

**Coming of Age and  
Changing Institutional Pathways  
Across Generations in Rwanda**

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the*

*Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies*

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis offers an account of children's lived experiences in Rwanda (1930s-2016) in four key domains: kinship, education, economic transitions, and marriage. Based on historical and ethnographic fieldwork in rural and urban Rwanda from 2012 to 2014, this work explores how three generations of young people have experienced and navigated childhood and coming of age at the interface of 'traditional' and 'modern' institutional systems. Rather than focusing narrowly on 'crisis' childhoods, individual agency, or exogenous forces, as studies of young Africans and social change tend to, this work examines young people's 'everyday' actions – intentional and unintentional, individual and collective, compliant and non-compliant – and locates them within their broader historical, relational, and institutional environment. By focusing on the intensely reproductive period of childhood and coming of age, on Rwanda's unexceptional majority rather than its exceptionally vulnerable minority, and on children's everyday actions rather than the strategic actions of elites, this thesis shows us how children shape the institutions of childhood and marriage and, in so doing, influence how society is reproduced and changed.

Theoretically, this thesis explains how children and their institutional environment are mutually constituting: it examines how and why young people experience rapid change and structural violence differently and it traces how they reproduce and change these structural conditions as they engage with institutional mechanisms in (un)intended ways. The research reveals that children in central Rwanda navigate constraints and opportunities by drawing on established kinship relationships and institutions while also opportunistically engaging with modern institutions and their actors. However, in this context of 'institutional multiplicity', traditional and modern institutional systems each need Rwanda's young majority to reproduce their institutions over others', and as intended, to achieve their power-distributional goals. This makes children's actions particularly consequential and demands that we redefine what political action – and political actors – look like.

For my loves, Aidan, Elise, Chloe, and Daniel.

In memory of Randy (1976-2011), Rosemarie (2011-2016) and Aurora (1940-2016).



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Finally, to the One who put this project in my heart and brought it safely to completion, thank you. This is my best shot.

(\*Pseudonyms)

*‘Qui plaisait plus, gagnait plus.’*

C - Education des Enfants, 3. Education Sociale et Politique  
*Le Mariage Coutumier au Rwanda*  
Bushayija (1966, 161)



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## Notes on the Text

I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity and security of participants, some key informants, research assistants (RA), and the organisation I did my urban study with. I have also composited the identities of local leaders and anonymised geographical names immediately associated with my rural research location.

To help the reader distinguish which participants belong to each family study, I have given family study members Christian names that begin with the same letter (see *Appendices 5, 6*); all other participants have Kinyarwanda names. When I first mention a family study member, I note the family study (FS1-5) and generation (G1-3) they belong to.

The proper term of reference for Rwanda's 1994 Genocide is 'The 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi'. I honour this specificity, but after first usage I refer to this event as 'the Genocide' for ease of reading. I refer to all Rwandans who lived through the Genocide as 'survivors'. I reserve the term *rescapé* for Tutsi survivors.

It is prohibited by law for researchers to ask Rwandan participants questions regarding their ethnic status or to refer to their ethnic status during research. Thus, I refer to all participants as Rwandan unless their ethnic status is significant to the narrative and argument. Any reference I make to participants' ethnic status – Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa<sup>1</sup> - is based on volunteered information.

All photos are my own, used with permission.

## Currency Exchange Rates

1985 GBP=RWF 120

2000 GBP=RWF 640

2013 GPB=RWF 1000

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<sup>1</sup> Twa (or 'Batwa') are pygmy indigenes and government-designated 'Highly Marginal People'.



## Introduction

Since 1970, almost all new civil conflicts have occurred in low-income countries where over 60 per cent of the population is under age 30 (Lin 2012; Leahy et al. 2007). Further, countries with a very young age structure have historically had a 90 per cent probability of autocratic or partial democratic governance (ibid. Leahy et al.). Most of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. But what is the relationship between young people and their institutional environment? How do young demographic majorities experience and respond to armed conflict, persistent poverty, authoritarian rule, and major historical change? And do their responses and actions, in the aggregate, have a consequential effect on their institutional environment?

These questions nagged at me as I wrote my Master's thesis on children and youth as actors in conflict-affected fragile states. Following the conflict decade of the 1990s, research and discourse on young people in sub-Saharan Africa was hypothesising a connection between the continent's large youth demographic and its high prevalence of poverty and conflict (see, for example, Urdal 2006). But neither political science nor child and youth studies were providing evidence-based theory to explain the nature of the relationship between young people and their institutional environment. Obscuring matters further, studies of African children and youth predominantly focus on exceptional categories of vulnerable young people (Anyidoho et al. 2012; Ofosu-Kusi and Abebe 2016). This left me to wonder how Africa's 'unexceptional' young majority experiences and responds to their changing institutional environment; it seemed

unlikely that a demographic majority would have an inconsequential effect simply because they are, in generational terms, ‘children’<sup>2</sup>.

Rwanda caught my attention as a focus of study because it is at once a successful outlier in state reconstruction and development studies and a country with a persistent history of political and structural violence<sup>3</sup> and extreme poverty. It also has a very young population: two-thirds are under age 25 and half the population is under age 15 (NISR 2015), a pattern that has persisted since record-keeping (Sledsens 1971). But while there are numerous political analyses of Rwanda’s turbulent history (see Lemarchand 2007), none consider the experiences and actions of Rwanda’s young majority. Further, studies of Rwandan children and youth remain crisis- and ethnicity-focused due to Genocide legacies and fears of conflict recurrence. Consequently, there are no in-depth studies of childhood and coming of age in Rwanda prior to this one<sup>4</sup>. Thus, Rwanda presented a compelling opportunity to examine how and why children’s lived experience has been changing over time and whether their ‘everyday’ actions influence the institutions that shape and inform their lives in consequential ways.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use the terms ‘child/ren’ and ‘childhood’ as a generational category. See below.

<sup>3</sup> I define ‘structural violence’ as ‘institutionalised inequalities of statuses, rights, and power [which are] the consequence of the more powerful group’s use of coercion, which has become institutionalised into legal systems, and justified through mythology, religion, philosophy, ideology and history’ (Hoffmann and McKendrick 1990, 20).

<sup>4</sup> Sommers’ (2012) work on youth transitions is not in-depth research. Education studies (see Erny 2005; 2001; 2003b; 2003a; Greenland 1971; Williams 2015; Pauwels 1974) and colonial scholarship (ibid. Erny, Pauwels; see also Codere 1973; Arnoux 1931; Maquet 1954; Vincent 1954) provide some data on childhood and family relations. Additionally, two community ethnographies document Rwanda’s changing society (Gravel 1968; De Lame 2005).

## **Complicating the ‘Single Story’<sup>5</sup> of Childhood and Youth in Africa**

In asking these questions, I am asserting that it is critical to understand the everyday lived experience of Rwanda’s young majority - not just the experience of those who are exceptionally ‘at-risk’. I am also arguing that without a historical institutional view of childhood and coming of age, we cannot explain how young people experience and respond to the convergence of multiple institutional systems, ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’<sup>6</sup>, in their everyday lives. Nor can we determine whether children’s actions – intentional and unintentional – influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives and society. Is it just adults who change childhood and transitions to social adulthood, or are young people instrumental in shaping these changes? If the latter, are children’s actions consequential? Does their generational position and their ways of engaging with their institutional environment warrant a theory of institutional reproduction and change specific to children? These are big questions, so I begin by briefly examining how existing literature addresses these questions.

### ***Changing Childhoods and Transitions to Social Adulthood in Africa***

Child and youth scholars agree that childhood and children’s transitions to adulthood are changing rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>7</sup> (for childhood see, for example, Twum-Danso Imoh and Ame 2012; Serpell 1993; Hollos 2002; Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014; for transitions see Punch 2015; Honwana 2012; Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh 2006b).

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<sup>5</sup> From Adichie (2009).

<sup>6</sup> While recognising the problems that come with labelling institutions ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ (see, for example, Ranger 1983), I do so to simplify the flow of the argument. Within ‘traditional’ I include precolonial, indigenous, kinship, and feudal institutions. Within ‘modern’ I include state, market, and international institutions, including the Christian Church. Henceforth, I drop the use of inverted quotation marks.

<sup>7</sup> The same is true globally (see, for example, Jeffrey and Mcdowell 2004; Jeffrey 2010; Punch 2014; Juárez and Gayet 2014).

However, scholars struggle to explain the process of change, how children's experiences intersect and vary, and how young people pursue social transitions in uncertain environments where the 'rules of the game' (i.e. institutions) are changing rapidly. A key reason scholars struggle is that contemporary academic and policy studies of African children and youth predominantly focus on exceptional categories of vulnerable young people, such as HIV/AIDS orphans, child-headed households, (ex)combatants, and street children (Anyidoho et al. 2012; see, for example, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi 2013; Pells 2009; Hoffman 2003; Honwana and De Boeck 2005). Alternately, they focus on exceptional experiences, such as extreme forms of labour, sexual violence, and conflict (see, for example, André and Godin 2014; Gerver 2013; Abbink and van Kessel 2005). Even when these studies provide a view of the quotidian, we are learning about the everyday experience of young people in crisis. Further, Punch (2015) notes that even holistic studies of 'unexceptional' young people in the Majority World<sup>8</sup> focus on the economically poor (69); see, for example, Katz 2004; Boyden and Bourdillon 2014). Thus, while this literature identifies sources of risk and advocates support, it does not reveal how the 'unexceptional' majority experiences and responds to change or how their lived experience intersects with that of exceptionally vulnerable children (Robson 2004; Twum-Danso Imoh 2016a). This sample bias obscures similarities and differences in experience, the complex ways social change constrains and benefits children differently, and how children position and reposition themselves in response and, in so doing, change African societies (Ofosu-Kusi and Abebe 2016, 304). Without more

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use the terms 'Minority/Majority World' to refer to the 'Global North/South', 'First/Third World', and 'Developed/Developing world' because Minority/Majority World accurately reflects the distribution of the world's children and emphasises the historically unequal power relations between these populations.

representative qualitative data, we cannot accurately identify the forces and mechanisms driving continuity and change in children's lives.

Holistic studies of childhood and youth in Africa, from early studies of the African family to contemporary studies of child-rearing and children's education and labour, locate the source of change at the convergence of traditional and modern institutions in young people's lives<sup>9</sup> (Waller 2006; Nukunya 2011; Serpell 1993). For example, Katz's (2004) longitudinal study of childhood and globalisation in Sudan demonstrates that when state and market institutions converge with pre-existing kinship-based institutions in children's lives, children's education, labour, kinship relationships, and norms change, transforming processes of social reproduction (see also Spittler and Bourdillon 2012; André and Godin 2014). Relatedly, Serpell (1993) traces how the growing prevalence of formal schooling has influenced notions of status and intelligence and, relatedly, how children are educated (see also Greenland 1971; Hollos 2002; for parents' reactions to colonial schooling in Africa, see Ball 1983). In a historical context where children are gradually integrated into full group membership through an interdependent, relational learning process, scholars note that the growing influence of schooling, Christianity, nation state, and market economy are shifting parenting priorities and weakening kinship norms (see, for example, LeVine et al. 1994, chaps. 3–5; Goody 1982; Alber, Häberlein, and Martin 2010; Kilbride and Kilbride 1990). Nsamenang (2002) argues that these patterns reflect young Africans' contemporary reality, which 'lies in the interface of the endogenous and exogenous' (96). However, given that most studies identify *extrinsic* forces and *exogenous* actors as the primary

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<sup>9</sup> Chinua Achebe's classic novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), captures these dynamics best.

drivers of change, rather than *intrinsic* forces and *endogenous* actors, and none trace the mechanisms of social change in children's lives, it is difficult to know whether young people's responses to their changing environment are consequential to broader processes of institutional reproduction and change.

Young Lives' longitudinal cohort studies from Ethiopia reveal that the way young people experience and respond to this convergence is mediated by multiple personal factors, such as ethnicity, sibling and household composition, socio-economic status, geography, gender, and age (see Camfield and Tafere 2011; Boyden et al. 2015; Boyden and Bourdillon 2014). This complexity is captured and teased apart in Hashim and Thorsen's (2011) examination of child migration in Africa. However, these are not just interesting details; the way young people experience and respond to social change has very real implications for their life trajectories and the reproduction of structural inequality. For example, in Morrow's (2015) analysis of youth transitions in Ethiopia and India, modern and kinship-based institutions converge to raise young people's aspirations and complicate their expectations related to gender and generational roles and interdependence. Expecting schooling to lift them out of poverty, many neglect farming only to be left without a viable livelihood option in a fragile economic context (see also Boyden 2013). This complexity, Nsamenang (2002) and Wyn (2015) argue, necessitates new research approaches and conceptual lenses that facilitate a broader understanding of the nature of contemporary change and how it impacts young people's experience and the meaning of childhood and coming of age.

In recent years, anthropologists have advanced new ways to conceptualise and theorise how young Africans navigate rapid change and structural and political violence. As a

starting point, Lubkemann (2008) argues that people continue to pursue ‘culturally scripted life projects’ (14), such as marriage, amid war and trying circumstances. Further, they navigate these ‘life projects’ in ways that are influenced by pre-war social norms and values as well as violence (see also Utas 2005; Wood 2008, 540). But how do children and youth do this? Christiansen et al. (2006a) argue that young Africans navigate social transitions in precarious circumstances *not by resisting* rule systems, but by adhering to dominant norms and values and continually (re)positioning themselves within existing social categories and relational structures. Vigh (2006) conceptualises this process as ‘social navigation’<sup>10</sup> (51; 2009). Cole (2011) argues:

[...] youth seek adulthood by subjecting themselves ever more intensively to the networks and social relations that provide economic and social opportunities. *Theirs is not a story of standing outside existing structures of power: It is a story of trying to get inside them.* (italics added, 73)

But young people do not have access to the same opportunities or face the same constraints as subjects: when children know their basic needs will not be met within existing relationships, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013) argue that their awareness of their vulnerability compels them to act ‘above and beyond what is permitted by the ‘rules of the game’ (380). Similarly, in contexts of chronic uncertainty, Johnson-Hanks (2005) explains that young people are more likely to try to move forward by engaging in ‘judicious opportunism’ - seizing promising opportunities – than by acting on prior intentions. Nevertheless, they still tend to follow the pattern Cole (2011) describes:

[...] young people actively allow themselves to become recruited into particular kinds of subject positions that are either closely tied to the circulation of global

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<sup>10</sup> Vigh takes this concept from *se débrouiller*, ‘to be resourceful’, a capacity (*débrouillardise*) Rwandan parents regard to be an essential marker of children’s intelligence (*ubwenge*) (Mukamurama 1985, 91).

commodities or to the reproduction of hierarchical patron–client networks. In neither case does resistance seem to apply. (72-3)

This suggests that even when young people change - rather than reproduce - existing rule systems and institutional processes, they may reproduce existing power structures and inequalities.

These patterns are evident in the empirical record, wherein young Africans increasingly struggle to transition to adulthood ‘according to *existing institutional paths*’ (italics added, Cole 2011, 60; Johnson-Hanks 2002; Punch 2015). However, transitions studies tend to employ research methods that are incapable of capturing and unravelling diverse experiences, identifying continuities as well as change, or extending findings to theorise young people’s experiences and actions. The most obvious reason for this shortcoming is that most scholars fail to locate young people’s experiences and actions within historical and generational processes of coming of age (for exceptions see Morrow 2015; Camfield and Tafere 2011; Cole 2004; Masquelier 2005). Sommers’ *Stuck: Rwandan Youth and the Struggle for Adulthood* (2012) exemplifies the dangers inherent in this approach: his study finds that young Rwandans are ‘stuck’ in the social status of youth because male youth cannot afford to build a home, which is a cultural prerequisite to marriage. However, like other youth scholars, he fails to interpret his findings within past studies related to African marriage<sup>11</sup>, which reveal that young people and their kin have been navigating these marriage challenges at least since colonialism<sup>12</sup> (for Rwanda see Ilinigumugabo 1989; Mugabo 1982; Olson 1994, 7-8; De Lame 2005, chap. 7; for Africa

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<sup>11</sup> The bibliographies of African youth transition studies show no evidence of this literature.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the custom of ‘free brides’ (*nkuli*) shows that there has historically been accommodations for young Rwandan men who cannot afford a home or bridewealth (see Bushayija 1966; Bigirumwami, n.d.)

see Bledsoe 1990; Burnham 1987; Mair 1969; Parkin and Nyamwaya 1987). Second, despite the reality that social transitions are embedded within generational relationships and predicated on some form of conjugal relationship, contemporary studies tend to examine *either* male or female experience and offer a very limited generational perspective (see, for example, Cole 2004; Mains 2007; Langevang 2008; Jones 2009; Sommers 2012). This gendered, individualistic approach leaves us to piece together how changing male and female and generational experiences intersect and inform each other. Finally, most transitions studies focus on minority social categories, such as urban youth and/or secondary graduates (see, for example, Mains 2007; Hansen 2005; Langevang 2008; Jones 2009; for rural studies see White and Berckmoes 2016; Sommers 2012; Camfield and Tafere 2011). But does Africa's predominantly rural, primary-educated young majority face similar opportunities and challenges?

Limited thus, we learn that contemporary transitions to adulthood are far more likely to be distinct processes (e.g. economic, domestic, sexual, and generational transitions), rather than synchronised ones. They are also less likely to be linear, uni-directional, or locally universal than in the past (Punch 2015; Johnson-Hanks 2002; Juárez and Gayet 2014). We are explicitly and implicitly told that there is a 'crisis' of reproduction (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004; Masquelier 2005; cf. Jones 2009) because youth lack the resources needed to transition to the social status of adulthood according to *existing* institutional pathways (Cole 2011; Johnson-Hanks 2002; Langevang 2008; Sommers 2012). Given that these pathways are no longer coherent or reliable, many scholars assert that we must shift from studying transitions to studying 'vital conjunctures': 'vital life events' that create moments of uncertainty in which different futures and identities may

be reimagined (Johnson-Hanks 2002, 878; 2005, 363; see also Langevang 2008; Jeffrey 2010). This thesis is an argument against this strategy because while studying vital conjunctures allows us to describe individual experience and action, it does not enable us to theorise how or why or for whom these institutional processes are changing. Nor does it reveal the implications of continuity and change for young people and broader processes of institutional reproduction. This underscores the urgent need for in-depth, qualitative research that examines changing transitions from a historical institutional perspective, as I do here.

### **Young People as Agents of Institutional Reproduction and Change?**

We know that childhood and children's transitions to adulthood are changing in Africa. But is it reasonable to expect that children shape these social processes and their outcomes and that they do so in ways that are consequential and different enough from adults that their actions warrant special attention? Three bodies of literature provide insights into these questions.

#### ***1. Youth 'Bulge' and Conflict Studies***

Youth bulge studies assert that the actions of Africa's young majority are consequential. Working with macro-level quantitative data, scholars and policy researchers find a strong correlation between large youthful populations (with a high dependency ratio), conflict, and low levels of economic development (Urdal 2006). Accordingly, policy discourse asserts that Africa's young majority represents a 'demographic dividend' or a 'social time-bomb' depending on whether governments can successfully reduce fertility rates and provide their young with education and employment opportunities (Leahy et al. 2007).

But while Africa's situation is often characterised as a 'youth crisis' (Honwana and De Boeck 2005), young people's role in this crisis – witting or unwitting - is quite unclear (Sommers 2011; 2015; Burgess and Burton 2010).

Young people are effectively absent from state building scholarship<sup>13</sup> and the few qualitative youth and conflict studies we have reveal that very few young people engage in armed violence; those who do are usually recruits, not organisers (see Boyden 2006; Beber and Blattman 2011). Further, Goldstone et al. (2010) find that the nature of political institutions - not demography (i.e. youth bulge) - is the strongest indicator of conflict onset within two years.

Does this mean that young demographic majorities like Rwanda's do not have a consequential effect on political, economic, and social stability? We cannot draw this conclusion from existing research for two reasons. First, the key variable that predicts conflict onset within two years – the nature of political institutions - does not tell us anything about how those institutions are (re)produced and changed over time, and by whom. This is context-specific information, and young people are rarely (never?) included in analyses. Relatedly, short of being recruited by armed groups, we do not know whether or under what conditions young people's everyday actions influence the (re)production of political institutions. Thus, while it makes intuitive sense that large youthful majorities influence social, economic and political stability in some way, we must identify the *mechanisms* through which young people influence processes of

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<sup>13</sup> Children and youth are mentioned as statistics or as (ex)combatants. My interest is in how children's 'everyday' actions influence the institutional environment, a view that is absent in this scholarship (see, for example, Ghani and Lockhart 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012).

institutional reproduction before we can understand whether and how Africa's young shape their broader institutional environment in consequential ways. To date, we do not have this empirical data (Kurtenbach 2012, 2-3; Sommers 2011, 294-5).

## **2. *African Social Studies***

Anthropological studies of kinship, child-rearing, and marriage in Africa locate many of these reproductive mechanisms in the institutions of childhood and marriage: historically, as children were socialised to group norms during childhood, and as kin-groups endeavoured to enhance their status by forging a family alliance through their son/daughter's marriage, young people (to varying extents) reproduced the social, economic, political, and cultural life of their families and society (Carsten 2004; Bushayija 1966; Mair 1969; Burnham 1987; Parkin and Nyamwaya 1987). These group marriage priorities shaped how children's education and coming of age were constructed and experienced in kinship-based societies, making childhood and marriage focal sites in the life course for processes of social reproduction and change (Goody 1982; Whiting and Whiting 1975; LeVine et al. 1994; Radcliffe-Brown 1950; Fortes 1969). Early cultural anthropologists in Africa understood these connections and therefore attended to how the introduction of 'Western' institutions altered how Africans educated and married their children and thereby changed society (see, for example, Mair 1969; Burnham 1987). While largely portraying Africans as being acted upon, these findings nonetheless confirm that childhood and coming of age is the most critical period in the life course for studies of reproduction and change in kinship-based societies.

Children are central players in these processes. But do children influence how the institutions that shape and constrain their lives are reproduced? The answer is unclear, for since Alanan's (1988) call to grant children 'the status of participants and constructors in the very processes that make their – and our – world' (65), new social studies of childhood and youth have primarily focused on children's individual experiences and agency<sup>14</sup>, while neglecting to locate their actions within broader historical and social processes related to generation and social reproduction (Huijsmans et al. 2014; Durham 2008; Punch 2014; White 2012). Moreover, few studies locate children's lived experience within the political economy and wider institutional environment, as 'child-focused' methodologies demand (Boyden and Ennew 1997, 11; Hart 2008). Thus, while we now have empirical evidence of children's agency, James and James (2004) remark that it is not clear what, in practice, this means (23). This inattention to children's broader institutional environment limits our ability to theorise young people's experience and agency (Mizen and Ofofu-Kusi 2013, 366–69) and how their actions may influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives and society (Ansell 2014).

### ***3. Generations, Cohorts, and Social Change***

As in African kinship studies, generation and cohort theories assert that youth and coming of age is the focal point for processes of social reproduction and change and that young people are central actors in these processes. Mannheim (1952) theorises that as

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<sup>14</sup> This shift was also a reaction to the research emphasis on exceptionally vulnerable categories of young Africans; child and youth scholars have responded with empirical studies that demonstrate even the most marginal have agency (see, for example, Klocker 2007; Robson, Bell, and Klocker 2007). However, Abebe and Ofofu-Kusi (2016) note that in Africa 'children's contributions to their families and communities are so palpable' that their agency and competency as social actors is generally well accepted (307).

each new generation (i.e. birth cohort) transitions from childhood to the generational status of adulthood, they have 'fresh contact' with prevailing cultural material (368-9). Because 'generation units' are comprised of individuals who share common formative experiences, they have a socially and historically-situated collective consciousness that influences their behaviour in common ways (see also Ryder 1965, 848). Less invested in the status quo than their elders, 'generation units' approach and assimilate cultural material in new ways. This gives each new cohort the unique potential to transform culture from the inside (Mannheim 1952; Ryder 1965; see, for example, Cole 2004).

Theorising the relationship between age cohorts and social change, Ryder (1965) turns the argument around saying that the broader institutional environment shapes the experience of age cohorts in similar ways. However, he specifies that different cohorts will respond to the same major historical event (such as the 1994 Genocide) in distinct ways depending on where they are in their development across the life course and in relation to institutions (847; Elder Jr. 1994, 6): age cohorts that experience major events during a critical life transition are more likely to transform practice because they are in a reproductively intense stage within the life course.

However, in his work on the politics of age, Mizen (2002) argues that while 'Age may bring individuals together into distinctive social groupings and institutional positions', there is little evidence to support the concept of an age cohort-based, class-like consciousness (10-11; see also Irwin 1998). This does not mean that young people do not effect change through similar responses to their institutional environment, but rather,

that we should be cautious about assuming that shared cohort experience is the primary basis for any common response.

In contrast to cohort theories, Alanen (2001) views generation and social change from a relational perspective at the household level. She argues that because socially constructed generational positions only exist in relation to each other, ‘action “performed” in the child position’ affects parental actions because what each actor ‘is’ depends on his/her relationship to the other, even when power relations are asymmetrical (19; see also Kallio and Häkli 2011). This relational contingency and interdependence forces us to re-examine the assumption that one age group ‘makes the rules’ and how children influence broader processes of reproduction and change (Schildkrout 2002 [1978], 346; see also Punch 2002).

Cohort and generation scholarship agree that studies of social change must account for generational relationships, meaning relationships of kinship and descent (Kertzer 1983; Elder Jr. 1978; Ryder 1965; Cole and Durham 2012). This is critical, Elder (1994) explains, because humans have interdependent, ‘linked lives’ with kin that span the life course and macro-historical change is experienced within this relational context (6). However, Kertzer (1983) argues that studies of social change must also keep the notions of cohort and generation distinct from each other. Doing so enables researchers to distinguish household (generational) processes of social reproduction and change from broader societal change, which is more closely related to cohorts and historical events (143; also Elder 1978).

This discussion highlights the main contributions and limitations in scholarship on African children and youth and social change. The goal of this thesis is to build on and add to this collective knowledge and theory. To do so, I address the identified weaknesses in existing studies by locating children's experiences and actions within the broader historical, social, political, and economic processes that shape their lives. However, even the most holistic approach to child and youth research will not provide an analytical framework capable of identifying the mechanisms institutions use to realise their goals through children's lives, or the mechanisms young people engage with to influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives and society. A new approach is needed. It is with the intention of addressing these gaps that this thesis proceeds.

### **Thesis Overview**

The overarching goal of this thesis is to understand and theorise the relationship between Rwandan children's everyday experiences and actions and their broader institutional environment over time.

Specifically, this study seeks to learn first, how children's changing institutional environment influences the way they experience childhood and transitions to adulthood and, second, whether young people influence the reproduction of the institutions that structure their lives and society in consequential ways. To this end, this thesis seeks to answer two questions:

1. How have young Rwandans perceived, experienced, and responded to their changing institutional environment over time?
2. Do children's 'everyday' actions influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives and society? If so, how and why?

To answer these questions, I have taken a historical institutional and ethnographic approach to studying children's lives – that is, I conducted a child-centred ethnographic and historical study of the main institution that has shaped childhood and coming of age in Rwanda over time: marriage. As I explain in *Chapter Three*, this study of changing marriage patterns, which I conducted for ten consecutive months between 2012 and 2013 and three weeks in early 2014, centred around five multigenerational family studies in central Rwanda. I located my primary ethnographic study in a rural village an hour from Kigali and a smaller urban study in Kigali. Through these studies, I explore how three generations experienced childhood and coming of age in three very distinct historical eras: Belgian colonialism (from 1930s-1962), the Two Republics (1962-1994), and the post-Genocide decades. In the chapters that follow, I historicise participants' early life experience by presenting the empirical analysis in terms of the 'grandparents', 'parents' and 'children's' generations. This generational approach allows me to foreground children's lives and relationships and trace continuities and change within families, while locating young people's experiences and actions within their broader, changing institutional environment.

This thesis will make several contributions to empirical knowledge and theory related to children and youth and social change in Africa. First, by examining three generations of 'unexceptional' young Rwandans, this work contributes a historicised, gendered, relational view of childhood and coming of age in Rwanda that locates children's

experiences and actions within broader social processes and their wider institutional environment. Based on this evidence, the thesis traces how children and their families experience and navigate life at the interface of multiple and competing institutional systems, modern and traditional, and the consequences of young people's actions to processes of institutional reproduction and change. Second, the thesis identifies the mechanisms institutional actors employ to engage children in processes of institutional reproduction. By making these processes visible, this work can theorise how and why young people's everyday actions both reinforce and disrupt the reproduction of power. Finally, this analysis reveals that children (like actors generally) and their institutional environment are mutually constituting; however, it also shows that children experience, engage with, and shape processes of institutional reproduction in ways that are unique from adults. In *Chapter Two*, I offer a framework for theorising children as agents of institutional reproduction and change.

### ***Chapter Overviews***

***Chapter 1 - The Historical Institutional Context*** opens the thesis with an institutional analysis of continuity and change in Rwanda and the political economy of childhood since colonialism. This material provides the background needed for interpreting the generational analysis of children's lives in *Chapters Four to Seven*.

In ***Chapter 2 - An Analytical and Theoretical Framework: Children and Social Change***, I engage with the institutional scholarship that informs this study and to which this study contributes. This analysis, combined with the above on children, youth, and social change, provides a theoretical basis for the framework I develop to conceptualise and explain young people's experience and actions in *Chapters Four to*

Seven, and how they are consequential to processes of institutional reproduction and change.

*Chapter 3 - Researching Reproduction and Change in and Through Children's Lives* provides a detailed explanation of my research design. My intention in presenting this material is to demonstrate my competency as an independent researcher, while also providing an honest account of how I conducted the research so that my work can contribute to research theory and practice.

In *Chapters Four to Seven*, I present empirical analyses of four key themes that emerged from my study of changing marriage patterns: children's kinship relations, education, economic transitions, and changing marriage patterns and social transitions. Each chapter follows a similar format: I begin with a brief social history of the topic at hand, which I develop from the eldest generation's narratives and historical research. This provides a context for interpreting the main body of the chapter, in which I present a gendered, generational thematic analysis of how three generations of young people perceived, experienced, and responded to the introduction and increasing presence of modern institutions and institutional actors in their everyday lives. Through these analyses, I trace and explain continuity and change in children's lived experience. I also identify the mechanisms through which young people reproduce and change the institutions that shape their lives and society and the consequences of their actions to both.

In the *Conclusion - 'Times have changed for real'*, I draw together the arguments presented throughout the thesis. I compare these findings to the discourse, debates, and

theoretical framework in *Chapter Two*. I then draw conclusions about the empirical, analytical, and theoretical contributions this work makes to existing scholarship.

### ***Defining Conceptual Terms***

The following concepts are central to this thesis and must be defined for clarity:

#### **Age Categories**

The state and society construct age categories differently depending on social, cultural, and legal norms and values that reference a young person's developmental competencies and capacities as well as generational relationships and institutional priorities (see Huijsmans 2016; Mizen 2002; Clark-Kazak 2009). These constructions shift over time and space. In Rwanda, the government and development agencies use chronological age to order and develop the population: in law and policy, 'children' are people age 0 to 18 and 'youth' are age 16 to 30<sup>15</sup>. However, in everyday life, Rwandans primarily identify people according to their social age. Here, the generational hierarchy is so important that individuals are often addressed by a social age term (e.g. 'girl', 'old man'), rather than by name. In this context, 'child(ren)' (*umwana/abana*) are people who occupy the generational status of 'childhood'. Additionally, Rwandans use more specific social age terms that reflect a child's physical development and readiness for marriage (see Musabyimana 1999, 200–202). Increasingly, the terms 'youth'<sup>16</sup> and 'student' are used in place of 'child(ren)', but Rwandans use all three terms to indicate

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<sup>15</sup> The legal definition of 'youth' was revised from 14 to 35 in 2016 (Kwibuka 2016).

<sup>16</sup> *Urubyiruko*, 'youth' or 'young person', implies a process of becoming, a person who is moving towards self-dependence (INT/Jacques/1-29-2013).

and address individuals who have yet to achieve the social and generational status of adulthood.

Because I take generation and relationship as a point of entry for this study, I employ 'young people', 'child(ren)' and 'youth' as social age terms. However, whenever possible, I use the term 'young people' rather than 'child(ren)' and/or 'youth'. I prefer this term to 'child(ren)' because it prevents the reader from inadvertently attaching her own cultural notions to this social category. I prefer to avoid the term 'youth' due to its masculine connotation in African scholarship. Unless noted, these terms do not correspond with the state's definition of children and youth.

### **Generation**

Throughout the thesis, I use the term 'generation' in the sense of relational descent (see Kertzer 1983). In Rwanda, the term 'parents' can include aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Similarly, the relational signifiers 'child(ren)', 'son/daughter', and 'brother/sister' can include any children within the same generational category (i.e. offspring, siblings, nephews/nieces, and cousins) (Byanafashe 1997). In this use, 'generational cohorts' are comprised of individuals who were born and married in a similar time and historical environment *and* who are related by descent to other generational cohorts (Elder 1978, S31; Kertzer 1983).

### **Education**

In keeping with the anthropological practice of distinguishing 'education' from 'schooling' (Levinson and Holland 1996, 2), I use the term 'education' to refer to the social processes through which children learn their current and future gendered roles and responsibilities as well as social and cultural rules, norms, practices, beliefs, and

values. I prefer the term education to 'socialisation' because socialisation carries a theoretical legacy that suggests that children's socialisation is a uni-directional and adult-directed process (James and Prout 1997; Schildkrout 2002 [1978]). I use the term 'schooling' to indicate formal instruction children receive in a classroom. I also use more specific terms to denote specific types of formal education, such as catechism class and civic education.



## Chapter 1 - The Historical Institutional Context

‘Parents were watching and they said, “*Zahinduye imirishyo*”, meaning,  
“The one who holds the drum [power] has changed”.’  
Elder, *Inteko Izirikana*<sup>17</sup>

The text originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

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<sup>17</sup> A colonial reference (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013). See ‘*Inteko Izirikana*’, *Appendix 1*.

The text and photo originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

The map originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

Rwagati is a rural village (*umudugudu*<sup>18</sup>) in Inkombe sector north of Kigali. Small *centres*, each with a cluster of shops, are spaced out about every two kilometres on the main dirt road that runs the length of the ridge. The sector has three primary schools, a secondary school, a small market, and a Health Centre. Churches of every denomination dot the ridge. Young people say the new stadium - a rocky football pitch with a small covered seating area - is the best thing here.

Economically, Inkombe sector is average for a rural Rwandan community – it is not as poor as the South and Western Provinces, but not as well-off as the North and Eastern Provinces. Most households subsist on farming and some animal husbandry. Coffee is the main cash crop, but households sell everything to access cash. In 2012, there was limited infrastructure and the road to the highway was unreliable, but Inkombe is experiencing rapid development: Since 2012, a dozen dirt roads have been cut into the ridge to make way for planned village settlements; a large market has been built; electricity arrived along the main road in late 2013; free Wi-Fi arrived at the sector office in 2015; the road to the highway was improved in 2016.

But elderly Janvier (FS4/G1) recalls life being similar when he was a boy, except ‘there were more cows than people.’ Today, walking paths still carry more people than the main road. Cars are infrequent. Children carry water from the tap at the bottom of the hill rather than pay for water from the village pump up top. Personal status continues to be carved onto geographical space: wealthier residents and resettled

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<sup>19</sup> *Umudugudu* (*sing.*): 1. The smallest administrative unit; 2. a planned settlement area or village. Historically, households were dispersed, not grouped.

*rescapé* live at the top of the hill in the official village settlement; poorer households are scattered down the hillside (see also De Lame 2005, 43, 111, 119–20). If you listen closely, you can hear the morning thump of a hoe digging into the earth, bird song, wind passing over the hill, children shuffling to school and playing in early evening, a neighbour singing at night by her cooking fire. It is not hard to imagine a distant but similar past.

It is difficult to imagine the 1994 Genocide wreaking havoc in the beauty of this place. It is difficult to imagine the pogroms of 1961 to 1966, the violence of the 1959 Revolution, and the brutalities committed by the Royal Court. The land has erased its scars, but violence lives on in the memories and bodies of those who walk the hill's red paths.

Rwanda scholars explain this violent history through the lens of elite politics and ethnicity (see, for example, Straus 2006; Prunier 1995; Chretien 2003; Newbury 1988; Carney 2014). That is not my goal, though I rely heavily on their work. Instead, I would like to explain how indigenous and modern institutions have shaped the context within which young people grow up and transition to adulthood in Rwanda. In the remainder of this thesis, I will build on this institutional analysis to explain continuity and change in children's lived experience across three generations.

I preface this analysis with a brief overview of Rwanda's land and population constraints, for they have strongly influenced individual and corporate action at least since the colonial period. Following this, I examine the historical structure of social relations in Rwanda. This analysis is not intended to represent a specific moment in time, for young people interpret the meanings of these relationships and social norms in different ways in different contexts and times. Rather, it is meant to orient the reader to historically,

socially, and culturally embedded institutional patterns that emerge across generations in the life histories in *Chapter Four*. In the second half of the chapter, I examine the political economy of childhood and transitions to social adulthood from the Belgian colonial period to the present.

### **Land, Demography, and Poverty**

Land scarcity and population density is an ongoing concern in Rwanda. A lack of access to land or alternate economic opportunities is often cited as a major contributing factor to the country's long history of violent conflict (see, for example, Andre and Platteau 1998). With one of the highest average population growth rates in the world, the population rose from 1.5 million in 1945 to 11.4 million in 2015 (Republique Rwandaise 1980; NISR et al. 2015), while the population density rose from 87 to 415 people per square kilometre – the highest in continental Africa (NISR and MINECOFIN 2012). Compounding these population challenges, approximately 70 per cent of the population still depends on subsistence-based agriculture (NISR 2015). With one of the most persistently youthful populations in the world, young people have used internal and out-migration to access land and employment since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Republique Rwandaise 1980; Olson 1994).

Today, 70 per cent of Rwanda's population is under age 30. Young people age 0 to 19 account for 53 per cent of the population, while 'youth' age 16 to 25 represent approximately 28 per cent of the population (NISR 2015). In 2015, Rwanda ranked 163/188 on the Human Development Indicators report and had a Gini co-efficient of 50.8 (UNDP 2015).

## 1.1 Indigenous Institutions

How we read the historical record regarding social relations and indigenous institutions in Rwanda has an immediate bearing on how we interpret subsequent change. It also influences how we understand the structuring of political, economic, and social processes that influence young people's life trajectories to the present. Since 1994, there has been a strong tendency to interpret history through the lens of the 1994 Genocide rather than interpreting the Genocide through the lens of history. Re-examining the historical record, Cyuma (2012) maintains that 'hostilities in Rwanda are still driven by ancient realities that modern structures spread and harden through education, religion and politics' (169). If we are to understand children's experience across generations, it is critical to understand these 'ancient realities'.

### **Ancient Realities: Power and Social Categories**

Others have analysed Rwanda's pre-colonial politics in detail, so I will summarise their work briefly. At the heart of this work is a concern with the nature of power in Rwanda, past and present. Venturing a bold critique of Maquet's work (1954) and contradicting Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's (1958) work on the social contract in African political systems, Codere (1962) argues that Rwanda's Royal Court maintained a monopoly on power 'against the interests and without the consent of the governed' through coercion and extraction with limited reciprocity. Subsequent analysis largely supports her claim (see Des Forges 2011). Under the reign of *mwami* Rwabugiri (1860-1895), the Nyiginga Royal Court centralised state power in a political context wherein Des Forges (2011) argues two rival royal clans stopped at nothing to attain power. C. Newbury (1988) finds that this elite competition provoked land and cattle patrons to exploit their clients to

secure their own power (see also Des Forges 2011, xxvi, 13). As they did, feudal patron-client relationships that were formerly more reciprocal increasingly became extractive and violent as elites gained control over the means of production (ibid.; also Maquet 1961, 129–31). As feudal institutions (i.e. *uburetwa*, *ubuhake*<sup>20</sup>) became more coercive, kinship institutions weakened, for where lineages previously acted as a corporation<sup>21</sup>, lineage elders increasingly faced pressure to ally with, and serve, feudal patrons and the *mwami*, rather than kin (C. Newbury 1988, chap. 6; Des Forges 2011).

Within this unequal, competitive context, those who found favour with their patron could be promoted to a higher ‘Tutsi’ status through the gift of a cow or land or marriage to a Tutsi wife; those who lost status saw their assets withdrawn (Albert 1960; C. Newbury 1988, 12-13). In this way, the Tutsi social category increasingly became associated with wealth, status, and control over the means of production, while the ‘Hutu’ category was associated with servitude and cultivation.

Under colonial rule, the social categories of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa were hardened as ethnic status<sup>22</sup>. However, it is wrong to attribute social division primarily to ethnicity, as many scholars do. This is because at least since the late 19th century, it is the divide between the elite and the rest that has widened (C. Newbury 1988): during colonialism, only 6000 to 10,000 of an estimated 150,000 Tutsi enjoyed wealth and/or power; further, those with power came from two royal clans: the *Abanyiginya* and *Abega* (Chretien 2003,

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<sup>20</sup> *Uburetwa* was land clientship wherein the client worked one to two days per week for the patron to stay on their land; *ubuhake* was cattle and land clientship (see Vansina 2004, 135-6; Carney 2013, 236).

<sup>21</sup> Lineages were corporations in the sense that ‘they functioned as though they were a single property-owning and jural unit’ (Carsten 2004).

<sup>22</sup> These social categories have been described as race, caste, class, and ethnic status (see discussion in Carney 2014, chap.1). The population counted in each category remained relatively constant prior to 1994 with Hutu at +/- 85%, Tutsi at 10-15%, Twa at 1%.

299; Carney 2014, 103). Similarly, following independence, few Hutu enjoyed privilege during the Two (Hutu) Republics (Uvin 1998; Verwimp 2013). These realities support Codere's (1962) argument that pre-colonial power asymmetries – namely, the subjugation of the powerless to the powerful – have come to define social relations at all levels of society, from the family to nation (see also Des Forges 2011; Jefremovas 2002, 66).

The focus on ethnic status is also misleading because – despite sharing the same language and over twenty clans (D'Hertefelt 1971) – culture and practice have varied widely by clan, region, and class (Newbury and Newbury 2000). For example, this study provides evidence of a strong social divide between the Buganza cattle-culture Rwandans of the central plateau and the Bakiga 'people of the mountains' of the northwest (see also Des Forges 2011, 49-51; D. Newbury 2001, 264). In this social landscape, Rwandans use one term, *ubwoko*<sup>23</sup>, to refer to their 'group' (Erny 2005). However, ethnicity is but one type of 'group', one facet of a complex social identity that has more often prioritised clan, lineage, region, religion, class, education, gender, and socio-economic status (Burnet 2012a, 47-8; Codere 1973). Further, Burnet (2012b) observes that at the individual level, notions of personhood are primarily based upon one's kin relations, life stage, gender, and social status (100–101). Bushayija (1966) notes that children learned to assess their social position within these complex social hierarchies early in life (160).

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<sup>23</sup> Singular, *amoko*.

In this work, I use ethnic terms of reference; however, I contend that ethnicity is a constructed category that acquires its 'social meaning and political importance through successive waves of state building' in Rwanda (Burnet 2012a, 48; Chretien and Banegas 2005; D. Newbury 2009, 298–300).

### **Kinship Institutions**

Feudal and monarchic institutions organised formal political and economic relations in pre-independence Rwanda, but within these and at the household level, kinship institutions organised social, political, and economic relations (Ntampaka 1997; De Lame 2005; Maquet 1954; Erny 2003). In Kinyarwanda, this family structure is described on three organisational levels: *ubwoko* (group/clan), *inzu* (lineage), and *urugo* (household/compound) (Byanafashe 1997, 7). Kin relations, which may or may not be biological, are based on descent and marriage alliances (De Lame 2005, 385–86).

Within lineages, the Rwandan notion of family has historically been 'elastic': the family is the lineage rather than the nuclear family or household, and household roles and structures are always changing in response to the domestic cycle and broader lineage needs (Byanafashe 1997; Codere 1973). The rules and norms that define family roles are not 'elastic', but they tend to be less rigid in poorer households (Burnet 2012a, 42–6; Erny 2005, 185–87, 193; Bushayija 1966; Vincent 1954, 13–15, 99). Prior to 1994, husbands were responsible for cash crops, allocating family resources, and disciplining wives and children (INT/FS1/2-24-2014; Erny 2005, 179, 185). Mothers held the sole responsibility for household production, domestic reproduction, and children's education and behaviour (ibid.; Codere 1973; Jefremovas 2002). Aunts and uncles were children's

primary advisors; the most powerful person in a child's life was his/her eldest paternal aunt (Vincent 1954; LH/Aurora/4-21-2013).

Jefremovas (2002) argues that over time, fathers have found it increasingly difficult to control their children's unpaid labour (especially sons') as heritable land has declined and schooling and wage labour have become more accessible (81). In contrast, state institutions enhanced husbands' control over their wives' behaviour and resources until 1994 (ibid., 86-9). But since the 2003 Constitution, gender equality laws and policies have given women more rights and made it increasingly difficult for husbands to control their wives (Burnet 2012c).

As this discussion and *Chapter Four* demonstrate, kinship institutions are changing. However, they continue to be a central organising force in young people's lives. Thus, it is critical to understand how kin groups have historically constructed the institutions of marriage and childhood to realise group priorities and how these institutions influence children's experience and life chances.

### ***The Institution of Marriage***

In a gerontocratic, kinship-based system where a person's rights, obligations, and status were primarily based on his/her generational identity, first marriage was the most important transition event in the life course: through the rituals of customary marriage or a rare informal union, the bride and groom made a domestic transition to their own compound; an economic transition to self-dependence and caring for others (Bushayija 1966, 130-1); and a physical transition to being sexually reproductive. Through these transitions, the lineage recognised the couple as having transitioned from the generational status of child to adult; as Erny (2003) explains, 'In Rwanda, to become an

adult is, above all, to be married, and to be a father or mother.’ (257; 2005, 184; Bushayija 1966, 161). Even when first marriage ended early due to death or separation, Codere’s (1973) autobiographies show that men and women retained their adult status and their associated generational roles and obligations (145; also Erny 2005; Bushayija 1966).

Through a child’s arranged marriage and the family alliance it forged, kin sought to reproduce the social, economic, cultural, and political life and status of the group (Bushayija 1966; Gravel 1968). These marriage priorities shaped how childhood was constructed and experienced: children were educated to fulfil their future gendered adult roles within the lineage, but they were also disciplined to behave well so that their lineage could make the best possible future marriage alliance. But Codere’s (1973) work reveals that children also understood that elders used marriage to enhance their *own personal* power and status. For example, fathers based their son’s marriage inheritance on favouritism, not birth order, to encourage pleasing, beneficial behaviour (Erny 2005; Jefremovas 2002, 79-81). Children understood these group and personal priorities and, far from being passive participants in this process, they worked to please elders to enhance their own status and life chances (ibid. Codere). Daughters knew that gaining favour could yield a more favourable marriage; sons knew that pleasing their fathers could yield more resources for marriage (see also De Lame 2005, 281-2). Thus, young people did not just participate in these adult-directed reproductive processes, they influenced them.

The institution of marriage continues to influence children’s lived experience and life chances to the present because it defines their jural status and lineage membership (RoR 2016; Ntampaka 1997; Bushayija 1966, 161-4). Children are legitimate and belong to their

paternal lineage if their mother's bridewealth has been negotiated and paid. If it has not been negotiated and paid, the child is illegitimate and s/he belongs to her/his maternal lineage<sup>24</sup> (ibid. Ntampaka). In this way, parents' marriage type determines which lineage their child belongs to and lives with. This belonging defines which elders and children hold reciprocal responsibilities to each other within what has historically been an implicit intergenerational contract. Within this contract, children were obligated to obey and respect elders and labour for their lineage until marriage, while lineage elders were responsible to provide for, educate, and marry them (Ntampaka 1997). But jural status both defines and limits the extent of each lineage's obligations to their children: only legitimate children are entitled to inheritance and only legitimate sons are entitled to the provision of bridewealth, if available<sup>25</sup> (ibid.). Children are not equal<sup>26</sup>.

### ***The Institution of Childhood***

Elder kin have historically structured children's lineage education in response to their social, material, cultural, and political concerns and context. During colonialism, Bushayija (1966) notes that the prevailing message parents taught children was '*Qui plaisait [sic] plus, gagnait plus*' ('The one who pleases more, wins more') (161). In this highly unequal society where 'there were no equal rights and duties, or rational and just distribution [of resources]', favour and opportunity depended on the will of the person with authority (ibid., 160). To please those with authority, children had to show respect

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<sup>24</sup> 'Bridewealth' is given by the groom/groom's family to the bride's; 'dowry' is the opposite. In 2016, the Law Governing Persons and Family No.32/2016 of 28/08/2016 Art.167 removed the bridewealth requirement for civil unions.

<sup>25</sup> The 2016 Law Governing Persons and Family removed parents' obligation to give property to their children.

<sup>26</sup> Children's status and vulnerability also varies with the nature of their parents' informal union (see Erny 2005, 184).

and obey without question (Erny 2003a; 2005). These beliefs and norms continue to influence young people's behaviour today (see also Grant 2015).

Based on his doctoral research on 'traditional education' in Rwanda and Burundi in the late 1960s, Greenland (1971) explains, 'children are not only trained in certain specific activities [skills] but [...] they are also educated' in local beliefs and values (10). These educational priorities are reflected in two Kinyarwanda verbs that translate as 'to socialise'. The first, *kubana*, literally means 'to be' (*kuba*) 'with' (*na*) (Byanafashe 1997). This term captures the importance Rwandans place on learning to live with others (ibid.). The second term, *kurera*, refers to the action of teaching children how to live in society (Pers.Comm. E-mail/Solange/5-1-2016). As in many other African cultures, Rwandan caregivers expect to see evidence of both forms of learning in children by age 7 to 9 when children begin to demonstrate *ubwenge*, meaning 'wisdom', 'intelligence', or 'sense' (Serpell 1993; Greenland 1971; Codere 1973; Mukamurama 1985 in Serpell 1993, 48-9). Children demonstrate *ubwenge*, Mukamurama (1985) explains, when they seek advice, learn from and work with others, show initiative, and know how to derive advantage from anything (i.e. *débrouillardise*) (91). They also demonstrate *ubwenge* when they understand social rules and their position in relation to others (Bushayija 1966, 160-1; Erny 2005, 180-81) and when they carry out their roles and responsibilities without being told (Codere 1973). As this notion of *ubwenge* suggests, children's learning process extends beyond what adults explicitly teach.

Early sources show that as children matured physically and began to demonstrate *ubwenge*, they were given more physical, complex tasks associated with their future gendered adult roles (see, for example, Codere 1973, 184, 212, 258). However, children

were educated differently depending on their class and livelihood, gender, birth order, sibling composition, and social age (see Codere 1973; Erny 2005; Pauwels 1974; Bushayija 1966; Arnoux 1931). In Codere's (1973) work, the very early competence of peasant children stands in stark contrast to the dependence of elite Tutsi children, who were confined and waited on until age 7 to 9 and whose capacity for self-reliance was often delayed by schooling (*passim* and 85, 240, 259 Arnoux 1931; Pauwels 1974). Peasant children learned from kin, whereas elite children primarily learned from servants, parents' overlords, teachers and religious workers (*ibid.*; also Erny 2005). It is also evident that girls were far more controlled than boys, in part because a future family alliance rested on a daughter's skills, behaviour, and virginity (Erny 2005, 193-94; Codere 1973, 24, 144; Ilinigumugabo 1989, 10). The ideal was a well-educated daughter, *ni nyampinga*, 'a bride who unites [the wealth of] two hills'<sup>27</sup> (INT/Sibomana/10-2012; LH/Janvier/12-11-2012). Similar patterns persist across generations in *Chapters Four to Seven*.

## **1.2 The Political Economy of Childhood in Rwanda**

Institutional patterns are more evident in a historical perspective. Having examined pre-colonial and kinship institutions to learn how children's social context shapes their lived experience, we can now trace how modern institutions have converged with these institutions to shape the political economy of childhood since colonialism. This historical analysis provides the political and economic context within which to locate the arguments and analysis in the following chapters. It also provides the background

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<sup>27</sup> Historically, this ideal belonged more to Tutsi elites, who were more likely to marry across hills/distance (Gravel 1968).

needed to recognise, interpret, and theorise how and why young people influence processes of institutional reproduction in diverse ways.

### **The Political Economy of Childhood During Colonialism (1903-1962)**

The grandparents' generation (G1) grew up during Belgian colonialism (1923-1962) and married in the turbulent years just prior to the 1959 Revolution and independence in 1962.

Colonialism was a period of tremendous political and economic upheaval (see C. Newbury 1988). A late colonial acquisition, Germany (1903-1916) and then Belgium (1916-1962) sought to 'civilise' and exploit Rwanda to advance their market economies and nation states (C. Newbury 1988, chap.8). To achieve these goals, the Belgians bureaucratised and monetised Rwanda's feudal monarchy. To facilitate indirect colonial rule, they developed a cadre of indigenous elite to manage colonial affairs under Belgian oversight and the rule of *mwamis* Musinga (1896-1931), Rudahigwa (1932-1959) and Kigeli (1959-61) and the Royal Court. As in other colonies, the colonials justified the power of the Tutsi indigenous elite by naturalising and institutionalising existing political structures (Ranger 1983), including the social categories of 'Tutsi', 'Hutu' and 'Twa'. Because Rwandans were ruled and exploited by both the Belgians and the Royal Court, governance in this era is often described as 'dual colonialism' (Newbury and Newbury 2000).

Since the onset of colonialism, then, young people have lived at the interface of multiple institutional systems – a traditional system based on feudal and kinship institutions and

a modern system represented by Church, state, and market institutions<sup>28</sup>. Institutional change in this era had diverse effects on young people's lives. I briefly analyse two themes.

### ***The Colonial Market Economy***

The introduction and expansion of the highly exploitative Belgian colonial market economy compounded the oppression peasant households were already experiencing through Rwanda's feudal institutions (C. Newbury 1988). From the 1930s, land shortages, famines<sup>29</sup>, and a harsh taxation regime prompted tens of thousands of young people to flee to neighbouring Uganda and the Kivus to work for wages under more favourable conditions (C. Newbury 1988, 157-8; Republique Rwandaise 1980).

However, there was another face to the market economy: Colonial authorities and missionaries promoted development and progress - *amajyambere* - in the form of European consumer goods, ideas (e.g. Christianity, terracing), and services (e.g. schooling, medicine). Through these, Europeans sought to 'civilise' and 'develop' the population. But from the beginning, Rwanda's young minority European-educated indigenous elite - *les évolués* - 'progressed' far more quickly than the peasant majority (Carney 2014, 53-6; see also Anderson 1983, 119, chap. 7). Schooling played a central role in creating and broadening this divide.

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<sup>28</sup> I say 'multiple' rather than 'two' because young people increasingly encounter non-state institutional system (e.g. illicit orders and economy); however, it is beyond the purview of this work to closely examine.

<sup>29</sup> Colonial extraction is largely responsible for the estimated 300-400,000 famine deaths in 1944 (C. Newbury 1988, 151-9; Republique Rwandaise 1980, 5).

### ***The Church, State, and Schooling***

The Belgians and the Catholic Church<sup>30</sup> shared similar priorities related to young people's education: both aimed to train a loyal cadre of bilingual clerks, specialists, and indigenous clergy who identified first with European culture, the Belgian state, Catholicism, and the Tutsi monarchy<sup>31</sup> (King 2014; Carney 2014; Longman 2010; Linden and Linden 1977). But the Catholic Church was divided: its politically ambitious leaders sought to make it 'an indispensable partner of the state', supplant indigenous beliefs and the power of the Royal Court, and establish Rwanda as a Catholic nation (Longman 2010, 56). In contrast, its missionaries were primarily concerned with serving the interests of Rwanda's disenfranchised Hutu and poor majority (ibid.). The Catholic Church achieved both of its goals by becoming the primary provider of schooling in Rwanda, but this internal political divide meant that Rwandans experienced the Church - and schooling - very differently depending on who they encountered and whether they themselves were elite or peasant.

The structure of Catholic education reflected these distinct colonial priorities. The Catholic Church established French language primaries and secondary boarding schools to educate a primarily Tutsi indigenous elite (Longman 2010). At the same time, both Catholic and Protestant missions trained 'a select African clergy' - mostly poor Hutu - in French boarding seminaries (Hoben 1989, 8). The vision the Church and state had for the rest was 'just enough [literacy] to convert them without changing their lives' (ibid.).

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<sup>30</sup> The Protestant Church was also active, but on much lesser scale until post-1994, when it replaced the Catholic Church as the dominant church. Henceforth, 'the Church' refers to the institution of the Church in Rwanda, Catholic and Protestant; in references to the pre-1994 period, 'the Church' primarily refers to the Catholic Church.

<sup>31</sup> This pattern is found across colonial states. See Anderson (1983, chap.7).

Thus, while schooling created new opportunities for young people, King (2014) argues that schooling became a new mechanism through which inequalities were created, reproduced, and hardened in the lives of young Rwandans.

### ***A Turning Tide (1950-1962)***

In the early 1950s, the United Nations put post-War Belgium under mandate to decolonise Rwanda (Carney 2014, 46); however, Belgium realised that the structural inequality they had institutionalised made a stable transition to democracy unlikely (ibid.; C. Newbury 1988, 184-7). To ease this transition and help transform a feudal Rwanda into a modern state, *mwami* Rudahigwa abolished *uburetwa* (1949) and *ubuhake* (1954)<sup>32</sup> (Carney 2014, 52). Where this edict was implemented, Hutu and Tutsi clients were relieved of their feudal obligations. Some, like the grandfathers in my family studies, were subsequently able to claim land from their local hill chief at no cost<sup>33</sup>. While these changes diminished the power of Tutsi monarchists, colonial and Catholic elites welcomed the replacement of 'Rwanda's ancestral customs with Western economic, political and human rights standards' as a necessary step in Rwanda's 'march for progress' (ibid., 52, 55). These institutional transformations, and the foreign pressure to democratise, caused divisions to emerge within and between elite groups (Carney 2014; C. Newbury 1988, 199-9). However, Carney (2014) argues convincingly that it was not until 1957 that divisions were discursively framed in ethnic terms and Tutsi and Hutu *évolués* began to jockey for power (87; *contra* Gourevitch 1998, 61).

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<sup>32</sup> C. Newberry (1988) suggests Belgium was behind these edicts and that concern over inequality, not marketisation, motivated the changes (145).

<sup>33</sup> Their accounts differ from C. Newbury (1988), who finds that the 1954 edict ended cattle clientship, but did not provide land or pasturage to clients (140, 145-46).

In November 1959, ethnic violence broke out triggering the 1959 Revolution. From 1959 to 1962, thousands of Tutsi were killed, while tens of thousands fled the country, lost homes, and were internally displaced (see C. Newbury 1988, 195–98). Three grandparents in the family studies lost a parent and/or assets.

Amid this political turmoil, the Tutsi monarchy was dissolved in 1961 and the Parmahutu won a political monopoly in democratic elections. Rwanda declared its independence on 1 July 1962 under Hutu President Kayibanda. These events ushered Rwanda onto the global stage as an autonomous nation state and provided the image of transformation from feudalism to modernity.

### **The Political Economy of Childhood in the Two Republics (1962-1994)**

The parents' generation (G2) were children during the regimes of Presidents Kayibanda (1962-1973) and Habyarimana (1973-1994). Like their parents, most transitioned to adulthood in a very turbulent period: the mid-1980s to 1994.

Contrary to Hutu expectations, governance during the Two Republics was neither democratic nor beneficent. President Kayibanda played patron to a small group of southern elites and, after seizing power through a coup, President Habyarimana concentrated power in the hands of a small group in the northwest – *'le clan de madame'*<sup>34</sup> (see Guichaoua 2010, 101–6). Both presidents' logic of exclusion and 'winner take all' mentality perpetuated a situation in which elites had far more access to opportunities related to modern institutions than the peasant majority (Bates 2008, 47; Verwimp 2013). Consequently, peasants were controlled by the state, but they remained

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<sup>34</sup> 'Le madame' refers to Habyarimana's wife, Agathe.

dependent on kin and patron-client relations. These dynamics influenced young people's lives in very tangible ways.

### ***Schooling***

The First Republic regarded schooling as a means to redress the inequality of the colonial period, inculcate a new national identity, and develop the country. To this end, the government rapidly expanded primary schooling and made it universal, fee-free, and mandatory in 1966 (Hoben 1989, 12). But while access to primary increased, access to secondary did not. Resentment built because social mobility was tied to secondary completion (ibid.; King 2014).

In 1973, President Habyarimana seized power in the immediate aftermath of nationwide anti-Tutsi pogroms that were strongly motivated by grievances against continued Tutsi dominance in education (King 2014, 72–73). Unsurprisingly, school reform was one of Habyarimana's top priorities (ibid., 81). The government's first reform increased funding to primary and introduced a quota system for admission to secondary, but did not expand access (Obura 2003, 41). The second reform sought to keep rural primary students rural and 'sensitise'<sup>35</sup> them to contribute to national economic development (King 2014, 83; Erny 2003b). Both reforms created dissatisfaction. Primary schools continued to deliver poor quality basic literacy for the rural majority. Access to secondary was perceived to be biased (Hoben 1989, 79–81). By 1983, only 41 per cent of

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<sup>35</sup> Sensitisation is a tool the Rwandan state – past and present - uses to (re)educate the population to make them responsive to the government's views and plans (Purdeková 2012).

students completed primary and only 4 per cent could progress to secondary - the lowest rate in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>36</sup> (World Bank 1988, 171).

### ***The Commodification of Everything***

During the Two Republics, the commodification of land, labour, and money profoundly influenced the parents' transitions to adulthood: land was redistributed and privatised<sup>37</sup>, taxation expanded (Verwimp 2013, 80), children developed as human capital, and the economy marketised and monetised. Average incomes rose from 1965 until the early 1980s, but then fell (Ansoms and Marysse 2005). Inequality rose dramatically thereafter: from 1982 to 1994, the income share of the richest decile rose from 22 to 52 per cent (Maton 1994; Uvin 1998, 115). Habyarimana preached individual sacrifice for the sake of national development, but elites and educated wage earners were the primary beneficiaries of Rwanda's 'march towards progress' (Uvin 1998, chap. 6; De Lame 2005).

Multiple factors converged to effect these changes. First, Habyarimana's ruralisation policy kept peasant households dependent on agriculture even as crop yields were diminishing (Olson 1994; Verwimp 2013, 101). Second, households' average land holdings were falling below the minimum 0.7 hectares needed for survival due to rapid population growth (Uvin 1998, 113), land splitting for sons' marriage inheritances (Olson 1994, 3), and an increase in 'distress' land sales made to meet rising cash-based

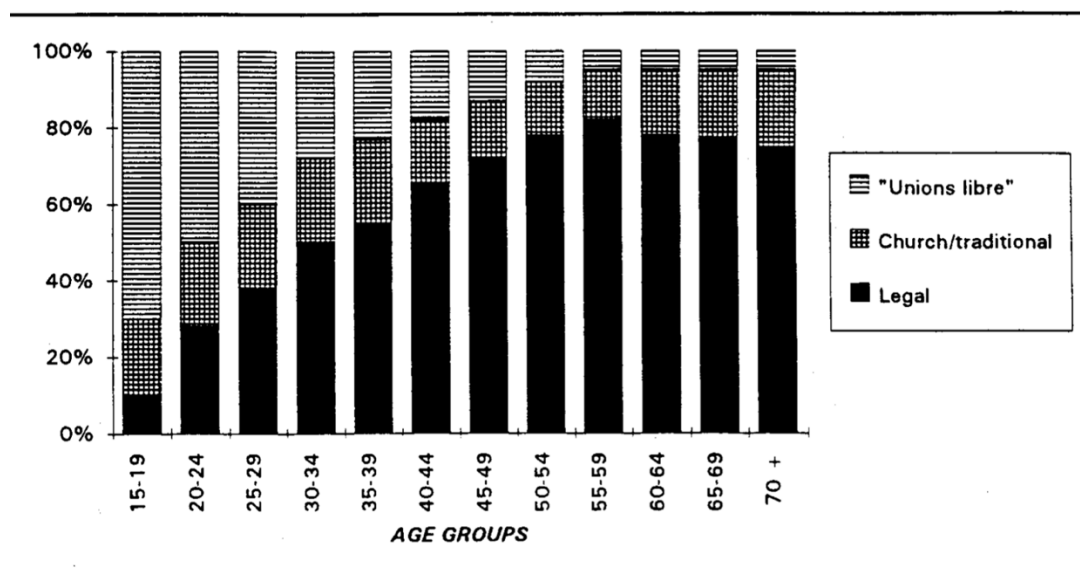
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<sup>36</sup> Hoben (1989, 48) and Obura (2003, 41) put this figure at 6 to 9 per cent during the Second Republic.

<sup>37</sup> The privatisation of land, which began in 1954, was formalised when the First Republic redistributed land in 1966 (De Lame 2005, 395).

obligations (André and Platteau 1998). Relatedly, land was consolidating in the hands of wage earners and elites (ibid.; Uvin 1998, 112-7).

**Figure 1.2: National Marriage Patterns in the 1991 Census<sup>38</sup>**



These conditions had significant social consequences for young people's transitions to adulthood. André and Platteau (1998) report that intergenerational conflict increased as parents were unable to provide a marriage land inheritance to sons who worked for them. With less access to land, young people lived with parents longer and delayed marriage and child bearing, and/or they migrated in search of land or work (ibid.; Olson 1994). To meet their financial obligations, parents increasingly requested their daughter's bridewealth in cash, rather than goods (De Lame 2005, 393-4), which made it more difficult for sons to pay bridewealth (ibid., 394; Burnet 2012b, 103). As Figure 1.2 illustrates, the rate of informal marriage unions skyrocketed and elites worried about

<sup>38</sup> (From MINIPLAN 1994 in Olson 1994, 7)

the rising number of *filles-mères* (De Lame 2005, 11; ONAPO 1989). These marriage patterns were an early indicator of the social upheaval to come.

### **Civil War (1990-94) and Genocide**

From the late 1980s, Rwanda was in a state of economic and political crisis. By the early 1990s, the Second Republic was unable to meet ‘the promises made to the population in terms of the producer price for coffee, schooling, access to land, food security and welfare in general’ (Verwimp 2013, 10). Internal and international pressure to democratise threatened the Republic’s political monopoly as well as social, economic, and political order (Uvin 1998, chap.4).

In October 1990, shortly after President Habyarimana refused the right of return to Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda, the politically ambitious Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched its first invasion into Rwanda from Uganda triggering civil war<sup>39</sup> (Prunier 1995). Warring parties signed the Arusha Accord on 4 August 1993, but this failed to bring stability.

Extremist Hutu officials and propagandists responded to the growing political crisis by urging the Hutu majority to protect themselves from the Tutsi ‘*inyenzi*’ (cockroaches), who were returning to kill them and steal their land (Des Forges 1999, 64–69). The social contract was over.

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<sup>39</sup> The civil war was between the Tutsi RPF, the Hutu extremist *Comité de Défense de la Révolution* (CDR) and the government’s *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND).

On 6 April 1994, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down and within half an hour, the Forces d'Armee Rwandaise (FAR) and *interhamwe*<sup>38</sup> began targeted killings of Tutsi and moderate Hutu. On 7 April, the killing transformed into a highly efficient genocidal operation (Dallaire and Beardsley 2003; Des Forges 1999). Over the next one hundred days, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed; of these, Verpoorten (2014; 2005) estimates 500,000 to 650,000 were Tutsi (see also Des Forges 1999).

On 4 July 1994, the RPF took control of Kigali and the FAR and *interhamwe* fled the country into the Zaire followed by an estimated two million Hutu (Des Forges 1999).

On 19 July 1994, an RPF-led transitional government was sworn in.

Less reported and acknowledged are the deaths of approximately 150,000 to 300,000 Hutu who were killed by the incoming RPF (Nduwayo 2002; Des Forges 1999, 540–47), in intra-Hutu power conflicts (Straus 2006), and by neighbours (André and Platteau 1998; Fujii 2009). The most enigmatic of the RPF massacres took place in 1994 in Giti, across the lake from my research site (see *Map 1.1*): Giti is the only commune where there was no Genocide, yet Des Forges (1999) reports RPF soldiers 'swept through like fire' (542; see also Nduwayo 2002). One grandparent lost her entire extended family in this massacre.

### *Genocide in Inkombe Sector*<sup>39</sup>

On April 13, 1994, *interhamwe* militias arrived in Inkombe. On April 14, the killings became more organised; they took on a new 'sense' under the direction of authorities

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<sup>40</sup> *Interhamwe* were a Hutu paramilitary group made up of FAR, MRND, CDR, and Hutu Power youth groups.

from Kigali. Tutsi fled to nearby RPF controlled areas and Rutare refugee camp. Those who did not escape were killed by machete and by drowning in Lake Muhazi by neighbours and *interhamwe*. When the Genocide ended and survivors returned, most found everything they owned was destroyed or gone. Neighbours who did not commit crimes helped rebuild Tutsi survivors' homes.

The text originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

### *The Genocide and Young People*

Nationally, children were massacred, raped and tortured alongside adults (HRW 2003). One in ten children lost one or both parents (*ibid.*, 2). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that in 1998, more than 300,000 children lived in child-headed households due to parental death, migration, or imprisonment (*ibid.*, 47).

Children also participated in the Genocide: prior to 1994, the RPF recruited children to fight in the civil war (1990-94) (*ibid.*, 15). After 1994, approximately 5,000 14- to 18-year-

old *interhamwe* were imprisoned for Genocide crimes (ibid., 19); 1000 children under age 14 were released due to age (ibid., 1, 14). Since the Genocide, warring parties have continued to use Rwandan children to fight proxy wars in Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo (ibid., 16; Dallaire 2010).

The Genocide and its legacy also impacted young people's transitions to adulthood by causing the sex ratio for people age 20 to 60 to drop from 0.94 (1991) to 0.77 (2002) (Schindler and Verpoorten 2013). This demographic shift shocked the marriage market and significantly affected 'the bargaining power of women relative to men both inside and outside marriage' (ibid., 2). These demographic and social changes help explain the findings in *Chapter Seven*.

### **The Political Economy of Childhood in the 'New Rwanda' (1994-2016)**

Since 1994, Rwanda has experienced political stability and *rapid* reconstruction and development under the leadership of President Kagame. This speed is no accident. The RPF-led government is under intense pressure to legitimise its rule with Rwanda's Hutu and peasant majority (Mann and Berry 2015). Employing a nationalist narrative of rebirth, the government has met this challenge by adopting a Post-Developmental<sup>44</sup> approach to governance, which prioritises rapid development, inclusive national economic growth, and strong state control (ibid.; Honeyman 2016, 17–26). The government's overarching development goal, which is captured in Vision 2020, is to transition the country from dependence on land to a middle-income, knowledge-based

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<sup>44</sup> Also referred to as a Neo-Developmental or Developmental Patrimonial state (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012), this is an authoritarian, technocratic (and high modernist) approach to governance that prioritises neoliberal ideals and national economic development (Honeyman 2016, 17–26; see also Scott 1998).

economy by 2020 (MINECOFIN 2000). Inclusive schooling is fundamental to the realization of these goals (Abbott et al. 2015; Williams 2016). But Vision 2020 and national unity are also contingent on making young people ‘perfect development subjects’ (Purdeková 2012, 194; see also MYICT 2015). Thus, Rwanda’s young majority is functionally and symbolically fundamental to the government’s vision of a ‘New Rwanda’.

However, Rwanda’s progress in the last two decades has not been without concern. When the government changes the ‘rules of the game’ quickly, those proximate to power (and information) can adapt and access new opportunities as they arise (██████████/10-2012; also Mann and Berry 2015), but the scope and speed of change keeps the rest of the population on its heels and creates new tensions for children and families (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014). Further, while the urgent need to reduce poverty is used to justify the pace of change and the state’s approach to development, persistently high inequality and poverty sustain concern (see Ansoms et al. 2016). For these reasons, many worry that structural violence and authoritarian rule create a ‘quiet insecurity’ (Grant 2015) that inhibits long-term stability and development (Reyntjens 2011; 2004; Straus and Waldorf 2011; Ansoms and Rostagno 2012). Against this conflictual backdrop, I examine how childhood constructions and children’s lived experience have been changing in this period.

### ***State (Re)Construction of Children’s Roles, Responsibilities, and Rights***

‘Rwanda’s development pace is high; the youth are the drivers of this speed.’

In President Kagame's ideal vision, young people help fast-track national development through schooling and adhering to traditional Rwandan values of patriotism, self-reliance, and dignity (ibid.; MYICT 2015; see also Kagame 2013a; 2013b). To achieve this vision, the government is aggressively reconstructing young people's roles, responsibilities, and rights through new laws and policies, discourse, and education (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014). Children and youth who do not fall into line have a 'bad culture'; they not only threaten Rwanda's development, but stability itself (Kagame 2013a; Purdeková 2012).

To empower girls to 'realise their potential' and contribute to national economic development, the 2003 Constitution established gender equality in law (see Burnet 2012c). Since then, the government and international development organisations have urged girls to utilise their newfound rights to attend school and advocate for themselves so that Rwanda can realise the 'Girl Effect': social and economic transformation in the household, community, and nation (McLean Hilker 2014, 7; INT/GirlHub/10-2012; cf. Hickel 2014). Today, more girls than boys attend school (NISR 2015) and girls' aspirations and expectations are rising. Yet, gender-based violence remains high (Gerver 2013). There is also evidence that the new gender norms are increasing girls' workload and creating conflict within families (Burnet 2012c). Thus, girls must navigate the gap between gender laws and official discourse on the one hand, and informal gender norms on the other.

In addition to gender rights, the government has demonstrated a strong commitment to children's rights and development (see Abbott 2013). Building on the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU 1990), new national laws define children's rights, but they also stipulate children's reciprocal obligations to kin and their roles and responsibilities related to national development<sup>46</sup>. For example, children have the 'right' to have a say in issues related to them (UNGA 1991, Art.12, 13, 15), but they must also obey and labour for parents<sup>47</sup>. Children age 0 to 18 have the right to primary schooling, but they also have the legal obligation to attend<sup>48</sup>. As in the past, young people achieve the age of majority at 18 and they can legally marry from age 21.

But despite a plethora of well-crafted laws ceaselessly communicated to children and parents, many struggle to interpret children's rights (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014, 300). Are parents allowed to beat their children? Children are entitled to protection from physical punishment<sup>49</sup>, but parents retain the 'right of correction', including corporal punishment<sup>50</sup>.

Further, despite the government's commitment to children's rights, children experience very different levels of government support for their basic rights (Abbott 2013; Pells 2009; 2012; Pells et al. 2014). Tutsi survivors (*rescapé*) benefit from FARG (*Fond d'Assistance pour les Rescapés du Génocide*) scholarships for schooling, but non-*rescapé* children have little or no access to school support (Honeyman 2016, 218–19). Rural children and children in the poorest quintiles are overrepresented in child labour and

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<sup>46</sup> See the Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child No.54/2011 of 14/12/2011.

<sup>47</sup> Law No.54/2011 of 14/12/2011, Article 3.2.

<sup>48</sup> Law No 48/27/2009; Law No 54/2011. The law was the same during the Two Republics.

<sup>49</sup> The National Integrated Child Rights Policy prohibits 'corporal punishment of children [...] in all settings' (5.5, MIGEPROF 2011).

<sup>50</sup> 1988 Civil Code, Article 347.

worst forms of labour (Abbott 2013). Unregistered children<sup>51</sup> and children born to informal unions face tremendous challenges accessing their basic rights (ibid.; Hughes et al. 2016). As the orphans and vulnerable children in Pells' (Pells 2012) study stated, 'Rights are everything we don't have' (427). The findings in *Chapters Four to Seven* build on this analysis to explore how and why young people experience life differently depending on their gender, class, and family history.

### ***Schooling***

Schooling is crucial to the state's goal of transitioning Rwanda to a knowledge-based economy by 2020, as the government slogan states: '*Kwiga ni umurage*', 'Schooling [not land] is [children's] inheritance.' To this end, the state has prioritised the rapid reconstruction and expansion of Rwanda's education system (Williams et al. 2015; King 2014): In 2003, the government declared primary school mandatory and 'fee-free'; In 2008, it expanded access to secondary through the establishment of local Nine-Year Basic Education schools (9YBE), which were expanded to Twelve-Year Basic Education (12YBE) in 2010 (ibid.); In 2009, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) changed the language of instruction from French to English. In 2012, Rwanda achieved near-universal enrolment in primary and won the prestigious Commonwealth Education Good Practice Award.

But these achievements, and the speed with which they have been implemented, mask deep challenges.

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<sup>51</sup> Forty per cent of children under age 5 (NISR et al. 2015)

First, mandatory primary school is ‘fee-free’, but it continues to come with significant direct and indirect (e.g. lost labour) costs<sup>52</sup>. These expenses represent a barrier to access or full-time attendance for many young people (Williams et al. 2015).

Second, despite expanding access to secondary to make schooling more inclusive, only Rwanda’s secondary boarding ‘Schools of Excellence’ provide any real possibility for social mobility (Williams 2016a). Students are told that access to boarding school is meritocratic, but their experience suggests it is often a lack of resources, not grades, that prevents many from progressing to boarding school (ibid.). This awareness influences students’ subjectivities, awareness of inequality, and assessment of future possibilities (Williams 2015; 2016b).

Third, MINEDUC has prioritised expanding access and monitoring school performance, but this approach appears to be adversely impacting school quality and reversing some earlier gains (Williams 2016a). For example, since 2011, net primary attendance and completion rates have been falling (NISR 2015) and repetition and drop-out rates are rising (MINEDUC 2015, 14). Secondary completion rates have increased to 14.5 per cent (population age 20-24; NISR et al. 2015, 16-7), but *Table 1.1* reveals that even with these gains, median years of schooling peak at 5.3. Further, over the past five years, the median years of schooling has declined dramatically for the top and bottom quintiles and the gap between them has widened. This data supports the findings in *Chapter Five*.

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<sup>52</sup> Primary school in Inkombe is approximately RWF 20,000 per year and local secondary RWF 40,000 per year. Nationally, boarding school is approximately 350,000 per year (see also Williams et al. 2014). Costs are rising. Most expenses are published by school officials.

5.3. Further, over the past five years, the median years of schooling has declined dramatically for the top and bottom quintiles and the gap between them has widened. This data supports the findings in *Chapter Five*.

Table 1.1: Median Years of Schooling, 1992-2015<sup>49 50</sup>

Age Range	1992 DHS		2000 DHS		2010 DHS		2014/15 DHS	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
10-14	3.6	3.6	--	--	--	--	2.4	2.7
15-19	5.5	5.7	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.8	5.3
20-24	5.9	5.6	4.2	3.9	4.2	3.9	5.3	5.2
25-29	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.4	4.5	3.9
Highest Quintile	n/a	n/a	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.2	5.2
Lowest Quintile	n/a	n/a	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.3	1.3	1.3

But perhaps the most concerning issue is that secondary graduates are far less likely to be employed than those with ‘no education’ (NISR et al. 2015, 43-45). Thus, MINEDUC has yet to find a way to fulfil its mandate ‘to transform the Rwandan citizen into skilled human capital for socio-economic development of the country’ (MINEDUC 2015, 1). As in the past, schooling is creating opportunities for basic learning, but it is also creating and hardening social divisions (Russell 2013; Williams 2015; for similar patterns in India, see Froerer 2011).

The text originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

<sup>53</sup> Medians and quintiles are not reported in the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS).

<sup>54</sup> Quintiles represent age 6 and up.

The text and photo originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.



## Chapter 2 - An Analytical and Theoretical Framework: Children and Social Change

### Introduction

My goal in this chapter is twofold: first, to explain how and why Rwandan children have experienced childhood and coming of age differently over time, and second, to theorise how their 'everyday' actions influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives and society. As I explained in the *Introduction*, child and youth studies are beginning to explain how childhood and transitions to social adulthood are changing in the Majority World and how children use their agency to navigate uncertainty and rapid change. However, few studies consider how young people's actions influence the institutions that shape and constrain their lives. Yet, a theory that approaches young people as actors must not only seek to empirically ascertain how children and youth participate in processes of reproduction, but also explain how they influence those processes and the institutions that structure them. My approach to this task provides a framework for analysing how local, national, and global institutions converge to structure and inform young Rwandans' experiences and actions on the one hand, and how young people navigate life at the interface of multiple institutional systems on the other. In so doing, I also begin to provide an explanation for how a young demographic majority influences patterns of reproduction even when they lack formal power. The theory that emerges allows us to move beyond descriptive analysis to a framework for theorising how, when, and why young people influence the way their institutional environment is reproduced over time.

To achieve these goals, I developed a novel approach to researching children and youth based on historical institutional theory. I use this approach in two ways. Analytically, I studied the relationship between children and social change by examining how young people have engaged with the primary institution that has shaped childhood and coming of age in Rwanda across generations: marriage. This allowed me to identify the mechanisms kin and non-kin institutional actors have used to structure childhood and children's lived experience. It also revealed how and why young people have engaged with these mechanisms differently and how their actions influence processes of institutional reproduction<sup>55</sup>. Theoretically, this chapter builds on institutional theory to develop a framework capable of explaining the findings in *Chapters Four to Seven*. This new approach provides a coherent framework for analysing how and why children's lived experience has been changing over time, but in different ways for different children. It also allows us to determine whether young people's actions influence processes of institutional reproduction in consequential ways and theorise why this is so.

The chapter develops as follows. In *Section 2.1*, I examine our understanding of institutions and actors and the relationship between them. Because children are absent from institutional studies, I integrate child and youth theory throughout the analysis to present a clear understanding of children as actors. Following this, I conceptualise the nature of the institutional environment in conflict-affected, post-colonial contexts like

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<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Fortes (1958) urges anthropologists to ask: 'What are the institutional mechanisms and customary activities of social reproduction in a particular society and how do they operate?' (2) He argues that this approach captures the contingency of a cohort's experience to historical time and place (see also Katz 2013, 32).

Rwanda. Finally, I examine theories that explain institutional reproduction and change. In *Section 2.2*, I build on the child and youth analysis in the *Introduction* and the institutional analysis here to develop a theoretical framework capable of conceptualising and theorising young people's experiences and actions in *Chapters Four to Seven*.

## **2.1 The Micro-Foundations of Institutional Reproduction and Change**

It is a well-accepted maxim in state (re)building and development studies that 'institutions matter' to long-term stability and economic development (North 1990; Goldstone et al. 2010). Likewise, studies of childhood and youth in the Majority World clearly show that institutions, from childhood and marriage to the state and United Nations, shape and inform young people's lived experience. But while child and youth scholars describe institutional *effects*, such as how the UNCRC or national economic policies are reshaping how childhood is constructed and experienced (Boyden 1997; Hopkins and Sriprakash 2015), few consider how institutions are *reproduced* and *changed* – let alone through children's lives. If we are honest, these processes often feel beyond our influence or control.

Yet theories of institutional reproduction and change are premised on the notion that institutions are constructed and enacted by humans, and that institutions and actors are mutually constituting (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). Thus, it is not only possible, but critical, to understand the interplay between the two and to examine whether children are consequential actors in institutional processes. To this end, I begin with the basics, namely, how institutions and actors and the relationship between them is theorised.

## **Conceptualising Institutions and Actors**

'Institutions and actors' are conceptual cousins to 'structure and agency'. But historical institutional theory explicitly demands that we move beyond the structure-agency debate to conceptualise the broader historical, material, and social context within which individuals and groups act; how that context is likely to shape behaviour; and how individual's actions - intentional and unintentional - shape their institutional environment (Thelen 2010, 56). To do so, we must first carefully define what we mean by institutions and actors, for these concepts have significant implications for how we study institutional change and how much change we find (Campbell 2010, 108).

### ***Conceptualising Institutions***

Institutional theories demonstrate a shared understanding of institutions as 'relatively enduring features of political, economic, and social life (rules, norms, procedures) that structure behaviour and that cannot be changed easily or instantaneously.' (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 4) In this theory, '*formal*' institutions are humanly constructed and codified rules<sup>56</sup>, norms, and practices, such as the Constitution or codes of conduct. In comparison, '*informal*' institutions are 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels' (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, 727). Both formal and informal institutions have economic and political purposes in addition to symbolic and social ones. Formal and informal institutions are primarily enforced through '*social*' institutions, such as the government,

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<sup>56</sup> 'Rules' are 'publicly fixed' codified prescriptions as well as 'socially shared' understandings (see Sewell 1992, 8).

family, market economy, media, and Church<sup>57</sup>. I define *social institutions* as collectively constructed structures and mechanisms that organise relatively stable patterns of human activity over time through the reproduction of the institution's rules, resources, power<sup>58</sup>, and social purpose.

Interactions between institutions, institutional actors, and everyday actors structure daily life and generate the social processes that reproduce and change it. However, different branches of institutional theory define and approach institutions differently, so I will briefly examine these before presenting the approach I take in this study.

### **1. Sociological Institutionalism**

Sociological institutionalists emphasise the dispersed, diffused influence of institutions by defining institutions not only as codified rules and practices, but also as the invisible structures of political, social and economic life, such as norms and 'frames of meaning' that influence human and organisational behaviour (Hall and Taylor 1996, 947). This broad definition blurs the line between institution and 'culture' as both provide 'cognitive scripts' and categories that influence how individuals interpret behaviour and craft responses (Ibid). Taking this definition to its logical conclusion, institutions not only influence human behaviour, but determine it because even actors' rationality is constructed by institutionalised meanings. Consequently, institutions are self-reproducing because they subconsciously lead actors to reproduce the institutions that inform their lives (Hall and Taylor 1996).

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<sup>57</sup> Jackson (2010) clarifies that entities such as schools and corporations are organisations, not social institutions. Organisations are shaped by, and enact, the rules imposed by their institutional environment (68–69).

<sup>58</sup> Definition influenced by Giddens (1984).

This approach has been criticised for its lack of attention to issues of power and its overemphasis on the structuring influence of institutions, which leaves little space to theorise how actors may overcome subconscious normative and cognitive influences to intentionally influence processes of institutional reproduction (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a, 30; Hall and Taylor 1996). However, in recent years, sociological institutionalists have conceded that institutions are not as determinative as once thought: because norms and ‘frames of meaning’ are humanly constructed, they cannot be defined unequivocally; they must be interpreted (Campbell 2010, 105). This leaves room for contestation and change over time (ibid.). But sociologists continue to treat institutions as an all-encompassing force that influences human behaviour, rather than as one force that influences behaviour, and one that can be influenced by other forces, such as culture and material conditions.

## **2. Rational Choice Institutionalism**

Until recently, rational choice institutionalists’ definition of institutions was as narrow as sociologists’ was broad, and as void of any consideration of norms and culture as sociologists were attentive. Strongly influenced by economics, this approach defines institutions as ‘the rules of the game in a society’, or ‘the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’ (North 1990, 3). The focus on rules reflects a utilitarian view in which (in)formal institutions shape behaviour by defining the choices available to particular actors and the payoffs or consequences associated with particular actions (Thelen 2010, 54). In this ‘game’ theory, resources are scarce; hence, competition is assumed (Hall and Taylor 1996). Aoki (2007) notes that compliance is built into this definition because institutions appear to actors as an external entity beyond individual

control that must be taken into consideration when making choices (8). In this utility-maximising view, institutional reproduction represents a state of equilibrium that strategic, self-maximising actors maintain as they coordinate their actions within institutional constraints in pursuit of institutional rewards (Hall and Taylor 1996, 944-46; Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 4, 10).

Beyond economics, there are many critiques of this view. For one, it has a limited theory of culture<sup>59</sup> and power, so it over predicts reproduction (Thelen 2010, 53). Jackson (2010) argues that it also tends to overemphasise the extent to which human action is strategic; therefore, it fails to explain why inefficient institutions persist and why actors often make 'irrational' or non-utility maximising choices (68). With its focus on economic and political organisations and formal collective action, rational choice theory appears to be of limited relevance to young people. Nevertheless, it provides some important insights for this study.

First, in contexts like Rwanda where resource scarcity, uncertainty, and economic competition often threaten survival, game theory helps to explain how institutional constraints and rewards influence actors' economic decision-making processes (see North 2005).

Second, rational actor institutional theory offers an elaborate theory of *collective action* wherein groups act together towards common goals and thereby reproduce and change institutions (see North 1990, chap. 2; Hall and Taylor 1996, 944-6). This perspective

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<sup>59</sup> Harriss (2006) asserts that 'culture' is only used to explain behaviour that does not fit the model articulated, rather than recognising that systems of meaning influence how rules are constructed and how/why actors engage with institutions as they do (181).

allows us to move beyond the individual agency imperative in child and youth studies, as Durham (2008) urges, to conceptualise agency as actions young people take *individually* or *with others* (see also Abebe 2013; Punch 2002).

Third, in terms similar to Giddens' (1984) 'duality of structure' theory, recent rational actor studies demonstrate that institutions and actors are mutually constituting (see Jackson 2010). Thus, institutional reproduction *is not* an equilibrium that can easily be maintained; rather, it must be produced and reproduced 'as an endogenous outcome of the strategy interplays of all the agents in the domain' (Aoki 2007, 8). Further, Aoki (2007) notes that it is often actors who think their actions insignificant, and perceive institutional rules to be unchangeable and beyond their individual control, who effect change as they work around rules and practices, rather than reproduce them. While still theorising reproduction through the lens of game theory, uncertainty and the importance of 'insignificant' actors is now acknowledged.

Finally, North's work on economic change reveals how power-holding institutional actors use ideology to influence individual beliefs and legitimate the prevailing socio-economic order (see North 1981, 45, 1990; 2005, chap. 8). When used effectively, ideology encourages the compliance of the majority and 'free-riders'<sup>60</sup>, which reduces the need to expend scarce resources on coercion and force (ibid. 2005). This helps explain the Rwandan government's extensive use of ideology (see Purdeková 2015). However, North (1990) notes that ideology's influence in socialist and utopian societies 'tends to fade over time when it runs counter to the behavioural sources of *individual* wealth

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<sup>60</sup> A 'free rider' is someone who benefits from collective action but does not contribute to this action.

maximizing' (132). This suggests that when the prevailing socio-economic order runs counter to what individual Rwandans think they need to do to get ahead, ideology will take second place to acting in one's own best interest.

### **3. Historical Institutionalism**

The final approach I consider is historical institutionalism. This approach is distinguished by its view of institutions as 'the legacy of concrete historical processes' (Thelen 1999: 382) and by its attention to the role of power, the influence of ideas, and an emphasis on unintended consequences (Hall and Taylor 1996, 938). Unlike rational choice institutionalists, who generate theory on the assumption that actors freely enter into contracts, historical institutionalists posit that institutional contexts afford some individuals and groups disproportionate access to the decision-making process and resources (Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 8). Thus, this approach defines institutions as 'the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy' (Hall and Taylor 1996, 938) and describes them as 'deeply political and contested, as underpinned by power relations and fraught with distributional implications.' (Thelen 2010, 54) Arguing that conflict over scarce resources lies at the heart of politics (Hall and Taylor 1996: 937), this power-distributional view of institutions 'emphasizes ongoing struggles within but also over prevailing institutional arrangements' (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, xi). Struggles occur because institutions are humanly constructed by actors with different relationships to power (Jackson 2010). This means that institutional reproduction is an inherently relational process, and therefore unstable and uncertain (Ortner 2006; Thelen and Mahoney 2010). This

political and relational approach locates actors within and at the interface of institutions that seek the reproduction of their rules and practices as well as their resources. In this view, equality and inequality have their origins in how institutions are constructed.

In contrast to sociological and rational choice institutionalists, historical institutionalists do not see institutions as coordinating mechanisms that 'hold together' particular economic, political or social patterns. Rather, institutions 'emerge from and are sustained by features of the broader political and social context. [...Thus] institutional arrangements cannot be understood in isolation from the political and social setting in which they are embedded.' (Thelen 1999, 384) Social processes are flexible. Thus, historical institutionalists place importance on understanding how context, beliefs, and culture shape actors' preferences, strategies, and objectives. But in contrast to sociological institutionalists, they regard ideas and beliefs as distinct forces that influence how individuals and groups interact with institutions (Hall and Taylor 1996). Lastly, in contrast to rational choice institutionalists who tend to focus on one institution or one set of 'rules' at a time, historical institutionalists are interested in how multiple institutions interact and how these interactions are influenced by actors as well as the broader context. This approach does not presume coherence; rather, it examines how forces intersect and converge to influence the (in)stability of the institutional environment (Pierson and Skocpol 2002, 12).

In the remainder of this thesis, I draw insights from all three schools of thought, but the historical institutional definition of institutions underpins my analysis. The historical institutional approach allows me to locate young people's experience and action within historical institutional processes and patterns, while recognising that power

asymmetries are built into the structure of institutions and therefore seek to be reproduced through young people's lives.

### ***Conceptualising Actors and Agency***

Within historical institutional theory, 'actors' are understood to be individuals or groups who are capable of making intentional, strategic choices among alternative courses of action<sup>61</sup> (Thelen 1999). However, actors are constrained and empowered by contemporary and inherited institutional rules and practices that have distinct distributional aims (Campbell 2010, 99; Greif 2006, 200–201). As a result, actors have differential access to knowledge and resources, but they also have different capacities to act on their intentions and different orientations to action (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 8; also Sewell 1992, 20–1, Ortner 2006, 136–147). In the case of children, state and global institutions use biological age to control the type of knowledge and resources children can access and the timing of their entry into the formal economy and politics (Mizen 2002; Clark-Kazak 2009; Stephens 1995). These institutionalised constraints and opportunities influence how and when children develop skills and cognitive capacities; this influences their capacity to act and their orientation to action at a given age. The state's goal, Stephens (1995) argues, is compliant citizens who serve the interests of the nation state and market economy (see also Mizen 2002). Similarly, male authority figures in Rwanda have historically used gender norms and land inheritance and banking laws to empower husbands on the one hand, and limit the ability of women to translate their labour and knowledge into resources and power within the household and community

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<sup>61</sup> This view has its epistemological roots in Weber's methodological individualism wherein 'the intentional individual is the ultimate causal agent behind socio-economic phenomena, but an agent highly structured and constrained by institutional frames.' (Weber 1978, 13–14)

on the other (Jefremovas 2002, 86-9, 95). Thus, the *same* institutional rule may endow different actors with very *different* constraints or opportunities. These historical legacies influence contemporary action.

Institutional scholars also argue that actors have ‘bounded rationality’: limitations imposed by their unique cognitive/emotional abilities and the complexity of the environment in which they operate (North 2005, chap.3; B. Jones 1999; Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 10-12). One reason for this is that humans have imperfect access to information (B. Jones 1999): with either too little or too much information, it is impossible to make optimal decisions (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). This is evident in Rwanda, where Pells, Pontalti, and Williams (2014) find young people have difficulty navigating daily life and planning for the future because laws and policies are constantly changing (see also Campioni and Noack 2012). However, actors also have different cognitive/emotional capacities to attend to, process, and act on information (North 2005, chap. 8); consequently, they tend to be more concerned to find a ‘satisficing’ path - one that satisfies their needs at some specified level, rather than an ‘optimal’ one (B. Jones 1999).

Because children’s physical and social immaturity is a given, it is generally assumed that their rationality is more bounded than adults’. But as explained above, institutions influence how children’s cognitive capacities develop and the meaning given to immaturity; further, they do so differently in different contexts (James and Prout 1997, 7; Rogoff 2003). For example, Serpell (1993) explains that African parents use a combination of developmental indicators and culturally-valued behaviours to distinguish when a child is capable of complex reasoning and more demanding tasks

and responsibilities; they expect to see these indicators between the age of 7 and 9 (see also Codere 1973). From this social age, a child is regarded as being capable of intentional, strategic action; children in the Minority World are not generally expected to demonstrate these competencies at such a young biological age. In an alternate example, Rwandan secondary students gain different information and knowledge than adult peasants; consequently, students are often more confident to interact with state institutions than their parents are. Thus, the complexity of the institutional environment demands that we look beyond actors' physical traits and generational category to examine and theorise how and why different actors' rationality is uniquely 'bounded' and how this influences their capacity to engage with institutions.

Since the 1990s, new social studies of childhood have been concerned to demonstrate that children are social, economic and political actors in their own right (Alanen 1988; James and Prout 1997; Robson et al. 2007). But in their zeal to prove that African young people have agency, scholars tend to venerate a libertarian form of agency that privileges independent action (Durham 2008). In this view, children's obedience, compliance, and cooperation with adults is often problematised as a response to institutional constraints and thus negated as agency (Abebe 2013). Durham (2008) argues that this perspective obscures our understanding of how agency is locally understood and valued in Africa, how young people attain and exercise agency, 'and how their agency relates them to others and to their society' (153; also Abebe 2013).

Institutional theory offers two main correctives to this approach. First, in Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) power-distributional view of institutions and actors, 'compliance emerges as a variable, and a variable that is crucially important to the analysis of both

stability and change.’ (10) Simply put, people choose whether and how to comply. That they do so within relationships of power does not negate the fact that compliance is an act of agency. Second, institutional theory makes group (collective) action an explicit and dominant concern<sup>62</sup>: it is a given that individuals act purposefully with others towards shared goals<sup>63</sup>. Acting with others ‘counts’ as agency<sup>64</sup>. Individual or collective, Ortner (2006) emphasises that human agency always operates within the context of historically contingent relationships, such as generations, which are characterised by power differentials. This makes institutional reproduction inherently unstable (ibid.). Thus, we must examine all the ways young people act - compliant and non-compliant, individual and collective – if we are to understand how they influence processes of institutional reproduction.

Thus far, there is nothing in institutional theory that precludes children who have reached ‘the age of reason’ from being defined as actors. However, not all actors are of interest to institutional scholars, who operate on the premise that some actors and actions are more consequential than others. Thus, we must determine whether or not the actors we are examining (i.e. children) are ‘players’ (Thelen 1999, 378) or, to use another descriptor, ‘change-agents’: actors who *strategically* engage with an institution’s mechanisms of reproduction in *consequential* ways (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 22–29).

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<sup>62</sup> Sewell (1992) also views agency as individual or collective.

<sup>63</sup> Olson’s (2000) work demonstrates that many of the principles of collective action are applicable to informal action despite the field’s focus on formal action and binding contracts.

<sup>64</sup> Collective action is similar to the interdependent social relationships Punch (2002; 2014) and Abebe (2013) describe.

But is strategic action really requisite to being a consequential actor? Thelen and Mahoney (2010) note that consequential ‘institutional change need not emerge from actors with transformational motives’ (22; see also Scott 1985). Thus, while institutional studies do not yet study young people’s actions, belonging within a given generational or social category does not make an actor inherently capable or incapable of actions that are consequential to processes of institutional reproduction. As we will see in *Chapters Four to Seven*, actors influence institutional reproduction in diverse ways; few of these are tied to the legal status of adulthood or to being a political elite.

These biases in institutional theory provoke several questions: Are ‘change-makers’ the only actors of significance? What about people who *reproduce* dominant institutional patterns? If compliance is really a variable that represents strategic behaviour, how can we possibly separate actors into groups based on the significance of their behaviour to institutional processes at the macro-level? As Thelen and Mahoney (2010) themselves argue, ‘gradual or piecemeal changes often only ‘show up’ or ‘register’ as change if we consider a somewhat longer time frame [...] Gradual changes can be of great significance in their own right; and gradually unfolding changes may be hugely consequential as causes of other outcomes.’ (2-3; see also Fortes 1958, 2). This is evident in Ahearn’s (2001) story of newly literate young Nepalis who covertly wrote love letters to each other and enhanced their agency in the arranged marriage process; their courting was not a purposeful attempt to undermine prevailing gerontocratic power structures, but it had this effect. These arguments demonstrate the importance of expanding institutional studies to examine the experiences and actions of young people.

## **Children’s Institutional Environment**

Just as young Rwandans live within an exceptionally beautiful but constrained physical landscape, they also live within an institutional environment. Some elements of their institutional environment, like their social relations, are visible: young people dominate Rwanda's physical landscape, elders are a minority. Most elements are less visible, but they still have 'powerful channelling and delimiting effects' that shape young people's experience and actions (Pierson and Skocpol 2002, 12; Thelen 2010, 44; Jackson 2010, 70). Although neighbouring countries may have similar institutions and institutional arrangements, Rwanda's institutional environment is distinct because specific 'constellations of actors' have constructed it upon unique historical, ideological and material foundations (Jackson 2010). Making this environment visible is key to understanding young people's experience and how their actions influence processes of institutional reproduction over time.

### ***Conceptualising 'Institutional Multiplicity'***

The international state system and globalisation are making the institutional environment in every state increasingly complex. Multiple and 'improbable combinations' of institutions and institutional systems co-exist within each institutional domain, each with their own objectives and reproductive mechanisms (Thelen 2010, 50; see also Campbell 2010; Djelic 2010, 28). The different historical roots and development trajectories of these diverse institutions and the timing of their emergence influence the nature of these interactions and make them likely to be marked by 'tensions, dissonance, and thus an inherent dynamism' (Pierson 2004, 56; Campbell 2010, 105). These tensions are evident, for example, when international children's rights conventions (e.g. UNCRC, ACRWC) intersect with local generational roles, norms, and

practices (see, for example, Hashim and Thorsen 2011). North (2005) argues that understanding the historical institutional roots behind these encounters 'is the key to understanding the process of change' (Loc1644). But what are these roots and why might they create tensions?

Scholars use similar, dualistic terms to describe these roots. For example, Nsamenang (2002) asserts that young Africans' contemporary reality 'lies in the interface of the *endogenous* and *exogenous*' (96) or *indigenous* and *non-indigenous*. Anthropologists and historians often speak in terms of the *traditional* and *modern*. These terms and tropes risk suggesting that social change is evolutionary and linear, or that one is backward and the other progressive, or that there is no blending of the two - that we are 'wedded to the plot of modernization' (81), as Ferguson (1999) so aptly puts it. But if we are to understand young people's experiences over time, we must somehow recognise that two different institutional systems have converged in Rwanda. These systems are not innately incompatible, Nsamenang (2002) argues, but they shape young people's beliefs, roles and responsibilities in multiple and often conflicting ways (96; see also Serpell 1993, 2-4). This makes it critical to understand the institutional dynamics that underpin young people's experience.

When European imperialism forced the meeting of these two institutional systems - traditional and modern - in Africa, each system was fundamentally different. North (2005) argues that institutions in rural subsistence-based societies like Rwanda's evolved to adapt to the challenges and risks inherent in an uncertain *physical* environment (chap. 7.II.). To this end, a social system based on interdependence and 'wealth in people' used social hierarchies, mutual control, coercion, reciprocity and

redistribution, and strong personal ties to spread risk, maintain social cohesion, and enable social mobility (Guyer 1995; Bledsoe 1980; Shweder and Bourne 1984). In such a system, 'Wealth and security rest on the control of others' (Bledsoe 1980, 48). Thus, elders depend on children's physical labour and care-giving, but tie reciprocity (future resources) and social rights to their obedience and respect (Goody 1982; Reynolds 1991; see also Roche 2014). Survival is threatened when a person cannot depend on others; security and freedom exist when one is not *forced* to be subject to another to survive (Mosse 2007). In contrast, the modern institutional system is adaptive to challenges posed by a *human* environment (North 2005, chap. 7.II.), which is embodied in the nation state and market economy and premised on individualism, monetary wealth, and individual gain (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). These challenges require formal rule structures and enforcement mechanisms (ibid. North), the commodification of land, labour, and money, and the separation of economic and social relations (ibid. Polanyi). As these two distinct institutional systems converge, 'developments in one realm impinge on and shape developments in others' (Thelen 1999, 390; see also Campbell 2010, 103-4). For this reason, historical institutionalists pay close attention to how temporal sequences and processes unfold, and how 'different processes at the domestic level or at the international and domestic levels unfold in relation to one another' (Thelen 1999, 390; see also Pierson and Skocpol 2002, 695-96). Because these systems are founded on fundamentally different relations of production, any change in these relations at the macro-level will affect the structure of social relations and social reproduction at the household level.

Conflict and state building scholars are increasingly interested in the relationship between these two institutional systems. Seeking to explain state reconstruction processes in Africa, Hesselbein et al. (2006) develop the notion of ‘institutional multiplicity’ to conceptualise how multiple and competing ‘rule systems’ interact<sup>65</sup> and how actors navigate the distinct normative frameworks and incentive structures these systems present, both historically and in the aftermath of war. Building on this work, Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) argue that in the Ugandan context, where there has been a resurgence of ‘traditional’ authority, state stability largely depends on the nature of the interface between institutional systems (i.e. ‘state’, ‘traditional’, and ‘non-state’). Where the state achieves some level of ‘institutional hybridity’ - that is, where traditional and non-state institutions combine with, or are subsumed by, ‘modern’ state and market institutions - there is relative stability (3, 6). But when there is little *effective* synthesis of modern and traditional institutions within a given domain (e.g. governance, economy), the institutional arrangement is better described as ‘institutional multiplicity’ (also Hesselbein et al. 2006). In Rwanda, the state provides the appearance of hybridity through its appropriation of past cultural practices and the incorporation of local hill chiefs into state governance. But these measures centralise state power (Ingelaere 2011; Purdeková 2012); they do not bridge the chasm between kinship and feudal institutions<sup>66</sup> on the one hand, and state institutions on the other. Multiplicity, rather than hybridity, describes this relationship best.

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<sup>65</sup> They identify four ‘rule systems’: state, traditional, non-state, and rules that groups devise for survival.

<sup>66</sup> For example, the informal economy, informal education, and ‘poisoning’ (versus formal justice mechanisms) dominate.

Institutional multiplicity can be ‘concordant’ if state and non-state institutions recognise each other’s legitimate roles and do not try to co-opt them; however, if state and non-state institutional actors cannot or will not do this, Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) explain that their relationship will be fundamentally ‘discordant’ (ibid., 7-8). In discordant institutional environments, institutional actors carefully guard their institution’s legitimacy and political space by engaging as many actors as possible in the reproduction of their institution’s rules, practices, and resources over others’. This competition makes the role of local actors particularly significant.

But rule systems are not a ‘rigid matrix’ that actors automatically respond to in reproductive ways (Thelen 2010, 55); as Hesselbein et al. (2006) argue, people can and do use one rule system to gain advantage in another (1). They also opportunistically pick and choose which institutions and institutional rules or practices they will engage with, thereby treating institutions as resources that ‘facilitate and enable action’ (Campbell 2010, 99, 103). These patterns are evident throughout *Chapters Four to Seven*.

Thelen (1999) argues that these interactions and outcomes are ‘politically consequential’ when actors interfere with processes of institutional reproduction (400). But Putzel and Di John (2012) explain that they are also consequential when actors reproduce the rules and practices of more than one rule system within a given domain, for in doing so they legitimise and reproduce rival institutions (15). Actors influence stability and the viability of the state when the state cannot ‘ensure that its institutions (or rules) trump rival rules anchored in non-state institutional systems’ (8; Hesselbein et al. 2006). This suggests that an institutional environment characterised by *discordant* institutional multiplicity is inherently unstable and that young people’s actions may be

more consequential in this context. However, Thelen (1999) cautions that ‘a more precise specification of the reproduction mechanisms behind particular institutions is the key to understanding important elements of both stability and change in political life’ (401) because ‘knowing how institutions were constructed provides insights into how they might come apart’ (400). I examine these suppositions in the next section.

### **Theorising Institutional Reproduction and Change**

Traditionally, institutional scholars have sought to explain social, political and economic change by analysing the institutional environment. But Thelen (2010) observes that few ‘question how institutions themselves evolve and change over time’ (45). If we are to not only explain children’s changing institutional environment, but also conceptualise how young people may actively be shaping institutional processes, we must be able to do both. Thus, this section first theorises the relationship between institutional reproduction and change, and then explains the mechanisms that institutions and everyday actors engage with to effect both. Following this, I present my theoretical framework.

#### ***The Relationship Between Institutional Reproduction and Change***

In institutional theory, change is traditionally associated with rupture, shocks, and exogenous forces (Campbell 2010; Thelen and Mahoney 2010). In contrast, reproduction is presented as continuity - a state of equilibrium (Hall and Taylor 1996, 953). But in this study, strong continuities run like an unbroken thread through generations of rapid and major historical change and violent rupture (see also Lubkemann 2008). This caused me to question the nature of the relationship between reproduction and change.

Until recently, institutional scholars largely viewed institutions as self-enforcing. In this view, continuity rather than change is regarded as the natural state. This approach tends to draw a sharp line between the logic of reproduction and change: reproduction is understood to be an endogenous process, while change is theorised as the result of exogenous forces and trends (Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Ortner 2006). This makes it difficult to theorise the relationship between the two. Yet social scientists are increasingly doing just that. For while there is a bias towards institutional reproduction (Sewell 1992; Ortner 2006; Thelen and Mahoney 2010), empirical studies increasingly demonstrate that institutional reproduction is an inherently unstable and negotiated social process that generates both continuities and change (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Lubkemann 2008).

Campbell (2010) argues that this is so because reproduction and change are the flip sides of the same coin (108): he explains, ‘processes of institutional reproduction and change are mutually constitutive in the sense that many of the forces that change institutions also stabilize them. Power is central to all of this’ (88). Power is central because those who benefit from existing power relations and distributional patterns pursue their reproduction, but their success depends on maintaining or mobilising political support. Gaining this support inevitably requires compromise and change as actors (re)negotiate their position in relation to others (Ortner 2006; Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 9). Thus, the outcomes of these interactions reflect both reproduction and change.

So what qualifies as change, and how do we recognise it empirically when we see it? Campbell (2010) argues that institutionalists would accept that a change in institutional rules qualifies as change (108). Similarly, Harper and Marcus (2015) find that ‘Where

sufficient numbers of people have adopted a new practice [...] the norm associated with that practice can be said to have changed' (6). However, Campbell (2010) warns that unless scholars identify and pay close attention to the *mechanisms* by which institutions are reproduced or changed, 'theories [of reproduction and change] risk lapsing into functionalist tautology' (88; see also Thelen 2010). But what exactly are mechanisms of reproduction and change, and what do they tell us about how young people may influence institutional processes?

### ***Mechanisms of Reproduction***

Mechanisms of reproduction are core institutional features that constrain or enable actors and thereby contribute to institutional reproduction (Thelen 1999, 387–401). Social theorists identify various forces and mechanisms that shape and constrain actors' behaviour, but most resemble the three types identified by sociologists DiMaggio and Powell (1991)<sup>67</sup>: (1) *Regulative/coercive* pressures expressed through rules and punishment (e.g. laws, policies, fines<sup>68</sup>); (2) *normative* pressures expressed through uncoded rules, practices, and processes (e.g. socialisation, media) and enforced through reward or sanction (i.e. feedback mechanisms); and (3) *mimetic* or *cognitive* pressures that encourage actors to conform to institutional goals <sup>69</sup> (e.g. ideation<sup>70</sup>,

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<sup>67</sup> For example, Bourdieu's work on habitus de-emphasises the mechanistic aspects of this process, but identifies normative and mimetic/cognitive pressures (see Bourdieu 1977). Foucault's work on disciplinary power and biopower emphasises the mechanistic and subconscious out-working of all three mechanisms (Foucault 1982; 1977).

<sup>68</sup> See Ingelaere's (2010, 52) list of fines in Rwanda, for example.

<sup>69</sup> Cognitive pressures are often communicated through institutional 'frames', which are collective, intersubjective understandings that 'people 'draw on' to construct roles and interpret objects.' (Autesserre 2009, 250–51)

<sup>70</sup> I define 'ideation' as 'discourse that construes a particular view of 'reality.'" Adapted from Martin and Rose (2007, 66).

ideology, information). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) note that cognitive pressures are particularly influential in contexts of uncertainty.

Interactions between these mechanisms make them dynamic, but also mutually reinforcing (ibid.; see also Jackson 2010, 69, 76): for example, Marcus and Harper's (2015) work on norm change illustrates that mandatory primary school attendance laws (*regulative*) encourage girls' attendance, which introduces girls to female role models (*normative*) who encourage imitation (*mimetic*). Knowledge gained (*cognitive*) may raise girls' expectations of new future livelihoods (6; see also Boyden 2013; Morrow 2015). But girls' immediate context, from their belief system and subjectivity to social relations and material concerns, also influences how they respond to these mechanisms and whether they reproduce or change rules, norms, and practices (Marcus and Harper 2015, 8).

When institutions perpetuate a highly asymmetrical distribution of power and resources, less powerful actors are not inclined to reproduce their subordinate status through the institution (Thelen 2010, 54; Ortner 2006; see, for example, Scott 1985). In this case, Thelen (2010) argues power-holding institutional actors must employ an additional reproductive mechanism - a type of 'settlement' with actors - to shore up their power and ensure reproduction (also Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 8-9; see, for example, Berry 1985, 8). Common examples of settlements include social and intergenerational contracts and political settlements<sup>71</sup>. The presence or entry of alternate institutions make a settlement even more necessary, for subordinate actors

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<sup>71</sup> A 'political settlement' is 'the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based' (Putzel and Di John 2009, 4).

are eager to discover and seize on new opportunities in the hope of improving their status (Ortner 2006, chap.6; see, for example, Ahearn 2001). Thus, in highly unequal contexts characterised by institutional multiplicity (like Rwanda) institutional reproduction rests tenuously on the success of settlements and the effectiveness of other reproductive mechanisms. Even then, institutional outcomes may not reflect intended goals, but rather, negotiation or conflict between institutions and groups of actors (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 8; Ortner 2006, chap.2, 6).

As this analysis suggests, reproductive mechanisms are significant because they influence actors' behaviour in ways that make reproduction, rather than change, more likely (Pierson 2004, 77). Further, when institutions do change, reproductive mechanisms make them more likely to change in 'path dependent'<sup>72</sup> ways (Campbell 2010, 90). For example, in Rwanda the social and material rewards historically embedded within customary marriage made it costly for children and adults to diverge from this sanctioned institutional pathway. Reproductive mechanisms are also significant because they reinforce existing patterns of power and make them path dependent so that power begets power<sup>73</sup> (Pierson 2015, 134). As patterns of power become path dependent, Pierson (2004) warns that the exercise of power becomes less visible (52, 77; 2015, 130). Speaking to the critical role of schooling in this process, Bourdieu (1973) asserts there is no mechanism for

[...] the transmission of power and privileges, [...] that is better concealed, and therefore better adapted to societies [...] than that solution which the educational

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<sup>72</sup> 'Path dependence' refers to a dynamic process wherein positive feedback reinforces the chosen pathway and constrains the options available to actors given that each additional step in the same direction makes it more difficult and costly to change course (Pierson 2004, 20-1).

<sup>73</sup> I define 'power' as 'decisive advantages for those with more resources and authority.' Adapted from Pierson (2015, 123).

system provides by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function.’ (see also Levinson and Holland 1996, 56–57)

Identifying reproductive mechanisms, then, reveals how unequal distributions of power are reproduced in everyday ways through individual lives and how these may be upset.

In relation to children, cognitive mechanisms have special relevance because they exert a formative influence: Mannheim (1952) explains, ‘Early impressions tend to coalesce into a *natural view* of the world. All later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as that set’s verification and fulfilment or as its negation and antithesis...’ (373) But early impressions are not formative because younger children are more cognitively or morally pliable, as many believe (see discussion in Boyden 2003, 349–53); rather, they are formative because *developmentally*, childhood is an intense period of learning and *socially*, children are relationally situated as subordinates (Mizen 2002, 11; Rogoff 2003). Thus, early cognitive influences are uniquely influential, but not determinative (ibid., Mannheim). Nevertheless, if an institution’s cognitive scripts become established, they are tenacious, shaping a child’s worldview and how she perceives her interests and options. In this way, cognitive mechanisms contribute to path dependence and institutional reproduction through children’s lives (Pierson 2004, 39–40).

### ***Mechanisms of Change***

Mechanisms of change are simply reproductive mechanisms that actors intentionally or unintentionally engage with in new ways; in so doing, they change, rather than reproduce, an institution (Sewell 1992; Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Djelic 2010, 33).

Until recently, most theories of institutional change emphasised functionalist and technical imperatives for change and the influence of exogenous shocks and forces, rather than endogenous developments that unfold gradually (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 2–3). The argument is that these exceptional forces - for example, colonialism or the 1994 Genocide - effect change because they create a ‘critical juncture’, which opens up an opportunity for historic agents to unsettle path dependent institutional trajectories (Katznelson 2003).

But although exogenous shocks have a significant material impact, critical junctures are rare and they are not strongly associated with institutional change (Capoccia 2015; Thelen 2010). This is the case, Thelen (2010) explains, because institutions change in ways that follow a particular internal logic that is shaped by their historical and structural contexts more than sudden events (55; see also Thelen 1999; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). Rueschemeyer (2005) offers a different perspective, arguing that pre-crisis institutional orders persist when the shock strengthens the power of elites who were ready to act prior to the change. Taking an actor-centred view, Lubkemann (2008) and Wood (2008) assert that limited change may occur through political violence because actors draw on pre-war norms to navigate the crisis; in this way, they reproduce pre-war norms (and institutions) in the post-conflict environment. But while critical junctures do not consistently lead to fundamental institutional change, they do introduce new institutions. In so doing, they create a possibility for change.

In contrast to models of discontinuous, sudden change, Thelen and Mahoney (2010) offer a model of gradual institutional change. This model emerges from the recognition that most change occurs in quiet, gradual, and incremental ways that are cumulatively

transformative, but often only evident in a historical perspective (Ibid, 2-3). In the power-distributional view of institutions that underpins this model, change is inevitable because institutions depend on actors' engagement and compliance for reproduction, but compliance is a variable (Ibid; Ortner 2006). Treating compliance as a variable means that institutions have possibilities for gradual change within their basic structure, for there is always a gap between the goals and preferences of power-holding institutional actors and their subordinates<sup>74</sup> (Ortner 2006; Thelen and Mahoney 2010). Thus, whenever actors engage with reproductive mechanisms in unintended ways, they transform reproductive mechanisms into mechanisms of change (Campbell 2010, 88, 98). In this way, features inherent to institutions enable actors to change institutions from within.

Actors effect gradual change in several ways. First, they may (un)intentionally interpret the meaning of an institution and engage with its reproductive mechanisms in new or unintended ways over time (Jackson 2010, 80; Campbell 2010; DiMaggio and Powell 1991). In the process, actors may rewrite or create new rules, or avoid them altogether (Jackson 2010, 77; Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Ortner 2006; see, for example, Ingelaere 2010; Scott 1985). As they do, they gradually shift and redirect the institution's goals, functions, and purposes (Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Campbell 2010, 101). When actors effectively replace existing reproductive mechanisms with new ones, an institution may be displaced (Thelen and Mahoney 2010, 16; Thelen 2010, 55).

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<sup>74</sup> Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) and Ahearn's *Invitations to Love* (2001) provide excellent examples of these dynamics.

Alternately, actors may change institutions and the institutional environment by engaging with multiple institutions within the same domain. One way they do this is by 'layering' the rules and practices of new institutions on top of existing ones (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). For example, in *Chapter Seven*, some young people add religious and civil marriage rules and rituals alongside customary ones. However, actors may instead rearrange or combine institutional principles and practices in new ways. This blending, a phenomenon referred to as '*bricolage*', can lead to institutional hybridisation (Campbell 2010, 98-9). These patterns suggest that actors influence institutional outcomes in consequential, but often path dependent, ways: new institutional arrangements may resemble their predecessors (Campbell 2010, 99) and informal institutions (e.g. power relations) may persist, even if the form of the institution changes.

In highly unequal contexts, it is difficult to predict how subordinate actors will engage with different institutional mechanisms and what effect their actions will have on institutional arrangements (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). In part, Ortner (2006) argues, this is because while these actors operate 'on the margins of power', they resist domination by retaining a commitment 'to sustain their own culturally constituted projects' (147; also Lubkemann 2008, 14). Those who identify with each other may also try to collectively disrupt existing institutional arrangements (Ortner 2006, chap.6; Scott 1985). More commonly though, they engage with multiple institutions, treating them as resources that offer diverse possibilities (Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Hesselbein et al. 2006, 1). We see this dynamic in *Chapter Four* when girls attend church to gain some mobility, literacy, and status (see also Ahearn 2001).

These patterns suggest that actors in highly unequal and uncertain institutional environments mine the possibilities for change that exist in the dynamic interstices of institutional intent and outcome. Further, even if exogenous shocks introduce new institutions or power-holding institutional actors initiate change, new arrangements will not 'stick' unless everyday actors choose to reproduce them.

## **2.2 Young People as Agents of Institutional Reproduction and Change**

Everyday actors cumulatively affect processes of institutional reproduction and change in ways that are socially, economically and politically consequential. This theory hinges on the recognition that institutions and actors are mutually constituting, that institutions are fundamentally concerned with the distribution of power and resources, that compliance is a variable, and that actors are embedded within multiple institutions and therefore have choice (Thelen and Mahoney 2010; Hesselbein et al. 2006; Ortner 2006).

But while this theory captures how actors reproduce and change individual institutions, it does not adequately anticipate or explain the significance of my findings in *Chapters Four to Seven*: namely, that while young Rwandans engage with multiple social institutions at one time, most engage with each one in a very limited way; they reproduce a few rules and practices, but they do not engage fully enough to realise a meaningful reward for their compliance. Further, institutional theory does not study children's actions. Neglecting to do so in countries with youthful populations means that we fail to capture how the demographic majority influences processes of institutional reproduction, including state (re)building. Without this empirical

knowledge, we cannot theorise the relationship between young people and their institutional environment, including conflict, development, and social change. This makes it critical to develop a framework that not only conceptualises how and why young Rwandans experience and interact with institutions as they do, but also how their actions shape the institutional environment.

Because the relationship between institutions and young people is not developed in institutional or child and youth studies, I begin by briefly establishing the nature of this relationship in contexts like Rwanda. Following this, I develop a theoretical framework that seeks to capture and explain the findings in *Chapters Four to Seven*.

### **Institutions and Young People**

Local, national, and global institutions construct the institutions of childhood and marriage (including transitions) in temporally and contextually specific ways (James and Prout 1997; Elder Jr. 1994; Johnson-Hanks 2002; Clark-Kazak 2009); as Johnson-Hanks (2002) explains, ‘Relatively coherent life stages exist when and where *social institutions* construct them’ (italics added, 869). James and Prout (1997) assert that children are active participants in this social process (8).

Until colonialism, it was almost exclusively kin-groups who constructed childhood and marriage in sub-Saharan Africa (Fortes 1969; Goody 1982; Reynolds 1991), but with the transition to a market economy and nation state, there has been a decisive global shift in how childhood and coming of age is constructed and experienced. In this shift, modern institutions have sought to supplant the influence of the kin group (Carsten 2004, 10-18) and construct childhood according to new institutional priorities and

distributional objectives (see Boyden 1997, 202; and discussions in Stephens 1995; McKinnon and Cannell 2013; Hendrick 2005; Heywood 2010). As Waller (2006) explains, in colonial Africa,

Co-opting the young and turning them into productive and responsible citizens alone offered colonialism a future. This required appropriately modern or modernized institutions of socialization – schools, youth organizations, welfare and, if necessary, penal agencies – and also an agreed upon discourse of modernity and maturation (79).

But as Balagopalan (2014) finds in India, colonial states in Africa did not envision equal ‘citizens’; rather, they constructed multiple childhoods and youths based on children’s class/caste, economic status, gender, and geography. These institutional processes have reshaped how children are prepared for adulthood and the adult roles they are equipped to fulfil, but they have done so in different ways for different children.

Through ‘the evolution of an increasingly compulsory relationship between the State, the family and child welfare’ (Hendrick 2005, 33; see also Meyer 1983), international organisations and African states increasingly structure the terms of childhood in line with the UNCRC and ACRWC (Boyden 1997; Hopkins and Sriprakash 2015). But although children’s rights have been institutionalised, the state has not replaced kin as the dominant social welfare provider. Consequently, generations remain bound in long-term relations of interdependence (Kabeer 2000, 465; see also Whitehead, Hashim, and Iversen 2007). This gives the family continued influence over how childhood is locally constructed (ibid., Kabeer), which means that young people’s lives are increasingly contested spaces wherein multiple social institution seek to reproduce their priorities for the future through children’s lives. For children not only represent the future of the

family and nation in Africa (Cheney 2007), but also a very large contemporary work force and consumer market (Cook 2004).

These concerns, and the belief that children are particularly malleable, prompt social institutions to develop specific mechanisms to engage young people in institutional reproduction from an early age (Pierson 2004, 40). The goal of institutional actors is to inculcate a specific view of 'reality' in children (i.e. ideations), legitimate specific strategies (Autesserre 2009; Jackson 2010, 69), and influence how less powerful actors perceive themselves and their options and interests (Pierson 2015). Education in all its forms is the primary vehicle for these efforts (Serpell 1993; Levinson and Holland 1996; Bourdieu 1973; for Rwanda see Williams 2016), but regulative mechanisms, such as age laws and cultural taboos, also play an important role (Mizen 2002).

But in most of Africa, and especially Rwanda, there is an additional dynamic at work, for the natural environment is so demanding and the dependency ratio so high that adults are very dependent on children's labour. Historically, adults have met their dependence on children with gerontocratic power structures that hinge on a settlement – an intergenerational contract - that shores up support for adult control and secures children's compliance in processes of production and domestic reproduction, as Thelen (2010) predicts (54; see also Berry 1985). Ideally, settlements are clear-cut and mutually beneficial. But, Pierson (2015) argues that when power relations are unequal, even consensus is underpinned by 'inequalities of influence' (127): that is, power-holding actors bolster their position and enhance compliance by inculcating their views in the less powerful. This use of cognitive mechanisms is evident in Rwanda, where adults use strong ideations to tie their reciprocal obligations to young people's behaviour: it is not

enough for children to fulfil their roles; they must also be ‘good’ Rwandans (state) and ‘well-educated’ children (kin) to access resources and realise their rights (Pells 2011, 81; Pells et al. 2014). These patterns lend support to Goody’s (1982) observation that ‘the giving of respect [by children] is an essentially political act’ (266; see also Ferguson 1999, 205–6). Thus, adult-child relations are not simply a matter of attachment and descent or mutual reciprocity; they are also political, tactical and, at times, expedient. Whether initiated by the state or kin, settlements are more about the reproduction of power, than reciprocity and mutual benefit.

In contexts of institutional multiplicity, cognitive mechanisms also exert a special influence on children because institutional actors must convince the young majority to reproduce their rule system over alternative ones to maintain legitimacy (Putzel and Di John 2012). To achieve this, they intensively use discourse to represent their institution and settlement as superior to others’ (see, for example, Ferguson 1999, 83; Serpell 1993, 2-18). For example, the Catholic Church and state in Rwanda have used discourse to portray their institutions as superior to each other, and more ‘modern’ and ‘civilised’ than ‘backward’ indigenous institutions (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013; see, for example, Carney 2014). Likewise, actors with traditional authority deride actors representing modern institutions as being ‘without culture’ or money hungry (ibid. Inteko; FG/WS1-3; Ferguson 1999, 83). By influencing actors’ perceptions, expectations, and aspirations, social institutions encourage compliance (Pierson 2015, 125–27; see also Foucault 1982). At the same time, modern institutions redefine pathways to power and status and encourage mimesis and norm change (Serpell 1993, 2-3). In this context, ideations may be competing and contradictory, but they discursively ‘map’ the

institutional environment within which young people live and communicate the 'rules' of each institution's 'game' to young people.

However, in highly unequal institutional environments, such as Rwanda, ideations rarely match material experience (Pierson 2015). Institutional actors may speak in terms of a reciprocal social contract or espouse ideologies of equality and children's rights, but children understand that power-holding actors distribute resources and opportunity based on a combination of subjective factors, from gender and geography to class, ethnic status, and behaviour (Coles 1986, 309; see, for example, Williams 2015; 2016). Institution theory anticipates this disjuncture between institutional intent (expressed and real) and outcomes, and locates change in the intervening space.

### **A Framework for Analysis**

A power-distributional view of institutions and the concept of institutional multiplicity help explain why actors face unique constraints and opportunities in relation to the same institutions. These frameworks also suggest that actors with less power will respond to power asymmetries and inequality by engaging with multiple institutions. But this body of theory leaves many real life questions unanswered, particularly in rapidly changing, uncertain contexts like Rwanda, where power asymmetries exist within institutions and institutional systems at all levels - generational, gender, class, socio-economic, and geopolitical - and where young people, who are not contemplated in institutional theory, are the most numerous actors. This necessitates a framework to theorise how young Rwandans experience and respond to the institutions that shape and constrain their lives, and how they influence processes of institutional reproduction and change as they do.

The young people whose lived experience I seek to explain are not representative of all Rwandans, but their experience and actions fit broader patterns evident in in-depth studies of everyday life by Newbury (1988), Codere (1973) and De Lame (2005), among others. All three generational cohorts grew up in rural central Rwanda or just north. Most have very limited schooling, but a few speak rudimentary French or English. The majority identify as Catholic or Protestant. Five Tutsi adults grew up with fathers who were colonial sub-chiefs and/or church-educated. The rest grew up in subsistence-based households with no meaningful connection to formal power. They survived the 1994 Genocide, but they lack the social capital, education, and English and French language skills that help Rwandan returnees get ahead. For this, Kigali elites (mostly returnees) consider them ‘backward’<sup>75</sup>.

When I refer to ‘young people’ in the following arguments, I am referring to children who demonstrate *ubwenge* – intelligence and the capacity for more complex reasoning. I encountered children as young as 5 or 6 who appeared to have this capacity, but most demonstrated *ubwenge* from age 7 to 10.

In the framework that follows, I build on institutional theory to explain this group’s experiences and actions and the consequences of their actions for processes of institutional reproduction and change.

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<sup>75</sup> Only two core participants are returnees, but they are returnees from Tanzania, a group with little influence.

### ***Theorising Children as Agents of Institutional Reproduction and Change***

Like adults, young people reproduce and change an institution's rules, practices, and processes as they routinely or purposefully engage with an institution's mechanisms of reproduction in new and intended ways within their given constraints. Although adults sometimes initiate this engagement, it is children and youth - not their adult authorities - who engage bodily with these institutions. When they do, they influence whether an institution is reproduced or changed.

When young people live in an environment where one institutional system is dominant or systems have hybridised, they engage with institutions that have compatible rules, norms, and practices, even if institutional goals differ (Goodfellow and Lindemann 2013). But in an environment characterised by institutional multiplicity, institutions not only operate according to competing and often contradictory rules and priorities, but also present constraints and opportunities that align with very different institutional goals. This describes the institutional environment young Rwandans have lived in since the onset of colonialism. Living at the interface of multiple institutional systems with an increasing array of institutions to (potentially) engage with, Rwandan young people commonly operate within multiple rule systems simultaneously (Hesselbein 2006, 1).

To the extent that young people engage with an institution's rules, practices, and processes as intended, they contribute to its reproduction. In so doing, they give that institution a measure of political space and legitimacy within its domain. This necessarily diminishes the authority of competing or co-existent institutions because it makes them less exclusive and dominant. For example, as sons increasingly engaged with state and market institutions in Rwanda and surrounding regions, fathers'

authority and control over their children's labour weakened (Jefremovas 2002). But the reverse is also true: to the extent that young people primarily engage with the kinship-based, informal economy today, the Rwandan state does not have control over the economic domain (Hesselbein et al. 2006). As Putzel and di John (2012) warn, if actors consistently reproduce non-state institutions over state ones, the state's hold on power is fragile. This illustrates the displacing and disempowering effect young people's engagement with a single institution has on another institution within the same domain.

Institutional theory suggests that actors, like young Rwandans, who live in highly unequal, rapidly changing contexts have diverse motivations for engaging with new and multiple institutions (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013) find that vulnerable young people who lack access to legitimate opportunities are more likely to act 'above and beyond what is permitted by the 'rules of the game' (380) to improve their situation (see also Johnson-Hanks 2005; Cooper and Pratten 2014). These opportunities tend to be in the informal or illicit economy (see, for example, GMO 2013; Gerver 2013; Williams, Binagwaho, and Betancourt 2012). Second, young Rwandans may engage with multiple institutions to gain the favour of new authority figures in the hope of accessing new opportunities and improving their life chances (Bushayija 1966, 160-1; De Lame 2005; Ingelaere 2010). Finally, young people may engage with modern institutions for subjective reasons (Williams 2016b): modernity and development discourse tells them they do not have value unless they develop themselves through schooling, conspicuous consumption, and engaging in skilled off-farm labour (see also

Cole 2004). Institutional multiplicity provides young people with opportunities to enhance their status (Campbell 2010, 99, 103; Thelen 2010, 50; Hesselbein et al. 2006).

Be that as it may, institutional multiplicity can also be very costly for young people. There are two reasons for this. First, because social institutions seek to reproduce a specific distribution of power and resources, institutional actors provide opportunities and rewards primarily to children who reproduce institutional rules and practices, and uphold their part of any settlement, *fully* and *as intended*. In a competitive, resource-scarce context, this approach ensures that the institution maintains or expands its political space and legitimacy; it also allows institutional actors to limit their reciprocal obligations to those who reproduce their power and status. For example, as economic insecurity increased in the late 1980s, Andre and Platteau (1998) find that parents in Western Rwanda interpreted customary marriage rules more strictly to limit their resource obligations to sons. The consequence of this approach is that young people must invest considerable energy and resources fully complying with a given institution/rule system to access resources and opportunity. Structural inequality makes this endeavour more difficult because power-dominant actors tend to structure the rules of the game in favour of those who already have power and resources: for example, the state tells Rwandan young people they must be 'good' Rwandans – meaning they must complete secondary school, build homes in formal settlements, marry formally, and conduct registered entrepreneurial ventures – if they want to realise Vision 2020 opportunities (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014). Yet only the upper quartile can afford these investments. Consequently, many expend significant resources in pursuit of new opportunities, but few realise a reward commensurate to their efforts.

Second, engaging with social institutions beyond kin is costly because reproducing modern social institutions requires cash: citizens must pay taxes (or fines for non-compliance), students must pay school expenses, church members pay for a wedding and a tithe, and conspicuous consumption to gain favour and status requires an investment in consumer goods. To meet these costs in a predominantly subsistence-based economy, young people and their families face the pressure to commodify everything.

Because *fully* engaging and complying with multiple institutions is time consuming and costly, only a wealthy elite young minority, or those with influential connections, have the option to fully reproduce multiple sets of institutional rules and practices. This situation effectively concentrates the best opportunities, resources, and long-term influence in the hands of those who already have privilege and proximity to power. The remaining majority, who are economically constrained and politically unconnected, are quite limited in their ability to engage with and reproduce multiple social institutions and reproduce them as intended. Further, attempting to do so impinges upon children's ability to fulfil their labour and filial obligations to kin. Thus, while engaging with multiple social institutions can give young people a measure of status and opportunity, it also threatens to make them poorer unless they can fully satisfy the expectations of a single institution (e.g. state, kinship, or client obligations) and be rewarded for it. If they must choose, traditional institutions require little or no cash and many young people have existing reciprocal relationships that they can call on. This makes them far more likely to invest in kinship and patron-client relationships and institutions than in state and market institutions.

These patterns of action have a consequential effect on the broader institutional environment. As most of Rwanda's young majority *partially* reproduces the rules, norms, and practices of multiple, competing institutions, they give each social institution and institutional system some legitimacy and political space. At the same time, through their partial engagement and their propensity to reinterpret and rewrite rules and practices they cannot or will not reproduce, young people prevent any one institution or institutional system from becoming exclusive or hegemonic within a given domain. Children are rearranging and rewriting the 'rules' of the institutional 'game'. This effectively prevents any one set of institutional rules and practices from becoming dominant, for no social institution is capable of fully reproducing its rules and resources as intended. In this way, young people perpetuate a state of institutional multiplicity wherein multiple institutions and institutional systems co-exist and compete. Within this environment, institutions may continue to distribute power and resources unequally and the modern institutional system may appear to be dominant, especially among wealthier actors who can fully reproduce institutional rules and practices. But the modern institutional system cannot be the dominant operative system at the grassroots level where institutional multiplicity reigns. This impedes the state and market system's hegemonic ambitions and a so-called transformation to 'modernity'.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter with the intention of developing a theoretical framework capable of explaining two related phenomena: first, how and why Rwandan children have experienced childhood and coming of age differently over time; and second, how their 'everyday' actions influence the reproduction of the institutions that shape their lives

and society. Child and youth studies and institutional theory provide key insights into both questions. Institutional (and social) theory allows us to conceptualise institutions as formal and informal rules, norms, and practices that are humanly constructed by actors who have power-distributional goals. This view reminds us that institutions are the legacy of concrete historical processes and that they are fraught with power and distributional implications. These reproductive goals explain why, in *Chapters Four to Seven*, power-holding institutional actors use their authority to constrain and reward children based on their identity and compliance with institutional rules, norms, and practices.

But institutional theory also explains that actors influence how institutions are constructed, reproduced, and changed, often through seemingly insignificant interactions with an institution's reproductive mechanisms. In this dynamic interplay, formal power is not a prerequisite to being an agent of change; acting in consequential ways – that is, changing institutional rules, norms, and practices – is. These insights open the way to develop a framework for examining whether children's actions are consequential to institutional processes.

The child and youth literature I examined in the *Introduction* to this thesis provides a starting point for this framework by demonstrating that childhood and coming of age should be the focal period in the life course for studies of institutional reproduction and change. This work also establishes that children have agency and that they are political, economic, and social actors. Building on this knowledge, this chapter argues against an adult-child dichotomy in political theory by showing that all actors - regardless of age - are uniquely 'bounded' in their capacity to engage with and influence institutions. Thus,

while we must assess how age structures and developmental capacity constrain children's capacity to act, we must also recognise that broader forces, such as gender, education, and class, constrain and enable adults and children alike. Finally, because collective/group action counts as agency and compliance is a variable, we must examine all forms of action young people take – intentional and unintentional, compliant and non-compliant, individual and collective - to learn whether they are consequential to processes of institutional reproduction and change.

Building on these insights, I developed a theoretical framework to explain the findings in *Chapters Four to Seven*. Three concepts within this framework are particularly important to the analysis. First, the notion of *institutional multiplicity* allows us to conceptualise the institutional environment young Rwandans live in. It provides an explanation for why young people live at the interface of multiple and often competing rule systems, and why the opportunities available in such a context may exacerbate risk and deepen poverty. Further, characterising Rwanda's institutional environment as one of institutional multiplicity alerts us to the possibility that young people's everyday actions are particularly consequential in this context given that an institution cannot be dominant within its domain unless actors engage with its reproductive mechanisms over others', and as intended.

Second, this framework emphasises the importance of identifying *institutional mechanisms* and tracing how children engage with them. Focusing on mechanisms of reproduction and change makes the practice of power visible by revealing how power-holding institutional actors influence children's experiences and actions and how young people respond. This allows us to trace whether children influence processes of

institutional reproduction and change in consequential ways. In Rwanda's highly unequal, rule-bound context, we can also examine how settlements are operating to discern the state of power relations, from the household to the nation state: if settlements are intact, children are more likely to reproduce existing institutions; if they are weakening, young people are likely to look elsewhere for opportunities to improve their social position (unless power-holding actors can find alternate mechanisms to keep young people engaged). This suggests that vulnerable children are more likely to contribute to change than reproduction.

Finally, this framework pays close attention to young people's participation in processes of *institutional reproduction and change*. It treats both as consequential, for if children continue to reproduce unequal social relations, for example, or fail to reproduce interdependent relations, they profoundly influence individual lived experience and the structure of society.

Through the empirical analysis in *Chapters Four to Seven*, I argue that institutions do not simply shape and change childhood and children's transitions to social adulthood. Rather, as young people engage with institutional mechanisms in intended and unintended ways, they influence how childhood and marriage - and the social institutions that shape them - are reproduced and changed over time. Their actions, particularly in the reproductively-intense school and transition years, are cumulatively consequential. However, when power-holding institutional actors effectively exclude most of Rwanda's young majority from opportunities for social mobility or withhold resources from the young, they obstruct young people's ability to reproduce institutions as intended. Incapable of compliance, young people are more likely to (re)produce

change. As they do, power-holding actors find it increasingly difficult to deliver their side of any settlement.



## Chapter 3 - Researching Social Change in and Through Children's Lives

### Introduction

When I set out to research young people and social change, I did not expect to conduct a study of changing marriage patterns in central Rwanda. Had I studied cultural anthropology or read Evans-Pritchard's *Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer* or Mair's *African Marriage and Social Change*, I would have understood the relationship between childhood and marriage and social reproduction and change in kinship-based cultures. As it was, the topic initially struck me - a Commerce major with an MA in conflict and governance - as archaic, parochial. Thus, I was surprised to find that the subject of changing marriage patterns (and by extension, childhood) resonated with every Rwandan informant I spoke to. Further, individuals were eager to share their views and experiences. In a politically sensitive, post-conflict environment, I had discovered a gateway into the complex interior world of my respondents.

In this chapter, I discuss how I approached and conducted this qualitative study. I begin by explaining the methodological approach that underpins my research design. Following this, I discuss the methods I used to gain access and co-produce data at each study site, ethical issues specific to this project, and how I approached the process of selecting and interpreting data for this thesis. For each topic, I explain the rationale behind my decisions and analyse the extent to which these decisions contributed to positive research outcomes. Throughout the chapter, I critically reflect on how my identity as a white, foreign researcher, as well as a wife and mother with family on-site, impacted the research process and the production of knowledge. My intent is that this

discussion will help the reader judge the quality of the knowledge produced, while also providing valuable insights into doing research in Rwanda with families, and with one's own family.

### **3.1 A New Approach to Child-Centred Research**

The historical institutional and ethnographic approach that informs this child-centred study addresses the dominant concerns being expressed in contemporary child and youth research, namely, that we locate children's lived experience and actions within their broader historical, social, cultural and material context (Boyden and Ennew 1997, 11; Ansell 2014; Hart 2008; Ofosu-Kusi and Abebe 2016). To do so demands that we study young people, and continuity and change, not through brief snapshots of individual experience, but over time (Twum-Danso Imoh 2016), within the context of generational relationships (Huijsmans 2016), and at the level of the individual, group, community, and nation (Boyden and Ennew 1997, 11). But what does a historical institutional and ethnographic approach entail?

Historical institutionalists are concerned with asking big questions - as I do here - but they do so in a way that recognises that causal variables of interest are often intertwined and strongly influenced by the overarching context within which they operate (e.g. time period, region, culture, regime) (Pierson and Skocpol 2002). Pierson and Skocpal (2002) explain that this 'place[s] bounds around the theorizing being done in any given study.' (15) In metaphorical terms, institutionalists are interested in 'the forest *and* the trees' and how they are mutually constituting, but they limit their theorising to the life span of a specific 'forest'. They also stress the need to identify mechanisms, rather than simple association, in causal arguments (ibid.). To this end, they tend to employ

methodological approaches such as comparative-historical analysis, which assumes that societies can be classified into comparable cases or categories (see Thelen and Mahoney 2015), or process tracing, which carefully analyses path dependence and critical junctures (see Streeck 2015; Pierson and Skocpol 2002).

As I designed this study, I sought to capture the complexity and specificity this approach offers by using methods capable of capturing change over time. However, I did not have the time needed to conduct an in-depth comparative study. Nor was there adequate secondary data to allow me to know what I should compare or what processes I should trace. Therefore, I approached this study as an exploratory one: I designed the research with the goal of achieving a deep understanding of the overarching context within which participants have lived and how they interact with the institutions that inform their lives. I expected that this approach would allow me to trace how institutions shape childhood and children's transitions to adulthood over time, and enable me to identify the mechanisms through which young people influence processes of institutional reproduction. With these insights, I could advance theory.

In Rwanda's conflict-affected society, where communal trust is low and state control is high (Ingelaere 2010), interpretive ethnography provides the flexibility and sustained social contact necessary to build social trust and achieve a deep understanding of participants' lives, past and present, including the institutional environment within which they live; indeed, after doing extended research in Rwanda, Burnet (2012) finds that interpretive ethnography is the only approach capable of eliciting reliable qualitative data (8). Ethnography also allows the researcher to use multiple methods to

elicit different types of information from diverse informants, and adjust these methods as learning occurs (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007a).

One critique levied at ethnography is that the data collected is just 'stories'. This is a common concern in Rwanda, where the veracity of the narratives elicited through qualitative research is frequently called into question (Fujii 2010; Ingelaere 2010; De Lame 2005, 6-7; Vansina 2004, 4). This is also the case in oral cultures, like Rwanda's, where narratives tend to be full of rumour, gossip and secrets (White 2000, chap. 2). However, all research data - quantitative and qualitative - is constructed by both the researcher and the researched<sup>76</sup> (Cerwonka and Malkki 2014, 164-77; White 2000, 46). The strength of ethnography is that it allows the researcher to use the insights gained through extended contact to interpret the meaning of events and stories. As with every methodological approach, one research 'story' and work does not stand on its own; rather, it builds on previous work, raises new questions, tests previous arguments, and corrects earlier limitations (Pierson and Skocpol 2002).

To study continuity and social change, a historical approach is a necessary complement to ethnography. There are two reasons for this. First, ethnography does not allow us to observe life in the past, so we cannot interpret oral history testimonies with the aid of observations. Historical research methods provide the next best option: the ability to compare participants' self-reporting with the historical record and locate participants - and their memories - within it. Multigenerational family studies provided an additional

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<sup>76</sup> I was reminded of this when a 2014 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) survey in Rwagati failed to count even one out-of-school child. Numbers can lie. Importantly, my ethnographic research informed me the surveys were inaccurate and ethnography helped me understand how and why and by whom the data was forged.

window into the past because they allowed me to compare and contrast stories from the same generation, within and between families. This gave me a more nuanced and complete picture of each era, and in some cases, produced new historical data.

Second, a historical approach is essential for studying institutional reproduction and change because most change is only evident over the *longue durée* (Thelen and Mahoney 2010). However, the methods we use ‘contribute towards and disrupt our understandings of the interplay of past, present and future’ (McLeod and Thomson 2009, 6); they also influence how much continuity or change we find (Campbell 2010, 108). The methodological challenge, then, is to locate the specific institutional mechanisms actors engage with so that we do not ‘laps[e] into functionalist tautology’, working backwards from the outcome to the intent or cause (ibid., 88). In the study of social change, Mandelbaum (1982) argues that life histories offer potential advantages over other methods

[...] as clues to implicit themes, as documentation on roles, as demonstration of socialisation and enculturation [...], as a view of the ‘emotional structure’ of a way of life, as a means towards understanding variations within a society, and also of seeing the ‘common humanity’ among peoples. (147)

However, because memory is actively constructed in locally and temporally specific ways, researchers must use a combination of methods that are capable of holding oppositional memories in tension (Radstone 2000, 13; Kuhn 2000).

In the section that follows, I detail the methods I used to research continuity and change in children’s lived experience and coming of age across three generations.

### **3.2 Methods: Research with Families, Across Generations**

The objective of this doctoral project is to learn whether young Rwandans influence processes of institutional reproduction and change in consequential ways over time. But the goal of the research design, as I explained at the outset of *Chapter Two*, was to provide a deep, historicised understanding of the relationship between the institutions of marriage and childhood in Rwanda, and to provide evidence of how and why these have been changing. To this end, I chose methods that would help answer two questions:

1. How and why have children's transitions to social adulthood (i.e. marriage patterns) been changing in Rwanda since the early 20th century?
2. What does this reveal about how young people influence processes of institutional reproduction and change over time?

As I asked these questions, my priority was to understand how participants understood and experienced childhood and adulthood, and how transitions in generational status have occurred in their experience and society more generally. I also sought to identify how young people were engaging with the institutional mechanisms that shaped their lives and society. These findings would allow me to explain continuity and change in young people's lived experience and trace how they influence childhood, marriage, and broader patterns of institutional reproduction.

These questions provided a wonderful excuse to attend weddings and *gusabas* (bridewealth ceremony), but throughout the design and implementation of this project I faced two unique and significant challenges. First, to achieve ethnographic and historical depth, my research had to engage a wide range of participants - from children to elders, rich and poor, male and female, educated and uneducated, rural and urban.

Further, to trace continuity and change as reliably as possible, I needed a core of participants who were meaningfully related by family descent (i.e. kin who shared everyday life). As I will explain, I met this challenge by building my study around five purposively selected multigenerational family studies. Second, with my husband and three school-aged children accompanying me for fieldwork, I had to put bounds on the research design that made my research activities feasible for my family<sup>77</sup>, while also putting boundaries on my family's activities to manage their potential effect on the research data<sup>78</sup>. Within these boundaries, I prioritised research methods that would enable me to gain a deep understanding of how and why childhood and marriage have been changing in Rwanda.

With a very set timeframe for fieldwork (August 2012 to June 2013), I conceptualised this research project in three phases: early, mid, and late (see *Table 3.2*). In each phase, I chose methods that would build on my existing knowledge level and the level of trust I had built with participants. I planned most of the methods in advance, but I drew on additional methods as the needs of the project unfolded. This section explains this process in detail.

## **Gaining Access and Consent, Ethically**

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<sup>77</sup> For example, I planned fieldwork to coincide with the children's school year, based the family in Kigali, chose a rural location within an hour's drive of Kigali, and organised my research activities so I was with my family four days per week.

<sup>78</sup> To this end, my family joined us in Rwagati one day per week, but I did not allow them to participate in planned research activities. The influence of one's family on data production is under-researched and rarely discussed (Flinn 1998), but there is strong consensus that family presence influences data production, methods, and theorising in significant ways (see Flinn et al. 1998; Cassell 1987; Mose Brown and Masi de Casanova 2009).

When I obtained university ethics clearance for fieldwork in mid-2012, the Government of Rwanda was tightening up its own research permit process: I now needed approval from the Rwanda National Ethics Committee (RNEC) in addition to a permit. I also needed a Rwandan research partner organisation with a research mandate<sup>79</sup> (see Jessee 2012). I began the permit process when I arrived in August 2012. I found the process efficient, but I did not obtain my research permit and visa until November. However, this delay afforded me valuable opportunities: in Rwanda for the first time, I had time to familiarise myself with Rwanda, consult with key informants, and redraft my research protocol for RNEC with their input. Through this process, I became confident that my research was doable and that I was asking research questions that were relevant to Rwandans. This institutional process also afforded me the time to visit and consider multiple research locations. In this strong-state context of high surveillance, I was fortunate to find urban and rural sites that met all my desired criteria<sup>80</sup>, which allowed me to conduct research freely.

But gaining access to a research site is as much or more about gaining favour as it is about acquiring an official permit. As I chose rural and urban research locations, I knew the local gatekeepers would be critical: RNEC required local government leaders to provide me with permission to research at the sector and village level, but I would also depend on informal gatekeepers, such as the village chief and community leaders, to open doors to potential research opportunities. I knew that these (in)formal

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<sup>79</sup> For official research purposes, my partner was the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-Rwanda (IPAR-Rwanda).

<sup>80</sup> I needed to be within an hour of Kigali, but I wanted to be beyond the 'NGO zone' that rings Kigali so that my primary study would be more representative of rural Rwanda. I also wanted to be free of gatekeepers who would make demands on my time and restrict my activities.

gatekeepers would also determine how much I - and my participants - were monitored and controlled during fieldwork and after. After identifying significant drawbacks to a number of potential research sites, I was grateful to have the Director of Empower, a Rwandan women's organisation my husband and I volunteered for in Kigali, invite me to do research with her 2012 cohort. She also suggested Inkombe sector as a rural research site. In November, she facilitated my introduction to sector leaders there.

I enjoyed a high level of research freedom in both Kigali and Inkombe<sup>73</sup>, which was directly influenced by my family's presence in both communities<sup>74</sup>. In Inkombe, the Executive Secretary granted my research clearance largely because he was excited to have my family come stay: we were the first *muzungu* (whites) to stay in the sector and he could hold us up as model citizens to the locals he was charged with 'sensitising'. We had a very good working relationship: he helped me find a home to rent, introduced us at the sector General Assembly, granted me interviews, and provided sector-level population data on request.

My immediate gatekeeper and neighbour was the chief of my village and a *rescapé* we called 'Chief' (FS4/G2). The relationship between my family (including Solange, my RA) and his was immediately one of friendship rooted more in trust and amity than work. When the Chief came to visit Solange and I early in our stay, he explained:

I came to *kubataramira* [customary evening visit] because [...] I'm Rwandese, I'm old, so that's why I will do that for her. If Kirsten wants, I will walk her around Lake Muhazi. I will try to find time. When her parents come at Christmas, we will share

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<sup>81</sup> This is often not the case (see Begley 2013; Ingelaere 2010; Fujii 2010).

<sup>82</sup> See discussions of potential benefits of research with one's family in Cassell (1987) and researching families as a mother in Mose Brown and Masi de Casanova (2009).

banana beer. I will come with my wife and we will *gusabana* [party, enjoy each other].  
*We will share one straw.*<sup>75</sup> (CONV/Chief/12-14-2012)

The Chief honoured his commitments. This relationship helped me build trust with my neighbours, who were all related to the Chief. At the same time, residents perceived him to be fair so our friendship did not appear to influence my interactions with them.

### Timing

From November 2012 to May 2013, I lived in Rwagati with Solange four days per week and in Kigali with my family three days per week. This schedule provided adequate relational continuity in my rural ethnographic study, but it also afforded me the opportunity to do archival research and develop a small urban study through Empower in Kigali<sup>76</sup>.

My family joined us in the village one day per week. In Rwanda's kinship-based society, their presence was important because it allowed my research community to observe me 'being family' just as I was observing them (Flinn 1998). Further, as my family engaged with neighbours in meaningful ways – for example, by fixing a grandmother's door (my husband) or playing football with neighbour boys (my son), their presence helped open the doors to neighbours' hearts and homes and establish my identity as a wife, mother, and female researcher. However, whenever the family was in Rwagati we were the local

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<sup>83</sup> To drink beer; 'sharing the [same] straw' is a symbol of unity.

<sup>84</sup> I primarily used the urban study to gauge whether there are significant differences between rural and urban experiences and views on marriage.

entertainment; this made it difficult to observe 'everyday' life, so I limited their time in the village. When they were there, I did not do interviews or focus groups.

After leaving in 2013, I had Solange make four follow up visits to Rwagati to gather specific details I was missing and to maintain relationship with the study families. In early 2014, I returned to do three weeks of follow up research. This second trip provided extremely valuable corrective data, as I explain in *Chapter 7.2*, and allowed me to renew my relationships with participants. Since 2014, Solange has hosted, visited, and stayed in touch with family study members at our initiative and theirs. We have also had text, email, and phone contact with some core participants. These connections have helped me retain some relationship with family study members and follow their life trajectories to the present.

### **Managing Expectations: Informed Consent and Reciprocity**

Informing potential research participants about the nature of the research project and their role in the research is an ongoing process, particularly in longer ethnographic projects (Hoong Sin 2005). For me, this process was as much about informing and obtaining consent in an ethical way as it was about managing expectations over time. For example, it was important for the Executive Secretary of the sector to introduce me publicly so that residents knew why I was there and that I had permission to conduct research in their community. At the same time, I had to make it clear that I was an independent researcher, that I would not share participants' identity with authorities, and what participation in my project entailed. I achieved these objectives in several ways.

Living along the main dirt road, my family attracted droves of curious onlookers. I used this attention as an opportunity to hand out information sheets in Kinyarwanda and English that explained my research project and provided contact information. These helped quell rumours related to why we were there, while also managing expectations.

I sought informed consent in different ways depending on the research activity, context, and the age of participants. I obtained oral informed consent with every participant, usually multiple times. Specifically, Solange explained what participants were consenting to (e.g. participation without pay, audio recording, use of data), the amount of time an activity would take, and that they could opt-out at any time. She also explained how I would use the information they shared and that I would anonymise all data.

Further, except for adults in the family studies (see below), I also obtained written informed consent the first time a person age 21 or over participated in a group research activity. Participants under age 21 received an ‘assent’ to participate form, as stipulated by RNEC. In addition, before working with me, a young person had to take a project information sheet and informed consent form home and bring it back signed by their legal guardian<sup>85</sup>. Individuals appeared to expect and be comfortable filling out these forms.

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<sup>85</sup> My concern related to caregiver consent was validated when I had a chance meeting with one mother whose son, age 19, was a regular research participant. Her son brought the forms home and read them to her. The forms reassured her that he would be contributing to something real and worthwhile. Had I not sent the forms home, many parents would not have given permission to participate, or they would have resented their children’s time away, or worried about what they were involved in.

But consent - oral or written - is relational and dynamic (Hoong Sin 2005). Written consent may express understanding and assent at one point in time, but consent to participate over a longer term requires an ongoing effort by the researcher to build and maintain trust, and sensitively manage respondents' expectations and willingness to participate (ibid.). Based on this relational interpretation of consent, I chose not to request written consent from adult family study participants. In part, this was because it did not feel culturally appropriate to ask elders to sign a form. In some cases, doing so would expose their illiteracy and cause them to lose face. But more to the point, their consent was contingent on getting a sense of who I was as a person, what my project was for, what I wanted to learn from them, and how I would use their stories<sup>78</sup>. Thus, as I increasingly enjoyed the trust and confidence of participants, informed consent meant that I often had to remind them that I was there as a researcher. This did not stop some from sharing emotionally sensitive stories with me. Indeed, their relief at having someone listen to their stories was often palpable. In these situations, I took consent to mean that they trust me to weigh the risks to them as I decide what to include or not include in this thesis and publications. These dynamics made informed consent an ongoing and complicated process that I adjusted as I came to understand the culture, post-conflict context, and individual lives better. I have been very careful not to abuse participants' trust; when in doubt, I have erred on the side of caution.

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<sup>86</sup> For example, one grandmother was concerned about how I would use the audio recordings of her stories. She was disturbed to hear audio stories of deceased Rwandans on a radio show and she did not want me to use her recording in that way after her death. However, she was eager to contribute her stories to my 'book' (thesis) and to help me pass my 'examination' (viva).

Particularly in conflict-affected and impoverished contexts, individual motives to consent to research are complex and must be understood (Boyden 2000; 2004, 242). As white foreigners, my family and I were perceived to be wealthy and influential. Young people were eager to be associated with us because they perceived that assisting me would create some possible present or future benefit for them, but also because we were a welcome diversion from work. Many also welcomed my presence because I listened: participants could share stories of trouble and grief that they were unable to share with others, or publicly<sup>87</sup>. Offering potential opportunities on the one hand, and confidentiality on the other, I was perceived as both patron and priest.

But power goes both ways. Living in an unfamiliar environment, I was acutely aware that I was completely dependent on my Rwandan assistants, hosts, and participants. Without their trust and willingness to engage with me and assist my learning, I had nothing. Thus, I was determined to not only ‘do no harm’, as ethics protocols demand,<sup>88</sup> but ensure that research was a positive experience for participants: I recognised that by accepting individual’s consent to participate, *I was consenting* to participants’ expectation that their involvement would benefit them in some tangible way. These expectations had to be managed, but also honoured (Morrow 2009, 13-4). After all, Rwandans were giving their time to me, a person with more material wealth who would realise future benefit from their contribution.

In Rwanda’s gift-giving culture, I managed these expectations by being generous in Rwandan terms: I did not respond to requests for money, but I kept a stock of snacks to

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<sup>87</sup> Due to the political nature of Genocide narratives.

<sup>88</sup> I consulted ESRC (2010) ASA of the UK and Commonwealth (2012), and Morrow (2009).

share with visitors. We helped neighbours with lifts to and from Kigali when a serious need arose. When neighbours asked for medical help, I provided primary health care if I could. They often reciprocated with gifts of food. At the same time, I made it clear that participants' involvement would not lead to a job or material gain, and that I could not intervene to solve their problems or fix their situation. In a context of extreme poverty, I tried hard to be a good and generous neighbour.

RNEC clearly stated that because research is a public good, I was not to financially compensate research participants unless the research activity exceeded half a day<sup>89</sup>. Respecting RNEC's intent, I looked for meaningful ways to 'give back' during research activities, and I always provided refreshments and a well-organised and engaging experience. I took small gifts of rice, sugar or soap to home visits. Sometimes I gave young people pens and notebooks, which were highly coveted for school. To thank participants in the journal project, I provided smart journals and gave them letters of participation. Photos are scarce and valued, so I often took pictures and gave prints as gifts.

When I asked families to be part of my family study, I was asking for a significant time commitment. To thank them, I promised in advance to give each member a printed copy of his/her life history in Kinyarwanda and English. Family members were visibly moved when I followed through on this commitment (I added family photos)<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> On the rare occasion I needed this much of their time, I told participants in advance that I would compensate them RWF 2000 each.

<sup>90</sup> Before leaving, I shared my early research findings with organisations in Kigali that work with young people.

Overall, Solange and I developed a high level of respect and trust with neighbours and participants in Inkombe. This level of relationship was possible because we found meaningful ways to give and receive. This mutual reciprocity helped to minimise power differentials and enhance the quality of the data we co-produced. But despite our care, intense poverty and recent conflict can make a minefield of consent and disclosure, reciprocity and generosity, as Boyden (2004, 242) warns. I experienced this when one extended family member became upset that I was aware of their family conflict, and when a father was angered that I gave a household item to his daughter rather than to him. In contexts like this, we must be particularly wise about how we manage research relationships so that we do not divide neighbours and families. At the same time, Solange reminded me that this conflict pre-existed our stay, and it will remain after we leave.

### **Scope and Sample**

This is a predominantly rural, qualitative study comprised of child-centred ethnographic and historical methods capable of in-depth historical inquiry. At the core of the study are five multigenerational family studies (see *Table 3.1, Appendices 5, 6*) that I complemented with a rural ethnography of Rwagati village<sup>91</sup>, a small urban study in Kigali, and national-level qualitative research. Overall, the study included over 100 unique young people and 70 adults<sup>92</sup>. Of these, 40 were participants in the family studies and 40 lived in Kigali. Family study participants ranged in age from 15 to 90, but I observed family members were newborn and up. In the broader study, I actively

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<sup>91</sup> The rural study was focused in Rwagati, but it spanned Inkombe sector because family members and social networks were spread out across the ridge.

<sup>92</sup> Most participated in two or more research activities.

engaged participants from age 12 to over 100. In addition, I conducted 58 key informant interviews with 51 individuals and two groups in Inkombe, Kigali, and Butare (see *Table 3.2* and details below).

Most participants were born and raised in central Rwanda. Only two family study members were returnees, but they were originally from Inkombe sector. The sample was not pro-poor, but because participants were rural residents or urban poor with limited schooling, they would be regarded as ‘backward’ by Kigali elites.

While child and youth scholars increasingly call for ‘generational’ studies, there are few models for how to do multigenerational family studies of childhood and transitions across generations<sup>93</sup>. Thus, with intuition as my primary guide, I purposively selected families to capture the experience of everyday Rwandans from diverse backgrounds. Solange and I did so by walking the hill from top (wealthier) to bottom (poorer) in Rwagati, stopping to visit with the people we met. Before inviting a family to participate, I checked their socio-economic (*ubudehe*<sup>94</sup>) category in sector documents to ensure we were selecting families from different strata. I began with one family study and did not add another until the former study was progressing well. In the time I had, I was able to achieve ethnographic depth in five family studies – four in Rwagati and one in Kigali. Together, the rural families reflect the composition of the local community quite well.

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<sup>93</sup> Two studies take a similar approach to this one: Ben White (2012b) studies twenty rural Javanese families in 1972-73 and follows up 27 years later with children from the original cohort. In comparison, Brannen (2004) studies childhood as it was experienced and remembered ‘by three cohorts of women who were born in three distinctive historical periods’ within twelve kin groups in England (410). I was not aware of these studies when I began.

<sup>94</sup> Official socio-economic categories assigned to households based on their assets.

Within each family study, I also purposively selected participants to ensure that we achieved gender balance in each generation. Within the 'children's generation', I selected children who remembered childhood prior to 1994 and those born since. However, during fieldwork I avoided categorising family members into birth cohorts because the relevance of 'generation' or 'birth cohort' to social patterns was an open question: I did not know the extent to which family of origin or historical context influenced a young person's experience, identity and/or actions, or how one's position in the life course influenced how one responded to, or was affected by, major events. It was only when I analysed my data after fieldwork that it became evident that making generational cohorts a focus of study would allow me to examine the impact of events on intergenerational processes within and beyond the family, and also examine the transmission of social change (Kertzer 1983; Elder Jr. 1978, S31).

### Table 3.1: Core Multigenerational Family Study Participants

The text / table originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of confidential or sensitive content.

For all other research activities, I primarily recruited participants through snowball sampling with a target demographic. We never asked anyone's ethnicity, but I actively sought out participants from the groups I needed to hear from. The overall sample closely resembled the ethnic and socio-economic composition of the surrounding community, but the adult sample was biased in favour of women and the youth sample was biased somewhat in favour of students. I have tried to compensate for these biases by paying close attention to the views of underrepresented groups.

### **Mixed Methods for Multigenerational Research**

From the beginning, I was aware that this study was a complex undertaking due to its historical and demographic scope. I managed to keep the research design fairly simple by staying very focused on changing marriage patterns and by thinking carefully about what methods would work best in each type of study – rural, urban, and family - and with different participants. For conceptual clarity, I lay these out in *Table 3.2*.

Often, the methods I used for one purpose overlapped with another. For example, family studies contributed to the rural ethnography. Likewise, when family members participated in research related to the community ethnography, the family studies were enhanced. But methods that were appropriate for one group were often not appropriate or ideal for another. Thus, as *Table 3.2* demonstrates, I used a combination of methods that allowed me to engage diverse participants and groups in ways that they found comfortable, engaging, and meaningful.

**Table 3.2: Methods for Researching Children’s Lives Across Generations** <sup>95</sup>

Methods	Research Phase	Total	Number Participants	Study Type			Methods for	
				Family studies (5)	Rural study	Urban study	Young people	Adults
Participant observation	throughout			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Key informant interviews	throughout	55	42		✓	✓		✓
English discussion groups	early-mid	4	10		✓		Age 12-21	
Youth research workshops:	early-mid	3	50+ unique		✓		Age 12-25	
Life maps			30		✓		✓	
Mock radio talk show		3	50+ unique		✓		✓	
Personal information survey	early-mid		78		46	32	46	32
Journal project ( <i>Appendix 3</i> )	mid-late		23	6	17		✓	
Life story interviews	late	33	35	✓	29	4	13	20
Focus group discussions	mid-late	15	~85 unique	✓	9	6	6	9
Caregiver interviews	late	5	5	5	4	1	✓	
Children's time use charts and journals	late		19	4	16	3	Age 9-15	
Marriage partner questionnaire	late		30		✓		✓	
Genograms ( <i>Appendix 6</i> )	late	5		5	4	1		✓
Archival research	late				✓	✓	✓	✓
Demographic research:								
Sector government data	late			✓	✓		✓	✓
Village-level government data	late			✓	✓		✓	✓
Empower intake data	late				✓	✓		✓

*Table 3.2* also shows the methods I used at different stages of the research. For example, early on I used methods such as the youth research workshops (described below) to explore ideas, test methods, and learn the culture. I did not attempt life history interviews, which required trust and a deeper cultural understanding, until later in the research. I evaluated data as we gathered it and paid close attention to how household,

<sup>95</sup> Note referenced *Appendices*. Research phases: ‘Early’ was August–November 2012; ‘Mid’ was November–March; ‘Late’ was March–May 2013 and 2014.

local, national, and global factors intersected with personal factors such as class, gender, and identity in the lives of participants. To help with this analysis, I had participants fill out a short Personal Information questionnaire when they filled out Consent/Assent forms. This provided helpful background and demographic data<sup>96</sup>.

This multi-method approach enabled me to historicise coming of age, while also locating individuals' experiences and actions in relation to their immediate and generational context. In the remainder of this section, I explain the main methods I used, my rationale for each method, and what I learned from the process.

### ***Participant Observation***

Participant observation underpins ethnographic enquiry because it provides a way for the researcher to learn about participants' lives and culture by engaging in and observing everyday life; with this experiential knowledge, the researcher is better equipped to locate and interpret data from various forms of self-reporting within this landscape. But as Firth (1989) argues, 'the position of an ethnographer is not simply that of a recorder of the life of a society, but is also that of someone who both affects that life and is affected by it' (xxviii). Living in Rwagati surrounded by destitute genocide-affected families, I was immediately forced to decide whether I would try to maintain a detached 'professional distance' as a stranger/observer or engage with 'the observed' as a fellow human being. I chose the latter and did my best to manage expectations, as noted above. However, I quickly realised that 'the observer cannot remain emotionally untouched' (Schwartz and Schwartz 1955, 347). Seeing and listening to families'

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<sup>96</sup> Questions related to birth date/place, family composition, education level, caregiver education and occupation, and marital and parental status.

struggles on the edge of survival, empathising with their physical and emotional pain, and bearing their dark humour was physically exhausting. Hedged in by Tutsi Genocide narratives on one side and Hutu accounts of imprisonment and massacres on the other, and moving between Kigali's urban elites and Inkombe's rural peasants each week, 'bias' became my constant companion. I negotiated with it daily, held it at arm's length as long as possible, and waited to examine it once I could leave Rwanda, gain emotional distance, and I read through my data. This approach allowed me to focus on building relationships with Rwandans from diverse backgrounds so that I could learn from their experience. But participating in everyday life in two disparate worlds each week was jarring - akin to repeat culture shock. This discomfort highlighted the disjuncture between what Ingelaere (2010) calls the 'imagined' and 'imaginary' Rwanda presented in ideations and experienced by Kigali elites, and the 'real' Rwanda experienced by the rest. Living in both helped me understand everyday life in these worlds, but also how each one views the other.

Three days per week (Wednesday to Friday) I lived in the 'imagined' and 'imaginary' Rwanda: orderly, immaculate Kigali. I participated in elite urban life through my children's school attendance, running a household, building friendships, and traveling and meeting people for research. As I watched poor neighbourhoods bulldozed and wealthier ones built seemingly overnight, I became acutely aware of the speed of change in Rwanda. I also became aware of urban residents' profound unfamiliarity with rural Rwanda, their contempt for 'backwards' rural Rwandans, and their disdainful treatment of the poor.

On Thursdays, I spent time with women at Empower. I built familiarity with them by helping with their vocational training, participating in their group wedding, and visiting women in their homes. This experience, combined with focus groups and a family study, exposed me to some of the differences between urban and rural life and provided insights into women's domestic lives and relationships.

Living in the village (Saturday to Tuesday) had elements of both the 'imagined' and the 'real', but the 'real' (i.e. nature, survival, family, norms and rules) was unavoidable. After renting an average house on the main road, I did what was expected of me: I set up house, visited and welcomed neighbours, and shopped at the market. Living and participating in rural life helped me comprehend everyday life in a way that visits do not allow. I gained a sense of daily rhythms and the seasons. I came to realise the massive amount of energy it takes to just live when water must be carried, fires built for cooking, and food cultivated. Like others, I needed young people's labour in this endeavour, so I hired a part-time house girl. While residents cultivated in the mornings, Solange and I worked on translation or met with local leaders. On Sundays, we joined neighbour children at church. In the afternoons, we visited families in their compounds. In the early evening, when children played and neighbours strolled, we joined them in the road outside my home. These experiences helped me locate young people's narratives, actions, and stated views within a broader social, economic, political, historical, and cultural context and triangulate their accounts with what I observed and learned from others.

Each day, I wrote field notes that captured my observations, reflections, and questions related to my interactions and environment. Writing helped me process our

experiences, my observations, what I was learning, and aspects of my research design. During fieldwork, these notes guided my interactions with participants and research decisions. As data, my research journals have also helped me interpret and fill out oral testimonies.

### ***Interviews and Life Histories***

Over the course of the research, Solange and I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with key informants (58) and core family study participants (40). Key informants ranged from Rwandan sociologists, historians, and elders (local and *Inteko Izirikana*) to community and government leaders, a youth radio host, and leaders of community and international organisations working with child, youth, family, and gender issues. Interviews in Inkombe were primarily conducted in Kinyarwanda. In Kigali and Butare, I conducted most interviews alone in English; Solange assisted me with three conducted in French.

Early in the research (pre-permit), I engaged key informants in exploratory interviews in which I asked whether marriage and childhood patterns were changing. These interviews informed me that changing marriage and childhood patterns are of great concern to Rwandans, but there is a lack of understanding as to why patterns are changing: change was not primarily regarded as an effect of the Genocide. These views helped me appreciate that I was delving into complex historical issues. Interviewees also confirmed that marriage was the best institution to study because it has shaped how childhood and coming of age has been constructed and experienced over time. Late in the fieldwork and on my return in 2014, I conducted key informant interviews in which

I asked for feedback on my initial findings and the questions they raised. These interviews helped me verify and interpret my data.

Once we had built rapport with family study members, we conducted life history interviews. In these interviews, I had Solange follow three lines of questioning: she began by asking the family member to describe his/her family of origin. Then she asked the individual to tell us what it was like to grow up as a boy/girl in his/her household and time. We sought insights into social norms as well as personal experiences, everyday roles and responsibilities, and remembered events. Finally, Solange asked how a boy/girl became recognised as a man/woman in his/her time and culture, and she asked individuals to describe and explain how they experienced that process. If the person was not yet married, we asked what they expected and hoped their life would look like over the next five years. We always arranged to interview young people privately so that they could speak freely without worrying about elders' judgements. In contrast, parents chose to be interviewed at home, often with others nearby. Grandparents chose to tell their stories in their compound surrounded by children and grandchildren. Shortly after each interview, I read the transcript and met with the informant again to clarify information and ask new questions.

Life history interviews with children were crucial in ways I had not foreseen. Due to low school attendance and poor quality schooling, I found that many children were unable to contribute meaningfully to child-focused methods that involved writing or drawing; they simply did not have adequate experience with pen and paper. Nor did these children fit into group activities with students. Life history interviews allowed uneducated girls, like Rachelle (FS<sub>3</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>), share their thoughts and experiences at their

own pace and to feel comfortable doing so. Second, in a culture where it is still frowned on for young people to complain or disagree with adults, young people expressed gratitude at the opportunity to share their life history privately. Taken together, young people's stories provided a very clear picture of how and why childhood and children's transitions to adulthood have been marked by both continuity and change.

In addition to life history interviews, we also did caregiver<sup>97</sup> and informal interviews with members of the study families and I recorded home visit conversations. Further, nine focus groups with women in the rural and urban studies provided complex, thick data that provided insights into how gender and generational rules, norms, and practices are constructed and experienced, the role of marriage in society, and how and why these social patterns may be changing (see *Table 3.2*).

On my return in 2014, I did genogram interviews with each family (see *Appendix 6*). Working from diagrams based on 2013 data, these interviews were extremely valuable because they clarified many details and yielded highly significant new data. The success of this method was partly due to its visual nature: participants were very focused on explaining the family connections and history they saw represented in the drawing; they were less focused on filtering that information<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> With so many children, mothers found it difficult to provide specific, meaningful data in these interviews. Ideally, caregiver interviews should only ask about one or two children.

<sup>98</sup> For example, Jean Baptiste maintained he was a double orphan (I knew he was not), but when presented with the genogram he readily provided detailed information about his live parents. This information revealed he was functionally an orphan.

### ***Child and Youth-Focused Methods***

Young people are a diverse group with unique interests, constraints, and abilities; as with adults, these vary with physical and mental capacity, education, and across households. Further, within the group we call ‘children’, ‘youth’ or ‘young people’, there are sub-cultures and complex social hierarchies (Hirschfeld 2002). But all can co-produce knowledge related to their own lives (James and Prout 2005; Hart and Tyrer 2006, 26). However, differences within this generational category meant that I needed to use multiple methods capable of eliciting different types of knowledge (see discussions in Hart and Tyrer 2006, 26-33; Langevang 2007). I also needed to create experiences that young people enjoyed and could capably participate in if I expected them to show up consistently and teach me something about their lives (Punch 2002, Morrow 2008).

To this end, I approached research with young people in much the same way that I planned my own children’s birthday parties, for the same principles apply: invite young people well in advance and get parental approval and RSVPs; build a reputation for putting on parties that everyone wants to attend; create a safe, welcoming space; plan more activities than you will need; plan diverse activities and allow children to opt-in; provide food and take home treats; make sure everyone is having a good time; do not let dominant children dominate; have helpers; stay in the background; do not knowingly allow a guest to leave with hurt feelings; end on time. *Table 3.2* lists all the methods I used with young people. I briefly explain four here.

### **Youth Research Workshops (WS)**

I held three research workshops for young people at the beginning of my time in Inkombe. I used these to attract interest to my project and to try different methods to learn what worked best with these young people. I also used these workshops to learn their views on what it is like to be a boy/girl growing up in Inkombe and how couples are beginning households. Each workshop followed the same format and had 15 to 20 unique participants age 12 to 25.

These workshops were two hours of fun. Young people arrived at the local primary school to snacks and their favourite Rwandan pop music. Once most had arrived, we went through the informed consent process described. Then Solange demonstrated how to make large life maps that included their goals, social support, and the challenges they face. They enjoyed this activity, but as Crivello (2009) finds, young people responded with highly improbable imagined futures and the data was too general to be very useful (see also Ansell et al. 2009).

After this activity, we held a mock radio talkback show. Solange was dressed as the radio hostess and I was the foreign guest who had come to learn what it is like to 'grow up in Inkombe'. I gave the youth a 'magic' microphone that we used like a talking stick (*Figure 3.1*). Radio shows are wildly popular in Rwanda and this role play engaged everyone in excited debate. Youth enjoyed teaching me about their lives and they appreciated that the 'magic mic' made everyone to listen to them. At the end of each workshop, I invited young people to participate in the journal project and focus groups.

### **Figure 3.1: Mock Radio Talkback Shows with the 'Magic Mic'**



### **Journal Project: ‘Growing up in Rwanda’**

The purpose of the journal project was to solicit private, reflective responses from local and boarding school secondary students on nine questions related to ‘Growing up in Rwanda’ (see *Appendix 3*). The project also created an opportunity to continue research with students while they were away at boarding school. Before the school year began, I gave each student a journal and an explanation of the project. Each week I texted them (or their contact) a new question in Kinyarwanda. During the school vacation, I scanned and returned their journals. Overall, 23 students age 16 to 23 gave thoughtful and insightful responses that made a significant contribution to my findings.

### **Focus Groups (FG) and ‘Marriage Preferences’ Survey**

I held four focus groups with students age 13 to 22 to follow up on the journal questions I had given: two with boarding school students and two with local students. Some peers

also attended, so each group ranged from 12 to 22 youth<sup>99</sup>. I also used these meetings as a springboard into other topics, such as what ‘development’ means to them and whether it influences family relations. These discussions were effective for gathering both general and specific knowledge because we asked young people to illustrate their opinions through personal anecdotes (see also Ansell et al. 2009). They were comfortable doing so because they knew each other well. I used the ‘magic mic’ to moderate the discussions.

Once I realised the high prevalence of out-of-school<sup>100</sup> (OOS) young people in Inkombe, I held two focus groups with eleven young people, male and female, age 15 to 22. I used the discussions to learn how these youth understood their life trajectories and coming of age, and how they viewed themselves in relation to students. These discussions were extremely productive because the youth knew each other well and felt free to speak openly and agree or disagree with each other.

At the end of my 2014 meetings with each group, I conducted a 20-question ‘Marriage Preferences’ survey that the students had helped me develop. The survey tool worked well and yielded highly relevant data, but the sample was too small to include (n=30).

### ***Historical Methods and Grey Material***

In addition to life history interviews, I used historical methods to produce data that would help me locate parents and grandparents within their historical context and interpret their remembered experiences. I used key informant interviews with Rwandan

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<sup>99</sup> I facilitated small group discussions with the largest group.

<sup>100</sup> I am referring to school-age young people (age 7 to 22) who do not regularly attend school.

academics, local elders, and *Inteko Izirikana* to access historical data and cultural and sociological history. I also did archival research at the National Museum archives in Butare, the Dominican Library in Kigali, and the African studies collection at the University of Oxford.

Grey literature in the form of online and print media; government, Church, organisational, and commissioned reports; unpublished theses; and popular music videos and radio shows also provided a picture of the broader institutional environment young Rwandans have lived in since the onset of colonialism. I also obtained detailed demographic and sector data from 2012 to 2013 Inkombe sector records, which included information on households and schools as well as births, marital statuses<sup>101</sup>, genocide prisoners, and MDG surveys. Together, these complementary and sometimes contradictory sources helped me interpret the data Solange and I co-produced with participants. Through this process, specific details that might otherwise have been overlooked in my data analysis became valuable pieces that filled in the picture of a participant's life experiences and actions.

### ***Co-Producing Knowledge in Translation***

Throughout this project, I regarded my research assistant and translator, Solange, as a co-producer of knowledge (see discussions in Berman and Tyyskä 2010; Temple and Young 2004). Solange not only assisted me with research and acted as my translator, but also mediated our social interactions and interpreted each encounter for me

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<sup>101</sup> I also obtained marriage status data from Empower intake records.

through a lens of culture and history. The way we facilitated research together was in itself a method, so I will briefly describe our research relationship.

Every day, I explained my learning goals and research plan to Solange. We then discussed how best to implement each activity, what obstacles we might face, and how to manage any special dynamics we were aware of. We came to an agreement on how we would carry out the research, but we constantly reassessed our progress as we went along. After this discussion, I gave Solange the freedom to direct life history interviews and focus group discussions. As she did, she provided me with brief, frequent updates about the flow of the discussion, rather than a full translation. At critical junctures, Solange consulted me about how to proceed. I audio recorded everything and we discussed the meeting on our walk home.

Regarding written translation, I asked Solange and her colleague, who I hired to transcribe and translate life history interviews<sup>102</sup>, to interpret the meaning of participant narratives into English; I did not want verbatim translations (see Temple and Young 2004). When I received transcripts, I discussed any questions with Solange.

There were many advantages to this approach. Freed from constant translation, I could loosely follow the Kinyarwanda and observe participants' body language, tone and speaking patterns, which helped us interpret what individuals shared (see also Tumblety 2013, 4). Partial translation took far less of our participants' time and allowed us to do more research in a shorter time frame. Further, by giving Solange the responsibility to lead, I allowed her to invest more of herself in the project and fully

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<sup>102</sup> This colleague regularly consulted with Solange on points of translation.

engage as the co-researcher she was<sup>103</sup>. If I trusted her skills and integrity less, this approach would not have worked as well.

### **3.3 Ethics in Post-Conflict Research and Research with Families**

Every researcher encounters context-specific issues that push him or her beyond the familiar ethics terrain that guides research practice. The issues I encountered were primarily related to Rwanda's legacy of violence and doing research with families. I relate these here to demonstrate how I applied ethical guidelines in practice.

#### **Research in War-Affected Contexts**

In contexts like Rwanda where the population has been affected by political violence, ethical considerations take on added weight because the risks related to research are typically higher: Boyden (2000; 2004, 241) cautions that in this context kin and community relationships and trust are likely to be fragile, and resources - including time - are scarce and carefully monitored. There is also a risk of triggering traumatic or difficult memories in participants through research activities (Hart and Tyrer 2006, 24). Further, in Rwanda, researchers, RAs, and respondents face serious consequences if they reference ethnic status, criticise the government, or question the official Genocide narrative (Begley 2013; Ingelaere 2010). These added risks redefined what it meant for me to do research ethically.

My first step to mitigate these risks was to hire a mature RA who understood and had experience managing these risks. Second, we explained the project and consent, and

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<sup>103</sup> I was careful to choose a RA who was raised in rural Rwanda so that Kinyarwanda was her mother tongue and she was comfortable living and working in a village. I also sought someone who was mature, well-educated, and had experience doing high-quality research.

used participants' time, very carefully. We ensured that young people had permission to be with us. Third, we exercised strict confidentiality. Fourth, we never referenced a person's ethnic status or asked about their Genocide experience, and Solange never disclosed her background to participants. Although it is almost impossible to be politically impartial in a context with such deep historical scars (Boyden 2004, 244), we acknowledged people's experiences and opinions in a way that expressed empathy and interest, rather than our own opinions. When necessary, Solange expressed the official Genocide narrative; however, we acknowledged Hutu and Twa sufferings by referring to all Rwandans who lived through the Genocide as 'survivors', which is a politically acceptable practice.

These efforts paid off in a high level of demonstrated trust. The Chief and Aida (FS2/G2) introduced me to others saying, 'She loves people'. Others took us deep into their confidence even when it was not safe to do so. This trust reminds me that ethical research is also about writing participants' stories in a way that respects their intent, while not exposing them to unnecessary risk through my professional activities.

### **Research with Families**

Family studies provided many unique research benefits, but family research is delicate business. One significant benefit was that interviewing three generations within the same families (many times) uncovered multiple views of the same event or time, or multiple assessments of a given person. Overlap, convergence, and disagreement in these accounts helped me triangulate data and achieve depth of understanding (see also Fujii 2009, Loc 756). However, family research carries unique risks. I would have betrayed confidence and risked damaging family relationships had I used one version

of a story to explicitly or even indirectly cross-check another family member's account. Further, because relationships were stressed or fractured by the legacy of the Genocide, we had to be extremely careful not to further damage trust and relationships by creating, exacerbating, or publicly exposing family conflict. This meant we could not freely share family news with extended family. After holding one multigenerational family discussion, we decided that these are inadvisable. When we thanked family members for their participation, we did so carefully to avoid provoking jealousy or conflict.

Ethnographic studies are built on relational trust. In family studies, this sense of trust can give participants the courage to disclose experiences of abuse at the hands of other family members<sup>104</sup>. What is an ethical and wise response in these situations? Malkki and Cerwonka (2014) assert that 'Ethnographic research practice is a way of being in the world' (178), meaning that in these ethical quandaries we are caring humans first, researchers second. Having said that, most participants who disclosed accounts of abuse were not looking to me to solve their problems, but to understand their life – to bear witness. These individuals looked to relatives and local authorities for help. As a temporary foreign resident, any rights-based action on my part would have been a very public stop-gap measure that was likely to make the situation worse. When one study member specifically asked for advice and help, I connected her to a local women's organisation<sup>105</sup>. The most ethical response is sustainable and usually local.

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<sup>104</sup> For example, children in two families disclosed accounts of severe physical abuse from fathers. In the most difficult situation, a mother confided that she was making plans to poison (i.e. kill) her husband to escape intimate partner violence. I was fortunate her plans were foiled.

<sup>105</sup> In this situation, local intervention was not helping, so I used my influence to immediately enrol the mother and her children in Empower (Inkombe). I also obtained the father's permission to enrol the older children in school. This did not end the abuse, but it brought the family into the public eye where their situation was more easily monitored.



### **3.4 Producing Knowledge**

Producing written knowledge is ethics in practice. For this thesis, I am using material generously provided by others to construct a story and theory, but what story and whose story will I tell? How will I tell it? Will I side with one group over another? Will I jeopardise the safety of my informants to make a point? Rwanda's written history of colonialism and elite politics reminds me that writing presents a meaningful opportunity to use my privileged position - albeit in a small way - to produce knowledge that gives voice and bears witness. This is not activist research; it is ethical research. But how do we practically do this?

As an ethnographer and scholar, I am not representing social phenomena in a literal fashion by documenting cultural norms, rules, and rituals and explaining their occurrence. Rather, like my participants, I am actively creating knowledge by '[re]constructing the social world through [my] interpretation of it' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007a, 11). Caplan (1988) argues that it is impossible to be completely objective or neutral in this process; however, as I interpret data I can actively seek to understand and make sense of my participants' worlds in a way that foregrounds *their* views and experiences and what is important to *them*, rather than my own - or hegemonic - agendas (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007a, 17). In this task, Malkki and Cerwonka (2014) argue that we are seeking information (technical, interpreted) and understanding with which to build theory, not 'truth' (175). This process of interpretation is complex and never produces unequivocal results, but done well, it can yield theoretical understanding (ibid.).

### **Coding and Choosing Themes**

To interpret data well, we must avoid the temptation to ‘cherry-pick’ data and instead, analyse data systematically and inductively. To do this, I used the software QSR-NVivo to facilitate a scaled-down version of a grounded theory approach (see Hutchison et al. 2010). Using NVivo, I began by coding the data by prominent themes that emerged in the narratives; these themes included childhood, education, youth transitions, ontological views, and social institutions. Within these themes, I coded sub-themes (e.g. childhood/era, transitions/rituals). Where data was specific to a person, I also coded by participant (e.g. Family study/Family/participant). I then read and reread through the data by theme, family study, and era (i.e. colonialism, Two Republics, post-Genocide). At the same time, I also read related, period-specific secondary literature. This helped me contextualise and interpret the data. I present any contradictions in the data, or between my data and other sources, alongside the empirical narratives to add nuance and complexity to the story.

The work I present in this thesis emerged from this process of data analysis. To trace continuity and change over time, I initially wrote up the material by generation; however, this approach made it difficult to demonstrate how young people are experiencing and responding to key institutions in their environment. After valuable feedback from my examiners, I rewrote the empirical chapters by theme. I suspect that the structural challenges I have faced are related to the generational aspect of this study, which makes the story more complex, multidimensional, and difficult to tell succinctly.

### **Interpreting Oral Testimony**

Interpreting oral testimony - upon which this thesis depends - and doing so well, requires careful attention, for ‘[...] life history material does not speak for itself

(Mandelbaum 1982, 147). Memories are not simply accounts of a past lived reality; they are actively produced (Radstone 2000, 7, 11; Tumblety 2013, 4). Thus, as I interpreted memory data, I was not concerned with discovering 'truth', but with finding 'evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined for its meanings and its possibilities' (Kuhn 2000, 186). In this endeavour, there were layers of interpretation and production to consider: To begin with, memory is partial and participants interpret the meaning of an event before - and as - they recount it (White 2000, 312); My translator then interprets the narrative into English through her cultural and linguistic register (Temple and Young 2004); and I analyse her translations through my interpretive frames. Thus, as I interpreted memory data, I carefully considered whether a participant was recounting experience through the lens of contemporary and/or past insights<sup>106</sup> (White 2000, 67). I worked to cultivate a strong understanding of Rwanda's social history so that I could locate participants within their social world, both now and in the past, and have some understanding of how they saw themselves (ibid., 68). I was also mindful of the context within which the story was told, including the dynamics between the interviewee(s), translator, and researcher.

However, in conflict-affected and impoverished contexts like Rwanda, oral testimony is more likely to be intentionally and strategically produced (Boyden 2004; Fujii 2010). In part, this is because stories provide a way of making sense of conflict, hardship, and contradictions (White 2000, 312; see also Fujii 2010). It is also because in the aftermath of violence, 'public accusations and private confessions [during research] can lead to reprisals from neighbours, rejection from family members, or repression by the state'

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<sup>106</sup> For example, elders sometimes told their own story using contemporary children's rights discourse.

(*ibid.* Fujii, 232). Ingelaere (2010) argues that Rwandans practice self-censorship to make a show of their compliance (real or imagined) with the official public transcript (52-3). These practices make it more difficult for the researcher to separate ‘image from reality and distinguish [...] the imaginary from the real’ (*ibid.*, 46; see also De Lame 2005, 303). When interpreting testimony in this context, Fujii (2010) argues that ‘meta-data’ – that is, ‘informants’ spoken and unspoken thoughts and feelings’, such as gossip and rumour - is as important as oral testimony because it provides clues about how the current social, political, and economic landscape influences oral history (231; White 2000, 312). However, White (2000) warns that meaning can only be reconstructed if ‘stories are grounded in relation to other evidence, other interpretations, other stories’ (312). Thus, while I attended to meta-data, I also compared oral testimonies related to the same context and I weighed my findings against what past researchers have observed, being careful to interpret their findings in light of their epistemological framework (e.g. Functionalism).

As a scholar, my primary research goal is the production of knowledge, but I have sought to create and interpret oral testimony in a way that helps to correct the ethnographic record (Tumblety 2013, 4; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007a, 34, 276). That is, where ethnographies, histories, and historical institutional studies have traditionally foregrounded the experiences and views of elites, adults, males and Minority World actors (Tumblety 2013, 4; Boyden and Ennew 1997, 11), this dissertation takes young, mostly peasant Rwandans seriously as historical and institutional actors who are capable of producing knowledge. In the remainder of this work, I foreground young people’s experiences and actions and privilege their accounts of their lives over

hegemonic narratives that portray African children and youth as universally at-risk. This in no way distorts the data; rather, in a small way, it decolonises child and youth studies by avoiding and questioning Western normative assumptions about risk-free childhoods, the 'poor' or 'war-affected' child, and childhood, youth, parenting and kinship in Africa generally.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I detailed the process through which I produced the knowledge that underpins this child-centred thesis. At the outset, I provided a rationale for why an ethnographic and historical institutional approach was most capable of providing the view of childhood and children's transitions to adulthood necessary for a study of children and youth and social change in Rwanda. As the following empirical chapters will show, this methodology generated a detailed and nuanced understanding of children's lived experiences and actions over time. Multigenerational family studies allowed me to locate these findings within children's generational relationships and the broader institutional environment over time, and triangulate the data.

As with all research, the picture this study provides is partial and it builds on the work of others; in so doing, it contributes to a more complete view of childhood, generational transitions, and institutional reproduction and change in Rwanda. At the same time, the methodological approach I have developed provides a new and effective approach to researching young people's lives across generations that addresses many of the critiques aimed at contemporary African child and youth research. In doing so, this doctoral project advances methodology and knowledge. In the remainder of this work,

I use this knowledge to develop a theoretical response to the research questions set out in the thesis *Introduction*.



## Chapter 4 - Kinship Matters

‘Taking apart the fiction of the modern family and the master narratives into which it is woven is therefore a necessary part of the process of reimagining the domestic as a site of political struggle.’  
*Expectations of Modernity* (Ferguson 1999, 205–6)

### Introduction

In 1950, Radcliffe-Brown argued, ‘For the understanding of any aspect of the social life of an African people – economic, political, or religious – it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of their system of kinship and marriage’ (1950, 1). This is not a popular view today, given our preoccupation with individual experience (McKinnon and Cannell 2013). However, the findings in this multigenerational study suggest that kinship ‘matters’ (i.e. everyday relations with kin, kinship norms and values) continue to shape children’s experience, actions, and future possibilities in fundamental ways: despite a lack of scholarly focus, ‘Kinship Matters’. For this reason, I begin the empirical chapters with the theme of kinship. This historical and ethnographic analysis allows us to locate and interpret children’s experiences and actions within their broader generational and social context in *Chapters Five to Seven*.

In this chapter, I delve into the intimate space of intergenerational family relationships as they unfold across three generations. This empirical data supports and illustrates the argument that kinship institutions and institutional actors structure children’s lives to ensure the reproduction of the group and its power-distributional goals. At the same time, the findings substantiate my claim that young people increasingly shape how these institutions and relationships are reproduced. The fact that participants have

done so in very different ways should direct our attention to how and why there are varying degrees of disjuncture between individual childhood and coming of age experiences and idealised narratives of kinship rules and norms. De Lame (2005) predicts these disjunctures when she warns that kinship in Rwanda is not a brand of 'African socialism and Humanism', but a distributive mechanism that has historically placed the interests of the family group over the individual through 'the reinforcement of its *strongest* members' (italics added, 281-82). This power-distributional view of institutions resonates throughout the chapter as lineage actors seek to reproduce their rules and distributions of power and resources through children's lives. In a context of persistent inequality, scarcity, and competition, this analytical framework makes the changing practice and reproduction of power in adult-child relationships visible.

But the story really takes off in *Section Two*, for as I trace how children perceived, experienced, and responded to the arrival and increasing presence of modern institutions and their actors, the size of the stage and cast expands, new roles and lines become available to bit players, and the dramatic tension becomes palpable. Just as Hesselbein et al. (2006) predict, actors (i.e. children) simultaneously live within multiple rules systems and they engage with new institutions and institutional actors opportunistically (also Johnson-Hanks 2005; Cole 2011; Vigh 2006; 2009). As they do, they reproduce and reconfigure kinship relations and institutions, while also influencing the reproduction of modern social institutions. But the advance of modernity does not spell the end of kinship; rather, as Christiansen et al. (2006a) predict, young people use existing social categories and relational structures to navigate

their rapidly changing and unequal institutional environment and improve their life chances.

To illustrate these dynamics, I open the chapter with an ethnographic portrait of Augustin (FS<sub>2</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>), the eldest son of Adrien and Aida. In Augustin's story, we encounter many of the tensions young Rwandans face as they struggle to hold on to and redefine their relationships with kin, while also moving ahead with their lives in a context of major historical change and rapid national development. While telling an important story of childhood in contemporary Rwanda, this portrait also raises key questions about how and why children reproduce and reconfigure kinship institutions. I use this portrait as a springboard into the first section, wherein I analyse kinship as an ideal and a lived reality in the grandparents' early life narratives. Through this historicised social analysis, I argue that the 'domestic domain' is also political: pleasing authority in Rwanda's unequal social landscape is not only a cultural imperative, but also a strategy children use to improve their life chances. This work provides the analytical tools needed to interpret continuity and change in children's kinship relations in the second section, in which I examine how young people experienced and responded to new, modern institutions and their actors across three generations. In this analysis, I trace the mechanisms institutions use to engage children in processes of reproduction, identify how and why children's experiences and responses differ, and examine how their actions shape the way kinship relationships have been reproduced over time. Based on this analysis, I argue that young people in every generation profoundly influence how kinship institutions are reproduced as they engage with institutional mechanisms in expected and unexpected 'everyday' ways.

## Augustin: A Portrait of a Son and His Father<sup>107</sup>

The air was hot and still in Kigali's central business district where Solange and I sat in the small, dim concrete front room Augustin shared with roommates. He looked sharp in a golf shirt, ball cap, and sunglasses that hid his blind eye. Augustin had heard about us from his siblings in Rwagati and he was visibly excited that we were visiting him. As we sipped warm Cokes, his best memories tumbled out:

During my childhood, I was treated well! My parents were in a good relationship with each other without any problems, and they gave us instruction in good behaviour...I was a child who was loved, who got everything he asked for...I remember I used to go to the market with my father and he bought me sweet bread...and once, he bought me shoes called *Tigana*. They were the top brand. They were beautiful sports shoes...

The eldest child of four, Augustin was six when the 1994 Genocide put an end to these outings. He recounted that his father, Adrien, tried to protect his Tutsi wife, but they had to flee for safety to a nearby refugee camp. When the family returned home, local Tutsi sent Adrien to prison because he was Hutu.

Augustin began school shortly after, but his mother withdrew him from Primary 2 to help her. While his younger siblings went on to attend school, Augustin stayed home to work and take food to his father in prison - a one to two day's walk each way. When his siblings were old enough to help their mother, Augustin was sent to live with and work for his maternal aunt. But his sister, Anne, ran away to Kigali, so he returned home to help his mother and take care of their neighbour's cow<sup>108</sup>. His aunt sent him home with a gift of three goats because she loved him and wanted to thank him for his hard work.

Augustin was twenty when his father was declared innocent at the local *gacaca* trials<sup>109</sup>. At the time, Augustin had a bicycle taxi business and land he had inherited from his paternal grandfather. He expected to receive the calf from the cow he was taking care of for the family. He planned to sell it and use the money to build a house so that he could marry.

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<sup>107</sup> Sources: Life history and semi-structured interviews with family members 2013-2014.

<sup>108</sup> They had usufruct rights to the milk, fertiliser, and future calf.

<sup>109</sup> In Inkombe, these community trials ran from 2007 to 2008 (LH/Clement/3-2-2013; Journal/Umulisa).

But his father had different expectations. Finally home from prison, Adrien expected Augustin to work for him until he married. If Augustin obeyed, Adrien promised to provide his bridewealth (a cow) and give him some land on which to build a house. When Augustin said that he was going to continue working for himself to save to build a house, Adrien beat him. With some emotion, Augustin explained: 'Prisons make people think differently, it is like they live in another county.' He appealed again to his father saying,

I know that you will never build a house for me. This is what you have said. But before you came back, it was I who gathered the cattle, we worked for this cow without you...why don't you at least give me one calf? I am old...I have a plot of my own. If you give me that cow, I will sell it and buy at least fifteen tin sheets [to build a house]. The rest I will do myself.

But his father refused. The conflict escalated and Augustin confided to his mother, 'It is better for me to leave home because I don't want trouble with my father. We could kill each other! You see that I am in conflict with him every day.'

Augustin and his father shared similar kinship ideals related to their reciprocal intergenerational responsibilities, but they no longer trusted each other. Adrien had not provided for Augustin since he was six, but Augustin had provided for his father and his family in Adrien's absence. Generational roles had shifted. Adrien blamed their conflict on development, saying: 'You understand that it is development...Today he can't accomplish all that [marriage expenses] alone without help. And why is he alone? Because he did not obey his parents.'

Augustin also questioned the influence of development, but from a very different perspective:

Everything you have to do is for them [parents], and you can't do anything for yourself. And then what do they give you? In the past, you had to cultivate for them to get benefits from your work. Today, you have to revolt against them. That is to say, nowadays parents are selfish. I don't know if the cause is development, but without a lie, all are selfish. Because considering how I worked for them, it is unfair that I am outside of my home without my own home.

With the help of a friend and his brother, Augustin migrated to Kigali to find a way to build his own home. He left in secret while his family was out.

## 4.1 Historicising Kinship Relationships

Augustin and his father understood their gendered generational kinship roles and responsibilities in fairly clear, culturally-informed terms, but they differed in how they interpreted their reciprocal obligations to each other. But does Augustin's behaviour reflect the influence of development discourse, as his father asserts, or is there historical precedent for his demands? Is Adrien's inflexibility rooted in strict kinship rules or a desire to regain power? How and why have kinship rules and relationships changed over time, and to what effect?

Before we can understand the meaning of young peoples' experiences and actions today, we must bring past kinship rules and relationships to life with all their ideals and material and symbolic realities. Historicising these relationships provides the background needed to interpret young peoples' relationships and interactions with kin in the remainder of this chapter.

## **Kinship Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships**

When I asked Augustin's maternal grandparents, Alexis and Aurora (F<sub>2</sub>/G<sub>1</sub>), to relate what it was like to grow up as a boy/girl in their time and family, they explained everyday life primarily in terms of their kinship relationships. Their accounts, taken together with the accounts of other elders and the historical material presented in *Chapter One*, reveal how lineage membership shaped children's everyday lives; the priorities and values that informed membership rules, norms, practices and processes; and the extent to which children and their elders sought to reproduce those priorities through children's lives.

This past institutional order was recounted as being quite coherent. But individual experience was often far from this ideal. For example, now a *musaze*, an old man, Celestin (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>1</sub>) presented an ideal narrative of how generational roles and responsibilities were constructed to reproduce the social and economic life of the lineage when he was a child. He explained:

In your father's eyes, you were always his child, so you were supposed to take care of your father's cows because from his cows came your bridewealth, and he made you a man. [...] Nowadays, they [children] tell their parents that they never gave them birth. (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

I begin with this quote because between the two extremes it presents - an idealised social order and intergenerational fidelity on the one hand, alleged contemporary rejection of parents on the other - there is, of course, another story. It is this other in-between story, shot through with memories and perceptions of reality, that I seek to capture and tell here.

When the grandparents' generation (b.1923-1946) were children, their jural status determined their lineage of belonging and their status within the lineage, place of residence, and access to resources. Alexis was born to a customary marriage, so he grew up as a full member in his paternal lineage. In contrast to Alexis - and his ideal narrative - Celestin was illegitimate and never knew his father. Speaking intently, he explained that his father never paid bridewealth, so he was raised by his maternal grandmother; he had no rights to lineage resources. Children were not born equal.

Grandparents recounted that when they were children, roles and responsibilities within the lineage were very clearly defined. Specifically, children's lineage membership defined which elders and children held reciprocal responsibilities to each other within an implicit intergenerational contract. As both Augustin and his father understood, adult kin held the responsibility to educate and provide for their children until they established their own 'gate' (i.e. household). This obligation of care was primarily held by a child's lineage of belonging, and especially the relatives s/he was living with and working for. Within the lineage, aunts and uncles - not parents - were children's primary advisors. Aurora explained: 'A young girl used to respect her uncle, her aunty. Her paternal aunty was like her father, and her maternal aunty [*nyina wabo*, my own mother] was like her mother [*nyina*, mother].' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013) Children were educated to respect and obey every elder. As Adrien understood, they were obligated to labour on behalf of their lineages, as directed, until their family married them.

When children were deemed capable of fulfilling their gendered adult roles, adult kin from both lineages were responsible to arrange their customary marriage. This was an

obligation, but as *Chapter Seven* explains, marriage was also a highly-anticipated and celebrated event in the life of the lineage when new kinship alliances were forged and social status was performed. Within this social process, the paternal lineage was responsible to sponsor legitimate sons into adulthood by providing bridewealth and a land inheritance prior to marriage. This land enabled sons to build a home, an act that demonstrated their readiness to marry and capacity to support a family. Janvier recounted, 'We had to respect our parents, we obeyed whatever a parent asked of us [...] Parents had to build a house for you [i.e. provide land] and help you to get married. A child was there, cared for, until he got married.' (LH/Janvier/12-11-2012) After labouring for elders for years, this provision ensured that children had the means to make the transition to social adulthood (see *Chapters Six and Seven*). But if a paternal lineage was very poor, or a son illegitimate, the son's lineage could fulfil its duties by arranging a marriage to a free bride (*nkuli*), whose father would provide land for the groom in return for his guarantee of labour. Being educated within this highly relational, interdependent context made children and their elders acutely aware of their roles and reciprocal responsibilities as well as their status within a gendered and generational social hierarchy. To the extent that children and their elders conformed to these culturally-defined roles and responsibilities, young people reproduced gender, generational, economic, and social patterns and hierarchies through their education and marriage.

These strong kinship norms and practices also acted as a social safety net for children by clearly defining obligations of care. This care was very significant for half of the grandparents, who had lost at least one parent due to death or abandonment before they married. This broader network of care was also important for children in conflict

with parents and mistreated children - especially illegitimate children and maternal orphans, whose stepmothers wanted their husband's inheritance for their own children. A maternal orphan, Francine (F3/G1) declared: 'God protected me from being poisoned by [my father's] jealous wives'. On days when her father came home yelling and beat her 'like a wife', she fled to her paternal aunt, who returned home with her and threatened her father (LH/Francine/3-5-2013). For these children, extended family were advocates and a haven of care. At the same time, children were often a labour resource for adult kin, especially grandparents. In this way, children built their own long-term relationships of mutual reciprocity across lineages. These relational and habitation patterns, though weakened, are evident in Augustin other children's contemporary stories, as we will see.

### **Reproducing Status**

When grandparents shared general memories of the time when they were children, kinship roles, responsibilities, and relationships were often idealised as part of a more ordered past. Personal stories did not contradict this order, but they were rarely this ideal. Thus, they provide a more nuanced understanding of children's kinship relationships. In these stories, two distinct relational patterns stand out: In the first, we see how and why adult kin sought to reproduce kinship institutions and their status through children's lives and how young people responded. The second shows us how children used these same relationships to enhance their agency, status, and life chances. I examine both patterns because together they help us understand how young people have navigated the arrival of new, non-kin institutional actors, which is the focus of section two.

### 1. *The 'Domestic' is Political*

Meyers Fortes (1958) distinguished himself by arguing that kinship is not simply a 'domestic' matter; it is also 'politico-jural' (see McKinnon and Cannell 2013). He associated the domestic domain with women, children and social reproduction, and the politico-jural domain with men and formal power. This hardened the dichotomy between these domains when, in fact, what is most significant about Fortes' insight is that kinship is simultaneously domestic and politico-jural: to the extent that children comply with kinship rules and practices, they sustain household production and social reproduction, but they also reproduce and reinforce existing generational, gender and class power hierarchies.

The grandparents' and parents' early life stories suggest that children had a clear awareness that the way respect, obedience, and labour was demanded and given between generations was not simply a domestic matter related to ensuring provision, though that was important<sup>110</sup>. Rather, children understood that those who benefitted most from strict patriarchal and gerontocratic hierarchies (i.e. elders and men) had a strong incentive to ensure that their status and position was reproduced through their children's behaviour. Janvier and his wife explained:

- Janvier: A girl used to be aware of her father's strict eye [*igiture*]. She had to be careful because if she didn't behave or respect herself [i.e. get pregnant] she would be thrown in the river or sent to an island [...] A girl didn't like to go out of the compound because if her father and brothers found out about it, that would get her into trouble.
- Wife: They were afraid of their brothers and their uncles. (LH/Janvier/12-11-2012)

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<sup>110</sup> Francine explained quite nonchalantly, 'I used to take all my children to cultivate, and I beat them when they refused to.' (INT/CaregiverFS3/5-7-2013)

But just as those with power understood their need to protect their status and that of the lineage, those who benefited less from existing social rules (i.e. women and children) had a lesser incentive to follow them. Or they had an incentive to co-opt the rules to their advantage. Despite the associated risks, Aurora and most elder female informants said they did *kubenga* (to refuse an arranged marriage) at least once in the hope of securing a more favourable marriage partner. As Thelen (1999, 54) argues, coercion of some kind is necessary to engage less powerful actors in reproducing a highly unequal status quo.

Across all three generations, punishment was the dominant tool used to coerce children. Beating was common and feared, as was '*kuguca umuryanjo*' - to be disowned by one's father (literally 'made to disappear', 'to die'). Daughters could be disowned, 'kicked until we burst' (LH/Concilie/2-22-2013), or drowned for becoming pregnant<sup>111</sup>. They could also be disowned for doing *kubenga*<sup>112</sup>. A son could be disowned or disinherited for disrespecting or disobeying his father or for doing something that was against the interests of the lineage. For example, Concilie (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>1</sub>) explained my neighbour Jean Claude's story, saying:

Even before the Genocide, that man [Jean Claude] was an abomination/outcast [*igicibwa*] to his father. Like their father, the other sons were kind, good people. But that one was really different. That man didn't get along well with his father. His father was wealthy, but he only received one cow, but the other sons were given

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<sup>111</sup> Many recounted that girls were threatened with drowning, but only Pacifique recounted it happening (LH/Pacifique/2-21-2013; see also Codere 1973; Erny 2005).

<sup>112</sup> Taylor (1992) explains that unwed pregnant girls were regarded as usurping elder women's control over the lineage's reproductive resources. *Kubenga* was seen in a similar light, that is, usurping male elders' control over lineage alliances.

many cows. He wasn't allowed to touch any of his father's property.<sup>113</sup>  
(CONV/Concilie/3-17-2013)

Some, like Celestin's stepfather or Fidel (FS<sub>3</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>), beat their children just to prove their power when they were drunk. While these accounts focus on fathers, Alexis explained that any adult could make demands of a child, while Janvier's wife recounted that any adult could beat a disobedient child.

As long as the lineage was a child's only (or primary) current or future source of support, elders could also use provision and the promise of future resources to influence behaviour; as Celestin said, future bridewealth came from your father 'and he made you a man.' Daughters who behaved well could expect a more favourable partner and/or more say in the marriage decision. But as soon as a child was capable of leaving home, either to live with kin or to find a patron or wage employment, elders had little control over their child's labour and behaviour (see also Arnoux 1931, 9; Jefremovas 2002, 94; Codere 1973, *passim*). Celestin was only about ten-years-old when he walked a distance alone to visit his younger stepbrother, found the boy's father beating him, and took him. Celestin explained, 'I told his father that I was taking him to visit his grandmother. When I left with him I didn't bring him back.' (INT/FS<sub>1</sub>/2-24-2014). These less powerful children understood, as Goody (1982) argues in her West Africa study, that 'the giving of respect [by children] is an essentially political act' (266). Children demonstrated an understanding that the way respect is demanded and given between genders and

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<sup>113</sup> This story is an example of difficult conflict-related data. Jean Claude was hated by local Hutu for his allegedly malevolent post-Genocide behaviour combined with his power over Hutu lives as head of *gacaca*. I give weight to this story because some Tutsi stories also support Jean Claude's negative reputation and because Concilie clearly respected his father and brothers (thus, it is not an anti-Tutsi view). The story provides evidence of father's showing favouritism to sons, a norm documented elsewhere (Erny 2005; Jefremovas 2002, 79-81).

generations is not simply a domestic matter: kinship institutions reflect and reproduce relationships of power.

***‘Social agency’<sup>114</sup>: Navigating Risks and Opportunities with Kin***

Elders’ accounts of childhood suggest that children understood the importance of obeying social rules and the cost of transgressing. In contrast to a strong emphasis on youth resistance in the African scholarship (see, for example, Waller 2006), acts of resistance were not a common theme here. There were almost no stories of risking punishment for minor goals (stealing food was a common exception). There were many accounts of behaving well to gain favour with elders, for children who pleased others had advocates, benefactors, or patrons who could help them navigate risk and pursue significant life goals. However, the nature of the goal mattered greatly. When a goal, such as *kubenga*, was not socially sanctioned, a young person had to risk acting alone and hope they had enough favour to succeed. They only took such a risk if they expected it would significantly improve their life chances.

A far more common pattern was for young people to act together with others towards a shared goal that was difficult or impossible for the child to attain under normal circumstances (e.g. customary marriage, schooling). Although this action was often adult-initiated, young people were expected to show initiative by requesting help and advice from people (usually kin) with whom they had actively built relationships of favour and reciprocal obligation. For example, although Celestin was illegitimate with no claim to lineage resources, both of his lineages acted with him towards a shared ideal

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<sup>114</sup> Jeffrey (2011) and Lubkemann (2008) use this term, but they do not develop it.

goal - customary marriage - because he was regarded as a good son. His maternal aunt provided a cow for bridewealth, while his paternal uncle provided him with land for marriage.

This collective process of pursuing a goal was usually very creative - an opportunistic and sometimes cunning 'do-what-it-takes' act of what I term 'social agency'<sup>115</sup>, in which roles and responsibilities became flexible and rules and norms were often subverted. In Celestin's story, both lineages went far beyond their traditional obligations to marry Celestin. Instead of providing a cow, his family could have provided a poor person's bridewealth (e.g. hoes, goats), or found a free bride. His uncle's provision of land was so far outside the 'rules' that Celestin gave the land back after his marriage to avoid conflict with his paternal cousins. In a similar story, Rosa's (F3/G1) lineages worked with her to conceal her illegitimate status. Her uncle posed as her father, even listing her as his daughter on his identity card and arranging her marriage. Not even her husband learned her status. They did this for her, the eldest daughter who managed the household, but not for her younger siblings (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014). Because of these group actions, neither young person reproduced their marginal status through their transition to social adulthood.

These young people would have had very different life trajectories had their families been like Adrien, who was unwilling to bend kinship norms to enhance Augustin's life chances. This contrast serves as a reminder that social agency is not implicit to interdependent kinship relationships. Like punishment, social agency is evidence of the

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<sup>115</sup> Definition adapted from Hammer (2009).

political nature of kinship relations: children are not treated equally. Family members did not extend themselves to help all children; they made a subjective decision to help those who pleased them. Thus, pleasing those with authority was not just a cultural or political imperative in Rwanda's gerontocratic, unequal society: it enhanced children's social agency, and this improved their life chances. Children understood that 'The one who pleases more, wins more' (Bushayija 1966, 161) and they acted on opportunities accordingly.

These historical patterns provide a lens through which to interpret children's actions in the remainder of this chapter.

## **4.2 Three Generations Navigate the Influence of Modern Institutions**

Prior to colonialism, young people in central Rwanda had few options for support and resources apart from kin and patrons. Colonialism and statehood changed this by introducing modern institutions; since that time, children have lived everyday life at the interface of modern and traditional institutional systems.

One consequence of this exogenous change is that young people have increasingly encountered new institutions and institutional actors who have priorities related to children's lives that are founded on world views and objectives that differ from indigenous ones. As children, participants primarily encountered these through the channels of the colonial and nation state; Catholic and Protestant churches; schooling; the market economy; international organisations; and popular media. As I will show in the remainder of this chapter, young people perceived, experienced, and engaged with these institutions in diverse ways. They engaged with actors representing both modern

and traditional institutions, but they selectively reproduced some rules and resources and not others. In the process, they reconfigured power relations as well as the political space and legitimacy institutions and their actors inhabit and enjoy.

### **The Elder Generations: Kinship in ‘A time of development’<sup>116</sup>**

In life history interviews, Solange and I did not ask the grandparents or parents any questions related to colonialism or the broader political economy. Nevertheless, stories of their interactions with the Church, schooling, and the market economy run like a strong thread through their memories of childhood and coming of age. Here I trace their memories of their interactions with church and schooling to illustrate how children perceived, experienced, and responded to these new institutions and their actors, and how their actions influenced the nature of their relationships with kin and the reproduction of kinship institutions.

### ***The Church: Status, Social Networks, and Salvation***

The dark politics, history, and legacy of the Catholic Church in Rwanda is well-documented, but this is not the story that grandparents and their children recounted in their early life narratives. Instead, their memories are of escaping work and the compound to ‘go pray’ or ‘study’, or of eyeing young Bible teachers as potential marriage partners. While these actions were recounted as unexceptional aspects of their everyday lives, young peoples’ engagement with church had a significant effect on the structure of the kinship relationships that bound their lives. I suggest that their actions also influenced the extent to which the Church realised its goals in Rwanda.

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<sup>116</sup> LH/Alexis/4-21-2013

The presence of the Church in children's everyday lives was particularly potent because it was not only material, but also moral, spiritual, political, scholarly, and cultural. As a material and political reality, the Catholic Church was very much a partner of the colonial state, and it was expanding rapidly in the 1940s when the grandparents were children (see Carney 2014). Church missions, Catholic and Protestant, brought young people from multiple hills together so that the Church quickly touched the lives of most children in some way. Children experienced the Church differently depending on their ethnic and socio-economic status as well as their proximity and access to a mission. For orphaned Hutu children like Celestin, who was taken into the care of *les Pères Blancs* at Nemba Mission, the Church was a caregiver and religious teacher. For elite Tutsi children like Aurora and her brother, Catholicism was a new requirement associated with their status. Lesser Tutsi and Hutu boys, like the Chief's father, experienced seminary training as a new opportunity for social mobility. For girls like Pacifique (FS5/G1) and Aurora, who were permitted to go to pray or study catechism, the Church represented a newfound freedom of movement and association and a very welcome alternative to household duties. But many, like Concilie and Francine, were not allowed to attend Church. Thus, as Rwanda became increasingly Catholic, religion became a new social divider: the Chief's Catholic and Protestant parents were unusual for marrying across religious lines; non-Christians were increasingly regarded as 'pagan' by their more literate, 'civilised' Christian neighbours. Catholic Church membership was a new source of status in a highly unequal society, while church leaders were regarded as new potential patrons (see also Carney 2014, 11; Codere 1973).

While some children had very limited contact with the Church, even minimal contact presented young people with new opportunities and ideas. Francine was forbidden from leaving her father's cows to attend church or school, but her thinking was influenced by the Bible lessons she listened to hidden outside the mission classroom, and she coveted the European clothing catechism students wore. Children with more access to church had more opportunities. Pacifique, Aida and Adrien each explained that children who attended church not only met young people from other hills and beyond their kin group, but they also learned to read and write (LH/Pacifique/3-21-2013; LH/Aida/5-5-2013; LH/Adrien/3-3-2013). These skills gave them access to knowledge and ways of communicating that their parents did not have. Some, like these, used their newfound literacy to covertly write courtship letters to a boy/girl they met at church<sup>117</sup>. Adrien explained, 'It was the time of democracy', meaning that young people were beginning to be able to choose their own partner based on individual preference; however, Aida indicated that parental approval was still required for marriage. In a society where lineage elders controlled processes of social reproduction based on what was in the best interests of the group, young peoples' seemingly innocuous move to court on their own challenged existing power structures. It also made marriage and social reproduction more about the needs and preferences of the individual than the kin group.

Participants' narratives suggest that children initiated their own church involvement and that they were primarily motivated by the perception of new possibilities and opportunities, rather than a desire to resist their elders<sup>118</sup>. As a girl, Aurora noticed other

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<sup>117</sup> For a similar pattern in Nepal, see Ahearn (2001).

<sup>118</sup> Grant (2015) finds similar motives in her Rwanda study.

Tutsi children walking to attend the ‘morning program’ (primary school) and she begged her father, a Tutsi hill chief, to let her go study too. She recounted:

But he said, ‘Did I go to school to become a chief?’ [...] But because I always did as my parents asked, they rewarded me by letting me go to study only in the afternoon program [catechism class]. Not in the morning program. (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013)

For children like Aurora, Christianity was far more than a belief system: it also represented *amajyambere* (development/progress/modernity) and ‘democracy’, meaning individual choice. As children walked long distances to church and met young people from other hills, they avoided work and girls escaped the compound. As they took classes, became literate, donned European clothes, were baptized and given Western names, prayed, and married in the church, young people took on – and inhabited – their Christian identity and modernity. Ishimwe, an *intore*<sup>119</sup> dancer for the *mwami*, was baptised and given a Christian name, ‘Janvier’, so he could be married in the Anglican Church. Aurora attended the afternoon program, became literate, and was confirmed and baptized in the Catholic Church. This identity and status appears to have given her the confidence to refuse her arranged marriage to a wealthy but illiterate and unchurched Bakiga boy, who she regarded as backward.

For children like Aurora, church membership opened up a world of new knowledge and social networks, new sources of status, authority and patronage, and new categories of belonging that originated beyond the lineage. As the Church became a source of status and patronage, many girls shifted their marriage preferences. Bible teachers like the Chief’s father were respected for being ‘very religious’ young men, but they also became

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<sup>119</sup> See *Appendix 1* (see also Vansina 2004, 62; Codere 1973).

regarded as ideal husbands due to their schooling and church connections. Likewise, Josie (FS4/G2) explained that she and her sisters were respected as 'saints', 'well-educated' girls, and ideal brides because they were devoted to the Church and prayed in the afternoons (LH/Josie/1-14-2013). As part of a first-generation of girls 'well-educated' in the modern, Christian sense, Aurora could refuse her arranged marriage and pursue her marriage preferences with assistance from beyond her lineage. She went first to her catechism teacher and then to her father's Tutsi overlord to have them appeal to her father to cancel her engagement. Her father relented. His traditional authority was no match for their colonial and Catholic authority. But while Aurora contested gender and generational rules and norms based on her new status, she attributed her success to her consistently submissive, respectful behaviour to her parents. In this way, she reproduced and rewrote kinship behavioural norms, while also reproducing and extending the legitimacy and authority of the Church. She maintained status within both systems.

These stories demonstrate that as young people reproduced religious rules, norms, values and practices, they reproduced the institution of the Church. They also expanded its influence, legitimacy, and political space. At the same time, children's involvement with the Church diminished the exclusivity of their kinship relations and the authority and knowledge of lineage elders: children now went to church leaders as well as to elder kin for spiritual knowledge and moral education; lineage elders no longer vetted potential spouses, children did; where lineages consulted a medium to determine marital compatibility, couples now submitted their genealogies to their priest for approval; female kin continued to prepare girls for marriage, but girls also studied the

marriage sacrament. The Church's roles in these matters gave young seminarians and teachers a spiritual, moral and political authority that was historically reserved for lineage elders and patrons (see also Carney 2014, 11). This authority came to the fore in the late 1950s as Rwanda's *évolués* wrested power from colonial and traditional (Tutsi) authorities, and a former Hutu seminarian - Grégoire Kayibanda - became Rwanda's first President.

But young people did not simply engage with the Church and dispense with their indigenous culture. Even though young people could enhance their status and access new opportunities through the Church, they weighed this involvement against other opportunities and obligations. For example, Celestin explained 'I was seven when the parish took me in charge and I was raised by *les Pères Blancs* and priests'. He received basic literacy and catechism instruction, but after three years he decided to leave the mission and return to live with his grandmother (LH/Celestin/2010-2013). Young people added religious rules, norms, beliefs and practices to indigenous ones when it benefitted them, and to the extent that they could. Girls added prayer to their schedule, but they also continued to believe in poisoning (i.e. spiritual and physical). Young Christians increasingly chose their own partners through letter writing, but they also continued to regard customary marriage - not Christian (or state) marriage - as the essential first marriage, even though it was not recognised by the Church. Most delayed their religious wedding for years. For these, customary marriage affirmed their position within the lineage and provided them with access to resources in a context where few young people apart from *les évolués* had any meaningful access to Church resources. Young people's continued engagement with kin and kinship institutions ensured their reproduction,

even as the authority of kin and kinship institutions was being weakened. At the same time, young Christians' spiritual dualism and their tendency to partially reproduce church rules prevented the Church from attaining the depth of conversions and political authority its leaders sought. Further, to the extent that young people engaged with the Church primarily as patron, they reproduced feudal (patron-client), rather than modern (meritocratic), patterns of social relations. However, as I explain next, children engaged with the Church and schooling very differently depending on their gender, class and other characteristics, and this reconfigured their kinship relationships in distinct ways.

### ***Schooling: Unequal Access and Unexpected Outcomes within Families***

In both the colonial era and the Two Republics, only 6 to 8 per cent of young people had access to secondary school<sup>120</sup> (Hoben 1989). However, in households with at least one full-time primary or secondary student, schooling profoundly influenced children's kin relationships.

First, children's school attendance reconfigured sibling and gender roles. Alexis and Sibomana explained that when students left their homes for boarding school, most never returned to work full-time for their families. Aurora explained, 'In our family we only had one boy and he did not want to [return home to] look after the cows. He preferred to go and work somewhere else to make money.' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013) When students left home, parents had to rearrange the distribution of labour and consign the student's roles and responsibilities to siblings. Because Aurora's brother was gone, she

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<sup>120</sup> All were gender-segregated boarding schools; most were for boys.

said, 'I used to do all the boys' work...taking care of the cows [bulls].' She said they had to be flexible.

Second, children's engagement in schooling introduced new tensions into family relationships. A retired primary teacher, Janine (FS4/G2), explained that primary school attendance often created conflict between children who wanted to attend school and parents who did not see the value in it and/or who depended on their child's labour: '[Children would say,] 'I'm tired! Let me go to school. If I'm late the teacher will beat me.' But the parent would say, 'Stay here, come and help me work. I did not go to school and I don't have any problems!' (INT/Janine/1-29-2013) This remark reflects parents' concern about labour, but it also reveals tension between their child's schooling and their own, uneducated status.

Secondary schooling also created a class and status divide within families. When a student accessed a scarce secondary placement, s/he became revered in the community and rose to a status within the household like that of the father. Unlike their siblings, secondary students ate with their parents and often advised them on matters (Pers.Comm. Solange/5-2013). Even as the family worked hard to pay the students' school costs, they were increasingly perceived as 'backwards' while the student became 'developed'. Students like Sibomana's father ascended the social ladder and graduated into the state and market economy, but their less-educated parents and siblings were left behind doing hard labour in a kinship-based subsistence economy. When Sibomana's father graduated as a medical assistant, 'He became the king of the family' (INT/Sibomana/10-2012). As the equivalent of a lineage head or patron, he displaced his brothers and rearranged the lineage patriarchy.

Through their behaviour, children largely determined whether schooling would create division within the family. If students retained a sense of humility and reciprocal obligation to their family, they built goodwill by acting as a patron to their family. For example, Josie's youngest sister took the role of mother and patron to her eldest daughter, Jeanne (FS4/G3). In this way, students reinforced and reproduced kinship and patron-client norms and values. If they did not meet these cultural expectations, students provoked resentment and created division between siblings. Culturally, children were expected to know how to derive advantage from anything, but they were also expected to use that advantage to benefit the group. Children who remained home and worked in the student's place expected future benefit. Students did not always do this. Josie, who resented her inability to continue to secondary, complained that her more educated brothers looked down on her even though it was the cows from her marriage that paid their bridewealth:

- Josie:           When they finish school they have their lives, but they crush you - you will always be the unfortunate sister [...] They come with their wives who went to school also; they look at you as if you are a useless dish. They see you as a poor sister who came to beg, isn't it?
- Solange:       Does that mean that if someone went to school, it's precious, you have more value?
- Josie:           So much more. (LH/Josie/1-14-2013)

An *Inteko* elder attributed these attitudes to schooling itself, arguing that students' European schooling undermined indigenous culture and corrupted family relations that were based on mutual reciprocity and respect for elders. He explained:

So, how have things changed? [...] They [missionaries] said [...] everything we have and do is *igishenzi* [stupid] [...] They educated the youth and we lost. [...] The children, the youth have adhered to their education, they had no choice! How can you contradict someone who tells you that he is educating you and afterwards he will hire you? Parents were watching and they said, '*Zahinduye imirishyo*', meaning

‘The one who holds the drum [power] has changed’, and ‘We had no choice!’ That’s when respect for parents changed, when people became miserly, and when they extended their stomachs [became more selfish]. (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013)

Speaking in the post-Genocide era, this elite Tutsi elder clearly benefited from his European education, but he realised that this opportunity had come at a cost. While his views minimise the agency of young Rwandans, he nevertheless neatly identifies the competition for power that the Church and formal schooling introduced between European and indigenous institutional systems. Clearly not all students lost respect for parents and became selfish - the antithesis of their cultural values - but when they did, it profoundly influenced the nature and structure of their kinship relationships.

At the societal level, children’s engagement with the Church, schooling, and the state-led economy contributed to the reproduction of the modern institutional system. To the extent that they could, children actively participated in positioning themselves within these new structures of power, as Cole (2011) observes. At the same time, they continued to engage with kin and to reproduce kinship institutions, in part because so few had access to the resources associated with modern institutions. But as *Chapter One* and *Six* explain, macroeconomic instability during the Second Republic was increasingly testing the capacity of the lineage to fulfil its reciprocal obligations to its children. This capacity was further weakened by the devastation of the 1994 Genocide. Children experienced and responded to these conditions in diverse and consequential ways, as this final section demonstrates.

## **The Children's Generation: Kinship in the 'New Rwanda'**

The 1994 Genocide and its legacies, and the state's approach to post-Genocide reconstruction and development, created rapid changes in children's material and institutional environment. Oral testimonies suggest that the most fundamental impact of the Genocide and its legacy on young people was the material and symbolic loss of adult family members and household assets (see also Pells 2009; Burnet 2012, 65-6), while the post-Genocide government's rapid approach to state-led reconstruction and development has given young people a heightened awareness and experience of state and market institutions and their actors. These exogenous<sup>121</sup> forces – Genocide and reconstruction and development - are interconnected in that the latter is a response to the former, but they are also distinct forces, and they have converged to influence children's kinship relationships in complex ways. Yet, it is actors who shape the outcomes of these interactions as they draw on pre-Genocide institutional rules, norms and practices - as well as new ones and their experiences of violence - to navigate their changing environment (Lubkemann 2008; Wood 2008; Thelen 2010). Through their responses and actions, young people provoke changes in multiple institutions.

This complexity makes it difficult and unproductive to examine the effects of these forces in isolation from each other. Therefore, in this final section I weave a picture of four arenas of change in children's kinship relationships and trace the interplay between Genocide-related and development influences within them. I begin with the post-1994

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<sup>121</sup> Exogenous to the household and kin relations.

government's reconstruction of children's roles, responsibilities, and rights and then shift to more Genocide-related changes.

### ***A Force for Change: State-Led Reconstruction and Development***

The government and international organisations have been actively reconstructing generational and gender roles, responsibilities, and rights in line with national development priorities and global norms. Further, in a bid to supplant the influence of children's parents, whose 'miseducation' contributed to the Genocide, President Kagame's nationalist discourse positions the state as family and parent and youth as Rwanda's new 'foundation', its future (Kagame 2013b; 2013a). The rapid roll-out of children's rights laws and policies has had a palpable effect in a context where intergenerational relationships were formerly gerontocratic and tightly controlled. Where children were required to obey adults without question, the UNCRC gives young people the right to have a say in issues related to them<sup>122</sup>. As the Chief's rather optimistic Secondary 5 nephew explained:

Today children have rights and they make decisions together with their parents. If the parents say something, the children can say 'no'. When children have problems, they can ask the [local] leader to solve it, even up to the President! Today if you have a problem you send a message to the President on Twitter and your problem can be solved! (LH/Joel/1-6-2013; FS4/G3)

Young people also understood that they have the right (and obligation) to attend primary school and the right to not be beaten. Similarly, students explained that in the new 'system of gender balance', boys and girls are considered equal (Journal/Umulisa). But actors interpret the meaning of rules differently from each other and in ways that

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<sup>122</sup> Articles 12,13, 15.

institutions do not intend or foresee: these same students were adamant that according to 'Rwandan values', 'the man is the head of the household [chief] and the wife is the heart'<sup>123</sup> (Journal/Habimana); as Jean Baptiste explained, 'They act together and the husband decides at the end.' (Journal). As Lubkemann (2008) argues, actors draw on pre-conflict norms to navigate rapidly changing environments where the institutional 'rules of the game' are constantly shifting; the outcome is creative, hybrid interpretations of meaning. This pattern was certainly evident in Inkombe and Kigali, where parents and children were interpreting and acting on development discourse in diverse and sometime conflicting ways. This had significant consequences for their kin relations.

### **1. 'Rights' Gone Wrong? Conflicting Interpretations**

Participants spoke of children's rights in terms of 'development' more broadly, but they interpreted development differently both across and within generations. Parents primarily understood development as *amajyambere*, 'to progress'. This meant improving their household's socio-economic status. For some, this entailed recognising their children's rights. The Chief and Josie could afford to recognise these rights because they had formal employment and their four eldest children had FARG scholarships. A minority, like Fidel, blatantly ignored their children's rights and local leaders appeared incapable of ensuring them. Most parents felt that development necessitated a selective recognition of children's rights. As Adrien learned the new rules, he beat his children less. He allowed Aimee (FS2/G3) to attend school, but not Aimable (FS2/G3). These

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<sup>123</sup> This is based on the Rwandan proverb '*Umugore ni umutima w'urugo*', 'The wife is the heart of the home.'

diverse responses meant that children perceived, experienced and responded to their new state-constructed rights, roles, and responsibilities in different ways.

Like their parents, children understood development as an improvement in household status<sup>124</sup>, but other notions of development were often more significant to them. Out-of-school young people valued development as modern infrastructure and mobile phones. In contrast, secondary students primarily valued development as children's rights and learning from non-kin. They associated both with freedom. In a student focus group, Dusabe explained:

As the country is getting developed, young people are getting freedom [...] Before, there was no development and young people were not free to do whatever they wanted. They could not go out as much as they wanted. But today we are living in development...see, we can move! So as development improves, everyone gets democracy [i.e. choice].

His friend added,

[Today] We share ideas with people all over the world. We are not limited to the ideas of our family. That's how you find a child who has ideas from different places. Some people can give you good ideas, others give you some bad ideas. It means that today children are free. (FG/students/4-1-2013)

Students understood that they attend school and are protected from beatings because of 'rights'. Girls explained that development gives them the right to choose their own marriage partner, wear pants, and have equal rights to boys. But the out-of-school majority were - by definition - not experiencing their rights to the same extent as students. Rights were something they tested and aspired to have.

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<sup>124</sup> For example, Aimee explained: 'My old man and I worked together to develop our household [...] we started by looking after banana trees and they started to grow. It is not an easy way to development; you have to work harder than ever.' (LH/Aimee/3-9-2013)

I could see that these dynamics were influencing children's kinship relationships, but I wanted to know what my journal students thought. When asked, they explained that development is fundamentally altering intergenerational relations because it is changing the way children's roles and responsibilities are constructed. In the same group discussion, one boy explained:

Before development, you could find a parent saying, 'I had this child so that he can work for me', and a child said, 'I was born to work for my parents.' But today, because of human rights, you can find that children work for their parents, but they can also go to work somewhere else to get some money to provide for their future.

In many cases, children left to work because they were not realising their right to basic care. But in a context of uncertainty and highly unequal intergenerational relationships, some exercised their new rights to work for themselves, rather than kin, to improve their overall status. This came at a high cost to caregivers: Concilie, who raises her grandchildren, reflected, 'Having children nowadays, it is not like before. Today, having children does not help you.' (CONV/Concilie/3-17-2013) She did not have enough labour to support the family: the eldest had left home to work, and the younger ones exercised their 'right' to say 'no' to domestic work.

When children (especially sons) earned their own money, it diminished their parents' authority and power. Exasperated with his 19-year-old son, Clement (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>) remarked, 'Today they all have money. He tells you that he is going somewhere to work for money. But a good child before the war used to listen to you [...] But today it is a problem to get him back under your control.' (LH/Clement/3-2-2013) The influence of money was particularly visible in changing marriage patterns. One *Inteko* member complained,

Sons today say, 'What do I need from my father? I court by myself! They marry themselves! Everything is the child's initiative, not the parents' initiative. Parents are like observers, so children feel they are above their parents. (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013)

To the extent that young people used their rights to improve their life chances through non-kin institutions, they were rewriting generational roles, responsibilities, and power relations. This diminished their reliance on kin and expanded the influence of non-kin institutions.

However, parents and children largely determined how the state's new view of childhood and children's rights influenced their relationship. Students explained:

Male: I can't say that the relationship between parents and children is stronger or weaker because there are some parents who accept the changes from development and there are other parents who don't accept it. *For those who accept the change, the relationship doesn't change. But with those who don't understand and accept the change, there is always conflict* between parents and their children.

Female 1: Development has changed the relationship between parents and children because [...] everyone wants to get developed, but they don't have the same idea about what it means to become developed. You find that *parents are not going in the same direction as their children* with regard to development... [italics added for emphasis] (FG/students/4-1-2013)

Both parents and children understood that the rules have changed, but they often (un)intentionally interpreted them differently from each other. Consequently, rights-related conflict was extremely prevalent in both the rural and urban study. Students argued that caregivers' inability to understand how to parent in this new institutional environment was compounding the problem:

Female 2: Some parents have wrong ideas about development. They are confused between development [i.e. rights] and how they educate their children [i.e. parent behaviour]. So some parents don't know how to guide their children. Sometimes when their children do something, they do not

correct them because they think that it is 'development' and that it is a 'right' for their children...that this is 'their time'. So they let them do whatever they please. Because they don't guide them, correct them, the children change their behaviour and become badly behaved. For example, they may engage in prostitution and then the girls get pregnant. All that because parents don't understand development and their children.

Parents knew that their children's behaviour was their traditional and state-mandated responsibility, but they were confused about where their authority began and ended. Children were leaving the compound without permission and refusing to return home by dark, but they were also refusing to cultivate, gather cow grass, fetch firewood, carry their 20L water cans uphill promptly, and cook - essential and quintessential childhood tasks. Parents struggled to know how to control their children's behaviour without beatings.

These new children's rights rules made it more challenging to manage Genocide-related changes, as we see next, and Genocide legacies made it difficult to adapt to these new rules. Children's responses to both reconfigured their kinship relationships in significant ways.

### ***A Force for Change: The Genocide and its Legacy***

In this final section, I examine how children's loss of adults and family assets, diminished trust between kin and neighbours, and parents reduced ability to provide are influencing the way young people engage with kin and reproduce kinship institutions. I conclude by exploring how young people and their families once again renegotiate their relationships in the 'New Rwanda' when parents, like Adrien, return home from prison.

## **2. Navigating the Loss of Adult Kin and Assets**

As a consequence of the 1994 Genocide and its legacies, children such as Augustin and his three siblings lost parents, elder siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents - the family who were meant to educate and support them as they grew up. As the genograms illustrate, these family members were absent due to death, flight to neighbouring countries, abandonment, imprisonment, and soldiering. In Rwagati and the village bordering it, these losses were exceptional. This had the effect of making loss more gendered than the national experience. Although difficult to quantify, many children also effectively lost kin due to alcoholism and mental health problems, which increased in the aftermath of the Genocide. For example, Fidel became an abusive alcoholic shortly after the Genocide, a time when his father and brothers were imprisoned and his father was shot upon release. Compounding these losses, families lost significant assets (see also Verpoorten and Berlage 2007). For example, RPF soldiers reportedly took Adrien's five cows, and the Chief's house was destroyed by neighbours. These cumulative losses impacted children's relationships with kin in diverse ways.

The widespread loss of men imposed changes on gender and generational roles, responsibilities, and relationships that left adults and children with less time together. Where husbands were absent, women became head of household. In this role they became responsible for cash-based expenses, which rose with the implementation of mandatory primary schooling in 2008 and national health insurance in 2010. To manage, most mothers needed children to contribute more of their labour to production and domestic reproduction. This burden was disproportionately carried by eldest sons and daughters: Augustin and his neighbour Mugire were withdrawn from school to help

their mothers when their fathers were imprisoned. Similarly, Josie kept Jeanne home from school for three years to help her care for toddlers and newborn twins. In a culture where fathers and male elders traditionally enforced punishment, women became responsible for disciplining children.

These added responsibilities were made more difficult by three dynamics: First, children, who historically carried a significant share of household labour, contributed less labour and were home less as school attendance increased; parents had to work more to compensate for this lost labour and to pay school expenses. Consequently, parents had less time to bond with and educate their children. Janine explained:

Development doesn't let parents and children see each other. [...] For example, you see parents who take their children to boarding school when they are babies. Usually when a child is small...when they live together, that's when s/he enjoys the love of parents and that's when you love him/her more. [...] But if you send your child to school, s/he comes back home tired and you are tired too, or you don't have time to talk, so when will you talk to her/him? Even the old children, boys and girls, they are always in boarding schools, so what can you teach them? (INT/Janine/1-29-2013)

As she suggests, these effects were felt most acutely in households with full-time students, especially boarding school students. Second, as Janine suggests, women struggled to find time to fulfil their traditional role of educating children in the kinship rules, norms, beliefs and practices that guide behaviour. Aida explained: 'In this time we are very busy. We don't have time to sit with our daughters and talk and explain the things of life to them.' (LH/Aida/5-5-2013) Concilie remarked that was too busy surviving to worry about culture. Third, many children born since 1994 were taking this lack of parental oversight and awareness of their 'rights' as an opportunity to loosely interpret instructions, disobey, and 'wander', rather than help.

Children who remembered childhood before 1994, and out-of-school children, had a much stronger sense of their kinship roles and responsibilities than others. Nevertheless, the combined effect of taking on new gendered and generational roles and responsibilities; being less aware of kinship institutions; and weakened enforcement, made children far less likely to reproduce their caregivers' kinship rules, norms, beliefs, and practices as their elders had.

### **3. Loss of Social Trust: 'Today People Don't Understand Each Other'<sup>125</sup>**

The Genocide and its legacies diminished trust between kin and neighbours. This influenced children's ability to learn from and work with elders and kin.

Much of this distrust was related to financial strain. Aida that some mothers could not uphold social rules in the face of hardship:

I stayed home alone all those [14] years. We had a very bad life, but many women weren't able to face it and hold on. That is what these consequences [conflict, lack of respect] are from. There was a woman whose husband was arrested and put in prison [...] He was suffering there. Men came and tempted her with food and some clothes [...] Her children knew their mother's behaviour; they knew that she saw other men. [...] You can't tell your daughter that what she is doing is wrong when you are doing the same, and she knows it. [...] We tried to hold on. It doesn't mean that I also wasn't tempted by all that. But we tried to fight it. The ones who couldn't fight it lost everything. (LH/Aida/4-21-2013)

Like this woman's children, the children of Clement, Chantal (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>), and the Chief, lost respect for their parent and took their disappointment as license to disrespect him/her and break cultural taboos. When family members did not trust and respect each other, families blew apart or disintegrated.

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<sup>125</sup> LH/Concilie/2-21-2013.

Similarly, distrust within families was common when members cared more about their own economic recovery than their family relationships. Augustin's aunt was bitter that his father, Adrien, was recovering financially but was unwilling to pass on assistance to her family, who had helped take care of his children while he was in prison. Josie spoke of adult siblings who fought over bits salvaged from their natal home after their parents' death. It was common for family members (and neighbours) to keep careful account of who was benefitting from whom (including me), while hiding evidence of their economic progress lest they incur jealousy and provoke poisoning. Josie claimed that family and neighbours once again 'share the straw' across ethnic lines (CONV/Josie/3-27-2013), but participants often remarked, 'There is no more love here.'

These stories formed part of children's social memory: despite the peace, diminished trust was evident in children's frequent references to poisoning by an upset or jealous relative or neighbour. These patterns worried old Janvier and his wife. They explained:

Janvier: That's how things have changed. Parents [neighbours] were hating each other and they taught it to their children and the children obeyed them.

Wife: The parents educated their children in bad way because if I hate my neighbour or she hates me, she teaches that to her children and we will start hate each other. If I invite her in my house and she doesn't come, I would say, 'Oh, my children you see, she hates us', and the children will take it as it is. They will hate each other too. (INT/Janvier\_wife/2-17-2013)

Young people explained that this lack of trust left them with fewer kin to call on for advice or support. When I asked Augustin whether he has extended family who help him, he replied, 'Only my mother's young sister and my father's young sister, two of them helped us.' (LH/Augustin/5-13-2013) His mother, Aida explained that family conflict prevents her sisters from teaching her daughters as she was taught:

You see that today things change a lot. That practice [*guca imyeyo*<sup>126</sup>] disappeared. [...] And in this Vision [2020], a girl's aunty can't teach her how to do it when she knows that her own daughter never learned that. But why is that? People don't like each other anymore. Love is very cold. People are not happy to see you improving your life. [...] In my time, there was love. In that time, *aunties were the ones who advised children*. They [Anne and Aimee] have their aunties, but their aunties can't teach them anything good. For example, their aunty never even came to see us when she knew we were sick! So how can you send your child to her, thinking that she will take her and raise her as a good aunty should? (LH/Aida/5-5-2013)

Emboldened by a sense of their rights, some children took advantage of this animosity and distrust between adults to disrespect elders who tried to correct them. Janvier's wife recounted:

You see, this is one family, from here to *Ikimana*, though many family members have been exterminated. [...]

Over there, close to the coffee plantation nearby the market, I'm telling you, that place is a place for prostitutes and fornicators! Maybe you would find Mugabo's [the Chief's] daughter there with boys and you tell her, 'Move! Let's go home.' If you say that, she will stand there and insult you, tarnishing you! If she doesn't insult you, she would tell you: 'You are not responsible for me, it's not your business.' What will you do? You will walk away. You would try to talk to her parent and say, 'I saw your daughter on the road in the dark and she was doing this and this, why don't you advise her to change...?' But he/she would stand outside and say: 'Who are you to say such things about my child?'

One evening I went out and I found a girl with boys nearby our compound. I asked her to leave. In the morning, she found me at Gatera's house and she insulted me. Do you know what happened after that? She got pregnant! From that day, I swear to not say or do anything to anyone! That's how things are today! (INT/Janvier\_wife/2-17-2013)

In a culture where elder kin and neighbours were traditionally responsible to correct or advise any child they met, many children not only refused correction but insulted elders who tried to correct them. Instead of being taboo to disrespect elders, it was becoming taboo to correct other peoples' children. When children refuse correction and

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<sup>126</sup> See Appendix 1.

disrespect elders, they weaken the foundations of the kinship system: elder respect and reciprocal care. They shift the balance of power in favour of children and individual interests. They also reduce the prevalence of communal child-rearing practices, which puts the onus to discipline on immediate caregivers. This lack of communal support, combined with elders' reduced ability to enforce cultural rules, norms and practices as desired, has meant that the mechanisms that traditionally reproduced kinship institutions are not being transmitted and enforced as before the Genocide.

However, while these behaviours were common, they were not pervasive. They fuelled rumours and gossip and stoked parents' fears because they were new. Most children I knew and observed were remarkably respectful, helpful, and hard working - especially compared to their Kigali or Western counterparts; as Janine concluded:

Because we are poor in Inkombe, most people still have culture, they still follow the culture. Because we are poor, our children don't have things that distract them. You too [i.e. parents], you don't have something to do outside the compound, so you are always at home. Only a few children are getting out of hand, a few.

Nevertheless, it was clear that children do not respect, obey, or work for their elders to the extent that children did prior to the Genocide. Nor do they reproduce kinship rules, norms and practices to the extent that their parents did.

#### **4. Without a 'Settlement'**

Perhaps the most significant difference between young people raised prior to the Genocide and those raised since was their sense of an intergenerational contract. Parents and their children, like Augustin and Jeanne, who remembered childhood prior to the Genocide had a strong sense of having an intergenerational contract with elder kin. In contrast, children born since 1994 had a much weaker sense of an implicit

contract, though most demonstrated some sense of interdependence. Younger children's diminished awareness of kinship norms, values and practices contributed to this difference. But this shift was also due to Genocide losses that made it extremely difficult for most parents to fulfil even the most basic terms of the intergenerational contract. Almost all the parents I knew could not provide their children with adequate food, shelter and clothing, let alone future resources. When the state declared 'Schooling [not land] is [children's] inheritance' and made primary school mandatory in 2003, it reduced parents' future obligations, but it also increased their immediate obligations to their children.

Most parents were selling their food staples to meet their parental responsibilities, yet many children also needed to work to meet their basic needs: Umulisa hauled water to a construction site to earn money for school supplies; Claire (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>) cultivated to earn money to buy her own clothes; Aimable cultivated a rented field with a friend to earn money to pay his own surgery expenses. Parents were more dependent than ever on their children's labour to make ends meet. Without a meaningful 'settlement' to help them enforce their authority and ensure a reliable supply of labour, how did parents gain their children's compliance? And how did children respond?

Parents worked longer days; Adrien and Aida laughed about their childhood when children woke long before their parents. Some hired workers. Parental abandonment was increasingly prevalent (see also Honeyman 2013). Most of the young people who shared their stories with me found this situation painful. Many, like Augustin, Rachelle, and Aimable and his friends, were sad that they cannot study because they have to work

for their parent(s). A number, like Mutoni, Christophe (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>) and Joelle (FS<sub>4</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>), had to leave home to work because their family could or would not support them.

But few openly faulted their parents for their inability to provide. Benimana, son of a single mother, explained matter-of-factly, 'The reason we cultivate [for ourselves] is so that we can get some money, because parents can't give you everything.' (FG/OOS/4-27-2013) Rachelle knew her mother and younger siblings would literally not survive without her labour. In many cases, this sense of understanding was underpinned by a close relationship with a mother figure (see also Dyson 2014). Rachelle knew she was part of her mother's 'team'. Sons, like 19-year-old Mugire and Aimable, were forgiving because they understood their father's need for labour. And sometimes their fathers provided them with a small piece of land to cultivate for themselves, as in the past. Thus, while the post-Genocide landscape severely weakened the intergenerational contract, mutual understanding - a sense of being 'together' - mediated young peoples' responses to their parents and encouraged compliance<sup>127</sup>. Children like twins Patricie and Patrick helped their parents and younger siblings because they could and they were needed, not because it was enforced.

In contrast, children who lost respect for their parents did not work willingly for their parents. Rachelle complied with her father, Fidel, under threat of violence. Christophe left home at age 10. His little brothers disregarded their mother. The Chief's children ignored him. Adrien's son, Augustin migrated to Kigali. These parents did not lose their

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<sup>127</sup> Honeyman (2013) finds a similar dynamic in her child-rearing study.

authority because they could not provide, but because of their behaviour. None of these children chose to work for, or comply with, their parent's rules.

Overshadowing these relational dynamics - and young peoples' perceptions of their rights, and parents' inability to provide - and keeping young people somewhat in check, was the reality that the extended family remains children's primary source of social support. As we will see in *Chapter Six*, development has delivered roads, schools, and 3G, but the state has yet to become the dominant economic institution or welfare provider. Likewise, friends and social networks were important, but limited in their ability to provide material support. The Chief's eldest, Julien, explained what most young people understood: 'As long as you need soap from your parents, you are not grown up...waiting for your food, sleeping in his house, doing everything he asks [...] you are still the baby, you are the child.' (LH/Julien/1-13-2013) As a student, Julien knew he had to submit to his parents' rules and preferences until he had his own 'gate', that is, until he was self-reliant with his own home. Thus, even as young people were testing their power, most understood they were still dependent on kin.

These realities meant that kinship, though weakened, was still a central organising force in children's lives. Further, the instability of the nuclear family made lineage members an even more critical resource. This was evident in children's continued practice of making long visits to live with and work for extended family members. Augustin and his siblings lived and worked for aunties for years at a time; in return, Aimee's aunt paid her school expenses. Augustin was given goats. Josie's Kigali sister took responsibility for her daughter, Jeanne, from the time she began boarding school and Jeanne helped raise her aunt's children. Young people also continued to seek refuge with kin when

they conflicted with parents: Rachelle fled to her maternal aunts; Jean Baptiste (FS4/G3) and Joel came to live with their paternal lineage in Rwagati to escape their stepmothers. Children made the decision to come and go between households on their own and in consultation with family. This movement between kin helped households recover from their Genocide losses, but it also helped children build their own kinship relationships based on mutual reciprocity. When I asked young people who supported them the most, mothers, God, and kin consistently topped the list. Mugire explained:

The most precious thing in the world is to have both parents. They say, '*Akabura ntikaboneke ni nyina w'umuntu*', meaning, 'Your mother is something you can lose and never get back' [...] We face many bad things in this world, but the life we have, we get from our parents. Without them we are nothing. (FG/OOS/4-27-2013)

Fathers were never mentioned.

### ***Renegotiating Gender and Intergenerational Relations***

As we have learned, children had to renegotiate their roles, responsibilities and rights with kin in response to the effects of the Genocide and state-led reconstruction and development. But because of the high rate of imprisonment in Rwagati, many children had to negotiate the 'rules of the game' all over again when fathers and male kin<sup>128</sup> re-entered their lives after over a decade away in prison. No one prepared these men for their new rights-based world (INT/RWAMREC/2-19-2014). Re-entry was often a difficult process for all.

In Rwanda, people express solidarity with each other by saying '*turi kumwe*', 'we are together'. In Rwagati, a family's ability to navigate a relative's return without breaking

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<sup>128</sup> Some women, like Rosa, were imprisoned, but for a much shorter time.

apart was strongly tied to their ability to stay 'together' through their challenges. Some families achieved this when adults and children accepted the same set of social rules with minimal give and take. For example, when Celestin was released from prison after serving eight years, he returned home to a wife, daughter, and grandchildren who welcomed his return and mostly accepted the resumption of pre-Genocide kinship roles, rules, and responsibilities. In comparison, when Francois returned home after 12 years in prison, he appreciated that his wife had made something he could 'build upon' and he was willing to adapt to, and even champion, the country's new gender and generational rules. Both men were secure in their role as family head and both had marriages characterised by mutual respect. In contrast, Adrien had a supportive wife who recognised his traditional role, but he returned home intent on reimposing pre-Genocide generational rules on his children. Aimable recounted:

When he came, he found us all grown up and he didn't want to admit it. He wanted to do whatever he wanted with us and no questions asked. But we weren't ready to accept a new leader because he changed the rules. We were only raised by our mother. When we did wrong, she used to come and show us what we did wrong. After 14 years, he came home and found me a man. He started by beating me... [...] I left home for a while and when I came back I found a changed father.  
(LH/Aimable/5-6-2013)

All four children, age 14 to 20, resisted their father's authority and rules by running away. Adrien responded by making more of an effort to work peaceably with his children. In contrast to these families, Clement's family of seven is completely divided. His wife maligned him to his children while he was in prison. His son is a known thief and violent. His 5-year-old daughter openly refers to him as 'War'. When I returned in 2014, Clement was unstable and his wife and daughters had left him.

If a family was even moderately 'together', they appeared to be able to renegotiate gender and generational rules, roles, and responsibilities and manage significant adversity. They had 'social agency'. However, if they were divided, as Clement and Fidel's families were, even having resources did not necessarily benefit children. Janine warns: 'If the parents fight, children will go to Kigali when they grow up because they find that their parents haven't provided good things for them.' (INT/Janine/1-29-2013) Without the provision of 'good things', children must look for alternatives to kin for social and material support.

## **Conclusion**

As in the past, kinship relationships and institutions continue to be a central organising force in young people's lives. This seems somewhat remarkable given the rapid changes in Rwanda's institutional environment and the current government's efforts to reconstruct generational roles and responsibilities in nationalist terms. But the findings here show that although exogenous forces and modern institutions converge to influence children's lived experience, endogenous actors – in this case, young people – play a significant role in determining how these forces and kinship institutions will be reproduced. Faced with persistent structural inequality from the household to the national level, girls go to church to get out of the compound, become literate, and meet boys; boys migrate to Kigali to improve their life chances. Wittingly or unwittingly, they weaken kinship institutions as they rewrite generational roles and responsibilities and make the authority of their elders less exclusive.

At the same time, however, children continue to fulfil reciprocal obligations to kin. In part, this is because so few can access alternative resources and opportunities within

the modern institutional system. In part, young people understand kinship rules and mutual interdependence and benefit in tangible ways. Many are also compelled by love for family and/or a sense of belonging – a dynamic unaccounted for by institutional theory. Children’s relationships with kin are never all they hope for, but in a context of rapid change, scarcity, inequality and competition, kinship institutions are usually more dependable than modern ones. Young people know that if they build favour with kin in the home or beyond, they can work together towards shared goals; they have social agency. Without the support of kin, they must subject themselves to others and only hope for the best.

## Chapter 5 - Educating Children

'A 'well-educated' child is a thing of the past.'  
Alexis, FS2/G1

### Introduction

In this chapter I explore children's education across three generations; this work builds on the analysis of children's kinship relationships in *Chapter Four* by deepening our understanding of how and why social institutions and their actors use children's education to engage them in processes of reproduction, and how young people experience and shape these processes and their outcomes. As explained in the *Introduction*, I use the term 'education' to refer to the social processes through which children learn their current and future roles and responsibilities, cultural beliefs, and values. In addition, I use specific terms to denote different types of formal education (e.g. schooling, catechism class, civic education).

The empirical analysis in this chapter draws together and examines all the ways children are educated, from the household to state civic education camps. This approach allows me to examine how multiple, distinct, and often competing institutional forces converge to shape and inform children's everyday lives. It also uncovers how institutions – whether kinship, state, or the Church – impart different skills and knowledge to children based on their identity and behaviour and the future adult roles institutional actors envision for them. These power dynamics are evident in the first section, where I critically examine participants' memories of their indigenous education (formal and informal) and the meanings they attributed to it. But are these patterns evident in children's modern Church and state-directed education? In the second half of the

chapter, I critically examine how children perceived, experienced, and responded to the introduction and expansion of modern forms of education differently. Similar patterns emerge. Their implications become increasingly evident as I identify and trace how children's actions influence patterns of institutional reproduction over time.

This empirical analysis makes the practice of power visible and in so doing, leads us to a more politicised view of children's education in Rwanda. In this view, we learn how and why social institutions use regulative, coercive, and normative mechanisms to reproduce a particular social order through children's education (Bourdieu 1973; Levinson and Holland 1996; Meyer 1983; Mizen 2002; Stephens 1995; Pierson 2015; Balagopalan 2014). This perspective challenges the popular contemporary view that schooling is a sacrosanct public good and that children's informal learning is anachronistic. At the same time, this analysis quashes the notion that institutional actors can simply educate or school their youthful subjects; to move forward in this environment of competitive institutional multiplicity, children engage with multiple forms of education. As they do, educational outcomes in the home, school, or Church become unpredictable.

This is problematic for the Rwandan state because its hegemony depends on the production of a particular type of citizen: 'perfect development subjects' who obey government authority and contribute to national development (Purdeková 2012; see also Meyer 1983; Mizen 2002; Stephens 1995). Thus, as young people navigate the priorities and interests of an increasing number of institutional actors, we must ask 'Whose priorities and ideals are they (re)producing, why, and to what effect?'

## 5.1 Children's Lineage Education and *Itorero*

In *Chapters One* and *Four*, we learn that children's education has historically been embedded within an intergenerational contract with kin. An *Inteko Izirikana* elder explained, 'In the past, parents used to be in charge of their child from birth, and they took care of his/her education until [...] the time they married that child and even gave him an inheritance.' Another *Inteko* elder added, 'Every child had someone who educated him/her, and the family courted [another family] on his/her behalf based on how s/he behaved' (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013). A 'well-educated' daughter could expect a more favourable marriage alliance and more say in match-making. Likewise, a 'well-educated' son could expect the best marriage land inheritance, bridewealth, and alliance his lineage was capable of providing. These reproductive and distributional patterns helped ensure that kinship institutions were reproduced by the lineage's most favoured and compliant members, a pattern De Lame (2005, 281-2) also observes. This underscores the intensely relational and political nature of children's education.

In 2000, the Rwandan government declared 'Schooling is inheritance', not land. Through this act of cultural appropriation, the government signalled that parents' investment in schooling replaces their obligation to give children a marriage land inheritance. Adrien explained:

- Adrien: As you know, they say that the only inheritance you give students is paying for their studies [...]
- Solange: Do you mean that she [Aimee] will not have a right to land because you pay her school fees?
- Adrien: She has a right. But if I can continue to pay for her until she finishes her studies, she would tell me 'Here, I have my inheritance' [...] She can't go to report me saying, 'My father didn't give me my inheritance' because they would ask her to think about her school fees. (INT/FS2Parents/2-25-2014)

This slogan also implies that schooling, like land, will give children the capacity to support their own future household. However, unlike land, this 'inheritance' is a legal obligation for parents and children, rather than an act of reciprocity.

This conflation of schooling and marriage inheritance suggests there has been a significant shift in how children's education has been constructed and experienced over time. At the same time, the government's introduction of mandatory '*Itorero*' education in 2009 suggests educational patterns may not have changed as it first appears (RoR 2014). To understand the meaning of these changing educational patterns and the institutional priorities that underpin them, this section examines how the grandparents' generation remember the formal *Itorero* education of the Royal Court and how participants remembered their own and their children's lineage education. This analysis provides the background needed to interpret how young people experience and respond to the introduction and expansion of new, modern forms of education in *Section 5.2*, and the significance of their actions to patterns of institutional reproduction.

## ***Itorero*: Performing for Power**

Prior to colonialism, Rwanda had both informal and formal forms of education for children: lineages educated children and, until the monarchy was abolished in 1961, the sons of those close to the *mwami* could be chosen for training as *intore* in the *Itorero* at the Royal Court. Janvier was among those selected. He explained his training at the Royal Court in Nyanza thus:

People were taken to be trained in political matters. [...] *Intore* were trained to please to the king, to make him happy. [...] Apart from being taught traditional dances, we were taught to speak Kinyarwanda - the real Kinyarwanda - how to joke and to not get angry, how to speak well and to have good relationships with our friends in the community. We lived there when we were being trained. After, we went back home. [...] We had local chiefs and they would call us when we were needed by the king. [...] We always lived to please. (LH/Janvier/12-11-2012)

Alexis's early life narrative suggests that boys looked to *intore* as a model for ideal behaviour:

Solange: Do you know how to dance the traditional dances?

Alexis: Yes, I can do the *intore* dances. And it [*itorero*] was the only school we had then. In that time, [...] no young boy didn't know how to dance. During the kings' reigns, people used to go to learn how to speak well, talking and fighting their anger, respecting the culture...Really! All that at the king's court.

Solange: Did you live at the *itorero*?

Alexis: No way! *Itorero* was for those who lived at Court. We used to study and imitate others...when *itorero* belonged to important people. (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013)

These accounts indicate that *itorero* was an important institution because it reproduced the political power of the *mwami* and the Royal Court: through their performance, *intore* set a standard for behaviour that prioritised doing everything to please the *mwami*, who owned all and had power over all – people, land, and cattle (INT/Sibomana/10-2012; see also Des Forges 2011). Everyone else was an imitator who -

to varying degrees - behaved like *intore* to attain status and please those with more power.

*Itorero* has influenced the social norms children learn within the lineage, as I show next. But its influence also extends to the present day through the government's creation of *Itorero*, a mandatory civic education program aimed at 'molding patriotic citizens characterized by observance of Rwandan cultural values and taboos as well as having the culture of *Ubutore*<sup>129</sup> (nobility of heart)' (NIC 2013, viii). Thus, in both the pre-independence and post-Genocide eras, the (primarily) Tutsi political elite use *itorero* education to teach children how to please the ruling authority and achieve status (see also Kagame 2013); however, it is also the case that in both eras only a small minority can access this level of formal education<sup>130</sup> and the status and rewards that attend it (see *Section 5.2.*). In this way, power-holding elites use *itorero* ideology and education to reproduce a very specific distribution of power and resources that seeks to subject the majority to the will of a very small, powerful minority. To the extent that the young imitate these norms and practices for the status they bestow, they reproduce social relations that are premised on inequality<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> The state of being *intore*.

<sup>130</sup> *Itorero* is for Rwandans age 7 to 35, but it is only being enforced with full-time students.

<sup>131</sup> This is not a new idea, but one that runs through scholarship on Rwanda (see for example Maquet 1961; Newbury 1988; Codere 1962; 1973). However, it is new to consider how *intore* norms are reproduced through children's in/formal education.

## **Children's Lineage Education**

As a social institution, the family seeks to reproduce its rules, resources, and power-distributional goals through the social process of educating children for their future adult roles within the household, lineage, and society. As the previous chapter demonstrated, we see that these parenting priorities evolve over time as members – including children – respond to their changing natural and institutional environment. This reminds us that institutions and institutional mechanisms are historically contingent and humanly devised: it is primarily adults who determine what skills and behaviours are valued or taboo and how they will be rewarded or punished. Children's lineage education – for all its domestic functions – is intensely relational and inherently political and tactical.

In the following empirical analysis, I look carefully at three aspects of children's education: First, I examine the norms and values that have shaped parenting and children's behaviour over time; Second, I examine the social processes families engage in to equip children with the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values they need to fulfil their future adult roles; Finally, I examine how and why children's education differs based on personal attributes. Throughout this analysis, I identify how children influence these social processes.

### ***The Politics of Being 'Well-Educated'***

Pre- and post-Genocide narratives speak about children's education in very different terms. Using the range of Kinyarwanda terms listed in *Table 5.1*, participants described children's behaviour and children prior to 1994 in terms of how 'well-educated' they were. In contrast, references to children's education in post-1994 narratives primarily

refer to schooling or to being a student<sup>132</sup>. This linguistic analysis suggests that ethnotheories of child development have fundamentally shifted; however, while ethnotheories may have changed, this chapter will demonstrate that parenting practice and children’s education have changed but not transformed. Consequently, it remains important to understand the values embedded in the notion of the ‘well-educated’ child, for these contain the essence of what has historically been valued as socialisation: namely, the ability to live and work well with others and please authority (i.e. *kubana, kurera*; Chapter 1.1). But what exactly was expected? And what norms and values were being reproduced through children’s education?

**Table 5.1: Kinyarwanda Terms Translated as ‘Education’<sup>133</sup>**

Kinyarwanda terms used to describe:	Meaning
<b>A “well-educated” child</b>	
<i>imico myiza</i>	Attractive behaviour
<i>umwana warezwe</i>	A pure child
<i>batureraga neza</i>	To be raised nicely, to be from a ‘good inheritance’
<i>kurera neza</i>	To be raised/reared nicely
<i>kumvira ababyeyi</i>	Obedient to parents
<b>A “badly educated” child</b>	
<i>kubunga /kuzerera</i>	A wanderer: leaving the compound without permission; walking around but not to fulfill tasks; loitering
<i>kujabura</i>	Bad behavior; to steal or eat food before it is ready and/or before it is served
<i>uburara</i>	Bad education, bad behaviour
<i>abatindi</i>	1. Landless, destitute poor
	2. A person without culture, badly behaved/educated

Alexis explained that in his time, a ‘well-educated’ child was one who listened to, obeyed, and showed respect to their elders:

When a boy received a good education, he used to listen to and respect everyone, from his father to his uncles, from his mother to his aunties, and any unknown

<sup>132</sup> Participants used the verb *kwiga*, to study, and the noun *umunyeshuri*, student.

<sup>133</sup> Sources: Analysis of word use in interviews, 2012 to 2014.

person who passes his way. They could ask him to bring firewood for them or to fetch water. [...] he always accepted a request for anything, at any time. And he had to bring anything he was asked to, and people would say: look at this one [parent]...he has a very good child. (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013)

Likewise, Janine explained, 'a child today, if it is a child who is well-educated, you ask her/him to leave a boy/girlfriend alone and s/he does.' (INT/Janine/1-29-2013) Clement considered his two eldest daughters to be well-educated because they are 'under the control of their mother.' (LH/Clement/3-2-2013) Others explained that well-educated children respond to correction, perform their tasks and roles well and without prompting, and help their parents with their work as requested. Like *intore*, Alexis and Aurora asserted that well-educated children restrain their emotional expression, look down when spoken to by elders, never speak directly to their father, and never confront adults. They look for ways to please their elders. A well-educated daughter could be trusted to maintain the household so her mother could cultivate. In the past, a well-educated son was trusted to represent his father in his absence.

Through these behaviours, children reproduced gender and generational roles, norms, and hierarchies. But by gaining the favour of the adults in their lives, they also understood that they could enhance their life chances. When a son was well-educated, Celestin explained, 'Parents gave him a cow [as bridewealth] to thank him that he gave them joy, not shame.' (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

In contrast, 'badly educated' children do not demonstrate respect, compliance, or self-control. Janvier and his wife felt that 'badly educated' children were those who learn hatred from their parents. They and others remarked that children who are not well-educated steal, 'wander' beyond the compound, and eat from the cooking pot in secret

before others. In his time, Alexis explained, badly educated boys were those who did not learn from their mistakes and who refused advice. Bad girls fraternise with boys and become pregnant before marriage. These views persist in the minds of children and adults today.

An *Inteko* member explained the consequences of being regarded as badly educated in the past saying, 'A child who is not well-educated will not know how to take care of her/his marriage or his/her compound. So this one will not have family to do matchmaking for him/her.' (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013) Here we see a direct link between children's acquisition of skills and behaviours for future adult roles and punishment/reward by the group; as long as children had limited access to resources and opportunity apart from kin, it was costly to lose favour and status by diverging from reproducing existing group rules, norms, and practices.

### ***The Social Process of Being Educated***

By examining the social processes through which lineage members educate children, we discover what families (un)consciously seek to reproduce through children's lives, how they pursue this goal, and how children participate in - and shape - these processes. This analysis makes the reproduction of power relations more visible. But it also reveals what children learn and how their learning equips them to participate in community life, now and in the future<sup>134</sup>. Attending to both aspects of children's education allows

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<sup>134</sup> Serpell and Adamson-Holley (2016) argue that pedagogy has much to learn from the situated learning embedded within these informal social processes (21-2; see also Paradise and Rogoff 2009, 130).

us to identify continuity and change in children's education, and the implications for children and their families.

One of the primary ways children learn is from advice. In this group-centric culture, the giving and receiving of advice is a cultural imperative. Both young and old expressed the view that people with more intelligence/sense (*ubwenge*) have a social *obligation* to advise those with less; likewise, individuals seek out and *depend on* advice from those with more knowledge and wisdom<sup>135</sup>. Young people often expressed concern to me that will not be able to 'improve' themselves because they lack someone to advise them.

Given their need to learn and their subordinate social position, children received advice from many people, but especially from grandparents and elders. Advice came in many forms, from moral tales to proverbs, taboos, maxims, direct counsel, and shared beliefs. Elders used proverbs to teach culturally valued wisdom and beliefs, for example: '*Uwanze kunvira se na nyina yunvira ijeri*', meaning, 'The one who refuses to obey his/her parents will end up obeying the cricket [i.e. any nonsense s/he hears].' In contrast, taboos were used to control behaviour; children were often threatened with disaster if they broke one. For example, Pacifique (FS5/G3) explained,

When you were about to have you first menstruations, you were supposed to go to do exactly as they told you. And if you made one mistake [broke a taboo], they could poison you, and you could have nonstop menstruations.<sup>136</sup> (LH/Pacifique/3-21-2013)

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<sup>135</sup> Mukamurama (1985) identifies advice-seeking as a trait of *ubwenge* saying, 'One must know how to come out and open oneself to another person to be able to collaborate with him in order to benefit from his knowledge' (91).

<sup>136</sup> Taylor (1988) explains that in Rwandan cosmology, everything and everyone is connected through fluids (e.g. rain, blood). Thus, a girl could negatively impact the group if her flow was not managed correctly. In this group-centric worldview, poison (in its physical or spiritual form) is used to regulate the behaviour of others, usually by inflicting illness or death (see also Taylor 1992).

Through this instruction, children learned to reproduce culture and kinship institutions.

In this predominantly oral culture, giving advice accords moral authority. However, as formal knowledge gains value, informal knowledge is losing value. Thus, whereas advice in the past primarily came from elders, today many secondary students take pride in their role of advising others with less schooling, regardless of age. As children take a role in redefining what knowledge has value, they are rewriting culture and redefining social relations.

In the past and present, children primarily learn skills through a process 'guided participation'. Through this process, children acquire locally valued skills and knowledge through watching, listening, doing, and mimicking older role models, who are usually siblings. This embedded active learning takes place within the compound and on the hill from the time a child is born. I witnessed this process when my 18-month-old neighbour used a dull blade to try to peel potatoes with her grandmother and when children carried jerry cans of water or bundles of firewood on their heads with smaller siblings (with smaller loads) in tow (see *Figure 5.1*). Through guided participation in everyday tasks, children gradually gain the capacity to carry out contextually and socially specific life skills.

**Figure 5.1: Learning Through Guided Participation**



Children also learn pro-social skills like negotiating, problem solving, sharing, and cooperation as they work and play alongside siblings with whom they share the same sleeping mat, clothing, and plate. Pascale's childhood experience during the Two Republics is illuminating:

When other family members went to cultivate, the child who stayed at home knew she had to prepare food for them so that when they came back they found lunch ready [...] After we finished eating, every child knew what her/his work was - who would go to get wood for cooking, who would go to fetch water, get grass for the cows etc. We knew everything, how to organise ourselves. (LH/Pascale/2-21-2013)

These patterns and skills are still evident in homes like Redempta's (FS<sub>3</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>) where children are out-of-school; they are less evident in homes where children spend more time in school.

Children's education is a collective affair, but mothers (or their equivalent) are held responsible for outcomes<sup>137</sup>. Gender, birth order, and sibling composition strongly influence how this education occurs and what skills individual children learn. Most mothers train their eldest child to manage the household and younger children because they need to return to cultivation. Janine describes this guided learning process:

When I was young, a young girl grew up working with her mother...learning to sweep, to wash dishes, to wash the milk pot...learning the tasks for girls. Whatever her mother did, she learned to do the same...in the past, parents were close to their children, working together. (INT/Janine/1-29)

By age five or six, the eldest can be seen carrying their baby brother or sister on their back and doing much of his/her care. From age nine or ten, the eldest manages the household in her/his mother's absence. Daughters are preferred for this role, but the gendered division of labour is flexible: Celestin's story and participant observation showed me that the eldest son carries out these duties until a girl is available to replace him. Similarly, Aurora carried out her brother's duties because he went to work in the colonial economy. As children increasingly leave home for school and work, they force a redistribution of labour. A more flexible assignment of roles and tasks helps households meet their labour needs - needs that have changed little over time. At the same time, because remaining siblings take on tasks that are less conventional for their gender and birth order, children's roles and learning are becoming less gendered.

Once trained, the eldest daughter (or son) has the knowledge and skills she needs to fulfil her future adult roles. However, before she marries she reinforces her own skills

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<sup>137</sup> This is why maternal orphans like Francine were pitied as children at-risk of growing up uneducated (see also Erny 2005; Kayigana 1979).

and ensures domestic reproduction by training the next oldest daughter. Aurora recounted learning from her eldest sister in this way, saying: 'She taught me day by day [...] until she married and then I replaced her in her job of milking [...] and then when I got married, my little sister replaced me milking the cows' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013). These patterns not only illustrate how children educate younger children, but also how they reproduce culturally constructed understandings of social age (see discussion below).

As the previous chapter argues, punishment and reward by role models play an important role in guiding and reinforcing children's participatory learning (see also Serpell and Adamson-Holley 2016, 17). Aurora recalled, 'When your father woke up, he came to check if you did your job [cleaning the cows] well. If you didn't do your job very well, he took a stick and beat you.' (INT/FS2/5-12-2013) Her family's livelihood was at stake if she did a poor job. Children also have the authority to correct younger siblings (see also Vincent 1954). This authority is a function of their social age; however, I only ever saw (or heard of) children firmly reprimanding younger ones. More often, older role models assist younger children with their tasks or offer bits of advice as they worked together. The effectiveness of this education is evident in children's early competence in tasks and in the high level of cooperation, collaboration, and understanding I witnessed within the sibling groups I observed. Full-time students, especially secondary students, lacked these competencies.

But learning from older role models through guided participation goes both ways: as older children in Rwagati learn new social rules from human rights discourse, they interpret these rules and pass on their interpretations to younger children. Aware that they now have the right 'to say no' to elders, many model less compliant behaviour. This

was evident in parents' constant complaints that their older children disregard curfews and instruction, while their younger children spend hours 'wandering' when they are meant to be doing tasks. Older children, like the Chief's daughter Justine (FS4/G3), openly (but cautiously) confronted their parents; their younger siblings complained about or refused basic chores. Because guided learning is so effective, children are changing kinship rules, norms, and practices quickly.

These learning patterns provide an important insight: Although mothers are held responsible for children's education, most learning occurs through the process of child-to-child knowledge transmission, not adult-to-child transmission. Elders direct children, but everyday learning is primarily sibling-directed; it also occurs through indirect learning by the child his/herself (sub/conscious) (see also Hirschfeld 2002). As children learn and direct learning, they gradually come to inhabit the gendered, generational roles and responsibilities they are being prepared for. To the extent that they comply with adult directives as intended, they reproduce existing social patterns and hierarchies. These findings suggest that within the life course the locus of institutional reproduction and change is childhood and coming of age, as African kinship and generational/cohort studies theorise.

### **Reproducing Social Hierarchies**

Lineages and family construct childhood and children's education to facilitate the transmission of skills and knowledge as well as the reproduction of power-distributional goals. Through social age categories, they give meaning to children's biological immaturity and culturally-valued skills; they also structure age relations (see, for example, Musabyimana 1999, 200-2). But as I will show here, early learning was also

constructed and experienced in gendered and contextually specific ways. Consequently, participants gained different skills and knowledge based on their personal and household attributes. These realities influenced what adult livelihoods they were capable of and the social and economic relations children reproduced through their transitions.

The grandparents' narratives suggest that two developmental markers influence the roles and responsibilities children are given and the social age they are accorded. First, elders expect children to demonstrate *ubwenge* - culturally valued forms of intelligence, wisdom, and sense - around the age of 7 to 9. *Ubwenge* is akin to the developmental capacity for abstract thinking as well as intersubjective and self-awareness. For example, Aurora explained that *ubwenge* gave her the sense to realise her place in her social world: 'When I got wisdom [*ubwenge*], when I began to see wisdom [*ubwenge*], I found my dad was a chief.' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013) In comparison, Francine explained, 'My older sister [...] was like a mother to me [...] and she is the one who gave me wisdom [*ubwenge*].' (LH/Francine/3-5-2013) In this example, wisdom is learned. As children demonstrated *ubwenge*, they were given greater responsibility and authority over others within the household and lineage. This analysis demonstrates that children have different capacities to understand, interpret, and engage with institutional rules, norms, and practices.

Second, children's education was influenced by their physical development. As children matured physically and demonstrated competence in age-appropriate roles and behaviours, older kin gave them more complex, physical, and gendered tasks to learn, and roles that demanded more responsibility. For example, Janine explained, 'When a

girl's breasts began to emerge, her mother taught her how to do handcrafts, to make *insika* mats, how to organise the household.' (INT/Janine/1-29-2013) These changes were recognised by a shift in the gendered social age terms children were addressed by: a girl, *umukobwa*, became *umwangavu*, a girl with developing breasts, and then *umugeni* or *umwari*, a girl who is ready to be married. This gradual process of learning gendered roles ensured the household had an adequate distribution of labour while also preparing children for their future adult roles.

These shifts in social age shaped children's constraints and opportunities in culturally defined ways. When girls demonstrated *ubwenge*, they had to start wearing clothing - a tasselled cow hide skirt; when they began to develop breasts, grandmothers explained they were actively prepared for marriage and were not allowed to leave the compound alone. They were given more responsibility for younger siblings. When a boy 'started to have a beard' and 'began to take initiative to do work himself [without prompting]', Jacques (FS4/G2) explained he was no longer a boy, *umuhungu*: he was *umusore*, a young man who was ready to marry (INT/Jacques/1-29-2013). To the extent that young people fulfilled expectations associated with these social age categories, they reproduced their parents' livelihoods, cultural norms and values, and social hierarchies based on age, gender, and generation.

Children's education was further gendered in that prior to the Genocide, a girl could not be deemed 'well-educated' and ready for marriage until she completed her sexual education; there was no equivalent education for boys. Through this education by older female relatives, girls learned *guca imyeyo* (to elongate the labia) and how to please

their future husband<sup>138</sup> (see also Musabyimana 1999; Codere 1973, 263). An elderly neighbour woman explained, ‘All girls who were well-educated did it...After the wedding night the *umushyingira* [woman who accompanies bride] stayed to make sure that the bride was a virgin and that she had done *guca imyeyo*.’ (CONV/Neighbours/3-18-2013) The groom could reject his bride if she failed to demonstrate either. As with other facets of a daughter’s education, this education both empowered and reproduced girls’ subservient position: women spoke with pride about having done *guca imyeyo*; they felt it added to their beauty and pleasure<sup>139</sup>. At the same time, because not doing *guca imyeyo* was grounds for divorce, it confirmed a bride’s subordination to her husband and lineage women (see also Taylor 1992). In this way, girls reproduced gender and generational hierarchies through their sexual education.

Children’s education was also strongly influenced by the broader political economy because learning that is embedded in labour is contextually specific. Thus, in every era, households’ ethnic and socio-economic status and class influenced the type of labour children engaged in, the age at which they learned tasks, and the skills and knowledge they learned. For example, during dual colonialism Alexis (Tutsi) recounted that he worked as his father’s messenger; in contrast, Celestin (Hutu) laboured for a Tutsi patron and Concilie helped her widowed Hutu mother fulfil her land patron’s forced labour requirements (*ubuhake*). In the post-Genocide era, out-of-school children (predominantly Hutu or mixed) engage in age-appropriate tasks related to production and domestic reproduction, while full-time students tend to only engage in domestic

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<sup>138</sup> It was unclear how many girls in Inkombe sector learn *guca imyeyo* today, but the award-winning late-night radio show *Zirara Zubakwa* is teaching it.

<sup>139</sup> Aida recounted that there used to be regional competitions to see who had the longest labia!

tasks. Further, structural violence forced many parents to give children tasks that exceed their social age or physical ability. Concilie noted that she and her sister were too young to be helping their mother dig. Children like Rachelle, Christophe, and Mutoni have faced similar demands in the post-Genocide years (see also Pells 2012; 2009). Although children learn livelihood skills through these tasks, these tasks and working for others at a young age put children at risk of harm; they also prevent children from accessing alternate, age-appropriate learning opportunities that are more likely to enhance their life chances. Consequently, destitute children are highly likely to reproduce their household's vulnerability.

When children's learning is embedded within their immediate context and they primarily learn through guided participation, they effectively learn the pro-social and life skills best suited to their context. Lancy (2012) asserts that this approach to educating children is like '...fitting the maturing child into its society like a key into its lock' (46): the key fits. However, this key opens the door to the same livelihood as parents' and makes children very likely to reproduce the kinship institutions and asymmetrical power relations that shape and inform their lives. One reason reproduction is so likely is that the intimate relational nature of informal learning as well as interdependence and mutual reciprocity, make unsanctioned deviance costly. Thus, despite the urgent need for Rwandan children to transition to off-farm livelihoods, the effectiveness of embedded, guided learning and the influence of structural violence make young people more likely to reproduce their peasant households' livelihood, class, and socio-economic status and the structural inequalities endemic in their institutional environment.

Given how effective this learning is at reproducing the status quo, it is critical to assess how the skills children learn can transfer to other livelihoods. And as international and state actors rewrite the social rules and norms that shape these learning relationships, it is essential to explore how children can improve their life chances without jeopardising these relationships - and their family's livelihood - by refusing traditional roles and responsibilities.

## 5.2 Navigating the Priorities of Modern Institutions

Beginning with the introduction and expansion of European and global institutions during colonialism (1895-1962), young Rwandans increasingly became aware of new forms of education. The most prevalent forms of education have been religious education and schooling, but the generational analysis that follows primarily focuses on children's interactions with Church and state-provided schooling and civic education because that is what participants recounted in the most detail.

Like kinship and feudal institutions, state institutions have had to establish their own political and economic organizations in Rwanda. These depend, as Stephens (1995) argues, 'on the formation of social actors *able* and *willing* to function in complementary ways within them' (16, italics added). The primary mechanism the state (colonial and nation) has used to produce these social actors, who are essential to the realisation of the state's goal of institutional hegemony (i.e. systemic change), is children's education. But how have young people experienced and responded to this education?

The empirical analysis that follows shows that children have perceived, experienced, and responded to these new forms of education in diverse ways. But while most appear '*willing to function in complementary ways*' within these new institutions, few are *able to*. This analysis examines why. It also raises important questions about whether the skills and knowledge children gain through their modern education prepares them to transition to off-farm livelihoods as needed. Finally, this work traces how young people influence processes of institutional reproduction as they engage with multiple forms of education in established and novel ways.

## **The Grandparents' Generation: Education During Colonialism**

When the grandparents' generation were children, the Belgian colonial administration and the Church shared similar priorities related to young people's education: Schooling and seminaries provided the means to train a loyal cadre of indigenous leaders who would identify with European culture, the Belgian state, and Christianity. The vision they had for the remaining majority was 'just enough [literacy] to convert them without changing their lives' (Hoben 1989, 8). But as the previous chapter showed, even an awareness of new opportunities changed children's lives by showing them alternatives to their lineage education - alternatives and opportunities only a few could access. Children were strongly influenced by both religious education and colonial schooling, but I focus the analysis that follows on children's experience of colonial schooling.

### ***Colonial Schooling***

The grandparents' generation interpreted, experienced, and responded to colonial and Church educational priorities in diverse ways. Concilie, who helped her widowed Hutu mother fulfil her *ubuhake* obligations, made no mention of schooling and had none. Francine, the daughter of a Tutsi widower, was not allowed to attend school, but she remembered hiding outside a mission classroom to listen in on Bible lessons. Celestin, a Hutu maternal orphan, studied catechism while living with *les Pères Blancs* for three years but then left of his own accord to live with his maternal grandmother. This education gave him basic literacy, but not the ability to transition to a new livelihood.

In contrast to these more marginal children, Aurora, daughter of a Tutsi hill chief, recounted:

When I was out looking after the cows, my friends joined me in the afternoon, after they attended morning school. They had a book called *Alefu* [Alphabet reader] and they taught me how to read and write from that book. That's how I learned to read and write. But because I always did as my parents asked, they rewarded me by letting me go to study, but only in the afternoon program. (INT/FS2/5-12-2013)

The 'morning school' was primary school. Access was restricted primarily to the sons of elites (see also King 2014; Hoben 1989). Aurora explained: 'I didn't go to school [morning program] because it wasn't easy for a young girl to go to school. To go to school, you had to beg and beg your parents to let you go. For me, I didn't study in the morning school.' The 'afternoon program' she attended was catechism class with some literacy instruction.

When asked what she studied in afternoon classes, Pacifique responded: 'Reading and writing. And a teacher used to go there to the board and then tell us to write this or that. Then we wrote and memorised it. In that time, we used to write to boys and put letters in the envelopes, talking about marriage.' (LH/Pacifique/3-21-2013) Colonial documents reveal that the Belgians intentionally used this rudimentary, rote, teacher-centred learning approach to prevent the formation of a literate, critical thinking indigenous populous who could challenge their authority (Erny 2001, 88; 2005). They surely did not anticipate that young people would use their limited literacy skills and new social networks to court and thereby challenge elder authority, as we see in the previous chapter. Thus, despite the limitations of afternoon classes, girls and boys used this resource to enhance their status and capacity to act. Schooling gave Aurora important social connections who, at her request, intervened to persuade her father not to make her marry an 'uneducated' (i.e. unchurched) Bakiga boy. Later in life, this minimal education also gave her the skills and status needed to serve her community as

a cell leader<sup>140</sup> (unpaid) from 1975 to 1990. However, most were unable to use this schooling to transition to off-farm employment.

The story was very different for some sons of elites, like Sibomana's father and Aurora's brother, who were selected from among their siblings to attend European style boarding schools. Alexis explained, 'In the past, they [*les Pères Blancs*] came and forced the boys to go to school. But only the boys from the upper class...the chiefs' children.' (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013) Sibomana's father was given up because he was the fourth son - not the favoured eldest or youngest. The Belgians and Catholic Church intended this schooling to supplant the Royal Court's *itorero* training, which prepared *intore* like Janvier to become courtiers or hill chiefs. Instead, European schooling prepared these elite boys to supply the colonial bureaucracy and Church with skilled labour (see also Longman 2010). Initially, coercion was necessary; parents did not trust *les Pères Blancs* or their schools. But as young men like Sibomana's father and Aurora's brother graduated from secondary school, and Josie's uncle graduated from seminary - bilingual and with a European education - they became part of the new indigenous ruling elite, *les évolués*, and they did not return to work for their fathers. With access to state power and the new market economy, the rewards of being 'well-educated' by the lineage paled in comparison to the benefits of formal schooling.

These elite outcomes played a significant role in shaping parents' and children's aspirations and expectations related to schooling. Francine recalled,

When our children were young, we used to send them to school thinking that when someone went to school, he would become famous, like a Minister or a Member of

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<sup>140</sup> Local leader for a group of villages.

Parliament, a doctor or agriculture engineer. We wanted them to know writing and reading so they could become veterinarians. They also could become a chief of sector, or a mayor. These were our reasons to send kids to school. (INT/CaregiverFS3/5-7-2013)

Because secondary graduates were effectively guaranteed positions in the colonial or Church administration, these parental expectations were understandable (see also Hoben 1989, 57). But the Catholic Church and Belgian colonials reproduced their position of power by intentionally limiting access to schooling opportunities on the one hand, and distributing power over relations of production to an elite, educated minority on the other. It was a mark of their success that most children had limited or no access to schooling of any kind.

However, these stories also demonstrate that young people were not simply acted upon by these modern institutions. Many children, like Francine, Alexis, Aurora and Pacifique, regarded schooling as a means to enhance their personal status and life chances. As children who could engage with schooling opportunistically, schooling began to reconfigure gender, generational, and class divisions because it provided formal knowledge to *some* girls, *some* Hutu, and *some* poor. At the same time, unequal access to schooling and its associated opportunities solidified and created new divisions between those with access to schooling and those without; between those who were connected to European institutions and the peasant majority, who - like Concilie - were subject to forced labour by their colonial and Tutsi masters. It is unsurprising then, that unequal access to schooling and its associated opportunities contributed to a sense of institutionalised oppression and exclusion and thereby contributed to the 1959 Revolution and violence of 1961 to 1966 (Newbury 1988, 115-6; Prunier 1995).

## **The Parents' Generation: Education During the Two Republics**

Both Presidents had a strong political commitment to 'fee-free' mandatory universal primary schooling for both boys and girls. They expected that expanded access to primary would help to redress historical inequalities, while also transforming children into 'truly skilled human resources' who would return to their rural livelihoods more productive human capital, equipped to advance national economic development (Hoben 1989, 14, 21; also Erny 2003; 2005). However, in contrast to their parents' positive accounts of colonial schooling, the topic of schooling evoked narratives of dissatisfaction on many levels from the parents' generation. In the analysis that follows, it is impossible to understate the extent to which state and family rules, norms, and distributional patterns influenced children's access to schooling, their experiences there, and their life chances. By exploring two dominant themes that emerged from narratives – access to quality schooling and gender - this section examines how children perceived, experienced, and responded to schooling in this period and why they differed.

### ***School Access and Quality***

Despite expanded access to primary school, mandatory enrolment, and 'fee-free' schooling, primary school attendance and completion was very low within the parents' generational cohort: as *Table 5.2* illustrates, one-third completed from zero to three years of schooling, two-thirds did not go beyond Primary 6, and five per cent completed secondary. These completion rates are very close to the national average in 1983 (see World Bank 1988, 171).

**Table 5.2: Schooling Levels in the Parents' Generation**<sup>141</sup>

Highest Schooling Level	Number	Completed highest level	Completed highest level (%)	Hutu	Tutsi	Male	Female
No schooling	6	-	-	5	1	2	4
Primary 1-3	6	3		4	2	3	3
Primary 4-6	15	9	43%	9	6	5	10
Primary 7-8 (1979-94)	4	4	19%	2	2	4	0
Secondary 9-12 (1979-94)	4	1	8%	1	3	0	4
Post-secondary	2	2	5%	0	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>			<b>57%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>57%</b>

One factor that created dissatisfaction and influenced participants' ability to attend primary school was conflicting state and parental interests. The state made primary attendance mandatory, but grandparents noted that 'fee-free' primary school had significant direct and indirect costs attached<sup>142</sup>. The government also delivered very poor quality schooling. But while cost influenced some children's ability to attend school, Pascale argued that financial capacity was not the real issue:

In that time, you missed school not because your parent lacked the means to send you, but because they did not want to send you to school. They did not care about education! You could find children whose parents were poor, but they took them to school. (LH/Pascale/2-21-2013)

Janine, a retired teacher, confirmed this view. Francine remarked that she and her husband sent all their children for some primary schooling, but her husband saw no value in it; they needed their children's labour for household production. She admitted, 'Sometimes we hid the children [from authorities] so that we wouldn't be forced to send them to school.' (INT/CaregiverFS3/5-7-2013) Here we see that the state and families

<sup>141</sup> Data includes siblings. See *Appendix 6*. Data for some deceased siblings is missing.

<sup>142</sup> Hoben (1989) estimates primary school cost US\$5 per child per year in the early 1980s when average annual per capita income was US\$280 (102).

had competing interests and objectives related to investments in schooling and children's time use and skill development.

However, children often made their own decisions related to primary school attendance: some quit school while others negotiated with family for the opportunity to attend, often against their parents' wishes. The Chief explained that he dropped out in Primary 6 due to ethnic tensions and because opportunities for Tutsi students were exceptionally constrained:

Later, in 1975, 1976 to 1978, 1979 ethnic ideology started in schools, teachers asking 'Who is *mututsi*? Who is *muhutu*?' [...] Each child had to raise a hand whenever they were asked about which ethnic group they belonged to. [...] No Tutsi could succeed, either in school or in other activities! (LH/Chief/12-10-2012)

But Celestin's eldest daughter, Camille (FS<sub>1</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>), quit in Primary 1 because her teacher beat her back till he took off flesh. Redempta's uncle paid her expenses, but she left Primary 4 because she hated being humiliated when students were publicly ranked in class. In contrast to these girls, Janine continued in school, despite beatings, because as a girl and a Tutsi she felt lucky to be allowed to attend school full-time. Francine's eldest, Francois (FS<sub>3</sub>/G<sub>2</sub>), persisted despite bouts of illness and his father's disapproval. Like Janine, he had his sights set on secondary. Other participants explained that even though they persisted in primary, their schooling was interrupted by illness, a lack of money, and parental demands for labour. These conditions made it difficult for students to either continue or succeed.

Young people who worked hard to access secondary found it virtually impossible to gain admission. Participants gave different reasons for their inability to progress. Francois explained, 'I finished Primary 8, but I never went on because it became impossible. I

was born into a poor family. When I finished my studies, I failed my examination. That is why I couldn't go on to the higher classes.' (LH/Francois/3-18-2013) But over 90 per cent of students in this period 'failed' their examinations because the government only admitted six to nine per cent of all primary graduates into its secondary boarding schools; most of those admitted were urban, Hutu, and/or connected to power (King 2014, 88). Josie understood the ethnic nature of these quotas, saying: 'Many of us had chances to study [primary], but our time was a bad one [...] You [a Tutsi] could succeed in the national examination, but they could never let you pass. That happened to me.' (LH/Josie/1-14-2013) The government expected primary students to transition back into their rural livelihoods as 'truly skilled human resources', but these young people wanted schooling to enable them to transition to off-farm employment. When this did not happen, they – and their community – felt the student had failed or been cheated out of an opportunity (see also Williams 2016; Serpell 1993, 11). But coming from a Tutsi or rural background, it was almost impossible to succeed.

Thus, while the new nation state expanded access to primary school to gain legitimacy with the Hutu majority and international donor community, both Presidents effectively used schooling to distribute opportunity and power to a select minority (see also Hoben 1989, 15; King 2014). The fact that so few young people transitioned from school to off-farm livelihoods is testament to the state's success.

At the same time, since most children had very little sustained contact with formal schooling, they continued to be primarily educated by kin. Many wanted to transition to off-farm livelihoods, but without the skills, knowledge, and connections to do so most continued to reproduce their parents' livelihood. Consequently, the government

did not realise its goal of creating ‘truly skilled human resources’ through its investment in primary schooling. Nor did it really redress historic inequalities in schooling, for the Hutu majority was still blocked from schooling that led to social mobility. Further, the Second Republic’s ethnic and regional discrimination in state education made Tutsi students, like the Chief and Josie, far more aware of their ethnic status and exclusion. The Chief’s life history suggests that this contributed to the solidification of Tutsi identity and the strengthening of lineage and ethnic networks of belonging.

### ***Schooling and Gender***

Particularly during the Second Republic, education reforms promoted increased enrolment and primary completion for girls (King 2014, 84). This focus effectively put pre-existing gender norms under the spotlight. As girls, Josie and Pascale embraced primary schooling and increasingly saw women like Janine and Aurora working beyond the compound as teachers and cell leaders. But despite their love of learning and their ability, these girls came to realise that obstacles to their attendance had little to do with any physical or cognitive limitations on their part. Their access to school was limited by entrenched patriarchal gender rules, norms, and practices and the gendered division of household labour. Pascale explained,

Parents used to improve and support some children and then treat others badly, for example, girls! Girls were like resources for other children in the family, or resources for their family. Do you understand? Life was not easy. (LH/Pascale/2-21-2013)

Because sons laboured for the lineage for life while daughters left home to marry, she felt that her parents saw a daughter’s schooling as a loss: ‘They were only interested in taking their boys to school. For them, a young girl had to stay at home and work till she

married!' Similarly, Josie complained that although her Tutsi father, a leader of the prominent Catholic newspaper *Kinyamateka*, wanted all his children to attend school,

The most important thing that could happen to a girl in her parents' eyes was to give her away for marriage so that they could get cows as bridewealth. They always thought of a daughter in that way [...] I stopped my studies in the 6th Form primary at the age of 13 [...] Regardless of how far we could reach, a girl could go no farther than the 6th Form [...] The main idea was that a boy was born to be superior; he had the chance to go to school [secondary]. (LH/Josie/1-14-2013)

She went on to explain that her parents depended on her bridewealth to marry their more educated sons. Thus, any further schooling for her could jeopardise her parents' ability to marry her well. Here, Josie recognises that it is not her cognitive ability but her gender that holds her back. Likewise, Pascale noted, 'I did not study because my parents were not willing to take me at school. I know I was able to do it.'

But some girls used their limited schooling to push back at these gender constructions. My neighbour Mukanda finished primary at age 15. At age 16 she did not feel ready to marry, nor did she want to marry the boy her parents had chosen. So she wrote a letter to the boy refusing him. When that failed, she did *kubenga* at her *gusaba*:

My father got angry, but finally he calmed down. Because I was educated [at school], I knew how to make my own choices. If I did not want something, I did not back down. So my father said, 'So you see, because my daughter has studied, she knows what she wants. It is her choice. I cannot change her mind if she doesn't want to marry the boy.' But when I refused that boy, my reputation in the village changed. They [villagers] thought that I was pregnant, or that I wanted to go to Kigali, or that I wanted to go *kwishingura* [marry oneself, elope] ...that my behaviour was bad. But I did not care about what they were saying. After a few days, people changed their minds. They began to agree with me and say, 'Ah, she is educated. See, it is her choice.' (CONV/Neighbours 3/18/2013)

Although Mukanda and Josie had the same level of schooling, they viewed the status it gave them differently. Mukanda said she succeeded at *kubenga* because she studied and

knew her mind; however, she also knew she succeeded because she was the *bucura*, the youngest, favoured child. In contrast, Josie was the second child - nothing special. She also had siblings who had more schooling than her and who, she felt, looked at her like she was a 'useless dish' for her relative lack of schooling. In her family, differential access to schooling broadened and hardened gender and status differences as siblings (re)assessed their educational status in relation to each other.

In this empirical analysis, the benefits of girls' schooling are not straightforward. Primary completion enhanced the status of some girls *combined with other factors*, such as birth order. Overall status - not schooling per se - gave Mukanda a greater capacity to have a say in decisions that mattered to her. Schooling did not enhance Josie or Pascale's status within their households, though it may have within the community. This reminds us that young people do not always change gender norms when they engage with new institutions; nor do they always (or immediately) benefit from new norms. Context matters because it shapes individual perceptions and outcomes.

In contexts like this where social relations are highly unequal, schooling is exceptionally political for it bestows status and opportunity on some and not others, shifts gender and generational relations, and hardens class and socio-economic divisions in ways that are often unrelated to cognitive ability or the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Thus, while the international development community lauded Habyarimana's government for achieving gender parity in primary education (King 2014), we must look beyond statistics to learn whether this achievement enhanced girls' life chances and if so, for whom and why. These are not just policy questions: During the Second Republic, school-based identity politics and widespread exclusion from school-related

opportunities deepened vertical and horizontal inequality, making the country more vulnerable to crisis (ibid.; Leander 2012); however, no one anticipated genocide.

### **The Children's Generation: Being Educated in Post-Genocide Rwanda**

Solange: Why do you think children's education [*uburere*, socialisation] has changed?

Aurora: It's because *times have changed for real*. (LH/Aida/4-21-2013)

Following the comprehensive devastation of the 1994 Genocide, Rwanda's interim government developed a plan for rapid, internally-led reconstruction and development that was embedded within a nationalist narrative of rebirth. Within this plan, rebuilding the education system was a high priority: school infrastructure and resources had been almost completely decimated and Rwanda's leaders believed that school-based identity politics during the Two Republics had contributed to the Genocide (MINEDUC 1997). The minority-led government's political settlement with the country's peasant/Hutu majority demanded rapid reconstruction of the school system and inclusive service delivery (Obura 2003, 58; Williams 2016). The development of Vision 2020 also underscored the reality that children and their schooling are functionally and symbolically fundamental to the state's ability to realise its goal of transforming Rwanda into a middle-income, knowledge-based economy by 2020. For all these reasons, the government regards children's education – broadly defined – as an essential mechanism for fast-tracking the country's economic development and ensuring national unity.

In this final section, I look at how the government has been pursuing its objectives through children's education and how young people have experienced and responded to its efforts. First, I examine the government's efforts to define and dictate children's

norms, values, and behaviour. Following this, I present family portraits to explore how children are experiencing and responding to 'Education for All'. Through this analysis, I ask whether children's education - broadly defined - has somehow 'changed for real', as Aurora asserts. I also question whether the state is equipping children with the skills and knowledge they need to transition to off-farm livelihoods and/or contribute to Rwanda's economic development. The findings demand that we reconsider whether a strong state can realise its goals through children's education if this education is disconnected from their material reality and gives unequal access to knowledge, skills, and opportunity.

### ***The 'Well-Educated' Child Reconstructed***

During my time in Rwanda, the government was directly engaging with children and youth to communicate three main directives: Young people must identify *first* as Rwandans, loyal to the state (Patriotism); they must return to 'traditional Rwandan values' (Dignity); and they must 'Striv[e] for self-reliance' (Self-Reliance) (see also MYICT 2015). Through these norms, the state seeks to restore moral order and Rwanda's international image and hasten national economic development. The government's legitimacy, locally and internationally, and its ability to secure international funding, largely depends on achieving these goals.

These nationalistic and traditional norms are not new to young people. Further, social institutions regularly use mechanisms (i.e. regulative, normative, cognitive) to engage young people in processes of institutional reproduction (Pierson 2004, 193-95; Levinson and Holland 1996). In Rwanda, adults firmly believe that early socialisation significantly shapes children's behaviour. Invoking a proverb, an *Inteko* member warned me

*'Umwana apfa mu iterura'*, meaning that a child's education must be completed before the small, 'mouldable' child disappears<sup>143</sup>. Similarly, the Rwandan government uses the popular proverb *'Igiti kigororwa kikiri gito'* meaning, 'A tree can be straightened while it is still young', to explain why it uses civic education to change the 'mentalities' and 'mindsets' of its youth and thereby speed national development (Purdeková 2012, 193-5; also Pells 2011, 80-1). However, the current government's strategic use of child and youth-specific mechanisms to directly engage young people in state-led processes of reproduction and change is exceptional. This section examines these efforts and tests Mannheim's (1952) assertion that early cognitive influences are influential but not determinative.

### **1. Civic Education: '*Ndi Umunyarwanda*' - 'I Am Rwandan'**

In the aftermath of a genocide that implicated most children's parents in some way, the government tells young people that they are to identify first as Rwandans. This nationalist identity has been constructed to counter genocide ideology, promote national unity and reconciliation, and secure loyalty to the state. In Inkombe, the government was promoting a Rwandan identity through school curriculum and events, community meetings, radio broadcasts, and the local National Youth Council. From late 2013, young people were also expected to participate in the 'I am Rwandan' program by attending group reconciliation events, which included a movie screening.

Additionally, secondary students learned patriotism at mandatory three-week Ingando (*Itorero*) civic education camps, which they attended following graduation

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<sup>143</sup> Literally, 'The child dies [when s/he is being carried] on the back.'

(INT/SEO/12-3-2012; see also Purdeková 2015). Prior to this camp, students knew *intore* were ‘important people’, but they did not know who *intore* are today. They were also familiar with the National *Intore* slogan, which advises them to behave like *intore*: ‘*Intore ntiganya ishaka ibisubizo*’, meaning ‘*Intore* solve their problems themselves; they do not complain.’ But after attending *Itorero*, Joelle explained that students became *intore* (for life) after they were grouped into cohorts that they named and then graduated from *Itorero*. At *Itorero*, they learned that behaving like *intore* would help Rwanda become less aid-dependent; by restraining their complaints and emotions, Rwandans would also recover their dignity, which was lost in the Genocide. One student explained that because this slogan comes from ‘old places’ (i.e. wise, powerful people) they must accept and practice it (FG/Students/4-1-2013). Students also understood that they must emulate this nationalistic behaviour to other, less-educated people (Journals/Question 8). But did they?

Following the 2013 *Itorero* camp, graduates were required to do six months of mandatory ‘volunteer’ national service for Inkombe sector; in 2014, this increased to one year (Fieldnotes/2-22-2014). Few, other than my *rescapé* neighbours, made more than a token effort to comply with this requirement. When ‘Kigali’ came to check on the success of the program, a local authority laughed as she explained that they attributed work to students that paid school maintenance workers had done; the sector did not have the resources to manage the program. In 2014, I asked individual students if they had participated in the ‘I am Rwandan’ program as required? I thought they would at least be excited to see a (rare) movie screening. They had not attended; they were ‘too

busy'. These 'intore' were willing to advise others and refrain from speaking in ethnic terms, but they were not fulfilling their civic duties.

Out-of-school youth also demonstrated a clear understanding of the state's national unity messages. For example, during a group discussion about local marriage patterns, Solange asked why parents might disagree with their choice of marriage partner. They responded:

- Girl3: Parents can see that they know that boy well, they know he doesn't like to work. Or they even don't like his face, his ethnic group also.
- Girl4: People talk about Hutu and Tutsi. It might happen that you, a Tutsi, fall in love with a Hutu. Then your parents tell you, as their son: 'Listen boy, we don't want that Hutu girl...you must marry a Tutsi.' And this can be a barrier to your love.

But boys quickly jumped in to shift the discussion away from ethnicity:

- Boy1: Those stories about Hutu and Tutsi disappeared. No matter what happens, you get married in the end.
- Boy2: You all know what happened in Rwanda, but also that we all reconciled.
- Boy3: You know what happened in Rwanda, but we have to let the past go. You know about that 'I am Rwandan' program. I might fall in love with a girl from that tribe [*amoko*, group], but because we are all Rwandans it doesn't matter anymore... we can have a strong marriage. (FG/OOS/2-22-2014)

It is difficult to know whether these boys were simply correcting the 'script' or expressing their sincere opinion. What their conversation does show is that these young people understand the state rules and norms they are to reproduce, but their compliance is performative rather than a set of internalised norms and values; saying 'I am Rwandan' is a statement of citizenship. It is not a homogenising national identity that provokes loyalty to the state, as the government demands.

## 2. Return to 'Traditional Rwandan values' and Gain *Agaciro*<sup>144</sup>

When I was living in Rwanda, moral panic over young peoples' wayward behaviour was pervasive. News stories, gossip, and community meetings in Kigali and Inkombe decried young peoples' involvement with drugs, alcohol, sex, and the rate of school drop-out (see, for example, Umutesi 2013). Presidential messages and sensitisation campaigns urged young people to reject the immoral, selfish, and individual-centred values evident in 'white' 'outsiders' (Kagame 2013a) and return to 'traditional' Rwandan values based on interdependence and *agaciro* – dignity and self-respect (Kagame 2013b); in 2016, student behaviour was formally codified in a Ministerial Order<sup>145</sup>. At the same time, young people were impelled to complete school and demonstrate nationalism. Young people in Inkombe, like Claire and her siblings, heard these messages weekly in church and on popular radio 'edutainment' shows like Radio Rwanda's youth talk show, *Urubwiruko rw'u Rwanda* (Youth of Rwanda) and the comedy/soap opera *Radio Urunana*<sup>146</sup> (Hand in Hand). Much is riding on children's actions and behaviour: 'The youth are Rwanda's future, its *Agaciro*' (ibid.), President Kagame reminds, so the government has multiple institutions supporting its efforts to educate children.

To gauge how young people were interpreting these normative messages, I conducted mock radio talkback shows in three youth research workshops. As a foreign guest, I asked 'How does a young person gain or lose *agaciro* in Inkombe?' Lively discussions revealed significant agreement across age and gender. Overall, *Table 5.4* shows that

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<sup>144</sup> *Agaciro* means dignity and self-respect. In 2012, the launch of the 'Agaciro Development Fund' made *agaciro* a local buzzword.

<sup>145</sup> Ministerial order N° 004/2016 of 08/01/2016.

<sup>146</sup> An estimated 70 per cent of Rwandans tune in each week.

young people primarily associated *agaciro* with norms, values, and practices embodied in traditional notions of being ‘well-educated’; however, secondary students emphasised behaviour related to schooling and nationalism. Youth also associated *agaciro* with having wealth and schooling; however, they repeated the government’s neoliberal message: namely, that the poor can get *agaciro* if they just plan and study and work hard enough to get out of poverty.

**Table 5.4: Understanding *Agaciro***

How to GAIN <i>agaciro</i>	How to LOSE <i>agaciro</i>
Successfully finish studies	Drop out or fail studies
Be patriotic by protecting your country against enemies	Do not do community building activities such as <i>umuganda</i> [community work]
Work hard	Be lazy
Have an objective in everything you do; do not get "distracted" from goals	Do not plan; give up on your goals
Advise and model good behaviour to others	Exhibit bad behaviour (e.g. steal)
Do not have [premarital] sex	Have premarital sex
Do not take drugs	Take drugs
Be polite, take care of one's appearance	Being dirty in appearance
Help and obey parents	Disrespect and disobey parents
Do not go out aimlessly and without parent permission ["to wander"]	Wander
	By being poor, having no money

As I came to know many of these young people, it became clear that some – particularly full-time students – had internalised these messages and were striving to achieve status and get ahead by gaining *agaciro*. At the same time, many participants were extremely ‘poor, without money’; some had failed their studies and/or left school. Even if they exhibited ‘traditional’ Rwandan values, they had little hope of achieving *agaciro* in the eyes of state authorities or the educated class. But in the workshops, young people laughed that *agaciro* is so hard for the poor to gain - and so easy to lose - that it is a bit of a joke anyways (FG/WS/12-21, 12-22, 12-30-2012).

However, over time I observed that these young people have other ways to gain status and build social capital with peers. Rwanda's rapidly growing music industry, African popular culture, football, and religious media were all the rage. Young people were enamoured with the wealth, celebrity status, and lifestyles embodied in these cultural forms and they did their best to emulate what they heard and saw. Proudly sporting his own second-hand radio, Jean Baptiste gained respect by playing Rwandan hits and sermons by local evangelists for his friends. Neighbour children congregated outside my home trying to best each other performing the latest hits by *King James*, *Knowless*, and *DJ Zizou and All Stars*. On Sunday mornings, clusters of boys and girls walked together to church dressed in their finest clothes pressed to perfection, skin glistening with body lotion. Most children attended one of the many churches in Inkombe; Jeanne joked that they have sex on their way home. For some, casual sex is a way to build relational capital with peers (FG/Students/4-1-2013); it is also a quick way to lose *agaciro*. More commonly, young people's church attendance, faith, and moral living accorded them both *agaciro* and the status of being 'well-educated'.

In this context of multiple institutional systems and poverty, young people have many different, and often conflicting, normative influences. They also have very different capacities to reproduce dominant norms and values. They can gain *agaciro* by reproducing some norms, values, and practices associated with state and kinship institutions, but they can also improve their status among peers through conspicuous consumption or the smallest association with modernity, wealth, and power. As they gain status with peers, they risk losing *agaciro* in the eyes of authority. However, as they opportunistically engage with multiple institutions, they are both reproducing and

changing the rules that define status. They are also impeding the state, family, and Church from reproducing their norms and values through children's lives as intended.

### 3. 'Striving for self-reliance'

The government's third message to young people was prominently displayed on the 2013 national genocide memorial slogan, 'Striving for self-reliance' (*Figure 5.2*). This is the cornerstone of the state's vision and policies for children and youth, who are to achieve self-reliance through schooling and entrepreneurship (see also Honeyman 2016). The government communicates these expectations to young people through school curriculum and entrepreneurship clubs; colourful *Ni Nyampinga* magazines (*Figure 5.2*); radio shows (e.g. *Radio Urunana*, *Girl Hub*); and sensitisation campaigns promoting youth cooperatives.

The capacity to be self-providing is not a new cultural value, but traditionally, this capacity was nurtured through long-term relations of reciprocal intergenerational care. In contrast, this slogan erases any notion of reciprocity and redistribution; there is no intergenerational - or social - contract inherent in this directive. Instead, the Kinyarwanda slogan, '*Duharanire Kwigira*' ('Strive to study/learn to be self-reliant'), implies that one can learn to become self-reliant if one tries hard enough. As the *Ni Nyampinga* magazine cover states: 'EVERY GIRL DETERMINES HER OWN FUTURE'. This neoliberal twist puts the emphasis on personal effort at the expense of attention to broader reciprocal relations and structures. It also makes children - not the state or family or international organisations - responsible to provide for their own future, this irrespective of the fact that most children provide significant labour for their families and many lack the capacity to be self-providing.

Figure 5.2: National Genocide Memorial Slogan; *Ni Nyampinga* Magazine<sup>147</sup>



As the previous chapter shows, young people are cognisant that their families have a very limited capacity to help them become self-reliant; they understand that it is an economic necessity to become self-providing. But as I explain in *Chapter Six*, for many, this is a seemingly impossible demand: Create your own opportunities; Become self-reliant with few or no resources. Many were sustained not by their hope in their family, the state, or Vision 2020, but by sheer faith and hope in God (Fieldnotes/4-1-2013). This final section will examine children's experiences of schooling to learn whether they are gaining the skills and formal knowledge they need to access or create livelihood opportunities.

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<sup>147</sup> *Ni Nyampinga* magazine Nov/Dec 2011.

### ***Inclusive Schooling: Skills for a Knowledge-Based Economy***

The government recognises that it must deliver equal access to *quality* primary schooling if it is to achieve its goal of transitioning Rwanda to a knowledge-based economy in a way that creates inclusive economic growth (Williams 2016; Abbott et al. 2015). But how have young people been experiencing and responding to the government's actual provision of schooling, including mandatory 'fee-free' primary 'Education for All'? The following portraits of children's school experiences in my rural family studies<sup>148</sup> help us to explore and answer these questions (see also *Appendix 6*).

#### **FS1: Celestin and Concilie's Grandchildren (Hutu)**

Celestin's grandson, Christophe, quit school in Primary 4. With his grandfather and father in prison, Christophe tried to support his own schooling; he dropped out when he realised he could not attend consistently. His younger sister, Claire, finished Primary 6 but did not pass the national examination. Their three younger brothers, age five to ten, 'wander'; they do not attend school. Their HIV-positive single mother, Chantal, does not have the money or energy to send them. Besides, she remarks, 'I can't waste money on those stupid boys! I don't trust them. If I pay school fees they will quit and I will be wasting my money.' (Solange/Visit/8-25-2013) Christophe explains that the boys see that schooling has not helped their older siblings, so why bother?

In contrast, their maternal cousin, Cyriaque (age 17), attended boarding school until Secondary 3. His handicapped mother, Camille, sold everything she had to pay his school expenses. But given that her husband in prison and her land on the main road

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<sup>148</sup> I am excluding Pascale's family due to a lack of school data.

was expropriated for village settlement housing without compensation (LH/Camille/3-10-2013; INT/Sector/2-27-2014), Cyriaque had to drop out of school mid-year in 2013. He was bitter and angry.

### **FS2: Adrien and Aida's Children (Mixed)**

When Adrien was imprisoned in 1994, Aida withdrew her eldest, Augustin, from Primary 2 to help her at home. Their oldest daughter, Anne, quit school in Primary 3. When asked why, she replied, 'You know what? Children are tempted by others who tell them to leave school. Then I stopped' (LH/Anne/4-2-2013). In contrast, when Adrien returned home from prison in 2008, Aimee and Aimable fought him for the right to continue school; when he refused, Aimable asked him to at least allow Aimee to continue. He relented, but Aimable had to leave Primary 5.

Aimee and her classmates worked hard to change the reputation of their local 9YBE school, which was nicknamed *ndererizondaya* ('to raise my prostitutes, my bitches') to reflect its low status. They were helped when the government established the Sector Education Officer (SEO) position: the new SEO improved the headmaster's and teacher attendance and facilitated long-term teacher training by Wellspring Foundation. Aimee explained:

We kept on...we were the first generation of that school. We had to study hard, give them good results. We even had a visit from Members of Parliament [...] We put our ideas together so that people can be proud of us and so we can gain *agaciro* [be respected]. We are not many, but we are good ones. And we are united ['bound together']. (LH/Aimee/3-9-2013)

In early 2012, the SEO reported that all 23 students passed their Secondary 3 national examinations; the school went from the lowest ranked school in the District to third

highest (Fieldnotes/3-26-2013). In early 2015, I received a Facebook message from Jean Baptiste saying: 'aimee passed [12YBE] with 19/73 . she has the diplome, *because the minimum mark was 10 [1/73]*' (italics added). But Aimable remarked, 'You see, if Aimee has succeeded it is because I sacrificed my life for her.' (LH/Aimable/5-6-2013) Five years later, he still regrets not being in school.

### **FS3: Redempta and Fidel's Children (Hutu)**

None of Redempta and Fidel's three school-aged children attended school. Their eldest, Rachelle, explained:

Rachelle: I was going to go to start school so my father bought me a pen. After buying me that pen, it had a problem, it didn't work [...] I never used that pen. When I got home, my father said that it would have been better if he had bought cigarettes instead of that pen! And when I was chased away from school, my father asked me if the reason was the pen and he told me: 'You are a fool!'

Solange: Then you left school?

Rachelle: No, he is the one who stopped me from going to school, because of that pen. And then he warned me that if I left home, he would beat me to death. That's how I left school. (LH/Rachelle/3-18-2013)

Fidel worked as a mason; he could afford to pay for his children's schooling but he refused to allow them to attend. Local authorities tried, unsuccessfully, to change his recalcitrant behaviour. Before leaving Rwanda, I secured Fidel's permission for the children to attend school on sponsorships. Four now attend primary, but despite a year of tutoring, two repeated Primary 1 and their son took Primary 1 three times before passing. In 2016, Rachelle began Primary 4<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>149</sup> Pers.Comm. E-mail/Ineza for Children/12-3-2015

#### **FS4: The Chief and Josie's Children (*Rescapé*)**

Unable to progress to secondary themselves, the Chief and Josie were committed to sending all eight of their children to school full-time. The four who were born prior to 1994 had FARG scholarships to secondary boarding schools - 'Centres for Excellence'; however, the three eldest did not graduate until their mid-20s because the Genocide interrupted their schooling. Julien, the firstborn, continued to university for a FARG-sponsored four-year Tourism degree.

In contrast, the four born since the Genocide attend the local 12YBE school - repeatedly. Their mother is committed to their schooling, but she cannot afford to pay for boarding school. At the local secondary, Justin repeated Senior 2 three times despite his love of learning. His twin, Justine, resents having to attend 12YBE rather than boarding school; she repeated Senior 4 twice (Fieldnotes/2-22-2014; Solange/Visit1/11-22-2013; Solange/Visit4/10-2014). Despite wanting to attend school, all four complained of hunger, fatigue, and poor quality instruction. When they failed, they blamed themselves (see also Williams 2016a). These children want to succeed and transition to off-farm livelihoods and they must, for unlike their parents, they have no farming skills.

#### **'Education for All'?**

The school infrastructure in Inkombe sector has been rebuilt and expanded, and primary school is mandatory and 'fee-free', but children's experiences of school were similar to those in the family studies: most were not attending full-time. Nor were they completing the primary cycle: in 2012, there were 454 students enrolled in Primary 1 at

Gutura Primary<sup>150</sup> but only 128 in Primary 6 (total enrolment=1630). Of the 106 students who dropped out during the 2012 school year, 42 left for 'work' and 64 dropped for 'other' reasons (excluding illness); this does not include non-returning students. On average, 9 per cent of students were 'repeaters'<sup>151</sup>. A local education official confided that her greatest anxiety was that on average, 50 children per month were dropping out of the four schools in the sector; this was an exaggeration, but I took her point (Fieldnotes/2-27-2014).

Young people who are unable to attend and complete primary school face barriers that are largely beyond their control: in most cases, parents cannot afford to lose their labour and/or they cannot afford the cost of schooling<sup>152</sup>. A minority of parents, like Fidel, do not want their children to attend school. Some, like Aimee, contest their situation with the help of kin and succeed in attending; many, like Christophe, Cyriaque, Rachelle and Aimable, attend school for a short time before they are forced to stop temporarily or permanently.

However, many young people also chose to quit school. They had sensible reasons for doing so: Class sizes were large and classrooms were crowded; Within grades, there was a broad range of ages and abilities; Children were bullies, as Justin learned on his first day in Primary 1 when he sat in another boy's seat; Some teachers were bullies, Aimable learned when his teacher marked down his paper despite having the same responses as

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<sup>150</sup> Data is from sector records for Gutura\* Primary (\*anonymised).

<sup>151</sup> National trends for this period are similar (see MINEDUC 2015, 18–19).

<sup>152</sup> Parents' inability to afford schooling was evident in household consumption patterns: families subsist on 'famine foods', such as cassava, and sell everything else, including sorghum – a product traditionally kept for its social symbolism of making and sharing beer. Jefremovas (2002) notes the same pattern prior to 1994 (90-2). Further, most children exhibit evidence of severe stunting.

the top student. Most children had to walk at least 30 minutes to school, often without a meal; Jasmine (FS<sub>4</sub>/G<sub>3</sub>) arrived hungry and had trouble staying awake. Students often had lengthy absences due to illness or family commitments and they fell behind. To make matters worse, children study in English, a language neither they *nor their teachers* speak or understand well. Students failed repeatedly, so school was often humiliating. Continuing often appeared pointless. Christophe explained:

I was bored of school, and I realised that I would never finish my studies. I knew that even if I succeeded on the national examination [Primary 6] I couldn't get the money to go to secondary school. Based on that, I decided to go to work for money so that I can achieve something in my life. Or even if I fail, I know I tried.  
(LH/Christophe/4-29)

Students like Christophe did not quit because they had a better alternative; rather, faced with the inability to progress well in school, their need to 'improve themselves' compelled them to find another way to move forward. Most subscribed to the government's Vision 2020 goals and wanted to become formally educated, but they could not realise this Vision for themselves. So they looked elsewhere for opportunities. *Chapter Six* discusses their trajectories in detail.

But do those who attend and complete primary or secondary school gain the literacy and numeracy skills they need to transition to off-farm livelihoods and a knowledge-based economy? Most students in the local 12YBE school could neither speak nor comprehend basic English, so how do they learn the curriculum? When Justin asked me to explain his physics homework, I discovered that his notes were a stream of words blended across the page because his teacher – who cannot read English – copied the text onto the board without putting clear spaces between words. Aimee 'passed' her Secondary 6 national examination, but the pass rate was 10/73 - not 50 per cent. This

experience is not unique to Inkombe sector: a national USAID (2014) assessment found that most students who finish the primary cycle are not achieving basic competence in literacy and numeracy. Local, public primary and secondary schools are not adequately preparing students with the skills and knowledge they need to become economically self-reliant in a knowledge-based economy.

Despite the government's primary 'Education for All' mandate, children in Rwagati are not completing significantly more years of schooling than their parents, though they may spend more time in school (see *Table 1.1*). Unfortunately, this lack of progress does not mean children are being educated by their families as in the past because time spent in school has reduced children's ability and willingness to cultivate. Aurora was right: 'Times have changed *for real*.'

These are not the educational outcomes President Kagame envisions - or needs - to achieve Vision 2020 and maintain the ruling party's political settlement with Rwanda's poor, mostly Hutu, majority. But it is a likely outcome in a Post-Developmental state where a small ruling elite seeks to reproduce its hold on power through the realisation of a high modernist vision that is only attainable by a select minority: those who can afford to attend Rwanda's 'Centres of Excellence' and who have the capital and connections necessary to turn this schooling into employment. Thus, while the state is reproducing an unequal distribution of power and resources through children's education, young people's lack of engagement with schooling and their poor school outcomes jeopardise this 'strong' state's ability to reproduce its hold on power.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter tells a consistent story, namely that social institutions in Rwanda use children's education as a mechanism to reproduce their power and distributional patterns. Whether we examine formal or informal educational processes, the pattern is the same: institutional actors care as much or more about ensuring the reproduction of their institution and position of power as they care about transmitting knowledge and skills. But because less powerful actors (e.g. children) are not inclined to reproduce their subordination, and because social institutions are competing for reproduction through children's lives, institutional actors must make extensive use of regulative, normative, and coercive mechanisms - such as rewarding or punishing behaviour - to achieve their objectives. Consequently, children live in a highly constrained institutional environment.

Because the maintenance of power is a primary objective, institutions give children differential access to knowledge and skills and the associated opportunities. Elite children have always enjoyed far more access to good quality formal education than the majority, but institutional actors also give educational advantages based on a young person's identity, physical traits, and behaviour. But without equal access to educational opportunities that offer social mobility, most young people are left with one strategy for advancement: pleasing and subjecting themselves to authority (see also Christiansen, Utas, and Vigh 2006a; Vigh 2006; Cole 2011, 72-73).

On one level, this outcome satisfies power-holding institutional actors because it ensures that they and their children continue to enjoy privileged access to knowledge, power, and resources. But it also means that despite the state's investment in primary 'Education for All', most of Rwanda's young majority lacks the basic skills and

knowledge needed to adapt to changing economic conditions and transition to off-farm livelihoods. This hinders national economic development; it also makes it unlikely that the state will be able to fulfil its political settlement (Vision 2020) with its resource-poor majority, leaving the power of these same political elite on shaky ground.

The second story in this chapter relates to the effectiveness of different forms of education. The findings in *Section 5.1* confirm what cultural theories of child development tell us, namely, that guided participatory learning is an extremely effective means of transmitting institutional rules, norms, and practices as well as skills and knowledge. It is effective because it is embedded, participatory learning (Serpell 1993; Rogoff and Lave 1984; Lancy 2012) and because performance is tied to resource distribution. But it is also effective because it is highly relational, and positive relationships both encourage learning and make non-compliance costly. In contrast, most children experienced classroom learning that was very ineffective and unconnected to off-farm livelihood opportunities. Consequently, they were far more likely to reproduce their family's livelihood, class, norms and values than not. Thus, as international and state actors rewrite the gender and generational rules and norms that shape children's learning relationships, it is essential to explore how both boys and girls can improve their life chances without jeopardising these relationships - and their family's livelihood - by refusing traditional roles and responsibilities.

This analysis provides an empirical and theoretical foundation for *Chapter Six*, which examines how children use their formal and informal education to transition to economic independence.



## Chapter 6 - Economic Transitions: Establishing Your Own 'Gate'

'The gift-to-commodity transformation is as much a change in the way people conceive of themselves and social relations as it is a historical phenomenon involving international trade.'  
*Milk, Honey, and Money* (Taylor 1992, 203)

### Introduction

Building on the analysis of children's kinship relations and education in *Chapters Four* and *Five*, this chapter examines how and why children's economic transitions have been changing across three generations<sup>153</sup>. As previous chapters demonstrate, social institutions and their actors engage with young people to prepare them to fulfil future gendered adult roles that align with institutional priorities. These imagined adult roles are premised on children attaining the capacity to be self-providing. In Rwanda, this goal is materially and symbolically represented in having one's own 'gate' (*irembo*): the capacity to provide for oneself and others, and autonomy within one's own household. However, as we have seen, institutional actors' distributive priorities and changes in the broader institutional environment profoundly influence children's educational opportunities, the resources available to them, and the social relations within which these reproductive processes are embedded. This chapter looks carefully at how young people have perceived, experienced, and responded to these changing dynamics as they work towards possessing a 'gate' of their own, and how their actions are reconfiguring the way young people pursue economic self-reliance. In *Chapter Seven*, I will build on

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<sup>153</sup> I explain local understandings of 'economic transitions' below. Briefly, I am using the term as short hand for the social processes and struggles young people engage in to become capable of economic self-reliance and care for others. I am not suggesting this process is linear, unidirectional, or locally universal.

this analysis by exploring how changing economic transitions influence young people's transitions to the generational status of adulthood.

Because this work seeks to theorise the relationship between young people and the institutional forces that shape and constrain their lives, this chapter examines economic transitions rather than young people's responses to 'vital conjunctures' in their economically uncertain lives. Retaining a focus on the institutions that shape pathways to social adulthood allows us to learn how and why the institutional processes that have underpinned children's transitions are changing; it also reveals how young people and their families experience and respond to these forces differently. This approach not only opens the way to theorise children's experience, but also how they shape processes of institutional reproduction and change. Further, historicising economic transitions allows us to explore how young people are rewriting the rules associated with 'existing institutional paths' and not abandoning them altogether; how and why they are engaging with new institutions; and how the pathways young people follow not only influence their status and access to resources in adulthood, but the state's ability to realise its economic goals.

Institutions and institutional processes are historically and contextually specific. For this reason, I begin the chapter by examining how children's economic transitions have traditionally been embedded within household processes of production and social reproduction, and how these household processes have been influenced by the broader economic and institutional environment. This provides an analytical framework for the second section, in which I examine how three generations of young people have sought to become economically self-reliant in a context of rapid change, structural inequality

and economic insecurity. This empirical analysis demonstrates that it is critical to study transitions precisely because they are no longer linear or predictable. It is only in doing so that we can appreciate why continuity and change in children's transitions and institutional environment is consequential for young people, families and the nation.

## **6.1 The Historical Institutional Context**

In every age and society, institutions have influenced how children are prepared and resourced to take on their future economic responsibilities. But because institutions emerge from concrete historical and cultural processes with distributional patterns that tend to reproduce specific patterns of power (Thelen 1999, 382), young people are equipped for this transition in different ways in different times. To appreciate these historical influences, this section examines the indigenous and modern institutions that converged to shape the grandparents' economic transitions.

### **Children's Economic Transitions Within the Lineage**

In every society, historically and culturally constituted institutions influence how children are prepared to be economically independent and define what this entails. In central Rwanda, lineage rituals associated with 'the gate' of the compound – represented in *Figure 6.1* - provide an apt metaphor for understanding these gendered marriage processes (see *Appendix 4*). While these rituals were more common prior to 1994, this chapter and the next demonstrate that they still influence norms and practices related to young people's economic transitions.

#### **Figure 6.1: The Material and Symbolic 'Gate'**



Previous chapters demonstrate that participants had a clear understanding that children must become capable of economically supporting themselves and others before they could transition to have their own household and family - their own 'gate'. Jacques explained that (in the past),

Parents have to fulfil their parental responsibilities until they make their son/daughter independent [*gucutsa*, weaned]. They make him independent when they help him establish his own home or after they take her to her own home (INT/Jacques/1-29-2013).

As I will explain, these processes were different for sons and daughters.

Sons were expected to demonstrate their capacity to fulfil their gendered adult responsibilities before parents would employ a matchmaker on their behalf. For example, Jacques recounted: 'We knew that a child had grown up and that he could get married when, after he looked after the cows, he came home bringing *umwugariro*, wood used to close the gate.' Similarly, Alexis explained that waking before your father to open the gate demonstrated initiative and an innate understanding of one's future gendered responsibilities (i.e. protecting one's family) (INT/FS2/5-12-2013; see also Erny

2005). While this ritual has largely disappeared, young men like Julien understood that as long as you 'sleep in his [father's] house' and live within his gate 'doing everything he asks, you are a child.' (LH/Julien/1-13-2013)

When a son was deemed capable of having his own 'gate', grandfathers explained that parents sent their matchmaker to 'find a gate' - or they asked their son to show them the gate - where they should request a bride. After identifying a possible bride, the matchmaker and male kin went to the home. There they asked to 'take the gate' (*gufata irembo*), meaning they asked the girl's father to *close* 'the gate' to other suitors. If the girl's father consented, the boy's family gave gifts of wine and beer. By accepting the wines, the girl's father (or his representative) entered a binding contract to marry his daughter; if he broke the engagement, he had to repay double the gifts given. These rituals demonstrate how parents in the past negotiated their child's customary marriage; however, they also show us that having one's own 'gate' accorded males with the adult status and authority to make formal economic contracts within traditional law.

The gate had different symbolic meaning for daughters. Aurora recounted to her grandchildren that in her time girls were not allowed to go beyond the gate without permission (INT/FS2/5-12-2013). This restriction was intended to protect a girl's virginity and reputation and ultimately, the marriage contract. Once married, the bride went into a period of seclusion. Josie explained that she could not emerge from her home and take control of her own gate until her in-laws ritually called her out of confinement by tempting her with gifts (e.g. banana trees). From this time, the bride went from being treated as a daughter - meaning that she cooked for her in-laws and

behaved as bidden - to being a wife and daughter-in-law, who had domestic autonomy. Josie explained: 'The mother-in-law calls her and tells her: 'This is your house and that is your gate, my child. I give you your life. Never hesitate to ask me for anything you need because I am your mother now.' (LH/Josie/1-14-2013) The bride was acknowledged to be a woman: economically self-reliant within a context of long-term relationships of reciprocal care. Following this, local women explained that the new couple travelled to the bride's natal home to 'cross the gate' (*guca mu irembo*). This ritual 'opened the gate' between the two newly allied lineages.

From the time the two newly allied families ritually 'closed the gate' to when they 'opened the gate', they were expected to provide the resources their children needed to marry and become capable of economic self-reliance. Paternal lineages were expected to provide legitimate sons with land upon which to build a home and cultivate. Traditionally, it was only after a son proved his capacity to provide for his own family by building his own home and establishing his own 'gate' that his lineage provided the bridewealth. These were customary ideals, however. Celestin explained that if the lineage was too poor to provide these resources, the groom could labour for his future father-in-law for a set period in exchange for a 'free' bride (*nkuli*) and land upon which to build a home (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)<sup>154</sup>. Maternal lineages participated in, and helped facilitate, customary marriage rituals. They were also responsible to marry illegitimate sons, but they owed them no resources. Following the marriage, both lineages provisioned the new couple until they were capable of self-reliance through

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<sup>154</sup> Codere's (1973) autobiographies also reveal that sons provided their own bridewealth if their family was too poor to do so.

their first harvest. These gifts also initiated reciprocal exchange between the new couple's household and kin, which would act as insurance against future hard times.

As this analysis shows, economic transitions were not a distinct process or event; rather, they were embedded within the institutions of childhood and marriage. Through these intensely relational economic processes, which were rooted in reciprocity and redistribution, children gained the capacity to support themselves and take on the economic roles and responsibilities associated with the generational status of adulthood. While these rituals have been practiced somewhat differently depending on one's region, socio-economic status, and era, the generational analysis that follows demonstrates that Rwandan young people continue to believe that they are not really 'adults' until they are economically self-reliant. At the same time, they understand that it is not enough to simply care for yourself, as many children do; you must also have the capacity to care for others; as a Catholic Father explained, 'To be an adult in Rwanda is to care for your family, community, and nation' (Fieldnotes/11-3-2012).

### **Economic Relations in a Changing Institutional Environment**

In central Rwanda, children's economic transitions have historically been embedded within kinship institutions and relationships, but the kinship economy is also inextricably bound within broader systems of economic relations, from feudalism to global capitalism. This economic ecosystem influences how parents and kin groups organise the distribution of household and lineage labour and resources over time to ensure social reproduction through children's transitions (see also Irwin 1995). Thus, it is important to understand how these different economic systems have manifested and converged to (re)shape these economic processes and the social relations within which

they are embedded. Only then can we appreciate how and why children's economic transitions have been changing over time.

### ***The Kinship and Feudal Economy***

Within Rwanda's kinship economy, labour and welfare (i.e. reciprocal long-term care) obligations are inseparable. The structure of Rwanda's pre-independence feudal economy was very similar, to the point that lineage and feudal obligations were often indistinguishable. For example, Concilie was obligated to labour for her mother, but sometimes she did so by helping to fulfil her mother's labour obligations to her *ubuhake* patron. Likewise, Alexis acted as a messenger and representative for his father, who was subservient to his patron. But while both kinship and feudal institutions promised the grandparents' generation welfare in return for their child labour, in this era of dual colonialism and scarcity, intergenerational and social contracts were premised on highly asymmetrical power relations in which power holders (parents/patrons) strictly controlled the factors of production (i.e. labour, land, cattle). With an air of disgust, Concilie explained the relationship between parents and children saying, 'In my time, a parent was the one to give orders and it was for us to follow orders [...] Parents had nothing to do but harass children, you can't imagine...' (LH/Concilie/2-22-2013) Likewise, Alexis explained: 'In that time, a boy [...] always accepted every request [from elders] for anything, anytime.' (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013) These experiences strongly influenced participants' perceptions of working for others. Grandparents and parents said with pride, 'I did not work for money', meaning that they were not slaves or destitute: they produced enough on their own land to support themselves; they were free. Thus, for grandparents and some parents the choice to enter the wage labour

market was, at least initially, largely an indication of their status (i.e. client, poor) and their family's inability to provide, or their need for cash in a rapidly monetising economy. The need to work for someone else continues to be a powerful indicator of one's social status, as we will see when we come to the children's generation.

But this historical institutional specificity also suggests that while children received long-term benefits from relations of mutual reciprocity, high levels of coercion, oppression, and resource scarcity make children more open to new relations of production. However, because labour and welfare were inseparably bound, any change in relations of production that decoupled work from welfare had to fundamentally alter how children achieved economic self-dependence because it forced families to rearrange their distribution of labour and resources.

### ***The Market Economy and Development***

It was in this kinship and feudal political and economic context that German and Belgian colonial administrations (and their national corporations) monetised the Rwandan economy, introduced the colonial market economy, and advanced the notion of development, *amajyambere*<sup>155</sup>. But before I examine how young people perceived, experienced, and navigated this new economic system, it is important to acknowledge its economic genealogy.

In contrast to kinship and feudal modes of production, the market economy requires the commodification of land, labour, and money; the goal is individual – not group –

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<sup>155</sup> The Kinyarwanda word *amajyambere* comes from two terms: (1) *amajya*, 'to move forward' or 'to get ahead', which comes from the verb *kujya*, 'to go to', and (2) the adverb (*i*)*mbere*, 'forward, ahead, before'. I am grateful to Mukarutabana Rose-Marie, Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture, for many of the linguistic insights I present here (Pers.Comm.E-mail/6-17-2015).

gain. However, like kinship and feudal relations of production, the colonial market economy depended on structural inequality and coercion to maintain control over factors of production. Significantly, these aims mirrored the premise of inequality already at play in Rwanda's feudal monarchy. Barring major institutional change, this increased the likelihood that traditional and colonial economic systems would converge to change economic relations in path dependent ways, hardening rather than loosening up patterns of inequality.

But like Ferguson's (1999) *Zambians in Expectations of Modernity*, participants in every generation regarded development as distinct from the market economy. Development, as the Kinyarwanda term *amajyambere* implies, moves a person forward into a new social space similar to Bourdieu's notion of 'fields' (see Bourdieu 1977). From colonialism onwards, individuals expected this forward movement to take them from a 'backwards' indigenous culture to European modernity: by acquiring symbols of 'progress', such as a Christian name, European clothing, consumer goods, and a modern wedding, one 'progressed'.

As a girl, Francine understood this idea. She explained that when she began to develop breasts, her parents gave her a tasselled cow-hide skirt and told her to stay away from boys. But she saw girls her age wearing cloth at the mission nearby, and she wanted to wear European clothing like them. Alone on the hill one day, watching her father's cows, she took off her new cow-hide skirt, selected a rock, and beat her skirt to a pulp. Her parents yelled at her when she returned home, asking why she tore her hide and what she will wear? But she got her way. She recounted: 'I began to wear clothes. I wore fabric which cost 5 francs; it was white. I really remember it!' (LH/Francine/3-5-2013) With

this demonstration of agency, Francine got her own piece of development: cloth and modernity.

But in the generational analysis that follows, we see that young people also understood development in this way because institutional actors who represented the market economy created a demand for consumer goods and foreign knowledge using ideations that linked these trappings of modernity with a higher social status. As *Inteko* members explained, missionaries and colonial agents decried indigenous culture even as they actively tried to ‘civilise’ Rwandans through their foreign institutions and the promotion of a European lifestyle. Given the importance of customary marriage, it is significant that a ‘modern’ bride became defined as one who married in a white dress in the church and brought a trousseau replete with modern goods, which was referred to as *amajyambere* rather than the traditional term, *ibirongoranwa*<sup>156</sup> (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013; Pers.Comm.E-mail/Rose-Marie/6-17-2015). By influencing young people to associate status with European behaviours and the consumption of foreign goods, the colonial administration and *les évolués* not only (un/intentionally) advanced the market economy, but also encouraged compliance with economic laws, policies, and practices that were in the interest of the state and market (see also Honeyman 2016, chap. 2).

The economic symbiosis between the market economy and development highlights a tension that runs through young people’s economic transitions in every generation: The cost of pursuing development, *amajyambere*, often pushes a person further into poverty without providing economic opportunity. *Amajyambere* contrasts with another form of

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<sup>156</sup> Prior to 1994, girls were expected to bring household goods to their marriage, but this was not equivalent to a dowry.

development, *gukira*<sup>157</sup>, which means to move up out of poverty and marginality by acquiring wealth and (thus) status. A person who experiences *ubukire* (noun) may show few outward signs of modernity, but their well-being has improved. Thus, while *amajyambere* refers to both modernity and development, the two are not necessarily linked. This tension, inherent in the language, needs to be held in mind throughout the analysis.

## **6.2 Pathways to Economic Self-Reliance: A Gendered, Generational Analysis**

*Chapter Five* demonstrated that children are prepared - and prepare - to become economically self-reliant through continual engagement with others from birth to marriage. This social process unfolds within the household and kinship economy as well as the national and global political economy. Across generations, this economic environment has been characterised by resource scarcity, structural violence, rapid monetisation, rising population density, and an increasingly globalised economy. At the same time, as young people lived at the interface of multiple institutional systems they were influenced by ideations that depicted the kinship economy as anachronistic and backward, while the market economy was associated with progress, modernity, and development. These ideations were not neutral; they too pressured parents to rearrange the distribution of family resources and reconfigure social processes related to children's economic transitions.

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<sup>157</sup> *Gukira* also means recovering from an illness, wellness, and wellbeing.

This section examines how three generations of young people perceived, experienced, and navigated the constraints and opportunities they encountered in their effort to become self-reliant. Through this analysis, we will discover how and why young people are changing institutional pathways to economic independence and how their actions are influencing broader economic processes at the household and national level.

### **The Grandparents' Generation: Economic Transitions in a Turning Tide (1930s-1950s)**

The grandparents' generational cohort were children during Belgian colonialism and all but one married in the politically turbulent years of the mid-1950s. In the analysis that follows, I explore grandparents' memories of coming of age and two contradictory themes that emerged: oppression and opportunity. Their experiences and actions provide rare insights into how young people and their families pursued 'culturally scripted life projects' (Lubkemann 2008, 14) – in this case, economic transitions - amidst rapid institutional change and violence.

#### ***The Colonial Market Economy: Oppression and Opportunity***

This generation was introduced to the global 'free market' economy through colonial taxation and forced labour and production. Celestin remembered the economy being very extractive, for the Royal Court allowed Tutsi hill chiefs to use their positions as colonial administrators to take more than their due from their feudal clients<sup>158</sup> (see also C. Newbury 1988, 152-156):

During the reign of *mwami* Rudahigwa, no one could own his own land or cattle. Even if you had received your cows from your son-in-law, if someone was stronger

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<sup>158</sup> In contrast to the *Inteko Inzirikana* (Tutsi) who blamed the Belgians for these actions, all other elders I interviewed attributed these actions to hill chiefs, the Royal Court, and the *mwami*.

than you and he had power, that higher personality could come and take all your goods, your cows, anything he wanted. (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

But regardless of whether a family primarily benefitted or suffered under dual colonialism, the possibility of new economic opportunities on one hand, and the experience of economic oppression on the other, forced families to reorganise their household distributions of labour and resources (see also C. Newbury 1988). This influenced the skills and knowledge children acquired, and the resources available, for their journey towards economic self-reliance. Children experienced and navigated these economic conditions in very different ways.

Children's exposure to *forced labour* was largely determined by their ethnic status and class: Hutu were subject to both colonial and feudal forced labour, while Tutsi peasants were only subject to feudal forced labour (*ubuhake*) (C. Newbury 1988). Hutu children like Concilie often took the brunt of this economic oppression, for as their families' labour resources were strained by these labour demands, many had to help fulfil their parents' forced labour requirements. Concilie explained:

If you never stopped digging for others [patron], you could stay on the land you already had. Others had chances to find someone to trade [land] with so that they could shift to another location<sup>159</sup>. We never had that chance, so we stayed. My sister and I were young, but at our age we used to go sometimes with my mother to help her dig. (LH/Concilie/2-22-2013)

Likewise, Alexis explained, 'In that time you could send a son into slavery [*ubuhake*] in your place, before it was abolished [...] Parents used to send one of their children, the

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<sup>159</sup> C. Newbury (1988) also documents that clients could escape a harsh patron by swapping land with someone in another region.

one who obeyed the best, to work for the chief or the *mwami*.' (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013)  
Concilie's life history suggests that she used an early marriage to escape this hardship:

'It was always bad times' prior to marriage, Concilie recounted. When Celestin's matchmaker came to request her for marriage, her mother initially refused saying, 'This is my little child! How can I accept her wines?' But Concilie's uncle advised her to ask the girl herself. Against her mother's advice, and emphasising that she was 'very young', Concilie agreed to the marriage. She was no more than 13-years-old at her *gusaba* and maybe 15-years-old at her marriage.

Although her livelihood did not change, Concilie used early marriage to transition to a more economically stable adult life in her own home.

Alexis and Aurora, both Tutsi, had very different experiences. They made it clear that as children they never had to work for someone else (i.e. do *ubuhake*). Alexis remarked: 'I grew up at home and I was never a slave...in my whole family, we never were slaves. We used to see slaves. But my father was a slave once and he even got a cow from slavery (*ubuhake*).' Similarly, Aurora remarked: 'I never had to do the forced works; I never had to go to work at all. All I had to do is look after our cows.' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013) Both of their families arranged and provided for their economic transition through customary marriage.

In contrast to these references to forced labour, grandparents' memories of *wage labour* centred on narratives of opportunity<sup>160</sup>. The colonial economy offered the European-educated sons of (primarily) Tutsi indigenous elites the opportunity to enter the formal

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<sup>160</sup> As mentioned, it was shameful to *need* to work for others. At the same time, wage labour was regarded as an opportunity to access resources that would allow one to escape their subordinate position.

wage economy; they seized the opportunity. After graduating from boarding school, Aurora's brother preferred to work for money, not his father. Josie's father went to work for the prominent Catholic newspaper, *Kinyamateka*. Sibomana's father graduated to become a medical assistant. As these young men used their formal education and new social networks to access wage labour opportunities within the colonial economy, they transitioned to economic self-reliance. They also transitioned from the feudal/kinship economy to the market economy, and from interdependence to independence from fathers and chiefs. Sibomana's explained that his father gained independence and freedom in the transition; at the same time, he rose to the top of his family and community because he was recognised as a leader. However, he was killed in 1962 for being a 'big guy' on the wrong side of history (INT/Sibomana/10-2012). Opportunity came at a high cost.

In contrast to these elite *évolués*, Alexis, Celestin, and Celestin's brother accessed opportunity in the growing market economy in a very different way and for very different reasons: Excluded from the formal labour sector and oppressed by dual colonialism, they joined tens of thousands of young Rwandans who emigrated to Tanganyika, the Kivus, and Uganda in the late 1940s and early 1950s; there they worked for wages in colonial economies where labour conditions were more favourable (see Newbury 1988). Elder males in every family study were part of this migration. Alexis explained, 'That is where the money was. Uganda was a very rich country in the past. So Burundians and Rwandese used to go to Uganda. [...] There was money for everyone.' (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013) This money was crucial for sons like Celestin (illegitimate) and his brother, who were raised by their maternal lineage and had uncertain access to

lineage resources. Celestin explained his situation at age 29, which was late for marriage, saying:

We both lived with our maternal grandmother and I started looking after a Tutsi's cows. After a while, my brother followed the people who were going to Uganda. He went to live there [...] but I went to Uganda after I did *gusaba* for this wife. I went to search for work. My grandmother was asking me why I wasn't getting married!!! When I came back, I married this wife [...] Before I left, I did not pay *inkwano* [bridewealth]. I went to Uganda to search for a job so that I could pay for it<sup>161</sup>. (INT/FS1/2-24-2014)

The money Celestin earned in this more favourable colonial market economy did not enable him to transition from subsistence farming to a livelihood in Rwanda's formal economy, but it did allow him to transition to a less-marginal adulthood: Upon their return to Rwanda, both brothers transitioned to adulthood through customary and Catholic marriage. This enhanced Celestin's status and ensured that his future children were members of their paternal lineage.

This analysis suggests that it was not modern institutions that caused young people to look for new opportunities, but the fact that power-holding institutional actors used both the market and feudalism to reproduce a highly unequal distribution of power and resources, largely through children's lives. Young people responded by opportunistically using marriage, schooling, and migration to mitigate this oppression and transition to a more favourable economic status. As we will see below, young people use similar tactics to today (for marriage/sexuality see also Schindler and Verpoorten 2013; Cole 2004; for migration see also Sommers 2012; Andre and Godin 2014; Boyden and Howard 2013).

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<sup>161</sup> Celestin's maternal aunt paid his bridewealth, but he did not know this while in Uganda.

### ***Economic Transitions in a Turning Tide***

In 1954, *mwami* Rudahigwa delivered a shock to the economy with an edict that declared an end to feudal institutions and a step forward in Rwanda's 'march towards progress' and economic modernisation (see also Carney 2014, 52; Newbury 1988, 140, 145-46; De Lame 2005, 395). In Inkombe, this edict turned the tide in favour of the peasant majority and made a tremendous impact on the grandparents' economic transitions. Every elder referred to this edict, but Concilie explained it best, perhaps because she felt it saved her family:

Before, she [widowed mother] lived with the problem of her small portion of land. [...] She was made to work every day for the owner of that small land she had [...] But after Rudahigwa was crowned, he stopped all that and set us free [...] he gave us that land forever. We grew up there, married there. That's how we survived it [*ubuhake*]. (LH/Concilie/2-22-2013)

In a separate but similar conversation, her husband Celestin explained:

During the reign of Rudahigwa, no one could own his own land or cattle [...] But when Rudahigwa realised it wasn't fair, he abolished that practice saying that you can't own things you never took care of [...] He said that the master could share the goods with his slave equally. But the slave was the one to choose his share first. And he said that everyone could live on his land as he pleased, or go anywhere he likes to get land. (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

This edict allowed Alexis, Celestin and his brother, Francine's husband, and Adrien's father (b.~1930s) acquire the land they began their families on. Celestin explained the process:

Celestin: At that time, when you did not have land you had to go to the chief of the village and you told him that you do not have land. Then he asked you some questions [...] saying 'Go find the place that it is comfortable for you and then come and tell me.' When you came back and told him that you found a good place to build a house, he told you to go and build and then he came afterward to give you the precise borders of you land.

Solange: And when he gave you the land, did you not pay him?  
Celestin: In that time we did not pay for land, you got land for free.  
(Solange/Visit4/10-2014)

Likewise, Francine explained, ‘Rudahigwa said, ‘You have to share’, and then everyone became independent owners of his property.’<sup>162</sup> (LH/Francine/3-5-2013) Before this edict, Celestin and others received a marriage land inheritance from their families but it effectively belonged to their land patron. With this edict, these young men gained title to land and began their marriages land-secure. But for the children of patrons this edict created economic insecurity: Sibomana explained that for the first time, he and his siblings had to help cultivate their lineage land to keep it in production. Otherwise, it had to be ceded to feudal clients (INT/Sibomana/10-2012).

Although Newbury’s (1988) work shows that this edict was not fully implemented in most of Rwanda, its complete implementation in Inkombe acted as a shock that disrupted the institutional ‘rules of the game’ in favour of the oppressed peasant majority: By disrupting the feudal mode of production, these young men gained control over the means of production (labour, land, cattle). This change enabled households to work for themselves, making more resources available for their children’s economic transitions. This empirical evidence suggests that entrenched inequality can be disrupted with economic policy if the measure is fully implemented. But this edict is also important because it effectively privatised land ownership. Thus, parents could sell their land rather than pass it to their sons for marriage. This had a profound effect on their children’s economic transitions, as we see in the next section.

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<sup>162</sup> The state still owns all land, then and now (see Meschi 1974, 42-43).

## **The Parents' Generation: Economic Transitions During the Two Republics**

Following independence in 1962, Rwanda joined the list of post-colonial nation states to be developed with European assistance. With more international aid specialists per capita than any other African nation (Uvin 1998, 42), young people in Inkombe were aware that modern institutions constructed pathways to economic self-reliance and adulthood quite differently than their lineages: Schooling was now essential to transform children into 'truly skilled human resources' for national economic development and the state refused to recognise any marriage that was not performed by the state or Church (see *Chapter Seven*). The Chief and Aurora recounted that government sensitisation campaigns (backed by aid agencies) promoted universal primary schooling, but also women's collectives and family planning. Women, including Aurora and Pascale, were appointed to civil affairs positions. These development initiatives all suggested new gender norms and life trajectories for girls, and livelihoods beyond subsistence farming (see also De Lame 2005, 388).

At the same time, both Republics made it clear that the goal of national development was to make the peasant majority more productive, not transition them to off-farm livelihoods. To this end, both severely restricted access to secondary schooling and the Second Republic used ethnic identity cards to limit urban migration. These restrictive policies pinned young people to rural subsistence-based livelihoods in a context where population density was extremely high, plot sizes were insufficient to support families, and cash was increasingly essential to everyday life. However, these challenges did little to diminish young people's desire to experience development and modernity for themselves. It was within this economic and social context that the parents'

generational cohort sought to transition to economic self-reliance and social adulthood in the 1980s.

### ***Coming of Age in a Time of Modernity and Crisis***

From the late 1970s to early-1990s, households faced a rising need for cash, but money was increasingly hard to come by; children's economic transitions were strongly implicated in the former, and impacted by the latter. Unlike the past, families increasingly needed cash to pay for schooling, which would ostensibly prepare children to become capable of self-reliance in a monetised market economy, and their children's marriages (see also *Chapter 7.2*). These demands pressurised already scarce family resources.

But young people's expectations related to the provision of schooling and marriage were also a significant driver behind these rising costs. Girls like Pascale and Josie wanted to attend as much schooling as they were allowed, not just Primary 1 to 6. And couples like Adrien and Aida expected a modern Catholic wedding in addition to a customary and civil marriage. For the modern bride, it was not enough to take pots and mats to the marriage; Josie explained that her trousseau needed to include *amajyambere*, 'development': 'In my time the country was being developed, so we took a table and chairs. [...] Two chairs and a table, cups, plates, dishes, a mat basket, a Coleman lamp...and a flat iron was necessary to take with you.'<sup>163</sup> (LH/Josie/1-14-2013) Between schooling and marriage, the monetary costs associated with these social processes could

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<sup>163</sup> Taylor (1992) notes the bridewealth was higher and less likely to be demanded in cash in the north/central, where these families originate. Kayigana (1979) estimates the cash brideprice to be RWF 8000 and up.

easily be RWF 80,000 and up per child - in addition to redistributed assets<sup>164</sup>. One generation prior, children's economic transitions did not require cash.

As young people and their families made these investments, they redefined social status: it was no longer enough to transition to self-reliance as their parents did; to attain an equivalent social status to their parents they needed to transition to adulthood in a more modern way. But while these expenditures accorded the status of being 'developed', they did little to improve a son/daughter's capacity to provide for him/herself and others; there was no direct link between development (*amajyambere*) and enhanced well-being (*ubukire*)<sup>165</sup>.

At the same time households faced a higher demand for cash, the escalating resource crisis meant that there was less land for sons to inherit at marriage. I will illustrate the effects of this situation by drawing on Francine's description of their livelihood:

*I never had to go to work for money because we had land. For example, this piece of land is fair enough. See how big it is? Today, all of my sons live in this land. When I arrived here, the land wasn't divided yet. I used to cultivate banana, cassava, sweet potatoes. When my kids grew up, my husband remained cultivating alone, saying that it was for his children. In my house there was everything. We also used to have beer all the time. And in that time no one knew about selling production [i.e. They had enough.] [...] All of my kids went to school and we were capable to pay their school fees. (INT/CaregiverFS3/5-7-2013)*

Clearly, Francine felt that she and her husband provided for their ten children; her opening statement sums this up. She also feels that they fulfilled their parental duties to their sons by doing *gusaba* for them and providing them with a land inheritance at marriage. But this land was a fraction of what they, as parents, had. Further, rising land

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<sup>164</sup> Estimate based on life history data. Labourers made RWF 70 to 100 per day.

<sup>165</sup> In part, this was because most schooling did not provide social mobility.

scarcity and demands for cash, combined with a decline in children's available labour due to schooling, made it increasingly difficult for parents to meet their reciprocal obligations to their children. It did not help that bridewealth was increasingly requested in cash, rather than cattle or goods (see also ONAPO 1989; De Lame 2005; Ilinigumugabo 1989). As the following analysis will show, parents responded to these new constraints by reorganising household distributional patterns and processes of social reproduction; children responded by pursuing economic transitions in new ways.

Parents responded to this cash crisis in different ways. Andre and Platteau (1998) find that parents increasingly sold assets and household production; problematically, this left them with less land and cattle to distribute to their children at marriage. In comparison, the evidence in this study suggests that parents came to depend on their daughter's bridewealth to meet their financial obligations. For example, Josie and Camille noted that their fathers used the bridewealth they received for their marriages (a cow) to provide their sons' bridewealth<sup>166</sup>. With these changes, *indongoranyo*<sup>167</sup> – the reciprocal gift the bride's parents gave to the groom's – became far less common, especially when bridewealth was given in cash (see also De Lame 2005, 372; Burnham 1987). For example, Pascale's husband gave the bridewealth in cash without any expectation of reciprocal gifts (e.g. wine) or *indongoranyo* saying, 'Your parents are poor so leave that money with them, it will help them in coming days.' (LH/Pascale/2-21-2013) Both Josie and Pascale expressed that their parents only valued them for the bridewealth they would bring – a sentiment that does not emerge from grandmothers'

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<sup>166</sup> Maquet (1954) explicitly notes that fathers were not to use their daughter's bridewealth to enrich themselves or pay their son's bridewealth (87).

<sup>167</sup> Usually the first calf from the bridewealth cow.

narratives. In the absence of reciprocal gift-giving between families, daughters became akin to commodities: monetised as bridewealth to meet their parents' financial needs (see also De Lame 2005, 373; Burnet 2012b, 103).

Children responded to their changing institutional environment in diverse, gendered ways. Daughters became more strategic about who to marry, and more involved in the decision. Knowing that she would be responsible for household production, Celestin's daughter, Camille, explained that when she had to choose between 'the candidates' visiting her parents' gate, she chose a husband who not only had a favourable plot of land, but also the ability to earn cash:

You had to consider his behaviour first of all. You also needed to know if he was capable of working for his family, the children you will give him, and whether he had the means to start a new household [...] *if he owned land that you could cultivate*. Also, you could check *if he had a job that provides money* [...] Before [the Genocide] [...] my husband also had other jobs: he was *umunyonzi* [a bicycle taxi] and he also used to sell oil and other goods. (LH/Camille/3-10-2013)

Likewise, my neighbour Mukanda refused her suitor because his steep land would be difficult to cultivate. But she also explained that she preferred to wait and find a husband with a more modern existence like her parents who had 'a modern house with a tin roof [...] beside the road.' (CONV/Neighbours/3-18-2013) Both girls refused their parent's arranged marriage, faced their father's wrath, and then chose an alternate husband from the suitors who visited their gate. As a result, both acquired more productive land to cultivate and more economic stability. These findings support De Lame's (2005) conclusion in the late 1980s that 'Marriage is no longer a collective moment of social reproduction setting up a new hearth, it is a crucial element in individual capitalization' (450). These daughters continued to be interdependent with

kin, but they used their marriages to improve their own economic trajectories, rather than their families'. As they did, they redefined gender and generational kinship rules, norms, and practices.

The fathers in the family studies experienced and navigated economic transitions in ways that appear to be related to birth order. As eldest sons, they appear to have had more access to resources than their younger siblings<sup>168</sup>; however, they still had to find ways to support their own economic transition. Francine's eldest, Francois, was given a marriage land inheritance but he had to cultivate for others for RWF 70 per day to get the money he needed to construct his house. Similarly, the Chief had to work to earn the bridewealth (a cow) on his own and built his own house. His parents and grandmother gave him land and his parents bought the roof tiles for his house. *But his parents did not give land to his younger brothers.* Adrien was an only son, so his father provided the bridewealth (a cow) and land for his marriage. However, Adrien wanted a house 'like the rich' so he worked for two years as a day labourer in Kigali (RWF 100 per day) to buy roof tiles (instead of thatch). Pascale's husband was a plumber from Gisenyi who lived and worked in Kigali so he did *gusaba* and paid bridewealth (cash) on his own. In contrast to these young men, Celestin's eldest son, Clement, was proud to say that he never went to work for anyone because his father provided for everything:

He is the one who made me who I am... We were poor, but because I was well-educated my old man told me, 'See, I have four children and *your sister was just married* [i.e. bridewealth in hand]. It's your turn to find a wife so that your old mother can have someone to clean her house.' He bought metal sheets for my house and supplied me with trees [wood], and he found me a builder to finish the roof and

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<sup>168</sup> I discovered this anomaly, namely that all the fathers in my study were eldest children or sons, when I sought to understand why core participants' experiences were so different from their siblings'. See *Appendix 6*.

put in the doors. Then he negotiated for my wife and paid the bridewealth [a cow].  
I had a formal marriage at the Church and I also had a civil marriage.  
(LH/Clement/3-2-2013)

In contrast to these eldest sons, the genograms reveal that very few younger siblings in this sample had customary marriages. This suggests that eldest sons were more likely to receive scarce resources than their siblings.

Traditionally, the social processes of children's education and customary marriage ensured that young people had the resources and capacity to establish their own 'gate'. But as parents reorganised their household distributions of labour and resources in response to the growing crisis in the national economy (see also André and Platteau 1998; De Lame 2005, 371-3), children responded in ways that increasingly transformed marriage into an individual strategy aimed at ensuring personal economic security, rather than lineage longevity. How did they do this?

Almost half of the siblings of the parent cohort (G<sub>2</sub>) married informally, despite living in a culture where formal marriage was not only a powerful status symbol but also a set of rituals that bound generations together in long-term relations of mutual care. This pattern was prevalent from the early 1980s onwards and it is mirrored at the national level (see *Figure 1.2*). When sons did not have access to bridewealth, they asked elder female kin to help arrange an elopement. Redempta and her sisters explained that by consenting to elope, girls hoped to escape the poverty of their natal home, save their family the shame of not providing, and possibly secure a more stable economic existence with their new husband (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014; see also ONAPO 1989). By navigating harsh economic circumstances in this way, young people fundamentally altered the kinship economy and the institution of marriage, as *Chapter Seven* details.

These tactics enabled couples to establish their own 'gate'; however, Rosa explained that this approach had negative repercussions for their economic status as adults: the lack of bridewealth and/or parental consent, and the absence of reciprocal gift-giving between families and generations, upset long-term kinship obligations that were premised on the redistribution of wealth and reciprocal care. Further, as long as the bridewealth remained unpaid, *de facto* wives and their children – such as Redempta and Chantal - lacked *de jure* status within the state and family and thus had no claim on their husband or his resources. Thus, many couples reproduced and deepened their economic precarity through their transition to adulthood and often created long-term domestic, intergenerational, and interfamilial conflict<sup>169</sup>.

These changing marriage patterns were an early indicator of an impending national crisis that macro-economic development indicators for the period mask: from the late 1970s children were increasingly transitioning to a less stable economic existence than their parents', but it was not until the mid-1980s that macro-economic development indicators began to detect problems. The crisis was first evident in children's transitions because the economic, political, and social pressures that were *gradually* wreaking havoc on the broader institutional environment were, in countless everyday ways, *immediately* forcing families to reorganise processes of social reproduction. The economic and social crisis these marriage trends predicted, and the structural violence that underpinned it, is strongly implicated in the 1994 Genocide (see also Uvin 1998, chap. 6).

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<sup>169</sup> Observation is from Fieldwork notes 2013-2014, Solange/Visits1-4 (8-25-2013 to 10-2014), and Solange's subsequent e-mail updates following phone conversations and visits with family members 2015-2016.

## The Children's Generation: 'Striving for Self-Reliance' in the 'New Rwanda'

'We do not know whether things will be changed [by development],  
but money is ruling everything today.'  
Janvier, FS4

If parents struggled to help facilitate their children's economic transitions prior to 1994, this situation became far more acute following the Genocide. Caregivers rearranged their meagre household supply of labour and resources in a bid to survive and rebuild their lives. Living at home and trying to save enough to establish his own home, Redempta's 22-year-old nephew explained, 'In my father's time, it was very easy [to marry] because your family was supporting you. But today, *it is just you supporting you*. [...] Parents just don't have the capacity to support you.' (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014)

At the same time, the government was urging young people to 'Striv[e] for self-reliance' through schooling and entrepreneurship. Youth were urged to begin collectives and savings and loans groups. Inkombe secondary was expanded from 9- to 12-Year-Basic-Education and a new market was being built. The government admonished students that '*Intore* solve their problems themselves; they do not complain'. End of matter. In this post-conflict, Post-Developmental economy, interdependence had come to mean working with others to develop the national economy (Kagame 2013a), not working with others for mutual or group gain. Young people felt quite unsupported.

As previous chapters demonstrate, the Genocide and new government regime acted as shocks to children's institutional environment; as Janine remarked, 'After the Genocide, with a new government, we woke up and suddenly we are moving *fast*!' (INT/Janine/1-29-2013) Further, the government's policy of rapid reconstruction and development keeps the population on its heels and local officials in permanent catch-up mode (see

also Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014; Williams 2016; Campioni and Noack 2012; Sommers 2012). How do young people experience and respond to these shocks and the continual change in their institutional environment as they strive to become economically self-reliant?

### ***Economic Transitions: Vision and Reality***

Young people in Inkombe and Kigali were eager to realise ‘the Vision’ (2020) for themselves. Adrien’s eldest daughter Anne spoke wistfully saying, ‘Today as we approach the Vision, things have changed a lot [...] it is the reason we can take a shower and get body lotion. We are approaching the Vision in a way that we can almost touch it with our finger nails...’ (LH/Anne/4-2-2013) For Anne and others on this hill, ‘the Vision’ found visual representation in their bird’s eye view of Kigali sparkling in the distance. The Vision was distant but real, and it shaped young people’s expectations and actions related to their economic transitions.

But the Vision was also elusive: despite the country’s impressive record of reconstruction and development, very few young people were making the transition to economic self-reliance in a way that they, their parents, or the government hoped. Within this generational cohort, three distinct trajectories are evident: Young people who were born before the Genocide and remembered childhood prior to it had very different experiences and trajectories compared to their siblings born just prior to, or since, the Genocide. Within this post-Genocide group, ‘students’ – young people who consistently attended school full-time - had very different economic trajectories compared to young people who were out-of-school, or in and out of school. Most of the young people in these three groups have yet to secure their own ‘gate’; nevertheless, I

examine their experiences and responses to learn how and why they vary so widely. I argue that unless young people can access the skills, resources, and opportunities they need to become economically self-reliant according to sanctioned pathways, they will seize economic opportunities wherever they can find them. As they do, they reconfigure pathways to economic self-reliance, reproduce structural inequality, and influence processes of institutional reproduction in consequential ways.

### **Group 1. Genocide Survivors**

Existing portrayals of Genocide or war-affected youth tend to mask the diversity of experience that exists within this group, painting them alternately as extremely vulnerable or as a risk to society. But the family studies here suggest that while young people may fall into those categories for brief moments, these moments usually pass. In contrast, issues related to ethnic identity, geography, socio-economic status, class, birth order, and gender consistently shaped their life trajectories in significant ways.

Yet despite their points of difference, this war-affected group shares important similarities: They remember the Genocide and life its aftermath; They have lost caregivers; Their schooling was delayed or disrupted. As Augustin's portrait in *Chapter 4* illustrated, these children were more likely to be their mother's primary support. And, I would like to suggest, they are far more likely than their post-Genocide born siblings to draw on pre-Genocide institutional rules, norms, and practices to pursue their economic transitions. Two family study portraits demonstrate how these similarities and differences have shaped these war-affected young people's expectations, experiences, and actions related to their economic transitions.

*The Chief's Family (Rescapé): Post-Genocide Networks and Opportunity*

The Chief and Josie's two eldest children, Julien and Jeanne, remember life prior to the Genocide (LH/Julien/1-13-2013; LH/Jeanne/4-14-2013). Jeanne had lived with her maternal grandparents, both of whom were killed in the Genocide. When the children and their parents returned home to Rwagati from Rutare refugee camp, Julien began his post-Genocide life with a Nike-shaped scar across his forehead and mental illness that kept him out of school for years at a time (INT/CaregiverF4/4-22-2013). He did not graduate from secondary until age 26. Jeanne's school start was delayed so that she could help her mother care for newborn twins.

But as *rescapé*, both children had FARG scholarships for secondary boarding school. Jeanne did not score high enough to gain admission to university, but when I met Julien he was two years into a four-year FARG-sponsored Tourism degree. While his mother helped him financially, he was adamant that no one supported his commitment to schooling. What motivated him to continue was a desire to be 'developed' and to become 'superior' to his 'enemies' by having a different livelihood from his neighbours from the other 'tribe'.

But while Julien was fortunate to attend college on a scholarship, he was poor relative to fee-paying Tutsi returnees and Hutu students (see also Williams 2015, PP). He felt his peers looked down on him and he struggled to succeed. Unlike them, he did not have *ikimenyane* – connections (favoritism/nepotism) to capital and contacts - to help him succeed in school or transition from school to employment. He explained:

I don't have family who will give me a job. [...] maybe a friend, but I will never depend on my poor family, they are unknown. There are no relatives in the

government, no mayor...we don't have many people representing our community.  
If we had that chance, I could have a job. (LH/Julien/1-13-2013)

Julien was right to be concerned. Despite his national status as a Tutsi Genocide survivor and his scholarship, degree, and father's status as village chief, economic opportunity largely occurs along diasporic lines today<sup>170</sup>, though ethnic status remains relevant. Returnees from Uganda (*abasaja*), who include the President and most of the RPF, have the most opportunity. Rwandans who never left (*abasopeca*), like Julien, appear to have the least influence (see also Reyntjens 2013, 12–14). Julien graduated in 2015, but he is struggling to find employment. At age 31, he still depends on his parents 'for soap' and is sometimes mentally unstable (i.e. dissociative) (Fieldnotes/1-14-2013; Solange/Visit4/10-2014).

In contrast, Jeanne enjoys the support of her Ugandan-educated maternal aunt in Kigali. Her aunt, an executive for Gasabo District, used her *abasaja* connections to ensure that Jeanne was placed in a boarding school where her former schoolmate was principal; she and the principal paid what FARG did not cover. Jeanne helped raise her aunt's children. After graduating, Jeanne used her boarding school network to find a bookkeeping job in a popular sports bar in Kigali. This work allowed her to be economically self-reliant (LH/Jeanne/4-14-2013). When I met Jeanne again in 2014, she had quit her job because her aunt had found her contract work as a tax collector (INT/Jeanne/2-18-2014). Jeanne was still capable of economic self-dependence, but she lived with her aunt so that she could save money to go to university - a dream that did not appear financially feasible. Thus, Jeanne managed to become self-reliant not through marriage, but by taking

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<sup>170</sup> I am referring to Tutsi returnees from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Fieldnotes/2-19-2014).

advantage of her survivor education benefits and by building her own social relations by gaining favour, patronage, and mutual reciprocity, as in the past.

*Pascale's Family (Hutu Survivors, Urban): Armed Conflict and Migration*

Born in Kigali in 1985, Patricie and her twin, Patrick, are the second oldest of Pascale's six children. With a father who was a plumber and a mother who cultivated their land, they had 'enough' (LH/Pascale/2-21-2013, 2-28-2013). The Genocide erupted the year the twins began primary school. They fled on foot to their father's village near Gisenyi on Lake Kivu.

From the time they lived in Gisenyi, Patricie cultivated alongside her mother. She was a tall, strong girl and a hard worker. When her mother returned to Kigali in the late 1990s to escape regional political violence<sup>171</sup>, the children left their father to return with her. But in Kigali they had 'a very bad life' so Pascale repeatedly pulled Patricie out of school to work: First, she ported water to a nearby construction site for RWF 50 per 20L jerry can; At age 12, she worked as a house girl and cultivated with her mother (LH/Patricie/3-7-2013). She studied to Primary 6 but did not pass. At age 16, she informally married a boy from a wealthier family; however, she was self-supporting with a business making and selling cassava flour and soft sorghum beer.

Patrick also studied to Primary 6, but he said he did not do manual labour for his parents. Because he was good in mathematics, a local (illiterate) businessman hired him to manage his books and business. Patrick gradually stole RWF 2 million over two years (LH/Patrick/4-25-2013); he then quit and used the money to study auto mechanics. But

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<sup>171</sup> The Second Congo War, 1998-2003.

there was no work, so he returned to Gisenyi to learn plumbing from his father. He has been financially successful in Kigali ever since. In 2008, his family helped him pay for a formal marriage (customary, religious and civil) after he got his girlfriend pregnant.

Neither Patricie nor Patrick initially had access to capital or networks, but they became literate and learned livelihood skills from their parents. They did not receive land or significant resources from either parent, but they benefitted from Kigali's growing economy. Today they are both the sole providers for their own children and they provide significant financial support to their mother and four younger siblings.

## **Group 2. Secondary Students**

*Chapter Five* reminds us that schooling continues to exist as a contradictory resource for young people: it imparts social status and some skills, but it also entails significant costs and delivers skills that are substandard and poorly matched to the few off-farm employment opportunities that exist (see also Williams 2015). In Inkombe, secondary students were cognisant of these realities. They were also aware that their families had already given them the equivalent of a marriage inheritance by paying their school expenses: 'Schooling is inheritance'. With little or no expectation of future kinship resources and limited economic opportunities in the formal economy, they were 'Striving for self-reliance' largely on their own; they actively sought advice from peers, kin, elders and local leaders on how to achieve this goal.

The government advised them to use their schooling to become self-reliant through careful planning, hard work, and entrepreneurship, but most students, like Joel, Jean Baptiste, and Joelle, pinned their hopes and futures to obtaining a coveted government scholarship to university - this despite the scarcity of scholarships, lack of family

resources, and high unemployment rates among university graduates. The waiting and hoping began after final examinations in November. In April, one or two - like Biko - received a scholarship to study at the National University. When graduates learned that they did not receive a scholarship, many began to look for ways to make money to save for university or Technical school, but the tuition and associated costs were out of reach for most. So what did they do to become economically self-reliant in their rural sector?

Students in my discussion groups drew on all existing knowledge and resources to try to solve this problem: their informal education made them aware of their social resources, while schooling advised them to be entrepreneurial and make use of savings and labour cooperatives (FG/Students/3-31-2013, 4-1-2013, 4-16-2013). Aimee and five girlfriends made a savings group; they planned to take turns using the funds for small business ventures after graduation. Another group of 25 students contribute RWF 1000 per month to a savings and loans fund. They need RWF 3 million to fund their business plan. This will take nine years without outside help. As I reviewed their plan, I quickly realised that they also lack the most basic business skills needed for venture. However, the group was pleased that they could loan funds to students who were struggling to pay for secondary.

In contrast to this group, Joelle worked as a house girl, saved her money, and managed to get a small private loan. Orphaned and abandoned by siblings, she had no family to call on, but she was well-respected in the community (INT/Joelle/3-16-2013). She used her funds and social connections to do something no girl had done in Inkombe: open a little shop. At the same time, she rented and cultivated a field with her friend. Her goal was to make enough money to study nursing in Uganda. But after her shop was

burglarised and she realised how little she was earning after paying all her business-related taxes<sup>172</sup>, she gave up her dream of nursing school (Fieldnotes/2-28-2014). A year later, she married a moto driver in a full formal marriage, which she helped fund. She had her own 'gate' and a child on the way (Pers.Comm. Joelle/texts; Pers.Comm. E-mail/Solange/2014-2016).

With limited family support and a state that advises them they must become self-reliant, students try to become capable of supporting themselves by working together towards shared goals. In addition to savings and loans groups, some rent and cultivate land together, but few have the skills. Others hope their schooling and good reputation will open the door to opportunity. The parish priest called Jean Baptiste and Dusabe when a newly-arrived international charity needed volunteers because they are locally respected. But apart from cultivating, there are few legal ways to make money in this rural sector. After fighting to overcome her school's awful nickname and making a savings and loan group with friends, Aimee's classmate, Jean Baptiste, texts me that he does not know where this once-popular girl is. She lives at home; her father says she is rumoured to be making money with sugar daddies (Pers.Comm. E-mail/Solange/1-11-2017). It is difficult to see how – without capital or connections - these graduates will become capable of self-reliance at a level that allows them to earn enough to support their own household without jeopardising their health and well-being.

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<sup>172</sup> See Honeyman (2016) on the regulatory environment young people must navigate.

### **Group 3. Out-of-School Children and Youth**

Out-of-school young people are difficult to define because they often go in and out of school. The ones I discuss here were not attending school; they ranged from age 7, when they are to begin school, to around age 22 – a common age for secondary completion.

Out-of-school children and youth account for a high proportion of the school-aged young people in Inkombe sector, but also Rwanda (Inoue et al. 2015). Within this group, a significant minority do not live at home. I observed that at least some were not included in Rwanda's 2012 Census. No out-of-school children were recorded on the January 2014 MDG survey in Rwagati. As this section will show, this omission is indicative of a larger issue: namely, that the wealthier, educated, power-holding class, who make Rwanda's children's rights laws and who are responsible for enforcing them, benefit from positive statistics and cheap child labour. This gives them an incentive to keep out-of-school children who do not live with family out of sight of the formal state system, at least until age 19. At the same time, local authorities coerce parents to send their resident out-of-school children back to primary.

Against this backdrop, this section examines how these young people are being prepared and resourced - and how they are preparing and resourcing themselves - to become capable of supporting themselves and others.

#### *Out-of-School: Leaving Home to Work*

Out-of-school children in Inkombe who did not live at home were often capable of supporting themselves from age 10 to 13; one neighbour boy left home at age 5. Abandoned, or belonging to families who were unable to support them, they had to

support themselves. They did so within exploitative relations of production, but usually without the benefits that should come from patron-client relations.

Celestin's grandson, Christophe, has been economically self-reliant since he left home at age 10 to take care of a man's cows for RWF 5000 per month. Christophe was a child of rape and all his male kin were imprisoned in 1994. His mother and grandmother struggled to support him. His pattern was to work away from home to save money for school, return home to attend school, and then drop out when he ran out of money for school or when he fought with his mother. He quit in Primary 4. Since then, Christophe cultivates for others for RWF 15,000 per month. The government pays his medical insurance. After I left Rwanda, his mother gave him a small piece of land to sell so that he could open a kiosk on the main road. Unfortunately, Celestin drank the earnings and the business failed. Christophe hopes to get a small land inheritance when his father returns from prison. When he is ready to begin life with a girlfriend, he says they will rent a place.

Mutoni left home at age 12 to work as a house girl for a wealthier family in the community. A Batwa, her family was extremely poor and marginal. At age 14, she gave birth to her daughter after being raped by her boss. There was a local investigation that confirmed his parentage and guilt, but no punishment or compensation. Mutoni's aunt and uncle raise the child. Since then, Mutoni has moved between Inkombe and Kigali, and in and out of domestic work, home, and school, trying to educate herself so that she can get a better job and support her and her daughter (Fieldnotes/11-20-2012 to 2-28-2014; CONV/FS3/5-27-2013).

The out-of-school young people I observed did not experience their full civil ‘rights’ to basic provision, education, non-exploitative work, or social protection<sup>173</sup>. Instead, middle and upper income locals, like my next-door neighbour, pay them RWF 5000 to 7000 per month to work in place of their children, who attend school full-time. The government has been unable or unwilling to restrain the country’s upper quartile from using their power to exploit children’s labour to further their accumulation of wealth.

For most, leaving home to work was an early survival strategy, but they survive by subjecting themselves to highly unequal patron-client type relationships reminiscent of the past. While these young people are capable of economic self-reliance, they are destitute. Further, through their labour they are reproducing the very inequality and marginal status that limits their future livelihood options. Ironically, once they have established their own household, their vulnerability makes them eligible to do paid manual labour in the government’s successful ‘Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme’ (VUP) (Roelen and Shelmerdine 2014). Apart from this or another intervention, the constraints these young people face make them likely to reproduce informal economic institutions that are beyond the purview of the state.

### *Out-of-School: Living and Working from Home*

In contrast to Christophe and Mutoni, most out-of-school children and youth live and work with their families. Of the three groups I have identified, this one is following the most traditional pathway to economic self-reliance, meaning that their actions are more

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<sup>173</sup> Some of their families received government support targeted to vulnerable households (e.g. free medical insurance).

embedded in the kinship economy than the others'. But as I will show, this did not mean that they received adequate reciprocal support from their kin.

These young people laboured for their families, but they also worked for themselves. They worked in a range of conditions and tasks, as *Table 6.1* illustrates, but they had two main motivations. Their short-term goal was to make enough money to buy their own clothes, shoes, and sundries because their parents could not adequately provide for them. But given that these young people could not rely on parents to provide the resources they needed to become economically self-reliant, they also had long-term strategies and goals. These emerged in my discussion with a group of eleven out-of-school youth age 15 to 19. When I asked, 'What are your goals for the next two to three years?' they responded:

- Aimable: The first goal is development!  
RA: But what are your personal goals?  
Aimable: I will own a house and a cow.  
Boy1: The improvement I want to make in my life in the coming 1 to 2 years is to [return to] study.  
Girl1: In 2 to 3 years my savings will reach RWF 500,000 from cultivating and doing small businesses.  
Claire: I will raise a goat.  
Boy2: I have no goals!  
Boy3: In 3 to 5 years I will own a cow.  
Boy4: At the end of this year I will buy a second bicycle [for bicycle business].  
(FG/OOS/2-22-2014)

This range of goals reflected the most common economic activities and priorities of local youth. As *Table 6.1* illustrates, boys generally had more legal and profitable ways to make money than girls.

As the conversation continued (see below), it became clear that most of these young people were actively working towards establishing their own 'gate'. Out of school, they

wanted domestic and economic independence more than anything - to work for themselves, not their parents. Influenced by global culture and norms, they also wanted more say in their lives. Establishing a home and marrying was a means to this end; they did not discuss how they would support their future household.

**Table 6.1: Informal Economic Activities (RWF)<sup>174</sup>**

Task	Gendered?	Rural wage/profit	Urban wage/profit
House boy/girl		7000/month	10-15,000/month
Cattle boy	Male	5000/month	N/a
Dig for self	More male	20-30,000/season net	Similar
Dig for others		700-800/day	N/a
Day labourer		~500/day	500-2000/day
Bicycle taxi	Male	20,000/month net	N/a
Craft industry	Female	Low	30-50% profit margin in 2013
Animal husbandry		Good	N/a
Selling sex	More female	Gifts or 200-500/time	500+/time
Making/selling alcohol		Good	Unknown
Selling drugs	Male	Good	Good

But as Aimable bluntly stated, ‘There’s no money at all around these days’ (FG/OOS/2-22-2014). Finding the RWF 300,000 needed to build a home was daunting. Many parents helped their sons towards this goal. For example, Adrien and others loaned them land to cultivate. Some gave them fertiliser, tin sheets for their roof, or land to build on. But ultimately, these young people understood that despite years labouring for their families it was up to them to acquire the resources they need to establish their own ‘gate’. This was far from what they needed or felt they deserved and they struggled to understand their continuing labour obligations to their parents.

<sup>174</sup> Sources: Life history interviews, FG/OOS/4-27-2013, FG/OOS/2-22-2014.

How did these young people pursue their goals?

In Rwagati, Aimable and his friends explained that boys often evade government laws that require all new houses be built within the village settlement (*umudugudu*) on expensive land (RWF 500,000), rather than on family land down the hill (see C. Newbury 2011). They also build what they can afford, rather than to the government's building code. For example, Adrien acquired a permit (RWF 10,000) to build a 'cow shed' on his land; in reality, it was a home for Aimable (see *Figure 6.2*). But the boys explained this was risky:

Benimana: Marriage is very difficult to make, but today building a house is more complicated because of the papers you have to get from the authorities. They may refuse to let you build on your parent's land, or they can destroy it after you finish.[...]

Mugire: Someone makes that choice not because he doesn't respect the law, but because he doesn't have a choice, and he must have a shelter.

Solange: What happens when someone builds on his own land and the government comes to check and finds out that he didn't respect the law?

Aimable: When they come, you have to give them some money so that they can't report your case.

Benimana: For example, if I want to build all I have to do is give some money to someone [i.e. sector agronomist] so that they can close their eyes on me for a while. (FG/OOS/4-27-2013)

Parents and a local leader noted that enforcement varies over time; nevertheless, these laws create a precarious existence for young couples, whose homes can be demolished. These patterns perpetuate a socio-economic divide in which wealthier couples enjoy stability and access to modern infrastructure along the top of the hill, while the poor majority live without both down below.

But out-of-school youth and students explained that boys are beginning to get help with the cost of building house or renting a home from an unprecedented source: fiancées.

One male student, Havugimana, explained this new trend:

[In the past] the boy must build his house without the help of the girl and put all the necessary things in the house before the bride comes into the house. But it is different today because they can love each other and one can have much more money than the other, and they can help each other. But *they tell people that the boy did it [built the house] on his own.* (Journal)

In her journal, Joelle noted, ‘The boy must build his house when he is capable to. But if he is not, the girl can help him with money, if she's got it.’ Similarly, out-of-school girls asserted that they would help pay rent for a house in the village if the boy had no land (RWF 10,000 per month). This covert negotiation enables couples to establish their own home. But at the societal level, these girls are fundamentally redefining gender rules, norms, and practices: in the past, building a home established the husband as ‘chief’ in his home. If today the bride helps finance the home, it stands to reason that she is at least a ‘co-chief’, even if this is not public knowledge. It is too early to analyse how this change is influencing gender relations in marriage, but I suspect it will be transformative.

**Figure 6.2: Aimable’s ‘Cow Shed’**



In *Chapter 7*, I explain that young people also made their economic transitions more affordable by redefining marriage rules. Additionally, some viewed urban migration as a pathway to economic independence. Anne, explained: ‘I decided to go to Kigali because there was no way I could make money. I realised that I couldn’t even buy anything. [...So] I left at night without telling my parents.’ (LH/Anne/4-2-2013) Like most girls who migrate to Kigali, she went as a house girl (FG/Empower/2-7-2013). Later, her brother Augustin migrated to work as an informal day labourer. But since most unskilled work in Kigali is in the informal sector, which is largely illegal, most workers receive extremely low pay and worse than no social protection (Fieldnotes/5-2013). Many girls arrive, get pregnant, and are abandoned, as Anne was; those who stay struggle to support themselves and their children (INT/Empower/2-20-2014).

Despite these challenges, when I asked these out-of-school young people to discuss their economic position vis-a-vis students, they were adamant that *they* had the economic advantage

- Girl 1: How can a student make money when he is always at school, while you as a girl are always cultivating? Normally a farmer is the one who should marry legally [formally (costly)] because he is the one who makes money.
- Girl 2: Those who say that students are the only ones who can have a good life are wrong, because when I think about a farmer I realize that s/he can have a good life too.
- Boy2: I have a question. How can you compare people who went to school with me? Because if they go to school, they come back and find me making money. Today there are so many [students] who don't have jobs.
- Boy3: Educated people are arrogant. (FG/OOS/2-22-2014)

These young people were using their lineage education to earn money and progress towards their goals. They felt they were getting there faster than their student counterparts. But as the tone of this discussion suggests, these young people were not just comparing one livelihood strategy to another; they were contesting a class hierarchy that constrained their life chances: they knew secondary students were regarded as 'perfect development subjects' (Purdeková 2012, 194) while they were regarded as uneducated and backward, obstructing the nation's economic transition. Further, while they needed and wanted to improve their literacy/numeracy and English, they knew they were effectively excluded from further schooling due to their economic status, geographic location, and background. They wanted to reproduce a livelihood other than their parents' and they longed for social mobility, but they were constrained in their ability to establish a new means of economic self-reliance.

### ***The Illicit Economy: Income and Escape***

Given the enormity of the challenges all three groups of young people face, many were turning to the illicit economy for income and escape. Transactional sex was on the rise in the rural and urban studies (FG/Students/2-23-2014; INT/Empower/2-20-2014). In

Inkombe, *chambres*<sup>175</sup> were a new development that allowed girls to discretely make a little money by the hour (RWF 200-500) (LH/Aida/5-5-2013). On the opposite end of the economic spectrum, unemployed male youth from wealthier families were dealing in drugs and alcohol (spirits). Rich and poor were trying to improve their economic status.

These illicit activities were affecting young people's economic transitions in diverse ways. Jean Claude's son, Jared (FS4, age 15), and a friend's son in Kigali (18) were expelled from boarding school for drug use. They lost their opportunity to study, but their addiction also made them incapable of caring for themselves (Solange/Visit2/8-27-2013). Out-of-school youth warned that this problem is increasing: '[...] except for us, all the other young people here are addicted to drugs! It is destroying people. And it is the reason we have so many thieves here in Rwagati.' (FG/OOS/4-27-2014) While not all theft was drug-related, theft was rising as young people like Jared and Clement's son stole to supply their habit (LH/Clement/3-2-2013). This created significant financial setbacks for youth who were 'striving for self-reliance': during fieldwork, Aimable's banana crop was stolen and Joelle's small shop was burglarized. While some youth benefited from illicit income, the rising prevalence of theft, addiction, unplanned pregnancies, and HIV/AIDS were negatively impacting young people's ability to attain economic independence.

Despite these challenges, Jean Baptiste and Dusabe texted me in early 2017 that opportunities are improving: since my 2014 visit, the government has established free

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<sup>175</sup> A room built into the back of a small bar that could be rented by the hour.

Wi-Fi hotspots, a new market, and a reliable road to the highway. However, those with capital and contacts still capture the best economic opportunities; land continues to be consolidated in the hands of the wealthy and commercial land owners; and few apart from the wealthiest quartile are transitioning to off-farm employment. This is deeply problematic, for parents' shrinking land plots cannot sustain another generation. When I first arrived in Inkombe, young people were unanimous that 'Getting money is the priority' (FG/WS1-3/12-2012). Now I know why.

## **Conclusion**

By examining transitions through the lens of historical institutional theory, this chapter provides an explanation for how and why children's economic transitions have been changing over time and how young people are shaping these changes. Through this empirical analysis, we learn that children's economic transitions have traditionally been embedded within household processes of production and reproduction, which are in turn shaped by Rwanda's broader institutional environment. Within this environment there has been rapid change, but informal institutions consistently reproduce a highly unequal distribution of power and resources that allows elites to exploit land and labour for their economic benefit.

This gendered, generational analysis provides a rare view of the quotidian in a context characterised by discordant institutional multiplicity: kinship-based households navigate political and economic shocks, unequal relations of production, the monetisation and marketisation of the economy, and increasing population density. We watch as they continually reorganise their distribution of labour and resources in an effort to ensure daily provision and long-term processes of social reproduction.

Across three generations, families in Inkombe have become increasingly unable to prepare children with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to become capable of supporting themselves and others. Nor has the state provided sufficient economic support or opportunities to meet the scale of the need. As parents fail to fulfil their reciprocal obligations to their children, the intergenerational contract – and their authority – weakens. Because adult-child roles are interdependent, children’s power increases.

These economic realities mean that young people must increasingly provide for and facilitate their own transitions - economic, but also domestic and social, as we will see in *Chapter 7*. Living at the interface of multiple institutions, they opportunistically seize whatever opportunities they can to navigate their circumstances and establish their own ‘gate’. As they do, they become less likely to reproduce one social institution over another, and more likely to reproduce bits and pieces – some kinship rules, some state, some from informal or illicit institutions. This further weakens reciprocal kinship relations over the life course meaning that, in the absence of alternate, long-term, reciprocal obligations of care, young people are transitioning to a more precarious economic existence than their parents’.

On the national side, so long as Rwanda’s young majority primarily engages in the informal economy, the state cannot be hegemonic in the economic domain; nor can Rwanda transition to a middle-income or knowledge-based economy as planned.

## Chapter 7 - Changing Marriage Patterns: 'Getting married isn't for everyone'

'Marriage is no longer a collective moment of social reproduction setting up a new hearth, it is a crucial element in individual capitalization.'  
*A Hill Among a Thousand* (De Lame 2005, 450)

### Introduction

In the *Introduction* to this thesis, I stated that I chose to study changing marriage patterns because I believed it would reveal how Rwanda's young majority influence processes of institutional reproduction over time. In this final empirical chapter, I examine the marriage findings from this study to explore and test this assumption. Based on my empirical analysis, I will argue that young people's actions are not only influencing how they transition to social adulthood, but how social order is being produced and reproduced in Rwanda.

Through detailed empirical and historical analysis, this chapter examines continuity and change in marriage patterns – and by extension, children's transitions to social adulthood – across three generations. The principal objective of this analysis is to trace a process of gradual institutional change that is transforming how Rwandan society is reproduced so that I can learn whether young people shape this process and its outcomes in consequential ways. At the heart of this study is the question of how young Rwandans (or Africans) achieve social transitions in an institutional environment that is characterised by chronic scarcity, structural and political violence, and rapid change. Faced with these challenges, contemporary youth scholars claim that Africa's young majority is 'Stuck' in the social status of 'youth' (Sommers 2012), and that their liminal

position constitutes a crisis of social reproduction that threatens social order (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004, 339; Cruise O'Brien 1996; Masquelier 2005; cf. Jones 2009). However, as I historicise marriage experience and locate participants' accounts within the broader historical literature on African marriage and social change, a more nuanced picture emerges that allows us to interpret individual experience and trace both continuity and change.

I begin this chapter by critically examining the grandparents' early life narratives to show that while lineages used children's customary first marriages to reproduce a very hierarchical social order, there was some flexibility and variation in how this process was carried out. However, there was also a strong relationship between children's compliance with normative ideals and the new couple's subsequent adult status. When the Church and state introduced new institutional rules, norms, and practices to govern marriage, institutional multiplicity presented young people with alternative pathways to social adulthood, but also new risks. Young people and their families have navigated these changes by engaging with traditional and modern marriage institutions in conventional and novel ways; as they do, they reorder how family and society are reproduced.

In the second half of the chapter, I build on this institutional analysis and previous chapters to examine how and why, as young people, the parents' and children's generational cohorts increasingly directed and provided for their own social transitions and in doing so, influenced marriage patterns in consequential ways. This generational analysis provides insights into why young people's social transitions have been changing in central Rwanda. It also confirms that childhood and coming of age is an exceptionally

reproductive period in the life course wherein young people influence broader processes of social reproduction and change in significant ways. For this reason, it is particularly critical to attend to how and why how young people are engaging with institutional mechanisms in national contexts where they are the demographic majority.

### **7.1 The Institution of Marriage**

Early anthropological studies of African marriage and society are clear that the institution of marriage has historically not been about ‘the couple’, per se, but about reproducing a particular social order through children’s transitions to social adulthood (Radcliffe-Brown 1950, 51). However, Burnham (1987) criticises these studies for theorising the mechanisms of social continuity that they sought to portray, rather than the full lived reality of African marriage processes. By failing to report ‘patterns and processes of competition, inequality, conflict and exploitation within domestic groups’, young people’s marriages were portrayed as unproblematic and change was ‘analysed as resulting from factors *extrinsic* to the ‘domestic domain’ (ibid., 38; italics added).

By taking a relational and historical institutional approach to the study of changing marriage patterns, this section offers both perspectives: the grandparents’ and parents’ narratives demonstrate how kinship and modern institutional actors used the institution of marriage to exercise and reproduce their authority in and over the domestic domain, including children; as they did, they (un)intentionally (re)produced distributional patterns that created opportunities for some, but risks for others. But as young people, who were *intrinsic* to the ‘domestic domain’, navigated these reproductive processes, they both complied with and challenged marriage rules, norms, and practices. In so doing, they reproduced and changed institutional patterns.

## **Customary Marriage**

I begin with elders' memories of customary marriage (see *Appendix 4*) because they provide a picture of how patterns of social reproduction were embedded within children's lives and relationships and how children both cooperated with and contested these practices. This historical analysis provides the background material needed to interpret the second half of the chapter. But it also provides insights into why young people continue to use customary rituals to lend legitimacy to their contemporary unions, despite the efforts of the Church and state to supplant the authority of customary marriage (Vanhees 2014, 47; De Lame 2005, 371).

### ***Matchmaking: 'Unequal arms can never embrace'***

In the grandfathers' experience, the marriage process began when they or their parents decided they were ready to marry; after agreeing on this, parents appointed a matchmaker (usually a paternal aunt or uncle) to find a suitable bride. This began the symbolic and practical transition to the generational status of adulthood. Celestin recalled:

When my [maternal] grandmother realised that I was becoming a man, she asked me if she could find me a wife. And I said yes. In that time, it wasn't the boy, but the parents, who looked for a beautiful girl. After they found her, they came back to you to tell you the good news. (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

But because customary marriage was primarily about forging a beneficial family alliance with another family, Aurora and *Inteko* members recounted 'It was first the parents who courted each other.' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013; FG/*Inteko*/5-30-2013) Thus, families invested considerable time vetting each other's reputation before the groom's family

asked to 'take the gate' and the bride's father accepted (see also Ndekezi, n.d.). Alexis recounted the most important criteria families considered:

Let me tell you how it was in that time. People were not the same, and families were not the same. There were what they called *amoko*, clans. They were Rwandans, but some of them were *abungura*, *abagesera*, *abasindi*. Some clans were not supposed to marry each other...it couldn't succeed...Before a girl was given for marriage, her family was supposed to do *kuraguza*, consult the spirits for her. If they didn't consult the sorcerer for her, all the cows might die, her parent could die, all that because your blood wasn't made to be mixed - it was taboo, forbidden.

The first thing to consider was one's group [*amoko*]. When that was compatible, then we had to consider the family [...] whether there were any men capable of coming to rescue you when you called for help [...] Then wealth came after all. The girl was supposed to be beautiful. Then you could say that you will marry her. Those were the conditions. (LH/Alexis/4-21-2013)

Alexis's account demonstrates that families arranged their children's marriages in the best interest of the group, not the child<sup>176</sup>.

But although Alexis mentions wealth as a final consideration, informants of all ages used the saying, '*Amaboko atareshya ntaramukanya*' ('Unequal arms can never embrace'), to explain that only those from the same socio-economic group [*amoko*] should marry. When this was the case, families reproduced their social, economic, and political status and power through their child's union. However, this did not always happen. Francine's mother was married to the son of her father's Tutsi patron 'because he liked her' (INT/Francine\_Redempta/2-26-2014). Thus, some marginal families married into wealthier ones (see also Codere 1973; Arnoux 1931). When families married 'up', they could improve their position, but Francine's life history suggests her father primarily

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<sup>176</sup> Taylor (1992) finds this process was more elder-led in northern Rwanda, where some of the grandparents were from (80-1).

regarded his many 'wives' as a source of labour and progeny to maintain his household and status.

Within this matchmaking and vetting process, 'well-educated' girls were favoured and idealised as *ni nyampinga*. Aurora explained this term saying, 'It means a girl who behaves, who could welcome visitors and give them food and shelter, who could talk to them in a good way. Then people would say, 'In that house there's a girl [available for marriage]: she is *ni nyampinga*.' (LH/Aurora/4-21-2013) Janvier explained the significance of this term:

*Impinga* means 'hill', which represents the wealth of a family. So *nyampinga* means one who joins two hills in marriage. The bride was considered the bridge, the key, that opened the relationship between two families [two hills] so that later on some other boy from either family would marry any girl from either family [...] she unified them. (LH/Janvier/12-11-2012)

In Rwanda, 'The Land of a Thousand Hills', *ni nyampinga* is a powerful metaphor that illustrates how a well-educated daughter enhances her family's status through her bridewealth and marriage (INT/Sibomana/10-2012; also De Lame 2005, 292). For their part, the groom's lineage desired a well-educated bride who would educate future children and manage household production well. By judging, celebrating, and marrying a girl based on her competence, obedience, and subservient behaviour, elders encouraged girls' compliance with gender and generational rules and norms. This helped to ensure future production and domestic reproduction, but it also reinforced male and female elder control over the lineage's children. Girls were not passive in this process: they understood that the best way to enhance their life chances was to gain the favour of elders, especially male kin and paternal aunts. As we will see, they used this favour to challenge gender and generational power structures.

### ***Gusaba: Sanctioning a Union***

The most essential ritual within customary marriage was, and still is, *gusaba*. Hosted by the bride's family, *gusaba* is the celebratory ritual wherein the lineages negotiate the bridewealth. Eugenia explained,

The day of *gusaba* we invited aunties, cousins, the whole family. [...] They [groom's lineage] bring two [pots of] beer, but many times...in that time, they used to share drinks. [...] You, as the bride, invite your girlfriends and take them into your room. [...] They start talking about the brideprice [*inkwano*]...while the bride is hiding. (LH/Eugenia/5-5-2013)

Essentially, this ritual celebrates the new family alliance and the daughter who made it possible. The bridewealth agreement was evidence that both families sanctioned the union. Bridewealth (*inkwano*) was supposed to be given before marriage, but even if it was never given and/or no further rituals took place, *gusaba* legitimised the union. By arranging the marriage and providing the bridewealth, lineage elders fulfilled their reciprocal obligations to their children and opened the pathway to adulthood for them. This act reproduced their authority as elders and affirmed their control over lineage resources, including future children. However, because they arranged the union that formed the basis of the family alliance, elders also carried the responsibility to mediate the couple's future domestic disputes and judge whether a husband had grounds for *gusenda*, sending his wife away, or a wife had just cause to leave (LH/Janvier/12-11-2012; see also Kayigana 1979).

Given its essential nature, it is significant that it was during *gusaba* that a daughter could signal her refusal to the match by doing *kubenga*. She did this by walking straight through the room of family and out the opposite door. But this was a risky act: a girl had no social support for *kubenga* because her lineage had arranged the marriage in

their best interest. Further, refusing it shamed them and she could be disowned for the act. Even if her father accepted her decision, *kubenga* was costly: he had to repay double the gifts he had received and their lineage was permanently cut-off from – *inzigo*, dead to – the groom’s (see also Twagirayezu, n.d.). Girls were more likely to succeed if they had the favour of their elders.

Despite these risks, many older participants boasted that they did *kubenga* at least once.

Celestin’s sister-in-law shared her story:

- Sister: I did *kubenga* several times. But I was afraid of being disowned. I was [eventually] married in 1962.
- Solange: If a girl decided to do *kubenga* to a boy, what did her family do to her?
- Sister: The parents could get angry; they could disown you and chase you away [...] But sometimes you could do *kubenga*, but they resisted and came back and asked again. (CONV/Neighbours/3-18-2013)

Women cited diverse reasons for doing *kubenga*. One disapproved of the boy’s haughty attitude (Pers.Comm. E-mail/Solange/12-1-2015). Two cited concerns about the poor quality of a boy’s land. Francine and Aurora did *kubenga* because they did not want to marry a Bakiga; Francine failed, but left her marriage after two years. Given the risks, *kubenga* was a powerful act that tested a daughter’s true position in a very gendered and gerontocratic social hierarchy. No wonder these women boasted of their success.

### ***The Marriage Night: Reproducing Gender and Generational Norms***

Until the early 1970s, marriage celebrations took place at night. They were full of symbolic meaning, a ritual rite of passage for the bride and groom (see also Bushayija 1966; Pauwels 1954; 1953; Musabyimana 1999).

These rituals celebrated a daughter’s value, but they also reproduced her subordinate gender status. The night before a girl’s marriage, women recounted that the bride’s

girlfriends and female relatives wept and sang of the loss of their daughter and the end of her girlhood; the next day they bathed and groomed her for marriage. Then, accompanied by female attendants, the bride was carried in a livery the long distance to her in-laws' compound. Hidden under the mat that would become her conjugal bed, she arrived at night to bonfires and the sound of singing and dancing. She was received on her mother-in-law's lap. Her mother-in-law gave her a gift and then she was placed on her father-in-law's lap and he too gave her a gift (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013). After telling the story of her marriage, Aida remarked, 'We were the cherished ones.' (LH/Aida/5-5-2013) These rituals celebrated a daughter's purity, but by receiving their new daughter well, the groom's parents also signalled their respect for the new lineage alliance. The bride was then accompanied to the groom's hut.

Through the very public ritual of first sex the bride and groom transitioned to the generational status of adulthood. While relatives hid in the dark listening and waiting outside the groom's hut, the bride had to prove her unfamiliarity with sex by acting fearful; she could not allow the groom to take her easily (CONV/Neighbours/3-18-2013).

Celestin explained:

There was a kind of test to prove the groom [...] He was supposed to take his wife at the cost of destroying his house, but the bride had to fight him off [...] This was done until he succeeded, until he showed her the strength in him, that he could control her. When you took your bride on your bed and slept with her, only then could the mother-in-law or the bride's female attendant go back to her parents to report what she saw, that their daughter was no more a girl [*umukobwa*], but a wife [*umugore*]. (LH/Celestin/2-10-2013)

When the groom emerged to declare his success, female relatives undulated cries of approval: the boy had proved his manhood. The girl had become a wife.

First sex completed the transition to social adulthood because it established the husband as chief in his home and over his wife, and it affirmed the couple's capacity to reproduce the lineage in every way. This transition in generational status marked one more step up in an increasingly gendered social age hierarchy that extended across the life course from birth to adulthood and old age. Through this corporate celebration, the couple also affirmed patriarchy and elder control over processes of social reproduction.

### **Marriage, Broadly Defined**

Until the late 1970s, almost all children transitioned to the generational status of adulthood via the fairly linear institutional pathway of customary marriage. However, this does not mean that there was a stable marital order, as early anthropologists suggest (see, for example, Maquet 1954, chap. 3; A. Kagame 1954): from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Church leaders lamented the high prevalence of polygamy, separation, divorce, and informal remarriage (Bushayija 1966; 1969). For many, customary marriage was only the first conjugal relationship in a life that included multiple partners.

The grandparents' narratives suggest that subsequent unions were widespread due to the prevalence of polygamy, marital dissatisfaction<sup>177</sup>, and widowhood. For example, Celestin's mother left her first husband because he was abusive (bridewealth was never paid); she remarried shortly thereafter. Rosa was born to her father's second, informal wife. Francine explained her situation, which Codere's (1973) work suggests was fairly common:

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<sup>177</sup> It was, and is, culturally acceptable for husbands to do *gusenda*, dismiss wives for infertility or poor behaviour (FG/Empower/1-17-2013; see also Kayigana 1979); similarly, wives could leave their marriage if they were badly treated (see also Pauwels 1954).

In 1942, I lost my mother [...] I was raised by my father's [informal] wives. Some came and stayed for one year...some might leave with one child, some might leave when they were pregnant, and some left without anything. (LH/Francine/3-5-2013)

They were the type of women who had left their marriage and had nowhere to go, so they came to live with him. (INT/Francine\_Redempta/2-26-2014)

These 'wives' did not enjoy the status or security of customary marriage. But many would rather risk informal remarriage than face the stigma of being *ijishubaziko*, a derogatory term reserved for unmarried women, prostitutes, and women whose marriage relationship failed. But Francine was so unhappy in her marriage that she risked leaving. She explained:

I was married to a Bakiga man who had another wife. My parents chose him for me and they forced me to marry him...I failed to live with that man because he had another wife and I could not handle living with her jealousy. [...] But if you failed to live with the husband they married you to, in a way you had some respect because you ended up in that situation because of your parents' rule. (LH/Francine/3-5-2013)

Shortly after leaving, she chose to marry a paternal relation in Inkombe.

Thus, depending on a woman's circumstances and a man's resources and need for assistance, *subsequent* unions took many forms - from a slave or servant-master relationship to an adulterous affair to an informal or formal monogamous or polygamous marriage. There were so many types of unions that there were specific terms to describe each variation; these terms made the social and jural status of the wife and her children - and the obligations of the husband and his lineage to them - clear to all (see also Bushayija 1966; Ilinigumugabo 1989; for today, see Vanhees 2014). This historic variation and flexibility in *remarriage* set a precedent for subsequent changes in *first* unions; as Burnham (1987) argues, there was 'play' within the pre-colonial marriage system (47).

In *Chapter Four*, we saw the grandparents' generational cohort changing rules, norms, and practices related to customary *first* marriage as they interacted with the Church and notions of modernity. Similarly, Parkin and Nyamwaya (1987b) observe that economic and social transformations underway in post-independence Africa led to 'the opening up of marriage strategies' (4). In both cases, the convergence of modern and traditional institutions created an opportunity – and in some cases, an imperative – for young people to engage with the institution of marriage in new ways.

But just as the Church and market economy introduced new marriage rules, norms, and practices for their members/consumers, the new Rwandan state established its authority over the 'domestic domain' with a Civil Code that only recognised citizens' civil and religious marriages<sup>178</sup>. After subverting traditional authority thus, the state curtailed the power of the Church by amending the 1978 Constitution to only recognise civil marriage<sup>179</sup>.

Despite these efforts at control, the remainder of this chapter argues that legal pluralism (i.e. traditional/religious/civil law) persists in the institution of marriage because young people opportunistically use institutional multiplicity to navigate their transitions to social adulthood: in a context of multiple, competing rule systems, young people 'open up' marriage strategies as they redefine jural marriage to their advantage. As they do, we see marriage patterns – and processes of social reproduction – change in consequential ways.

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<sup>178</sup> 1962 Constitution, Official gazette 24/11/1962, Art.28, 29.

<sup>179</sup> Official gazette 20/12/1978, Art.25. The 2003 Constitution, Art.26 confirms this prohibition by solely recognising civil, monogamous marriage. In 1988, the Civil Code, Art.171, set the minimum legal age for marriage at 21. This was affirmed in the 2016 Law Governing Persons and Family.

However, this analysis of remarriage reminds us that the marriage strategies young people are using are not *new*. What is new is that they are appropriating *remarriage* practices to *first* marriage. They are redefining *first* marriage in the broad terms previously reserved for *subsequent* unions. Bledsoe (1990) warns that if we fail to expand our view of marriage as they are, and instead ‘bemoan the demise of stable African marriage and family structures [...we] misunderstand their intrinsic dynamism’ (19). We will also fail to understand the political, economic, social, and legal implications of changing marriage patterns.

## **7.2 Changing Marriage Patterns: A Gendered, Generational Analysis**

As in preceding chapters, this section draws on historical and ethnographic data to present a gendered and generational analysis of the changing marriage patterns evident in the parents’ and children’s generational cohorts. In contrast to youth transitions scholars who argue that young people are ‘stuck’ in the social status of ‘youth’ due to their inability to transition to social adulthood, this analysis suggests young Rwandans continue to achieve the status of adulthood by (re)interpreting and redefining marriage rules, norms, and practices. This tactic is increasingly feasible because there are a growing number of rule systems for young people to engage with.

But as I argued in my theoretical framework, the opportunities that come with institutional multiplicity also introduce new risks: as young people increasingly direct and provide for transitions on their own, they transform marriage from an agreement between two families to an agreement between two people, from an institution aimed at reproducing collective well-being to an institution used to ensure individual well-being (see also Bushayija 1969, 83). This influences the support available to them over

the long-term. Further, as young people reinterpret and reconfigure the institution of marriage, they force the redefinition of social and jural status, but new definitions may or may not benefit them. Thus, as we will see, young people are not only changing marriage patterns and pathways to social adulthood; they are fundamentally altering the social order and how Rwandan society is reproduced.

### **The Parents' Generation: Marriage Patterns During the Two Republics**

In the 1980s when most of the parents' generational cohort were marrying, changing marriage patterns were alarming policy actors, Church leaders, and Rwandan elites (Ilinigumugabo 1989; De Lame 2005, 11). In a society that was traditionally reproduced through customary marriage, 50 to 70 per cent of all young people age 15 to 24 were engaging in '*les unions libre*' (see *Figure 1.2*). In her Western sector, De Lame (2005) finds that between 1970 and 1990 the number of marriages that began with no bridewealth rose from 28 to 69 per cent (372). Yet despite these changes and the economic crisis driving them, all the parents except Celestin's daughter Chantal transitioned to social adulthood through customary, Church, and civil marriage.

When I left Rwanda in 2013, I thought this group's experiences were normal for this period - that marriage patterns only really began to change after the 1994 Genocide. But when I returned in 2014 and conducted genogram interviews with the study families, I discovered they were exceptional: almost half of their siblings married prior to 1994 began social adulthood with *koco* (elopement), a practice that was taboo just one generation before. This pattern, which is indicative of broader national transformations, represents a highly significant change within the timespan of one generation. For this reason, I focus on explaining the siblings' stories here. Their experiences, and

participants' reflections on them, provide insights into how young people transitioned to the generational status of adulthood in this unequal and unstable institutional environment and how their actions cumulatively influenced patterns of reproduction.

### ***'Koco' [KO-cho]: One Response to Poverty and Global Culture***

It is important to begin by explaining the Kinyarwanda terms used to describe elopement, for elopement has become the most common way to initiate a first union in central Rwanda today<sup>180</sup> (see also Vanhees 2014; Polavarapu 2014, 143). Further, the way these unions begin and unfold speaks volumes about evolving gender relations and the couple's status and life chances.

As *Table 7.1* illustrates, Kinyarwanda has many terms to describe different forms of elopement and informal marriage. I have chosen to use the somewhat vulgar and humorous term for elopement – '*koco*' (*gukocora*) - to connote all forms of elopement because it is the vernacular term my predominantly poor urban and rural participants knew and used. The fact that none of the middle to upper-class Rwandan adults I spoke with knew the term '*koco*' underscores the reality that *koco* was and is a practice of the poor and marginal - there no evidence of *koco* in the Chief's Tutsi family genogram. This suggests that marriage patterns and processes of social reproduction are changing more quickly, and in different ways, for the poor majority than for the middle and upper-income minority<sup>181</sup>.

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<sup>180</sup> This claim is based on individual interviews and focus group data in Inkombe and Kigali, and on 2012-2014 sector data for Rwagati and Inkombe.

<sup>181</sup> For example, age at first marriage was likely higher for those who would not elope (see Olson 1994; André and Platteau 1998).

Prior to the 1980s, Rosa explained that all forms of *koco* were taboo (*amahano*, a scandal) for first marriage and quite rare. But from around 1980, she remembered *koco* becoming increasingly common. By *koco*, she meant an instance in which a boy took a girl to be his wife without the formal knowledge or approval of her parents. There were two main ways to do this.

**Table 7.1: Terms for Forms of Elopement and Informal Marriage<sup>182</sup>**

Kinyarwanda	Translation	Meaning
<i>gukocora</i> (“ <i>koco</i> ”)	“To elope”	A vulgar, humorous term denoting a hit-and-run kind of action.
<i>kwishyinjera</i>	“To marry oneself”	An individualistic way to begin a union instead of being married by kin.
<i>kwijyana</i> or <i>kwinyina</i>	“To go on your own” (to boy’s house); “To sneak out”	Girls said, “I left at night without telling my parents”; they wanted to avoid a confrontation with parents and the rituals of customary marriage.
<i>guterura</i>	“Stealing” a bride	Taking a bride without her or her family’s consent; tricking a girl into having sex.
<i>gusumbukaza</i>	Informal remarriage	

In a less common scenario (*guterura*, kidnapping/stealing), a boy took a girl by force with the assistance of relatives from both families. Motivated to secure a union for her, Redempta’s sisters explained that the girl’s relatives – usually her aunt - invited her to visit; the relative then ‘betrayed her’ by leaving her alone in the house for the boy to rape<sup>183</sup> (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014). Redempta recounted, ‘The boy put the *umwishwa* vine on her head saying, ‘I marry you. I am (name), son of (name and name).’ And it was over.’

<sup>182</sup> From transcripts and consultation with translators and key informants, 2012-2014 (see also Vanhees 2014, 52-54).

<sup>183</sup> I use the term rape because unlike first sex on the wedding night, the girl was not aware of what was about to happen (see discussion of sexual violence in Burnet 2012).

They kept her for a week or so to see if the girl would consent to marriage. Redempta added, ‘The boy was sure that after doing that, the girl’s family was obliged to give him their daughter. That was the culture’<sup>184</sup> (INT/Francine\_Redempta/2-26-2014).

If the girl consented, one of the groom’s relatives went to tell her parents that their daughter was now *umugore*, ‘a woman’ and they gave the bride’s relative a gift for the act of matchmaking. They also had to mend relations with the bride’s family. They did this by visiting her father’s compound, apologising for their son’s actions, and formally requesting their daughter in marriage.

However, if the girl or her family disapproved of the union, the family could deny the marriage and take their daughter back. Francine did this with her eldest daughter. When a daughter returned home, she was no longer a virgin and she was not a wife, so she had to reclaim her generational status by doing rituals associated with girls, but taboo for women<sup>185</sup>.

While shameful, stealing a bride enabled very poor sons and daughters to marry<sup>186</sup>. However, by physically taking a girl against her will, boys diminished daughters – who were celebrated in customary marriage - to damaged goods, factors of production. Further, as elder female kin and sons took the responsibility for matchmaking from fathers and male elders, they also took control of social reproduction. This exposed the

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<sup>184</sup> Putting *umwishwa* vine on the bride was a customary ritual on the wedding night. The 1988 Family Code criminalised forced *guterura*.

<sup>185</sup> An example given was walking on a roof (FG/Inteko/5-30-2013).

<sup>186</sup> It is not clear when or why the tradition of labouring for one’s father-in-law for a ‘free bride’ disappeared.

impotence of fathers. Marriage became the means to ensure a son's future, not his lineage's.

In a more common second scenario (*gukocora*, *kwishyinjera*, *kwijyana/kwinyina*), couples did *koco* consensually to avoid an existing arranged marriage and/or to choose their own partner in a 'democratic' way. Aida's eldest sister did *koco* because 'it was her right' and because it got her out of an existing engagement (INT/FS2/2-25-2014). However, Aida, Francine, and Redempta explained that relatives still acted as matchmaker, introducing the couple and passing messages between the two until there was an agreement to marry. Because *koco* carried risks and stigma, most young people only did this if they knew their parents were unable to provide a customary marriage or if they feared their parents would disapprove of their chosen partner. As with 'stealing a bride', young people and their relatives were taking control over social reproduction to secure their own future, rather than their families'.

Although *koco* was increasingly common from the early 1980s, poorer parents and grandparents explained that it was never the preferred way to marry. Rather, it was economically and socially expedient: it did not require the normal bridewealth payment and exchange of gifts. However, once a union was approved, the bride's lineage quickly arranged *gusaba*<sup>187</sup>. Bridewealth was negotiated, but Francine explained that it was usually only a token amount and it was often not paid. Families then carried out some customary marriage rituals to offset the social stigma associated with *koco* and brought

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<sup>187</sup> Genogram interviews 2014.

the two lineages together to celebrate the union (see *Appendix 4*; see also De Lame 2005, 371). In some cases, a civil and/or religious marriage<sup>188</sup> followed.

But when couples eloped, were they recognised as ‘adults’ within their families and on their hill? It depends. If the groom had his own ‘gate’ and the families did *gusaba*, the couple were recognised as man and wife. Lineages accorded this generational status because the groom had demonstrated his capacity to provide for himself and others, and because both lineages sanctioned the union with *gusaba* and a bridewealth agreement. If *either* of these conditions were not met, the couple lived in a liminal state: the girl could be referred to as a prostitute rather than a wife and she could be sent away without recourse at any time (especially if bridewealth was not given). The couple were a shame to their families and had very limited voice within the lineage.

Although civil marriage was the only form of marriage recognised by law after 1978, I found no evidence that young people used civil marriage to avoid or escape the expense of customary marriage. Most registered their marriages, but like Celestin, they did so primarily to avoid being fined. To them, civil marriage was a bureaucratic formality that depended on evidence of a bridewealth agreement and payment<sup>189</sup>. In contrast, customary marriage was not only a powerful demonstration of status, but also evidence of intergenerational and intra-familial reciprocal obligations of care that extended across the life course. Thus, young people and their families reproduced customary marriage rules and rituals to the extent that they could; as they did, they reinforced the

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<sup>188</sup> Church members had to have a religious marriage to retain their membership (CONV/FS1/5-18-2013) and civil marriage to avoid being taxed (Solange/VisitFS1/10-2014).

<sup>189</sup> 1988 Family Code. This requirement was removed in the Law Governing Persons and Family No.32/2016 of 28/08/2016.

authority of kin and kinship institutions over church and state law (see also De Lame 2004, 370).

Thus, just as young people in *Chapter Six* found new ways to navigate the economic demands of economic transitions, young people used various forms of *koco* to ‘open up’ first marriage strategies; however, they blended *koco* with customary rituals to legitimise their union and restore family relations. In the aftermath of Genocide, young people would find this precedent helpful.

### **Changing Marriage Patterns in the Post-Genocide Era<sup>190</sup>**

Married by *koco* in 1995, Redempta was unsure how to tell me the story of her marriage.

She recounted,

I never had the idea of getting married after I saw the war, I never thought about it. In me, I never had that idea. [...] I saw how the war was and I remembered how mothers lost their children in that war, they had a bad life, some were pregnant. I heard stories about how pregnant women were cut with a machete. I felt that I would never get married. (LH/Redempta/3-4-2013)

It is easy to understand why, after witnessing Genocide in Inkombe at age 19, Redempta lost any thought of marriage, of bringing children into the world, of love. In a very visceral way, life stopped. For participants, lived experience occurred either before the Genocide or after. Life, as they knew it, ended.

And then it began.

Redempta was roused back to life when her girlfriends alerted her to the fact that *all* the eligible Hutu men in their village were gone - fled or imprisoned. Having survived war

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<sup>190</sup> This section includes data from the youngest siblings of the parents’ generation as well as the children’s generational cohort.

and a genocide, Redempta now faced the spectre of social death: already marginal as a 'bastard' and a Hutu, what social value would she have if she was not a wife and mother? Whose land would she work to survive?

Lubkemann (2008) argues that war is 'a social process' in which everyday actors use their agency to continue to realise life projects within an environment that is shaped by *pre-war* social norms and structures *as well as* violence (22-24). But in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide, this environment was also being shaped by new state and international institutions that aimed to re-establish political, economic, and social order. Rwanda's Post-Developmental state stands out as being particularly ambitious in this regard: it not only seeks stability but also a 'New Rwanda', which is modelled on high modernist and neoliberal ideals and rebuilt upon a foundation of interdependence and 'traditional Rwandan values' (see Kagame 2013a) from an idealised past.

In this 'New Rwanda', new households must be built to code in designated village settlements; gender equality and children's rights trump patriarchy and gerontocracy; and young people 'striv[e] for self-reliance', abstain from premarital sex, marry from age 21, and register their union in the civil affairs office before living together. But there is a significant disjuncture between these ideals and young people's material reality. How are young people realising life projects, in particular, generational transitions to social adulthood, within this institutional environment?

The remainder of this chapter examines how young people like Redempta, and those born since 1994, have been pursuing one of their primary life goals, marriage and social adulthood, in the two decades since the Genocide. Through this analysis, I argue that

young people are not only changing institutional pathways to adulthood, but fundamentally changing how Rwandan society is being reproduced.

### ***Shocking Marriage Patterns***

In the aftermath of the Genocide, households in Rwagati were reconfigured due to the death, flight, and the imprisonment of family members. Inkombe sector was a zone hit by 'excess mortality' (Verpoorten 2011, 29-30); further, Rwagati and the neighbouring village were exceptional for imprisoning all Hutu men. These gendered losses severely distorted the sex ratio, locally and nationally. In an informal interview, Concilie described what this looked like in Rwagati, repeating: 'Before [*gacaca*], this village was a village only of women!' And again, 'There were no men in the village, only women, for a long time' (INT/Concilie/3-17-2013). This gender imbalance acted as an exogenous shock to the marriage market, locally and nationally (see also Verpoorten and Schindler 2013). In response to this shock, young people like Redempta continue to pursue marriage as a life project, but they are doing so in new ways. Two trends are notable for their effect on the institution of marriage.

First, women in Inkombe explained that economic insecurity and a lack of men made girls fear that they would not secure a husband. Although these women were unanimous that premarital sex was taboo prior to the Genocide, in its aftermath these fears made girls more willing to compromise their values and take sexual risks with men<sup>191</sup> (FG/Women/1-6-2013; see also Burnet 2012; Schindler and Verpoorten 2013). Thus, many girls began to do '*gutanga avance*' - give a sexual advance (i.e. on marriage) - so that

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<sup>191</sup> Similarly, Haguruka (2003) finds that fear also increased girls' willingness to enter informal unions and forego the rights associated with civil marriage.

boys could 'try out' a potential partner before they decided who to marry (FG/Students/2-23-2014; FG/Women/1-6-2013). Girls in a student focus group explained that giving an 'advance' could open a pathway to a more secure financial future, or at least an escape from the poverty they already knew, if it led to a long-term relationship. As one girl explained, 'Parents can't afford everything you need, so you marry the man who will give you what you need', especially if you are an orphan (FG/WS/12-30-2012; see also Vanhees 2014, 54). These findings support Verpoorten and Schindler's (2013) conclusion that 'genocide-induced male scarcity leads women to accept the less binding commitments made by men' (31) and shed light on how young people understand and pursue transitions to social adulthood today.

But *gutanga avance* is risky. Sometimes it worked in a girl's favour, especially if the community was aware of her relationship and she gave birth to a son (Fieldnotes/9-12-2012). But young people explained that some girls begin to cohabit 'When they are very young, even when they are 15!' (FG/WS/12-30-2012). Without the ability to marry legally until age 21, they have no legal protection. Further, authorities could force them to separate and return home, as they were when I arrived in 2014.

More commonly, a young man tricks a girl into sex with promises of commitment<sup>192</sup>, but in a post-1994 twist, he refuses to marry her formally or he discards her (see also Vanhees 2014, 53). Due to the prevalence of this trend, one woman explained, 'Today, when girls marry they are already *biyararang*, finished, used up, not serious.' (FG/Women/1-6-2013) Similarly, Mutesi wrote that elders no longer regard marriage as

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<sup>192</sup> Participants used the same term for this deceit as 'stealing a bride', *guterura*.

a celebration of something new and special for their daughters, for they are already 'used' (Journal/Mutesi).

These behaviours were negatively influencing girls' social value in Inkombe. While boys were admired for being strong-willed and committed to their plans, old and young regarded girls to be weak-willed and easily influenced. Biko criticised girls saying, 'In their weakness they begin with 'no, no, no', but then they end with 'yes, yes, yes' (Journal). Girls were being told they are now equal to boys, but they were being looked down upon because they are no longer ashamed 'to look men in the eyes' – a cultural indicator that they are brazen, uneducated, and sexually active (FG/Women/1-6-2013). Thus, despite Rwanda's gender equality discourse, patriarchal norms and practices still dominate: girls, not boys, are singled out for censure. Girls are changing practice by breaking sexual taboos and engaging with gender rules, norms, and practices in new ways, but norms are slow to change.

Through *gutanga avance* and the more liberal sexual culture that has followed it, young people are redefining sexual and marital rules, norms, and practices in ways that give them freedom to use sex in new ways – both for survival and pleasure. This signals that girls are taking control over their sexuality from lineage women. However, they are doing so without the social protection that comes from the accountability of customary and civil marriage. Thus, if a partner exploits a girl by 'trying her out' and then refuses to (formally) marry her, she has no recourse. The experiences of Anne, Augustin, and women at Empower demonstrate the social costs of these actions: unplanned pregnancies and unions are contributing to rising rates of domestic violence and spousal and parental abandonment (LH/Anne/4-2-2013; INT/Empower/2-20-2014; see also

Honeyman 2013). Thus, while *gutanga avance* may create opportunities for some, it is foreclosing opportunities for many. Through these unions, young people are destabilising the institution of marriage and producing social instability.

A second trend also suggests that the imbalance in the sex ratio shocked the marriage market: the trousseau evolved into something closer in value to a dowry. Mutesi explained:

In the last four years, you found that a girl had to bring *ibishyingirwa* [to the marriage]. For example: a plastic bowl, mortar, mattress, chairs, mat, etc. But today they also have to bring even a cupboard and sofa, and some people bring bicycles (for families that are wealthy)! (Journal)

The goods that a bride must bring vary by region, but in Inkombe the trousseau now costs more than bridewealth. Adrien and Aida explained how this affects parents:

Adrien: Here, when it's time to prepare the wedding, it is very expensive for us poor people. Because she [daughter] takes everything that is needed in a house to start her life.

Aida: She leaves nothing.

Adrien: Accepting to do *gusaba* [i.e. customary marriage] for your daughter is like collapsing your household into hers. (INT/FS2Parents/2-25-2014)

As in the Two Republics, children are driving these economic changes, not parents. On one level, young people are responding to the sex ratio imbalance: boys think they can demand more from girls and girls feel pressure to make themselves more desirable as a marriage partner (Fieldnotes/4-16-2013; Journals). But this trend is also being driven by young people who regard marriage as an individual project that must be navigated on one's own for oneself, rather than by and for one's family, the Church, or the state: with limited material resources to draw on, many students remarked that they can use the goods they receive from the bride's family to 'develop' their own household (Journals).

However, as I will explain, young people are redefining marriage rules to their benefit, but they are once again inflating the cost of social transitions by pursuing the trappings of modernity and development at the cost of economic and social stability. Redempta's nephew explained that many families cannot afford the rising cost of the trousseau, so girls are increasingly pressuring boys to do *koco*. This represents a significant reversal to pre-1994 *koco* trends and suggests that young people are navigating social transitions on their own more than their parents did.

How are these post-Genocide behaviours influencing young people's ability to achieve the social status of adulthood?

### ***Marriage, Adulthood, and Status: Social Transitions, Locally Understood***

In his influential study of youth transitions in Rwanda, Sommers' (2012) argues that 'Rwanda faces the imminent prospect of producing almost an entire generation of failed adults. Many are stuck, struggling to become adults but unable to gain acceptance as one.' (Loc 3561) But has Rwanda's institutional environment changed so much that young people today are unable to achieve the social status of adulthood? Or are outside experts and elites failing to understand the 'intrinsic dynamism' (Bledsoe 1990, 19) of marriage and generational transitions in Rwanda, as Jones (2009) argues they are in Africa?

In *Chapter Six*, it was evident that young people understand that they need to establish their own 'gate' to be recognised as adults within their family and community. This was not only an economic imperative, but a social one: young people – especially those who were out of school or in their early twenties - were desperate to get out from under their

parent's authority. But what did it mean to them to be an adult? Who did society recognise as men and women?

Expressing a traditional view of adulthood, Umulisa explained in her journal that 'They say that someone is a man or a woman when they get married...that is when they take a new step in life from a young age to the mature one.' Mutesi expressed a broader view:

People say that someone becomes a man or a woman when s/he is married. But also when you are a girl and you have a child, people call you woman [*umugore*]. You are not a girl any more. But when people know very well that a boy has a child, people call him man [*umugabo*] and girls who are of the same age don't feel free with him because of that child. About this point, people say that you are a man or a woman when they are pretty sure that you have a child. (Journal)

Women in my focus group in Inkombe were more liberal, saying, 'You are called *umugore* [woman] when you begin to live with someone from the opposite sex. When you go to live with him, when you love him, that is when you are called *umugore*.' (FG/Women/1-28-2013) Writing in her journal, Nikuze emphasised that this transition in generational status is permanent for girls saying, 'We can't ignore that French saying – 'Each girl [*umukobwa*] can be a woman [*umugore*], but a woman cannot become a girl again'.<sup>193</sup> Thus, a woman could be marginalised as a prostitute for living alone, but once she is recognised as a woman she will always hold the generational roles and responsibilities associated with the status of adulthood.

This did *not* mean that young people who engaged in premarital sex and/or had a baby while living with parents were accorded the generational status of adulthood: my young neighbours who enjoyed sex in the nearby coffee field were not regarded as 'men' and

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<sup>193</sup> Women (FG/Women/1-28-2013) and multiple students referenced this saying (see also Vanhees 2014, 52).

'women' by anyone, including themselves. Daughters like Anne, who became pregnant while single, continued to live as girls under their parents' authority until they established their own home; they were not regarded as women except in the legal sense at age 19. But neither was it accepted for a male or female to establish a home alone; they may be addressed as adults, but they were regarded with suspicion for not fulfilling their 'adult' responsibilities of caring for a family (INT/FS4/2-25-2014; Journal/Mutima). An adult was someone who co-habited with a partner of the opposite sex; a couple who had their own 'gate'.

These findings suggest that like definitions of marriage, generational categories have broadened, not narrowed. This makes it easier, not more difficult, for young people to achieve the social status of adulthood. But how do young people understand this social process, and what - if anything - is the role of marriage in it?

As this discussion suggests, young people continue to regard marriage as the primary way to become recognised as adults. However, they understand 'marriage' in the broadest sense possible: in discussions, young people only occasionally differentiated between couples who were 'legally married' through civil marriage, 'formally married' through civil, customary, and/or religious rituals, and those who are 'illegally' or 'informally' married, meaning they co-habit without any formalities. This presented Solange and I with a semantic challenge, so we had to continually clarify what we and the speaker meant by 'marriage'. For example, in all three research workshops young people were adamant that people in Inkombe do not get married because it is too expensive. Similarly, Justin wrote in his journal: 'Getting married is not for everybody because it's very expensive'. But young people were not saying they do not plan to enter

a conjugal union. One clarified, 'Many people prefer to not marry *legally* because you will need to do ceremonies like *gusaba*...and it's very expensive' (FS/WS/12-30-2012). Another explained, 'because people in Inkombe are poor' most begin their union with informal marriage (FG/WS/12-30-2012). In group discussions, journals, and interviews young people all expressed an intention to marry - at some point and in some way - formally or informally. Further, youth, adults, and local leaders agreed that 80 to 90 per cent of the couples who begin with *koco* register their marriage within a short time frame<sup>194</sup>. Young people are marrying.

But these semantic challenges reveal a more fundamental issue, namely that marriage, like schooling, has become a social divider: in contrast to the grandparents' generation when rich or poor could facilitate a customary marriage, today only the wealthy and those with a secondary education (and social capital) can afford to begin their married life with formal marriage (see below). The rest begin with informal marriage, which provides no legal rights or protection to wives and children on its own.

But are the informally married socially marginalised as 'youth' based on their type of marriage, as Sommers argues (Loc 110-8, 1614-8)? This does not appear to be the case. Young people explained that (in)formally married people are accorded social respect based on how well they fulfil culturally-defined, gendered adult roles and responsibilities. As in the past, girls achieve status as 'women' through childbearing, managing their homes, children, and production well, behaving respectfully, and today - generating an income. Students believed that 'men' are those who speak well and have

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<sup>194</sup> In 2012-2014, couples in Inkombe were more likely to do civil marriage quickly (within days rather than months) because the law prohibiting informal unions was being enforced.

‘good actions and good ideas which are useful to society’ (Journal/Jean Baptiste; also Journal/Mutima). One girl reflected, ‘They consider a man to be someone who is strong enough to take care of his family’ (Journal/Nikuze). But Biko also explained: ‘In general, in our country *when you do good actions that people profit from*, they say that you are a man, regardless of your age or sex’ (italics added, Journal). As in the past, caring for others is essential to being respected as an adult.

Similarly, Mutima argued that the couple’s relationship is a more important indicator of adult status than other factors:

They can say that a young person becomes a man because of two things: what he did (good things for others) or that he married legally. And they say that a young girl becomes a woman when she has a baby, even if she is not married, legally or illegally. But when a boy lives alone without a girl, he is not a man. People consider them with respect *because of the way they live together*. (Journal)

In Inkombe, informally-married couples who live together well are respected for being ‘serious’, meaning that they care for their marriage, family, and community; in contrast, discordant couples are criticised for being ‘not serious’ (see also Cooper, n.d.). A sector leader explained the difference between ‘serious’ and ‘not serious’ informally-married couples:

There are a few people, a few, who prefer to live together common-law. But those people are in two categories: first, *those who make an agreement* between themselves because they don’t have means to marry. Then there are those who meet on the road and go live together. They didn’t take time to discuss their relationship between themselves. They may know each other for three days and then they go live together. You find the boy living with his woman in his parents’ kitchen. Those people are the source of conflict in their families because they didn’t plan their marriage. Sometimes they don’t have food. Or they go and rent a house and they don’t have the means to pay the rent. So that is a big problem in the community. (INT/Sector/2-11-2013)

Couples with an 'agreement' were respected because parents and leaders understood their economic dilemma and their intention to marry formally (Fieldnotes/4-1-2013). Significantly, this 'agreement' was widely regarded as the most fundamental element of a union, similar in force to the marriage agreement families negotiated in the past. It was also significant to Joel and Biko that today girls can make this agreement on their own (Journals). When negotiating an agreement, couples discussed how they would formalise their union and how they would help each other finance house construction, the trousseau, and wedding rituals. This agreement is evidence that these young people have taken responsibility for the social process of marriage from parents and elder kin. They are directing how social order is (re)produced through their transitions, not adults.

Thus, it is not the case that informally-married couples are not accorded the social status of 'adults' as Sommers (2012) contends, that they are marginalised simply for having an informal union<sup>195</sup>. Couples who refused to legalise their union could be fined RWF 10,000, but civil marriage did not accord social status. In Inkombe and Kigali, young people can marry informally, begin their own household, and be respected as adults within their communities (FG/Empower1-5; INT/Empower/2-20-2024); they are not 'stuck' in the liminal status of 'youth' due to their informal union (see also Jones 2009).

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<sup>195</sup> Regardless of marriage type, couples who did not live together well – like Clement and his wife, or Redempta and Fidel - were thoroughly marginalised by the community.

In this next, final section I analyse the social process of formal and informal marriage to show how and why the institution of marriage is changing, and what type of social order young people are (re)producing through their social transitions today.

### ***Changing Marriage Patterns***

Crammed into a tiny, hot bedroom for a rapid costume change with eight other female wedding attendants, I hid my wonder as the bride-to-be kept trying to wedge her ample breasts into her too-small bra and wedding dress. She was clearly fighting the laws of nature. Then it dawned on me...she rented her dress before her body caught up with the knowledge she was pregnant.

This was Uwingabire's second pregnancy by the same man. During her first, they moved in together. When his family opposed the union, he abandoned her. When a son was born, they recanted and told him to marry her. Rejected once, she hesitated. When she realised she was pregnant a second time, she agreed to his proposal. This wedding would restore her dignity.

During fieldwork, I observed that this was the way most unions begin today, regardless of socioeconomic status and schooling: unplanned. In Inkombe, young people were unanimous: a couple may negotiate an agreement to marry, but the timing of their (in)formal marriage is usually determined by pregnancy, fear of pregnancy, or virginity lost or given (FG/WS1-3; Fieldnotes/5-12-2013). This is a radical change from their parents' and grandparents' first marriage experiences when premarital sex was taboo and marriages – customary and *koco* – were *planned*, and planned by kin.

What exactly is happening? And how are young people's actions influencing their life chances and broader processes of social reproduction?

First, today young people choose their own partner and 'marry themselves' (*kwishyinjera*) by *koco* or formal marriage. Biko explained:

Nowadays the situation has completely changed because a boy needs to search and find a favourable girl to marry on his own [without a matchmaker], and then declare that girl to his parents. And nowadays *parents can't change the girl* if the boy has chosen her. The only requirement is love between that boy and girl. Also, *a girl has the right to choose* who her husband will be, *regardless of her parent's feelings, beliefs and religion*, and the *region* where her sweet boy is from. (Italics added, Journal)

But parents are not the only ones with less power in this decision process: Adrien explained that his daughters' generation has the right to say 'no' to a boy:

If she doesn't want it [*koco*], the boy can't take her by force. That is where it differs from before. Because before girls were even taken by force when a boy asked his friends to keep an eye on her. For example, if she went to mass, then they could take her. Today if you touch a girl and she is unwilling, you are arrested. (INT/F2/2-25-2014)

Generational and gender norms are changing: children, not elders, and girls, not just boys, are choosing their own partners today. These patterns represent a significant change from pre-1994 marriage patterns and a massive transformation from the grandparents' generation, when it was 'first the parents who court[ed] each other.'

Even more significantly, when young people do *koco* they often choose *and leave* with their partner without the involvement *or knowledge* of kin. Rosa explained:

*Koco* in the past and present are very, very different. In the past, it was not like today. In that time, all your family knew where you were going and what you were planning. Because it was usually the relatives that planned *koco* and then they went to her parents and told them 'Our daughter is in such and such a place, don't worry.' But today, *it is only young people who know what they are doing*. The young people

get together and make their plan. (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014; also INT/Francine\_Redempta/2-26-2014)

Daughters who did *koco* (or migrated) told me, 'I left at night without telling my parents'. Clement's wife explained how their daughter left:

Solange: So tell me, the day she left, she didn't say something, like...  
Wife: No way! The day the older one left [...] She lived with me. She was here. That young man came here once, but I never knew what he wanted. I don't know if they fell in love that day. A month later, she was gone. That is how it happened. (LH/Clement/3-2-2013)

This scenario was common. Although most elopements were quickly followed by some customary marriage rituals (see below), these unions were very independent, secretive acts on the part of sons and daughters. They had to be to avoid the interference of kin. Thus, children today not only participate in and influence processes of social reproduction, they direct them. And they direct them in their own interest, rather than in the interest of their families.

But as Uwingabire's story illustrates, young people understand there will be a cost if they choose someone their parents disapprove of. In the short term, parents can forbid the union and refuse to facilitate marriage rituals, as Jacques and Janine did when their niece wanted to marry a Hutu boy. But I also observed long-term consequences. Gatete captured these when he wrote: 'Marrying a wife or husband that the family doesn't like creates conflicts, and poisoning comes, and families are destroyed.' (Journal) For many in Rwagati, this conflict is a daily reality.

This situation illustrates how young people are caught between two institutional systems: they may use the individual-centred norms promoted through right's messages and global culture to navigate material constraints and maximise individual gain, but if

their choices are not regarded as being in the best interest of the group, relatives may sanction them. Families may withhold long-term support and/or aggressively undermine the union through poisoning. Thus, if young people go against their parents, they produce greater long-term vulnerability through the social process of marriage.

Second, in a trend that became apparent during the 1980s, a diminishing number of young people can afford to begin their first union with formal marriage. With limited resources from family, students and out-of-school young people struggled just to become capable of self-reliance and establish a home. Formal marriage was an added, and significant, expense. To make matters worse, the cost of formal marriage was spiralling out of control and beyond the reach of most (see *Table 7.2*): to marry formally, couples had to have civil marriage and *gusaba* (now a condensed version of a customary marriage) as well as a modern reception and/or Church wedding. It is no wonder one boy in a research workshop declared, 'It's difficult! [to get married] It's like telling Satan to go back into heaven! The requirements are difficult to meet given the economy' (FG/WS/12-22-2012).

Given these financial challenges, only young people from middle and high-income families - or secondary graduates who had social capital and status to protect - had, or expected to have, a formal marriage; interviews in Kigali suggest the situation is the same there (INT/Empower/2-20-2014; see also Vanhees 2014). *Koco* is the marriage pathway of the poor majority<sup>196 197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Sector data and local leaders confirmed this conclusion.

<sup>197</sup> I realise I am not addressing the situation of those who never enter a conjugal union; I had none in my sample. Never-married individuals are a small, but growing, group that is still culturally marginalised, as the discussion of adulthood above suggests.

But this is not the end of the story. The social processes of formal marriage and *koco* are very different and they have some surprising implications for young people’s adult trajectories. I discuss these next.

**Table 7.2: Estimated Minimum Marriage Expenses in Inkombe, 2014<sup>198</sup>**

Expenses	BOY: Rich	GIRL: Rich	BOY: Medium poor	Girl: Medium poor
House	2,000,000		300,000	
Land	Family		Family	
Bride wealth	300,000		150,000	
Gusaba	150,000	300,000	75,000	100,000
Engagement rituals/trousseau	155,000	500,000	90,000	150,000
Marriage	250,000	2,600,000	100,000	660,000
<b>Total RWF</b>	<b>2,855,000</b>	<b>3,400,000</b>	<b>715,000</b>	<b>910,000</b>
<b>Monthly Income</b>	<b>120-400,000</b>	<b>120-400,000</b>	<b>20-50,000</b>	<b>20-50,000</b>

### Formal Marriage: Imitating Memories and Ideas of Status

Contemporary Rwandan weddings are truly an organisational feat: customary and religious rituals that used to take place over years and months are now tightly packed into one long, expensive day. The wedding day begins with *gusaba*, performed in traditional attire. *Gusaba* is then followed by a church wedding in Western attire (Figure 7.1) and/or a modern wedding reception in the evening. At night, there are customary family rituals and dinner<sup>199</sup>. Couples put on wedding celebrations that exaggerated their economic status and exceeded their financial capacity. As Janine explained, ‘We try to imitate what people who have money do.’<sup>200</sup> (INT/Janine/1-29-2013)

<sup>198</sup> Marriage expenses are much higher in Kigali. There is no cost estimate for ‘poor’ families because they cannot afford formal marriage. Data is from interviews and a costed estimate by a rural female key informant, 2-27-2014.

<sup>199</sup> Families had heated debates about the proper way to perform traditional rituals, for example, *gutwikura* (see Appendix 4).

<sup>200</sup> One exception is group weddings, like the one I participated in at Empower in 2012. These weddings are particularly important for resource-poor women because they pressure husbands to consent to a

However, I quickly learned that young people and their families do not pay for formal marriage by themselves. In Kigali, engaged couples call a meeting of everyone they know. There, they present a line-item budget, request financial commitments, and expend considerable energy collecting the promised funds. In Inkombe, the couple's parents call the meeting and request contributions, but primarily from family. Couples also gather funds from invited guests, who are expected to respond to the invite with a financial contribution.

**Figure 7.1: Formal Marriage - *Gusaba* and Church/Modern Wedding**



However, much of this gift-giving was just performance: some parents of the groom made a private agreement with the bride's parents to give an empty envelope at *gusaba* so that they would give the appearance of paying bridewealth (FG/Empower/1-17-2013). Similarly, Sibomana laughed that cows promised by elite relatives rarely materialised. Rose-Marie explained that guests often commit money at the budget meeting, but never deliver. Without adequate resources, engaged couples applied for bank loans and lied about how they intended to use the funds (Fieldnotes/9-10-2012). Couples were going

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civil marriage and it allows the couple to achieve the status of formal marriage (Fieldnotes/10-26-2012).

into so much debt for their weddings that in 2013 Parliament debated whether it could somehow limit marriage expenditures.

As with house construction, students explained that some couples are taking the unprecedented move of secretly helping to pay the other's wedding expenses (Journals). As young people respond to a lack of financial support from elder kin by fundraising and paying expenses themselves, they are rewriting generational and gender rules related to reciprocity and redistribution. But by using the form of formal marriage to perform and enhance their status, they are also collectively reproducing past practice and the formal institution of marriage.

However, the economic outcome of formal marriage is very different from the past: by inflating the cost of marriage through conspicuous consumption and a demand for status in all institutional arenas – kinship, state, religious, and popular/modern culture – young people are eating up their family and friends' scarce material resources. This consumption enables the couple to achieve an appearance of wealth through marriage rituals, but they begin their married life with nothing to build upon because many literally sell everything they own to pay their debts. This is a source of significant marital conflict. It is also opposite to how their grandparents and (most) parents began their adult lives when, through customary marriage, kin provided bridewealth and a home, sponsored their marriage, and provided for the couple until their first harvest.

### ***Koco*: A Means to an End**

One of the strongest complaints against informal marriage across all three eras was that it robbed the family of a celebration. Unsurprisingly, resource-poor youth were adamant that formal marriage, not *koco*, was their preference. As one out-of-school boy declared:

'In Rwandan society, no one takes the bad [i.e. *koco*] when he is able to take the good! That problem [*koco*] is because there are no means' (FG/OOS/4-27-2013). Thus, *koco* is highly symbolic of the division that exists between a Rwandan minority who have secondary schooling and the 'means' to marry formally, and the majority, who do not.

But young people with 'no means' were actively reshaping the meaning and practice of both *koco* and formal marriage to their advantage. Rosa explained,

In the 1980s there was shame around *koco*. After the war, they [children] could decide for themselves, without *gusaba* and without shame about it. Now it has become common. Now, girls even go to the boy's place [i.e. they are not kidnapped], even in the daytime [i.e. not at night]. (LH/Rosa/2-27-2014)

Mutesi, a well-educated boarding school student, argued:

When you compare marriage today to marriage in past you find that today people don't care much about [formal] marriage. For example: In the past, a girl who did *kwijyana*<sup>201</sup> tarnished her reputation, but today this is normal, it means nothing. It means that today people don't value [formal] marriage. For me, I think that this is because people are more economically minded; there is poverty and behaviours change. (Journal)

Through their actions and attitudes, young people were making *koco* socially acceptable - a pragmatic decision they could take 'in the daytime' rather than one they had to hide at night. As they did, they transformed marriage into an institution that is initially beyond the purview of the kin-group, state, and Church.

But in their effort to establish a home and marry, sons like Augustin and Aimable were also trying to transform the meaning and practice of bridewealth to their advantage. Augustin reasons in his portrait that his father should give him - not his future father-

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<sup>201</sup> To sneak out, elope.

in-law - the bridewealth so that he can sell the cow, build his home, and marry himself by *koco*. This proposition, if accepted, would transform bridewealth from a gift that celebrated the bride's education, forged a family alliance, and secured a husband's paternity, to a financial reward for a son's years of labour. His father refused.

But Aimable's friend, Benimana, knew it was him, not his father, who would have to pay bridewealth; he had no intention of doing this. He argued:

Let me tell you, you can spend RWF 500,000 on your marriage and finish it. But if you buy a cow and pay the bridewealth you will end up begging for your family's living. [Instead] You must keep the money, bring her by *koco* and then buy a cow for your household. [...Otherwise] she will arrive at my house and find out that there isn't even 1 kilogram of sweet potatoes to eat. (FG/OOS/2-22-2014)

For these young men, keeping the bridewealth and marrying by *koco* was the only way they could begin adulthood with something to build upon. Their strategy stood in direct contrast to couples who spent more than they - and their families - had to marry formally and then began adulthood in debt. The former are 'striving for self-reliance' whereas the latter are striving for status - the appearance of *amajyambere*, development - but their conspicuous consumption rarely leads to *gukira* - enhanced well-being and economic status. Adrien and Aida understood the bind their resource-poor sons were in. Aida remarked, 'Do you think that they chose a good way [building illegally]? Is it their fault? He built his house, his father-in-law helped them, and then they got married [*koco*]. Their household is stronger like that.' (LH/Adrien/3-3-2013)

Unsurprisingly, girls were not keen on this plan for bridewealth remains a long-term source of social status (FG/OOS/2-22-2014; Journals). But out-of-school girls offered a concession: if boys would pay bridewealth, they would help them rent or build their

house. This negotiation would be a central piece of their future 'agreement'. What they decided would influence the extent to which they reproduce and change gender and generational relations and the institution of marriage through their transition to social adulthood.

But *koco* was a means to an end: beginning a union in an affordable way. Thus, if a couple was 'serious', they acted quickly to move their union back within the margins of family and society. In Inkombe, they did so according to established institutional pathways.

Celestin's granddaughter, Claire, noted that the first step in this process is for the daughter to return to her parents' home to do *kuganira* ('to discuss'):

[...] for an illegal marriage, the girl goes to the boy's during the night. A few days later, she comes back home to talk [to her parents] carrying a basket [gift] on her head and entering the gate. If she doesn't have the basket, she must pass behind the house [back gate] and not come in the main gate. (Journal)

Aida explained that mother-in-laws begin the customary practice of *gutekesha* after *kuganira*: 'That is when you start to support them, cooking and giving them food' (also FG/Empower/1-17-2013). Once the daughter has restored relationship with her parents, the couple and (usually) the groom's parents should immediately bring gifts to the bride's parents and do *kwirega* - apologise (for eloping). Without a gift, the groom's family must come 'through the back gate'.

The couple organises *gusaba* when they can afford it. Both extended families attend, but it is a modest celebration. Bridewealth may be ritually negotiated, but if it is given, it is usually token.

Church members (Anglican, Catholic, and others) went through a different process. Parents had to go to the Church to apologise for their children's actions before they could participate in *kwirega* or celebrate *gusaba* (CONV/FS1/5-18-2013). Similarly, the new couple had to attend marriage classes before the Church would recognise their marriage. If the family did not comply, they could be banned from attending and Christian neighbours could refuse to 'share the straw' at *gusaba* because they did not want to appear to condone their actions. Concilie explained all this to me as her daughter-in-law was leaving to apologise to the church for her daughter's elopement. After she left, Concilie laughed saying, 'People like us who are pagans, we don't care, we go [to *gusaba*] and we go on drinking beer!' (CONV/FS1/5-18-2013) For this old woman and her children, restoring family relations and celebrating a union through customary rituals was what mattered most.

These marriage rituals and the prevalence of civil marriage provide evidence that there are institutional pathways couples can follow to restore relationship and ensure their union is recognised by kin and community. Of course, couples fell on both ends of the spectrum: the 'serious' did *koco* and civil marriage and saved for two years to have a church, modern, and family celebration; the 'not serious' did *koco*, but these 'husbands' refused to do *kwirega* or civil marriage and often threw the girl out. Without civil marriage, the law could not protect her or her children (see also Vanhees 2014; Polavarapu 2014); as one sector leader explained, 'If they choose to have an informal marriage, that is their business, but *don't expect us to help you or intervene when there are problems.*' (INT/Sector/2-11-2013) These couples, who are a minority, produce vulnerability through their transitions to social adulthood.

## Conclusion

The empirical analysis in this chapter and the findings that underpin *Chapters Four to Six* demonstrate that we can study changing marriage patterns in kinship-based societies to learn how and why childhood and children's transitions to adulthood are changing and how young people influence processes of institutional reproduction. This historical institutional approach also reveals that young people's actions are cumulatively consequential to the reproduction of society and processes of state (re)making.

The findings in this chapter suggest that Rwandan young people are not 'stuck' in the social status of youth. Rather, as they navigate life at the interface of multiple institutional systems, they reinterpret and rewrite existing marriage, gender, and generational rules, norms, and practices to facilitate their transition to the generational status of adulthood. As they do, they not only change institutional pathways to social adulthood, but also increasingly direct how society is reproduced over time: whereas elders historically arranged children's marriages and directed processes of social reproduction, today children 'marry themselves'. Over the course of three generations, the balance of power in generational relationships has shifted in favour of children. But as young people increasingly direct processes of social reproduction, how is society changing?

Today, most young people begin their adult life with an informal union, which is why the chapter title states 'Marriage isn't for everyone'. However, they are not foregoing formal marriage because modernity has made informal co-habitation '*à la mode*' (Ilinigumugabo 1989); rather, they are choosing informal marriage because few in

Rwanda's status-bound culture can afford the high costs associated with contemporary marriage ceremonies. The generational experiences here suggest marriage patterns are a strong indicator of individual and national socio-economic stability. Further, like schooling, marriage has effectively come to define one's class, status, life chances, and future possibilities. Thus, while young people can achieve the generational status of adulthood through formal or informal marriage, those who begin with informal marriage tend to find themselves 'stuck' in a very marginal existence unless they quickly formalise their union through civil marriage and celebration. The high prevalence of *koco* suggests many young people are producing social instability, despite their efforts to make the transition to social adulthood affordable.



## Conclusion - 'Times have changed *for real*'

I began this doctoral project motivated to understand how children have experienced childhood and coming of age over time in Rwanda and to discover whether their 'everyday' actions influence their institutional environment in consequential ways. I recognised that major historical change is endemic in Rwanda, and that political and structural violence has spanned decades and socialised generations. At the same time, I was compelled by Lubkemann's (2008) arguments that social processes in every place are inherently unstable; that violence generates 'new challenges *and* possibilities, new forms of empowerment *and* disempowerment, and affirmations *and* underminings of identity – in different ways for different actors' (24); and that people continue to pursue 'culturally scripted life projects' amidst trying and changing conditions (14). But what does this mean for young people in Rwanda? Existing studies of conflict, state (re)building, and children and youth offer few clues or theories to explain young people's experiences or the implications of their actions for processes of institutional reproduction and change. To address these questions, I needed a new approach that would allow me to examine the relationship between children and their institutional environment over time.

The analytical and theoretical approach I developed and implemented for this study has provided an effective means to address the gaps and limitations in existing scholarship and move knowledge and theory forward. Drawing on historical institutional theory, I examined the primary institution that has shaped children's lived experience over time: marriage. This study allowed me to trace how three generations of young people have

experienced and responded to their changing institutional environment in four key domains: kinship, education, economic transitions, and marriage. At the same time, combining historical institutional and ethnographic approaches to research provided a historical and relational view of children's lived experience at the interface of tradition and modernity in central Rwanda. This perspective allowed me to identify and explain continuities and change in childhood and children's transitions to adulthood; changing power relations; and relatedly, how and why children's experiences and actions differ. This empirical analysis confirmed that children and their institutional environment are mutually constituting and that children's everyday actions influence processes of institutional reproduction and change in consequential ways.

In this *Conclusion*, I highlight and summarise my key findings and explain how they support and expand theories related to children in Africa and institutional reproduction and change. I begin with empirical and theoretical insights into the relationship between Rwanda's young majority and their institutional environment. Based on these findings, I outline the contributions this thesis makes to our understanding of continuity and change in childhood and children's transitions to adulthood.

The first insight we gain from participants' narratives is that the nature of the institutional environment shapes children's lived experience and options in distinct ways. This finding supports and extends Goodfellow and Lindemann's (2013) argument that it is not multiple institutional systems, but the relationship between them, that contributes to (in)stability (see also Hesselbein et al. 2006; Putzel and Di John 2012): when distinct institutional systems fail to hybridise, children must navigate an institutional environment characterised by multiple competing and often conflicting

rule systems. On the one hand, this presents new opportunities for young people because they can opportunistically engage with new institutional actors beyond kin. They can also cherry pick rules, norms, and practices that benefit them. On the other hand, when institutions seek to become hegemonic rather than co-exist or hybridise, young people encounter a very constraining environment because institutions must ensure that children engage with their mechanisms over others', and do so as intended. For example, *Chapter Four* reveals that in Rwanda's discordant institutional environment children cannot simply be educated in both the home *and* the school; instead, the state communicates that schooling is the most essential learning and that parents' knowledge is 'backward'. Similarly, it is not sufficient for couples to have a customary or common-law marriage: the state and Church must wrest control over social reproduction from the family by refusing to recognise both. In this intensely rule-bound context, the everyday actions of Rwanda's young majority take on added significance, for social institutions need their compliance to achieve legitimacy, political space, and hegemony within a given domain.

Second, *Chapter Six* demonstrates that when traditional and modern institutions converge, changes in the broader institutional environment force families to reorganise their household distribution of labour and resources. At the same time, parents' land, labour, and financial resources have been diminishing over time due to children's increased time in school, rising demands for cash, and rapid population growth. With exceptionally high dependency ratios (and thus, high dependency on children's labour), parents must increasingly choose which child(ren) to distribute resources to. These pressures influence how children within the same household are educated, the skills

they learn, and the resources available for their marriage. When Josie complains that her bridewealth was used to marry her more educated brothers, we see that these dynamics not only shape children's life trajectories, but also create class differences within families. As parents are increasingly unable to provide for children's transitions, children become responsible to sponsor and facilitate their own; when they do, we see more significant patterns of institutional change, including a shift in power from elders to children.

Finally, participants' accounts provide empirical evidence that institutions are deeply political and that institutional arrangements afford children unequal access to opportunity and resources; in so doing, they shape children's experiences and life chances in distinctly different ways. For example, Celestin and Alexis both grew up during colonialism. However, as a Tutsi and a legitimate son, Alexis enjoyed full membership in his lineages and society; in contrast, Celestin was marginal in both because he was illegitimate and Hutu. These patterns are also historically specific: Concilie and her granddaughter Claire grew up in different eras, but both were marginalised for being peasants and Hutu; however, gender and generational norms changed over time, so they experienced different constraints and opportunities in girlhood. Ethnography and historical institutional analysis makes these patterns visible so that we can understand and theorise children's experience and trace how their everyday actions influence the reproduction of these power-distributional goals.

These institutional patterns expose a fatal flaw in Rwanda's institutional environment, one that suggests Rwanda's young majority will predominantly reproduce patterns of inequality and instability: in a context of institutional multiplicity, where traditional

and modern institutions must compete for reproduction, institutional actors must intensively use mechanisms (regulative, normative, cognitive) to engage children so that they reproduce their institutional goals rather than rivals'. But beyond inceptive engagement, institutional actors only accord select children - those with a favourable identity and/or behaviour – the resources and opportunities they *need* to reproduce the institution as intended. For example, fathers have historically given inheritance to their most compliant, pleasing son. Similarly, the contemporary state only gives school sponsorships to Tutsi Genocide survivors, not orphaned Hutu survivors. Consequently, a minority, comprised of authority-pleasers, children from the right group, and wealthier, politically connected young people, is far more likely than the resource-poor peasant majority to both *reproduce* and *benefit from* a highly asymmetrical distribution of power and resources. Because the majority cannot afford to fully engage with institutional mechanisms as intended, neither modern nor traditional institutions can be hegemonic within a given domain. Thus, children reproduce a state of institutional multiplicity and inequality.

Uvin and Sommers (2011) argue that in this culturally-rigid, rule-bound context, young Rwandans have a very limited capacity to act. However, the evidence in *Chapters Four to Seven* demonstrates that young people have established ways of navigating their constraining institutional environment. Culturally, children demonstrate intelligence (*ubwenge*) by being resourceful, tactical, and discrete. Further, most children achieve early competence in basic life skills, which gives them the confidence and capacity to take initiative to 'improve' themselves and their life chances from a very young age. Young people act on their intentions in distinct ways.

First, we see children routinely use cooperation and compliance – working with others and being ‘well-educated’ – to please authority. This is not passivity on children’s part, but a tactic to improve their status and life chances. This ‘social agency’ enables children to mobilise the strategies and resources of the group in service of culturally-informed life goals, such as marriage. When children cooperate and comply, they are actively reproducing the institutions that shape and inform their lives. Celestin and Rosa’s marriage stories in *Chapter Four* suggest that this is the case even when the group bends or disregards dominant rules and norms to achieve its objectives.

Second, children have developed many non-discursive ways of acting given their limited voice in Rwanda’s historically gerontocratic society. Life histories reveal that it is common for children to steal food, drop out of school, behave well to gain favour with authority, avoid tasks, poison adversaries, speak through mothers and aunts, sneak out to be with friends, or secretly leave at night to do *koco* or migrate to Kigali. The context surrounding these non-discursive acts suggests that children are not primarily motivated by a desire to resist authority; rather, faced with an inability to openly confront authority as well as the daily struggle to survive, they use secret, quiet forms of action to make their present and future more liveable<sup>202</sup>. However, with the increasing prevalence of secondary schooling and the recent introduction of children’s rights, which give young people a voice, children are becoming more vocal, less secretive, and more assertive; today, Rosa explained, young people ‘even’ do *koco* in the

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<sup>202</sup> This form of action is very similar to what Robson et al. (2007) call ‘secret agency’ or Grant (2015) identifies as ‘quiet’ agency, wherein Kigali youth use to navigate the ‘quiet insecurity’ created by the state and poverty. Relatedly, Burnet (2012) describes Rwanda’s socio-political landscape as ‘amplified silence’ (11).

daytime. As young people actively pursue their goals – silently or vocally – we see them ignoring taboos and reinterpreting or rewriting cultural rules and past practice. In so doing, they gradually change institutional rules, norms, and practices in consequential ways. At the same time, by acting silently and by taking initiative to improve their circumstances, they reproduce kinship institutions and generational hierarchies.

While young people's actions may seem inconsequential on their own or within one generation, historicising children's everyday actions related to the institutions of childhood and marriage quickly revealed that their actions have a consequential effect on their institutional environment. As young people continued to pursue life projects in the face of major historical forces and events – whether colonialism, globalisation, or Genocide – they shaped how these forces influenced pre-existing institutions. When young people responded to institutional multiplicity by consistently reproducing competing rule system, social institutions struggled to realise their goals. Further, because *most* young people have failed to reproduce state institutions as intended, they have precluded Rwanda's transformation from a feudal (patron-client), kinship-based institutional system to a modern state and market economy; Vision 2020 remains a vision. These observations support Putzel and Di John's (2012) argument that the state's hold on power is fragile if actors – in this case, Rwanda's young majority - consistently reproduce non-state institutions over state ones. Children's everyday actions clearly influence the broader institutional environment in consequential ways.

This view of the relationship between Rwanda's young majority and their institutional environment provides key insights into continuity and change in children's lived experience and transitions to adulthood.

First, looking across three generations, it is apparent that the gender and generational power relations that shape childhood have changed dramatically. In contrast to Rwanda's recent patriarchal past, girls in the new 'gender-balance system' have equal rights to boys. This legal change has not transformed young people's gender norms, as my analysis of post-Genocide marriage market dynamics illustrates, but change is evident.

It is also evident that children have far more power in adult-child relations today than in previous generations. Rwandans joke about this change, laughing that development creates 'Vision children' who even 'raise' and 'marry themselves'. Children's rights advocates celebrate children's enhanced agency, which is related to the introduction of children's rights. However, this thesis demonstrates that these patterns are also associated with rising vulnerability related to a breakdown in the intergenerational contract: as *Chapters Four to Seven* explain, many children have to 'raise' and 'marry themselves' because their parents struggle to fulfil their reciprocal care obligations to them. This failure weakens parents' authority and places greater responsibility on children to be self-providing – dynamics that at once increase children's vulnerability and give them more social power.

Second, the generational and relational analysis that underpins this thesis shows us that while kinship institutions and relationships have weakened, they continue to be a central organising force in children's lives: 'Kinship matters'. Far from being redundant in this age of modernity, children's interdependent relationships with kin – and the social agency they afford – are a vital resource that helps young people navigate life at the interface of multiple institutional systems. Individual agency is an inadequate

answer to such challenges. These findings question the veracity of child and youth studies that privilege individual experience and agency over a broader relational view, as Huijsmans (2016) also argues.

Third, the multidimensional view of education I present in *Chapter Five* contributes several key findings to studies of children's education and schooling in Rwanda. To begin, the empirical analysis demonstrates that parents' ethnotheories of child development have shifted: 'well-educated' children in past generations were those who mastered the skills and behaviours needed to fulfil their future adult roles within the lineage; today, 'well-educated' children are primarily regarded as those with secondary school completion or higher. However, *Chapter Five* explains that despite this shift in views and an increase in the time children spend in school, the median years spent in school remains extremely low.

This situation carries many consequences for children, their families, and the nation. Perhaps the most significant is that regardless of how young people *feel* about their level of access to schooling or whether they fight to change it, they reproduce these structural conditions through their education: a minority who have access to capital and connections attend quality schools, graduate, and access existing employment opportunities. In contrast, the majority are primarily educated by family through guided participation, which is a far more effective form of learning than the pedagogy they encounter in the poor-quality state schools they attend. Both scenarios make children far more likely to reproduce their family's livelihood, class, norms, and values through their education than not. This situation means that most young Rwandans lack the credentials required to access opportunities within the formal economy as well as the

skills they need to adapt to changing economic conditions and transition to off-farm livelihoods. Social mobility is blocked. This makes it urgent to learn how the knowledge and skills they gain through informal learning may transfer to other livelihoods.

The generational analysis in *Chapter Five* reveals that these patterns are not new; as in the past, children are reproducing relations of inequality through their education. While this allows Rwanda's power-holding elite to retain control over relations of production, children's lack of formal skills and knowledge hinders the state's ability to realise its goal of rapid national economic development. This leaves Rwanda's political elite on unstable ground as they are potentially unable to fulfil their political settlement with the country's Hutu majority.

Finally, the findings from this study of changing marriage patterns signify that there has been a fundamental shift in *how* Rwandan society is reproduced, *what* is being (re)produced, and *by whom*. Where elders formerly endeavoured to reproduce the priorities of the lineage corporation through their children's education and marriage, today's children arrange their own unions in their pursuit of personal goals. They, not their elders, are directing processes of social reproduction and, relatedly, how society is reproduced.

The historical and relational view this thesis provides allows us to interpret the meaning of these changes: successful transitions to adulthood are critical not because tradition and gerontocracy in Africa must be preserved, but because the 'adult' obligations that come with a transition in generational status are embedded within long-term, reciprocal relationships of care. When parents struggle to support their children's

transitions, children will struggle to transition to social adulthood. When they do, achieving the status of adulthood only indicates that they have managed a transition; it does not indicate, as it did in the past, that the new adult is capable of supporting him/herself and fulfilling their 'adult' obligations to care for children and elders. As Augustin's story demonstrates, he was not 'stuck' in youth because his father refused to give him the bridewealth. He migrated to Kigali, found work, got a girl pregnant, and began a household. But while he was regarded as an 'adult', he struggled to fulfil his new generational obligations to care for his family. These struggles prompted him to return to Rwagati, where he is once again embedded within reciprocal generational relationships of care.

Changing marriage and transitions patterns must be viewed within this institutional and relational framework. When they are, the broader implications of these changes become clear: the generational bonds of interdependence that support Rwanda's social welfare system are weak. Uncertainty and change in the institutional environment is provoking people to redefine the social categories and life course-related claims that order the reproduction of social life.

These empirical findings and theoretical analyses set a new course for studies of children and youth and social change in Africa.

First, they underscore the urgent need for child and youth-centred research that shifts the focus from individual experience and agency to a relational and historical institutional view. This view allows us to trace transactions between individuals in specific generational cohorts and the institutions that shape and inform their lives.

Relatedly, we must shift attention from exceptional categories of children and youth to 'everyday' actors so that we can understand broader patterns of continuity and change in childhood and transitions to adulthood in Africa.

Second, findings related to children's 'everyday' actions reveal that it is critical to examine all forms of action - intentional and unintentional, individual and collective, compliant and non-compliant – and do so through the lens of local culture.

Finally, this thesis empirically demonstrates that children continue to pursue culturally-informed life projects amidst rapid change and violence; they do so by drawing on pre-crisis *and new* institutional rules, norms, and practices. Therefore, when studies examine how young people experience their institutional environment, it is critical that they locate children's actions within a historical perspective so that they more accurately identify how young people contribute to continuity and change. This approach provides a more nuanced view of how children adjust to violence and change, thereby avoiding a simplistic focus on young Africans in crisis.

Taking this historical and relational view, focusing on young people's everyday actions, and making institutional patterns visible permits us to identify and theorise how instability is produced and reproduced through children's lives, and how it may be interrupted. It also forces us to redefine what political action – and political actors – look like.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Glossary of Kinyarwanda and French Terms

<i>Amajyambere</i>	Development, to progress, to move forward
<i>Amoko</i>	Social group, e.g. ethnic, lineage, clan, regional, class, etc. (pl. <i>ubwoko</i> )
<i>Bakiga</i>	Rwandans from the northwest mountains; the region is a Hutu kinglet that resisted state incorporation into the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
<i>Évolué(s)</i>	Hutu and Tutsi European-educated social and political elites; Rwanda's first educated class.
<i>Gacaca</i>	Community-based trials of accused <i>genocidaire</i> .
<i>Guca imyeyo</i>	A ritual practice in girls' sexual education in which elder female kin taught girls to extend their labia through massage.
<i>Gukira</i>	Well-being, health, prosperity
<i>Gusaba</i>	Bridewealth ceremony
<i>Inteko izirikana</i>	An association of government-appointed Tutsi elders who work under the auspices of the Ministry of Sports and Culture as 'official keepers of Rwandan history and tradition'. Kigali <i>Inteko</i> are returnees, not <i>rescapé</i> .
<i>Intore</i>	Cadres of elite boys (primarily Tutsi) who were recruited from age ten to be trained in the arts of war, dance, and speech in <i>Itorero</i> at the Royal Court. Today, <i>intore</i> are Rwandans trained in <i>Itorero</i> education camps.
<i>Itorero</i>	Formal training for <i>intore</i> at the Royal Court; reintroduced in 2009 as civic education.
<i>Koco</i>	Slang for elopement
<i>Kubenga</i>	'To pass through' the room during <i>gusaba</i> and refuse an arranged marriage.
<i>Mwami</i>	King
<i>Les Pères Blancs</i>	The White Fathers who ran the Catholic missions during colonialism, called thus for their white cassock, not race.
<i>Rescapé</i>	Tutsi survivors of the 1994 Genocide.
<i>Ubuhake</i>	Cattle and sometimes land clientship. The client had usufruct rights only. The cow and land ultimately belonged to the <i>mwami</i> .
<i>Ubwenge</i>	Intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, sense.

## Appendix 2: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations, Including Interview Codes

9YBE	Nine-Year Basic Education
12YBE	Twelve-Year Basic Education
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CONV	Conversation recorded and transcribed
FARG	<i>Fond d'Assistance pour les Rescapés du Génocide</i>
FG	Focus Group interview
FS1-5	Family study 1-5
INT	Interview (semi- or unstructured)
LH	Life History interview
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
OOS	Out-of-school children and youth
RA	Research assistant
RNEC	Rwanda National Ethics Committee
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RWF	Rwandan Franc
SEO	Sector Education Officer
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WS	Youth research workshop

## Appendix 3: Journal Questions

<p><b>Question 1:</b> <i>Think about your life. Please tell me about some of the most important events in your life and why they are important to you.</i></p>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> <i>How and why do you think marriage is changing in Rwanda? (e.g. Since your parents' and grandparents' time)</i></p>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> <i>What are the dis/advantages of being married legally? Informally (common-law)? What option do you think you will choose?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> <i>In Rwanda, when does a young person become a man or a woman? When this happens, do people treat them differently? Does anything change?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 5:</b> <i>In Rwanda and in your life, what are some of the things you do, or that have happened, to make you feel like you are growing up?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> <i>Please tell me about the main people who have provided and cared for you in your life. Who are they, what do they provide, and how do they show they care for you?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 7:</b> <i>In Inkombe, if a young person wants to marry (legally or informally) and begin a family, how does s/he do that? Is it difficult to get married? How can they get a house? How is it different for boys/girls? How is it different if you are more/less poor?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 8:</b> <i>'Intore do not complain; they work out their problems on their own.' [Government slogan] How do you think about this slogan in relation to your life?</i></p>
<p><b>Question 9:</b> <i>Think of the next 5-10 years. What are your plan for your future? What 2 to 3 things do you most want to achieve and why? What challenges do you think you will face?</i></p>

## Appendix 4: Customary Marriage Rituals<sup>203</sup>

Note: In each ritual, beer, wine and gifts were exchanged. This is a partial list.

Ritual	Name	Description
Finding a bride	<i>Kuranga</i> (to matchmake)	To appoint matchmaker ( <i>umuranga</i> ) to find a 'gate' where there is an eligible bride from a good family.
Vetting the family	<i>Kuraguza</i>	Bride's family consults medium to ensure it is 'safe' to mix the fluids of the two lineages. Lineages resolve outstanding grievances.
Contracting engagement	' <i>Gufata irembo</i> ' ('taking the gate')	Groom's family requests bride. If accepted, her father 'closes the gate' to others and accepts wine in contract.
Bridewealth negotiation	<i>Gusaba</i>	Bride's lineage hosts groom's; families ritually negotiate the bridewealth ( <i>inkwano</i> ).
Give bridewealth	<i>Gukwa</i>	Bridewealth given to bride's father; lineages celebrate bridewealth and daughter.
Checking bridewealth	<i>Iryamye</i> ('how the cow sleeps')	Groom's lineage returns to ceremonially check health of bridewealth (cow).
Set the date	<i>Gutebutsa</i>	After groom has built home, his lineage visits bride's lineage to set marriage date.
Marriage night	<i>Gushyingira</i>	Bride carried to groom's home to celebrate at night; marriage consummated.
Bride's seclusion	<i>Kwarama</i>	Weeks or months
Wife's debut	<i>Gutwikurura</i> ('to uncover')	Bride's family arrives singing to shave bride's hair tassels ( <i>amasunzu</i> ) off; this ended her seclusion and showed she has no shame: she is a wife.
Training wife	<i>Gutekesha</i>	Mother-in-law teaches new daughter to cook, manage household.
Family alliance	' <i>Guca mu irembo</i> ' ('to open the gate')	Groom's family and couple visit bride's family, arrive to dancing and singing. This opens the 'gate' between the lineages. Husband can speak for himself as a man.

<sup>203</sup> Sources: Fieldwork interviews 2012-2013.

## **Appendix 5: Family Study Portraits**

The following family portraits include family members who provided life histories.

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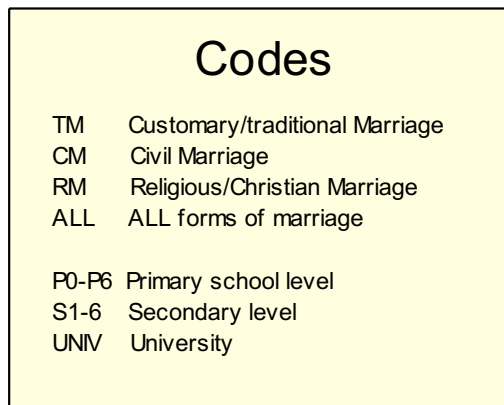
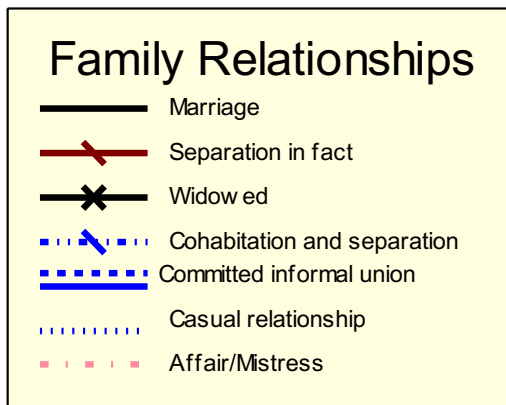
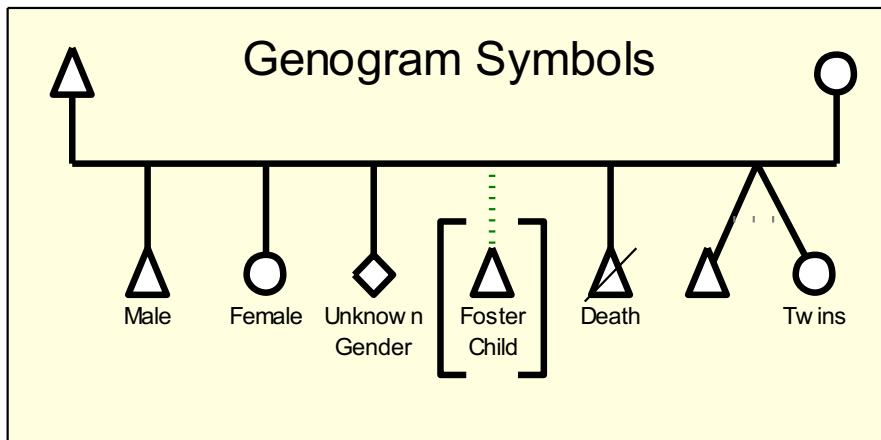
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## Appendix 6: Family Genograms



\*The green lines/arrows indicate a primary caregiver relationship.

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