Ugandan Households:

A Study of Parenting Practices in Three Districts

AfriChild Centre for the Study of the African Child, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda,
and the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, USA

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Neil Boothby, Ed.D. (Corresponding Author)
Allan Rosenfield Professor
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
60 Haven Ave B-4
New York NY 10032
01-212-342-5213
nb2101@cumc. columbia.edu

Firminus Mugumya. Ph.D.
Lecturer
Department of Social Work and Social Administration
School of Social Sciences
Makerere University
P.O.Box 7062 Kampala, Uganda
256-7823-51444
firm@chuss.mak.ac.ug/ firmlib@yahoo.co.uk

Amy E. Ritterbusch, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Government
Universidad de los Andes
Cra. 1 No. 19-27, EdificioAulas, Bogotá, Colombia
57-3138783502
a.ritterbusch@uniandes.edu.co

Joyce Wanican, MS.
Executive Director AfriChild
Centre for the Study of the African Child
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Makerere University
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala Uganda
256-0792-666610
jwanican@africhild.or.ug

Clare Ahabwe Bangirana, BS.
Research Manager
AfriChild Centre for the Study of the African Child
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Makerere University
P.O. Box 7062, Kampala

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256-0792-666610
cbangirana@africhild.or.ug

Adrienne D. Pizatella, MPH.
Research Associate
Program on Forced Migration and Health
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
60 Haven Avenue B-4
New York, NY 10032
304-657-9500
adp2159@cumc.columbia.edu

Sophie Busi, MPH.
Research Associate
AfriChild Centre for the Study of the African Child
P.O Box 21378 Kampala Uganda
256-7516-00618
fiso22@gmail.com

Sarah Meyer, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Population and Family Health
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
60 Haven Avenue B-4
New York NY 10032
0792-6666-43
sm3992@cumc.columbia.edu

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Ugandan households play a central role in child care and protection, yet the way social interactions with parents or other caretakers protect children from adversities has not been thoroughly researched. This study was designed to identify community perceptions of protective and harmful parenting practices in three districts in Uganda. It employed free-listing interviews to determine priorities and practices deemed to be important in providing care and protection to children. Findings suggest that parenting practices can be grouped into seven basic themes, including: Investing in children's future, Protection, Care, Enterprising, Relationship with neighbors, Intimate partner relationship, and Child Rearing. Investing in children's future, including educating children, was cited most often as a hallmark of positive parenting; while failure to care for children was most often cited as a hallmark of negative parenting. Concrete behaviors, such as walking a daughter to school; sewing a son's torn pants before going to church; and structuring study time at home were identified as concrete actions Ugandan parents undertake daily to promote their children's well-being . Conversely, neglect and abuse were identified as central components of negative parenting. Building on community strengths is recommended as a principle means of enhancing household resilience and reducing childhood risk.

Keywords: Uganda, children, household, parenting, violence

Introduction

A national Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) was conducted in 2015,[1] assessing lifetime prevalence of exposure to sexual, physical, and verbal violence amongst 13-24 year olds, with the overall objective of informing a national response to protect children from various forms of violence. This qualitative study sought to complement the methods and findings of the VACS, employing ethnographic data collection techniques to better understand risk and resilience at the household level. The research team identified a range of household practices, and in particular, parenting, as a key factor in determining children's exposure to violence and overall well-being. Therefore, this study sought to explore and describe the household care environment of children

[1]The Uganda Violence Against Children Study was jointly managed and implemented by the Ministry of Labor, Gender and Social Development, UNICEF, Centers for Disease Control, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Makerere University School of Public Health and The AfriChild Centre. Final results are scheduled to be released in December 2016.

in three districts in Uganda, and identify attitudes and behaviors associated with protective and harmful parenting practices.

Scientific advances in neuroscience, epigenetics, psychology and human development point to the need to examine childhood vulnerability and resilience from a social systems perspective (Shonkoff, J. P., et al, 2011). Beginning in utero and throughout childhood, the human brain responds to its environment, reshaping neural connections in line with social experience (Grantham-McGregor, S., et al, 2007). Additionally, neglect, violence, and other adversities that disrupt safety and security in childhood can distort these processes with negative impacts that extend far beyond the suffering of individuals to encompass the rearing environments of future generations and societies they will compose (Engle, P et al., 2007; Fang, X., et al, 2012). Indeed, critical human development milestones, including raw intellectual capacity, motor development, language acquisition, and social learning are achieved or not within the context of social interactions at the household. It is therefore important that we examine social interactions as sources of childhood risk and resilience.

Research has documented multiple adversities to which children in Uganda may be exposed. These include HIV/AIDS, lack of access to safe water, stunting and malnutrition, lack of access to quality education, and exposure to various types of violence, abuse, and neglect (Boothby et. al., 2015). Unfortunately, there is a lack of representative, national data on violence against children in the community, at school, and at home in Uganda. Some research indicates that violence in the household is commonplace, however. For example, a study measuring violence households in Northern Uganda showed that intimate partner violence occurs in the majority of homes in this region. (Stark, L et. al, 2009). Additionally, a Raising Voices' study

showed that the preponderance of children (98.2%) interviewed had experienced harsh discipline and violence at home, school, or both (Naker, 2005).

In Uganda, households play the central role in child care and protection: children are raised in families; families are nested in households; households are nested in neighbourhoods or communities; and neighbourhoods-communities are nested in wider societal systems. Families and households are the 'frontline protectors' of children, yet household care environments and, in particular how relationships and interactions with caregivers may be able to protect children from the impacts of such adversities, have not been thoroughly researched. The identification of protective factors and key levers of social change will be especially important data to inform follow-ups to the VAC study, especially for parenting and family-strengthening interventions.

Objectives

This research sought to answer the following question:

How do caregivers and children describe and understand parenting practices? It included explorations of both:

> "Positive parenting:" attitudes and behaviors that support children and promote their well-being; and,
>
> "Negative parenting:" attitudes and behaviors that place children at risk and undermine their developmental well-being.

In asking these questions, the research sought to identify basic attitudes and primary behaviors of parents in Uganda that are associated with positive and negative parenting.

Methods

Study setting

The research team selected three regions in Uganda (Central, Western and Northern), and within each district, a division or sub-county. The selection of three distinct regions for the study was based on the objective of including a range of study settings to represent differing histories and current contexts, including, for example, differing urbanization levels, history of conflict and displacement, potentially different cultural practices, and differing socio-economic circumstances. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the research team selected three diverse study settings, to enable comparative analysis or exploration of parenting practices across these settings.

Table 1. Key characteristics of three study sites

Region, district, division/ sub-county	**Reasons for selection**
Central – Kampala district, Kawempe division	• A metropolitan area where multiple ethnicities reside; • Formal sector employment higher than other two districts; • Division OVC/Probation and Welfare Officer and Police Officer in Charge of Family and Child Protection report multiple child protection challenges in Kawempe division.
Western – Ibanda district, Nyamarebe sub-county	• Rural area where agriculture and cattle are primary economic activities; • Different ethnic groups live in this district as do migrants from Kigezi region in south western Uganda; • Has not experienced armed conflict or population displacement due to political violence • District Community Development Officer reports high levels of violence in Nyamarebe Sub-County.
Northern – Lira district, Barr sub-county	• Emerging from armed conflict and displacement

	• About 300,000 displaced persons returned home, following the longstanding battle between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Uganda People's Defence Forces; • Barr sub-county is believed to have high incidence of child abuse and neglect cases.

Study sample and recruitment

In each study site, 60 children and 60 caregivers were selected to participate in the study (see Table 2). Purposive sampling was utilized to select interviewees, an approach which selects "the most productive sample to answer the research question" and also seeks to optimize data quality through careful consideration of the contextual specificities of each study site (p. 523 Marshall, 1996). Specifically, the lead data collector in each study site consulted with community leaders to identify households that were suitable for participation in the study. Eligible children were aged between 8-12 years old, and eligible caregivers were aged 18 or above, who were caring for at least one child between 0-8 years old. Children and caregivers were selected from separate households, to reduce the risk that caregivers would influence children's responses or seek to find out how their child had responded.

Table 2: Study sample

Study site	Children Males	Children Female	Caregivers Male	Caregivers Female	Total
Lira	28	32	26	34	120
Ibanda	30	30	28	32	120
Kampala	30	30	21	39	120

In each household, the data collector approached the caregiver and described the objectives of the study in order to seek confirmation that the caregiver would either personally provide consent to participate or provide consent for their child to participate. For households where the child was interviewed, the data collector would then obtain consent from the child to

participate in the interview. Interviews were conducted in a quiet, private place in order to create a safe space for the discussion of child well-being and parenting in the community. The interview took between 30 and 45 minutes.

Data collection

The research team gathered data using free-listing interviews to determine priorities and practices considered important in providing care and protection to children. The selection of methods and sampling technique fit the exploratory, open-ended nature of the study design. Free-listing is a brief ethnographic interview technique, which has been used for rapid and systematic gathering of local perspectives on a specific topic; the methodology has been previously utilized in a range of low-income settings globally (Boothby, Ager, & Ager, 2009) (Boothby et al., 2006), including Haiti (Bolton et al., 2012), Northern Uganda (Betancourt et al., 2009), Tanzania (Dorsey et al., 2015), Uganda (CPC Network, 2010), Northern Iraq (Bolton et al., 2013), Georgia (Murray et al., 2012) and amongst refugees from Burma living in Thailand (Meyer et al., 2013).

To systematically collect information on parenting, brief interviews were conducted and included the following questions:

"Think of a female parent that you know is providing their children with good care. Don't tell me who this person is. It does not have to be the best parent you know; just someone who is parenting his/her children well. I am going to ask some questions about what this parent is like, and what sort of things he/she does. Remember it must be someone you know—but do not tell me his/her name. In what ways is this man/woman a good parent? What are the things this good father/mother does?"

These questions were then repeated for mothers and fathers, focusing on negative care practices. Respondents were asked to list up to five responses for each category of parents. They were asked to choose the most important quality and explain why this aspect ranked the highest.

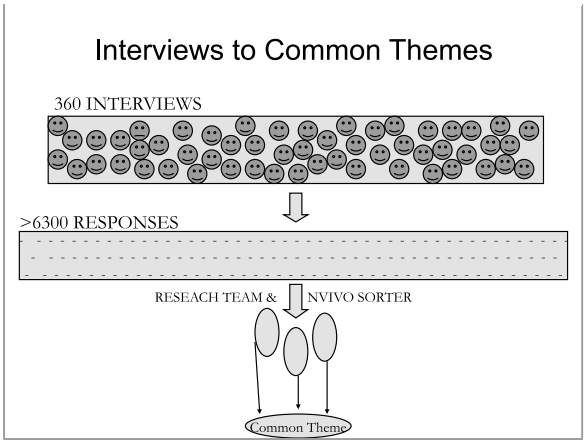
All instruments were pilot tested with a minimum of five respondents. After each piloting session, researchers and data collectors would discuss the findings and refine the instruments. The interviews were conducted in the relevant local languages: In Lira, Luo/Langi; in Kampala, Luganda; and in Ibanda, Runyankore.

A team of 4 data collectors and a team leader conducted data collection in each district; data collectors were fluent in local languages and familiar with the cultural context. The Ugandan research team participated in an in-depth 5-day training workshop on interviewing techniques, methods to record responses verbatim, and human subjects research ethics. Classroom practice exercises were followed by field-testing opportunities to ensure that the questions were being understood by people in the way that practice exercises intended.

Analysis

To start the analysis process, the team of data collectors reviewed the free-listing interviews and cleaned the data based on cultural understanding and local expertise. One research analyst, who was not on the data collection team, analyzed the cleaned free-list data to identify principal trends on parenting in the data set by using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo11 (Saldaña 2009).

Figure 1



To develop the first draft of the codebook, the research analyst conducted open coding of 20% of the interview transcripts. To generate a second draft of the codebook, codes were refined, merged and deleted through an iterative process, and all transcripts were then coded using the final codebook. Themes, categories, and codes identified for positive parenting and negative parenting are shown through the thematic map in Annex C.

An inductive thematic analysis (NVivo) was employed to permit both description and interpretation of responses.[2] This analysis is done by generating themes which "[capture] something important about the data in relation to the research question and [represent] some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 83 Braun, 2006).[3] Additionally, a "data-driven" inductive form of analysis was utilized in which no theoretical framework was used to guide coding or analysis, (p. 84 Braun, 2006). Several steps were taken to analyse data including immersion, coding, categorizing, and generation of themes (Green, 2007).

Transcripts that included the key phrase, longer description of that phrase, and explanation of which key phrase was ranked highest were imported into NVivo. Using NVivo's Nodes function codes were created, and the transcripts were coded using a segmentation rule that included an entire line of a response (i.e. cover term, description, and explanation if applicable). The Nodes function was also used to merge and delete codes and create parent codes, which represent categories in most cases, as the codebook developed. NVivo's Queries function was used to analyse the data and was specifically used for counting codes and creating regional

[2]An inductive analysis approach was chosen (as opposed to deductive) because codes, categories, and themes emerged from the data, and the development of the codebook was not guided by a theory or prior research. Moreover, a pre-existing theory did not provide a framework for the analysis.
[3]"Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently if goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic." (p. 79, Braun, 2006).

comparisons and respondent type comparisons. Finally, the Memos tool in NVivo was used to note the researchers subjectivities before and during the coding process.

An inter-coder reliability test was conducted using the query function within NVivo. The team established a necessary Kappa score of .75 a-priori as is recommended by Cicchetti's criteria for interpreting Kappa (Cicchetti, 1994). Due to the size of the data set, 10% was re-coded by another researcher, and the Kappa score was .846.

Research ethics

The research was approved by Mildmay Institutional Review Board (Uganda) and the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology.

Results

Parenting practices can be readily grouped into seven basic themes: Investing in children's future, Protection, Care, Enterprising or Work ethic, Relationship with neighbors, Intimate partner relationship, and Child rearing. Parents investing in children's future was ranked as the most important aspect of positive parenting 282 times, while the failure to provide adequate of care was ranked as the most important aspect of negative parenting most often, 203 times.

Tables 3 and 4 below indicate categories that respondents identify as most important and the number of times a respondent identified an aspect of positive or negative parenting within each category as such.[4] For example, component codes that form the category, Cares for Children, were identified as the most important 254 times (145 times in describing good mothers

[4]6% of positive parenting and 5% of negative parenting responses were too vague to include in the study's results. 8 respondents said there were no bad fathers, 6 said there were no bad mothers, and 1 said there was no good fathers.

and 109 times in describing good fathers). The study's data were disaggregated based on regions (Ibanda, Lira, and Kampala) and on respondents' age (child-adult). Only modest differences emerged as shown in Annexes A and B.

Table 3. Positive Parenting Practices

Mother			Father			Total
Most Important	Category	Number of responses labeled Most Important	Most Important	Category	Number of responses labeled Most Important	
	Cares for children	145		Cares for children	109	254
	Enterprising	23		Enterprising	42	65
	Good neighbor	37		Good neighbor	12	49
	Investing in Children's Future	135(Providing education= 129)		Investing in Children's Future	147 (Not supporting education=140)	282
	Protection	24		Protection	29	53
	Raises children well	20		Raises children well	18	38
	Relationship with partner	3		Relationship with partner	11	14
	Total	387		Total	368	755

Table 4. Negative Parenting Practices

Mother			Father			Total
Most Important	Category	Number of responses labeled Most Important	Most Important	Category	Number of responses labeled Most Important	
	Lack of care	109		Lack of care	94	203
	Not hard working	13		Not hard working	35	48
	Bad Neighbor	30		Bad Neighbor	18	48
	Does invest in children's future	61		Does invest in children's future	91	152
	Does not protect	105		Does not protect	60	165
	Raises Children Poorly	14		Raises Children Poorly	3	17
	Bad relationship with partner	11		Bad relationship with partner	42	53
	Total	343		Total	325	668

Investing in Children's Future

> *'A pen today is a future asset. If children study and complete school, they become prosperous.'* –Male Adult, Ibanda

Investing in children's future was identified as the most important single attribute of positive parenting (282), whereas not investing in children's education was identified as one of the most telling attributes of negative parenting (noted as the most important negative characteristic 152 times). The majority of these top ranked responses not only emphasized the importance of education but also the link between education and a child's future. One male adult from Lira stated: 'When a child is educated and has knowledge [the parent] would have provided everything for that child--their future will be bright.' Another male adult from Ibanda said of a good mother: 'She encourages them to go to school and shows them that in the future education is important.' A male adult respondent from Ibanda noted that going to school enabled children to avoid problematic behavior which also paves the way for a positive future: 'He [the father] has seven children however he has made sure they are all in school, have clothes and are well fed. Because of this, you do not find them loitering in the trade centers or gambling or playing cards. They are well behaved and have a good future.'

Adult and child respondents stressed both formal and informal education as being important to a child's future well-being. Frequently cited behaviors linked to ensuring a child's future/education are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Investing in Children's Future Codes

Investing in Children's Future	# of Codes
• Ensures children have technical skills	13
• Educates Children	759
○ Pays school fees	423
○ Provides children with school supplies	192
○ Helps them with homework	7
○ Ensures they arrive to school on time	2
○ Visits the school for meetings or to check on children	16
• Teaches children house chores	73

Responses also indicate that ensuring a child's future/education involves self-sacrifice. One female child respondent from Ibanda explained: 'She puts her children first. When they need books, she cultivates more vegetables and sells them.' Another female adult from Kampala suggested: 'She wears simple things so she has a little more money to buy her child school

clothes.' Another female Kampala resident stressed that (she) 'would never spend money on her appearance if it meant her children did not have [taxi fare] to go to school.' A male adult Lira respondent said a good father 'does not spend money on himself but uses it for his children's schooling.' Respondents acknowledged income levels as a determining factor in what parents could afford to provide their children, with expectations higher in Kampala than in the other two districts. Nonetheless, key attributes of positive parenting across districts include an understanding of importance of education, its link to a child's future, and a willingness to invest personal time and household income on insuring that future.

Conversely, not investing in a child's future/education was one of the most cite attribute of negative parenting (427 responses). 443 of these responses focused on not supporting schooling in various ways including not paying school fees, which was cited 197 times. 'He makes his children work on the compound…he does not care if they have a future' (Female Child, Lira). 'He does not pay school fees for his children and they no longer study' (Female Child, Kampala). 'Even when the wife tries to educate the children, he takes away the money' (Female Adult, Ibanda). 'She refuses to educate her children. She won't pay their school fees and they drop out. They survive through digging. They will be helpless in the future' (Male Adult, Lira). The lack of support for education was often linked to parental indifference or neglect. As one child from Kampala put it: 'Some children fear to ask teachers questions so they ask their parents. But this father does not help his children with their homework or help them revise their work. If they can't go to their parents where can they go for help?' An adult from Kampala noted: 'Her house

Table 5. Not Investing in Children's Future Codes

Not Investing in Children's Future	# of Codes
• Does not support schooling	443
○ Does not pay school fees	197
○ Does not provide schooling	158
○ Does not provide school supplies	51
• Does not teach housework	8
• Does not teach technical skills	1
• Lacks land	12

is disorganized. She does not supervise her children. They never do their homework.' Other component features of not investing in children's future are listed in Table 5.

Care

'There is nothing you do without eating' –Male Adult, Ibanda

While education is about investing in a child's future, care is about ensuring a child's immediate health and well-being. The provision of food and water (756 times), clothing (351 times), and keeping children clean though bathing, washing their clothes, and providing soap (179) were frequently cited as core attributes of positive parenting, while the failure to do so was characteristic of negative parenting. In addition, care involves having a clean home and providing medicine/health care, and providing play things. Familiarity with good feeding, dietary and hygiene practices was implied in most positive parenting citations. Like education, positive care also involves making difficult economic choices. As one male adult from Ibanda stated: 'Despite the fact that she is not well off, when children are sick, she sells what she has to make sure they get medication.'

Table 6. Care Codes

Care	# of Codes
• Buys clothes for children	351
• Buy toys/ Buys toys/gifts	51
• Have clean, well-maintained home	58
• Provide Child Nutrition	756
○ Breastfeeds	5
○ Provides clean drinking water	26
○ Cultivates for food	151
○ Provides food for school	57
○ Provides food	517
• Keeps children clean	179
• Provides health care	155

Positive parents meet nutritional needs by breastfeeding, packing food for school (or paying for children to buy food at school), cultivating ('digging') for food, and providing clean drinking water. Providing food by cooking, cultivating, or purchasing was noted most often 668 times. Provision of food was further described as ensuring a balanced diet and multiple meals a day (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner).

Respondents discussed non-care or parental neglect 1002 times, and it involves not breastfeeding and not cultivating or buying food.[5] Respondents noted that the non provision of food results in poor health outcomes as well as troublesome social behaviors. When parents do not 'provide food, …[children] go begging for food from neighbors. The child is then disliked by the community' (Female Child, Kampala). In addition to neglecting a child's nutrition, non-provision of adequate clothing was a frequently cited (222 times) attribute of negative care.

Table 7. Non-care Codes

Non-Care	# of Codes
• Abandons home	20
• Children are dirty	100
• Has dirty home	44
• Does not buy clothes	222
• Does not provide health care	78
• Does not spend time with children	64
• Neglects nutrition	524
○ Does not breastfeed	3
○ Does not cultivate for food	70
○ Does not provide food	442
○ Does not give food for school	9

Gender differences emerged in all districts. Participants mentioned mothers not providing care because they did not keep children clean far more often than they discussed fathers not providing care in a similar way (73 times and 27 times respectively). This implies that participants view the cleanliness of children as a more important role for females. One respondent describes the problem as "her children have jiggers and lice because they are always dirty" (Female Adult, Ibanda). Others try to explain why, noting sometimes that she cannot afford soap. Fathers on the other hand seem to be held more responsible for providing health care with respondents mentioning fathers not providing medicine, immunizations, or other health care services 55 times and only mentioning this same failing in mothers 29 times.

[5] While frequency rates were higher for care than for investing in the future (1002 and 427 respectively), investing in child's future received more 'most important of all rankings' than did care for negative parenting.

Protection

> *'He takes his children to school every day by car and this has helped his children not to be endangered by "boda-boda" riders/men.'* –Male Child, Kampala

Protection was described as parenting practices that shield children from harm. Respondents indicated that parents protect their children by: not leaving children alone, keeping children inside at night, being non-violent, shielding children from problematic peer groups, ensuring they use mosquito nets, providing adequate shelter/bedding, and ensuring children's safety to and from school. These component characteristics are shown in Table 8. Providing adequate shelter and bedding (cited 106 times) and non-violent households (cited 102 times) emerged as the most important component of protecting children from harm. Parents also protect children by walking, driving, or otherwise accompanying them to and from school (48 times). Parents 'help children not to be stolen by strangers' (Female Adult, Kampala) and protect them from other dangers while ensuring they are attending school each day.

Table 8. Protection Codes

Protection	# of Codes
• Does not have vices	12
• Does not leave children alone	8
• Keeps children inside at night	3
• Not violent toward children	102
• Protects children from bad peers	4
• Provides mosquito net	10
• Provides shelter/bedding	106
• Takes children to school	48

Children are unprotected when parents abuse them (physically or verbally), do not provide adequate shelter or bedding, force children into early marriage, leave children alone, or overwork children. Household violence and abuse was cited most often (642 times) as indicative of an unprotected child. Extreme forms of violence were identified as beating, punching, kicking, or striking a child with large objects. Additionally, household violence and abuse was frequently linked to excessive alcohol intake (116 times). One female

Table 9. Lack of Protection Codes

Does not protect	# of Codes
• Abuses Children	642
○ Beats children	413
○ Verbally abuse children	189
• Forces child into early marriage	6
• Inadequate shelter/bedding	53
• Leaves children alone	33
• Overworks children	63

adult in Lira explained: 'He over drinks alcohol and doesn't care how his home looks and over beats his children. Over-drinking makes the children live in fear when their father is at home.' Several times, multiple risks were described: The mother 'sends them to go and fetch firewood and water at night and…when they refuse she beats them' (Female Child, Ibanda).

Child Rearing

> *'He has brought up his children to fear God and trained them to be leaders. So these children can be leaders in this village. And such children will be able to be good managers of their families.'* –Female Adult, Kampala

Raising good daughters and sons is seen as a core function of positive parenting, and positive parents are viewed as those who draw a clear distinction between discipline and violence. Child rearing was cited 219 times as a core element of positive parenting, with nearly half (99) of these responses focused on advice giving and appropriate (non-violent) discipline. One female child respondent in Kampala stated: 'She doesn't beat her children. Even if the child makes a mistake, she just advises, which makes the child feel loved and therefore grow well. Beating children scares them away from the parents. So when they have a problem, they will fear to approach them.' Corporal punishment is seen as appropriate when it's used in addition to advice, counselling, and warnings to discipline children or teach children manners. One female child from Kampala says, 'Disciplines his children well. When his children do some mistakes like when they fight he advises them not to repeat it but when they do, he beats them not badly. This helps his children to learn good manners because if they don't people will not like them. This helps his children to learn what is bad and stop doing it.' There is also a limit to corporal punishment with one female adult from Kampala explaining 'she can beat them but not in a bad

Table 10. Raise Children Well Codes

Raise Children Well	# of Codes
• Allows for play	23
• Disciplines or advise children	99
• Disciplines with violence	18
• Does not shout	22
• Raises with religion	59

way which can not hurt them.' Positive parents also advise their children about right and wrong, raise children into a faith community, and support children's play and recreational time.

Attributes of negative child rearing include not supporting playtime, not providing direction or advice, and not raising children into a faith community. Child respondents cited denial of play as characteristic of negative parenting more often than adult respondents (19 versus 4).

Table 11. Raise Children Poorly Codes

Raise Children Poorly	# of Codes
• Does not allow for playtime	24
• Does not discipline or advise	48
• Does not raise children with religion	14

It is of interest to note that different assumptions about childhood were, on occasion, linked to positive and negative child rearing: Are children individuals in their own right? Or do they exist to serve their parents' will? Consider the following child respondent comments:

[She] 'says her children belong to God and this is why she raises them well.' (Male Child, Kampala)

'You can tell he doesn't love his children because he won't let them play or go to school. He only makes them fetch water and do chores.' (Female Child, Lira)

Enterprising

> *'When he gets money he takes it to his bank account to help with emergencies, not like others who will get money and drink it all without supporting their children'*
> –Male Adult, Lira

The quote above highlights differences in the financial habits of adult caretakers. Positive parenting incudes being industrious, which is concretely described as buying or owning land, farming/digging and selling goods, making money in other ways, owning livestock, and saving money. Owning land was one of the actions identified by respondents that directly impacts the welfare of children: She 'bought land for her

Table 12. Enterprising Code

Enterprising	# of Codes
• Buys land	13
• Cultivates food for income	123
• Makes money	99
• Owns animals	61
• Saves money	11

children to use in the future and this has made the children's future brighter… they have been given a start' (Female Adult, Kampala).Working hard to achieve financial stability through farming or other means is seen as an important staple of positive parenting (222 times). Farming--selling produce (123 times) was the most common means of generating income. A parent 'works hard to get money. When he gets money he provides for his children whatever they want like toys, text books and clothes' (Female Child, Kampala). Saving is also characteristic of working hard, as one participant explained, '[The mother] is in savings groups like about 3 of them and she gets money from there to pay school fees when children are chased from school' (Female Adult, Kampala).

'Not working hard' on behalf of one's children was linked to negative parenting 203 times, and included not generating or spending money on school fees and health care. Excessive alcohol consumption also co-occurred with 'not working hard' 94 times. Fathers were associated with 'wasting money' more often that mothers (147 versus 56). Other actions that fall under not being enterprising or hard working include: not farming (digging) for financial gains, not doing housework, not making money, not owning livestock, and being a thief/stealing.

Table 13. Not Hard-Working Codes

Not Hard-Working	# of Codes
• Does not cultivate food for income	57
• Does not do housework	6
• Does not work	26
• No livestock	8
• Steals	14
• Wastes money	100

Adult respondents attributed being enterprising to positive and negative parenting twice as often as child respondents. Lira respondents (13%) had a higher percentage of positive parenting/enterprising responses than did Ibanda (8%) and Kampala (3%).

Intimate Partner Relationship

> *'[She] has a good relationship with her husband They agree on several issues on how to run their family and how many children to have within a specified period;*

especially those they can easily care for. So their children live happily in their family because they can manage them well.' –Female Adult, Kampala

Intimate partner relationships was linked to positive parenting 30 times and to negative parenting 204 times. Non-violence, mutual decision making, equitable division of responsibilities, and sexual fidelity are qualities associated with good intimate partner relationships and positive parenting. One female adult respondent from Kampala underscored the importance of non-violent households: 'He has a good relationship with his wife. When he has a misunderstanding with his wife he endeavors to solve it away from the kids like in his bed room. Their kids have never seen their father abuse their mother and this nurtures them very well.'

Table 14. Good Intimate Partner Relationship Codes

Good Intimate Partner Relationship	# of Codes
• Does not fight with	8
• Good relationship	33
• Teaches respect for father	4

A troubled intimate partner relationship was seen as detrimental to children. A female adult from Lira, for example, stated that the '[father] fights his wife, [which] is not good because it makes life hard for the children and it shows a bad example as a parent' A troubled relationship was associated with wife beating, verbal abuse, and having multiple sexual partners and consistently referenced as setting poor examples for children. 'This man drinks alcohol and comes back home to beat his wife when the children are seeing, which is a bad example to the children' (Female Child, Kampala).

Table 15. Bad Intimate Partner Relationship Codes

Bad Intimate Partner Relationship	# of Codes
• Bad relationship	10
• Beats wife/husband	81
• Fights with wife/husband	73
• Multiple partners	56

Good Neighbor

A parent's status in a community affects a child's status in that same community. When parents are seen as good neighbors, their children are afforded an extra degree of care and protection. When they are perceived to be troublesome their children are marginalized as well. The characteristics of a good neighbor include being kind to neighbors, helping community members overcome difficulties, caring for children other than your own, and teaching children manners as shown in Table 16. 'People like her and they can even lend her money to pay school fees for her children hence they get education' (Female Adult, Ibanda).

Table 16. Good Neighbor Codes

Good Neighbor	# of Codes
• Cares for other children	36
• Helps community	47
• Kind to neighbors	42
• Liked in community	25
• Teaches children manners	129

In contrast, adults that are abusive, uncaring and unkind to neighbors are seen as troublesome and, by extension, so may their children. One female respondent from Kampala stated: 'He is undisciplined; naturally he has bad manners if you tell him something small he abuses you and when people try to talk to him about his children he say ''*muffe kumidalla gyamwe'* (mind your business) so the children are really suffering since no one cares about them since their dad abuses people and tells them to mind their business.' A male from Ibanda pointed out: 'It takes a whole village to raise a child but now he has cut his children off the villagers by refusing to cooperate with them. How will they then be groomed into responsible citizens?'

Table 17. Bad Neighbor Codes

Bad Neighbor	# of Codes
• Abusive or quarrelsome	65
• Disliked in community	8
• Does not care for other children	17
• Does not teach manners to fit into communities	37
• Lacks manners	6
• Unkind to others	41

Discussion

> *'For our country to grow our children must grow.'* Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, Prime Minister of Uganda

The experiences children have in their early lives – and the environments in which they have them – exert a life-long impact. These experiences shape the developing brain architecture and influence how and what genes are expressed over time. This dynamic process affects whether or not children grow up to be healthy, productive members of society (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010). This is not to suggest that compromised beginnings cannot be turned around. Indeed, children's resilience is a powerful reality, achieved when protective factors – particularly a stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult – outweigh other risks (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015). The neurobiology of brain development clearly shows that it is easier, more efficient, and cost effective to build strong beginnings than it is to facilitate repairs later in life, when brain architecture is less malleable.

This study found high consensus among adults and children in communities in the three districts studied on what constitutes protective and harmful parenting as shown through tables in Annex A. It identified basic attitudes and concrete behaviors that caring parents undertake on a day-to-day basis to promote their children's well-being and protect them from harm. These behaviors range from making significant economic sacrifices to pay for education and health care, on the one hand, to ensuring a child's safety through simple, replicable) actions, such as walking one's daughter to and from school. The research also identified common characteristics of neglectful and abusive parents. Denying their children education, employing violence as a principal means of discipline, and treating children as extensions of their own will are behaviors and attitudes that place children's development at risk.

The new Uganda National Development Plan II (NDP-II) released by the Government of Uganda in 2015 acknowledges room for improvement in the focus of the country's human capital development, as well as the need to boost national progress through childhood investments in nutrition support, responsive social care, education and learning, and prevention of violence. As Uganda's Prime Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda pointed out that 'unless critical child health and development challenges are urgently addressed, Uganda's full social and economic potential will not be reached' (Daily Monitor, 2/25/15). In order to seriously put children at the heart of this national development agenda, the critical role parents and households play in promoting children's health, development, education, and protection must be recognized and supported. Services delivered to children – whether primary care, early childhood care and development, education, or protection – do not work in a vacuum. They are most effective when the vital role of the household in children's lives and wellbeing is also strengthened. Without the consistent, nurturing and protective care of parents and other household caregivers, children's wellbeing suffers across domains.

There is a scarcity of intervention programs in Uganda that address parenting or responsive social care at the household level (Boothby, et al., 2015). One program conducted in the Kitgum district of Uganda sought to increase maternal awareness and participation in stimulating the child's cognitive functions (Morris et al., 2012). The project combined emergency feeding for internally displaced mother-infant pairs with psychosocial stimulation for the infants. This involved providing education to the mothers on early childhood development and facilitating discussion groups. A similar program in Lira, Uganda, provided parenting education via twelve sessions of peer group teaching on child care and maternal wellbeing and

home visits. While neither of these programs was taken to scale, each showed positive child health and development gains.

The Ugandan Nutrition and Early Child Development Program (NECDP), funded through the World Bank, was developed and implemented between 1998 and 2003 in 25 districts of Uganda (Britto et al., 2009). Communities in the intervention group received public health announcements on child stimulation, health, and nutrition through the radio and newspapers. In Alderman and Engle's review of the NECDP, while cognitive development for children did not see significant improvement, posited by the evaluators as due to the 'low intensity of the intervention', the weight-for-age[6] for children under the age of one was significantly better in intervention households than the control households (2008). Positive results in weight difference were observed for children as young as a few months. The same improvement was not seen for all children under the age of five, possibly due to the greater brain plasticity and reversibility in younger children. Intervention households also reported more diversification in their children's diet to include multiple forms of legumes when compared to the control households, along with greater frequencies of milk, fruits, and vegetable consumption in a week (Alderman and Engle, 2008).

Questions were raised about appropriateness and meaningfulness of underlying constructs, activities and measures in all three projects. None of them were based on community norms or practices. The Lira program involved community members as trainers and volunteers, yet its package of predetermined activities were based on social care practices from other parts of the world. The World Bank-supported project achieved considerable scale, but did not base it

[6] The appropriate weight for children of a specific age, according to WHO standards

public awareness messages on local practices and did not achieve desired child development outcomes.

Our research suggests the possibility of a different approach. The ethnographic approach employed for this research may also be used to create program objectives indicators that reflect local ideas and beliefs more accurately than those reflected in measures imported from other locations. Interview response data can further be used as a way of evaluating whether the ideas reflected in existing program tools are also reported and experienced by the community. It will enable programmers to test whether a measure and its underlying construct are meaningful and appropriate for the local population. More importantly, when feedback loops are created, it can begin a process whereby community members are not only respondents but also analysts, planners, implementers, assessors, and beneficiaries of programs and initiatives. Building on community defined good practice and their capacity to deal with adversity may be a key to Uganda's sustainable development objectives.

Conclusion

Analysis of more than 6,000 responses generated through this research indicates a high consensus on what constitutes protective and harmful parenting among communities in the three districts studied. Walking a daughter to and from school, sewing a son's torn pants before he goes to church, bathing children, using mosquito nets, and structuring study time at night are among the concrete ways Ugandan parents promote their children's development and protecting them from harm on a day-to-day basis. Conversely, the use of violence and verbal threats, neglecting nutritional needs, leaving children home alone at night, and not permitting playtime are examples of how parents place children at risk.

These findings suggest that investing wisely in Uganda's children (NDPII) would include the engagement of communities to determine how to build on their own positive parenting assets. What are the social ecologies of good parenting? How might these ecologies be engaged to scale up household resilience and reduce risk? Can violence and abuse be replaced with constructive discipline options? A better understanding of what motivates Ugandan parents to invest in their own children's future would be an important piece of the puzzle as well.

Annex A: Regional Comparison

Positive Parenting

	Ibanda	Kampala	Lira		
Care	43%	38%	47%		
Being Enterprising	8%	3%	13%		
Good Neighbor	9%	8%	6%		
Investing in Children's Future	21%	22%	19%		
Protection	8%	9%	8%		
Raises Children Well	5%	11%	3%		
Intimate Partner Relations	2%	1%	1%		
Other Good Mother	2%	3%	1%		
Other Good Father	4%	5%	3%		
Total	100%	100%	100%		

Negative Parenting

	Ibanda	Kampala	Lira
Lack of care	28%	25%	32%
Not hard working	5%	3%	8%
Bad Neighbor	5%	6%	4%
Does invest in children's future	12%	15%	10%
Does not protect	22%	25%	22%
Raises Children Poorly	1%	4%	2%
Bad relationship with partner	5%	9%	5%
Other Bad Mother	4%	3%	2%
Other Bad Father	3%	3%	2%
Negative personal characteristics	15%	7%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Annex B: Child and Adult Respondent Comparison

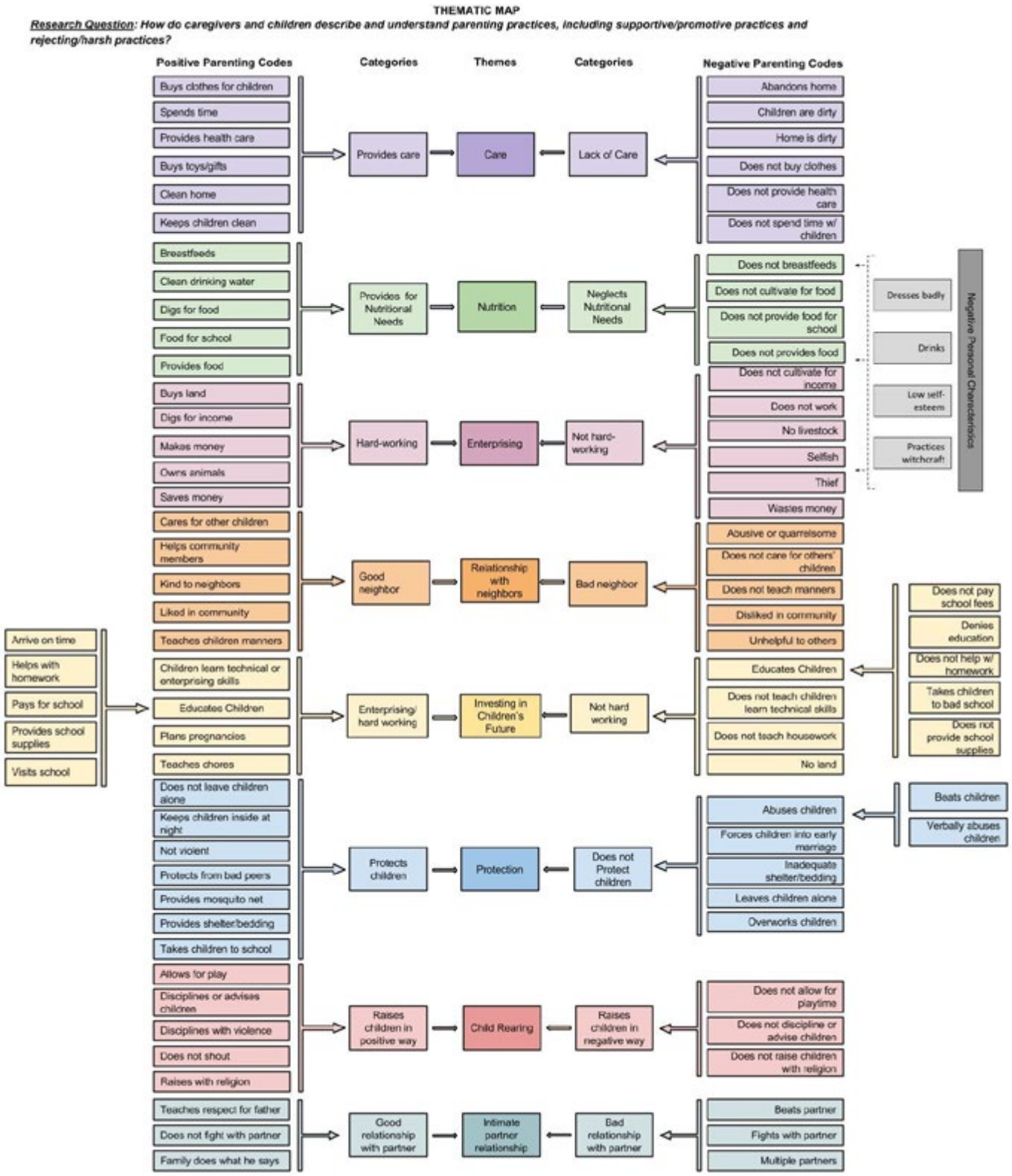
Positive Parenting

	Adult Respondents		Child Respondents	
	Raw	**Percent**	**Raw**	**Percent**
Care	611	35%	878	50%
Being Enterprising	194	11%	92	5%
Good Neighbor	180	10%	81	5%
Investing in Children's Future	379	22%	338	19%
Protection	135	8%	152	9%
Rearing Children	112	6%	107	6%
Intimate Partner Relations	38	2%	7	0%
Other Good Mother	37	2%	34	2%
Other Good Father	75	4%	65	4%
Total	611	35%	1754	100%

Negative Parenting

	Adult Respondents		Child Respondents	
	Raw	**Percent**	**Raw**	**Percent**
Lack of care	496	27%	506	30%
Not hard-working	140	8%	63	4%
Bad Neighbor	117	6%	56	3%
Does invest in children's future	235	13%	192	12%
Does not protect	287	16%	509	31%
Does not raise children well	43	2%	43	3%
Negative intimate partner relationship	148	8%	67	4%
Negative personal	279	15%	139	8%
Other Bad Mother	54	3%	38	2%
Other Bad Father	33	2%	55	3%
Total	1832	100%	1668	100%

Annex C: Thematic Map



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