**HUSTLING NGOS: COMING OF AGE IN KIBERA**

**SLUM, NAIROBI, KENYA**

(Order No. )

**LYNSEY DEANNE FARRELL**

Boston University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2014

Major Professor: Parker Shipton, Professor of Anthropology

ABSTRACT

Some demographers predict that in the next generation over 50% of the world’s youth population will live in Africa without requisite social services and economic opportunities to support them. In Nairobi, Kenya the effects of this trend are evident already in the high rates of violent crime, the proliferation of slums, the dependence on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide basic services, and the large proportion of the population who make their living through unofficial, informal channels—colloquially called “hustling.”

The failures of public policy to address the consequences of the demographic explosion are exacerbated by a common custom across Kenya of setting youth apart as way of moderating inter-generational tensions. Youth become stuck and unable to transition to adulthood. They ultimately spend the majority of their lives in a protracted state of liminality, marked by a lack of status and feeling of incompleteness.

This dissertation follows a group of youth in Nairobi’s large informal settlement of Kibera as they cope with this liminality by hustling NGOs. The saturated development field in Kibera provides them opportunities to make money, create networks of reciprocity, and build internal hierarchies in the slum. For the most successful of these youth, hustling NGOs aids in their entry into a new status that transcends the hurdles of generation—a category they call exposure. In Kenya, socio-economic constraints limit the options for a majority of youth, but becoming exposed provides an ideological shift that paves a way toward an alternative to adulthood.