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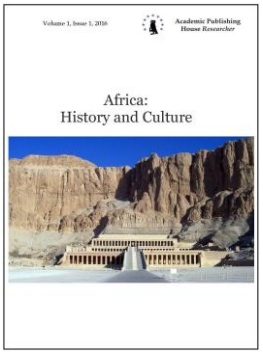

The Mutual Influences of African Music and Politics

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Abstract

The article aims to look at the many genres of African music in a political context. The significance of music in African political movements is illustrated by a number of examples from Kenya, Senegal, Mali and other countries over the decades. Furthermore, political themes brought up by modern artists of African ancestry in their songs are discussed.From the analysis, music perhaps does not create political change as a solitary force; rather, it stirs a community into action, expresses and calls attention to oppression, and bridges the divide between people of different cultures. In times of conflict and uncertainty, culture is radicalised. Artists develop new muscles, and events radiate a higher sense of purpose. Music and artists descending from Africa suggest many examples of such phenomenon and its power in a political context.

Keywords: African Music, Apartheid, Conscious Hip Hop, Protest Songs.

Introduction

Many artists find inspiration in everyday life and write songs that reflect their views on modern problems, such as corruption, terrorism and violence. Africa has a long history of music in political realm on the continent and beyond, more recently with genres such as conscious [*or political*] hip hop becoming once again popular all around the world.

While it remains difficult to measure precisely how much influence musicians have on political issues, there are several facts that prove music has a certain power to be reckoned with. In some instances, it is used by government as a tool for propaganda; in others folklore, protest songs and pop music can spread awareness, boost the morale and unite communities to fight for a better future. Further in this article, some historical examples will be offered to highlight the role of African music in struggles for change, redemption or political power.

Method

This article is based on essays, books, scientific papers, various media archives and record label's press releases as well as artists' lyrics.

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Music and the Pursuit of Freedom

The pursuit of freedom over the world has always been complemented by music. Sometimes, the music has defined the cause, ignited the public's demand for progressive change and crystallized the ideology of the movement for reform. At other times, the music has sharpened people's understanding of the wrongs that need to be addressed; it has strengthened their resolve and sustained their anger and hope (Sibi-Okumu, 2013).

The Mau Mau songs in Kenya were the key in creating solidarity among the people in order to deal with the colonial onslaught. Christian songs were rewritten in order to deal with secular themes. Evangelising hymns were changed during the struggle for independence to speak about relations between the rulers and the ruled. If the role of Christianity in the colonial project was to pacify African souls, that did not happen in its entirety. In the post-independent Kenya, side by side with resistance songs, were praise songs by established bands and the Christian-dominated Muungano Choir which sought to valorise national leadership, as well as give their interpretation of patriotism. The post-colonial government sponsored choirs which composed music to perpetuate hegemonic normalcy and maintain socio-political status quo.

This interpretation of patriotism was naturally questioned by other musician, such as Joseph Komaru and D. O. Misiani, who aligned themselves with the needs of ordinary people. Sometimes musicians have paid a very high price for their criticism. D. O. Misiani braved the attentions of not one but three Kenyan presidents. He was imprisoned on several occasions for lyrics that were perceived as crossing the line into political criticism (Njogu, & Maupeu, 2007).

Music as a "Weapon of Struggle"

The Apartheid era drove its music and its musicians underground, and apart from fellow musicians, or into *"the banalities of commercial music-making"* (Olwage, 2008). The apartheid state prohibited broadcasting of musicians who went into exile or who sang in opposition to apartheid. The government destroyed archives of black music such as African Jazz, deeming them unworthy of a remembered past. Such a move proves that, the state understands the significance of music and its ability to undermine government's power. The formally recognised opposition to Apartheid known as the ANC began in 1912 when several hundred members of South Africa's educated African elite gathered to establish a national organization to protest against racial discrimination. The meeting opened and closed with the singing of *"Nkosi Sikelel'I Afrika"*, which was adopted as the ANC's official anthem (Vershbow, 2010).

It was during this transition to violent resistance that music was often talked about as a *"weapon of struggle."* A song called *"Sobashiy'abazali"* [*"We Will Leave Our Parents"*] became one of the most popular songs sung at the MK training camps. The lyrics evoke the sadness of leaving home, as well as the persistence of freedom fighters: *"We will leave our parents at home/we go in and out of foreign countries/to places our fathers and mothers don't know/Following freedom we say goodbye, goodbye, goodbye home/We are going into foreign countries/To places our fathers and mothers don't know/Following freedom"* (Olwage, 2008). Toyi-Toyi, thought to originate in Zimbabwe, a classic example of this shift and became a symbol of the apartheid resistance. Usually performed in a group setting, it is a dance consisting of foot stomping and spontaneous chanting. Toyi-Toyi was often invoked during the ANC's *"Amandla"* chant: in call and response, the leader of a group would call out *"Amandla!"* [*"Power"*] and the group would respond with "*Awethu!"* [*"Ours"*] (Vershbow, 2010).

A bright example of the role of music in political struggle can be found in Senegal. The country was ruled by the Socialist Party for 40 years until Abdoulaye Wade was elected president in 2000 after the *"sopi"* –movement [*"change"* in Wolof]. He was re-elected in 2007, but during his two terms amended Senegal's constitution over a dozen times to increase executive power and to weaken the opposition. Finally, his attempt to change the constitution in June 2011, and his decision to run for a third presidential term, prompted large public protests that led to his defeat in a March 2012 run-off election with Macky Sall. A prominent role in overthrowing Wade's regime belongs to *"Y'en a marre"* [*"Fed up"*], a movement started by Senegalese rappers and journalists that quickly gained followers all over Senegal. For example, to persuade people to register to vote, small groups went around the popular blocks in town, armed with a stereo playing the Y'en a marre single. As Dakar and Senegal has a lot of talented young rappers, the next step was to distribute flyers and rap about the country's situation and the importance to register to vote. Y'en a marre also collaborated with

the media and there were televised programs and shows to raise awareness. The news of the achievements of Y'en a marre have spread and the movement has reached Mali and Togo (The Movement Y'en a marre, 2012). Despite reaching the goal of ousting Wade, Y'en a Marre remains active, hosting meetings and shows, urging the new government to implement promised reforms, including reforms of land ownership, a key issue for Senegal's rural poor.

Y'en a Marre is particularly significant in Senegalese politics, because in his 2000 campaign, Abdoulaye Wade prominently featured the support of Senegalese rappers as a way of connecting with young voters. 12 years later, Y'en a Marre demonstrated that Senegal's youth were not unquestioningly loyal to Wade and were searching for a leader who could credibly promise reform (KOLA, 2012).

In Mali, music is a political language reflecting cultural changes, ideas of African unity, and issues of equality and rights. Musicians are present in many of the rituals of daily life in Mali. The traditional praise singers known as *'Griots'* sing and play at weddings, birth ceremonies and funerals. But their role is not just to provide background entertainment. Yacouba Sissoko, a Malian Griot known for his mastery of the ngoni, a stringed instrument, and the *"talking drum,"* which mimics human speech, says that the Griot is a "person who creates cohesion between people, a kind of cement in Malian society." Moreover, in Mali, where high rates of illiteracy mean that music – rather than newspapers or books – is a prime means of sharing information. Malian hip-hop artists in particular have tried to use their music to raise awareness about social issues. The Malian rapper Amkoullel addresses education in his song *"Teaching, Studies,"* rapping in both French and his local dialect, Bamanan. He rails against corruption in the school system: *"A place to teach should not be confused with a place to do business,"* and inequality: *"private schools, so well-equipped / public education, neglected / the poor have no choice"* (Fernandes, 2013).

Socio-political Oppression of Music

Mali is the only country in recent history where music has been banned by religious extremists, apart from Afghanistan during the reign of the Taleban. The ban became official in August 2012 when a spokesman for the jihadist group MUJAO went on the radio in the eastern town of Gao to proclaim that all 'Satan's music' – in other words, everything except Qur'anic chanting – was henceforward forbidden in the two-thirds of the country, then under occupation by armed jihadi groups. It officially came to an end in February 2013 when the north of Mali was finally liberated by the French army (Morgan, 2015). A 2015 documentary called *"They will have to kill us first: Malian music in exile"* follows musicians in Mali in the wake of a jihadist takeover and subsequent banning of music. The director Johanna Schwartz says, *"They've been through hell, and survived to sing about it. Though the conflict in Mali is still far from over, with extremist attacks continuing in the north and south to this day, I have no doubt that these musicians will continue to stand up and fight for their right to sing* (Schwartz, 2015).

Looking back, Kenyan music has a long history of protest music. In the compilation album Retracing Kenya's Songs of Protest, Ketebul Music traced the history of the country through its protest music during the 50 years from independence until 2013. The dramatic end of Daniel Arap Moi's 24-year rule in Kenya happened to the sounds of *'Yote Yawezekana.'* Indeed, the creative energy with which protesting marchers at Nairobi's Uhuru Park changed the lyrics of *'Yote Yawezekana'* from their original Christian message of hope in divine deliverance to one of political protest and economic reform shows music's defining role in the struggle for freedom of expression (Sibi-Okumu, 2013). According to Kenyan hip-hop artist Abbas Kubaff, *"There are many musicians in Kenya that sing against corruption, terrorism and violence. One of the strongest responses from artists was in the wake of the post-election violence in 2007. A group was set up called Pamoja Amani Upendo [PAU], which translates as Togetherness Peace Love. PAU is a community-based organization which utilizes music, musicians and dance to promote peace and unity within Kenya, and regularly puts on concerts and shows to spread this message to the people"* (Solés, 2015).

Kubaff supports the idea of music as a tool for social and political change. He says, *"...there is no greater group of people than musicians for reaching out to large numbers of people, across age groups and tribal boundaries. Musicians are able to set an example of unity to the rest of Kenya and show that tragedies such as Garissa can be mourned in a way that does not cause further divisions within Kenya's diverse ethnic communities. When terrorist attacks occur in Kenya, there is often a wave of anti-Muslim or anti-Somali sentiment that spreads throughout the country.*

Musicians are able to remind Kenyans that whilst terrorism is abhorrent, it is not the Muslim or Somali community as a whole who is responsible for such evil acts. There is a deep mistrust of politicians and other leading figures within Kenya, but music is a uniting force that Kenyans pay attention to."

Many Kenyan hip hop artists come from low-income areas of Nairobi, where they have been most affected by the corruption and poor governance that has slowed development in Kenya. For this reason, many hip hop artists feel a responsibility to use music to secure a better future and open people's eyes to the reality of everyday life in Kenya. Some of the more mainstream artists would be afraid to speak out in such a way against corruption or the government, for fears of repercussions or that prominent people could begin to interfere in their careers. In general, hip hop artists are not afraid to speak out and would rather suffer the consequences of their actions if they are speaking out for the right reasons (Solés, 2015).

Political or conscious hip hop developed in 1980s as a subgenre of hip hop music. Themes of conscious hip hop include afrocentricity, religion, aversion to crime and violence, culture, the economy, or depictions of the struggles of ordinary people. Conscious hip hop often seeks to raise awareness of social issues, leaving the listeners to form their own opinions, rather than aggressively advocating for certain ideas and demanding actions. Inspired by 1970s political preachers such as The Last Poets and Gil Scott-Heron, Public Enemy was the first predominately political hip hop group. They are known for their politically charged lyrics and criticism of the American media, openly speaking and rapping about frustrations and concerns of the African American community. Public Enemy was one of the first hip hop groups to do well internationally and influences many musicians with their sound collages and skilled and poetic rhymes (Fox, 2014).

Recent Trends of the Mutual Influences

In the last three years, mainstream artists are increasingly including elements of conscious hip-hop in their songs. Today popular rappers such as Kendrick Lamar, Kanye West, Talib Kweli, Saul Williams and others help to spread awareness on problems shared by African people, and their message reaches listeners all over the world. Hip Hop music has grown to be such a large part of mainstream culture that The Washington Post wrote *"The Politician's Guide to how to be Down with Hip Hop."* The criticism of hip hop that was considered patriotic or even moral, some generations ago can make a politician seem *"out of touch"*, especially with young voters (Schwarz, 2015).

Kendrick Lamar's song *"Alright"* was inspired by his trip to South Africa, witnessing other people's problems in the country: *"their struggle was ten times harder."* Both the track and its music video received acclaim from critics, highlighting their message in the social context of the time. The song was associated with Black Lives Matter after several youth lead protests were heard chanting the chorus, with some publications calling *"Alright"* the "unifying soundtrack" of the movement (Coscarelli, 2015). Lamar was featured on Ebony Power 100, annual list that recognises many leaders of the African-American community, emphasizing *"how the chorus of his song "Alright" became a chant for Black Lives Matter protestors"* (Ebony, 2015).

Conclusion

This paper looks at the reciprocal influences of African music and politics. From the analysis, music perhaps does not create political change as a solitary force; rather, it stirs a community into action, expresses and calls attention to oppression, and bridges the divide between people of different cultures. In times of conflict and uncertainty, culture is radicalised. Artists develop new muscles, and events radiate a higher sense of purpose. Music and artists descending from Africa suggest many examples of such phenomenon and its power in a political context.

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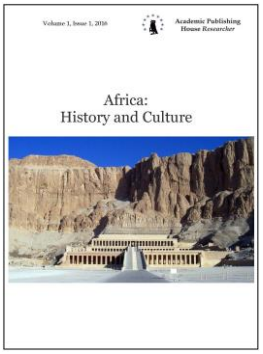

Casting a View at the Indigenous Ghanaian Parenting Styles: A Review of Variables, Outcomes and Trends

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Abstract

Parenting styles contributes to children's intellectual, social, and behavioural development. Culture is one key factor that affects the way parents train their children. This affects parent-child communication, how parents correct their children and even relate with them. This paper describes the specific variables, outcomes and trends within the indigenous Ghanaians parenting context. This paper reviewed the indigenous system of parenting in Ghana within its cultural context. Many books regarding childhood and parenting emanates from the Western world. Due to this, African cultural values like parenting styles are fading away with time. This paper therefore aims at helping readers and Africans to be cognizant of some indigenous Ghanaian parenting styles and how they can go a long way to help train children to become responsible adults. It will also add up to existing literature about African parenting styles with a special focus on Ghana.

Keywords: Indigenous Parenting Styles, Ghana, Culture, Community, Children.

Introduction

Parenting styles involves the various approaches parents use in bringing up their children. This refers to the parents' level of expectations, performance demands, and attention to rules as well as the style of discipline that the parents use to enforce their anticipations. Parents influence different aspects of their children's development in a variety of ways. This is because parents play significant roles in the upbringing of children.

According to Baumrind (1966), there are three types of parenting styles which include authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting and permissive parenting. With authoritarian parenting, parents set rules and expect children to follow without exceptions. These parents give no reasons for the rules they set and mostly use punishment rather than consequences. Children have little or no involvement during challenges or problem solving. According to Baumrind (1991) these parents *"are obedience- and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation*" (p. 65). Although such children tend to follow rules, it is likely their self-esteem would be low; these children also tend to be hostile and aggressive because they might also be angry at their

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parents for punishing them rather than learning from their mistakes. They are also more likely to be anxious, withdrawn and unhappy (Baumrind, 1991).

Authoritative parents set rules for their children, expect them to follow but there are exceptions to these rules. They give reasons for the rules they set and mostly use consequences rather than punishment (Baumrind, 1966). These consequences are normally positive ones to reinforce good behaviour. This form of parenting encourages more freedom of expression which makes children more comfortable to express their opinions. Children are likely to develop a sense of independence, always happy and successful in life. It is also probable that such children will turn out to be confident and develop high self-esteem.

Baumrind (1966) explains permissive parents as parents who do not set many rules and therefore do not expect much from their children. They do not encourage their children to challenge themselves and are very lenient to their children which can lead to low persistence to challenging tasks. They encourage children to freely communicate with them about anything bothering their minds but they do not offer much discipline. They play more of friendly role than parental role and avoid confrontations. This according to Baumrind (1966) does not help children develop skills that can help them to solve problems and it leads to low level of academic performance. Such children tend to be rebellious and defiant. They are likely to also have poor emotion regulation.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) also discovered a fourth type of parenting style called Neglectful parenting. There is very little communication and these parents place few demands on their children. They are not involved in the lives of their children but provide them their basic needs. It is noteworthy that all the parenting styles have respective effects birthed within specific particular cultural settings.

Some studies have concluded that authoritative parenting style yields the healthiest and most emotionally and mentally stable children (Querido, Warner & Eyberg, 2002; Huang, & Prochner, 2003). However, Kelly and Tseng (1992), and Wang and Phinney (1998) found that Chinese mothers reported more physical punishment and yelling at the child. Chinese mothers were more authoritarian, not only with the use of corporal punishment, but also with directives or commands. Nonetheless, Chao (2001) explained that Chinese Americans use of authoritarian methods of discipline did not have any negative outcome on achievement. This was due to the community in which these children found themselves and how they had come to accept the training their parents give them as the best way they could grow up to become good and responsible adults in future. This also explains why Nyarko (2014) and Selin (2014) asserted that parenting styles were more socially constructed than Baumrind's perspective of universal constructs.

"Culture is a way of life of a group of people - the behaviours, symbols, values, beliefs that people accept, not really thinking about them and are passed by mostly communication and imitation from one generation to another" (Amos, 2013, p. 65).

In the African culture, parenting styles takes different forms which help the child to grow up to become a responsible adult (Hofstede, 2011; Schwartz, 2006). Thus, culture seems to play a major role in parenting, and may affect the way parents adopt different methods in raising their children. Consequently, there is the possibility that African parents in America are more likely to adopt the American popular style of parenting than their own local approach.

This paper examines most parenting practices done in Ghana. It also sought to define its respective similarities when compared with other African countries.

Method

The sources of information for this paper include; scientific studies, essays, and books. I used systematic review analysis to situate Ghana's parenting styles, related outcomes within their cultural milieu.

Results

Indigenous Ghanaian Parenting Styles and Community Spirit

Hofstede (2011) and Schwartz (2006) labels West African countries like Ghana as collectivistic where much is placed on family, community relationships and respect for the elderly. Children are expected to show respect and to greet every elderly person they meet whether they know them or not (Salm, & Falola, 2002). In effect, Ghanaians raise their children, communicate with them and correct them in a similar fashion in general.

Parenting is incomplete without looking at the family system as a whole. There are two types of families in Ghana. They include the nuclear and the extended families. The nuclear family consists of the father, mother and children, while the extended family consists of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and other relatives aside the ones in the nuclear family. Bringing up a child in the African culture does not depend only on the nuclear family but the extended family as well (Adinlofu, 2009). Aside these families, any elderly person in a collectivistic community is also responsible for bringing up and correcting children who are not their own (Schwartz, 2006).

Consequently, every child belongs to the whole community and can be corrected by anyone who sees the child doing the wrong thing. This explains the popular African proverb *'a single hand cannot nurse a child'* which literally means that not only parents are responsible for raising up their children, but everyone in the community is responsible in the upbringing of children. For instance, Imoh (2013) interviewed some Ghanaian children concerning the last time they were punished by their parents or caregivers. One of the children's response was *"I was beaten about a month ago. My grandmother called my uncle that I have become too stubborn and do not listen to her anymore. So he came and called me to the room and asked me if everything my grandmother has told him is true. I didn't answer, and then he started lashing me"* (p. 477). From this excerpt, it can be seen that the biological parents of the child were not even involved in punishing him. This shows how people in the Ghanaian community fully accept responsibility to partake in the upbringing of children.

Indigenous Mediums of Ghanaian Parenting

Some of the mediums used to train children to become responsible adults include proverbs, folk tales and songs (Ampofo, & Boateng, 2016). Children are told stories by older ones. These stories teach about lessons in life and shape these children to live upright lives. Some of these lessons include; consequences of love, humility, pride, selfishness etc. *"In almost all parts of Ghana, the general practice is for mothers and their female relatives to be responsible for the early care, training and discipline of children. From between the ages of six (6) and ten (10) boys are generally expected to be brought up by their fathers often outside the home. Girls are raised by their mothers in domestic spaces, especially the kitchen"* (Ampofo, & Boateng, 2016).

According to Ampofo and Boateng (2016), most Ghanaian adolescents are trained to see female or male roles as differing. Girls are raised to accept home roles and give due respect to every male. Boys on the other hand are trained to take care of their mothers and sisters and play dominant roles in everything. These forms of training are done through direct instruction, rewards and punishment and by observing adult role models.

Indigenous Ghanaian Parenting Styles and Modalities for Correcting Children

According to Rudy and Grusec (2006), in collectivistic cultures like that of Ghana, children see parental authority and control as the norm. This is very different from individualist cultures where children see such authority and much control of parents as intimidating and rejecting. Children have to follow rules parents set for them without complaining. Unlike western cultures, physical punishment is one way parents use to correct their children in Ghana and in most African communities. Most children have been socialized to accept it as one of the best ways in which parents use to train them to be good people and responsible adults in the future (Imoh, 2013).

A study on Children's perceptions of physical punishment in Ghana, revealed that, children believe it is the responsibility of their parents to punish them physically when they *go wrong although they felt pains during the punishment. During the study, a child stated that "If we are not punished as children we will become bad adults"* (p. 479). Another child stated that, *"Physical punishment is used to correct children who go wrong. If it is not used, children will grow up to become corrupt adults, so it's good for parents to physically punish their children"* (p. 479). According to other Ghanaian children, if parents punish them physically, it shows they love them and want the best for them in future (Imoh, 2013).

Parents who do not punish their children in such ways are mostly seen not to be carrying out their duties as parents and in a way spoiling their children (Imoh, 2013). Parents have control over their children even when they become adults. To the African community, a child will continue to be child as far as his or her parent is alive and must always adhere to their parents' instructions without complain (Gyekye, 1996).

Discussion

Most of the ways in which African countries train their children are very similar. From the explanation of Baumrind's theory of parenting, it can be stated that most African countries use authoritarian parenting style, Selin (2014) posits that, the preferred Ghanaian parenting style is the authoritarian parenting style. According to Stevens, Vollebergh and Crijnen (2007), Moroccans are categorized as collectivistic and insists on submission to parents and the elderly without complain.

This explains why Pels and Nijsten (2003) assert that, most parents in Morocco use authoritarian parenting style. Oburu (2011) also points out that most parents in Kenya use authoritarian parenting style in bringing up their children. Most Nigerian parents physically punish their children by spanking them when they do the wrong thing (Soyingbe, 2014) which is similar to what most parents do in Ghana.

In most African countries like Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria and Kenya, parents do not play friendly roles with their children as it is done in most part of the Western world. There is a limit to how a child can relate with his parent especially his father. Mostly boys are able to relate well with their fathers and girls are able to communicate easily with mothers than fathers. However, it is not easy at times for children to approach their fathers as they do with their mothers. This is because fathers are seen as the head of the family and everyone has to respect him and obey his commands without any complain. Communication with mothers is done easily because of the frequent contact children have with them.

It should be noted however that the effects of authoritarian parenting style outlined by Baumrind (1966) do not apply to all children. This is because of the culture they find themselves and how they have come to accept authoritarian parenting style as the best way their parents can train them to grow up to become responsible and respected adults.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the indigenous system of parenting in Ghana within its cultural context. Many books regarding childhood and parenting emanates from the Western world (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2003). Due to this, African cultural values like parenting styles are fading away with time. This paper therefore aims at helping readers and Africans to be cognizant of some indigenous Ghanaian parenting styles and how they can go a long way to help train children to become responsible adults. It will also add up to existing literature about African parenting styles with a special focus on Ghana.

Implications

Studies about parenting should be done with regards to the culture in which the people find themselves. This will help to understand why people from different cultures use different ways in the upbringing of their children and how that affects their development. Story telling which depicts a lot of moral lessons should be re-visited including television programs like "by the fireside, concert party" popularly known in Ghana and other educative African cultural values that help train children to grow up as good adults. Most of the movies and story books are more focused on the western culture and gradually children are picking up with them.

One may ask, if these parenting practices still exist in Ghana and Africa as a whole? Due to the gradual infiltration of Western culture into the African setting, most of these parenting practices discussed above are fading away. Parents and neighbours in the community do not get time to tell children stories they can learn from because of their busy work schedules in order to cater for the needs of the family. On the other hand children have come to like the media than listening to stories. They rather prefer social media for instance Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter to name but a few. In recent times, I will like to hypothesise that most parents are more likely to strictly use authoritative parenting style in training their children which does not advise punishing children by using physical punishment.

Another possible thing researchers may like to look at is the existing socioeconomic impact on the indigenous parenting and family system. Most children grow up not knowing most of their extended family members because the socialization process that used to exist between the nuclear and extended family is gradually disappearing. Notwithstanding all these, some parents still go by the African cultural system of parenting. One aspect that is also fading away is the corporal punishment parents used to correct their children. This sometimes hurt the children and leaves

marks on their bodies for a long time. Some parents have realized that its negative aspect overweighed its positive aspect and have put a stop to it.

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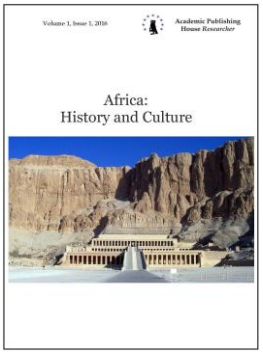

'Bone-Shakers' and Contemporary 'Tro-Tro' in Ghana: Implications for Traffic and Transport Psychology

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Abstract

'Tro-Tro' is a local term for any minibus in Ghana, that trip short to semi-long distances as 'share taxis'. As share taxis, Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' run in between specific destinations with passengers alighting at designated or assumed bus stops, while others get on board. This business is unique for its cheaper transport fares and possible interactions, at least with the conductor who is locally known as the 'Mate'. This article explores some historic evolutions that the 'Tro-Tro' business had accomplished so far in Ghana. In addition, it examines the role of the 'Tro-Tro' business on the culture, socioeconomic and psychological factors in Ghana. This unique business nurtures a collective life force among the three human elements; the 'Tro-Tro' Driver, Mate and passengers. The 'Tro-Tro' transport industry and concept have come to stay and needs to be given the needed advocacy and consideration. This paper has implications for future studies, education, transport industry, policy, and traffic and transport psychology in Ghana.

Keywords: 'Tro-Tro', Transportation, Traffic and Transport Psychology, Vehicle, Driver, Conductor (Mate), Passengers, Interactions, Culture, Ghana.

Introduction

The 'Tro-Tro' transport business has come a long way, even before Ghana's independence from the British Colonial Masters in 1957. This share taxi business started with old Bedford trucks, with locally made wooden forms which were often used for intra-city travels (Powell, 2012).

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Figure 1: Ghana's First 'Tro-Tro': The Bedford Truck
Credit: http://www.carmudi.com.gh/journal/interesting-inscriptions-cars-ghana/

'Tro-Tro' vehicles are well noted for carrying inscriptions which serve as mottoes and slogans. These mottoes and slogans which are often written by the owners or the drivers on their vehicles serve as a form of identification and to express their heartfelt philosophies (Powell, 2012). An example of such old Bedford trucks is illustrated in Figure 1 with the inscription *"Wisdom"*. These Bedford trucks were locally called *"Bone-Shakers"* due to their constant nature of throwing passengers up-and-down to literally *"shake their bones"* as they drove by. The famous name 'Tro-Tro', is noted to have originated from the 'Ga' Ghanaian dialect. History attributes the name 'Tro' from the value of the currency 'Penny', which was used in the Gold Coast colonial days to pay for the fares share-taxis charged. After Ghana's independence, the Cedi currency was introduced but the 'TRO' concept lived on (Anyima-Ackah, 2002). The aim of this paper is to provide a review on the existing Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' transport industry and its impact on culture, socioeconomic and psychological dynamics.

Method

The major sources for this article were online media articles and peer reviewed studies on the subject. I used a combination of observation and a systematic review method to analyse past and current developments in the Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' industry.

Results

The Present Day 'Tro-Tro' Vehicles and their Stations

At present, the 'Tro-Tro' concept has been shifted from the old Bedford trucks to include comfortable mini buses from leading vehicle producing companies like Hyundai, KIA, Nissan, Ford, TATA and Mercedes Benz as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Present 'Tro-Tro' Station at Kumasi
Credit: KAD International Photos

These vehicles have their stations where they are loaded on a *"First-Come, First-Serve Loading System"*. This system runs that, the vehicle that is first on the loading scale gets loaded first (Coomson, 2013). Most vehicles operating in this industry ranges between fourteen [14] and twenty-one [21] seaters and even beyond in big TATA buses. Not all buses in the existing 'Tro-Tro' transport business are in good shape. Some big buses known as the 'Space Buses' and other brands of Benz buses often called '207 buses' may look quite old (Anyima-Ackah, 2002).

Ordinarily, most 'Tro-Tro' stations do not have a well arranged linear car parks for these buses. The 'Tro-Tro' Drivers keep moving in and out, trying to create spaces for each other. Figure 3 shows an example of existing Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' station as demonstrated by Coomson (2013).

Figure 3: Present 'Tro-Tro' Station at Kumasi
Credit: Coomson (2013). http://233times.com/2013/01/profile-of-trotro-in-ghana-2/

Many a times, 'Tro-Tro' stations are very busy avenues. They are often surrounded by markets or commercial buildings. It is very easy to bump into petty traders who sell items ranging from food to hi-tech resources like mobile phones.

The Categories of Human Elements within the 'Tro-Tro' Business

There are three (3) key human elements in the 'Tro-Tro' business. These elements work-hand-in-hand to make the success of the industry boom. Unlike other transport businesses in Ghana, there are some expectations for each element within the 'Tro-Tro' industry.

The first human element in the 'Tro-Tro' industry is the 'Tro-Tro' Driver. These 'Tro-Tro' Drivers are often adult males who are qualified to drive buses. They begin their work as early as 4 am especially in the cities, and may close between 10 pm and 12 am. Majority of these 'Tro-Tro' Drivers have bosses they account their daily income called 'sales' to. These bosses usually called 'car owners' [notwithstanding the gender] prescribe fix daily amount of 'sales' for these 'Tro-Tro' Drivers to meet as targets. Due to this, there seems to be no time for break or rest except weekends or when their vehicles develop mechanical faults. In some cases, other 'Tro-Tro' Drivers who do not have vehicles of their own to drive [called *'Spare Drivers'*] take possession of the vehicles when the main 'Tro-Tro' Drivers [or *'Master Drivers'*] closes in the evening to work in the night. The driver needs to be an adept in navigation and should be able to change routes when traffic jams upsurges (Anyima-Ackah, 2002).

The second human element is the 'Tro-Tro' Mate. The 'Tro-Tro' Mates, usually males also, does the job of a bus conductor. Unlike other places in the world, most Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' buses do not

have boarding tickets or automatic doors. Thus, it is the duty of the 'Tro-Tro' Mate to collect the fares and also manage the opening and closure of the buses' doors (Coomson, 2013). Apart from these duties, the 'Tro-Tro' Mate has to be vigilant at noticing the particular place the passenger got on board to be able to charge the right amount. A wrong pricing, can lead into agitations from passengers. Another important role of the 'Tro-Tro' Mate is his duty to serve as a helping hand to both passengers and 'Tro-Tro' Driver.

'Tro-Tro' Mates are supposed to pack the belongings of passengers into their buses before boarding, and offload after arrival. They also buy things for both 'Tro-Tro' Drivers and passengers in traffic. They also assist little children, vulnerable adults like pregnant women, physically challenged, and the aged to board or alight. Figure 4 shows an example of a 'Tro-Tro' Mate helping a child to alight from a vehicle in Accra.

Figure 4: 'Tro-Tro' Mate helping a child to alight in Accra
Credit: KAD International Photos

Their duties to the passengers come at no extra cost and are fairly seen as 'responsibilities' rather than 'privileges'. Another important role of these 'Tro-Tro' Mates is to call out the next destination to alert passengers of their nearness to their arrival bus stops. Once a passenger responds to his or her destination's name, they alert the 'Tro-Tro' Driver to stop and assist the passengers to alight. 'Tro-Tro' Mates also simultaneously signal any potential passenger along the road by calling out the name of the possible routes or destinations, even as the buses move as shown in Figure 5 (Coomson, 2013). Thus, the successes of the daily 'sales' or fixed income targets depend on the effectiveness of the 'Tro-Tro' Mates.

The third important human element is the group of persons called passengers. Passengers are the main consumers of the 'Tro-Tro' services. Depending on their journeys and choices, some passengers may choose to go to the boarding stations or stand at a bus stop to pick a passing bus. The passengers in the 'Tro-Tro' are both Ghanaians and foreigners of all ages. Children are not charged fares once they are able to sit on the laps of adults they may be travelling with. At the stations during the peak periods or rush hours, passengers have to wait patiently in often long zigzagging queues (Anyima-Ackah, 2002).

Typically, some Ghanaian passengers serve as a check on the 'Tro-Tro' Drivers and Mates, especially when they impose wrong fares on innocent passengers or drive carelessly. They also chastise other passengers and even the 'Tro-Tro' Drivers and Mates for wasting their valuable time, if a passenger fails to hurry up to get on board (Coomson, 2013).

Figure 5: 'Tro-Tro' Mate in black shirt calling out for potential passengers in Accra
Credit: KAD International Photos

Passengers are very valuable because they help in determining the prices of fares. Once you get on board in a 'Tro-Tro', a new passenger is expected to greet and feel at home. Each passenger is supposed to shift to make space for a boarding passenger or step down for another to alight. The passengers also assist in the collection of fares as the 'Tro-Tro' Mate is only seated close to the door of the mini bus.

Though not quite obligatory, passengers also assist in buying water and other items for other passengers who cannot get access to the traders who are hawking in the traffic. Passengers join in conversation with themselves and sometimes with the 'Tro-Tro' Mate or occasionally with the Driver.

Discussion

From the analysis, the old Bedford trucks have evolved to include many recent comfortable mini buses from leading vehicle producing brands, who charge differently depending on the destination (Anyima-Ackah, 2002). In effect, the Ghanaian 'Tro-Tro' transport system is more of a cultural concept rather than a type of bus or an amount of currency that is charged as a fare.

The system of interactions between the 'Tro-Tro' Driver, the 'Tro-Tro' Mate and the passengers are very unique. Considering the nature of risky driving in Ghana (Anakwah et al., 2015), the role of passengers in maintaining sanity is very vital. Passengers are seen as visible checks and regulators on the conduct of both drivers and conductors within the 'Tro-Tro' system. Unlike other transport systems in the country, the passengers in the 'Tro-Tro' buses are quite open and have some extra conventional powers to instruct the drivers and conductors. This may have some role in influencing risky driving and related consequences if used positively.

Perhaps, another important issue to be debated is the system of 'Tro-Tro' passengers' collectivism. Granting it as a novel discovery may yet, point to the underlying philosophy within the 'Tro-Tro' transport industry as serving a particular social class [*i.e. their cheaper means of transportation*] (Anyima-Ackah, 2002). The historical 'Tro' idea may warrant that latent concept among the passengers. The possible feeling of 'invariably coming from one family.' Noticeably, this may not be so, as people within the high and middle socioeconomic classes do patronise these buses for several reasons (Coomson, 2013). However, that unconditional feelings may be hypothesized to lead to some extent, the universal feelings of togetherness and oneness as they travel in the same bus.

Conclusion

This study examined the evolutions that have occurred within the 'Tro-Tro' transport system in Ghana. It also examined the human elements within the industry and the existing dynamics.

It appears that the 'Tro-Tro' Drivers, Mates and passengers build a system of culture that is mutually dependent. This relationship goes beyond the service provider - consumer bonds.

It fosters a communal spirit among the 3 groups of human elements, though each has his or her own distinct roles. These findings suggest that, the 'Tro-Tro' transport industry has come to stay and will go a long way to enhance the national development agenda, once given the needed consideration.

Implications

This paper advocates for the need to delve deeper into the 'Tro-Tro' transport industry. The hypothesised concept of 'Tro-Tro' passengers' collectivism ought to be studied in a broader sense using more robust methods.

It is noteworthy that the discipline of traffic and transport psychology should be promoted by psychologists, researchers, educators, regulatory boards, and policy makers in Ghana and Africa as a whole. From the work of Conkle and West (2008), there is a need to consider the 'psychology on the road'. Again, future studies may also look at interesting features such as the use of mottoes and slogans for communication as discussed by Powell (2012).

Once traffic and transport psychology is advanced within Africa, it will have a positive impact on all other branches of psychology in general. It will help explain the changing aspects of human behaviour on the roads of Africa and enhance development (Anakwah et al., 2015; Conkle, & West, 2008). On the whole, this will positively enhance planning, policy making, and growth.

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