artists and teaching students through playwriting helped establish trust and strong bonds. Because of this, I was able to follow students outside of the compound of the art school to understand how they explored opportunities for learning art outside of school. I asked current students to draw maps for me of how they learned art – which mentors they sought within and outside of Imani. I was then able to follow up on these maps and interview several graduates of Imani who operate their own art stalls in town to get a stronger understanding of the challenges they face as practicing artists.

Extending the Conversation: Analyzing, Writing, and Revising

Initially, I hoped to spend a year in Kisumu. However, because of funding restrictions, I had to conduct fieldwork in three phases: three months in 2011, six months in 2012, and two months in 2013. Upon reflection, this approach had several advantages. First, it gave me time as a scholar to analyze my data in between trips and return to the field with a refined set of questions and a more nuanced understanding. Second, it allowed me to observe different topics of instruction in visual art and to experiment with different styles of playwriting described above. I was also able to follow students who had graduated from Imani into the field to see how they were faring. Finally, it helped build trust between the students and me. People in the community of Nyalenda are used to international visitors, even those who stay for long periods of time. But

visitors who return are not as common. Making three separate trips helped students to see me as someone invested enough to return.

In between field visits, I transcribed my interviews, coded my field notes, had many conversations with my committee, and began to write what I had learned. While in Kisumu, I wrote analytic field memos every month that I shared with my committee. I revisited those memos and identified themes to start writing. First, I started writing descriptively and tried out different theoretical perspectives. I talked with members of my committee and presented at conferences such as the African Studies Association and the Comparative and International Education Society conferences and began to develop ideas about the construction of youth and the formation of artistic identity.

Transcribing, writing, and analyzing enabled me to return in 2013 with a refined set of understandings and questions. I spent most of my time in the field in the marketplaces rather than the art school. This allowed me to see what artists need to learn to be able to make do in the markets and how artists rely on their own networks.

When I returned home, I began to write chunks from my data. As I analyzed data and developed codes, I discovered that I wanted to find a theory that would allow me to explore individual agency of youth while not losing the larger social, political, and economic context in which youth operate. I turned to de Certeau as a lens to explore both agency and constraint. de Certeau's ideas about strategy and tactic and space and place allowed me to analyze my data using these concepts and to see the ambiguities and complexities of Imani as a space/place and the contradictions youth face as they navigate pursuing art and education that is meaningful to them with obtaining a sustainable livelihood and becoming adults.

Positionality: My Cultural Constructions of Youth

Although I have spent significant time in Kisumu and tried hard to understand life from the perspective of an insider, I will always be an outsider. I have not tried to become Luo and the people I work with closely understand I have my own particularities. As Conquergood (2013) describes, the ethnographer is often performing.

A practicing ethnographer is one who is performing at many levels and aware that she is performing. Since her enterprise is to produce actor-oriented descriptions of culture, she must attempt to take the perspective of the other by participating in unfamiliar tradition while maintaining her own integrity as self. (p. 21)

Being aware that I am participating in traditions that are unfamiliar to me helps me avoid the danger of identifying so strong with my participants that they lose their distinctiveness. While I try to spend as much time with people in the community as possible, I still need solitude to process what I've experienced and maintain my sense of self. Being an outsider allows me to see aspects of social life people take for granted because they are so embedded in their own experience. It also prevents me from deeply understanding some aspects of social life that I have limited access to because of barriers of language and culture.

Of the four traps Conquergood (2013) identifies: The Custodian's Rip-Off, The Enthusiast's Infatuation, the Skeptic's Cop-Out, and The Curator's Exhibitionism, I gravitated most toward the Enthusiast's Infatuation, having a deep commitment to Luo youth and strong identification with them. As a teacher - not just in Kisumu but also in my domestic K-12 teaching experience – I have been driven and shaped by my commitment to students who have been marginalized. I see the potential in students and I believe in their possibilities. My own cultural construction of youth is grounded in my belief that every student has something to contribute – has unique talents and possibilities and that it is my job as an educator, to help them

develop these talents and possibilities. At times I felt torn between believing in this group of Luo youth as their teacher and maintaining social scientific distance in order to understand their lives and experiences as part of a larger social, cultural, and political context. With time and many conversations with colleagues, I came to understand the importance of critically examining the stories of these students and to present them as whole people rather than simple sketches where they are the heroes of their own stories. These young artists are in a complicated process of becoming caught within an even more complex system. Sometimes they make choices that lead to replicating their own circumstances and their mistakes and their creativity are equally important in understanding the complexity of their lives and choices.

This work has always been personal for me. I first came to Nyalenda in the summer of 1997 as an undergraduate anthropology student at a Catholic university. The university paid for my travel and stay so that I could have an experience of ethnographic fieldwork and engage in service at a Catholic NGO. I was deeply moved and shaped by this experience. I admired the way the European founders of the NGO lived in the community and worked side-by-side with Luos who were committed to improving conditions for their own community. The work and the collaborative nature resonated with my own Catholic beliefs rooted in social justice.

I now have a more nuanced and complicated understanding of development work and my own faith; however, as a scholar, I remain committed to engaging in research that both forwards scholarly conversations and makes a pragmatic difference in the lives of participants. During my time in Nyalenda, I developed deep friendships with the students, artists, and community members and I was motivated to understand their lives and experiences and to advocate for the community. On my first trip in 2011 I met a Luo musician and visual artist who would become my husband in 2014. My closeness with the students and the community impacted the kind of

anthropology I engaged in – an anthropology that is informed by performance, art, and the humanities and oriented toward activism. This also influenced and shaped how I felt about being a participant in this community, what I saw, the stories I told, and how I wrote this dissertation. My goal was not detachment but deep engagement and conversation that led me to learn how to live in somebody else’s language.

As de Certeau (1984) notes, “what the map cuts up, the story cuts across” (p. 129). Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to draw on two different ways of knowing – social scientific ways of knowing represented by ethnographic methods (interviews, participant observation, field notes) and humanities, arts-based ways of knowing represented by stories, playmaking, poetry, and visual art. For me, these ways of knowing are complimentary and equally important. Analyzing a transcript of an interview gives me as much insight as analyzing a painting. The stories of young artists and my own story cut across this dissertation. They are an ongoing conversation across different cultures with the aim of reaching an intercultural understanding. This has been the beginning of what I hope will be a long-term, ongoing conversation and attempt to live in somebody else’s language.

Appendix B: Map of Kenya



Figure B.1 Map of Kenya

Kisumu Municipality
(Main Areas and Sublocations)



Appendix D: Location of Art Stalls in Kisumu

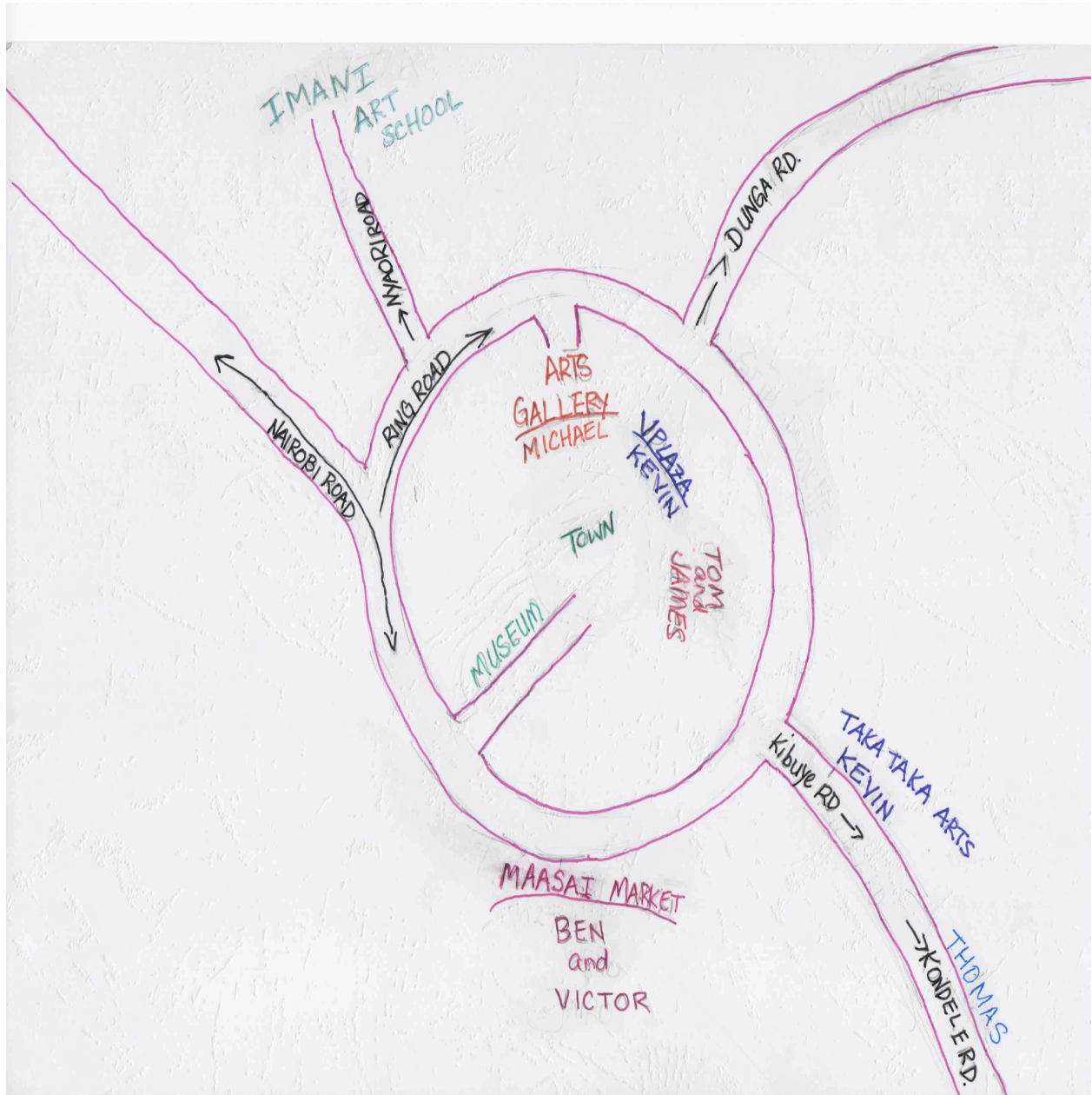


Figure D.1 Map of art stalls Kisumu

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