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## Teaching History after Identity-Based Conflicts: The Rwanda Experience

SARAH WARSHAUER FREEDMAN, HARVEY M. WEINSTEIN, KAREN MURPHY,  
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[Hutu extremist] organizers of the [Rwandan] genocide, who had themselves grown up with . . . distortions of history, skillfully exploited misconceptions about who the Tutsi were, where they had come from, and what they had done in the past. From these elements, they fueled the fear and hatred that made genocide imaginable. (Des Forges 1999, 31)

A country's history is often a central concern after violent, identity-based conflicts, regardless of where they occur. Why does history take on such significance? As expressed in Alison Des Forges's explanation of Rwanda in the epigraph, all sides tend to blame cross-group hatred and ensuing conflicts, at least in part, on past injustice. Citizens of countries that have experienced such devastation can often see how political leaders distorted and then exploited national history to incite violence. As countries seek social repair, many believe that a new and more truthful history must be transmitted to the next generation through revised history curricula in schools. In such disparate places as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Germany, Guatemala, Japan, Northern Ireland, and Rwanda, the reteaching of history has been expected to lay the foundation for social reconstruction, a better future, and a lasting peace (Cole and Barsalou 2006; Hodgkin 2006; Cole 2007a, 2007b).

In response to the educational challenges countries face after violent conflict, we explored the links between larger political processes and decisions about teaching history. We focus on secondary schools in Rwanda, where we have been working on educational issues since 2001, and ask the questions: How can material for a history curriculum be developed to avoid propaganda? What tensions surface when teachers negotiate an increasingly repressive

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political climate? What opportunities can encourage and support democratic teaching and debate about multiple perspectives?

Our data come from a case study of an intervention project on teaching history in Rwanda.<sup>1</sup> We began this project in response to expressions of interest from the Rwandan Ministry of Education for assistance in developing materials for teaching history in secondary schools. The ministry's interest evolved from a University of California, Berkeley, study that asked Rwandan educational stakeholders what they felt was needed to reconstruct their society after the 1994 genocide and wars. From that study we learned that most stakeholders thought that teaching history was essential to social reconstruction and that they were losing patience with the slow process of official decision making regarding the issue (Freedman et al. 2004; Weinstein et al. 2007). Stakeholders objected to the fact that a moratorium on teaching history placed by the Ministry of Education immediately after the genocide had remained in effect for over a decade.

Although the contexts for teaching history vary in different countries, we hypothesize that some of our findings in Rwanda may relate to the dynamics surrounding the teaching of history in societies facing similar transitions. Our thinking is based both on our own work in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Burundi, Czech Republic, Germany, and Colombia and on our reading of the literature on education after conflict (Tawil and Harley 2004; Cole and Barsalou 2006; Cole 2007a, 2007b). Some of our findings also may apply in nonconflict settings where teacher-centered, lecture-dominated classroom structures are common and where students have few opportunities to develop and express their own opinions.

Our research in Rwanda revealed two tensions related to the influence of ongoing political processes: first, the government's political goal of teaching history to promote a unified Rwandan identity while also emphasizing an understanding of historical evidence and thinking; second, the teaching of history to shape this new national identity while also incorporating the social realities of continuing ethnic identities in productive and nondivisive ways. These tensions were heightened by the government's educational policy, which stipulated that only its official historical narrative should be transmitted. This insistence on having only one official narrative conflicts with another official goal for education reform in Rwanda—to embrace so-called modern, democratic teaching methods that foster skills thought to be essen-

<sup>1</sup> The history intervention project involved collaboration between the University of California, Berkeley's Human Rights Center; the National University of Rwanda (NUR); and the Rwandan National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). Also central to our efforts was a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization, Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO), that offers "support to educators and students . . . in a critical examination of history, with particular focus on genocide and mass violence" (<http://www.facinghistory.org/campus/reslib.nsf/sub/aboutus/historymission>).

tial for successful participation in an increasingly global economy, such as critical thinking and debate.

In a postgenocidal context that continues to be marked by repression, we found, through our research, that educators may inhibit disagreements—including potentially productive ones—for fear of their erupting into larger and more destructive conflicts. We argue that suppressing open debate might actually lay the foundation for further societal violence. We differentiate between conflicts that are necessary for learning and growth, which we call productive conflicts, and those that erupt into violence, which we identify as destructive conflicts.

In Rwanda, given the extent and severity of destructive conflicts and an increasingly repressive government, the political landscape is fraught with difficulties that intensify fears about productive conflicts. Those with power are primarily Tutsi who grew up as refugees outside the country but who returned after a rebel army they supported ended the 1994 genocide and took control of the country. A small but powerful minority, they hold definite ideas about Rwandan history that are not in harmony with those held by many Rwandans (Pottier 2002; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004; Straus 2006). Thus, ongoing disagreements about the nature of the past continue alongside dialogue on the need to forge new directions for the future. This highly charged situation makes it difficult, although not impossible, to find opportunities for examining historical evidence and promoting productive conflicts that are part of critical thought.

Further, when Rwandan citizens express disagreement with the official doctrine, they risk placing themselves in danger. Human rights organizations have reported on how basic human rights, including freedom of speech, have been threatened or denied (e.g., see Human Rights Watch 2001, 2004). Rwanda today promotes retributive justice, and this view has begun to extend its reach to everyday citizens, who may be accused of harboring “genocidal ideology” (Longman 2006; Parliamentary Report 2006). Rumors abound that the current government is encouraging Rwandans to turn in their neighbors and their colleagues who might be seen as harboring such ideology. The accused can lose their jobs, be jailed, or even be killed (Human Rights Watch 2000, 2007). Although in such a context many disagreements go underground, some surface in the courts as alleged war criminals face trial or when testimony is heard in front of community-based courts known as *gacaca*. They also tend to surface in less expected ways whenever decisions have to be made collectively, as is the case for history curricula. Those who express their disagreements may be harassed, which shows that remnants of destructive conflicts linger long after much of the violence has subsided. These remnants of conflict are part of Rwanda’s struggles to reconstruct its institutions, including its schools. The challenge is to introduce spaces where productive conflicts can take place.

### Two Dilemmas: What History to Teach and How to Teach It

Most who write about teaching history after conflict focus on how states deal with the problem of content selection. If nations are imagined communities (Anderson 1983), then historical narratives are key to shaping how communities understand themselves. In the aftermath of conflict, revising the content of history curricula presents states with an important means of conveying new narratives of the past, which influence the national identity of citizens, particularly those of the next generation. A new collective national identity is often placed in opposition to group identities that were central during violent conflict, with national priorities taking precedence. The literature on collective memory and identity construction on which our work is grounded is extensive and rich.<sup>2</sup> Our work examines some interrelationships among history education, collective memory, and identity in Rwanda.

Discussions of what history to teach are based on two contrasting approaches. The first, which has a longer timeline, claims that accurate and sound curriculum can be developed only after historians resolve or at least narrow disputes about politically charged and historically contested events (Emmert and Ingrao 2004; Barkan 2005). Elizabeth Cole (2007b), quoting Michael Ignatieff (1998), notes how important it is to “reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in public discourse” (119). In contested environments, this goal is often difficult to achieve. The second, more pragmatic approach, pushes for new materials to be created in a timely fashion because teaching and learning in schools is ongoing and perspectives on contested events must be resolved during the materials-creation process. In weighing the relative effects of these approaches, one must keep in mind that political goals often determine curricular decisions, regardless of the scholarly record. Such effects are noted by Ann Low-Beer (2001) in her review of the volatile and highly political nature of decisions about textbooks in postconflict Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Some pragmatic approaches have proven more successful than others. A common first response after conflict has been to review history textbooks and history curriculum for potentially offensive or divisive material and then to remove such material. The problematic material often consists of unfounded assumptions about the “other” who are believed to have supported and given reason for ethnic hatreds. Although some decisions about what to remove are obvious, many engender fierce arguments and end with no satisfactory resolution (Low-Beer 2001). Offensive material in textbooks is literally blackened out with a marker, usually by an official government-appointed committee. But blackening often happens at times when emotions are raw and many are dealing with recent loss or injury of family and friends.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Halbwachs (1980, 1992), Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), Connerton (1989), Gillis (1994), Nora and Kritzman (1996), Barahona de Brito et al. (2001), and Bell (2003).

Officials who begin the process seem unprepared to deal adequately with the emotions and volatile public controversies that arise (Weinstein et al. 2007). In a sense, the real-life need to carry out curricular reform runs up against the real-life emotional responses of a traumatized citizenry who may resist change.

Moving beyond immediate response after conflict, other scholars have worked to create history textbooks and supplemental materials for history classes. The Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) has analyzed “images of the ‘other’ and images of the enemy” and has created materials to help students develop understandings of competing points of view (<http://www.gei.de/index.php?id=mission&L=1>). Elizabeth Cole and Judy Barsalou (2006) describe a project led by Tel Aviv University historian Eyal Naveh (1999, 2006), who, rather than writing a definitive history, used a process of examining historical disputes to create materials for raising issues for students and teachers to study and debate. He brought together teams that included historians as well as Palestinian and Israeli teachers. Their materials, which promoted dialogue among those holding different points of view, were integrated into some textbooks adopted by the Israeli Ministry of Education. However, in 2000 a conservative government took power, and the new textbooks became a subject of great controversy, illustrating vividly the complex interrelationship between politics and teaching history (see Porat [2006] for a discussion of how varying groups understand the same incident differently).

Like the materials Naveh’s work stimulated, some materials in Guatemala have been developed with the potential not to build consensus but to open up classroom discussion and debate and to expand the range of allowable narratives about the past. Oglesby (2007) writes about these materials, focusing on the stories of victims as told to the Historical Clarification Commission, a truth commission. Currently, with a new government in place, Oglesby finds some evidence that such materials are being used but that they are not a dominant force in the curriculum.

Looking across these approaches to dealing with historical content, one finds little empirical evidence that they have positively affected what students are taught or what they learn about their country’s history. Although some of these approaches may be helpful, we found few studies evaluating their impact. In the context of other societal influences, parceling out the influence of history education presents a significant challenge. In countries such as Germany, since the 1960s, and Spain, following the death of Franco, history textbooks have been modified and more nuanced views of the past have emerged in society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> However, in these cases history curricular reform has occurred in the context of changing societies where, given the benefit of time, the societies have struggled in multiple ways to come to terms

<sup>3</sup> See Davis (2005), Dierkes (2007), and Valls (2007).

with their past, for example, through trials, more open and democratic governance, engaging with international scholars (Wolfgram 2006), and responding to the increasing influence of international criminal justice.

At the end of the day, most states may never fully come to grips with some of the most difficult parts of their history; nevertheless, the scholarly approach of examining evidence and reaching consensus when possible seems essential to curriculum development, especially over time. However, in the short run, most people do not want schools to wait for major historical controversies to be resolved before resuming the teaching of history. The challenge for schools is always how to move from research on the historical record to a pragmatic strategy for influencing what enters the classroom.

Those who discuss how to teach history tend to focus on the need to change from authoritarian ways of teaching, where the teacher transmits a body of knowledge, to more nuanced views of learning that encourage student agency, debate, and critical thinking. In their synthesis of a recent conference on teaching history in parts of the world that have experienced recent conflict, Cole and Barsalou (2006) explain that approaches to teaching are as important as content but often receive less attention. In particular, they suggest that teaching critical thinking and exposing students to multiple historical narratives can promote democratic participation and contribute to the development of a peaceful society. They suggest that “helping history teachers promote critical inquiry may be more urgent than reforming history textbooks” (1).

However, the challenges to teaching are inevitably complex, and little is known about how best to prepare teachers to manage them. Even when contested issues are not so emotionally loaded, they are still difficult to teach. Students and teachers bring unofficial histories to the classroom, histories that are transmitted in the home between the generations or in the community. These may conflict with official histories and with historical evidence. In research in Estonia, James Wertsch (2000) examined ethnic Estonians’ understanding of how Estonia became part of the Soviet Union. The official history taught in school promulgated a Soviet version of events that conflicted with unofficial histories. The interviewees knew the two accounts but believed the private account, which had been banned from public settings; ironically, they knew the details of the school account better. Wertsch wrote: “A set of dialogic processes gave rise to unofficial histories that stood in stark opposition to official ones” (38). Further he explained: “These interviewees demonstrated what might be called a pattern of ‘knowing but not believing’ in the case of the official history and perhaps even ‘believing but not knowing’ in the case of the unofficial history” (39). This situation occurs in a context where a group does not identify with those in power and therefore resists their official narrative. A similar process occurred in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, where the abuses of Tito’s partisans became idealized in a postwar

narrative while the associated atrocities were submerged under the motto of Brotherhood and Unity (Hoepken 1999).

In any identity-based conflict, interpretive tensions inevitably arise out of the different backgrounds of those involved. Given the likelihood of entrenched unofficial histories and varied interpretations of the same event, it is crucial to build debate and discussion into the curriculum. Like other authors, Wertsch (2000) does not address the complexities of handling such discussions—particularly, how to teach students to participate effectively in democratic discussions; how power dynamics among speakers might influence what a particular speaker feels comfortable discussing; and how teacher training might be used to overcome the legacies of school systems unused to supporting student voice, as is commonly the case in post-Communist and postcolonial societies.

In sum, the projects and research reviewed here discuss varied aspects of what is needed to support the development of an official history curriculum—textbooks, materials, and new ways of teaching—but none focus on what is involved in integrating these parts. Also, they do not usually focus on long-range plans nor do they evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of the projects or connect them to larger political processes and ideologies, particularly those related to how history education articulates the building of collective memory and new identities.

#### **A Case Study of the Rwandan History Project**

The history project in Rwanda provided us with an opportunity to see what would be involved in filling these gaps in the literature. We developed a long-term project that included a plan for institutionalizing our work and studied the effects of our process and its relationship to official political agendas. The project consisted of two phases. The first focused on materials development and was anchored by two workshops. The second, an ongoing phase, is focusing on teacher education, materials refinement, and materials elaboration. To date, five teacher education seminars have taken place. Data for this article come from the two materials development workshops, the first three teacher seminars, and all related planning meetings.

#### *Participants*

Participants included officials, whom we interviewed and who interacted with us during the planning and implementation of the project; workshop and seminar leaders; and educational stakeholders such as parents, students, and teachers, who took part in the sessions. The materials development workshops included 40–50 participants, eight of them U.S.-based consultants and the remainder Rwandan consultants, education officials, and local educational stakeholders. One of the Rwandan consultants, a distinguished Rwandan historian, assumed the role of chief writer. Eight of the initial



participants emerged as working group leaders, either as writers and or as group coordinators. They led the four small groups assigned to create materials for different periods in Rwandan history.

The teacher seminars included from one to two U.S.-based coordinators; two Rwandan coordinators, one each from the National University of Rwanda and the National Curriculum Development Center; and two to four other Rwandan leaders. Collectively, the seminars involved 250 teachers from across the country, who together served approximately 30,000 students.

The Rwandan project coordinators and leaders were Anglophone Tutsi returnees from Uganda, the group with the most political power. The chief writer was a Francophone Tutsi returnee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, the second most influential group in Rwanda today.<sup>4</sup> Most of the working group leaders were Francophone. As such, the leaders may not be representative of the overall population, as it is difficult to find all groups equitably represented in positions of power in the country. While aware of these limitations, we were cognizant that entry into the educational system required collaboration with those in power. The onus was on our research group to ensure that other voices entered the curriculum design process.

For all of the workshops and seminars, our Rwandan collaborators agreed to try to balance participants according to ethnicity, as well as other variables related to power—including experience with the genocide, length of time living in Rwanda, gender, and geographical region. Ensuring ethnic balance was particularly difficult because national policies discourage talk of ethnicity and any public ethnic identification. We relied in part on carefully selected participants from our initial study sample (Freedman et al. 2004). Also, as U.S. team members, we found ourselves repeatedly checking with our Rwandan colleagues to ensure that all groups were fairly represented.<sup>5</sup>

#### *The Workshops and Seminars*

The materials development phase centered around two week-long workshops. During the first workshop, in June 2004, Rwandan educational stakeholders and Rwandan-based academics divided into four small working groups of approximately 10 each, balanced as much as possible by ethnicity, geographical region, and experience with history teaching and curriculum development. The working groups held separate meetings during which they developed materials for their historical period. Each group chose a controversial historical case that was central to its period, compiled resource materials about the case, and finally created a plan for teaching it. These cases provided a set of models; the idea was that, in future curriculum development, other

<sup>4</sup> The director of our initial research project from 2001 to 2003 was a Tutsi genocide survivor; he was in Rwanda during the genocide.

<sup>5</sup> Because we could not ask about or identify participants explicitly by ethnic origin, we cannot provide exact demographic statistics.

cases would be constructed to fill out the study of each period. The Rwandan project and working group leaders coordinated these activities across the working groups after the workshop was over. The chief writer coordinated the other writers. To further support the writing process, the U.S. team brought the chief writer to the United States to collaborate on creating a standard outline for the groups to follow when generating their historical cases. In addition, the FHAO collaborator conducted a supplementary seminar on teaching methods to help the small groups move in similar directions with respect to pedagogy. By the time of the second workshop in June 2005, draft materials were ready, and we focused on testing sample lessons and revising materials from each group.<sup>6</sup>

The data for the second phase of the project, teacher education, centered around four seminars, each 3–5 days long.<sup>7</sup> The goal was to introduce teachers to new ways of teaching associated with the materials and of handling the special issues they would face in their work because of the genocide. By using Rwandan resources in conjunction with the resources in *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Strom 1994), participants were able not only to confront their past directly and wrestle with how to teach it but also to safely make connections—not comparisons—through another historical case study. By using a case study that focuses on the breakdown of democracy in the Weimar Republic; the rise of a totalitarian state; the role of propaganda, conformity and obedience in turning people against each other; and stories of courage, compassion, and resistance, participants were able to discuss ideas and events and raise feelings that were too threatening to approach directly. Besides focusing on teaching and learning, these seminars provided participating teachers with the structure and support to create additional lessons for the initial cases and ultimately to add historical cases for the period.

#### *Data Collection*

To study the process of introducing new materials and ways of teaching history, we interviewed government and policy makers, as well as historians and other educators, on their understandings about the history of Rwanda and particularly about the events that led to the genocide. We also collected relevant newspaper articles, government documents, and reports; took field notes during all meetings, workshops, and seminars; saved the materials that we used, as well as those the participants produced; and retained e-mail correspondence among project leaders. We conducted evaluations at the end of each workshop and seminar in the form of written questionnaires. For some, we conducted interviews and held focus groups to understand more

<sup>6</sup> Materials are available in French and English at <http://www.hrcberkeley.org/specialprojects/index.html>; see *The Teaching of History of Rwanda* (2006).

<sup>7</sup> Two additional seminars have been offered in 2008, and more are planned.

fully participants' views about the materials development and implementation processes. In addition, the U.S.-based team members produced a final trip report after each workshop and seminar, and we had access to the transcribed interviews and focus groups from the 2001–3 study. To allow for closer study of implementation issues, the first author tape-recorded an entire seminar in June 2006 and interviewed participants about the materials and their implementation. Significant portions of the recordings were transcribed.

#### *Data Analysis*

We used qualitative methods to analyze the data. Specifically, we read through the data set several times, looking across all sources for themes related to what counts officially as the history of Rwanda, what controversies emerged surrounding the official narrative, and what tensions were involved in creating and implementing new materials for the teaching of history. These tensions involved varied understandings of historical events, ways of negotiating disagreement, integration of old teaching methods with new ones, and relating pedagogy and content. From what emerged within these initial categories, we identified two tensions that we thought resonated with more general experiences in postconflict contexts. We then proposed generalizations about the dimensions of each tension for the case of Rwanda and triangulated our findings across the varied data sources. We looked for disconfirming evidence for all generalizations. When we found such evidence, we revised the generalization. By this process, we explicated and analyzed hidden controversies surrounding the current official historical narrative and examined how those controversies led to tensions for creating and implementing new ways of teaching history.

In this article, we add our reflections as practitioner-inquirers in a section in which we analyze how we navigated our work with teachers in the context of what became increasingly complex political terrain. We focus on both the complexities and the spaces we found where teaching and learning could occur.

#### **Reflections on the Rwandan Context and Our Role as Outsiders**

Understanding our role as outsiders was critical to interpreting our findings and exploring their potential implications. Ongoing tensions between the government of Rwanda and the international community are substantial. Many among Rwanda's current power elite of repatriated Tutsi blame the international community both for the violence that drove Tutsi into exile beginning in 1959 and for the perceived complicity of the international community in the 1994 genocide. This complicity is believed to lie not only in the failure of the international community to intervene to stop the genocide but also in the way that colonial rule purportedly invented ethnic divisions in Rwanda (Pottier 2002; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004). In par-

ticular, tensions between the government and the international community surface around the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and domestic genocide courts (both national courts and local *gacaca* courts).

As foreigners with funding, we encountered fears that we might intend to “colonize” the history curriculum by trying to control its substance. From the start, the Rwandan Ministry of Education limited our role to that of informed outsiders who would facilitate and offer resources and advice. The ministry was clear that only Rwandans would be allowed to write an official version of Rwanda’s history or develop an official history curriculum. While we fully supported the stance of the ministry, we did so with the caveat that we could not endorse any curriculum that duplicated the failings of the past—that is, a one-sided curriculum used to bolster a government that discriminated against specific ethnic groups. The ministry’s stance became part of an official memorandum of understanding (MOU) when University of California, Berkeley, issued a subcontract to the National University of Rwanda for the Rwandan-based parts of the project. The MOU limited the scope of the project to the creation of “sample materials and resources” and “methods.” The project explicitly was not authorized to create an entire history curriculum. The MOU specified that the materials and resources “could be used as models as the MINEDUC [Ministry of Education] through the NCDC develops a history curriculum for Rwandan schools.” The use of “could” made clear the power of the MINEDUC to use or choose not to use the output of the project. The MOU also made clear who ultimately develops curriculum in Rwanda. While we had no alternative if we wished to participate in advancing the process of history education in the country, we recognized the need to be vigilant. Throughout, we were clear that we would not allow the university’s name to be associated with any propaganda.

The U.S. and Rwandan teams jointly conceptualized the project and worked to designate specific roles that we thought would honor the varied types of expertise and experience the different project leaders brought, as well as our official commitments to the ministry. Rwandan teams conceptualized, wrote, and edited the sample materials that the project created. Similarly, Rwandan historians led all workshop and seminar sections on history, with training on how to use these resources in interactive sessions. During the materials development phase, the four working groups writing historical cases were exclusively Rwandan.

The U.S. team provided consulting support in the form of access to a diverse group of international educators and scholars of Rwanda; it assisted in opening the discussion of topics where differences existed between the current official Rwandan narrative and the narratives of an array of international historians who study Rwandan history. Furthermore, the U.S. team modeled democratic teaching methods and ways of teaching students about a difficult past. Organizational duties were shared, although the basic struc-

ture for the workshops and seminars and the plan for creating the materials were conceptualized by the U.S. team members, with input from the Rwandans.

A complex issue related to foreign aid, one which we had little power to control, emerged from our initial research. Does international aid promote a culture of powerlessness? As funders of the project, we were aid-givers. Attuned to these issues of power, we set local capacity-building as a major goal. By offering seminars on research methods, grant writing, questionnaire development, and general research design, we hoped to leave Rwandan participants with resources to design their own projects and to apply independently for future funding.

In the end, we realized that the reasons for not taking responsibility were far more complex than the issues of power that so often are given as the cause. It was simply easier for the Rwandans to depend on outsiders to obtain funds and then to negotiate the terms once funding was in place. Of course, making the decision to depend on others to obtain the funds implies a decision to cede some aspects of power to outsiders. This implicit decision inevitably became a sticking point in the collaboration. The outsiders were the ones responsible to the funders, and the outsiders controlled the initial project agenda and the dispersal of the funds. Even in cases where the funding is based on a collaborative effort, as was the case for our project, there ultimately were consequential decisions that we as outsiders were responsible for making. This kind of understanding led to differences of opinion that often boiled down to “ownership” of the curriculum—the delicate balance that made the project a diplomatic challenge.

#### **Findings: Political Goals versus Historical Thinking, National versus Ethnic Identity**

The current government promotes an official narrative of Rwandan history that created a backdrop for the tensions that the participants in our projects experienced as they talked and wrote about teaching history.<sup>8</sup> This narrative is spread through many channels in the wider society, including the media, genocide memorials, *gacaca* courts, and *ingando*, or solidarity camps, where many segments of the society—from local political leaders to entering university students to repatriated former army and militia members—are “reeducated.” It is behind the oft-repeated slogan, “We are all one Rwanda,” and the official label for the RPF (Patriotic Front of Rwanda) government as “the government of national unity and reconciliation.”

The narrative of the past that has now become official was developed among Tutsi refugees living in forced exile. As Malkki’s (1995) research on Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania demonstrates, the experience of exile

<sup>8</sup> We use the term “ethnic” since it is used locally for the identity categories of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. Under the Belgian colonial regime, these categories were racialized.

has a powerful impact on the collective memory of refugees. Malkki found that refugees who lived in the limiting conditions of refugee camps were most preoccupied by historical narratives of the past that served to keep alive a sense of their own history of persecution. The most powerful figures in Rwandan politics and society today are themselves primarily people who grew up in refugee camps in Uganda, and their experiences in exile have convinced them of the importance of promoting an official narrative of the past that will prevent their ethnic group from facing persecution in the future.

This official narrative exacerbates the tension between meeting political needs and teaching historical thinking, as well as between promoting a unified national identity in the face of continuing ethnic divisions. The official government-promoted narrative seeks to inculcate a unified national identity.<sup>9</sup> However, while ethnic identities remain firmly in place, the official narrative leaves no room for any kind of ethnic identification. It also stymies a main goal for teaching history—that students learn to think like historians by using historical evidence to construct narratives (Holt 1990). Since it leaves no room for multiple points of view, debate and discussion are discouraged.

The official narrative claims that the colonials invented ethnicity and promulgated a false belief that the different ethnic groups came to the territory that is now Rwanda in successive, distinct waves of migration. Forest-dwelling Twa arrived first, Hutu cultivators came next, and Tutsi herders, whom the colonials regarded as superior, conquered the other groups (Des Forges 1999; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004). The official narrative claims that the colonials created these false teachings about ethnicity and migration in order to “divide and conquer” the population. It further asserts that these false teachings then set the stage for the genocide because the postcolonial, radical Hutu government used them to characterize the Hutu as sons of the soil and Tutsi as foreign invaders who persecuted the Hutu, threatened their survival, and therefore did not deserve to live in Rwanda. The perpetrators of the genocide extended this reasoning to argue that the Tutsi did not deserve to live at all. The official narrative goes on to suggest that the Belgian colonizers were also responsible for driving the Tutsi from power in 1959 and encouraging their persecution, in violence that drove much of the current elite and their families into exile.

As a correction to these false teachings and to support the political goal of Rwandan unity, the official narrative explains that, before the colonials arrived, Rwandans were a peaceful people who lived together in harmony. Social groupings consisted not of ethnic groups but of 15–18 clans that cut across ethnic groups. The hope is that, if Rwandans would abandon ethnic categories invented by the Belgians and learn about and identify with this precolonial harmony, they would have a positive model for peaceful coex-

<sup>9</sup> See *The Unity of Rwandans*, Office of the President of the Republic (1999).

istence and would replace pride in their ethnic identity with pride in their national identity (Longman and Rutagengwa 2004).

*Inconsistencies between the Official Narrative and the Available Historical Record*

Historians agree with much of the current government's critique of the colonial and postcolonial versions of Rwanda's history. There is no debate that the Belgian colonial and radical Hutu postcolonial versions of Rwandan history were inconsistent with many historical facts (Des Forges 1999). Historians express no doubt that these narratives magnified and racialized the divisions between Hutu and Tutsi, paving the way for violent conflict and eventually making genocide possible (Newbury 1988; Vansina 1998; Newbury and Newbury 2000).

At the same time, many historians disagree with at least three parts of the current official narrative. First, most historians do not characterize Rwanda as a nation-state in precolonial times. The borders were less fixed and systems of state power were much more complex and less centralized than in modern nation-states. No idea of a Rwandan national identity was tied to political institutions (Prunier 1995). Second, while some older historical works emphasize the importance of clans in ways that are consistent with the official narrative, more recent historiography has argued that clans were not as important as other precolonial identities, such as lineage and region (Newbury 1980). Finally, historians disagree among themselves about how and when the concept of ethnicity was constructed and used in racist ways. Nearly all historians today agree that ethnicity did not result primarily from migration and that patterns of migration were complex and took place over long periods of time. Some argue that ethnic categories already existed in late precolonial times and were even used then to divide the population (Newbury 1988; Vansina 2001). Others, particularly historians who are Rwandan and who live in Rwanda, tend to support the official narrative that ethnicity began with colonialism.

*Educational Stakeholders Reveal Private Questions about the Official Narrative: The Tensions Emerge*

The main questions surrounding the official narrative that led to palpable tensions were all related to issues of ethnicity and its origins; although the government wants to erase ethnic identification, it still exists. This tension was foreshadowed in our initial research project. When we asked education stakeholders what they believed about contested aspects of Rwandan history, we found that 46 percent of the stakeholders we interviewed expressed beliefs about the origins of ethnicity in Rwanda that were inconsistent with the official narrative. Generally they believed that ethnicity existed in precolonial times. Most voicing this belief were Hutu who were interviewed by another Hutu

(Freedman et al. 2004, 259). Importantly, these interviewees were careful to express their belief in the importance of a unified Rwanda.<sup>10</sup>

In the history materials that our project produced (*The Teaching of History in Rwanda* 2006), this tension remained evident. The Rwandan writers were unclear in their characterization of whether colonials introduced ethnic categories, as is shown by this statement from the materials: “Another fascinating aspect of Rwandan clans is their multi ethnic composition. Before the introduction of the new Hutu-Tutsi-Twa identities, which were imposed and circulated by the colonial and postcolonial bureaucracy, at the beginning of the 1930s, clans were being used as identification elements and were commonly used by the people of Rwanda” (8).

The phrase “new Hutu-Tutsi-Twa identities” is interestingly ambiguous. Consistent with the official narrative, it could be read to mean that the colonials introduced these identities as “new” ones. Or, more consistent with the historical record, it could be read to mean that, under the colonials, the categories took on new meanings, as did the nature of ethnic identification.

Our materials explicitly agree with the government’s hopes that precolonial history can be used to bolster current movements for unity, as shown here: “Some Rwandans think that clans especially with their multi ethnic aspect can play a role in the process of finding the ground to current political speech that insists on unity and solidarity in a context where ethnic divisions have taken a lot of importance” (8).

Tensions related to ethnicity and its origins also emerged around discussions about when Rwanda became a nation-state. In one of the teacher seminars, participants discussed the fact that Rwanda was not a nation-state in precolonial times. The seminar leader suggested positive pedagogical opportunities of studying multiple Rwandan identities as they developed over time, even if the precolonial era did not offer a clear reference point for an idyllically unified Rwanda.

The next day, when seminar leaders asked participants to reflect in their journals about how they might use materials about earlier identities within Rwandan society with their students, the sensitivity of the topic became clear. A number of the participants voiced insecurity about positioning students as historians and critics about this issue. Although they never explicitly expressed fear, they found a number of excuses to avoid teaching this topic. They said that they were bothered that so little was known and that what was known seemed to raise some questions about the official narrative. They worried that origin stories about the clans seemed to lack factual basis. One asked pointedly, “Should we tell students that we don’t know the origins of clans?”

The stakes seem especially high because the propaganda that helped

<sup>10</sup> See Eltringham (2004) for an analysis of the occurrence of these narratives among Rwandans living in Europe and those living in Rwanda. He found no disagreement with the official narrative in Rwanda but found consistent disagreement among the Rwandans living in Europe.



move the country to genocide included emphasis on who came to Rwanda first and therefore had the most right to be considered Rwandan. The teachers wanted facts. They had difficulty accepting any ambiguity on this issue. Another complained, “We don’t know who was first.” Still another noted that the origin of Ugandan clans was clear but that “the real origins of these [Rwandan] clans is not very specific. Really we don’t get an image of this.” The teachers wanted to know how the clans got to Rwanda and which ones were in Rwanda first. Their comments reflect a more general, obsessive concern with origin stories and how to deal with them.

Another source of tension surfaced around how to teach critical thinking in cases where there was more myth than factual knowledge. One of the Rwandan historians tried to help the teachers see that ambiguity exists and that it does not have to pose insurmountable obstacles: “Many things can’t be explained. . . . Is Africa the origin of white men, like we’re talking now?” He went on to note that what is important to him is that “we have to live together.” The implication was that teachers might use these materials toward that end, consistent with the ultimate goals of the official narrative. The teachers still felt uneasy.

*External Constraints, Internal Fears: Effects on Teaching*

The political climate during our research affected how teachers perceived the possibilities of introducing certain issues in the classroom. From the start, our data presented evidence of the teachers’ reticence about introducing the productive disagreements that could lead to learning. In addition to a fear of entering into debates about when varied groups migrated to Rwanda, the teachers expressed a strong need for “truth” about any narratives that entered the classroom. Thus, concerns remained about how to teach critical thinking in relation to the less codified and more controversial aspects of Rwandan history. Across the board, these tensions emerged mostly around issues of ethnic identity that were central to the highly contested historical narratives.

Fear of discussing ethnicity in the classroom derived from at least two concerns. First, some teachers accepted the idea promoted by the government that continuing to focus on ethnicity could reignite violent, destructive conflict in Rwanda. The concern that discussing ethnicity would perpetuate ethnic division was one of the main reasons the government suspended the teaching of history after the genocide, and it remains one of the formidable barriers to restoring the teaching of history. Second, our interviewees and participants were wary of possible negative consequences. Even in our 2001–3 interviews and focus groups, people said that they would talk about ethnicity only when they were with members of their own ethnic group whom they felt they could trust. Two-thirds of our interviewees (67 percent) said, at some point in their interview, that they felt that the topic of ethnicity should be ignored in the schools, while about half (48 percent) said that it should be

addressed and 25 percent voiced both points of view (Freedman et al. 2004, 56–57).

Recent government policies have made it even more difficult to discuss ethnicity. The government has actively suppressed people who have criticized or challenged particular governmental policies. Whereas previously Hutu who were seen as challenging the government risked being imprisoned on genocide charges, in the past several years, they have faced accusations of supporting a “genocidal ideology”; that has been identified in a 2006 Rwandan Parliamentary Report, *Rwanda Genocide Ideology and Strategies for Its Eradication*, as “a set of ideas or representations whose major role is to stir up hatred and create a pernicious atmosphere favoring the implementation and legitimization of the persecution and elimination of a category of the population” (16). Accusations of harboring a “genocidal ideology” have been used in recent years to ban the two most prominent opposition political parties, to crush the only remaining independent human rights organization, and to arrest a number of government critics, including the former president, Pasteur Bizimungu (Human Rights Watch 2000, 2007; International Crisis Group 2002; Reyntjens 2004).

Accusations of genocidal ideology increased during the course of our research. By 2007, *The New Times*, the newspaper affiliated with the government, was running stories about those accused of genocidal ideology in almost every issue. Not surprisingly, such accusations ultimately spread to schools, fueling concerns over introducing conversations about ethnicity into the classroom. In 2007, a parliamentary commission was established to investigate genocide ideology in schools, and a March 2008 article in *The New Times* said that the commission report offered “damning revelations on the extent of genocide ideology in some schools, with some secondary schools registering 97 percent cases of the ideology.” The article reported further that “lawmakers, at one time, insinuated that Mujawamariya [the Minister of Education] could herself be harbouring genocide ideology” because of her inaction regarding the accusations (Buyinza and Mutesi 2008).

As a result of the growing seriousness of these issues for our seminar participants, by the time of our 2007 summer seminar, they considered ethnicity and stories of origin a “taboo subject.” Their sense of taboo was reinforced by one of the senior historians who suggested to the U.S. leader that the group was not being “prudent” and that the conversation was approaching genocide ideology.

It remains to be seen whether Rwandan teachers can safely raise these tension-filled issues, whether real debate is possible, and ultimately whether questioning the government’s narrative is possible, even when such questioning is aimed at helping the country move in the directions the government wants. All of the workshop and seminar leaders acted as though such activities would be theoretically possible. Still, given the Rwandan govern-

ment's priority of maintaining tight control, especially of dissent, questions remained about how much debate ultimately will be tolerated in the country.

#### **Entry Spaces: Practitioner Inquiry Shows Strategies for Coping**

We used a number of strategies and materials that had been developed by FHAO and adapted these for Rwanda, trying to find entry spaces so that the Rwandan educators could create a new history curriculum that would be intellectually responsible yet responsive to the Rwandan context. Teaching students to think like historians means that the students must be free to construct their own well-documented historical narratives. Some of the tools that the teachers and their students needed to construct such narratives included critical reading of historical sources; looking from multiple points of view, which could lead to competing narratives; and crafting and supporting arguments for discussion and debate (Holt 1990). Since government officials wanted Rwandan citizens to have these tools but also feared their potential consequences (Freedman et al. 2004), we faced a dilemma. We could introduce tools commonly associated with what we call "democratic teaching," but we and the teachers would have to be careful about how we handled their uses. Although we knew that any history of Rwanda must include grappling with ethnicity and its racialization, we felt that we all would have to broach the topic somewhat indirectly and even then do so with extreme care. We understood the danger of discussions that could be interpreted as being divisive with respect to the unity of the nation.

We created the first entry space by introducing democratic teaching methods. In this way, we framed teaching history in ways that were new for the teachers. As in many African countries, education in Rwanda has traditionally been teacher-centered, with extensive lecture and little discussion. Democratic teaching methods opened the possibility of thinking of history as multiple and contingent rather than as a single received truth. It moved us away from direct confrontations with highly contested content, such as the topic of ethnicity. It fulfilled the need for students to have space to communicate and for that communication to be open and honest. The teachers accepted the desirability of new ways of teaching that would be more student-centered, but many of them expressed concern about the feasibility, given the institutional constraints of large class sizes, the limited availability of teaching materials, and the need to prepare students for traditional examinations.

We created a second entry space by using a technique of discussing personally highly emotional and controversial topics through the lens of distanced material. We used carefully selected pieces of literature, as well as the distant historical case of Germany's Weimar Republic, to initiate discussions about issues of identity as they related to the genocide. By talking through a fable or a poem or another history, we then moved toward making connections to Rwanda. The distanced materials provided a means to discuss Rwanda

without ever mentioning Rwanda, and they also promoted some direct discussion of the events in Rwanda in ways that allowed the participants to make their own decisions about whether or not to respond publicly.

*First Point of Entry: Democratic Teaching*

As we began our July 2006 seminar with the Rwandan educators, we characterized the discipline of history as a process, not a set of facts: “We’re not going to look at history like it’s a march through time, like this [draws line on board]. We’re going to look at a process [laughter over difficulty translating the word ‘process’ into Kinyarwanda].” The lack of an easy translation for the word “process” indicated the foreignness of the idea.

The leader then challenged the idea of a single history by introducing the concept of agency and examining the past from the varied points of view of individuals who made different choices: “We aren’t going to look at history as something that just happens to people. We are going to look at history as a series of choices. . . . We’ll look at the decision to be a bystander. We will look at the decision to be a perpetrator. We will look at the decision to be a rescuer. And we will look at the decisions of everyday citizens to make a positive difference.” The room filled with excitement as participants thought concretely about what they might be able to accomplish through teaching history through the eyes of those who, in similar circumstances, chose to act differently.<sup>11</sup>

The teachers were accustomed to thinking about themselves as transmitters of information for students to memorize to pass examinations. This transmission model was consistent with the government’s goal of promoting a single official narrative but not with the more democratic approach we were introducing.

We connected the success of a democratic state with democratic teaching. The seminar leader stressed freedom of speech and freedom of ideas, both in the wider society and in the classroom: “In order for a democracy to be strong, citizens need to exchange ideas. . . . Democracies require public spaces for the exchange of ideas where citizens can try things out with each other. This [seminar] is our civic space. . . . And we have to tell the truth; we come from a difficult past.”

In Rwanda, issues of safety for free speech are serious, and in some cases free speech may be impossible to guarantee. We emphasized the importance of providing a safe and confidential space for talk on difficult topics in the classroom, talk that could include debate about conflicting points of view.

<sup>11</sup> The approach taken here is consistent with the work of Scott Straus (2006), who has examined how the genocide unfolded in Rwanda. His research suggests that it was not solely a top-down event with an obedient population; rather, at a local level, individuals made decisions to participate. Such decisions usually reflected some calculation of benefit. While we do not accept his argument fully, we agree that local-level decision making at both an individual and community level is a critical component of ethnic conflict.

We tried to model the creation of a safe “civic space” for enacting democratic principles. In doing so, we hoped that teachers would see how to create safe spaces for their students. In thinking about the safety needed for honest communication, the leader emphasized the importance of having rules of confidentiality for classroom talk: “One thing I’m going to ask is that the conversations we have here stay here.” Still, given the dangers in Rwanda today, each individual had to decide for himself or herself how much to reveal and what could and could not be said.

Also, in the seminars, we consistently offered participants an alternative to public participation, the private space of their journals. The leader explained: “So I ask you two things. To take the risk if you feel you can. Take the chance. And if you’re not sure, write it down in your journal. But allow yourself to continue the questioning with yourself. Don’t turn that off.”

*Second Point of Entry: Distancing and Making Connections*

With these ideas about democratic teaching in place, we created additional space for thinking through important issues using the technique of distancing. Through the FHAO case of the Weimar republic, the seminar participants examined human motivations, decisions, and responsibilities in violent times by looking at others in similar contexts. The Weimar case allowed us to examine the elements that potentially made a society vulnerable and those that could make it strong. Many of the vulnerabilities, including economic instability, violence, lack of institutional reform, and social instability, were familiar to the Rwandan participants in terms of their past and current state of transition.

When the seminar leader stressed the importance of making connections and drawing personal conclusions, she encouraged individual decisions about how public these personal connections would be: “One thing that we are going to use for the next few days is judgment. And this means, ‘What do I think?’ ‘Where do I stand?’ . . . I am asking you to look at the decisions people made [during Weimar] and to say to yourself out loud in your journal, ‘I do have a view about that.’ . . . So when we move into this case study about human behavior, we will be making Rwandan connections with our new resources.” Talking through another history proved particularly important in Rwanda since honest and direct discussion of Rwandan history was potentially fraught with danger.

We also included a series of activities to frame the concept of identity as more complex than ethnic or national identity. The seminar leader explained: “We’re going to take a particular approach beginning with questions of identity. And this doesn’t just mean Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, Francophone, Anglophone. This is when thinking about kids. ‘Who am I? How do I see myself?’”

By showing that people are members of many identity groups and that these groups overlap in varied and complex ways, the teachers interrogated

the essentialized categories of ethnicity. We decreased tension by focusing first on the more universal aspects of adolescent identity development rather than more contentious issues such as the group dehumanization underlying the genocide. We then explained how and what parts of students' identities may remain invisible, tailoring our explanation to the Rwandan context: "For a kid it could be because they don't speak the same language. It could be because they are a refugee. Maybe they're an orphan. Maybe their parents have AIDS. Maybe they are very poor."

We then asked the teachers to introduce themselves by contrasting how they see themselves and how others see them, encouraging them to reveal multiple aspects of their identities. These materials prompted the seminar participants to discuss times when aspects of people's identities are invisible, when they see themselves one way but others see them differently. They also led these participants to discuss the process of stereotyping.

Most participants talked and wrote freely and seemed to feel safe talking about identity in general and about works of fiction and distant historical events, even those that contained themes and illustrated processes that were obviously similar to the Rwandan identity-based violence. The leader then was able to ask participants to ponder, "Why is it that we and they become we versus they?" After reading a series of documents related to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, the participants began to see how peoples' identities affect their behavior during violent identity-based conflict.<sup>12</sup> The readings engendered debate about how different people act out different identities and how they do so for complex reasons, taking one small step at a time.

Distancing through the Weimar case and through more general discussions of identity took some pressure off the topic of ethnic identity, while the stress on making connections helped the participants move closer to their own context in a way that gave them agency over which connections they felt comfortable drawing. Through distancing and then making connections, our goal was to model building a safe community, one bracketed off from the everyday world, where all participants would make commitments to speak honestly and would consider what others said as confidential. Our goal was to move participants from a focus on "facts" to legacies of different choices individuals make in the face of violence. We further hoped to decrease fears that the productive conflicts associated with learning might erupt into the more violent and destructive conflicts that had plagued the larger society. Distancing allowed for a universalization of human evil and frailty and opened a space for imagining a better future.

<sup>12</sup> Readings included an interview with a professor who was a bystander; an interview with a perpetrator, a commandant at a death camp; and a story of rescuers, the people of the French community of Le Chambon who saved Jews.

## Conclusions

In studying how collective memories, and ultimately states, are built and rebuilt, we argue that it is important to extend the theories of Maurice Halbwachs and other scholars to look more closely at what is taught and learned in schools, taking into account what the government policies allow, what is enacted everyday in varied school contexts, and what kinds of reform projects take hold across an extended period of time. Schools reflect, and have the potential to influence, the processes of collective memory transmission and transformation. The development of a history curriculum in a postconflict country reflects in microcosm the forces that drove the country's conflict. Political manipulation, ethnic stereotyping and rivalries, economic competition for scarce resources, and the power of collective memory influence how a history curriculum develops in the aftermath of conflict (Stover and Weinstein 2004; Weinstein and Stover 2004).

In our study, we saw how the victory of one political side created a set of tensions that inhibited curricular reform. The inability to discuss issues of identity, the distortions of a history that the government wishes to tell, the constraints against teaching students how to be critical thinkers, and, above all, the fear of productive conflict have profound implications for the establishment of a healthy democracy in the country. When one identity group has power and others are subject to that group's policies and practices, history reform becomes an almost impossible task. The danger remains that the party in power, if unopposed, will create a history that structures a civic identity in its own image. If no single party is victorious, each group will struggle for its story to hold sway unless external pressures (as in Bosnia and Herzegovina) or consensus governance (as in South Africa) facilitate curricular transition. In fact, our research suggests that teaching a critical approach to history may be fundamentally at odds with the political effort to recreate the nation as a new, imagined community (Anderson 1983).

Another important conclusion is that external intervention, no matter how well meaning or thoughtful, will always be subject to the existing political context. Curricular reform is often controversial, regardless of the setting. However, progressive curricular development is more likely in political contexts that support openness and transparency, for example, where conflict has ended and a consensus exists that a healthy state is more important than the parochial vision of any one group. This kind of change is only possible where there is rule of law and citizens do not live in fear. Curricular reform must occur thoughtfully and with deliberation as part of a package of postconflict institutional changes.

This multiyear project was designed with careful attention to historical context, stakeholder participation, clear definition of roles, and acceptance of the realities of Rwanda. In terms of deliverables, we created a curricular model reflecting the work of multiple sectors concerned about education.

We successfully completed a set of workshops and seminars and built curricular development capacity. The Faculty of Education at NUR and leaders at NCDC are continuing the training in ongoing collaboration with FHAO.

However, in order for real educational reform to occur, students and teachers must confront the charged interactions that invariably occur in classrooms as conflicts productive to learning emerge. The fears that prevent those conflicts doubtlessly undermine efforts at long-term social and political reconciliation and likely enhance the vulnerability of the state to destructive conflicts associated with ongoing or periodic upheaval. Further, our study suggests that teaching history cannot be divorced from the state's goal of building a national or civic identity. The teaching of history therefore remains subject to government policies that dictate curricular content and pedagogic practices. We conclude that the two sets of tensions we identified will continue to influence curricular change: first, meeting political needs for teaching history while also promoting an understanding of historical evidence and thinking; second, understanding the role of teaching history in shaping a new national identity while also incorporating in productive and nondivisive ways the social realities of continuing ethnic identities.

In Rwanda, the policy of denying the reality of ethnicity and the inability to discuss ethnicity comfortably make it hard for everyday citizens to process what happened during the genocide and to talk about lingering fears and dangers. Unless that policy is addressed and remedied, the teaching of Rwanda's history will be flawed, and the potential for further destructive conflict will remain a concern.

Over the course of the project, we began to see signs of increasing narrowness of perspectives; the media reports and the Rwandan Parliamentary Committee's report on genocidal ideology are only two aspects of this clamping down on the part of the government. This change in climate affected our project in two significant ways. First, in the seminars, we saw increasing resistance to discussing ethnicity or identity or to deviating from the government line of unity and reconciliation. To our surprise and disappointment, seminar leaders who had been enthusiastic participants in the original process became increasingly hesitant to confront the issues directly. They began to caution against discussing specific areas of fact or interpretation. Second, at the policy level, we saw the government begin to distance itself from the project. In fact, concomitant with the official handover of the created history modules, the Minister of Education was replaced and the director of the NCDC, who was part of our team, was also replaced when he was promoted. The new director had no stake in our project and, while giving assurances about further development of the modules, he refused to use the allocated money for printing the training materials; many of our Rwandan colleagues backed away from confronting these changes. The new director ultimately



released the funds for printing but began his own project that may or may not incorporate the work of our 40 participants.

What do we make of the above changes in support for our project? As we had received nothing but positive feedback about our work over a 2-year period, we suggest that the project, with its emphasis on openness and individual choice, democratic classrooms, and primary source review, became unpalatable for a government focused on control. The ultimate lesson for educators may be that, while the debate on best practices focuses on content of material or the process of creating materials, the real concern has to do with timing and context. As we have suggested, changing the history curriculum after conflict can take place only in the context of an open and legitimate government. Anything less will invariably lead to the teaching of a propagandized history. Close attention to the development of democratic institutions and rule of law, support for human rights, and constructive engagement across formerly warring groups maximize the potential for meaningful curricular change. The fundamental questions become these: When is the best time to make the educational intervention? What openings for change can be found?

Was this project a failure or a success? An all-or-nothing conclusion would mean falling into the trap that underlies much of international aid. Expectations for concrete, immediate results are often dashed in the developing world, especially in postconflict transitional periods. The tasks are to institute a process, to introduce possibility, and to create opportunity; we feel that we have accomplished these goals. Educational reform is problematic at best in the Western world, and it is even more so in resource-constrained, politically turbulent societies. However, despite the constraints, we succeeded in building capacity among Rwanda's history educators. After 10 years with no history courses taught in secondary schools, our project helped move the country closer to reintroducing the subject into the classroom. Through our project and the publicity surrounding it, the government publicly embraced the importance of teaching history, as well as the adoption of new teaching methodologies. Through our workshops, 40 individuals, most of whom are in positions to influence the future teaching of history and other subjects, were introduced to new types of curriculum and new methods of teaching. An additional 250 teachers have been trained in our seminars on democratic teaching methods, and they can apply them regardless of the curriculum that is ultimately implemented in Rwanda's schools. Many of the teachers who have worked with us understand that, in any inclusive society, multiple points of view, which are related to the complex identities of its citizens, must find their way into the nation's history.

Transition after violent conflict is a long process. The failure or stalling of many programs should inspire us to think in new ways about education and the process of transition. Close attention to the development of demo-

cratic institutions and rule of law, support for human rights, and constructive engagement across formerly warring groups maximize the potential for meaningful curricular change. This type of transition takes longer and requires more internal and external attention and resources than conventional wisdom supports. While an open and democratic society may be more likely to accept new curriculum and teaching methodologies, we firmly believe that the adoption of more nuanced history materials and the introduction of more democratic teaching methods can also contribute to the process of transition. At the least, our project has set a process in motion and has provided teachers with tools that they can use to work toward the accomplishment of that task.

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