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978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

Elisabeth King

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From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

This book questions the conventional wisdom that education builds peace by exploring the ways in which ordinary schooling can contribute to intergroup conflict. Based on fieldwork and comparative historical analysis of Rwanda, it argues that from the colonial period to the genocide, schooling was a key instrument of the state in contributing to the construction, awareness, collectivization, and inequality of ethnic groups in Rwanda – all factors that underlay conflict. The book further argues that today's post-genocide schools are dangerously replicating past trends. This book is the first to offer an in-depth study of education in Rwanda and to analyze its role in the genesis of conflict. The book demonstrates that to build peace, we cannot simply prescribe *more* education, but must understand who has access to schools, how schools are set up, and what and how they teach.

Dr. Elisabeth King is a Fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Canada. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Toronto (2008) and was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Columbia University (2008–2012). Dr. King works on issues at the intersection of conflict, peacebuilding, and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. She has published articles in *African Studies Review*, the *Journal of Genocide Studies and Prevention*, and the *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, and she has contributed chapters to several edited volumes. Dr. King has conducted fieldwork in Croatia, India, Kenya, Liberia, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Tanzania. She has worked with nongovernmental organizations on the global landmine crisis, world literacy, and community-driven development, and she is currently working on several development impact evaluations. She uses a variety of research methods to examine how development and peacebuilding efforts really work (or not) for people in the Global South.

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To the children of Rwanda

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ELISABETH KING

Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada



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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page viii</i>
<i>Preface and Acknowledgments</i>	<i>ix</i>
Introduction	i
Key Questions	3
A Conversation between Education and Peace and Conflict Scholars	3
Arguments: Education as a Key Piece of the Puzzle	7
Opportunities and Challenges of Research in Post-Genocide Rwanda	10
Contribution	13
1. Moving Education from the Margins to the Mainstream	16
Explaining Intergroup Conflict in Rwanda	17
What Education Can Tell Us about Violent Intergroup Conflict	20
Pathways from Education to Conflict	23
<i>Horizontal Inequalities</i>	23
<i>Exclusive Identities</i>	25
<i>Stigmatizing Groups</i>	27
Pathways from Education to Peace	28
<i>Horizontal Equity</i>	28
<i>Inclusive Identities That Do Not Collectivize and Stigmatize Groups</i>	29
<i>Reconciliation</i>	32
<i>Critical Thinking Skills</i>	33
Interactions and Continuums	34
Concluding Reflections	35

vi	<i>Contents</i>
2. Colonial Schooling	36
History, Politics, and Society in Colonial Rwanda	37
Causes of Violent Intergroup Conflict	46
Formal Education during the Colonial Period	47
An Assessment of the Role of Colonial Schooling (1919–1962)	52
<i>Access to Primary School</i>	52
<i>Promotion Past Primary School</i>	59
<i>Content and Language</i>	64
<i>Pedagogy</i>	67
Conclusion: The Peace and Conflict Role of Colonial Schooling	68
3. Schooling under the Rwandan Republics	70
Politics and Society during the Rwandan Republics	71
Causes of Violent Intergroup Conflict	77
Formal Education under the Rwandan Republics	78
An Assessment of the Role of Schooling (1962–1994)	84
<i>Access to Primary School</i>	85
<i>Promotion Past Primary School</i>	87
<i>Language</i>	96
<i>Pedagogy and Classroom Practices</i>	96
<i>History Teaching</i>	101
<i>History Lessons: The Arrival of Rwanda's Populations</i>	102
<i>History Lessons: Ubuhake</i>	103
<i>History Lessons: The Revolution of 1959</i>	104
<i>From History Lessons to Conflict</i>	106
Conclusion: The Peace and Conflict Role of Schooling during the Rwandan Republics	109
4. Schooling after Genocide	111
Politics and Society in Post-Genocide Rwanda	112
Schooling after Genocide	118
An Assessment of the Role of Schooling (1994–Present)	122
<i>Access to Primary School</i>	123
<i>Promotion Past Primary School</i>	124
<i>Reintroducing History Teaching</i>	130
<i>A Primary School Guide to Civic Education</i>	131
<i>Primary Social Studies</i>	132
<i>Materials for a History Curriculum for Secondary Schools</i>	133
<i>National Curriculum Development Center Secondary School</i>	
<i>History Guidelines</i>	134
<i>History Teaching and Peacebuilding</i>	135
<i>One History in Rwanda: History Content and Pedagogy</i>	137
<i>History and Ethnicity</i>	140
<i>Pedagogy, Language, and Classroom Practices</i>	144
Conclusion: The Peace and Conflict Role of Schooling Today	147

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda
Elisabeth King
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

<i>Contents</i>	vii
5. Education for Peacebuilding: Rwanda in Comparative Perspective	149
How Can Education Be Structured to Promote Horizontal Equity between Groups?	150
How Can Schools Address History in the Aftermath of Conflict?	152
How Can Schools Address Identity to Build Peace after Identity-Based Conflict?	157
What Is the Role of International Actors in These Post-Conflict Educational Dilemmas?	160
Conclusion	162
Conclusion	163
Policy Implications	165
<i>Global Policy and Practice</i>	165
<i>Policy in Rwanda</i>	171
Final Thoughts	173
<i>Appendix: The Interview Sample</i>	175
<i>Works Cited</i>	179
<i>Index</i>	201

Figures

0.1	Map of Rwanda	<i>page</i> xii
1.1	Pathways from schooling to violent intergroup conflict	23
2.1	Number of students by ethnic group in central primary Catholic schools in 1928 (boys)	54
2.2	Number of students by ethnic group in central primary Catholic schools in 1928 (boys) normalized for proportion of population	55
2.3	Student enrollment by ethnic group at the <i>Groupe Scolaire</i> (1932–1959)	61
3.1	Number of students enrolled in primary school (1959–1960 to 1993–1994)	80
3.2	Primary school gross enrollment rate (1966–1991)	81
3.3	The educational pyramid in the 1980s	88
3.4	Over- and under-representation of ethnic enrollment at secondary schools in relation to population (1964–1980)	90

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

Elisabeth King

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface and Acknowledgments

When I was a student in the French-language school system in Ontario, Canada, I learned history from a different perspective from my friends attending English-language schools. In my education, for example, the 1759 battle on the Plains of Abraham, after which French troops had to relinquish New France (Québec) to Great Britain, was presented as a pivotal moment in our country's history. Many friends studying in English-language schools could barely remember the Plains of Abraham. In pondering our country's conflict between Anglophones and Francophones, it struck me as important that I had a different understanding of where we had been as a country from the many Anglophones who became my university classmates. I wondered about similar situations in countries that suffer even more acute conflict, especially violent ethnic conflict. When I later had the opportunity to visit Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of my NGO work on the landmine issue, a local colleague pointed out two schools, at the end of a road, one for Croats and one for Bosniaks, in a place where there had been one before the war. I intuitively felt that this move was in the wrong direction. During graduate school, when I pursued my strong interest in post-conflict peacebuilding, I was surprised by how schooling was left out of most political science texts on the subject, and how, when it was included, it was often mentioned in passing as an important part of rebuilding a society after conflict, without details or questions. As I became interested in Rwanda, which was, then and now, undertaking significant educational reform, I realized that a study such as the one undertaken here could make an important contribution. When I present this book, people often approach me to discuss how it resonates with their personal experiences in places as different as Afghanistan, Israel, and the United States. I approach this book as a great believer in the power and promise of education.

Thank you, merci, and *murakoze*, to the many people who helped bring this book to fruition. This project would not have been possible without the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

generosity of the many Rwandans who agreed to share their experiences with me. I will always remember the warm welcome and long conversations with the Rwandans who opened their homes to me, introduced me to their families and friends, took me for my first goat brochette, and helped me make my way through the hills of Rwanda. Officials at the Rwandan Ministry of Education also helped make this study possible. Several Rwandan-Canadians were invaluable in helping me plan my research and fieldwork. I promised all of these participants anonymity and thus cannot thank them by name.

My research in Belgium was aided by the members of *Mémoires du Congo* who helped me track down missionaries and administrators who had served in Rwanda's colonial period. The conversations I had with these individuals, to whom I also promised anonymity, were fascinating and greatly enriched my analysis.

This book began in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. I became intrigued by Africa and especially Rwanda thanks to Richard Sandbrook; committed to peacebuilding thanks to Robert O. Matthews; and dedicated to further exploring education thanks to Kathy Bickmore. The manuscript took shape at Columbia University, working under the mentorship of Macartan Humphreys, from whom I learned a great deal. The book was published while I was based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, thanks in large part to support and guidance from David Welch. Each of these institutions, and the people based there, provided welcome and thought-provoking environments in which to forward this work. Throughout the research, writing, and publication process, Séverine Autesserre, Dana Burde, and Ian Spears provided especially careful reading, ideas, and friendship. I was also fortunate to benefit from conversations and advice from many other generous scholars and practitioners including Monisha Bajaj, Lili Cole, Peter Coleman, the late Alison Des Forges, Danielle de Lame, Tad Homer-Dixon, Jean-Damascène Gasanabo, Herb Hirsch, Mahmood Mamdani, Karen Mundy, Karen Murphy, John Mutter, Catharine Newbury, Filip Reyntjens, Alana Tiemessen, Katherine Reilly, Marc Howard Ross, Jack Snyder, Scott Straus, Susan Thomson, Jenn Wallner, Peter Uvin, Sarah Warshauer Freedman, and Harvey Weinstein. Contributions from discussants, co-panelists, and audience members at numerous conferences and workshops also improved this book. In writing a book about education, I do not underestimate the impact of all these teachers on me and my work.

Noel Anderson, Travis Coulter, Katie Degendorfer, Aaron Kates-Rose, Max Margulies, Sarah Ngu, Henry Wells, and Aliénor Westphalen – most of whom were at some point my students, from whom I always learn a lot – provided various forms of research support and assistance. Stephanie Bouris, Maude Patry, Sarah Pilon, and Florence Ting helped with transcription. Jean-Pierre Rubibi provided excellent Kinyarwanda-French translation. René Lemarchand kindly allowed me to reprint a figure from his book *Rwanda and Burundi*. David Cox designed the map and Kevin Millham skillfully created the index.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda
Elisabeth King
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface and Acknowledgments

xi

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A long list of family and friends also helped make this book possible and I am grateful to them all. I especially acknowledge my parents and sister, Ann, Chris, and Jessica Farrell; my uncle and aunt, Ken and Danuta Kitay; my parents-in-law, Shannon and Lloyd Noseworthy; and my dear friend Tara Bedford. Thanks finally to my husband, David Noseworthy, who supported me in so many ways and who asked me on innumerable occasions "tell me more about Rwanda," and to our beautiful one-year-old daughter, Ella Josephine, who already loves books.



FIGURE 0.1 Map of Rwanda.