settler colonial studies

Boys, Brats and Education: Reproducing White Maturity in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1915-1935

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During the 1920s and 1930s, white settlers in Southern Rhodesia (Colonial Zimbabwe) achieved responsible government and sought to claim the region as a settlers' territory but faced a crisis with their own children and youth. Despite subsidised schools and easily available bursaries, too many white boys grew to adulthood without useful education or skills, and with disruptive expectations and demands. These youth faced immediate unemployment and appeared unlikely to be able ever to qualify as civilised breadwinning patriarchs for future generations. Rhodesia's white elite ironically responded to this problem by invoking models of socially controlled education initially developed to train and contain groups of people expected to be inferior: white girls, whose practical education prepared them for subordinate social roles, and African boys and men, whose schools sought to channel individual ambition into a defined, appropriate form of education that emphasized rural life and community values. Educational initiatives, though, proved incapable of making the racial and communal logic of segregation viable. In this case study of white crisis and administrative policy response it is possible to trace some of the logical and practical problems with the social planning initiatives of one of the most segregationist regimes anywhere.

By the 1920s, Southern Rhodesia was no longer an imperial frontier administered by the British South Africa Company under Colonial Office supervision. It had become a settler colony with a government elected by a tiny voting population dominated by the white settlers who were able to meet property and literacy requirements for the franchise. In Southern Rhodesia's demographic context, where settlers were never more than about five per cent of the population, white settlers' anxieties dominated government initiatives, and the new Legislative Assembly passed increasingly intensive segregationist legislation, including the Land Apportionment Act, restrictions on labour and changes in Native Administration.[1] White

settlers elected a Prime Minister who bluntly put white interests first, declaring

> The greatest civilising influence in Southern Rhodesia is the White settler, as long as he is really white inside [...] All the settler asks is [...] that there shall be a reasonable prospect of his children's children remaining white even unto the tenth generation.[2]

This declaration by the Prime Minister emphasised the central elements of white Rhodesian ideas of rule, maturity and success. Prime Minister Huggins linked 'real' whiteness with civilisation. And he linked success not with Rhodes' example of personal achievement, but with a collective notion of generational civilisation or whiteness. Rhodesia, the settlers of the 1920s and 1930s argued, needed mature white men able to provide paternal leadership; it did not need aggressive social climbers, scam artists, equal rights or empathy.

Rhodesians pursued their multi-generational, paternal model of successful development through racial segregation that drew on international notions of race relations, some borrowed from the southern states of the USA, some from the hygiene and racial science notions of British imperial theorists. Yet administrators, legislators and white leaders in Southern Rhodesia emphasised that most of these external models were negative ones. They did not want the tense plural politics of India or South Africa. Neither did they wish to give up the labour supplied by informal squatter arrangements and other extra-legal forms of labour recruitment and management in favour of international ideals of rational economic, social and political organisation.[3] Rejecting the gospel of scientific management and rational policymaking, Rhodesian leaders focused on building a sustainable system of domination by white settlers. As David McDermott Hughes has pointed out, such a project required settlers to creatively 'establish a credible sense of entitlement' that allowed settlers to 'belong' and provided a basis for their claims on land, resources and power.[4] Children, youth, and the resources and values necessary for the social reproduction of the white population were central to this goal.[5]

The late 1920s-1930s period was therefore an extremely challenging time not just for the African majority of Southern Rhodesia, but for the white would-be elite as well. During these decades, administrators, politicians, missionaries and settlers steered between a variety of outcomes they dreaded. These white parents sought a racial system where dominance could reproduce itself, and their white children grow to rule what their parents had seized and built. They sought to naturalise and then conserve white domination. Settler colonialism, they believed, must be more than just a phase in the region's development.

But this reproduction-based, transgenerational model of natural white dominance fit awkwardly with the country's realities. It required effective governance and social initiatives, not just money, military power or even scientific knowledge. African educational initiatives challenged the myth of white superiority. African economic successes might drive white farmers and artisans out of business, as African entrepreneurs worked for less than white farmers, builders, craftsmen and contractors. And beyond these small scale challenges by successful African individuals who failed to fit the myth of white supremacy, there was the problem of white men, and especially white youths, who looked unlikely to be able to successfully defend the racial order. White men and boys who lacked the education, discipline and diligence necessary to raise white families were perceived as an internal threat to settler visions of multigenerational success.

White Rhodesian leaders offered two sets of responses to these problems. Most of their efforts went to designing a set of legal, social, economic and educational institutions for Africans that would cripple Africans' efforts toward success, wealth and power. I have written elsewhere about this aspect of policy, particularly as regards education. This was not a concealed plot, but an overt, explicit agenda item for most of the white political parties in the country.[6]

Here, however, I wish to concentrate on the other approach available to white leaders: building up the white youth and future of the country. As white observers declared when complaining about the white youth of Rhodesia, 'The white men were the aristocrats of this country and it behooved them to keep that position for themselves'.[7] For some members of the Legislative Council, this meant pushing for

mandatory education for white children. This agenda persisted for years, as leaders remarked that 'with our black population we need an aristocracy of public-spirited [white] men'.[8] In this context, average simply would not do. From at least 1915 onward, legislators and white settlers called for a system of education for white children which would address the plentiful problems associated with youth growing up as members of a dominant racial minority in an African country (with distractingly beautiful weather and plenty of servants to handle the labour of ordinary life). Leaders saw this task as so difficult, if it was indeed possible, that it required careful planning, coordination and enlightened leadership. These social planners sought to teach male youth a muscular, disciplined and productive maturity. Sometimes, this meant that white professionals would have to overrule parents as to the proper means of raising and training their children. Sometimes, it might mean developing youths' maturity by overruling the youths themselves, forcing them to engage in tasks they saw as the province of the African men whom settlers called 'boys'. As in policies aimed at suppressing African challenges, therefore, coercion was essential. And because coercion had to be justified to a white electorate, it had to be explainable.

Officials therefore drew on professional opinions to bolster their argument that these sorts of unpleasantness were essential elements in the production of strong, aristocratic youth. And they drew that professional opinion from some interesting, indeed ironic, sources. They sought to explain why girls' education was more successful than boys', and apply the ideas and initiatives which guided girls' education – such as domesticity, deference and low-level secretarial or commercial skills – to boys' training. And, as that failed, they sought to learn from the competition their racist rhetoric condemned, drawing educational initiatives from African programs which had been explicitly designed to mitigate social problems, teach discipline and promote a constructive, non-confrontational community building domesticity for the future. A system of white education that merely mimicked Britain's was neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, in a curious desperation, white leaders experimented with educational programs for Southern Rhodesia's white youth which they modelled on those initially planned for their social inferiors.

THE PROBLEM WITH WHITE BOYS

Even leaders who opposed compulsory education for whites considered white education important, not in spite of the power whites wielded purely on the basis of skin colour, but because of it. Legislator Collins, for example, argued that 'in a country situated such as Rhodesia was with an inferior race [...], it was absolutely essential that the superior race should [...] receive a superior education to the inferior race'.[9] Poor whites were part of the problem, as legislators made allusions to the Boer war and problematic relations between English and Dutch in South Africa. But an even bigger problem was that of perceived degeneration. Some of these boys who were growing up too ignorant to pass the literacy test for the franchise, one legislator warned, were the sons of public school men, the elite of England.[10] Unless help arrived, these youths would be unable to take their fathers' places, would lose the rights of citizens, and would actually begin to accept standards where, as one legislator described a white school, children learned about the world around them in a school which doubled as a mule shed.[11] One legislator explained that education was as essential to a white child as food or famine relief could be to a starving African.[12] In later years she argued that 'uneducated children, or a child who is being given an indifferent education [...] is of more danger to the State than [...] a tick-infested beast'.[13]

Education was a basic necessity, both for the individual white student, and for the society he should grow up to maintain. And home schooling or minimal farm schools were not enough, according to white leaders. White boys needed exposure beyond the family to the discipline of boarding establishments, or at least graded day-schools.[14]

By the 1920s, the populist rhetoric of the early debates over white education escalated another notch as one legislator asserted that 30% of white children were illiterate, and that the country 'could not afford [...] to allow that great asset, the white child, to remain undeveloped in such a way that he was not able to maintain the directive power'.[15] Increasingly, uneducated or miseducated white children were not just a danger to white power, but a wasted

resource, one in danger of becoming a drain on a struggling colony. Legislators labelled white education as the greatest problem the colony faced, and called for measures 'to conserve the brains of our children and to direct them into the avenue of greatest production'.[16]

Observers in the 1920s, though, complained that white education had problems which extended beyond the mule shed facilities which characterised farm schools.[17] Legislator Tawse-Jollie called for bible reading and moral training in the boarding schools, as parents distant from their children had become unable to provide proper ethical foundations.[18] By the mid 1920s, she complained annually that white education was not adequate or improving. Legislators who joined her complaints might not agree with some specific objections to both boarding and farm schools, but they made their own observations of how education produced 'mental saturation' and filled children with 'a large number of facts which they had no practical opportunity of applying'.[19] Legislators, and the popular press, increasingly discussed new types of education such as a multi-stream system which would educate both elite and ordinary on separate academic and vocational tracks. In this discussion, they recognised the increasing distinctions within the white population of Southern Rhodesia, urban and rural, secure and struggling and, increasingly, worthy and unworthy. By 1928, Tawse Jollie was justifying overruling parental notions about education because 'we cannot rely on the parents of this country to do their duty invariably in regard to these children'.[20] Another legislator, Thompson, was blunter. Rejecting any vision of all white children being trained to the model of an English grammar school or public school, he asserted

> My opinion is that it is a waste of education to educate a child beyond the sixth standard when such a child has not the capacity likely to fill a post where the educational standard is higher than the sixth standard gives [...] [T]here should be a certain amount of weeding out [...] In a new country we do not want those super-educated men, men who are turned out machine-like [...] repeating the same things like a parrot, from a text book. We do want a man to be well educated, and the man who gets that good groundwork can forge ahead in

> a new country. [...] [T]here is such a thing as putting good education into bad material [... and] I think this question of educating all [white] children, irrespective of capacity, to a very high standard, can never do much good, the provision is a waste of money.[21]

Thompson's speech may have been blunt, but his points were supported by increasingly critical white voices objecting to the ways in which white youth assumed positions they had not earned and might have been incapable of earning. In ways that paralleled their efforts to adapt education programs to block Africans' migration to the cities, some legislators obliquely called for more moral training of white youth, or for schools which, located in rural areas, would avoid inculcating a taste for city life.[22]

By the 1920s, however, white observers clearly saw a problem. They complained that youth growing up in Rhodesia could not compete with Africans for work because 'they are spoilt by having native servants [...] they think only of bioscopes [movies] and sports'.[23] Missionaries asserted that white youth needed more wholesome fun within Christian families and, for those beyond family life, YMCAs and other such Christian organisations. Other observers complained that complacent white youths were losing any form of superiority over energetic, disciplined, ambitious Africans.[24]

By 1927, the *Rhodesia Herald* was issuing editorials on 'Our Education' which discussed how White education in Southern Rhodesia was seen as producing neither educated scholars nor skilled artisans, but poor imitations of both. Smatterings of culture, the paper observed, led white children to despise manual labour. Youth relied on servants, categorising hard work as 'kafir' work, and the white community sought to block Africans' competition, rather than to make its sons answer the challenges of work and economic change.[25] And the problems started early for white youth, as the editorials noted: 'more than a few spoilt white children in Southern Rhodesia', including children of as young as 2 or 3 years old, were 'exercising definite dictatorships which in the long run cannot do them any good'.[26] Even the Teachers' Federation, a professional organisation of teachers in white schools, while rejecting the Director of Native Development's characterisation of white youth as

'appalling' in their attitude toward African children, noted that the 'European child in Africa [...] takes the native and his ministrations very much for granted' and that this 'produces something of a problem'.[27] Meanwhile, these critics emphasised, Africans' educational ambition and achievements grew.

By 1929, there were nearly 100 government schools and almost as many aided farm schools for white children in Southern Rhodesia, and total enrolment had increased from hundreds at the turn of the century to around 7800, of whom more than 2500 were boarders. This education was among the most expensive in the world on a per capita basis.[28] Investigating this haphazard network of institutions scattered across the countryside, the Report of the Education Commission, published in 1929, summarised the problems of white youth in an African country. '[T]he ubiquitous native', it asserted, contributed to white youth's degeneration by undermining any white work ethic, family life, sex life, concept of moral obligation, or even character.[29] Rhodesian youth, the commission suggested, were in danger of succumbing to the temptations of lethargy and degeneration, and schools' immediate problems of retardation (students older than age appropriate to grade), drop-outs and frequent transfers should be read as warning signs. Popular commentary was blunter than the careful words of the commission report, as the newspaper published, for the benefit of its white readership, a depiction of Rhodesian white youth as

> unambitious, unable to seize opportunities, dull, without polish, lacking in initiative, inefficient, undisciplined, unstable, purposeless, superficial, and further from the fulfilment of Rhodes' ideals than the youth of any other part of the British empire. Finally, he is smug and has no wish to improve.[30]

The *Rhodesia Herald*, like white politicians over the previous decade, did defend youth as not entirely responsible for their undisciplined state, noting that if Rhodesian youth were unable to seize opportunities, it was because few opportunities were available. But the newspaper and elite commentators rejected the arguments put

forward by the Labour Party and those further down the social hierarchy, that they should receive as much help as necessary and Africans' education be slowed and carefully channelled. Segregation was fine, according to the paper, but white youth, too, needed to be held to a higher standard. Elite observers, indeed, saw segregation as a way of forcing lower class whites to labour, not as a means of protecting their ineffectual efforts from African competition.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

Not all observers agreed on what to do with these deplorable, undisciplined youth. One possibility was a more academically rigorous education modelled on the grammar schools and public schools of Britain. In 1931, for example, a newspaper article suggested expanding the school day from the ordinary two-hour days, five days a week, to something more substantial, which would leave room for activities and socialisation.[31] This concept of building the student through conventional academic hard work was put forward by a Director of Education who complained that too few students were studying Latin, and endorsed to some extent by the Education Commission itself, which worried about how few Europeans took their matriculation exams, and asserted that '[p]reparation for and conduct of examinations is therefore to be regarded as an integral part of the whole character-forming process which is education'.[32]

Nearly all other observers, however, rejected the idea that the practical problems could be solved by attention to Latin grammar, external exams and boarding school discipline. More popular, especially among elite parents, were ideas of fostering 'rural mindedness' and 'practical' training for other people's children.

Seeking solutions, these critics examined reputedly more successful and appropriate models of education. One of the first models for new types of education for white male youth was the education of white female youth. White girls in Southern Rhodesia did not generally excel in academics, nor were they expected to do so. Doris Lessing, who attended a convent boarding school while her parents farmed ineffectually in Sinoia, recalled active discouragement of her desire to read.[33] And even in 1933, many

white girls from rural areas dropped out of school at age 15.[34] By that time, however, they had received some training which they were likely to be able to use in their future lives. They were, at least in the popular mind, prepared for their future roles, unlike boys who were 'left to grow up any which way'.[35] Not all observers believed this: one candidate for the legislative assembly paralleled accusations levelled at male youth when she complained that white girls were not being trained in housewifery, and were 'more interested in face powder than baking powder, in blacking eyebrows than blacking stoves', but her critical remarks were condemned in the newspaper, and she failed to win an assembly seat.[36] Whatever girls' actual interests, officials believed that domestic science, taught in all the girls' secondary schools, would provide enough background for these girls to supervise their future servants.[37] Some observers even saw girls as more employable than white boys, observing that white female school-leavers had a variety of possibilities: 'the civil service; certain blind-alley occupations, such as typing, banking and general stores work, and, of course, the old profession of marriage'.[38] Students who dropped out of school at fifteen could prepare themselves for this work at such institutions as the Salisbury Commercial College, which taught shorthand, bookkeeping and typing.[39] Clerical and shopgirl work would not allow girls to support themselves independently over a lifetime of raising a family, but it did not need to. Girls' training *was* sufficient to point the way to a domestic white future, rather than spurring questions and social discontent.[40]

Girls' education was basic, appropriate, usable, and did not produce notable social problems. But it had drawbacks as a model for boys' training. First, it was successful at least partially because of its low expectations. Despite the presence of prominent white women in the political, professional and economic life of the country, neither official nor popular observers considered women's leadership to be a priority for the future. Secondly, it did not provide a model for addressing the perceived character issues which prompted the most damning criticism of white male youth. Indeed, the girls, whose mastery of domestic science qualified them to supervise servants, shared the characteristics condemned in their brothers: an unwillingness to take on hard or dull labour, and inflated opinions of their own worth.

White observers worried about the educational future of working class white families could have chosen to address the problems by re-designing girls' education to facilitate their lifetime employment, and by proposing a new type of family: one with two wage earners.[41] But they did not choose this option. Instead, while many girls did work as school leavers, and even as wives and mothers, observers and planners chose to push for a form of white male education which, even at its lowest levels, would permit a man to support not merely himself, but his family. And they defined the situation as a crisis when it became obvious that many white boys, while able to find jobs, were not going to be able to grow up, marry, and support a white civilised existence on their wage alone. The danger was not to white individuals, but to future white Rhodesian *families*, emphasised officials from Huggins on down. Paternalistic elite initiatives which substituted 15-year-old Rhodesian white boys for African men in factories, temporarily solving the white unemployment problem, could not offer young men much hope for the future.[42]

Attempts to model boys' education on the more vocational aspects of girls' domestic and commercial courses, therefore, drew aggressive criticism from observers who argued that they would subvert the ideal of white superiority through higher civilisation by leading to dead end jobs (at best). As the Director of Education argued,

> it may be doubted whether commercial subjects as ordinarily taught are of very high value even to pupils who are known to be likely on leaving school to enter commercial houses [...] So far as the secondary school is concerned, therefore, commercial studies are not, in the long run, either the most valuable or even the most practical.[43]

Girls' education, which prepared white girls for low-level commercial and shop employment, and a maturity of wifehood, failed as a model to prepare white boys to become the 'aristocrats' and white patriarchs demanded by colonial proponents. Men had to earn more

to support a civilised family and pass the heights of Western civilisation on to the next generation.

Critics of boys' education, therefore, worked diligently to discern sectors of the economy which would be lucrative enough to support future generations' aspirations and expectations. By the 1920s and 1930s, white men were beginning to suffer unemployment as educated Africans became the best candidates for low-level white-collar jobs throughout the region, and skilled or semi-skilled African craftsmen took over the category of artisanal labour and building. In this atmosphere, it became obvious that, barring aggressive segregation, white youth would have to prepare for work either in the agricultural sector, where white capital and access to government support and credit could provide the possibility of an acceptable life, or professional and supervisory work, from which Africans might be excluded for reasons of propriety or politics.

During the 1920s and into the 1930s, therefore, while the working class parties of Southern Rhodesia called for job reservation and aggressive segregation, social planners and politicians worked to develop a model of 'rural-minded' education which would address the 'calamity that the [white] youth of the country [...] seemed to have little inclination to take to the land. Their inclination seemed to be to stay in the [...] congested towns'.[44] While town youth were problems, these leaders imagined that local white youth could be 'their best settlers' if not 'driven out of the country because we did not in Rhodesia provide facilities for agricultural training'.[45]

Reforms in white education emerged immediately after the first major government initiative in African education at the Domboshawa and Tjolotjo government schools. Domboshawa and Tjolotjo were designed as centres of training Africans in home crafts and appropriate local farming practices, with an idea of facilitating students' ability to live on smaller farms in reserves. But they mutated rapidly in response to lack of government resources, missionary pressure and aggressive student resistance. By 1923, when Matopos opened its doors, neither really adhered to its initial mission statement.[46] Instead, the Matopos school, designed to provide rural training for white youth, took up the banner of appropriate rural education. It was designed to solve social difficulties through educational engineering and to instil rural

mindedness; it adhered in remarkably direct ways to the templates initially laid out for the African schools.

THE MATOPOS EXERIMENT

Domboshawa, the African school which the Matopos school apparently modelled itself on, promoted the idea of appropriate, selective education which would allow Africans to make better lives within their own community, staying in rural areas and away from white development, and avoiding competition with white clerks, labourers or storekeepers. In 1920, as Domboshawa opened, missionaries protested that it was taking resources away from their more efficient schools. And the school itself rapidly changed, in response to student pressures, becoming more similar to a good mission school, and less constricting in its educational initiatives. But legislators, perhaps unaware of how much the school had deviated from its plan, defended it as a way to spend money raised from Africans for African benefit and as a way to parallel increased investments in the education of the white children.

The Matopos school received its first funding in the early 1920s at a time when white representatives were already beginning to complain about the costs of educating the children of parents who could not afford to pay.[47] As the Matopos school opened, one Legislator described its mission as to train boys for 'civilized life' and give them a means of making a living. 'Good work', he went on to declare, toward what Rhodesia needed, 'could be done by turning the thoughts of children toward the land at as early an age as possible'.[48] For the government, this was part of a broad push toward practicality and vocational education, as the Rhodesian Colonial Secretary sought alternatives to academic tracks and other legislators asserted that boys could find jobs without high levels of training, and suggested that policies avoid pushing students into 'mental saturation'.

As at Domboshawa, however, social engineers found it hard to make the Matopos school achieve the desired results: youth who would willingly accept to live rural lives. Frustrated, Rhodesia's Colonial Secretary noted,

> The problem of education [...] is deeply based on the economic character of the country. We have on the one side the town, with a high standard of living, high wages coming in regularly [...] On the other hand we have [...] the people in the country. There the farmer has an uncertain income which, taken on average, is low compared with the towns.[49]

Like the African youth trained at Domboshawa and recruited by white employers, Matopos youth observed and acted on real differences in social prospects, rejecting an expectation that they could be rural, frugal, and the country's next generation of settlers.

Instead, the youth of Matopos seem to have viewed themselves, regardless of their family backgrounds, as young gentlemen. Or at least as potential professionals. During its early years, the school, while touting its excellent climate and scenery, increasingly included a standard academic curriculum. This emphasis on academic training may have emerged in an attempt to deflect the popular view of Matopos as a school for indigents, a label vigorously rejected by its headmaster.[50] The Matopos school initially sought to combine general education in English, science and math with preparation for farm life, in the form of agriculture and handicrafts. The school was plagued by bickering and confusion, though. Despite opening with buildings sufficient for 90 students, it only enrolled 41, which increased to 50 in 1925, and then fell again, reaching as low as 18 at the end of 1926, and beginning 1927 with 11 after a change in headmasters and numerous withdrawals.[51]

Parents withdrew their sons because they rejected the limited future which Matopos' training offered.[52] Several noted that, while their sons were interested in farming, a curriculum which allowed students to drop academic subjects at 14 was not appropriate.[53] This rejection of early specialisation was even expressed by parents of boys who were acknowledged to be 'backward'. Mr. A. Raymer stated, for example, that he took his son out of school because he 'was not sufficiently advanced in ordinary school subjects', and noted that he 'had no alternative but to take him away and put him to a

school where such could be provided'.[54] Boys who wanted to become accountants, veterinary surgeons, or anything that required a matriculation certificate and further education, departed *en masse*. Those who arrived and spent any time at the school in the 1927 term found the experience frustrating. There were not enough boys for a football team, complained one. Even parents who accepted the idea of an agricultural school rejected Matopos' specific program, one parent complaining that of ten pupils, only three intended to take up farming, and another noting that his son, one of four farming pupils, was wasting time. 'Had I wanted him to do manual labour I could have put him on my own farm', asserted a father whose son had complained of being put entirely under the supervision of the farm manager, without any real lessons.[55] Parents, unlike elite educational planners, did not consider manual labour – however character-building – to provide useful training for their white sons. The school's inspector ratified the frustrations of the parents, at least obliquely, when he suggested that it would be desirable if boys leaving the Matopos school could write formal exams and receive certificates. Since the headmaster had failed to teach English, however, he complained that this would not be practical.[56]

During the late 1920s, as rural economic conditions continued to deteriorate, the school continued to fail in its stated mission. Inspectors condemned the training as not 'really efficient [...] particularly as regards the practical side', partly because 'the interests of certain of these boys do not lie in the direction of farming'.[57] In 1930, when the school was formally transferred to the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education effectively declared its social engineering initiative to have been wholly ineffectual as the school had failed to attract 'the type of pupil for whom it is intended [...] of all the boys who have left the school not more than five are at present on the land'. Students were dull, failing their exams wholesale and taking lessons in a way that appeared, at least to the inspector, 'to indicate a general intelligence definitely below that in similar forms in other secondary schools in the territory'.[58] These boys, inspectors implied, would never be the rural leaders and aristocrats that white social planners had hoped to create. Indeed, they might not even absorb enough education to evade the label of poor white. And, paralleling the African youth of Domboshawa, they were certainly not deterred from moving away

from rural life and into the towns. The inspector noted that woodwork was the school's happiest department, perhaps because it was a skill that could be transferred directly into an urban context.

ADMINISTRATIVE DOUBLETHINK

The Matopos school and the surrounding controversies about white boys' education in Southern Rhodesia raise interesting questions regarding how colonial education policy was imagined, designed and implemented. Colonial and missionary rhetoric emphasised education as a benefit for all. It was a part of civilisation, one of the things that Britain, as an advanced, civilised and Christian society, could offer to the people it conquered and ruled. Certainly, colonial thinkers sometimes worried about the immediate effects of education on traditional order and social stability, but generally they prescribed more controlled forms of education – not *no* education – as the cure for these difficulties. In a powerful summation, C. T. Loram declared, to the applause of educational professionals from throughout eastern and southern Africa, that 'Education is the process by which a human being is changed from what he is to something that those in authority wish him to be'.[59] Confident in their mission, colonial educational administrators saw education quite simply as one of the benefits of civilisation, one which could even ensure development and social peace.

Nationalist and post-independence critics of education in colonial Africa have been far more sceptical about the goals and effects of colonial educational policies. In critical anthropologies, histories, novels and memoirs, they have asserted that colonial educational policies, which were inherently racist, had contributed to making Africa into a misinformed and problematic place.[60]

Closer examination of educational initiatives and developments, however, leads to a picture which is hard to simplify. Suddenly, factors beyond racial domination emerge even in discussions of education policy in Southern Rhodesia, surely one of the most race-conscious societies the world has ever known. This preliminary discussion of white education in Southern Rhodesia merely scratches the surface, but it raises several concerns for

anyone trying to construct a straightforward picture of education as a tool for hegemonic white power in the building of a settler colony.

First, the elites' willingness to draw on girls' and educational programs for Africans as models in the education of non-elite white boys implies that educational policymaking involved variables beyond simple racism. The elites' acceptance of 'appropriate education' and limited horizons for white boys indicates a social polarisation and class consciousness that went beyond race. Despite the rhetoric of racial stratification, white elites were interested in maintaining their dominance not merely over Africans, but also over demanding lower-class whites. References to whites as an aristocracy may, in this context, have been simply words, not a defendable social goal. In a rhetoric characterised by a concern over generational reproduction and future patriarchal power, white elites defined themselves as the adults, and placed not simply Africans, but also lower class whites, as importunate children who had to be schooled and trained.

Second, even as a white elite was accepting the reality of limited horizons and coercive social control for some white youth, the larger voting white community sought to re-define success and maturity not as Rhodes' model of individual achievement, but into a collective, race-based form of communal success and survival. Controlled, agrarian-minded and disciplined working class white youth could share in this aggregate form of success even as they themselves lived working-class lives and knew little of Latin or Greek, or about the glories of Western civilisation. Instead, these individuals achieved adulthood through a disciplined, muscular form of white paternity and domesticity, accepting guidance for themselves and their children, as long as it was accompanied by the assurance that they and their white children could remain 'really white inside' to the 'tenth generation'. Ironically, this focus on the communal rather than the individual in settler discourse bore a strong resemblance to the type of African development which segregationist 'Native Development' programs proposed.[61]

When Prime Minister Huggins called for securing 'generations' of white Rhodesians, he drew on a set of local priorities that won him votes in Rhodesia and sympathy in Britain. He defined the civilised white man, the man who conquered and colonised, as someone profoundly mature. And Huggins' political initiatives pursued such

maturity for white sons, in the midst of a continent whose people, viewed from the British perspective of the time, were little more than children. Maturity, colonisation and rulership were thus fundamentally intertwined in Rhodesia. Childish white boys, therefore, were a threat so severe that parents could justify managing them as the children they resembled – African 'boys' – rather than the white aristocrats they should have been. Therefore, mature African men, whom settlers *called* 'boys', ironically became a model that white ones might be pushed to emulate (and surpass). As African aspirations, achievements, and qualifications rose, white youth found themselves in competition with a moving target, and one which was hard to match. To gain maturity, these boys had to be more adult than African men. But when African men were experientially older, white youths' ability to assert mature authority required that they be prepared. They should have the character, and the intellectual and disciplinary skills that such competition required; white youth who failed in competition with African men became the much complained-about spoiled brats.

Educational policymaking in Southern Rhodesia, with its complex dynamics of age, race, gender and class, was a twisted patchwork whose details often seemed illogical or counterintuitive. An African education unsuccessfully designed to block African success could therefore become a progressive model for a type of education designed to ensure the success of weak white youth who needed remedial help to sustain the 'appropriate' racial status. They had to become the aristocrats, and mature, economically secure fathers of a developing country. Settler colonialism, even in its most explicitly racist form, was in Southern Rhodesia such a difficult system to secure that it led its adherents in logically convoluted circles, as they sought communal achievement and security through social education strategies originally designed to foster complaisance and subordination in white girls and African men. To understand settler colonialism, it is important to look at what settlers did when faced with intractable demographic, economic and social realities. Despite the ambitions and extreme bureaucratic flexibility of Southern Rhodesia's white leaders, they faced limitations in their ability to build up their settler colony so that it could survive into a 'tenth generation'. And those limitations were shaped not just by the resistance or pressures from the country's majority African

population, but also by contradictions in related processes of white socialisation and reproduction.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Carol Summers is a professor of History at the University of Richmond. Her publications include From Civilization to Segregation: Social Ideals and Social Control in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1934 *(1994) and* Colonial Lessons: Africans' Education in Southern Rhodesia, 1918-1935 *(2002), as well as recent articles on late colonial Uganda.*

NOTES

[1] For a discussion of this changing rhetoric and reality, see Carol Summers, *From Civilization to Segregation: Social Ideals and Social Control in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1934* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994).
[2] G. M. Huggins, 'A Vital African Problem', *African Observer* 2 (February 1934), pp. 18-25.
[3] For example, see the discussion of the economics of squatting in Steven Rubert, *A Most Promising Weed* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press 1998).
[4] David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape and the Problem of Belonging* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1. Hughes argues that water management was key to this assertion of connection between white settlers and local 'nature'.
[5] Black generations, however, were explicitly not planned for, lest the government need to allocate more land as African Reserves.
[6] See Summers, *From Civilization to Segregation*; and Carol Summers, *Colonial Lessons: Africans' Education in Southern Rhodesia 1918-1940* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 2002).
[7] Lionel Cripps, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1915), p. 198.
[8] Editorial: 'Critics of the Rhodesian Youth', *Rhodesia Herald* (16 April 1930).
[9] *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1915), p. 191.
[10] Jock McChlery, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1915), pp. 194-5.
[11] Jock McChlery, describing Enkeldoorn School, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1915), pp. 142.
[12] Ethel Tawse Jollie, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1923), pp. 553-7.
[13] Ethel Tawse-Jollie, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1925), pp. 662-9.
[14] The unstated part of this discussion was the future role of immigrant whites versus those born or raised in Rhodesia. These legislators sought a Rhodesian identity, rather than simply a British one reinforced by immigrants.
[15] R. D. Gilchrist, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1920), pp. 495-8.
[16] R. D. Gilchrist, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1923), pp. 561.
[17] The rhetoric around farm schools directly paralleled the elite condemnation of African 'third class' or 'kraal' schools run by the missions throughout the country, often with rudimentary facilities, poorly trained teachers, and erratic attendance.
[18] *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1920-2). Ethel Tawse Jollie and F. L. Hadfield both make similar points, critiquing the reliance on boarding.

[19] F. L. Hadfield, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1924), p. 705.
[20] Ethel Tawse-Jollie, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1928), pp. 945-55.
[21] T. Thompson, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1928), p. 849.
[22] See examples in the *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1928).
[23] Geo. H. Johnson, 'Rhodesia's Youth', *Rhodesia Herald* (8 February 1924). Johnson rejected this view, but reported on the general sense of his community.
[24] Rev. Howard Young, 'Are we failing in our duty?', *Rhodesia Herald* (30 May 1924); D. Witney, 'Our Rising Generation', *Rhodesia Herald* (18 July 1924).
[25] Editorial: 'Our Education', *Rhodesia Herald* (2 July 1927).
[26] Editorial: 'Spoilt Children', *Rhodesia Herald* (3 December 1927).
[27] Editorial: 'The Teachers' Point of View', *Rhodesia Herald* (23 June 1928).
[28] C. D. D. (pseudonym), 'Rhodesia Revisited', *Rhodesia Herald* (4 November 1929). The government, however, subsidised it sufficiently to make it inexpensive for parents. See Ethel Tawse-Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), p. 271.
[29] *Report of the Education Commission for Southern Rhodesia* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Ltd, 1929) p. 10: 'We see Southern Rhodesia [...] as a small but growing and vigorous community of good European stock [...] settled amid a native population of about twenty times its own numbers, composed of a people who are for the most part docile enough and intelligent enough to afford a large supply of labour which [...] is available not only for productive industry but for the simplest needs of domestic and personal service. This latter fact has important reactions upon the upbringing of the youth of this colony, both in home and school'.
[30] Editorial: 'Critics of the Rhodesian Youth' *Rhodesia Herald* (16 April 1930).
[31] Editorial: 'School Hours', *Rhodesia Herald* (20 March 1931). This article referred to white rural primary schools. Incidentally, African schools were required to have at least two hours a day if they were third-class schools, and four hours per day for first-class schools. This move may have been pushed by an awareness of the fact that some African children were spending larger proportions of their days in the classroom than were European children.
[32] L. M. Foggin, *Report of the Director of Education for 1927* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1928), p. 6; and *Report of the Education Commission*, p. 111.
[33] Doris Lessing, *Under my Skin* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), pp. 95-6.
[34] L. M. Foggin, *Report of the Director of Education for 1932* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1933), p. 4. Lessing, for example, dropped out at age 14. Lessing, *Under my Skin*, p. 154. Composite figures for the early 20s indicate that 8 or 9 times as many white children were dropping out of school before matriculation, or failing, as were passing it. Suggested remedies to the situation only applied to boys. See Editorial: 'An acute problem', *Rhodesia Herald* (18 July 1924).
[35] Editorial: 'Responsibility for our Youth', *Rhodesia Herald* (3 March 1932). Interestingly, one of the commentators (Dr. A.P. Martin) even asserted that girls were in better physical condition than the boys in Rhodesian schools.
[36] Editorial: 'Miss Steedman and Mr. Gilchrist at QueQue', *Rhodesia Herald* (18 April 1924). Lessing actually supported Christine Steedman's characterization, describing even the rural girls at her urban boarding school as knowing nothing of 'the bush,' fearing it, and refusing to learn farm skills. Lessing, *Under my Skin*, p. 103).
[37] L. M. Foggin, *Report of the Director of Education for 1927* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1928), p. 8.
[38] Geo. H. Johnson, 'Rhodesia's Youth', *Rhodesia Herald* (8 February 1924).
[39] Editorial: 'Commercial Life', *Rhodesia Herald* (1 October 1920).
[40] Girls' education could lead to successful domestic establishments even if Rhodesian boys were not able to achieve enough to marry. Girls simply married new immigrants, trained and schooled in England, on the continent, or at least in

South Africa. This, given the ratio of immigrant men to women, was demographically feasible but opened up a potential set of concerns for local boys seeking wives.

[41] White women's labour was a live issue. For example, during the African labour controversy of 1927, a government minister suggested that tobacco farmers could manage without forced African labour if they applied themselves and had their wives take over watering the seed beds and other light agricultural tasks. Farmers' associations saw this as a deeply insulting suggestion. Whatever white women actually did, they did not want to be expected to do it. 'Old Hand' to Editor, *Rhodesia Herald* (28 January 1927). White families' reluctance to accept women's extradomestic labour probably was linked to the association of hard physical labour, especially field work, with African women. Instead, women expected to make a more genteel, appropriate contribution in responding to low producer prices and other production problems. The *Rhodesia Herald* discussed a 'Home Industries Society' in 1920 as a response to a high cost of living. Wives could make knitted goods, jams, sweets, flowers, etc.: *Rhodesia Herald* (9 March 1920).

[42] M. E. Cleveland, who proposed this initiative, regarded it as a success. 'Responsibility for our Youth', *Rhodesia Herald* (3 March 1932).

[43] L. M. Foggin, *Report of the Director of Education for 1927* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1928), p. 7. Note: girls' work in dead-end occupations nevertheless provided opportunities to meet potential husbands among mostly immigrant young men. Girls' social mobility, therefore, was feasible through marriage, if not provided for through high levels of commercial skill.

[44] J. A. Edmons, 'Coming of Age of the RAU', *Rhodesia Herald* (1 February 1924). See also the letters and opinion pieces in the *Rhodesia Herald* during the 1924 campaign. Labour Party candidates condemned missions' education initiatives for Africans, and called for protection, apprenticeships, and opportunities for white labour.

[45] C. S. Jobling (President, RAU) 'Rhodesia Farmers', *Rhodesia Herald* (25 March 1921).

[46] Summers, *Colonial Lessons,* pp. 39-45.

[47] Ethel Tawse Jollie and W. D. Douglas-Jones, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates* (1922), pp. 319-21.

[48] L. Cripps, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates (*1923), pp. 541-3.

[49] W. M. Leggate, *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* (1928), pp. 886-9.

[50] Headmaster, 'Itineration of Headmaster of Matopos School' (received August 1927), National Archives of Zimbabwe, Borrowdale, Harare, Zimbabwe [NAZ] S824/844.

[51] Director of Education, Memo on Matopos, 3 February 1927; W. Helett to Director of Education, 2 March 1927, NAZ S824/844.

[52] Matopos students were generally younger than Domboshawa men, and still under their parents' authority. Thus, while Domboshawa students protested for themselves, Matopos parents protested for their sons.

[53] E. F. Henderson to Inspector, 14 June 1926, NAZ S824/844.

[54] A. Raymer to Inspector of Schools, 12 June 1926, NAZ S824/844.

[55] Theo Hastings Case, 1927. See also W. Hewlett to Director of Education, 2 March 1927 and 12 February 1927, NAZ S824/844.

[56] Cowling (Inspector of Schools) to Director of Education, 30 April 1927, NAZ S824/844.

[57] Matopos Inspection Report, 1 November 1928, NAZ S824/844.

[58] Inspection Report, Matopos, 23 September 1930, NAZ S824/844.

[59] C. T. Loram, 'Fundamental Principles of African Education' in *Interterritorial Jeanes Conference* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1935) p.7.

[60] See, for example, John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume One: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1991); Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: Women's Press, 1988).

[61] For a discussion of ideals of community and how communal development programs failed to meet Africans' goals, see Summers, *Colonial Lessons,* pp. 117-138.