

*Making the Maasai Schoolgirl:  
Developing Modernities on the Margins*

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Planning, Governance and Globalization  
The School for Public and International Affairs

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25 September 2009  
Blacksburg, Virginia

**Keywords:** gender, Africa, girls, Maasai, development, education, modernity

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ABSTRACT

In 2000, the United Nations hosted the Millennium Summit, billed as the “largest gathering of world leaders in history” (UN Millennium Project). This delegation defined The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the primary set of metrics that serve as benchmarks against which development, the world over, is to be measured. Of these eight goals, one focuses specifically on education and four relate to women and girls’ empowerment. This study of identity formations among Maasai schoolgirls in southern Kenya, then, is designed to shed some new theoretical light on life as a target of these goals. In this dissertation, I consider the lived experience of development in the form of formal schooling from the subjective point of view of Maasai primary schoolgirls.

The study explores the textured variation of identities within the single social category, “schoolgirl,” in an effort to uncover the on-the-ground meanings of development imperatives focused on recruiting girls to school, keeping girls in school, and supporting their achievement. Designed as an ethnographic case study focused on the nine government co-ed primary day schools in Keekonyokie Central Location, Ngong Division, Kajiado District, Kenya, interviews were conducted with 98 Maasai girls aged 12-20, enrolled in primary school at the time of the interviews. Additionally, interviews were conducted with some of the schoolgirls’ mothers and teachers, along with 8 secondary schoolgirls from the immediate area (Lood-ariak). Along with ethnographic data, policy documents and overlapping literatures were reviewed in order to ascertain education-as-development imperatives articulated by local, national, and international development institutions. The purpose of the research is an attempt to capture the complex interrelations between formal schooling, multi-scalar development imperatives, and individual everyday life worlds within the changing economic and social context of postcolonial Kenya in the age of globalization.

My research suggests that “the schoolgirl” has emerged as a historically new and profoundly salient social category in contemporary Maasai life that has implications for gender dynamics and

social forms like marriage, family and household structure and maintenance, and labor relations. I argue that the “schoolgirl” as a category has been created by the collusion of local and global discourses that define girls’ education as a singular and primary development imperative. Moreover, Maasai schoolgirls themselves deploy the discourse of development in their use of the schoolgirl category which enables them to negotiate and redefine who a girl is and can be in Maasailand today *vis-à-vis* education.

Based on literature reviews prior to the research in Kenya, I went to Kajiado expecting to hear stories of the problems associated with the schooling imperative combined with the pressures of adolescence as a biosocial process that can make staying in school a perilous passage for rural African girls. While many participants did describe the obstacles they faced in their pursuit of schooling, I also found that nearly every girl my translator and I spoke with marshaled a poignant and pronounced sense of agency in their use of the schoolgirl category as both discursive tool and practical fact. Deployed and employed by schoolgirls and others on their behalf, the schoolgirl category gives Maasai girls unprecedented room to negotiate current realities and future trajectories. This positive finding notwithstanding, the theoretical implications of my research also suggest that the schoolgirl subject position has been (and perhaps could have only been) forged in the particular crucible of the market-driven economic development context defined in recent years by neoliberal ideology, and because of this, there are structural limits to the autonomous and independent existence modern development ideology predicts and requires for and of agents.

As I argue, the Maasai schoolgirl subject-position is made—produced, constructed—by and within an intricate matrix of forces, including the discourse(s) employed and deployed by Maasai schoolgirls themselves about their own circumstances. This exposition of Maasai schoolgirls is embedded in a history, political economy, and a symbolic universe. Therefore, the arguments forwarded here must go beyond the mechanical dissection of discourse; they must illuminate the lived realities, contextualized histories, and meaning systems that are enacted and embodied by the storylines and characters that give shape to the arguments themselves. Thus, the earliest chapters (1-3) are dedicated to Maasai subject formation through Kenyan history along with the paradoxical relationships many Maasai have had with formal schooling through out this history, as well as a broader context for girls’ education in selected Sub-Saharan African contexts.

By focusing on African schoolgirls as creators of knowledge around their own experiences and highlighting that experience, this study’s findings contribute to at least two broad literatures:

1) the critical feminist theoretical literatures that are concerned with the construction of gendered subjects in late capitalism and 2) critical development literatures (both conceptual and practical) that are concerned with the contradictory processes of development and their gendered, and gendering, impacts. As Chapter 5 and my conclusions suggest, feminist development interventions must squarely account for these contradictions rather than be seduced by reductive rhetoric that empties gender analysis of its critical edge. In so doing, development scholars, local practitioners, and everyday people may be better equipped to confront the real gendered effects of institutional changes based on sex, such as recruiting and retaining more girls in school. My ultimate goal is to expand and localize the working knowledge of gender in development contexts so that we might face the matrix of complexity of life in the development zone and thus, perhaps, craft more reasonable, just, and gender-centered interventions aimed at transformative and positive change for all, not just girls.

This dissertation is dedicated to African schoolgirls.

And in memory of Deborah,  
who was tragically killed on December 1, 2008 along with two others when the pick-up *matatu* in which she was riding lost use of its brakes, lost control, and crashed on the Magadi Road in Oloseos near Babu and Shosho's house. She is survived by her husband, her co-wives, and her children, one of whom was interviewed for this dissertation, as was she.

## Acknowledgements

I joke that I have an ‘illegal’ committee composed of an incredible group of people from my true academic home—the liberal arts and sciences—despite the fact that my degree is housed in the College of Architecture and Urban Affairs. The committee assembled to support me through the doctoral process embodies my attraction to interdisciplinarity, reflects my humanities and literary studies past, and makes my future as an Africanist possible.

I’d like to begin by thanking my co-chairs—Dr. Bernice Hausman and Dr. Tim Luke. Bernice, thank you for being an incredible ally in this process and giving me so many opportunities to learn how to do intellectual work from a brilliant intellect while also being there with humor, humanity, and humility. Tim, thank you for agreeing to be a part of the committee when you could have said no and for having faith in my abilities all along despite my own misgivings; I didn’t expect pep talks from you, and have appreciated them immensely. To my wonderful committee members—Dr. Brett Shadle, Dr. Charles Good, and Dr. Patricia Kelly—I would like to thank you all for your work on my behalf over the past few years. To Brett, for opening up the world of African studies to me and for sharing my love for Kenya despite its faults. To Charles, what can I say? Your generous agreement to come from retirement to teach Topics in Political Geography with a focus on African Development made my desire to produce a dissertation on development issues in Africa *possible*, and for that I will always be grateful. To Pat, seeing you and Josiah in Kenya meant a great deal to me at that fragile beginning stage of in-country research (not to mention a restaurant meal!); your interest in the stories I had to tell at that moment reassured me that I would in fact have something to say when I got back home. To all of you, for all if this and more, I am grateful. Any historical mistakes, clunky theoretical baggage, or inelegant logic are mine alone.

There are faculty who did not serve directly on my committee who I want to thank. I have a special thank you for Dr. Max Stephenson who has provided me with intellectually stimulating, personally edifying, and financially important research assistantship and associate positions over the course of my tenure as a doctoral student. Max, for your consistent and affirmative support, I will always be grateful. To Bernice Hausman, Dr. Betty Fine, and Dr. Barbara Ellen Smith in Women’s and Gender Studies, I thank you for the teaching assistantship at the beginning that made quitting my job and returning to school full time seem possible. And lastly, but never least, I would like to thank Dr. Wilma Dunaway for her relentless pursuit of excellence and her commitment to global justice that inform my work in ways that may not be explicitly obvious.

I would also like to thank the generous support of the American Association for University Women’s American Dissertation Fellowship for 2008-2009. This support not only made it possible to focus on writing after I returned from Kenya, but also legitimized my contention that African girls’ voices matter to our understanding of development in African contexts.

There are too many people to thank in Kenya to list, so I will list only a few here. *Asante sana, Ashy oleng oleng*, John Ole Kintalel, Esther Kintalel, Joseph Ole Simel, Eunice Nkopio and the staff at MPIDO, Eliakim Okiddy, Milka Okiddy, and their girls and the staff at Tekko, Agnes Sereti Meja, Rebecca Shempere, Mary Muyaki, Mzee Samuel ole Pulei (Babu) and Edith Pulei (Shosho), and the family in Oloseos, and all the head teachers, staff, and students in Keekonyokie Central Location primary schools, and all the Kenyan schoolgirls who took their time to give me precious insights. I would like to thank the Government of Kenya and the Ministry for Education in Nairobi and Kajiado Town for granting me permission to conduct research and Kenya, and Dr. Frederick Gravenir and Kenyatta University for granting me affiliation.

Graduate students finish degrees for three reasons: faculty support, family support and good friends. Among all the friends I should list, I will list a few here: Veronica Arroyavé, Angela Mendes, March Schnitzer, Aberash Weji Berek, Chris Strock, Elisabeth Bloomer, Cathy Skinner, Aileen Murphy, Paul Heilker, Elisabeth Chaves, Nicole Sanderlin, Chantelle Dubois Eversole, Derren Rosbach, Lisa Poley, Rachel and Will Butler, Curt Gervich, and Kim Foulds. These amazing people saw me through returning to school after ten years out, buying, refurbishing, and selling a house, field work in Kenya during a turbulent time for Kenyans, a seven month adventure in Los Angeles, and all the discomforts, insecurities, and ah-ha moments that doctoral study—and life—throw our way. I could never really thank you adequately for your significant support. Always in a category all her own, I also want to thank Dr. Lea Pellett, a dear friend, tireless social scientist, and humanitarian. I hope I spend my retirement, like her, wrestling cobras from my sleeping bag!

To my parents, Charles and Pat Switzer, I owe a lifetime of gratitude for unconditional support, love, and faith; we all wish that mom could be here to see me accomplish such a feat. To Rita Montrosse, it is not clear what any of us might have done without you, and I thank you for being here. To Scott, my little brother, your wish has finally come true—your big sis is no longer a student! To Bill and Carmen Deshler, my in-laws, please know that your tireless support of me in so many ways has helped to make this day possible. I have reserved these last sentences for my husband, David Deshler. David, thank you for years of sacrifice, quiet nights, Rift Valley rainstorms, and your consistent encouragement, faith, and love and perhaps above all, your diligent map-making skills! I hope you find your own love for Africa between the lines here.

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<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Preface: <i>Talking to Maasai Schoolgirls:</i></b> Making Mythologies?	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction: <i>Girl(ing) Gender, School(ing) Girls:</i></b> The Promise of Develop(ing) Modernities in Maasailand	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 1. <i>Making Maasailand in Kenya:</i></b> Developing Historical Legacies and Contemporary Subjects	<b>72</b>
<b>Chapter 2. <i>Making the Maasai, Being Educated:</i></b> Paradoxes of Educational Provision in Maasailand, 1920-2003	<b>125</b>
<b>Chapter 3. <i>“I cannot get any education without school”:</i></b> Case Review of Girls’ Education in Selected Sub-Saharan African Contexts	<b>184</b>
<b>Chapter 4. <i>Making Meanings, Localizing Methodologies:</i></b> Researching Schoolgirls in the Development Zone	<b>218</b>
<b>Chapter 5. <i>Disruptive Discourses:</i></b> Maasai Schoolgirls Make Themselves	<b>285</b>
<b>Conclusion: <i>The New Enkanyakuai and the “Alchemy of Gender”:</i></b> Why Identities Matter in Development Discourse	<b>340</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>Appendix A: Consent Form</b>	<b>370</b>
<b>Appendix B: Minor Assent Form</b>	<b>375</b>
<b>Appendix C: Parental Permission Form</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>Appendix D: Original Interview Protocol</b>	<b>383</b>
<b>Appendix E: Revised Interview Protocol</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>Appendix F: Data Analysis Description</b>	<b>388</b>



## List of Figures

Figure 1:	Map of Kenya	7
Figure 2:	Map of Rift Valley Province	9
Figure 3:	Map of Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL)	10
Figure 4:	Map of Nairobi Locales Relative to Study Area Locales	11
Figure 5:	Illustration of the Runda to Lood-ariak Continuum	24
Figure 6:	Map of Maasai Territory Late 1800's	77
Figure 7:	Map of East Africa, circa 1900	80
Figure 8:	Maps of Maasai Territory Before the Moves, Maasai Territory Post-1911	88
Figure 9:	Map of Keekonyokie Central Location School Sites Ngong Division/Kajiado District	229
Figure 10:	Map of Lood-ariak to Oltepesi Travel Route	237

## Preface

### *Talking to Schoolgirls: Making Mythologies?*

“Do you circumcise girls in America? What do you put on your skin to make it white? Do you have poor people in your country? Do you have black people in your country? Do you have cows in America? Do you have schoolgirl pregnancy in your country? Do schoolgirls drop out of schools? Are girls married to an old man in America? What foods are there in your country? Is there corruption in your country? Do you walk long distances in you country? Do parents beat children in your country? Did your dad beat you? Do you have a husband? Where is he? Do you have your own children? Do you believe in God? Are you a Christian? How far have you gone in your education? Who supports you in your education? What will you do with your education? Have you come to Kenya just to ask these questions of Maasai girls? Will you write a book about this research?”

Slender arms shot in the air with each question, but at first no one waited for my answer before the next question was hurled through the dry, dusty space between them and us. Alice and I stood in front of thirteen Maasai girls, ages 12-17, who had been gathered by the head teacher in an empty classroom close to the end of the school day.<sup>1</sup> Innyonyorri Primary School is a small government day school in a sub-location by the same name located about fifteen kilometers west off

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<sup>1</sup> All of the names in the dissertation are pseudonyms with the exception of Joseph ole Simel, executive director of MPIDO, the NGO that helped facilitate the study and that I discuss in more detail in the dissertation. Most Maasai people have two names—a Maasai name and a Christian name; some prefer to use one name over the other. Generally, when I renamed Maasai people I mixed the pseudonyms so that some are Maasai and some are Christian in keeping with participants actual names. The names of places, schools, and other locations have not been changed. I know that my friends, colleagues and acquaintances in Runda and the Rift might enjoy seeing their names on the pages, but in the spirit of protecting their identities, they have been disguised here instead.

the Magadi Road and about halfway toward Lood-ariak along the *murram* road David ole Kilusu jokingly calls “the Lood-ariak highway.”

Even though of the ten schools I visited, Innyonyorri Primary School is one of the closest to my home base in Lood-ariak, it was the second to last school on our list. By this time, in February 2008, Maria was still in a holding pattern as the postelection violence in Nairobi’s city center had started to simmer down and University of Nairobi officials planned to reopen the gates for her new life as a university student to begin, and Alice and I had found our own rhythms with the research. Folks in Runda and the Rift were still on edge; we’d all been shaken by the violence that should have come as no surprise, but like a jack-n-the-box that never fails to make you jump, we all recoiled in shocked horror at the clown’s grotesque smile. To add to our anxieties, the short rains had barely fallen; the staggering heat of the dry season seemed to swallow everything whole; livestock suffered and died while men and their sons migrated out of the Rift to find grass for grazing.

And still, every visit to a new school started this way, with a vibrant and fascinating onslaught of questions. After an introduction by phone or in person by an MPIDO staff person, I explained my intentions and needs to each head teacher, and he, or his deputy head teacher, gathered a group of girls to be interviewed over the course of three to four days. As requested, before we met with each girl privately for her individual interview, we met with the group all at once to introduce ourselves, explain the research in basic terms, explain the interview process, and request their participation. These group meetings also gave the girls a chance to freely ask us questions—any questions they wanted to ask—and we would answer them. I wanted the girls to see Alice and Maria as knowledgeable resources who could answer questions about their own experiences in secondary school and the search for colleges. I also wanted to present myself to them in a very open manner and to underline what I hoped would be a casual, non-threatening, but

also “serious” (as opposed to “silly”) exchange of ideas and thoughts. In this sense I hoped to destabilize the standard didacticism that characterizes most Kenyan teacher/pupil relations within the classroom and foster less rigid but nonetheless engaged dynamic.

The questions they asked in the group meetings, and at the end of each interview when we turned our interrogation over to the interviewee, reveal some of the girls’ curiosities but also, as the dissertation will discuss, their desires. Schoolgirls—the actual students I met and talked to—and the idea of what it is to be a girl in school—are *the* heart of this dissertation. Their experience of schooling, their perceptions of development in their daily lives, and the ways they rework the idea of ‘the schoolgirl’ as she comes to them from messages at church, at home, in school, in NGO workshops, on the radio, and elsewhere in everyday discourse, are the issues that continue to animate my own desire to learn about and from them. I went to Kenya specifically to learn from them because I believe that they have singular, incisive insight into their own experience, despite the conventional rhetoric of “the girl-child” that suggests otherwise. But in moments like this in Innyonyorri, I was struck—almost star-struck in a way—by how astute their questions could be and how resounding their enthusiasm. It was as if in those dusty hot rooms all the clarity and sheer energy needed to save the world as we know it congealed into slender arms and coalesced in to rapid-fire questions. Some times I learned more from what they asked, and my struggle to answer, than from the answers they sometimes struggled to give me.

From individual and group conversations, I learned, perhaps most fundamentally, that Maasai schoolgirls, perhaps like schoolgirls everywhere, are double dealers, in the best sense of the phrase. Maasai schoolgirls have been required to hone the art of what Archambault (2007) calls “re-interpretation,” and what I call “re-signification.” Archambault conducted two years of ethnographic study in a Maasai community east of my study site a just a few years before I arrived in Lood-ariak. I met her once, at MPIDO’s office in Karen, but neither of us were in a position to

talk separate from our obligations to the meeting we were both attending, but now that I have read her dissertation, entitled, *'School is the Song of the Day': Education and Social Change in Maasai Society*, I am reassured that what I observed and heard in my short stay in Maasailand is validated beyond my own conclusions or wishful thinking. She argues that the “infectious enthusiasm and determination with which [Maasai] children sing their English songs and recite the alphabet” is seated in “a hope that that they will one day fly a plane or become a doctor *and also* be part of a ‘developed’ Maasailand, developed from local and culturally embedded aspirations” (286, emphasis mine).

This notion of hope surrounded by singing is what one wants to find—but doesn’t always— at the end of a story about girls in rural Africa. It is not that you won’t find moments of hope in this dissertation. Indeed, like most feminists, I am always watching for the ways in which women, and men, exhibit agency or resistance in the face of the seemingly intractable problems of our time. I, for one, am not content to imagine a world without some agency. And after all, I am a kind of schoolgirl too; I still invest education with all of my own hopes and desires. But in writing this dissertation, I have been forced to confront the making of my own mythologies about schoolgirls, and now, because of them.

Myths...are narratives that do more than tell a good story. They are composed of a series of familiar images and devices, and work to produce an order-of-things that is compelling precisely because it resonates with the affective dimensions of values and norms. It is the mythical qualities of narratives about [girls] evoked in gender and development policies, then, that gives them the power to spur people in to action (Cornwall et al. 2008, 6).

I am honestly not entirely sure what my actions will be regarding girls, but readers of this dissertation can be sure, that I did not go to Kenya “just to ask Maasai girls questions” without some critical investment in the feminist fables that call me to action.

## **Introduction**

### ***Girl(ing) Gender, School(ling) Girls: The Promise of Develop(ing) Modernities in Maasailand***

*“There must be a concept of hope, as well as a concept of the hoped for.”*  
Ben Agger (1992)

Two weeks into the research for this dissertation, I was carjacked, along with two dear Kenyan friends, Wairimu and Oscar Otieno, on the road to their home in Runda.<sup>2</sup> We were not hurt (the gun turned out to be fake), and we were barely robbed, as our three assailants were young, drunk, and inexperienced. But in those dark moments as the right front wheel of the car caught and held the curb we swerved into, and the young man in the blue shirt begged me in perfect English, beneath his breath so the loud drunk one could not hear, to “please, just get out of the vehicle quickly,” it was not entirely clear how the event would unfold. As the drunk one yelled, “we will kill you!,” the realities of the political economies of everyday life in Kenya were instantly magnified and embodied.

I begin this dissertation on identity formations among Maasai schoolgirls in rural southern Kenya with a story of a carjacking by young men in an upscale suburban neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya’s capital city, as a way of narrating the complex realities of what I am calling the “development zone” [see Figure 1]. The daily experiences of the schoolgirls at the heart of this study are far removed from the lives of our carjackers in Nairobi’s slums by geography, culture, social worlds, sex, gender, relationship to education and so much more. All the same, both cohorts of young people live each day and imagine their futures in the same Kenya. In my focus on rural Maasai schoolgirls and the shifting discourses of gender that configure them, I have attempted to

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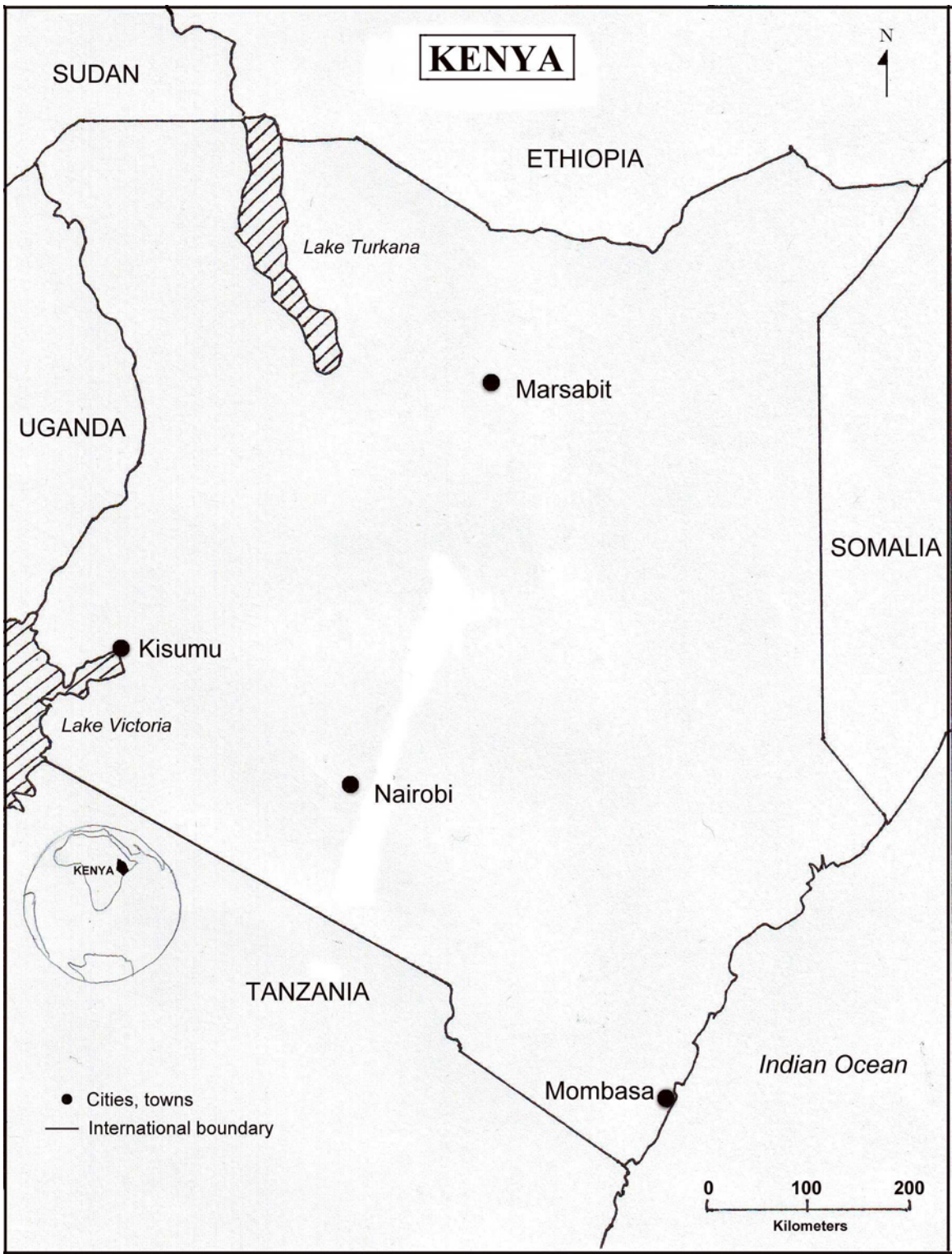


FIGURE 1

Figure 1. Map of Kenya.

keep the specter of these teen-aged, man-boy carjackers alive on the margins of the study and on the tip of my tongue.<sup>3</sup> The lens they inadvertently provided on my time in Kenya has helped to shape my analysis of the schoolgirl narratives I collected far away from this dark spot on the road in Runda.

During the research in-country, I spent most of my time in the southern region of Kenya's great Rift Valley Province [see Figure 2], Kajiado district, Ngong division, in an area called Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL) [See Figure 3]. The ten primary schools that form the backdrop for the schoolgirls' stories are dispersed throughout this location. When I needed to be in Nairobi, I lived with the Otienos in Runda and worked at an empty desk in Oscar's safari tour company offices in downtown Nairobi's Central Business District (CBD) [see Figure 4]. One evening, around 7 p.m., on the way home from work, Wairimu, Oscar and I were deep in a discussion about the intricacies of structural violence portrayed by the American film "Traffic," when the carjackers leapt, wielding what looked like a large-barrel handgun, from the bushes on either side of the road directly in front of the moving vehicle.<sup>4</sup> We came to lurching halt; two of them jumped on the hood and windshield while a third pulled open the driver's side door and shoved Oscar over on top of Wairimu; the others followed, pushing him to the backseat on top of

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<sup>3</sup> To my mind, with an American frame of reference, the individuals who carjacked us were "teenagers"—young men aged anywhere between 16 and 19. Oscar and Wairimu agreed that they were not older, perhaps the drunk one was 20 at the oldest. But the phrase "teenager" is not used in Kenyan delineations of social categories, except perhaps among a narrow, newly westernized elite. Instead the carjackers would be classified as "youth" or more probably, "street thugs."

<sup>4</sup> Had I known more about guns, I would have known that the only kind of gun (beside a flare gun) with a barrel as large as the one I remember seeing, would be a sawed-off shot gun which is usually not held like a handgun. Whatever the young man was holding, once he and the others got inside in the vehicle, we never saw it again.



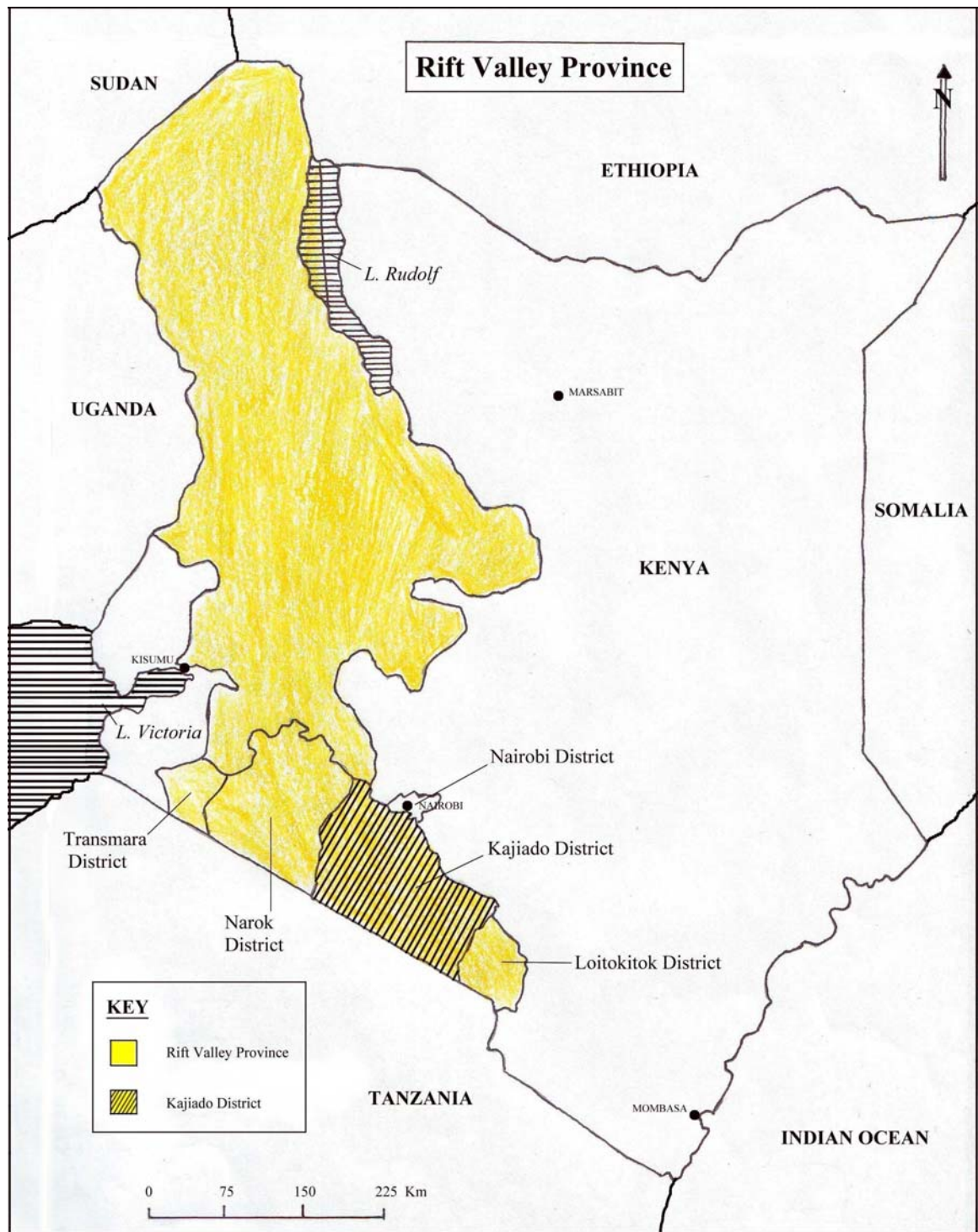


FIGURE 2

Figure 2. Map of Rift Valley Province.

## Kajiado District, Ngong Division, Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL)

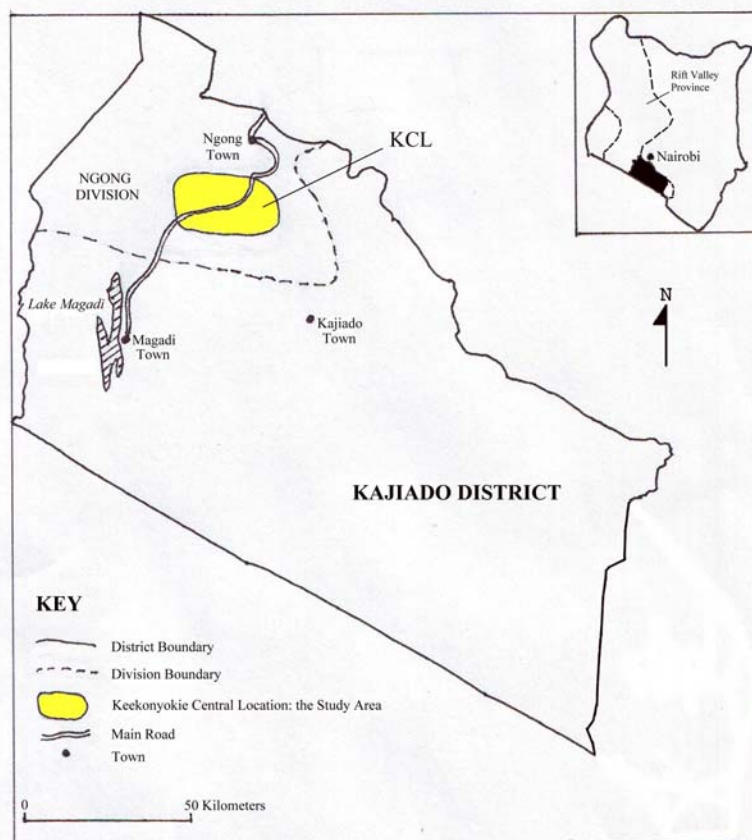


FIGURE 3

Figure 3. Map of Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL).

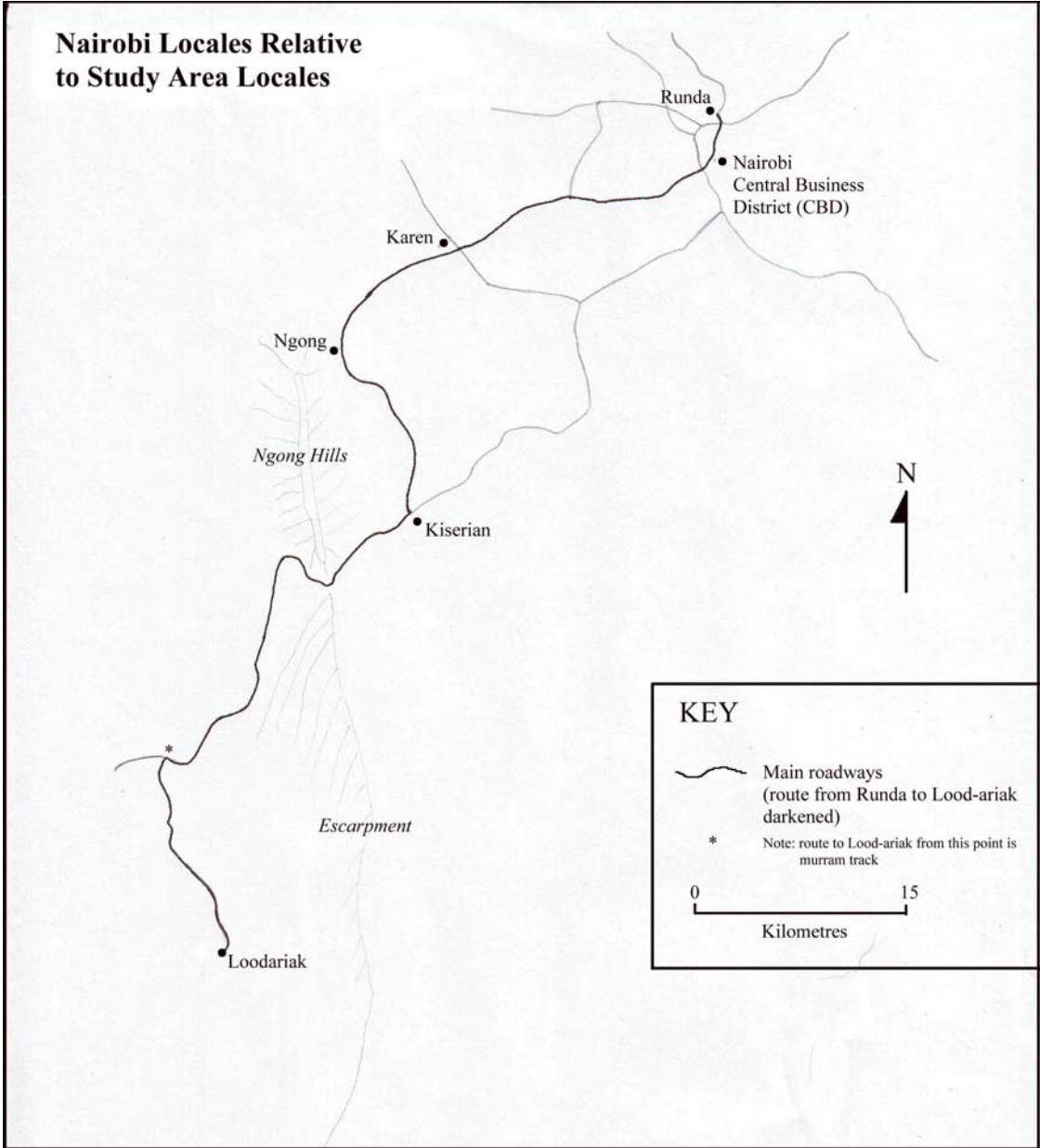


FIGURE 4

Figure 4. Map of Nairobi Locales Relative to Study Area Locales.

me, and then the one who landed in the drivers' seat drove the vehicle off the main road, into a vacant lot, swerving abruptly into the curb before stopping.<sup>5</sup>

Why we were not hurt is pure speculation. Wairimu thinks the young men did not hurt us because she spoke to them in her mother tongue, Gikuyu, once she realized that was the language they were speaking between shards of broken English and *Sheng*.<sup>6</sup> She told them in their mother tongue that we had nothing more than what they had taken from us already; she asked them to let us go without hurting us. The apparent leader, the biggest one, the loudest one, and the one who smelled most strongly of *miraa*,<sup>7</sup> cigarettes and alcohol, laughed and said in Gikuyu, "Ah Mama, you are one of us. For that, we will not take you to the bush!" When recalling this later, she explained "take you to the bush" means "rape and kill you." He then threw the car keys to the ground, shoved Oscar against the vehicle one last time, and ran with the other two from the orb of the street light toward the shantytown a quarter of a kilometer away, leaving us stunned.

Oscar was told later, in confidence and with confidence, that the young men would be killed. Or some young men would be killed. Someone would be picked up and shot in a field. According to the police captain, H.E. President Mwai Kibaki had ordered the summary execution of street thugs, carjackers, and the like. The formal term is "extrajudicial killing."<sup>8</sup> We don't know

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<sup>5</sup> It was never clear if the youth behind the wheel did not know how to drive or was too impaired to drive correctly.

<sup>6</sup> *Sheng* (pronounced "shang") is a constantly changing urban slang language derived from a mixture of English, Swahili, Gikuyu, and pieces of other Kenyan languages and other European languages. According to one source, *Sheng* originated in Nairobi's Eastlands slums in the 1980s and was spread throughout Kenya's urban centers by *matatu* touts and rap artists (Wrong 2009).

<sup>7</sup> *Miraa*, also called "*khat*," pronounced as "cat" in Kenya and pronounced as "chat" in Ethiopia, is a flowering plant native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula that acts as a stimulant when the raw leaves are chewed and packed in the jaw.

<sup>8</sup> There are many stories on the alleged "special execution squads" and extrajudicial killings (Mukinda 2008).

if this happened, but we were all sure that it could. We regretted going to the police in the first place, but the carjackers had taken Wairimu and Oscar's identification cards and their voter registration cards. In late August, a few months before the now infamous December 2007 elections, my friends needed to get what is called an "abstract" from the police in order to replace their voter registration cards and identification cards. They wanted to vote in December. Going to the acrid, poorly lit police station just down the road from the carjacking was inevitable. In order for Wairimu and Oscar to participate officially in the democratic process, we likely erased the democratic right to due process the carjackers, if caught, should have enjoyed.

These contradictions are not new, and the drama on the roadside in Runda is not rare. In fact, I learned after this incident that the stretch of road we were stopped on is notorious for crime. Traveling southwest on Runda Road, to the left is the heart of what residents refer to as "Runda Estate." A former coffee plantation, Runda Estate is now an upscale subdivision in the same neighborhood as the American Embassy and the United Nations (UN) international headquarters in Gigiri, and in relative walking distance from The Village Market, a small Mecca for the affluent complete with day spas, water slides, fresh sushi, hand thrown pizza, and Gucci handbags. While these class/sector categories are not as rigid or unequivocal as they appear my description here, generally residents of Runda are the upper middle class members of the modern urban wage and state sectors—not the richest of the rich Kenyans, but getting there—lower level politicians, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, business men and women and expatriates of various stripes, many of whom work for embassies, the UN and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOS). The houses are large and elaborate, with swimming pools littered with jacaranda blossoms hidden behind palm fronds. These lushly manicured compounds are captive behind walls topped with electric fencing, concertina wire, or shards of glass anchored in concrete. Hand painted placards nailed to stakes advertising "YOGA" or

“VIOLIN LESSONS” peep up between the hedgerows dripping with trumpet vines. The streets themselves are paved and lined with streetlights. Trash is picked up by the city of Nairobi, and Runda Water is a private water processing plant for the estate. At any time of day or night, the neighborhood is strangely silent and empty.

Except for all the people around. The people you will actually see in Runda on any give day do not live there. They are gardeners trimming bougainvillea into mushroom clouds, guards sleeping in doorways, maids carrying laundry, nannies pushing prams holding sleeping white children, yard boys impatiently dragging the overheated dogs of their employers for walks, drivers driving. Although wealthy by any standard, most of Runda’s residents are not affluent enough to provide ‘servants quarters’ within their compounds, and most of the domestic and day laborers who work in Runda cannot afford to live in Nairobi, or where they can afford rent is too far from Runda for a daily commute that begins at 4 a.m. and ends as late as 10 p.m.

Consequently, the shantytown, approximately two kilometers from Runda Road where we were carjacked, sprung up almost over night. According to Oscar, the slum was forming as many as ten years ago when he first acquired the plot on which he would slowly build his home over the next eight years. From the shanty, workers can walk to and from the gardens, houses, and cars of the families they work for in the Estate. Vacant lots within Runda are full of kitchen gardens, distant extensions of one-room shanty houses. When I arrived in Kenya in mid-August 2007, the last remaining acreage of the plantation—the verdant no man’s land between Porterhouse School and Runda Road—was completely cultivated with kitchen *shambas*.<sup>9</sup> On weekends, the strip was full of women, men, and children tending subsistence crops like *sukuma wiki*,<sup>10</sup> maize, and mottled-

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<sup>9</sup> Swahili for garden, farm.

<sup>10</sup> In Swahili *sukuma* means “push” and *wiki* is “week” so it is the green leafy vegetable (like collard greens) that one makes last the whole week.

skin beans. By the time I left at the end of March 2008, the strip was surrounded by concrete towers at intervals supporting eight feet of rolling concertina wire. The residents of the shanty were effectively locked out of their gardens. The street was given an eerie, other-worldly feel—big houses and manicured gardens on one side, concertina wire protecting a narrow green space on the other, and smoke rising from the shanties just beyond.

### **I. The contours of the study**

The various development interventions targeted at the rural Maasai girls I interviewed, or the ‘at-risk’ youth who carjacked us, or the urban underclass working in Runda by day and seeking skills development in courses by night, or the residents of the adjacent informal settlement, and so on, are parts of a larger bundle of politics, policies, plans, laws, programs, conventions, benchmarks, protocols, technical packages, reports, projections, financial instruments, and projects that constitute ‘the development agenda,’ broadly, as it applies to what is often referred to as ‘the developing world.’<sup>11</sup> As I elaborate more fully in the coming sections, in the dissertation I use the

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<sup>11</sup> Debates continue about the most accurate, politically sensitive, historically relevant and meaningful way to refer to nations ‘like Kenya.’ Some terms that are in use include: Third World, developing nations, underdeveloped nations, low/middle-income countries, non-industrialized countries, newly industrializing countries, highly-indebted countries, postcolonial nations, the global south, newly democratizing countries, resource-poor contexts, periphery/semi-periphery, the Orient, the non-west. All of these terms have polar opposite analogs for the those parts of the world that are counter-posed to nations “like Kenya.” Some of these terms include: First World, developed nations, high income countries, industrialized/de-industrializing countries, G8 countries/G20 countries, imperial/neo-imperialist, global North, the West, western countries, liberal democracies, resource-rich countries, core countries, semi-periphery. There are no doubt more geopolitical terms that I have not collected here. I retain the word ‘development’ in the phrasing of the analytic because the conventional western concept of development as national economic growth along capitalist lines as the driver for progress and within that, some degree of poverty reduction as is necessary for sustained growth, in my opinion is a defining force in communities, nations, and regions of the world that have thus far not “developed”—or are in the process (of being underdeveloped)—in these ways. For example, in a recent article for *Vanity Fair* (July 2009), former World Bank economist and critic of “market fundamentalism,” Joseph Stiglitz

phrase “development zone” as a reductive shorthand for what is an amorphous and vast discursive field. In this analysis, the “development zone” is a way for me to refer to ‘the development agenda’ and ‘the developing world’ in general terms while at the same time calling attention to the overgeneralizations that development interventions often rely on. More than the material interventions themselves and the geographies implied by the phrase, I mean to refer to even more: namely, the ideational and ideological, socio-cultural, and political-economic manifestations of our time in many places around the world.

Although the contemporary contours of the conventional development regime are often dated to the post-World War II policies of the Truman administration, it was not until the turn of the twenty-first century that the United Nations hosted the Millennium Summit, the “largest gathering of world leaders in history” (UN Millenium Project). This delegation defined The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the primary set of metrics that serve as targets against which development, the world over, is to be measured. Of these eight goals, one focuses specifically on education and four relate to women and girls’ empowerment.<sup>12</sup> This study of identity formations among Maasai schoolgirls in southern Kenya, then, is designed to shed some new theoretical light on life as a target of these goals. In this dissertation, I consider the lived experience of development in the form of formal schooling from the subjective point of view of Maasai girls who were enrolled in primary school at the time of our interviews.

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uses the term “Third World” to describe “the 80% of the world’s population that lives in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, 1.4 billion of whom subsist on less than \$1.25 a day” (83).

<sup>12</sup> The eight goals are: 1) eradicate poverty and hunger 2) achieve universal primary education 3) promote gender equality and women’s empowerment 4) reduce child mortality 5) improve maternal health 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases 7) ensure environmental sustainability 8) develop a global partnership. See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.



Through in-depth personal interviews and research in Kajiado district, as well as policy document analysis, my research suggests that “the schoolgirl” has emerged as a historically new and profoundly salient social category in contemporary Maasai life that has implications for gender dynamics and social forms like marriage, family/household structure and maintenance, and labor relations. I argue that the “schoolgirl” as a category has been created by the collusion of local and global discourses that define girls’ education as a singular and primary development imperative. Moreover, Maasai schoolgirls themselves deploy the discourse of development in their use of the schoolgirl category which enables them to negotiate and redefine who a girl is and can be in Maasailand today *vis-à-vis* education.

Based on literature reviews prior to the research in Kenya, I went to Kajiado expecting to hear stories of the problems associated with the schooling imperative, combined with the pressures of adolescence as a biosocial process that can make staying in school a perilous passage for rural African girls (Switzer 2006). While many of the participants described the obstacles girls face in their pursuit of schooling, I also found that nearly every girl my assistant/translator and I spoke with marshaled a poignant and pronounced sense of agency in their use of the schoolgirl category as both discursive tool and practical fact. This positive finding notwithstanding, the theoretical implications of my research suggest that the schoolgirl subject position has been (and perhaps could have only been) forged in the particular crucible of the market-driven economic development context defined in recent years by neoliberal ideology, and because of this, there are structural limits to the autonomous and independent existence modern development ideology predicts and requires for and of agents.

This dissertation builds an extended analysis of a set of terms which act as place holders for various, and varied, complex processes that far exceed the capacity of any of the terms to adequately corral. The terms, and the processes, under scrutiny are collected in the title: *Making*

*the Maasai Schoolgirl: Developing Modernities on the Margins*. Broken down, the elements of this title are like the discreet steps of a dance that only make sense in combination with other steps that render the whole dance. These elements are: Maasai, schoolgirl, development, modernity, and marginality. To this list it is sensible to add “making” as an operational term because the process of constructing subjectivities and living identities is central to this study. As I argue, the Maasai schoolgirl subject-position is made—produced, constructed—by and within an intricate matrix of forces, including the discourse(s) employed and deployed by Maasai schoolgirls themselves about their own circumstances. This exposition of Maasai schoolgirls is embedded in a history, political economy, and a symbolic universe. Therefore, the arguments forwarded here must go beyond the mechanical dissection of discourse; they must illuminate the lived realities, contextualized histories, and meaning systems that are enacted and embodied by the storylines and characters that give shape to the arguments themselves. But the obligation runs deeper still. Beyond illuminating, it is my hope that the arguments put forward here equip us (the writer and the readers) to address, if even small ways, the human concerns at the heart of this work.

#### A. *The Runda-Lood-ariak continuum*

As an American in Africa, I have felt and seen these disparities of relative wealth, well being, and capacity to thrive between the rich, the richer, and the poor between my own life and the lives of many Africans. During this research trip for the first time I had the chance to live and more fully see gradations of income and material wealth *among Kenyans*.<sup>13</sup> The disparities in evidence along the continuum of the experiences between Runda and Lood-ariak, as elsewhere in

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<sup>13</sup> To be clear, I do not know any extremely wealthy Kenyans of Swiss-bank-account-wealth—members of the “transnational capitalist class”—but they do exist, and they live in neighborhoods far more exclusive than Runda.

Kenya and indeed, the world, can be explained by in part by what Holmquist et al. (1994) call the “centrifugal forces of late capitalism” (84). These contradictions are inherent as capitalism expands and nested political economies diverge. The authors describe the process in general terms with respect to the structural relations in Kenya:

In the modern wage sector wages can rise but there are relatively few employment opportunities. On the other hand, wage rates in the large-holding export and competitive sectors respond to variations in total demand, but they can also decline as the sector absorbs workers unable to find employment in modern urban or state sectors. Excess productive capacity and high wages in the modern sector coexist with poverty and underemployment in the competitive sector, generating wealth and growth at one pole and poverty and stagnation at the other (84).

Holmquist et al. (1994) track the structural development of Kenya’s economy through Daniel arap Moi’s re-election in 1992; Kenya has since seen two more elections. In 2003, President Moi’s tenure came to an end when he conceded defeat to current President Mwai Kibaki. Nonetheless, this general description seems to hold for current realities. Hence the burgeoning of both Runda and the adjacent shantytown, both growing simultaneously over the past fifteen or so years.

Elaborating my travels between sites—where I lived in *mashambani*<sup>14</sup> and where I lived “in town”—as well as comparing the circumstance between the schoolgirls I met in Runda and in the Rift, further illustrates the discontinuities and the linkages among nested political economies along the Runda-Lood-ariak continuum by explicitly highlighting the deepening marginalization of

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<sup>14</sup> This is Swahili for the countryside, literally, the place of *mashamba* (gardens, farms). An unintended (by the speakers) ironic term, given that few *mashamba* can thrive in most of Kajiado district, particularly in the Rift where I lived and conducted research. It is interesting thinking about this colloquialism, because no one who worked for Oscar came from pastoralist people and would therefore find no irony in the phrasing. Even though only 20% of the land in Kenya is arable, the general term for rural/non-urban space connotes the sense that outside of Nairobi or Mombasa one will largely find farms, but this is only true in some areas, not most.

pastoralism as a facet of what Holmquist et al. (1994) call “the competitive sector.”<sup>15</sup> My intentions here are not to highlight my personal discomfort in these travels or tell ‘war stories’ about the hardships of research on the ‘dark continent,’ but rather to capture the tenor of the sometimes vast differences and intimate interlinkages between located lives in development zones and to foreshadow a discussion in chapter 4 of the relationships between human social formations and the topographies of movement around locales.

Like the majority of Kenyans, I did not have a personal vehicle at my disposal. I traveled from Point A to Point B by a combination of walking, using public transportation, and obtaining generous lifts with friends. In order to travel from Oscar’s house in Runda to David ole Kilusu’s *enkang* in Lood-ariak, I would use one personal vehicle (a black Mercedes sedan), one bus (like a city bus or Greyhound), two mini-van *matatus*, and one pick-up truck *matatu*.<sup>16</sup> Depending on the circumstance, there could be more minivan *matatus* in the mix. The journey that begins in Runda Estate around dawn with two people in a Mercedes leaving the house at their discretion, carrying

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<sup>15</sup> Although scholars debate whether pastoralists can be referred to as “peasants” which is Holmquist et al.’s (1994) catch phrase for the majority of Kenyans who fall into the “competitive sector,” including the informal economy (Kratli and Dyer 2006). Their analysis does not explicitly account for pastoral economies.

<sup>16</sup> “*Matatu*” in Swahili literally means “the threes,” which refers to the fare (3 pennies) for the original vehicles used in the late colonial period to transport African laborers in and out of Nairobi from the “Bantustans”—a term adopted from its original use in the South African context to refer to the ethnically organized (but often to a degree mixed) reserves (Oscar, personal communication 2007, although there are various theories on the origins of the term). Today, “*matatu*” is its own noun and refers to the Nissan, Izuzu, and other 15 passenger mini-vans. In 2004, the government passed a law forbidding *matatu* operators to overload the vehicles, requiring 15 seatbelts for 15 passengers for the 15 seats in the vehicle. Before this law, it was common to travel with often 30 people in a *matatu* (each person with one person on his or her lap). *Matatus* are ubiquitous in urban and peri-urban Kenya, and indeed, throughout various development zones. Because of their wonderfully outlandish paint jobs, and before legislation, their loud stereos, *matatus* have quite a ‘cult’ following as 109 different Facebook groups, with titles like “*Matatu* Appreciation Society,” “*Matatu* Culture,” “The *Matatu* Fan Group,” and “*Matatu* Mania: The Official *Matatu* Website,” suggests. The Wikipedia entry on “share taxi” gives a good sense for the prominence of similar modes of transportation around the world and shows some photos.

hot tea in travel mugs, adjusting the radio on the station of their choosing, back seat empty, laps empty because backpacks and brief cases are in the trunk, ultimately ends in Lood-ariak around sunset, but not without a significant delay in Kiserian for a transfer to the pick-up *matatu*, what I (un)affectionately christened the ‘goat truck.’

These pick-ups are the only form of transport off the Magadi Road in the Kajiado Rift.<sup>17</sup> Most people referred to the vehicles in my area as “Parsoi’s vehicle,” “Nkopio’s vehicle” or “Koilel’s vehicle” because these three men owned the only vehicles, and the only vehicles-for-hire, that I know of in the sub-locations between the Magadi Road and Lood-ariak and beyond. These three vehicles, and various similar ‘goat-trucks’ destined for some of the many scattered sub-locations in the sparsely populated Rift, line up along the open-air market in a place referred to in Kiserian, as generally all over Kenya, as “the stage.” Here, 18-25 people and hundreds of pounds of goods are wedged into the truck’s bed. The cab holds three people, the driver and two others he usually chooses; the cab can also often be ‘reserved’ in advance. Packed into the vehicle this way, passengers then wait for anywhere from two to four hours to depart once the driver decides that the vehicle is maximally full. The last stop in Kiserian is usually for petrol at a single gas pump sprouted from the ground like a tree stump that stands about 30 feet from where *jua kali* welders

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<sup>17</sup> Mini-bus *matatus* do travel between Kiserian and Magadi town, but they are few and far between, always full, and they do not go off the tarmac. As its name suggests, the pick-up *matatu* is a small, single-cab pick-up truck, often a Toyota Tacoma, usually with metal-bar framing over the bed for tying down loads, passenger hand-holds, and a place to attach a plastic or canvas cover in the rainy season. Unlike minivan *matatus*, pick-up *matatus* are also useful for hauling livestock, like goats and sheep, along with humans. Because of this, and the fact that, in my estimation, once people board the pick-up *matatus* we lose the power of choice and discretion and become more like live goods (livestock) than ‘passengers,’ I called ‘my’ *matatu* “the goat truck.” Overloaded pick-ups are also illegal, but dangerously overloaded vehicles pass daily through a police check-point going south out of Kiserian where the road forks and one path leads to Madagi Town and the other towards Isinya and Kajiado Town. The policeman comes to the driver’s window and says something like “this vehicle is overloaded,” and the driver (ole Parsoi in my case) says something like, “yes, but how are these people supposed to get to and from the market? We have no otherwise.” The policeman nods, they shake hands, and the money is passed from the driver to the policeman.

rework metal with blue flame.<sup>18</sup> After fueling, these passengers then travel in this manner about 35 kilometers over the next 90 minutes to three hours, depending on the loads and the stops.<sup>19</sup>

On one trip the vehicle was particularly overloaded and the young man who worked with the driver to collect fares and pack the vehicle traveled by standing on the rear fender and holding on with one hand to the rail. I was standing as well, near the rear of the truck bed sort of pinned between branchless trees much longer than the truck, like slender telephone poles, that were strapped across the rest of the piled goods. Betraying my own misgivings, I asked him if he ever felt afraid; what if the vehicle crashed, I asked? He laughed: “Hey! We can die in our sleep! This is the work!”<sup>20</sup>

South of Kiserian, the geography changes dramatically and abruptly as the road rounds the crest of the escarpment and descends into the Rift; the view is breathtaking. The road itself, however, will take your breath away for reasons other than its beauty. Like most roads in Kenya,

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<sup>18</sup> “*Jua kali*” in Swahili literally means “hot sun.” This phrase is used to refer to labors who work with wood or metal, typically performed outdoors—like welding, carpentry, carving—that is physically difficult, can be casual, considered an integral part of the informal economy. There is an artisanal element to *jua kali*, as in people who transform discarded tractor blades into hoes and shovels and also women’s artisanal cooperatives even when wood or metal are not involved. Every open-air tourist market is full of *jua kali*. By comparison, a farmer is not in the *jua kali* sector even though s/he works physically hard under the hot sun. See for example: [http://www.practicalaction.org/?id=manufacturing\\_peoplestories](http://www.practicalaction.org/?id=manufacturing_peoplestories). The phrase has a history and is not without contention. See Kenneth King (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Once we carried 4 bags of cement in addition to the 18-25 people and other goods. At every incline in the rock/hardpack road everyone had to get out of the vehicle and walk up the hill beside it, and the climb back in again at the top. Transversing the approximately 35 kilometers (21 miles) on that trip took us over 3 hours.

<sup>20</sup> I am sorry to report that as I write this dissertation, I have learned that on December 1, 2008, Agnes Kilusu, wife of David and owner of the compound I lived in while in Lood-ariak, was involved in a fatal pick-up *matatu* accident on the Magadi Road just south of Kiserian when the brakes failed, the driver lost control, and the vehicle crashed. She astonishingly and thankfully only sustained minor injuries, but her sister-in-law, one of the mothers I interviewed, was killed, as were two other men, one of whom was seated directly beside Agnes. This accident did not involve ole Parsoi or his vehicle, but another driver and another truck.

the Magadi Road is in dangerous disrepair; the edges perceptively crumble inward making the actual space of pavement too narrow at points for two vehicles to pass without one going off the road. Large pot holes from wear and weather pock the road, forcing drivers to swerve, ricocheting the vehicle from one side to the other. The turn-off for Lood-ariak and other sub-locations is at the bottom of a series of dramatic descents into the valley. For approximately 25 kilometers then, from the tarmac to the Lood-ariak Primary School (and then another 6 or 7 kilometers on the 'road' to John's place), the route is called '*murram*,' the Swahili word for hardpack and rock roadway. In fact, much of the *murram* road follows dry rocky-bottomed streambeds that are impassable in the rainy season. On this section of the journey, the goat truck may or may not pass another vehicle for an hour or more as the driver stops at predictable junction points to drop passengers and goods.

The trip from Runda to Lood-ariak, traveling approximately 90 kilometers (55 miles) in at least five vehicles, over two distinct road types (tarmac and *murram*), beginning with 2 people in one vehicle and ending with 18-25 people in one vehicle, descending approximately 1700 meters in elevation from the highlands, down the escarpment, to the floor of the Rift Valley, would take 6-8 hours, depending on the stops and the load, one way [see Figure 5].

Arriving at either end meant being exhausted and covered in road dust. Employees in my friend's safari tours office used to laugh with me when I arrived from *mashambani* covered in various goat bodily fluids and road dirt and with my hair whipped into a frenzy barely tamed by a ponytail. I did not live in Kenya long enough to perfect the grace with which local people negotiate the exigencies of public transportation and keep their composure and comportment intact in the process. Professional people like schoolteachers and office workers travel these routes prepared. Women wrap their skirts and hair in old *shukas* (cotton sheets); men roll up their pant legs to their knees. Everyone carries a change of shoes.

## The Runda to Look-ariak Continuum

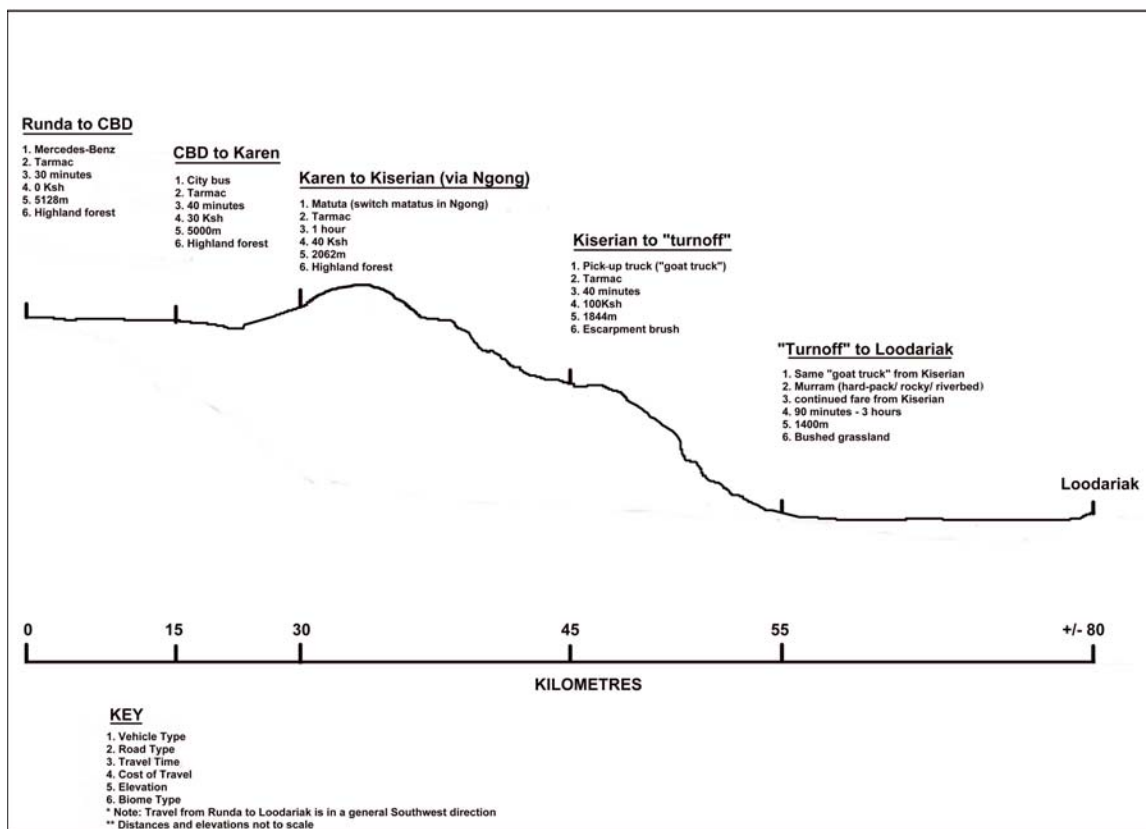


FIGURE 5

Figure 5. Illustration of the Runda to Lood-ariak Continuum.

The conversations I had with young people about school and future aspirations were also markedly different along this continuum. I spent most of my time down in the Rift with Maasai schoolgirls, the majority of whom slept in *enkagiti* in large *enkangs* and studied at night—if at all—by paraffin lamp or candlelight, collected firewood in the foot hills, fetched water from distant taps, cooked for their families, washed clothes by hand in plastic basins and hung them to dry on barbed wire fences and thorn trees, cared for their siblings, helped their mothers bead jewelry, looked after goats on the weekends, attended the African Inland Mission or the Cornerstone Pentecostal Churches, and worried about earning poor marks, being ‘married off,’ or not raising



the funds to attend secondary school.<sup>21</sup> Nearly all the girls in the study came from homes in which no adults went to school and most do not work in the cash economy; most of their fathers are polygamists; nearly 100% of the girls we interviewed are circumcised or will be soon.

These circumstances reflect ways of being and doing that have largely characterized Maasai for as long as outsiders have been looking in, with the exception of their fears of being married “too early” and therefore not progressing on to secondary school.<sup>22</sup> With respect to their future marriages, schooling prospects, and employment options, Maasai girls are caught in the interstices of change coming from ever-mounting challenges to pastoral livelihoods. As drought conditions meet rising food costs, shrinking pasturage, and an overall increased cost of living, resiliency to recurring shocks has been severely undermined (KFFSG Assessment; Kratli and Dyer 2006).<sup>23</sup> If these girls make it to, and then through, secondary school, they face a 40% unemployment rate and

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<sup>21</sup> *Enkang*, is the *Maa* word for a multi-family homestead and livestock corral (also locally referred to as a *boma*, Swahili). In *Maa*, an *enkangiti* is a traditional Maasai house made by women by forming an igloo-shaped frame with slender branches of local trees and plastering the walls and roof with cow dung mixed with water. Some girls lived in “modified traditional houses” which have the same floor plan and stick and dung-plaster walls, but have higher roofs made of corrugated sheet metals and more windows. Still other lived in “*mbati* houses” which are structures framed with timber and covered with corrugated metal sheeting and poured concrete floors. That I know of, none of the girls in the study lived in what are referred to as “permanent houses.” These houses are built of stone cut into large bricks the size of cinder blocks and plastered together with cement; these houses also have pitched clay-shingled roofs and metal and glass windows.

<sup>22</sup> To the contrary, Hodgson (2001a) has recorded stories of elderly Maasai women in Tanzania who recall circumcision and marriage with excitement and delight. I interviewed one elderly woman, Koko Margaret, and she likewise spoke fondly of her youth. She remains in favor of female circumcision, but she spoke sharply against ‘early marriage’ for today’s Maasai girls. Instead, she wanted to see them in school. Talle’s (1988) extensive study of gender dynamics among Maasai near Kajiado Town in the late 1970s documents young women who did not accept their arranged marriages.

<sup>23</sup> In a conversation with Ole Kilusu in November 2009, almost two years after the research in Kenya, he indicated that a bag of sugar now costs 100 Ksh, up 50% from the 50-54 Ksh I would have spent in the spring of 2008, while dying cattle have significantly decreased market value (from 15-20,000 Ksh to 7000 for a steer).

an uncertain future with respect to the power sharing arrangements in process for restructuring Kenya's political infrastructure and rebuilding its economy in the wake of postelection violence in 2008 and the global downturn we are all experiencing right now in 2009. Even before these most recent events, the upturn in Kenya's economic possibilities was never distributed equally or widely among Kenyans, and after decades of structural marginalization, the average educated Maasai schoolgirl has had little to secure her entry into the modern urban employment sector.

In Nairobi my conversations revealed a different kind of 'betwixt and between' scenario for the urban elite. When I was in town at least once per month or more, I got to know the Otienos' two girls and had a lot of time to talk with them about schooling and their futures. Whereas I did not spend much time at all observing Maasai schoolgirls at home, I lived with Leah and Mercy. I watched them work on homework (which usually required internet research to complete), practice for piano and violin recitals, complain that they wanted Coco Puffs and other American fare from the UN Commissary, and watch Hannah Montana or "High School Musical" 24-hour marathons on DSTv on their holidays.

I did not anticipate this saturation of American mass media in these girls' lives. Not only did they watch television incessantly, particularly on their holidays but not so much on school nights, they read books voraciously. I watched them read impressive volumes of mostly British and American classic and popular literature; books are everywhere in the Otieno house and often dinner conversation was silenced by four people—me, Leah, Mercy, and Wairimu—deep into another novel.<sup>24</sup> The girls, like girls all over the industrial global north, are "in love" with Edward from the *Twilight* series. While I was there, the Otienos had arranged for high speed internet at

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<sup>24</sup> I gave Leah a copy of Robert Corimer's *I Am the Cheese*, and she read it in one night then proceeded to go directly to the bookstore to find *The Chocolate War*. Conversely, I met literate Maasai carrying around three-year-old newspapers because they wanted something to read.

home, and when it was working properly, the girls moved back and forth between the large screen HD TV and the computer.

At Christmas, we attended pageants at both Mercy's private primary school and Leah's private high school. Both schools are part of what they call the British system (Leah's school is one of 5 high schools with this distinction in the country) which is to say, they are private; they are not run by the Kenyan government, and they do not follow the Kenyan curriculum. Primarily expatriate children and wealthy white, black, and Indian Kenyan students populate these schools. I observed, for example, a conversation over dinner one night in which Leah presented her reasons for why she should be allowed to travel with her class on their annual trip—a surfing safari in South Africa for two weeks. I never heard the exact fee, but I suspect it was around \$2-3,000 per child. In the end, she was not allowed to join the trip.

In the Land Cruiser one day, I listened as Leah explained her frustrations that her rich friends were guaranteed college acceptances because their parents could afford to pay any tuition (in or out of Kenya) and thus, unlike her, they did not have to earn excellent marks in order to compete for scholarships to offset costs.<sup>25</sup> When I pointed out that millions of Kenyans her age do not even *attend* high school because they cannot afford to pay the comparatively nominal high school fees for average and below average Kenyan schools, and that many, especially girls her age, would be forced to marry instead of applying for scholarships to study in the United States or Europe, she looked at me like any American teenager might, as if she couldn't understand what else one might be doing if one were not 'forced' to endure high school. Leah and Mercy will also face a 40%

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<sup>25</sup> Because the girls went to private schools at a distance from Runda, they had to be dropped off in the morning and picked up again in the afternoon. Oscar usually sent a staff person—the town driver, or errand driver—to pick up Mercy, and I often caught a ride back to Runda with them instead of taking the *matatu*. This day Leah was with us as well, although her mother usually picked her up on her way home from her office in the UN downtown.

unemployment rate when they graduate from high school, but unlike the girls in the Rift who have absolutely nothing to guarantee smooth passage through secondary school much less college or a university, the Otieno girls will assuredly attend a university in Kenya if they choose, but more than likely they will travel to the United States or Europe. Although they are both a bit ambivalent on this point, both seem to believe that they will live and work outside of Kenya once they finish their undergraduate degrees, and/or, they will pursue advanced degrees abroad and continue to live abroad. They are not limited, as their rural Maasai cohort is, to aspiring to the modern urban sector in Kenya; in a real sense, the global marketplace for high-end jobs is potentially open to them.<sup>26</sup> Leah is a math wiz and contemplating physics, although she thinks she wants to design high performance vehicles. Mercy is eleven and has not yet imagined her future as clearly yet, although she has toyed with the idea of becoming a novelist or a veterinarian.

These brief stories about my observations of life in one Nairobi family are just that—brief, circumscribed, and singular. I am not telling you about how Leah’s parents struggled and sacrificed to provide an elite and culturally transnational life for their children.<sup>27</sup> But what I can say is that as members of Kenya’s largest and most influential ethnic groups, Kikuyu and Luo, Leah’s parents come from communities that “might be poor, but are always well educated.”<sup>28</sup> Both Wairimu and Oscar graduated from the prestigious Alliance High Schools (one for boys, and one for girls), and

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<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this may be unusual in many American contexts in which high school graduates have little to suggest to them that the global workplace is theirs for the choosing. Perhaps because both Wairimu and Oscar have themselves lived abroad (Wairimu studied in the Netherlands and Oscar worked and studied in Japan) and, like many upper class/elite Kenyans, they have several family members in the global Diaspora, it is almost ‘common sense’ that Leah and Mercy would seek (and find) opportunities outside of Kenya for both higher education and employment.

<sup>27</sup> Or about their disappointment and dismay that neither daughter can communicate with either grandmother, as the grandmothers do not speak English and the granddaughters do not speak *Gikuyu* or *Dholuo*, or Swahili for that matter.

<sup>28</sup> Comments I heard from more than one Luo.

from Kenyatta University.<sup>29</sup> Wairimu has a master's degree in finance from a European university. Oscar is fluent in Japanese and has carved out a niche market in logistical support for Japanese filming in Kenya as well as conventional tourism. In reference to Holmquist et al.'s (1994) structural schema, the Otienos are part of the emergent wealthy, firmly grounded in the modern urban employment sector—Wairimu as an employee and Oscar as a entrepreneur—and they arrived where they are by virtue of educational achievement, hard work and entrepreneurial grit, international connections, and membership in dominant ethnicities.

As the following chapters will show, this legacy of access to and acceptance of formal education and its modernizing influences has not been readily available, explicitly institutionalized, or commonly internalized in rural Maasai communities for a variety of historical and structural reasons. The schoolgirls interviewed for this study dream of living like Leah and Mercy live. When I played the devil's advocate with one Maasai elder and pointed out that surely given the large numbers of Kikuyu and Luo people in Kenya and the high poverty rates generally, many must be poor, and many must not be educated. He said, confidently, "Yes, it is true that some are poor and not educated. But in the case of these communities, it has been by choice or laziness. For Maasai, we have not been given that choice."

The Maasai pastoralist economy has been firmly lodged within the center of development of a capitalism and state-centric policy in Kenya since the British needed to finance the Uganda Railroad in the late 1800s and chose to recruit settlers from Europe and South Africa to originate and organize large-scale export agriculture as the backbone of the colonial economy (Hughes 2007;

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<sup>29</sup> Wairimu told me stories about when she was a boarding student in primary and secondary schools (she lived away from home, in school, from the ages of 9 to 19), her mother felt that one pair of underwear per term was adequate, so Wairimu washed these everyday; eventually, the elastic would fail and over the course of the day they would slip down and end up at her knees. She told me this as we folded the girls' clean laundry—pairs and pairs of multi-colored flower-patterned underwear to choose from.

Holmquist et al. 1994; Lonsdale and Berman 1979). This move inaugurated an enduring “pattern of an ethnically defined large-holder export sector dependant upon state nurture and protection” to the exclusion (and detriment) of most Africans, all pastoralists, and Maasai in particular (Holmquist et al. 1994, 72; Lonsdale and Berman 1979). The state ideology that emerged, “a mix of tutelage, paternalism and centuries of European racist motifs, said that Africans where inherently communal and could not, and should not, be at the forefront of capitalist accumulation” (Holmquist et al. 1994, 72). Nonetheless, some Africans were better positioned from the beginning to articulate, albeit to a considerably less powerful degree than the settlers, and these individual men and their networks would be the inheritors of the new state at independence. The unarticulated, marginally articulated and disarticulated remain flailing in today’s Kenya, a pseudo-meritocracy, a fantasy democracy, a vampire state.<sup>30</sup>

It is here that the modern sense of ethnicity enters the complex Kenyan historiography and narrative of political economy. ‘Ethnicities’ were vying for resources prior to the European invasion of the geographic spaces that became the East African Protectorate, then the Colony of Kenya, and then the Republic of Kenya. But as many scholars argue (Holmquist et al. 1994; Hodgson 2001a; Lonsdale and Berman 1992; Buchmann 1999) the solidification of the colonial and postcolonial state—as a modern institution—in Kenya has been, from the start, tightly tied with ethnic identity. The state’s interests have been capitalist, and from the very first formation of the settler class the state has stepped in to distort markets in favor of the ethnic cohort at the growing-edge of the modern large-holder export sector. Pastoralists, perceived as perhaps the most ‘irrational’ Africans with respect to their modes of production, perceived

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<sup>30</sup> I use the phrase “vampire state” with reference to Parseleo Kantai’s characterization (2007).

conservatism/'otherness', resistance to change, and small population were seen as the very least likely to be a part of the cutting economic development edge.

The Maasai reserve, and the subsequent area often referred to as "Maasailand" today, was formed, framed, and codified in the crucible of emerging capitalist relations of early colonialism. At the heart of these machinations—the loss of land/territory—has been emblematic of the contradictions of Maasai marginalization and development (Hodgson 2001a). It is against this historiography of development from the colonial past through the postcolonial present that the Maasai schoolgirls form their understandings about who they are and who they can be in the future.

#### *B. The Research Questions*

My objectives for this research and the questions I pose are situated in the nested political economies of place and personhood that I have outlined thus far. The study explores the textured variation of identities within the single social category, "schoolgirl," in an effort to uncover the on-the-ground meanings of development imperatives focused on recruiting girls to school, keeping girls in school, and supporting their achievement. On a theoretical level, the study is an attempt to access and witness the ways in which social categories are "fluid sites for meaning making" (Fine and Wise 2005, 67) and to explore the dimensions of these identities that evidence gender (Butler 1988; Oyewumi 1997, 2005). Thus, this research focuses on identity formation(s) among Maasai adolescent girls aged 12-20, enrolled in primary school at the time of the interviews, in relation to education-as-development imperatives articulated by local, national, and international development institutions. The purpose of the research is an attempt to capture the complex interrelations between formal schooling, multi-scalar development imperatives, and individual everyday life worlds within the changing economic and social context of postcolonial Kenya in the age of globalization.

To study the complex and contradictory transnational process of education from the perspective of schoolgirls in rural Maasailand, Kenya, I initially formulated one primary research question and three supporting questions:

How do Maasai schoolgirls, young women both in and dropped-out of school, talk about their experiences in formal schooling, and how can the meanings the girls themselves make of their experience be located in and by the development contexts in which they live?

- a. How do teacher and parental narratives of schooling influence the meanings girls' make of their experiences?
- b. How does the culturally mediated biosocial process of adolescence, or coming of age, influence girls' understandings of themselves?
- c. How does the education-as-development imperative as articulated by local, national, and international arbiters of development programming influence girls' experiences in, and understandings of, formal schooling?

Once in Kenya, the primary framing question was amended when it became clear that I would be able to interview very few "drop-outs." The focus was shifted, and with that time and resources, to a singular focus on girls enrolled in school at the time of the interviews.

The three subordinate questions were originally designed to further specify and deepen my findings by locating the schoolgirl participant's individual biographies and life experiences within the coordinated matrix of the primary adults in their lives, their own changing bodies and attendant social categories, and beyond these, the larger social actors and processes at play in the configuration of their life worlds. In this way, the subordinating questions help to purposefully position the ethnography at the "nexus" of structural forces and individual agencies (Fine and Weis 2005, 68). Of these questions, the focus on 'coming of age' remains, but the notion of "adolescence" as a mediated biosocial process was overshadowed by more explicit discussions of female circumcision and the social processes this bio-body-focused procedure/rite ignites for Maasai schoolgirls. As discussed more fully in the next chapter, parental narratives were difficult to collect, and therefore, I end up making very few connections between what the girls say and the



meanings they make to those of their parents. Similarly, although I did conduct teacher interviews and thus have some insight on teachers' discourses of education and development, this data has not found an explicit place in the analysis of the findings. These threads of inquiry are reserved for future research that will more fully elaborate the connections between shifting identities, gendered social changes, and the education-as-development imperatives that frame contemporary Maasai life. The findings for this dissertation, discussed primarily in chapter 5, are largely focused on what the girls themselves said and how I understand their discourses to be embedded in the contexts that frame their experiences.

The goals for this research, then, are to illuminate a set of stories about the lived experience of development that are either absent from the discourse or used as side bar anecdotes peppered through more technical reports in order to *support data* on education and development. Instead, I have positioned the schoolgirls' subjective perceptions of education and daily life in the development zone *as data*. With this overarching intention, I have pulled together a myriad of narrative threads about the 'school experience' in rural postcolonial Kenya in order to add more dimensions to the larger, and rather flat, discourse on girls' education in rural Africa. By focusing on African schoolgirls as creators of knowledge around their own experiences and highlighting that experience, this study's findings contribute to at least two broad literatures: 1) the critical feminist theoretical literatures that are concerned with the construction of gendered subjects in late capitalism and 2) critical development literatures (both conceptual and practical) that are concerned with the contradictory processes of development and their gendered, and gendering, impacts. My ultimate goal is to expand the working knowledge of gender in development contexts so that we might more squarely face the matrix of complexity of life in the development zone and thus, perhaps, craft more reasonable, just, and gender-centered interventions aimed at transformative and positive change for all, not just girls.

There are limitations to this approach. The empirical literature on girls' education is largely quantitative; therefore, foregrounding girls' voices through their own stories and insights about their experience marks my approach as a departure from the conventional research model predicated on demographic surveys and causal analysis. Yet, my approach threatens to undermine its own radical and liberatory intentions by once again rendering African experiences "as data" to be systematically analyzed by a western researcher and transformed into "findings." Indeed, I have already made use of this technocratic discourse in this dissertation so far. As a feminist researcher, I recognize the ethical problems inherent in conducting research, itself a productive, powerful/power-laden, privileged enterprise, particularly when conducted in indigenous communities outside of the researcher's own racial, cultural socio-economic and geopolitical home: "In reality, many of us straddle a number of political locations by virtue of our social and intellectual ties with particular constituencies," yet "who says what still matters" (Okeke 1997). The problem of appropriating marginalized voices has more to do with "ethics and politics" than with "epistemology" (Haraway, qtd. in Okeke 1997). The process of research in Africa as elsewhere in the development zone, I would argue, is itself a function of the contradictions that configure the development zone. Back to the earliest explorer or colonial agent with an eye for "the anthropological" to the contemporary Peace Corps volunteer listening to an ipod and making notes in a journal, the development zone is made and remade in the moment and by the moment. Things are never still.

Gayatri Spivak (1988) has argued, with reference to the relevance of Derridian deconstructive analysis for people's experiences outside of the First World, that "[Derrida] is less dangerous when understood than [is] the first world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves" (87). I have not conducted Derridian deconstructive analysis in this study. But I have, nonetheless brought my own theoretical interests

and background to bear on some one else's experience. The disguised "absent nonrepresenter" is one who, by virtue of her disguise, is dangerous because she has relinquished responsibility for her representations. For Spivak and other postcolonial observers, among the dangers of this position is solipsism. Not becoming the nonrepresenter has been a goal of this research that has not been met. While I hope my discussion of methodology and the self-referential tone will make my own ambivalence clear, I have also sought to obscure this ambivalence with confident prose. Yet, there are moments here when I also own my obvious and explicit role as 'representer' and strive to balance this political fact against the real threat that power imbalances inherent in the notion of the research project itself will "undermine the emergence of indigenous voices" (Okeke 1997). As I see it, the "crisis of representation" (Denizen & Lincoln 2000) is one of the many ethical burdens immanent to research in a thoroughly asymmetrical world.

## **II. Conceptual Issues: theorizing modernity, development, gender, and education**

Several literatures inform my unravelings of the narratives I collected in Kenya, among those discussed here are: western feminist theory, African gender theory, critical development theory, and critical ethnographies of education in east Africa. The conceptual context for this study is therefore framed by the elaborate and often coordinated forms that development, modernity, gender, and education take in the everyday lives of schoolgirls. It is precisely the complicated and nested nature of these elements of Maasai schoolgirls' lives that make untangling any one strand difficult to do. For example, although African gender theorists' insights are rarely present in feminist development discourse (and absolutely absent from mainstream development discourse and most western feminist literatures), adding African gender theory to the entanglement significantly complicates the literature on women and development and girls and education. Critical theories of development question the efficacy of the development project itself, and therefore

provide a fertile background for an exploration of education as a process intent on producing the ‘modern subjects’ of development. Narrating the “process of education” (Malhotra et al. 2003) from the perspectives of the “target population” is a way of disrupting over simplistic slogans like “girl power” that will have limited efficacy for those very girls unless the larger and deeper structural inequities that maintain them are also addressed.

Additionally, during the research for this project, and then later, after I returned from Kenya and started to plow through the data I collected, the idea of ‘the modern’ or ‘being modern’ emerged time and again. How has ‘the modern’ been tied to the prevailing discourse and practice of development? In recent years, how has a focus on girls within the context of gender and development further specified and complicated our understandings of gender? If we understand education to be a transnational process rather than a neutrally created, impartially delivered, and equitably accessed and obtained public good, what then do we make of the education-as-development imperative and the bright spotlight this discourse has cast on the “girl-child” as a target for intervention? As Stambach (2000), notes, perspectives which assume “schools themselves are the main engines of social change” may fail to consider the ways in which “people collectively invest schools with the cultural capacity to change social relations” (10). How then are collectivities arranged in and by structures, such as the development regime, and how do people within them resist and remake the subjects they have been positioned for?

The study of development as a body of discourse and practice has been characterized as the study of the history of relations between the West and the ‘other,’ or, most pointedly, as an “anthropology of modernity” (Escobar 1995; Rist 1997). The concept of ‘the modern’ is elemental to this study of identity-formation among Maasai schoolgirls because it relies on contradictions to help us understand the complexities of protracted social change (Felski 2005). This dynamism and

dialectic is nowhere more salient than in an examination of contemporary African social relations characterized in/by the development zone (Macamo 2005; Weiss 2004). Development, in this sense, is both a process and a product of modernity. My study is situated within a critique of development that objects to an over-reliance on a singular and reductive version of modernity inherited from European enlightenment and translated in to the Euro-American development regime. Concomitantly and somewhat conversely, my analysis here attempts to complicate conventional notions of modernity in order to put it to use in explaining or illuminating the contradictions that the participants in this study express.

#### *A. Develop(ing) modernities*

According to the conventional taxonomy that neatly divides human experience between the premodern and the modern, everyday African realities are often assumed be largely relegated to the pre- or non-modern world, with the nominal exception of certain urban spaces (Zack-Williams 2004). One of the goals of contemporary development practice in Africa has always been to transform African cultures, societies, and political economies in ways that help them ‘catch up’ with the modern, or developed, world, best evidenced by the European and North American industrial democracies. As chapters 3 and 4 illustrate, even prior to contemporary development interventions, colonial programs to sedentarize nomads, compel pastoralists to farm, and ‘teach’ Maasai men how to be taxpayers and household heads and Maasai women to wash clothes and bath children were deeply enmeshed with Euro-American notions of civilized development.

Why are humanity’s relative relations to the modern so integral to our notions of development, progress, and power? Notions of modernity and development were honed in the same crucible and can be traced back to Aristotle (Rist 1997). The western “belief” in the inherited

and deeply sedimented notion of development/growth as the linear and progressively infinite collection of knowledge built on precedence, and the accumulation of material “opulence,” has become a “global faith” and an operational norm (Rist 1997). Contemporary Euro-American development processes are linked specifically to American post-World War II foreign policy, the exigencies of the Marshall Plan and the rebuilding of Europe, the fall of colonialism, and the emergence of the Cold War, but as a phenomena of its time, development remains faithful to the modern spirit that predated and undergirds these world historical moments.

Scholars of African modernity argue that European contact through the slave trade and colonialism marked the beginning of Africa’s engagement with modernity, and that the imperial penetration of the continent inaugurated the historical continuum that culminates in globalization today (Macamo 2005). Accordingly, colonialism “forced” Africa into “European historicity” and it became the “terms under which modernity was brought” to the continent (Macamo 2005, 8). As chapter 5 suggests, many of the same social, cultural and economic imperatives that framed the engagement between Europeans and Africans was always and already fraught with the contradictions that exist in variations today. Macamo argues, from Wittrock’s evocative “promissory notes” metaphor, that “since the onset of colonialism, African social experience has been structured by the ambivalence of promise and denial that is constitutive of colonialism” (8). Colonialism brought the “immanence of modernity” to Africa in the form of promissory notes, but like all agreements of its kind, the terms are set by the giver/lender. As much as it was a project of economic domination based, primarily, on the wholesale expropriation and extraction of resources, it was also a revolution staged against perceived ‘traditional ways’ that invariably thwarted the march of progress characterizing the modern ideal. A concept of “for their own good” was forged in the dangerous crucible of material power, philosophical dogma, and the capacity to produce new subjects through the internalization of the modern regime. Europeans promised a certain set of

social goods, like formal schooling, premised on their inherent modern-ness while justifying their exploitation of Africans in the name of the civilizing mission.

While I do not disagree that colonial penetration formalized Africa's incorporation into the capitalist world system and in this way inaugurated modern relations between Africans and the rest of the world (and themselves), this double register of modernity is more deeply fraught than a uni-directional imposition of European interests on/over African realities (Shadle 2006). Rather, as chapters 1 and 2 suggest, modernity was formed, in part, within the confluence of interests between some Africans and some Europeans,<sup>31</sup> within the oppositional social forces that were produced in the encounter, and outside of European colonial relations altogether (Hodgson 2001b). Hodgson (2001b) makes a distinction between Modernity with a capital M that designates "the hegemonic form" "premised on Western Enlightenment thought" and modernities in the plural with a lower case m to designate "other ideas of 'being modern' that are not necessarily produced by or even reactive to Modernity" (2). Modernity, with a capital M, is a totalizing and "teleological agenda for material and social improvements" that found precedence in "interventions into social and economic life in Europe and North America, especially the capitalist system of economic production" (Hodgson 2001b, 3). "The experience of modernity may be simultaneously seductive and threatening, freeing and restraining, creative and stultifying," and it has been a "deeply ambivalent and contradictory process" (Hodgson 2001b, 1-2). For the purposes of this study, the modern agenda, which has been variously articulated, is best instantiated by the policies and practices of social change that are called "development." Development, as the set of political, economic, and social programs for change generated in the west post-World War II and the much earlier policies that were not necessarily referred to as "development" but nonetheless mandated

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<sup>31</sup> And also between some Africans and some Arabs and some Asians.

social change for some groups in reference to the precedence of others, has always been a remedial civilizational pedagogy grounded in the grammars of modernity and the mechanics of modernization.<sup>32</sup>

Theorists who challenge the norms of this conventional development discourse and practice have largely located their skepticism in critiques of the modernization paradigm, first theorized and operationalized over 50 years ago but still salient today, and the notion of the inevitable and desirable growth of the capitalist system according to free market principles (Escobar 1995; Kabeer 1994; Mies 1987, 1994; Leys 1996; Luke 1990; Rist 1997; Scott 1998). Implicit in this critique is the expectation of the imposition of ‘western ways’ attached to modernity’s benefits: “The fact that most women [and men] in many parts of the Third World want modernization must be taken seriously, yet the meaning of this modernization must not be taken for granted. Often it means something quite different from what it means in the West and been constructed and reconstructed as part of the development encounter” (Escobar 1995, 189).

What is more, definitions of ‘the modern’ and ‘modernity’ in the context of the development literature are almost always descriptions of how the circumstances of economies, governing systems, and social worlds and individual lives will change or have changed with the onset of modern technical/technological ‘advances.’ But leaving out culture and cultural changes in an investigation of modernity or development misses the opportunity to consider the experience or understanding of any such change and “thus their reciprocal or reflexive impact” (Appadurai 2004; Hausman forthcoming 2010). ‘The modern’ is a “category of cultural consciousness” (Felski 1995) as well as a set of capacities and skills, and in this way, it is useful for considering the

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<sup>32</sup> This was the case even as the formal “modernization theory” was discredited by development professionals over the course of the 1970s.



formation of subjectivities within a self-consciously ‘modern’ regime like ‘development’ in the global south.

It is toward this method that I go to great lengths at the beginning of the chapter to describe the circumstances and the setting around our carjacking as a way of illustrating the deep and abiding disparities common in Kenya and to characterize what I am calling the “development zone.” The development zone is a complex social formation that is, above all, a modern phenomenon. It is geographical and spatial, political and economic, and temporal, but it is also analogical/metaphorical, psychological, and sociological. The development zone can encompass most of an entire continent--“Sub-Saharan Africa” for example—and it can characterize the 1000 square feet of a primary school classroom, a shantytown, and a subsistence garden carved between mansions.

As a shorthand, “the development zone” is also meant to capture the internal and unquantifiable—ideologies, attitudes, assumptions, expectations, aspirations and desires thought, felt, expressed and repressed by those human beings who reside in the literal spaces targeted for and by development and as targets themselves. If the development zone can refer to a schoolroom, it can also refer to a schoolgirl’s body, or her way of being, as well as her way of seeing. In this way, I use the phrase to indicate that development itself, as a manifestation of modernity, is a kind of spatiality—a zone that is occupied but that also occupies. In the zone of development, development (policies, practices, ideas, fantasies) is deployed, enacted, and put into practice. It is also received, internalized, experienced, performed, resisted, and remade.

As an analytical reference, the development zone is a strategy for capturing a particular way of being modern that is distinguished from other zones of contradiction or hybridity by the geopolitical, transnational role that the current western-derived and designed development regime

plays in producing daily realities for collectivities living outside of the west. As facet of modernity, the development zone is a way of pointing to the structural features of global capitalism that characterizes all aspects of life in the spaces and places within its orbit. Recursively, structures, like global capitalism, require agents who express, perpetuate, interrogate and challenge them; it is, after all, from within this dialectic that structural formations like capitalism exist. Thus, the development zone is always multi-scalar, historiographic, and dynamic. The development zone as an analytic must also make room for the pressure agents bring to bear on the resiliency and coherence of structures.

In this formulation, the carjacking incident provides compelling narrative fodder for teasing out the concepts of modernity and development that form the backdrop of this study. While the carjacking was chilling to experience and to recall, the scene was also confusing. I am certainly grateful that we were not hurt. Nonetheless, we were all left wondering about the nature of such a blundering and bewildering crime. “They didn’t even take the car,” we kept saying, trying to reconcile the idea of the crime with our experience of it. This confusion was only heightened by our trip to the police office to make a report. Not thirty minutes after we returned home, the police called to tell us they had some of our belongings and had apprehended a suspect. We returned to the station. The officer handed us Oscar’s empty wallet, and asked us if the young man in the putrid cell was among the carjackers. We said that he was not. And that was it. When it was all said and done, the feelings the experience engendered—confusion, incredulousness, relief, anger, sadness, guilt---did not match the feelings we might have expected to have, like terror, pain, rage, or righteousness.

Raymond Williams’ (1961) notion of “structure of feeling” is helpful in thinking about the multiple manifestations of modernity that shape the development zone as a material space that people occupy, but are also occupied by, as well as a non-material sensibility that is internalized,

disseminated, and sometimes resisted. For Williams, “structure of feeling” is a phrase intended to define “a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or a period.” In the sense that I am using the phrase, structure of feeling is a way of pointing to a spatial arrangement of time, geographic place, and interior space. Structure of feeling is used to suggest that what is like to experience the powerful social, political, cultural, and ideological architecture of a time and place and the “fleeting, inchoate experience” of that time and place is, itself, significant (DeKoven 2004, 19). I see “structure of feeling” as offering a way to talk about the inner and outer, the ideational and the material experiences of the social, political, cultural, and ideological—and to that list I will add economic—facets of life in the turn of the twenty-first century in Kenya Maasailand in which competing and conspiring claims from “tradition,” “history,” “independence,” “western culture,” “African culture,” and so on characterize the milieu of growing up and going to school today.

Although it is variously articulated and deployed, in this sense, trying to identify the structure of feeling is an attempt to call out the normalizing and the normative as processes and behaviors that are not natural even though they may feel like commonsense, as it has come to be understood by nearly everyone. It is in this way that we can flip the analytic on itself to speak of the *feeling of structures*.<sup>33</sup> What is the relationship between the structures we inhabit and the experience of that habitation? How do the interpretations we make of our experience push back against the norms that structure how we are to feel, behave? In other words, in what ways are agency and agents/subjects—individuals who populate collectivities—intertwined with, co-produced within, the structures that surround them? Assuming everyone everywhere feels structures, what makes the *structure of feeling* and the *feeling of structures* worth noting in/for the development zone?

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<sup>33</sup> This useful conceptual inversion was Dr. Timothy Luke’s idea; the credit is his.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, asking the girls when and how a girl becomes a woman today in Maasailand was tantamount to asking fish to talk about water. For each of us, the ‘facts’ of daily life are incredibly prosaic and plain even as they are incredibly difficult to describe and explain. These daily ‘facts’ are rarely inert; rather, it is precisely the ‘facts’ about who a girl is, who a woman is and so on that structure the experience of being female, and vice versa insofar as biological ‘facts’ are as assertive and productive as the more esoteric ‘constructions’ of femininity or masculinity. Sometimes the girls we gathered to for the interviews looked at us like we were crazy to ask such obvious and uninteresting questions! But then, not unexpectedly, they often struggled to plainly answer these very same questions.

To my mild surprise, more than one schoolgirl and a few women turned to me during our interviews and asked, sometimes pointedly, “*sasa*, when does a girl become a woman in *your* culture?”<sup>34</sup> Most everyone we asked about the transition from girlhood to womanhood, as a way of asking how gendered subjects are made, struggled to answer without getting caught in circles of logic. Similarly, when I tried to answer the question when it was posed to me, I struggled to first identify the “culture” I could speak from—was this American culture writ large, or something like “white culture” or “middle class culture” or “southwest Virginian culture”? What is my ‘culture’ anyway, I wondered? Indeed, the possibilities seemed too numerous to settle on any one frame of reference. Beyond that, I had difficulty explaining that there is not really any certain agreed upon ‘rite of passage’ analogous to *e-murata*<sup>35</sup> that has generally meant to signal a threshold into adulthood, although maybe there used to be. I tried to explain that while the onset of menses does signal a significant change in a girl’s body, no one actually considers a menstruating twelve year old

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<sup>34</sup> *Sasa* means “now” in Swahili and is often peppered in English sentences.

<sup>35</sup> Translated as “circumcision” for both boys and girls but for girls it most accurately denotes “clitoridectomy” and sometimes “excision.”

(or seventeen year old for that matter) to be a “woman,” not anymore anyway. I strained to recall when I personally thought of myself as a woman and not a girl. Oddly enough the exercise prompted me to remember that I actually asked my roommate our sophomore year of college if she thought of herself as a woman, and she said no, but she added that she did think of her boyfriend, who was our same age, as a man.

One of the first people to turn this question back to me was my assistant’s aunt, Judith. I recall distinctly the look on her face as I struggled to answer, qualifying this definitive statement with another, until ultimately my non-answer had everyone confused. She watched me struggle with a sense of recognition. In this look I saw what I assumed I would not see: a shared experience of the ‘modern’ identity ‘crisis.’ In earlier trips to Kenya and Maasailand, everyday conversations about everyday things had left me with the impression that among Maaai there are generally agreed upon social categories that are, and have been, relatively stable and coherent. From these previous experiences, I expected rural Maasai people—as members of a “traditional” culture—to have very definitive and localized understanding of women’s and men’s identities and roles today as in the past. I expected a fixed and timeless discursive regime; what I found, as some scholarly analysis would predict but daily discourse often belies, was a very familiar struggle to pin down identities in quick-time production.

My sense is that “Maasai hegemonic thinking” has, as hegemonic thinking of any stripe will, primarily determined reality for most Maasai (Talle 2007), and it is the ideas framed by this thinking—that a girl becomes a woman when she is circumcised, for example—are the first best answers nearly all the girls in the study reached for to express themselves when questioned. Yet, this hegemonic thinking has changed and is changing through the process of history, including engagement with development policies. ‘New’ hegemonic paradigms are on the scene, some of which have already mixed with customary ways (even as customary ways themselves have always

been more mutable than daily discourse will concede) and thus hosts of worldviews compete for primacy.

According to Williams (1961), the structure of feeling of any time and place cannot be “learned” but it can be taught. This invisible or stealth capacity to impose the feeling of structures is the “real power of institutions.” Maasai institutions have always been embattled, as chapters 1 and 2 will elaborate. Among a menu of current and past development imperatives challenging these institutions, formal schooling has direct immediacy for young girls. For many, attending school marks their first encounter with other ways of thinking, seeing, knowing, and doing. As an institution, school introduces children to ‘new’ scaffoldings within the complex architecture of the development zone. Curricula discursively inculcate sensibilities among pupils that sometimes stand in stark contrast to the knowledge generated in the *enkang*, the cattle dip, and the pasture and extended into the cultural knowledge bank at large. The converse is also true. Schools, in this sense, are increasingly enduring repositories of ‘new’ knowledge that open some doors and close others. For example, the gender narratives that schoolgirls inhabit at home also apply at school, which is in part why some teachers feel they are fighting a losing battle as they encourage girls to stay in school despite the pressures on them to drop-out and the incentives attached to ‘traditional’ benchmarks like *e-murata*, or as families see clearly that employment for sons is scarce and reckon that marriage offers themselves and their daughters leverage in an insecure world.

At the same time, home narratives are also challenged, considered, and sometimes rearticulated through schooling narratives, as many of the girls in this study make clear when they insist that *e-murata* is “meaningless” or that one has “nothing” to learn at home. In some cases, school knowledge is reinscribed by home knowledge, like in the case of hygiene, a school knowledge prized by many of the girls in our study. Instead of rejecting “traditional attire”—these days a belted cotton *shuka*/skirt combination for women—schoolgirls modify traditional dress

according to standards considered appropriate and desirable when these garments are kept ‘clean’ and ‘modest’ by standards outlined in textbooks and in Sunday schools.’<sup>36</sup>

It is precisely these deeply political structural and constructed processes of education, development and gendered subject-formation that I set out to explore in this project. Instead of providing greater information about gender inequalities in schooling, which is to say sex-based disparities in education policy and provision, my intention has been to look at the local, national, international and transnational influences and interests that produce, reproduce, maintain and normalize the gendered ideologies, discourses, policies and practices that structure inequity (Bloch et al. 1998; Brock-Utne 2000; Escobar 1995; Mblinyi 1998; Steady 2004). Schools, and through them, discourses of education, are the vector I have chosen to analyze what it is like to live as a target of development. Education is a transnational process (Stambach 2000), particularly in the development zone where ‘catching up’ with the core is imperative, and is thus a primary means by which individuals and collectivities are configured in a globalizing world. Not only is education “constituted by and constitutive of struggles over the distribution of symbolic and material resources,” but it “implies and confers structural and ideological power used to control the means

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<sup>36</sup> Photos from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century show Maasai women dressing very similarly to how they dress today, with some important differences that reflect social and as well as economic changes in Maasai lifeways. The old photographs show women wearing dresses constructed by tying a sheet of leather at one shoulder and wrapping another sheet of leather around the waist as a skirt. Young girls in the photos have a leather skirt but are topless except for the layers of ‘jump’ necklaces resting just above their breasts. Today instead of leather women use two colorful cotton *shukas* tied at each shoulder and belted at the waist and a separate solid royal blue skirt underneath. A third *shuka* acts as a wrap around the shoulders and tied over the breastbone. Older women will still wear a good deal of jewelry, but the younger and more educated the woman, the less jewelry she will wear. The biggest departure from this ‘updated’ style is the t-shirt. Modest schoolgirls (and many women) wear t-shirts under the *shukas* tied at each shoulder, the effect of which is a sleeveless dress over a shirt with sleeves, rather than having bare shoulders. See Lesorogol (2008) for an analysis of Samburu schoolgirls attitudes and assessments of traditional Samburu adornment and modernity.

of producing, reproducing, consuming, and accumulating symbolic and material resources” (Ginsburg 2000). At the core of these processes is the struggle over what it means—can mean, should mean, and may not mean—to be modern.

### B. *Girl(ling) gender*

Gendered modernities are inherent in development discourse and practice, despite attempts to ignore or mystify this fact with the guises of rationality, technicality, objectivity, and neutrality. Education-as-development imperatives, and by extension, schooling, are likewise gendered processes that have implications for the distribution of material and symbolic power among men and women. Moreover, gender cannot be easily disentangled from other social signifiers like generation, ethnicity/race, religion, and class (Hodgson 2001a, 2001b; Shadle 2006; Thomas 2001). Identity formation is “not just a matter of individuals engaging directly with broader structural forces” (Hodgson 2001a, 276). Rather, it is always mediated by a confluence of social categories, obligations, and desires. The idea of “girlhood” that presupposes the global girls’ education discourse and practice is embedded in debates and questions about the interdependence (and co-production) of gender and generation in development zones.

The social category of ‘the schoolgirl’ is itself a function of the modern process of development and the production of fitting subjects and the construction of collective categories like children, adolescents, and adults. The central contestations around the notion of gender that inform this study are complicated by adding girls and female ‘youth’ to the analysis that generally focuses on women or collapses women and children (usually in reference to infants and people 10 years old or younger) together in the same categories of vulnerabilities. Conversely, the category of ‘youth’ most often refers to boys and young men. As chapter 5 will critically examine, the category “girl-child” is sometimes evoked to conjure the gender and generational concerns of young females, but



this term fails to register the same degree or tenor of agency and ingenuity that ‘youth’ can connote for young males. Recognizing age or generation as primary axis of identity and subject formations, *along side gender*, helps us more fully understand and account for the ambivalence and confusion Maasai schoolgirls express about growing up and going to school. According to De Boeck and Honwana (2005), “children and youth are extremely difficult to grasp and pin down analytically . . . They may be targets, students, servants, orphans, street children, combatants, healers, onlookers, political activists, entrepreneurs, artists, or witches, and they often occupy more than one position at once” (3). The children and female youth at the center of this dissertation are self-described “schoolgirls” who are also, as the development discourse deems them “girl-children,” and as such, they are implicitly the ‘women of tomorrow.’

Maasai schoolgirls demonstrate the profundity of localized and historically produced gendered modernities in their negotiations and revisions of the identities available to them in the normative flow of Maasai life *and* in the prevailing discourse of modern development. As I discuss in chapter 5, my examination of an important local gender category, *enkanyakuai*, reveals the possibilities and constraints of new identities and new social relationships for Maasai girls who complete school.<sup>37</sup> Being Maasai, being female, and being in school are social categories typically (and normatively) reserved for young people; in the case of Maasai schoolgirls, gender analyses of women need to make space for females who are sociologically and chronologically *not yet women*.

I highlight *enkanyakuai* here because the concept is sensible as a locally derived term of gender analysis only when we intentionally pry open the hold “women” have on gender. This is

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<sup>37</sup> An extended analysis elaborates this concept more fully in chapter 5, but the phrase in *Maa* refers to a girl who has been circumcised but who has not yet been married. Customarily, a circumcised girl would stay in her natal home while she healed from the procedure and prepared to become a wife. During this time, when she still lives in her father’s home, she is no longer a girl, and not yet a wife. She is *enkanyakuai*. The phrase can only be used to describe a female in this period of life.

what I mean by “girl(ing) gender”—consciously interrogating gender from the subjective perspective of young females who, by virtue of age (generation) and sex (gender), occupy specific, and clearly shifting, positions within their social worlds in Maasailand as elsewhere. The process of girl(ing) gender usefully denatures women. Despite the fact that the larger literature on gender, development, and education is predicated on women’s experiences, this literature is, nonetheless elemental in the conceptual landscape of this study. My readings in the critical feminist literature on women’s experiences in the development zone compelled me to be alert to local articulations of gendered identity from the girls’ point of view in the first place.

It is axiomatic in western feminist theory and analysis that hegemonic Modernity (with a capital M), founded in European Enlightenment, “not only presumes and promotes such gendered binaries as nature/culture, domestic/public, past/future, and traditional/modern, but it *genders* them, usually rendering the first, devalued term, female and the second, privileged term, male (Hodgson 2001b, 9, emphasis mine). In western contexts, “gendering” is an analytical concept developed by feminist theorists in order to examine the production and effects of gender structuring in all human societies (Rubin 1975; Scott 1986, 1999). It refers to the socio-political production of power relations between and among men and women derived from the social organization of sex along this fundamental dichotomy. Further, social life is structured according to these gendered relations and relative values mapped to the sexual division of labor, or the allocation of particular tasks to particular people (Kabeer 1994). As this division of labor is normalized, it enforces a separation between men and women, ensures heterosexual interdependence (Rubin 1975), and becomes a social structure to the extent that this allocational process poses a “constraint on future practice” (Kabeer 1994). In other words, the repeated performance of certain tasks reifies, in practice, the seemingly natural and normative dimensions of these tasks, including the humans who perform them. As these tasks are settled into essential, ritualized behaviors (Butler

1989), not only do men and women develop and learn a set of skills and capacities around these 'regular' practices, these practices become norms that achieve hegemonic status; to stray from 'normal' behavior is not only not done, but to do so may be risky, even dangerous (Butler 1988).

Thus the routine performance of certain gender capacities becomes the "rational response" to getting through the day (Kabeer 1994). This rationality undergirds institutional structures, discourses, and practices and conversely, the functioning of structures ensures a reference to rationality, and this process produces the normative matrix within which life gets lived. Over time, these constructions of opportunity and constraint are intermittently contested by some, "but history is written as if these normative positions were the product of consensus rather than conflict" (Scott 1986). According to this theory, gender is a structural principle and a primary means by which the material processes of production, reproduction, and distribution are organized within households, communities and nation-states. Capitalist relations of production depend on and further entrench this rationality.

In the context of this study, however, it is not enough to illuminate the power of the 'gendering' process to create commonsensical notions of women and men without also considering the role of generation in these productions. As Africanists, African feminists, and African gender theorists argue, gender is not and may not have always been, the primary arbiter of hierarchical relations in African contexts; at the very least, scholars of Africa suggest that generation alone, and as it relates to gender, is a formative force for creating and transforming social life. De Boeck and Honwana (2005) argue that generational concerns in Africa have historically been essential to operations of social reproduction and change as well as shifting power. Moreover, "the social category of 'youth' or adolescent' did not exist in Africa until recently" (de Boeck and Honwana 2005, 6). They explain:

In Africa, until recently, forces of rebellion emanating from children and youth, as from other subaltern groups such as women, were structurally embedded in social dynamics whereby ritualized moments of anti-structure channeled these counter currents and strengthened social equilibrium through a plied of rites of passage and other rituals of initiation or age-grade associations (Richards 1956; Turner 1967). In Africa, the counter-hegemonic reversal of roles and behaviors associated in the West with adolescence and teen-age counter culture were liberated, socially channeled, and ritually embedded within the over all social system (6).

In this respect, the skilled performance of gender always occurs in the context of generation because transitions from junior status to elder status have different implications for girls/female youth and boys/male youth. When elders teach the next generation how to perform through rituals, future performances of gendered generational reproduction is enabled, if not codified. Gender theorists argue that these survival strategies are iteratively honed under threat of sanction.<sup>38</sup> I would argue that similarly, the rewards conferred in generational hierarchies have enabled the maintenance of these hierarchies. Importantly, gendered interests are not necessarily ensured by generational hierarchies.

Moreover, the symbolic attributes of gender and generational hierarchies are also embodied in, and performed by, discursive individual and institutional practice such that parents, heads of state, public policy, ceremonial rites, relatives/kin, land rights, peers, curricula, medical

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<sup>38</sup> The ambivalence almost all of the girls in this study feel about *e-murata* for females (excision) is powerful evidence of the deep-seated, commonsensical claims these performances make over time. Although almost all of the girls were circumcised at the time of the interviews or would be soon, none of them 'wanted' to be nor had 'chosen' to undergo the rite. Nonetheless, most of them also felt that they could not refuse to participate and not only because it is what their fathers and, often, mothers wanted, but because they feared being alone among their peers and laughed at; conversely, many also sought the status upgrade circumcision signals, even as they argued that female *e-murata* has "no meaning." The threat of sanction is omnipresent, and so is the promise of some, albeit marginal, access to adult prestige by participation in the ritual. All the same, none of the girls planned to circumcise their future daughters. This turn reveals the *potentially* corrosive power of individuals, who swell in collectivities, on supposedly monolithic structural pillars. Longitudinal research would be required to ascertain how well these girls will be able to realize these future goals.

regimes, poverty, neighbors, religious doctrine, development officers, clergy, movie stars, development schemes, juridical codes, teachers, obligations, textbooks, pedagogic practice—nearly all aspects of social life--become “communicative agents” of the structuring of gender and generation (Davison and Kanyuka 1992, 455). While the iterative and recursive nature of normative processes makes it possible to intervene in or resist its constructive effects (Butler 1988; Rubin 1975; Scott 1986), it is, at the same time, deeply entrenched and more easily “performed” (Butler 1988) and reproduced than disrupted. The interwoven nature of gender and generational structures, like most structural social forms, change very slowly against the persuasive power of the narrative of consensus.

Modernity thus continues to be a “gendered intervention” (Hodgson 2001a, 258) that is, at least in most African contexts, intersected by generational claims to power. Likewise, development is a defining discourse of modernity and a primary arbiter of recognitional and redistributive concerns. In this way, the development zone is a profoundly gendered and generational space, although the exact outlines and configurations will vary between and within development zones and the historical mechanisms at work across geographies and cultures. European variations of modernity arrived in African in the mixed bag of the trans-Atlantic/Indian Ocean slave trade, mercantile capitalism and then later, colonialism, Christianity, and then later still, development and globalization. Imperialism imposed modernist logics, including the fundamental mechanisms for the production of gendered social arrangements that nation building has sustained and perpetuated.

Through the course of colonialism, “as products became commodities, peasants [and, less often, pastoralists] became wage laborers, and communal land became individualized property,” men and women struggled “to come to terms with the sometimes radical and rapid transformations in their lives” (Hodgson 2001b, 3). Among these transformations were often the relationships not only between men and women, but also between the social, political and economic meanings and

modalities of what it meant to be male and female in indigenous systems. Given the pervasive importance of generationally based hierarchies and socio-political arrangements in most African contexts, we must also consider not only how what it means to woman or man, but also what it means to be an adult man, a boy, a young man and likewise, what it means to be an adult woman, a girl, a grandmother. The processes are still in play today as everyday people struggle to negotiate still-rapid change in the development zone.

Gender is not an uncontested analytic, however, and not only because it tends to only signify women, but, which women, how is 'woman' constituted, in what ways, and to what ends? Academic debates over the relevance of gender are rooted in political and epistemological struggles over definitional authority and knowledge production (Fraser 1989). In the context of this study, various schools of thought within broad feminist circles and more particularly among those who study women, gender and various struggles for justice in the development zone, frame the debate over gender and the modern claims gender theorists make.

African feminist theory and gender theory make a fascinating and fundamental claim against this story of gender that is conceptually important for feminist theory in general, and to this study in particular. The incursion is this: this narrative of gender, as the modern cultural organization of sexual difference, has been formed against certain social arrangements inherited from a certain "cultural history of forms of masculinity and femininity" (Rubin 1975) that have been institutionalized and normalized as universal over time. 'Gender,' rather than a static given, is a concept born of western cultural exigencies and histories that when presumptively applied in African contexts misspecifies and distorts African social forms, histories, and experience. Moreover, according to this critique, Euro-American feminists have, by virtue of their location in the world cultural political economy, what amounts to a hegemonic hold on the production of

knowledge about women and gender in Africa according to narrowly western feminist precepts (Amadiume 1987; Bakare-Yusuf 2001; Cornwall 2004; Okeke 1997; Oyewumi 1997, 2005).

The African gender critique and retheorization targets the idea of a discreet ‘domestic sphere’ and most particularly, the ‘nuclear family’, as the assumed primary loci of women’s oppression. Materialist feminists theories have rooted women’s subordination to men as the byproduct of changing modes of production and the control over the means of production and women’s invisible articulation into the surplus nexus through their primary roles as reproducers of households (Rubin 1975; Scott 1988; Mies 1994). Some argue that while these theories tell us how the capitalist mode of production makes use of women’s invisible labor, they fail to explain why it is that women have always been the “wives”—the humans in charge of reproducing the household (Rubin 1975).

In an attempt to get at the deeper structures of gender identity, other feminist theorists use psychoanalytic theory to explain the unconscious formation of gender identities. For these theorists, gender, as the imposition of social ends on biological processes, is formed in the heterosexual nuclear family whereby the “wife” is predominately defined as the sexual partner to the husband and the children’s gender identities develop against this structural norm (Amadiume 1987; Oyewumi 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005; Nzegwu 2006).<sup>39</sup> In this framework, heterosexual conjugal relations are the bedrock structure against which all identities are formed. However, based in her research on Yoruba social forms in pre-colonial Nigeria, Oyewumi (1994) argues that “in a situation such as the African household arrangement where there are many mothers, many

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<sup>39</sup> In short, in this theory, the reconciliation of the Oedipal conflict teaches all children that the mother is the sole property of the father (and thus the roles of “husband” and “wife” are cemented along heterosexual, sexually dimorphic lines), that the son will one day have rights to a wife, and the daughter will never be the father or have rights to a wife, and thus reconciles herself to lesser rights (in herself, other women, and men).

fathers, and 'husbands' of both sexes, it is impossible to represent the relationship between mother and child—or “man and wife”—in this way.” In fact, she goes on to argue, women *did not exist* in pre-colonial Yorubaland. She does not mean that biologically sexed females were absent from the human community, but that the social category of “woman” and its attendant *gendered* meanings in western culture did not exist until the British discursively and practically created ‘women’ (and ‘men,’ presumably) as a “category of control” (Hodgson 2001a) based on “rigid Victorian gender hierarchies” (Oyewumi 1997). Colonial administrators and native indirect rulers relied on a certain sexual division of labor and its accompanying gendered hierarchies in order to install Modernist mechanisms of control such as ‘taxpayer,’ ‘household head,’ “wage earner,” and ‘dependent,’ and so on. Moreover, as Africanists and African gender theorists emphasize, generation, or the construction of social power based on chronological age and/or one’s status in the graduated rites that signify advancing (and declining) seniority, corroborates and complicates (and sometimes replaces) gender as the primary arbiter of power in African contexts. As these categories, like ‘student’ or ‘schoolgirl’ suggest, it is both sex/gender and age/generation that continue to have implications for relationships between and among the people who claim/embody them.

Oyewumi’s and others’ arguments tend to overly generalize “African households” and socio-political arrangements and likewise ignore the centuries of reconfigurings of African families in response to a myriad of internal and external threats and opportunities. Yet, these points strongly alert us to the slippery nature of gender as an analytic and its relative salience in a variety of social contexts. It is worth remembering that ‘gender’ may not be the primary mode for signifying difference and social hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> What is more, gender as it has been defined in a

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<sup>40</sup> See Thomas (2001) and Shadle (2006) for gender and generation among Meru and Gusii, respectively, in Kenya. Oyewumi (1997) argues that among the Yoruba of Nigeria, seniority by chronological age is the primary status category and thus trumps gender, and Amadiume (1987) makes similar arguments about Ibo social forms.



western context, may not have even *existed* in many African contexts prior to colonial invasion.<sup>41</sup>

An analysis of current African social forms cannot assume away the profound transformations colonialism wrought as Africans (and others in the postcolonial development zone) negotiated identities according to their needs. This sedimentation is inherited and informs the present.

With these and other critiques in play, feminist and gender theorists have subsequently argued that gender itself must be conceptualized as inherently intersected with other social categories (race, ethnicity, class, age, caste) and as such, may not be primary.<sup>42</sup> This is in contrast to Joan Scott's (1986) original articulation of "gender as a useful analytic" in which she argues that in western contexts, gender is the primary signifier of difference and power. These relative critiques notwithstanding, the revelation of gender as the social construction of what it means to be a man and a woman rather than a universal biologically determined phenomenon has given analysts a remarkable tool for ascertaining the precise forces at work in the cultural production of sex-difference and the hierarchies of superiority and subordination that obtain (Rubin 1975). More than this, removing gender from the essentialized realm of 'natural fact' historicized, and thus, politicized its study (Butler 1988; Scott 1986, 1999). In the feminist/gender studies literature, gender is understood as a product of the matrix of historic, economic and cultural forces at play in any given context that will vary across geographic boundaries and over time.

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<sup>41</sup> Again, see the Nigerians: Amadiume (1987) & Nzegwu (2006) for analyses of Ibo arrangements.

<sup>42</sup> Various assaults on liberal, white feminism since the early 1980s have revealed racist, heterosexist and homophobic, classist and culturally elitist parameters to the foundations of feminist theory and popular feminist movements founded in the United States and Europe. African feminist and gender theories are among the bodies of discourse that have challenged feminist theory to expand the boundaries of inclusion. Yet, Henry Louis Gates (1985) argues that race is the primary signifier in Western contexts. See Patricia Hill Collins (1993) for her elaboration of the "simultaneity of oppression" and the analytic of 'intersectionality' that rejects a hierarchy (and hence a primacy of any one signifier) of oppression or marginality in Western cultures.

A similar line of reasoning to that used to reconsider gender in the African context can be used to consider the generational categories that inflect current development ideology. Ideas of children and childhood, youth and adolescence, and adults and adulthood have been inherited from the western industrialized nations that are the primary arbiters and architects of development policies. Considerations of the nexus of modernity, childhood, youth, adolescence, gender and development in the global social imaginary, then, requires us to consider how these constructs have been historically shaped in the west. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to go into extensive detail; rather, I outline the contours of the idealized and increasingly universalized norm of childhood embedded in development that the Otieno girls, for example, along with their cohorts in the transnational capitalist classes anywhere in the world, enjoy and the Maasai schoolgirls I met in the Rift cannot even imagine. Examining discourses of childhood, youth, and adolescence—or, in the language of my study, what it means or can mean to be a ‘schoolgirl’ in Maasailand today—provides analytical insight into the girl(ing) of gender, the school(ing) of girls, and the develop(ing) of modernities in the development zone.

Ruddick (2003) argues that western conceptions of childhood were constructed and reified in the process of advancing industrial capitalism: “Far from being a byproduct of industrial capitalism...modern youth and childhood can be located at its literal and figurative core” (337). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Fordist industrializing contexts, childhood, as a sequestered and protected space along with a protracted, consumer-oriented adolescence, became institutions within institutions. In other words, children were children and adolescents/youth/’teens’ were youth precisely because they were articulated into certain institutional contexts (and the identities these socio-economic relations conferred). Compulsory schooling, child labor protections, the ‘family wage,’ urban/suburbanization, nuclear families, gendered divisions of labor and solidifying domestic/public domains, state infrastructures (schools, bus systems, truancy laws,

suburban/school districts, and so on), and new forms of flexible labor (part-time and seasonal employment for youth as well as part-time work for mothers) are examples of institutions created to serve the needs of capitalist development, and in turn, the existence of these arrangements justified and normalized capitalist socio-cultural and political relations (Ruddick 2003). Clearly and definitively exiting these institutions (graduating from high school or college, getting a job, getting married, having children) signaled the passage to adulthood.

In the past 30-40 years, post-Fordist economic divergence between and within nations and the globalization of modernity through neoliberal economic restructuring has progressively destabilized and reconfigured the experiences of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in the west (Ruddick 2003). Instead of a putatively clear progression through stages of increasing social maturity and socio-cultural and political economic cache characterized by increased independence through integration in the labor market, we are seeing the trends toward the opposite. Against this norm, it can be said that the customary social category of “adulthood” has been shortened in the face of a distorted prolonged adolescence brought on by un- and underemployment, market pressure to re-tool or stay in school for longer (go to college, go to graduate school), high divorce rates, remarriage, ‘late’ parenting, and the general idea that one can start the process over at anytime despite biological or chronological ‘maturity.’ In other words, the transition from childhood to adolescence then to adulthood are far less clear in contemporary times that have been in the past (Ruddick 2003).

Thinking through Ruddick’s arguments, I am confronted again with the memory of trying to answer Aunt Judith’s question, “when does a girl become a woman in *your* culture” and my inability to specify the when or the how of gendered social maturity, at least in any stable, generalizable way (Ruddick 2003, 350). Are “non-linear” “life trajectories” in which older adults are driven to reclaim ‘youthfulness’ in order to stay relevant and youth are often caught in a cycle

of deferred adulthood a necessary function of late modernity? If so, what does it mean that the set of ideological norms for childhood and adolescence that preceded this current dislocation of supposedly stable categories in the west, are integral to the education-as-development discourse? What does it mean that development relies on an idealized version of childhood in which children are protected in functioning institutions and adolescence is extended until well past biological and chronological 'maturity' so that individuals can grow and learn according the modern principles that will equip them for rapid and easy entry into the wage economy? How is the idealized childhood and adolescence animating education-as-development itself gendered? When we break childhood down into boyhood and girlhood, in what ways are local conceptions of who people are and can be relevant to the imposed vision development relies on?

As I will argue in chapter 5, Maasai schoolgirls, as targets of conventional development, also rely on the discourse of protected childhood, extended adolescence, and deferred adulthood in order to stake their own claims in modernity's promises. Unfortunately, the education-as-development ideology is fundamentally paradoxical. As Ruddick (2003) points out, neoliberal development continues to dictate the reduction of "the state costs of social reproduction for the young and old" in order to enhance national/international competitiveness and compel economic development even as the western path to modernization and capitalist accumulation has historically been predicated on state provided education, the production of skilled labor, and the inculcation of the proximity of the middle class dream. What's more, development's promise is predicated on a construction of childhood—a generational concern—that can be at odds with localized schedules for human development.

It is generally agreed that in all societies, people reach a stage in the lifecycle in which they leave childhood behind and physically, socio-culturally, and economically become adults. In this process, individuals' roles, rights, responsibilities, and rewards change to reflect and reify their new

status. As the forthcoming chapters will discuss, this step-wise progression from child to adult is always localized; communities create and recreate themselves by observing the rituals that constitute the legitimate subjects of their societies. In Africa generally and among Maasai in particular, specific communally performed processes mark a child's initiation into adulthood. This public construction of adult identity confers both new opportunities and new constraints. These processes in Maasai worlds are detailed in the next chapter. Further, as chapter 5 will examine closely, schoolgirls come of age within the narrow confines of formal schooling. Unlike their coevals who are not in school, who are circumcised, and then proceed along the 'customary' life of a Maasai woman, schoolgirls are forced to negotiate their new identities as women in school. Contradictions inherent in the nonexistent category 'schoolwomen' cannot be resolved; instead, schoolgirls refuse to be called 'women' even though they have been ritually localized as new adults.<sup>43</sup>

### C. *School(ing) girls*

If development is a defining discourse of modernity, education in the form of formal schooling has become a denominating discourse of development: "One of the dominant themes in development discourses from the colonial period to the present is *education as panacea*" (Varvus 2003, 7). Varvus (2003) uses this phrase to "describe the enduring faith that schooling will effect profound social change in the Third World, even in places where political-economic

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<sup>43</sup> There is a strong focus in parts of Kenya, as elsewhere in development zones, on adult literacy. In this case, adult women (mothers many times over) are students. They gather in small groups with a teacher and they learn to read and write Swahili, *Maa*, and English. These women are not called 'schoolwomen.' Like their male and female counterparts (sometimes their husbands) in the United States as elsewhere they are called "adult learners."

conditions make such transformations highly unlikely” (7). In her analytical frame, as in mine, ‘education’ refers to western-derived formal schooling, as opposed to various processes of learning (‘education’) that occur outside of formal classrooms. Accordingly, in place of education as panacea, I prefer the phrasing education-as-development as a way of signaling the how education as a transnational process is embedded in modernist notions of progress and progressively deeper articulation into capitalist modes. From Varvuz, I also use the phrase to refer to the prevalent and seemingly eternal modernist faith that education via formally accredited, state-sponsored or approved schooling is equated with development defined as improved lives and livelihoods.

The discourse of education-as-development promises modernity and all that it makes possible. In so doing, the policies (and politics) it inspires often instead reinscribe the very paradoxes that empty modern life of these possibilities. The figure of the Maasai schoolgirl at the center of this study of modernity, development, education and gender embodies a contradiction in which meaning is contained precisely in the clash of competing claims. That she is Maasai, that she is a girl, and that she attends school are all subject positions that are produced in reference to one another by a confluence of historical and social forces. Her perceptions of education and development in her current and future life demonstrate the possibilities and dead-ends inherent in the development zone. On the one hand, the discourse generated by the scholarly research on girls’ education in the development zone is clear: Education does foment modern practices that change and save lives, particularly female lives, all along the lifecourse. The schoolgirl, as a product and purveyor of these positive changes, is a canary in the development zone coal mine—an indicator of relative levels of ‘development’ and progress, and as such, she has unprecedented opportunities. At the same time, and not simply contradictorily but coproductively, as her possibilities for modern access increase she and those around her continue to operate according to the rules for gender behavior determined in another time and against another, waning, set of forces. The political

economy of development as it is currently conceived is failing most people in Kenya; in her pursuit of education and the modern social categories which attend schooling, she risks losing as much as she has to gain.

The affirmative discourse of education-as-development gives shape to policy imperatives around educational provision and an increased focus on “gender equality.”<sup>44</sup> Varvus (2003) argues that a shift toward emphasizing girls’ and women’s education as development imperatives emerged according to shifts in development practice and economic theory. Post-World War II, development planners tended to promote the ‘development state’ as an interventionist structure that by the application of Rostowian principles could craft itself, its economy, and its populace according to modernist and modernization precepts (Varvus 2003; Holmquist et al. 1994). By the 1980s, geopolitical sensibilities turned the neoliberal corner. Bilateral and multi-lateral development agencies, INGOS, and international financing institutions began championing a small state and free markets as the prime movers of development (Varvus 2003). Modernist dictums asserted themselves in the form of privatization of social goods, increased emphasis on individual responsibility and achievement, and the public-private ‘partnerships’ that decentralized state functions and, among other things kindled the ‘NGO-ification’ of development and shifted the burden of social provisioning, like education, to localities, collectivities, households, and individuals. Getting girls in primary school, and the current focus on UPE/EFA—universal

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<sup>44</sup> Which usually refers to sex equality, or an equal number of boys and girls enrolled in school, completing school, and so on. Gender is often more of a catch phrase and a rather empty analytic, particular when it simply (and inaccurately) replaces “sex.” Furthermore, ‘equality’ as a concept does not recognize the very different *gendered* conditions under which people attempt to live and work that structure power asymmetry. There has been a recognition that “equity” is a more fruitful concept as it recognizes gender difference and accommodates it in order to prevent the continuation of inequitable status quo. Equity emphasizes fairness in process and outcome, and does not assume ‘sameness.’ However, I would argue that “equality” has more general appeal. Equity is also clearly harder to measure than equality, which can be rendered in percentages. See Unterhalter (2000) for a detailed analysis.

primary education/education for all—diverts the popular focus from the creation of neoliberal policies like charging user fees for secondary and tertiary education (the situation in Kenya) to increased access to education and increased state and donor legitimacy (Varvus 2003). As I argue in Chapter 5, girls' needs are less important than the usefulness of those needs in the support of other interests.

Scholarship and programmatic interventions focused on these goals have been amplified and accelerated since the “Education for All” conference in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 (Brock-Utne 2000). The literatures associated with this movement focus on ascertaining demographic trends and examining the overall benefits of, and constraints to, education for girls in the developing world (see for examples, Floro, et. al 1990; King & Hill 1993; Malhotra, et. al 2003). Particularly in their focus on the timing of demographic events, changes in per capita income, and changes in health and wellbeing, these studies have found that education has an “undeniabl[y]” (King and Hill 1993) positive impact on delayed marriage and sexual debut (Ikamari 2005), fertility (Ikamari 2005; Nekatibeb 2002), infant mortality, maternal mortality, the provision of education for the children of educated women, the ability of women to negotiate sex (Jewkes et al. 2002; Wolff et al. 2000), and reduced vulnerability to HIV infection (Fylkesnes et al. 2001; Hargreaves and Bolin 2006). The global consensus is that education is an unmitigated and absolutely essential good for individual females themselves as well as the economic development of the local and national communities in which they live (King and Hill 1993). “Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Jomtien marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is the single most vital element in combining poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth” (UNICEF 1999, 13 qtd in Varvus 2003). This consensus is solidified by the United Nations’ unprecedented emphasis on girls’ and



women's empowerment and human capital investment as the *sine qua non* of development broadly writ in the eight Millennium Development Goals.

Ethnographic studies of education in developing contexts suggest that the picture is not unequivocal (Kiluva-Ndunda 2001; Stambach 2000; Varvus 2007). Scholars of this far smaller literature are more ambivalent about the unmitigated good of the current education-as-development imperative, as these studies illuminate the difficult and contradictory aspects of formal schooling for girls in development contexts, including the high rates of sexual harassment and assault (including rape) in schools and in the context of schooling (Barker and Rich 1992; Bloch et al. 1998; Mensch and Lloyd 1998, 2001; Stock 2004; UNICEF 2004), the rising rates of HIV/AIDS among females of schooling age (15-24) (UNAIDS 2005, 2006), gender bias in student, teacher, and parental attitudes against girls' academic abilities (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992; Mensch and Lloyd 1998; Mensch et al. 2000), and the ambivalence many communities still have around the "social death" young women face when they pursue schooling (Kanogo 2005; Stambach 2000).

My study of subjectivity formation among Maasai schoolgirls is properly situated in this smaller literature. While I do not dispute the practical necessities of education for girls in general and rural Maasai girls in particular, I hope to question the seamless rhetoric concerning formal schooling as a neutral public good in order to open up the complex conversation about educational access and attainment in Kenya, as elsewhere, today. Girls from pastoral communities in Kenya have been historically removed from educational opportunities, in part, like the 600 millions girls the world over not in school, *because they are girls*. As chapters 1 and 2 illustrate, for Maasai girls, the reasons also stem from a paradox created by a history of policies that have curtailed access to education for pastoralists in general and pastoral resistance to the educational opportunities that have existed.

I have focused on Maasai schoolgirls because Maasai, like other pastoralist and semi-pastoralist groups in the arid and semi-arid regions of Kenya, have historically been simultaneously the targets of, and marginalized by, development processes (Hesse 2001; Hodgson 2001; Leggett 2005). There has been increased attention to the problems and paradoxes of educational provision in nomadic pastoralist communities (in Kenya and globally) (Anonymous 2006; Kratli 2001; Sifuna 2005), although like the larger literature on education and development, gender issues, and girls' experiences in particular, are either sidelined or instrumentalized (Nagel 2001; Sifuna 2005). Kratli and Dyer (2006) echo my own contention that in any context "education can never be a simple, neutral practice in the way that much of the policy literature seems to assume" (10). Education anywhere today is best understood as a transnational process, but this fact is even more pronounced in Kenya and development zones because the content and form of education (as formal schooling), and the context(s) in which education occurs, are heavily structured by the confluence and convergence of international civil society objectives (what Kratli and Dyer call "liberal humanitarian aims"), bi- and multi-lateral lending and funding agendas, and national development imperatives that are "ideological in nature, and embedded in particular ways of thinking about human development in general," and as is most relevant to this study, "nomadic development in particular " because nomadic/pastoralist social formations worldwide are considered the least amenable to state-centric policies (Kratli and Dyer 2006, 9; Scott 1998). While the academic research focused on gender, education and development in Maasai areas may not have caught up the general development rhetoric, conversations about the political economy of education, and girls' education in particular, is central to daily discourse in Maasai communities.

In their analysis of the scattered literature on education and development in pastoral and nomadic communities, Kratli and Dyer have grouped policies and programs into two major themes that are also reflected in the literature on education and development among Maasai communities:

1) *the full accomplishment of the individual as a human being* which relates to the discourse of human rights, indigenous justice claims-making, and to gender analyses of equity and empowerment, or what Elaine Unterhalter (2006) has called interventionist strategies and 2) *the integration of nomadic groups in to the wider national context* which most profoundly reflects the national development goals which include sedentarization, modernization, poverty alleviation, resource management, and the systematic production citizen/civic identities (10). These complementary discourses produce the “received wisdom about the difficulties of ‘providing education’” to nomads and pastoralists that is based on the fundamental assumptions that schooling is equated with development, or progress; that pastoralism is a lifestyle rather than a livelihood strategy and program for social reproduction and therefore it is an identity that can be shed, or transformed, by modernizing processes like formal schooling; and that the central problem of education among pastoralists and the central reason pastoralist communities are ‘behind’ is household mobility—the less the mobile the community, the closer that community is to ‘modern’ on the scale of progress beginning with traditional or pre-modern and moving toward modern (Kratli and Dyer 2006).

The cumulative and normative force of these assumptions and the policy and practices they engender makes the notion of educating pastoralists out of backwardness and into the twenty first century simply common sense. Indeed, many of the schoolgirls in this study expressed this way of thinking in our interviews as they endeavored to explain why education is the only route to full participation in the money economy and why such participation is more than desirable, it is required. A fundamental contradiction of this logic, however, is that “no educational process can ever be context free, and thus modern schooling takes place within certain contextual realities which may militate against emancipation” (Kratli and Dyer 2006, 10). In the case of contemporary Maasai communities in Kenya, including those in Kajiado district, these realities are shaped by the widening entrenchment of global capitalism and neoliberal development policies that require

governments to scale back social provisions and leave essential services such as drilling boreholes and building schools and clinics to community self-help and civil society.

These larger structural realities complicate, and are complicated by, local level contextual realities which threaten efforts to maintain fragile pastoral livelihoods that are reeling from recurring shocks including nearly-continuous drought conditions and food insecurity, rising food prices, decreased prices for livestock, epizootics, rising unemployment, and violence and insecurity (in some pastoral regions of Kenya) (KFSSG 2008; BurnSilver and Mwangi 2007). Educational provision—how, when, by what means and to what ends children learn in formal school settings—is often the fulcrum upon which supra-national and national economic development imperatives are pitted against pastoral demands for improved livelihood support mechanisms (such as veterinary services, water systems, and so on), livelihood diversification (such as meat production facilities in pastoral areas), and cultural legitimacy (such as valuing pastoral culture as more than a tourist attraction) (BurnSilver and Mwangi 2007). As Dyer (2006) argues

...the existing mass educational provision is rarely sympathetic to nomadic cultures, and children who attend these schools are less likely to value their own cultural heritage, particularly if their own traditional learning patterns, or knowledge find no place in what they do in school. While formal education may open the way to jobs within the wider economy, for which qualifications are a prerequisite, it may be part of a destabilizing process that exerts pressures to bring the values of the ethnic group into line with the values of the homogenizing modern state. In this scenario, ‘education’ is synonymous with sedentarization and the delegitimation of nomadism as an acceptable way of life (2).

This tension is alive and well in the Maasai communities of Keekonyokie Central Location where this study was conducted, and has been, to a certain degree, internalized by the schoolgirls in this study who want to be modern *and* Maasai.

Pastoralist communities are often marked as “underdeveloped” in relation to settled agricultural and urban regions (Leggett 2005; Stock 2004); within these pockets of underdevelopment, gender disparities are often deep-rooted. With the declaration of Free Primary

Education (FPE) in Kenya in 2003, a national gross enrollment rate of 104% was achieved. However, this overall increase obscured geographical inequalities, and in pastoralist districts including Narok and Kajiado, the gross enrollment rate was only 25%, with as few as 17% of pastoralist girls enrolled in school (Oxfam 2005). Given the realities of life in rural Africa, particularly in arid regions, we must also assume that these low enrollments rates translate to even lower attendance and retention rates. Although Maasai girls may not be the most marginalized of the pastoralists (evidence suggests that North Eastern Province, sparsely populated by Somali nomads, has the lowest primary school participation rates in Kenya—see Leggett 2005), Maasai schoolgirls must face the triple barrier of poverty, gender bias, and household mobility (Leggett 2005) in their quest for schooling. Maasai children in general, and girls in particular, have a difficult time going to school and staying there, and these confounding factors serve to maintain chronic patterns of vulnerability and structural hierarchies along ethnic, class, and gender axes. Unlike their urban cohorts or schoolgirls in ethnic communities historically mainstreamed in, and by, formal schooling, rural Maasai girls form a special case (and inhabit a special space) for a local level ethnographic study of gender, education, and development.

### **III. Summary of chapters**

The chapters that follow tell a story about subjectivity formation among the Maasai schoolgirls interviewed for this study from various angles. Chapters 1 and 2 move the dissertation forward by taking the reader back through time while tracing two crucial historical issues for this very contemporary study. Chapter 1 looks at the creation of “the Maasai” in Kenya by examining the secondary historical literature beginning with the colonial period and culminating in the current context. In addition to chronicling ‘the facts’ of Maasai history in Kenya and the shifts in both gender and generational relations that obtain, the chapter also seeks to provide a picture of Maasai

subjectivity over time almost in opposition to, or at least as a clarification of, the seemingly coherent and stable Maasai identity that the schoolgirls refer to as they discussed their own identities. Chapter 2 chronicles the historical provision of education in the Kenyan Maasai reserve from the colonial period through the legislation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, and the ways in which local circumstances in Kenya as a post-colony and international discourses of Education for All have shifted attitudes toward education for all Maasai children and particularly girls from resistant and skeptical to largely affirmative and urgent.

Chapter 3 uses selected empirical case studies from throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, but primarily East Africa, to establish the current knowledge, and attendant discourse, about the role of education as formal schooling plays in the progressive betterment of girls' and young women's lives in parts of Africa today. It is from this empirical literature that the relatively more explicit political discourse of education-as-development is derived.

Chapter 4 brings the reader into the aspects of life in Kenya today while discussing the process of the research itself and the ways in which working with young Maasai translators and research assistant alerted to me to the challenges, contradictions, and possibilities of the schoolgirl category alongside the collection of data from the primary schoolgirls themselves.

As a scholar and critic of development discourses, I am skeptical of the achievements that programs following the mainstream development rhetoric of education as a neutral public good might realize given the enormous constraints on the national and local operating environments under current global economic restructuring regimes and the ubiquity of structural gender hierarchies at all levels. At the same time, I am interested in the possibility that emphasis on educating girls will, in the first instance, provide some benefit to the girls who are targeted, and in the second, the communities they live in. Moreover, I am particularly interested in the girls themselves and their own perceptions of what it means to be a girl and a woman in the context of

the changing social environments of the Kenyan development zone. Positioning girls as knowledgeable subjects with insight into the experience of formal schooling and their own positions within the coordinates of opportunity/benefit woven by the multiscalar forces of development discourse and practice, has, as Chapter 5 will discuss, revealed the limitations of the standard and static “girl-child” category and re-imagined her through the lens of the neoliberal subjectivity, the schoolgirl. For this finding alone, this dissertation contributes to the critical ethnographic literature on gender and education, and expands our knowledge about Maasai communities in transition.

The structure of feeling governing contemporary Maasai sensibilities in Ngong division, Kajiado district, is fractured, at times incoherent, and I think for most, destabilizing. This disconcertion is reflexive and rooted in the feeling of structures in the Kenyan development zone. As the concluding chapter discusses, the discourse of education and development, captured by narratives we collected from schoolgirls, teachers, and some mothers, reflects the ambivalence of postcolonial late modernity in the shadow of the neoliberal turn. This is a long and fancy statement, but what I mean to say is simple: everyone I talked to wants more, and needs more; they hope for more—more opportunity, more access, more freedom, more security—and expect more because they accept the promise of modernity as development (and *vice versa*). But their longing is colored by another feeling of structures, the resignation of hope rooted in a mythological, monolithic, but waning, governing “culture” and an utterly material reality consisting of reduced and reducing options except for a narrow few.

**CHAPTER 1*****Making Maasailand in Kenya:*****Developing Historical Legacies and Contemporary Subjects**

*“Maasai have not always lived in this desert; they were made to come here.”*  
 Schoolgirl, 14 years old, Innyonyorri Primary School (February 2008)

*“No doubt on platforms and in reports we declare that we have no intention of depriving natives of their lands, but this has never prevented us from taking whatever land we want (...) I have no desire to protect Masaidom. It is a beastly, bloody system, founded on raiding and immorality, disastrous to both Masai and their neighbors. The sooner it disappears and is unknown, except in books of anthropology, the better.”*  
 Sir Charles Eliot, Commissioner of the East African Protectorate, 1900-1904, qtd in Sorrenson (1968)

The secondary historical and anthropological literature on East African pastoralist peoples is rich and vast. In this chapter I consolidate several stories about the continuing history of Maasai people(s) in order to give a broad context for the study and its major findings. On a theoretical level, I have attempted to use historical accounts and analyses to build the conceptual foundations for this study of contemporary Maasai schoolgirl subjectivity formation. In our interviews it became progressively clear that although schoolgirls’ everyday identities are constantly shifting, they nonetheless rely on a static and monolithic notion of Maasai-ness to frame the way they understand themselves. However, as this chapter illustrates, this enduring bulwark of Maasai-ness has actually been (and continues to be) a fluid and dynamic social category. As subsequent chapters will discuss, when Maasai schoolgirls repeatedly reach for a mythological Maasai identity against which to pitch their hopes, dreams, and dismay, the contradictions that arise can be linked to an ambivalent engagement with modernity in the education-as-development discursive field.

To develop the historical foundation for what it has meant to “make Maasailand” in Kenya over time, I focus on a series of transformations in Maasai social arrangements and political



economy from the early colonial period through the contemporary postcolonial context, as these profound changes are mapped to gender and generational relations, land use, productive patterns and modes, and cultural resiliency. To do so, I frame my discussion around three distinct but also utterly intertwined processes: 1) the creation of Maasai reserve and related land policies in the early days of the East African Protectorate 2) further land alienation and adjudication between the world wars, into the mid-twentieth century and into independence (1963) and 3) continued land loss through privatization *vis-à-vis* changing development imperatives in the contemporary period.

The Maasai Moves of 1904 and 1911-1913 are considered watershed moments for Maasai and Kenyan history.<sup>45</sup> I pin modern Maasai historical trajectories to this singular colonial maneuver as a way of tacking within the complicated dynamics created by the contradictions and paradoxes that frame this examination of education, gender, development, modernity, and identity in Africa today (Coe 2005; Ferguson 1999; Hodgson 2001a; Little 1998; Weiss 2004; Stambach 2000). The process of making contemporary Kenya Maasailand I present in this chapter reflects the contradictory desires and disruptions inherent in the sustained unfolding of modernity in Africa from the colonial period, through the onset of the post-colony, and into the political economies of contemporary globalization. For Maasai peoples in southern Kenya, this series of changes predates colonialism (and is accelerated by the arrival of Europeans in the Rift Valley), persists through

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<sup>45</sup> As Lotte Hughes (2006) notes, the Moves garner very little detailed attention in the academic histories (though they are typically referred to), although they are very much alive in the Maasai consciousness, particularly among members of certain sections (*IIPurko* and *ILLalipiak* particularly), who live mostly in Narok district. In my research in Kajiado, the Moves were never distinctly mentioned, except in some interviews with schoolgirls who made reference to “being moved” to “the desert.” This perhaps because Keekonyokie Maasai have traditionally lived in and around what is now northern Kajiado district. Yet, anxieties over loss of land and land speculation pressure, drought conditions, land privatization and fenced pastures, and ultimately, loss of livelihoods, were on the tip of every adult tongue. This discourse was fever-pitched in the run-up to the 2007 election and during its tragic aftermath. See Hughes (2005) and Kantai (2007).

decades of subsequent colonization and state formation, and continues into the postcolonial, post-independence present characterized by the development zone.

## **I. History of Movement: Making “the Maasai” and Maasailand**

### *A. Maasai moves*

Even a cursory history of Maasai is marked by movement and change. “The Maasai” as a discreet people and culture is a complicated concept to characterize in historical terms (Galaty 1982; Bernsten 1980; Coast 2000; Little 1998; Spear and Waller 1993; Waller 1976). In a sense, the best metonym for speaking about the history of the “the Maasai” is to speak about the various trajectories of the Maa language and the people who have spoken it.<sup>46</sup> This inchoateness often goes unremarked however, and many observers unselfconsciously speak of “the Maasai” as a coherent totality. Contemporary multi-lateral development agencies, NGOs, missionaries, and even local governments targeting Maasai communities for development interventions in both Kenya and Tanzania often do not explicitly recognize the complex and layered histories that have solidified the “ethnic” identity called “Maasai” (Galaty 1993).<sup>47</sup> Tourism economies likewise rely on a stable idea of “the Maasai” as an “aesthetic component of the Western safari experience” (Hughes 2005, 207) in order to attract visitors interested in watching ‘authentic’ unchanged cultures at work (or rest, or play).

Pre-historically speaking, comparative linguistic geographies mark the branching of the ‘Maasaan’ *Maa* dialect from the Eastern Plains Nilotic up to a millennium ago, and date the

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<sup>46</sup> What King (1971) has referred to as “something of a Maasai diaspora” (119).

<sup>47</sup> This is true for all ‘ethnicities’ in Kenya but perhaps moreso for the Maasai given the protracted debates regarding Maasai identity in the academic literatures, historical documents and equivocation among Maasai themselves (Hodgson 2001a). See Cohen and Adhiambo (1989) for shifting identities for Luo people.

expansion of *Maa*-speaking peoples throughout what is today northern Kenya around 300 years ago (Sutton 1993).<sup>48</sup> Formative shifts from *Maa*-speaking peoples to the “Maasaiaization” of these loose groups occurred throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Sutton 1993).<sup>49</sup> This culminating process was as much about movement-as-migration as it was about movement-as-socio-cultural-change. Sutton writes:

‘Movement’ can be interpreted as the rapid social, institutional, and ritual development of self-conscious ethnicities as much as actual territorial expansion. It might be argued that what expanded was not a different group of people, the Maasai themselves, but a new identity, expressed in culture and language, which became ‘Maasai’ (1993, 39).

Being Maasai was thus solidifying “as a community with a distinct identity only in Maasailand itself,” by the time Europeans encountered them for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Galaty 1993).<sup>50</sup> At the height of Maasai consolidation and political power in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their rangelands measured approximately 800 km from north to south, and at its widest point, about 320 km from east to west, spanning from what is today the Lake Baringo basin of Kenya to just west of the Nguru Mountains in Tanzania (Gorham 1980; Waller 1976; Galaty 1993; Homewood 1995). Rutten (1992) configures the pre-colonial territory at approximately 55,000 km<sup>2</sup>. [See Figure 6]

From her analysis of European archival documentation of life among Maasai during the 1890s and life history interviews with three elderly Maasai (in Tanzania Maasailand in the early 1990s), Hodgson (2001a) concludes that “Maasai ethnic and gender identities and relations in this

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<sup>48</sup> There is some disagreement here: Galaty (1993) states that *Maa*-speakers arrived in the Rift Valley around 1600 A.D., whereas Sutton (1993, the same volume), asserts a more recent arrival, the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. See Galaty (1993) for a detailed discussion.

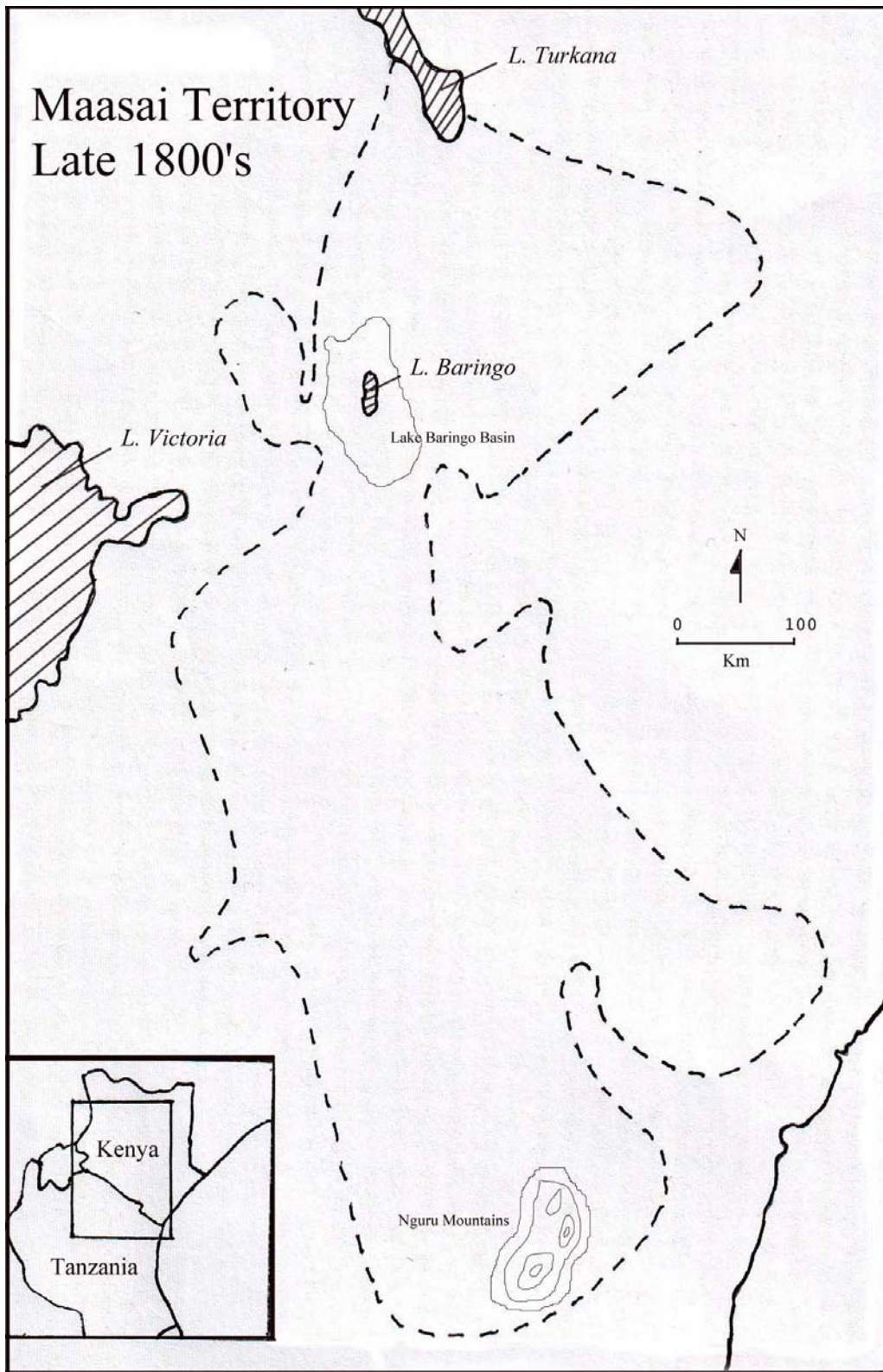
<sup>49</sup> Sutton (1993) uses this word to refer to the historical process of “increasing specialization in pastoralism and a heightened sense of identity as pastoralists” (Hodgson 2001a, 24).

<sup>50</sup> Modern Maasai history is dated to the 1870s (Sutton and Vossen 1993) and the late 1800s by European explorers (examples: Mortiz Merker 1910 [1904]; Thomas 1885).

period were. . . premised on interaction and complementarity—between Maasai pastoralists and their cultivating neighbors, between Maasai men and women, and across generations” (36).<sup>51</sup> She argues that these relative egalitarian and cooperative arrangements between men and women and people of various ages was accomplished by structured reciprocal linkages within the evolving specialized production system in which women and men had rights and responsibilities for cattle, small stock, and human relations; the spatial dispersion of Maasai homesteads among cultivating communities and the relative proximity for exchange relations; women’s mobility, autonomy, and economic centrality as traveling traders; and no clear distinctions, like in aristocratic Victorian England, between ‘public/political/productive’ and ‘private/domestic/reproductive’ spaces in Maasai life. As some Maasai/Maa-speaking peoples shifted concentration from agro-pastoralism to specialized pastoralism, women’s roles included caring for calves, smallstock (goats, sheep), sick animals; managing the production, distribution/consumption, and surplus trade of pastoral by-products (milk, ghee, yogurt, leather); trading, by traveling to trading centers and entertaining traveling groups, with cultivators for grains and other foods; and trading with Swahili traders for tobacco, glass beads, wire, cloth and other goods (like umbrellas). While men administered the most overtly ‘political-economic’ practices like resolving disputes and levying fines for breach of

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<sup>51</sup> During these interviews, the elderly participants recalled their fathers’ harrowing and heartbreaking stories of the *Emutai*.



Adapted from Homewood (1995)

FIGURE 6

Figure 6. Maasai Territory Late 1800s.

conduct or deciding where and when to graze and water cattle, women mediated human relations with *Eng'ai* (God), advised their sons, lobbied their husbands, and were central to the performance of ritual and the maintenance of social life like arranging marriages and circumcisions (Hodgson 2001a).

By the turn of the century, two sets of forces, both 'natural' and 'manmade,' whittled down this territory radically transforming historical modes of production, intercommunity relations, and gender and generational dynamics within communities: 1) *Emutai* (the Disasters) and 2) the Scramble for Africa.<sup>52</sup> For Maasai, *Emutai* refers to the internescene wars among sections of the *Maa*-speaking peoples.<sup>53</sup> These wars were ignited by cattle epidemics and human famine and nearly decimated both human and cattle populations not already dead from disease.<sup>54</sup> Kipury (1989) argues that "the impact of the [internescene] wars on the question of identity and in the whole social

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<sup>52</sup> *Emutai* is referred to as "the disasters" most texts although in Waller (1976) he says it means "the finishing off of everything completely."

<sup>53</sup> Known as the *Morijo* War in which the rivalry between brothers Olonana and Senteu erupted; Olonana won this war because of his alliance with the British, and the British fundamental misunderstanding of Maasai political structures. Olonana duplicitously 'represented' all Maasai to sign the first 'agreement' to approve the first move in 1904. This period is also sometimes referred to (although I only saw this phrasing in one of many sources) as "the time of *Enaashe*" (thanks) during which Maasai/*Maa*-speaking families were given help and refuge by Kikuyu families and contracted a kind of debt in the process. Ties of thanks were wrapped up in ties of "*Osotua*," the Maasai concept of bonded friendship that transcends social boundaries, which largely characterized the pre-colonial Maasai/Kikuyu relationship. See Waller (1993), for a detailed discussion of changes in Maasai/Kikuyu relations at the dawn of colonialism that I also turn to later in this section.

<sup>54</sup> Communities throughout East Africa were affected by these epizootics and epidemics. In 1883, an outbreak of bovine pluro-pneumonia and in 1891 an outbreak of rinderpest devastated Maasai stock holdings, igniting famine and outmigration to farming communities. Outmigration increased Maasai susceptibility to disease that their regular low population densities protected them from. Unfortunately, in 1892 an outbreak of smallpox devastated the human population. Jacobs (1965) (quoting Leys 1924) estimated that over half of the human population died (Coast 2000). See Coast (2000) for demographic details regarding the cumulative effects of "the Disasters" during this time.

structure cannot be overestimated. . . pastoralism became intertwined with identity and survival, [and] the primary locus of transformation has to be seen from a the perspective of pastoral praxis” primarily because as sections (such as *Illakipia*, and others) were largely wiped out by war and famine, survivors were absorbed by neighboring sections.<sup>55</sup> In this process, identities, social arrangements, and of modes of production and reproduction shifted by necessity (Hodgson 2001a; Little 1998; Waller 1993).

It was during these critical junctures in Maasai history that in 1884, nearly 4000 miles away, The General Act of the Berlin Conference was drawn and inaugurated the Scramble for Africa. This act allocated the whole of historical Maasailand to Britain and Germany and enabled the formal institution European administration of these territories. This juridical act was the beginning of Kenya’s formal incorporation into the world economic system as a dependency of the Crown. By the late 1890s, British sights were set on expanding the imperial project from what is now Uganda into what is now Kenya after the failure of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The East Africa Protectorate (EAP) was created in 1895, and the Uganda Protectorate was incorporated a year later [See Figure 7]. As more explorers, colonialists, and missionaries arrived under this mandate, they found Maasai in the process of reconsolidating, restocking, and rebuilding their communities.

To a certain degree, new-coming Europeans were convinced that the chaos they observed was indicative of demographic decline, even extinction (Coast 2000).<sup>56</sup> Yet, despite European

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<sup>55</sup> Maasai are divided into two moieties, red and black. From these moieties are derived five clans. Clans are further subdivided into sections. There are generally 12 sections (although Hughes states that numbers range from 12-44). See Frans Mol (1996) for schematic organizational details.

<sup>56</sup> This is a somewhat reductive and oversimplified statement. See a wealth of scholarly work analyzing European impressions of Maasai and *Maa*-speaking peoples, beginning in the early 1800s as Europeans and Arabs moved into the interior from the coast. Some select readings include: Hodgson (2001a), Waller (1999), Galaty (1982), Coast (2000), Hughes (2007). As Hodgson

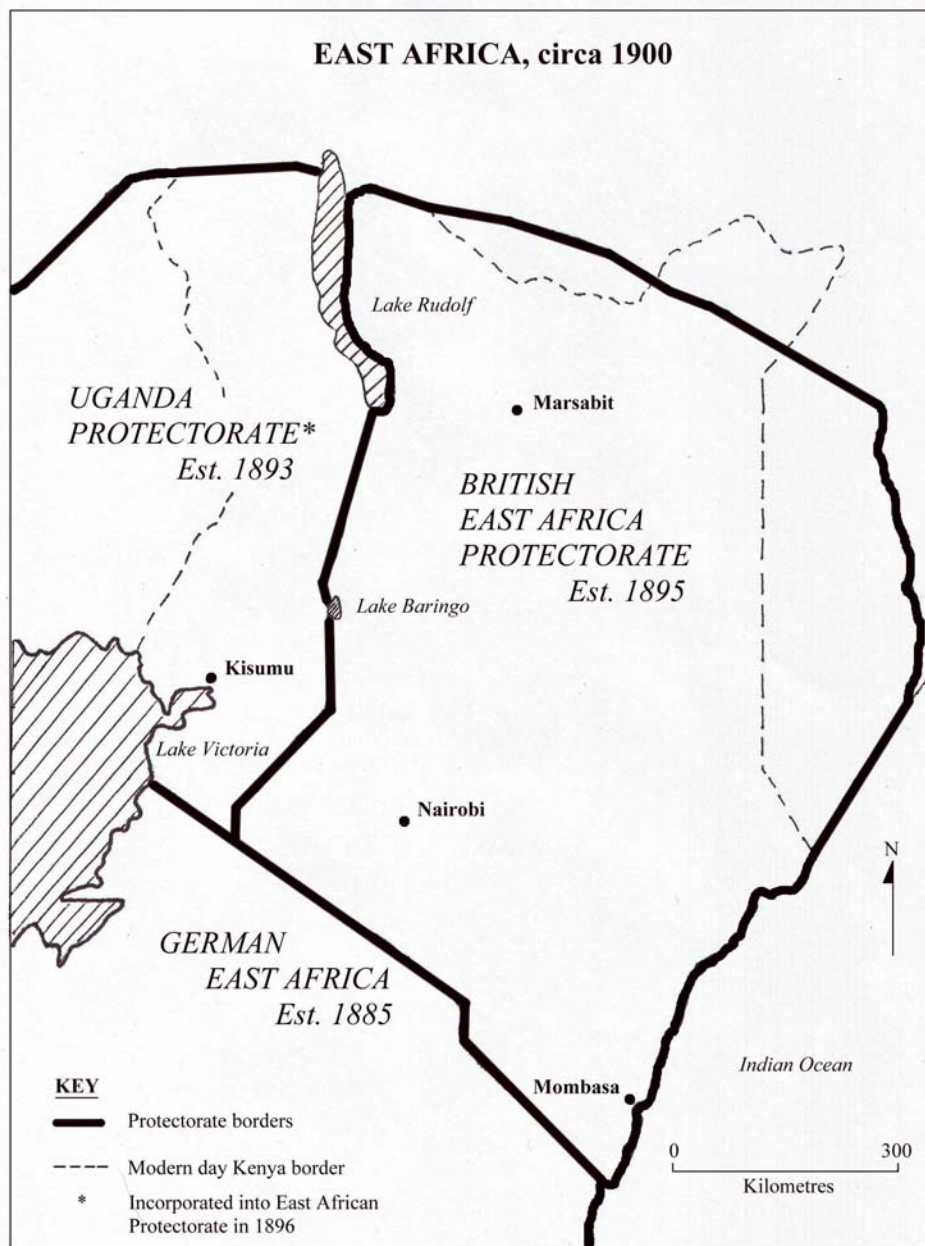


Figure 7

Figure 7. Map of East Africa circa 1900.

argues, it was these earliest and pivotal ways of “seeing” Maasai that have premeditated all modern engagements between Maasai and westerners, and to a large degree, non-Maasai Kenyans.



perceptions of decline, Maasai were busy bouncing back from the brink. They used various strategies to survive that put them in direct and sometimes somewhat desperate contact with non-Maasai neighbors, agro-pastoralist *Maa*-speaking sections, and agents of the newly solidifying Protectorate.<sup>57</sup> These strategies included intermingling and intermarriage with surrounding cultivating communities, debt-pawning children to non-Maasai neighbors,<sup>58</sup> absorption (through marriage, formal traditional adoption, client/patron relations) into agro-pastoralist *Maa*-speaking sections, as well as working for and with colonial officials as levies and cattle raiders/rustlers, and relinquishing orphans to missionaries (Waller 1976).<sup>59</sup> Gender and generational arrangements were most profoundly marked by shifting marital arrangements as women were encouraged to marry into cultivating families, girls were exchanged for food or shelter and were absorbed, clan

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<sup>57</sup> Whether agro-pastoralist *Maa* speaking sections would have self-identified as “Maasai” or been understood as “Maasai” by other non-Maasai and Maasai themselves is unclear, and, according to Hodgson (2001a), so is the historical record. The implication from Waller in his description of this time is that a more clearly defined group of people known as “Maasai” intentionally sought refuge with groups who were not Maasai and those who spoke *Maa* but were nonetheless not regarded as clearly “Maasai.” One of the elderly women Hodgson interviewed identified herself as “Dorobo” as she told her father’s story of *Emutai* and how he encouraged her to “sell’ herself to another family and then runaway” (2001a, 37). Dorobo is a complex identity that means many things, including someone who is a “poor Maasai” (no cattle), a hunter-gather who speaks a dialect of *Maa*, a derogatory term in *Maa* to refer to someone who is lowly or unclean, and others. In short, it is very hard to say exactly because the Maasai point of view recorded in this period is almost non-existent (Hodgson 2001a), but the suggestion is the *Maa*-speaking groups who absorbed the “Maasai” were peoples who, through the benefits of sedentarization and mixed pastoralism, had the means to take on new mouths to feed in the face of massive epizootics.

<sup>58</sup> Debt-pawning (pawnage, pawn slavery) is the practice of exchanging children (sometimes wives) for goods or services to pay off debt in times of extreme hardship. The practice is a global historical phenomena and therefore not limited to Africa, but there is a body of research on debt-pawning in African history. See Waller (1976) for references to Maasai contexts.

<sup>59</sup> Levies are conscripts. British recruited Maasai as additional or replacement fighting forces because the colonial cadre was too small. While this was a logistical matter, it was also a state-building regime; Maasai raided/rustled stock from communities the British wanted to target some of which was then redistributed by British administrators to buy favors among “friendly” indigenous leaders (Lonsdale and Berman 1979).

endogamy was relaxed, bridewealth payments were reduced, boys and youth were hired out as herders and married elsewhere, and elopement was fairly common (Hodgson 2001a).<sup>60</sup>

It was not unprecedented for Maasai social forms to be intermeshed with other African groups in times of social crisis. Throughout the period of Maasai expansion prior to the *Emuati* and the Scramble, “boundaries between pastoralists, cultivators, and hunters in the Rift Valley region were permeable, constantly shifting, and subject to continuous redefinition” and alliances with non-Maasai neighbors were based on long-standing ties of reciprocity (Waller 1993, 226). Hodgson’s work bears this out as well. These strategic relations with the new-coming Europeans, however, would mark the beginning of a complex engagement “in a new and potentially hostile world” as the colonialists were in the initial throes of developing the Protectorate as a capitalist venture and missionary recruiting ground (Waller 1993, 227). In the face of colonial attempts to consolidate and control and in their own attempts to reassert themselves after the disasters, African resiliency and responsiveness based in collaboration and cross-frontier networks were compromised and transformed as “identities also became more exclusive and, in some cases, bitterly contentious. Imprecisely drawn boundaries hardened and became policed borders that divided rather than united communities on either side” (Waller 1993, 227).

As a result of these circumstances, Maasai modes of production, processes of social reproduction, frontier relations with non-Maasai neighbors, and spatial locations were sporadically reoriented and reorganized as some pastoralists relied on old ties to ‘take up the plow’ alongside their cultivating neighbors; some began a sustained engagement with *wazungu* (Europeans) in various capacities, and some looked inward to solidify a defiant and sure “Maasiness” in the face of new threats. And some did all three, and more. Hodgson argues that as ethnic identity might have

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<sup>60</sup> Hodgson (2001a) documents Maasai prostitution in settled towns at this time as well.

been hardening for some, identities were intersectional and variously shifting. She clarifies that at this time in Maasai history:

...the social patterns and cycles of aging, forging new relationships through marriage and birth, constituting and reconstituting households and homesteads, negotiating rights and responsibilities, and ensuring the well-being of one's family and community, all convey a sense of shifting, intricate relations of power. Moreover, they indicate that there is no homogenous Maasai "woman" or Maasai "man," rather women and men of different ages, social statuses, and so forth whose interactions, both ideal and real, vary considerably (39).

Perhaps it was the very flexibility of identities as they may have been perceived by Maasai (and others) that helped to determine the strategies they employed; perhaps they were motivated by sheer desperation. Nonetheless, Waller (1976) and others have argued that Maasai understood that these strategies of forging potentially risky alliances were expedient solutions aimed toward returning to a 'pure' pastoral existence. In other words, to regroup in ways that solidified pastoral specialization. As history unfolded, these entanglements would prove to be pivotal in the colonial policies toward Maasai and within Maasai communities as the colonial state itself formed and gendered and generational social forms also shifted during the encounter (Hodgson 2001a).

It was during these years (late 1890s through the early 1900s) of Maasai recovery with their political economy in varying degrees of disarray and social forms complicated and compromised, that British officials sought in earnest to incorporate the Protectorate into the world capitalist economy. The strategy would be to consolidate the colonial state around large-scale export agriculture by populating the most arable land in the Protectorate with productive settlers in order to finance the greater imperial project (Holmquist et al. 1994; Lonsdale and Berman 1979; Hughes 2007). This decision had incalculable ramifications for Maasai futures because Maasai had historically held sway over the fertile land in the central highlands that the British saw as a

means of unexploited profit, but also as a region of tropical Africa that seemed hospitable for sustained European settlement.

### *B. Colonial Moves*

As a result of the Scramble, by the century's turn, Europeans claimed 90% of all the land that made up Africa. The processes of globalization ignited by the trade in goods—including people—between the continent of Africa and the rest of the world for centuries was gradually codified and legitimized by imperialist logics. African social formations and modes of production all over the continent had always been dynamic, as all social arrangements are, but the institutionalization of imperialism radically and complexly transformed these forms throughout the colonial period (Waller 1993). In the EAP, as elsewhere, this historical fluidity was now situated in a new milieu of modernity characterized by the rationalized administration of seemingly chaotic subjectivities as colonial officials struggled to manage the contradictions of colonial capitalism (Hodgson 2001a; Scott 1998; Lonsdale and Berman 1979).<sup>61</sup>

At this point, in the first decade after the turn of the century, British agents were practically convinced of both the demographic decline of Maasai and the relative emptiness (*“tableau rosa”*), availability, and attractiveness of the highlands (Coast 2000; Hughes 2006). The early Maasai/British relations forged during the years of first contact when Maasai were at their political weakest, can be read from two angles that together set the stage for the colonial moves that followed. For Maasai, these relations were among a repertoire of adaptive practices necessary for survival that were also couched in Maasai prophecy that white men would come to Maasailand but

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<sup>61</sup> See Hodgson's (2001a) analytic “categories of control” and her extended analysis of the “the most enduring achievement of the British during the pre-World War II period”—the formation of the “Maasai tribe” and “Maasai land” in Tanganyika after their takeover from the Germans in 1916.

then leave without staying for very long (Hughes 2006; Waller 1976). In what was understood as the short term then, the alliances suited their needs for restocking and fortifying their communities. For the British, early relations with Maasai both created, and resulted from, specific processes of consolidating a capitalist colonial state by articulating already existing African modes of production with imported settler regimes through large-holder commercial agriculture and the state/owner/labor regimes these relations require (Lonsdale and Berman 1979; Waller 1976). These processes required the state to create the conditions for which settlers could be effectively recruited to the colony in order to participate, unencumbered, in the commercial imperialist project.

As part of this complex meta-history, what then are the specific details through which we might read the culmination of the term Maasai and the subjective condition of being Maasai throughout this period? What events contributed to the formation of Kenya's colonial political economy and how is Maasai historiography implicated in these processes? What institutions were created in the colonial period that shape those that emerge in the postcolonial present, particularly those formations that influenced gender dynamics and relations between women and men? As noted, the dynamics of coalescence/dispersal of Maasai identity and socio-political forms had been in process long before the British came to the continent insofar as groups of people and modes of production had intermixed in complex ways throughout time across the region. The colonialists, however, read in these historic fluctuations and their various aftermaths, indications of social disarray and opportunities to impose order and control. For Maasai as other African communities, the broad-brush strokes of the colonial response systematically changed, among other social forms, the relationships between the young and the old and men and women. Complementary to their own cultural understandings of effective family forms, "administrators began to exert more energy toward preserving family stability under the strong rule of fathers and husbands" (Shadle 2006, 50).

In the Maasai case, policies aimed at this degree of social control could not be implemented as long as nomadic pastoralism continued to evade administration.<sup>62</sup>

Settling on moments that singularly define this array of social change is difficult given the imbroglia of Maasai/Kenyan/African histories. At the same time, it is clear that two central historical watershed moments of the colonial period help to explain, in part, the culmination of a monolithic “Maasai” identity, social forms, and political economies which obtain today. These events are typically referred to as the “Anglo-Maasai Agreements.” These two treaties or agreements were made between British colonial officials, white settlers (in the case of the 1911 Agreement) and Maasai representatives during the formative years of the EAP.<sup>63</sup> The first agreement was made in 1904 and established one reserve to the north on the Laikipia Plateau (referred to by Maasai as *Entorror*) and one in the south.<sup>64</sup> Around this time (1907), the colonial capital was moved from Mombasa to *enkare nyirobi*, “the place of cool waters,” at the center of Maasailand.<sup>65</sup> The 1904 agreement was broken by the second agreement, signed in 1911, although the movement of people and livestock from the northern plateau to the southern lowlands lasted

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<sup>62</sup> Nomadism fundamentally evades what James Scott (1998) has called the “legiblizng” forces of (high) modernity.

<sup>63</sup> Agreement is usually in quotation marks to indicate the contestation around the question of whether and if Maasai may or may not have been “in agreement.” They were certainly not consulted. Maasai political structure is not centrally commanded by a king or head of state, but rather, dispersed among junior elders (*il-payani*) and sometimes influential age-set spokesmen (*ol-aiguenani*) who are selected among their *il-murran* (warrior) cohort had some voice in decision-making. The British assumed that ritual leaders and prophets (*Il-oibon*) acted as representatives for all Maasai, and tapped the prominent Laibon (anglicized) Olonanna (Lenana in English) as the Maasai “chief.” Olonanna did not dissuade the British of his relevance as chief. He “signed” on the behalf of the Maasai, although he did not have the authority or remit to do so (Waller 1976; Hughes 2006; 2007).

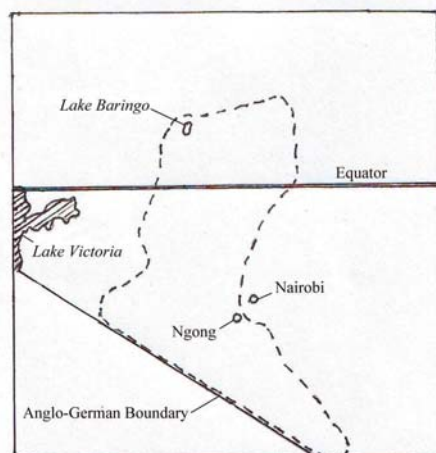
<sup>64</sup> The 1904 agreement stipulated that if Maasai moved to the two reserves as they had been carved out by the state, that they could live there unmolested for “as long as the Masai as a race shall live” (Hughes 2006).

<sup>65</sup> “*Enkare nyirobi*” is a *Maa* expression, anglicized as “Nairobi.”

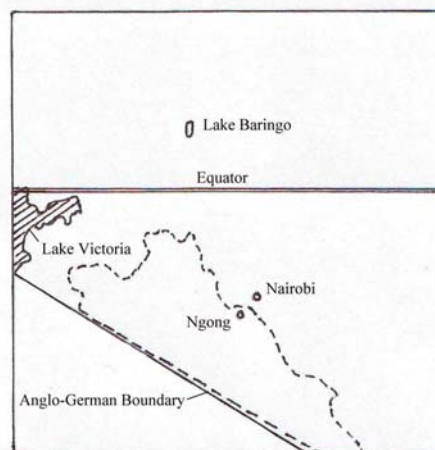
until 1913. It is estimated that 10,000 people, 200,000 cattle, and 50,000 sheep were evicted from the northern reserve and forced to join the Maasai already living in the south (Archambault 2007). In the wake of the second agreement and the attendant moves, extending the boundaries of the southern reserve formed a single Maasai Reserve [See Figure 8]. This process of political and geographic marginalization was concomitant to the growing consolidation of the colonial state (Kantai 2007).

From the perspective of state, and subject, formation, “the history of the Maasai in [German and British] spheres of influence became one of peripherization” (Kipury 1989; Rigby 1985). Alternatively, it is possible to argue that relegating Maasai to the periphery of the burgeoning capitalist state early in its formation by removing them from the fertile highlands made Maasai marginality *central* to state formation. In this sense, early British-Maasai relations make the gathering consolidation of the colonial state *possible*. The making of Maasailand was a simultaneous co-production of the making of the infamous White Highlands of central Kenya: “The fact that British East Africa soon became a ‘settler community’ set it on a collision course with the Maasai” (Hughes 2006, 15). In other words, the practical creation and discursive construction of White settler production and colonial administration in the East Africa Protectorate was largely contingent upon the practical creation of a Maasai Reserve and the discursive construction of “the Maasai” as a discreet socio-cultural form of ‘pure’ and ‘patriarchal’ pastoralists who were, it was assumed, in

### Maasai Territory Before the Moves



### Maasai Territory Post-1911



Adapted from Hughes (2006)

FIGURE 8

Figure 8. Maps of Maasai Territory Before the Moves, Maasai Territory Post-1911.



demographic decline anyway (Hodgson 2001a).<sup>66</sup>

The expropriation of Maasai land by “foreigners” (Europeans and non-Maasai Africans) in what became the White Highlands and throughout the original rangelands, remains integral to Maasai modernity—and marginalization—up to today (Campbell 1993; Hughes 2006; Kantai 2007).<sup>67</sup> As Lotte Hughes (2007) unequivocally argues, “If the Maasai moves had never happened, the map and history of Kenya would have been completely different — socio-economically, politically, spatially and environmentally” (Hughes 2007, 222). Moving the Maasai enabled the Crown to align state-centric political, economic, and geographic interests by alienating the most arable land for commercial agriculture, appeasing settlers to create the structural economic backbone of the emerging state, cultivating favor with lineage heads among the neighboring Kikuyu by removing the threat of Maasai raiding and retaliation for cultivating the range, creating a literal space to buffer pastoral competition with European ranching, curtailing the spread of ‘native’ stock disease and creating a ‘safe’ ranching zone for settlers, corralling Maasai for easier taxation, and demilitarizing the warriors classes to decrease conflict (Gorham 1980; Kituyi 1990; Hodgson 2001a; Hughes 2006, 2007).<sup>68</sup> With one policy—moving the Maasai—colonial officials made inroads toward reducing the affective contradictions of creating the conditions for capitalist

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<sup>66</sup> Waller (1993, 251) says in note #25: “The DC Narok, noting that Maasai did not take to agriculture, stated bluntly that those who had *shambas* were not pure Maasai (*NDAR*, 1939). Belief in the axiom: Maasai=pastoral was widely shared by administrators and ethnographers alike—see Tidrick (1980).” Hodgson’s research on Maasai and the formation of Tanganyika and then Tanzania suggest similar circumstances for Maasai who resided on the land that became the EAP and then Kenya.

<sup>67</sup> The result of the two moves and the later forced moves of the Uas Nkishu from a reserve at Eldama Ravine and the Momonyot of the Loldaika Hills to Trans Mara (in Narok district), Maasai lost 50% of the land they ranged in 1895, and some estimates increase this percentage to 70 (Hughes 2006, 6).

<sup>68</sup> In 1912 the Hut and Poll Tax was instituted in the new reserve.

accumulations and commanding social cohesion and control. At the same time, the deployment of this policy permanently undermined Maasai relations of production and social reproduction by cutting herders off from dry-season range and drought preserve and altered identities by codifying land alienation as a strategy that officials not only thought to benefit Maasai communities, but believed Maasai themselves agreed to (Hughes 2006).<sup>69</sup>

Concomitantly, the formation of the permanent southern reserve also made other facets of state-formation, notably the creation of ‘modern’ subjects, a more ostensibly manageable affair. As Hodgson has discussed with respect to Maasai who were incorporated into British Tanganyika in 1916, the creation of certain subject categories necessary for the maintenance of the modern state—headman, household head, taxpayer, livestock owner, conscript, pupil, and so on—relied on three significant colonial interventions: 1) creating the Maasai reserve as a geo-political space for ‘pure’ pastoralism (while subsequently excising arable land for settlers) 2) premising indirect rule on “broadening and deepening [elder male] control over junior men and women” by extending their customary roles in the political-economic administration of community affairs to direct mediation

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<sup>69</sup> Beyond the scope of this chapter, Lotte Hughes’ *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure* (2006) details the myriad contestations around the moves from within Maasai leadership and rank and file, among British administrators, dissidents, and settlers, and countless others involved in the imperial pursuit. Not everyone was in agreement about how or why, or even if, the second move should occur. Among the complexities that her research highlights is the real possibility that Maasai elders believed that the settlers they negotiated with were government officials and that even before the legal state-defined 1911 agreement was codified, they had made a blood oath that framed their understanding of the events and their implications. Her analysis of the ‘men on the spot’ as well as the Foreign Office and Colonial Office and dissidents both in England and in Kenya also unhinges any notion of a concerted colonial consciousness about the moves, Maasai in general, and Maasai development policy in particular. She argues that Maasai most likely did not fully understand the implications of the 1904 agreement, and that the 1911 agreement was “certainly forced upon largely unwilling signatories, some of whom, notably ole Gilisho, had received threats from British officials which they took very seriously. The age-set spokesman clearly saw the implications of the second Agreement for the first, likening the latter to ‘a broken weapon which is finished with.’ All the available evidence belies Lewis Harcourt’s confident claim to the House of Commons in July 1911 when Secretary of State for the Colonies: ‘The Masai came to a unanimous and even enthusiastic decision to move to the Southern Reserve’” (Hughes 2006, 172-173).

of colonial policy and 3) monetarizing trade/implementing taxation and commodifying the pastoral means of production (livestock and land) and in so doing, recreating male elders as economic actors (albeit peripheral ones) which replaced female-dominated barter trade while rendering women as 'dependants' or completely invisible as subjects at all.<sup>70</sup> These regimes permanently altered aspects of Maasai relations between women and men and between elders and juniors.

Maasai social structure had already established intergenerational mechanisms of control based on the age-set and age-grade system (Talle 1988).<sup>71</sup> Although Maasai are divided into clans, male-only corporate age-sets (*ol-aji*, *pl. il-ajjik*) cut across clan structures. Once a boy (*ol-ayoni*, *pl. il-ayio*) is circumcised around 14-15 years old, he enters the age-set system. The circumcision period will be open for 3-4 years while boys all over Maasailand in every clan are circumcised. Then the circumcision period ends; it is not opened to new initiates until the current cohort moves on to the next age-grade.<sup>72</sup> Each age-set is divided into the right hand (*e-murata etatene*) and left

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<sup>70</sup> Hodgson details policies designed to teach circumcised 'adult' Maasai men to use money and the marketplace, how to be cattle owners (and not just keepers), and how to be heads of their households in the western sense.

<sup>71</sup> All of the details regarding Maasai age-set/grade structure come from Talle (1988). See her book, *Women at a Loss*, for detailed analysis of Maasai social structure and its gendered and gendering components. In my research, none of this was ever made reference to. I think this is the case for two reasons: 1) because 'moranism' or warriorhood is nonexistent in Ngong division and 2) because I spoke to young, school-going girls who are as far outside of this system as any Maasai can get. Research that explicitly ascertains how salient these structures still are, I concede, would be brought to the fore more easily by interviewing boys, young men, and their fathers. I asked David Kilusu if he thought his sons (11, 9, and 4 in 2007) would be associated with an age-set and he said he thought they would insofar as they would all be circumcised, but that neither the name nor the structure itself would have much significance in terms of warriorhood. In 2007-2008 when I was in Kenya, so was Aud Talle. She was doing follow-up research near Kajiado Town twenty years after her research for *Women at a Loss*.

<sup>72</sup> An age-set is the singularly named group of men who were circumcised together (although not literally, but in the same circumcision cycle) and move corporately through the male-only age-grades together. Age-grades are structural features that delineate differential status positions *within* the age-set. For example, being a 'warrior' is an age-grade that is distinguished from being a junior elder (graduated warriors) age-grade.

hand (*e-murata ekedianye*) circumcisions groups.<sup>73</sup> At this stage, both groups of men are designated as members of the “warrior” (*il-murran*, *pl. ol-murran*) age-grade, with the left hand group considered junior warriors and the right hand, senior warriors. New warriors were typically younger than 25 years old. Warriorhood lasted for approximately five years. During this time, the left-hand group would advance through the *Eunoto* ceremony from junior to senior warriors. Senior warriors were typically 25-35 years old.<sup>74</sup>

The age-set is not given a common name that defines this particular group until they pass through the *Olng’esherr* ceremony which unites the two ‘hands’ into one and promotes senior warriors to junior elders. Once named, the age-set remains closely attached throughout their lives and constitutes the decision-making bodies in their communities.<sup>75</sup> Among the newly named age-set, a spokesman (*ol-aiguenani*, *pl. il-aiguenak*) is elected. Senior warriors are mentored through this stage by their immediate superiors, the junior elders who are known as their firestick patrons (*ol-piron*, *pl. il-pironito*). This structural relationship between elder and junior men weakens agnatic and affinal ties and creates new ‘kinship’ bonds of control as firestick patrons become the ‘fathers’ to their new ‘sons,’ the warriors.<sup>76</sup> Generational ties of authority were built into these arrangements; essentially, warriors worked for their elders, primarily by raiding cattle that they

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<sup>73</sup> The right hand is slightly older and slightly superior to the left hand group.

<sup>74</sup> I do not know if *Eunoto* is still practiced among those Maasai communities that still have *il-murran*. There were no *il-murran* groups in *Ngong* division. The *Eunoto* ceremony has historically been a very important ritual occasion for the mother of a son. The graduating warrior’s mother is central to the ritual. Talle (1988) describes a triangle of power relations around this passage: the senior warriors and junior elders involved represent authority, the junior warrior represents strength, and the mother represents fertility/fecundity (the woman’s greatest asset). See Talle (1988) for more details.

<sup>75</sup> It is precisely this close netting of friendship and reciprocity that has been, and is being, unwound by development, particularly the institutions of schooling and organized religion (Christianity, primarily).

<sup>76</sup> Junior elders are approximately 35-50 years old.

would then bring home to their *il-pironito*. Junior men were temporarily deprived of their own resources (access to livestock, access to women) as they could not marry, and could not have sex with ‘women’—circumcised females—and were *de jure* relegated to (nonprocreative) sex with ‘girls’ only, although *de facto* junior men also found lovers among married women.<sup>77</sup>

In Maasai social structure there is no parallel graduated corporate system for females. Girls are associated with the warrior class they danced with (and the singular name that warrior age-set is given when they graduate to junior elders), and then when they marry, women are loosely organized in association with their husbands’ age-set. These associational relations, and also her father’s age-set, determine, for example, which men a woman may greet with her head or her hand.<sup>78</sup> Prior to circumcision, a girl (*entito*, *pl. intoyie*), 10-13 years old, would historically live with

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<sup>77</sup> Talle (2007) writes that in addition to living a pure lifestyle according to food taboos (only milk, meat, fat, and blood and no meat seen by a married woman), *il-murran* were (and perhaps still are in areas where *il-murran* traditions are still strong) socially and morally obligated to have sex with young girls because in traditional Maasai cosmology, warrior semen is understood as necessary for young girls to physically mature. *Intoyie* (uncircumcised prepubescent girls, “sweethearts,” in the age ranges of 10-14, because pre-circumcision pregnancy was/is an enduringly strong taboo among Maasai) and mothers to the warriors were the only females allowed in the *e-manyatta*, the warrior camp. Young girls went the camps “to dance” with the warriors. They did dance, and they also had sex. The customary taboo against fathers sleeping in the same *enkangiti* with any of his daughters over 10 years old makes sense when one considers that she would likely be sleeping in the *e-manyatta* with other *intoyie* and *il-murran*. *Intoyie* were also the only other people allowed at *opul* (meat camps) besides *il-murran*, although sex was not allowed at meat camps, but girls were allowed to eat meat. When I mentioned all this to Maria, she was indignant and strongly argued that none of this was ever the case. Alice, on the other hand, was not pleased to know this part of her cultural history, but she said that this had been the way of things. As born-again Christians, both Maria, Alice, and other converts I met, had trouble reconciling ‘pre-Christian’ Maasai world views with their contemporary sensibilities.

<sup>78</sup> Adult men do not have such complex social greeting obligations. When a boy is circumcised, he henceforth greets everyone, even elderly men and women, by shaking hands, unless he is greeting a child of either sex or a woman who is his social junior, and then he touches their head lightly and they bow slightly before him. Women, on the other hand, can only shake hands with the men they were associated with as girls in the *e-manyatta*, members of their husband’s age-set, and other women. A woman should never shake the hand of any man in her father’s age-set. A girl should never shake anyone’s hand, except another girl’s or another uncircumcised boy’s. In chapter 4 I discuss my confusion around greeting David Kilusu. It’s possible, that with their 5-7 year age

the newly circumcised *il-murran* (14-18 years old) in the *e-manyatta*. Upon her own circumcision at approximately 13-15 years old, the *entito* becomes *enkanyakau*—a female person who is no longer a girl but who still lives in her father’s house waiting to become her husband’s wife. Once she is married she becomes a wife (*esiankiki*, *pl. isiankikin*), and shortly thereafter, if all goes well, a mother.<sup>79</sup> During her years as wife and mother, a woman’s status does not shift again until her own children are circumcised, and then she might be called “*entast*” (*pl. intasati*), although this denotes a woman beyond childbearing age.<sup>80</sup>

Talle (1988) argues that the structural linkages between alternate age-sets (the *il-pironito* elders and their warrior ‘sons’) created constant elder male control over women and young men. Elder men (not warriors) were the only males allowed to have sex with ‘adult’ (circumcised) women. By monopolizing mature women’s sexuality, elders controlled female procreative resources; if, and often, when, *il-murran* had sex with married women (all women are married), they infringed upon an elder’s property, privileges, and the ordered distribution of authority (Talle 1988).

In very similar ways, the colonial state sought to curtail and control the orderly distribution

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difference that David and my husband might be in the same age-set, and therefore, it is sensible that I would shake his hand. But in practice, it seems that I shook his hand because that is how non-Masai greet one another, so he used this greeting with me from our first meeting.

<sup>79</sup> With motherhood, a woman’s name changes again to that of Mama X, or “the mother of X.” I am not sure if this is a singular Maasai practice, but rather seems common throughout Kenya. It is also not a name shift registered in historical anthropological studies of Maasai. Maria and I interviewed a ‘drop-out’ named Timanto, but when I addressed her as “Timanto” both she and Maria laughed. Maria clarified that “Timanto” was no longer her name “because she is a mother, she is used to responding to Mama Samuel.” Samuel is Timanto’s first born.

<sup>80</sup> Talle (1988) notes that the women she interviewed generally disliked this word because it suggests lack of sexual attractiveness and a ‘past-your-prime’ connotation that they did not appreciate. Another word that she does not use, but Hodgson (2001a) does, is “*Koko*” or grandmother. This was a common expression for obviously elderly women.

of authority by controlling the ‘head’—elder men—who could therefore control the rest of the body politic.<sup>81</sup> Young Maasai men, *il-murran*, (usually from 16-25 years old, junior and senior age-sets) were seen by the state as unruly and maybe even uncontrollable. By allocating additional power to junior and senior elders, the state wanted to strengthen and extend this already embedded control (Hodgson 2001a; Talle 1988). Hodgson (2001a) writes that, “women of all ages were generally missing from the category of ‘Maasai’” in the early colonial period because customary social rules predicted certain behaviors for women and men that led administrators to conclude, not unlike in their own social arrangements, women were seen and not heard.<sup>82</sup> Thus Maasai women (and African women in general despite their pre-colonial roles) were not considered for the related categories created and consolidated by British practices, including ‘taxpayer,’ ‘household head,’ livestock ‘owner,’ ‘buyer,’ ‘seller,’ and ‘native authority.’ As these categories suggest, “the separate domains of the ‘political’ and ‘economic’ promoted by British practices were primarily male domains” (Hodgson 2001a). Maasai elders were able to capitalize on their new-found access to state subjectivity in ways that Maasai women were excluded from (Hodgson 2001a, 72-73).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Also in traditional Maasai cosmology, the man is considered ‘the head’ of the body (social life) and woman is considered ‘the neck.’

<sup>82</sup> Hodgson (2001a) discusses, for example, the social rule in Maasai culture during this time that visitors were to be greeted by their sex/age counterpart. So when ‘elder’ male British officials encountered Maasai, they were greeted by elder male Maasai. Theoretically, if young British girls chanced upon a Maasai homestead, they would be greeted by young Maasai girls. Likewise, she argues, that Maasai men and women generally spent time (working, relaxing, sleeping, eating) separately, there was no power asymmetry implied by the absence of women in a men’s gathering, or *vice versa*. A very similar practice exists today. When I asked why men and women gather together for meetings but sit apart and then reconvene after in separated groups to eat and relax, I was told that it is both habit (“it’s just been the way”) and preference (“women prefer to sit together”) but that no rules governed this practice.

<sup>83</sup> An important dynamic of this gendered asymmetry and dysfunction is that in time, Maasai elders were given the authority to codify customary law according to their own interpretations and interest (Hodgson 2001a).

The creation of these male-defined categories made incorporation into the state uneven in terms of 'ethnic' spatiality and modes of production, but also in terms of gender because women were not initially categorized as pastoralists or potential laborers. Nonetheless, "the establishment of capitalist state production depended upon the appropriation of African land" (Lonsdale and Berman 1979, 500) and the (mis)use of African labor. By an accident of history, Maasai held sway over the most desirable land in the colony. The core of Maasailand became part of the White Highlands, and most profoundly for contemporary political economies of place and ethnicity in Kenya today, the northern and southern edges of Kikuyu pre-colonial encroachment on Maasai territories was absorbed as well. The separation of Africans from their lands as the means of production by the misuse of metropolitan legislation did not impact all African groups equally. Lonsdale and Berman (1979) argue that not all Africans were immediately adversely affected, "save the case of the pastoralists, who suffered immeasurably larger losses than the cultivators" (501). On the contrary, some well-positioned male members of cultivator communities who lived around the edges of Maasailand were able to expand their productive capacity and enlarge their pre-colonial wealth and client base. Once Maasai were removed from the territory, cultivators could actively shrink the frontier areas previously left as defensive boundaries against pastoralist raids. Moreover, under the tutelage of white landowners, tenant farmers could use land that settlers could not afford to plow in order to plant and raise cattle (Lonsdale and Berman 1979). In this process, Maasai dry season rangelands were "turned inside out as African cultivators, the majority of them Kikuyu, now invaded the choicest areas of the pastoral plain under the protection of its new overlords" (500). While Maasai were permanently moved thousands of kilometers away to the southern reserve, some Kikuyu and other cultivating communities had access to the land, even as it was legally appropriated by settlers, and thereby the formation of the state via capitalist market



formations, and thus became “big” men in ways that Maasai were prohibited from until the 1950s (Campbell 1993).

But Maasai/Kikuyu relations at the dawn of colonialism were not defined by rigid categories of “pastoralist” and “cultivator” and territorial demarcations were not unequivocal (Waller 1993). A long history of collaborative social arrangements still existed despite colonial attempts (by creating ‘closed’ reserves, and so on) to separate and control. And although some Kikuyu and members of other cultivating groups did have increased access to land once the Maasai were moved, others among the same groups were left landless and migrated out of the highlands to the relative openness and less-regulated Maasai reserve in order to avoid a new incarnation of oppressive relations by settler and lineage “big men,” including colonial hut tax (forced monetarization) and coerced labor regimes (Kanogo 1987; Waller 1993). Ironically, and forebodingly for the majority of Africans involved, “the articulation of capitalist agriculture to the lineage mode of production through the extraction of labor was in fact facilitated by the very differentiations in African society which were inevitably increased by expanded commodity production” (Lonsdale and Berman 1979, 501). While the state continued to distort the market in favor of settler production, thus creating deep divisions among Africans, social relations among Africans and between Africans and the state were distorted and perhaps permanently transformed.<sup>84</sup>

Within these broad transformations, gendered relations among men and women in cultivating and pastoral (and other) societies were changed; for example, cultivating women, central to the precolonial production and distribution of household consumables and arbiters of trade and commerce, were regulated to ‘subsistence’ while men in these communities were

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<sup>84</sup> For example, when African farmers competed with settlers, the state raised the Hut tax and imposed a Poll tax in order to increase African cost of living (although this actually spurred increased domestic production and wage labor migration instead of reducing productivity). See Lonsdale and Berman (1979).

christened ‘farmers’ engaged in ‘cash cropping’ or ‘laborers’ (Chege and Sifuna 2006). Moreover, the days of Maasai women and traveling traders were coming to an end, and not just because the range was dramatically circumscribed; at this time of state formation in the around, and well into, the turn of the century, “Britons across Africa. . . believed that a properly functioning wage labor system required constraining women’s movements” (Shadle 2006, 50).<sup>85</sup> While production modes differed, both pastoral and cultivator gendered social forms were subject to enforced modifications that generally consolidated (elder) male power and disempowered women (Chege and Sifuna 2006; Hodgson 2001a; Thomas 2001).

As the need to create viable settlements intensified, land alienation to settlers continued. Aggressive policies that undermined both African rights and the legislation in place to protect African access to land were made possible, primarily, by Commissioner Sir Charles Eliot’s misuse of metropolitan policies, in order ensure settler interests at African peril.<sup>86</sup> The eventual migration of marginalized Kikuyu (and other) subsistence famers-*cum*-laborers-for-hire from the highlands would effectively multiply the effects of Maasai marginality and ‘ethnic tensions’ over land resources as the colonial period wore on and spilled over in to independence.

Through the course of the moves to the consolidated southern reserve between 1904 and 1913, Maasai essentially disappeared through the cracks of the colonial state’s attempts to weave

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<sup>85</sup> As Shadle (2006) suggests, women’s movements as both laborers and sexual actors were constrained by colonial policy that further entrenched male (father, husband, and brother) control over women and girls.

<sup>86</sup> The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 was pivotal legislation for colonial land grabbing because it prevented the selling of (stolen) land to non-Europeans, scholars argue, primarily to prevent Indians from competing with Whites. As result, nearly 6000 square miles of land was alienated up to 1915. Maasai were not the only community affected; Kikuyu lost 60,000 acres north of Nairobi to white settlers (Rutten 1992). It is also clear that the legislation was manipulated and misused by the second Commission to the EAP, Charles Eliot, who sided with settler interests. With these maneuvers we see how the tensions between settler and metropolitan interests fueled African land alienation. See Hughes (2006) for more details, Rutten (1992) for a clear summary.

together a productive and lucrative fabric of peasant and settler political economies based on agriculture. As Hughes notes, “Maasai became pawns in that struggle [between the metropole and settlers] largely because where they were on the map and how their lifestyle, cattle economy and economic contribution to the state were perceived” (2006, 16). Pastoralists are not peasants in the sense that settled subsistence farmers are (Ellis 1993; Hughes 2006). Pastoralism was regarded a primitive mode of production, and it did not fit the “overload-peasant model” of most colonial relations (Hughes 2006, 16). Accumulation through large-holder export agriculture was favored by the metropole, settlers with investments in large estates, and lineage heads among the cultivating communities who saw ways to leverage customary clientelism for capitalist production (Lonsdale and Berman 1979). Land—a primary and pivotal means of production for Africans and colonists—was deemed most appropriately used for large-scale agriculture and household production. In the context of colonial attempts to leverage and merge competing economic modes around agriculture and given the ‘outsider/other’ status of the pastoralist economy, the Maasai Moves physically manifested their marginalization throughout the colonial period. They were effectively removed from both the economic and political forms of intermeshing and entrenching capitalist systems. Pastoralism was not articulated, but outcast, regulated to the edges of the central landscape as an irrational cultural enterprise inconsistent with more remunerative exploits.

As Lonsdale and Berman (1979) make clear, “the authority of the young colonial state came to rest upon a compatibility of interests between the big men of both peasant and capitalist production” (500). Falling into neither category, pastoralists were not to become “big men’ in the way cultivators did for decades to come. This delay has historical implications for Maasai political economy within the postcolonial state in their continuing clashes with settler descendants and cultivator communities over land and resources associated with continuing a pastoral livelihood.

Ironically, the making of modern subjects out of Maasai herdsmen was a result of the centrality of their marginality to the state rather than their participation in, or incorporation by, the state. As Maasai herdsmen were removed from direct integration into the colonial state by the moves and later only marginally integrated into the larger economy by monetarization and commodification, women were removed or separated from customary access, roles, rights, and responsibilities by their new category as invisible dependant.

The moves ended long-range land use and livelihood systems between the dry- and wet-season pastures and watering holes and effectively transformed Maasai nomadism into dry-land only modified semi-sedentarization, and even this is still being systematically eroded as history unfolds.

Lonsdale and Berman (1992) argue that,

White settlement would pin down pastoralism, the way of life that kept Africans idle, unnervingly on the move, and impervious to the benefits and constraints of civilization. The politics of conquest was brought symbolically to an end with the Maasai moves of 1904 and 1911. These fenced pastoralism out of the best grazing of the Rift while fencing capitalist ranching in (qtd in Hughes 2006, 17).

Pastoral inarticulation was magnified as the colonial period played out toward independence as land shortages, labor exploitation, and the increasing demands of monetarization and commodification drove more and more disenfranchised cultivators out of the highlands into the rangelands of the new reserve where Maasai sections were struggling to reconstitute their society in a new and environment and amidst colonial policies that significantly curtailed their efforts. Not all Maasai in the south were new; some sections, like the Keekonyokie in northern Kajiado, and the Mataputo, Kisongo, and Loita in the southern reaches of Kenya, had historically lived in the region. Still, all Maasai sections had to contend with what amounted to a massive increase in population over the span of ten years, decreased grazing pasture and water sources for human and livestock, increased concentrations and incidences of livestock disease, and very little state infrastructural support

despite the promises made in agreements. As the next chapter will elucidate, the sporadic and largely irrelevant government sponsored education available in the reserve neither offered Maasai attractive or achievable alternatives to pastoralism nor equipped them for employment outside of the reserve in the larger colonial economy.

### *C. Conflicted change and mid-century migrations*

Moving the Maasai from their historical rangelands to one consolidated reserve in the southern-most arid lands of the Protectorate determined all state subsequent state intervention. Colonial administrators believed Maasai were in rapid demographic decline, and thus they were confident that the southern reserve gave Maasai herdsman more than adequate space to practice pastoralism (Campbell 1993; Hughes 2006). These beliefs were steeped in misperceptions of pastoral resiliency, the imperatives of the civilizing/modernizing mission, and the interests of the ever-growing capitalist state apparatus. Adapting to the new circumstances of reduced range, loss of water sources, and increased population densities, Maasai social, political and economic forms both continued and changed. Maasai identity was as much up for grabs as it had ever been, although the moniker of “marginal” held because pastoralism was not easily or affirmatively articulated with capitalist interests and state efforts.

This process of Maasai marginalization embedded in the centrality of state formation was deepened by exclusionary policies regarding the reserve. In 1906, two years after the first Maasai move, the Outlying Districts Ordinance (ODO) declared the Maasai reserve a “closed district” to which entry was allowed only under permit and “foreign” (Kikuyu) squatters were not to be tolerated (Hughes 2005; Waller 1993). While rhetorically rooted in colonial efforts to ‘protect’ Maasai lifeways and honor the 1904 agreement, the 1911 agreement disabled earlier promises (Hughes 2006), further instantiated a policy of exclusion and cut off Maasailand from the capitalist

transformation of the rest of the colony. Moreover, the agreement legally and geographically substantiated the idea that Maasai, as an “ethnic” identity, would necessarily be ‘other’ (as in separated from) to the mainstream. Practically however, in the early years of the colony between the wars and through the 1930s, the ODO was only sporadically implemented and some Maasai benefitted from its weak administration just as some Kikuyu benefitted from new capitalist structures. Indeed, in these processes male elders of both groups were able to consolidate certain powers over their dependents (women, children, and laborers) and reify what Hodgson calls the “myth of the patriarchal pastoralist” (2001a).

In the period between the culmination of the moves through the eve of the Emergency, life in the Maasai reserve was thus dominated by negotiating the tumultuous social changes imposed by colonial occupation.<sup>87</sup> Among these changes, those associated with land use and pastoral and agricultural production, and the attendant attitudes and ideologies of land, ownership and community, were perhaps the most profound and enduring. Concomitantly, many Maasai, particularly those who moved from Laikipia, did not expect the government to “follow them south” (Hughes 2006). Early in this period, dismayed by their stock and human losses during the long forced move of 1911-1913, a group of illiterate elders from the ‘northern’ sections hired British lawyers and brought suit against the colonial government in the British High Court. The suit was lost on a technicality, and with it, the beginning of widespread Maasai distrust in government processes.

Meanwhile, drought raged. In 1916 cattle disease outbreak created havoc, and a year later the government imposed a quarantine on the movement of Maasai herds that would last through to

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<sup>87</sup> The Mau Mau dawned with wide-spread violence on white-owned estates in the central highlands. A State of Emergency was declared in 1952 and lasted until 1960.

the 1930s. Throughout this time the settler “livestock lobby sought to discourage the expenditure of government revenue” on Maasai pastoralism because ranchers did not want to compete with Maasai on the open market (Gorham 1980). Consequently, colonial administrators did not make veterinary assistance available, or when it was, it was ineffective, deleterious (inoculations were incorrect and ended up infecting previously healthy herds), or too expensive given the relative shortage of cash in the reserve and the paucity of opportunities for earning it (Gorham 1980). Reduced range and quarantine intensified the effects of drought and livestock disease as customary recovery strategies could not be enacted. These threats to livelihood, in combination with human losses to malaria (which was either unknown or not prevalent in the north; thus those who came south in the second move did not have resistance) increased Maasai resistance to and alienation from the colonial state. Simultaneously, during this period, the opening of the highlands to settler ownership and large-scale commercial agricultural production sent a concomitant ripple through highland cultivating communities and likewise, pastoralist-peasant social arrangements. Kikuyu migration out of the White highlands into the better-watered areas of the reserve continued as it had since the settler influx despite new restrictions, but between the wars the nature and extent of migration patterns changed (Waller 1993). Negotiating space, identity, and commodifying relations with immigrants were added to the mounting struggles of the time.

Prior to colonization and early into the century, Kikuyu immigrants had been traditionally and formally “adopted” into Maasai communities and thereby “reborn” as Maasai (Waller 1993). In this new wave of immigration post-1911, “distinct enclaves of Kikuyu settlement” formed. Cultivators, along with their families and stock, became contracted labors, even tenant or squatters, within the Maasai reserve (Waller 1993). These arrangements underlined conflicting understandings of land (as territory) that drew fairly sharp distinctions between “Maasai-ness” as pastoral and “Kikuyu-ness” as agrarian that served to reinforce colonial perceptions of pastoralism as

an economic system at odds with capitalist schemes. Contrary to ‘rational’ European practices of ranching, farming, and land tenure, Maasai understood livestock, and not land, to be the means of production in the pastoral economy (Campbell 1993). In this schema, accumulation depended on growing herds and allocating stock for the formation of kinship and friendship ties and developing social status. Moreover, Maasai saw land as shared territory that could not be owned by any one person, much less traded or sold, but as a communal resource, the use of which was governed by the ways in which stock, and status, were distributed. In these ways, the use of land “conferred no rights” to that land (Waller 1993, 233).<sup>88</sup>

Kikuyu, on the other hand, worked from a pioneering tradition whereby those who cleared and used any land frontier to current settlement had customary rights to that land for lineage purposes (Waller 1993).<sup>89</sup> Within this set of conflictual relations, old patterns of collaboration and exchange remained, but steadily deteriorated as colonial restrictions on migration tightened, in part because of complete land gridlock in the highlands. Maasai economic stability was already destabilized by drought and disease. It was increasingly threatened by autonomous Kikuyu

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<sup>88</sup> This ‘traditional’ or customary ideology about land has been amended by market ideology and juridical possibilities. As early as 1913 a group of illiterate elders, spear-headed by Maasai folk-hero and age-set spokesman Parasaloi ole Gilisho, hired Mombasa-based British lawyers and brought the first suit in East Africa by an indigenous group against a colonial government to the British High Court. They demanded compensation for stock losses and depreciation in remaining stock values precipitated by the second move which took over two years to complete. They claimed the treaty did not bind ‘northern’ Maasai (Laikipia and Purko, mainly) who had not signed it. The suit was thrown out on a technicality. Hughes (2006) argues that much of the conflict, contestation, and mistrust between Maasai, the colonial state, and the settlers post-1911 is seeded in Maasai anger and frustrations over being forcible moved from the “sweet place,” *Entorror*, on the Laikipia Plains.

<sup>89</sup> And this besides, the situation for landless Kikuyu was dire. By the 1940s, “there was simply no room in Kikuyuland for squatters who had often migrated to the Rift decades before and who now had no effective land rights ‘at home’” (Waller 1993, 235). See Waller (1993) for a detailed analysis of Kikuyu settlement in Maasailand.



settlement patterns, even as some already well-positioned Maasai benefitted from Kikuyu labor,<sup>90</sup> while Maasai identity, Waller argues, was perhaps even more embattled: “Kikuyu settlement was a central issue not just because it seemed to threaten the integrity of Maasailand but because of the serious questions that immigrants, as ambiguous ‘others,’ raised about alternative constructions of Maasai-ness (Waller 1993, 248).

British officers played on Maasai concern over further land loss to “obtain general assent to their policy of exclusion and expulsion” (Waller 1993, 239) and thereby “nurtured an enduring obsession with boundaries, promised land, and exclusivity” that have implications for land use and development policies then as now. By 1930, although Maasai had restored their herds and reportedly had more cattle than at anytime in their history (Campbell 1993), the pastoral economy stagnated (Waller 1993, same volume).<sup>91</sup> As was argued in the previous section, stock rebounds had little direct bearing on colonial accumulation largely because Maasai production was not articulated with the larger colonial economy but ran alongside the cohering state. Maasai did not restore their herds in order to participate in the market, although they were willing to sell animals when a competitive price was offered (Campbell 1993). Instead, Maasai perceptions of land use and stock maintenance remained grounded in the subsistence pastoral worldview. As Campbell (1993) clarifies, for Maasai:

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<sup>90</sup> As will be mentioned in Chapter 2, Maasai also put Kikuyu children to use against state policy by passing them off as their own when the state inflicted quotas to force Maasai to school. Ironically, of course, “real” Kikuyu access to education (as well as these incidents of “false Maasai”) quickly outstripped Maasai, and access to the wider colonial economy was quickened for those who were even marginally educated. I recall Wangari Maathai’s narratives of her father, a laborer on a settler farm, who petitioned his boss to build a school for African children so that his children, including Wangari, would be educated. See Maathai, *Unbowed* (2006), for the complete story.

<sup>91</sup> And some individual Maasai had become quite wealthy in livestock, land, laborers, commercial wheat farms, and wildlife/tourism, although these riches have never been equitably shared beyond individual families and county councils.

The land was traditionally seen as a communal territory containing resources rather than as a resource that could be appropriated by individuals. The use of territory was governed by social and political conventions designed to reduce the risks associated with the unpredictable climate of the semi-arid environment . . . [Similarly] Livestock had several roles within the Maasai system. The most important was to provide subsistence. Given the frequency of drought and disease, Maasai attempted to increase their herds in good years to protect against the anticipated losses in bad years” (258, 260).

During this period, against a backdrop of recurring extreme drought conditions and grazing and marketing restrictions, debates about how to develop Maasailand hinged on social change and land-use. As Waller (1993) evocatively states “Even if only in order to force them to take a more effective part in supporting the colonial state, the Maasai would have been developed” (240). As the colonial period wore on and exclusivity in the Maasai reserve was rendered untenable by land pressure elsewhere, attempts to articulate Maasai into the larger economy were linked to transforming pastoralists into landed or landless agrarians. The debate was essentially between administrators who supported Kikuyu, Kamba and other cultivator immigration because the pressure to compete with immigrants would force Maasai to settle and become farmers, and others, largely local reserve administrators, who feared that allowing open immigration would further marginalize Maasai economies. All the while, land pressures were intensified in the reserve as drought continued and immigrants kept coming. Although the government implemented legal procedures to limit cultivation in the reserve in 1947 and 1951, cultivators continued to immigrate during this time by leveraging long-held intermarriage/kinship and clientelist ties with individual Maasai families.

In addition to decreased access to land for grazing by the penetration of pastoral lands by cultivators searching for their own piece of the pie, the colonial government began setting aside rangelands for the protection of wildlife management. In 1945 the National Parks Ordinance started the process of establishing parks for the exclusive use of wildlife and tourists. The Maasai

reserve (as well as other semi-arid areas) was targeted for protection. Today, Maasailand (broadly speaking) is home to three national parks and one reserve, and bordered immediately by nine such areas, including those adjacent to Narok and Kajiado districts on the Tanzanian side of the border and in Maasai areas not within the reserve post-1911<sup>92</sup> As Matampash (1993) asserts in a World Bank Discussion Paper entitled, *Indigenous Views on Land and the Environment*, “Once medium potential grazing lands were earmarked for the wildlife tourism industry, Maasai started to experience significant competition on the rangeland for their livestock. Worse still. . .[Maasai] still accommodate over 60% of wildlife on their group ranches without compensation for the land, grass, and human lives destroyed. Although the wildlife industry is a major foreign-exchange earner in Kenya, and the Maasai serve as wildlife’s main custodians, they receive almost nothing from the industry” (37). Matampash’s rhetoric is more revealing than his facts, considering some well-positioned Maasai do benefit from proximity to parks and reserves, but most do not.

By midcentury then, the combination of cultivators migrating to better-watered regions of the rangelands, land speculators (Maasai and non-Maasai) ‘grabbing’ land for development as commercial agriculture or residential development, the cumulative effects of drought and livestock disease, and land alienation for developing a tourist economy, had dramatically reduced Maasai subsistence and productive capacities. Land use policies inaugurated by the co-production of white settlement and large-holder agriculture and the removal of unproductive pastoralists to a compromised reserve set the course for land use policies that have “come to undermine the

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<sup>92</sup> Areas include: in Kajiado district, Amboseli National Park, bordered to the east by Tsavo National Park (East and West), bordered to the northeast by Nairobi National Park, bordered to the south in Tanzania by Lake Natron Game Controlled area, Longiso Game Controlled Area, Mt. Kilimanjaro National Park, and Arusha National Park; in Narok, Maasai Mara Game Reserve, bordered to the south by the Tanzanian border and Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro National Conservation Area, and Maswa Game Reserve; in northern Rift Valley, Nakuru National Park, Hell’s Gate National Park, Abedare National Park, and Mt. Kenya National Park (Homewood 1995, 336). Counting the areas within Kenya, this amounts to 3756 km<sup>2</sup>.

assumption of land as a common resource” (Campbell 1993, 269). These changes represent “an ongoing spread down the ecological gradient of the adjustments of land rights and use involving the replacement of livestock by crops as the basis of production and ownership of cattle by land as the objective of accumulation” (Campbell 1993, 265). Policies related to the Emergency of 1952-60 and culminating in the Swynnerton Plan in 1954 and the Kenya Livestock Development Project (KLDP) served to solidify these changes, symbolized by the demarcation of the first individual ranch in Maasailand, northern Kajiado district, in 1954.

*D. From alienation to adjudication, nomadism to semi-sedentarization*

*In sum, it was intended that the pastoralists, the Maasai in particular, should have a system of “transformation” which would enable them to operate commercial enterprises. They would avoid rapid change which might upset traditions, create large numbers of landless people and transform land into an economic good subject to free buying and selling. . . They should be offered simpler instruments than the Company Act for carrying out this transformation. It provides an evolutionary or transitional mode of change based on the traditional way.*  
Swynnerton Plan 1954: 90 (qtd in Matampash 1993)

*At the time of demarcation my father looked and said that the land as far as he could see was his, and it was then demarcated as his for his sons and theirs.*  
Maasai woman, Kimuka sub-location, near Ngong Town, 2004

Nomadism does not exist among Maasai in Kenya today, and for the most part it has not since the culmination of the second move and the formation of the single reserve. The colonial policy of land alienation, embodied by the moves, slowly gave way to land adjudication as officials searched for ways to deal with the land problem that would be consistent with capitalist development imperatives. Maasai social arrangements have followed suit. Many continue to migrate in short-range capacities when forced by environmental conditions, but the long-range movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before is gone. Semi-sedentarization is the norm, characterized

by grazing “close to the *boma*”<sup>93</sup> (Wangui 2008), with permanent settlement and extreme pressure to completely diversify livelihoods to the exclusion of pastoral praxis competing for rank of the new norm. As this chapter has thus far chronicled, this current reality began over one century ago at the ascendancy of the colonial state. As a new independent dawn hovered at the horizon, the colonial policy toward the reserve continued to reflect its earliest perceptions that pastoral praxis is contradictory to capitalist accumulation. Officials were convinced that development among Maasai and others in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALS) would come from the intentional movement away from pastoral ‘conservatism’ and toward modern practices of privatization and sedentarization as the natural evolution of development and social change.

In 1954 the East African Royal Commission unveiled the Swynnerton Plan which was designed to address African struggle for land by reforming land tenure, consolidating fragmented holdings, issuing freehold title, intensifying and developing African agriculture, providing access to credit, and removing restrictions on growing crops for export (Rocheleau, et al.). The lasting impacts of these policies for all African groups in Kenya have been deep and vast. For the most part, the plan was aimed at non-pastoral areas (Wangui 2008), which again underlined the peripheral nature of the pastoral economy to the core aims of the government concerning agriculture. Nonetheless, the plan did make some recommendations for privatization schemes that eventually reached the rangelands with mixed effects until now. For pastoralists, the Swynnerton Plan reinforced the Kenya Land Commission’s (1932) remedies for the ‘pastoral problem’ and recommended creating market access for livestock, controlled grazing, improved water supply, stock disease eradication, improved veterinary services, improved breeding techniques, and ranching schemes (Mwangi 2006, 168).

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<sup>93</sup> *Boma* is the Swahili word for a Maasai homestead (*enkang*, in *Maa*). Most Maasai I spent time with use *enkang*, but *boma* is also used.

Although the authors and architects of the Swynnerton Plan feared the landlessness and unrest that privatization schemes provoked in the highlands and thus imagined group ranching schemes that would usher “evolutionary or transitional mode of change based on the traditional way,” individual ranches (IR) were initially developed. The establishment of IRs in the better-watered areas of the reserve near Loitokitok on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro (now Loitokitok district, carved from the southern tip of Kajiado district) and south-east of Ngong, started in the 1950s and “marked the first time that Maasai had begun to move away from the traditional values which saw cattle as the basis of production towards a view of land, no longer as Maasai *territory*, but as the basic resource for individual advancement” (Campbell 1993, 263, emphasis Campbell’s). As Maasai conceptions of land were transformed so were many attitudes towards adjudication and the fungibility of land as property, particularly among the few Maasai notables in the position to take advantage of changing policies.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, World Bank funding for the Kenya Livestock Development Program (KLDP) created support for individual ranchers in the form of livestock extension services, low-interest credit, on-ranch infrastructure including boreholes and water troughs, as well as access to improved breeding stock (Wangui 2008; Mwangi 2006; Matampash 1993) which further empowered already wealthy, influential, and well-positioned Maasai who could afford to privatize.

These new policies of production, resource management, and social reproduction fell just short of requiring Maasai to embrace demarcating, titling, and thus “encapsulating” (Wangui 2008, 372) their land into private holdings and sectional grazing schemes, reducing rangelands for

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<sup>94</sup> The most extreme difference compared to Maasai customary practice is the concept of “fee simple,” the most common form of land ownership in modern societies, in which the owner has the right to sell, trade, or pass on the land to inheritors at his or her discretion, which was the eventual formation. However, these ranches were not initially “legalized” such that they could be sold but not leveraged; this changed after the Lawrence Report’s group ranching recommendations resulted in state capitulation to pressure from Maasai elites to legalize their land holdings (Mwangi 2006).

everyday Maasai herders even further (Campbell 1993). As a result of these massive paradigm shifts in policy and practice, the individuals living in Maasai communities throughout the reserve were more deeply differentiated than in any time in history.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps most profoundly, the process of privatization, through which Maasai subjects were explicitly created as such vis-à-vis their relationship to land-ownership as the means of production, occurred simultaneous to the consolidation of the newly independent, African-led, ethnically contentious Kenyan state. Some Maasai were more quickly articulated into state structures, whereas the majority remained outside of, or only marginally adjacent to, the state, particularly with respect to changes in pastoral identities and the erosion of the ‘traditional’ distribution of status and social forms.<sup>96</sup>

By 1965, 52 individual ranches had been established in what is primarily the Kaputei Plains in northern Kajiado (Mwangi 2006). The average size of these plots was considerable at 2000 acres (Campbell 1993). Although a small percentage of Maasai were wealthy enough to privatize and those individuals were made more wealthy in the process, rank and file Maasai preferred Maasai ownership to non-Maasai ownership because rich Maasai still tended to keep pasture open to the possibility of grazing, particularly in crisis situations. Non-Maasai, on the other hand, would most likely cultivate, and thus render the land completely off-limits to grazing. It was against this backdrop that group-ranching schemes (GR), in lieu of IRs, were proffered as the possible solution to “realizing the same goals of accelerating agricultural and pastoral development, but with the added advantage of safeguarding against alienation to non-Maasai or to the state” (Campbell 1993;

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<sup>95</sup> For example, as Campbell (1993) explains, the ramifications of privatization were clear during the drought of 1960-61 when the only place to retain shared grazing was the Kisongo section around Mount Kilimanjaro, and when they opened the pasture up to other Maasai sections, the land was inundated.

<sup>96</sup> Education is implicated in this process, which is discussed in chapter 2.

Mwangi 2006, 170). The pivotal feature of GRs was the conversion of communal land tenure, with flexible access to resources, to group tenure with fixed and legally recognized boundaries.

In general, Maasai supported the development of the GRs although their reasons tended toward protection from alienation rather than support for the state and donor advancement of ‘scientific rangeland management’ as well as the ability of GRs to leverage financing for future investment against the security of the collective title (Campbell 1993). Elite Maasai with individual holding initially resisted the formation of GR policies, but the state eventually capitulated to their demands for legalized titles to their property so that they could also leverage it for capital accumulation. As it turned out, even GRs would be “insufficient protection against predation by influential local and national elites” (Mwangi 2006, 173). Land speculation and “unsanctioned allocations” (land grabbing) remain the largest threats to survival and livelihood for Kajiado Maasai, and increasingly, Narok Maasai as well.

During the Emergency, colonial policies drastically limited migration into the reserve. Post-independence, freed from colonial restraints, cultivators left the highlands again in search of land. Under the auspices of the Kenyatta’s “Nakuru Covenant” (Kantai 2007, 117), only 20% of the white highlands were transferred to small holders (Holmquist et al. 1994).<sup>97</sup> The rest was sold intact to the new elite, effectively Africanizing the larger holder sector without fundamentally altering its structure or privileged relationship to the state (Holmquist et al. 1994; Kantai 2007).<sup>98</sup> The combined processes of notable Maasai gaining state-supported access to large individual land

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<sup>97</sup> After independence, Kenyatta addressed white settlers in Nakuru, Rift Valley Province and assured them that in the new dispensation “We will forgive but never forget.” According to Kantai (2007), “this implied both that their interests would be protected and that it was also safe to re-invest in independent Kenya” (121).

<sup>98</sup> *Mbenzi* is *Sheng*—Swahili slang—that literally means ‘he of the Benz’ and refers to the Kenyan elite, known to have penchant for Mercedes Benz. The phrase was popularized by Ngugi wa Thiong’o and used to refer to newly rich Africans after independence (Kantai 2007).



holdings, and a new influx of cultivators in search of land to sow, produced new versions of old relations<sup>99</sup> whereby wealthy Maasai subdivided and sold parcels of individual ranches to migrating cultivators and simultaneously enriched themselves, strengthened their ties with the state regime, and impoverished their Maasai neighbors who still depended on the rangelands to survive (Campbell 1993).

In a twist of history among the many paradoxes of decolonization, Maasailand was thrust from the periphery of state production toward its center. Whereas at the turn of the century Maasai marginality was central to colonial state formation, by midcentury, notable Maasai themselves had entered the circle of state power far enough to leverage the rest of Maasailand's marginality for its their own gain. As "one form of elite (European settler) as replaced by another form of elite (Maasai elite) [and] the same institutional regime was perpetuated over time, one can argue that, in the end, what was set in place was an institutional mechanism for elite appropriation of land resources through 'legal' means" (Mwangi 2006, 175). As colonial state formation was dependent upon the management of contradictions inherent in capitalist social relations, post-colonial state coherence has centered on similar imperatives and crafted similar policy interventions to realize its goals.

Like the first individual ranch, the first group ranching scheme was adjudicated in northern Kajiado in the later 1960s, where 14 ranches, each averaging about 1900 hectares, were established for about 100 families (Mwangi 2006).<sup>100</sup> By the mid-1970s, and increasingly through the mid-

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<sup>99</sup> What Esther Mwangi (2006) calls "path dependency."

<sup>100</sup> As an exercise: 1900 hectares equals approximately 4,695 acres. Fourteen ranches covered approximately 65, 730 acres that were shared (for the exercise they are divided evenly) by 100 families. In the end, that is approximately 657 acres per family. Compare this the individual parcels made available to one man/one family at 2000 acres each.

1980s, the failure of GRs seemed imminent, and subdivision had gained significant momentum.<sup>101</sup> Maasailand was also experienced dramatic population increases in the years after independence (1963). In 1948, Kajiado and Narok districts combined had approximately 57,000 residents; by 1978, this figure was up to 360,000 (Archambault 2007).<sup>102</sup> A large part of this growth was due to immigration, and by 1979, Maasai were only about half of the total population of both districts (Archambault 2007). By 1984, 29 of the 51 GRs in Kajiado had sub-divided or had passed resolutions to do so (Campbell 1993).<sup>103</sup> By 2006, out of the 52 GRs, 32 were subdivided, and 15 were in progress, seven of which were disputed and under court injunction (BurnSilver & Mwangi 2007). Not surprisingly, the GRs in the drier lowlands tended to stay together, whereas the GRs in the medium and high potential highlands had greater pressures and greater incentives to subdivide. According to Campbell (1993), the drought of 1972-1976 severely tested the capacity for the GRs to ecologically support the families and herds gathered to live on them. Customary resource management and reciprocity networks proved resilient, but younger Maasai were strongly moved by the experience to sub-divide and diversify livelihoods with mixed farming.

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<sup>101</sup> The reasons for GR failure and the motivations to subdivide have been widely documented and will not be discussed in full here (see BurnSilver & Mwangi 2007 for a summary and analysis). The paramount concern has been poor management and accountability of the GR administrative committees (called, ironically, “group trusts” in Narok) which has severely undermined incentives for individuals to remain in the GRs. In a Narok district GR of which I am familiar, a group of individuals established a competing trust that essentially took administration in its own hands, dividing the GR into loyalty factions. According to a map in SilverBurn and Mwangi 2007, Lood-ariak is a group ranch that has been subdivided and awaits titles. I never heard of any one speak of the GR or a trust while I lived in Lood-ariak. David spoke of “his land,” about 200 hectares (almost 500 acres) that had been subdivided from his father’s land.

<sup>102</sup> And the population continued to rise. By 1988 both districts recorded a combined population of approximately 664,000 (Archambault 2007). The population of Kajiado district alone more than quadrupled with 4 people/km<sup>2</sup> in 1969 to 19 in 1999 (Reid et al. 2008).

<sup>103</sup> BurnSilver & Mwangi (2007) note that official records indicate different total numbers of GRs in two different time periods—56 in 2002 and 52 in 2006. Note that Campbell’s (1993) total is different still, 51.

By the next substantial drought episode in 1984, in the larger context of statewide economic decline, debt, political unrest, state repression, and structural adjustment policies, the GRs were not so resilient. Ironically, subdivision does not guarantee security, and some studies found that subdivision increased the likelihood of long-term food insecurity (Reid et al. 2007). Unfortunately for the poorest GR members, subdivided plots can be as small as 50-200 acres, and many are forced to sell completely and then contract themselves as herder-laborers to more prosperous Maasai. Many Maasai living on the rangelands today, not unlike their predecessors in the reserve post-1911, cannot qualify for employment in the larger Kenyan economy and remain limited to herding-for-hire in greater Maasailand in Kenya and even across the border in Tanzania. Moreover, “the realization that areas which have long been defined as economically ‘marginal’ have substantial revenue-earning potential has contributed to the motivation of national elites to legislate policies facilitating subdivision of the GRs” (Campbell 1993, 267).<sup>104</sup> Elite land grabbing, land alienation for parks and reserves, persistent drought, and mounting pressure to subdivide continue to characterize life in the rangelands today.

These interventions are accordant with the long-held view that pastoral praxis is inconsistent with capitalist development and should, at all costs, be replaced by modern production, be it agricultural, ranching, tourism, residential development, or otherwise. Likewise, as these policy shifts require greater articulation by more Maasai and the larger Kenyan economy, changes in livelihood risks and the discourse of pastoralists themselves suggest that more and more Maasai will diversify in earnest and move toward “strategies that augment livestock production activities” (BurnSilver and Mwangi 2007, 3), perhaps even to the exclusion of pastoralism. Against

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<sup>104</sup> High revenue enterprises like beef cattle ranching and wildlife related activities require large holdings. Campbell (1993) argues that breaking up GRs into dispersed smallholdings will make it easier for “national” (non-Maasai) and “local” (Maasai) elites to essentially collect smallholdings and merge them into large holdings appropriate for more remunerative activities.

the expected and “inevitable” decline of pastoralism, some research into collective action among pastoralist post-subdivision to re-aggregate subdivided spatial access through pasture sharing and swapping mechanisms (see BurnSilver and Mwangi 2007; BurnSilver 2006) suggest that all may not be lost for Maasai willing to draw on communal strengths and hybrid/innovative/customary social forms against the individualizing forces of capitalist development.

*E. Wazungu, wabenzi, wananchi and the “re-constitution of Kenya”*<sup>105</sup>

At the dawn of independence in 1963, Maasai petitioned the Second Constitutional Conference in an attempt to claim the land ceded in 1904, up to 70% of what had become the “White Highlands,” perhaps the most productive real estate in Kenya today.<sup>106</sup> The British determined that “the Maasai had no legal claim to lands they forfeited by treaty.” Over 40 years later, and 100 years after the first move in 2004 on the coattails of the end of Moi reign, a Maasai contingent would again seek to regain Laikipia, amidst violence and one fatality, and to no avail. In 2005, MPIDO, the local Maasai NGO that facilitated my study, was threatened with deregistration for supporting the Laikipia campaign. Calls for “*Majimbo!*” rang out in the wake of the violence ignited by the 2007 election.<sup>107</sup> What threads pull these pieces of Maasai discourse together against

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<sup>105</sup> Two Swahili words, *wazungu* and *wananchi*, mean “white people, foreigners” and “ordinary citizens,” respectively.

<sup>106</sup> According to Kantai (2007), the former Maasai territory on the Laikipia Plateau alone is 2 million acres owned by 37 families.

<sup>107</sup> *Majimbo* is (literally, “group of regions”) is a Swahili term that is commonly used in Kenya to refer to the idea of political devolution of power to each of the country's regions. It is alleged by critics, including former vice-president Oginga Odinga in *Not Yet Uhuru*, to have been coined by European settlers around the time of independence in 1963, who preferred to retain an autonomous, ethnically-based governance over the region. I sometimes heard “*majimboism*” as well. Most Maasai I talked with about it were in favor of devolution.

the historiography assembled in this chapter? How can we read the present as is refracted against the past?

Today, communities in greater Maasailand, and areas of Kajiado District in particular, face another in a series of critical historical junctures as they negotiate their way through the matrix of forces that shape their daily realities: “They are caught between new land tenure rules associated with dissolution of group ranches and subdivision of communal rangelands, and the *unchanged* ecological exigencies of dryland systems” (BurnSilver and Mwangi 2007, 1-2). Indeed, drought has always been a facet of Maasai life and so have been state policies to dismantle pastoralism despite its proven effectiveness as sustaining fragile landscapes, despite Maasai stewardship of wildlife and ‘picturesque’ participation in tourist economies, despite Maasai specialization in beef production, and despite repeated calls from Maasai and other pastoralists alike to maintain cultural integrity within the hegemonic homogenization of “Kenya Only.”<sup>108</sup>

Yet most Maasai I spent time with in the Kajiado Rift want to straddle the supposed divide between the stable, understandable past and the less clear, but no less embraced, supposedly modern future. Structurally, as things change in Kenya, they seem to also remain the same; development’s accomplishments have been uneven, predictably disparate, and increasingly hard to anticipate. Today, Kenya is considered by many to be a ‘failed state.’<sup>109</sup> But the ideas embedded in

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<sup>108</sup> Eric Wainaina’s hit song “Kenya Only” clogged the airways of FM radio in the wake of the post-election violence in 2007, particularly during the media ban. Although I have not been able to locate lyrics, I make reference to the song here because it became kind of an anthem that both helped to sooth the pain Kenyans felt at the violence but also obscured, in a rhetoric of “one-ness,” the deep disparities that make that kind of violence possible.

<sup>109</sup> In *Foreign Policy’s* Index of Failed States, a dynamic set of indicators that states move on, off, and around in over time, Kenya is listed as #14 of the top 20 states listed as “critical” among the total of 60 states in the index. The states ‘more’ failed than Kenya in 2009 include (in ascending order): Burma, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Guinea, Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq,

what is referred to as the Bomas draft of a possible new constitution continue to emboldened *wanachi* in to believing that change can come within the promise of democracy and development.<sup>110</sup> Everyday Kenyans, and certainly the Maasai parents, teachers, grandmothers, and schoolgirls involved in this study, continue to negotiate their located lives by pushing back against the structural forces that routinely conspire to configure their identities for them. The result—the straddle—is both completely precedented and completely new.

## II. The politics of historical knowledge: reflections from Lood-ariak

The politics of knowledge regarding Maasai historiography the among academics and experts that I have studied to produce the first section of this chapter have a different feel when removed from textual debates and returned to the *enkang* as a discussion over boiling hot tea.

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Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia (number 1). The five listed as numbers 15-20 are: Nigeria, Ethiopia, North Korea, Yemen, Bangladesh, and East Timor (as #20).

See:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/2009\\_failed\\_states\\_index\\_interactive\\_map\\_and\\_rankings](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/2009_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings)

<sup>110</sup> In 2004 The Constitution of Kenya Review Commission held the National Constitutional Conference in which delegates to the conference voted on, and ratified, a revised draft of Kenya's Constitution. Held at a venue called Bomas of Kenya, the draft is popularly referred to as the Bomas Draft (cleverly, this translates to "the village draft"). The Bomas Draft allegedly does reflect the will of the people, unlike the current Constitution. One of the primary sticking points is executive power. Currently, the president of Kenya is vested with all state power. The Bomas Draft, among other things, calls for executive power to be divested between the president, the deputy president, the prime minister, and the ministers. Most Maasai were strongly in favor of the Bomas Draft. The final version, however, included only a non-executive prime minister despite the newly elected Mwai Kibaki's pledges to deliver a new constitution. In November 2005 a referendum was held ("yes" votes were symbolized by the image of a banana and "no" votes were represented by an orange); over 58% of Kenyans who voted in the referendum rejected the new constitution and its re-consolidation of presidential power (Wrong 2009). Nonetheless, when President Kibaki named his new government a month after the vote, he ejected those ministers who had not supported the draft (the beginning of the "orange" movement that went on to become a new party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), which opposed Kibaki in the 2007 election).

When in Lood-ariak, David and I made a habit to share *chai* and “chew words” about the events of the day a few times a week, sometimes at my house, sometimes at his. Although my relationship with him has always been informal and familial, David is a contemporary elder in the strict sense<sup>111</sup> and in this way he is expected to be able to provide insight into all-important aspects of Maasai life and history. When I asked him to translate “*Iloikop*,” he said “*iloikop* means to murder” (Kilusu, personal communication, 2008). When I pointed out that some scholars were in a debate about whether or not *Iloikop* could refer to the people we now call “the Maasai” he was not sure and said with a shrug, “maybe that can be a name for a group of Maasai who killed many in raids, I don’t know.” Similarly, when he and I discussed the historical and ethnographic details of Lotte Hughes’ *Moving the Maasai: A Colonial Misadventure*, David was deeply moved and indicated that hers is a book every Maasai should read so that he or she might know the history that has shaped their lives today.

David is a college-educated man who works on the Board of Directors for MPIDO, the NGO that helped to facilitate my study.<sup>112</sup> MPIDO is a self-identified indigenous organization, and its staff likewise prides itself on cultural knowledge, activism, and work that preserves Maasai heritage while also trying to secure and diversify livelihoods for pastoral peoples in Kenya. That David is not a party to the academic debate regarding the historical accuracy of the reference *Iloikop*

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<sup>111</sup> Age-set, *Il-Kitoip*. He became an elder around 1984, although as an educated man he was never a ‘fulltime’ *ol-murran*, or warrior.

<sup>112</sup> Hughes (2005) documents MPIDO’s role, among other local NGOs, in reviving the Moves as an anchor for contemporary claims to land and as a moral compass point for understanding Maasai marginalization. She also notes the ways in which civil society activists in this pursuit distort historical facts. MPIDO’s support was integral to my access, safety, and the completion of my research. And while I did have some exposure to the overtly political nature of the organization’s work (for example, I attended a rally organized by Joseph ole Simel, the executive director, which gathered hundreds of Maasai at Olonanna near Oloseos to determine if he should throw his hat into the ring for MP of Kajiado North against the career incumbent, George Saitoti; it was determined in the public meeting that most preferred to support James Sakuda against Saitoti. Saitoti won the election, but not without massive claims of voter fraud and corruption), it was not the primary subject of conversation with me.

for instance, and that he recognizes that a British academic has access to Maasai history in ways uncommon for most Maasai, helps to show how a selective history forms the basis of a consensual monolith that is understood as “the culture.” In this way, and as elsewhere, the culture that every schoolgirl we spoke to reached for to help explain her subjective positioning is historical artifact, myth and memory as much as it is anything.

Indeed, a subjective and singular response is just that, and perhaps other educated Maasai may jump head first into an academic debate about the “*Iloikop* Hypothesis.” Be that as it may, David’s responses are also symptomatic of people living in the disjuncture of modernity, or stated differently, what James Smith has called “modernity disarticulated” (qtd in Stambach 2006). Despite the belief that modernity is a discernable break with the past, there is no definitive break (or a loss) but rather there is coalescence, the parameters of which are at best fleeting, mutable. Moreover, “history,” as Greg Dening has noted, “is not the past: it is consciousness of the past used for present purposes” (qtd in Hughes 2005, 216). Maasai identity now, as it always and already has been, is produced and re-produced in the convergence of policies, practices, politics, intimate conversations, national discourse, and international interventions, although the daily discourse frames a reliable, stable, and commonsensical notion of what it means to be “Maasai” that endures despite the history that belies it.

### **III. History is not the past**

What I have learned about ‘the Maasai,’ and the machinations of development in parts of Maasailand today, has come partly from spending most of my time with young Maasai girls who are currently in primary school. As result of this focus, in some ways, I spent my time with aspiring modernists, girls who for many reasons are focused on their futures—in largely individualized ways—rather than their pasts and express an almost *de facto* desire to “be modern.” At the same



time, the stories of the Maasai past, as they are presented in the oral histories (Kipury 1983) that the girls have heard around the hearth, and also in the academic histories I have read and reproduced for the dissertation, are stories of men, both old and young. Women and girls are often invisible altogether in these stories or homogenized through phrases like ‘community,’ ‘population,’ or ‘generation.’ I have also drawn on a broad assortment of Maasai scholarship to frame Maasai histories presented in this chapter. Among them, Lotte Hughes’ work on the 1904 and 1911 moves has been significant to my understanding of Maasai history and social change. Unlike other Maasai scholars who do not acknowledge a male bias, she justifies her “overwhelmingly male” pool of informants this way:

Though women have stories to tell about how the moves affected them, and some are included here, they were not—as far as one can tell—party to the political discussions that surrounded the moves and court case and did not, at this time, play a key role in the public political arena. Since this is my primary focus, I make no apology for the gender imbalance that has resulted; this is simply a rather male narrative, and gathering more women’s stories would be another story and a different task (11).

With a few notable exceptions (Hodgson 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Talle 1988; Kipury 1989), the vast body of academic work on Maasai is focused on men and a society based on what are configured as male pursuits. The stories at the center of this study are different in that respect: they are schoolgirls’ stories, told in the now about the future but relying on a discourse of the past, from the past, and against the past. Although the girls always spoke about education as positive force in their current lives and a way to be modern in the future, the girls also collectively spoke of their “Maasai culture,” which was almost always a way of representing something (usually knowledge, modes of being, and social practices, like for example, female cutting) that to them comes coherently to the present from the past. They often used the expressions “in those days,” “in times past,” “when my parents were young” or simply, “back then” even when the actual time period they referred to was

as near as five years in the past, as a way of referring to “Maasai culture” as if it is synonymous with a historical past and the lived present.

Although this collapsing of time may be characteristic of how children express themselves, it is significant nonetheless that repeated reference to “culture” as a static and monolithic entity held sway. In this way, “Maasai culture,” in our interviews, was represented as finite and final. As Galaty (1982) notes, “Maasai ideology” “asserts that “the term Maasai refers to a nonproblematical, unitary, given social entity” (1). He goes on:

Similarly, “Maa” represents the language they speak and “Ol Maa” their nation. For Maasai, the notion of “Maasai” is a preeminently natural category since it represents an aspect of reality as concrete as geographical features, as biologically distinct as cattle, and as unique in practice as species of wild animals. To define “Maasai” is as easy as pointing out those who are and those who are not; to describe “Maasai” involves explicating a collective value system understood by all and encoded in various folk etymologies of the origin of the term. The meaning of “Maasai” is not, in short, problematic for Maasai (1982, 3).

In conversations with Maasai, many expressed a similar ‘nonproblematic’ notion of identity, at least on a superficial level. At the same time, as Hodgson (2001a) has argued, the nonproblematical Maasai identity—to Maasai themselves, non-Maasai Kenyans, and most outsiders— *is* problematic insofar as the construct of the patriarchal pastoralist and the policies associated with his development have distorted Maasai gender dynamics and enduringly obscured women and girls from full access to, and representation in, the narrative of Maasai life, unless they appear as the supporting cast to the central male characters of history, or, as subsequent chapters will go to discuss, as the eternal victims of the ‘unitary, given social entity’ of pastoralist social arrangements, in the first instance, and pastoral development, in the second.

As we would expect given the double register of modernity described in the introduction, the culture that every girl interviewed reached for to explain her life as a schoolgirl today is a historical and dynamic process rather than a static condition. What is more, to refer to a singular

Maasai identity is a “semiotic process” that “generates, rather than simply represents, the social order” (Galaty 1982, 1). The repeated reference to “Maasai culture” does more than preserve the status quo; it produces and preserves its possibilities. In hearing this reference to a seamless culture in nearly any conversation with a Maasai person, it became clear to me that grappling with the productive force called “culture” must involve some basic fluency in its historiography. How did ‘being Maasai’ come to be the ‘unitary’ construct so easily within reach of the schoolgirls we interviewed? What does it mean that a seemingly coherent Maasai identity endures despite evidence against its existence as a totality and even as the girls themselves often define themselves in opposition to conventional categories and constructs? Indeed, the girls rarely said “my culture” and often referred to “the Maasai” as if they themselves were somehow outside of or other to this distinction, as if their kin and neighbors were “Maasai” in ways that they were not. This chapter is my attempt to weave a version of this historiography that then can wrap around the particular stories that form the basis of my findings. My purpose has been to make some sense of this history in its most basic terms—to chart or chronicle “the facts”—while also trying to uncover the discursive threads that have helped to ‘make’ the Maasai who populate the girls’ narratives.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that the formation of the colonial state was contingent upon the co-production of the White highlands and a single Maasai reserve because these actions enabled the state to begin to reduce the effects of the contradictions created when capitalist modes of production are embedded in local agrarian peasant forms. From the dawn of the protectorate that would become the Republic of Kenya, Maasai marginality has been central to state formation. This path dependency continues through independence and the formation of the postcolonial state,

although through the contemporary period external pressure under the egis of exogenous development for economic growth and concomitant calls for democratic reform, Maasai civil society actors have carved out some narrow space for making demands. Perhaps even more profoundly for Maasai articulation into policy formation, new research suggests that despite the pressure to abandon pastoralism and adopt ‘modern’ practices, some Maasai areas are using collective action to rebuild resiliency.

The moves of 1904 and 1911 and conditions surrounding the formation of the Reserve, unlike other regions of Kenya in which countless other communities were moved and forced into their own reserves, made Maasai central to formation of the developing state and simultaneously marginal to it.<sup>113</sup> It is precisely this paradox that produced the disingenuous and haphazard provision of education in the reserve and, moreover, made possible Maasai ambivalence toward education that are still in play today.

As chapter 2 discusses, entrenchment of capitalist extraction and export economies was, as Gorham (1980) argues, the central motivating factor associated with the provision of even the meager colonial sanctioned education in Maasailand well after the consolidation of the single reserve. Although officials in London articulated support of ‘Native’ education, Gorham (1980) notes that Belfield, the Governor of the EAP at the time, “was more interested in reducing the size of Maasai livestock holdings (via the imposition of an imposed cattle tax) than he was in improving the Maasai economy by linking educational provision to traditional livestock farming” (9). The next chapter chronicles the historical provision of formal education in Maasailand with specific emphasis on Kajiado district, and the contradictory discourse of education, particularly for girls, that has emerged over time.

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<sup>113</sup> In 1926 the colonial government gazetted 24 native reserves covering 46,837 square miles of the colony, of which 14,600 were in the southern Maasai Reserve (Hughes 2006, 27).

**CHAPTER 2*****Making the Maasai, Being Educated:*****Paradoxes of Educational Provision in Maasailand, 1920-2003**

“The school is a central institution within which [Maasai] children are now growing up”  
Archambault (2009, 300).

*“My parents have seen development when they saw some families educating their children and the children have come back to help them. Then they educate theirs. In my parents’ life they have seen that they should work hard to meet the goals they never had before.”*  
Primary Schoolgirl, age 13 (Nov 2007)

*Education is the head of everything because educated people know many things which illiterate people do not know [and] those who are educated take the illiterate as if they are not people. For example, a car gets an accident; they say there were ten people and one Maasai as if the Maasai are not people—as if the illiterate is not somebody. So education gives you value.*  
Hannah, a mother from Lood-ariak (2008)

*Despite the complexity of interrelations behind [pastoralist] decisions considering one child’s school education, one pattern emerges quite clearly: school is seen and used as an alternative to herding. Those who go to school stop herding and, whenever financially and/or logistically possible, those who stop herding go to school.*  
Saverio Kratli with Caroline Dyer (2006)

I looked for conversations about education everyday while in Kenya. On this day, the conversations found me. As usual, I was crammed along with other passengers in the bed of “Parsoi’s vehicle.” Ole Parsoi lived in a large traditional *enkang* about .5 mile from where I lived, which meant that ours was the second stop out before dawn and the second to the last stop coming home around just around sunset. By the time we reached my house, very few people, sometimes no one save me, would be left in the bed of the pick-up careening toward the setting sun. This situation also ensured that from the moment we shoe-horned the last person or 20 kilo packet of *ugali* flour into the truck bed in the Kiserian, I would ride with the entire group until the end of the line.

On this day, in addition to the regular Lood-ariak residents I had come to know or recognize, we were joined by a group of four men (and their provisions) who had been contracted to build an addition onto one of the two small churches in Lood-ariak's 'center.' At a glance it was easy to notice that the men were not Maasai. This was clear in part because of the shapes of their faces, but also in their manner of standing apart, speaking in English or Swahili, and at their clear discomfort in the mode of transportation. In this mix of mostly Maasai, I stood out even more profoundly, and although I hope it was clear that I was not new or unaccustomed to the 'goat truck' process or to the local folks crammed into it (I knew many of them, but my *Maa* is restricted to greetings and very basic communication), the foreman of the group nonetheless spoke to me almost as soon as we were underway to ask how I was adapting to the conditions in Kenya.<sup>114</sup>

In this manner, over mounds of cabbage, we chatted our way down the dramatic escarpment into the Rift over the course of the 90-minute trip to Lood-ariak. I learned that he and his crew would be adding on to the African Inland Mission (AIM) church social hall, that he owned the construction company contracted to do the work, and that he was originally from Mombasa (he never disclosed his 'tribe,' and I never asked).

By the time we reached the AIM Church, most of the passengers had been dropped off along the way. The remaining seven people (the construction crew, me, and two other local people) could spread out in the pick-up. Some chose to stand facing forward, thighs-to-waist against the back of the cab, holding on to the metal frame used for covering the bed with plastic

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<sup>114</sup> In casual conversations with strangers, by people who spoke to me in English, I was asked this question often. People who did not live on the route between Lood-ariak and Kiserian seemed dismayed to see me in the truck. They wanted to know why I didn't have a vehicle of my own, or if my husband knew what I was doing. At first ole Parsoi insisted I ride in the cab, but eventually I just became like any other passenger and the special treatment ended. Once, even though we had already paid and our belongings were in the truck, he left Alice and me because we were about 5 minutes late getting back to the vehicle; she called him, but he refused to turn around.

when it rained. As we backed up to the Church to unload the provisions the crew had with them, the foreman finally asked me, as he stepped off the back of the truck bed, “So what is the subject of your research?”

I alighted as well as everyone else to wait while the crew unloaded; the foreman and I continued our conversation. I told him I was studying Maasai girls’ education and that I had been in the community for a few months and would remain a few more. “Ah,” he said, with a kind of recognition in his voice that indicated he’d heard the joke before and already knew the punch line, “Of course we know that Maasai hate education. They always have; they have never wanted it and that’s why they are so behind the rest of Kenya today.” This discourse, and the confidence with which urban Kenyans delivered it, were not new to me. But these kinds of statements were usually issued by non-Maasai in urban settings among many non-Maasai. I was shocked, embarrassed and angry at what I perceived to be not only an incorrect statement but also a rude and chauvinistic declaration. We were standing in the “center” of a Maasai community, surrounded by Maasai people! I didn’t know the other two men also waiting. I did know that Parsoi and the other local men in the cab of the truck did not speak English. In keeping with his comments, I can only imagine that the contractor assumed no one around us could understand English. Even though I was angry, I wanted to push the issue. I asked, “Really? What leads you to believe that?”

“Look around,” he said, “just look around,” and with a shrug, he walked off to join his waiting crew, wishing me a “nice time.”

Parsoi was impatient to get home, so the rest of us were quickly herded back into the truck. I decided to stand against the railing; the setting sun was always a dramatic show, and we drove straight west toward it. Besides, I was tired from sitting on the narrow wooden bench and using my legs and toes to anchor myself in the truck while my arms were busy stabilizing the tower of *unga* and other heavy goods on my lap and stacked all around me. A tall, slender young Maasai

man dressed in ‘western’ clothes took his place beside me. As we lurched along, he asked me: “So, after your time here in this community, do you believe what he has said, that Maasai hate education?”

I felt the color rise to my face and knew that he had heard my conversation with the contractor. I instantly regretted not confronting the man from Mombasa with my profound disagreement. “No, I do not agree with him at all,” I said. “What is clear to me from my time here is actually the exact opposite, that many Maasai are hungry for education for their children and even themselves.”<sup>115</sup>

“But you know,” I continued, “that I also hear this other thing all the time, this thing that Maasai hate education.” “Yes,” he said, “*Keh soba oleng*, (it is very true); this is what they say about us.”

He introduced himself as Gabriel, a new teacher at the Eret Preparatory School, the only private school in Keekonyokie Central Location, a tiny primary school with about 25 pupils started by David and Agnes, a veteran government teacher of over 15 years. Indeed, the presence of a private school suggests the opposite of the contractor’s view of demand, and Gabriel pointed this out. I also asked, “if there is such a hunger which I have seen, why are some families still so resistant to educating girls?”

For the rest of our remaining short ride home he told me of his own personal efforts to change this attitude. Part of the problem, he argued, like many educated Maasai I spoke with, is “the culture” that “sees girls as less than boys.” He spoke of trying different methods to instill his female students with confidence to speak up in the classroom, debate boys, aspire to the top positions in class rankings, and do their very best so that they could advance to secondary and

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<sup>115</sup> This phrasing “hungry for education,” was one I heard many times in conversations, and thus it became part of my idiom as well.



complete school. It was after 7:15 p.m. when we arrived at David's homestead, and we were all anxious to get to our respective homes before the southern Kenyan dusk quickly dissolved into darkness. We left our conversation with an agreement to meet again and talk in more detail about these competing perceptions of non-Maasai and most Maasai about Maasai attitudes toward education. I also wanted to know, for example, if his classroom efforts were ever directed towards boys' attitudes towards girls' education. Unfortunately, our paths never crossed again, although I hope to follow up with him when I continue the research initiated in this study.

I offer this account as a way of signaling aspects of the daily discourse around education in Maasailand today. While Maasai are not the only or the most deeply alienated communities from educational provision in Kenya, the prevalent story—that Maasai “hate” education and always have—is on the tips of most Kenyans' tongues. There is a commonsensical confidence underpinning statements like the contractor's that I heard repeatedly, as if the facts of the matter were given, and not only not subject to change but truly unchangeable. Hannah, the mother from Lood-ariak I quote at the beginning of the chapter, makes reference to a version of what Caroline Archambault (2007) claims is a common “joke.” A *matatu* driver recounted the “joke” for Archambault in this way: “[He] received a phone call from his tout asking how full the *matatu* was. The driver responded, ‘Well, I have 12 people and 1 Maasai’” (40). A converse storyline, in evidence when a Ministry of Education bureaucrat commented to my professor that he was happy to know that research was being conducted on Maasai girls' education because *something really needs to be done for those girls*, is also in play.<sup>116</sup> While the ‘joke’ dehumanizes Maasai and their modes of living, the bureaucrat's concern that Maasai girls receive particular focus and interventions on their

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<sup>116</sup> On a research trip to Kenya in 2006, Dr. Brett Shadle, one of my advisors and an expert on Kenyan history, submitted a research clearance request for me at Jogoo House B in Nairobi prior to my fieldwork. He was greeted with this affirmative response.

behalf, almost overly implies the putative inhuman treatment of Maasai girls within their communities. The joke underscores persistent stereotypes linked the particular facts of Maasai visibility and marginality; the “othering” way of speaking concerning Maasai girls’ education both draws legitimacy from, and enables, the global discourse of the ‘girl-child’ that I discuss in chapter 5. This chapter attempts to show how the latter strand of the discourse is embedded in the former.

Building on the storylines established in chapter 1, here I review the history of educational provision in Maasailand from the colonial period to the present in order to give a context for contemporary Maasai schoolgirls’ perceptions of education and development in their daily lives. The girls we interviewed express a faith in education that has been shaped from, and against, their elders’ often strongly conflicted and contentious relationship to education and their own changing attitudes as their lifeworlds change. What also happens in this chapter is a perceptible shift in the tone of my arguments. My analysis thus far has been strongly, and presumptively, structurally determinant—animated by what Waller (1999) calls the “grand narrative of colonialism.” In the grand narrative, capitalist agents and colonial structures dialectically emerge, but structures ultimately prevail. Within this narrative, the conventional storyline for Maasai development in Kenya unfolds in two related but opposing directions, both linked to an inherent Maasai ‘otherness’ and strident resistance to change (Waller 1999).

In the first story line, the colonial state neglected Maasai modes of being, and as a result, Maasai evolved from a reluctance to change to a recalcitrance toward modernity; in this way, Maasai continue to be victims of imposed modernization in the post-colony. In the second version, Maasai have always been reluctant to change and opposed to modernity, therefore the colonial state closed the reserve and neglected Maasai development in favor of more amenable subjects (Waller 1999). In this vein of thinking, the postcolonial state continues to neglect Maasai communities, but

not by closing them off; instead, the government of Kenya has purposefully marginalized Maasai communities by granting non-Maasai unfettered access to Maasai resources (namely, land).

Both lines of reasoning suggest the ways in which educational policies from colonialism through the present have stymied the actual provision of schooling. According to the first story line, formal schooling is a cultural, ideological project that has been imposed on Maasai lifeworlds; Maasai either reject the imposition, are forced to contort themselves to fit it, or change to accommodate it. According to the second way of imagining the situation, Maasai have “always” “hated” education, so why waste resources in Maasai areas for the few who will make the effort to take advantage of the opportunities education affords?

Yet, neither storyline adequately captures Maasai historiography, and particularly the historical story of education in Maasai areas. The grand narrative approach is useful to a point, but it cannot account for, and therefore obscures, Maasai agency. Agents populate this narrative. While the agency of individual Maasai and Maasai communities in general exhibit is formed in the confluence of historical and structural forces, contestation over education, like contestation over land, is evidence of the local corrosive power of individual and collective pushback against structural formations, even though these processes take a very long time and produce varied effects. In this sense, I take ambivalence itself to be a form of agency that animates certain ways of thinking and acting. What of the ambivalence many Maasai have perennially expressed about education, even as some Maasai have always demanded western education since it first made available? Now that the imperatives to be educated are, discursively at least, given, demand has increased significantly and the discourse is shifting. Nonetheless, some skepticism remains, as do structural constraints on changing attitudes. Many Maasai feel this ambivalence about education in general, and in particular about the poor quality of the education on offer and the realization that as necessary as education is for livelihood diversification and other potentially positive social changes,

it is not sufficient. This ambivalence reveals that structures strongly influence, but never fully determine, the extent of agency over time. Moreover, the story is still in progress, and the plot continues to twist.

My position is that from their earliest encounters, the British ‘way of seeing Maasai’ was its own ‘cattle complex’ that enabled policies that have directly and indirectly hampered the development of educational infrastructure, access, and attainment in Maasailand up to present.<sup>117</sup> This perspective belies the conventional wisdom in Kenya that Maasai “hate education” and “always have. Rather, when Maasai were removed from the highlands and relocated in reserves, they lost access to the land that had, in conjunction with the lowland range, sustained pre-colonial pastoral production and social reproduction. Simultaneously they were prevented from participating directly in colonial capitalist articulation in its earliest phase which likely would have inspired, if not required, less ambivalence about the value of education to the lives of everyday people. At the same time, policies designed to transform pastoralists into farmers in order to make productive use

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<sup>117</sup> My usage is a play on words in reference to a famous article by Melville J. Herskovits in 1926 published by the *American Anthropologist*. Here he detailed what he called the ‘cattle complex’ among the pastoralists he encountered in what was then the colony of Kenya. Although Herskovits used the phrase to situate pastoral praxis within a complex of social forms, colonialists misapplied his phrase as a “complex” in the lay-Freudian, negative sense of the term in order to bolster their attitudes concerning the “irrational” (and essentially developmentally delayed) management strategies of pastoralists, Maasai included (Nair 1985). These attitudes were translated into colonial ‘development’ strategies focused on destocking the range and limiting pastoralists’ ‘distorted’ reliance on cattle for subsistence and social reproduction in favor of sedentary farming or cattle ranching. This despite the fact that pastoralist strategies have since been proven to be a completely rational specialization evolved out of agriculture based on the cycle of threats in the arid and semi-arid rangelands whereas intensive agriculture has been deemed detrimental (McCabe 2003). Contemporary analysis of pastoralism disregards the “cattle complex” notion. Ironically, it is difficult not to read secondary historical analyses with primary sources directly quoted without walking away thinking the British had the ‘complex’ about Maasai and their cattle—in the lay-Freudian sense.

of land and labor and to protect the burgeoning settler economy from direct competition, further curtailed both the supply and demand of formal schooling in the reserve.

This storyline is complicated by the subplot of missionary education, which never realized the level of influence and stature that it did in more populated, settled areas. In this sense, disparities between pastoral and other areas in Kenya were not ameliorated by a homogenous missionary influence, but were actually exacerbated by the African Inland Mission's (AIM) particular program for penetration in Maasai lands.

Leading up to independence, non-Maasai migrations to the reserve and state expropriation of land for wildlife also had ramifications for the development of education in Maasailand. After independence the notion of an ethnic "reserve" was considered counter to the idea of Kenya as a unified nation, so Parliament amended the 1911 treaty to open the reserve (Archambault 2007). Further land alienation and loss through adjudication and land sales intensified the relevance and necessity of 'modern' education for pastoralists and promoted a shift in Maasai attitudes toward education. During the post-independence period educational demand across Kenya skyrocketed and the state struggled to keep up. Instead of managing the promises of modernity in the form of long-term education-as-development, political leaders opted for political expedience and scaled up efforts to provide universal, free access to schooling without the realistic capacity to deliver it (Buchmann 1999; Chege & Sifuna 2006; Mukudi 2004). Lack of long-term planning for education and the deepening state economic crisis in Kenya, as elsewhere, in the late 1970s and 1980s further rendered the state incapable of effectively satisfying demand; '*harambee*' (self-help) efforts of the 1960s were replaced with 'cost-sharing' imperatives in the 1980s. Unfortunately for Maasai, as the desire for education waxed, the opportunities believed to come from educational achievement waned, as the postcolonial economy sputtered, widespread unemployment persisted, and ethnically derived access to power became the continuing norm of the postcolonial condition.

Throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s—when many of the parents, and even older siblings, of the schoolgirls we interviewed were coming of age as adult members of the Maasai community at large—postcolonial policies combined with recurring and intensifying drought had serious implications for the majority of Maasai who could not pay for schooling, and Maasai marginality deepened even as more and more Kenyans enrolled in school (Chege & Sifuna 2006). Educational provision and access from the 1980s until now has been linked with aid and therefore largely framed by exogenous, “global” imperatives, translated into national agendas, to provide “education for all” and to particularly redress the uneven/unjust gender disparities that have configured educational access in general, but in pastoral areas in particular. Some scholars argue that this discourse extends that of self-help from the early post-independence period and serves as a distraction from the pressing structural constraints created by structural adjustment policies, elite corruption, and sharpening internal disparities while generating legitimacy and popular support for ‘fragile’ states like Kenya (Buchmann 1999; Varvus 2003).

Faced with increased competition for land, pressure to subdivide, and shrinking pasturage, growing interest in schooling was (and is) based in the notion that education makes sense for Maasai “pastoral praxis” (Kipury 1989). Because children are the future, children as best positioned to learn ‘new ways’ that will benefit not only themselves, but also their community (Archambault 2007).<sup>118</sup> Schooling, Archambault (2007) argues, should not be seen as “an activity that is pursued to extract children from their social worlds within the community but as one that will supplement and reinvigorate the livestock economy and its interlinked institutions” (57). In this sense, education is seen as a survival strategy for the reproduction of pastoral social life (Archambault 2007).

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<sup>118</sup> This was a recurring theme in my interviews with teachers and the few mothers I spoke with.

Within this framework, I argue that the combination of colonial, missionary, and postcolonial educational policy in Maasailand and Maasai ambivalence to educational provisions has, over time, created and sustained a contradictory discourse of education-as-development that the schoolgirls interviewed for the study have inherited. Archambault (2007) asserts that “the school is a central institution within which [Maasai] children are now growing up” (300). This chapter asks then, given the popular discourse of Maasai resistance and refusal, how did education become a central institution in Maasailand today? This question leads to another overarching question, initially addressed here but more fully in the next three chapters: How has the ‘global’ discourse of education, as a central tenet of progress and development, been gendered by the veritable discovery of girls as targets of intervention, and how has this program for intervention been inflected in, and reworked by, local representations in Maasai contexts?

## **I. Education in the EAP**

*“The struggle for the hearts and minds of children has been central to colonialism.”*  
Sue Roddick (2003)

*“Understandably, the mission was seen as an opposed world, a place from which Maasai did not return unscathed.”*  
Richard Waller (1999)

The development of formal educational provision in Maasai areas prior to the moves, and then in the consolidated reserve post-1911, is not a singular or straightforward narrative. The East African Protectorate was formed in 1895, but, as has been well documented in scholarship on Kenya and other colonial locations in Africa, in the beginning of formal incorporation into the Crown territories, any and all formal, ‘western’ education for Africans was the purview of the

various European and North American missionary societies that had traveled throughout the region since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>119</sup> As the result of demarcation agreements,<sup>120</sup> in 1901 Maasai territories generally became under the purview of the Protestants, and in particular, the African Inland Mission (AIM), an American evangelical fundamentalist mission. Other protestant missions, including the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Anglican mission, and the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), were also active in Maasai areas and often in contention with the AIM for converts (Waller 1999).<sup>121</sup> During the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the disasters, Maasai-European relations were initially mutually beneficial. Maasai responded expediently to the opportunities created by the arrival of the British colonial agents and the European and North American missionary influx. Maasai-European relations formed in the earliest years of occupation thus

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<sup>119</sup> Settlers' interests were less diverse than their backgrounds--a tricky mix of British aristocratic gentry, South African Dutch immigrants, and variously positioned Europeans set out to make their fortunes in the colony—and they were mostly concerned about developing educational facilities for their own children. Focus on African development was relegated to creating conditions to sustain a healthy class of laborers and curtailing Indian merchant expansion in the colony (Anderson 1970). The Fraser Report in 1909 stipulated academic education for Europeans and Indians and industrial and agricultural education for Africans (Stanfield 2005).

<sup>120</sup> The agreements were not formal, but spheres of influence and competition for converts and students were continually negotiated (sometimes violently) between Protestant and Roman Catholics and among Protestant sects (Strayer 1978). In 1848, CMS built the first western style school in Kenya near the coast.

<sup>121</sup> The AIM was not the first mission to make contact with Maasai, and not all Maasai Christians were/are AIM adherents. In the 1926, after years of failed schooling, a group of elders, including the famous Sempole, circumvented the AIM and approached the CSM to start a school in Ngong, claiming that the AIM had done nothing to promote education (Waller 1999; King 1971). When the CSM leadership sparked the “female circumcision crisis” in 1928, the elders sidestepped the CSM and appealed to the government for a school. The circumcision crisis in part precipitated the Kikuyu Independent School Movement (Anderson 1970). Maasai did not mount a similar movement, and although Sempole and others tried to build a Maasai-led school off-mission at Siyabei, it was not terribly successful; nothing like the Independent School Movement developed in the reserve (Waller 1999).



emerged dialectically—missionaries needed converts and refugee Maasai needed refuge, while administrators needed mercenaries and Maasai needed stock (Waller 1976).

Waller (1976) argues that the first educated Maasai were born of these responses to *Emutai* in the 1890s. As Maasai struggled to survive famine, disease, and war, one of the strategies they used was debt-pawning children (orphans and those with living parents) and women to non-Maasai communities in exchange for food and refuge.<sup>122</sup> Given the extent of the disasters, the market was flooded with Maasai debt pawns. Children who could not be pawned were given by their parents to, or took refuge of their own accord with, the newly established missions on Mount Kilimanjaro, in German East Africa, and at Taveta, between Nairobi and the coast, where they were taught very little beyond some basic Swahili (Waller 1999).<sup>123</sup>

King (1971) indicates that in 1894 Kaputei Maasai were “offered one of the first educational openings of any tribe in the interior” when in return for their parents receiving food from Francis Hall, British administrator at Fort Smith, “twenty-two children were dispatched to the East African Scottish Mission at Kibwezi” although by 1898 all of the children who had not died left the mission school of their own accord (118). Exchanging children for food, shelter and debt relief was one of many strategies Maasai employed as they attempted to rebound from cattle and human loss in “*the finishing of everything completely.*”<sup>124</sup> But “the expedient of taking refuge with neighbors

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<sup>122</sup> Debt-pawning (pawnage, pawn slavery) is the practice of exchanging children (sometimes wives) for goods or services to pay off debt in times of extreme hardship. The practice is a global historical phenomenon and therefore not limited to Africa.

<sup>123</sup> King (1971) notes: “They were instructed in industrial work and Swahili, with some cricket in their spare time; this remarkable diet was insufficiently attractive to hold them, and by 1898 all who had not died voted with their feet against education” (118). It is little wonder.

<sup>124</sup> A translation for ‘*Emutai.*’

was seen only as a temporary one” (Waller 1976, 534), which may explain why the children left Kibwezi.

In this sense, Euro-Maasai relations, at least from the Maasai point of view, seemed to have been based on short-term gains. Nonetheless, it is in these earliest relations with both missionaries and administrative agents that we find the seedbed of Maasai direct divergence with colonial state and colonial subject formation.

The first government school was built in the reserve in 1919; thereafter government schools operated alongside mission schools in various areas of the reserve. From these processes, essentially two groupings of Maasai were produced vis-à-vis education: 1) the majority of Maasai for whom formal western education, along with Christian conversion, was an alien process that existed among the new and complex facets of their new and complex colonial world and 2) a very small cohort of those few Maasai men and eventually families, who, by accident or design, were educated ‘at the feet’ of missionary leaders and later on, government schools. Yet despite the limited impact of education in the early years compared to other parts of Kenya, the first Kenyan African to travel to the United States for higher education was a Maasai who sold his cattle to do so.<sup>125</sup> But Ole Sempele was an exception in Kenya broadly and in Maasailand particularly.

Missionary work and education did not take hold in Maasai areas like it did in the African

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<sup>125</sup> Molonket ole Sempele (1880-1955) plays a starring role in the AIM missionary record. In the disasters of the 1890s, his father lost his herds to rinderpest and then died, leaving nine wives and a large family (Rigby 1981). Sempele survived by traveling, trading (and thus learning Swahili), and attaching himself to Europeans (and converting to Christianity) he met along the way. Sempele sold his cattle in 1909 and headed to the United States where he spent three years at an all-Black institute in the south (King does not give its name). Prior to his journey west, he worked for John Stauffacher, head of the AIM mission in Kenya, and upon his return, he continued his work with Stauffacher for more than 40 years (Waller 1999). According to Rigby (1981 from King, 1971) Sempele did not address missionaries as ‘*bwana*’ (master) and looked them directly in the eye when he spoke.

communities in the highlands and other densely populated and settled cultivating communities, in part because, unlike their agrarian neighbors, Maasai communities were on the move.

A. *The AIM and early interventions*

Europeans and North Americans evangelists had no ready precedent for creating missions without also creating settlements. Inherent in the very first attempts to evangelize was also the desire to civilize.<sup>126</sup> Colonial assessments for Maasai development were rooted in deep assumptions about the “necessary relationship between civilization, sedentarization, and the humbling or even extinction of once proud nomadic peoples” (Waller 1999, 90). The Europeans and Americans who came to Africa as missionaries, like the state agents of imperialism, saw settled agriculture as the best avenue through which to establish large scale productive capacities, develop a viable state economy, and produce a legible roster of colonial subjects amenable to the requirements of the state (conversion, taxation, conscription, labor extraction, and eventually, schooling).

However, Maasai pastoralism had been resilient enough to persist and reproduce itself despite decades of demographic crisis. From the point of view of most Maasai at this time, the new way of life that Christian education offered (and less dogmatically, government education) was not superior to their own systems, and therefore most declined to participate. Those few who emerged again and again in the historical record as closely linked to missions and the emerging state, were initially among those indigent and refugee Maasai who survived the *Emutai* but may not have recovered themselves through conventional pastoral mechanisms and thus sought to save themselves by alternative means.

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<sup>126</sup> See Rigby (1981) for detailed analysis of the political economy of imperialism and the missionary role in the capitalist transformation of Maasai areas in Tanzania and Kenya.

As the burgeoning colonial state and the missionary societies jockeyed for Maasai souls and pastures at the turn of the century, a “high level meeting” held after the first move between the Commissioner for the East Africa Protectorate, Olonana and his advisors, his brother Senetu, and John Stauffacher (leader of the AIM mission), was “in fact one of the earliest summit meeting on African education in Kenya” (King 1971, 121).<sup>127</sup> Remarkably, this meeting, and the agents assembled to it, bring into stark relief the ways in which formal schooling—missionary or otherwise—and productive land ownership were the single two most direct routes for African articulation into the colonial state, and the uneven penetration of capitalist forms that resulted. At this point, Maasai had lost land, but it appears as though Olonana and his advisors (themselves illiterate) learned through the process of alienation that education would be necessary for future relations with the British. Despite Olonana’s full support and agreement at the meeting that the AIM would start a school for Maasai boys living in the southern reserve along the Athi River, the first mission station was ultimately opened north of that, on the Laikipia plateau where the first Anglo-Maasai agreement had relocated ‘northern’ sections into a reserve there in 1904 (King 1971).

On Laikipia, the station at Rumruturi was located near a swamp because the AIM hoped to compel Maasai to settle and learn to farm. Despite these enticements, the AIM did not develop a notable presence at Rumruturi/Laikipia (Waller 1999). The Stauffachers had little impact on

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<sup>127</sup> Olonana is a primary character in Maasai history and central player in the production of Maasai marginality. Ironically over-empowered by the British who misunderstood his role as a spiritual leader and prophet, rather than a political leader, Olonana’s duplicity regarding the first agreement in 1904 was pivotal for ensuring the moves. Even though Maasai have never had ‘chiefs,’ he let the British believe he was sensibly tapped as chief and arbiter of Maasai/British relations. In 1904, he ‘agreed’ to the first move on the behalf of all Maasai even though he did not have the power to do so (as far as Maasai were concerned). Olonana sought his own consolidation of power against his brother Senetu; moving the Maasai into a northern reserve helped him do this (Hughes 2006). Similarly, in this decision over education, he did not have the remit of ‘leader’—not even for the ‘southern’ sections he claimed to represent.

inspiring Maasai to convert, settle, or otherwise commit themselves to a new way of life (Rigby 1981). Seven years later, the government moved the Maasai again, and the Rumruturi station closed in 1911 with only four pupils in the mission school; the Stauffachers moved to Congo, and missionary activity in the reserve lapsed until well after the second move.<sup>128</sup> In 1918 the Stauffachers returned to Maasailand, and the AIM relocated to Siyabei near Narok in the new single reserve. In a pattern started on Laikipia, the mission did not manage to attract any supporters among the leading Maasai elders of the pre-1940s generations (Waller 1999). This concerted lack of mainstream support dogged the mission throughout its tenure. It is important to note that the second move in 1911-1913 was considerably more fraught than the first in 1904. The ‘northern’ sections, primarily Purko and those left among Laikipiak, felt forcibly moved from the northern plateau to the extended southern reserve and many relocated homesteads and grazing to the Narok area (Hughes 2006). The Maasai who had resisted AIM evangelism on Laikipia were the same Maasai who lived around and about the new mission at Siyabei. The second move, like the first, also created a demographic among those sections that were rendered refugees and remained untethered from customary networks. Furthermore, cultivators with Maasai connections migrated to the reserve in search of space for themselves as land pressure tightened around them elsewhere. These marginal Maasai and Maasai relations were attracted to the mission, while the mainstream remained distant.

Those who ended up at the mission in desperation (and later by choice) were educated for the sole purpose of becoming “Native evangelists.” The AIM valued conversion over education;

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<sup>128</sup> And “there were not...appreciably more educated Maasai in 1910 than 1900” (King 1971, 122). According to Waller (1999), there were three “permanent converts,” all Keekonyokies-- Molonket ole Sempole (the man who went to America), Taki Oloposioki ole Kindi, and Suapei ole Metiame—and perhaps a dozen more men who were heavily influenced by the mission, some of whom went on the be head men in the colony (like Masikonte).

there was no expediency beyond salvation. From the AIM's point of view, basic literacy was required for Africans to read and teach the bible (Strayer 1979; Waller 1999). Beyond this, education was not viewed as a necessary means through which adherents would gain entry into the workforce, make strides toward the participation in the market with the intent to accumulate for personal gain, or as a means of empowerment beyond ready access to God's word. The AIM "eschewed political and social activism...its vision was inward-looking and narrowly focused on 'soul-winning'" (Waller 1999, 85).

This dogma flew in the face of "being Maasai." Not because Maasai inherently wanted missionary education to do otherwise, but because the very foundations of Maasai political-economic and socio-cultural modes were at stake in the face of evangelism as "an intrusive socioeconomic force" (Rigby 1981, 100). According to the AIM formulation, in order to gain salvation, Maasai had to lose wealth (in livestock) and the status, prestige, influence, and the 'respect' wealth in cattle conveyed and conferred.<sup>129</sup> Not coincidentally, as across Africa at this time, early converts tended to be those 'marginal' Maasai who may not have had stock to lose in the first place, or later in the colonial period, those of mixed Maasai/Kikuyu or Kamba parentage, and immigrants who were passing under the radar of the 'closed district' by exploiting their claims to residency as Maasai relations.

For those Maasai "in good standing," however, who gained status via the customary public and collective rites, the mission was not attractive. Rather, according to Waller (1999), early converts were not only "*il ashumpa* (like whites) but *isigan* (menial)" (92). The missions then, for

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<sup>129</sup> For men, primarily, but for women as well. Even though women did not own cattle (and still do not, customarily) except in trust for their growing sons, Maasai women, particularly as mothers of sons, were wealthy by extension of their husband's and sons' herds. And as purveyors of milk and leather goods for trade beyond household consumption, women had particular means for accumulating wealth in the pastoral economy via livestock by-products. Waller neatly reduces this complex of signifiers into the concept of "voice" (Waller 1999).

most Maasai, were understood as sketchy places of possible disrepute. Not surprisingly, early converts (who became mission teachers and itinerate preachers) were notably male, as females were forbidden by elders to go around missions.<sup>130</sup> That the early (and later) notable adherents were all male is hardly surprising, but that they were all marginal to the central Maasai decision-making bodies and practices may be, given modernization assumptions that education equates with increased prestige, efficacy, and opportunity in a broader social world. In Maasai areas of the EAP, however, it seems that the exact opposite was the case. Waller (1993) clarifies:

Maasai who became Christians were marginal figures, often accused of being ‘aliens’, not Maasai, poor and unconfident, divided amongst themselves and lacking the ‘respect’ that was the mark of Maasai social order. . . Church membership in Maasailand barely reached treble figures during the period. Most Maasai Christians were living either outside Maasailand altogether or concentrated in small semi-agricultural settlements on its fringes. The autonomous expansion of congregations and out-schools found elsewhere as an expression of local identities and rivalries had no counterpoint in Maasailand at this time (Waller 1999, 83).

Moreover, those few Maasai who did convert and who did receive missionary education were separated from a pastoral livelihood and neither well articulated with the larger colonial economy nor congruent with the ‘traditional’ political economy of the reserve. The little formal education that was provided was focused on basic literacy and learning to farm according to highland agrarian principles that were inappropriate for agriculture in the arid lands. Outside of the pastoral praxis, converts became “aliens, not Maasai” and therefore not attractive for emulation.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Although once families were established at missions, and at Siyabei many of the women (wives) were Kikuyu, women were the primary congregants, as males—men, youth, and boys—were often absent with herds (Waller 1999).

<sup>131</sup> As an example, Sempele (the first Kenyan African to travel to the United States for education) spent the first 17 years of his life as a celebrated *ol-murran* who was selected by his peers as his local age-set spokesman, and then, he was also marked for election as the *olaiquenani kitok*, “great” spokesman, of his entire age-set, *Iltareto* (King 1971; Rigby 1981). At the same time, his impoverished history marked him as a marginal figure as well. He gave up his leadership positions to join the mission, marry a Kikuyu woman, and meagerly farm potatoes. As Maasai would say “he was lost,” and as result he lost the respect and cache he had in the mainstream Maasai community

### B. *Government schooling*

Prior to the creation of the colonial Department of Education in 1911, the government subsidized missionary efforts to educate Africans (Gorham 1980). After its creation, government-run schools sprouted up throughout Kenya according to local demand and colonial interests, which were often intertwined by virtue of the monetarization of the economy and the levying of state taxes that had to be paid in cash. Government schools ran in conjunction with mission schools, although the end goals could be quite different. In the case of the AIM in Maasai areas, for example, missionary primary education led pupils to Kijabe Bible School to hone their craft as “Native evangelists” and mission (Biblical) teachers, whereas pupils from government primary schools often ended up at Ngong Veterinary College, but not until much later in the colonial period.<sup>132</sup> Unlike their cohorts in settled, peri-urban contexts, very few Maasai were among those Africans educated into the state via positions as clerks because the AIM was not interested in preparing its students for such work (Gorham 1980).<sup>133</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, the moves of 1904 and 1911 effectively removed Maasai from access to direct articulation by virtue of the fact that they did not farm the land and, moreover, their productive mode—pastoralism—was deemed inappropriate for capitalist transformation. While Waller (1999) has argued that missions, and from them, schooling, were not

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(King 1971; Rigby 1981). Although Sempele was a Keekonyokie, the primary Maasai section in my study area, no one ever mentioned him to me; I learned about him from academic historians.

<sup>132</sup> By the time Maasai had ‘protected’ enrollment quotas at the NVTs, they did not want it; by 1938 there were only three Maasai students in the school (Gorham 1980).

<sup>133</sup> See K. King’s (1971) discussion of notable Maasai who were part of the “protest phenomenon” as political consciousness spread among the educated elite in the years before the Mau Mau and the struggle for independence.



mainstream in Maasailand precisely because the AIM approach required a conscious separation from “Maasai-ness,” King (1971), on the other hand, argues that it would be “rash to allege that the A.I.M. notion of missionary work determined the educational disparity that was fast beginning to show between some of the agricultural people and the Maasai” (122). Rather, he concludes, Kikuyu did not necessarily place a higher value on education than Maasai, but that “the European penetration of Kikuyu country and the proximity of Nairobi created demands for food products, skilled and semi-skilled labor, and low grade clerical occupations” that made education a prerequisite for participation in capitalist articulation, particularly for those Kikuyu not in lineage control of land (122). In this sense, educational provision was easier and earlier in the highlands because capitalist articulation required it, and not simply because cultivating peoples are any more or less ‘accepting’ of education than pastoralist.

Moreover, Maasai, were still operating in a largely parallel economy in the relative backwater of the closed reserve. This was so in part because Maasai stock numbers for many households had rebounded heartily. Within the pastoral political economy, production and reproduction were thus secured, and even hedged against the likelihood of drought. Unlike those living on or near larger-holder estates as tenants where the cash economy prevailed, mainstream Maasai had what they needed to subsist and thus, were not attracted to ‘selling wealth to buy poverty’ in school rooms and *shambas*.<sup>134</sup>

But what if they had, as King (1971) observes, “combined this restoration of their fortunes with a forceful entry into the market economy through stock sales” (123)? Despite the relatively

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<sup>134</sup> My usage of this phrase comes from the title of M. Rutten’s (1992) *Selling Wealth to Buy Poverty: The Process of Individualization of Land Ownership Among the Maasai Pastoralists of Kajiado District Kenya, 1890-1970*. According to Archambault (2007), during her research in Kajiado district (near Kajiado Town “on the other side” of the district from Lood-ariak) from 2005-2007, local Maasai used this phrase as a way of referring to their fears associated with group ranch sub-division and loss of pasturage.

well-off position of Maasai to articulate as beef suppliers, the free market was not in play. Rather, colonial quarantine and marketing policies protected nascent settler economies from local competition. King quotes the District Commissioner of Narok in the late '20s:

So far as the District is concerned he is forbidden by law to sell his stock however much he may want to. . . Folks may talk of the useless Masai. But the fact is that they are forbidden to help the Colony in the way which they best could, that is by supplying cheap beef (NDAR 1929, qtd in King 1971: 123).

Instead, Maasai articulation would evolve on an *ad hoc* basis through subsequent cycles of drought and livestock loss, and the degree to which it has occurred at all has been increasingly tied to access to relevant schooling.

## II. Government education in Maasailand: 1920-1963<sup>135</sup>

### A. *Early issues*

The first colonial school built in the newly formed single Maasai reserve in southern Kenya was the Government Maasai School (GMSN), a three-year primary school, in Narok Town in 1919.<sup>136</sup> It took nearly ten years after the second move was set in motion to formally inaugurate government educational policy or infrastructure in Maasailand. The financing schemes used to

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<sup>135</sup> Gorham's (1980) dissertation is one of very few historical studies of government educational provision in Kajiado district, and it is primarily his work that I use to tell this story. See also King (1972), Ole Sarone (1986), and Holland (1996). Others refer to or include references to education in a larger analysis of Maasai life. Consider Kipuruy (1989), Coast (2002), and Hodgson (2001) for examples.

<sup>136</sup> This means the government school was finished (although the funds were requested, and denied, as early as 1913 according to Gorham 1980) one year after the AIM started to set up a new mission at Siyabei, in the same general area as Narok Town. Presumably both institutions were near to Narok Town as the 'urban gateway' to interior Maasailand in the west (as opposed to Kajiado Town in the east). Neither Gorham in his analysis of government schools, nor Waller and King in their analyses of the missions really address how these schools co-existed. The second school was built in Kajiado Town in 1926.

build and maintain the first school highlights the complexities of the earliest educational provisions under indirect rule and the establishment of ‘native councils’ and ‘paramount chiefs.’ The GMSN was built entirely with public funds derived from the Reserve’s General Revenue generated from a combination of poll and hut taxes and cattle fines levied on Maasai residents, and not from grants-in-aid from the newly formed Department of Education (1911) (Gorham 1980). Local administrators could use General Revenue funds without the consent of the government-instituted Elder’s Council. However, another source of public money, the Maasai Expense Account, set up in 1915 to provide capital for improved water facilities in the reserve as condition of the second agreement in 1911, was primarily generated by Maasai contributions and the sale or lease of reserve land (primarily to non-Maasai immigrants) and required the consent of the Council to be used (Gorham 1980). The single Maasai reserve was established for over ten years before the Education Department directed funding to the GMSN by agreeing to pay the headmaster’s salary in 1923; until then, recurrent costs has been met by the Maasai Expense Account (Gorham 1980). Essentially both revenue streams were generated by direct subsidies from Maasai themselves, either through self-help contributions or by paying taxes and fines.

In the formation of indirect rule, British agents fundamentally misunderstood Maasai social arrangements. Maasai customarily are acephalous and do not have chiefs or ‘headmen’ (Hughes 2006). Political power and popular influence was (is) shared among councils of junior elders (*il-payani*) but also sometimes age-set spokesmen (*il-aiguenak*) chosen among warriors (*il-murran*) but not among the senior, retired, and ancient elders (*il-tasat*) who were often appointed to (un)representative bodies like “the Elders’ Councils” (Gorham 1980; Talle 1988; Hughes 2006; Jacobs 1965).<sup>137</sup> Consequently, the elders tapped for the Council were making decisions about

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<sup>137</sup> Talle (1988) notes that “In his position as junior elder, a Maasai man has reached the height of his structural power; beyond this point the age-grade system offers only positions of diminishing

pooled monies ('tribal funds') without an actual remit to the community at large. The Council's proactivity with respect to early education expenditure is thus intriguing and paradoxical. On one hand, it clearly contradicts the prevailing and mutually reinforcing notions that Maasai are resistant to change, "hate" education, and are too impoverished to allocate resources to provide education, and conversely, that they are unwilling to use the resources they have to avail themselves of educational opportunities.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that it also seems likely that at least initially their proactivity was designed to protect these particular elders' own social and political-economic interests configured by a Maasai world view. As it turns out, the Council used tribal funds for the school on the condition their own children *would not be required to attend* (Gorham 1980). Sending boys and young men to school would have meant a significant loss of herding labor and adversely affected stock management and accumulation. Additionally, association with schools had social repercussions given the perceived links between marginal "Maasai-ness" and western education. Both mission and government schools, then, with their focus on agriculture, settlement, and state-defined subjecthood presented non-starters for Maasai who enjoyed prosperity or near-prosperity in the pastoral system. Gorham (1980) argues that the very issues that inspired leading elders to reject schooling for their own children were the same issues that kept everyday Maasai away as well. These issues, similar to those effecting enrollment in the mission schools, have to do with socio-cultural and political-economic concerns.

What is more, the funds the Council allocated for education had been originally gathered from the community in order to improve local livestock facilities. This fact complicates the

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authority" (104). Hughes (2006) confirms this, but adds "councils of elders constitute the main decision-making bodies, though some of my evidence challenges this model and suggests that younger men also are or were central to decision-making processes" (14).

situation in two ways. First, the 1911 agreement framing the second move stipulated that because the southern reserve was not well-watered, the colonial government would provide watering facilities to accommodate pastoralism, but instead, Maasai themselves contributed to the Expense Account. Secondly, their decision begs questions of legitimate authority and representation. Did the Council have the latitude to redirect the funds to schools instead of water troughs? Gorham (1980) argues that “while it would be misleading to characterize this support as a breach of trust, by the same token, it will be appreciated that few individuals in the traditional society felt (or would feel) themselves bound by the decisions agreed to between the Council and the colonial administration on educational matters” (11). A possible interpretation is that the Council hedged their bets against the British with support for formal schooling.

Even though it is not entirely clear why the elders invested in this first school, it does seem clear that their efforts rendered very little in practical benefit for the earliest pupils or their communities at large. Already stung by the betrayal of the moves and creation of the single reserve, Maasai were rightly skeptical that colonial policy was in their best interests. Interventions in Maasailand at this time, including eventual education policy, were motivated by two central concerns. Policies to quarantine Maasai stock movement within the confines of the reserve, restrict marketing and slaughter locations, reduce access to water sources, tax stock, mandate destocking, and eventually begin school quota systems that targeted pastoral labor and codified fines for households that did not comply, all targeted the first concern which was to restrict Maasai pastoral capacity and directly curtail commodity production by distorting markets in order to protect the development of settler ranches (Gorham 1980; Evangelou 1984).<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Quarantines were initially enacted in response to a rinderpest outbreak in 1915. The quarantine was imposed in 1916; veterinary assistance was not made readily available, which Gorham (1980) argues, indicates that the administration was less inclined to support pastoralism and more inclined to witness its demise.

As part of this broader set of policy aims, the earliest schools were not directed at improving Maasai pastoralism or customary livelihoods. The administration provided schools in the Maasai reserve in order to address their second overarching concern with the reserve: to teach Maasai how to settle and farm, and in the process, curtail “traditional social practices in the area which were felt, in colonial circles, to be both a threat to effective administration in the Reserve and detrimental to the pastoral Maasai themselves” (Gorham 1980, 12). In this desire to transform semi-nomadic pastoralists into more easily manageable farmers, dairy managers, and semi-skilled tradesmen, colonial administrators believed mandatory schooling would be the best means for curtailing and eventually dismantling what they perceived to be Maasai deleterious social arrangements, including: the age-set system, *e-manyatta* settlements (warrior camps), and *il-murran* practices (King 1971; Waller 1999; Gorham 1980). Administrators wanted to control the colony’s perhaps most famous “restless natives” by attempting to sedentarize, demilitarize, and monopolize Maasai modes of cultural and material production. As a result, educational provision was seen by most Maasai as an imposed system designed to threaten their way of life rather than enhance it. In its initial forms, education in the Maasai Reserve was not intended to “create professors and students of the higher grades of education” out of Maasai youth (Narok Annual Report, 1923, qtd in Gorham 1980,12), but rather to inculcate them to the ways and means of life under colonial rule.

Paradoxically, given the moralizing sentiment regarding the ‘betterment’ of Maasai people and social forms, the colonial administration was not concerned with promoting education that would enhance Maasai pastoral praxis, teach agricultural practices appropriate for semi-arid regions, or prepare local people to participate in local economies or compete in economies outside of the reserves as tradesmen. The only employment for Maasai outside of the reserve was as herdsmen, positions for which they were clearly qualified without European schooling (Gorham 1980). Moreover, given that men and boys were primarily responsible for long-range herding,

these facts are another way of saying that only males had wage employment potential in the wider economy (this was true for women in cultivating communities as well).<sup>139</sup> Female labor in the pastoral economy—the management and trade of livestock by-products like milk, ghee, and leather—was disrupted and distorted by the imposition of a cash economy and the relative visibility (even misunderstood and undervalued pastoral labor) of male labor and subjectivity (Hodgson 2001; Talle 1988). Education for social change, from the point of view of the colonial administrators aligned with settlers (which is not necessarily all agents or reflective of all attitudes in London), was equated with sedentarization and the self-serving intention to weaken or eradicate Maasai stock competition. And, as Waller has suggested from his interpretation of the primary records, to eradicate pastoralism for good.

In the face of this agenda, when no pupils enrolled in the GMSN, the government instituted a quota system to fill the school. “Although there was no basis for this measure in colonial legislation, the threat of substantial cattle fines for non-compliance was sufficient to produce 96 pupils for the school by the end of the first year” (Gorham 1980). If the leading elders’ children did not go to school, then who did? The question of who is enmeshed with the question of what: who attended the early schools and what were they taught? Similar to the mission school, the emphasis of the government school curriculum was basic literacy, and then when that was achieved, agriculture. The “agriculture” curriculum simply required the students to work in the school’s *shamba* (subsistence garden/farm). Given that the GMSN was built over a mile away from the closest water source, the children who came to school basically hauled water and worked the

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<sup>139</sup> Wangui (2008) argues that given the steep reduction in rangelands and the contemporary practice of “grazing close to the *boma*,” it is more than reasonable to assert that women today are, in fact, pastoralists. The closer pastoral praxis comes to the homestead (“*boma*”), the more responsibilities (but not necessarily rights in) women have for the care of cattle and small stock. Indeed, as more children go to school and more men go in search of waged labor, more and more women will be seen “looking after” the family’s herds.

fields. Unfortunately, the pupils did not enjoy the fruits of their labor because the school *shambas* actually failed four of the five years it was in production (from 1920-1925); the school could not even adequately feed the students officials had convinced to board. Not only were parents dismayed that their children were made do menial work, particularly in drought conditions with insufficient food, no one was assured of the merits of farming based on the school's clear failure to model successful methods.

While forced quotas did motivate households to send children to school, a combination of the labor demands of pastoral production and the irrelevance of the curriculum for daily life in the reserve ensured that the best and the brightest were not chosen to attend school. On the contrary, households selected the most marginal members to fulfill the quota.<sup>140</sup> The pattern of 'marginal'

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<sup>140</sup> The "hated son" is another 'marginal' social category that deserves more investigation, and suggests that those chosen for school were chosen for reasons other than physical or mental (or both) handicaps, as Gorham asserts. I met several "hated sons" in the field. Some described themselves with these words, and others were described by other community members with this phrase. As one elder told me, "I was taken to school by my father because when the chief and the *askaris* came to my home, I was sent because my father did not need to have me with him." The hated son—the product of his mother's lover, for example—was often sent to school to meet the quota requirements. The most loved sons, the cleverest, usually the ones who could recognize every head of cattle in a herd of hundreds by color markings, would never be sent to school because his skills were too valuable to household wealth and reproduction. Many of these men—the excellent pastoralists, the warriors of lion-killing fame—rue the day they were kept at home, while their brothers, the "hated sons," earn wages in the formal economy as teachers, and so on. One elder was careful to point out that by "hate" he did not mean that his father did not love him and would not provide for him, but that his father did not necessarily want to see him and be reminded of his mother's other relationships. Another elder, a favorite son, told me through Maria about when he was an *ol-murran* he asked his educated neighbor to teach him the alphabet, and then he would return to the warrior camp in the bush and draw the letters in the dirt in an attempt to teach the other *il-murran* what he'd learned. What sparked his interest in his youth was curiosity. Now, as a father of five, he was proud to say that all of his children were in school, he was a member of the school committee, and he was also attending adult education classes. This effort, he said, was inspired by "being born again as a Christian." When I asked another elder who had not been to school if he had ever been part of killing a lion (*il-murran* killed lions in large groups; the warrior whose arrow or spear first struck the lion was considered the one who killed the lion, although in truth the firepower of many was necessary to bring the lion down) he said, "Oh yes," and waved his hand as if swatting a fly. "But we now know that we wasted all that time when we could have been learning and today we would have permanent house instead of these," he said in *Maa*, pointing to



Maasai attending school, established with the AIM mission in Rumuruti at the turn of the century, was repeated in the early government schools, albeit with a slightly different slant. Instead of choosing those boys and young men (girls were not considered) who were perceived to be smart and strong to attend school, the weakest boys, either physically, mentally, or both, were sent to school, and the most clever were sent with the cattle. Alternatively, households would send any boys who were ‘less Maasai’ by virtue of mixed origins (typically Maasai-Kikuyu unions), and later in the colonial period as in-migrations intensified, Maasai would send the children of their non-Maasai (*Ildorobo*, Kikuyu, Kipsigis, etc) employees instead of their own.<sup>141</sup> The complicated results of these practices were born out as history unfolded and relatively few Maasai emerged among the educated Africans who began to galvanize around the politics of independence and decolonization. And the Maasai who did emerge among the men who shaped Kenyan history, were inheritors of this marginal status within mainstream Maasai communities. Moreover, as in-migrations increased over time, the cultivating families who moved to the reserve to claim land and spaces in relatively empty Maasai government schools, increasingly sidelined local Maasai in education attainment. These individuals helped to populate the ‘alien’ enclaves that further threaten Maasai territory and identities.

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distant *enkagiti* as we passed. The pick-up *matatu* driver, a Kipsigi who worked for the Maasai owner of the vehicle and spoke *Maa*, translated for us.

<sup>141</sup> *Ildorobo* are a Maa-speaking group that subsists on hunting, gathering, and raising honey. Anglicized as Dorobo, these communities have been historically discriminated against by pastoral Maasai because they do ‘menial’ work as blacksmiths and most notably for Kipury (1983) because they hunt and consume wild animals which is nonsensical and wrong in Maasai cosmology (4). Kipury further notes that Maasai “appreciate” blacksmithing services but also believe that the manufacture of lethal weapons (like spears) make Dorobo “unclean” (4). It is interesting to note this attitude given that in the customarily significant *Olng’esherr* ceremony whereby senior warriors (*il-murran*) leave warriorhood to become junior elders and social adult men ready to marry, this new status is symbolized by the gift of the branding iron so that the new elder can brand his herd (Talle 1988).

Ultimately, widespread Maasai resistance to early colonial educational provision in the reserve in the 1920s was largely the result of a complex of disincentives based in the colonial administration's interests in transforming pastoralist into productive, controllable subject of the Crown. These disincentives included an emphasis on agricultural training using highland derived water-intensive techniques that were inappropriate to the arid and semi-arid ecology; requirement that pupils work in school *shambas* although the water source was far away; pastoral production required boys of schooling age to herd stock (while older youth were engaged as *il-murran* and girls were not considered) which had a direct and positive bearing on household wealth, whereas hauling water did not; onset of drought increased labor demands; household mobility; poorly functioning schools; Maasai mistrust of government schemes and reluctance to donate resources (land, labor, cash) to build institutions in direct contrast to their own.

By the end of 1926, these mounting disincentives conspired to reduce the enrollment at GMSN to 61 students. The headmaster himself was rarely there as he was tending his own herds and managing his own subsistence (Gorham 1980). The school was rendered largely irrelevant to most Maasai.<sup>142</sup>

#### B. *More schools, increased demand*

By the 1930s, the end of Kenya's first decade as an official colony found 40 unemployed Maasai school leavers idle in the Ngong area (Gorham 1980). This statistic foreshadowed a persistent problem of education in Kenya, intensified and accelerated at independence, in which demand for education continually outstripped economic growth and opportunities for employment

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<sup>142</sup> In an ironic note, 1926 is also the year that the first African secondary school (for boys and young men) opened in a town called "Kikuyu" north of Nairobi. Alliance High School, among other private schools, continues to produce Kenya's elite.

for the majority of the population (Buchmann 1999). The political economy of relevant education for a relatively select few was solidified in the last decades of the colonial period. As a result, multiple generations of Kenyans had been locked out of education; the leaders of independent Kenya inherited a state ill-prepared to support the “hunger’ for education this circumstance created. In its place, the political economy of relative expediency prevailed, built upon a history of complex, contradictory, and multivalent policies and practices colony wide.

In Maasailand, if elders had initially supported schools for other people’s children and not their own, as the decades wore on educational authorities and local leaders struggled to develop the schools into viable institutions in order to meet an increasing demand for education relevant to both the immediate pastoral economy and the wider Kenyan economy, and indeed, to the articulation of the two (Gorham 1980; Sifuna 2005). In an oft-repeated refrain, the overlapping of restrictive colonial policies toward pastoral production and the ever-present reoccurrence of drought and subsequent disease in Maasai areas hamstrung these developments (Campbell 1993). The quarantine instituted in 1916 was in full swing until 1932, and cash shortages were registered in Narok starting in 1929 (Gorham 1980). When the most severe drought to hit the area in decades occurred in 1933, many Maasai were already working at a deficit. Gorham (1980) reports that around this time cattle prices dropped steadily so that in 1929 a bull would be sold for 50 Ksh. By 1934, that same bull was selling for a mere 15 Ksh (24).

From the late 1920s to the late 1930s, actual educational provision was relatively stagnant, although activism around education was afoot in the reserve, but not the extent it was in other parts of Kenya (Anderson 1961).<sup>143</sup> Unlike the rest of the colony, missionary schools were not the norm

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<sup>143</sup> I have cited Anderson’s (1961), *The Struggle for the School: The Interaction of Missionary, Colonial, Government and Nationalist Enterprise in the Development of Formal Education in Kenya*, in reference to the activism and activity “in other parts of Kenya.” It is notable that a book with this scope mentions Maasai three times, and not in reference to the struggle for the school in Maasailand.

in the reserve, government schools were, and these schools were few and far between and run in varying states of emptiness. The GMSN was still in operation, and while the GMSK (Government Maasai School Kajiado) closed in 1931, another opened in Loitokitok (GMSL). Both schools report significantly decreased rosters. The pupils who remained could not matriculate on to industrial training at the Industrial Training School at Kabete or the Veterinary Training Center (NVTS) at Ngong because they were not adequately prepared by the shoddy instruction they received at the primary schools in the reserve. Perhaps most profoundly for the deep divergence between Maasai areas and other area of Kenya in terms of educational attainment, the 'closed reserve' status was extended to the schools as well and no attempts were made to ensure that Maasai school curricula were kept apace with the rest of the government schools' curricula in the wider colony (Gorham 1980). Structurally, Maasai were in separate and unequal schools, which translated, as it always will, into enduring divergences between those areas well positioned from the outset and those marginalized from the beginning (Sheffield 1973; Sifuna 2005).

The closed district status did little, therefore to 'protect' Maasai educational resources from midcentury migration to the reserve, although Maasai funds, lands, and livestock were leveraged to build and provision schools. For example, in 1927 the government planned to build the Ngong Veterinary Training School and persuaded the local Native Council to provide 3000 acres of land and experimental herds for the school's new animal husbandry program. Authorities

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Anderson cites the earliest reactions to European control over education in Kenya as early as 1908 in Nyanza, only four years after Maasai were moved the first time. Kikuyu political activity including resistance to European education and the independent and out-school movement takes hold in the highlands in the late 'teens and '20s. The Kikuyu Central Association, formed in 1924, is associated with the rise of the independent school movement after the female circumcision crisis of 1929. The independent movement built, staffed, and taught students in 300 schools (Anderson 1961). Sempele was among a handful of educated Maasai who spent time with Harry Thuku of the East Africa Association, and although Sempele and others started a small 'out-school,' there was no parallel movement for independent education in Maasailand.

wanted the NVTs to train animal husbandry instructors to provide a husbandry curriculum in the reserve schools. However, the school ended up benefitting the non-Maasai students who came to reserve for advanced training because the instruction was geared toward dairy farming with European-derived stock and tailored for highland, water-intensive techniques instead of focusing on pastoral strategies for lowland, local stock dairying (Gorham 1980).<sup>144</sup> After skirmishes between Maasai and non-Maasai students and protest about the content of the curriculum, in 1931 NVTs re-organized as ‘mono-tribal’ and focused on recruiting and admitting primarily Maasai students. However, the focus on European-style dairying remained.

One enduring result of the struggles over education in Maasailand leading up to independence was that colonial administrators and other non-Maasai communities that sought schooling opportunities in the reserve developed an idea of Maasai as a people who “hate education.” As we have seen, this remains the discourse alive and well today. The colonial government eventually instituted several practices to attract more Maasai children to government schools, including, as the NVTs example suggests, privileging Maasai participation over the participation of children from in-migrated communities. Other strategies included the reduction of or waiving of fees, offering free boarding facilities, and, from the 1950s, access to secondary schools with lower marks than required of those students from other parts of the country (Gorham 1980). These measures, however, did not attract sufficient numbers of Maasai children to schools. As a result, authorities attempted to run schools with few enrolled or attempted to boost

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<sup>144</sup> One distinct technique difference I observed: Maasai keep the cows separated from their calves all day—the mothers are out to graze with the herd and the calves are grazed separately close to the *enkang*. Then in the evening when the cattle return, women milk the cows *while* the calves nurse. According to Ole Kilusu, in other communities, like Kikuyu, mothers and calves are also separated during the day but when the mothers return to the homestead, the calves are tied to the fence while the mothers are milked. Once the farmer has the milk she needs, the calves nurse.

enrollments by opening 'closed' schools to immigrant children. In some cases, the schools were simply closed.

There was clearly a resistance to the education on offer in the reserve. Nonetheless, school-going Maasai wanted more, not less, educational access. Demand focused on the opportunity to graduate from primary school and go on to secondary school outside of the reserve. However, there was no way to sit for the primary school exam, required for graduation to secondary school, because none of the schools in the reserve offered all the grades necessary to qualify. In 1937 the GMSN finally reached six standards to become a full primary school. This meant that for the first time Maasai students could complete a curriculum that would qualify them to take the Kenya African Primary Exam (KAPE) and attempt to continue to secondary school at Alliance High School (which had been open to students from other parts of the colony for eleven years already). In an ironic twist, the Education Department decided at this time to institute an animal husbandry component to the curriculum at GMSN as a way of tying student learning to immediate needs in the reserve. Paradoxically, school-going Maasai and other students at GMSN did not want to attend an additional year of primary school just for animal husbandry when that time could be spent preparing for the KAPE. They, in large part, did not want biblical training at Kijabe, industrial training at Kabete, or veterinary training on European highland stock from NVTs; they wanted advanced academic training and the chance to attend the Alliance High School. Their sights were set on the formal wage economy. Not surprisingly, by 1938 there were only three Maasai students at NVTs (Gorman 1980).

Not only did the husbandry schemes run counter to demands for education by some Maasai, they required 4000 acres of rangeland per school for the pasture necessary to run demonstration sites. The education department expected local Maasai to make this land available for each school in the district. This policy, along side legislation in 1945 that expropriated grazing

land for wildlife parks and reserves, convinced many Maasai that the expansion and development of schools was less about improving the condition of life in Maasailand and more about finding official ways to alienate more and more land (Gorham 1980). The ‘beef strike’ of 1945 exemplifies Maasai resistance to state policies that expropriated African resources, distorted and controlled markets, and prevented Africans (not just Maasai) from taking full advantage of economic opportunities. Beginning in 1940, faced with wartime demand for military food, the colonial government embarked on policies designed to force African stock owners—who owned “well over 95% of the cattle in Kenya”—to produce targeted quotas for legal sale to the only official market, the government (Spencer 1980, 509).<sup>145</sup> While initially successful, by 1943, tribal police were called to round up the required quotas in Narok (Spencer 1980). By 1945, Maasai refused to comply by withholding stock from the government market.<sup>146</sup> Large-scale meat shortages were registered in Nairobi. Within a year, the policy was abandoned and with the operating of the free market in beef, the government marketing board and meat-processing factory were driven out of business (Gorham 1980).

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<sup>145</sup> This was among other policies was designed to create the conditions for settler economic recovery and dominance in the war years. See Spencer (1980) for a detailed discussion.

<sup>146</sup> According to Spencer (1980), a similar pattern of initial willingness to support the war effort devolving into “concerted resistance” by the end was repeated across the colony. Similarly, Fleisher (2000) shows how in the same period Kuria pastoralists in northern Tanganyika fled their homesteads and moved cattle in the middle the of the night to avoid compulsory sale to the colonial government; meanwhile, those Kuria who were willing to sell circumvented the quota by smuggling cattle into Kenya to sell illegally. One wonders if Maasai were buying and passing Kuria cattle on to the Kenyan quotas. Also at this time, Kenya’s settlers had wrangled for increased state protection and access to the wartime market in maize and other grains. To support settlers, large numbers of trained oxen were acquired by force and then sold at fixed low prices to European farmers and immediately put to work breaking new field for increased production or put back on the market and sold at increased prices as European stock (Spencer 1980). Spencer does not say whom the oxen was acquired from, but it would not have been Maasai; some cultivating communities were abused by this policy.

By the end of World War II, through the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1952, and up to the eve of Independence in 1964, Maasai/colonial relations around school provision were deeply contentious and contradictory.<sup>147</sup> School-going Maasai and their parents increasingly rejected the vocational education available in the reserve and instead demanded access to secondary school and the employment opportunities this achievement promised. At the same time, most Maasai rejected the imposition of schools. School expansion, always associated with land loss, became widely understood as policy designed to further disempower and marginalize pastoralist modes of production. “Thus while the focus of educational resistance in the two decades before independence shifted from the content of government schooling [the focus on intensive agricultural practices inappropriate for arid and semi-arid lands and sedentarization] in Maasailand to the consequences of educational provision, it continued to condition educational promotion until well into the post independence period,” and the paradox of education persisted (Gorham 1980, 2).

### **III. Post-independence and Education for All**

One basic, if often implicit, question that still shapes local discussions of Maasai education in Kenya almost 50 years after Independence is this: how to explain why Maasai communities are behind most Kenyans in educational attainment, even those of other rural communities? Results from Coast’s (2002) large scale ( $n=1545$ ) cross-border household survey in Kenya and Tanzania

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<sup>147</sup> By the late 1940s, the highlands were burning as violence erupted on white-owned farms, in squatter settlements, and Nairobi slums and Mau Mau emerged. Mau Mau was a secret organization of Kikuyu farm laborers on European estates in the highlands and urban radicals. In 1952 Governor Sir Evelyn Baring declared a State of Emergency; the emergency ended in 1960 (See Berman 1991 and Lonsdale 1990 and other for detailed analysis of Mau Mau and its relationship to decolonization and the formation of independent Kenya). The Kikuyu independent schools were closed at the advent of the Emergency on the assumption that they were training grounds for militant political action, although Anderson (1961) argues that despite the Kikuyu nationalist bent, militarism was not what the schools intended to teach.



indicate that although there is evidence of improvement in access to education over time in Maasailand, in Kenya, relative to the national rural average of 65% of all children aged 7-12 years in school, only 32% of Kenyan Maasai were attending school—over 80 years after the first school was built in the post-1911 reserve. How do we account for this gap in access and attainment? Without collapsing into Maasai exceptionalism, how can we make sense of this persistent lag? This question lingers among educated Maasai today even as enrollments rates are on the rise and everyday discourse expresses the exact opposite of the supposed historical truism: Maasai have become people who “love education” and strongly believe it has an essential role to play not only in their futures as individuals, but as pastoralists (Archambault 2007). I agree with Archambault that school has become a central institution within which more and more Maasai children are growing up. What also clear, at least for the historical moment, is that Maasai girls still trail behind Maasai boys in schooling access, persistence, and achievement.

Several factors act as constraints to education for boys and girls in rural communities in the development zone. These constraints are exacerbated for historically nomadic and semi-sedentarized communities.<sup>148</sup> Persistent obstacles for pastoralists and semi-pastoralists include household mobility and transhumant settlement patterns (Leggett 2005; Dyer 2006), lack of

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<sup>148</sup> Maasai communities constitute the largest group of pastoralists in Kenya (Coast 2002) but they are not the most alienated from education. Oxfam (2005) indicates that nomadic pastoral communities in North Eastern Province, primarily members of various Somali clans and sub-clans, (and large mixed refugee populations) have the lowest levels of primary school gross enrollment (GER) in all of Kenya. In 2006, North Eastern showed 27.5% GER, with a secondary GER of 6.3%. Nairobi province (the city proper and surrounds are referred to as Nairobi province—urban slum areas are implicated in this statistic) is the next lowest at 40.1% GER, followed by Coast Province at 96.4%. Rift Valley Province is in the middle at 112.4%, with a secondary GER of 31.2%. In 2006, Eastern and Nyanza Provinces were nearly the same with the highest primary GER in Kenya at 126.6% and 127.7% respectively. To clarify, gross enrollment ratio refers to the total number of students enrolled in primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the total population in the official age for primary education (in Kenya, 6-13 years). It is therefore common for the gross enrollment proportion to exceed 100% to reflect pupils above the determined age group for a given education level. For example, a 15-year-old pupil in standard 3 (official age for standard 3: 8 years old).

demonstrable benefits of from education for pastoral economies (Gorham 1980; Kratli & Dyer 2006), labor requirement for herding (Rigby 1985), the direct costs associated with schooling (user fees, supplies, uniforms), lack of infrastructure (school buildings, school books, paved roads, teacher housing), low population densities (Kratli and Dyer 2006), and the reluctance of teachers to live in relatively isolated areas (particularly non-pastoralist teachers). Since independence, these obstacles have little abated; in general, they remain intact as essentially the same obstacles Maasai, and other pastoralist groups, faced under colonial rule. These days, the only obstacle that is demonstrably less salient, for Maasai at least, is the relevance of educational content for the betterment of pastoral economies. Rather, those Maasai who “love education,” embrace the new knowledge that can only come from school and have a deep faith in the benefits they hope will accrue for securing an education.

Yet, from the very first days of the post-colonial state, despite these rationally perceived obstacles to education in rural pastoral communities, the perception of Maasai and other pastoralist irrationality and incommensurability with development remained deeply rooted in colonial ideas about development. This perception has had as much to do with administrative misinterpretations, willful neglect, and economic ideology as it has had to do with Maasai institutions and social arrangements (Gorham 1980; Kratli and Dyer 2006; Sifuna 2005). The Republic of Kenya’s (1964) first post-independence report on education recognizes the disparities in development among different regions of Kenya. The Report categorizes “a developed area as one which shares the social and economic benefits of a modern economy” and affirms the idea that progress toward this requires an injection of economic resources and depends on “concurrent changes in traditional ways of life, of which nomadism is perhaps the most obvious example” (133). The authors note, with no degree of irony that I can detect, that it is the “social isolation of the people of the under-

developed areas that has contributed to keeping them under-developed” (133). In Maasai communities anyway, historic processes have produced social isolation.

As chapter 1 traced, Maasai social isolation in Kenya has primarily been a function of land alienation and adjudication. Colonial expropriation of land set the precedent and the post-independence period followed suit, but instead of European encroachment (except for those descendants of original settlers), everyday Maasai have been faced with rangeland loss by the Kenyan state and Kenyan elites, Maasai included. As we have seen, when pastoralists lose land, they lose livelihood. The loss of household and community resources has a direct impact on the provision of social services, including formal education, particularly in the uneven and fluctuating development zone of newly independent Kenya when household and communities shouldered the burden of provision.

Consequently, the ASALs (arid and semi-arid lands) are always referenced with respect to sparse access and low participation, for all children, but glaringly for girls. However, most research on education in postcolonial Kenya, and certainly in the past 20 years, unfortunately has made little mention of Maasai areas specifically, although “the ASALs” are always referenced.<sup>149</sup> This generalizing of “pastoralist” experience makes for frustrated reading. The purely nomadic camel-keeping Somali sub-clans of North Eastern Province are nearly completely absent from all social services in Kenyan, education and health systems most pointedly. This cannot be said for Maasai, particularly the communities involved in this study. Nonetheless, the two groups are categorized together under the same two rubrics, “pastoralist” and “inhabitants of the ASALs.”

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<sup>149</sup> Not unlike lip service to “gender mainstreaming,” “the ASALs” as well as “the urban slums” have discreet sections allocated to them in every development plan.

With these limitations in mind, I have attempted, with the scattered specific information I can piece together, to provide some insight on the current situation in Kenya broadly, and in Kajiado district specifically. However, more local level research is needed in Kajiado district (and for reference, Narok district) for more comprehensive overview. What seems clear is that as the fluctuating educational trends experienced by the majority of Kenyans since independence—increased fees/reduced fees, increased demand/decreased demand, high teacher-pupil ratios/increased drop-out rates, massive school expansion/insufficient infrastructure, historic levels of female enrollment/ increased gender disparity, universal primary education/decreased retention and completion rates and so on—are exacerbated in Maasailand, as elsewhere in pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities and in urban slum settlements because these, generally the economically most vulnerable communities in Kenya, often do not have the capacity to weather shocks as other communities might.<sup>150</sup> The paradox of education, a demonstrable feature of Maasai life in the colony, endures in the post-colony.

Since independence, access to and participation in formal schooling in Kajiado district has moved in fits and starts, largely in tune with the rest of the country if several paces behind, gaining momentum around the punctuated intervals of free primary schooling for standards 1-4, legislated by the President Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union (KANU) government in 1973, and the institution of free primary education in standards 1-8 (the full course of primary), legislated by the President Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2003, and for several reasons in between which I will discuss here. Maasai, like all Kenyans, were swept up the process of decolonization, which was itself a contradictory process. Kenyan movements for self-rule and

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<sup>150</sup> I do not mean to include elite Kenyans in this picture. As Buchmann (1999) pointed out 10 years ago, elite Kenyans opt out of the Kenyan education system altogether, either by sending their children to private schools in the British system in Kenya, or sending them outside of Kenya completely.

independence were deeply rooted in the very worldview they sought to and fought to overcome, including a faith in education and an embrace of the education-as-development imperative. Today, most schooled Maasai make clear, and most un-schooled Maasai agree, education is the future (Archambault 2007). From the point of view of the state, the rubric ‘education-as-development’ is more applicable when inverted to read ‘development-as-education.’ This formulation highlights the role formal academic education was (is) believed to play in the solidification of the postcolonial nation.

#### A. The Kenyatta era

The discourse of development-as-education has been formative in Kenyan official educational policy from the very beginning of postcolonial rule and has always been saturated with references and recourse to economic development as the prime driver of human, social and political development. A week after independence, on December 19 1963, President Kenyatta initiated the Kenya Education Commission and called for a plan for education in the new nation (Kiluva-Ndunda 2001). The Commission authored the *Ominde Report* (1964), the first official report of the new government, which created a platform from which the new African leadership could reclaim and “Africanize” education in the pursuit of nation building in the post-colony.<sup>151</sup> Just over a year later, *Sessional Paper #10: African Socialism and Its Application to Planning Policy* (1965),

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<sup>151</sup> In just over 40 years since independence there has been more than 10 such commissions and reports focused on education (and very likely all are not included in this list). Some include: the Kenya Education Commission/*Ominde Report* (1964), *Sessional Paper #10: African Socialism and Its Application in Development Planning* (1965), *1974-1978 Development Plan*, the *Gathachi Report* (1976), the *Mackay Report* (1981), the *Wanjigi Report* (1982-1983), the *Kamunge Report* (1988), *1989-1993 Development Report*, *Ndegwe Report* (1991), *Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET)/the Koech Report* (1999), *Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010 (KESSP)* (2005), and *Gender Policy in Education* (2007). See Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) for table that summarizes many of these reports through 1991 (80-81).

established education as the “principal means for relieving the shortage of domestic skilled workforce and equalizing economic opportunities among all communities for the acceleration of Africanization” (qtd in Kiluva-Ndunda 2001, 62). *Sessional Paper #10* claimed that class distinctions were a European imposition and would have no place in “African Socialism,” despite the fact that very few Kenyans were to directly benefit from decolonization to the degree that a very small elite did once power, and resources like land, shifted from the white government to the black government. As Kiluva-Ndunda (2001) points out, the initial focus on “Africanization” obscured, and thereby reified, axes of inequity among Africans: namely along ethnic, class, sex, and gender lines.

At independence about 900,000 Kenyans were in school (Buchmann 1999). One of the signature policies of the Kenyatta era was Africanization through *harambee*, Swahili for “let us pull together.” Premised on the notion of ‘self-help’ and decentralization, *harambee* was meant to empower African Kenyans to take charge of infrastructural provision and economic advancement in their communities through locally elected county councils after decades of colonial policies to prevent self-determination. It was also intended to deflect attention away from the new government’s incapacity to handle to the groundswell of interest in schooling (Buchmann 1999; Gorham 1980; Rutten 1992). At a basic level, *harambee* was designed to build schools for more and more Kenyans to attend. Particularly in the provision of secondary education, the *harambee* movement was initially very successful in increasing the number of schools and the number of children enrolled in school. All over Kenya, after decades of denied access to academic education, demand soared. As Buchmann (1999) notes, “within the short period of five years the rapid expansion of secondary education produced enough skilled graduates to fill most of the workforce needs of the new government”(99).

There are indications that after independence some fundamental shifts in local ideas and economic realities occurred. Maasai communities were also under new African leadership; in Kajiado district, as elsewhere in Maasailand, the 1960s saw the coming of power of the *Il-Nyangusi* age-set, some of whom were the product of early educational efforts in Maasailand and were equivocal about the importance of education (Gorham 1980).<sup>152</sup> This, plus the devastating effects of yet another drought from 1959-1962, the increased pressure on land from in-migration with the opening of the reserve in 1970, and land loss from the increasingly prevalent practice of group ranch demarcations and sub-division, local leaders agreed that education was vital to development (Gorham 1980). That this turn to education was universal in Maasailand is not clear. Nonetheless, it does appear that for the first time Maasai leaders had the sense that they should take advantage of the positive social changes independence was believed to foment and among them, education.

Similar to an earlier pattern of demand, initial primary school expansion and enrollment was directly tied to secondary provision (Gorham 1980). Like other Kenyans, Maasai who were interested in schooling were interested in academic instruction and saw secondary completion as a fundamental goal. As soon as the first secondary school was built in the district in Kajiado in 1965, Maasai children crowded into primary classrooms. By 1969, the number of primary schools in Kajiado had almost doubled and enrollments were over 7000; 40% of these pupils were girls, although most were not Maasai but rather the daughters of in-migrating non-Maasai who sought new opportunities in the newly independent nation and the newly opened reserve (Gorham 1980). In 1971 a presidential decree abolished tuition fees for the ASAL districts and parts of Coast Province in which unfavorable environmental conditions were thought to keep people poor. By

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<sup>152</sup> Hughes (2006) lists the name *Il-Nyankusi II* for the men dated as warriors from 1942-1959. The next age-set, *Il-Seuri*, dated as warriors from 1957-1975 would, I would think, also be implicated in this 'new breed' of Maasai leader (Hughes 2006).

1972, when the provision of schools and schooling had reverted back to the central government, there were over 10,000 students in 53 primary schools in Kajiado district (Gorham 1980).<sup>153</sup>

Despite this expansion of educational provision, however, the decentralized nature of *harambee* development led to large regional disparities in the number and quality of schools. Communities in Central, Western, and Nyanza Provinces, “in which the independent school movement had been well established, flourished under the *Harambee* system,” whereas other peripheral regions in the Coast, North Eastern, and Rift Valley Provinces, “which had little experience with self-help schooling, struggled to catch up” (Buchmann 1999, 100). As a result, wealthier communities and ethnic groups who counted more already-educated people among their ranks were able to build more and better quality schools than their poorer countrymen (Sifuna 2005). As Buchmann (1999) points out, the government’s policy of rewarding additional funds to successful self-help efforts widened these disparities that had actually been forming for decades prior to independence.<sup>154</sup>

The strong but already unevenly distributed provision of education under Kenyatta inaugurated with *harambee* showed signs of strain by the end of the decade. The 1970s marked the beginning of the turbulent life of Kenya’s postcolonial education system. In 1973, President Kenyatta made the first declaration of free education in all districts in Kenya by abolishing fees for

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<sup>153</sup> Gorham is not clear on the ethnic make-up of these students. As in the case of girls, it might be that many of these children were not Maasai. According to Rutten (1992), in 1927 the total population of Kajiado District was 14,799, 86.4% of whom were said to be Maasai (non-Maasai 13.6%). By 1979 the total population of the district this was 149,005. Of this total, Rutten found that only 62.8% of this total were said to be Maasai (non-Maasai 37.2%, mostly Kikuyu, but also Kamba, and others—Luo, Luhya, and Somali).

<sup>154</sup> It is generally noted that there was no coincidence in the fact that the independent school movement flourished in Kikuyu communities. Not only did Kenyatta’s regime disproportionately reward individual already elite Kikuyu with the spoils of decolonization, everyday Kikuyu were better positioned to take advantage of *harambee* incentive structures.



standards 1-4 and standardizing the fee structure for uniforms to 60 Ksh per child per year.

According to Sifuna (n.d.), “The presidential decree providing free education in the early classes was one of the most dramatic political pronouncements of the Kenyatta era since it took planners and the public unaware” (2). By 1974 the government was overwhelmed by demand; enrollment in standard 1 rose by one million above the anticipated estimated increase of 400,000. The total enrollment for standards 1 through 6 increased from 1.8 million pupils in 1973 when the decree was made, to nearly 2.8 million by 1974 (Sifuna 2005).

Despite its stated intentions to reduce educational disparities countrywide, *harambee* seems to have increased inequalities; furthermore, the government was simply not prepared to deal with the influx of new pupils (children and adults alike). Consequently, “free” education turned out to have a substantial cost to local households and communities. At the time of the decree, the education system was already running at a deficit of trained teachers, schools, and teaching and learning materials. Local primary school committees were faced with absorbing massive enrollment increases while no government funding had been allocated for the revenue shortfall. According to Sifuna (2005), to accommodate demand and offset the fees paid before the directive, local school committees imposed a ‘building fee’ per pupil to construct additional classrooms, an ‘activity equipment levy’ to procure needed supplies, and required parents to provide textbooks, exercise books, uniforms and other related schooling materials. In the absence of state support, school levies, a “purely spontaneous reaction to an emergency,” became a permanent feature of decentralized educational policy (Sifuna n.d. 3).

Rather than proactively managing the protracted growth of participation in education, the state was forced to react to unchecked demand and ban the building of *harambee* schools without government approval (Buchmann 1999). Kenyans clearly wanted education in formal, academic schools. However, given the government’s non-approach to provision, this desire collided head

first with harsh economic realities. In most cases, the locally applied levies were higher than the government's fees prior to the decree, and many parents all over Kenya were forced to withdraw their children. Sifuna (2005) estimates that approximately one to two million children dropped out of school once the building fees were levied, decreasing national enrollment back down to pre-decree levels. These historic enrollments and subsequently historic disenrollments happened within the span of two years. With such turmoil, insecurity, and seeming caprice in the educational system, it would be little wonder if all Kenyans, and not only Maasai, would be ambivalent in their 'struggle for the school.'

Buchmann (1999) argues that as a new government, the Kenyatta regime opted to build legitimacy among everyday Kenyans as a provider of modernity rather than to strategically manage the long-term development of a viable education sector. Moreover, even as the regime started to see the ill effects of too-rapid expansion, rather than risk its fragile legitimacy and despite its own ban against such activism, it looked away as local communities continued to build schools without government approval (Buchmann 1999). *Harambee* schools tended to be even more expensive (fees were levied to offset building costs) and lower quality than government provided schools, yet rampant *harambee* school expansion (of secondary schools particularly) continued. Ironically, Sifuna (n.d.) notes that "Beyond recruitment of *more unqualified teachers*, the government played a very minor role in the implementation of 'Free Primary Education.' If anything, it was quite satisfied that school committees had successfully implemented the program with minimal cost on its part" (3, emphasis, mine). Despite the government's putative focus on pastoral development, by the end of the 1960s, the *1970-1974 Development Plan* (1978) indicated that "less than 50 percent of the total primary school age populations are enrolled in schools in Baringo, Samburu, West Pokot, Turkana, Kajaiido, Narok, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Isiolo, Marasbit, Tana River, and Lamu

Districts” (8). Over 40 years later, this list still represents the least schooled districts in the country.<sup>155</sup>

### B. *The Moi era*

Kenya’s second president, Daniel arap Moi, framed his regime with the phrase “*Nyayo*.”<sup>156</sup> Fittingly then, under Moi, educational provision, for the majority of Kenyans, continued on the roller coaster ride of expansion/demand/disillusion which characterized the continuation of “educational policy by political fiat” (Cooksey et al. 1994 qtd in Buchmann 1999, 102). This amidst the tightening of authoritarian state repression and an intensification of ethnic hostilities within the shifting of ethnically-derived state power.

Two of the Moi regimes most historic educational policies, (1) the restructuring of the original British 7-6-3 system to the American 8-4-4 system in 1985 and with this, the elimination of the selective Cambridge O exam that had been required for all students midway through secondary school, and (2) the implementation of the Free Milk Scheme, which provided all primary schools with free milk, “signaled greater educational opportunities for all Kenyan children” and again, dramatically fueled demand (Buchmann 1999, 102).<sup>157</sup> President Moi needed to seduce legitimacy

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<sup>155</sup> With the exception of slum areas of Nairobi, like Kibera, which have been added to the list.

<sup>156</sup> The Swahili word for “footsteps,” that is translated as “following in the footsteps of” Kenyatta. *Nyayo* was meant to assure Kenyans that although the ethnic outlines of power would change (Moi is Kalenjin, whereas Kenyatta was Kikuyu), Moi would see Kenyatta’s vision of a unified Kenya through. More cynically, it was a way to ensure that the Kikuyu elite who managed most of the nation’s foreign currency exchange, along with white Kenyans, would feel appeased and continue to expand the economy. *Nyayo*, in this way, was not unlike the “Nakuru Covenant” when Kenyatta pledged to white Kenyans that their business would be welcomed in independent Kenya.

<sup>157</sup> The British 7-6-3 system is seven years of primary school (divided into infant and junior school between years 2 and 3), three years of lower secondary school, three years of upper secondary with Sixth Form, and years of tertiary study. The American 8-4-4 system is eight years of elementary and middle school (grades K-8), four years of high school (grades 9-12), and four years of

for his already embattled regime. As he learned from President Kenyatta before him, the holy grail of state benevolence, even in the face of grave repression, seemed to be the promise of development-as-education, and by extension, economic development and secured human welfare.

But also true to *Nyayo*, the Moi regime was not prepared to handle the demand its policies signaled. *Harambee* continued under Moi as well, but the original intentions of the policy had been transformed throughout the Kenyatta era from community ‘self-help’ and self-determination to the entrenchment of client-patron relations in which local ‘big men’ helped themselves to the funds communities raised and the socio-political legitimacy created by building schools (Buchmann 1999). Additionally, in a throwback to colonial education policy of the 1930s, with the advent of 8-4-4, the government reinstated vocational education as education for “self-reliance” through “self-employment.” This policy was designed to counteract widespread unemployment, including school leaver unemployment. But true to history and the development-as-education imperative, Kenyans rejected vocational education requirements for two reasons: (1) implementation required increased costs, and (2) they wanted academic education that directed them to higher education and formal modern sector wage employment, not informal self-employment (Buchmann 1999; Chege and Sifuna 2006; Chege 2006).

Economic stagnation, rising unemployment and cost of living, and the imposition of International Monetary Fund (IMF) generated structural adjustments to the Kenyan economy were the defining structural features of this period that framed these policy interventions. Structural adjustment policies (SAPs) are often cited as among the first set of development prescriptions under the rubric of neoliberal restructuring. The required cost recovery measures consequently led to a

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baccalaureate education (freshman-senior years of tertiary). In Kenya 8-4-4 is broken down as Standards 1-8 (primary school) and Forms 1-4 (secondary school). Most Kenyans do not earn bachelor’s degrees at 4-year institutions. More common is a one- year certificate (for example in Community Development) or a 2-year diploma (for example in teacher education).

shift of the near complete burden of the cost of education directly to parents. Already reeling from locally imposed “self-help” of the 1970s, “cost-sharing” user fees, irrespective of poverty level, beginning in 1988 disastrously undermined any gains since independence. Under SAPs, local communities supported 80% of provision, government 19%, and civil society 1% (CEF 2003). For its 19%, government paid trained teachers, administrative costs, and limited upkeep on school facilities. Parents paid untrained teachers to supplement understaffing, tuition, books, activity and exam fees, uniforms, and additional costs associated with boarding. Communities had to pool funds to maintain or expand school infrastructure. Needless to say, these conditions created grave implications for educational quality and demand into the 1990s.

Despite the capriciousness fluctuations in policy, Kenyans still flocked to school and found ways to stay there. In 1989, the gross enrollment rate (GER) had reached an all-time high of 95% suggesting that nearly “universal primary education” (UPE) had been achieved (Chege and Sifuna 2006).<sup>158</sup> This near perfect gross enrollment statistic, however, hid deep disparities within regions in Kenya.<sup>159</sup> Not surprisingly, given the disjunctive and contradictory provision of schooling in pastoral and semi-pastoral regions, comparative studies reveal that as most Kenyans were enrolling in school, Somali nomads and Turkana, Samburu, Pokot, and Maasai semi-sedentarized pastoralists and agro-pastoralists continued to be on the margins of widespread social change. In the early 1990s Sifuna (2005) sampled nine districts, 6 in the ‘low-potential’ ASALs (West Pokot, Turkana, Samburu, Wajir, Garrisa, and Narok) and 3 in the ‘high-potential’ agricultural districts (Meru, Muranga, and Kiambu); primary school enrollment differentials between the high and low potential areas are striking. Meru district shows the highest rate in all 9 districts with nearly 160,000 pupils

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<sup>158</sup> This percentage was not disaggregated by sex.

<sup>159</sup> Aggregated percentage differences also show substantial increases in enrollment across Sub-Saharan Africa, but also masks national, and sub-national disparities (EFAGMR 2009).

enrolled, whereas Garissa district indicates enrolment figures between 0 and 10,000 (Sifuna 2005).<sup>160</sup> Narok district, the only Maasai district in the sample, is also very low, with fewer than 20,000 pupils enrolled at that time. Given the exigencies of drought cycles in the arid and semi-arid areas, including Narok locations, it is reasonable to assume that these enrollment figures cannot be understood as stable.

Kajiado district was not part of Sifuna's comparative study, but other statistics from the late 1990s also show low numbers. In 1999, the primary school-going aged population (6-13 years old) of Kajiado district was 102,579, although the total primary enrollment that same year was only 54,278 (NCAPD 2005).<sup>161</sup> This means that 47% of the district's children were not in school. Moreover, as Gorham (1980) and others have shown, a sizeable proportion of children enrolled in Kajiado district schools at any given time will not be Maasai children, particularly in northern Kajiado above the Rift with the highest population densities.

### *C. The Kibaki era*

The education sector in Kenya during the 1990s is somewhat confusing to get a handle on, but on the world stage the picture is more clear. The 1990s have become synonymous with the "decade for education" because of the benchmark World Conference on Education For All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. Jomtien is widely noted as watershed moment for the consolidation and coordination of a global consensus that all children everywhere around on the planet should have

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<sup>160</sup> Garissa district is in North Eastern province, primarily inhabited by Somali nomads. As indicated elsewhere in the dissertation, this area is the most marginal in Kenya in terms of all social services, including state sponsored formal schooling.

<sup>161</sup> This figure is disaggregated into 52,303 males and 50,276 females who were of school-going age. Of this total population, only just over half (53%) of these children were enrolled in school. Of the children who were enrolled, 55.8% of them were boys and 50% for girls.

the right to spend their childhoods in school. This conference “marked a new start in the global quest to universalize basic education and eradicate illiteracy” (Dakar). Kenya arrived at Jomtien “a success story, having achieved universal primary education” on its own, of its own volition, based on internal demand for schooling (CEF 2003, 4). Nonetheless, Kenya did not immediately qualify for EFA funding from the Commonwealth Education Fund (DfiD) or the World Bank because it had not complied with the production of various policy and planning reports. Yet, according to Chege (2006), EFA-related activities in Kenya gained little momentum throughout the 1990s, until the government and civil society prepared for the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 and thus began what she calls Kenya’s “EFA compliance journey.” The government managed to deliver a spate of policies and policy documents that satisfied the requirements for support, including *TIQET: Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training* (1999), also known as *The Koech Report*, National EFA Actions Plans, and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).<sup>162</sup> These documents also helped qualify Kenya for the Fast Track Initiative.<sup>163</sup> These documents instantiated the rhetoric and discourse that the Kenyan government needed to gain legitimacy within the

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<sup>162</sup> The *Koech Report* is important because it establishes the policy framework for a re-entry program for pregnant schoolgirls.

<sup>163</sup> The Fast Track Initiative is a partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress toward the goal of EFA (ADEA 2006). Countries must meet two requirements which “demonstrate serious commitment to achieving universal primary completion”: an approved PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) or its equivalent and an education sector strategy consistent with the PRSP and endorsed by the local donors involved in education. Kenya submitted its PRSP to the IMF in 2003, and its education sector plan, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme 2005-2010 (KESSP) was launched in 2005. Because the recipient country is required to show how it will ‘domesticate’ global goals, FTI is lauded as “country-driven” and “locally-derived” although the funds are globally generated and managed. The FTI is considered the “first ever global contract on education” and a “key part of the global architecture and dialogue for progress on EFA” (ADEA 2006). In January 2006, a grant of \$US 24.2 million was disbursed (ADEA 2006).

“economy of statements” regarding education-as-development and development-as-education in the international arena.

The decade for education ended with the beginning of the millennium of education. Both the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal and the Millennium Summit in New York City, were held in 2000 and set the ostensible development agenda for the next 15 years. Kenya arrived in Jomtien a star of UIPE, but by 1995, the GER in Kenya had dropped to 79%; by 2002, when President Moi’s 24 year reign ended and Mwai Kibaki became Kenya’s third president, the GER was only at 85% and over 3 million school-age children (11% of 6-13 year olds) were not in school (CEF 2003; Swadener et al. 2008). The Kibaki regime nonetheless attempted to secure legitimacy with foreign donors and the Kenyan public by announcing the Children’s Act in 2001. The government’s to-date most impactful educational policy however, harkening back to Kenyatta’s proclamation in 1974, was the 2003 declaration of a full course, standards 1-8, of free primary education (FPE) to all Kenyans in all districts.

To say that this move was in direct response the global call for EFA would be to miss the obvious fact that since first elections for an independent Kenya in 1963, Kenyan African leaders had been calling for universal access to education for all Kenyans. Nonetheless, it is also seems clear that Kenya’s “current experiment” in free primary education must be seen as singular response to a variety of demands from inside and outside of Kenya (Sifuna n.d., 1).

Outside of Kenya, international funders, beleaguered by the Moi years, frustrated by endemic corruption scandals, but yet interested in courting Kenya’s strategic position in the War on Terror, were in favor of Kibaki’s efforts; FPE attracted historic levels of funding. For examples, the World Bank allocated 3.7 billion Ksh, Britain’s Department for International Development (DfID) allocated 1.6 billion Ksh, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)



allocated 1.2 billion Ksh, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) allocated 430 million Ksh, and UNICEF allocated 250 million Ksh.

Within Kenya, Kenyans responded positively to a policy that seemed designed to relieve the burdens of the over 30 years of turbulence in education policy and provision. Local school committee levies were banned, and fees and levies for tuition were abolished. The government, in conjunction with funders, would cover the cost of basic teaching and learning materials, activities fees, government-trained teacher's salaries, and critical non-teaching staff salaries. Additionally, the government and funders would subsidize every child in primary per year with 1020 Ksh. Parents would be required to supply uniforms. They were not required to build new classrooms, but they were required to refurbish existing structures as well as activate local resources for space, like churches and social halls.

Kenyans responded with a measurable nationwide increase in participation following FPE; demand was registered instantly, and by January 2004, 22.3% more children were enrolled in school (Sifuna 2005). By 2004, 7.2 million children were enrolled in school; an increase of over one million children (MOE 2007).

Sifuna (2005) found that the implementation of the free primary education initially had a strong impact in the ASAL regions he sampled. Increases in enrollment were around 28% on average, well above the national average. However, he also found that FPE seems to have had more impact on boy's enrollment than girls in his sample districts. In Narok district, the enrollment trends from 2000-2003 show an increase for boys by 30.2% whereas girls increased by merely 3%. He concludes more pastoralists are "interested in sending their children to school" when the cost is reduced. "Contrary to widely held perceptions, pastoralist communities do not have less interest in schooling for their children than parents in largely agricultural groups" (2005, 510).

My qualitative evidence, echoing Archambault's (2007), suggests as much. However, despite the initial increased enrollment, dropout rates for both girls and boys, are very high, glaringly for girls. For all the years between 2001-2003, according to his study, the year 2001 reflected the worst year for drop-outs: 650 girls left school (based on information provided by schools in his sample—which means the number could be higher). In 2003, the year FPE was implemented, over 500 girls dropped out (and over 200 boys). Maasai, in fact, “do not have less interest in schooling for their children than parents in largely agricultural groups”; however, like these and other groups in Kenya, many parents and many children, especially many girls, are not interested in overcrowded, overly competitive, potentially hostile school environments. Despite the education-as-development imperative, poorly functioning schools will continue to drive Kenyans away from education.

The Government of Kenya reports a similar disturbing trend nationwide. In its new Gender and Education Policy, the Ministry of Education (MOE) authors are forced to admit that despite the positive rise in enrollment rate, gender disparities have sharpened. According to the MOE, girls' retention and completion rates have fallen (in other words, drop-out rates have increased) and boys' grade repetition rates have increased along with drop-rates.

This is all in part because history is simply repeating itself. Dramatic and rapid enrollment increases in an already over-burdened, gender disparate, materially inadequate system have obviously resulted in overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, increased fees (PTAs require small user fees to hire extra “parent-paid” teachers to off-set shortages), insufficient supplies of teaching materials, reduced/compromised quality, increased teacher, parents, student frustration, increased drop-out, decreased completion, and decreased new enrollment.

The biggest obstacle in the ASAL and in all economically vulnerable regions is less about desire or recalcitrant “lifestyles,” and more about cost. FPE did not necessarily reduced cost

(Sifuna 2005). By the time of implementation in 2003, the average annual cost to send one child to school is estimated to have been approximately 4-5000 Ksh (Sifuna 2005). The government subsidy of 1020 Ksh did little to mitigate these costs for the poor. Clearly, sending more than one child to school, if any, would be more than most households can bear.

Yet, the “official rhetoric is that the FPE is working smoothly” (Sifuna n.d., 4). Scholars agree that the projected cost of universal free basic education in Kenya is “way beyond” the current national education budget allocation (Sifuna n.d., Mukudi 2004; Chege and Sifuna 2006). Mukudi (2004) is both pessimistic and realistic about the prospects for sustained universal free primary education in Kenya in the narrow neoliberal operating environment and argues that the only way for primary education in Kenya to be globally competitive is for it to be “funded at a level equivalent to the per capita primary education funding level seen in the developed countries (238). Writing in the late 1990s, Buchmann (1999) notes that a consequence of massive educational expansions without long term government planning for sustaining expansion is that the growth of an educated populace will extend far beyond the actual employment prospects in the nation, which was the case in the wake of the FPE announcement, and is without doubt the case in the wake of the 2007 elections and violence in Kenya.

President Kibaki, not unlike Presidents Moi or Kenyatta before him, has chosen the path of political expediency rather than strategic long-term planning for development (Buchmann 1999; Sifuna n.d., Chege and Sifuna 2006; EYC 2005). Chege and Sifuna (2006), long time Kenyan educators, argue that the “handicap to the realization of gender equality in education [in Kenya] is neither lack of knowledge nor of the necessary policy options. But rather, the challenge seems to be one of bridging the necessary political commitment, expertise, and resources together in order to respond to the task” (Chege and Sifuna 2006, 139). I believe that the ‘handicap’ goes much deeper ideologically than the simple coordination of efforts. That FPE is currently unsustainable

should be a surprise to no one, least of whom the Kenyan people who have been on this roller coaster for almost 50 years. But yet again, this is the “real power of institutions” (Williams 1961). So strong is the desire for education that the ‘struggle for the school’ persists despite diminishing returns for so many who pursue it.

*D. The paradox continues*

Between 1999 and 2006, Kenya increased net enrollments by nearly 20% (EFAGMR 2009). The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2009) indicates that in the same period, Kenya, along with fifteen of forty-one countries with data, reached gender parity in primary enrollment. At the same time, gender disparities increased at the secondary level. Kenya needs an educated populace in order to develop economically. Paradoxically, Kenya’s economy is not developed enough to sustainably provide education to supply its demanding populace, much less is own objective to be “developed.” Kenyans are caught in a vicious cycle of stagnating development (“decline”) against a local climate of skyrocketing demand (“desire”) and within a global discursive economy of imperatives. When scholars use phrases like “pipe dream,” “mirage,” and “illusion,” it is troubling to consider the effects on local people. At the same time, those same scholars argue that schools, as institutions, must “challenge a societal culture that dehumanizes girls” (Chege and Sifuna 2006. 136). While I could not agree more, I am left wondering how, in such seemingly desperate circumstances, this could ever be possible?

Despite the fluctuating gross enrollment rates, despite the hidden costs of “free” primary education, despite the poor infrastructure, gender disparity, overcrowding, and inexplicable frustrations of going to school in most Kenyan contexts and certainly in Maasai areas, these days, as Nasarean (a schoolgirl we interviewed) clearly stated, “because of the world of Kenya that we are in now, everything we do is about education.” She is not alone; as the rest of this dissertation will

illustrate, Maasai are now squarely in the ‘struggle for the school.’ In a 2005 survey of 390 residents of Maasai homesteads in an area near Kajiado Town called Enkop, Archambault (2007) found that 99.7% of her respondents declared education to be important. Only 1 woman and 7 men of the 390 said that education was not important (14). If Maasai are people who ‘hate education’ it is against this bulwark that contemporary subject positions, *vis-à-vis* education-as-development discourse, are formed into something more akin to people who “love education” for what it promises.

My exchange with the contractor and my subsequent discussion with Gabriel, the young Maasai primary school teacher, frame two important and enduring discursive features of how Maasai subjects have been produced in and by historical processes: 1) that Maasai have always ‘hated’ education and continue to, hence the lack of development in Maasai areas, and 2) that the earliest engagement with European colonialism in the EAP was formative in the production of this social ‘fact.’ Yet, this story also illustrates the existence of local counter discourses in play. Gabriel, other teachers (Maasai and otherwise), and Maasai students themselves (not to mention the 100% of 98 schoolgirls interviewed for this study) express a singular faith in education-as-development to improve their lives.

Paradoxically, because the “hate” discourse is still operative, Kenyan authorities can more easily rely on a distortion of needs in order to justify the enduring lack of provision in Maasai areas of the country, while continuing to engage in land alienation, extractive industries, and international tourism at local peril.<sup>164</sup> As in the past, Maasai relationships to education today are

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<sup>164</sup> The government says as much in chapter 4, “Equity and Poverty Reduction,” of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (the IMF’s new instrument for creating conditionalities for loans in the wake of the largely devastating impacts of SAPs): “The ASAL program is a multi-sector program designed to cater to geographical areas with high poverty incidence that have traditionally been a low priority in public resource allocation and programs. This government has committed to reverse past inequities and promote development and poverty reduction in these areas” (58). “This

more than liking or hating; this relationship is embedded in a matrix of social, economic, political, and historical relationships that condition access and responses to education as an imperative of the development context.

## V. Conclusion:

Chapter 1, “Making Maasailand,” chronicles the legacy of contestation, movement, and change of Maasai as a subject position *vis-à-vis* the developing/development state, the expression of these changing relations through the specter of land use as well as gender and generational concerns, and the postcolonial complexities of this particular colonial past. This chapter, “Making Maasai, Being Educated,” builds on these ideas to track the practical and policy implications of these points of view as they pertain to the provision of education in the form of formal schooling in Maasailand, with particular reference to Kajiado district. Maasai are not alone in their struggle to figure out how formal schooling fits into their present and their futures. Communities the globe over are engaged in very similar daily discussions about who goes to school, when, where, for how long, with what means, and to what end(s). This conversation does not end when ‘development’ or ‘industrialization’ or ‘democracy’ is achieved.

As Hodgson (2001a) has shown in her research with Maasai in Tanzania, colonial interventions regarding the provision of education in Maasai areas in the East African Protectorate,

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government”—the Kibaki regime—is the fourth government, including the colonial government, to make such a promise. The ASALs have been on the postcolonial government radar screen, specifically with respect to education, since the *Ominde Report* in 1965. What is more, George Saitoti (who has a PhD in Algebraic Topology from Warwick University), Minister of Education at the time of the PRSP (and currently Minister for Internal Security), not only claims to be “half Maasai” (Maasai disown him, however), he is the MP for Kajiado North and yet, nothing changes. In the more deeply alienated North Eastern Province, nothing will change, unless the change comes from the Somali diaspora.

and later the British Colony of Kenya, constitute the beginning of a long history of what we now call 'development' (although this particular word was not used until the post World War II era on the heels of the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine). The development regimes in place in Kenya Maasailand today, designed to close the development gap between the arid and semi-arid lands and the more prosperous and 'developed' regions of Kenya, are the direct legacy of state consolidation in the colonial period. Colonial maneuvers for land over 100 years ago are still eminently salient in Maasai consciousness. More than one schoolgirl argued that at least part of the reason there is "no development" in Maasailand today is because Maasai "were forced to the desert long ago." The creation of the reserve and the subsequent peripheralization of Maasai socio-political power in post independence Kenya is in evidence in ambivalent and contradictory discursive formations around formal schooling. Both in the educational policy and practice and everyday attitudes embodied in speech, Maasai remain 'outsiders' to and victims of development processes largely because Maasai are less educated than their peers in other communities throughout Kenya. At the same time, everyday Maasai discourse and behavior has shifted to embrace education and the promise of modernity it implies. This 'new' faith in education-as-development in local Maasai homesteads and global development agendas is manifested in increased attention to the "girl-child."

**CHAPTER 3*****“I cannot get any education without school”:*****Case Review of Girls’ Education in Selected Sub-Saharan African Contexts**

*“These girls are being disturbed by maturity quite a lot”*  
Deputy head teacher, Embolei Primary School (2007)

*H: In Embolei we met many girls who are worried that when they finish class 8 they will be married off. What is your opinion on that?*

*D: That one is just foolishness of the highest order because it is not good. Her education is of no benefit.*  
Dorcas, a grandmother, Lood-ariak (2007)

*“Education helps to get knowledge and utilize the available resources to refine the existing life you are living.”*  
Teacher, Eremit Primary School (2007)

*[Relationships between men and women are changing] because of the long drought which clears all the livestock and men have nothing to rely on. They want help from the women now; they want all of them to be earning at least something.*

Ann, a mother who dropped out of primary school, Lood-ariak (2007)

Using empirical case studies from selected Sub-Saharan African (SSA) contexts, this chapter reviews the benefits and constraints to the education of girls, explores the implications of the shifting experience of female adolescence in the context of school in contemporary rural SSA contexts, and considers new directions for our understandings of how gender operates in conjunction with educational imperatives in the development zone. Designed as a broad investigation, the discussion here is intended to elucidate the context for my localized study of Kenyan Maasai girls’ perceptions of education and development in their daily lives. Beyond creating the context for my particular study, I also use this chapter to give some shape to the “economy of statements” that constitute the affirmative education-as-development discourse that this dissertation argues is operative in Maasai schoolgirls’ identity and subjectivity formation (Escobar 1995, 163).



Escobar (1995) argues that the political economy of development is always accompanied by an “economy of statements” about development that work to normalize and fix the development regime’s agenda as universally common sense. The large empirical literature that documents the benefits of, and the constraints to, girls’ education across the world’s development zones, some of which is discussed here, constitute, along with conceptual studies that I have not focused on, this discursive economy. The education-as-development discourse that defines our knowledge about the inter-dynamics of girls’ education, gendered social change, and development thus finds root in this literature. Escobar (1995) argues that any discourse of development asserts ideological power. The economy of statements in these literatures not only defines our knowledge about girls’ education, but it functions to delimit what can be known; therefore, recognizing the formation and the functioning of discourse is central to our overall understanding of development’s effects in local communities and everyday life.

Development institutions from the United Nations (UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNAIDS, and so on), to bilateral governmental agencies like USAID, SIDA, and DFID, to the World Bank, to international NGOs like Oxfam and CARE, on down the organizational gradient to in-country regional NGOs like MPIDO, and all the way to grassroots community based organizations (CBOs), have integrated an affirmative, at times even uncritically celebratory, rhetoric regarding educating girls into their platforms for action, policy prescriptions, funding mechanisms, and project planning. As this body of discourse forms the evidential basis for more overtly politicized reports, national policies, and global conventions, what the “integration” of these statements about the promise of girls’ education into practice achieves, then, is the “reprod[uction]...of the world as we know it” (Escobar 1995, 163). Although many of the studies reviewed here point to what we don’t know (how “empowerment” should be understood or measured, for example), and what has not been studied (how, for example, schoolgirls negotiate ‘modernity’), these less sure, more

speculative elements of the body of discourse, akin to the critical ethnographies of education and development, are not the “statements” which have as much currency in the economy of statements as the quantified declarations do. For example, when the multiple authors of, *Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda*, assert that “The evidence summarized [in the report] carries an unmistakable and intuitively obvious message: the world would be a far better place if the needs of adolescent girls were met and they were afforded opportunities to participate in schooling and economic activity” (Levine et al. 2008, 20), we can see that girls themselves are on trade in the economy of statements regarding development’s promise. As chapter 5 will suggest and the conclusion to the dissertation will elaborate, even though *Girls Count* and studies like it are designed to benefit girls, and even in the face of the actual, laudable benefits of educating girls, both for their future children and for their national economies, the “intuitively obvious” seamless nature of the affirmative girls’ education-as-development discourse has the potential to rationalize and instrumentalize girls’ needs in the absence of real structural change and to the exclusion of girls’ empowerment.

### **I. Coming of age and going to school**

Particularly generated since the late 1980s and early 1990s after the World Summit on Education in Jomtien, Thailand, a substantial literature documents the benefits of educating girls and forms the foundation of certain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by world actors like the United Nations (UN) and adopted by national governments in developing regions. Getting girls on the development ‘radar screen’ is a strategy for combating their relative invisibility in development discourse and practice. Yet, in order to fully understand the impacts or outcomes of girls’ education in Africa we must contend with the myriad of negative outcomes and impacts associated with going to school. In a critical review of empirical studies, benefits seem to fade into

the background as elusive, even ironic, as the difficult and often dangerous place school can be for girls in also becomes clear. Moreover, the process of coming of age during the period referred to in western discourse as adolescence, is itself a difficult and complex passage for many youth, and made more so in the SSA development zones by the education-as-development imperative that drives children into school settings that are materially inadequate, economically underdeveloped, and fraught with deeply structured social and cultural attitudes and conventional wisdoms that work against success for girls.

Passionate belief in the education-as-development paradigm is enmeshed in, on the one hand, the deeply held faith in the promise of economic development and modernity, what Fran Varvus (2007) calls “desire.” The desire for modernity manifest in the demand for schooling is paradoxically connected, on the other hand, with deeply held gendered and generationally derived worldviews that can be at odds with development and modernization imperatives particularly when they are embedded in the precarious economic realities of “decline” (Varvus 2007; Mukudi 2004).

As the part of the contextual research for my localized study of Maasai schoolgirls’ perceptions of education and development in their everyday lives, I set out to understand the problems associated with girls going to school; not just Maasai girls, but rural African girls in a variety of specific locations.<sup>165</sup> The process of reviewing the literature, however, has altered my initial understanding of the ‘problem’ under consideration when we speak of “girls’ education.” Lack of education for African girls is a problem as it is linked, in the prevailing discourse, to the perceived benefits of educating girls for over-all economic development in the region and also for what are referred to as ‘private’ returns to education. There are documented benefits, particularly for household development and national development, to educating girls. In this chapter, and the

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<sup>165</sup> I did attempt to limit my search to empirical studies in the geographically related regions of east Africa.

in the dissertation at large, I am left questioning, however, at what cost are the benefits of education enjoyed, and to whom do these benefits accrue? Do girls and young women themselves directly benefit, particularly given the risks that they encounter trying to enroll in and stay in school? When adolescent girls are more likely to leave school than adolescent boys, in large part because puberty has different implications for girls than boys and social categories make different demands, I also want to know if the girls who leave school benefit from the education they leave behind? Where is the disconnection between the rhetoric of education-as-development and the matrix of constraints to education that erode or even erase the empowering promises of development? What is problematic about formal schooling in rural Africa and how does the contemporary process of coming of age for girls contribute to these problems?

I consider the questions raised here in an analysis that is itself framed by the belief that the biosocial process of adolescence becomes a ‘problem’ for African girls *in the context of development pressure to go to school and succeed there*. Adolescence is widely regarded as a complex, sometimes difficult, transition in most societies, and research on adolescents/adolescence in western (post-)industrial economies abounds (see Aries 1978; Austin and Willard 1998; Griffin 1993; Mitterauer 1993). I argue that the contradictions and potential dangers of adolescence are markedly intensified for many African girls, particularly poorer rural girls, because of the deeply entrenched structural vulnerabilities of their households and communities and the demands the education-as-development makes on local social categories to accommodate shifting identities without material guarantees to secure complex social change.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> As chapter 5 will elaborate, when “initiates” are transformed by development into “schoolgirls,” this staggering change is mitigated by the promises of employment. If that schoolgirl manages to finish school but then can neither secure employment nor fulfill her social obligation to marry and have children, the transformation is considered by many to have been a poor investment, an unfortunate bet, a failure. When the reverse is true, everyone celebrates. Unfortunately, most

While economic constraints to education and economic contributions to the dangers girls face in trying to persevere in school are ubiquitous, local socio-cultural arrangements create and sustain certain ideas about girls and childhood, women and adulthood, motherhood, and sexuality that are complexly intertwined with economic pressures. Indeed, economic pressures often intensify socio-cultural practices, and simultaneously, socio-cultural arrangements help to reproduce and reinforce structural conditions. In other words, these are co-constructive forces that constitutively configure the process of coming to age as *gendered*, *gendering*, and *generational*. As chapter 2 has argued and chapters 4 and 5 will elaborate, understanding the education process as gendered, particularly as it maps the age/status construction of “girls” and “women” within a more general understanding of being “a student,” is imperative for understanding the impacts of education on African communities and the potential to empower girls and women.

## II. Benefits of female education

The literature on the benefits of educating girls in the developing world and in the SSA context in particular far exceeds the texts studied in this review. Floro et al. (1990) and Malhotra et al. (2003) have produced worldwide meta-analyses of the outcomes and impacts of girls’ education globally, and both case study and conceptual literatures spans several disciplines. Universal primary Education for All (EFA) is the UN’s second MDG after eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. The World Bank and other major international NGOs and multi- and bilateral donors have concerted campaigns to increase the enrolment and persistence of girls in school. Because this study takes place in Kenya, East Africa, the case studies under review here are confined

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development zones can provide very few even basic guarantees. Instead, development relies on faith in development.

to those conducted in East African states with the exception of one illustrative study from Ghana. The intention is to highlight those documented benefits that help to form the “economy of statements” that form the basis of the education-as-development imperative and contribute to the increased complexity and peril of the contemporary adolescent experience for girls in this region of the world.

*A. Economic benefits: earnings and employment*

The mainstream neoliberal development agenda is, in part, distinguished by its focus on economic growth as the driver of human development. Studies on the ‘returns to investment in female education’ argue for education for all, but particularly for girls and women, as the single most important path to overall national economic growth (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2002). Women’s education is viewed as a crucial human capital investment that yields economic and social benefits (Appleton et al. 1999; Ikamari 2005; Malhotra et al. 2003). The argument is that household investment in education will yield marginal growth for the household that can then be distributed for the benefit and human development of the household members. Studies argue that national and household policy should concertedly prioritize girls’ education on the belief that a general increase in the level of overall education increases rates of return for all workers, and the increase in the education levels of women and men reinforce each other in the labor market and result in the rise of productivity and earnings of both sexes (Manda et al. 2002).

Returns to earnings and wage or ‘modern’ sector employment are strong for men and women. Educational investment, however, does not predict return equally. Different levels of education predict different rates of return, the region (rural/urban) in which any education is put

to work matters, and access to the modern wage sector is not conferred equally. In general, men benefit more than women from educational investment.<sup>167</sup>

In terms of earnings, in five east and southern African countries, waged, formal sector work pays much more than self-employment in the informal sector and in all cases, university graduates are the highest earners; among high school leavers, male leavers tend to earn more than women, although women with university degrees who live in urban settings earn more than men with less education in both urban and rural contexts (Al-Samarrai and Bennell 2003). However, none of the studies under review mention ‘semi-proletariatization’ whereby formal wage earners supplement their incomes with informal sector activities. The costs of semi-proletariatization are often externalized to women and girls (Dunaway 2006). This represents a gap in our full knowledge about how incomes are earned in the region and the gendered impacts of access to modern sector employment.<sup>168</sup>

#### *B. Social benefits: empowerment and well-being*

The particular case studies reviewed here yielded little in terms of actually investigating links between educating girls and women and the empowerment of girls and women. The reduction of gender inequality between men and women in Africa societies as related to educational

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<sup>167</sup> Even women’s educational investment. See Manda et al. (2003).

<sup>168</sup> Observational evidence suggests that all ‘modern sector’ wage earners in Keekonyokie Central Location, male and female, supplement this income with informal work. All male Maasai schoolteachers, for example, are also livestock owners and traders, even if they aren’t the actual agents buying and selling in the marketplace or herding the animals; others own and hire-out their vehicles. Nearly all of the female Maasai teachers I met have some informal work on the side; many produce beaded jewelry for local and tourist markets; some operate *dukas* (small shops); one of the accountants at MPIDO opened a beauty salon in Ngong; those living above the escarpment sells eggs or produce at the *soko* (open air market).

status or attainment was also not the focus of these studies.<sup>169</sup> A much more extensive literature on empowerment exists, and debates rage as to whether empowerment can actually be measured, by whom, and for what purposes.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, as this dissertation attempts to remedy on a small scale, “the literature on women’s education generally overlooks women themselves as active participants in their own lives” (Floro et al. 1990, 53). Nonetheless, the case studies reviewed here do suggest forces that help to shape potentially empowering processes for girls and women via educational attainment.

Women and girl’s increased empowerment or wellbeing is often linked to their increased access to the economic benefits that can accrue to investments in education. Access to the modern economy expands earning options away from a narrow relegation to the informal sector where workers only earn ‘survivalist’ wages (Al-Samarrai and Bennell 2003). Access to the formal sector and modern waged employment and this participation in waged work leads to women’s “increased self-worth and wellbeing” (Davidson and Kanyuka 1993, 448). Increased participation in the modern economy “removes girls from the domestic environment and offers literacy and exposure to ‘new ideas and value systems’ that may ‘compete’ with traditional values and customs” (Ikamari 2005, 35). School “may be the only place girls can learn that existing gender roles and competencies are potentially challengeable and changeable” (Mensch and Lloyd 1998, 167). When girls go to school, “they learn about the world that lies beyond their community” (Mensch and Lloyd 1998, 167) and therefore education “expands women’s life opportunities and choices”

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<sup>169</sup> This is the case primarily because the empirical literature is predominantly quantitative. Although debates continue, scholars generally believed that “empowerment” and “equity” are not clearly measurable or widely generalizable variables (Unterhalter 2007). Not all the studies under review actually focused on education. For example, some focus on HIV/AIDS prevalence and education is among the variables tested.

<sup>170</sup> For examples, see Malhotra et al. 2002 and Williams 2005.



(Ikamari 2005). This expanded terrain of opportunities and life choices is seen to parlay into increased agency and power and can contribute to the reduction of gender inequality within the family (Lloyd et al. 2000).

The empowerment that is seen to come from the attainment of education is also linked to increased health and wellbeing for women and their families. The development of values, norms and aspirations in school may lead girls to delay marriage and early childbearing (Mensch and Lloyd 1998) and each additional level of education lowers the probability of first marriage significantly (Ikamari 2005). Education lowers women's susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection and increases their ability to talk to their partners and make decisions concerning sex. Moreover, this relationship is stronger the higher the level of education attained (Wolff et al. 2000; Jewkes et al. 2002). Some studies point to increased use of family planning among educated women, including use of contraceptives (Nekatibeb 2002). There is a strong association between educational attainment and women's increased decision making authority in general, sexual agency or the power to make decisions regarding their own sexuality and sexual activity in particular, and reduced prevalence of HIV infection.

In short, education is necessary and largely beneficial in meeting standard social and economic development goals like reduced fertility, increased health and wellbeing for women and their children, increased access to formal sector employment, and increased earnings.

### **III. Constraints to female education**

There are many factors under consideration in the individual and household decision-making process regarding education. Households decide when children will enter school and when they will enroll (not necessarily the same occurrence). They decide who will enter and enroll, how

long that child or those children will remain in school, and they decide who will dropout if needed. The decision to enroll a child in school or remove that child once enrolled is not “a one-time event, but rather a series of decisions at different points in time in response to family circumstances and parents’ and children’s preferences” (Awedoba, et al. 2003, 55). This on-going process, particularly in “fragile and economically vulnerable” rural African households, is fluid and fluctuating, and hinges to both the “readiness” of the children and the household in question (Awedoba 2003, 56).

*A. Economic constraints: an intimate calculus of cost*

Children, and girls in particular, leave school because of demand-side and supply-side costs to the household. Demand-side costs refer to those costs which decrease the market demand for education, including the direct costs of schooling (tuition, materials, uniforms, etc), the opportunity cost of lost labor to the household, and the social or cultural costs, which are often referred to those attitudes and beliefs that decrease household/individual choices and reduce demand for schooling in favor of other investments. Supply-side constraints are those costs that reduce the supply of any given commodity, in this case, education, despite the demand. Examples include, lack of adequate school facilities (buildings, classrooms, lavatories), instructional materials (textbooks, blackboards, laboratories, libraries), and quality personnel (teachers, administrators, nurses, counselors). Both categories of cost are interrelated as households calculate who will attend school from any given household. The direct costs associated with schooling are often the main reasons girls are not taken to school (Davidson and Kanyuka 1993; Nekatibeb 2002).

As a function of poorly performing states and neoliberal development requirements, in most SSA contexts, parents are required to pool monies and resources to fund building schools or

classrooms and maintaining them as well as teaching staff. Parents sometimes provide classroom seating as well, and all cases, parents must provide for school uniforms. Parents are forced to hire inadequately trained teachers at reduced rates to cover significant shortfalls in the number of teachers provided by governments. In Kenya, for example, one finds the “parent-hired” and “government” teachers doing the same work but at markedly different pay rates.<sup>171</sup> Parent and community funds, in conjunction with food aid, are often the only way food is provided at school. Rural children walk to school each day carrying a piece of firewood from home for cooking lunch. In cases of drought, more children come to school if the school can provide water; when it cannot, the children are kept home or migrate with their households. Economic constraints to education are most prevalent in impoverished households, predicting the reproduction of structural inequality as poor children are less educated than their richer peers. Furthermore, multiple studies conclude that “the enrollment of boys is less susceptible to variations in family circumstance than the enrollment of girls” (Awedoba 2003; Lloyd et al. 2000,143; Martin 1982; Nekatibeb 2002). The odds that girls are twice as likely as boys to drop out are significantly increased in rural areas (Lloyd et al. 2000).

*B. Socio-cultural constraints: the costs of an intimate calculus*

Demarcating where economic constraints end, and socio-cultural constraints begin, is difficult and arbitrary. The single most common citation for dropout and initial non-enrolment of girls is the direct and indirect costs of households. Nonetheless, every study found a great degree

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<sup>171</sup> For example, a trained government-hired primary school teacher may earn from 10,000 -20,000 Ksh per month in a rural school, whereas an untrained parent-hired teacher will earn no more than 7000 Ksh. These two teachers carry the same work load.

of socio-cultural constraints to girls' education, which are almost always intertwined with, and mutually reinforced by, decisions also based on economic costs.

In most countries, the recommended starting age for school is six years old. However, children often do not start school on time for the simple reason that the distance children are required to walk to school is too great for a 6 year old child. Other reasons for starting late include parent's perception of the child's "readiness" based on his or her size and the labor needs of the household. Starting school late or 'over-age' is cited throughout the studies reviewed here (Awedoba 2003; Barker & Rich 1992; Davidson and Kanyuka 1992; Mensch et al. 2001). Over-age entry has serious implications for the onset of puberty and the process of coming of age for girls in particular.<sup>172</sup>

Related common themes are 'schoolgirl pregnancy' and sexual harassment (even rape) in school. The intensely sexualized climate that most girls face in school, in which both boys and girls feel pressure to have sex and the majority of girls experience sexual harassment (particularly grabbing of the breasts) on a daily basis (Mensch and Lloyd 1998), contributes to the real and perceived threat that attending school can increase a girl's risk of becoming pregnant. Concomitantly, early marriage is often cited as a prevalent constraint to girls' education in Africa. Whereas parents in patrilocal societies assume boys are a better investment because they will not leave the natal family when they marry, daughters are often viewed as potential brides whose value to the household is best in evidence in the form of bride wealth she receives upon betrothal or marriage (Martin 1982; Nekatibeb 2002). In some societies, like Maasai for example, pre-marital sex has traditionally been an expectation of both girls and boys, but the schooling imperative is at odds with this practice (Talle 2007). Regardless, some parents anticipate an 'early' pregnancy

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<sup>172</sup> Over-age entry, as the result of too few schools and sparse population densities and dispersed settlement patterns, is a significant problem in Maasai areas.

because it makes it easier to justify removing a girl from school and ‘marrying her off’ for bride wealth (Kilusu, personal communication, 2007). Boys are not bartered as brides, and their pre-marital virginity does not signify status in the same ways that it does for girls in some communities. In this regard, boys do not run the same kinds or degree of risks being in school as they come of age and begin having sex or marry early.

Parent’s education, and attitudes toward education, are likely factors in the initial enrollment and persistence of all children, and particularly girls, in school. In general, the studies find that children are more likely to enroll and stay in school if parents are wealthier and attended school themselves (Awedoba et al. 2003; Davidson and Kanyuka 1992; Lloyd et al. 2000). Parents who believe in education, despite their relative poverty, will do whatever they can to keep children, even girls, in school. However, the size and configuration, economic circumstances, and attitudes and beliefs of the household may also predict an increase in labor demands from children, and parents expect girls to do this work.

Actual in-school ‘culture’ is also often a critical factor in girls’ negative experiences in school. Studies that surveyed, interviewed, and/or observed teachers consistently found negative attitudes about girls’ participation and performance in school. Teacher attitudes regarding the subjects appropriate for study and future employment also indicate a different set of expectations for boys and girls in school. In most school settings, boys outnumber girls and dominate the classroom environment. The prevailing ‘chalk and talk’ pedagogic practice of most east African schools is not conducive to female achievement. When girls are expected culturally to be shy and submissive (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992) and boys are expected to be assertive and prepared, teaching approaches that depend on students to volunteer answers are stacked in favor of male achievement. Girls are not immune from the discouraging, even hostile, signals they are given in

school. Several studies indicated that girls internalize low expectations and negative perceptions of their abilities (Nekatibeb 2002).

School facilities across SSA are inadequate, under funded, and difficult to teach and learn in, especially in rural areas. Teachers are not paid well and are frequently absent (Mensch et al. 2001).<sup>173</sup> Inadequate facilities, instructional materials, and minimal teacher credentials and high absenteeism are linked to female dropout (Awedoba 2003; Mensch et al. 2001; Nekatibeb 2002). Girls are more distinctly impacted by some material factors more directly than boys. For example, several studies noted the particular problem of limited or poor-quality lavatory (less likely in rural areas) or latrine (more likely) facilities. Latrine or lavatory areas become a favored site for both sexual and nonsexual harassment for girls, mostly because they are not private enough or well supervised (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). Girls may also be discouraged from attending school when they are menstruating if they have no safe or adequate place to attend to their needs at this time (Kirk and Sommer 2006; Sommer 2009).

As with the benefits of education, the categories of constraint to education are understood as interlocked socio-cultural and economic factors within which families and households and girls themselves must negotiate in order to enroll in, avoid dropping out of, and achieve in, school. Geopolitical forces shape the economic conditions of local communities and in turn, those conditions shape beliefs that often reinforce those forces within local economic practices.

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<sup>173</sup> I have observed small, remote schools emptied of teachers in areas of Narok district, but all of the schools we visited in Keekonyokie Central Locations were consistently 'full staffed,' meaning that all the teachers who were supposed to be at work usually were. (I do not mean to say that all the schools had an adequate number of staff; they did not).

In the next section, I look more closely at the ways in which these categories of constraint, against the backdrop of benefits that predicate development via educational attainment, conspire to create a perilous passage from childhood to adulthood for many adolescent girls in rural Africa.

#### **IV. Female adolescence in contemporary African contexts**

This reading of empirical case studies investigating girls' education reveals that a central 'problem' for girls is the pressure of coming of age and the process of adolescence along with the pressure to be formally educated. The gendered and gendering process of coming of age in Africa is complicated by the education-as-development imperative to attend, complete, and succeed in formal schooling despite conditions of economic decline.

Gender is not a biologically determined phenomenon, but rather a social construction shaped in and by the intersections of historic, economic and cultural forces at work in any given context that will vary across boundaries and over time. "Gender structuring" is the process by which "culturally determined ways of defining women and men and their roles in a given society at particular historical time period shape gender-specific opportunities and constraints" (Davidson & Kanyuka 1992, 455). As my introduction to the dissertation argues, in African contexts, localized gender categories are always and already interconnected with generation-based hierarchies. Gender structuring is the means by which the material processes of production, reproduction, and distribution are organized within households, communities and nation-states. What's more, the ideational attributes of any given set of gender structures are produced in discursive practice such that parents, relatives, peers, neighbors, teachers, textbooks, and pedagogic practice become "communicative agents" of the gender structuring process (Davison & Kanyuka 1992, 455). While the iterative and recursive nature of the gendering process makes it possible to intervene in or resist

its constructive effects (Scott 1986), it is, at the same time, deeply entrenched and more easily reproduced than disrupted (Butler 1988). Gender structures, like most structural social forms, change very slowly against the historical process of consensus that sustains them (Scott 1986).

The process of education is a process whereby gender structures are taught, learned, perpetuated, and even celebrated. Gender hierarchies are reproduced and reinforced in the social and economic structures found in schools, and girls and boys are caught in the crosshairs of change brought on, in part, by the significant pressure to be in school in order to get ahead in an increasingly competitive formal labor market. What does it mean to come of age in this context? The recognition that education is a process that is both gendered and gendering begs several important questions about education as social change in development contexts. Does gender structuring impact the transition from childhood to adulthood for girls? Does the process of education in formal school impact the process of coming of age? What is the network of relationships between adolescence, gender structuring, education and development in the SSA context?

A certain lens on development, girls, and women almost always frames the current discussion of benefits. For example, the selected studies reviewed here argue that education will directly “enhance women’s wellbeing through the knowledge and skills they acquire and through shifts [in their] attitudes and values” (Floro et al.1990, 54). In this way, education is a pillar of the contemporary development paradigm through which women are presumed to be “freed from ‘traditional’ constraints that limit their status and activities” (Floro et al.1990, 54). Feminist critiques of development suggest, rather, that not only have girls and women often been left out of the benefits of modern education, “the actual experience it offers girls frequently reinforce existing social status and structure” (Floro et al.1990, 54). Moreover, far less research has investigated the “impact on attitude changes associated with ‘modernity’” (Floro et al. 1990, 53).



Thirteen years after Floro et al.'s (1990) meta-analysis of the impacts and outcomes of girls' education worldwide, Malhotra et al.'s (2003) worldwide meta-analysis continues to find few studies that offer empirical evidence to explore the key aspects of the empowering potential of education or that investigate "the effects of a primary education on girls' self-esteem or their adoption of new social roles as adults" (Floro et al. 1990, 53). Studies which analyze *the process of education*—"specifically the process of going to school, being outside of the constraining home environment, being exposed to new ideas, being socialized in a non-family situation" (Malhotra et al. 1990, 38) are few. The assumptions behind the recognition of this gap in the literature rest on a certain faith that the process of education can and will promote change toward gender equality rather than reproduce gender inequities. A reading of the case studies under review here suggests that the process of education for adolescent girls is actually a fairly treacherous landscape, full of challenges that tend toward further solidifying and re-entrenching gendered, and gendering, structural inequities. Although beyond the purview of this review at this time, is important to keep in mind that the process of education is also intersectional, such that as gender hierarchies are reproduced, so are generation-defined divides, class divisions, and racial/ethnic inequities. Prioritizing or isolating these intersections serves to occlude elements crucial to understanding the differential effects of the education-as-development imperative on African girls across socio-cultural, geographic, and economic contexts.

The studies reviewed here do not make reference to "coming of age," although several out of the demographic literature highlight the period of time in life roughly between the ages of 12 and 20 commonly called adolescence. I argue that the link between the physical fact of puberty and the social-cultural and economic facts of leaving childhood and becoming an adult, or 'coming of age,' are gendered and gendering such that girls and boys have very different experiences and outcomes (Sommer 2009). "Because adolescence is the phase of the life cycle when roles and responsibilities

of adulthood emerge and when gender difference become sharply defined” we are compelled to “understand the ways in which schools shape adult gender roles and influence later productive and reproductive outcomes” (Mensch and Lloyd 1998, 168). This argument sets the stage for a more subtle analysis of coming of age in the development context and invites consideration of the ways that girls, often targets for development interventions, experience these intersection of coming of age processes and formal schooling.

There are gender dimensions to both the benefits and constraints of education for children in the developing world (Lloyd et al. 2000). Neither the current development paradigm nor education as an imperative is gender neutral. “Girls who enter school have to cope with not only the societal attitudes that perceive them as less intelligent, less achievement oriented, and less academically capable than boys but also with the gender stereotypes that school staff have about female pupils that reinforce these attitudes, making it doubly difficult for girls to overcome negative perceptions and achieve excellence in school” (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992, 463). Additionally, both girls and boys often share these same attitudes about female performance and options (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992, 463). How does adolescence itself, and the process of coming to age, contribute to this gender structuring process? How does formal schooling itself complicate (and often pervert) the otherwise “natural” process of puberty? How do social constructions of childhood, particularly being a “girl,” and adulthood, or, being a “woman,” markedly shape the formal school/coming adolescence nexus?

African girls are more likely than their male peers to dropout of school as they reach, pass through, and grow beyond puberty. This likelihood rises as they progress through their teenage years, and these odds of dropout increase markedly for rural girls (Awedoba 2003; Lloyd et al. 2000). Keeping in mind the high incidences of both over-age entry and grade repetition for all

children (and girls in particular), we recognize that puberty and sexual maturation for many African youth occurs during their time in primary school (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). A study in Kenya found 5% more boys than girls aged 14-15, 9% more boys than girls aged 16-17, and 23% more boys than girls aged 18-19 in school (Mensch et al. 2001). In Ghana, 60% of girls who start primary school do not finish, as compared to 30% of boys (Awedoba 2003). In southern Malawi, girls tend to dropout between primary standards 1 and 2 (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992), and in Ethiopia dropout often occurs for girls between the ages of 14 and 19 (Nekatibeb 2002). Clearly there is a direct link between the decreased persistence of girls in formal schooling and the onset of puberty and the process of coming of age.

In an effort to illustrate the complexities of social change required by the education-as-development imperative that are not celebrated in the affirmative economy of statements accompanying interventions targeting 'girls' education,' I here highlight four mutually reinforcing forces in play during the contemporary adolescent experience in Africa, as elsewhere, that reconstitute and reconfigure existing gender and generational hierarchies and serve to reproduce structural inequalities according to sex (and gender) and age (and generation). The interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of these forces amount to the formation of what may be seen as a perilous passage to adulthood for girls who go to school in the contemporary neoliberal development zone.

*A. The economic imperative to get in, stay in, and succeed in school*

The push for education for all is framed by a global development agenda focused on human development driven by economic growth. As nations attempt to develop according to the current neoliberal paradigm, the impetus is on the growth of the private sector as the driver for wage employment resting on a faith in the market and the trickle down effect to improve livelihoods at

all levels. Within this paradigm, education is viewed as the best means by which individuals can develop and move away from “traditional’ economic activity like small holder subsistence agricultural production toward “modern’ employment in the private sector.<sup>174</sup> Schools are largely geared toward this development agenda.<sup>175</sup> Although the more recent push for primary education’s benefits of literacy and numeracy is often coupled with a call for more relevant life skills for those children who will not have access to the modern employment sector, there remains a faith that on the backs of skilled labors overall economic growth will be realized.<sup>176</sup> On a daily basis in sub-Saharan Africa, and on the continent as a whole, households calculate their options, and children, both boys and girls, are caught in the desire/decline matrix of the larger discourse on development that requires the benefits of formal schooling, and their own economic and socio-cultural realities.

Girls' enrollment and persistence in school is more vulnerable to household economic shocks than boys. This fact is often correlated with a “male bias” toward educating boys (Davidson and Kanyuka 1992) largely because of the macro-structural bias in the labor market that ensures that boys, young men and adults will earn more than their female counterparts. According to conventional wisdom in many contexts, boys are held to be better candidates for successful

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<sup>174</sup> This sensibility is internalized as ‘fact’ among the schoolgirls we talked to. Education, they unanimously argued, is the only means to a wage work, and work is the only means to a better life.

<sup>175</sup> Education for employment and economic development is the singular mantra of all education policy in Kenya since independence. A slight exception would be those first reports used by President Kenyatta which still retained a focus on “Africanizing” education in the new Kenya. While economic development was still the goal, in the process education was understood as means through which all Kenyans might come to know themselves and the new world differently. These more ‘esoteric’ ‘enlightenment’ claims have fallen by the wayside in all subsequent formal policy documents.

<sup>176</sup> As chapter 2 illustrated, Maasai, and most Africans, rejected “vocational” education in favor of “academic” education in primary that would lead the student to secondary and on to university and the modern wage sector. This is still the prevailing attitude. (Even in the United States, as many students reject the aspiration to become a plumber, electrician or other skilled trade because they want what academic education promises: highly paid work.)

schooling than girls; this social ‘fact’ reinforces the reality that males do earn more and have greater access to wage employment.

The ‘fact’ that men tend to have more securely ensured employment helps to perpetuate the idea that boys are the better investment because they are more achievement oriented and academically competent than girls. In the end, this recursive feedback loop works to deeply inscribe and entrench the status quo—both economically and socio-culturally. Additionally, the highly sexualized environment of school contributes to this feedback loop as “weaker” (economically and academically) girls are easy sexual prey to male students and teachers; girls will trade their bodies to get in/to school (rides instead of walking long distances or fees to enroll), to stay in school (fees for tuition, uniforms, building funds), and to succeed in school (good grades, advancement, good exam scores, academic privileges). Students who cannot or will not “pay” will drop out.

*B. The sexualized environment of school and intensification of sexual harassment and assault (including rape) girls face at school*

Studies find that girls face considerable sexual and nonsexual harassment in school during their teen years (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). Both male and female student surveyed in a study in Kenya indicated they felt pressure to have sex; however, no male students indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment in school. This is not to say with absolute certainty that this is in fact the case as underreporting is very likely and boys do admit to experiencing nonsexual harassment and bullying (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). Girls tend to have sex younger in SSA broadly, and their sexual partners are at least 6+ years older than themselves (UNAIDS 2004). Ten thousand secondary school girls were surveyed in Kenya; 40% indicated that their first sexual experience was coerced or they were “tricked” in to sex with male students their age or older (only 5% surveyed

pointed to adult men) (Mensch et. al. 1998, 2001).<sup>177</sup> Some studies connect the high incidences of sexual harassment with inadequate school facilities (latrines in particular), poorly trained teachers, and double standards for male and female sexuality as held by students themselves, teachers, and parents. Most correlations have an economic dimension. Sex is often “not volitional” for teenage girls in the African contexts of the studies reviewed, whereas “boys--for whom early sexual experience has relatively fewer hazards and more potential benefits, including gratification and social prestige—appear to engage in premarital sex largely independent of the influence of their environment” (Mensch et al. 2000). Girls, especially poor ones, can find themselves in the “owing position” and pay their debts for fees and other forms of “sponsorship” with sexual favors (Barker and Rich 1992).

Although a documented benefit of education is delayed marriage or increased age at first marriage, studies indicate that premartial adolescent childbearing is on the rise with more than 50% of teenage childbearing in Kenya results from premartial conception (Mensch, et al. 2001). On average, 50% of girls/women give birth in African before they are 20 years old (Barker and Rich 1992). When girls reach puberty within the negatively sexualized confines of formal school settings, the risks to their health and well being rise as they confront the physical and psycho-social complexities of sexual assault and rape, unwanted/unplanned pregnancies, disease (STD and HIV/AIDS most specifically), and illegal and unsafe abortions. Ironically, many girls face these

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<sup>177</sup> This notion of being “tricked” is salient in rural Maasai contexts; the girls we interviewed used this phrase and made reference to the idea that schoolgirls are impregnated by older male students and men who are not in school by “tricking” them. Through conversations I came to understand this to mean that girls were convinced to have sex by boys/men who told them a variety of lies: that sex the first time would not make them pregnant, that they loved them, that they would be married, that they would do their homework or help them pass exams, etc. More nefariously, I also came to understand that “trick” can be code for “force” or “coerce.”

risks because the gendered process of education clashes with other configuring forces of female identities.

*C. The lack of formal family planning or sex education in schools for boys or girls and the subsequent lack of knowledge youth possess*

Despite the touted value of formal schooling to educate ‘modern’ skilled workers, in a comparative study based on interviews and focus groups with in and out-of-school adolescents in Nigeria and Kenya, Barker and Rich (1992) found that schools provide neither relevant nor timely sex or family planning education for pre-teens or teenagers. Other studies and reports corroborate this finding (Mensch et al. 2001; Nekatibeb 2002; UNAIDS 2005). These findings are very disturbing in light of the current HIV/AIDS crisis in SSA. Sixty-two percent of the global population of young people ages 15-24 living with HIV are in SSA—and 75% of these people are female. Given the high incidence of sexual harassment and assault adolescent girls face in school, it seems reasonable to surmise that not all girls ‘chose’ to become sexually active and may, in those first instances of sexual intercourse, contract HIV. States that have legalized the expulsion of pregnant schoolgirls and made illegal the sale of condoms to unmarried youth directly pervert the supposed benefits to all, and particularly to individuals, of the education-as-development imperative.<sup>178</sup>

“School, because it the most important socializing institution outside of the family” plays “a significant role in certain aspects of the transition to adulthood, including the decision [if indeed one

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<sup>178</sup> In Kenya 2003, the Free Primary Education legislation stipulated that it would no longer legal to expel a pregnant schoolgirl or to refuse to admit her to school after she has given birth. In my observation, this legislation is *de facto* in effect. We interviewed three girls who had returned to school after giving birth. One of the many complications of the lingering stigma around schoolgirl pregnancy and return to school is that most girls do not (feel they “cannot”) return to the schools they left, and instead have to arrange to attend a different school.

is taken] to engage in premarital sex” (Mensch and Lloyd 1998; Mensch et al. 2001). What is clear, however, is that schools are not providing pre-pubescent and adolescent school children with the knowledge they need to protect themselves from disease and unwanted pregnancy, precisely at that time in which their bodies are changing in ways that increase their risks in the contemporary setting. Girls are particularly disadvantaged by this lack precisely because they, and not boys, will endure an unwanted pregnancy or abortion, and they have greater odds of contracting HIV than their male peers (Mensch and Lloyd 1998).

Rich and Barker’s (1992) study, found that students had not received a formal sex education or family planning course in school and although they did learn basic reproductive anatomy in biology class, the information was incomplete, irrelevant or too late (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). Fewer teachers favor sexuality or family planning education in the curriculum (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). Although they have questions and want more information, female students are often afraid to ask sensitive questions to male teachers, even in the context of biology or anatomy classes (Barker and Rich 1992). Other reports find that in SSA, only 8% of out-of-school adolescents and a slightly higher percentage on in-school adolescents have access to preventative education (UNAIDS 2004). Nearly 50% of young men aged 15-24 surveyed for a UNAIDS project could correctly identify ways to prevent HIV infection; this percentage decreases to under 40% of young women the same age who could correctly identify preventive measures (UNAIDS 2004). Instead of learning about sex, conception, and disease from family or school, many adolescents rely on their peers, popular magazines, and adult movies (Barker and Rich 1992).<sup>179</sup> Consequently, adolescents rely on myths and misinformation to inform their sexual decisions and practice.

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<sup>179</sup> The schoolgirls in our study asserted that they could not learn about menstruation and menstrual cycles, and thereby associated reproductive cycles, at home. They said they learned these things (how to count the days of her cycle, for example) at school.



Although teenagers may not know always accurately know how conception occurs, they do know of the repercussions, and this fallout is markedly gendered. Focus group participants in both Nigeria and Kenya told very similar stories of the repercussions of pregnancy: pregnant girls are forced to leave school or vocational training programs, marry the boy or man involved or be ‘married off’ to older polygamous men, seek an illegal abortion, risk being kicked out of their parents' home, and risk health problems or death related to early pregnancy or unsafe abortions (Barker & Rich 1992).<sup>180</sup> Participants stated that girls sometimes get pregnant on purpose to prove their fertility and marriageability. Almost across the board these adolescents denied male responsibility and blamed the female involved (Barker and Rich 1992). Similarly, focus group participants had more and more accurate knowledge about, and more favorable attitudes toward, abortion compared to family planning and contraception; however, nearly all said that unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortions are secrets and are the girl’s responsibility to keep secret and handle alone (Barker and Rich 1992).

*D. The socio-cultural initiation processes that mark the transition to adulthood for girls and the psychosocial impacts of these deeply held beliefs*

The study on female dropouts in Ethiopia was the only study to explicitly cite female initiation processes in general, and circumcision in particular, as constraints to girl’s education. In all other studies the transition from childhood to adulthood, or coming of age, was more broadly collapsed into ‘adolescence’ even though many of the studies reviewed here were conducted in

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<sup>180</sup> My protocol did not include questions concerning abortion and abortion never came up in the interviews. Abortion is a marked taboo in Maasai society, as elsewhere. Being “married off,” however, was a topic of discussion in nearly every interview. Some girls suggested that parents punish pregnant schoolgirls by intentionally forcing them to marry “old” men (10+ years older than the girl). I did not hear of any schoolgirl pregnancy case in which the girl married the boy or man who impregnated her.

regions of Kenya in which female initiation is significant and circumcision is also practiced. More empirical case study research needs to be analyzed in light of this important claim. I primarily use Nekatibeb's (2002) findings as a framing mechanism for the more general social construction of "woman" and "adulthood" in the east African context to comment on the perilous passage from childhood girls face when they begin to change physically and socially, literally, before everyone's eyes, although the evidence of my own study of Maasai girls shines a sharp light on the implications of shifting constructions of 'girl' and 'woman' as they relate to the 'new' idea of 'schoolgirl.'

For Ethiopian adolescents, coming of age and becoming "women" in their own eyes and in the eyes of their community is but one of many factors that contribute toward the process of leaving school early. As stated earlier, concomitant to coming of age for Ethiopian girls is early marriage, abduction, and sexual harassment and assault, and early pregnancy. Participants in Nekatibeb's study (2002) also dropped out because the economic pressure to stay in school was too great. Girls and young women find themselves in tightly recursive network of forces that make school a difficult place to get in, stay in and do well in, especially once they reach the onset of puberty. As an Ethiopia women, now in her late twenties, told me: "when you first see your period, you know you are different, you are a woman, and circumcision confirms this for everyone" (Berek, personal communication, 2006). Awedoba et al. (2003) also found that Ghanaian girls sometimes feel they are "too old" to persist in school, particularly for those girls who are over-age for their grades because of later entry. The child who begins school at 10 years old and starts her period at 13 may only be in primary standard 3 (or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) because she repeated standard 2. In this context, she *is* among children in comparison to her own physical socio-emotional stature and status as a teenager. The changes brought on by puberty are also signified for all by physical changes when, most obviously, her breasts and hips develop which can make her a moving target

for sexual harassment and assault. Circumcised girls can also be a 'bad influence' on younger, uncircumcised girls by refusing to listen to teachers (Nekatibeb 2002).

In Ethiopia, as in other SSA contexts like Maasailand in Kenya, initiation has customarily signified the end of childhood for girls. Prior to education-as-development imperatives, community members could easily agree that circumcised girls were officially adult women. However, with the demand for school in accordance with development requirements, the school context has altered this 'easy' agreement. School children are not necessarily treated as adults in school. Participants reported being punished in school for not participating in activities thought to be for "children" after circumcision (Nekatibeb 2002). For many parents, community member, and girls themselves, the next "natural" step after initiation and circumcision is marriage and child bearing. Completing school is in direct opposition to these social roles. Interlocked with these strong socio-cultural beliefs is also an intense economic pressure to secure good marriages and bride wealth. According to Nekatibeb (2002), initiation and circumcision enhances a teenage girls' social status in ways that education cannot. Circumcision, in particular, he argues, is designed to curb female sexuality and preserve virginity so that the best possible bride price may be had. Parent believes that school, on the other hand, is threat to female sexuality, virginity, and marriageability (Nekatibeb 2002). Moreover, parents also believe that girls will not get a good job or earn as much as boy might, and therefore they may not doubly risk the investment in female education.

One of the studies under review reflects the ambivalence surrounding schooling in the lives of many girls in SSA development zones. Awedoba et al.'s (2003) qualitative study in Ghana investigated the process parents use to decide who will enroll in school, when they do so, and for how long. The researchers found a small group of parents who were genuinely "perplexed" as to why their children dropped out of school. The researchers created the category of "student

disinterest” as a constraint to girl’s education; Nekatibeb has a ‘lack of interest’ category as well. This is not to say that some girls are simply not interested in school or may feel that their time is not well spent in school and prefer to work at home, marry, and/or enter the informal economy (many of whom are already there). In the Ghana study 12 of the 43 children (28%), ages 5-16, who dropped out did so because they were no longer interested in school (Awedoba et al. 2003).

Nonetheless, given the data on the ubiquity of sexual harassment, assault, and bias toward female students in schools and around education processes, it gave me pause to find, among the those who dropped out, that some children give “no reason.” For examples: a 15 year old girl who attended primary standard 6 (she is two-three years over-age—her classmates are around 12-13) because she had repeated several grades, dropped put of school on multiple occasions but was persuaded by her parents to return; a 15 year old dropped put of primary standard 2 (7-8 years over-age) because she disliked being with “little children” and she was “being teased”; a father sees his 13 year old daughter as “too old” to be in school and when she sees her friends going she “cries so much”; two sisters in the same household, the one then the other, drop out because they “see no benefit of schooling” (Awedoba et al. 2003). The examples given of boys who drop out because of “lack of interest” were all intent upon farming and preferred to be at work. In my conversations with schoolgirls, many explained that schoolgirls who “are not performing well just go home” rather than “waste time” in school. At home girls still have access to the status afforded those who become women, wives, and mothers and in these capacities, contribute to their communities.

These examples reveal that under the affirmative veneer of “education is light” and “girls count” that animate the loudest set of statements available regarding gender, education, and development is the complex, often contradictory, and fundamentally contingent place of school and schooling in girls’ lives.

## V. Conclusion

Kenya's Ministry of Education (MOE) (2007) opens its *Gender Policy in Education* this way:

Education is widely recognized as key to national development... There is evidence that educating women is beneficial at the national, community, family and individual levels. With even a basic education, individual women engage in economic activities and thus contribute to a greater national productivity. At the family level, educated women have reduced fertility rates, brought up healthier, better educated children and families, and reduced infant and maternal mortality rates. At the society or community level, educated women participate more in development activities as well as in political and economic decision making processes. Further, educated women enter the labor market and earn income through engaging in productive economic activities. This enables them to attain financial independence, reduce poverty and enhance gender equity and equality. Educated women are also in a better position to protect themselves and their families against HIV and other infections (1-2).

Then, in recourse to the one sentence that has come to define the education-as-development imperative, the authors of the policy refer to Lawrence Summers, former president of the World Bank: "Considering all the benefits of educating girls, Summers (1992) concludes that "*Investment in girls' education may well be the highest return on investment available in the developing world*" (2, italics in the original). The authors then draw the commonsensical conclusion that the "attainment of gender equity and equality in education is, therefore, a core development issue" (2). Although they also add, "and a goal in its own right," the predominating thrust of the argument for a national gender policy in education is the supposedly incontrovertible link between educating females and national economic development.

Kenya's Ministry of Education is not alone in its effort to put girls and women to work for national development. This very economy of statements comes hand-in-hand with actual development aid and other forms of political-economic currencies. As the new policy summarizes in one paragraph, girls' education is widely linked to an array of positive development outcomes and increased productivity and earnings. However, if more boys than girls go to school, stay in school, advance through school, achieve more in school, and earn more because of school, then it

follows that boys will become men who have disproportionate access to better jobs, higher earnings, and smaller and healthier families.<sup>181</sup> The daughters of poor parents and poor mothers start behind and stay behind in the daily struggle for livelihoods. The empirical literature collected here documents the increased vulnerability of adolescent girls in school. As demonstrated, girls drop out at higher rates than boys and most of them drop out between the ages of 14 and 19, precisely as they are contending with the socio-cultural and economic process of coming of age along with the physio-emotional process of puberty, and the process of becoming educated by going to school. Although the policy purports to address these structural ‘facts,’ it is not clear that its authors—or the discourse they employ—have considered the less straightforwardly positive, more evidentially messy contradictions that arise when development makes promises that it cannot deliver.

One of the forces confounding the seamless social change predicted by the education-as-development discourse on display in the MOE’s new policy document is that of ‘adolescence’ in shifting postcolonial contexts like SSA. In all societies, people reach a stage in the lifecycle in which they leave childhood behind and physically, socio-culturally, and economically become adults. Although this process does not happen over night, in some African contexts the transition is communally marked by an initiation into adulthood. This public construction of adult identity confers both opportunities and constraints. When girls come of age, they are forced to negotiate their new identities as women within the narrow confines of formal schooling. Indeed, some girls find themselves in a classic dilemma: remaining in school through and after puberty is often very difficult, however, leaving school offers its own set of hardships. Boys are not faced with a similar dilemma. Some of the studies reviewed here suggest that the negotiations and contestations

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<sup>181</sup> According to UNESCO 2006, in SSA, 60% of girls are enrolled in school whereas 67% of boys are enrolled.

experienced by girls as they come of age can actually be mitigated by empowering school environments that 'arm' adolescents with the self-knowledge and the efficacy to 'fend' off unwanted attention, harassment, and sexist attitudes about their abilities. Mensch et al. (2001) found that schoolgirls in Kenya were less likely to choose or be forced to initiate sexual activity if they have attended schools in which they feel they have been treated equitably. Thus, they find that empowering school environments correlate with delayed sexual initiation for girls (Mensch et al. 2001). Far from assuming the education process is gender neutral and that all girls need is more information in order to choose responsibly when it comes to sexual activity (Ikamari 2005), research that looks closely into the contemporary adolescent experience can not fail to recognize the larger structural forces out of the control of most young girls that can work against their success in school.

Yet, none of the case studies reviewed here explicitly or systematically explore the relationship between girls' experiences in school with the development-led push for education as framed by the modernization and economic growth paradigm. This line of inquiry requires a critical lens on neoliberal globalization and development mechanisms like structural adjustment programs (SAPS) that force nation-states to reduce the public sector and shift resources toward private development and liberalizing international trade. Much more research needs to be done along these lines so that the geo-political forces at work in the tightening matrix of constraints to girls education can be made explicit, and so, at the very least, we may begin to see why poor households have to come up with resources to build classrooms and adolescent girls seek out "sponsors" to pay for required uniforms and instructional materials.

Moreover, not enough research has been conducted on how girls themselves both experience and understand the process of education. Has the encounter with 'modernity' been 'empowering'? For those girls who leave school without completing, how has their education

helped them or hurt them as they negotiate their way in the world? As far as I know, no study has investigated the process of coming of age as it comes in tension with the process of formal schooling for contemporary rural African girls. Studies that focus in circumcision and other rites of passage need to be considered in order to grapple with how the girls themselves experience education and explain their desire to attend school. And what of those girls who live in contexts for which coming of age is not explicitly marked by a communal or public ceremony but, rather, maps to the onset of puberty, sexual maturation and physical change? Can these girls be said to face ‘perilous passage’?

Coming of age and the process of adolescence have always everywhere been complicated generational affairs as power shifts between and among juniors and their elders. But more than this, these transitions are markedly gendered events. Given the particularly constraints of neoliberal globalization and development processes, in the contemporary Sub-Saharan African development zone, the social constructions of “child” and “adult,” and particularly, “girl” and “woman” are made more complex and troublesome with respect to going to school. At puberty, and through the socially mandated process of coming of age, girls become women, and this social fact is often at odds with western-derived notions of being “a student.” In the literature reviewed here, boys do not evidence the same potentially negative encounter with schooling at puberty, in part because both schooling and puberty are very different experiences for boys. Given prevailing gender hierarchies at work in the case study data, boys tend to have more opportunities and fewer constraints from coming of age in school.

The current development paradigm presents education as the best means through which individuals, households, and nation-states become modern and grow economically. This push for education and the process of formal schooling itself intensifies the problems associated with contemporary females adolescence in SSA. The pressures to get in school, stay in school, and



succeed in school often clash with the process of coming of age for girls because the onset of puberty is markedly different than for boys and has potentially dangerous implications for girls in this context. As the rest of this dissertation will elaborate, Maasai schoolgirls, not unlike many of the girls whose lives have been examined in the studies reviewed here, struggle to make claims in various identities at once, all the while aiming for the goals the education-as-development discourse has framed for them.

**CHAPTER 4*****Making Meanings, Localizing Methodologies:  
Researching Schoolgirls in the Development Zone***

G: "You've been in school all this time just to be a teacher?"

H: "Well, a lecturer does more than teach. She also does researches like this one I am doing here with you, and she can write books."

G: "Will you write a book about Maasai girls?"

Conversation with a schoolgirl, Lood-ariak Primary School (October 2007)

In this chapter I discuss the ethnographic case study methodology I used to conduct the research for this analysis of Kenyan Maasai schoolgirls' identity formation within the context of formal education and development imperatives. My basic purpose here is to introduce readers to the study by way of "thick description" (Geertz 1973) and ethnographic detail. But I also want to move beyond the detailed minutiae of the places of the case and the methods I used, and in a broader way, evoke the feeling of structures I discussed in the introduction. I also use this chapter to illustrate my praxis, or the ways theoretical analysis and methodologies are intertwined. My approach is to weave details of the research setting and process, academic literature on methodology, and stories from the research activity itself in order to invite readers into the world of the study from within that world. By capturing the feel of life in microcosms along the Runda to Lood-ariak socio-cultural and economic continuum, the human geographies of movement in the places and spaces of the case, and the realities of the research process, I hope to illustrate how the intertwining of process and product, or the intersubjective nature of qualitative research, is itself another example of the paradox of the development zone: it is a place where outsiders like me go to learn something new about the experiences of insiders, but in the process, and "in the end, one is never entirely a 'stranger' who can completely, unchanged, 'return home' (Stambach 2000).

I begin here by discussing the changes in the research design and process based on my interactions with the staff of a local, indigenous non-governmental organization (NGO), Mainyoito Pastoralist Integrated Development Organization (MPIDO), whose support was integral to the study.<sup>182</sup> I discuss two interrelated themes that emerged as functions of the research process itself: the ways social relations are formed and maintained by the local use of space and understanding of place and how both searches for an assistant/translator and my eventual relationships with each young woman (or “girl”?) called to the surface some of the issues that would later stand out in our conversations with the schoolgirls we interviewed, namely, the contradictions of the schoolgirl category and the new *enkanyakuai* as well as the paradox of schooling—both the agency and the ambivalence. These findings are further elaborated in the next chapter.

### I. Adjusting (to) the Means

The research design I proposed for this project was radically changed during my first few weeks in Kenya. While my organizing research questions remained the same, as did my methodological paradigm, in order to more richly reflect aspects of the development zone, the details of my approach changed. I had originally planned to interview 30 girls ages 14-20 who were enrolled in Lood-ariak Primary School (LPS) at the time of the interviews. From the first 30 shorter interviews, I would then choose 15 of the richest interviews and sit down with those girls for a second longer interview. I also planned to interview the parents and teachers of the 15 girls selected for the longer interviews. Because I lived in Lood-ariak, I also planned to conduct direct

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<sup>182</sup> The *Maa* word “mainyoito” means, “let us rise up!” (Ole Kintalel, personal communications). Mol (1996) spells the word a bit differently as *mainyeito* (242). The word underlines, from a Maasai point of view, the broader Kenyan notion of “*harambee*,” a Swahili word that means “let us pull together.” Beyond *harambee*, however, *mainyoito* connotes a revolutionary stance against an enemy or an oppressor, or an oppressive circumstance.

and participant observations at LPS as well as in the 15 girls' homes whenever possible.

Additionally, I planned to interview 30 former schoolgirls, that is, girls who had dropped out of school before finishing. Following the same pattern, from these 30 I would select 15 for longer interviews. I planned to interview the teachers and the parents of the girls who had left school as well. Changes to this design included: interviewing in the 10 primary schools around the area instead of 1; interviewing 98 schoolgirls once instead of 30 once then 15 twice; interviewing girls as young as 10-13; interviewing 7 secondary school girls from the Lood-ariak area while they were home for the December holiday; not conducting direct or participant observation to any systematic degree; interviewing only 7 'drop-outs' who were also in the interview category of 'mother'; interviewing no fathers and only 14 mothers.

On one level, these were simply logistical changes. The number and spatial locations of the participants were adjusted to more adequately fit the local conditions and more demonstrably address the questions I had initially posed about schoolgirls' perceptions of education and development. On another level, however, the changed design not only enabled to me to more adequately address my questions, it forced me to squarely confront, through the research process itself, two important insights of the research. First, the ways in which the use of space in the Kajiado Rift conspires with other contextual forces to shape social arrangements, and conversely, the way social relations, and the identities they create, help to maintain and reify the spatial configurations, socio-cultural lifeways, and political economic realities for the members of the Maasai communities in this study. Secondly, as the result of the changed design, I was able to more intimately understand the challenges, contradictions, and possibilities the schoolgirl category produces for the girls and young women who inhabit it.

#### *A. Meeting at (the) Crossroads*

We waited for my first meeting with Ole Simel at the Nakumat Crossroads shopping mall in Karen in the open-air food court amid tourists and expats drinking Java House coffee and eating burritos with real salsa laced with fresh cilantro. David and I had traveled together that morning from Lood-ariak, first braving the cold, blustery ascent up the escarpment through the break in the Ngong Hills at Oloonana in the back of the goat-truck, then warmed up with hot chai at The Unique for 10 Ksh a cup in Kiserian, and then two *matatu* rides later we rested from the sun under umbrellas drinking Cokes the African way, through straws.<sup>183</sup> Joseph ole Simel, MPIDO's executive director, was, predictably, late.

MPIDO's main office is about 20 kilometers east down Langata road, so we decided to meet at Crossroads and then after, David and I would catch a ride back to Kiserian with Ole Simel on his way to the organization's field office and resource center down in the Rift in a wind-battered wide spot in the road called Oltepesi.<sup>184</sup> In studying my field notes, it seems as if most of my days were spent deliberating logistics—how to get from point A to point B and back again. Maria and I learned quickly to always have what she called a “Plan B” which we discussed before hand or elaborated on the fly. My notions of productivity as it is linked to the use of time were tested again and again, as back-up transportation plans also corresponded with back-up research activities. For example, if Ole Simel was not able to make the meeting arranged for this day, then plan B would kick in, and I would do any number of things like email at the cyber café, or take the *matatu* back to Ngong to visit the district education office, or go all the way back to Kiserian to shop at cheaper

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<sup>183</sup> It is at least the Kenyan, Ethiopian, Tanzanian, and Zanzibarian way; I can only assume a similar practice exists all over the continent. In the places I have been, glass bottles are reused/recapped repeatedly so what started as a smooth lip around the mouth of the bottle ends up making a chipped and uncomfortable sip, so straws are always offered.

<sup>184</sup> As it turned out, one MPIDO driver took Ole Simel to his meeting in town and another driver took John and me to Oloseos because we had already missed the evening goat truck back to Lood-ariak.

markets and stake my place in the pick-up for the return to Lood-ariak, or all three, depending on how much time I actually had, what my priorities were, and so on. I learned to use my time—and realized how quickly one can get things done—by following David’s lead and my assistants’ suggestions; after about four weeks, I learned what was possible once I adapted to the rhythms of movement, time, and work and the human connections necessary to make any of this possible.

On this day, our trip had thus far gone as planned. I had arranged to meet with Ole Simel and David to discuss my study (specifically the logistics of transportation, but also hiring an assistant, working with a translator) and to engage their expertise around the content and the process of my research. I happily agreed to meet at Nakumat because I wanted to look into renting DVDs in order to try to show the David’s kids some movies on my laptop. I learned that they had never seen a movie of any kind in any context, so it seemed fitting somehow that I would share a movie with them using my laptop fully charged in Nairobi because neither my nor David’s solar panels had enough power to adequately charge the computer.<sup>185</sup>

Meeting at Crossroads also gave me another opportunity to observe this very particular space in suburban Nairobi. Nakumat has become iconic of the recent expansion in the Kenya’s economy (pre-December 2007) and the increasing ubiquity of (western) material culture in the sub- and urban scene. Over the course of my stay in Kenya, I developed a love-hate relationship with the retail store. On the one hand, as a westerner, the place felt familiar and convenient in its shiny vastness, like Wal-mart or Target in terms of the array of merchandise available, from 4-person tents, to Lipton Noodles with Alfredo Sauce, to Toblerone, to Chinese eggplant, to L’Oreal anti-wrinkle night cream, and Java House coffee, like a Kenyan Starbucks, right outside. Unlike

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<sup>185</sup> Renting DVDs was too expensive, and eventually I learned that the Otienos had a large DVD library, so I periodically borrowed videos from them and showed them on the laptop in Lood-ariak when the computer was adequately charged. The Kilusu kids were particularly fond of Dreamworks’ animated “Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas.”

most retail outlets in smaller towns in Kenya but also in Nairobi too, Nakumat accepts credit cards. When I needed to buy sleeping mats for my assistant and me that I had not budgeted for because I had not planned to bed down at night on the floors of teacher's rooms, it was nice to do so with my Visa card instead of using cash already allocated for other items. But on the other hand I felt uncomfortably out of place, in this place that was most ostensibly like my home than many others I spent time in. Unlike Wal-mart in America however, in Kenya, Nakumat's palatial outlets are the playground of the rich and the up-and-coming, which usually means it is full of expatriates, white Kenyans, tourists (who are generally white), and upper middle class-wealthy Kenyans, purchasing Euro-American style goods at Euro-American style prices and paying with Visa cards emblazoned with "Nakumat" and its signature African elephant symbol. In the aftermath of the post-election violence in late December 2008, KISS FM<sup>186</sup> listeners were exhorted by DJs: "you know you will spend 10,000 Ksh in Nakumat tonight on your way home from the office—please add a bag of *unga* or a vat a cooking oil to leave at the door—the Red Cross is collecting for victims of the violence!" The middle class had arrived, and it comes as no surprise to me that the coming-out party would be in Nakumat, hosted by the Red Cross.

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<sup>186</sup> An urban Nairobi radio station that specializes in American pop music, particularly hip-hop, call-in shows for relationship advice, and the like. As one website describes the station, "KISS is a new hits format station, playing the latest International Urban and Kenyan hits 24 hours a day. The station's music, presenters and programming target 18 to 35 year olds and those who want to "feel" young. This station feel of KISS FM is friendly, fresh and local. Kiss Presenters are down to earth people who talk "local" and focus on what happening in and around Nairobi – Kenya's capital" ([http://www.nairobist.com/mwiki/index.php?title=Kiss\\_FM](http://www.nairobist.com/mwiki/index.php?title=Kiss_FM)). It was also the clearinghouse for liberal rhetoric in the wake of the violence. This is in contrast to the "vernacular" radio stations broadcasting in mother tongues that allegedly used radical political rhetoric. Vernacular stations have been accused of inciting 'inter-ethnic' violence that has been likened to the use of the radio by powerful Hutu to incite genocide in Rwanda.

The first time Maria and I came to Nakumat we sat in the same open air food court, and she pointed to the decorative fountain forcing recycled water 5 feet into the air in the parking lot in front of us and asked me, “so, is this a swimming pool?”

In an instant, my sight adjusted, and I could see the scene from her point of view. Her question revealed less about her ignorance of ‘city-things’ and more about my narrow assumptions regarding the common-place-ness of Nakumat and the experiences it engenders. My familiarity with the feel of the place occluded the fact that Maria (or Alice) would not feel the same way in Nakumat. I regretted sending her into the store with a list of provisions for our stay at Embolei without an orientation once that I knew she had never been inside such a place. I regretted assuming that she would already know what to do. She explained that although she had traveled to Nairobi before and had seen the various Nakumats as she passed from her seat on the bus, she had never been this close to one. But this conversation was held only *after* she had accomplished the tasks I had given her without saying a word to me about her misgivings.<sup>187</sup> When I explained that the fountain was not a swimming pool but a decoration, her response made perfect sense. She wondered how it could be that in the scattered Maasai communities in the Rift that we had left maybe 50 kilometers behind, water is so scarce that people and livestock walk for miles to find it, but people in Karen can make this resource-as-commodity into a something nice to look at? When I pointed out that the tea she was sipping cost a whopping 120 Ksh (twelve times more than the same tea in Kiserian and about \$1.60, around the same one might spend for a cup in Blacksburg), I thought she would fall out of her chair.

*B. A crossroads of contradictions*

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<sup>187</sup> Indicative of Maria’s strong personality and sense of self-confidence.



It is in this sense of political, economic, and social dissonance in which Crossroads is exactly what its name implies. The round-about outside of the Nakumat and adjacent shops will spin you out in four directions: south down Ngong Road out of the city toward the escarpment, Lood-ariak, and beyond; or north directly in to Nairobi's central business district (CBD) complete with skyscrapers and "The Dark Knight" on the big screen; or east down Langata road into the heart of Karen and its bucolic estates,<sup>188</sup> or west, toward Dagoretti and eventually, the road to Narok Town and the escarpment again.

At the crossroads, like most African urban scenes, luxury and austerity migrate into one stunning mix whose logics are embedded in the everyday realities of the place. After months of crossing the threshold of this round-about going between Lood-ariak and Runda by whirling *matatu*, I never knew, for example, that there is a lovely little expatriate restaurant nestled in the dense trees not far from the road until I had lunch there with Norwegian anthropologist and Maasai scholar Aud Talle and her husband. Such a place makes sense, given that Karen is home to some relatively wealthy people and relatively wealthy visitors who enjoy *chevré et crudités* under leafy trees while window shopping Maasai beaded jewelry selling for more than most Maasai women will earn in one year. At the same time, as a microcosm of the whole, in the same few hundred yards one can also buy maize roasted over charcoal by a one-armed man along the dusty littered thoroughfare beside the pitted tarmac road and board a *matatu* for 10 Ksh. The roundabout, in this way, marks a

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<sup>188</sup> Karen Blixen's (Isak Dinesen) former property, 22 kilometers southwest of Nairobi's city center and bordering the Ngong Forest, is now a suburb of Nairobi called "Karen," named after Karen Melchoir, Blixen's cousin, whose father owned the Karen Coffee Company. This is the place of rolling estates, horse farms, the Ngong Racecourse, Great Danes, and country clubs. Historically home to the "KCs" ('Kenya Cowboys,' descendants of the original European settlers), but since Independence this leafy suburb has been largely populated by the black Kenyan elite. Karen is thus generally considered an enviable address, although there is are also pockets of dense poverty in Karen, like the slum that developed along side Runda, Karen depends on poor labor to operate (Wrong 2009).

space on the borderland; just a few kilometers further south and the sub-urban city scenes begin to dissipate. They are repeated to a degree in the peri-urban towns of Ngong and Kiserian, but Crossroads is the last stop on Ngong road for credit card purchases and French cheese.

*C. The lay of the case: Kajiado from the Kaputei Plains and the Ngong highlands to the Great Rift*

These contradictions and jarring juxtapositions are fundamental characteristics of the development zone; similar microcosms can be found all over Kenya. While they are ubiquitous, for the purposes of this study most of the locations I discuss (with the exception of Runda), are all marked by their relative relationships with the areas of Maasailand in Kajiado district and the striking contrasts in human geographies, ecologies, and economies that characterize these relations. The area carved out by the Anglo-Maasai agreements in the early twentieth century and called the Maasai Reserve is now demarcated by four administrative districts in southern Rift Valley Province: Trans Mara, Narok North and South, Kajiado, and Loitokitok.

Rift Valley Province (RVP) has the largest population of Kenya's seven provinces, estimated at 6,987,036 in the 1999 Census (CBS/GOK).<sup>189</sup> In a study of the spatial distribution of poverty at the local (sub-location) level, Ndeng'e et al. (2003) estimate that 2.7 million people in the rural areas and 450,000 in the urban areas of RVP are poor.<sup>190</sup> Kajiado district covers an area of 21,105 km<sup>2</sup>, that is 11% of the RVP and 3.5% of the total area of Kenya. The population of Kajiado

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<sup>189</sup> The last census in Kenya was in 1999, and the next is in preparation now for 2009. Perhaps it goes without saying, but census data must be taken with a grain of salt. Even in more "legible" contexts like the United States, census data can only be so accurate. I can imagine census teams canvassing my case study area; but it is hard to imagine the collection of accurate results. Anyone who has been to Kibera, or other densely populated urban communities can also imagine the impossibility of accuracy. I use the numbers here to give the reader an idea of the relative populations, poverty rates, densities and so on in order to 'thicken' the description.

<sup>190</sup> Using these figures, we can say that 2.2% of Rift Valley residents are poor.

is approximately 421,336, or 6% of the total population of the province (KD Long Rains Assessment 2008).<sup>191</sup> The district is topographically and economically diverse within its boundaries, as are the divisions within the district (Ole Katampoi et al.1990), although Ndeng'e et al. (2003) found that nearly half, forty four percent, of the adults in Kajiado fall below the rural poverty line.

My study area is in Ngong division, Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL), and spatially spread out within this location, are the ten sub-locations where each of the ten primary schools is located [See Figure 9]. Ngong division is the northern most division of the district (closest to Nairobi) and the least poor division in the district, with a poverty incidence of 34%. However, among Ngong division's nine locations (among them KCL), rural poverty rates range from 11% to 64% (Ndeng'e et al. 2003). The spatial distribution of poverty in Ngong division can practically be mapped topographically, with the spine of the escarpment marking the less poor, heterogeneous, densely populated, more temperate, peri-urban highland plains from the more poor, homogeneous, sparsely populated, arid and semi-arid areas in the Great Rift Valley. To illustrate these ecological and economic differences, I want to describe one site that I spent a good deal of time in with part of David's extended family who lives in Oloseos, just a few kilometers south of Kiserian in the Ngong Hills, in Keekonyokie North Location. Along the Runda to Lood-ariak continuum that I delineated in the Introduction, I came to think of Babu and Shosho's place as somewhere *in between* the Hannah-Montana-ipod-world of Runda and the dung-house-goat-herder-hyena world of Lood-ariak.

#### *D. From Oloseos to Lood-ariak: mapping the places of the case*

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<sup>191</sup> Kajiado district originally included what was known as Loitokitok division including Amboseli National Park, but that area was carved into Loitokitok district in 2007. Population of the new division is estimated at 129,443 (KD Long Rains Assessment 2008).

Joseph and Ruth Purkei (whom I called Babu and Shosho for 'grandfather and grandmother') live in a neat and lively compound behind an enormous, old boxwood hedge in Oloseos right on the Magadi Road in the shadow of the Ngong Hills. Their house has several bedrooms, and spacious sitting room with comfortable couches, an indoor toilet, electricity, and a propane stove. In the evenings we gathered in the sitting room to eat vegetables and rice (and

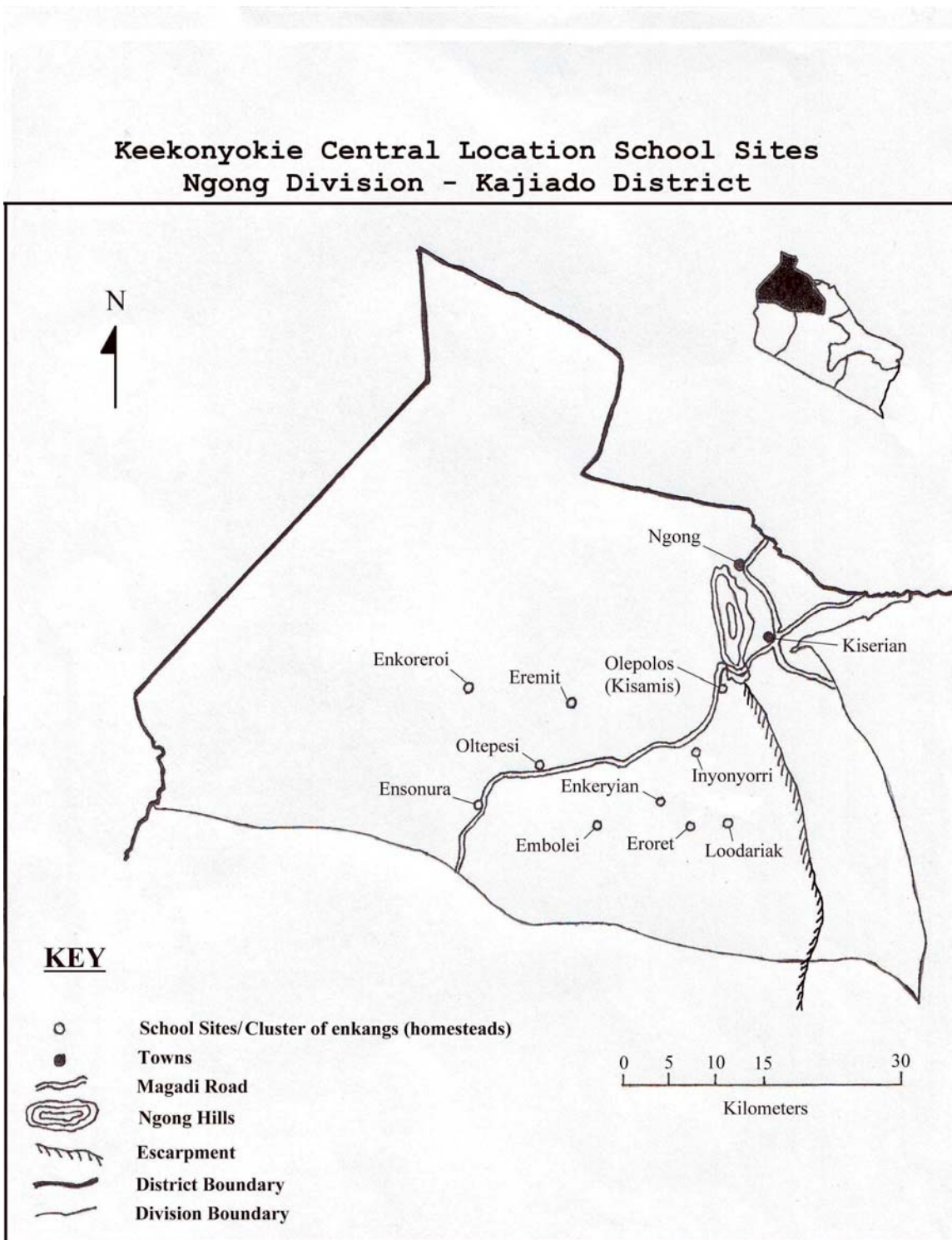


FIGURE 9

Figure 9. Map of Keekonyokie Central Location School Sites Ngong Division/Kajiado District.

sometimes with beef) and watch the local news on KTN.<sup>192</sup> Although Babu is Maasai and grew up as a pastoralist not far from where they live now, his wife is Kikuyu, and she grew up as a farmer. In Babu's retirement from the Presbyterian Church, they live as small scale farmers and keep a large *shamba* (garden, small farm), Friesian dairy cows for milking, about 40 chickens for eggs and occasionally, meat.<sup>193</sup> Shosho is retired too from marketing vegetable and eggs in Kiserian and in a roadside stall just outside the compound. Their *shamba* is impressive. Here they grow multiple varieties of mango, avocado, passion, banana and other fruits as well as maize, napier grass, and various vegetables like tomatoes, onions, and eggplant. My favorite meal at their house was by far breakfast, which always meant fresh eggs, sliced avocado straight from the tree, and warm fresh milk with sugar.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> I often "overnighted" in Oloseos when I could not get transport back to Lood-ariak because I missed the pick-up *matatu* in Kiserian. For example, if MPDIO picked me and Alice up in one of the interior schools late in the afternoon, it was easier and cheaper for them to drop us off in at Shosho's as they passed by rather than taking the time and fuel to drive us off-road to Lood-ariak. The next morning, either MPIDO would pick us up again or we would catch a *matatu* to Kiserian, wait and work the day, and go back to Lood-ariak with the "goat truck" in the evening. One evening I arrived to find Babu, Shosho, one of their sons and his three girls laughing hysterically at an old VHS copy of "City Lights" with Charlie Chaplin.

<sup>193</sup> Friesian refers to indigenous taurine European black and white cattle, which are related to Holstein, although Holstein refers to animals traced to North American bloodlines. Friesians are bred to produce large quantities of "thin" milk and require temperate conditions to survive, as compared to indigenous and hybridized lowland cattle like the original 'Maasai cattle,' *engikishu*, or the East African taurine/Zebu hybrids (Boran, Sahiwal) which are hearty in arid zones and are found in Keekonyokie Central location. According to David ole Kilusu, the 'very local Maasai cows' can still be found in Magadi division and in other parts of the Narok district. These cows produce far less milk but it is "more thick with cream" than the European dairy stock. Bebe et al. (2003) found that cattle-keeping households in the Kenyan highlands preferred to keep Friesian and Ayrshire for producing milk for cash income and East African Zebu hybrids and Jersey breeds for family milk consumption. This practice has limited efficacy in the lowlands, however, as the taurine cattle cannot survive, thus making a living raising cattle for marketing milk is not viable. Maasai prefer hybrid cattle that produce fewer quantities but better quality of milk as a dietary staple.

<sup>194</sup> I had fresh milk directly from the cow every day I was in Lood-ariak as well. It took me awhile to figure out that each tasted very different, and why. Babu and Shosho raise European-derived taurine stock. Their cows eat grass, nappa grass that they grew and cut for the cows, and dairy

Situated at around 2,500 meters in the hills along the spine of the Mau Escarpment, Oloseos is part of the catchment area for the Athi River known as the Kaputei Plains. Temperate climate, proximity to Nairobi, and infrastructure like paved roads mark the Plains as a high and medium potential area and has led to land sales and high immigration rates, while local residents (Maasai) are pushed further south into more marginal areas of the district. I am most familiar with the routes leaving Nairobi either along Ngong Road through Karen (and past Crossroads), then Ngong Town, to Kiserian or leaving via Langata Road through the intensely congested Ongata Rongai corridor to Kiserian, but most of the Plains are littered with urban centers of various sizes, including Isinya, and Kajiado Town, the seat of district level government. Ngong is the most densely populated division in the district with 50 individuals per km<sup>2</sup> (KFSSG 2006), and most of this density is concentrated on the highland plains. Not surprisingly, 80% of the marketing and trading centers in the district are located in the northern Ngong division highlands (KFSSG 2006), South of Oloseos in the Rift, Magadi division is the least populated area of the district with 9.2 individuals per km<sup>2</sup> (KFSSG 2006), and has the highest poverty rate of 57% (Ndeng'e et al. 2003). Keekonyokie Central Location, where my home base in Lood-ariak and the 10 schools in my study are located, is directly between this upland urban space, and the extreme lowland sparsely populated space, although as a medium lowland zone, it is more like Magadi division its highland neighbors.

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meal. By contrast, David and Agnes raised lowland Zebu cattle called Sahiwal, a stock hybridized with local 'Maasai' stock. Whereas Babu and Shosho's cows were pastured, David and Agnes' cows were grazed daily by the shepherds they hired to herd the animals. The difference in cattle variety and food made the milk itself different. Two spoonfuls of sugar aside, Babu and Shosho's milk tasted more familiar to me, and therefore I tended to prefer it. In Lood-ariak milk and milk products (sour milk and ghee) were the best source of protein available short of dried beans. I asked around out of curiosity, but every time I mentioned drinking, eating, or preparing blood or bleeding cattle, young people, even teachers, curled their lips and said things like, "the old people eat that, maybe." In my observation, families rarely ate meat except on special occasions.

From Shosho's house following the Magadi Road down the escarpment for approximately 20 kilometers to the turn off on the *murrām* (gravel-hard-pack) road leading another 20 or so kilometers west to Lood-ariak, the elevation drops to around 600 meters; agricultural potential decreases significantly at this altitude, as does rainfall. Settlement is sparse throughout the southern Rift Valley Province. Traditional Maasai houses are low, dung-brown and blend into the landscape of scrappy thorn trees and dense shrubs, and with only 9.2 people per km<sup>2</sup>, it is easy to drive (or walk) for miles without the sense that a soul is around.<sup>195</sup> The elevation at Lake Magadi south of Lood-ariak is a mere 500 meters, and the landscape practically lunar in its arid, salty strangeness.

The district has historically had a bimodal rainfall pattern with short rains from October to December, and long rains from March to May. I lived in Lood-ariak from late August 2007 to late March 2009 and in that time, it only rained significantly (for several hours) *twice*. In each instance I expected to wake up and find my house afloat like the Arc; in each instance, the land was dry as bone within eight hours. Essentially, the short rains did not fall that year. The view of the Rift from the back of the goat truck as one descends the long grade of the escarpment is always breathtaking, but sometimes we would round the Laiser Hill at Olonanna to see enormous rain cloud forming over the valley. More often than not, we watched them drop rain but knew it would evaporate in the hot, dry air before it ever reached the ground.

*E. Mapping local assets: MPIDO's role in the research*

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<sup>195</sup> Every plant form has a thorn it seems. One bush is locally called the “wait-a-bit” because the shape of the thorn creates a tough hook that once snagged, one cannot continue walking without losing chunks of his or her skin. The first time I walked outside of the fence around David's compound wearing flip-flops, I stepped on a blade of dried grass (referred to by arid land management technicians as “standing hay form”—the driest form of the grass' life cycle and evidence of severe drought) that pierced both the shoe sole and my skin.



The web of relations that form Maasai families and kinship structures can be intimidating and confusing for outsiders. Even though my Maasai friends and colleagues are careful to use phrases like “step-brother” and “real mom” to clarify, these phrases have little salience in Maasai understanding of families. I came to know Babu and Shosho through David who is related to them through his half-sister Joy, who is married to their son, Peter. It is also through David that I came to know MPIDO and the organization’s executive director, Joseph ole Simel.

According to Daly (2007), qualitative methodologies are often inductive and emergent. While I agree, I would also argue that effectively using qualitative methodologies requires more than a recognition of the need to be flexible and comfortable with ambiguity. I had been to Kenya on four separate occasions prior to the research trip for this study.<sup>196</sup> As I considered the parameters of the study, even before returning to Kenya, it was clear to me that conducting research must be a matter of relations and relationships within their social contexts that foster certain kinds of agency for the researcher and the researched. Clearly, I will always be an outsider in Kenya. However, I was able to destabilize the hold that the category “outsider” can have by working within relations (geopolitical, economic, racial, gender and generational) and forming relationships that helped me to move more adroitly among and between the lines that divide the in from the out, the observer

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<sup>196</sup> My first visit was in 1999 when I was evacuated as a Peace Corps volunteer, along the American mission, from Ethiopia. We held our ‘close of service’ debriefing for two weeks at the Peace Corps permanent training facility in Naivasha, Kenya; after being decommissioned, I spent some time as a tourist in Kenya, Zanzibar and Pemba. My second trip was as part of a teaching team from Virginia Tech’s Residential Leadership Community (formerly part of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia Tech); we spent time in service-learning immersion projects in western Kenya (Siaya district, Nyanza province) and were tourists in Nairobi and the Masai Mara Game Reserve. My third and fourth trips were both for 5 weeks as a volunteer for a small NGO that works in the Meguwarra and Losho sub-locations, Siana Group Ranch in Narok district bordering the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. The NGO supports projects related to Maasai girls’ education; it was through these trips that I developed friendships with several Maasai and their families and became curious about gender, education, and development in Maasai areas. I had actually only visited Kajiado district and Lood-ariak for a few days in 2004 before I returned in 2007 to conduct the research.

from the participant, the knower from the learner. The possibility of flexible relationships was already embedded in my relationship to David (forged by my friendship with his half sister, Leah, whom I knew in the Narok years before I ever thought about graduate school or research in Kajiado). David was my entrée to MPIDO, and with MPIDO's support, many doors were opened to me in the Kajiado Rift, particularly in Keekonyokie Central Location, which was their area of operations.

When Ole Simel finally arrived for our meeting at the food court that day in Karen, I got my first glimpse at the long hours and weeks he devotes to his organization's efforts to improve the lives of Maasai people in Kenya, and particularly in Kajiado district.<sup>197</sup> It was already late in the day, around 4:00 p.m., and after apologizing for being late he explained that he would have to rush off for another meeting in Nairobi's CBD, then another, after that, back in the Karen office. I knew that we would meet for at least an hour or more, and that after the subsequent meetings that he still had more than an hour commute home, and that at 5 a.m. a new day would start with that same hour commute again back up the escarpment and so on.<sup>198</sup> Similarly, David sometimes made the

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<sup>197</sup> Within the terms of respectful address in Maasai culture, the modifier "ole," which means "son of," is used to make deferential reference to a revered elder. Someone I would address as 'ole' I would also physically greet by slightly lowering my head in deference. For reasons I cannot quite identify, I have always called Joseph "ole Simel" although we are age-mates, and therefore, I am not obligated to defer to him in these symbolic ways. Indeed, I might be a couple of years older than he is, and my husband is older than the both of us. David, whom I never call Ole Kilusu, is around 48 and, I believe maybe 10 years older than Joseph. Perhaps it's Ole Simel's intimidating demeanor?

<sup>198</sup> I am compelled to clarify that the commute I speak of is not the same as driving on an American interstate highway from one town to the next. Between Karen and Oltepesi, the paved Magadi road is narrow and precipitous in places, crumbling from the edges inward, pocked with potholes, and shared with enormous five-axel lorries carrying overloads up and down the escarpment. Traveling at 55 mph, it is easy to feel like the vehicle is rocketing through space across the rough surface while ricocheting from shoulder to shoulder dodging holes, goats, and the like. But the organ-crushing, dust-laden part of the journey does not begin until the driver exits the tarmac for the *murrām* (rock, gravel, and hard-pack) road, which often nothing more than the rocky skeleton of a dry stream bed or sun-baked rutted dirt. To say that the commute is exhausting is to fall dreadfully short of capturing the physical intensity of the experience, even for locals who argue that

trek from Lood-ariak to Karen daily, managing to keep one foot in what he likes to call his “modified traditional” home and the other “in town.” Because of this dedication and the wide-ranging respect that man each commanded in the Rift and beyond, I came to call both them the “Road Scholars,” as they both spent such large portions of their days on the road between town and *enkutoto* (the local region, the area where resources are shared by people), in political discussions and development forums and generally ‘at work’ at all times.

Spending time with the ‘road scholars’ actually alerted me to one of the earliest lessons I learned doing research in rural Maasailand using local transportation: the real and opportunity costs of time and travel. Given the way the ‘goat trucks,’ operated, the elements of time and cost occupied more daily logistical effort than I had anticipated. In the Lood-ariak sublocation, for example, two pick-ups left the area at roughly the same time, between 5:30-6 a.m. Saitaga’s vehicle waited at “the center” near Lood-ariak Primary School for passengers, while Parsoi’s vehicle stopped directly in front of David’s place. Both vehicles drove directly to Kiserian, stopping for passengers (humans and livestock) along the way, arriving at the slaughterhouse around 7:30 a.m. The vehicle then waited in Kiserian all day at “the stage” and departed again back to Lood-ariak around 5 p.m. arriving just as the sun started to set around 7 p.m. When Maria or Alice and I traveled to anywhere outside of Kiserian or Lood-ariak, we did so by catching a ‘lift’ with MPIDO in Kiserian. Because neither of the ‘goat-trucks’ traveled further south along the Magadi Road than the turn off for the *murram* road leading to Lood-ariak and beyond, in order to travel, for example, a relatively short distance (20 kilometers) to Oltepesi, we had to first travel from Lood-ariak to Kiserian, wait for two to three hours, meet MPIDO, and then turn around and travel back down the escarpment, past the turn off to Lood-ariak and beyond to our final destination: a total distance

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they are “used to it.” Many locals expressed the desire for better infrastructure and assured me that the situation they had long endured was exacerbated by heavy rains.

traveled of around 80 kilometers, or four times the distance as the crow flies [See Figure 10].

Other sub-locations in the Rift along the Magadi road had similar systems. These transportation modes and routes were designed to move people, goods, and livestock back and forth to Kiserian (to the vegetable market, the slaughterhouse and livestock market, the place to catch a *matatu* to Ngong or Nairobi, among other marketing activities) and not necessarily anywhere else without paying a hefty fee.

On several occasions David and I discussed the high cost of his commute, both in terms of money and time.<sup>199</sup> Agnes, David's wife, did what she could to avoid inevitable trips to Kiserian because she was frustrated with the discomfort, inconvenience, cost, and to some degree, danger, of travel in pick-up *matatus*. They had both determined, however, that the recurring cost of vehicle upkeep overshadowed the relative comfort and autonomy of owning their own vehicle (given the money they spent to commute could cover the purchase of a vehicle, but not its fuel or maintenance), so they had ruled that possibility out and made do with the means available, as everyone did. In general, most people expressed a certain disgruntled fatalism about the cost of travel and shrugged it off with "we have no otherwise." Ultimately, we were all grateful that the goat trucks were there at all.

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<sup>199</sup> Ole Parsoi and the other drivers from the study area charged 100 Ksh/person one way from Lood-ariak, and all points in between, to Kiserian (and *vice versa*). They haul goat or sheep for 50 Ksh/head. Cattle were not transported in the goat trucks. (In all of my time in Kenya I never saw cattle transported by vehicle.) One roundtrip cost 200 Ksh, or (at today's exchange rate approximately 76 Ksh/1 USD) \$2.57. If I made this trip with Alice or Maria, my costs doubled to over \$5. If we traveled 3 times in a week, I would spend \$15 on travel alone. Someone like David might make this trip 3 times per week, spending a little over \$7 per week. I don't know how much David earns, but I know his wife earns about \$200/month, or \$2400 per year. If David uses approximately \$30/week for travel, that is well over \$1000 in transportation in one year.

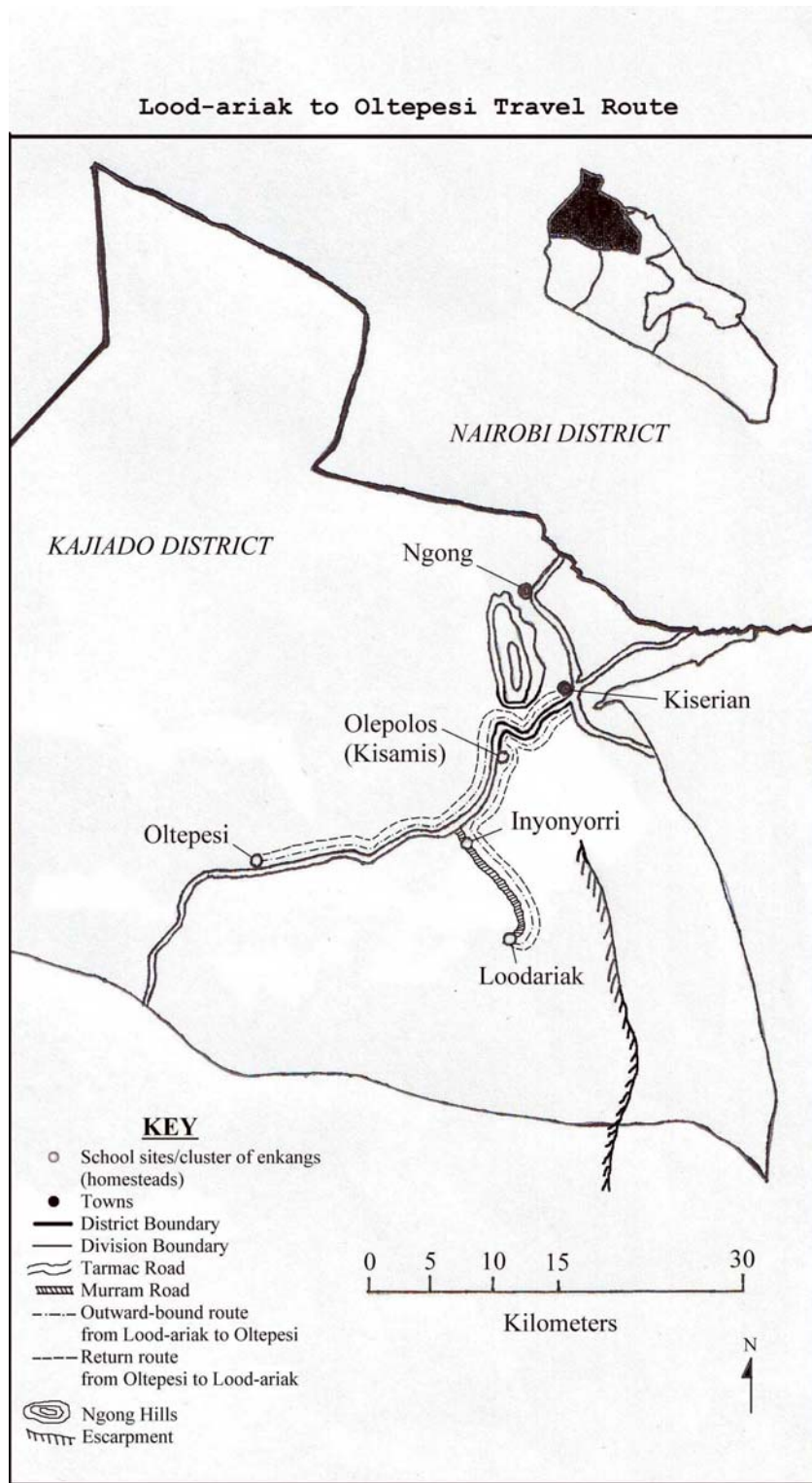


FIGURE 10

Figure 10. Map of Lood-ariak to Oltepesi Travel Route.

My time and productivity then, like anyone's traveling beside me, were defined by our access to, and use of, transportation, and this transportation was never under our control.<sup>200</sup> In fact, without MPIDO's support, the study would not have been conceivable without a private vehicle given the exigencies of spatiality in the southern Rift. Watching local professionals (school teachers, development workers) as well as herdsmen and women, deal with the inevitable frustrations of such a scenario offered significant insight into the art of patience and how interdependent connections among people and systems are necessary for making it through the day. This rural Kenyan pattern of thinking and being, particularly in areas like the ASALs where transportation access and human habitation are dramatically dispersed, is markedly counter to the relative freewheeling autonomy of the everyday American accustomed to the independence required by modern life and afforded to those with personal vehicles.<sup>201</sup> Moving with the flow of these rhythms forced my own reckoning of the socio-cultural and political structures that configure localities and the power of place and space in the shaping of social identities.

Consequently, more profoundly than the cost of travel (in conventional terms—time, opportunity, and actual money), being immersed in this orchestrated calculus of movement helped me to more clearly understand, from a local point of view, how concepts of space help to create, shape, and maintain social relations. More than this, I was able to see how *the local* is

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<sup>200</sup> My sense of self was also implicated in the transportation situation. As I joked with my neighbors and others familiar with the 'goat-truck' system, I called it the goat truck precisely because of the dehumanizing effect of the experience. People laughed at the idea, and would often say things like "as an American you are not used to this!" I was often struck by these comments. There is a class of Kenyans—indeed, Maasai—who would likewise feel dehumanized by the pick-up matatu, as their subjectivities have, like mine, been honed in a crucible of capitalist ethics in which as consumers we feel we can demand our rights or change the system. I quickly learned that, like my neighbors, I had "no otherwise" and my own "American" sense of entitlement receded.

<sup>201</sup> Not just Americans, obviously, but also Kenyans who could afford to buy and maintain their own vehicles.

actually produced by the relational and contextual facets of movement across space and scale (Appadurai 1991). I am referring here to the ways my neighbors and I took into account our movement(s) relative to, and in the context of, a variety of obvious and less obvious networks of relation. For examples, we accounted for the condition of the roads as part of the recognition of geographic terrain and the obstacles and opportunities therein; we calculated distance based on various modes of travel—for example, walking versus travel by goat truck versus travel by private vehicle; we calculated time with respect to distance and modes of transport, actual costs of movement relative to need, the opportunity costs of being in one place as opposed to another; we understood the cultural conceptions of movement—who can legitimately be in one space or another—and so on. Social relations are forged in these daily, taken-for-granted negotiations as people move through the day. I am calling this constellation of actions (and their meanings) embedded in human reckonings and negotiations of space, “spatiality,” in reference to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s (1991) concept of “locality”—the “socialization of time and space” (178-179). Remarkably, although he does not refer to Williams (1961), Appadurai (1991) asserts that “locality is a structure of feeling,” and this is the sense I want to convey as well, although I also want to point to its converse—the feeling of structures in daily life (181).

Spatiality, then, in this usage, is more than space alone; the concept attempts to account for the fact that relationships are produced through these complex flows of people, goods, ideas, aspirations, and anxieties. In this sense movement and action, create space and at the same time, space, and our negotiations of it (as well as place and our relationship to it), contributes to our engagement in certain actions. Moreover, as spatialities congeal social relations, they also help to structure identities within those relations. In turn, existing identities help to shape the spatialities that structure daily life. Appadurai’s argument that “without reliably local subjects, the construction of a local terrain of habitation, production, and moral security would have no interests

attached to it,” helps to explain why my neighbors on the goat truck did not seem to be interested in changing the circumstances of movement (riding horses or bikes, pooling monies to fund more goat trucks with varied schedules, searching for investors, etc.). Part of local subjectivity is framed by and in the realities of movement in the Kajiado Rift. This subjectification is more than a theoretical observation. As I discuss later in this chapter, at least two of the young women we interviewed to be my assistant and translator, were not “local enough” to be hired, although one of them lived in Lood-ariak.<sup>202</sup>

These conceptual insights come as the result of certain practices. For example, riding in the goat truck as opposed to driving my own vehicle alone, required me to think and be differently. Riding in the goat truck was, for me, an effect of my budget—I could not afford to rent or buy a personal vehicle. Had I been able to afford a personal vehicle, driving my own vehicle would have likely reinforced (and even reified) my sense of my own entitlement to independence and autonomy (whether this is actually true or not). For my own experience as a researcher and cultural outsider, riding in the goat truck instead was crucial for my learning. In the process of learning to negotiate space, time, and place according to local rules and under the tutelage of local guides, I gained some insight into the production and maintenance of local identities.

As a concrete example of how spatiality works, in concert with other contextual forces, to create and maintain identities, consider the local institution of patrilocal marriage patterns.<sup>203</sup> When a Lood-ariak girl is married and moves to her husband’s family’s homestead, for example, on the western border of the district boundary with Narok, she moves approximately 35-45

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<sup>202</sup> Susan is mentioned, but her story is not elaborated in the dissertation. Bebe’s, on the other hand, is given attention.

<sup>203</sup> Patrilocality refers to the social pattern of women/wives leaving their natal home and moving upon marriage to live with or near their new husbands’ parents. The opposite is matrilocality in which the husband makes his new home with his wife’s birth family.



kilometers (22-29 miles) away, as the crow flies. According to the local calculus of space, her new home is a great distance from her childhood home; she has little reason to think that she will see her natal family very often, and *vice versa*. In conventional Maasai discourse (and among members of most patrilocal societies) daughters (because of their potential as wives) are defined as people who leave their birth families and form new attachments, as well as solidify old ones (between the men who arranged the marriage, for example) elsewhere. Many of the girls we interviewed had older sisters who they had never met because they had been married “far away.” In some instances, when my assistant and I could determine where the sister had moved, the place was no more than 30 kilometers away. Nonetheless, these older sisters were effectively strangers to their younger sisters.

As I discuss in more detail in chapter 5, according to the girls, a formally educated woman who becomes a wife has more ways to negotiate the actual and symbolic distance of being “far away” from her parents, siblings, and natal community. They insisted, as high school graduates, they will be able to “help” their natal families with housing, food, and so on, because they will earn their own money. Illiterate women, who may earn very little money selling beaded jewelry or nothing at all, do not have the power, they asserted, to divert resources to their natal home or to use their own resources to travel to visit her parents or siblings. In these most common instances, they said, the illiterate wife can only do what her husband will allow her to do.<sup>204</sup>

Moreover, given this “socialization of space and time,” maneuvering in the development zone is characterized by the simultaneous and contradictory expectations that create opportunities and constraints. For example, the development discourse frames the completion of primary

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<sup>204</sup> As I also note in chapter 5, it is beyond the scope of this study to corroborate these perceptions. I can say that these perceptions are widespread, and not just among schoolgirls but also among married women, literate and not.

school, at the very least, as an imperative of progress. In areas like Keekonyokie Central Location, and even more extremely in other parts of the arid and semi-arid lands like northeastern Kenya, many children, and particularly girls, enter school late or not at all in part because the few schools available to them are geographically dispersed and they have no means, other than walking, of getting there.<sup>205</sup> In this example, the opportunity itself (a school to attend, the promise of education) is embedded in the constraint (the school itself is not an option for those children whose families' cannot bear the cost or who hold the child home until s/he is 'ready' to walk with the older children.

While the experience of geographies of movement and the social relations that form as a result of movement patterns (and *vice versa*) was intensified in some ways in the rural areas given the relative lack of means and the spatial dispersion of homesteads and consolidated population centers, productions of urban identities could also be mapped to spatial configurations in conjunction with other socio-cultural and political economic structures like class, ethnicity, or religion. I also spent more than one morning on any weekday exiting a packed minivan *matatu* in the middle of a four-lane deadlocked traffic jam on Haile Selasse Avenue entering Nairobi to join the thousands of people herding into the capital city on foot amidst the lorries and buses bellowing back petrol exhaust and the incessant blaring of car horns.<sup>206</sup> The carjacking incident I describe in the

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<sup>205</sup> In northern Kajiado, predatory wildlife is largely non-existent these days, except for small packs of hyenas, and families are wary to have young children walking to school in the darkness for this reason. In other ASALs, however, like parts of Narok district or southern Kajiado for examples, children and adults must contend with a host of wild animals beyond the hyena like lions, elephants, hippos, and cape buffalo.

<sup>206</sup> One morning I was on a *matatu* from Kiserian coming into town along the Ongata Rongai route, and the vehicle died on Uhuru highway not far from the Stadium. As we all alighted from the vehicle, most passengers started flagging down other on-coming *matatus*, although most were already full. In the confusion, I watched a Maasai man, wrapped in red and black checkered *shuka* (blanket) and carrying an iconic herding staff, get out of the *matatu* and set out in long strides toward the city. I said to a woman standing near me, "perhaps we should just walk?" given that the

introduction to the dissertation also refers to the power of place and space to allow for (or require) certain actions, attitudes, and way of thinking and being.

*F. The Rubber meets the “Road Scholars”: revising the research design*

Once Ole Simel arrived at the Crossroads, we all discussed my research questions, motivations, and study design over roasted chicken and chips (french fries) despite the incessant yodel of *matatu* horns stopping near the roundabout. The whole of my time in Kenya would be punctuated with interactions with Ole Simel and his variety of hard-nosed professionalism and erudite commentary. I explained that most of the literature I had read on girls’ education as a development intervention tended to instrumentalize girls’ needs against larger economic growth imperatives, but very few actually focused on schoolgirls’ own perceptions of education’s role in their lives or what “being developed” might mean to them and for them. I made clear that I support girls’ education, but that I was also troubled by some of the dangers that seemed to accompany efforts to get in, succeed in, and stay in school. I indicated that I wanted to know what Maasai schoolgirls had to say about their own circumstances.

He explained that MPIDO’s concern regarding ‘girl-child education and women empowerment’ had to do with what they and other adults perceived to be the increasing problem of schoolgirl pregnancy and drop out.<sup>207</sup> He wondered if my conversations with girls might shed

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traffic jam in front of us was full of packed *matatus* and buses. She looked at me like I was crazy, so I said, “he is,” and pointed to the man in the near distance gaining ground toward town. She laughed: “Ah, but he is Maasai—he used to walking! It is at least 3 kilometers to town!” At that point I had grown used to the approximately 10 kilometer roundtrip walk from David’s place to the Lood-ariak center and primary school, so suddenly 3 kilometers seemed like a breeze. I gave in to hesitation however, and when the vehicle that died sputtered back to life, I jumped back on and took my chances.

<sup>207</sup> In a interesting preliminary analysis of the figure of the pregnant schoolgirl in African history, Lynn Thomas (2007), links anxieties over schoolgirl pregnancies (as opposed to, for example, the

some light on this concern. He also agreed that any insights my study could render would be useful for MPIDO's continuous efforts to attract funding for its livelihood diversification programs, and specifically for its work to support girls who had the grades to go on the secondary but not the funds and its adult literacy programs angled toward women (but open to anyone).<sup>208</sup>

At first, however, he was skeptical about my personal capacity to do the project. He said things like “these conditions will be very difficult for you,” “the distances for walking are far—can you walk 25 kilometers” “can you drive a motorcycle” “Maasai are pastoralists which means we eat once per day and drink even less, can you handle these conditions?” and so on. Likewise, he was concerned that I could choose a translator whose cultural and linguistic knowledge may be sub-par and thus, hinder, rather than help, my understanding of complex socio-cultural issues. Intuitively I could tell that this bluff and bluster was his way of offering me a reality check, and that it would not be as difficult as he tried to make it sound, or at least it didn't have to be. He was also curious, I think, that unlike most well funded researchers he's had the pleasure to work with (John Galaty has been affiliated with MPIDO for most of his career, for example) my budget was slender because I had not received a grant to conduct the research. At the same time, his questions were astute and

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pregnancy of a girl the same age and circumcision status who is not in school) to what she calls “gendered reproduction,” or the “intimate relationship between gender ideologies and procreative processes” (49).

<sup>208</sup> I attended an MPIDO “Prize Giving Ceremony” at Oltepesi Primary School in 2004. The ceremony is designed to celebrate successful schoolgirls, their families, and their schools. The girl to earn the highest score on the Kenya Certificate for Primary Exam taken in each December by all Standard 8 students is awarded a cow. In Maasai customary practice, females do not own cattle outright, but keep cattle in trust for their sons, and girls never have cattle at all. This gift effectively resignifies both school achievement and cattle ownership by celebrating schoolgirls. Her parents are also recognized with gifts of blankets and *shukas*. Additionally, MPIDO subsidizes the winner's school fees for the first term of secondary school. This practice helps to prevent high performing girls from being ‘married off’ because her parents cannot afford to send her to high school.

required me to reexamine the assumptions I had made about how much time and other resources (money, primarily) I would really need to complete the work.

As we discussed my ideas and needs, he questioned important aspects of my study design as well, in particular my intention to focus on interviewing girls and their families in the Lood-ariak area only and my interest in interviewing girls who had dropped out of school. My original study design proposed interviewing 30 primary school girls from Lood-ariak Primary School and then following up with in-depth interviews with 15 of the participants who had told us the richest stories in the initial meeting. I said that I would then speak with these 15 girls' parents and teachers, as well as conduct direct observations in school and at home. Additionally, I proposed to interview as many girls from the Lood-ariak area who had dropped out of school, to get a sense for their understanding of education in their lives now that they were no longer in school. But in the end, I interviewed 98 primary schoolgirls in ten schools, 7 secondary schoolgirls from various schools, 14 mothers, no fathers, 7 'drop-outs' (who also fell into the category of 'mothers'), and 23 teachers at nine schools, for a total of 143 formal interviews. The reasons for the changes stemmed from the realities on the ground, as clarified by Ole Simel, David, and other MPIDO staff who became my *de facto* advisors for the research.

#### *G. Sketching relative degrees and perceptions of "development"*

Ole Simel's two central concerns with my research design were that Lood-ariak is "too developed" and therefore not representative of all areas and that 'drop-outs' may not want to talk about the circumstances of leaving school because it often involved pregnancy and moreover, once out of school, girls are "married off" quickly and would therefore likely no longer live in Lood-ariak or even the location and would be hard to locate.

As it turns out, these concerns are more intricately intertwined than it would first appear. As I learned more about the settlement patterns in the Kajiado Rift and the production of the sense for *the local*, it became increasingly clear that getting around to find the people I needed to interview would be an overarching challenge given time and budgetary constraints. Although I already knew that Maasai marriage arrangements and homestead patterns are patrilocal, I did not figure that ‘local’ could comprise distances that would be relatively vast given the paucity of transportation options and my incapacity to walk where I would need to go.

Administratively, Kajiado District is divided into six divisions, and I lived and worked in Ngong Division, the northern most division in the district, making it the area of greater Maasailand closest in proximity to suburban Nairobi and the city itself. Divisions are then sub-divided into locations. The ten schools that form my case are geographically dispersed throughout Keekonyokie Central Location (KCL). The smallest governmental unit is the sub-location, which is not so much a “village,” but rather a loose network of homesteads united spatially by some kind of consolidated “center” that usually has at least one small shop selling basics, and sometimes a school, clinic or church. Lood-ariak is a sub-location of KCL, as are the 10 areas that I ultimately visited, focusing on the homestead networks around each of the ten primary schools in the location. Some sub-locations are fairly close to one another; Lood-ariak and Innyonyorri are separated by approximately 15 kilometers in direct route through the dense bush, for example. But others are quite far apart, particularly when distance is relatively understood not by how long it would take to drive, but to walk. A journey to Innyonyorri, for a local Maasai from Lood-ariak, might take six hours on foot. But I didn’t know these logistical details at the time because in the first two weeks of my arrival, I was singularly focused on settling into Lood-ariak. His comments threw into stark relief my ideas about how the project would proceed.

The idea that Lood-ariak is “too developed” to give me a broadly adequate sense for Maasai schoolgirls’ experiences, challenges and perceptions, forced an early reckoning with the relative degrees of “development” within communities and how these differences are perceived by local people. A premise of the study is that Maasai areas tend to be ‘behind’ more developed regions of Kenya, but Ole Simel’s comment highlighted the disparities *within* Maasailand. From my initial observations, these comments about Lood-ariak’s relative development compared to other sub-locations in the division rang true based on my limited observations around Lood-ariak. At that point my only experience in ‘the interior,’ was to travel back and forth between Lood-ariak and town, and in this process it was clear that life in Lood-ariak is more hardscrabble than in Oloseos or certainly Runda. I knew that the community has piped water from protected springs along the escarpment to several wells, and in a district where only 28% of the population has access to potable water and the walking distance to water is on average 10 kilometers, it was widely known that Lood-ariak “has water,” which marks the sub-location as advanced or ‘developed’ in the provision of services (KFSSG 2006)

Similarly, Lood-ariak Primary School (LPS) is the largest and best equipped school among the nine of the ten schools located down in the Rift and the few *dukas* (small shops selling basic provisions) that have come up in the past few years did give the place a sense of density as well as provide access to some basic goods without traveling to Kiserian.<sup>209</sup> At the same time, it also seemed clear on the face of it that Lood-ariak could not be considered ‘developed’ in terms of infrastructure. Of the 2,745.6 kms of classified roads in the district, only 245 kms are paved with tarmac (KFSSG 2006). The rest of the roads, like those in Lood-ariak and the other sub-locations

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<sup>209</sup> Olepolos Primary School in Kisamis (also called Olepolos) is considered peri-urban and in the ecological saddle of the escarpment where agriculture is still viable. Close proximity to Kiserian by a mini bus *matatu* network makes employment in various urban centers, including Nairobi, possible.

in the study area, are dirt roads made impassable by rainy conditions. And while LPS is a relatively bigger school, it is still overcrowded and understaffed, and six un- and under-qualified teachers paid by the parent committee augment the faculty. All children walk to school carrying a stick of firewood to contribute to the cooking fire as they do in any school I have encountered in rural Maasailand, and many walk as many as seven kilometers one way to attend. There is only one government dispensary in the sub-location, and though from the outside it looks like a relatively new structure, I never saw it in operation. While 22 of the 33 major trading centers in the district have electricity, rural electrification is not a reality; most people meet their energy needs with charcoal, firewood fires, paraffin lamps, and candles, and this characterizes Lood-ariak residents (there are few exceptions, like David and Agnes and others who have solar panels hitched to a lorry battery that runs the electric lights in their three room house for a few hours each night). Certainly the piped water system distinguishes Lood-ariak from the other sub-locations, as this basic provision does make daily life easier for residents, but it was actually built by a combination of community labor and NGO funding. Lastly, there is no market in Lood-ariak, neither livestock nor vegetable nor otherwise despite the few *dukas* that sell sugar, rice, sometimes white cabbage, gumballs, and by the time that I left, 50 Ksh phone cards for 52 shillings a piece.

Ole Simel argued that if I wanted to get a better sense for the conditions in which a broad section of girls lived and schooled, I should take the opportunity to move around Ngong division, and that the nine government and one private primary schools in Keekonyokie Central Location might give me an a more substantial plain for my analysis. Certain characteristics do differentiate the schools, the most obvious of which is the school's proximity to the paved Magadi Road.

Of the nine government primary schools in the division, three, Olepolos Primary School, Oltepesi Primary school, and Ensonura Primary School were located directly on the Magadi Road, whereas the others, Enkeryian Primary School, Embolei Primary School, Eremit Primary School,



Innyonyorri Primary School, and Lood-ariak Primary School, were all located in what locals called “the interior,” which is to say in settlement areas anywhere from 15 to 30 kilometers off the paved road. The tenth school, a small private primary school called Eroret Preparatory School is located about 5 kms from Lood-ariak (and about 500 yards from my metal house in David’s compound). Notably, until January 2009, there were no secondary schools in Keekonyokie Central Location at all, and only 30 in all of Kajiado district (Long Rains Assessment report 2008). As I was leaving Lood-ariak, the community was in the process of building a “*harambee*” secondary school that serves students in an approximately 10 kilometers radius.<sup>210</sup> To my knowledge, this is the only secondary school in the location.

My primary concern with the new design was transportation. Given the difficulty of the terrain and climate,<sup>211</sup> it seemed unrealistic to plan on walking to and from these schools from my home base in Lood-ariak, and, contrary to Ole Simel’s suggestion, I did not have a motorcycle, and besides, I needed to travel with an assistant and translator (which also, along with the ubiquitous thorns, ruled out a bicycle). Ole Simel offered the necessary “lifts” to these schools to my assistant

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<sup>210</sup> “*Harambee*” is a Swahili word that means “let us pull together.” As a political, quasi-technical development term, *harambee* was popularized by President Jomo Kenyatta. He used the phrase to call for collective efforts for the infrastructural provision and expansion of education such as the building of secondary schools. By 1974, ten years after independence, over 600 *Harambee* secondary schools had been built and the total capacity of the secondary schools had grown to nearly ten times its original size (Buchmann 1999), although these gains were not evenly distributed throughout the new nation. See a discussion of *Harambee* schools in Chapter 2.

<sup>211</sup> The bulk of my time in Kenya was during the dry season, which in 2007-2008 was longer than normal when the ‘short rains’ did not fall in October. At the height of summer, December-February, the daytime temperatures were upwards of 100 degrees Fahrenheit and often over, whereas at night, the temperatures dropped to the 50s and the wind howled at high speeds. Despite the challenges of this climate, I was lucky to avoid the heavy rainy season when residents of Lood-ariak, for example, are often prevented from traveling to Kiserian because of dangerous flash floods and swollen rivers. While the 6 kilometer hike from my house to Lood-ariak Primary School through the hot thorny bush was not easy, I imagine that it would have been in some ways more difficult in the driving rain and ankle-deep mud.

and me. He reasoned that MPIDO staff crisscrossed the division (and beyond) every day attending to various the projects that constitute their work. Once I had hired an assistant, we would sit down with Eunice Nkopio, MPIDO program manager for programs related to women and ‘the girl-child,’ and map out travel and interview schedule against MPIDO development activities throughout the area. Then, the MPIDO driver would drop my assistant and me at the scheduled school and then pick us up again three or four days later.

This solution to the ‘problem’ of the research design was a welcomed surprise. I had been convinced by their arguments that I would observe a broader swath of the district and get a more substantial understanding of girls’ perceptions by talking to more girls in different locations, as well as visit different schools, and speak to teachers teaching in similar by different settings. This new plan also offered a potential strategy around something that I feared, that being in one school and concentrating on one group of girls may render a sort of ‘group think’ over time. This way, it seemed to me, the girls who participated in the interviews would have fewer opportunities to compare answers if our presence was somewhat unexpected and short-lived. I also saw the benefit of increased interaction with various MPIDO staff members beyond David and Ole Simel, many of whom had grown up and gone to school themselves in Keekonyokie Central Location. On the other hand, however, I also understood from the outset that by going broader, I risked losing the depth and acuity that could come from concentrating in one place for eight months.

## **II. Research Assistants as Cultural Translators**

### *A. The challenge of finding qualified candidates*

At the meeting in Karen, David, Ole Simel, and I also discussed a process for finding my research assistant and translator. I wanted to work with a young woman who had graduated from

high school and thus spoke English, Swahili, and *Maa* and who would also be able to empathize with the girls we interviewed as well as be able to discuss her experience in secondary school and perhaps college, and in that way, be a role model. The ideal candidate needed to live near enough to David's place to walk there, and given the new research design, she needed to be prepared to travel around the division, be away from her own home for several days at a time, and sleep in a tent or on the floor of a teacher's house. However, most females living in the vicinity of David's place were too young, had not completed high school, and/or were already married mothers who would not be at liberty to be away from their homes for days at a time. As we talked, it became clear to me what a tall order such requirements created and how limited our pool would be.

Advertising the position outside of the division complicated matters in terms of travel and salary. We determined the research assistant's salary at 10,000 Ksh per month.<sup>212</sup> Most schools in the region do not have enough government-paid teachers to cover their classes so the parent school committees (similar to the PTA) pool parent funds to hire un- and under-qualified teachers to fill in the gaps. A trained veteran teacher of fifteen years like Agnes Kilusu (although of lower primary, standard one, which is a lower pay grade) only earns around 15,000 Ksh per month, whereas a local secondary school leaver hired by the parents to fill in earns far less at approximately 5,000 Ksh. We reasoned that my translator would be working long hours (far more than a teacher) and would be away from home and away from other income generating work like jewelry making, and household labor like childcare or herding. I also paid for her travel costs and food while we were together. If, for example, my assistant went to Ngong for the day to collect information at a

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<sup>212</sup> At current exchange rates for June 2009 (approximately 78 Ksh to 1 USD), my assistants earned about \$128 per month. Agnes Kilusu and other lower primary teachers earn just under \$200, and untrained teachers earn less than \$70, putting them in them in the \$2 per day or less global category of 'poor.' By local measure, my assistants earned a fair wage for the work. Another irony, of course, is that the perfect assistant translator would be someone like Agnes herself, but she would not be at liberty to do the work as it was arranged.

government office, I would cover her transportation costs, give her a per diem for food, and make sure that she had enough credit in her phone to communicate with me and make any calls necessary for the work. At the same time, as a high school graduate, my assistant would have less education than a trained teacher, so we needed to find a salary that balanced out these factors while remaining attractive to the few who would qualify.

While the salary seemed commensurate with the work, Ole Simel and David made clear that it would not be attractive to a pool of possible applicants who lived in the peri-urban or urban centers of the district. They would expect more money, they said, and they would also cost more to transport down the escarpment into the various sub-locations. What's more, they concluded, I would run the risk of hiring someone who would not be familiar with local conditions or may not be willing to live/work in them, and could possibly hinder my understanding more than enhance it.

After a day of four interviews organized by MPIDO at the resource center in Oltepesi, Maria Nawoiki was hired as my first assistant.<sup>213</sup> This was her first paid job. She was living at the time with her aunt, uncle, and paternal grandmother in Lood-ariak about six kilometers from David's house. Her biological mother had died, and her father lived with one of his three living wives and their children in Olokurman, a sub-location about 15 kilometers further west of Lood-ariak. She had graduated from Moi Girls Isinya Secondary School, one of the all-girls provisional level boarding schools in the district. She was waiting to hear if she had been accepted to the

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<sup>213</sup> Not only did MPIDO transport all four young women from Kiserian to Oltepesi and then to their homes, they fed us lunch and tea, at no cost to me. Ole Simel, Lilian, David and myself made up the interviewing panel. This was one of the few instances of 'participant observation' that I engaged in, and as the oxymoron suggests, it was difficult to strike a real balance between participating in the interview and observing the interviewers and interviewees as the interviews played out. My notes reflect my attempts to manage both. Ultimately I learned more about what the MPIDO staff thought were important questions to ask than I did about the young women themselves.

University of Nairobi where she thought she might want to study science or preparation for medical school.

Maria and I worked together, ate together, slept together, and traveled together nearly constantly for about three and half months. At some point in her tenure, she learned that she had been admitted to the University of Nairobi and would have the opportunity to begin classes as a parallel degree student in January 2009.<sup>214</sup> At this point in the research, we still had several schools to visit, and MPIDO's staff (along with everyone else in Kenya!) was enmeshed in the local politics of the run-up to the December election and was not available to shepherd a second search. Instead, Maria and I put the word out and managed to interview three young women, one of whom was a candidate in the first round.

In this second search and interview process, I hired Alice Nkopio who would be with me through the end of the fieldwork. Alice also graduated from Moi Girls in Isinya, and she lived with her mother and siblings approximately one kilometer from my house. Her father lived with his second wife and her children in Kitengela, although he traveled back and forth between homesteads. After we called Alice for an interview, he stopped by David's compound to meet me. Maria and Alice have very different personalities and my relationship with Alice developed in a rather different set of circumstances than my relationship with Maria. Accordingly, the dynamics of the research process differed between the first few months of the work and the last few. I

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<sup>214</sup> Maria's grade point average when she left secondary school was a B- which was not high enough to earn a 'bursary' scholarship from the Kenyan government that would pay for her undergraduate degree at a public university; to receive the bursary, she needed to have earned a B average or higher. She did qualify for the "parallel degree" program, also referred to as Module II. In this program she takes classes 'in parallel' with the mainstream students admitted through the bursary. As self-pay program, it is considered expensive, but not as expensive as a private university. There is some debate as to whether or not Module II "waters down" Kenyan's tertiary education sector given that, for example, of the 44,914 students attending the University of Nairobi, 32,010 are enrolled as parallel students (Ngare and Muindi 2008).

examine these differences at length in the next section. For now, I want to discuss the ‘girls’ I did *not* hire by focusing on Charity, Naomi, and Bebe.

*B. The ‘girls’ we didn’t hire: foreshadowing schoolgirl contradictions*

From the first round of interviews I did not hire Naomi, Masana, or Charity, and from the second, Naomi again, Bebe or Jackline. Although each young woman has her own story, all of which are relevant to the larger project of this dissertation, Charity, Naomi, and Bebe’s circumstances illustrate important themes that foreshadowed the narratives generated in the schoolgirl interviews, and in this way, give context the discourses the younger girls produced about their current circumstance and future aspirations.

*1. Charity from Kimuka, via Ngong*

Charity is Agnes Kilusu’s younger sister. She is the oldest and most educated among the candidates, having earned a certificate after a one year course in library science, but had not yet found employment. At the time of the interview she lived in Ngong Town, but if hired, she would move to Lood-ariak to live with Agnes, David, and their six (five of their own and a niece) children in their three-room house. In this house, she would share a bedroom with the children: three boys in two bunk beds and three girls and Charity in the double bed. That she remained unemployed despite her continued education is an important point. The unemployment rate in Kenya is 40% and likely rising, particularly in the wake of the 2007 postelection violence and the global financial crisis of 2009 (CIA Factbook 2008). Charity’s unemployment is complicated by another social parameter: she is in her mid-twenties and still single. Her father had attempted to arrange more than one marriage for her, but she had refused to participate in any of them. Disgusted with her, he had forced her “out of her mother’s house” (Ole Kilusu, personal communication September 2007),

and she was sharing a single room apartment with a cousin in Ngong Town. She needed the job for the income, but also to justify her single status and divert the social pressure to marry.

## 2. *Naomi from Enkeryian*

At the time of her interview, Naomi's circumstances appeared unremarkable. She had also graduated with Maria from Moi Girls Secondary School in Isinya and was living at home in a large homestead near to the Enkeryian sublocation but explained that she could move to Lood-ariak and live with relatives there while working for me. Before interviewing for the assistant/translator position she had been an untrained parent-hired teacher at Enkeryian Primary School for the kindergarten. I highlight Naomi's situation because, about two months later when Maria and I visited Enkeryian Primary School, we walked to the large homestead where Naomi lived and visited her as well as members of Maria's extended family. It was only then that I learned that Naomi was due to deliver her first child at any time. It is often easy enough to miss that a Maasai woman is pregnant or guess that she is less far along than she usually is. Customarily, Maasai women stop eating protein after the fourth month of pregnancy in order to keep the baby small and more easily delivered (female cutting practices inhibit labor and delivery and obstructed labor is fairly common). Whether Naomi followed these dietary taboos is not clear to me, but she did not look pregnant at the interview, nor she did mention her pregnancy at that time. If anyone else knew she was pregnant, they did not mention it. According to the schoolgirls interviewed for this study, unlike most girls and young women who get pregnant before marriage, Naomi had not been "given out" to a husband by her family. In our cursory conversation in her house that day, she gave no indication that she wanted to marry the father of the child, or anyone, for that matter. She said she would have the baby, get help from the women in her family to care for him or her, and continue to look for a job.

### 3. *Bebe from Kiserian via Isinya*

Unlike all of the other candidates in both rounds, Bebe was the only candidate who I did not know personally or who was not referred to me by MPIDO staff, which is a way of saying that she did not come from the Rift. A Maasai man I met while he was doing contract research assistance and translation for an NGO called The Girl Child Network (GCN) referred Bebe to me. Alice and I stayed at his house when we visited Ensonura Primary School late in the research. Jacob made his living by working as a short-term contractor for NGOs like GNC or larger organizations like World Vision and MAP International, and he spent a good deal of his time (and had a second house) in Kiserian. I bumped into him one day in Kiserian just after I learned that Maria would be leaving and asked him to keep an eye and ear open for possible candidates to replace her. A doctor in Kiserian who knew her and her family recommended Bebe to him. No one in my personal network knew the doctor, Bebe, or her family, but she fit the profile so we arranged to meet in Kiserian for an interview.

As in the other interviews in the second round, instead of a panel of professionals working for MPIDO, Maria and I conducted the interviews alone. By this time, we knew well what I needed in an assistant. In keeping with the style we had evolved over several months interviewing schoolgirls, Maria and I generated a list of questions together, alternated asking questions and follow-up probes, and then staged a ‘mock-interview’ in which Maria played the schoolgirl and I the interviewer so that the candidate could see the challenges she would face in the interviewing young girls.<sup>215</sup> We three then discussed the mock interview and got the candidate’s feedback on what had occurred.

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<sup>215</sup> The challenges we enacted included: 1) the interviewee speaking inaudibly 2) the interviewee being confused by the questions or giving confusing and inconsistent answers to seemingly easy



Unlike the other candidates, Bebe was very urban in her manner of speaking, mode of dress, and comportment; I could tell right away that she spent very little time in an *enkang*, and my guess was that she wanted to keep it that way. Jacob's experience on contract research assignments consisted only in administering survey questionnaires. We made clear to Bebe right away that the semi-structured, open-ended conversations we needed to pursue were much more complicated affairs. Ultimately, despite her credentials, there were three strikes against her: 1) her lack of fluency in *Maa* and what Maria perceived to be her "proudness" and 2) the fact that she lived in Kiserian and had no kinship or other ties down in the Rift and would thus have no easy place to live close to the research sites.

*C. Three schoolgirls, and none of them were hired*

Charity, Naomi, and Bebe each embody various elements of the schoolgirl aspirations that were eventually articulated by the 98 participants in the study. Charity's life so far has played out as the primary schoolgirls might imagine theirs proceeding: she matriculated from primary to secondary, and then successfully went on to a diploma program. Similarly, Bebe completed high school and after a computer training course was also in the process of applying to various diploma programs to study community development. Naomi has also finished high school, and although she

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questions like "how old are you now?" or "how many brothers and sisters do you have?" 3) the interviewee struggling to elaborate her answers or answer the follow-up question, "*kain-yo?*" (why?) 4) helping the interviewee state her thoughts clearly, particularly when she got caught up in competing cultural logics, for instance when we asked "when does a girl become a woman?" and she answered, "when she is circumcised" and we followed up with, "are you circumcised," and she answered, "yes" so we asked, "so are you a girl or a woman right now?" to which she inevitably answered, "right now, I am a girl" or "right now, I am a student." The enactment was also to stress the point that we weren't searching for 'correct' answers, particularly to the more abstract questions, but that we aimed to engage interviewees and illicit rich stories or at least rich answers. Also to point out that, for example, if an interviewee could not do the arithmetic required to calculate her age, or if she did not know the year she was born, that this was not evidence of incorrect or unimportant information.

did not express clear career goals in the interview, she had already made it farther in school than many young women in the area, and in that case, could be considered a success according to the schoolgirls' aspirations for themselves.

At the same time, Charity, Naomi, and Bebe's experiences interviewing for the assistant and translator job highlights the contradictions in the schoolgirl category and the discourse of education that attends its necessity. All three of these young women were 'schoolgirls,' and all three variously embody her possibilities and constraints. Although Charity has carved out a fairly autonomous place for herself in the broader Kenyan society, in Maasai terms, she is not living up to social expectations because she is nearing 30 years old and she is not married and she does not have children. Many educated African females could easily feel these pressures across a variety of cultural contexts given the proximity of older social codes to newer ones. It is interesting to note, however, that Charity can escape or lessen reproach from her father and other elders in her community by getting a wage-sector job. I would submit that she would still be pressured to marry even when she has a job, but for a female who has graduated from high school and a diploma program and has, by definition, sidestepped the 'customary' life course for females and chosen a different or 'modern' path, the opportunity to even further extend *enkanyakuai* is made possible by the extension of the classificatory status of 'schoolgirl' by becoming an 'employee.' To 'do nothing' is not acceptable, and considerable pressure will be exerted on those women stalled in between school and employment to marry and start families and 'do something.'

On the other hand, Naomi's pregnancy highlights another facet of the schoolgirl category—the ability to forestall forced marriage by the empirical facts of schooling requirements, but perhaps more fundamental than that, the idea that schooling is more important than marrying and starting a family. My conversations with Naomi were not extensive or triangulated, but nonetheless, that she does not plan to marry but to continue to seek employment and even further

schooling after her baby is born corroborated the schoolgirls' belief that finishing high school gives them more negotiative power within community norms than not having any education or dropping out could ever give them. Naomi was not *not* hired because she was pregnant when she interviewed. But had I or we known that she was pregnant, the marked physical hardship required for the job would have significantly decreased the likelihood that she would have been chosen if she had been the otherwise best candidate (which she was not). In this sense, like women in capitalist societies the world over, reproductive work is seen to be in competition with productive work, and despite the fact that her education places Naomi in a shallow pool of applicants for the relatively well-paid translator job, she is not guaranteed access to wage employment simply because she finished school, which seems to be the equation primary schoolgirls make about their future prospects.

Bebe's candidacy for the job raises similar but different issues in light of the schoolgirl narratives of education. In many ways, Bebe embodies the schoolgirl fantasy of themselves as high school leavers and employment seekers or wage earners. She does not come from the Rift Valley, but from an area near Isinya on the Kaputei Plains. She had an expensive urban-youth hair and clothing style (elaborate extension braids, tight blue jeans, fitted cropped top), and she wore makeup, which was absolutely rare among the Maasai women I knew, even professional schoolteachers. Apparently she had done some modeling, a fact I was not surprised to learn. She was beautiful in the way fashion models often are. Her English was flawless, but her *Maa* was not. In the mock interview portion, Maria and I tested each candidate with several ideas that had emerged over the course of the interviews we had already conducted, and among them was the notion of *enkanyakuai*. Bebe had never heard this word and could not venture a guess as to what it might mean.

At another moment she laughed and asked, “do some old men still have many wives? I thought that was finished back in my grandfather’s time!” By contrast, Maria’s father has three wives (her mother was his first wife and when she was alive he had four), and Alice’s has two. Far from the paramount chiefs of the past who married as many as ten wives and supported close to 100 children, polygamy among Maasai men has not disappeared in many areas of Maasailand.<sup>216</sup> Bebe’s urban upbringing had separated her from these still current realities, and placed a wedge between her and the girls we were interviewing. Similarly, her superficial understanding of *Maa* made us worry that she would not be able to capture and translate everything the girls, or even more profoundly, the women, might say in the interviews we had yet to conduct. In short, Bebe was too educated, too urban, and too far removed from “traditional” Maasai life to work as a translator on a project exploring Maasai schoolgirls’ perceptions of education and development in their everyday lives.

This irony was not lost on me or anyone I shared the story with. As ethnographic studies of girls’ education in sub-Saharan African contexts like Kiluva-Ndunda’s (2001) study of women’s experiences in Kilome, Kenya indicate, a congruence, and conflation, of “public” and “private” discourses around education help to shape what people living within and participating in those discourses imagine is possible. The schoolgirls both Maria and Alice and I interviewed, along with most of their mothers and teachers, believe that education is the answer to current problems and future achievements. That an educated and otherwise successful candidate for the assistant/translator position had moved too far away (geographically, linguistically, socio-

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<sup>216</sup> Polygamy rates in Kenya generally have dropped over time, and continue to do so. Caselli et. al (2006) indicates that the changing proportion of married women in polygamous unions in Kenya fell from 29.5% in 1977 to 19.5% in 1993 (368). Moreover, they argue, that if we take into account all women aged 15-49 married or not and calculate the proportion of women in polygamous unions that aggregate, then from 1977 to 1993 in Kenya, the ration fell from 21% to 11% (Caselli et al. 2006, 368). These statistics do not account for ethnicity.

economically, and finally, culturally) from Maasai life in the study area to be an asset to the study points balefully towards the contradictions of a social category that is premised on these very fissures to be legitimate. At the same time, this irony, or simultaneity, is perhaps an example of the complex of identity and subjectivity cohorts produced in any development zone. Amy Stambach (2000) found in her study of schooling among Chagga on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania that

...transformations in ideas about 'education' reflect changes in what constitutes 'community'. . . there is no one particular "Chagga community," but multiple and often conflicting views about what is 'Chagga' coexist. Differences are objectified in a range of cultural types—among them 'cool, hip youth,' 'big sisters of the city,' 'stay-at-home-mothers,' and even 'farmers'. . . these types are at once ephemeral and enduring. . . they reflect the particular events of the time yet they speak to underlying tensions that give rise to change (170).

Although I was given no finer differentiation that "schoolgirl," we can see a similar situation to the one that Stambach describes. That Bebe is not Maasai "enough" to be an effective assistant and translator cannot erase the fact that she is, nonetheless, according to her and those who referred her, Maasai, and even more pointedly, a Maasai schoolgirl. The schoolgirl category is one that inherently must make room for a multiplicity of belongings.

#### *D. Working with Maria and Alice*

I did not intend to have two research assistants, but when Maria learned that she was admitted to the University of Nairobi, we were very excited, even though it was clear that I would need to hire a replacement. At the time, this process was disruptive and disheartening, and I worried that I would not find a suitable or timely replacement. Upon further reflection, however, working with both Maria and Alice has given me added insight into the dynamics of working with

an assistant and translator as well as shed some light on the multiple ways of being a Maasai schoolgirl.

Maria and Alice were both hired for all the reasons the others were not: they speak strong, local *Maa*, live locally, had some degree of flexibility from familial obligations, and remain connected to their home areas in the Kajiado Rift. In these ways, both Maria and Alice were essential cultural and linguistic translators, as well as logistical managers and liaisons between local school officials, teachers, students and community members and me. Given the language and cultural barriers I would have experienced without them, it is more than fair to say that they project could not have been conducted with the work of local guides.<sup>217</sup>

With that said, however, I want to delineate some of the differences between Alice and Maria, as their personalities, capacities for the work, and knowledge and expertise about Maasai experience and education positioned them as almost two sides to the same Maasai schoolgirl coin in the ways they each embodied and expressed the agency and ambivalence young women such as themselves experience when caught in the crosshairs of change.

1. *Maria: "Why do we need to talk to anymore girls? They all give similar answers—isn't this enough?"*

Maria's insights in the early stages of the research were crucial. She helped me understand some of the central issues schoolgirls confront and the mechanisms by which they produce

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<sup>217</sup> In fact, more than once Maria literally guided me through the darkness. In one instance we had gone on a hike with some young male teachers at one of the interior schools; they wanted to show us the caves created by outcropping where local *il-murran* used to come for the *olpul*, or the "meat camp." By the time we were to return to the school the sun was down. We walked in the dark by the light of the moon for nearly an hour through hyena country. In another instance we only had to walk about .5 kilometers, but there was no moon—no ambient light at all. Maria had to hold my hand and guide me, as she is accustomed to walking in the dark. Ironically, once she left my side as the MPIDO vehicle approached, blinded by the headlights, I walked into a thorn tree limb blowing in the wind and ended up with blood all over my face.

alternatives for themselves. She was the first person I interviewed who expressed the idea that she was neither a girl nor a woman, but something “in between.” To capture this in-between-ness, she preferred to call herself a student, although she was not enrolled in school at the time. Instead, like I would learn from so many of the younger schoolgirls we interviewed, Maria was actively hedging her bets by pitting one social category—the schoolgirl—against another—a woman—as a way of negotiating more time before she could be or would be forced to marry and have children. By claiming the schoolgirl (or student) category, Maria could remain liminal. This singular insight, her notion of being “in-between,” would come up in the interviews again and again. In this space—what I am calling the “new *enkanyakuai*”—Maria operated with a certain degree of freedom in the pursuit of her own life choices. When we met she was waiting to hear if she was accepted into the University of Nairobi. Although a few young women from the greater Lood-ariak area had gone to two-year Kenyan colleges, and even one was off in a Canadian university, if accepted, Maria would be the first girl in the area to attend a Kenyan four-year university. Her classificatory relationship with schooling effectively removed her from some social expectations incumbent upon adult women; she did not experience, for example, the pressure to marry. Yet, she was also not treated as a fully autonomous adult by the adults we interacted with during the process of research although the work of the research often required her to function in this way. The tensions both she and Alice felt and faced highlighted the contradictions of her liminal social positioning.

In the beginning, Maria came to my house every day for a series of meetings in which we went over my goals for the project in detail, my expectations for the work, her questions, concerns, and expectations for the work, and in general got to know one another. From these initial meetings, I learned two insights about Maria that would come up again and again in our work together: she is quick, astute, and patient when it comes to explaining complex issues and she is reluctant and sometimes resistant to doing work that she believes pushes her beyond the boundaries

of proper behavior as a young woman/schoolgirl. In other words, in some situations in which I assumed and expected ‘adult’ or autonomous behavior, she sometimes instead felt and acted constrained by the social obligations and expectations of her as a young, single female. Through the process of working together, I slowly learned that her reticence or actual refusal to do certain things the research required was less about her lack of experience (although that was part of it) and more about the overlapping categories that she inhabited and the claims they made on her—the dutiful ‘daughter’ (a category that exceeds the biological ties that bind her to her actual father), or less specifically, ‘young unmarried female,’ and, as my assistant, ‘paid employee.’

These overlapping and somewhat competing subject-positions were often difficult for Maria to negotiate, but this difficulty was only plain to me in those situations in which she deferred to her (real and perceived) obligations as a dutiful daughter and social minor (young, unmarried female) rather than tapping into her relative ‘power’ and legitimacy as a classificatory student awaiting word from the University.

For example, she was resistant when I wanted to arrange to meet with some local Lood-ariak women who do paid beadwork “at Leakey’s place.”<sup>218</sup> She essentially refused to go or to make the arrangements for me to go. She argued that it was too far to walk and there would be “strange men” there. I learned later that the “strange men” she referred to were likely Kamba carvers also

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<sup>218</sup> Phillip Leakey, one of Louis and Mary Leakey’s three sons, has a house on the escarpment overlooking Lood-ariak where he lives with his wife, an American named Katy. The Leakeys run a jewelry business called The Leakey Collection, and they employ local women to string dyed grass (Zulu grass) ‘beads’ on stretchy plastic to make necklaces which are sold in upscale shops around Nairobi and in mainstream retail outlets in the US. “Leakey’s place” as it was referred to, is in walking distance of the Lood-ariak Primary School. I was curious about the operation and meeting the Leakeys, but I also wanted to interview as many mothers as I could and many said they didn’t have time for an interview because they worked for Leakey during the day and were busy with household work and care obligations in the evenings and on the weekends. One of the serious limitations of research in rural areas without a vehicle is that the work day must be confined to day light because it is too difficult/dangerous to walk at night.



working for the Leakeys making carved wooden ‘beads’ for another line of jewelry. According to her and others I asked, Maria has never had any negative experiences with these “strange men,” but in her worldview, it would be unbecoming for an educated ‘girl’ to make her way through the bush to the work camp. All of the women who work for the Leakeys are married women and mothers, and few of them (I know of two who finished primary but did not continue to secondary and were married) have had any schooling.

In another example that also surprised me, we were invited to a Lood-ariak women’s group meeting that I saw as an excellent opportunity to meet as many women from the area as I could. Despite the fact that the women gathered were her neighbors, relatives, and friends, Maria essentially refused to mingle, translate, or proactively introduce me to people I should know. She argued later that she was embarrassed and intimidated. Maasai social rules of deference and respect to elders or persons of authority curtailed Maria’s efficacy as an assistant and a translator, and these situations were very difficult for her. Personality traits aside, at least some of the reasons Maria could be hard to work with at times, despite her distinct talents, are structural insofar as they are enmeshed within Maasai social arrangements and rules for “respect behavior” that are at once monolithic and shifting (Hodgson 2001a). These tensions reveal the relative instability of the “new *enkanyakuai*” as overlapping categories can confuse and complicate what might otherwise be a fairly straightforward affair.

When Maria seemed to feel she was in a relatively empowered position, she was an excellent collaborator on certain research processes, including developing a locally-relevant interview protocol and evolving our interview approach. In those initial meetings we worked for several days revising and testing the questions I brought with me, and after our first few interviews, we modified the questions further and our approach to conducting the interviews. It turned out that Maria is an excellent interviewer. She is sensitive to what has not been said and quick to

follow-up with meaningful prompts and elaborating questions. Once we learned that it made more sense for her to conduct the interview while I listened and interjected as necessary rather than me posing each question in English for her to translate, and so on, we shifted the dynamic and despite her missteps in other areas, like being on time, she readily shouldered the responsibility of setting the tone and pace of the interviews with schoolgirls. As I progressively learned about Maria however, she tended to be less confident and aggressive when confronted with someone older than her. She was less confident when interviewing adult women, for example, and she had a great deal of trouble on those occasions when her job required her to elicit information from an adult man, particularly a Maasai man.

2. *Alice: "Excuse me, Heather, how do you spell the sound of someone clearing her throat?"*

Alice and Maria are age-mates, neighbors, former schoolmates, and friends, but they could not be more different and our relationships were accordingly very different. Whereas I was often simultaneously frustrated and delighted with Maria, Alice was astonishingly easy going, even-keeled and above all, consistent. In her interview she was a bit reserved, even shy, and soften-spoken to the point that I nearly disregarded her as a viable candidate. The girls we interviewed often spoke just above a whisper, and I needed an assistant and translator who could help the interviewee feel comfortable enough to speak up, if only a notch. Maria's approach was aggressive in a teacherly way, and funny; the girls largely responded very positively to her prodding. Alice's approach, I was to learn, would be different, and also effective.

She was nervous at her interview, but once she was hired and we got to know one another, her own style emerged. Unlike Maria, Alice did not have the luxury to work through the protocol with me and spend a couple of weeks getting into the project. We had to hit the ground running, which meant going straight into interviews with no practices in between. Alice was less confident

directing the interviews than Maria had been, but she felt her way, and eventually, I felt as if I could trust her to conduct interviews without me, although I never did. Both Maria and Alice had a good sense for the kinds of answers—with depth and elaboration—that I was looking for, but Alice was less quick than Maria, and more patient. In the end, Maria was a stronger interviewer, while Alice’s real talent is her reflective capacity. We had fascinating conversations about interviews after interviews. Days later she might bring up a previous interview in reference to one we had just conducted. Her insights came slowly, through some contemplation, whereas Maria was quick to conclude.

Although Maria was also quick to conform to social rules for proper behavior, her work ethic was more fragile than Alice’s. Whereas her reticence was often couched in social constraints, I learned after working with Alice who was faced with the same constraints, that the pressure to behave in certain ways is can be circumvented.<sup>219</sup> The activity of transcription is a case in point. Anyone who has transcribed oral interviews knows that it is tedious, exhausting, and time-consuming work. Transcribing our interviews intensified the negatives of the process given that the girls spoke so softly into that the recording where hard to hear, the first 20 minutes of each interview was the struggle to ascertain her family structure, and the transcriber had to do the work by pressure lamp or flashlight at a small desk after a very long day.

Alice’s transcriptions are amazing. She once asked me how to spell the sound of someone clearing her throat (we guessed—aaahhem); she was so attentive to detail. She worked dutifully every night hunched over her notebook with my camping headlamp strapped efficiently to her

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<sup>219</sup> More than once, when walking with Maasai schoolgirls, I was directed off the path or road through the bushes in order to circumvent a group of male elders gathered to chat. Passing them would have meant the both of us slowly walking up to each man and greeting him with our heads. The first time a Lood-ariak schoolgirl directed me around a small gathering, I was confused. She laughed and said, “let us move around the *wazee!*” (respected elders).

forehead and headphones emerging from her ears like she had been born with them. She would work like this sometimes until midnight after our long, hot days—even I would be falling asleep in my sleeping bag over my field notes!

Maria, on the other hand, resisted the transcription process. She preferred to summarize, but once I explained to her why I needed her to write every word and sound as carefully as she could, she complied. Early in the process, about ten interviews in with our first school behind us, she asked me why, if we were going to continue to get similar answers, did we continue to ask the same questions. We were at the Lood-ariak ‘center’ at the time having a soda at our friend Catherine Lamet’s *duka*.<sup>220</sup> Catherine laughed when she heard the question, and before I could speak she responded, “wait until you get to university Maria, this is how research is done!” We had talked at length about the research process in the two weeks we spent working on the interview protocol, but I think it took doing it for her to see the process and for us to learn together how to illicit rich answers and have interesting interviews. Although perhaps perplexing and even frustrating for her, this learning was not in vain. Maria was poised to begin classes in January 2008 when the post-election violence disrupted the opening of the University of Nairobi, and she was forced to “sit at home” while she waited for classes to begin. Jacob, the man who had referred Bebe to me, called me looking for short-term contract employees to enumerate a survey for an NGO, so

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<sup>220</sup> “The center” was a phrase, shorted from “the shopping center,” to distinguish the small conglomeration of 5 shops (*dukas*) that had sprung up near the Lood-ariak Primary School. These corrugated iron (*mbati*) shops, from most no larger than 100-300 sq ft, sold cell phone credit, cabbage, rice, and hot soda among other sundries. By the time I left Lood-ariak, the local Maasai landowner who intended to rent them to locals interested in ‘business’ was building several more shops. The center was also the locus of community life outside of the school and inside homesteads. The new ‘*harambee*’ Secondary Day School (the only secondary school in Ngong division) was under construction adjacent to the center as I left. It is now home to approximately 40-day students who walk from a 10-12 kilometer surrounding radius.

I gave him Maria's number. Based on her research assistant experience, she was an excellent candidate for the job.

Similar to the process of finding and hiring Maria and Alice, working with them alerted me to the challenges for young women in the 'new *enkanyakuai*.' As not-quite-girls and not-quite-women, both were pulled strongly pulled in opposing directions, and the degree to which each young woman responded to the force of these pulls depended on the depth of the obligation she perceived and the pressure she felt. In all cases, it seemed to me that they were both often torn. Importantly, this tension between social categories and obligations was intensified by the fact that they were my employees. Had they not been my employees, it would have been much easier for them to respond to social obligations without anguish or stress. But instead, the wage-earner contracted relationship—absolutely new for both of them—cast in stark relief the ways in which schoolgirls—even classificatory ones—are removed from some gendered obligations, and new ones are created. In fact, like their 'modern' cohorts the world over, Maria and Alice were often caught between their 'new' modern obligations and their 'old' customary reciprocity and respect norms.

These tensions were most obvious around the nature and the structure of our work vis-à-vis their family obligations, and most pointedly, the expectations of the adults we spent time with at each school (primarily teachers but also community members at large). I learned eventually that Maria was often late because her aunt expected her to do certain chores at home before coming to meet me. Unaccustomed to balancing these kinds of competing obligations, Maria usually deferred to her aunt. Alice had similar obligations, but her mother was more accommodating. More than once I asked about her mom and she indicated that she was out with the goats because Alice was not home to do it because she was with me. Both had childcare responsibilities as well; Alice to her youngest brother, a toddler who was around 13 months old, and Maria to her nephew, also about

that age. I learned very early that meetings at either of their houses would be interesting and insightful, but whatever work I had in mind would not get done. When they were at home they were not just meeting with me—they were feeding babies or cooking or often both.

I anticipated these family constraints to a certain degree. In fact, I expected to encounter much more conflict than I did. I imagined regular instances when either of them would say, “I cannot work today because I am needed at home,” and both David and Ole Simel said as much when we originally met. This never happened. Certainly the income they were each bringing home contributed to their negotiative capacities when it came to household labor. I know for certain that Maria was obligated to hand over a certain amount of her earnings to her aunt. She even asked me to act as her bank and save back 5000 Ksh each month so that when the job was over she could use that saved money toward her schooling. I do not know if Alice had similar obligations, although it is not my impression. Rather, it seemed to me that when Alice gave a portion of her earnings to her mom (which I can’t imagine that she did not do, although I never asked) it was to be generous and helpful, not because, as in Maria’s case, she was forced to comply.

What I did not expect was the tensions we encountered when we stayed at the various schools. In these cases, MPIDO arranged for us to either stay with the teachers or in two instances, in local homes. In Kenya, as in other African contexts, teachers live at rural schools, and some cases only travel to their home areas over the December holidays. Parents often have their young children with them as well. Living quarters vary by school, but most consist of ‘houses’ that do two-three teachers share one-two room cinder block buildings. Typically, one room is the bedroom and the other is the sitting room. Sometimes the house is only one room, as in the case of most of the houses we stayed in. In all cases in my experience, meals are cooked communally outside over open fires. Teachers haul water for bathing, washing dishes, and doing laundry like any rural dweller, and sanitation facilities are usually a pit latrine and sometimes a private stall for

bucket-bathing. None of the schools in my study area had electricity, although some of the schools had pressure lamps that were specifically used for class 8 students studying for the KCPE exam at night.

All of the teachers and residents at every school in the study area were more than gracious hosts. At each school, teachers shifted their own living situations so that we could have a room for ourselves. We shared meals with the teachers, so when we visited each school, we arrived with bags of groceries to contribute to the communal effort. We usually brought the basics: *ugali* flour, *wimbi* meal, white rice, dried beans, jam, margarine/cooking fat, white cabbage, *sukuma wiki* (like collard greens), onions, salt and, as customary for a guest to bring, sugar and loose tea leaves. Not as basic but usually really appreciated in the interior schools where perishables were hard to transport, we added fruit, tomatoes, and sliced white bread. We carried bottled water for drinking and did not usually share this. As the drought deepened over the course of the study, we also carried powdered milk. Breakfast was usually tea with milk and sugar and sometimes *wimbi*, a millet meal porridge, or white bread, margarine and jam. Lunch was usually hot food prepared by teachers, like white rice and boiled cabbage. Likewise, supper was hot and might consist of *ugali* and greens. There are usually one or two tea breaks during the day as well.

As may be clear, a good deal of time and effort on any given day a rural school is dedicated to preparing food to cook, cooking, and cleaning up after cooking. In my observations, this work is equally shared among teachers (and sometimes students are called to this work, but I did not see that often), male and female alike taking turns at the various tasks necessary to complete any meal. Charles, a teacher at Embolei Primary School was the only non-Maasai teacher (Kikuyu) at the school and was thus deemed the “king” of preparing *ugali* (not a customary staple food of Maasai but has become increasingly so), whereas Noah at Eremit was the go-to man for beans, Sophia prepared the *mandazi* at Ensonura, and so on. Meal times, particularly lunch and dinner which required

chopping vegetables and other prep tasks, turned out to be an excellent time to sit and talk with teachers. All teachers speak English fluently, so unless someone engaged in a conversation in *Maa* or Swahili, I did not need Maria or Alice for translation. In the beginning, it seemed natural to sit together with the teachers and peel carrots or chop onions as we talked. I also typically interviewed teachers in the evenings. As opposed to chatting while working, I considered these formal interviews, and as such, the teacher and I would sit privately and talk while I took notes.<sup>221</sup> With Maria we experimented with her taking notes while I talked with a teacher, but abandoned the practice when it was clear that taking notes in English was not something that she was comfortable with or skilled at. Alice and I never had time to try.

All in all, I saw it as our responsibility to contribute to the work required to prepare meals. Unless I was elsewhere conducting an interview, I was chopping, cooking and washing dishes with everyone else, although it was often clear that me doing this work was anomalous, or at the very least, curious and funny, to many of the teachers who were delighted that I (a *mzungu*?) could actually peel potatoes, although I could not, in their estimation, chop cabbage ‘properly.’ It took me awhile to notice, however, that Maria and Alice were *expected* to do these chores. By the time Alice and I conducted interviews at Olepolos Primary School, the last school we visited, we had a sense for the tensions that would arise. Given its proximity to peri-urban Kiserian, no teachers lived on the school compound; they all commuted to school by foot or mini bus *matatu*. We stayed with Babu and Shosho in Oloseos and caught a *matatu* to and from Kisamis at the beginning and end of each school day. Because Babu and Shosho had electricity, I looked forward to Alice getting a lot of transcription done. One evening, before sunset, Alice was inside transcribing while I sat outside

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<sup>221</sup> Interestingly enough, the digital recorder was very distracting to teachers who seemed to talk more freely as I made notes. The schoolgirls, on the other hand, talked more freely with the recorder and seemed completely distracted when I tried to write anything down.



with Babu on a bench pulling dried maize kernels from a big pile of cobs for the chickens. As we raked the hard nuggets out of their sockets, we talked. Babu told me how other Maasai questioned his and Shosho's decision not to circumcise their daughters in the mid-70s. Others worried, as many do now still, that his daughters would never find Maasai husbands. To this he said: "I told them to leave it! Then they will not find husbands. Is that so bad? But they all did." He also asked me why Alice preferred to sit alone with headphones on just writing. I explained that it was part of the work and that she had a deadline to meet. He nodded and seemed to understand. Not long after, Shosho joined us on the bench. Her eldest son's two youngest girls (one 4 and one 7) were back from school and needed to be bathed before dinner. Without blinking an eye Shosho called Alice and instructed her to bathe the girls. Alice didn't seem to mind, I guessed she needed a 'break' from transcription anyway, and besides, neither of us were in a position to say "no" to Shosho (albeit for somewhat different reasons).

In the beginning when we had fewer interviews to transcribe, and before we knew how they would pile up, it made sense for Maria join the conversations with teachers and help with the chores instead of transcribing in our room. It wasn't until we stayed at a private home of an esteemed former teacher (the wife of a deceased and well respected district education officer) that I started to see the tensions around Maria's role in the household as it was perceived by the other women who lived there (and only women lived there). Mama Titia expected Maria to cook and clean, as was fitting, in her eyes for a girl to do. Maria finally spoke up when she had been asked to 'mop' the house (which means using an old wet towel and scrubbing on hands and knees) when Mama Titia found her at the desk transcribing during the day.

I did not talk at length with Mama Titia about the situation, but it seemed clear that from her point of view, she had an extra set of hands to call on to help her get her work done. This help was even more important at that time because not only did she have two houseguests, but also as

the drought deepened, several families from the Embolei sub-location had temporarily migrated with their herds to the Enkeryian area where the foothills were still covered with grass. The migrants built temporary *enkagitis* with sticks and plastic; some of these folks, extended family and kin, came to Mama Titia's house for supper and tea.<sup>222</sup> That Maria was obligated to work for me seemed not to enter her mind. For Maria's part, as much as she did not want to mop, she did not like to transcribe, and besides that, she felt obligated by rules for respecting elders to do what Mama Titia told her to do; in many ways, this obligation was much stronger than the one she had to me through our employment 'contract.' Eventually I had to intervene and explain to Mama Titia that I needed Maria to sit quietly and transcribe because that was the work she was being paid to do. She consented, of course, but when it was time to prepare dinner, Maria was called.

### III. Research Design and Methodology

#### A. *Negotiating research: my assumptions*

Researchers search for answers to questions. Yet, how we shape the approach we take to asking our questions and pursuing answers speaks to the philosophical assumptions we make about ourselves in the world. Critical and constructivist qualitative methodologies reflect the paradigmatic, theoretical, and practical commitments I make as a researcher and enable approaches to answering the questions that frame this study. I employ discourse analysis as a method or a technique for analyzing data but also as a perspective on social interaction and an approach to knowledge construction and power dynamics across histories, geographies, societies, and cultures

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<sup>222</sup> In an awkward miscalculation, Maria and I actually brought much less food with us to Mama Titia's house than we did to teacher's houses because we wrongly assumed that we would be on our own for most meals—which we planned to be peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and fruit. In fact, what we needed to have brought was multiple bags of the standard vegetables, salt, sugar and all the necessary sundries for three hot meals a day for several (10+ people), which was what Mama Titia prepared over an open fire.

(Daly 2007). The four essential assumptions that form the basis of the intellectual commitments and practical influences behind this study are:

1. The belief that the social construction of reality is a recursive process.
2. The idea that meaning-making is essential to the human condition and uncovering meaning is essential to understanding human and social phenomena (Scott 1986).
3. The recognition that social constructions and their meanings are historically, contextually, and materially based (Denizen and Lincoln 2000; Fine and Weis 2005; Scott 1986).
4. The belief that no research paradigm can be objective; rather, knowledge is co-produced through the interaction of the researcher and the researched (Agger 1991; Harding 2004; Smith 2005).

To a certain degree, the insider/outsider (emic/etic) divide inherent in positivist and postpositivist paradigms is blurred and complicated in constructivist, or what are often loosely labeled “postmodern,” approaches to social science projects by the ontological assumptions that undergird these paradigms (Daly 2007). As a qualitative researcher engaged in discourse analysis as both method and paradigm, I attempt to read the world as a text. With these assumptions above in mind, I can imagine a continuum of ethnographic immersion on which I would locate my study somewhere in the middle of long-term, full anthropologically required immersion and the drive-from-town-and-then-back-again development technician approach at the other end.<sup>223</sup> I worked to learn, via as many immediate pathways as possible, the historical, contextual, and material realities of daily life in the Kajiado Rift. I expected my subjective ways of seeing and being would be in play as I made interpretations during the daily process of research in Kenya and long after.

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<sup>223</sup> I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Mary Njeri Kinyanjui at the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi. She received me, but not warmly. Very soon in our conversation she informed me that she had little interest in being lectured on development in Kenya by a young American doctoral student. When I stuttered to explain that I was there to learn from her, which was the truth, she went on to tell me about “some woman from Harvard who alighted from the plane, came directly to [her]office, and proceeded to inform [Kinyanjui] about the issues.” The “Harvard woman” did not get very far with Dr. Kinyanjui (a Cambridge Ph.D herself) anyway.

Consequently, I self-consciously leveraged my assumptions in the pursuit of a rich and evocative story to house my observations and analyses. On the day that has framed my discussions throughout this chapter, I traveled with David as David travels several times a week—in the back of a pick-up truck from “the bush” to the swirling suburban mix of Nairobi’s southern edges. Although my perspective is inherently ‘outsider’ or *etic*, I worked to confound any reliance on this line of demarcation by attempting to enter local structures and world views and to foreground the interactive construction of interpretations via the process of qualitative inquiry.

Navigating a landscape of contradictions is then the stuff of ethnographic research. While moving through situations that seemed complex and unclear to me as an outsider in them, which is to say, while conducting research in Kenya, my basic methodology was simple: I paid a very particular kind of attention. In qualitative work, the researcher’s body is the instrument with which she sees, measures, experiments, analyzes, interprets, backtracks, and begins to conclude. It follows then that data analysis begins with the formulation of the research questions and continues throughout every literal step of the process; analysis is not a discreet ‘phase’ that stops and starts independent of other ‘phases’ such as “the write up phase.” For example, codes—the concepts or words that stand out or repeat in the iterative reading and dismantling of interview transcripts—command attention much earlier than after all the interviews have been transcribed (Maxwell 1996).

With discourse analysis as a defining rubric for organizing information, I spent as much time listening intently to language (careful to record metaphoric nuance, for example) as I did watching actions and behaviors. For me, as for most researchers engaged in ethnography, codes began to coalesce into themes and patterns stood out even in casual conversations with passengers on the pick-up *matau* as well as in formal interviews with schoolgirls; I had to be highly aware during all waking hours for insights to add to the more clearly acquired ‘data’ in the formal

interview transcripts. Qualitative researchers are, therefore, always categorizing, bracketing, connecting and configuring analytical threads throughout the process of research. These idea groupings are recorded, jotted, discarded, and reconsidered in the field notes, in the margins of typed transcriptions, in the drafting and redrafting of chapters.<sup>224</sup>

During his research in northern Kenya with a large nomadic community of Ariaal for two years during the Sahelian Famine of 1968-1976, anthropologist Eliot Fratkin literally lived “the long hunger” (*la’amai lo’odo*) (Fratkin 1998, 2).<sup>225</sup> Fratkin provides evocative images of learning to live ‘locally’ alongside his Ariaal compatriots. He was a young man in his mid-twenties, so rightly, he lived among the warriors (*il-murran*). During this time, in the rhythm of the place, an Ariaal maiden chose him to be her ‘boyfriend’ and lover; he learned how to ward off and live with fleas, ticks, and other exigencies of life lived close to livestock; he learned how to eat in keeping with warrior food taboos, pastoral practices and preferences and in drought conditions. Certainly a more explicitly visceral or ‘bodily’ experience than my own, Fratkin’s is an example of relying on the singular and rather intimate experience of the body as the primary instrument with which one

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<sup>224</sup> I kept eleven notebooks that together constitute my “field notes,” and in these I kept a running commentary on the research as well as collected observations. For example, not even a month into the Kenyan segment of the research, about a week after the carjacking, I noted in my field notes that the first sentence of the dissertation would be “Two weeks into the research for this dissertation I was carjacked along with two dear Kenyan friends on the road to their home in Runda.” It was not clear to me how the entire analysis would unfold, but it was clear that disparities within Kenya, made real to me in that incident, would be a central theme. Relatedly, in my first “formal” interview with Maria, which was actually a practice interview to test the original protocol, she indicated that she was neither a girl nor a woman but something “in between” because she identified herself as a “student” even though she was not formally enrolled in school. This comment caught my attention and curiosity; when it was echoed in the interviews with the younger schoolgirls, this ‘code’ became a primary organizing idea. See Appendices A-F for a detailed commentary on method.

<sup>225</sup> Ariaal are a pastoral society of northern Kenya who form a bridge culture between highland cattle-keeping Samburu (*IISambur*, *Maa* speakers) and lowland Rendille camel pastoralists (Cushitic speakers) distantly related to the Somali (Fratkin 1998).

can ‘crunch data’ (Fratkin 1991). Could he have gained an understanding of the mechanisms that Ariaal pastoralists use to adapt to drought without living the long hunger or becoming intimately enough enmeshed in the lifeways that a young woman would seriously chose him as her lover? Given the remoteness of Ariaal communities and the lack of documented studies of Ariaal societies at that time, it is easy enough to conclude that his immersion in Ariaal life, the length of his stay, fluency in the language, and a vested interest in his own survival were all crucial tools for data collection.

Even as I write the latter half of the previous sentence however, I am dissatisfied with the idea that his experience was only, or simply, about the collection of data, although that was certainly his purpose as a researcher. I imagine that the research experience must have been invested with more meaning than ‘only’ the collection of data to him and to the Ariaal who made him a part of their families. As I have discussed, qualitative research relies on a network of relationships iteratively worked out within already occurring structural relations. I want to believe that the Ariaal community that allowed him to live among them actually came to know him, and vice versa. It seems reasonable to me that his relationships in northern Kenya were more intimate and irreplaceable than the simple didactic equation of the researcher and the researched. Yet, I am self-conscious about the naiveté of such statements. After all, Fratkin, like any other outside researcher, is not Ariaal. He effectively *chose* to endure the long hunger; he could physically leave its potential peril, and with a subsequent long academic career as evidence, he eventually did. My desire for ‘something more’ from the didacticism of the researcher and the researched paradigm is rooted in my sense—and my observation—that the researcher and the researched are in a relationship that must necessarily be more dynamic and dimensional than it claims to be. I am nonetheless wary of sentimentalizing (and exoticizing) away the real power differentials that help to shape the researcher-researched dynamic. Like Fratkin, I left Kenya, and the uses I put my ‘data’ to

serve largely to change my circumstances, and not those of the individuals and families I came to know during my time there.<sup>226</sup>

Although my experience with the goat truck helped to localize my sensibilities (and, at least for a short time, my sense of self), unlike Fratkin, I was not living as an anthropologist would, in what David Kilusu would call a “traditional” homestead.<sup>227</sup> I did not live in an *enkajii* (cow dung house) or sleep on hides or live on sour milk or go for days drinking little water (a skill, I was told, Maasai have honed over generations). I relied on a household full of English speakers, a close water source for cooking and bathing, a flushing toilet, quality solar panels, bottled water hauled from town for drinking, and a private, secure living space. My days were fairly predictable. When I wasn’t walking to an interview, interviewing, cooking, writing, reading, sleeping, packing or talking with David or Alice or Maria in my house or theirs, I was listening to American country music on China Radio on Saturdays between school trips and hand washing my clothes in that messy, inefficient *mzungu* way that makes Kenyan women laugh outright.<sup>228</sup> When African honeybees and tent caterpillars (on separate occasions) invaded my metal house, I slept on Agnes and David’s couch. When the younger kids gathered around Agnes and her twelve-year-old daughter at night while they cooked in the *enkajii* she used as a kitchen, I sat in the smoky low

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<sup>226</sup> Although I, like I imagine many researchers in similar situations, have a long-standing connection still to many in the broader community of my research area and work, in conjunction with them, to raise funds and collect resources for certain projects. This is hardly commensurate with the fact that the research I conducted forms the basis for my livelihood here in the U.S.

<sup>227</sup> In fact, the Kilusos referred to their *enkang* as a “modified traditional” homestead. For example, the cows and smallstock (sheep and goats) were corralled in separate enclosures, divided from the ‘human’ space of the compound by chain link fencing, as opposed to in the center of the homestead with family living spaces around the edges. Many of my Maasai guests preferred the dung and stick architecture of the “traditional” home to the metal “hut” I lived in because the latter was so hot.

<sup>228</sup> Swahili for foreigner, white person.

room and laughed along with everyone when the 4-year-old fell asleep on his sister's lap with his *chapti* still hanging from his lips.

Despite my peripheral immersion by anthropological standards, from the local point of view, I integrated myself well enough to be recognized, welcomed, and assisted. I often found the 'sweet spots' of field work when I felt 'at home,' in the uncanny way of being both out of—and also solidly in—my element. More than one person told me, "I see you in Parsoi's vehicle—you are one of us!" or when I greeted elders (both men and women) by lowering my head and looking at the ground so they could lightly touch the crown of my head, they greeted me back by saying "Enkerai aii," or "my child." Some even gently petted me as if they thought this might be their only chance to touch a *mzungu's* hair. Sometimes young boys tried to take advantage of what they supposed to be my ignorance of social graces and when they found me alone on the path, one would break from the pack and race toward me, only to stop abruptly, stand erect, and thrust his right hand toward me for a shake. Only when I laughed and said "ah, ah, *hapana wewe*," would he demur and lower his head for me to touch him as my elders had touched me.<sup>229</sup> According to

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<sup>229</sup> Swahili, but basic enough for young kids to understand: "Ah, ah, no, you." During my first trip to a Maasai areas in 2002, I was put-off by this 'heading' greeting as I interpreted it as demeaning, particularly because circumcised young women continue 'to head' elders of both sexes while their male age-mates grow out of this social expectation and as social adults are allowed to greet other adults without the demurring affect of a child. Indeed, on this recent extended trip I encountered many awkward situations in which men in their 20s and 30s expected me to 'head' them; inevitably I would explain that I was, I guessed, actually *older* than they might have expected, and usually I was right. In these cases, as my 'age-mates' or even more appropriately, as the 'age-mates' of my husband, we could comfortably shake hands. Over the course of the research, however, I began to appreciate the opportunity to show my respect for my obvious elders, particularly men and women who were either clearly grandparents or were older and in positions that required signs of respect like head teachers or friends' fathers or mothers. In a way, I combined my own 'cultural' practices with Maasai norms to define my behavior when in Maasailand. In town however, when met Maasai professionals, I usually shook men's hands because they usually offered them as per the rules of non-Maasai etiquette. In Runda, I often walked the 5 kilometers from the Otieno's house to Village Market for a once-monthly plate of cashew chicken at the Chinese restaurant, and once I passed a security guard for one of the big homes seated on a stoop. His missing bottom middle tooth and red plaid *shuka* (blanket) betrayed him as Maasai; his wrinkled face and graying hair



Maasai custom, only a circumcised man (and not boys) can greet someone with a handshake instead of 'heading' as a sign of respect.

In other words, I was present and alive to the pulse of life even when I didn't understand everything happening around me, and certainly not from an emic point of view. And while a qualitative paradigm requires a certain openness to the vagrancies of experience, including surprise, ambiguity, and discomfort (physical, emotional, intellectual, even ethical), the job of the researcher is also about building interpretations based on evidence—that evidence which is not 'found' but which is co-created in the process of conducting (and in many cases, living) the research. My job as a social scientist is to generate meanings and present them to others (my audience) about the experience I had, but much more than that, the experiences of the participants to the study had—as they themselves endeavor to convey their perspectives and experiences to me. In this dissertation I have generated a textual version of the “ ‘dialectic interplay’ between the subjective meaning of people’s experiences described in everyday language” and my own “reconstructions of that reality using emerging concepts and interpretations” that are effectively “constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene” (Schutz 1971, 6 qtd in Daly 2007:211). As the schoolgirls in our interviews positioned themselves by framing a narrative for me to hear, likewise I learned to confront misgivings, misinterpretations, and emerging ideas as interpretive choices that positioned me in the process as well.

#### *B. Limitations of the research*

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betrayed his age. To his initial confusion and ultimate delight, I 'headed' him in greeting instead of just muttering “*jambo*” in passing. He greeted me back appropriately by touching the top of my head and smiling silently.

The opportunity to interview girls in each school in the division dramatically expanded the reach of the case study, and in some senses, undermined its depth. Under the framework of the new design, I planned to interview ten girls ages 12-20 in each school for a total of 100 girls.

Contrary to my original plan to drill down in Lood-ariak for several months, the new plan allowed for having only three to four days at each school. This logistical fact curtailed the possibility of longer follow-up interviews. Given both the distance between school and home for many children, and the labor requirements for girls in particular, it was not possible to meet with the girls before or after school or on the weekends.<sup>230</sup> We were also reluctant to take any time away from the girls' short lunch break.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, every girl interviewed had to miss her lessons to talk with us.

With these constraints in mind, we were still able to schedule each interview for approximately 60 minutes, and many surpassed this.

The interview conditions were less than ideal in more ways. The schools in this study are resource-strapped. None of them had adequate classroom space or staffroom space (with the exception of Oloseos Primary which had an exceptionally large and functional teacher staff room). All of them were dusty, hot, and loud.<sup>232</sup> We needed a private space to conduct the interviews, and

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<sup>230</sup> These restrictions were even more rigid in the months leading up to the class 8 Kenya Certificate of Primary Exam in December. All participants in the study who were also studying for this exam were using every second of her time at school to do so.

<sup>231</sup> Although no one said this to me outright, parents in pastoral areas, particularly in times of drought and food insecurity, often enroll children in school and try to keep them there because they will be fed (KFSSG 2008).

<sup>232</sup> Two sub-locations in particular come to mind: Embolei and Ensonura. Embolei Primary School is approximately 25 kilometers southeast off the Magadi Road into the interior, and Ensonura Primary School is located directly on the Magadi Road and is the last school in Ngong division before Magadi division begins. When we visited Embolei in late November, most families had migrated for greener pastures, and the school started buying water that would be delivered in various jerry cans in the back of a small pick up truck and then dumped into a holding tank. The dust in Embolei was incredibly thick; it seems like everything at all times was coated with cocoa powder. We fell in with the teachers in terms of water use—we had one small bucket of water

all of the sites were as accommodating as they could be, but in many cases, just the basic distractions of strong winds banging loose metal roofs against wooden frames, teachers themselves yelling over the wind in the next classroom over, and young children gathering in doorways to peer in, intense heat, and very softly spoken interviewees complicated already complicated interviews. We packed as many interviews into the school day as we could; typically we talked to five-seven girls each day we stayed a school, depending on how many days we had and how many girls were on the roster. In two schools, Enkoreroi (a new school opened in 2000) and Ensonura, we interviewed boys because there weren't enough girls in the age range to interview.

Similarly, the original plan to follow the participants in school and at home was thwarted for several, primarily logistical, reasons. Most students lived on average three kilometers from the school, so walking to and from their homes would have taken considerable time out of our already tight schedules at the schools. Over the course of the research period, the drought intensified into the dry season after the short rains fell sparsely and sporadically, and many families migrated throughout the district and beyond in search of water and grazing for livestock.<sup>233</sup> Most school children were left with families who had not migrated, but some were pulled from school to follow their parents, and some transferred to schools closer to the areas they migrated to. Parents were hard to find in these circumstances.

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between us for bathing. Similarly, we visited Ensonura in late January where we experienced what residents call the “Ensonura rain”—enormous dust storms kicked up by hot winds. The temperatures in each location easily reached or exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit, but no one had a thermometer to document it.

<sup>233</sup> According to estimates, grazing distances have risen to 15-25 kilometers in the past 2 years and short rains have decreased and drought (an ensuing food insecurity) is entrenched. While Maasai pastoral zones are far from the epicenters of postelection violence that erupted in December 2007, in many cases pastoralists were unable to access dry season grazing lands and markets in neighboring conflict zones, and are still feeling the affects of this reduction today (KFSSG 2008).

Additionally, from the inception of the study, I was assured by everyone I discussed my research with that I did not need to talk to fathers but to concentrate on mothers because, they reasoned, mothers know their daughters well and fathers would have very little to say on the subject.<sup>234</sup> The 14 mothers I spoke to had a great deal to say concerning their own expectations of education for their daughters and for their families in general.<sup>235</sup> However, it became clear as we spoke to the girls themselves that fathers play very large roles in the education of their daughters, and indeed, fathers have a large stake in determining the life course choices in their daughters' lives. Further study on this topic requires more attention to father's perceptions of their daughters' relationship to education and development. Additionally, a more comprehensive study would systematically gather data from the entire division, which would mean all of the schools in all nine locations, including the urban centers of Kiserian, Ngong Town, and Ongata Rongai.

Lastly, funding constraints stipulated that this study be confined, and as a result, I did not interview schoolboys about girls' education or shifting gender ideologies. Understanding gender requires understanding the relational production of male and female subject-positions and identities. Further research will expand and enrich the data set by focusing on fathers and sons.

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<sup>234</sup> Customarily, once girls grow past around 10 years old, their relationships with their fathers shifts from an explicitly loving and often emotionally close relationship, to a more formalized performance (Archambault 2009; Talle 1988). For instance, according to tradition, if a Maasai father plans to sleep in the home his daughter(s) also sleeps in (in other words, with her mother), if the girls are older than 10 or 11, the daughter(s) must find somewhere else to sleep. In the past, they would have "gone with the morans"—the *e-manyatta* where *il-murran* lived alone with only itinerate mothers for cooking and their "sweethearts," young girls from ages 10, 11 and upward until circumcision. In recent times, teachers and others complain that when girls have to go find sleeping arrangements, they end up "cheated" by men into having sex.

<sup>235</sup> The mothers I interviewed were mostly in the Lood-ariak area because I was living there and could arrange to meet them more easily and because the availability of water made it easier for families to stay throughout the drought.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***Disruptive Discourses:***

#### **Maasai Schoolgirls Make Themselves**

*“There is no doubt that childhoods are changing among the Maasai.”*

Caroline Archambault (2009)

*“According to Maasai, if you are not in school, you will be circumcised, then you are married so you are called a woman.”*

Maasai schoolgirl, 14, Eremite Primary School (November 2007)

*H: “So I am asking you: now, do you consider yourself a girl or a woman, entito or enkitok?”*

*J: “Now, I am a student.”*

Maasai schoolgirl, 16, Lood-ariak (December 2008)

In the Foreword to Naomi Kipury’s *Oral Literature of the Maasai* (1983), Reverend John T. Mpaayei expresses his clear delight that the riddles, narratives, proverbs, songs and poetry of Maasai oral literature have been collected for the benefit of all Maasai and all Kenyans. He notes the usefulness of the “running English translation” for “urbanized Maasai children” and others who may not read *Maa*. But his most striking comment is this:

It is interesting to recall that it took us Maasai Christian people, including Naomi’s father, Mr. Godfrey Kimoisa ole Kipury, and the late Gideon Saina ole Mpoke, Jason Kirruti ole Sein, and John Ntoyai ole Muturi, the late Reverend Daudi Mokinyo ole Loolpisia and others, ten years to obtain an official agreement from the then colonial administration and the Maasai chiefs of the time, to let us open the first primary school for Maasai girls, which we did in May 1959. The efforts of Ms. Kipury and those of the other girls from that school have made our efforts worthwhile (no page number).

As chapter 2 argued, the exigencies of the historical provision of formal education in Kenya Maasailand have produced over time a contradictory discourse around the institution of schooling that frames the hopes and fears the schoolgirls in this study express and that I discuss in this chapter. The Reverend’s comments are part of the contradictory discourse; his affirmations stand now, as they must have mid-century, in sharp contrast to a persistent negative vein of popular sentiment

and rhetorical idiom around girls' education today, from inside and outside of Maasailand. On the one hand, given the relatively slow assimilation of Maasai into mainstream schooling from the colonial period onward, Maasai ambivalence towards schooling throughout the process, the persistent political and economic marginality of most rural Maasai, and the enduring narratives of Maasai "otherness" and resistance to modernity, many Kenyans believe, as the contractor's comments in chapter 2 made clear, that Maasai have always "hated" education and still do.<sup>236</sup> On the other hand, the people I talked to in the Kajiado Rift, like the young teacher Gabriel and so many others, want nothing short of universal access, enrollment, attainment, achievement, and completion, for girls and boys, beyond secondary school and through the highest reaches of tertiary study. Rather than resisting education and the 'modern' life it is supposed to offer as the result of completing school, there is a strong and growing chorus of support for ensuring that all Maasai girls attend school alongside their brothers.

These days, affirmative statements about education are not atypical in Maasailand; indeed, assertions of "*Elimu ni mwangaza*" are on the tip of every tongue and inscribed on the side of many schoolhouses.<sup>237</sup> All of the schoolgirls we talked to expressed similar affirmative sentiments and were hard-pressed to imagine any 'negative' effects of education in Kenya. What is more, most of the schoolgirls we talked with expressed a keen awareness of their situated positions, *vis-à-vis*

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<sup>236</sup> Kim Foulds, a UCLA Africanist in the Department of Comparative Education, conducted interviews in March 2009 with primary school children in the urban Kitale in western Kenya (Nyanza Province) in order to ascertain how children see and think about gendered images in primary school textbooks. In a personal communication about the research she said that more than one (non-Maasai) child pointed to images of "huts" in textbooks and explained to her that 'backward' people like Maasai live in houses like these while another portrait of a woman who does not appear to be wearing a brassiere elicited a similar response. Part of the "hate" discourse is this notion of being behind in development, or 'backward' thinking and living as opposed to 'forward' or modern thinking. There is also an implication in these statements, hinting at the "otherness" stereotype, that Maasai *prefer* to be 'behind' living in "huts" and wearing "traditional" clothes.

<sup>237</sup> Swahili for "education is light."

education, in today's development zone. In every interview we asked, "Why is education important to you in your life?" Jane's response emblematically consolidates many of the reoccurring themes across the interviews. She said, "[Education] makes me learn more and understand much more about myself than I used to. It will help to get a job. Through education I will be able to communicate with different people from all over the country. It is important because you never know where you will land in life." Similarly, her cohort, Nasarean said that education is important to her "because in the world of Kenya that we are in now, everything we do is about education... That even the job you get, you must be learned, you must know both English and Kiswahili... according to many Kenyan jobs, they require certificate from primary and secondary school, and now good jobs call for qualified people."

Although most of the time their actual voices were barely louder than a whisper, I cannot type these comments here, listen to the recordings, or read the transcripts without cheering loudly for the girls speaking. Given the fame of "the Maasai," it is reasonable to assert that anyone (including most Kenyans, like the contractor) would read these statements and nod in surprise at these girls' sense of agency and acuity.<sup>238</sup> The figure of the un- and under-educated Maasai girl looms large in general discourse about African 'backwardness' and 'traditional cultures.' Against this figuring, and in the context of the popular rhetoric around the endurance of 'traditional' Maasai social forms, particularly gender and generational relations, these statements by girls about who they are and can be, in concert with accompanying schoolgirl actions, effectively constitute

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<sup>238</sup> This reference to Maasai 'fame' is to the opening sentence in Thomas Spear's (1993) introduction to *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, edited by Spear and Richard Waller, in which he asserts, "Everyone 'knows' the Maasai" (1). He goes on, "Men wearing red capes while balancing on one leg and a long spear, gazing out over the semi-arid plains stretching endlessly to the horizon, or women heavily bedecked in beads, stare out at us from countless coffee-table books and tourist snap shots. Uncowed by their neighbors, colonial conquest, or modernization, they stand in proud mute testimony to a vanishing African world... Or so we think. Reality is, of course, much different" (1).

disruptive discourses—ways of speaking, thinking, and behaving that challenge expected norms and actively reconfigure what is possible as social fact in contemporary life.

That these girls' comments can be understood as articulations of young, female agency and from this, an indication of potentially changing gender and generational formations in Maasai communities in favor of women and girls, is a response made possible by various discourses in contention. I argue that an affirmative response to these statements is rooted in the enduring image of the pastoralist elder honed throughout Kenyan history and alive and well today in tourist brochures, coffee table books, Kenyan textbooks, in the broader Kenyan consciousness, and, to some degree, in the daily life experiences of Maasai individuals—the recalcitrant patriarch, *rungu* on his belt, spear in hand, lording over his many wives and many children, his cattle and small stock among them (Hodgson 2001a).<sup>239</sup> Yet, the enduring trope of the authoritarian father makes sense precisely because he is flanked by his foil—his daughter, the 'girl-child.' The schoolgirls in this study are in fact 'girl-children' as the development discourse defines them, and as I will go on to describe. At the same time, as I talked to girls, the more it became clear that within this rather limited category of 'girl-child,' the schoolgirls Maria, Alice and I spoke with actually see themselves as something else as well. They see themselves in fact, as 'schoolgirls,' and it is about the distinguishing characteristics of this subject-position that the analysis in this chapter focuses on.

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<sup>239</sup> A similar construct has had considerable play in academic understandings of Maasai, too. Also, as Hodgson (2001a) and others (for example, Hughes 2006) argue, Maasai themselves have capitalized on this image, particularly when it comes to marketing for tourists. This is certainly in evidence when Maasai schoolboys who, short of circumcision, do not practice "warriorhood" in any real sense, dress in costume including weaving braids into their own hair, to dance "warrior dances" at safari lodges. They effectively perform "Maasai-ness" in ways that sitting in desks and reading books would not, according to the stereotype. A *rungu* is a club, like a knobkerrie, that can be plain or elaborately beaded; it is iconically associated with Maasai *il-murran* and used as a weapon. There is also a ceremonial *rungu* that Maasai men carry to speak in front of groups and gesticulate with. Former Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi, a Kalenjin, is famous for carrying a gold tipped ivory *rungu* when speaking in public (Wrong 2008).



Moreover, the increasingly bygone scripts ascribed to Maasai ‘fathers’ and ‘daughters’ (and by extension, ‘wife,’ ‘mother,’ ‘son,’ ‘brother,’ and ‘husband’) are also changing, largely as the result of a confluence of factors that involve girls’ participation in schooling, and with these shifting categories, however slightly, so shifts gendered relations of power (Hodgson 2001c).

The local commentaries I heard and observed are framed by, and in response to, the ‘global’ conversation around girls’ education and economic development in Africa and the developing world as a whole. In chapter 3, I use selected studies from the large empirical literature on girls’ education in development zones in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to highlight the actual benefits of schooling for girls and the primary reasons why education for girls is unanimously supported and increasingly promoted by development actors at all scales. I also agree that education provides positive benefits to all children and that girls and boys should be equally and equitably equipped to develop and utilize their full potential.

At the same time, my analysis foregrounds evidence of the contradictory effects of educational access and attainment at the local level that the affirmative discourse obscures and often occludes. While I do not dispute the practical necessities of education for girls in general and rural Maasai girls in particular, I hope to complicate the seamless rhetoric concerning formal schooling as a neutral public good in order to open up the complex conversation about educational access and attainment in Kenya, as elsewhere, today. As development imperatives themselves have shifted within late capitalism, the neoliberal discourse of individual achievement, personal responsibility, and being ‘at the ready’ when ‘opportunity strikes’ for private gain finds a comfortable home in the “*world of Kenya that we are in now*” because “*you never know where you will land in life.*” Education, these girls believe, is the only achievement that will qualify them to successfully live in their world. Because the figure of *the schoolgirl* as an idea, and an entity, is increasingly presupposed by the primary question (How to make development effective and sustainable?) and the recurring answer

(Educate a girl!) for the development of resource-poor contexts, I believe that understanding the contradictions that configure her existence are integral to ensuring that as she is instrumentalized, she is not lost in process.

The themes of contradiction, paradox and ambivalence around Maasai identities vis-à-vis development and education generated in the previous chapters on the larger theoretical (introduction), historical (chapters 1 and 2), empirical (chapter 3), and methodological (chapter 4) contexts of the study, find particular and localized referents in this chapter. Maasai schoolgirls' perceptions about who they are and what they can become and the roles education and development take in their everyday lives raised several significant questions that frame this chapter. In addition to orienting my analysis here, these questions also serve to ballast my own thinking about future research directions. This chapter provides some preliminary answers to some of these questions, while other possible answers (and questions) are only hinted at here and require more time with schoolgirls and formal interviews with schoolboys.

As the schoolgirls' narratives analyzed here indicate, *being Maasai*, *being female*, and *being educated* are strands of the unified subject position that all of the participants to this study seek. How have these once putatively mutually exclusive, or at least locally counterintuitive, categories become pervasively (and persuasively) contemporaneous? Given these changing social norms along axes of gender and generation, what is the relationship between formal schooling and increased, instead of decreased, marginality? Or stated differently, what kinds of new exclusions are created by the schooling imperative? Are the margins of marginality being redrawn, or simply being reinscribed? How is it that education is seen as a way out for girls today, yet as a 'way out' of certain cultural forms, why and how is not necessarily a way 'in' to the alternative forms they seek? How is this process of becoming educated also paradoxical—in which gain is loss and loss is gain?

This chapter examines the practical construction and effects of the local discourses of Maasai primary school students in play within the global debate around gender and development by considering three interlocking dynamic tensions: 1) the schoolgirl as the alter ego to the “girl-child,” 2) the schoolgirl as a neoliberal subject, and 3) the schoolgirl as the “new *enkanyakuai*.” The Maasai schoolgirl category considered here comes from her construction in and across the 98 interviews we conducted with primary schoolgirls attending the nine schools located in nine sub-locations of the study area. Through the course of these interviews, observations, and everyday life in Kenya, I began to realize the importance and possible implications of schoolgirl category as a sociologically emergent fact of Maasai life. In this chapter, I discuss how Maasai schoolgirls discursively produce versions of the unified subject position they seek by creating their own identities linguistically (through the language they use to describe themselves and their current situations) and practically (through the actions they take with reference to school). I illustrate the ways in which the discursive formation of the ‘schoolgirl’ positively distorts the common image of “the girl-child,” disrupts conventional Maasai gender categories and creates new hybrids, and galvanizes a sense of agency for those girls who attend and persist in school despite the odds. I question, however, the limits of this disruptive discursive formation and its everyday practice. Even as the schoolgirl category breaks with ‘traditional’ gender formations as the myth of Maasainess has defined them, elements of this new category appear to reify the requirements of a neoliberal subjectivity in ways that could work against structural change for Maasai women.<sup>240</sup>

These tensions are intrinsic to the development zone, particularly as the discourse of individual empowerment meets the materialities of economic decline (Mukudi 2004).

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<sup>240</sup> See Marnina Gonick’s (2006) illustrative examination of the production of the “neoliberal girl subject” in a western context in “Between ‘Girl Power’ and ‘Reviving Ophelia’: Constituting the neoliberal girl subject.”

## I. Being Maasai, being female, being educated

As Reverend Mpaayei's statement demonstrates, the chorus of voices in favor of girls' education is not altogether new; not *all* Maasai have *always* "hated" education, and to be more precise, not *all* Maasai fathers have *always* "refused" education for their daughters. His comments suggest that as early as 1949, and likely earlier, "Christian Maasai" elders acted to expand education to include girls. They were well aware no doubt of the first secondary school for African girls and young women in Kenya, African Girls High School, opened in Kikuyu in 1949, and these men clearly wanted to see Maasai girls continue from primary to secondary by attending what was, and still is, a prestigious institution.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, their accomplishment, the African Inland Church Girl's Primary School near Isinya in Kajiado district (about 40 kilometers south of Nairobi on the Kaputei Plains), is still going strong.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Now called Alliance Girl's High School (AGHS), the school is known as the sister school to Alliance High School (AHS), the first secondary school for Africans in Kenya, which admitted only boys/young men when it opened in 1926. AHS was started by the Alliance of Protestant Churches including The Church of Scotland Mission (later known as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa), Church of the Province of Kenya, the African Inland Mission, and the Methodist Church. As Anderson (1970) notes about AHS, "during its early period it provided tangible evidence to an African community, disillusioned by settler/official intrigue and determining to stand on its own, that at least some Europeans were prepared to work genuinely, if rather cautiously, for African development" (23). Sheffield (1973) says that "although the first years of study at Alliance High School consisted of a 'literary' curriculum, including English, arithmetic, and general science, the emphasis after the third year was distinctly vocational, in keeping with the general belief in the African's limited intellectual capacity" (24). At independence, the curriculum changed to offer a full course of academically focused, college preparatory classes for Kenya's new elite and those non-elites who make the grade and can rustle the fees. As far as AGHS is concerned (referred to as "Alliance"), several of the girls in this study said that is where they dream of attending secondary school. Notable alumnae include Lucy Kibaki, current First Lady, MP Charity Ngilu and first ever female presidential candidate in Kenya, and Professor Olive Mugenda, first female chancellor of a public university, Kenyatta University.

<sup>242</sup> Notably, an online news story indicates that in 2000 the boarding school was designated a FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists) Center of Excellence and a "rescue center" for girls fleeing forced early marriage and excision (FGM: "female genital mutilation"). The author states that in 2000 when she visited the school, of the 706 girls in enrolled, 217 "were rescued from

At the same time, the idea that Maasai men, particularly fathers, either refuse, resist, or sacrifice their daughters' education is alive and well in most of rural Maasailand and was evident in the narratives we collected in this study. It is also evident in practice that someone, and fathers or elder male proxies (often the mother's brother) are usually named, keep children, and particularly girls, out of school or cut short girls' education by arranging their marriages toward the end of primary school.<sup>243</sup> From my observations and understanding, there are fewer girls than boys, particularly in 'upper primary' (standards 5-8), in all nine primary schools in Keekonyokie Central Location, fewer girls than boys advance through to complete primary, and fewer girls than boys continue on to secondary.<sup>244</sup> Yet, the numbers are not shockingly disparate as the boys' numbers are also fairly low, but rising. Kajiado district, as a whole, shows a steady increase in enrollment of

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FGM, early marriage, poverty and sexual abuse” but she does not indicate of these students what percentage are Maasai. One of the girls featured in the piece who ran away from home and ended up at the school is Pokot, another pastoralist/agro-pastoralist society, even smaller in population than Maasai, living primarily in the northern Rift Valley of Kenya and parts of Uganda.

See: <http://ip-216-69-164-44.ip.secureserver.net/ipp/guardian/2009/05/04/135943.html>

<sup>243</sup> The reasons for keeping girls out of school likely vary and likely have more to do with economic constraints than cultural ones. Conversations with men who have “married off” their daughters are necessary to get a sense for these reasons. Nonetheless, from the most of the girls' point of view, more boys than girls go to school because some Maasai men “want only cows”—boys bring cows by 1) marrying and 2) earning money in wage sector employment, whereas girls, they say, are more likely to produce cows by way of bride wealth. Among the girls in school, all said that unlike these men (fathers, uncles, brothers), their own fathers (and often mothers are cited) “have seen the benefits” of educating all children, and for some, particularly girls, when their children use their wage sector employment to “help” the parents (usually in the form of paying for younger siblings' education).

<sup>244</sup> According to the Government of Kenya (2007), there were 81,098 students enrolled in primary school in Kajiado district in 2006. 37,949 were girls, for a net enrollment rate (NER) of 61.9% and a gross enrollment rate (GER) of 78.4%. 43,148 were boys, for an NER of 64.8% and a GER of 87.7%. That same year, only 9,777 students were enrolled in secondary; 4,075 were girls, and 5,702 were boys. By way of comparison, the district with the highest primary GER in Kenya in 2006 was Homa Bay, with a total GER of 154%; the lowest was Wajir district (Somali nomads) at 20.8%. Total GER for Kajiado was 83.1%. Homa Bay had 321 primary schools; Kajiado has 284, and Wajir had 89.

both sexes, and Kenya as a whole is considered to have reached gender parity in enrollments across primary and secondary education.<sup>245</sup> Nonetheless, as the chorus rises in affirmation of the benefits of education for all Maasai children, and particularly for girls, the opportunities to enter the upwardly mobile flow of modern sector employment are dwindling and thus threaten the primary reason most children and parents seek formal schooling in the first instance. As chapters 2 and 3 argue, the rise in demand is tied to the evidence of actual benefit that families and girls see around them, but also to the powerful “economy of statements” that accompany these positive changes. It seems that sooner than later, the salience of the statements will outstrip the actual capacity of the ‘real’ economy to absorb all the girls (and boys) who come to school expecting to reap the benefits of education.

A. *“[My parents] removed me from among their children”*

Emily Nashipae stood out from the other schoolgirls gathered in the Olepolos Primary School classroom because she was a good head taller than the rest, but more than this, she made eye contact and generously introduced herself. At my request, as we arranged in every school, the head teacher assembled the 13 girls we would interview over the course of the following few days for a

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<sup>245</sup> In terms of primary total gross enrollment rates (GER), in 2002 Kajiado reported 63.8%, in 2006, after the advent of Free Primary Education (FPE), this rate increased to 83.1%. GER for girls in Kajiado increased from 59.6% in 2002 to 78.4% in 2006, while boys’ rates increased from 67.8% to 87.7%, in 2002 and 2006 respectively. By comparison, pastoralist areas in the vast ASALs of Eastern, Northeastern, and northern Rift Valley provinces and non-pastoral communities in Coast province are much more dire straits in terms of gross enrollment rates (GER) generally, and girls in particular. The primary GER for girls in North Eastern Province in 2006 was 20.5%, whereas the national average was 105%. The girls’ secondary GER in North Eastern in 2006 was 3.6% whereas the national average, which is still dreadfully low, was still over 8 times as high at 29.9%. Oxfam (2005) found that children, but particularly girls, in North Eastern Province are the Kenyans most at risk for never attending school. The inhabitants of this area primarily include various clans and sub-clans of Somali nomadic and semi-nomadic livestock keepers (cattle, goats, and camels) (Leggett 2005).

group meeting. The sparkle in her eye was hard to miss as Alice and I introduced ourselves and explained the research; when invited, Nashipae and her friends asked us questions for over an hour, and she was a clear ‘leader’—confident, assertive, and anxious to use her English with an American. As Maasai would say, you could tell very quickly that Nashipae was “*kitok*” (big).<sup>246</sup> Her ‘bigness’ was in part explained by her age; we learned that she was 17 years old and in Class 6 (6<sup>th</sup> grade). More aptly, we also learned, her ‘bigness’ seemed to come from the emotionally painful events of her recent history that forced her to come to terms with adult circumstances even more quickly and abruptly than many Maasai children, particularly those from homes in which schooling is prioritized and childhood, as a protected sociological space, is extended.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> According to Archambault (2009), Maasai parents’ perceptions of children’s growth is “non-linear and contingent on social and interpretive circumstances” (288). She goes on: “Maasai use the terms ‘big’ (*kitok*) and ‘small’ (*kinyi*) to refer not to chronological age or predetermined stages of growth but rather to children’s capabilities or maturity in different contexts. Children become ‘big’ in a particular domain when they are mature and capable enough to accomplish the respective task” (288). The girls we interviewed would often say, for example in answer to the question, “why is it better to wait until after you finish university to get married?”: “because I will be big.” In a similar but different vein, in a interview with a head teacher at another school (not Naishipae’s), Mr. Lang’at referred this way to the schoolgirl scheduled to be interviewed after he and I finished: “this girl who is coming now, she is grown, her body is big, she would make a good wife, but, she loves school.” Mr. Lang’at’s own ambivalence, the sense of being torn between two possible outcomes, is in evidence in his statement, pivoting on the “but” and is pinned to the girls’ relative “bigness” or his perception of the maturity of her actual body which bespeaks, he implies, her capabilities as a wife (/mother).

<sup>247</sup> Nashipae did not describe her experience as painful, but she did cry a little as she told her story; all three of us did. Archambault (2009), writing about corporeal punishment in Maasai primary schools in Kajiado district, asserts that Maasai parents, teachers, and students justify corporeal punishment for three reasons: “First, pain is seen to play a fundamental role in learning. Second, there is a symbolic connection between pain and adulthood. And finally, it embodies the social status and relationship between the practitioner and receiver” (290). She goes on to say that for Maasai, physical pain “represents future struggle” and moreover, “pain and personhood...are intimately interconnected” (291). As one female Maasai primary school teachers tells her, “...You cannot gain without lots of struggle. Struggle is power. If you want to be powerful, you need to struggle” (291). With this in mind, I submit that Nashipae had ‘grown’ and ‘learned’ through emotional, not physical, “struggle.” Further research into the emotional dimensions of ‘pain’ mapping from its physical necessity in Maasai world views is necessary to make this case any more strongly.

In answering the questions we posed in every interview, like all the girls, Nashipae told us bits and pieces of her personal story. Among them was a folk tale she had learned from the elders in her *enkang*. She, like nearly every girl we interviewed, asserted that there is “nothing” to be learned at home except household chores. But unlike anyone else, she also said that at home, a girl can learn Maasai “long ago tale[s].” We asked her to tell us a tale she had learned at home; she agreed, and had Alice crying with laughter over her elaborate rendition of the tale of “Mbiti, the girl who was collecting firewood and was met by a forest creature and taken [to his] home.”

As Nashipae tells it, Mbiti was young when the creature took her and hid her in his home, a hole in the ground. He kept her there “until she grew completely.” Each day he pricked her arm with a thorn to see if blood or fat came out; when her pricked skin bled oil, he knew she was fat enough to cook and eat. But Mbiti managed to leave the hiding place before this time came and encountered a crow. For a piece of *ugali*, the crow told her that she should apply ash all over her body so she could sneak away because the creature had been holding her until she was grown so he could eat her, and that time had come.<sup>248</sup> Meanwhile, the forest creature called all the other animals to a big feast.

There is a twist to the tale that is not clear in the transcript, but it seems that while Mbiti was away from the hiding spot, the creature’s mother crawled into the hole where Mbiti had been hidden. The mother waited for Mbiti to return so the “completely grown” girl could be eaten. By mistake, it seems, the creature’s mother became dinner instead, as Mbiti had managed to escape, disguised with ash.

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<sup>248</sup> *Ugali* is maize meal boiled in water until it is stiff; it is somewhat akin to polenta, except it is made from ground maize (like feed corn in the US) instead of sweet corn. Ugali is a staple food of cultivating societies in Kenya and is increasingly ubiquitous in Maasai households.



The story is a bit hard to follow in the transcript and on the recording because Nashipae tells her tale in Swahili with breaks in English, and Alice is laughing so hard she can barely translate. I have noted that we rushed on without really discussing the story because we were going to run out of time for the interview, and we had several questions yet to ask. I am not going to belabor a literary analysis of an incomplete folk tale that I only loosely triangulated. I have included it here, however, because of the obvious and vivid parallels it makes to Nashipae's own story of "escape," "rescue," and "disguise" (re-identification) and the lengths she was willing to go to leave her life at home and start a new life in school.

Nashipae's father has one wife and nine children—four girls and five boys.<sup>249</sup> Her sisters are all married; she was the only girl "left at home," while all of her brothers are in various stages of schooling, including one brother at Makerere University in Uganda. Nashipae explained that her "father never wanted to educate girls, only boys," so she knew that it was a matter of time before she would "be grown" and be "married off" like her sisters. At home she spent her time herding smallstock and helping her mother cook, clean, fetch water and firewood, and care for small children. She said that she "never wanted to be married" because her sister "was married by an old man and when he died she was left very young" so she "never wanted to get such problems." She indicated that her parents "do not know the importance of education and only wanted dowry."<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Maasai are 'traditionally' polygamous, and is still widely practiced, although not at the rates of past when a wealthy man may have five or more wives; today the average is probably closer to 2-3. Monogamy and serial monogamy is increasingly popular, particularly among educated and Christian people. Given that Nashipae's parents are not educated and her father is not a young man, it is notable that he has one wife. That he is allegedly interested in "dowry" (she means bride wealth) could indicate that he is a poor man, which might speak to his inability to secure more wives. See Talle (1988) for discussions of male poverty and marriage among Maasai.

<sup>250</sup> The use of the word "dowry" is interesting here. Nashipae is very bright and narrated her story in English, almost entirely without translation (except for the Mbiti tale). What she means to refer to is 'bride wealth,' or 'bride price', which refers to the goods given to the bride's family over time as a condition of the marriage arrangement. Dowry, on the other hand, is the goods the bride

Nashipae said her parents “usually believe that when a girl gets education she can’t go anywhere, only to class 8 or even form 4, get pregnant, and just go home.” In other words, it appears that her parents believe that investing in a girls’ education, through 8<sup>th</sup> grade or high school (form 4), is a wasted investment because a girl can become pregnant at anytime. Once she is pregnant, it is strongly believed that any benefits that may come from schooling are lost because she must be married and any assets she might bring accrue to her affinal family instead of her natal family that directly invested in her education.

As it turns out, her father had arranged her marriage as she predicted. She said, “he wanted to sell me to an old man so that I refused to go there. I came to school and talked to the headmaster about my problem, that my father was to give to me to somebody, and I didn’t want that because I want to learn. The headmaster helped me, and the following day I came to school. They [her parents] were very harsh to me [after that].”

When I followed up with the headmaster, he confirmed her story and filled in some of the details that Nashipae had omitted. The morning after she was informed that she would be soon married, Nashipae left the *enkang* with the goats like she did every day, but instead of herding them toward greener leaves and water, she walked with them all the way to the primary school.<sup>251</sup> When she reached the school and found the headmaster to explain her story, she had the herd of goats with her in the school compound. He told her to take the goats and go back home so she could not also be punished for taking or losing any of the family’s herd. He told her to say nothing to anyone but to rise in the morning before dawn and come back to the school. Meanwhile, he would arrange a place for her to board, admit her immediately to the school, and work on getting her the shoes,

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brings with her to her husband’s home. It is not clear to me how this word may have come to be a part of her vocabulary.

<sup>251</sup> A distance of easily 25 kilometers.

uniforms and school supplies she would need. According to him, she complied, and the next day she arrived at the school and has not gone back to family's home since. She was 14 at the time.<sup>252</sup>

Once her parents learned that she was living with a local teacher and attending the school, they came for her. Her father insisted that she would be “removed and give[n] to her husband.” The father's reputation and potential bride wealth were at stake, not to mention the very idea that the state could override his authority when it came to his daughter's future. But that is precisely what was threatened: “the headmaster said that if [the father] continue to say that [he will remove her] he is going to jail. So that pressure came down.” The headmaster also indicated that her family followed her and that the father was very angry. I asked about Nashipae's mother, and the head teacher said that she supported Nashipae and wanted her to go to school but “she had no otherwise.” In the end, the *mzee* gave in to the ‘pressure’ asserted by the headmaster and local elders who gathered to discuss the matter and find a solution without actually involving the police.<sup>253</sup> The family, it seems, has disowned Nashipae. As she put it, “*sasa*, they removed me from among their children.”<sup>254</sup>

## II. Schoolgirls make themselves

Over fifty years after Reverend Mpaayei and other *wazee* gathered to decide on educational provision for at least some Maasai girls, fathers and daughters (and in the background, husbands and

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<sup>252</sup> Nashipae entered class 1 (first grade) at 14; she was 17 at the time of the interview. She passed through 5 classes (grades) in three years because the school officials allowed her to skip large sections of the syllabus in order to catch-up to the proper standard for her age. While this is a common practice, it is also as common to see very over-age children in standards at all levels in primary and secondary.

<sup>253</sup> *Mzee* is Swahili for “old man” and “respected elder.”

<sup>254</sup> *Sasa* is Swahili for “now.”

mothers) are still the main characters in the schoolgirl stories related throughout the chapter.<sup>255</sup> Nashipae's story is not altogether rare; Maasailand resounds with stories of 'runaway' girls fleeing "FGM" and arranged marriage and 'rescued' girls finding refuge in schools. Yet, she had the most dramatic story of all the schoolgirls I spoke with. For many of the girls involved in this study, the adults around them strongly supported their education; many of her cohort came to school from families who sacrificed themselves to prioritize education; some fathers (or both parents) withstood criticism for educating their daughters. While support for girls' education has broadened as it has deepened, it is not entirely clear that communities are prepared for concomitant changes in gender roles that often, to varying degrees and effects, accompany changes in institutional access based on sex. Given the imbrications of gender and generation in African contexts, contemporary gender troubles are also inflected by concerns over shifting generational power. Gender and generational dramas of education-as-development are one of the primary venues through which the collision of Africans' "desire" for modernity's promise fulfilled and the actual "decline" not only in economic prospects and possibilities, but also in certain kinds of social power, are enacted (Mukudi 2004; Varvus 2003).

From and within anxieties around educational opportunities, 'culture' is reasserted as a primary signifier, at least in the way young girls describe their current realities and their future aspirations. Consequently, in Nashipae's narrative, her parents come across as cultural stereotypes in a familiar, somewhat cynical strain of the discourse of girls' education that parallels the affirmative variant reductively embodied by 'girl power': the greedy patriarch who is ignorant of education, 'hungry for cows,' and will likewise 'eat' his daughter to secure his supper and the empathetic but powerless and subservient mother. Her parents are foiled by the heroic head

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<sup>255</sup> *Wazee* is Swahili for old men, respected elders (s. *mzee*).

master, a local elder, but also an agent of the state, who takes Nashipae in to the school fold, protects her from her own family, and makes possible the life she deserves. Of course, the actual story is much more complex and poignant than these caricatures allow. It is nonetheless within the idiom of ‘culture’ and ‘custom,’ mapped to gendered norms of generational behavior, that Nashipae’s ‘wayward’ (Hodgson 2001c) actions are couched. What remains hidden behind claims to cultural normativity are the economic pressures that were likely factors in her parents’ decision-making.

Nashipae’s own role is more equivocal. In her desperation to escape her father’s decision to marry her at 14 against her will, Nashipae is a quintessential “girl-child” as the discourse defines her. In the large literature on education in developing contexts it is not easy to find references to “the boy-child,” whereas “the girl-child” has become a ubiquitous refrain in the development discourse (Croll 2006).<sup>256</sup> “The girl-child” is a generalized and essentialized perpetual victim who is the victim of three interlocking conditions of this subject position: her age, her sex, and the socially constructed gender requirements that configure her possibilities. The phrase was put to widespread use as development terminology in publications following the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995.<sup>257</sup> The Platform for Action is the paradigmatic

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<sup>256</sup> Although one does find plenty of references to ‘youth.’ Youth is almost always a way of speaking about males between the ages of approximately 16 and 30 (de Boeck & Honwana 2005; Waller 2006).

<sup>257</sup> Review of Google Scholar searches suggests that the phrase “girl-child” in scholarly titles earlier than 1990 seems to come out of various Asian contexts, specifically China and India, and is tied to research, awareness campaigns, and activism around certain practices and outcomes including pre-birth sex selection, the rise of associated technologies, infanticide, and worsening sex-ratios at birth, dowry-related deaths, and son-preference. Elisabeth Croll’s (2006) article in *Third World Quarterly* is the only source I have yet found that singles out the phrase “girl child” as a discreet “rubric” in development circles (1285). Her analysis bears my observation out. She lists a variety of initiatives in India in late 1980s and 1990s including, for example, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation’s designation of the 1990s as the “Decade for the Girl Child” and the National Expert Group on the Girl Child in China. She indicates further that in the 1990 UNICEF’s

document of the UN's Decade for Women, 1975-1985; it is the first document of its stature that singles out the "girl-child" as a target in need of singular interventions (Croll 2006).

The Platform's Mission notes that "the girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow" and the "skills, ideas and energy of the girl-child are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace" (FWCW Platform for Action 1995). Clearly, the girl child is instrumental to development goals, although her own goals are not specified. The malady under review is not made clear, nonetheless Section L, the "Girl-Child Diagnosis," is outlined on the Platform as its own discreet category. Broken down into nine strategic objectives, the diagnosis requires the global community to:

1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child.
2. Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.
3. Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.
4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.
5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.
6. Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labor and protect young girls at work.

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"Board recommended that its strategy and programs for the ensuing decade explicitly address the status and needs of the girl child" (1285). My own preliminary research on the origin or earliest usage of the term also suggests that UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the entity that monitors the ratification and monitoring process on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, meeting nine months prior to Beijing, clearly indicate that the preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women should be informed by an explicit focus on girls' rights. After an extended discussion among a variety of UN bodies, NGOs, and CRC members regarding "the girl child," the 8<sup>th</sup> Sessional Report concludes "there was an undeniable commitment on the part of the international community to use the provisions of the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] as an agenda for action to identify persisting forms of inequality and discrimination against the girl child, to abolish practices and traditions detrimental to the enjoyment of their rights and to define a real forward looking strategy to promote and protect those rights" (CRC/8 1995, 48). Moreover, the CRC asserts the reinforcing nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. As such, the members stipulate their decision "to transmit the content of the general discussion on the girl child, as reflected in the report of the 8<sup>th</sup> session, to the Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women" and "requests that the Platform for Action for the Conference reflect throughout its different chapters the situation and the fundamental rights of the girl child" (CRC/8 1995, 3-4).

7. Eradicate violence against the girl-child.
8. Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.
9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child (FWCW Platform for Action 1995).

Disseminated by the UN and NGOs participating in this global conference, the objectives intentionally carve a new space for girls in the development agenda by disaggregating girls' experience from boys', separating adult women from children, and further emphasizing the double problem of sex (and gender) and age (and generation) by rhetorically insisting that the children in question are girls and these females are children. This tangle of vulnerabilities is understood to be intensified for the Maasai "girl-child" because she is also marginalized by ethnicity/indigeneity and livelihood to the borders of the Kenyan political-economy, the edges of Kenya's habitable land, and to the recesses of the national consciousness.<sup>258</sup> Nashipae and her cohort are vulnerable by virtue of their sex and sexuality (or more accurately, their putative fertility); the gender norms that require their compliance because, as a female children in Maasai society, they are conditioned to become adults who "must always give respect" whereas their male coevals grow up learning that men "must always be given respect"; and finally, their status as a social minors bound by customary hierarchies of respect (*enkanyit*) and disciplinary codes that require them to submit to the will of male elders (Lang'at interview 2007).<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Pastoralist civil society groups struggle for recognition of pastoral concerns. For example, during the post-electoral violence in December 2007-February 2008 when all eyes were on Kenya, local groups in the area of my research worked to call attention to the daily suffering and death inflicted by the enduring drought, the need for food aid, and the need for clean water. These 'natural' shocks would be exacerbated in the wake of the violence as food shortages and rising food prices have thrust the region into a position of worsening food insecurity (KFSSG 2008).

<sup>259</sup> In 1992, Aloya, a young Maasai woman in Tanzania, took her father to court when he tried to force her to marry a man of his choosing against her will (Hodgson 2001c). Direct testimony from the trial reveals the completing claims of 'custom' and juridical judgments and how these contentions transform and create gendered social relations. For example, when pressed by the

Yet, although clearly a “girl-child” who needs the protections listed in the Platform and who invokes these protections by running away to the school, Nashipae also comes across as the heroine of her own story. After all, she had seen how her older sisters suffered in their marriages and in this, Nashipae is not alone; many of the girls we interviewed expressed similar fears of early marriage based on their sisters’ experiences. Not coincidentally, the girls also know that their older sisters “regret” not having had the opportunity to go to school. If Nashipae, like Mbiti, had her own crow—the supporting character, like an elder sister, who warns her to disguise herself and run— she did not tell us about her. Nonetheless, this is precisely what Nashipae did. Once deemed “fully grown,” she ran away from her home, redressed herself in a schoolgirls’s uniform, and boldly, if implicitly, refused her role as a Maasai woman and the social expectations and relations that inhere in the category. Instead of complying, she rejected her father’s authority and followed her own desires at great risk to herself and her family’s reputation.

Ultimately Nashipae must have known that this break could be permanent and that she would be disowned. In a real sense, when she walked away from her natal home and the social obligations between elder men that her marriage arrangement represented, Nashipae was forced to take on a new identity formed by new structures of feeling as a person now apart from the system of embedded kinship reciprocities. In the folk tale she shared with us, we learned that after Mbiti

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magistrate to address the idea of the degree of “consent” and “choice” a Maasai girl-woman has historically had regarding her marriage arrangements, the elder called to witness for his friend, the accused, indicates that “In the past, she couldn’t have chosen the person...[but these days] she is told that a certain person is her fiancé, but if she doesn’t want him she should say something before her wealth is sent.” According to the second witness for the accused, when the magistrate asked “If a father has decided to give his daughter to someone, does his daughter have a voice [in the decision]?” “According to Maasai custom,” the witness replied, “she has none” (Hodgson 2001c, 156). In this case, as in, I would speculate, most cases of girl-women refusing arranged marriages, the crux of the problem typically boils down to whether or not bride wealth has been exchanged. Once this exchange has occurred, it is much more difficult for anyone to reconfigure the agreement, least of whom the daughter being traded.



left the place where she had been hidden, covered herself in ash, and then ran away, she encountered three different groups of animals on the path. Each different group said, “Who are you? It seems that you are not the Mbiti daughter we [were called] to feed on. You don’t look like that girl.”

To which Mbiti replied, as the crow had instructed, “oh no, I am a poor girl just going [on my way],” and in each case, the animals continued on their way while Mbiti, unrecognized, ran farther and farther away from the feasting site. Although we don’t know where Mbiti was headed, it’s clear that the relative unknown was preferable to her than her arranged fate. Perhaps through the dissemination of the rights rhetoric expressed in the Platform and embraced by civil society networks in the Kajiado Rift or maybe from age-mates who were in school, even though Nashipae had never been to school when she left her mother’s house at dawn with the goats, it seems that she knew “her rights.” Her rights as a Kenyan citizen, however, directly contradict her father’s customary rights *in her*, as his daughter (Hodgson 2001c; Rubin 1975; Talle 1988). In Maasai social structure, females remain social minors; they never become the social equals of males, even as married women, mothers and grandmothers may be highly respected in their communities. Moreover, although Nashipae was 14, according to some conventional interpretations of Maasai ‘custom,’ she was no longer a girl because she had been circumcised. Instead, she was officially a woman and, in this capacity, rightfully ready to marry.

According to the Kenyan government, however, Nashipae was still a child and a legal minor because she was under eighteen. According to the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and The Children’s Act in Kenya (2001), her status as a child gives her the right to education and the right not to be forced into marriage; these state-accorded rights ultimately trumped her father’s ‘customary’ right to marry her according to his own interests. By choosing to become a schoolgirl and thereby extending her

childhood, Nashipae deferred the “guarantee” that for Maasai children, “status and power will be bestowed upon them unconditionally with age” (Archambault 2009). Nashipae seemed to know all too well that these status and power upgrades are uneven and incontrovertibly gendered; she opted instead to hedge this ‘traditional’ guarantee against the promises of a different set of guarantees made by the education-as-development discourse.

As Nashipae’s struggle for school reveals, the education-as-development discourse and the schooling imperative have opened sites of individual intervention in which Maasai girls who are in school can resist the claims conventional gender categories make on them and thereby actively create new subject positions. As I have noted, however, Nashipae’s story of running away, rescue, and recompense is not rare in all of Maasailand, but it was uncommon among the schoolgirls we interviewed. Despite their learned submissiveness toward any elder and a general shyness toward any outsider, all the girls, not unlike Nashipae, spoke clearly, and often passionately, about education and formal schooling in their lives. More than talk of school—we spoke very little about classrooms, textbooks, or teachers—my questions and their responses led us down pathways that ultimately speak more to the complexities of socio-cultural and political-economic change in a globalized world than to schooling *per se*. The majority of the schoolgirls in the study and, I would hazard, across Maasailand, disrupt conventional norms on a daily basis much more subtly, but no less profoundly than Nashipae, and other girls like her who are forced to make a physical break with the structures that oppress them.

Most of the girls we spoke with quietly and unselfconsciously disrupt gender and generation categories with the very language they use—or refuse to use—to define and describe themselves. Despite the fact that most had undergone (or would soon undergo) the customary rite of passage that has historically inaugurated the physical and socio-cultural transformation of Maasai girls into Maasai women, all 98 schoolgirls rejected being called “woman” (*enkitok*). They also

rejected the singular category “girl” (*entito*), and choose instead to modify the latter and be “schoolgirls.”<sup>260</sup> The newly salient schoolgirl category is a sociologically liminal space somewhere between a child (*entito*) and an adult (*enkitok*). The schooling imperative has altered the conventional progression across life course as it has been historically and customarily understood prior to schooling demands. The social categories of girl, initiate,<sup>261</sup> woman, and mother are all gendered according to the prevailing understanding of the categories in the microfibers of community life. Absent the imperative to attend school, these categories have different meanings and produce differential practical effects.

Implicit, therefore, in their narratives about the meaning or importance of education in their lives is a struggle to say who they are with particular respect to school, and to those who are not schooled. Inquiries like “who am I?” “who can I be?” “how can I be?” hovered behind the formulaic expressions of “education is light” that clutter the popular discourse about education in this context. The perceived necessity to enroll and persist in school ensures that social categories, and the people who embody them, are variously positioned *vis-à-vis* education. Consequently, schoolgirls live in homesteads populated by girls and women (and boys and men) who have never attended school or have left school without finishing. Schoolgirls collect firewood with their age-cohorts who are no longer girls—they are women, wives, and often, mothers. Although they are

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<sup>260</sup> I asked repeatedly if there is a word or phrase in *Maasai* that refers to a “schoolgirl” and was told there is no word for this category. However the written source of record for Maasai vocabulary and grammar, Frans Mol’s *Maasai Language and Culture Dictionary* (1996), lists *e-naitengeni* (*p. i-naaitengeni*) and *enkaitengeni* as words which mean “pupil, disciple, school-girl” (271). Mols’ work relies primarily in Purko Maasai informants, whereas most of my informants are Keekonyokie Maasai, so perhaps this discrepancy is an issue of dialect.

<sup>261</sup> This word is used throughout the anthropological literature on Maasai society, but it was never used by any of my informants in Kajiado. This is likely because I interviewed girls in school--schoolgirls—for whom the category of “initiate” is anathema because it is synonymous with “soon-to-be-married.” It also may be that given the disappearance of *il-murran* (warriors) in my research area, that female initiates are not names as such anymore.

all female and they are all “Maasai,” these variously educated individuals understand each other, and themselves, through the lens of relative development associated with formal education. As a practical effect, negotiations over education and economic realities that prevent all children from attending school, have created new social relations as well as individual and collective subjectivities. As the development imperative to attend school increasingly normalizes the schoolgirl category, schoolgirls themselves continue to use their own discursive resources to produce possibilities for social arrangements for themselves that are effectively impossible for their un-schooled age, sex, and circumcision-status cohort.

### III. Risks of the “girl-child” as a representational regime

Yet, as targets of development, schoolgirls face risks as the project of girls’ education is emptied of its emancipatory potential in its mainstreaming. Central to the deployment of the “girl-child” discourse is a certain array of subject-positions that can undermine schoolgirl agency. More than rhetoric, the now-common framing of the “girl-child” constitutes a “representational regime” that formulates her as a target of development interventions (Escobar 1995).<sup>262</sup> This targeting is not innocent or inert.<sup>263</sup> Rather it is thoroughly double-edged. On the one hand, now that she is *within*

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<sup>262</sup> The phrase representational regime is meant to signify a set of discursive forms—language, for example terminology like “girl-child”, practices, and policies—that come to define what reality is in any context. In *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995), Arturo Escobar has used the concept to analyze the ways in which the development regime has “made” (and continues to make) the “Third World.” He says: “Regimes of representation can be analyzed as places of encounter where identities are constructed and also where violence is originated, symbolized, and managed” (10). For Escobar, the concept is a “theoretical and methodological principle for examining the mechanisms for, and consequences of, the construction of the Third World through/in representations” (10). I use the concept as a way of referring to a constellation of representations that together make the notion of the “girl-child” not only possible, but an important element of the development process that needs to be addressed/managed.

<sup>263</sup> I want to note here that I am attempting to make an argument about effects, and not intentions. As I will discuss in the conclusion to the dissertation, I can imagine a range of intentions that

*sight* and *visible*—made more than just 'on the radar screen' but rendered instrumental to the realization of development goals—her “girlhood,” can be seen as “more than a stage of [individual] development” (Mitchell 2000). Now, girlhood is itself a structural element of girls lives available to be carefully examined by specialists as a “cultural site where issues of race, class, power, domination, and so on play out” (Mitchell 2000). In other words, by bringing the resources of global development expertise to bear on girls’ immediate needs, human rights, and future aspirations, for the first time girls lives will get the attention—and the interventions—they need and deserve. In this sense, targeting girls is the solution to their invisibility and thereby their victimization, and as such, must be a good idea. As we’ve seen in Nashipae’s story, because the ‘girl-child’ is firmly on development’s agenda, particularly with respect to her access to education, this representational regime provides the rationale (and sometimes resources) for her rescue. The head teacher intervenes on Nashipae’s personal behalf for her direct benefit; but as an agent of the state, his actions, and those of non-state actors like churches and NGOs, are also legitimized and made sensible within the logics of the development agenda. Because she has value to the development process beyond that of her own intrinsic human value, there is more involved in her targeting (and her rescue) than her individual desire. Nashipae’s human rights matter; but they have also been made to matter for reasons that far exceed her actual human needs.

What is at stake then when development discourse frames a new target? The other side of this double-edged solution reveals the potential risks to girls of being positioned squarely on the development agenda. Now that girls and their girlhood are targeted, girls and their needs can be easily reduced and packaged into what Nancy Fraser (1989) calls “bureaucratically administrable

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inspired targeting girls for development, and all of them are “good” intentions. This does not mean, unfortunately, that the effects of targeting are practically or theoretically uniformly “good” for girls.

satisfaction[s],” or more simply, “social service[s]” managed by technocrats (174). The claims made on the behalf of Maasai girls (and all the 600 million out-of-school girls world wide who are ubiquitously referred to) are most accurately and profoundly political claims for gender and generational justice. However, as the target of development expertise, these specific “politicized needs” are “translated” into “administrable needs” (Fraser 1989, 174). Fraser specifies the risks of translation by what she calls “expert needs discourses,” those discourses that, in our case, manage development:

As a result of these expert redefinitions, the people whose needs are in question are repositioned. They become individual “cases” rather than members of social groups or participants in political movements. In addition, they are rendered passive, positioned as potential recipients of predefined services rather than agents involved in interpreting their needs and shaping their life conditions. . . . By virtue of this administrative rhetoric, expert needs discourses, too, tend to be depoliticizing. They construe persons simultaneously as rational utility maximizers and as causally conditioned, predictable, and manipulable objects, thereby screening out those dimensions of human agency that involve the construction and deconstruction of social meanings (174).

In the case of girls’ education, political questions concerning who can be educated, should be educated, what ends, with what means, why, and how often devolve into the technical management of needs satisfaction. While the “Girl Child Diagnosis” itself does attempt to articulate girls’ actual political-economic and socio-cultural needs, more often than not, these are translated into policy and projects that are designed, at best, to address expediency.

For example, girls and young women are at risk for harassment, sexual assault, and even rape in school compounds that do not provide private and functional latrines or lavatories. These risks can be mitigated--bureaucratically satisfied—by building latrines where there were none. In the short term, the targeted need has been met; girls and young women for whom the facilities have been built no longer journey into the bush behind the school to relieve themselves or avoid school for several days during their menstrual cycles. Girls and young women, in fact, benefit from the

new facilities.

At the heart of this need, however, is the deep need for security against the threat of structural violence and violence itself. In this sense, girls and young women are no more secured from sexual and gender-based violence by the provision of latrines, although incidences may be lowered by the provision. Development agencies, like The Girl Child Network that works in my research area and throughout Kenya, can apply for grants from UNIFEM or UNESCO, allocate the funds for local projects like Lood-ariak Primary School's plan to build girls' latrines, and tick off "provide latrines" from a laundry list of needs. In so doing, structural social transformation whereby consolidated male power equates to male entitlement to sex on demand, or perceptions of female inferiority, vulnerability or sexual availability, or the material poverty and political marginalization of some communities evinced by lack of basic services can be pushed further aside in the wake of expediency claims and short-term gains. To be clear, I am not against building latrines for female students at Lood-ariak Primary School and agree that such measures are necessary and, in fact, good. Yet, once a powerful discursive regime like global development sets its sights on a target and packages that target for consumption, opportunities for counter-hegemonic resistance are often frustratingly deferred.

#### **IV. Shifting subjectifications: from girl-child to neoliberal girl subject to schoolgirl**

As we have seen, the conditions of life in the post-colonial development zone are predominated by the mainstream development agenda. These structural arrangements have enormous bearing on Maasai schoolgirls' lives. The package of policy instruments and interventions often referred to as "neoliberal restructuring," widely operative from the late 1970s, throughout the 1990s, were signified by the imposition of structural adjustments to national economies

according to the dictates of the international financial institutions. Despite programmatic shifts since then, neoliberal policies continue to form the context for the shifting gender discourses that I discuss here. While economic restructuring has been aimed at political and economic mechanisms and the state's relationship with its citizenry particularly with respect to social provisioning, the effects of these changes have been registered in and by human social arrangements.

The neoliberal variation of capitalist expansion is an incarnation of modernity unfolding in Africa (as elsewhere). Thus, the neoliberal 'turn' does not represent a punctuated discontinuity with the capitalist world historical project; nonetheless, it does generate contradictions that are specific to this, our time. As Brad Weiss (2004) argues in his introduction to *Producing African Futures: Ritual and Reproduction in a Neoliberal Age*, the intensity and types of insecurity many Africans face today as they negotiate their daily lives are idiosyncratic of the current experience. He calls this insecurity "speculation" and argues that "the tensions of inclusion and exclusion [or, marginality and participation] are both produced by (and serve further to fuel) rampant speculation in all social life. Speculation, of course, is a central feature of the kinds of political economic measures that many would simply equate with the capital flows and thus global diffusion of neoliberalism" (9). However, he continues, "in Africa today, it is the very capacity for self-definition and regeneration—the prospects for shaping and securing something like a future—that is mired in a bewildering conjecture" (9).

The apprehension of Maasai schoolgirls within the larger lens of development's scope clearly offers them unprecedented opportunities while it also levies new, or re-structured, constraints. This notion of "speculation" ("bewildering conjecture") helps us understand how Maasai schoolgirls continually make (and remake) themselves through disruptive approaches to meeting their own needs. The evidence presented in the interviews strongly suggests that being in school provides a crucial staging ground for the production of subjects who are better positioned to



negotiate the claims of conventional gender and generational norms. In order to negotiate a future, schoolgirls require speculations that are survival strategies. In the service of desire, and more fundamentally, survival, schoolgirls deploy and employ the ‘girl-child’ discourse against itself. The construct of the “girl-child” is redefined and reinvented through the process of neoliberal subjectification. The “neoliberal girl subject” is the girl-child resignified as the schoolgirl.

Elements of Felista’s story, and Maria’s reactions to it, offer some insight into this resignification process. A class 7 student at Embolei Primary School, Felista spent much of her interview with us distraught over two pressing and related issues in her young life (she was 15 at the time of the interview). First, she wanted our counsel on how to convince her father to buy plastic sheeting for her blind mother’s *enkagiti* so that when the rain came she would not stay wet and ill. She also wanted to know how she could convince her father, who had already promised to “marry her off” at the end of class 8, to let her continue on to secondary and postpone marriage until she had completed school. She explained that her only recourse, it seemed to her, was to cry, but when she cried, he beat her. If her mother intervened on Felista’s behalf, he beat her too.

I did not corroborate her story with the head teacher, although I have no reason to doubt that her concerns were true and her needs real. Maria did not hesitate to take her very seriously. As Felista tearfully explained her predicament, Maria listened intently. When she was finished, I intentionally hesitated and did not respond. I was not sure what appropriate advice would be, but Maria had very clear instructions for Felista. When she finally responded, Maria’s voice was low, and determined; she spoke with the gentle firmness of an elder sister or wise aunt. And Felista listened with the shy intensity that I came to expect from schoolgirls.

First, Maria suggested that Felista speak to the head teacher about her concerns.

But this was not her real advice.

Her real advice came in the form of a Swahili proverb: “*dawa ya moto ni moto*,” which translates to “the remedy or medicine for fire is fire.” This advice reveals the profound and contingent place of schooling for girls in precarious situations. Maria said, “your results matter. They will speak for themselves. When you work hard this term—you must work to beat the boys’ scores—take your results to your father. Say, ‘father, I need a present for this good work, the present I need is for you to buy plastic bags for my mom’s house.’” Felista kept her eyes down as she chipped away at the peeling green paint on the school desk with the clip of her pen cap. In her other hand she held tightly to the mini cassette recorder like a herding stick.

Maria continued steadily. As far as convincing her father to postpone arranging her marriage, Maria was unequivocal; Felista held the solution to her problem in her own hands. If she wanted to fight her prearranged marriage and stay in school, her best defense was school; she needed to show her father good grades. Maria continued, “When your results are good, even the government will be involved. You will be given a letter inviting you to secondary, and your father cannot refuse you.”

Maria’s tenacity and clarity were remarkable, but Felista was not assured. Piling green paint slivers over the new bare spot on the desk, she wanted to know how she could “study and perform well” when she had “no paraffin at home.”<sup>264</sup> Clearly for Felista, a real element of her (and her mother’s) vulnerability was her family’s poverty. Maria did not hesitate. She had a plan around this constraint as well. She said, “Move home directly from school, and do your chores quickly—prepare *ugali*, gather the water, everything. Sleep early. Come to school at 6 in the morning and

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<sup>264</sup> The kerosene pressure lamp the school used for extra class 8 exam prep was a rare and expensive exception to the rule that light at night in rural Maasailand, like many rural regions of Kenya and Africa, comes from a homemade or locally rendered lamps, usually constructed from an empty aerosol can, that burn liquid paraffin. The light from a paraffin lamp is adequate for moving around (cooking, cleaning, talking, taking tea, and so on) after dark, but it is far inferior to an electric bulb for studying.

study until 8. These small sacrifices will be worth it.” Felista wiped the corner of her eye with the back of her right hand; little rivers of sweat dripped off the corner of the recorder from her palm. Maria was firm and resolute: “*don’t even think of getting married after class 8*—leave it! Your marks will speak on your behalf and your father cannot refuse you.”

As Nashipae’s story illustrates, “Your father cannot refuse you” are strong words in context in which fathers routinely refuse daughters. Unlike Nashipae, Felista was already in school. Maria’s advice to “fight fire with fire” suggests that the resources for ‘speculation’—bewildering conjectures toward securing a future—must come from within an individual. Maria had herself thus far won the struggle for school, to a certain degree, by leveraging her own inherent intelligence and ingenuity. But before she was a schoolgirl, Maria was also a ‘girl-child,’ as Felista clearly is. As Maria grew up in school, in addition to English and mathematics, she learned to manipulate the contemporary cracks in the gendered and generational veneer of Maasai social structures. As a schoolgirl, Maria knows “her rights” and how to use them. She is, therefore, not immune to the pull toward the state to secure those rights, as evidenced by her first suggestion that Felista consult the head teacher (a man known for his activism around girls’ education), and her assertion that “even the government will be involved” on Felista’s behalf. Further, Maria clarifies that the government’s intervention in the form of an invitation letter to secondary school has putatively more power than Felista’s father, or any local patriarch.

Maria’s advice also more fundamentally reveals her internalized understanding of neoliberal logics. By sheer individual will, ingenuity, and proper and respectful manipulation of structural forms, the girl-child learns to think and act like a schoolgirl and consequently, a citizen (the generalized subject of neoliberal development). Maria never suggests that Felista run away or otherwise actively defy her father’s authority. To the contrary, she advises Felista to be a *better daughter and better student*, and in so doing, she alone can satisfy both her own needs and her

mother's. To return to Williams' (1961) insights, structures of feeling cannot be taught, but they can be learned, and this is the real power of institutions. The school structures the feelings that provide girl children with the discursive resources to meet their own needs as the structures around them fail to do so. The feeling of this structure is ambivalent; it is at once 'empowered' and necessary, as well as, I fear, ultimately insufficient.

The subjectivity Nashipae and Maria, and presumably soon, Felista, embody can be called "the neoliberal girl." Marnina Gonick's (2007) formulation of the "neoliberal girl" has been forged in a decidedly western crucible. Nevertheless, her insights into the discursive production of girls and girlhood subjectivities in service of neoliberal agendas has real relevance to this discussion of the Maasai schoolgirl identities. Gonick traces the historical emergence of the "girl subject" in the west within the unfolding of contemporary modernity at the turn of the last century and the social changes the process engendered. In reference to Nancy Lesko's *Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (2001), Gonick observes that "a new form of ideal subject" has been normalized through these changes. I argue that in Maasai contexts, as no doubt elsewhere in the development zone, this new ideal subject, "the self-determining, individualized, and reasoning citizen," is produced in the crucible of education-as-development (2007, 4).

The aspiration toward this idealized subjectivity is a central theme in the Maasai schoolgirl narratives collected for this study. Nashipae's pursuit of schooling, Maria's persuasive plans, and Felista's very real fears illustrate the constellation of desires that often shape the process of neoliberal subjectification as a girl-child becomes a schoolgirl. In the sections that remain, I highlight five speculative conjectures schoolgirls use to negotiate their worlds and attempt to satisfy their desires for a certain kind of life. In this discussion of personal sacrifice, developing a personal future vision, being independent, imagining neo-marriage, and de-signifying (re-signifying) e-

*muratta*, I am attempting to illustrate the defining features of the schoolgirls' narratives that constitute disruptive articulations of the lived struggle to navigate shifting identities.

Inherent in the desire for school, and clearly articulated in the elements of schoolgirl interviews in evidence throughout this chapter, is the requirement of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a function of 'speculative' strategies at the core of survival for the neoliberal girl. For Nashipae, her sacrifice and loss is *in* the past but *of* the future. She said she suffered the loss of her family and home, "because I know one day, one time, I will become a very big person." In Maasai cosmology, suffering, or struggle, is elemental to maturity, growth, and the tenor of 'bigness' that is the cornerstone of Maasai codes of *enkanyit* (discipline, respect) and adulthood (Archambault 2009). Her aspirations were formed as she walked away from her family toward the school. Her plans include "reading [studying] hard" and "be[ing] careful [to not get pregnant] so that I can make my vision to be a doctor."<sup>265</sup> Likewise, Maria, drawing on her own experience with personal sacrifice, admonishes Felista to set aside her fears ("leave it!") and actively work to hedge her bets against her father's authority. The "small sacrifices will be worth it"—worth certain losses and against potential risks is the promise of certain gains—it is a neoliberal girl's subject calculus of survival. The fragility of Nashipae's and Felista's (through Maria) aspirational horizons are clear, and so is the internalization of taking personal responsibility for reducing vulnerability and risk.

Central to schoolgirls survival strategies is this notion of 'future vision.' Nashipae's notion of future 'vision,' like that of many of the girls, is also embedded in the logics and ethics of the neoliberal girl and part of the disruptive discourse that positively distorts the girl-child to makes the

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<sup>265</sup> Arjun Appadurai asserts that the "capacity to aspire" is crucial if marginalized peoples are to mobilize themselves and "change the dynamics of consensus in their social worlds." The capacity to aspire is a "navigational capacity" and the horizon of aspirations, while brittle, has productive power. See "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition" from *Culture and Public Action* (2004).

schoolgirl subjectivity possible. As Patricia, one very adamant schoolgirl explained, “They [those who have not gone to school] don’t see because they are not learned, so they don’t see anything which is ahead of them. All they see is those things like to look after [livestock]. When you come to school your mind opens up and you can see ahead.” According to the girls, living a “modern life”—“the life we are living now, not the live life we lived before”—requires this kind forward thinking beyond the apprehension of what has been known toward something which is new. After an impromptu singing and dancing performance at Felista’s school one evening, I asked Jacob, a young Maasai teacher and the choir director, about the songs that the students performed for me. I had seen variations of these same songs and dances before at primary schools throughout Kenya Maasailand. He explained that Maasai “no longer sing of cows or lions, like before; we no longer sing praise songs of warriors. We write new words for today’s messages. We now praise education and criticize those vices that are here now, like smoking and wearing incorrect clothes like miniskirts.”

In Patricia and Jacob’s statements we can see the engines at work in the process of subjectification—the creation of subjects according to material and discursive contexts. Gonick (2006) describes this process as “the self’s fashioning by its insertion into an already articulated symbolic economy” (19). As Jacob aptly describes, the symbolic economy that surrounds the Maasai schoolgirl is articulated in ‘new’ song lyrics set against ‘traditional’ rhythms that reflect “today.” Beyond this, these messages are in school textbooks, Bible study sessions, on fliers papered on the outside of shops in the market, and on radios. Nanshipae, Patricia, Maria and other schoolgirls can ‘see,’ and must see, their futures because the neoliberal framing of development requires that she break with the cultural codes that ‘hold her back’ and aspire beyond the confines of her cultural home. For schoolgirls, the only way to see “something” on the horizon is to do so

through the lens of formal school. Through this lens, schoolgirls can ‘fashion themselves’ to meet the requirements of the symbolic (and real) economy.

At Olepolos Primary School, the symbolic economy of wage labor was produced in schoolgirls daily, if indirect, interactions with peri-urban life. Kiserian, the largest trading center in the local region, is only about 10 kilometers up the escarpment; even more proximally, at the lip of the escarpment, in view from the school below, is a famous “*nyama choma joint*”<sup>266</sup> called Olonana that caters to hundreds of Karen and Nairobi elite every weekend who drive out for grilled goat meat, a lively bar, and breathtaking scenery. Every girl we interviewed at this school expressed a clear and strong desire to be independent, although the phrasing they used was “not to be depending on anyone.”

This theme of independence, particularly with respect to having control over the allocation of wage income, was dominant across the interviews, but in this peri-urban school, each girl explained how education and wage employment were the surest paths to autonomy, not only for themselves, but their mothers and younger siblings, as every schoolgirl in the study hopes to “help her family” as a result of being educated. Schoolgirls see themselves as having more freedom, autonomy and a perceived sense of agency because they are in school. As I discuss below, an educated woman is thought to be independent from even her husband when it comes to allocating the wages she earns. Schoolgirls see themselves as producers, actively producing for themselves a future that those not in school not only do not have the capacity to produce, but are actively prevented from producing by the limits of the social categories “wife” and “mother,” but more

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<sup>266</sup> “*Nyama choma*” means “roasted meat” in Swahili and refers to meat, goat is preferred, grilled over an open wood fire. Several of my Nairobi friends asked if I ever stopped to eat at Olonana because “Maasai goat is too sweet!” I enjoyed Christmas Day at Olonana with David and Agnes, the children, and their extended family. The *nyama choma* we enjoyed started the day as *mbuzi* (goat), and rode with us from Lood-ariak; he was one of David and Agnes’s herd.

specifically, “uneducated wife and mother.” Nashipae and others explained that those who are in school make their own futures. These future dreams are stitched together from patchwork story lines woven from school textbooks, sermons, and everyday talk, even if the aspirations they articulate are grandiose and unlikely.

Personal sacrifice, future vision, and independence are thematic threads that have obvious connections to one another, but also to the neoliberal *zeitgeist* that trickles down from White Papers by experts on female empowerment through NGO sponsored livelihood diversification projects, but also floats up from localized response to the promises of education-as-development. In this milieu, as other children pushed rocks through the dirt pretending to be pick-up *matatu* drivers, Catherine climbed the nearest thorn tree and pushed her rock through the air above the heads of her friends; she was not the only schoolgirl to say she wants to be a pilot, but she was the only one who had already acted out her ‘future vision’ on the playgrounds of her childhood. Nashipae sees herself as a doctor, as many of her coevals did, “leading her people.” In a similar but different vein, Nadupoi was adamant: as the president of Kenya she would lead and support all ethnic groups because “in Kenya we are not from just one community.” I met several would-be lawyers, doctors, and even a few more presidents. All the primary school girls I talked to have little to guarantee their graduation to high school, much less two-year colleges. Even more distantly are the four-year universities and the post-graduate education required to realize many of their dreams. They nonetheless have settled on images of themselves carved by and against the prevailing sentiment of what is normal and expected or even possible.

While Maasai schoolgirls have less to secure their dreams of high level employment or political office, the likelihood that they will marry and have children is extremely high. Given their commitments to the schoolgirl identity, they imagine that their marriages and mothering will be very different than their uneducated mothers and sisters because, as educated citizens, they will be



able to control how their incomes are used. Every interviewee, when asked, “Do you want to be married?,” responded by recoiling and clearly answering, “No!” We would then ask, “never?” In each case she would sit back and clarify, “yes, but in the future, after I finish my education.” A common refrain in the local “economy of statements” for why fewer girls than boys attend school is that any asset a girl may have will not benefit her natal family but will accrue to her affinal family (Escobar 1995). Schoolgirls reject this sensibility and repeatedly clarified that as educated wives, “no husband can refuse” when she chooses to, for example, allocate a portion of her earnings to educate her younger siblings or build her mother a modern house.<sup>267</sup>

The idea of female agency within marriage, namely, as a wife and mother, was initially very ambiguous in the interviews as schoolgirls struggled to reconcile, in ways that I could understand, what appeared to be a trenchant array of contradictions once the schoolgirl becomes a wife. Indeed, discussions did produce a degree of ambivalence for schoolgirls. When formally educated women become wives, the girls argued, they are uniquely positioned to “help their families.” Whereas illiterate women, as many of their mothers, their mothers’ co-wives, and their older sisters, were, as Sumulel, a class 7 student in Enkeryian asserted, “controlled by their husbands” and not “themselves.”

All of the girls we interviewed wanted to help their families, although some girls specifically mentioned helping their mothers. By “help” they meant monetarily and materially; they wanted to buy their mothers, parents, and natal families food, clothing, a new “*mbati*” house,

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<sup>267</sup> Many meant to refer to a “*mbati house*” made of timber frame and iron sheeting as opposed to cow dung plaster. But the ‘real’ modern house would be a step up from this to ‘permanent house’ made of concrete, iron, and stone. When I was in Lood-ariak there were no permanent houses, although Maria’s uncle was in the process of slowly procuring the materials to build one. Similarly, a few months after I left, David and Agnes poured the concrete foundation and starting accumulating stone for their own permanent home.

sometimes health care, a few even said they wanted to buy a vehicle for their fathers. They wanted to put their younger siblings through secondary school and even college. All of them have plans for how their incomes will help their parents.<sup>268</sup>

But I had also been assured by most of the girls we talked at the first two schools that once a woman is married, she must “fall under” the husband. How, I wanted to know, did these girls plan to help their natal families once they were married? Three girls had assembled in the head teacher’s office, which was our interview space at that school, for a small group interview with the only girls in class 8 at Embolei Primary School.<sup>269</sup> I wanted to unravel the tangle of agency and marriage based on the statements I had heard several times up to this point, so when they all stated that they wanted to get married and they wanted to use the wages they earned at their jobs to help their natal families, I asked my question: “But is this possible? Isn’t a Maasai wife the property of her husband?”

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<sup>268</sup> None of them, however, had either any sense for what kind of income they might earn as teachers, doctors, airline pilots or how much they might need to earn in order to afford the items they hoped to provide. One girl indicated that she did not know how much money an accountant would earn. We asked her, “how much salary would you require to do the work of an accountant for one month?” She shrugged, and answered, “10,000 Ksh,” as if this amount seemed very high to her. Maria and Alice earned 10,000 Ksh each month to work for me with no higher education experience. I can only assume, given the extra certifications required of accountants beyond college (or university), that an accountant in Kenya earns more than approximately \$150 per month. On the other hand, on average, Kenyans earn less than \$500 per year.

<sup>269</sup> The conversation with Peshut, Lucy and Ruth encapsulates many of the themes that emerged across the interviews. At the same time, they were not as forthcoming as I think they might have been had we more time. As with every school, we were rushed to accommodate all the competing demands on the girls’ time and energies. In the cases of these girls, we were even more pressed because we were in Embolei in mid-October, the beginning of extra exam preparation time for all class 8 students scheduled to take the national Kenya Certificate of Primary Exam (KCPE) at the beginning of December. Every school had special “tuition” sessions for class 8 students every Saturday for several hours. I got the impression that when they were not completing other schoolwork or doing household work, most class 8 pupils were studying.

Lucy replied quickly and clearly: “No. [He will not own me]. I am not a goat!” Maria, I, and the Embolei girls all laughed at Lucy’s forthrightness and indignation. Peshut and Ruth agreed, but Peshut was more ambivalent. She added that according to “traditional Christian values” a wife is the property of the husband. “But,” she was quick to concede, “I want to be equal with my husband.”

Ruth and Lucy were sisters, with the same father and different mothers. Peshut had only recently returned to Embolei Primary School after staying for some time at African Inland Church Girls’ Primary Boarding in Isinya (the school Naomi Kipury’s father helped found) after her father arranged for her marriage and the head teacher, Mr. Sonkoi, intervened. Mr. Sonkoi’s intervention was to place her in the boarding school for safe-keeping and in the meantime, meet with her father and try to change his mind. The first day Maria and I met Mr. Sonkoi he showed us the reserve supply of bags of local cane sugar that he carried to meetings with parents (fathers) as a sign of respect. He is also a local man, and weeks later when we stayed at in the Enkeryian community, he was home for the weekend with his wife and young children. I asked him about Peshut’s situation and he said that her father was angry that he intervened and had argued with Sonkoi. Peshut’s father had yelled, “She is my daughter. I will do with her as I please!” To this the head teacher said he responded, “no, she is my daughter now and the District Officer is involved.”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> In Aloya’s case, the Maasai daughter who sued her father (Aladala) for forcing her to marry against her will in Tanzania in 1992, her father was found guilty by the court. Upon hearing the verdict, Hodgson (2001c) writes, “Aladala was outraged. From his box, he yelled at the magistrate in Maa: ‘Take my daughter then, she is yours, she belongs to the government now. You take care of her, you marry her off, you receive her bride wealth. I disown her here and now.’ Then he sat down, bitter with anger, humiliation and confusion” 161). I image that Nashipae’s and Peshut’s fathers felt very similar emotions. And in case, although the state was not involved in terms of the police or the courts, the head teacher was exercising his state sanctioned right to intervene on the girls’ behalf. The head teacher in Peshut’s case had very strong ideas. At that time, he had 4 children—all daughters. Three of the girls were old enough to be in school; one was away at secondary school. He told me that he had a legal will drawn so that his wife and daughters would be the sole inheritors of his land and “properties” (a catch-all phrase used primarily to refer to

It is against this activism that Peshut's comments are sensible. She was one of the brightest, most reflective students we encountered, and at first I was shocked to learn that she had been 'rescued.' As a girl-child, Peshut was well aware of the structural oppression that defined much of her existence. As a schoolgirl, however, she was also been made aware that another world could be possible for her. She knew "her rights" and consented to the intervention of the state, via the head teacher, on her behalf. Although I did not ask about the role of religion in their lives, I would venture to guess that 100% of the girls we interviewed are Christian, and more than this, in the local idiom, they are all "born again." More research is required to adequately capture the dynamic tensions between the neoliberal girl-subject and the Maasai Christian woman, but suffice to say at this juncture that the contradictions inherent in this combination are fitting for the circumstance. Hodgson argues that spirit possession (*orpeko*) and other forms of explicit spirituality enable Maasai women, marginalized by modernity from their pre-colonial status, to "[critique] the intrusion of 'modernity' and the consolidation and reinforcement of patriarchal authority in the lives of women" and "[strengthen] relationships among women" (Hodgson 2001a, 259). Similarly, I understand Peshut's ambivalence to be formed by the crosscurrents of her life: Christianity offered her access to 'modern' lifeways and spaces of negotiation. In the church, not unlike the school, social categories and subjects-in-position become 'real' inside institutional life (Talle 2007) because within institutions, identities have 'real' consequences. That 'schoolgirl' is likely also synonymous

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livestock). In 'traditional' Maasai society, women do not own cattle or land, with the exception of some wealthy widows, but even in these cases the husband's property is understood to be held in trust for his sons. In the case of man only having daughters, customarily, he would take on another wife and wait for sons. Or, his property would be divided among his brothers after his death. When I asked him what his brothers thought of this plan he said "oh, they don't like it, but what can they do—I have a legal will!" And, he was quick to add, his wife, a former schoolteacher, and his daughters, are all educated so they can fight for themselves.

with 'Christian,' adds another dimension to the layers and forces that shape and reshape Maasai girls today.

The last speculative conjecture that I highlight here, schoolgirl rejection and de/re-signification of *e-muratta*, is illustrative of the enduring power of cultural consensus (despite contestation around that supposed consensus), the ambivalence that social sanctions can produce, and the relative power of discursive shifts to embolden the schoolgirl subject.<sup>271</sup> Even though 92 of the 98 girls in the study had been circumcised or soon would be, as I have shown, none of these 92 girls (and certainly not the 6 who had not undergone the rite) claimed to be women. In fact, they all strongly objected to any association with the category "woman." Rather, most of them described themselves as schoolgirls, or, simply "students." A representative example of a repeated refrain in every interview is one interviewee's simple answer to my complex question, "right now, do you consider yourself a girl or a woman?" Her answer: "now, I am a student." Some interviewees, like Jennifer in Eremit, explained that "at home" she is considered a woman but never

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<sup>271</sup> *E-murata* is *Maa* for "circumcision" for males and females. For girls, however, the phrase more accurately describes various procedures for removal of female external genitalia. In 2007 the World Health Organization classified female genital cutting into four broad categories. Type 1 (clitoridectomy): the partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or the clitoral hood. Type 2 (excision): the removal of the *labia minora* in addition to the clitoris, with or without excision of the *labia majora*. Type 3: (infibulation): narrowing of the vaginal orifice with the creation of a covering seal by cutting and placing together the *labia minora* and/or the *labia majora*, with or without excision of the clitoris. Type 4 (unclassified): all other procedures for nonmedical purposes, for examples, pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, and cauterization (Population Reference Bureau 2008). Although stories varied, Maasai generally currently primarily practice clitoridectomy. By some accounts it seems that in the past and in other parts of Maasailand even today, some Maasai have engaged in more elaborate cutting, including excision, with the addition of lateral cuts inside the vaginal wall (Pellett, personal communication). These days, all of the descriptions I was given by schoolgirls and others included only the removal of the clitoris, or in some cases, "modified *e-murata*," the removal of the tip of the clitoris or the clitoral hood. Some activists argued that "modified *e-murata*" for girls is easier to negotiate with adherents than its full eradication. One source indicates that in Kenya, while 40% of older women ages 35 to 39 have been cut, only 20% of younger women/girls ages 15-19 have undergone any procedure (Population Reference Bureau 2008).

at school. At Olepolos, Alice and I interviewed three schoolgirls ages 15, 16, and 17 who had come back to school after giving birth. Even though they were all mothers, none of them would consent to being called “women.” I asked one of them, Margaret, if any one ever called her Mama Joseph, after her son’s name according to Kenyan idiom, at school. She smiled shyly and also winced at the thought: “No, I can’t be called by that name at school. Here I am just a schoolgirl like everyone else.”

Embedded in this discursive slight of hand is a radical departure from conventional Maasai thinking and ways of being: rejection of the female rite of passage, *e-murata*. *E-murata*, for both males and females, is popularly equated with the English word “circumcision,” although the procedure for females is more accurately conveyed by the various procedures for the removal of external female genitals. Indeed, many educated people simply say “FGM,” although when I asked Maria the expression in *Maa* for mutilation or complete destruction and if this phrase could ever be used to replace *e-murata* she said that it could not.

But neither “excision” nor “circumcision” adequately captures the full sociological and biosocial meaning of the concept of *e-murata* in Maasai sociology. For example, there is nothing in the phrasing *e-murata* that refers to or denotes cutting of any kind (Ole Kintalel 2008). The focus of the indigenous discourse is, rather, on changing individual subjectivities.<sup>272</sup> *E-murata* is a process whereby children become adults, a rite of passage that primarily sociologically changes the person from a thoughtless child into a thoughtful adult, although in the case of females, removal of the

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<sup>272</sup> There is a phrase in *Maa*, *e-murata ngaa*, which means, “circumcision of the head,” and is used to refer to wise people who are not Maasai and thus have not been circumcised in the physical sense but display the characteristics of a mature, thoughtful person. During the run-up to the 2007 election, for example, Raila Odinga, the opposition candidate, was very popular among Maasai. Odinga is Luo, and therefore uncircumcised, but he is nonetheless, *e-murata ngaa*, a wise leader. Interestingly, many of the schoolgirls we talked with indicated that although Odinga could be their president, he could never be their husband, because he is not *physically* circumcised. As one young woman noted, “what is good for politics may not be good for marriage.”

clitoris and the *labia minora* is thought to prepare the body to give birth (Talle 2007) and as some schoolgirls explained, female cutting is also designed to “reduce sexual feelings.” This rite, second only to marriage, ignites a socially embedded process whereby the individual child becomes a productive member of a community linked by kinship ties. Historically and customarily girls have no power or prestige in Maasai society. They have been understood to be ‘foreigners’ or ‘visitors’ in their natal homes, biding time until they could transition to a future husband’s home (Lang’at interview 2007). Women have customarily gained social status by the passage to womanhood through the *e-murata* rite and further by the birth of sons (Talle 1988). Historically, *e-murata* is understood as the threshold through which groups of young people together (a particularly formative experience for *il-murran*) are educated according to community norms, customs, and expectations. Unlike modern schooling, which relies on individual achievement and advancement, customary status upgrades happen for all youth at roughly the same age in cyclic patterns.

Long guarded as part of the sacred, *e-murata* for females has come under fire in recent years. Schoolgirls in my study are unanimously not in favor of female cutting. They argued clearly that *e-murata* is “meaningless.” Their critique is embedded, in part, in widespread Christian, NGO, and national awareness campaigns that emphasize “eradicating FGM,”<sup>273</sup> but also because the schoolgirls resist the potential progression of life events that proceed from the rite—even when the rite is performed unceremoniously and for reasons that do not necessarily conform to ‘tradition.’ For example, several girls explained that female circumcision “has no meaning” because “nowadays”

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<sup>273</sup> The Children’s Act, passed by the Kenyan Parliament in 2001, outlaws various forms of violation against children, including female genital cutting for females 18 and younger, but the practice remains widespread. I met some girls who were circumcised in urban clinics, although most had the procedure at home.

girls are cut very young for clearly expedient reasons.<sup>274</sup> The most prevalent reason is to prevent pre-*e-murata* pregnancy. To be pregnant before circumcision remains a taboo for Maasai, and therefore a dangerous circumstance for the girl who is often chased away from her home (Talle 1988; Mol 1996). *E-murata* is part of an intimate calculus in the consideration of schooling for schoolgirls. Resignifying *e-murata* as “meaningless” enables schoolgirls to stake certain claims in a category that helps to protect them from the conventional exigencies of being female.

Consequently, claiming and keeping the schoolgirl category is intimately understood as a survival strategy for the schoolgirls we interviewed. Circumcision status matters because a circumcised girl “at home” is more vulnerable to early and forced marriage than a circumcised schoolgirl. But imbricated with circumcision status is the economic flexibility of households. Several schoolgirls spoke of needing to earn “high marks” in order to prolong their status as schoolgirls. Class 8 (8<sup>th</sup> grade), is a pivotal time for girls and boys, as this is the demarcation point for either continuing on to secondary school or leaving school, typically for good, although boys do not face the promise of marriage when they do not continue on in school. Kenyan students take a national exam in Class 8 and the score earned on this exam determines if the student can continue to secondary.<sup>275</sup> Moreover, students will only continue if their families can afford to send them; unlike primary schooling, secondary schooling is not ‘free.’<sup>276</sup> As Felista’s story illustrates, many of

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<sup>274</sup> Many informants assert that historically *e-murata* for females was considered a premarital rite performed between the ages of 15 and 18 but has been transformed into a prepubescent one for which girls as young as 10 are cut, in part because of the demands for, and of, schooling (Ole Kintalel 2007).

<sup>275</sup> And at what level. There are three levels: district schools (admit students with the lowest scores), provincial schools (admit students with above average scores), and national schools (elite schools that only admit students with exceptional scores).

<sup>276</sup> As chapter 2 discussed, in 2003 Free Primary Education was institutionalized in Kenya, although many identify “hidden fees” such as uniforms, books, transportation and food as costs that are still prohibitive for many.



the Class 8 schoolgirls we spoke with were worried that low scores on the exam would not only mean the end of schooling but would also mean being “married off” to men chosen by their fathers. Dorcas explained that high scores on the exam could trump poverty because “no father could fail to send a high performing girl to school” as the community would rally in support of the girl, raise her school fees, and ensure her advancement to secondary.

Maria’s admonishment that “results matter” captures the urgency with which future conjecture about “strong performance” has meaning. In the Kenya neoliberalized development zone, decentralized education funding and externalized costs to households creates the scenario in which poorer girls are more vulnerable to “harmful cultural practices” like early marriage that are less “cultural” and more determined by economic circumstance. While some schoolgirls indicated that poor performing girls might willingly leave school and marry, seeking the status marriage has customarily accorded girl-women, none of the schoolgirls we interviewed expressed such desires. All 98 professed a desire for schooling strong enough to inspire them to variously resist and “refuse” community norms in favor of their own future aspirations.

As the discussion in this chapter has indicated, the schoolgirl as a neoliberal girl “subject-in-process” is “always simultaneously a product and producer of the symbolic economy” (Gonick 2006, 19). The symbolic “economy of statements”—the discourse of education-as-development—in conjunction with the actual economy of material poverty and political marginality, creates a contradictory nexus for schoolgirls. It both provides the means for her rescue even as it captures her and creates new categories of control (Hodgson 2001a). It is as if Nashipae and her peers read and act from the development ideology script written in the offices of the United Nations, the halls of the Kenyan Parliament, and in the pages of their textbooks. At the same time, they modify and extend the script as they study by paraffin lamp in the dark smokey chambers of their *enkaajii*, reject miniskirts and long for cell phones, runaway from home and run to school before dawn to study at

day break, and daily speculate about how their needs will be met. In this way, local practice embodies *and* resists the subject positions made available in this context.

The bits and pieces of the narratives collected and discussed here evince a reformulation of the girl-child as “the schoolgirl,” through an “engagement with individualizing processes” like formal schooling as required by the education-as-development imperative (Gonick 2007, 6). The schoolgirl absolutely has more room to maneuver than the girl-child; her desires for a different life than her mother’s or her older sister’s are legitimated by the logics of neoliberal development discourses. However, the schoolgirl subject functions at the limits of any kind of radical break with conventional gender norms which make neoliberal subjectivities possible. Indeed, with its deep structural ties to neoliberalism, the contemporary development regime relies on the possibility that ‘girl-child’ can become the ‘schoolgirl’ to meet its millennial goals.

## V. The ‘new *enkanyakuai*’ and the limits of the neoliberal schoolgirl subject

One of my earliest interviews was with Maria, my first research assistant who graduated from high school and now attends the University of Nairobi despite the significant odds against her. As we sat in the sliver of shade created by the roof edge of my sheet metal house, she explained that at 19 she was neither a girl nor a woman, but “something in between.” She went on to clarify, “I am a student.” That Maria was not, at that moment, enrolled in school or taking any class did not seem to matter; as a classificatory ‘student’ she could be something *other* and *in-between* the conventional categories available to Maasai females over the ‘customary’ life course.

Maria’s comments artfully characterize, in very personal terms, the double register of modernity I discussed in the introduction. James Ferguson (1999) writes of the

realization that global modernity is characterized not by a simple, Eurocentric uniformity, but by coexisting and complex socio-cultural alternatives (Appadurai 1996), and that the successful negotiation of it may hinge less on mastering a unitary set of ‘modern’ social and

cultural forms than on managing to negotiate a dense bush of contemporary variants in the art and struggle of living (251-252).

The “realization” that Ferguson confronts is embodied by the schoolgirl—the girl who is in some way connected to school, as a pupil, as a leaver, as a diploma or degree seeker, or in Maria’s case at the time of her comment, a girl in active pursuit of more schooling. The schoolgirl subject position and identity gives her the sociological acumen required to negotiate the ‘dense bush’ of modern ways of being in contemporary Maasailand, and, no doubt in any development zone where the schoolgirl is an emerging social fact. In most modern contexts, we have had pupils—boys and young men who were tapped for various reasons to leave the farm, step away from the sea, corral the cattle or otherwise abandon subsistence work for the pursuit of remunerated (if alienated) labor. In Maasai communities in Kenya, however, like similarly configured communities elsewhere, we must specifically speak of the schoolgirl as a way of marking her relative novelty, increasing in numbers and prevalence, on the scene.

I also learned from Maria and other Maasai schoolgirls about a customary social category available only to females called *enkanyakuai*.<sup>277</sup> *Enkanyakuai* is the “name” given to a girl who is circumcised and having not yet “gone to her husband’s house, remains in the father’s home” (Maria, personal communication September 2007). *Enkanyakuai* is a liminal and protective category historically reserved for the “initiate” as a time and space for healing and preparation for marriage.<sup>278</sup> Someone who is *enkanyakuai* is in waiting for the material commencement of the next

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<sup>277</sup> This term was used repeatedly in the interviews and other conversations (and jokes, as one friend always kiddingly called me “*enkanyakuai!*” just to get me to respond in the negative, given that I am not circumcised and I am already “in my husband’s home”), but is defined differently by Frans Mol (1996) and others who document Maa grammar and vocabulary.

<sup>278</sup> As I could discern, there is no official or mandated amount of time set aside for healing and preparation, but it usually around one to three months as the marriage is typically already arranged, but this will vary by circumstance and cultural practice. Talle (1988) found that the time period

phase of her life. She is a woman, but she is not yet a wife.<sup>279</sup> Once married, she becomes *esiankiki*—a bride, a wife, a young married woman and a person with adult status in the community and household, a status further solidified by becoming a mother.<sup>280</sup> Lesorogol’s study of Samburu schoolgirls reinforces this finding: “Staying in school is the best way for a girl to postpone marriage. Attending school enables girls to extend the normally brief period of transition between social statuses of girl and wife” (2008, 569).<sup>281</sup> Moreover, “marriage, like pregnancy, almost always marks the end of education” (Lesorogol 2008, 569).

I argue that the schoolgirl category revises, expands, and extends the cultural notion of *enkanyakuai*. Over time and conversation, I watched the young girls we interviewed claim the schoolgirl category, this *other* space, and reject being simply girls or simply women but something more than a girl and less than a woman. I began to imagine a new version of the old *enkanyakuai*, an in-between space of knowledge accumulation and preparation for adult life, but one reconfigured

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among Maasai near Isynia in Kajiado district was two to four months in the late 1970s. For Samburu, this time period can be as short as 24-48 hours after excision (Lesorogol 2008), in which cases, healing happens in the affinal home.

<sup>279</sup> The term *enkanyakuai* appears several times in the interview data, at different schools from different girls. Mol (1996) however, defines this term as “the returned one”—“it refers to a woman or a wife who returns to her husband’s settlement after having run away from it. The noun is derived from the irregular verb *a-itu*: to return here, of which the pst.t. is *a-nyak-ua*.” Again, Mol’s *Maa* is derived primarily from Purko section and dialect, so perhaps the Keekonyokie usage is different. Both Talle (1988) and Payne & Ole Kotikash (2008) use the word *enkabartani* to refer to a new initiate, or a young, circumcised girl who is not yet married. It may also be that the girls simply have this word wrong; at least one girl admitted that her “KiMaasai” is not very good, and many worry that school children are rapidly losing vocabulary and sense-making in their mother tongue (Ole Sonkoi, personal communication, 2009). That she refers to her mother tongue, *Maa*, using Swahili (“KiMaasai”—adding the prefix “ki” to the group name denotes the language of that group), supports her comfort in Swahili over *Maa*.

<sup>280</sup> *Esiankiki* is used for a married woman, and usually a woman who has not yet given birth, but this is not a fast rule (Payne & Ole Kotikash 2008). Talle (2007) uses the phrase to refer to a woman in the “prime of life.” I was more than once referred to in this way, even though I am not young, and I have married for over 10 years, and I do not have children.

<sup>281</sup> Samburu and Maasai are related groups, share a similar version of *Maa*, and other cultural traits.

by an additional set of rights, responsibilities, reactions, and rewards that accompany the process of getting in and staying in school for girls.<sup>282</sup> The ‘initiate’ is resignified through neoliberal capitalist development as the ‘schoolgirl.’

Accordingly, the schoolgirls in this study all imagine that because they, as schoolgirls, are *different* that their marriages and their mothering will be very different from their own mothers and older sisters, because in their ideal futures they will be educated women who have access to wage labor, and as importantly, they will each will marry a partner of their own choosing.<sup>283</sup> For schoolgirls, having access to wage labor and choosing a husband are privileges inextricably linked to successfully completing school. Dropping out of school, in other words, does not confer the same degree of perceived benefits as finishing. If she leaves school early, of her own accord or at the behest of some one else, the schoolgirl seems to understand that even her classificatory relationship to school is severed and with this break goes the negotiating power she once had.<sup>284</sup> In this sense, the girls we spoke do not reject being women and mothers and wives, in due course, but they do adamantly reject the fact that these categories can be thrust upon them before they desire it. After

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<sup>282</sup> Another way of thinking through these effects is to consider the competing sexual economies that have been created by the schoolgirl category as the “new *enkanyakuai*” is more and more common. For example, who is the child-bride/wife/mother beside her sister, the schoolgirl-cum-pregnant-drop-out, or the unmarried-but-educated-young woman who cannot close the circle until she is married or a mother and therefore be ‘called’ a ‘woman.’ These categories require further research.

<sup>283</sup> The “real” facts of this “ideal” vision are beyond the scope of this study; anecdotally it is clear that Maasai women in large part, despite education, continue to have narrow opportunities for autonomy and agency in marriage arrangements, although it is also clear that educated women have much more room for negotiation than their uneducated peers.

<sup>284</sup> The distinction between dropping out and leaving school early and graduating from high school were was made many times. Although Maria and Alice, for examples, were not *enrolled in* school, they had *completed secondary school* and were actively pursuing higher education. The finishing, and the continued pursuit, made them classificatory students and extended their negotiative power. If, hypothetically, while she worked for me Alice was also planning her wedding and upcoming marriage, she would not call herself a student, but rather, she would call herself a woman.

all, all of the schoolgirls interviewed for this study expressed a keen interest in marriage and motherhood, but each were as emphatic: “only after I finish my education!” The new *enkanyakuai* last as long as it takes to fulfill this aspiration.

*Enkanyakuai* is the customary bridge between childhood and adulthood, and it is obviously a gendered time and space, as it is only reserved for girls.<sup>285</sup> In ‘Maasai culture,’ as it is articulated by many Maasai and others, there has ‘always’ been the prevalent narrative that girls are born into a kind of limbo that *enkanyakuai* solidifies into a social category that signals the actual process of leaving the natal home and securing affinal ties. Young men, on the other hand, are seen as crucial to the demand to increase the homestead and increase the family status in livestock.<sup>286</sup> Specific research is necessary in order to ascertain how the disappearance of the warrior stage for young men has affected understanding of gender and gender dynamics in Maasai communities. Can the new *enkanyakuai* parallel a ‘new *il-murran*,’ a period in which Maasai men are made in school instead of in *opul* (meat camps)?

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<sup>285</sup> In customary practice, boys do become “initiates,” but in a very different way and with different consequences. Customarily, after circumcision, the male initiate graduates to greater social standing by virtue of corporate age-sets to become *ol-murran* (pl. *il-murran*), or a warrior (see Jacobs (1965) for a detailed discussion of the age-set system). In present day northern Kajiado district with its proximity to urban centers and Nairobi, “morans” (Anglicized for *il-murran*) are almost nonexistent, rendered obsolete primarily by the imperative to be in school. Schooling, for boys, has replaced the warrior stage for many. (I was told some *il-murran* might be found in Magadi division south of where my study area was located, and certainly in Loitokitok and Narok divisions *il-murran* would still be active but with vastly circumscribed roles). Whereas not all boys complete school through Form 4, no boys are *il-murran* either, and boys are not “married off” in the same way that girls are (although I have some evidence that fathers do arrange marriages for some sons against their will. This deserves more research).

<sup>286</sup> Sons have historically increased herds by securing multiple wives, raiding other sections or tribes, and trading, whereas increasingly today sons are expected to increase herds by working in the wage sector to buy stock. For example, all full-time male Maasai schoolteachers also keep herds managed by kin or hired hands (Maasai and non-Maasai). It is possible to find adults who are pro-education for their own children but employ children and youth of school-going age to herd for them while their own children are in school.

Can schooling be considered the ‘new *enkanyakuai*’ for Maasai girls? *De facto*, for many, it already is insofar as the space between childhood and adulthood for Maasai school-going girls is lengthening; the longer the girl stays in school, the more likely she will be to make autonomous decisions about her future. Yet, some women, seduced by the new storyline, have found themselves beholden to the ‘old ways,’ when, after completing high school, they cannot secure a job or further schooling.<sup>287</sup> Modernity is disarticulated when the desire for its benefits meets the material decline in evidence for most people in the world’s development zones (Weiss 2004; Mukudi 2004; Ferguson 1999; Varvus 2007; Stambach 2000).<sup>288</sup> The idea of a “new *enkanyakuai*” suggests that the categories produced in modernity’s uneven and disjointed wake can be contradictory in their gendered impacts. Development, as a process of protracted social change, offers expanded opportunities as well as entrenches resignified customary constraints.

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<sup>287</sup> Recall Charity’s situation discussed in the previous chapter for example. Although she has a diploma in library science, she had not found a job when I met her, and her father forced her out of the house when she refused the marriage he arranged. The incidence of older, educated, unmarried women succumbing to or resisting forced marriage deserves attention. I know of another educated Maasai woman 30, not married (who has rather dramatically resisted an earlier attempt at forced marriage by, she says, “making herself very sick so I ended up in the hospital with ulcers”) and newly unemployed, who managed to leave Kenya in a fairly desperate attempt to resist a forced marriage arranged by her uncle on her elderly father’s behalf. She fled, she said, because the bride wealth had already been paid. In addition to joining the ranks of the uneducated (by American standards) and unemployed in the United States, this woman is now responsible for paying the uncle back for the cattle he gave for bride wealth; after all, her father’s reputation is on the line. When I suggested that she return to Kenya to work, she said that she could not risk returning to Maasailand, and outside of Maasai areas, she “would be discriminated against” and would never find a job. Her extended stay as *enkanyakuai* protected her from these pressures as long as she was employed, or in school, and perceived to be “doing something” as opposed to “doing nothing.” She said that she considered “getting a baby” without a husband as a way of relieving the pressure from her male elders. As a single mother I met in my research area, a professional for MPIDO, told me, “It’s easy to get a baby. Getting a good husband is not.”

<sup>288</sup> Samburu and Maasai are related groups, share a similar version of *Maa*, and other cultural traits.

Fran Varvus' study of schooling, *Desire and Decline: Schooling Amid Crisis in Tanzania*, is her attempt to understand "why faith in schooling endures, particularly in these parts of the world where social and political-economic problems seem most intractable" (2007, 3). Ultimately, her conclusions are clear: "In the absence of a concomitant restructuring of national and international development priorities, schooling can transform very few lives (2007, 5). Varvus argues that the problem of everyday desire for development's promises clashing with uneven growth and persistent decline in the life quality for the majority of the world's poor "lies at the heart" of the postcolonial condition. The "global faith" (Rist 2003) in development's promises is configured by—and simultaneously shapes—macrostructural forces that are implicitly normalized in everyday life in the development zone. Material poverty, for example, is taken as 'normal' (if undesired) for the schoolgirls in this study. Getting a job and earning money is, then, a fundamental, commonsensical goal and the number one reason stated for why education is important in their lives. The desire for education is steeped in a deep need to have a better life, complete with 'knowledge' that can only be attained in school and the material things that do indeed make life easier: a secure place to live, enough food to eat and clothes to wear, access to health care, clean water and so on.

As Varvus points out, this desire is productive, in both constructive and dangerous ways:

The desire for schooling and the life of an 'educated person' is not the mere expression of an oftentimes unrealistic goal; it also becomes an engine for action. In some cases, the action is counterproductive because it can put young women at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS by having sex with men who pay for girls' schooling in return; in other instances, the desire for schooling for one's children may bring communities together to oppose policies likely to compound the effects of economic decline (19).

As a local discursive formation nested in the macro-generated education-as-development imperative, this desire for school produces possibilities and constraints and thus makes certain subjectivities possible. Running away from paternal authority and arranged marriage and reinventing the language of identities both have the same profound effect: they destabilize the



essentialized vulnerability of the “girl-child,” assert the agency of the schoolgirl to negotiate a new set of recognitional terms (Appadurai 2004), and effectively reconfigure Maasai social forms on a micro-level. Had Nashipae run away to the school and asked for refuge from early marriage but had refused to join the school, the head teacher would have had far less recourse. The Children’s Act would have protected her to a degree, but to what audience would the head teacher have made his claims on her behalf that would have had the same local salience, identification, and support? The meanings that local communities have invested in the education-as-development discourse, and through this, school, both enables the rescue Maasai girls deserve and arms what seems to be their inevitable capture.

When Nashipae walked away from her *enkang* before dawn, according to Maasai social codes, she was called *enkanyakuai*, the new woman who waits in her father’s home until she joins her husband. According to development discourse, she was a “girl-child” in need of intervention. According to her she left her family behind in pursuit of the “one day, one time” dream of being a “big person” and “leading her people.” When she joined the school and put on the uniform, she was renamed and reclassified as a ‘schoolgirl;’ she became, in this move, the “new *enkanyakuai*,” the female adolescent who is neither a child, nor an adult, who has the chance to grow up in school instead of marriage. But even has Nashipae’s schoolgirl status frees her of some gendered expectations, like a shadow self, the girl-child is still part of her. And she still waits to join her husband. But now this is according to her own time, “when [she] finish[es] her education,” and on her own terms. She “prays God [will] show [her a good] one.”

Ironically, her schoolgirl subjectivity extends her social role as a “child’ and not a “woman,” thus freeing her of the responsibilities incumbent upon women, but nonetheless reaffirming the fundamental lack of agency which attends to the girl-child category. Moreover, because the schoolgirl category relies on a neoliberal discursive regime to make sense—she is someone who can

break the bonds of tradition and kinship in order to pursue her own autonomous dreams and take her own independent place as a producer and consumer in the future developed world—a possible effect is the reification of the schoolgirl category such that it is ultimately emptied of its emancipatory potential by the pre-packaging required for its mainstreaming.

A central contradiction of postcoloniality, as an extension and transformation of the colonial experience, is a paradox: the constraints of the condition open up new possibilities for individuals (and vice versa as the dialectic of enlightenment). The ideational questions at the heart of this analysis—*Who is a girl? A woman? Who can she be?*—are central to the material concerns of development debates occurring in Maasai communities at this moment, with particular reference to access to educational access, attainment, and applicability. These are more than theoretical questions about identity but rather, the struggle to form them and answer them evinces the productive power of discourse to frame possible subject positions (and a resistance to these frames), close off others, and produce ‘new’ social ‘facts.’ “Culture, moreover, is a legitimate, even necessary, terrain of struggle, a site of injustice in its own right and deeply imbricated with economic inequality. Properly conceived, struggles for recognition can aid the redistribution of power and wealth” (Fraser 2000). The discursive production of the Maasai schoolgirl provides both a recognitional and redistributive field in which agency, resistance, and dialectic are in play. Recognizing the productive salience of Maasai schoolgirls’ aspirational horizons is crucial to understanding how such a capacity has the power to create discursive spaces and thus open ground for agency. At the same time, however, the aspirations the schoolgirls articulate display the characteristics of the neoliberal frame around development as an aspiration. In other words, as the vulnerable ‘girl-child’ aspires to be the empowered ‘schoolgirl’ she risks losing as much as she hopes to gain. As Africans in general wrestle with the “promise of modernity” and modernity’s legacy in contemporary development ideology’s faith in formal schooling and in other social

formations, Maasai schoolgirls are forced into the match as they engage daily with newly forming meanings associated with being female, growing up, and going to school (Macamo 2005).

**Conclusion:****The New *Enkanyakuai* and the “Alchemy of Gender”:  
Why identities matter in the discourse of development**<sup>289</sup>

*“The world is awakening to a powerful truth: Women and girls aren’t the problem;  
they’re the solution.”*

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (August 23, 2009)

When Maria first started as my research assistant and translator, she came to my house in David and Agnes’ compound every morning where we worked, then had lunch, and worked some more in until it got too hot to think in my tin hut, and she would leave and walk about five kilometers along the shortcut through the bush back to her uncle’s compound. One morning, as she sat down for a cup of tea, she told me that on the way to my house she met one of the women she was circumcised with years before.<sup>290</sup>

When they met on the path and chatted briefly, the woman, who I will call Naipanoi, a resident of the Lood-ariak area, was heading back home with her youngest child after collecting firewood in what locals refer to as “the forest” or patches of trees dispersed among what is mostly low scrub brush and grasses.<sup>291</sup> I did not see Naipanoi that day, but I have seen women carrying

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<sup>289</sup> The phrase “alchemy of gender” comes from Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn’s very recent article in a special issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, August 23, 2009, entitled “Saving the world’s women: How changing the lives of women and girls in the developing world can change everything.”

<sup>290</sup> In early September 2007 I interviewed Maria in order to test the protocol and revise it with her help. Her circumcision story comes from that interview. Maria was circumcised “young,” around 11 or 12 years old, just after she began menstruation. She was grouped with seven other girls, most of whom were about three years older, and the ceremony was held in December while she was on holiday from school. She was the only schoolgirl in the group. Everyone one else was married within months, while she returned to class 5 (5<sup>th</sup> grade). Maria was 19 when these women met on the path, and Naipanoi was 23 and mother to 4 children. Naipanoi was likely 15 or 16 when she was ‘married off.’

<sup>291</sup> Deforestation is a central concern for residents of the southern Rift, and these “forests” are few and far between these days. All household require firewood, but even more than this, landowners

large loads. I can imagine her bent slightly forward with the hacked branches on her back tied together with a leather strap and then tied to her, one sash around her waist and another forms a kind of handle that comes up and across her forehead and then attaches on the other side of the load. Her baby would be tied with a colorful *shuka* to her chest. As an effect of this arrangement, women carrying loads walk looking ahead of themselves, but with their faces angled slightly down and forehead first, rather than looking forward, face first. In my observation and experience, a woman carrying a load will always stop to chat despite the weight, both hands on the straps framing her head, face down, talking to the ground. Maria, in contrast, was carrying only the notebook I had given her for transcription and small purse for her cell phone, a pen, and her handkerchief.

Maria said that she told Naipanoi that she was walking to meet me for our work together. As they briefly “shared the news,” and then prepared to move on, Naipanoi told Maria, “in your work, please remember the women like me who are carrying heavy loads in the hot sun instead of papers and books.”

Naipanoi’s vivid language to describe her position in comparison to Maria’s is startling in its precision and profound in its commentary. Despite the fact that the material conditions of their lives had been, and were still, very similar, the things they carried on that day symbolized different current realities and future trajectories. In a world in many ways sharply divided by access to, and experience in, formal schooling, the image of Maria and Naipanoi standing together in a clearing seems to represent two divergent paths for female subjectivity in contemporary Maasailand. Indeed, Naipanoi was correct in implying that Maria would earn more money for far less back-breaking work carrying a pen and papers. Likely, in four months as a research assistant, Maria would earn more than Naipanoi might in one year or more. Even though they had been circumcised

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(some Maasai, some not) contract with “charcoal burners” (usually Kamba and Kikuyu men) to cut and burn trees to produce charcoal which is then sold, locally and throughout Kenya.

together 7-8 years prior, according to local categories, Maria was still a kind of schoolgirl because she had just graduated from secondary school; as a classificatory student and a wage earner (although in the informal economy), she still had her life ahead of her. She *was not yet a woman*, and for that reason, her possibilities seemed open. Naipanoi, her age-mate, had never been a student. Instead, *she had been a woman for years already*, when she graduated from childhood to adulthood through *e-murata* and quickly married and started down the path of wife and mother. According to the discourse of relative development that frames the possibilities instantiated by the bundle of firewood and the baby compared to the notebook and the pen, Naipanoi's personal future, by comparison, was finite and best given expression by what her children might do or become.

The current conventional discourse of education-as-development pivots on the static images of the Marias and Naipanois of the world: two females similar in age and life circumstances who, by virtue of their different relationships with formal schooling, will live different lives. But more than simply different, Maria's life will be, *must be*, far superior to Naipanoi's because, as the discourse argues, Maria is in a position to avail herself of the full range of opportunities afforded by development whereas Naipanoi, and by extension, her children, are permanently shut out of these benefits. If Naipanoi is lucky, Maria and her American employer will "remember women like her" and perhaps ease her burdens in some way (and, I would surmise, the chosen way would be to provide funds to educate her children). Education will not only enable Maria to be an active agent on her own behalf, her contributions to her country's overall development will be measured by her place in the formal workforce as an employee and taxpayer, by her increased tendency to vote or participate in public matters, by her expanded consumption capacities and patterns, and by the small size of her healthy, educated family as the result of her 'delayed' marriage. Naipanoi, in contrast, as far as the discourse is concerned, is a drain on the system because her contributions to gross domestic product are negligible, she is disconnected from 'public' affairs of the state and

marginalized within “women’s programs” in civil society if at all, and she produces more children than she can adequately feed, medically treat, or formally educate. In the oversimplified development rubric, Maria will break the cycle of poverty; Naipanoï has entrenched it. Maria is the solution; Naipanoï is the problem.

From the evidence presented in this dissertation, it is clear that the inestimable paradox embodied by Napanoï and Maria and further articulated by their encounter on the path and the things they carried, cannot be resolved by affirmative rhetoric and targeted policy intervention aimed at girls and women alone. As with many of the dire problems facing the world’s poor and marginalized, most of whom are girls and women, rhetoric and intervention are absolutely necessary but insufficient to decidedly change the gendered structural oppressions they face on a daily basis, oppressions that are intensified, as well as mitigated, by neoliberal development.

Nonetheless, a pronounced ideology that “girls count” for development is gaining prominence.<sup>292</sup> This emerging ideology self-consciously and strategically positions girls in the center of the analysis thereby making their needs visible and targeted. In their very recent article, “The Women’s Crusade,” Kristof and WuDunn (2009) call this ideological figuring of girls and women “the alchemy of gender.” They use the phrase to refer to the “growing recognition among everyone from the World Bank to the U.S. military’s Joint Chiefs of Staff to aid organizations like CARE that focusing on women and girls is the most effective way to fight poverty and global extremism.” Embedded in the notion of alchemy is the power and possibility of transforming

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<sup>292</sup> This phrase is taken from a groundbreaking, but also discourse producing, report called *Girls Count: A Global Investment and Action Agenda* (2009). Co-authors Ruth Levine, Cynthia Lloyd, Margaret Green, and Caren Grown are long-time feminist scholars in gender and development and represent, respectively, the Center for Global Development, the Population Council, International Center for Research on Women, and American University.

something as common as ‘a woman’ (or ‘a girl’) into someone who has great value, if only the secret to that value can be unlocked and put to proper use.

This concept of singular, but until now hidden, *girl power* is captured by a new collective of organizations called The Coalition for Adolescent Girls, founded by the United Nations and the Nike Foundation and joined by over 30 additional organizations. Their evocative website opens with the words: “An adolescent girl can be the most powerful person in the world. She’s the key to ending generations of poverty” (CAG). The dynamic graphic that accompanies this text is of the ‘universal’ woman symbol like the one on the door of a woman’s restroom in western contexts, but the text tells us that this figure is not yet a woman, but an adolescent girl. At first ‘she’ is large and alone in the center of the screen. As the text emerges from the background, ‘she’ moves to the side, raises ‘her’ arms above ‘her’ head, as a line appears; above that line, more ‘men’ and ‘women’ symbols appear, multiplying until they form a pyramid shape of 50 ‘men’ and ‘women’ above her head. The graphic is compelling and clear. It says in symbols what Kristof and WuDunn also invoke when they refer to the alchemical power women have to “hold up half the sky.”

I have used their phrase “alchemy of gender” in the title for the chapter also to refer to this new recognition of newly targeted female power as well, but my use is meant to be somewhat ironic given the contradictions raised by my investigation of the schoolgirl category in Maasai life and the promises and the problems of the “new *enkangyakuai*.” What’s more, I want to reflect my own ambivalence as a woman, a feminist scholar, a current student, and former girl about these images and embodiments of *girl power* as they relate my nagging concern that making women and girls “the solution” to our world’s most extremely serious (dangerous and deadly) problems, despite the intentions of the attention, may not always be in the best interests of any women and girls, much less the most vulnerable among them.



I want to use the space of the conclusion to this dissertation, therefore, to think through some of conceptual, political and practical questions this study has raised for me. Over the course of the dissertation I have returned time and again to the notion of identities and subjectivities. Choosing to focus on identity formation in the context of a critique of international development can be a risky undertaking. When, as the discourse reiterates, over 600 million girls are out of school worldwide—a statistic that bespeaks the poverty and immiseration that must obtain—it is easy to feel guilty or self-serving for asking academic questions about girls' lives that do not focus on meeting their most pressing needs. And this is because I know, having read these literatures and talked with girls and some of their parents, their needs are overwhelmingly pressing. It is because of these facts, not despite them, that I believe the evidence presented in this dissertation makes a strong case for why identities matter in development discourse.

My notion of the 'new *enkanyakuai*' arrived directly from the ways in which the girls we interviewed talked about their own immediate circumstances and what it means to them to *feel structure[d]* like a schoolgirl. By claiming the schoolgirl category as their own, they both discursively and practically drew new lines in the Rift's volcanic soil around who they are, who they are not, and who they want to be. The unified subject-position, being Maasai and being schoolgirls, has real bearing on the (re)distribution of material and symbolic resources in Maasai life. Yet, the image of the singular 'girl' shouldering the responsibility for most of the people in her world resonates sharply with neoliberal capitalist ideology in which the private individual is the reference point for all social forms. Maasai schoolgirls' understanding of their various positions within the landscape of development and the manifestation of the 'new *enkanyakuai*' are in line with the norms of self-reliance and self-management that are the "new configurations of power and authority under neoliberalism" (Bragg 2007, 343). I worry that it is too easy for both Maasai

schoolgirls, and the feminists who support their achievements, to be seduced by, as I will go on to explain, “our uncanny double” (Fraser 2009, 114).

### **I. Feminist Fables**

As I discussed in chapter 3, Arturo Escobar (1995) argues that an “economy of statements” accompanies the political economy of development. In the economy of statements that support the education-as-development discourse, the rubrics of “gender” and “the girl child” are stable currency. As Cornwall et al. (2008) argue about ‘gender’ and Elisabeth Croll (2008) argues about the “girl child,” both have gained official institutionalized status within the discourse of mainstream development. Moreover, many scholars and development officials recognize that “Consistent gender responsive scholarship has over the years provided a setting with which studies on equity issues within education and the status of the girl-child has grown and developed its own paradigm” (Abagi 2006). The more deeply “gender and development talk” is absorbed into grammars of development, the more ubiquitously it has come to be characterized by simplistic slogans, and “the girl child” has become a central vocabulary with which to see or know the development zone (Cornwall et al. 2008, 1).

As a feminist, I applaud the work of pioneering feminists, gender scholars and activists who have worked since the 1970s ‘second wave’ to centralize ‘gender,’ and as I argued in the introduction, through the ‘girl child,’ the further *girl(ing) of gender*. There is no irony lost on me, a ‘third wave’ feminist born in 1970, that because of this pathbreaking work, these very gains are available to me today for critique. Nonetheless, a rhetoric composed of slogans ceases to be analytical, incisive, or inclusive and becomes marketing. Making marketing out of gender analysis blunts the concept’s analytical edge, empties gendered subjects of agency and renders them objects

of the discourse that purports to have a liberatory agenda, and risks the ‘official’ reinscription of the very axes of power that it was innovated to illuminate and dismantle.

As a critical feminist reader of development discourse, I am sensitive these processes. Yet, I went to Kenya rather unselfconsciously expecting to learn more about and from the Maasai ‘girl-child.’ It wasn’t until I returned to the states and began reviewing my notes, the transcripts, and other academic studies that I began to see the ways in which Maasai schoolgirls ‘gender and development talk’ repeatedly and poignantly recuperated ‘the girl-child’ by localizing her. But despite this new critical perspective on top of my old critical perspective I, along with anyone reading this conclusion I would venture, want the story I open the chapter with to be very different. We (this hypothetical reader and myself) want Naipanoi to have Maria’s life chances. We wish she could be dealt a “do-over” card that would change everything. In her do-over, Naipanoi would *not* be married at 15 to a man 10 years or more her senior, she would *not* have 4 children in 8 years instead of graduating from high school and going to college or otherwise pursuing her dreams and not someone else’s expectations or obligations, and she would *not* be carrying fire wood on her back and a baby to her breast under the hot sun. She may yet do all those things (marry, become a mother, work), we are thinking, but on her own time and according to her own interests.

Indeed, the language of feminism—of gender analysis—enables me to express my very political anger at the injustice of Naipanoi’s oppression and similar relief at Maria’s possible liberation. In an observation similar to the ones I make in chapter 5, Cornwall et al. (2008) write

Women often appear in narratives of gender and development policy as both heroines and victims: heroic in their capacity for struggle, in the steadfastness with which they carry the burdens of gender disadvantage and their exercise of autonomy; victims as those with curtailed choices, a triple work burden and on the receiving end of male oppression and violence (2).

My (and my reader's) emotional response, these authors contend, is "Embedded at least in part in our own self-conceptions" because "these rallying cries have the power to move, but they are also...very far from the complexity of women's and men's lives" (92). While I agree that Naipano and Maria present a moving and profound image, and I am certain their lives are more complex than my rendition of them allows, I also believe that what moves me is more than my "self-conceptions" at work. As I argue in chapter 5, my affirmative response to Maria and my negative response to Naipano, are produced by competing discourses about what it does and should mean to be an adolescent girl or a young woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This competition over meaning has become a storyline in the genre of "feminist fable" that conditions how we see girls in the development zone. As Hodgson argues about Maasai development, the problem has not been the fact of 'being Maasai,' but rather the discourse and policy associated with how Maasai have been seen in certain bracketed and one-dimensional ways; likewise, feminist fables concerning the "girl-child" configure what we know, and can know, about girls in the development zone.

Cornwall et al. (2008) define the "feminist fable" in development discourse as a "powerful set of narratives" "harnessed to gender myths" that valorize and essentialize women (5). Further, feminist fables are typically "charged with a key moral message" that sets in motion a series of 'ought-to' claims which, as the authors also suggest, move us to action (5). For example, the ideas in development discourse that women are "closer to nature" and therefore "natural" stewards of the environment, or that women are "more peace-loving" and should, therefore, be at the forefront of conflict resolution, are story-lines based on conventional, essential notions of who (all) women are regardless of any of the mediating structural, personal or other factors that realistically and complexly configure identities and subjects-in-positions.

Yet, the authors argue, it is precisely this reductive quality that makes it easy for others to recognize and know the women in the fable; the "myths" that empower feminist fables "have to

make sense in the inchoate flux of life and provide sense of the purpose and conviction” (4). Thus, the “persuasive power” of feminist fables of development is realized through their capacity to “define the problem as well as the solution” (6). In other words, they have to not only make sense, they have to be sensible. As I argue in the introduction to this dissertation, ‘empowering adolescent girls’ has become both the question and the answer to the world’s most dire problems. The idea that ‘everyone knows’ African girls are vulnerable to a variety of dangerous forces, ensures the ease with which any reader of this conclusion already knows both Naipanoï and Maria’s stories. We know them well enough from my description that we can not only distinguish between the two, but we come to a definite determination regarding of the two who is, or was, a “girl child.” As the “alchemy of gender” variation of the feminist fable goes on to suggest, perhaps it is not Maria who will save the world, but Naipanoï, who is transmuted by her targeting from victim to heroine.

Contending with discourse in development is important to our understanding of identity formation because the “particular framings of the problem and the solution” that “gain purchase” are always a reflection of institutional power (Cornwall et al. 2008, 3). There is little room among powerful international development actors to indicate “doubt” or “uncertainty” about either the problem or the solution, the target or the intervention (Cornwall et al. 2008, 8). This referential self-confidence helps to shape consensus among development actors at all scales, and consensus is often the precursor to ideological hegemony (Cornwall et al 2008). As a result, and as I suggest in chapter 5, instrumentalism prevails. Studies of feminist ideas instrumentalized by the development regime indicate that this process will occur “despite the fact that the welding of gender equality concerns to...influential policy agendas may well have been the work of ardent gender champions within key multilaterals” (Cornwall 2008 et al., 12).

I am disturbed that feminists in development institutions play with “presentational pragmatics” “driven by the conviction that it is better to make concessions than to see no action at all” (Cornwall et al. 2008, 13). Yet, “Instrumentalism may have its place as a tactical maneuver,” which indicates an array of possible rewards for girls and young women who are the main characters, and a primary audience, of feminist fables concerning education-as-development. As we have seen in the various facets of schoolgirl narratives presented in this dissertation, the promotion of feminist fables does produce discursive mythologies which find resonance in local ways of seeing, thinking and being that can enable agency and resistance. In fact, Maasai schoolgirls’ use the very discursive mythologies of the ‘girl-child’ to their advantage. Maria can magnanimously advise Felista on how to negotiate with her father because Maria knows from her own negotiations with her father how education can stack the deck in favor of schoolgirls. Naishipae knows that if the head teacher will take her in, she will likely be ‘rescued’ from a forced marriage. At another scale, feminist fables enable the proliferation of productive mythologies for development by “encoding ‘truths’ in narratives that nourish and sustain convictions...[therefore] development’s myths gain their purchase because they speak about the world in ways that lend political convictions the sense of direction that is needed to inspire action” (Cornwall et al., 4). Naipanoi’s comments to Maria on the way to my house that day, opened the door to action on my part depending how I chose to respond to her request that we “remember her.” Visitor’s to the Coalition for Adolescent Girls have a variety of ways to “get involved” that include opportunities for activism around global gender issues, contributions to various organizations that work on the behalf of girls, and ways to learn more about girls’ lives around the world. Feminist fables of ‘the girl child’s’ essentialized vulnerability, or conversely, the schoolgirl’s superhuman strength and capacity to hold her entire extended family above her head, do offer Maasai girls, and other girls elsewhere, rewards that, absent this targeting, they may not enjoy.

## II. Cautionary tales

While feminist fables can be seen as mechanisms by which Maasai schoolgirls, and other girls in the development zone, can produce and leverage for themselves an array of subjectivities made available within the discourse of education-as-development, is it also true that the narrative theme of this dissertation is not a feminist fable at all, but a cautionary tale to feminists and others concerned for Maasai schoolgirls, and other girls around the world.

To assume away the corrosive effects of structural divergence between and within nations would be an exercise in irresponsibility and naiveté. The schoolgirls at the core of this study will come of age and struggle for school in the Kenyan post-colony in the age of neoliberal capitalist globalization. I have attempted to illustrate the ways in which this structural reality is not wholly determinative of the girls' lifeways, but it is nonetheless profoundly salient for both symbolic (or recognitional) concerns, like agency and subjectivity, and material (or redistributive concerns), like the political economies of marginality and vulnerability. As I argued in both chapter 5, the resignification of the girl-child as the schoolgirl depends on her deep internalization of the neoliberal capitalist logics of self-determination, individual achievement, alienation from 'tradition' and 'culture,' and self-knowledge outside of kinship norms. At the same time, as Archambault (2007) has argued, Maasai children today strongly desire education not for the separation it foments between them and their home cultures, but precisely because of the complex imbrications of Maasai social forms and political structures in local schools, and the recursive effects of 'new' school knowledge for the future of pastoral praxis. She calls this relationship between the force of structure and the resistance of agents a "hybrid moment," wherein the mutual reinforcing nature of school and home find root.

Yet, as, Escobar (1995) argues, development “maps people into certain coordinates of control. The aim is not simply to discipline individuals but to transform the conditions under which they live into a productive, normalized social environment: in short, to create modernity” (156). Unfortunately, neoliberal development policy has gone a long way to empty the modern dream of the stuff that makes it so desirable. As Sifuna and Chege (2006) elaborate, Maasai schoolgirls who dream of becoming pilots, magistrates, presidents and doctors, are more likely to enter the deterritorialized international division of labor that is a predominate feature of neoliberal development. They write

Primary school leavers, many of them young women, are likely to be preferred as casual workers in agro-processing factories, such as those for tea and coffee, based on their basic literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, this group of workers would be most suited to work in subordinate positions based on the socialization provided by schools in aspects of punctuality, unquestioning obedience, regular attendance, and the ability to adapt to bureaucratic structures, among other working class attributes. Above all else, they are more likely to accept underpayment (Sifuna and Chege 2006, 135).

Perhaps paradoxically, the Maasai schoolgirl’s firm connection to Maasai identities and hybridities through language and parental home suggests that unlike their cultivating neighbors who have been mainstreamed by development for much longer, they might initially be insulated from the draw of the coffee and tea plantations and other export processing zones. But she will, regardless of the employment she seeks, be rationalized within the framework of “working class attributes” that serve as commonsensical “categories of control” in developing world.

As I have argued throughout the dissertation, it is precisely the discourse of neoliberal capitalist development that makes the schoolgirl category possible and intelligible to her and to us. Also as I have argued in the dissertation and thus far in this conclusion, there are rewards for Maasai girls who become and remain schoolgirls. The ‘new *enkanyakuai*’ affords them unprecedented



negotiating power in the current reality. But what are the risks of these feminist fables? Why do I worry, and why should we all worry, about the new iconography of girl power?

The discourse of identity matters in critical readings of development and its every day impacts because interpretive power is not now, and has never been, neutral, objective or uninterested. Discourse is a social project, and as such the discourse of identities becomes 'real' inside institutions. Institutions like the development-driven primary school create an array of subject-positions that have profound implications for girls and women (and boys and men) everywhere. Further, the interpretive power embedded in development's discourse of identities is profoundly salient because neoliberal capital literally infuses development's interventions; likewise, neoliberal capitalist ethics distribute development's imperatives. What is hard to swallow, but as I found listening to Maasai schoolgirls' discuss their dreams and aspirations, neoliberal capitalist ideology has found a comfortable home in western 'second wave' feminism. Consequently, as western feminist sensibilities are themselves co-opted and transformed by the neoliberally defined capitalist development institutions that formulate policy and fund intervention, it is no wonder at all that instrumentalism is the name of the game. As Fraser (2009) asserts

to be sure, [the] spirit [of neoliberal capitalism] includes a masculinist romance of the free, unencumbered, self-fashioning individual...but neoliberal capitalism has as much to do with Walmart, *maquiladoras*, and microcredit as with Silicon Valley and Google.... 'Disorganized' neoliberal capitalism... turns a sow's ear into a silk purse by elaborating a new romance of female advancement and gender justice (110).

She continues; this "feminist romance"

invests flexible capitalism with a higher meaning and a moral point. Endowing their daily struggles with an ethical meaning, the feminist romance attracts women at both ends of the spectrum: at one end, the female cadres of the professional middle classes, determined to crack the glass ceiling; at the other end, the female temps, part-timers, low-wage service employees, domestics, sex workers, migrants EPZ workers and microcredit borrowers, seeking not only income and material security, but also dignity, self-betterment, and liberation from traditional authority. At both ends, the dream of women's emancipation is harnessed to the engine of capitalist accumulation....Once the centerpiece of a radical

analysis of capitalism's androcentricism, [second wave feminism] serves today to intensify capitalism's valorization of waged labor (111).

In other words, 'disorganized,' flexible capitalism—neoliberal capitalism— has the uncanny capacity to absorb even radical programs for social justice, neutralize them, and put them to work. To Fraser's critique of micro-credit and other interventions targeting poor women, I believe we can and should add the development-as-education imperatives concerning girls' education. As new lines of marginality are drawn and new exclusions created in the wake of the education-as-development imperative, I worry that as Maasai schoolgirls cash in on the rewards, they risk losing as much as they had hoped to gain.

### III. Desire and decline

Feminist fables of education-as-development rely on a cast of characters to make sense. As we have seen throughout the dissertation, vulnerable girls, clever girls, and heroic girls take center stage with heartless patriarchs, well-intentioned mothers, and crusading teachers. About a month into the research, I sat with David ole Kilusu in the sitting room of his house drinking tea and discussing the day. I said that I thought a byproduct or effect of development might be "confusion—over who people think they are, have been in the past, and want to be in the future." According to my notes, he said: "Is it development, actually, or education?" As I re-read this comments now, in the light of my analysis, my answer back to him would be something like: "isn't it both?" At the same time, I can see his point in light of the profound impact the education-as-development discourse has on Maasai schoolgirls in the Kajiado Rift. The girls do not distinguish a difference between the desire they feel to be educated and the imperative they perceive to be developed. They also see evidence of 'decline' all around them, but this does not dissuade their 'desire.' Instead, it fuels it. If this study confides a cautionary tale, this is it: in our feminist efforts

to confront traditional hegemonic authority—in the classrooms and living rooms of the west or, through a compromised and compromising development, in the classrooms and *enkangs* of Africa—we must be awake to the risks at stake in unresolvable contradictions, alive to the rewards inherent in our small victories, and always ever-vigilant against the ease with which we, and the girls we cheer for, are seduced by the promise of development.

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## **Appendix A: Consent Form**

\* Note: this form was originally designed to cover girls who had dropped out of school.

This Consent Form is in compliance with the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board checklist. The researcher requests a waiver of written consent. This form will be read to participants in the language that is the most appropriate for each participant (English, Kiswahili, or KiMaasai). For participants who prefer to read the form themselves and sign, the form will be provided. The translator present at each interview will act as witness to the consent and sign the form. The forms will be stored in a locked, fireproof box only accessible by the researcher.

### I. The Purpose of the Research

This study focuses on rural Maasai girls' personal experiences in formal schooling in Kajiado district of Kenya, East Africa. The study is based on first hand accounts and descriptions of what going to school is or has been like for participants, including those girls who have left school before finishing. The purpose of the study is to understand the formal schooling experience from the students' perspectives. The study focuses in Maasai girls, ages 12-20, who are either currently attending school or have left school early. The study will consist of short interviews with schoolgirls in the 10 primary schools in Keekonyokie Central Location. The study also includes interviews with each girl's parents and/or guardians and teachers when possible. This consent form protects adults, including primary schoolgirls over the age of 18, who participate in the study.

### II. Procedures

Participants who consent to this research will be expected to meet with the researcher in a comfortable and convenient location for approximately 1 hour. At this meeting, you are encouraged to ask the researcher any questions you may have about the study itself or the researcher herself. Also at this meeting, the researcher will ask you some questions about yourself and schooling and education in English and when necessary, a local translator will ask the questions in either Swahili or Maa according to your needs. The participant may answer in English when possible and appropriate. You may also answer in your native tongue and the translator will translate that answer in to English for the researcher. During the interview, the researcher may take notes and/or record the conversation using a recording device. If you are not comfortable with the audio recording device, it will not be used. At this time, the researcher will also find out if you are comfortable giving your name and having your photograph taken. Participants' names and photographs will only be used for record keeping purposes and will be kept safely and confidentially in the possession of the researcher. No participant's real name will be used in any written account related to the study and your photograph will never be displayed publicly.

Follow-up interviews may be necessary to clarify researcher questions or concerns.

Follow-up interviews may also be held at the request of the participant if you need to withdraw, change, or add to your initial comments.

Participants are not obligated to answer any questions. Participants may stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants may expect a total time commitment of 1-2 hours.

### III. Risks

The potential risks of this research to the girls involved include emotional discomfort and fear caused by several possible factors including speaking negatively about schools, school officials or teachers, parents or guardians; the possibility that you may be seen by your peers to be receiving special treatment; the possibility that you will relate information of abuse by peers, parents, or teachers; the possibility that the you may feel obligated to consent to the wishes of adults to participate in the study even if you do not want to; the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly to an adult from outside of your community; conversely, the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly with a local translator present.

The potential risks to parents/guardians involved in this study include emotional discomfort and fear caused by the possibility of speaking negatively about schools, school officials, and/or educational policy; the possibility that girls will relate information of abuse by peers, parents, or teachers; the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly to an outside researcher; conversely, the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly with a local translator present.

The potential risks to teachers or school officials involved in this study include emotional discomfort and fear caused by the possibility of speaking negatively about schools, school officials (including superiors and peers), and/or educational policy/policy makers; the possibility that you may be seen by your peers to be receiving special treatment; the possibility that students will relate information of abuse by other students, parents, or teachers; the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly to an outside researcher; conversely, the possibility that you may feel uncomfortable speaking frankly with a local translator present.

In order to minimize these risks, every participant is fully informed about the nature and procedures of the study. You are reminded that your participation is voluntary. You are reminded that you can refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews will be conducted in locations that are comfortable and convenient for you. You are ensured confidentiality. When possible (for those participants who speak English), translators need not be present for the entire interview if this is what you prefer.

### **IV. Benefits**

You are reminded that no promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate in this study. There is no direct benefit to you for your participation. As participants of this study, particularly the girls, you may indirectly benefit if the findings that reflect your stated needs as students are used in the future to positively inform education policy in Kenya or the specific policies of the school you attend. Similarly, parents or guardians and teachers and

administrators may receive some indirect benefit if increased knowledge about girls' experiences in formal schooling positively impacts the provision of schooling for girls, and boys, in Kenyan communities.

#### V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The identity of the participants of this study will be kept confidential by the researcher. This means that the researcher will identify participants by name and other identifiers in her research notes, but the researcher promises not to divulge that information to anyone, including her dissertation committee. Only the researcher will have access to raw data. Data with identifying markers will be kept in locked boxes in the researcher's possession. The researcher will use study ID codes (ex: Student A, Student B, Teacher A, etc.) in all documents read by anyone other than the researcher, including her dissertation committee. All participants' identities will be altered and pseudonyms used in any publication of this research. It is possible that the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research. The data gathered in this study will not be destroyed after it is collected, as it will be archived by the Virginia Tech libraries in the United States.

#### VI. Compensation

Participants in this study will receive no monetary compensation. Participants will receive tokens of appreciation for the time spent in the study. Students and teachers will receive school supplies; parents and guardians will receive household supplies.

#### VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to refuse to answer any questions without penalty. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants who withdraw will still receive the token of appreciation.

#### VIII. Participant's responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. As a participant, I have the following responsibilities:

- I will work with the researcher to arrange a time to meet with the researcher in a location of my choosing.
- I will meet at the arranged time, or I will notify the researcher if I cannot meet.

#### IX. Participant's Permission

I have read the Consent Form or the Consent Form has been read to me. The conditions of this study have been explained to me. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my consent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you should have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct and research subjects' rights, or if you have a research-related injury, please contact the investigator and/or her faculty advisors:

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## Appendix B: Minor Assent Form

This Minor Assent Form in compliance with the Virginia Tech Internal Review Board recommendations. The assent process is designed to elicit the child's affirmative agreement to participate in research. The researcher requests a waiver of written consent. The participants in this study will range in age from 12 to 20. This assent covers the 12-18 age group. The consent form will be used with participants older than 18. This form will be read to participants in the language that is the most appropriate for each participant (English, Kiswahili, or KiMaasai). For participants who prefer to read the form themselves and sign, the form will be provided. The translator present at each interview will act as witness to the verbal assent and sign the form. The forms will be stored in a locked, fireproof box only accessible by the researcher.

Out of respect for children as developing persons, the children involved in this study will be first asked whether or not they wish to participate in the research. The following areas of assent will be covered with every opportunity for questions from the participant, and then the child will be asked again if she wishes to participate. Her/his affirmative or negative response will be recorded and witnessed by the translator/research assistant.

The assent process covers the following areas:

### **\* What the study is about:**

I am a university student from America. Part of my program involves studying what it is like for Maasai girls in school. So I am living in Kenya in Loodariak for 7 months. While I am here, I would like to talk with many schoolgirls who are between the ages of 12 and 20 so I can learn from you what your experiences in school and with learning have been. I am also hoping to talk to young women and girls who decided to leave school before finishing.

### **\* Why she qualifies for the study:**

I asked to talk with you today because as Maasai girl in Standard 5, I thought you might have some interesting stories to tell me about being a student.

*\* The voluntary nature of the study and assurance that she will be treated the same whether or not she agrees to join the study:*

I appreciate the time you have taken to sit and talk with me today. You are not required by anyone—not me, not your teacher or the headmaster, or your parents—to participate in this study. You are here only because you want to be. No one can make you come to talk, and no one can make you stay. If you have changed your mind and don't really want to talk about being a student, then you are free to end the interview whenever you want. I have a pen and composition notebook for you as a token of my appreciation, and you can still have this small gift even if you decide you do not want to participate.

### **\* Potential benefits & potential risks:**

I will give you a small gift to thank you for taking your time to talk to me. There will be no other direct benefits—you will not receive special or extra credit in your classes nor will you or your family receive any money for talking to me today. I hope that by talking to Maasai girls about their

experiences in school that we can educate teachers, parents, and other adults about how to make school a safe and positive place for all students to learn. This is an indirect benefit of your participation. There should be no risks to you for participating. If you are afraid of saying something bad about your teachers or school, I understand that fear. I would like you to be honest, but if you don't want to answer any question I ask, please feel free to refuse to answer. You will not be punished by me or anyone for not answering. All of your thoughts will be protected by me—I never use your name.

*\* The procedures that will be done:*

I hope we can talk today for about an hour. I have about 15 questions that I would like to ask. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not an examination. I would just like to know your thoughts and opinions. If I ask a question that you do not want to answer, you don't have to. The translator will help us. She will say the questions in Kiswahili and Maasai to make sure you understand what I am asking, and she will help me understand your answer in English. I will take some notes as you talk. This is to help me remember what you have said. I will also record our conversation. [Show her the digital audio recorder—play around with it saying “hello” and playing it back]. The recording is to make sure that I remember what you have said and have a correct record of your words. If you do not want me to use it, I won't. No one else besides you, the translator, and me will hear this recording or see my notes. I will keep the information protected and I will never use your name or your photograph.

*\* An invitation to ask questions:*

I invite you to ask questions at any time during the interview. Please stop me if you don't understand what I am asking or if you just want to ask me any questions.

**\* Assurance that he/she may withdraw from the study after discussing it with his/her parents.**

I would like you to think about my request to interview you and speak with your parents/guardians. If you do not want to participate, or your parents/guardians do not want you to participate, then you may easily withdraw from the study. I will be happy to see you in the schoolyard and the compound, and I will not be angry at all if you decide to withdraw.

Minor Assent

The Minor Assent Form has been read to me (or, I have read the Minor Assent Form). The conditions of this study that I will be involved in have been explained to me. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my assent:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



If you or your parents/guardians should have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct and research subjects' rights, or if you have a research-related injury, please contact the investigator and/or her faculty advisors:

**Investigator:**

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## Appendix C: Parental Permission Form

This Parental Permission Form is in compliance with the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board recommendations. The researcher requests a waiver of written consent. This form will be read to participants' parents or guardians in the language that is the most appropriate (English, Kiswahili, or KiMaasai). For parents or guardians who prefer to read the form themselves and sign, the form will be provided. The translator present at each interview will act as witness to the permission and sign the form. The forms will be stored in a locked, fireproof box only accessible by the researcher.

This document is written under the assumption that many of the parents and guardians I seek permission from will not be literate. In language similar to the minor assent form, I detail the various aspects of the project in which I have requested that their children or wards participate. For those parents or guardians who can read English, a written version of the form will be available for them to read and sign. I have tried to explicitly expand the notion of "parent" in the Western nuclear family sensibility, as Maasai children are often raised in extended family/kinship networks, hence my phrasing "child/ward/relative."

### **\* What the study is about:**

I am a university student from America. Part of my program involves studying what it is like for Maasai girls in school. So I am living in Kenya in Loodariak for 7 months. While I am here, I would like to talk with many schoolgirls who are between the ages of 12 and 20 so I can learn what their experiences in school and with learning have been. I am also hoping to talk to young women and girls who decided to leave school before finishing. I would like to talk to your child/ward/relative about her experiences. I am seeking your permission to do so.

### *\* Why she qualifies for the study:*

I selected your child/ward/relative because as Maasai girl currently attending school, I thought she might have some interesting stories to tell me about being a student and her ideas about education.

### *\* The voluntary nature of the study and assurance that she will be treated the same whether or not she agrees to join the study:*

I appreciate the time you have taken to sit and talk with me today. Your child/ward/relative is not required by anyone—not me, not her teacher or the headmaster—to participate in this study. You are not required by anyone to give me permission to interview your child/ward/relative. Your child/ward/relative will only participate because she has chosen to and you have granted me permission to include her in the study. If she or you change your mind and don't want me to conduct and interview, then I will not. I have a pen and composition notebook for your child/ward/relative as a token of my appreciation, and she can still have this small gift even if she or you decide that she may not participate.

### **\* Potential benefits & potential risks:**

I will give your child/ward/relative a small gift to thank you for taking the time to talk to me. There will be no other direct benefits for her—she will not receive special or extra credit in her classes nor will she or you receive any money for talking to me. I hope that by talking to Maasai

girls about their experiences in school that we can educate teachers, parents, and other adults about how to make school a safe and positive place for all students to learn. This is an indirect benefit of her participation. There should be no risks to her for participating. She may refuse to answer any question that makes her uncomfortable. She will not be punished by her teachers, you, or me for not answering. All of her thoughts will be protected by me—I never use her name or photograph.

*\* The procedures that will be done:*

I will talk with your child/ward/relative for about an hour. I have about 8 questions that I would like to ask. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not an examination. I would just like to know her thoughts and opinions. The translator will help us. The translator will say the questions in Kiswahili and Maasai to make sure your child/ward/relative understands what I am asking, and the translator will help me understand her answer in English. I will take some notes as we talk. This is to help me remember what she has said. I will also record our conversation. [Show the parent/guardian the digital audio recorder—play around with it saying “hello” and playing it back]. The recording is to make sure that I remember what she has said and have a correct record of her words. If you do not want me to use it, I won't. No one else besides your child/ward/relative, the translator, and me will hear this recording or see my notes. I will keep the information protected and I will never use her real name or her photograph.

*\* An invitation to ask questions:*

I invite you to ask questions about the interview process at any time. Your child/ward/relative will be able to ask me questions at any time during the interview, and she can stop me if she doesn't understand what I am asking.

**\* Assurance that he/she may withdraw from the study after discussing it with his/her parents.**

If you do not want your child/ward/relative to participate, or your child/ward/relative does not want you to participate, then she may easily withdraw from the study. I will be happy to see her in the schoolyard and the compound, and I will not be angry at all if you decide to withdraw your child.

\* Assurance of anonymity

I will keep the identities of the girls involved in this study anonymous. This means that I will never use your child/ward/relative's real name. The identity of the participants of this study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

\* Explanation of compensation

Participants in this study will receive no monetary compensation. Your child/ward/relative will receive tokens of my appreciation for the time she will spend talking to me. This small gift will be school supplies or household supplies (for girls no longer in school).

Parent or Guardian's Permission

The Parental Permission Form has been read to me (or, I have read the Parental Permission Form). The conditions of this study that my child/ward/relative will be involved in have been explained to me. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my permission:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you or your child/ward/relative should have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct and research subjects' rights, or if your child/ward/relative has a research-related injury, please contact the investigator and/or her faculty advisors:

**Investigator:**

Heather Switzer, Doctoral Candidate  
311 Upland Road  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
USA  
Cell: (540) 558-8142

Contact in Kenya:  
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206 Shanks Hall  
Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  
USA  
E-mail: [bhausman@vt.edu](mailto:bhausman@vt.edu)  
Office: (540) 231-5076

If you or your child/ward/relative should have any questions about the protection of human subjects regarding this study, you may contact:

Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Research Compliance Office

1880 Pratt Drive

Suite 2006

Blacksburg, VA 24060-0497

USA

Email: [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

Office: (540) 231-4991

## Appendix D: Original Interview Protocol

The original research design changed significantly in the field. This appendix lists the original questions based on the original research design. Appendix E documents the revised protocol for the enrolled schoolgirls based on pretesting with my first assistant, Maria. The original design called for interviewing 30 schoolgirls once in ‘short’ interviews and then following up with 15 in a second ‘long’ interview. We ended up interviewing 98 schoolgirls once (as well as 3 boys) and effectively combined some of the questions that were originally divided between the first and second follow-up interview.

While I did interview women who had ‘dropped out’ of school, this element of the original design was complicated by logistics and therefore did not become a significant data set for the overall project. Those questions are listed here, along with the protocols for teachers and parents (which ended up to be only mothers); these did not change significantly after field tests.

Short interviews with girls who are still in school will include the following general questions/directives:

1. Please describe/tell me about yourself.
2. Please tell me about a typical school day for you, beginning with when you wake up in the morning until you go to sleep in the evening. What are the best and worst parts of the school day for you? What do you enjoy and the least the most about being a student?
3. Please describe your school (the location, the compound, buildings, staff, other students, materials)
4. Please tell me how you feel about going to school (do you look forward to going to class?)
5. If you were in charge of your school, would you change anything about it?
6. What is the purpose of school in your life?
7. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”? Where does education come from?
8. What are your dreams for the future?
9. When you grow up, what do you want to do/be?
10. What are the best and worst things about being a female?
11. Are there differences between being a girl and being a woman? What are the differences between a girl and a woman? Is there anything in between? How do you know when you become a woman? What about between a boy and a man?
12. Do you call yourself a girl or a woman (or something in between)?
13. What are the reasons that more boys go to school than girls?
14. Do you have any questions for me?

Short interviews with girls who have dropped out of school will include the following general questions:

1. Please describe/tell me about yourself.
2. Please tell me about a typical day for you, beginning with when you wake up in the morning. What are the best and worst parts of your day?
3. When did you leave school? How long did you attend?

4. Please tell me about the decision to leave school. (Was it your desire to leave school? If yes, please explain. If no, who made the decision? Why did you leave?)
5. How do you feel about leaving school?
6. Do you miss being a student?
7. Do you want to return to school? Do you have a plan for returning to school?
8. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”?
9. What are your dreams for the future?
10. When you grow up, what do you want to do/be? Why?
11. What are the best and worst things about being female?
12. Are there differences between being a girl and being a woman? What are the differences between a girl and a woman? Is there any thing in between? How do you know when you become a woman? What about between a boy and a man?
13. Do you call yourself a girl or a woman (or something in between)?
14. What are the reasons it is easier for a boy to stay in school longer than a girl?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Long interviews with girls who are still in school will include the following general questions, but will also be individually tailored to each girl based on her short interview responses:

1. We talked for a long time before, is there anything you want to add or change about what you said before? Do you have any questions now?
2. Please tell me about your family/homestead.
3. Who else in your family attends or has attended school?
4. How do your parents/guardians feel about *mafunzo*, your education? Have your parents/guardians or any of your elders attended school?
5. What do your elders want for your future? What do you think of this vision of your future?
6. Describe your relationship to your teachers.
7. Describe your relationship to other students in your school.
8. Have you heard the word or idea *maendeleo* (“progress” or “development”) before? Where/from whom have you heard this idea? When you hear this word what do you think of? What does progress or development mean to you?
9. Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life? How so?

Long interviews with girls who have left school will include the following general questions, but will also be individually tailored to each girl based on her short interview responses:

1. We talked for a long time before, is there anything you want to add or change about what you said before? Do you have any questions now?
2. Please tell me about your family/homestead.
3. Does any one in your family/homestead attend school, now or in the past?
4. How do your parents/guardians feel about *mafunzo*, your education? Have your parents/guardians or any of your elders attended school?
5. What do your elders want for your future? What do you think of this vision of your future?



6. Explain how what you learned while in school helps you in your daily life now. Is there anything in particular you would like to learn more about now that you are out of school that would help you in you in your daily life now?
7. Have you heard the word or idea *maendeleo* (“progress” or “development”) before? Where/from whom have you heard this idea? When you hear this word what do you think of? What does progress or development mean to you?
8. Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life? How so?

### **Parent/Guardian Interviews**

These questions form the conversational guide for the parents/guardians of the girls who are still in school:

1. As you know, I have also spoken with your daughter/niece/granddaughter/etc. Please tell me a little about yourselves and your family from your point of view
2. Please describe your personal experiences with *manfunzo*.
3. What do you think about Student A attending school?
4. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”? Where does education come from?
5. Is the purpose of schooling the same for both sons and daughters? Do sons and daughters have different experiences at school? Please explain.
6. What are the obstacles to educating Maasai girls?
7. What are your dreams for Student A’s the future?
8. What are Student A’s dreams for her future?
9. Have you heard the word or idea *maendeleo* (“progress” or “development”) before? When you hear this word what do you think of? What does progress or development mean to you? Where/from whom have you heard this idea?
10. Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life?
11. Would you explain the relationship between *mafunzo* and *maendeleo*?
12. Do you have any questions for me?

These questions form the conversational guide for the parents/guardians of the girls who dropped out of school:

1. As you know, I have also spoken with your daughter/niece/granddaughter/etc. Please tell me a little about yourselves and your family from your point of view
2. Please describe your personal experiences with *manfunzo*.
3. Please tell me about the circumstances that led to Student B to leave school.
4. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”?
5. Is the purpose of schooling the same for both sons and daughters? Do sons and daughters have different experiences at school? Please explain.
6. What are the obstacles to educating Maasai girls?
7. What are your dreams for Student B’s the future?
8. What are Student B’s dreams for her future?

9. Have you heard the word or idea *maendeleo* (“progress” or “development”) before? Where/from whom have you heard this idea? When you hear this word what do you think of? What does progress or development mean to you? Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life?
10. Would you explain the relationship between *mafunzo* and *maendeleo*?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

### Teacher/Administrator Interviews

These questions form the conversational guide for the teachers/administrators of the girls who are still in school:

1. Please tell me about your own experiences in/with education.
2. Please describe the school you lead/teach in.
3. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”? Where does education come from?
4. Is the purpose of schooling the same for both males and females? Do boys and girls have different experiences at school? Please explain.
5. What are the obstacles to educating Maasai girls?
6. What are your dreams for Student A’s the future?
7. What are Student A’s dreams for her future?
8. When you hear the word *maendeleo*, what do you think of? What does progress or development, mean to you?
9. Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life?
10. Would you explain the relationship between *mafunzo* and *maendeleo*?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

These questions form the conversational guide for the teachers/administrators of the girls who are still in school:

1. Please tell me about your own experiences in/with education.
2. Please describe the school you lead/teach in.
3. What does being “educated” mean to you? What does “education,” *mafunzo*, mean to you? How do you know when someone you meet is “educated”? Where does education come from?
4. Is the purpose of schooling the same for both males and females? Do boys and girls have different experiences at school? Please explain.
5. What are the obstacles to educating Maasai girls?
6. To your knowledge, why did Student B leave school early?
7. What are your dreams for Student B’s the future?
8. What are Student B’s dreams for her future?
9. Now that she is no longer in school, what aspects of her learning are relevant to everyday life now?
10. When you hear the word *maendeleo*, what do you think of? What does progress or development, mean to you?
11. Do you experience *maendeleo* in your life?
12. Would you explain the relationship between *mafunzo* and *maendeleo*?
13. Do you have any questions for me?

## Appendix E: Revised Interview Protocol

(From field notebook #1: 9.14.07)

\* These questions were eventually phased out/dropped.

My original questions were pretested with Maria. Together we revised the new set.

### Enkisoma (education) questions:

1. Please tell us about yourself (your names, where you are from/were born, where you live now, your family/household, siblings in school, etc).
2. What grade are you in? \* What subjects are you currently studying?
3. How do you feel about school? (do you look forward to school each day? What is your favorite part of the school day—why? What part of the school day you like least?)
4. What is the purpose of schooling in you daily life right now?
5. What are your parents happy to see you in school although they themselves were not taken to school?
6. What is 'education'? What does education mean for your life?
7. What does it mean to be 'educated'? (Note: there is no verb in Maa that translates to "to be educated". Rebecca will likely ask, What does it mean to be an educated person, *oltungani osume*).
8. \* When you meet someone, how do you know if he or she has gone to school (been educated)?
9. Does school give you knowledge? (what kind of knowledge? Explain/give examples).
10. If you do not go to school, what kind of knowledge do you have? Explain/give examples.
11. What can you learn at home that you cannot learn at school? What can you learn at school that you cannot learn at home?
12. What are your dreams for your future?

### Abaiki eboto/Atubulua (growing up, maturing, adolescence) questions:

1. When does a girl become a woman? How?
2. Please tell us about the differences between a girl and a woman.
3. What is the meaning of *e-murata* (female circumcision)?
4. What do you call yourself right now? (For how long have you been a woman? How did you know? Did you feel any different?)
5. Is there any category in between being a "girl" and being a "woman"?
6. When does a boy become a man? Are your classmate's men or boys?
7. We see from the head teacher's chart that there are more boys than girls in this school. Why do more boys than girls attend school?
8. What is your opinion on the situation of educating girls?

### Inkiasin ngejuko (new changes) (maendelo in Kiswahili, development) questions:

1. What is development?
2. Do you have or experience any development in your life right now?
3. What are examples of development in this place?
4. Is there any connection between education and development?
5. If you could be the MP of Kajiado North, what development do you want to see in this place?

## Appendix F: Data Analysis Description

The primary means of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews. I interviewed people from three constituencies. These included Maasai girls ages 10-17 enrolled in primary school at the time of the interviews, some of their teachers, and some of their parents or guardians (all mothers or grandmothers). As the basis for the study, the interviews were designed to proceed as “conversation[s] with purpose” (Kahn & Cannell 1957). The purposes of the interview questions were to prompt participants to tell her or his own stories, to ask her or his own questions, and to frame the directions the interviews would take (Marshall & Rossman 1999). Rather than a formal interview protocol, I formulated “conversational guides” (Rubin & Rubin 2005) by listing more questions than I would actually ask in a fairly loose order.

As I learned, however, the process of interviewing young Maasai primary schoolgirls presented challenges that were mitigated by ‘formalizing’ the interviews in certain ways. As a function of youth and gender, Maasai schoolgirls are not accustomed to being asked by adults their opinion on many matters, much less those as important as (or as serious and complex as) education. They were not comfortable with a very open format, and seemed to prefer specific, directed questions. And even then, their answers tend to be very short and circumspect. For example, a typical answer to the question of “why is education important to you and your life” would be “because education is good.” Often a series of prompting question (why?) and reframing questions (You have said that education is “good”—to you, what is “good” about it?) were necessary to elicit more elaborated answers, and even then, the answers came over the course of a protracted, back-and-forth series. For this reason, my assistants and I tended to follow a list of questions rather than hold a more loosely guided conversation. After the initial 5 or so interviews, both my assistants and I knew the questions by heart so we did not refer to them as a list *per se*, but we did follow a

predictable format and knew when we needed to push through the “education questions” to ensure that we had time for the “development questions” which tended to come at the end of the interview. We also followed any new direction the schoolgirl might lead us. Additionally, at the end of each interview we asked each schoolgirl if she had any questions for us; we answered any questions we were asked and allowed for whatever discussions that ensued to proceed.

From these protracted back-and-forth exchanges and ‘answers’ diffused throughout the entire verbatim transcription, I have been able to piece together what are more coherent ‘narrative’ threads. As a result, the reporting of this data in the dissertation is not often verbatim and instead relies on a kind of reverse paraphrasing; instead of shortening the schoolgirls’ utterances in my own words, I often needed to fill in words in order to string short phrases together into sentences while integrating directly quoted phrases or words from the transcripts.<sup>293</sup>

An example of verbatim responses from 10 girls across the pool in response to the question “Why are your parents happy to see you in school?” are listed here:

1. “They say that when we grow up we can help them in everything they don’t have.”
2. “Because they have seen that education is important to children.”
3. “Because they did not get education so they don’t want us to miss the chance.”
4. “They want us to come and read so that in future we will come and help them.”
5. “From their house the father and mother decided not to put all of them to school like the first born [who] was married, so by the time they were being born, so they were let to come to school and not to be married.”
6. “They just don’t want their children to stay at home so that we cannot all be the same.”

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<sup>293</sup> Nashipae’s story in chapter 5 is a case in point. In the verbatim transcript of that interview, her telling of leaving home to come to school unfolds over 3 typed, single-spaced pages of my prompt, sometimes Alice’s prompt, and Nashipae’s responses. The folk tale she tells of Mbiti is likewise 3 pages. (The entire interview transcript is 11 pages long).

7. "I think when they saw that education is good and they started educating their first children."
8. "Because they have seen so many people who have learned and performed."
9. "So the parents want them to be like those ones being someone in future."
10. "They want their children in school."

Adults (teachers and mothers and grandmothers) however, were much more comfortable and practiced at stating their opinions and elaborating their ideas and stories in a more 'conversational' way. Also, I conducted interviews with teachers in English without the assistance of Maria or Alice. Interviews with mothers, however, were often fully or mostly translated. Nonetheless, mothers tended to have a great deal to say and easily elaborated their answers to very direct questions like "why is important to you that your children are in school?"

In order to mitigate validity threats to the accuracy of my descriptions, in addition to making observation and reflective notes, when possible and appropriate, interviews were digitally audio recorded. By and large, the schoolgirls were more comfortable speaking into the small hand-held recorder than talking as I took notes. It seemed as if my writing was a point of curiosity and distraction, whereas they held the recorder and spoke into it, almost seeming to forget it was there. Two schoolgirls elected not to have their interviews recorded; in these cases, I took notes while Maria (in one case) and Alice (in the other) conducted the interview and I interjected only occasionally. As I will detail at the end of this discussion, the digital recorder I carried to Kenya malfunctioned in early October 2007 while we were visiting Embolei Primary School. There was no way to replace the recorder. Rather than delay the research until a new recorder could be obtained, I used a microcassette recorder as back up. I ended up using the microcassette recorder for 3 schools (Embolei, Eremit, and Enkeryian) until a new digital recorder could be procured from the United States.

Unfortunately, the poor sound quality of these interviews means that most of the interviews from these schools were not transcribed or systematically analyzed except for the few I took notes on rather than using any audio recording device. Maria was not able to hear playback in order to transcribe while I was in Kenya. When I returned to the U.S. I had the taped data transferred to digital format and ‘scrubbed’ using software called Peak in order to reduce the background noise. A Maasai person who speaks Maa, English, and Swahili living in the U.S. was employed and attempted to transcribe the interviews. Although the background noise was reduced in the digital copies, the girls’ voices were sufficiently distorted to preclude timely transcription.<sup>294</sup> I have my memory of those interviews in addition to notes made during my time at those schools, but these data have not figured into the systematic analysis.

Best practices indicate that recorded sessions should be transcribed immediately after the interview when possible. In my case, however, because the interviews were conducted in a mix of three languages, two of which I do not speak, I did not transcribe the interviews. Between Maria and Alice (with the exception of the one and half transcribed by a Maasai man in the US), all of the interviews that were recorded on the digital recorder were transcribed in Kenya. Alice began transcribing the interviews we conducted during the day each night that we were visiting a school. Maria, on the other hand, tended to wait several days before transcribing. They both transcribed by hand. After about 2 transcriptions, I decided that it was too costly and prohibitive in terms of time to transcribe the Maa. Instead, my assistants noted, “in Maa, transcribed in English” rather than writing out the Maa and then the English. They did, however, write out the Swahili verbatim. Then, I hired a typist in Nairobi who speaks both English and Swahili. She typed Maria and Alice’s

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<sup>294</sup> I had \$500 to employ this very specialized transcriber at \$10/hour. Over 50 hours, he was only able to transcribe one whole interview and half of another because it was so painstaking and slow going. I did not have the budget to allow him to continue, and therefore reserve those interviews for use at a future time was once they are transcribed.

handwritten transcriptions, and these documents form the basis for the bulk of the systematic analysis.

The purposeful sampling for this study used a modified “snowball” technique. A ‘pure’ snowball sample would be one generated by talking to one schoolgirl who would then refer me to another schoolgirl, and so on. Time the logistical constraints of the research setting and the fact that head teacher must grant permission for outsiders to enter a school compound, interrupt the school day, and actually interview students, meant that I was obliged to begin with the head teacher and interview the group of girls he assembled based on my criteria. Consequently, at each school, I met with the head teacher, introduced myself, explained my study, and requested to interview at least 10 girls ages 10-20, across standards (“classes,” or what Americans call “grades”), and across abilities (“high, middle, and low performing”) as well as some of the teachers.<sup>295</sup> Before we met with each girl individually for her interview, we met with the group of girls the head teacher had selected. In the group meeting, my assistant and I introduced ourselves, explained the research, explained the interview process, asked for assent, and fielded questions from the girls.

Before beginning each individual interview we went through a version of this process a second time: we explained the study, the procedures for the interview (including the role of the translator), and requested assent. In the case of the teachers, I met with them each individually (I did not need translation as these interviews were conducted in English), explained the process and gained consent before beginning. In the case of the mothers, my assistant and I met with each woman alone, explained the process, and gained her consent. We also explained that the

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<sup>295</sup> MPIDO, the local NGO that helped facilitate my study, also notified the head teacher of each school before we arrived. Also, in most cases, an MPIDO driver dropped my assistant and I off at each school, and in such cases, an accompanying MPIDO staff person would introduce us. As I discuss in Chapter 4, my relationship with MPIDO assured my *entree*. As one head teacher told me, “if you were not with MPIDO I would not allow this study.”



participant's information would be kept confidential and that he or she was free to not answer any question we asked and that he or she was free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Additionally, we tried to make clear that there were no right or wrong answers to my questions but that we were interested in the participants' own ideas and opinions. I obtained verbal consent and assent based on Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) rules and the specific protocols in Appendices A, B, and C. My assistants (Maria and Alice) acted as the witnesses to the consent or assent. Since the completion of data collection, I have been audited by Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board and was passed.

Additionally, at the end of the study I visited each school again and gave each girl a token of my appreciation which consisted of a copy of her photo that I took with her permission at the end of each interview, an exercise book (what Americans call a "composition notebook"), one ball point pen, one pencil, and one eraser.<sup>296</sup> During the same visit I gave each teacher I interviewed one roller ball pen and one hardback teacher's planning book. Along with David and Agnes Kilusu, I hosted a "thank you party" at the end of my stay at which time I gave each mother I interviewed a painted aluminum tea cup (very common all over Kenya), and 8 strands of tiny glass beads in various colors that many Maasai women use to make beaded jewelry.<sup>297</sup>

### **Data analysis**

As I have noted in Chapter 4, in qualitative research, analysis begins with the formation of the research questions and continues every step of the way for as long as the researcher is

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<sup>296</sup> The same token of appreciation was given to the 3 boys I ended up interviewing as well.

<sup>297</sup> According to Maasai custom, there was no guest list for this party—everyone was invited. We slaughtered a goat and prepared food for several hours as guests walked from all around Lood-ariak sub-location, or, in the case of several employees of MPIDO, drove to join the party.

working on the research. With that said, it is also possible to break the analytical process down into discernable actions and activities that give some insight into the theory building process.

It is generally best to transcribe interviews immediately after they occur and begin analyzing transcriptions as soon as they are created in order to progressively focus interviews and make changes in the process when necessary (Maxwell 1996). As noted, I was not able to read and re-read transcriptions until the last month of a 7-month process, after all the interviews has been conducted. Nonetheless, I did reflect on most every interview or set of interviews (for example, perhaps after the four conducted in one day) by keeping a daily, on-going analysis in my field notebooks. In this sense, I inverted what is typically the “initial step” of qualitative analysis—reading and re-reading interview transcriptions—to the analytical activities of taking notes, writing ‘memos,’ and tentatively sketching categories, further questions, emerging ideas, and fragile relationships (Maxwell 1996).

According to Maxwell (1996), “memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, they facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (78). My field journal entries effectively constitute continuous memos as well as the location of observational data.<sup>298</sup> Two excerpts from my field journals help to illustrate how this analytical note making helped me to begin categorizing (coding) and conceptualizing (theory building) on a daily basis and over time. Consider the first of the pair of excerpts. On September 15, 2007 (about one month into the research), I wrote in my field notes:

I am not sure I can write an entire dissertation on the ambivalence around who women and girls are—I am observing much less ambivalence around being a boy and becoming a man—but the notion of circumcision (for females) seems to have less and less salience in terms of creating/producing stable social categories and attending social relations.

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<sup>298</sup> I created 8 such journals. I carried one with me everywhere and numbered them chronologically. After analysis, they are highlighted, dog-eared and post-it note covered in cross-references.

Whereas *c.c* once conferred status for females—girls initiated into women and therefore shortly wives and therefore shortly mothers—schooling interrupts this progression. . . .I think I need to start asking each girl if she has started her period and if they have been *c.c.* . . .of the 4 girls interviewed yesterday, I only asked 1 [if she was circumcised]. She answered me easily. She seems comfortable talking about her regret [at being circumcised] but not ‘ashamed,’ just regretful. She said her elder brothers insisted, as did her mom (her father is deceased) and so did her grandmother—her primary guardian—M’s grandmother—who also strongly endorses educating girls.

About two months and about 30 interviews later, part of an entry on Nov. 11, 2007 develops this initial idea further. I write:

This ‘in-between-ness’ seems like an important place to concentrate on and I need to talk with folks about this social location as a negotiative/innovative space that seems to be continuously open—“now”—whereas “traditionally” this was on openish space that anticipated its own closure—it was in fact foreclosed but now seems to be an opening that schoolgirls seek and relish. . . .there seems to be no way to imagine ‘women’ without imagining ‘hardships.’

As these passages indicate, my methodology inverted the ‘norm.’ In the process of reading and re-reading transcriptions, a standard procedure is to then begin categorizing ideas into what are commonly referred to as “codes.” The goal of coding “is not to produce a count of things,” as in quantitative research methodologies, but to “‘fracture’ the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data with and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell 1996, 78-79).

Once I had the transcriptions in hand, I did precisely this, as I will discuss further. But before fracturing the data in the iterative reading of transcriptions, instead I mulled over and over ideas as I heard them repeated in the interviews themselves. For example, as I have noted, in my first interview with Maria as a test of the protocol, she indicated that she was neither a girl nor a woman but, rather, something “in between” because she considered herself a student even though she was not enrolled in school. This idea peaked my interest, but it wasn’t until the same kind of idea was repeated in the interviews with schoolgirls that I began to consider it in my field journal

and then began to essentially ‘watch for it’ to see if it would be a category that would hold over time as a “code.” Moreover, when the idea of not being a girl or a woman but a student or schoolgirl did come out in subsequent interviews, both Maria and I or Alice and I took the opportunity pursue this line of discussion in an effort to further clarify and solidify the idea.

After the 7 month period that I was in Kenya conducting interviews, living locally, making observations and daily reflecting on my findings by creating conceptual mappings of what seemed to be central, recurring, and potentially solid ideas, I waited until I had the transcriptions in hand to consider ‘coding.’ At this point, once I was back in the U.S., the interviews were analyzed in one of two ways: 1) a portion of typed transcriptions were analyzed using the qualitative software NVIVO, and 2) any hand written interviews that were not typed and a portion of the typed interviews were systematically analyzed by reading and re-reading, highlighting, and note making.

Not all of the interviews we conducted survived into transcribed form. For example, of the 33 interviews conducted at Embolei, Eremit, and Enkeryian Primary schools, 5 were handwritten (by me) and mini cassette recording collected the other 28. The 28 recorded interviews have not been transcribed or systematically analyzed, although I was present at the interviews and do have reflections on them in my field journal. The 5 handwritten interviews have not been typed, but they were systematically analyzed by reading and coding by highlighting and making notes and cross-references. From the rest, 57 interviews were digitally recorded; handwritten transcripts were created, and then these were typed. Additionally 8 interviews were not recorded, and I took notes during these interviews. These 8 interviews were not typed.

From the analyzed verbatim typed transcripts and handwritten notes on interviews that were not recorded, I generated 52 codes using both NVIVO software for the typed transcriptions and color-coded highlighting and longhand fracturing for handwritten interview notes. Not all of the codes became primary for the dissertation, although they provide a rich set of fractured data for

further exploration. The codes were arrived at by three pathways: 1) some were based on the questions themselves which I developed before going to Kenya, and thus they are linked to existing theories and 2) many were developed inductively during the analysis, and 3) others have been derived from the conceptual structures of the schoolgirls themselves (Maxwell 1995).

The 52 codes included: Aspirations (hopes, dreams), Age, Circumcision, Cultural beliefs (Maasai beliefs), Bad Manners, Barriers to school (fees, etc), Change/changes, Choice, Connection between Development and Education, Demand to be taken to school, Development/*Maendeleo*, Dropping out, Forced to the Desert, *Enkanyakuai*, Growing up (Becoming Grown), Help family/Barriers to Helping Family, Independence/dependency, Job/Money/Employment, Home Knowledge, School knowledge, Starting late, Leadership/becoming a leader, Maa Words/Concepts, “Married Off”/Forced/Early Marriage, Marriage (other), Refusing (marriage, circumscisoin), Past Practice/Beliefs, Politics, Police, MP/President, Pregnancy/Giving Birth/Motherhood, Pride/Proudness, Class Reception, Rights, Sex/Sexual Feelings, Shame, Siblings in School, Siblings Married, Number of Siblings in Mother’s House, Total Number of Siblings, Support (fro an Individual), Support (from an Organization), Those Days/the Past, Why parents did not go to school, Why some parents do not educate children, Why parents want to educate children, Wife (being one), When a girl becomes a woman, Why education is important, Girl Child, Differences between educated (in school) and not educated (out of school) people, Future Life.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Note that some codes refer to demographic indicators. For example, “Number of Total Siblings.” At the beginning of each interview we asked a series of questions trying to learn basic demographics. This turned out to be very difficult; many of the girls did not know what year they were born or their precise age; they had trouble explaining their family relations. For example, a girl might know that she has three “step moms” (her father has 4 wives) but they did not always know how many children each mother has or how many of them are in school because not all wives necessarily live together. A variety of confusions stemming form the complexity of Maasai

As I have noted, in order to mitigate validity threats to the accuracy of my descriptions (of people, places, and ideas) I recorded interviews when possible. It was not always possible to record all interviews or all casual conversations that helped me see or understand a concept further. For these instances, I tried to make accurate notes, attempting when possible to write in my field notebook as soon after a conversation or an observation as I could. I attempted to collect “rich” data that are detailed and complete enough to provide a full picture, and I attempted to contextualize my findings with rich descriptions (Maxwell 1996). The more challenging threats to mitigate, however, are threats to the soundness of my interpretations and theories.

According to Maxwell (1996), “the most important check on [interpretation] validity threats is to seriously and systematically attempt to learn how the participants in your study make senses of what’s going on, rather than pigeonholing their words and actions into your own framework” (90). The very best way to prevent this is with the use of “member checks” (Maxwell 1995, 94). Unfortunately, I cannot talk to Maasai schoolgirls unless I am in Kenya, so once I left, it has been difficult to imagine conducting a proper member check. I have, however, checked with the adults who helped facilitate my study for feedback, and an interesting tension has emerged: some of my conclusion, check out with adults to a degree, but at the same time, they are able to add dimensions to the concept that many of the girls either do not know, or were too shy to discuss. The concept of *enkanyakuai*, for example, has meanings beyond that described by the girls. This new information does not nullify my conclusions, although they do add further dimension to the concept. The logistical limits of the dissertation research (primarily time) would be mitigated by more time in the field. Further research is therefore necessary to deepen and corroborate the conclusions made here.

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kinship relations, gaps in the knowledge of many of the girls, and the lack of resources necessary to triangulate their descriptions of their families, we did not get clear or useful demographic data.

My approach to the threat of researcher bias has not been to reduce my bias; in fact, consistent with the paradigmatic commitments I discussed in Chapter 4, I have assumed that my biases would be part and parcel of the conclusions I reached. Indeed, each interview, in this sense is a collaboration of perceptions rather than a neutral and objective rendering of truth. For example, the idea that emerged early, strong, and consistently that schoolgirls are somehow “in between” girls and women likely resonated with me as a researcher, perhaps more than another, because of my own readings in the literature of identities in development contexts and pressures of modern imperatives that produce contractions. Rather than ignore my interpretive frame of reference, I have tried instead to reflexively incorporate the tensions inherent in a research process that cannot “control for” bias.