

Introduction

Everyday Life in Africa

The Importance of Leisure and Fun

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In her influential 2009 TED Talk “The Danger of a Single Story,” the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns of the perils of the dominant narrative of Africa: “a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner.”¹ Famine and conflict are real and deserve sustained attention, but this narrow focus on chaos and decline pathologizes a vast and diverse continent.

The essays in this volume offer those who have little or no direct exposure to the continent numerous counternarratives to the “single story,” offsetting the overemphasis on perennial crisis that saturates Western media sources, portraying daily life in Africa as nothing but hardship, violence, and despair. This volume is meant as a corrective that depicts the agency of Africans in their daily lives. To do this, it provides narratives capturing everyday life and ordinary experiences, sharing insights into the lives of individuals whose perspectives would otherwise remain hidden, emphasizing creativity, leisure, and pleasure in order to “bring a little fun” to the study of Africa.²

The framework of everyday life thus grounds the analytical focus of this volume. We define everyday life as the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of lived experiences and daily practices that provide valuable insight into broader social issues. By centering everyday life, these essays critically examine the multiple perspectives that enrich the complex social realities and imaginaries of life on the African continent.

Scholars have associated everyday life with the ordinary, both in terms of mundane, routine, and quotidian experiences, but also in

recognition of the importance of the daily lives of ordinary people.³ This approach brings to light perspectives that may have otherwise been ignored.⁴ The topics covered in this book are broad, which we hope will capture the unevenness of daily life, full of contradictions and inconsistencies, in ways that raise real challenges for the study of the everyday but also yield innovative findings.

This collection contributes to wider Africanist scholarship, including the literature on leisure, folklore, and popular culture on the continent, and general understandings of Africa in three ways. First, building on previous scholarship, we maintain that studying everyday life has intrinsic value. This volume highlights the agency of individuals, often in relationship to cultural groupings. It also centers unconventional sources and sites outside of official records and recognizes the ambiguities and textures of social life. As renowned anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff note, “the very significance of the quotidian lies in its paradoxes.”⁵ This approach allows us to adjust how we understand and frame larger structural transformations, interpret cultural forms, and respond to social change. Second, studying the everyday reveals insights about many other aspects of society and culture, with topics such as clothing, music, dance, or social media use providing valuable context to questions related to politics, technology, economics, and gender relations through illuminating societal values, norms, and unstated codes.⁶ As Bea Vidacs wrote in relation to studying sport, it “can throw into relief political processes on the ground and their local interpretations.”⁷ Finally, we argue that recognizing fun, pleasure, and creativity in everyday life does not negate the reality of hardship for many on the continent. We do not romanticize everyday life in Africa. Indeed, we spotlight that some of the social issues that cause deprivation or disorder may be productive realms for thinking about the central themes of this volume.

We recognize that our broad mandate invites accusations of exhibiting a desultory approach or even callousness about “important” issues. But the continent is vast and varied, and through case studies we seek to show the diversity of daily experiences of Africans. We caution readers not to misunderstand and believe life in Africa is ever-cheerful, and to avoid infantilizing stereotypes of Africans as naïve and carefree. Even Africans whose lives are riven with the constraints of poverty, warfare, rampant corruption, or the effects of ecological disasters may experience pleasure. Challenging circumstances create hardship; they also animate the lived experiences of people.

The Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina wrote in his satirical piece, "How to Write about Africa," that "taboo subjects" include "ordinary domestic scenes, love between Africans (unless a death is involved), references to African writers or intellectuals, mention of school-going children who are not suffering from yaws or Ebola fever or female genital mutilation."⁸ And from this tongue-in-cheek advice we depart, assembling writings on "off-limits" topics such as courtship and new love, intellectuals and novelists in 1970s Dar es Salaam, and children playing at a park in Namibia.

Conceptual Approaches to Everyday Life

The everyday life approach has been pursued in a number of specific fields, each with its own intellectual trajectory and theoretical traditions. Within sociology, the groundwork for the approach was laid in the 1920s and 1930s but took off in the 1950s and 1960s as a critique of macro-approaches toward society that emphasized large-scale social processes and institutions. The field used everyday life as a lens to understand the relationship between self and society and peel back layers of taken-for-granted aspects of social interaction and the organization of daily life.⁹ Inspired largely by symbolic interactionism, which examines how individuals construct social worlds through shared and contested meanings to understand the underlying social patterns of language, emotions, and action, this approach examines everyday behavior, beliefs, and symbols to explain social norms, change, and stability. The study of everyday life, primarily through firsthand observation, is a cornerstone of cultural anthropology, illuminating cross-cultural contexts and detailing the tacit dimensions of conflict, resistance, and social bonds.¹⁰

This volume builds on decades of scholarship in the broad area of social histories in Africa, where it was recognized that daily activities revealed larger social, political, and economic dynamics. The growth of social histories of Africa allowed for a focus away from macro-politics, colonization, and biographies of powerful men. These new social histories took the forms of micro-histories, biographies, and ethnographies of previously ignored populations. Books began to document the lived experiences of women, slaves, prostitutes, and sharecroppers. Works such as Marcia Wright's *Strategies of Slaves and Women*, Charles van Onselen's *The Seed Is Mine*, and John Chernoff's

Hustling Is Not Stealing provide granular details about how individuals on different parts of the continent, in varied time periods, lived their lives.¹¹ Though focusing on individuals, these books recognized the larger, limiting constraints that governed their subjects' lives, even as they documented the agency of a multilingual bar girl without formal education and a poor sharecropper in South Africa. These new social histories often drew extensively on oral sources, life histories, and other creative uses of sources.

Everyday life is also at the core of folklore studies, in line with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's definition of folklore as "the aesthetics of everyday life."¹² The field's populist approach considers *all* people and *all* types of expressive practices to be equally deserving of scholarly attention. In line with folklore studies, the essays in this volume evidence that creative activities can have instrumental value, in that the pragmatic activities of everyday life, such as fishermen and car repairmen at work, can be expressive and artistic. The analysis of the interplay between the aesthetic and pragmatic across cultural forms and social groups has produced better understandings of the arts as "one of the chief media through which ideas about race, class, gender, or other dimensions of identity are inculcated, debated, and resisted."¹³ Oral tradition is one of the many important genres of folklore that allows closer study of socialization, communication, and political negotiations.¹⁴

The scholarship on popular culture in Africa examines the production of material objects, expressive culture, performance, and arts with close attention to content, circulation, and the social context of their creation. Karin Barber (2018) traces the development of popular culture as a field of inquiry in African studies that began with ethnographic studies of the 1930s and continues with the role of media and technology in the global flows of cultural forms. Her landmark edited volume *Popular Culture in Africa* (1997) delineated the concept of popular culture as a "product of everyday life," recognizing its blurriness and its connection to identities and ideologies.¹⁵ Popular culture emerged as a concept to capture inventive cultural forms that defied categorization into strict binaries between African heritage and European-inspired aesthetics, in addition to demarcations based on generation, class, and social setting.¹⁶

While the fields of African folklore and popular culture stress the cultural expression of ordinary people in the public domain, the closely related field of leisure studies has been associated with the elite

and focused on consumption in private domains within the context of Africa's changing political economy.¹⁷ Akyeampong and Ambler's introductory essay in a 2002 special issue on "Leisure in African History" made clear a few important points that this volume also engages with. First, what constitutes leisure in Africa has changed over time. Meanwhile, boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and age affect the meanings of leisure. And, as they put it, "leisure is not a fixed or natural category but a fluid phenomenon, variously understood and historically specific."¹⁸ That special issue called for a reimagining of leisure from the perspective of those seeking pleasure, and we believe that many of the essays in this volume speak to that challenge.

Everyday life topics, even if not framed around "the everyday," represent a rich vein of scholarship. Recent books exploring subject matters such as hip-hop, car culture, and spaces like barbershops have made noteworthy contributions to analyzing everyday life in Africa.¹⁹ Other scholars have used the everyday life approach to study institutions such as the informal economy, political culture, religion, and domestic life as well as social conditions like violence and corruption.²⁰ Other works bridge a focus on popular culture and leisure activities, such as Phyllis Martin's research on dance and night life in colonial Brazzaville, Jean Allman's work on fashion, Peter Alegi's writings about soccer in southern Africa, and Laura Fair's study of popular recreation in colonial Zanzibar.²¹ These works and many others link subjects like clothing, music, and sport to political change and new forms of identity making, showing they are important topics in their own right.²²

Contributor Essays

The essays in this volume overlap with one another in ways related to geography, time period, theme, and disciplinary approach. All of the authors consider aspects of daily life, like using cell phones, watching YouTube videos, shopping at malls, and working. Some chapters feature activities not all Africans can enjoy, such as joining an elite men-only tennis club, going to the movies, or attending a wrestling match. Other chapters reflect on the meaning of special occasions like fasts, feasts, weddings, and new-year celebrations. And a handful reflect on ubiquitous aspects of daily life that we rarely examine, such as cars and the camaraderie that comes from working creatively and productively with others.

Many chapters explore the ways in which African popular culture has been in dialogue with the rest of the world. They present ample evidence that forms of leisure and popular culture in Africa are best discussed in terms of indigenization, adaptation, and appropriation rather than as static binaries of European/foreign/global and African. Matthias Krings (2015) argues that rather than understanding global culture in Africa—like the remaking of Hollywood scripts in the Nigerian film industry—as mimesis or imitation, we should pay close attention to the cultural transformations occurring.²³ Many of the essays in this volume center contingency influenced by changing internal and external forces to disrupt assumptions about the fixed nature of social practices and meanings in everyday life. Essays such as Charlotte Grabli’s examination of the daily use of radio in 1950s Leopoldville (present-day Kinshasa) argue that, while it was initially a tool of colonial propaganda, local radio programming adapted the technology to fit African musical tastes in ways that reconfigured public space. Jacqueline Mougoué shows how women’s sporting activities such as football (soccer), the “world game,” which came to Africa through colonialism, became a way for urban elites to demarcate the regional superiority of Anglophone Cameroon. Other chapters focus on how localized traditions are deeply tied to a specific place and time, such as “traditional” practices like Yoruba bridal showers in Nigeria or funeral practices in Zambia. These examples and many others throughout the volume highlight how dynamic social practices remain locally meaningful.

The essays are grouped into seven sections: Celebrations and Rites of Passage; Socializing and Friendship; Love, Sex, and Marriage; Sports and Leisure; Performance, Language, and Creativity; Technology and Media; and, Labor and Livelihoods. We encourage readers to read the book in ways that are meaningful and productive to their own objectives.

Celebrations and Rites of Passage

Rites of passage such as weddings, births, coming-of-age ceremonies, and funerals are typically set aside temporally and spatially from “everyday life” as special occasions. But they have important social functions that expand outside the set time of the event, providing opportunity for commentary about politics and community expectations surrounding gender, age, and ethnicity.²⁴

Erin Nourse describes a Malagasy Islamic hair-cutting ceremony for a newborn baby, where an ethnically and religiously diverse group of family and friends gather to welcome the newest member into their community. Nourse shows how these types of rituals serve as a meeting point where participants reaffirm their social positions and navigate shared group membership. Similarly, Abiola Victoria Ayodokun and Osuolale Joseph Ayodokun analyze *ekún-ìyàwó*, a form of poetry and bridal shower celebration among some Nigerian Yoruba communities, highlighting the importance of ritual ceremonies in demarcating kinship ties. Through poetry recitations, familial blessings, and gifts, brides absorb many of the obligations that accompany their new status. Prince Lamba's chapter on "funeral swag" explores how burial rituals in Zambia have shifted from somber occasions to flamboyant affairs that highlight changing ideas about gender difference and social status. The transformations he pinpoints are due in part to the commercialization of mourning through hired caterers, professional wailers, ostentatious outfits, and lively musicians, linked to larger global trends, urbanization, and generational differences within the country.

Picking up on the theme of rituals, Hadeer Aboelnagah writes about Egyptian feasts that bring people together across religions. She remembers as a child taking delicacies enjoyed during Ramadan to her Christian neighbors, and correspondingly enjoying their offerings at Christmas. Aboelnagah describes the social importance of food in crafting joint histories, shared norms, and public displays of tolerance (as when Christians refrain from eating in public during Ramadan). Scott M. Youngstedt examines the rising popularity of New Year's Eve celebrations with heavy drinking and firecrackers in Niger. The outdoor parties present an opportunity for men and women to socialize together publicly and for citizens to feel like they are taking part in a global ritual. The rowdy behaviors function as a "ritual of rebellion" that questions the social order while still reaffirming its importance.

Socializing and Friendship

These four chapters address friendship in various contexts and forms—in exclusive clubs that emphasize wealth and masculinity, as forms of public conspicuous consumption, and between children during play. Martha Ndakalako-Bannikov recalls her own childhood

in Namibia. Her essay draws on the particularities of Tank Park, where a tank rested among the jungle gyms and swing sets. The tank was “an uncommon memorial to childhood,” an odd piece of material culture, the remains of a long-fought war. Without denying narratives of trauma and war that loom in Namibia’s recent history, Ndakalako-Bannikov makes a persuasive case for remembering something as ordinary as children’s play. Deborah Durham focuses on another communal gathering space—the malls of Botswana—where insights about fashion, consumerism, and social relationships abound. She recognizes the importance of the malls as gathering spaces for intergenerational exchanges of information, reaffirmations of kin and friendship ties, and sharing gossip. As with other chapters in this volume, Durham indicates that work and pleasure blur: people run errands and complete chores at the mall, but also experience the pleasure of seeing and being seen.

Daniel Jordan Smith and Omotoyosi Babalola further take up the connections between status and social relationships. Both authors consider friendship, class, and moral codes in male-dominated social spaces. Smith’s ethnography takes us inside a tennis club in south-eastern Nigeria to explain the centrality of money in the construction of masculinity. Club members spend lavishly and generously to assert their authority, generate praise from peers, and build friendships in ways that largely reproduce hierarchies of gender, age, and class. The chapter connects micro-level actions in the social club with macro-shifts in Nigeria’s uneven political economy. Babalola focuses on Nigerians who enjoy going to nightclubs on weekends, a lifestyle that constitutes “turn it up” party culture. She traces the intensifying demands of urban life in megacities like Lagos that create stressful lives but also lubricate a vibrant nightlife. Male-oriented bars, dance clubs, and food joints encourage extravagant spending, drinking, and unabashed entertainment. Here as in Smith’s tennis club, several-million-naira bar tabs are not just about boasting about money, but part of an assertion of affluent and influential masculinity.

Love, Sex, and Marriage

From the friendship explored in the prior section sometimes grow deeper connections of love, intimacy, and desire in the context of romantic relationships—which is the topic of the next set of chapters.²⁵

Dorothy L. Hodgson's account of youth courtships and flirtations that flourish at moonlit celebrations emphasizes explorations of sexual freedom. Based on long-term ethnographic observations in Maasai communities in the Rift Valley of Tanzania, she argues that these festivities stimulate sexual play as well as young people's understanding of group membership, connection, and gender. Steven Van Wolputte pulls from extensive ethnographic fieldwork among Himba communities in Namibia to question assumptions about patriarchy in poly-amorous sexual relationships through examining partners' joking, intricate kinship ties, and expressions of fulfillment. Van Wolputte argues that international discourses casting such wives as helpless victims obscures the complex power relations and mutual pleasure that undergird these partnerships. Like Hodgson, who explains how intimate gendered relationships are subject to change under larger social forces like colonialism, urbanization, state control, religious institutions, and NGOs, Van Wolputte emphasizes that shifting moral expectations have direct consequences on how sexual relationships are socially legitimized.

Lara Rosenoff Gauvin's chapter also takes up love, courtship, and marriage (*cuna*). She describes how, under the dramatically changing circumstances of postwar northern Uganda, daily life goes on in modified forms after decades of war, violence, and displacement. She focuses on challenges youth face while raised in internally displaced persons camps through the experiences of two couples and the limitations they face in courtship rituals. Conflict often draws international attention or assistance, and in this case the chapter makes clear that the concern of the international community did not match local priorities to restore community relations. In the communities where Rosenoff Gauvin was based, people described everyday encounters such as courtship and marriage as central to rebuilding in the post-war situation. As with Ndakalako-Bannikov's focus on children's play, Rosenoff Gauvin does not undermine the seriousness of war or its long-term effects; rather, she provides a nuanced picture of how daily life continues in modified ways.

Sports and Recreation

Four chapters present different ways of participating in sports and athletic pursuits on the continent. During the colonial era, leisure

activities were tightly controlled, with clear examples of acceptable and unacceptable ways to spend free time—whether women should play sports, what young boys should do, what young men should not do. What was deemed acceptable was tremendously revealing of colonial priorities and expectations about age, gender, and class. Africans responded with subtle forms of resistance and obvious forms of appropriation and adaptation to heavy-handed programs. For example, soccer was introduced as an appropriate leisure activity, but Africans around the continent quickly made it their own, stretching the game to allow for female teams, elaborate aesthetics, and political commentary.²⁶ Across a wide time span, this section demonstrates how people construct recreational activities in ways that are socially meaningful.

Issahaku Adam and Akwasi Kumi-Kyereme draw attention to the contemporary leisure activities of people with disabilities in Ghana, who are often stigmatized and ostracized. Drawing on interviews, they describe leisure activities that might seem surprising: a young man who lost a leg who uses crutches playing soccer; a blind woman enjoying television. These examples reveal alternate ideas to the dominant narratives of what constitutes sport and leisure, who participates, and their meanings.

Expanding on the theme of rethinking normativity, Jacqueline Mougoué's and Cheikh Tidiane Lo's chapters show how varied institutional actors use sporting cultures to craft social understandings of femininity and masculinity to both buttress and destabilize assumptions. Mougoué uses archival research to describe the political history of women's participation in athletic activities in 1960s and 1970s Anglophone Cameroon. She traces how governing elites and influential journalists marshalled political leisure to represent Anglophone Cameroon as autonomous, progressive, and competitive. Conversely, Lo's work on Senegalese folk and professional wrestling analyzes the public spectacle of masculinity at these popular events. Through media analysis and first-hand accounts, he argues that men's bodily movements, technical skills, and artistic expressions present an image of masculinity centered around honor, prestige, and strength. Lo points to the many meanings of these wrestling events: a pathway for social mobility, a rite of passage into manhood, a communal gathering, and a way to create national identity. Other works have traced wrestling across the Atlantic world, yet another form of continental contact and exchange.²⁷

The understandings of masculinity central to Lo's chapter also function in the boys' clubs created in post-World War II colonial Lagos that Michael Gennaro discusses. While these clubs sought to corral youth who colonial officials considered "wayward" by using sport to ease transitions into adulthood, multiple sources recount the camaraderie and friendships that the boys created and maintained there. Like other contributors to this volume, Gennaro emphasizes that Africans adapted and adopted colonial creations to fit local needs and interests.

Performance, Language, and Creativity

The next set of essays explores how people use daily forms of communication that capitalize on wordplay and performative culture as a form of social commentary and shifting communal boundaries. Alex Perullo and James Nindi explore Tanzanians' use of humor to stave off fatigue on long claustrophobic journeys on public transportation and through comedy shows. These critical conversations and performances provide biting social critique on pressing issues like crumbling infrastructure or changing urban dress codes. Lisa Gilman and Paolo Israel center performance in order to understand inventive cultural forms and historical legacies. Gilman focuses on *chilimika* dance competitions in Malawi, which offer performers opportunities to build community and engage in bottom-up forms of cultural creativity. Israel focuses on the life of Mustafa Bonde, a Mozambican masquerade master whose playful renewal of ancient traditions speaks to larger complexities of cultural change, personal struggle, and shifting social landscapes of colonialism, war, and resistance.

Mokaya Bosire's essay on Sheng, a form of slang common among youth in urban Kenya, reveals how linguistic vernacular remains at the heart of social life. Sheng shows up across Kenyan society: in mobile phone texting, social media, hip-hop, stand-up comedy, and slam poetry. By studying its structure and uses, Bosire reveals ingenious linguistic play that facilitates communication between people who speak different languages. Maya Angela Smith explores the YouTube show *Journal Rappé*, a product of the global digital age targeted at those in Senegal and the global diaspora, as a form of "edutainment" that combines Wolof and French, exposing new ways of thinking about language. Smith showcases the innovative ways that the hosts

blend rap, video, and news to convey satire, commentary, and information. For Bosire, Sheng's fast-moving expressions help illustrate reconfigurations around group identity in Kenya's ethno-linguistically diverse urban spaces, while, for Smith, language becomes an engine to propel political transformations for Senegalese communities. Taken together, these contributions push us to think about linguistic artistry in the context of social change.

Technology and Media

The next four chapters document varied engagements with technology and media and show how people make these cultural products meaningful in their local contexts. In an essay on film translation in Tanzania, Birgit Englert and Paul Moreto explore how Tanzanians have adapted films from the United States, India, China, and Korea to make them relevant to their lives. A creative industry of young men who provide translations in Swahili has garnered local fame by adding contextual information, ignoring some lines while elaborating other parts, and "adding a certain *vionjo* (flavor) to the film that makes it more entertaining to the audience."

John Fenn explains that the increased availability and affordability of cell phones in Malawi has facilitated communication and collaboration between people across rural and urban settings. His chapter documents creative ingenuity, such as entrepreneurs developing battery-charging businesses to serve the many Malawians whose homes do not have electricity. Charlotte Grabli's chapter explores how the public address system, with speakers installed throughout Kinshasa, Belgian Congo, in the 1950s to facilitate colonial control, became a pleasurable part of daily life. This appropriation of a colonial tool and technology to create "the musical landscape of the colonial town" is particularly subversive.

Just as African residents in Kinshasa demanded music from around the globe, Laura Fair shows the deeply global nature of the leisure of many Zanzibari youth in sold-out screenings of kung fu, blaxploitation, and Indian films, and musical shows featuring R&B, funk, and rock-n-roll in packed disco dance clubs. Some films raised questions of justice, fairness, and equity while others provided visuals for acting on true love and models of what "modern" love might look like. Fair also draws our attention to how young couples could escape the

oversight of older generations in cinemas. All these chapters hint at Africa's history of global engagement with forms of popular culture and technology including music, film, and gadgets.

Labor and Livelihoods

Joshua Grace's chapter brings us in a slightly different direction, focusing on a creative interaction with technology (the automobile) and the Tanzanian auto garages and mechanics participating in everyday acts of repair and expertise. Grace questions and undermines narratives of technological dysfunction and brokenness, presenting Tanzania as a place of innovation by studying car garages in Dar es Salaam and the resourcefulness required to keep cars running. Through narratives of individual mechanics, he inverts the idea of dysfunction as failure, presenting it as "an opportunity to learn, to tinker, to modify and remake vehicles, to stimulate the mind, to create new designs, and to have fun."

Emily Callaci's chapter focuses on generational change, the draw of the big city, and the friendships cultivated in urban spaces. She explores the lives and friendships of the male Tanzanian authors of Swahili detective novellas written in the 1970s. Their friendships, which Callaci demonstrates are foundational to understanding their work, developed under conditions of police harassment, housing shortages, evictions, and slum demolitions. Yet the precariousness of daily life only intensified the bonds. Demonstrating the crosscutting themes prevalent in the volume, Callaci recounts how these young men made their way, generating original art while maintaining friendships.

Eric Debrah Otchere's essay examines the everyday life activities of canoe fishermen in Ghana. The chapter captures the role of singing in making their difficult work achievable. Through a call-and-response rhythm, these songs coordinate effort, invite group participation, teach life lessons, and cultivate creative spaces amid grueling work. This chapter calls attention to how music can provide space to engage with daily realities and public controversy.

In the final chapter, Bill McCoy discusses patient activities at the missionary Mbuluzi Leprosy Hospital in Swaziland in the 1950s, and particularly their growing of *dagga* (marijuana) on the hospital grounds. Selling *dagga* to neighboring South Africa provided some with needed funds, but represented just one of the challenges Swazi patients raised

to the moral and social norms foreign missionaries advanced. The chapter is a good reminder “of just how thin the lines often are that separate leisure activity from the political and economic realm.” What occurs in the everyday can be pleasure, drudgery, and legal or not.

This volume recognizes the richness of everyday life in Africa through a series of case studies that provide local context while shedding light on many broader questions of history, economics, politics, and society. However, we recognize these are only case studies and there are many important topics that these chapters did not address. These include precolonial time periods, which limits our ability to timestamp how and why leisure, popular culture, and understandings of everyday life have changed since those periods. Moreover, none of these essays directly engage with queer sexualities.²⁸ These essays also do not explicitly discuss how notions of beauty and fashion are locally rooted and connected to media, relationships, and labor.²⁹ Nonetheless, we believe we make a valuable contribution by drawing out complex analytical stories about intimate relationships, recreational activities, expressive cultures, and media and technology use. By centering these multilayered stories about everyday life, we can begin to fulfill Adichie’s mandate to use many stories “to empower and to humanize.”

Notes

1. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” video of presentation at the TEDGlobal 2009 conference, July 23, 2009, quote at 6:15, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en#t-1053011.

2. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, “Introduction: The Creation and Consumption of Leisure: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations,” in *Leisure in Urban Africa*, ed. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Cassandra Rachel Veney (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), viii.

3. Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome, eds., *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Toyin Falola and Augustine Agwuele, eds., *Africans and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009); Wale Adebani, ed., *The Political Economy of Everyday Life in Africa: Beyond the Margins* (Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2017).

4. Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler, “Leisure in African History: An Introduction,” in “Leisure in African History,” ed. Emmanuel

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5. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 30–31.

6. Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yankah, eds., *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

7. Bea Vidacs, “Through the Prism of Sports: Why Should Africanists Study Sports?,” *Africa Spectrum* 41, no. 3 (2006): 337.

8. Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write about Africa,” *Granta* 92 (Winter 2005): 91–96, published on the *Granta* website January 19, 2006, <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa>.

9. Patricia A. Adler, Peter Adler, and Andrea Fontana, “Everyday Life Sociology,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 217–35; David A. Karp, William C. Yoels, Barbara H. Vann, and Michael Ian Borer, *Sociology in Everyday Life*, 4th ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2016); Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, “Sociology of Everyday Life,” *Current Sociology* 61, no. 5/6 (2013): 714–32.

10. Mwenda Ntarangwi, David Mills, and Mustafa Babiker, eds., *African Anthropologies: History, Critique, and Practice* (London: Zed Books, 2006).

11. Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East/Central Africa* (Cambridge, UK: James Currey, 1993); Charles van Onselen, *The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894–1985* (Cambridge, UK: James Currey, 1996); John M. Chernoff, *Hustling Is Not Stealing: Stories of an African Bar Girl* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

12. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “The Future of Folklore Studies in America: The Urban Frontier,” *Folklore Forum* 16, no. 2 (1983): 175–234. See also Simon J. Bronner, “Folklore Movement,” in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: Routledge, 2006).

13. Giovanna P. Del Negro and Harris Berger, “New Directions in the Study of Everyday Life: Expressive Culture and the Interpretation of Practice,” in *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture*, ed. Harris M. Berger and Giovanna P. Del Negro (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 3.

14. Kwesi Yankah, *Speaking for the Chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1995); Isidore Okpewho, *Once Upon a Kingdom: Myth, Hegemony, and Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

15. Karin Barber, ed., *Readings in African Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

16. Karin Barber, *A History of African Popular Culture: New Approaches to African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

17. Zeleza and Veney, *Leisure in Urban Africa*, 105–24.

18. Akyeampong and Ambler, “Leisure in African History,” 5–6.

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