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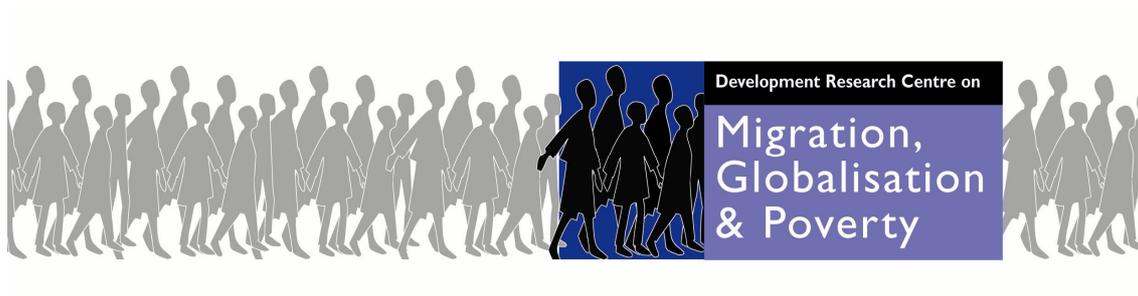
**Child Migration, Child Agency and  
Inter-generational Relations  
in Africa and South Asia<sup>1</sup>**

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## 1. Introduction

This paper arises out of the findings from a set of research projects carried out under the aegis of the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (Migration DRC) at the University of Sussex. The research examines children who migrate without their parents or guardians in developing country contexts, focusing mainly on children who migrate within a specific country or, if across borders, to neighbouring countries, which effectively comprise a linked labour market within a region. We refer to these children as 'independent child migrants'. We recognise that the decision to move may or may not be an autonomous one, the children may or may not make their journeys in the company of known adults or other children, and at their destinations they may or may not be living with other family members or kin. Most often, they remain in contact with their families and family ties have not been broken, unless by conflict, but they do include runaways and also orphan children.

The projects, located in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ghana and India, were not designed as comparative case studies on a single template. Hence, this paper gives an overview of analytical ideas and approaches that are adopted in only some of the work. However, all the projects start from the conceptualisation of the child as an agent -- capable of acting. The idea of the child who has agency is quite common in studies of children in developing countries (Hashim 2004, Iversen 2002, Nieuwenhuys 1994, Ota 2002, Reynolds 1991). It has been widely used to counteract the idea of the child as simply passive. A number of authors have argued this 'passive' child is implied or constructed by western ideologies of childhood that stress childhood as a period of dependence (Edwards 1996, James and Prout 1997, White 2002). However, as Young (2004: 471) has pointed out, the view that children are social actors suggests that they can no longer be considered simply as part of the family and that their migration may be separate from that of parents. The Migration DRC research seeks to understand the motivations and aspirations of child migrants, but this means going beyond the simple assertion that children have agency. In this paper, we explore how children exercise agency within particular sets of social relations, notably those within the family. We also draw attention to limitations on children's exercise of agency.

Independent child migration throws a particularly interesting light on inter-generational family relations because, in the short term, it disrupts an existing everyday and generally very wide set of activities between parents and children and, through spatial dislocation, makes some of these impossible. These activities include domestic work given and received, discipline and advice,

socialisation and skills transfers, expressions of love and nurturance, and a wide range of economic and affective exchanges that make up those long term and short term reciprocities often described as responsibilities between parents and children. Independent child migration dislocates these. Such dislocation may or may not be experienced by parents and children as a kind of rupture, but a rupture that is more profound can be implicated when children migrate on their own. Child migration may arise out of what children or parents perceive as failure in the inter-generational relation: it may arise out of conflict in the relationships or their effective breakdown. These issues are discussed in the next section, where we briefly examine how discourses of family rupture and dysfunction figure in public discussions of child migration and contrast these with evidence from our research about the extent to which conflict, rupture and breakdown in family relations are associated with children's migration. We argue for the need to understand the contextually specific ways in which migration is understood in relation to local norms about parent-child relationships.

In order to focus attention on this area the paper uses a specific interpretation of the idea of the inter-generational contract. The concept of the inter-generational contract has been widely used in demographic studies where it draws attention to the dependencies between generations conventionally conceptualised as young children, adult parents and ageing (grand)parents. The structure of these dependencies is different in different kinds of demographic regimes. In the absence of state level social security systems, these dependencies require ways of securing reciprocities that ensure that the productive members of families feel responsible for those who either are not yet, or are no longer, productive. Demographers also point out that inter-generational contracts have to exist at the societal level. In this paper, we use the idea of the inter-generational contract in a somewhat different sense from this long established use by demographers and in ways that are influenced by feminist scholars of intra-household relations. Kabeer (2000: 465), for instance, uses the term 'inter-generational contract' to refer to the shared, although possibly conflicting, understandings between family members 'as to what each owes and can expect from others within the family'.

Section 3 explores how this conceptual idea of inter-generational contracts might usefully be used to describe parent-child relationships in the context of child labour migration. Although we retain the use of the word contract, it is less the idea of a fixed and binding set of exchanges that we try to emphasise, than the many different kinds of interaction, and the values and processes which affect the everyday relations between parents and children over the short and medium term. Using this term avoids assuming that the child, by definition, is a dependent, and instead

emphasises that both child and parent have agency, objectives and interests. As in the initial feminist work on intra-household relations, the premise is that the content of parent-child relations cannot be read off from universal normative assumptions; instead, we argue that they must be held up to conceptual and empirical scrutiny.

The discussion in section 3 points to four main thematic areas that are then taken up in the rest of the paper. Section 4 presents evidence on the intra-household negotiations that precede migration. It illustrates the bargaining strategies that prospective migrants deploy vis-à-vis their parents and looks at the factors that parents and children take into account. Section 5 explores the diverse ways in which education is implicated in the inter-generational contract and is linked to child migration. Section 6 looks at the maintenance of the inter-generational contract in the context of child migration, while Section 7 is a culminating discussion that looks at constraints on the child's exercise of agency in relation to migration.

## **2. Child Migration as the Rupture of Family Relationships?**

Migrating children frequently are the subjects of strong moral evaluation, as are the families from which they come<sup>2</sup>. Children leaving home to work in villages, towns and cities figure very negatively in many local, national and international discourses. The intensity of such moral evaluation, perhaps, has been especially strong in the West-African context. During the period that Hashim was working on this project the issue of children migrating, especially to southern cities, had become a matter of public comment and concern in Ghana. She recorded several occasions where child migrants were described in the Ghanaian media as 'trafficked'. Trafficking and/or child slavery was a favourite topic in the daily television news or in newspapers, often accompanied by accusations of the parents being poor and/or irresponsible.

Concern about migrating children had earlier led UNICEF and a local NGO to sponsor a study of children migrating from the more northerly areas of Ghana to Accra (Beauchemin 1999). Their

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<sup>2</sup> As Boyden points out, families and the school are seen as the "chief legitimate agents for the socialization of children" (Boyden 1997: 195), consequently migrant children and their families are viewed as deviant since children are living away from their parents and, as shall be discussed later in the paper, it is assumed that they are out of school. This is especially so since migration is often for work, and work is a pathology when associated with childhood (White 1999: 134).

report puts forward a complex set of reasons why children migrate to the south to work, some of them centred on the role of parents. Parents may find 'the strain' of caring for 'numerous offspring' too great, and so neglect some or all of their children, leading them to leave their homes (ibid.: 28). The 'exodus of children' from rural areas to the urban centres of Ghana is 'linked to the breakdown of the nuclear family' (ibid.: 15), with the failure of parenting playing a complex role. Parents are often unable or unwilling to pay the costs associated with schooling, with children's aspirations for education thwarted and children pushed into work (ibid.: 21-23). The report also recognizes, however, that parents are faced with a harsh reality, arguing that many parents believe that the opportunities available for their children are far greater in the city than in their home village, and so encourage their children to migrate (ibid.: 28).

International discourses about migrating children also tend to stress poor parenting:

In many African countries, for instance, sending children to work in faraway places is seen as socially acceptable and often occurs in the context of family dysfunction related to large family size or an inability to care for a child (or children) because of a death in the family, displacement, severe economic stress or other factors. ... This practice underlies the widespread interchange of children among these countries, with the result that they easily disappear from parental or other view and are more easily exploitable (ILO 2002: 37).

In these international examples and in some national discourses we see child migrants through the lens of normative ideals of the family, with particular ideologies of parent-child relations, centred on the idea that parents and children should live together. Living together allows for the nurturing and socialising element of parent-child relationships to be played out, implying moral guardianship, as well as child dependence and, of course, ideologies of what childhood should be. The strength of these normative ideas produces an understanding that child migration implies family breakdown or family dysfunction (Hashim 2004, Riisøen, Hatløy and Bjerkan 2004).

Child migration can be seen as both cause and effect in relation to family dysfunction. It is assumed that when a child goes away to work the family is broken, because parents are no longer caring for their children and children lack the supervision, affection and economic support of their parents. Child migration is also often assumed to signal that children are reacting to ways in which parents or guardians are already not caring properly for them within locally specific norms, or that such children are delinquent. In our view, the possibility that independent child migration entails significant rupture in family relations, whether as cause or effect, has to be established and cannot be assumed. In different ways, the Migration DRC research projects throw doubt on the too easy equation of child migration with family dysfunction or family

breakdown.

## *Adults and Children on the Move*

A key feature of the contexts from which the Migration DRC child migrants come is that migration may be a very normal aspect of life for both adults and children. The out-migration rural study areas in the West Africa projects are localities from which flows of short distance rural to rural migration have long been very common. They are also areas where, increasingly, in the twentieth century, substantial outflows of longer distance male labour migration have occurred. These are dry savannah communities of poor and precarious livelihoods, and dry season labour migration or adult migration, especially of men, for periods of the life cycle, are well established. The cocoa-growing areas of southern Ghana were a magnet for migrants earlier on, but as agriculture in southern Ghana declined and that in Côte d'Ivoire boomed, this became the favoured destination for Burkinaba and Upper East Ghanaians. More recently, a resurgence of ethnic disputes and violence in the Upper East and in one area of the Northern Region has been reported as a cause of migration (Beauchemin 1999; Hashim field-notes). Urbanisation has also attracted migrants to Ghana's cities and to Ouagadougou.

There is a similar background in Bangladesh, where members of poor and landless rural households have long been on the move to other rural areas for work<sup>3</sup>. In addition, more recently, many adult men and women are moving to Dhaka as its economy has grown and diversified since 1971. The capital city attracts migrants from many of Bangladesh's rural areas.

Karnataka in southern India, too, is a state where rural to rural migration by members of poor households for temporary or seasonal work from the poor and dry northern districts is common. Iversen's research shows as well the historical longevity and changing trajectories of adult and child migration to urban areas, both from the better-off districts on the coast and from areas with rain-fed agriculture in the central south. Early flows of migrants headed towards Mumbai at least from the 1930s, where the predominant peasant caste of the coastal belt, the Bunts, established increasing control over the city's growing number of South Indian eating places, popularly known as Udupi-hotels. The more recent boom in Bangalore also resulted in the establishment of many more similar food outlets, attracting unskilled migrants from other districts of Karnataka.

It is possible then to speak of many rural areas as having a culture of migration as Kielland and

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<sup>3</sup> Gardner and Ahmed's (2006) study suggests that these migration flows are enhanced by international migration from some areas, which suck in substitute labour.

Sanogo (2002) do for rural Burkina Faso. In them, moving to work is one of a number of economic and other opportunities that are embedded within local livelihood strategies and may represent the possibility of significantly better opportunities. Young people also may be thought to gain emancipation and maturity through migration.

The Migration DRC's home localities are all ones with either existing high rates of adult migration or with previous high rates. From these communities, different household members seek or have sought livelihoods, employment or incomes elsewhere at particular points of the life cycle, at particular periods of the year or in response to particular crises. Our research highlights that these household members include those who, by international definitions, are children, and that rates of independent child migration are particularly high in the West African and Bangladesh localities. The child migration rates in Karnataka display considerable intra- and inter-district variation. In the village of Honnavara in Mandya district, child labour migration accounts for about 20 percent of all recent migration events and only involves boys. In Innanje, a village in the coastal belt, the corresponding figure for child labour migration is about 4%. In the coastal belt, rapidly growing levels of education, declining poverty and the demographic transition between 1991 and 2001 have produced different constellations of livelihoods and migration flows.

Where adult migration is common there are well-established ways of making moves and more or less imperfect local knowledge about conditions of work and life at destinations, which children also may make use of. Insofar as migration processes are often of long historical duration and may be part of the life pattern of a high proportion of adults so family relations between parents and children may already include established patterns of spatially dislocated expectations and activities.

### *The Role of Fostering*

Some indication of the 'normality' of child migration is given in Table 1, which looks at the incidence of children who live away from their mothers across age groups in selected African countries. The proportions of children aged between 10 and 14 not living with their mothers varies from 11.4 to 29.4 percent and the figures for the younger age group aged 5-9, while not so high, still represent a sizeable proportion of the age group experiencing migration measured in this way. Rates vary from 7.7 to 18.2 percent.

**Table 1: Percent of Children Living Away from Mother**

<b>Country/Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>
Ghana	4.2	18.2	29.4
Senegal	5.7	16.3	11.4
Mali	3.6	13.5	17.8
Kenya	2.8	7.7	11.4

Source: Serra (1996)

In these African countries, there are a number of reasons why children may be living away from their mothers and these statistics cannot be taken as the number of children who have migrated independently. Of particular importance are movements associated with fostering and the link between children's movements away from their natal families and the death of a parent or parents.

The Bangladesh study found that the loss of a parent was the second most common reason for children's decision to move (34 percent), after searching for a better future (49 percent). Hashim's study throws some light on the role of parental death and/or of fostering in independent child migration. Becoming orphaned appeared prominently as a life event for many of the child migrants interviewed by Hashim. In her study of child migrants from Ghana's Upper East Region to the south of Ghana, she interviewed 70 children, with 25 of them falling into this category. Interpreting these movements requires care and often it is difficult to assess the full circumstances of particular cases. Many of the orphans in Hashim's study moved autonomously, but went to live with extended family members in the south. Some of these reported that they moved southwards of their own initiative because of the desire to earn an income with which to support a widowed mother and/or siblings. Others reported that they moved south (on occasion by running away) because the relatives who became their guardians<sup>4</sup> were unable to care for them or were neglecting them. The majority, however, viewed their movement south in a positive light.

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<sup>4</sup> Children invariably stay in their fathers' household on the death and/or divorce of their parents, even if their mother is alive and living elsewhere. Under these circumstances, their guardianship falls under their fathers' most senior living male relative, their day-to-day care usually falling to their own mother if she remains in the household or another of their father's wives or one of the senior women in the household.

Many of these orphans may be seen as benefiting from the practice of fostering, a long-standing and widespread tradition in West Africa (Akresh 2003), whose causes vary widely and include illness, death, divorce, parents' separation, socialization, education, mutual help among family members and the strengthening of family ties (Pilon 2003). Calling on these extended family relationships in ways that produce children's migration reflects the value placed on fostering, where moving to live with relatives other than parents definitely does not constitute family rupture. Rather, the children and adults involved may see it as a positive opportunity, or it may ensure orphaned children are better provided for. This is especially so more recently with the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Guarcello et al. 2004). For this reason, even when discussing those orphaned children reporting that they moved south because their relatives were neglecting them, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the data to mean that they were being maltreated<sup>5</sup>.

While we have emphasised, so far, that migration is an outgrowth of common economic and social processes in our project areas, there is evidence that family breakdown may be a factor in some children's migration, although this varies across study sites. Of the 70 child migrants in Hashim's study, seven (three boys and four girls) reported neglect and/or not being cared for sufficiently in their households in the north as the reason for their migration -- some 10 percent. A few of these children had run away, although only one reported completely losing touch with their families. The Bangladesh survey suggested that, although some children had run away from home to work in the markets and lorry parks of Dhaka, only a few children gave conflict with their parents/guardians as the reason. Of the 105 children interviewed, 3 percent complained of ill-treatment by parents, while a further 5 percent stated they moved because of a lack of affection from parents. The 15 in-depth interviews, carried out to complement the detailed quantitative data, appeared to throw up rather more comments from children on their negative home and family circumstances. As Khair points out, poverty was the major reason why children moved, but maltreatment at home appears to be one of the many implications such impoverishment carries for children (Khair 2005). Another of the DRC's studies on child migrants in Ghana carried out by Anarfi and Kwankye (2005) found that 3.7 percent of the 301 children interviewed in Accra gave parents' inability to care for them as the reason for their migration, although none of the 142 children interviewed in Kumasi gave this as a reason.

The Indian data are in somewhat of a contrast. Iversen's earlier work, in 1998 in the Mandya district of Karnataka, found that conflicts between fathers and their increasingly assertive sons or

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<sup>5</sup> See Hashim (2006) for an extended discussion of this.

between stepparents and stepsons often were catalysts for autonomous child labour migration (Iversen 2002). He reports that Manju ran away to Bangalore along with his friend to escape hard agricultural work and cattle grazing that was accompanied by regular beatings from his parents (Iversen, fieldwork notes). He moved to get away from a persistent and unacceptable situation. Some children ran away as a response to particular episodes, rather than because of long-term intolerable domestic problems. Boregowda, who ran away at the age of 13, did so after being scolded by his father for failing his eighth standard exam. Kumara, then aged 13 ran away from home after being scolded by his father for refusing to work on the family's coconut farm (ibid.). Iversen argues that the conflicts and quarrels that triggered boys to leave home to seek work in Bangalore's numerous South Indian eating places in the 1998 examples rarely involved permanent family breakdown, but were usually a temporary deterioration in the relationship between fathers and sons. In most cases, the children's loss of contact with their families was relatively short-lived and the conflicts with male family members could occur alongside persistent strong and traditional bonding between mothers and sons. In Iversen's 2004-2005 Migration DRC research in the Udipi district of Karnataka, child migrants had also often come into conflict with their parents, particularly over their wish to migrate and unwillingness to stay at school, but in contrast to the earlier study, it was less common for boys to be running away in this part of the state. Instead, they had to negotiate hard to get their own way (discussed in detail in section 4).

In different ways, then, the Migration DRC research projects emphasise the need to avoid simplifications and generalisations about the relationship between child migration and various manifestations of family dysfunction or domestic conflict and suggest that local discourses about migrating children need to be explored carefully. In Hashim's earlier work in 2000-01 in the Upper East Region area in Ghana, adults and children used a discourse of 'running away' about child migrants. For example, Eissah, a successful but elderly farmer explains, 'If a child is grown it is their responsibility to feed you. But you have to beg them because they can run away, but you cannot'. When he was asked if he meant that it was a mutual relationship, he responded, 'Yes, exactly, because if a child wants something and I, as a parent, don't provide, they can run away. So I have to support them to ensure they don't run' (Hashim 2004: 88). Another father said of his son, 'He didn't discuss it at first; he just dodged to Kumasi as he knew I wouldn't give permission; look at me now, farming alone'. He added, 'We did it ourselves'. When he was asked what he meant by this, he explained, 'I myself dodged. I went there for five years, came home, married and went back for ten years. I came back because my father was old'.

Although in these local discourses children who migrate are described as 'running away',

'dodging' or 'escaping', this does not mean that it is a major rupture in family relationships. 'Dodging' and 'running away' seem rather to be a recognised pattern of behaviour. There is also a suggestion that, since parents have to be deceived, it is at a point where the interests of parents and children do not coincide. A young woman in the same area said, 'Children run because if they have nothing to do here and they see their parents are not supporting them they will run to find work. For example, Rose [her twelve year-old sister] has run to Kumasi' (ibid.). The language draws attention to the fact that it is the child's own decision to migrate and implicitly to the respective obligations and expectations between children and parents.

Thorsen (2005) found that parents in southeast Burkina Faso also speak about their children 'running away' and that parents tend to worry about the child's well being when they do so. One man, whose son had gone to Côte d'Ivoire without his permission, complained about the fact that the boy had defied his authority by running off and explained that the boy would suffer because he did not know the type of work he would have to do on a cocoa plantation and therefore he would eventually want his father's advice. Although this father bemoaned the fact that the boy had run off, he readily accepted that his two older sons, who were in their mid-twenties, had migrated. The response to runaways was most acute in India, where local discourses linked such episodes to the collapse of inter-generational control, resulting in parental loss of face. Parents were unhappy and often ashamed when sons ran away and frequently responded by organising search efforts to track down the migrants (Iversen 2002, Iverson field notes 2005).

Consequently, children's independent migration *may* signal family rupture, but childhood migration needs to be understood beyond this. Adolescents and young people are making the transition to adulthood. Aspirations to particular identities are a core component of this transition. The trajectory towards adulthood is rarely experienced by the child simply as emulating their parents and migration may have a strong aspirational element. This may be for something as ill defined as new experiences beyond the village, or new knowledge or new consciousness, as well as a response to new opportunities. In many contexts, it is likely to be centrally linked to ways in which work is part of age-appropriate behaviour for many children. Children moving for different kinds of work may be pursuing economic objectives, exploring or establishing particular identities and/or playing out their sociality. Faced with a variety of options on how to spend their time, migration may rank ahead of schooling and village-based agricultural work, but this might bring children into conflict with parents. The conflicts, negotiations and processes around the point at which a child migrates may give considerable insight into how, in particular local contexts, the obligations and responsibilities between parents and children are understood, including how

these may be changing. How do domestic and family work, helping with family income, attending school and fulfilling responsibilities to other relatives figure in what is 'owed' by children to parents – from both the child's and the parents' point of view? Reciprocally, what are the essentials of and limits to what parents owe to children with respect to their material, developmental and social needs? This is assuming, of course, that 'owed' is a locally appropriate discourse to describe these exchanges; and here is part of the difficulty of adequately understanding independent child migration. Conceptual languages to explore these issues in parent-child relations are not very highly developed. In the next section, we discuss how we can draw on the idea of the inter-generational contract as one possible way of conceptualising the relationship between parents and children in order to better understand children's independent migration.

### **3. Theorising the Inter-generational Contract and Migration**

A number of recent literatures have used the idea of the inter-generational contract to describe the relationships between parents and children.<sup>6</sup> Kabeer (2000: 466) suggests that this legalistic language is used, not because these relationships are legally binding contracts, but so as to capture 'the fact that a great deal of interaction within the family is not random, idiosyncratic, intuitive or rationally chosen, but rather governed by norms and customs which make up the social meaning of the family in that context. These norms and customs<sup>7</sup> exist prior to the individuals concerned and have evolved at the level of the wider community'. These 'contracts', thus, are more implicit than explicit, and refer more to associations and co-operation between individuals that are flexible and negotiable. Whilst there are some contractual elements to parent-child relations, these are subject to normative frameworks regarding appropriate behaviour, rather than the prescribed, 'rational' and/or instrumental behaviour implied by a fixed contract. This is particularly so since inter-generational 'contracts', by their nature, are usually envisioned to last over the long-term, with the result that direct day-to-day bargaining may co-exist with negotiations around the long-term balance of support and reciprocity. This opens up various potential areas of analysis – for example, the extent to which these are mutual, reciprocal or negotiated, the timescale of reciprocity, and whether they are subject to bargaining or exist in the realm of doxa, where the aspects of tradition and culture are so taken-for-granted that they become naturalized, and thus

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, McGregor, Copestake and Wood (2000) Special issue of *Journal of International Development*; Malhotra and Kabeer 2002. Much of this literature is concerned with intergenerational relations at the societal rather than the familial level.

<sup>7</sup> There is a wide range of interpretations of the idea of norms within social science disciplines. The usage here owes more to economics than to anthropology.

not subject to negotiation (Agarwal 1994).

The idea of the inter-generational contract has been utilised with respect to migration in a small number of studies (Hashim 2004, Hoddinott 1992, Iversen 2002, Punch 2002). One of the earliest of these is that by Hoddinott (1992) in an examination of the implications of migration in Kenya. He suggests that adult migrant offspring send remittances in expectation of a subsequent inheritance and that, over the long term, parents' greater access to inheritable resources can be used to elicit care from offspring. Migration, thus, reflects an inter-play between the interests of parents and offspring and it is best seen as a continuum of cooperative migration in which both generations benefit in some ways.

Iversen (2002) takes up this approach in a study of 'autonomous' child labour migration in India and extends it by using Sen's idea that intra-household bargains take place within relations that are characterised by both cooperation and conflict. Iversen points out that failure to understand the co-existence of cooperation and conflict might lead to over-estimations of parental control over child migration and misinterpretations of the meaning of conflict in the child's decision to migrate. In his Karnataka study autonomous sons left home 'in conflict with parents in a vast majority of cases, but 'with a few conspicuous exceptions, the ties between household and migrant were retained also when migrants ran away from home' (ibid.: 821). He argues, therefore, that autonomous migration decisions are 'a revolt against the content of the inter-generational contract rather than a contract termination *per se*' (ibid.).

These two seminal discussions bring out a number of key features. First, they point to the importance of time-scale, implicitly suggesting that what happens over the relatively short term – how parents and children take into account their mutual obligations when decisions are made about a child's migration – should be considered alongside what happens over the medium to long term – especially with regard to the issues of the relation between adult children and their parents, and the responsibilities for elderly parents. Second, children, as well as parents, are conceptualised as exercising agency in migration, and indeed in the decisions that follow from this as to how much responsibility is taken for parents. Third, that the notion of conflict and rupture between parents and children in relation to migration decisions is a complex one.

The literature on inter-generational contracts that adopts the long-term time scale is that by demographers, especially those interested in the transition from regimes of high mortality and high fertility to regimes with declining mortality followed by declining fertility. A classic account of

changes in inter-generational relations within demographic transition theory is that by Caldwell (1982). For Caldwell, demographic transition is associated with modernisation, which brings about significant changes in values and beliefs about the family and in modes of livelihood. Parents become mainly focussed on their dependent children rather than on the ties to wider family members. Major intervening factors are education, which assumes economic importance, and wages, which become a more individual form of economic reward. Education requires much higher levels of parental investment in children, so that high fertility places a greater burden on parents, while education, modernisation and the wage economy undermine the adult child's sense of responsibility to the parents who have made these investments. The balance of power between old and young changes, and typically societies with low fertility low mortality regimes experience the elderly as a problem and lacking in authority. For Caldwell, the demographic transition signals a change in the net resource flows between the generations, but education also brings key shifts in values, which may undermine the authority of parents (Caldwell 1976; Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell 1985).

A number of key questions are raised by this discussion for the context of migration with which we are concerned. How does migration affect the values embodied in the inter-generational contract? As some suggest, does it destabilise values that sustained children's responsibility for elderly parents (Apt 1992)? Are money wages treated more individualistically than contributions to family based forms of production? What is the link between migration, education and the perception and practice of obligations between parents and children?

The structuralist nature of these discussions of demographic transition highlights a relatively limited terrain of parent-child relationships and do not necessarily help us to explore particular synchronic empirical examples. While parents and children may be assessing their obligations mindful of dependency over the long term, and the obligations owed for past support, there is also the question of the everyday. How does the long-term perspective affect the decisions that children and parents make on a day-to-day basis, which may well result in tension and conflict?

One of the advantages of ideas of the inter-generational contract approach is the full scope they give for treating children as social persons with specific sets of interests that they may act upon in making their own decisions about residence, work and education. They develop as social persons within the context of family based households and, hence, the literature on intra-household relations can be drawn upon to theorise this agency. In addition to micro-economic models of the bargaining behaviour between parents and children over migration decisions, we find the broad,

more qualitative approaches to intra-household relations that characterise feminist writings on the household particularly useful. In these, intra-household relations are understood as potential sites of gender conflict and women are conceptualised as having agency. Her considerable contribution to these approaches has certainly influenced Kabeer's recent discussions on the inter-generational contract.<sup>8</sup>

A key issue here is not the 'shared understandings' that characterise the inter-generational contract but the potential conflicts. It is important to develop a language beyond the somewhat static 'cooperative conflicts' of bargaining models to capture the short to medium term perspective entailed in the inter-generational contract. More recent feminist writing on intra-household relations is relevant here. Rather than stressing bargaining as what the parties to the conjugal, or inter-generational contract, engage in, Whitehead and Kabeer (2001) stress the ways in which intra-household relations may be simultaneously relations of dependence, interdependence and autonomy on different terrains (see also Jackson 1998). The ways in which men and women, and we add parents and children, juggle these mutually configured but also contradictory elements of family or household relations cannot be read off but must be explored through processual qualitative accounts of everyday practice.

One author who conceptualises parent-child relations in very similar terms is Punch (2002), who has studied a rural community in Bolivia, where there are high rates of youth international out migration for work. In a paper which foregrounds the negotiated nature of these migrations, Punch argues that, from infancy to adulthood, children have to accomplish a transition from full dependence to independence. She suggests that during this period, and depending on where they are living and working, children 'move in and out of relative autonomy and dependence' (ibid.: 124) and suggests that 'the notion of interdependence' could be a useful way of understanding this (ibid.). In this context, interdependencies between parents and children are acute because children start work at an earlier age and are active contributors to the maintenance of their households. Evolving working roles and responsibilities mean that 'young people negotiate and renegotiate their interdependence with their parents and siblings throughout the life course' (ibid.).

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<sup>8</sup> The term inter-generational contract has echoes of Whitehead's (1981) term – the conjugal contract – which was used to describe in very similar ways the terms on which men and women negotiated various aspects of their relationships within marriage based households.

This account suggests a number of themes that should be explored in the empirical findings from the individual studies that comprise the Migration DRC's loosely collaborative work on child migration. Key issues revolve around firstly, the extent to which the decision to migrate is a negotiated one between parents and children; secondly, what the relationship is between education and migration; thirdly, how the inter-generational contract is maintained when children migrate and, finally, what factors affect children's agency in the process of migration. Each of these issues will be dealt with in turn.

#### **4. The Negotiated Decision to Migrate**

A key issue for child migration and the inter-generational contract concerns the decision to migrate itself. As was made clear in the introduction, independent child migration in our study refers to children who migrate without their parents. We do not assume that it is the child's own decision, nor that such children usually end up on the streets or with abusive employers. Some of the literature asserts that children who migrate to work are sent by parents who need them to work because of their straightened circumstances. Other discussions stress a continuum from a decision that is made entirely by the parents to one where the decision is made entirely by the child (Lauby and Stark 1988 cited in Iversen 2002). Iversen captured this complexity in his work in Bangalore, where he suggests that, in practice, in many situations the decision that a child migrates is likely to contain some element of cooperation, although it is unlikely that, however mutually agreed, the costs and benefits are equally distributed (Iversen 2002). The Migration DRC research confirms that the decision of or for a child to migrate is usually a negotiated one. The qualitative methodology adopted in a number of its projects allows detailed exploration of how the decision to migrate is taken and what kinds of factors adults and children find significant in these negotiations.

##### *The Inter-generational Contract and Child Migration in Ghana's Upper East*

In the Upper East Ghana study site, the factors taken into account by both parents and children are embedded within what is a fairly culturally explicit inter-generational contract. Hashim's earlier research on children's work for their farming households in the village of Tempene Natinga in north-eastern Ghana found that all household members are obliged to work under the direction of the household head in the household farm to produce food for domestic consumption for the year and cash crops (Hashim 2004; see also Whitehead 1981, 1996). These obligations included age-

specific work for children. From a very young age, children are encouraged and expected to contribute to the household's livelihood activities. From the age of four or five they are helping with tasks such as caring for younger siblings and running errands. Between seven and thirteen, children are expected to gradually begin engaging in almost all those tasks that adults are carrying out in the production of food for the household's consumption, in the production of cash crops and in the reproductive labour necessary to secure the household's subsistence, albeit to a lesser extent than adults. By the age of fourteen they are carrying out all those tasks that adults of their gender are able and expected to do (Hashim 2004: 58). They do this by engaging in farming and also trading, or doing casual work on their own account, like adults, as they are expected to provide for themselves several personal items, such as soap, additional clothes, and so on. They also begin to buy the items necessary for their progression into adulthood; namely pots, basins and bowls, in the case of girls, and livestock to rear, in the case of boys (ibid.). A good child is seen as one who conforms to these expectations: children are rewarded if they fulfil their obligations and sanctioned if they do not, as reflected in this child's assessment of his work for his family, 'It's good because if they see that you have helped they will buy you something, but they won't if you don't' (ibid.).

While children are encouraged to adopt the economic roles expected of them, this is not a conflict-free process and, up until the age of about thirteen, sanctions, such as the withholding of affection, corporal punishment or being denied food, may be employed (ibid. 89). As children mature into their evolving responsibilities new conflicts emerge. In a context where children are both required and expected to contribute to household subsistence, and expected to be to some degree self-reliant, there is a fine balance to be achieved between these contradictory goals. Children have to ensure, on the one hand, that they fulfil their obligations to parents and seniors, while, on the other hand, they try to carve out the space to pursue their own personal endeavours. This is both in their material interest, and an aspect of the development of their identity and others' perceptions of them as 'a good child'. For their part, seniors need children's labour to secure subsistence, while at the same time they need to ensure they provide children with the time and means for pursuing their own endeavours (ibid. 149).

In this cultural context the relatively explicit inter-generational 'contract' is one in which interdependence and autonomy co-exist, albeit the relationship is unequally balanced in favour of seniors and parents. It is nevertheless in both the child's and the senior's interests to achieve some degree of equilibrium. This is captured well in comments made by Adamu:

If they send you [to work on the farm] and you go, your parents will note this and help you. Those that don't go will be seen as a bad child. ... My work for my family is important because it is where they will get their food to eat. It is also good for me because I'll get food too and get strength that will allow me to go to my own work and get money ... Because of my work for them, if I have friends to help me with my rice farming, they will fetch millet for me to prepare food for them. ... And when I marry my father will give me the animals for my bride-wealth" (ibid. 87).

The interdependencies expressed here are also evident in the negotiations that come into play when children migrate. The younger child migrants interviewed in the south rarely initiated their movement themselves, usually stating that they have been asked to migrate by a senior. However, they also rarely said they did not wish to move. Thus, when children are young they are often merely following their elders' decision to move them, usually in the face of a request for labour from a migrant relative. The children are not 'choosing' to move to another household, but they recognise their obligations to seniors and to their extended kin, and consequently are fulfilling expectations of them embodied in the implicit inter-generational contract, merely in a different context. However, as children become older (the 14+ category) and emerge into a more differentiated world of work where they begin to want to realize their own economic, social and, as we shall see, educational objectives, their interests become more separated from those of their parents. Migration is amongst the opportunities they begin to seek out. As their labour is important to household livelihoods, there is a potential conflict between the child who wants to migrate and the parents who need their labour.

Boys and girls experience these potential conflicts differently. Boys have more work opportunities available to them and a working role that is both more valued and that has a monetary value more easily placed upon it. Consequently, they have both incentive and opportunity to migrate to pursue their own livelihoods. However, boys also are more embedded in the social, cultural and economic relations of their community.<sup>9</sup> Because of the patrilineal nature of residence, the practice of bride-wealth and the gendered nature of the work tasks, boys are more connected with their communities and this connection involves investing labour as a long-term resource strategy. This resource strategy is both economic, such as in farming, but also social and cultural,

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<sup>9</sup> Gender, family size and structure all affect the life trajectories of individual children.

Whitehead's research in the 1970s suggest that it was much easier for boys to negotiate with parents their release from family work obligations to migrate when there were several sons in the family. Boys in small families more often had to 'run away' to achieve these ambitions (Whitehead 1996).

in terms of building the relations necessary to ensure the ability to secure their own and their households' livelihoods, since securing livelihoods in this context requires cooperation among many. The effect on familial relations is that both a boy and his agnatic group have a vested interest in maintaining good relations. Thus, boys may draw on this to negotiate permission to migrate, as well as be more easily persuaded to stay or to return. Depending on the household circumstances, males may also be encouraged to migrate both since there are greater income-generating opportunities for males, and because of the potentiality for securing a patronage relation with a receiving household through the provision of a boy's labour.

Females, on the other hand, are viewed as more temporary members of their households, since they invariably move to their husbands' villages on marriage. 'Girls do not belong to the household' was frequently heard (ibid 91). Thus, girls are less embedded in the social, cultural and economic relations of their agnatic kin. Their work, almost without exception, is undervalued or simply unrecognised, by men (and boys). Any girl in any context can do girls' work, and they, as a result, can move or be moved around more easily. Moreover, girls' work is primarily domestic, which by its nature is on a different, shorter cycle, such that any woman or girl can do this work and it can be done in any setting, whether it be for their mothers, their agnatic kin, their husbands or as part of a migration strategy (ibid. 112). Consequently, families may more readily release girls in the face of a request for a child's labour, or a request by a girl for permission to migrate<sup>10</sup>. Girls' lack of embeddedness also means that girls have to be more resourceful in pursuing alternatives beyond their natal families and agnatic kin. At the same time, there are very few opportunities to pursue their own enterprises and only extremely limited earning opportunities for girls in the north. Consequently, they have significant motivation to migrate in pursuit of better opportunities (ibid).

These issues are all reflected in the ways in which the decision to migrate was negotiated between parents and child, and often parents and extended family. Hashim's Ghana study of children who had migrated, for example, found that only three children had not wished to move, while the vast majority stated either that they had been asked to and were happy to do so or that they had instigated the move themselves (Hashim 2005: 14-5). Many of the children were 'collected' by a relative, and parents were under some pressure to accept such a request (ibid.).

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<sup>10</sup> As shall be discussed later, families did, however, sometimes express concerns about girls' safety and 'morality' if it was older teenaged girls who were seeking to migrate, rather than younger girls who were being requested by a relative.

As one man put it: 'If your brother asks for your child you can't refuse because it's his child too' (ibid. 30). Motives that parents mentioned were that migration enabled children to contribute to the household's expenditure: 'He helped us a lot with the father's funeral, so it's good that he went', or because this enabled children to acquire the items necessary for their marriage or for their livelihood activities (ibid 14). One mother in northern Ghana, for instance, stated of her three daughters' migratory experience: 'First Vic went to her uncle and when she came back she brought a sewing machine and clothing. And when Dinah went she came with bowls and clothing, and so I'm hoping it will be the same with Mary. If she could have got [from here] the items like Dinah and Vic to marry maybe she would not have gone, but how [else] is she going to get these things?' (ibid.).

Children, also, sometimes had to negotiate permission to migrate, if parents and/or guardians were not happy about them doing so. For example, one teenaged girl's father's brother did not want her to migrate because 'some girls come south and find work and when they get money they don't go back' (ibid. 37). She persuaded her uncle by saying, 'I told him that if I didn't go I will suffer. You can't get it for me, my mother can't get it for me, so I have to go, otherwise when I marry I will have nothing' (ibid). This kind of strategy seemed to be an important one for children. Parents seemed to feel they could not dissuade children from moving if they had no means to provide other than food for them, as reflected in this father's statement that, 'I am not happy but I don't have control. I don't have a job here to be supporting him' (ibid.).

These examples suggest that a child's migration can be a continuation of the social relations of the immediate family, but played out in a different spatial locality. However, by no means are all child migrants from the Upper East living with relatives. Twenty-two of the 60 child migrants interviewed in southern Ghana were not. In some cases parents agreed to children's movement because of their perceptions that they were securing the welfare of their child and the sense that they have a parental obligation to do this. Equally, parents may be permitting their children to migrate as part of their responsibilities to 'support' their children, allowing them to pursue their individual enterprises (ibid. 36).

These are by no means cost-free decisions that parents make, although the trade-off is often that by acting to support their children, these latter feel indebted to them for that support and consider it when parents are ill, or need them at home. However, as discussed in section 2, it should be stressed that not all child migrations are the product of such negotiated decisions. Parents often described it as running away when the costs to them are very high ('Look at me, now! I am

farming alone'), and of course a small minority of children do simply 'run'.

### *The Role of Parents and Children in Child Migration Decisions in India and Bangladesh*

Many more of the child migrants studied in India and Bangladesh live independently when they have moved to work in towns and cities, although 63 percent of the children in the Bangladeshi study lived with those who had accompanied them during their migration, just over half of whom were relatives.

In terms of who made the decision to migrate, in the Bangladeshi study, the research revealed that 55 percent of the children themselves made the decision to move, while 24 percent stated that their relatives influenced their decision to move. Only 19 percent had their parents decide for them. Khair concludes from this that, 'aspirations for a comfortable life encouraged these children to migrate, the general perception being that work for a few years will pave the way for a prosperous future for them. In many cases they are supported by parents/guardians who send their children away in the hope that after a few years of work in the city they will have landed a steady job and help the family sustain' (Khair 2005: 80). Those children who had themselves made the decision to move were principally motivated by searching for a better future (49 percent), while the loss of a parent was the next most significant factor (34 percent), followed by children's desire to help their family by working (7 percent). Most children set about trying to find work when they got to Dhaka, often drawing on social networks to do so (32 percent were assisted by a relative, 21 percent by the person with whom they had travelled and 14 percent by friends or neighbours), although 30 percent procured their work themselves.

According to Khair (2005), some children decided to move despite not receiving parental consent and others did not even consider asking their parents, as they knew that they would not be granted permission. Yet others consulted their parents but received only half-hearted assent, while in some other cases parents gave permission willingly, realising that the prospects for their children in the village were extremely poor. It is relevant to the difference between these patterns and those in Ghana's Upper East that, for landless poor households in rural Bangladesh, the child cannot work to help the parents to farm their own land; instead they must seek out often scarce casual rural employment. Sohel, for example, who was 14 years old when interviewed in Dhaka, had been unable to attend school as his mother, who is divorced from his father, could not afford

it. Having plenty of idle time on his hands<sup>11</sup>, he soon became involved with a group of village teenagers who were occupied with diverse anti-social activities. Villagers repeatedly complained about Soheli's involvement with petty crimes to his parents, who chastised and punished him. One day there was a theft in one of the houses of the village and although Soheli was not involved, he was accused along with others. A *shalish* (arbitration) was convened at which point his father advised him to leave the village. He took his father's advice and headed for Dhaka with a small amount of money given to him by his father.

Rural Bangladeshi parents might also be more actively involved in finding a child work elsewhere, especially perhaps for girls. Shahera, a twelve year-old girl, worked in a house in Motijheel in Dhaka, when she was interviewed, but originated from Bogra. Of the five brothers and sisters in her family, she alone has completed her primary education, but she had had to discontinue her studies due to family poverty. Her father is a farmer, but he is old and unable to support his family. Her mother works part-time in different houses as a domestic help. Her mother managed to find a job for her as a household help in a well-off family in Bogra. Shortly thereafter, the daughter of the family moved to Dhaka and set up house there, bringing Shahera with her to continue her domestic work. Although her family had arranged these jobs for her, Shahera had always been keen to come to the city, and was very excited when the opportunity came up (*ibid.*). Parents, in these cases, are seeking realistic solutions to the problems of poverty and opportunities for their children in ways the children, too, find acceptable.

Most of the child labour migrants in Iversen and Raghavendra's study of coastal Karnataka live independently of relatives and those who have helped them migrate. Working in small South-Indian eating-places, they typically live in their workplace. This may be one reason why, in the Indian case, the child's desire to migrate for work appears to cause more initial conflict between parents and children. In an earlier study of children working in hotels and fast-food restaurants in Bangalore, around 75 percent of the parents of autonomous migrants were unhappy about their son's choice. This is partly because Mandya parents did not perceive these eating places as risk-free social environments and often expressed concern that their sons could end up in bad company and partly because many of these children had run away (Iversen 2002).

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<sup>11</sup> Note here that there is no work for Soheli who comes from a landless household in the village.

In northern Ghana this could never be the case. A 14-year-old might not be able to work outside, but could be fully engaged in helping his senior males in farming.

In the coastal areas, the initial conflict between aspiring migrant and parents is often subject to prolonged negotiation. Both the extensive networks from coastal areas into the food industry and the fact that parents are involved in the negotiations in the choice of workplace makes these placements perceived as less risky. Raghu left school at the age of 12 after receiving several beatings from both parents and teachers, and was determined to migrate to avoid the constant parental pressure to keep up his education. During the summer vacation and before the start of the new academic year, he approached his father's younger brother, the owner of a pan-beeda stall in Bangalore, who was home on holiday. He asked if he could find Raghu a job in Bangalore. The uncle agreed to facilitate, but only if Raghu's father, who was in the village at the same time, approved. The uncle left the responsibility of obtaining his father's consent to Raghu. Raghu approached his father who initially said no and tried to persuade Raghu to continue his education. However, he had to give in when Raghu persistently refused to consider further school attendance.

There were many examples where children persisted in wanting to leave school and migrate to work, resulting in these kinds of hard negotiations and conflict between parents and children over education. Babu's father appears more sanguine over his son's lack of interest in school. Babu was fully aware he had failed his seventh standard exams, because he had been constantly absent from school. Even before the results were out, he approached Manju, an older friend cum neighbour who had been working in a hotel in Mumbai for nearly 10 years and had briefly returned to the village. Manju had arranged a new job for himself in a hotel in a town in a nearby district where a relative from the village was a manager. With the manager's consent, Manju agreed to take Babu along. Only then did Babu inform his parents about his decision. The parents said that he was free to take such a decision and his father gave him Rs 300 in support. However, in other examples, parents and child might be faced with a difficult situation with respect to the child's welfare and/or family welfare. Sanjay, a 45-year-old Brahmin, left home for the district headquarters of Udupi at the age of thirteen. A hearing impairment made schooling difficult for him, and after struggling to complete fifth standard, Sanjay told his father that he had decided to leave school. Although his father initially opposed this, he gave in when Sanjay's mother backed her son's position, but on condition that Sanjay take up work in a hotel. Sanjay's father took him to his nephew who was working as a cook in Udupi, and he spoke to his employer who agreed to employ Sanjay as an assistant to the cook. There also are examples where children had been encouraged or pressurised to migrate by their parents, who had pressing income, economic or resources concerns. In the 1998 Mandya data, for example, some child migrants had moved to work to provide for their sister's dowries, largely in response to the parents' dictate or pressure.

These illustrations, together with those in earlier sections, bring out the wide variety of paths negotiations about a child's migration may follow: while the legitimate parties to the negotiations are usually the parents, other relatives and non-relatives often also play a part. The precise contents of these negotiations vary significantly and once parents agree to the migration, they often play a constructive role in ensuring that the movement matches wider household interests in some ways.

Unlike Hashim's Ghana example, in this cultural setting, parent-child relations are not described locally in ways that highlight their implicitly contractual nature. Hence, the language in which the negotiations about migration decisions are expressed is rather different. However, there are some interesting similarities in the two situations. It is not uncommon for there to be disagreement between parents and children over whether migration is a sensible idea, and this generally leads to negotiations between the generations. The initiation of the negotiations may come from either parents or from the prospective migrant. It is also not uncommon for others to be involved in these negotiations – these others may be used as potential strategic allies by the migrants (see also Ota 2002) or by parents with a view to dissuade the migrant. In the earlier Indian research (Iversen 2002), failure of the negotiations often resulted in boys running away. In the later Indian research in the coastal areas of Karnataka, where the present educational aspirations of parents are high, one or both parents were usually very opposed to a child's migration. Drawing upon other relatives and friends for support, as did their parents, while adamantly refusing to follow a parent's wishes, boys often managed to negotiate a solution in which their own preferences and priorities won through. In Ghana too, while some children left clandestinely, many others negotiated permission to leave.

In both Ghana and India, parents often attempted to make their child's migration more secure, either by sending children to relatives (Ghana) or by seeking hotel and restaurant jobs with employers with whom some kind of social network contact existed (India). Once they had left home, however, migrants could and did find other work situations. Eighty-year-old Sunil, for example, recounted how, when he had first migrated aged 17, he had been persuaded by a companion not to take up his arranged job in Mangalore, but to travel instead to Mumbai on the basis that there were more jobs and that it was better not to work for a relative.

## **5. Education**

Education is a key issue both for child migration and in the literature on the inter-generational contract. The effect of migration on children's education is a dominant theme in the advocacy literature about child migration, the general view being that child migration affects their education negatively. Many policy-generated studies of child migrants find that they have not attended school or are not able to attend school where they are migrants (Beauchemin 1999, Kielland and Sanogo 2002). Kielland and Sanogo (2002), among others, cite not being at school as a factor associated with the likelihood that children would migrate in Burkina Faso –implicitly assuming that getting children into school would reduce child migration. On the other hand, and as noted earlier, demographers' discussions of the inter-generational contract emphasise the link between demographic transition and a greater value placed on children's education. A key element here is the rise of education as a prerequisite for economic opportunity. Although some argue that education in and of itself brings youth into conflict with elders and undermines the latter's authority (Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell 1985), Kabeer (2000) argues that education becomes a new element in the inter-generational contract that is expected by children, but also supported by adults because of the possibility of greater security in old age. In Bangladesh, investing in education serves to cement the child's sense of duty towards parents in their old age. She points out that a further feature in demographic transition is the 'quantity-quality trade off' when parents cease to invest in large numbers of children for their security and instead invest in their children's current well-being and their long-term interest by investing in health-care and education (ibid. 466).

Differences in the Migration DRC's study sites are quite significant when we come to look at the links between child migration, education and the inter-generational contract. Some of our studies found that children gave up school to migrate, or that child migrants were more likely to come from those not at school. Khair's research in Bangladesh has instances of child migrants to Dhaka having to give up their education once they migrated to search for work (Khair 2005). Anarfi and Kwankye's (2005) study in Ghana similarly deals with youth migrants whose work in Accra precludes them from attending school. Thorsen (2005) found that most of the child migrants in her study lacked education, with only 16 of the 49 ever having attended state school, while another five had been enrolled in rural Qur'anic schools, and even then only two had completed primary school with a certificate and two had attained the basic level in Islamic learning.

However, our other case studies suggest that all these linkages are quite complex, and particularly that they are context specific. In this respect, an extended comparison between the

India findings and those from Hashim's Ghana study raise very interesting issues. Iversen and Raghavendra's study provides access to data collected earlier in Mandya district of child migrants to Bangalore and collects new information from child migrants, mainly boys, both from Udupi district in coastal Karnataka and again from Mandya district. It also includes migration and life histories from adults of a wide age range who had been child migrants in earlier decades. Adults and children from these parts of Karnataka have long been involved in out-migration for work. From very early on the educational needs of Kannada-speaking children were catered for in Mumbai by Night Schools. With the first such school set up as early as 1918, by 1950 the area known as Fort Mumbai on the southern edges of the city had as many as five night schools, attended mainly by boys from Udupi working in small South-Indian eating places. The owners of these enterprises sponsored the night schools and provided flexible work-hours. The narratives from current child migrants are markedly different from those of boys who left for work between 1935 and 1950, when village schools did not cater for educational needs beyond the fifth standard, increasing the relative attraction of migration for work.

The more recent evidence also points to a link between education and migration, but of a very different kind. Rates of child labour migration in the four villages covered by the study are below that of Mandya district in 1998 (Iversen 2002), although one village in Udupi has seen a very rapid and recent increase. The educational aspirations of parents are very high and the main group of contemporary child labour migrants are what Iversen terms 'educational misfits' – children who are not getting on well at school, or who dislike school and refuse to go. Motives for leaving school include general restlessness and disinterest, stigma attached to failing in school and commonplace beatings by teachers, at least in some villages. In Udupi, discourses and conflicts between young boys and their parents that precede a child's migration typically revolve around school attendance and performance. Umesh is a typical example of an educational misfit. Umesh left school at the age of 12, after receiving several beatings from both parents and teachers. Umesh had no interest in schooling – it was simply not his cup of tea. Teachers would beat him for not completing his homework or for his performance in class, and to avoid punishment, he would miss classes for days and go out to play and roam with like-minded classmates. His mother and elder maternal uncle would also punish him for his regular absenteeism, and his father vacillated between advising him of the importance of staying at school and beating him. He describes his situation as a choice between 'the devil and the deep sea'. Umesh used his social network to find a potential job opening and simply refused to consider going back to school, so that eventually his father reluctantly agreed to let him migrate.

Babu, whose father had agreed more readily to let him migrate when he found a job, was also not interested in schooling. Teachers and parents regularly beat him for his irregular school attendance and his behaviour in class. Without informing his parents or his teacher, he would go out to roam, play and watch *yakshagana* (the folk dance of the region) with four or five classmates. Although he had turned up for all his papers for the seventh standard final exam, he was sure he had failed and was determined not to go back to school. Instead, as described earlier, he sought out a possible job.

These considerable shifts in attitudes to and availability of education in coastal Karnataka reflect the profound changes in India's employment patterns and forms of economic activity, and in the prevalence of and potential value of education in the last 50 years. The status of education and its relation to jobs, careers and livelihood options has fed into India's undoubted, but uneven, demographic transition. In the contrast between Iversen's 1998 Mandya findings and those for 2004 Udupi, it is relevant that Udupi district today is amongst the less poor of Karnataka's districts. It has the highest adult literacy rates in the state (86.6 percent male and 74 percent female), the highest percentage of births brought to safe delivery (91.5 percent) and one of the highest rates of completed infant immunisation (86 percent). At 4.5 percent, it also has a very low rate of girls married under the age of 18<sup>12</sup>. It would be interesting to know how parental commitment to education, which may not be shared by a child, fits in with other elements of parent-child responsibilities within the inter-generational contract. The household's position in the rural socio-economic hierarchy must affect which children must earn, when and why, and whether children are expected to help with the family farm or other enterprises.

These scenarios in the Indian study sites are to be contrasted with Ghana's Upper East Region.<sup>13</sup> Conditions here are much harsher and poorer, and the benefits of education in the labour market are more difficult to access. More children are not attending school and very few parents send all their children to school. Instead parents watch to see what the child's own commitment is, being more likely to support a child at school who is keen to go and to learn (Hashim 2004).<sup>14</sup> The child migrants interviewed in southern Ghana had mainly not been in school in the first place or had dropped out early on before they had migrated; only four of the seventy children interviewed having dropped out to migrate (Hashim 2005: 43). However, child migration and education were linked in

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<sup>12</sup> Rates for other districts vary between 4.5 and 67 percent.

<sup>13</sup> The Upper East is Ghana's poorest region, with poverty increasing significantly in the last decade.

<sup>14</sup> Punch (2002) also reports that not all of the children in a family get educated.

that some children migrated in order to pursue their education. Some of the children had undertaken targeted migration to acquire the funds to pursue their education or in the hope of securing an apprenticeship position (Hashim 2007).

However, also apparent in Ghana and in line with some of the literature (cf. Iversen 2002), is evidence that the investment in education is strengthening the inter-generational contract, as illustrated by the following extract from Hashim's field notes:

*Ghana Diary Extract, 26 May 2004*

On coming back [from a visit to a son in the south] Abang found his youngest son [aged fifteen] in Garu [a nearby town], about to travel south with his mother's sister. She owns a bar and had persuaded him to come with her for four months until his junior secondary school exam results are out. Abang was unhappy and he subsequently sent for the boy, who returned after one week. Abang told me, 'All the suffering for his education, he should be with me'. Apparently, he is concerned that if he allowed him stay there he wouldn't be able to 'control' him.

Equally, the failure of a parent to fulfil their side of the contract, which now includes education, is reflected in this teenaged girl's comment regarding why she ran away from home. 'I wrote my exams and asked my mother if she was able to support me [to continue to senior secondary school] and her response made me think that I should forget about education'. Parents in Ghana also reflected on their failure to prevent their children from migrating because of their inability to provide their children with an education or training: 'Because I had no money to send her to handicraft [apprenticeship] I have to allow her to go'.

In the Bangladeshi study, only 6 percent of children left home to pursue education. However, the in-depth interview with 15 children, which shed more light into the complexities of migration, illustrated that in some, albeit rare cases, children may hope to one day return to education, should they earn sufficient monies, or alternatively to assist younger siblings to do so. The Ghanaian child migrants also reported that on occasion they assisted siblings with funds for education. Children, as well as adults then, might be seen to be investing in the education of close relatives.

This raises other issues of inequity in relation to who gets educated and who does not. Children who move to carry out domestic work sometimes are undertaking work that would have been done by the children of the host family, who are, instead, being sent to school. This is often the case for the young household helps in Dhaka, but this is also apparent in Ghana. Equally relevant, but along a different line, is the other important linkage with education in the Ghana context that children from rural areas are replacing the labour of children in southern areas who are going to school. That is, parental aspirations have changed in the south and amongst long-standing northern migrants to the south, so there is a growing demand for migrant children from the north to replace the labour of those children in the south who attend school as their parents have aspirations towards their education. In total, of the 60 child migrants interviewed by Hashim,

10 reported that they did not attend school while the household children were enrolled. This is in line with other research that suggests that as families become wealthier and live in urban environments, children (particularly girls) are more likely to attend school, which reduces the family labour supply, creating a demand for domestic workers (Andvig 2000, Beauchemin 1999, Innocenti Digest 1999). In the West African context, this might be acquired through fostering. For example, Pilon's (2003) thorough review of the material on fostering suggests that rural fostering in West Africa appears to be associated with better access to education, but that the situation in cities is quite different, where, except for boys in Côte d'Ivoire, children living without their parents in urban areas seem to have lower enrolment rates than the household heads' own offspring. Under-enrolment affects girls more than boys and appears to be related to the increasing enrolment of urban-based girls in schools and women's access to employment or other income-generating opportunities (Boursin 2002, cited in Pilon 2003).

Hashim's study found both that some children were employed to fulfil labour gaps, while others were apparently fostered specifically to fulfil the labour lost in a southern household from sending a child to school. However, Hashim also found that it is not always the case that fostering was negatively associated with education. She found that children are fostered or seek fostering situations to further their education, usually when there had been a family crisis, such as the death of a parent, resulting in the child's immediate family being unable to care for the child (Hashim 2007). These children fall under the independent migrant category but some children's movement is simply about replacing one set of 'parents' for another. In other cases, children are seeking opportunities themselves because of the rise in aspirations towards a vocational training, opportunities for which are not available in the north and responsibility for which is not seen to be that of the parent but of the child (ibid. 25-9). This has a different sort of impact on the inter-generational contract; potentially a more weakening one, since, while parents investing in formal schooling might tie a child more closely, growing aspirations to vocational training puts a strain on the child's ability to fulfil their obligations. This is because it is more usually seen as the child's responsibility to find the funds to pursue this, which requires a move to find paid work (or to find another relative in the south who can provide). Having said that, parents are often aware of their inability to provide, and are accepting of this change in the inter-generational contract.

Formal education was seen as having little value in the north, given the limited labour market for educated persons. By contrast, and in particular given the declining yields to farming, young people aspired to have a vocational training. Although employment opportunities were also limited due to the sheer numbers of individuals trained in those most commonly pursued

apprenticeships (tailoring, carpentry and vehicle maintenance), vocational training was more practicable than formal schooling both because of the high rates of failing in school and because, even though limited, these vocations could at least be combined with farming (ibid.). The fact that vocational training was deemed more appropriate than school for girls and the increasing expectation that women should have some independent means on marriage also made vocational training especially important for girls (ibid. 36). As we saw earlier, teenaged girls could use this quite effectively to persuade relatives concerned about their safety that migration was their only option. Unsurprisingly the desire to pursue vocational training was strongly implicated in the migration of many of the children Hashim interviewed. Eight of the 60 child migrants were at the time undertaking apprenticeships, while others had been promised assistance with fees or were simply hoping that the people they were working for would help with apprenticeship fees or their living costs while they undertook apprenticeships (ibid. 26).

As with the other limited research that has been done on education and children's migration, our research suggests that the linkages between education and migration are very context-specific. We also find that it cannot be assumed that children's migration represents either the denial of the opportunity to pursue education, or that the impact of education on the inter-generational contract can be assumed. For example, Iversen's (2002) work leads him to suggest that, rather than Caldwell, Reddy and Caldwell's (1985) claim that education reduces inter-generational control, it is possible that educational investments have a counterbalancing effect because they nurture loyalty and gratitude in offspring. Hashim's (2004) research, in contrast, suggests that in a situation where education is not yet fully implicated in the construction of childhood, such that parents are not seen to be failing to fulfil their side of the contract if they cannot support their children through school, participation in education plays a small part in the negotiations around the inter-generational contract.

## **6. Maintaining the Inter-generational Contract**

As we have looked more closely at the case studies of child migration, we have found a minority of cases in which outright rupture with parents is involved. This section will review briefly the extent to which the inter-generational contract is maintained, which can take the form, for example, of the extent to which children stay in contact with parents and siblings at home or whether they send remittances, and to what use these remittances are put. Our findings are mainly about the short-term. Assessment of the implications of child migration for the long-term inter-generational contract requires different methodologies than the ones adopted in the

Migration DRC projects.

With respect to the extent to which children remained in contact with their families at home, the Bangladeshi study revealed that 78 percent of children had had contact with their families. Of these, 63 percent kept in touch by visiting their families or having their families visit them, 30 percent reported that they communicated with their families via relatives or neighbours, 5 percent kept in touch through letters and 2 percent relied on other means for communicating with their families (Khair 2005).

The Bangladeshi children also occasionally assisted families with the money they earned. While 42 percent of those children who earned a wage kept all their wages for themselves, 36 percent stated they gave all or some of their wages to the parents. Those parents who were interviewed revealed that children's remittances were useful for families' subsistence, 10 percent depending greatly on children's earnings, with a further 54 percent relying moderately on these (ibid).

In the study from Burkina Faso, the inter-generational links were maintained through multiple channels. Some children went home for funerals or for important feasts, others sent their regards or a letter with other returning migrants, and with mobile phones becoming increasingly common, some would make the occasional phone call. The decision whether to send one's greetings orally or to have somebody write a letter depended on the child's economic situation, as oral greetings did not require remittances whereas a letter should contain some money or accompany a gift, such as a set of clothes, shoes, a wrist-watch or something that could be displayed at religious meetings. As only few people had mobile phones, the gesture of calling actually resembled sending greetings with others unless arrangements were made to call back later once a parent had been summoned. Another advantage of phones was that parents would be able to get hold of their children if they needed to. This would usually be to announce serious illness or sudden death and it meant a lot to both parents and children (Thorsen 2005).

In Anarfi and Kwankye's (2005) Ghana study it was found that more than half of the migrants stated they sent money home, although this varied by gender and by the migrant's location. Boys remitted more frequently than girls (69.2 percent compared to 59.2 percent), while those children who had migrated to Kumasi reporting remitting more frequently than those in Accra (71.5 percent as compared to 56.2 percent). Remittances were mainly sent through relatives, friends, traders and drivers. It is important to note that more than half of the migrants in both Accra and Kumasi indicated that those back home had used the monies to buy food. Other purposes to

which the monies were put were to buy building materials, for farming inputs, towards a mother's medical costs, for trading, to purchase a sewing machine, livestock or items for marriage, to help a younger sibling, and for the purchase of personal belongings or as savings to be held by their mother. A small number did not know what the money was spent on. Consequently, remittances could be either representative of an obligation that children felt towards kin or reflect the motivating factor for many children's migration – their desire to earn an income of their own.

The other Ghana study by Hashim reached similar conclusions, finding that, although children rarely visited home during the period of migration, for the most part they remained in contact with their immediate families, intermittently, through the same social networks that they utilised in their migration. It was relatively easy to do so as many children travelled with members of their extended family or other villagers to areas where others from the same area had migrated. In addition, the constant movements between home villages and destinations, as people returned for visits, funerals, or permanently, meant there was usually a means to pass news on to families (Hashim 2005: 14-6).

Children occasionally also sent money home through the same networks. Twelve children (eleven boys and one girl) in Hashim's Ghana study reported that they had sent money or food home. Quite a few other boys said that if they returned home with money they would give some to their parents or would return with food. Certainly three of the return migrant boys reported that they used some of the money they had earned to assist relatives upon their return, one boy buying a goat for a funeral and giving some money to his father to buy onion seedlings, while another paid his father's medical costs and the third bought food (ibid. 21).

The study also found that the length of time that children could be away from home varied substantially, with some only migrating for short periods, such as during school holidays, while others interviewed had been away as long as ten years (ibid. 12). Despite this, like the adult migrants, the expectation seemed to be that children would eventually return since the north was 'their home' (Hashim 2004: 111). This was particularly so in the case of boys since, as discussed earlier, boys are embedded in the social relations of their village in a way that girls are not. That is, unless they choose to permanently live in the south, boys know it is to their agnatic kin that they will need to look for support in land and in inputs such as labour and seeds, not to mention their reliance on seniors to provide them with cattle for their bride-price (ibid. 112).

To summarise, although children often do not have very active contact with parents (and vice

versa) while away, even when they are away for long periods, and only some send remittances, very few children fully lose contact with their parents. However, the act of migration by a child might itself serve to maintain the inter-generational contract and be part of such a contract. The discussion earlier suggests that Northern Ghanaian children may choose to move as a way of fulfilling their work obligations to parents, or alternatively parents may be permitting their children to move, as part of their obligation to allow children to pursue their own dreams and endeavours. In our other research sites, too, the child's migration might be interpreted as an aspect of the maintenance of the inter-generational contract, being a continuation of familial obligations between parents and children, despite their spatial dislocation.

## **7. The Constrained Nature of Children's Agency**

The case studies illustrate graphically that, whatever the legal status of children, in terms of their dependency on parents, in practice in many contexts, parent-child relationships can consist of mutually coexisting areas of dependence, autonomy and interdependence (cf. Punch 2002). This interdependence between the generations is recognised in the idea of the inter-generational contract, but as we showed earlier, in the classic demographers' accounts, the partners to the contract are often thought to be parents and their adult children. The main content of the contract is the dependence of either non-productive children or the no-longer productive elderly. In this paper we have demonstrated ways in which a somewhat different idea of the inter-generational contract can be applied to children under 18, giving examples where children acknowledge responsibilities towards their parents and often, too, towards their siblings. We have shown how child migration is frequently a negotiated decision in which both parents and children strive to meet their own objectives, whilst taking into account the needs and interests of other family members. The research is unable to say whether such inter-generational behaviour is motivated by long term considerations of security or by affective social bonds that nurture altruism.

Some of the forms of this argument, notably that children make strategic life choices and negotiate with adults to do so, are also core arguments within the literature which considers child workers as more than simply passive victims. It is of fundamental importance, however, to consider the constraints on children's agency and to emphasise the extent to which the choices open to them are highly limited. These constraints operate at many different levels.

Reynolds' (1991) path-breaking study on childhood in Africa specifically explores why parents and children act the way they do and make specific choices. In particular she seeks to

understand why girls acquiesce in a particular gender order. Reynolds' research on children's work in the Zambezi River Valley found that all girls in her research performed more work than boys, at the behest, chiefly, of their mothers. She found, however, that they also frequently worked for their brothers and explained this as a mixture of social obligation and specific individually chosen strategies for securing care and protection, since in adulthood brothers are a means of support for their sisters (Reynolds 1991: 124-5). In order to theorise more broadly this combination of socially enjoined behaviour and individual strategising, we can draw on a close parallel in the gender literature, namely Bina Agarwal's (1994) distinction between Bourdieu's concept of 'doxa' and areas of contestation. The latter defines realms where autonomy may be exercised or negotiations are feasible; doxa defines what is normalised and not subject for negotiation. Depending on the cultural context, these realms will vary both with the age and the gender of the child.

Childhood, in particular, is subject to strong context-specific doxa. For example, in Ghana, when a 12-year-old girl was asked about playing, her mother said that girls of her age were not permitted to play since they were too occupied with work (Hashim 2004: 36). Similarly, in Mandya, India, in 1998, a prevalent parental norm was that beyond a certain age, children should not be wasting their time. At the same time, there was often considerable scope for negotiating precisely which activities to be involved in (education, village-based work and work as a migrant). Gender differences in access to schooling are often explained by gendered norms and opportunity structures. For instance, in Ghana girls and boys, and occasionally women, said that men were unwilling to send daughters to school because the benefits of education accrued to their husbands and husbands' households, since women invariably moved to their husbands' village upon marriage. Boys also mentioned, as a further constraint on girls' access to schooling, that fathers were worried their daughters could become pregnant, particularly if they attended a boarding school. Concerns about girls' safety and 'morality' were also voiced as a constraint on their ability to receive permission to migrate. Gender norms in South Asia, too, reduce the scope for girls' agency in negotiating going to school after puberty.

In addition to constraints arising within the local value system about age and gender appropriate behaviour, we want to stress that children's agency is also constrained by the way in which age hierarchies restrict children's access to key resources. These resources are material and social, and include information.

The research data on children's economic strategies and ownership of resources is limited and

invisibilised to the extent that children are perceived as economic dependents in the family. The child labour policy literature routinely examines what happens to children's wages and aspirations for consumption goods, and trousseaux items figure in explanations for children's migration (Castle and Diarra 2003), but a more rounded examination of what material resources children have, how they save and what for, is lacking<sup>15</sup>.

Hashim's earlier work in Ghana describes how, in the rural Upper East, children's independent income and economic activity is a culturally defined area of their autonomy, although this autonomy is also ideologically circumscribed. Boys, for example, use income from farming to buy livestock such as chickens, or are rewarded for their labour contribution by being bought it (Hashim 2004: 81). However, the principle that 'I am the landlord (household head) so I say it is for me', indicates an at least nominal claim that the household head can make on these birds and animals, irrespective of ownership (ibid. 61). Children's material resources are also limited by adults' perceptions of their abilities to hang on to these. One young boy, for example, explained that he had once been given a chicken as a reward for his work as a cattle-herd, but as all the chicks died they would not give him another until he learnt how to take care of them (ibid. 85).

Children are further constrained in getting access to material resources by the structure of opportunities for work in the child and youth labour market and the nature of that labour market. Children have worse rates of pay and conditions of work and this is often explained by their weak bargaining position and their vulnerability in the labour market. There are contrasting examples in our study sites, where children sometimes leave a place of employment without ever receiving the promised meagre rewards, while in other cases they can move jobs more easily, with the result that they are in a stronger bargaining position<sup>16</sup>. In the Bangalore examples, the proliferation of and easy access to new employment opportunities, and therefore to exit options, enables child employees to defend their interests vis-à-vis their employers. There is, of course, an age dimension to this, since very young children are less capable of using these alternative opportunities. The Bangalore evidence also pinpoints a marked gender difference. Compared to boys working in small South-Indian eating places, girls working as domestic servants were more vulnerable, as they were without easily accessible exit options. Iversen and Raghavendra's research found that girls were frequently victims of workplace violence, receiving regular beatings from their female employers. In addition to physical vulnerability and the opportunity structure,

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<sup>15</sup> Hashim (2004) and Punch (2002) are among the rare exceptions to this.

<sup>16</sup> Anarfi et al (2006) gives detailed examples arising from the DRC work.

children's position in the labour market is also affected by their constructed social position as children. An early article by Elson (1982) argues that ideologies of children's dependency and vulnerability contribute to the subordinated position of children in the labour market. Elson argues that the hierarchical system based on age (seniority) facilitates the systematic undervaluing of children's labour power and the imposition of various non-market forms of labour control.

One of the interesting themes in many of the empirical examples is the recourse children have to adults who are not parents. We saw many situations in which children called on other relatives, or even neighbours and friends, not only to find work or to make the journey, but also to influence their parents. The child's social world contains many other adults whom s/he seeks to recruit as key mentors and patrons in their own life choices (cf. Reynolds 1991). In some of these examples we also saw these other adults acting to reinforce parental authority (as in the example of Raghu) at the same time as forwarding the child's wishes. We also saw contrary examples, where children are social pawns in extended kin relations, being sent to help in already migrant households. As well as being resources these findings suggest that the authority of age and seniority extend beyond the parent-child relation to adult-child relations more generally.

A further key resource to which children have restricted access is that of information and knowledge. Children who aspire to migrate routinely interrogate returned migrants for detailed information about how to travel, where to find work, how much they will earn and so on. Depending on age and experience, however, they may lack the wider knowledge and understanding to contextualise this information.

Parents who allow their children to migrate often take the decision sorrowfully. Acutely conscious of ways in which household and community offered their children far too little, they are also concerned about the risks of migration, the potential for abuse and the limitations of opportunities in new places. Rural under-development and the absolute or relative poverty that accompany it constitute the primary constraints for both parents and children in relation to the migration decisions that are made.

A final key arena for constraint on children's agency lies beyond their communities and within societies and states. The state and the wider society play a large part in the construction of childhood, as well as in placing legal parameters around a child's status. Part of the social contract between citizens and the state consists of the statutes and laws concerning the responsibility owed by all adults to children. This, too, is the inter-generational contract. This

responsibility legitimates state interventions in particular child-adult relations, requiring for example compulsory schooling, a minimal level of care or an absence of harm. As a number of authors have pointed out it is one of the paradoxes of child protection that as well as protecting, it can disempower.

Nieuwenhuys (1996: 246) describes how this occurs in the context of child labour:

Irrespective of what they do and what they think about what they do, the mere fact of their being children sets children ideologically apart as a category of people excluded from the production of value. The dissociation of childhood from the performance of valued work has been increasingly considered a yardstick of modernity. .... The problem with this way of defining the ideal of childhood, however, is that it denies children's agency in the creation and negotiation of value.

As some in the debates over child labour protocols have argued, protective legislation plays its part in restricting children's agency by *legally* constraining them more than adults in their ability to negotiate pay and conditions, and at worst, they may be criminalised by the mere fact of their working.

In relation to migration, the work by Castle and Diarra (2003) in Mali demonstrates some of the problems with protection measures. Mali has signed a Cooperation Agreement on Combating Trans-Border Trafficking of Children with Côte d'Ivoire, being the first West African country to adopt a national approach on child trafficking (UNICEF 2002). The agreement considers that an intermediary who gives or receives payments (or expects to give or receive payments) can be considered a child trafficker if there is intent on the part of the intermediary to exploit the child. They found that, as a result of this legislation, NGOs and government agencies had 'rescued' and repatriated a number of children, because, in almost all cases, an intermediary was involved in the movement of the child. Their own interviews with these children found that in only four cases was there an intention to exploit on the part of the intermediary; however, because determining intent is very difficult, they argue that what happens in practice is that the focus is placed on whether or not an intermediary was involved. Far from being rescued, many of these children did not wish to be returned to their home villages and some stated that they felt ashamed because they were teased for returning from migration empty-handed.

The institutionalisation of the constraint on children's agency is most evident in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, known as the Palermo Protocol. This states that any 'recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or

receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation' (UN 2001) is considered 'trafficking', *irrespective of whether a child has consented to this*. Thus, the Protocol distinguishes between smuggling and trafficking; where smuggling refers to the movement of individuals where the individual has consented, and trafficking, which involves the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception or abuse of power. However, Article 3 of the Protocol makes it explicit that in the case of those under the age of eighteen the issue of consent is irrelevant (ILO 2002, UN 2001)<sup>17</sup>.

## 8. Conclusion

By drawing on the preliminary findings from a set of loosely collaborative research projects carried out at the Migration DRC, University of Sussex, this paper has explored the experiences of children who migrate without their parents or guardians in developing country contexts. In contrast to the manner in which much independent child migration is often assumed to entail a rupture in family relations, the paper argued that this has to be established and cannot be assumed. Its premise is that the content of parent-child relations cannot be read off from universal, normative ideas that lead to such assumptions and that there is a need to understand the contextually specific ways in which migration is understood in relation to local norms about parent-child relationships. The paper argued, as a result, that parent-child relations must be held up to conceptual and empirical scrutiny.

Given the limitations of conceptual languages to explore these issues, the paper drew on the idea of inter-generational contracts and on feminist writings on the household, where intra-household relations are understood as potential sites of conflict and simultaneous elements of dependence,

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<sup>17</sup> There are complex issues around to what extent children are legally viewed as fully-functioning individuals as reflected in the tension between their right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them, and their inability to necessarily have the capacity to know what is in their best interests (Archard 2003: 13). This is embodied in Articles 3 and 12(1) of the Convention on the rights of the children, since they declare that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration and that, on matters that affect them, the views of the child should be given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity (UN 1989). However, 'it remains adults who determine whether children are sufficiently mature and to what extent their views will be followed' (Pupavac 2003: 4).

interdependence and independence. The ways in which household members juggle contradictory elements of family or household relations needs to be explored through processual, qualitative accounts of everyday practice. This kind of approach avoids assuming that the child, by definition, is a dependent, and instead emphasises that both child and parent may have agency, objectives and interests. We went on to illustrate the diversity of intra-household negotiations that precede a child's migration, the strategies that prospective migrants deploy vis-à-vis their parents and the factors that parents and children take into account. Also explored were the diverse ways in which education is implicated in the inter-generational contract and linked to child migration, and the manner in which the inter-generational contract is maintained in the context of child migration, where there is a spatial dislocation of inter-generational family relations.

Adopting this approach enables full scope for treating children as social persons who act to make decisions about residence, work and education, albeit in the context of social obligations within the family and possibly with limited knowledge. We argued, too, that it is of fundamental importance to consider the constraints on children and to emphasise the extent to which the choices open to them are highly limited. The concluding section of the paper, thus, looked at constraints on the child's exercise of agency in relation to migration and explored how these constraints operate at many different levels. Among the constraints discussed were those arising within the local value system around age and gender appropriate behaviour, and those arising from the ways in which age hierarchies restrict children's access to material and social resources. The role of the state in placing legal parameters around a child's status was also considered, including how measures aimed at their protection may serve to further disempower children. These need to be understood if we wish to go beyond simple assertions that children are not passive victims but rather exercise agency in relation to migration, to explore *how* children exercise agency within particular sets of social relations.

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