

About Claire Elisabeth Dungey

Claire Elisabeth Dungey is an anthropologist and has written her dissertation at the School of Culture and Society, Department for anthropology at Aarhus University. Her research areas are education, institutions and childhood/youth.

Facts about the field of study

Kisoro is a small town in southwestern Uganda with about 25.000 inhabitants.

The area is close to Rwanda and DR Congo, about 10-15km.

The national language in Uganda is English, but Kinyarwanda is more common outside schools.

**Contact**

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Date, time and place for the PhD defence

24 September 2015 1pm-4pm.

The lecture hall, 4206/139. Moesgaard Alle 20, 8270 Højbjerg, Denmark

**SHADES OF FRIENDSHIP:
SCHOOLING AND MO-
RALITY AMONG UGAN-
DAN YOUTH**

PhD dissertation by Claire Elisabeth Dungey



SHADES OF FRIENDSHIP: SCHOOLING AND MORALITY AMONG UGANDAN YOUTH

This thesis explores how friendships among schoolchildren in south western Uganda are played out through trust and sharing but always in the shade of mistrust, and secrecy.

Shades

The thesis focuses on the multifaceted shades of friendships and how relationships to others are marked with moral uncertainty. A shade, I suggest, captures the several nuances of friendship but also its dark side where people can deceive, pretend, steal or stop giving. Within the category of friendship, as well as other relationships, moralities are constantly negotiated, evaluated and worked on.

Regional conflicts

The region has been and still is to a certain extent affected by war, genocide and instabilities both in the country itself but also across the borders in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These insecurities have largely shaped schoolchildren's understandings and

experiences of how trust is never easily gained and how it is sometimes better to conceal certain matters from friends, neighbours, relatives and policymakers. However, mistrust is not just caused by war, but also by several other factors, including ethnicity and religion.

Friendships that cut across

In previous research concerning the area, ethnicity is sometimes overrepresented in an academic debate at the expense of understanding other ways of relating. Thus, friendships influenced by religious orientation, where children and young people create connections across ethnic boundaries, are often neglected. It is important to understand how friendships often develop over time in the context of schooling where children inhabit a physical space and share material items, food and time together.

Moral gossip

A dark side of friendship is the widespread practice of gossiping where friends and family members create trust amongst each other by secretly gossiping about other people's moral behaviours, in particular the ones perceived to be below them. Here they often keep quiet about what they do themselves, because of fearing social exclusion. Some, however, are morally evaluated as unreliable people with so-called 'bad behaviours' who break moral boundaries.

Conclusion

This study offers a Ugandan perspective on how children and young people strive to get connections to friends where these kinds of connections encompass moral evaluations. Despite experiencing uncertainties, the thesis concludes that young people create a sense of economic and moral stability through friendships.