

Changes in the domestic labour market for female young migrants over the last 30 years

The case of child and young domestic workers in Abidjan (Côte-d'Ivoire)

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Introduction

- In main West African cities today, large presence of little and adolescent girls
- They perform all sorts of domestic AND ‘informal’ trade activities
- This paper >> girls aged 9-22 who migrate to work as “little domestics” in Abidjan
(3 millions inhabitants in 1998)
- Not a new phenomenon but significant changes over the past 30 years
- No quantitative data on the phenomenon: what is the number of these very young female migrants ??

Yet, a striking over-representation of girls aged 10-19 in demographic statistics on Abidjan

The notion of (child/youth) migration

- Considered in its larger sense
- It includes:
 - movements from rural areas to Abidjan
 - movements from smaller cities to Abidjan
 - internal movements within Abidjan
 - girls' return migrations

Outline of the presentation

- Fieldwork and research materials : a brief presentation
- 3 parts:
 1. Historical, socio-economic, cultural & demographic **context** of the 'little domestics' phenomenon in Abidjan
 2. Main **factors & consequences** in girls' migration to work as domestics
(The example of the region of Bondoukou – North-East)
 3. Beyond the classical thesis of 'family solidarity' and beyond the hyperbole of child trafficking:
a challenge for social sciences today

Field study and research material

- 3 periods of fieldwork
 - 12 months : Feb-April 1999; Jan-May 2000; Jan-May 2001.
 - Principally in Abidjan (> 10 months)
 - In the N-E region : Bondoukou + 3 villages
 - Yamoussoukro + 3 villages in the Centre of Côte-d'Ivoire

- A qualitative survey: indepth interviews; direct observation.

A total of 173 interviews with:

- 30 employers and 'guardians' from various social backgrounds
- 38 CDW and 13 former CDW
- 27 intermediaries of placement/recruitment
 - (i.e. staff of placement agencies (16); "placement-aunties" (8); and 3 non-professional intermediaries)
- 5 parents of CDW
- 42 persons (non-) directly involved in the phenomenon:
 - managers & members of NGOs, associations and government departments related to childhood; International Organisations staff; journalists.

“Child domestics workers”
a definition based on 3 criteria:

- Children who work daily, full time within or outside the household selling goods in the streets or markets
(in Abidjan, most of them live-in)
- for someone else than their natural mother or father
- the age: a sociological and generational definition of childhood in Africa, according to Martin Verlet (1996).

In my research, the “adjustment generation”
= people under 20

NB: The gender issue:

In Côte-d’Ivoire (& in West Africa), child domestic work continues to be performed by a **large majority of girls**.

But cf. CDW in Haïti (“restavec” = girls AND boys)

Part 1

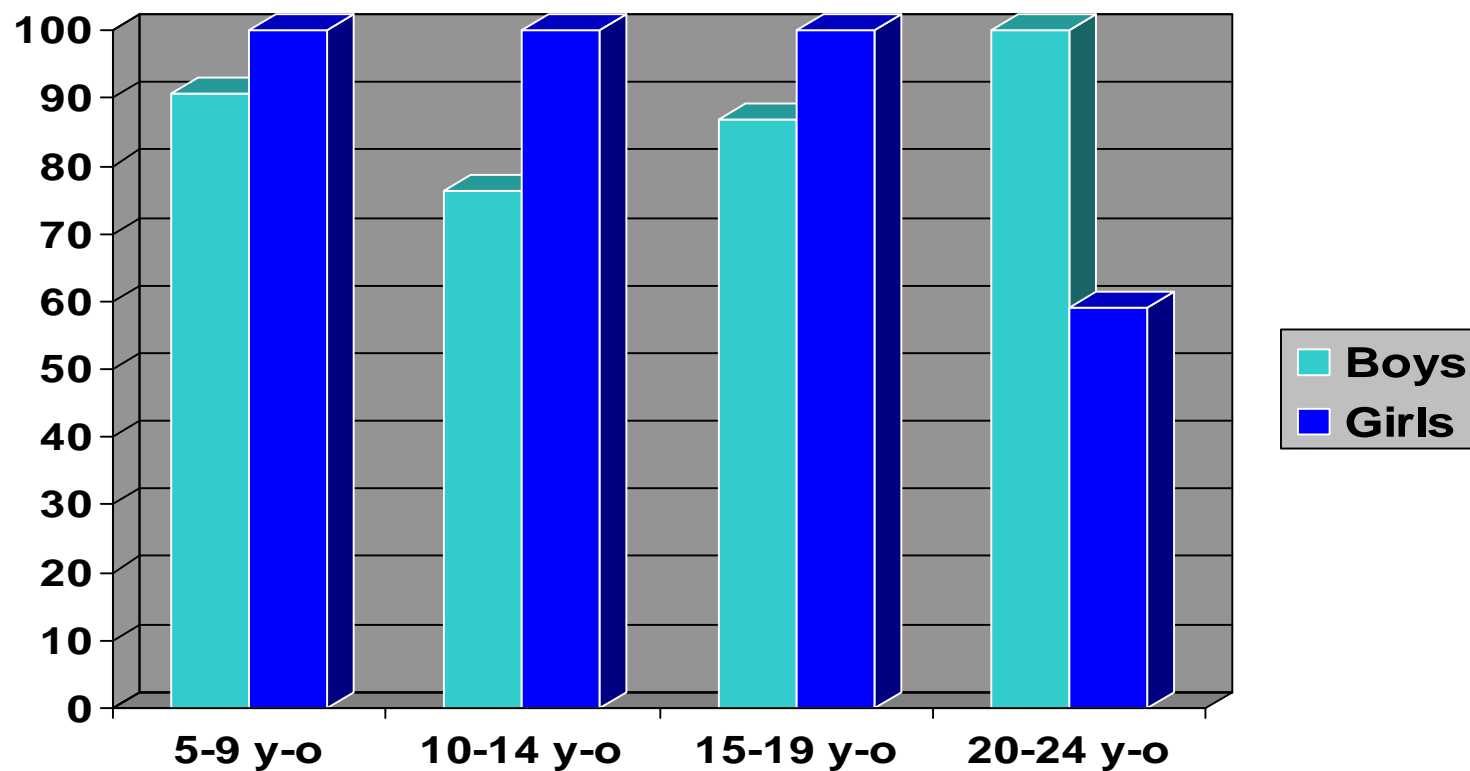
“Little nieces” and “little maids” in Abidjan.

The market of child domestic service:
context and changes over the last 30 years

1. A demographic paradox

A demographic enigma

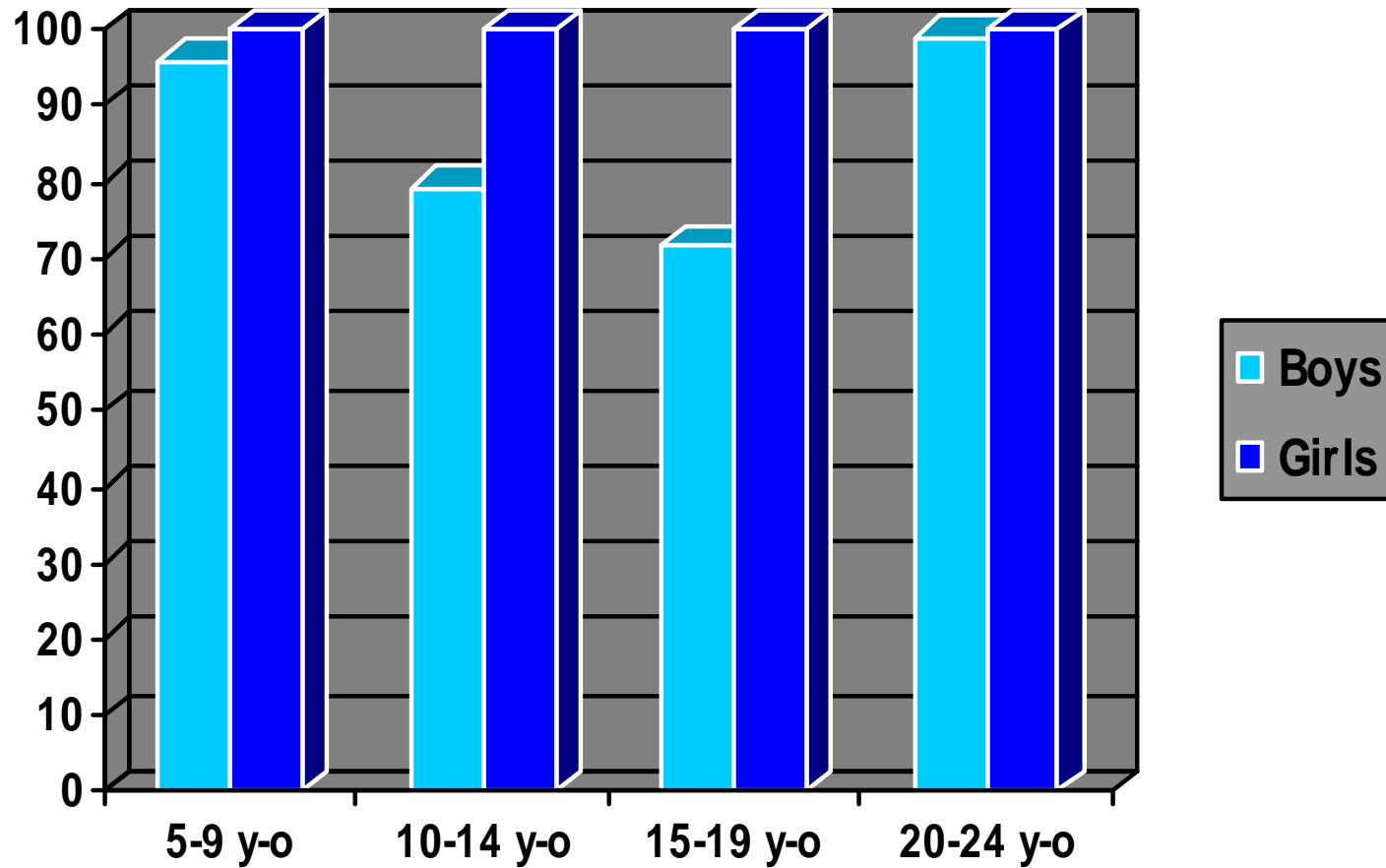
Rate of masculinity in 1975



Source: *General Population Census in Ivory Coast – 1975*

Rate of masculinity in 1998

Source: *General Population and Housing Census in Ivory Coast – 1998*



Comparative male ratio in 5-9 to 20-24 age groups

YEAR	5-9 yo	10-14 yo	15-19 yo	20-24 yo
1955	100.4	110.6	107.9	125.3
1975	90.7	76.3	86.8	141
1978	-	69.1	71.6	-
1988	94	76	71.5	97
1998	95.9	79.1	71.6	98.9

Part 1

“Little nieces” and “little maids” in Abidjan.

The market of child domestic service:
context and changes over the last 30 years

2. The economic role and value of an ‘unseen’ labour
3. From a ‘family economy’ to a market economy:
3 types of placement of migrant girls

3 types of young domestic workers in Abidjan today:

- The “little niece”

In exchange for the girl’s work, her ‘auntie’ in Abidjan is presumed to take well care of her and ensure her learning of appropriate and useful skills.

In addition to transferring some wealth to the girl’s parents from time to time, the ‘auntie’ should provide a trousseau for the girl, or some means to start in her “adult life” (some money to begin a small trade, a sewing machine, etc.).

(No specific age groups, girls from 5-6 to 20)

- The “hired helper”

An ‘auntie’ brings the girl to the city but instead of having the girl working in her household as a “little niece”, she places the girl in a non-related family. Every month she picks up the girl’s salary, but she is still supposed to survey that the girl is taken well care of, and when the girl returns to her village, the auntie should provide her with a trousseau.

(Mostly young girls aged 7-8 to 13-14 years)

- The “waged little maid”

The girl finds employment herself or through placement agencies, she has no relation at all with the household where she works. She receives her salary herself, paid in cash, on a monthly basis.

(Mostly girls aged 13-15 years or more)

Part 2

Main factors and consequences of girls' migration to work as domestics

- 1. Economic, social and cultural factors in girls' migration**
- 2. Questioning the impacts of this type of migration**

Part 3

Conceptualizing child (domestic) labour migration beyond “family solidarity” and child trafficking: a challenge for social sciences

1. Possible routes for further reflection
2. Give migrant and working children the floor