

The state-as-parent: reframing parent-child relations in Rwanda

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Abstract:

This article attempts to think across and beyond the fields of childhood studies and parenting culture studies by employing postcolonial, relational and temporal lenses to explore child–parent–state relations and how these relations have been constructed, represented and enacted over time. Using the case study of Rwanda, we suggest that the phenomenon of state-as-parent functions symbolically and instrumentally to establish state legitimacy and national unity in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, informed by both the specificities of the Rwandan historical and current contexts, as well as transnational discourses on childhood and parenting. Furthermore, we argue that plural, coexisting and conflicting temporalities are at play in the reframing and reworking of state–parent–child relations, which are also a site for the generation of subaltern forms of temporality to contest the overarching narrative of state-as-parent.

Key words:

Parent-child relations; parenting culture studies; postcolonial childhoods; Rwanda; temporality

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Introduction

The global circulation of parenting discourses and interventions originating in the Global North, have been subject to increasing critique within parenting culture studies, as being a product of late-capitalist modernity and a particular socio-cultural imaginary of ‘the child’ and ‘the parent’ (Faircloth et al., 2013). Within childhood studies, attention has been called to the teleological and instrumental linkages between the development of the ‘child’ and the nation (Burman, 2008; 2018). In this paper we attempt to think across and beyond these current frames to explore the construction and enactment of parent-child relations in Rwanda. We draw on our research on intergenerational narratives, relations and temporalities (Benda, 2017; 2018; 2019) and on the tensions between the symbolic and instrumental representations of children as national development projects with their lived realities (Pells, 2011; 2012; Pells et al., 2014).¹

We start by drawing out synergies between the fields of study while also suggesting areas to extend current theorizing of child-parent-state relations in a global context. First, within parenting cultures studies current concern is with the state as either in retreat, in contexts of austerity and/or as (over)intervening, particularly among impoverished groups in society (Gillis, 2006). Instead, we argue that neither is fully sufficient for accounting for the ways the state is positioned *as parent* in the Rwandan context. We suggest that the phenomenon of state-as-parent is one of the modes through which the state ‘comes into being’ (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 8) through cultural representation and everyday practices to establish state legitimacy in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi. We suggest that the state-as-parent is a hybrid concept that encompasses the ways in which relations between the social institutions of childhood and family in Rwanda were profoundly altered through colonialization; the dynamics of which continue to unfold, including in light of transnational discourses on childhood and parenting (Balagopalan, 2019). We examine how the state is positioned as parent by different actors and question how this plays out in the everyday relations of children and parents.

Second, we argue that plural, co-existing and conflicting temporalities are at play in the reframing and reworking of state-parent-child relations, against the backdrop of rapid social and economic change. In particular, through analysis of the Youth Connekt Dialogues (YCD) and *Ndi Umunyarwanda*, we explore how temporalizations are employed to position the

state-as-parent to the young ‘to whom the future belongs’ in contrast to their parents who are portrayed as ‘stuck’ in the past by resentment and/or guilt (Benda, 2018). Yet dominant state temporalizations are not without challenge and we examine how parent-child relations are a site for the generation of subaltern forms of temporality, which contest the overarching narrative of state-as-parent.

We conclude by considering the implications of our analysis for transnational perspectives on parent-child relations and theorizing in the fields of parenting culture studies and childhood studies.

Child – Parent – State

Understanding, appraising and reimagining relations, between ‘child’, ‘parent’ and the nation-state have been central to scholarship within both the fields of parenting culture studies and critical childhood studies. In exploring how the figures of ‘child’ and ‘parent’ are evoked and mobilized by, and in relation to, the state, it is instructive to note Sharma and Gupta’s (2006: 7-8) observation that despite often ‘interchangeability’ within the academic literature between the terms ‘state’, ‘nation’ and ‘nation-state’, the ‘nation’ is largely seen as cultural artefact and affect, whereas the ‘state’ is framed principally in institutional terms. Instead, the authors argue that such a distinction is unhelpful and that rather than seeing the state as ‘devoid of culture’ existing *a priori* and outside of society, the state can be reconceptualized as culturally constituted through representations and everyday practices with material consequences for people’s everyday lives. Moreover, contemporary global spread of regimes of neoliberal governance, international ‘development’, and capitalism necessitates a reconceptualization of the state away from notions of the nation-state as a territorially bounded entity, to apply a transnational perspective when examining the modes through which the ‘state comes into being’ (ibid.: 28).

Drawing upon these representational, everyday and transnational frames in reviewing how child-parent-state relations are constituted within the respective fields of study, we suggest that within childhood studies, considerable attention has been paid to tracing how states are culturally constituted through the symbolic trope of the child, accompanied by imaginaries of childhood to enact projects of nation- or empire-building (Burman, 2008, 2018; Cannella & Viruru 2004; Millei & Imre, 2016; Silova et al., 2018). This can be seen, for example, with the alignment of child and national development in policies and programmes, resulting in

childhood and parenting becoming sites for intervention, by both states and other transnational actors like UNICEF, through programmes such as early childhood care and education (Penn, 2011).

Both fields have also charted how tropes of 'child', 'childhood', 'parent' and 'parenting' have become transnational constructs, seemingly timeless and placeless, so masking the historical, social and cultural origins of assumptions on either what it is to be a child and what childhood should (not) be like (Burman, 2008; Nieuwenhuys, 2013) or what it means to be a 'good parent' (Faircloth et al., 2013). As Hopkins and Sriprakash argue (2016: 1) so-called 'universal' constructions of childhood as a time of 'innocence' devoted to schooling and play are 'positioned as naturalised and normalised' yet these constructions are 'laden with racialised, gendered, classed and sexualised cultural assumptions' about what it means to be a child (Baird, 2008: 291). Globally circulating discourses and representations of what constitutes a 'good childhood' or 'good parenting' are thus typically characterised within both fields as interacting with 'local and indigenous conceptualisations' (Faircloth & Murray, 2015: 1122).

Moreover, both fields have highlighted the ways in which the constitution of childhood and parenthood are inseparable from global power inequities (Faircloth & Murray, 2015; Penn, 2011). Underpinning and accelerating the global circulation of such imaginaries is the framing of children as human capital: 'the raw material for national prosperity, security and even survival' (Burman, 2018: 9). The role of parents is thus constructed, by both states and transnational actors, as being to cultivate 'individualistic risk-taking, entrepreneurial selves' among their offspring in preparation for children's future economic labour (Faircloth et al. 2013: 4). Such representations become not only a form of state power, but also a means through which inequities are reproduced (Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Those who fail to conform to these prescribed ways of being and acting, whether child or parent, are positioned as 'other' and either undeserving of state assistance, or in need of disciplinary measures, as we illustrate later on.

Despite the critical advances made by both parenting culture studies and childhood studies in elucidating relations between discourses, representations and practices of childhood, parenthood and state, we suggest that there are three areas in which it would be productive to extend current theorizing by bringing insights from both fields into dialogue.

First, both fields have the tendency to invoke binaries between the ‘global’ and ‘local’ which as Balagopalan (2019: 25) argues privileges ‘the working of a distinct “global” on a discrete “national”’ and so fails to capture the co-constitution of both scales ‘within an earlier and more fraught colonial past.’ Instead, the emerging application of postcolonial theoretical lenses within childhood studies attends to the ways in which ‘global’, ‘national’ and ‘local’ are not distinct in the ideational, material or spatial configurations of childhood (Balagopalan, 2019; Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Nieuwenhuys, 2013; Hopkins & Sriprakash, 2016). As we explore in the following section, multiple scales co-constitute constructions, representations and mobilizations of childhood, parenting and parent-child relations. Moreover, this requires attending to what Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 982) term ‘the spatialization of the state’, namely how the state represents, and is represented, as being both above as well as encompassing of all other institutions, including the family. How people respond to particular constructions, representations and mobilizations are also shaped by their particular spatial locations (Sharma & Gupta, 2006; Das & Poole, 2004).

Exploring co-constitution and resisting compartmentalization brings us to our second theme of relationality. Within childhood studies the insistence on the centrality of the child, whether in theorizing or in calls to action is increasingly critiqued for failing to account for the complexities of social relations and the ways in which subject positions, such as ‘child’ or ‘parent’ are inherently relational (Spyrou et al., 2019). While a relational lens has been employed in analysing constructions of ‘child’ and ‘nation’ (Millei & Imre, 2016) the constitution of parenthood and positionality of parents have remained typically marginal. Insights from parenting culture studies and especially critiques of an emphasis on child centredness within parenting policies, manuals and interventions that detach children from the social and material realities of their everyday lives may be fruitful in examining the multiple, relational positionalities of children, parents and the state. Relationality is foundational to our concept of state-as-parent, whereby the state exists within and through other institutions, such as the family (Sharma & Gupta, 2006).

Thirdly, a relational perspective encompasses also considerations of temporality. Critiques abound in childhood studies of the privileging of the child as ‘becoming’ within notions of human capital and national development plans (Rosen, 2017). However, this has generated another binary, between the child as ‘being’ versus ‘becoming’. More recent theorisation has sought to attend to the ‘co-presence’ of past, present and future in the ontology and lives of children, as well as in the constitution of childhood (Rosen, 2017: 377; Pells, 2012; Hanson,

2017). In the third section we explore how a temporal perspective enables a richer exploration of the plural, co-existing and conflicting temporalities of, among and between children, parents and the state are at play in the reframing and reworking of parent-child relations.

In the rest of the article we employ these postcolonial, relational and temporal lenses to explore child-parent-state relations in the Rwandan context and how these have been constituted and enacted over time. We suggest that central to these real and symbolic encounters is the phenomenon of what we term 'state-as-parent' which seeks to extend our theorisations of child-parent-state relations beyond whether the state is in retreat and/or overreach in family life to attend to fluidity of (self-)positionings, for varied political purposes in the context of interconnecting inequalities at multiple scales.

State-as-Parent

Rwanda has become synonymous with violent bloodshed in the popular imaginary, following the 1994 genocide which saw between 800,000 and 1 million mainly Tutsi brutally murdered in 100 days by an extremist, Hutu-led government (des Forges, 1999). With notable exceptions (e.g. Jessee & Watkins, 2014; Vansina, 2004) contemporary scholarship on Rwanda has focussed on the years immediately preceding, during and after the genocide, with far less consideration of the country's history, especially in the pre-colonial and colonial (1885-1962) periods (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2011). Within this section we suggest that discourses and practices of parenting in the contemporary era cannot be understood without attending to the ways in which the changing institution of *umuryango* (family) has been closely entwined with changing modes of governance.

We argue that the state-as-parent is one of the modes through which the Rwandan state comes into being (Sharma & Gupta, 2006). The state-as-parent manifests as cultural representation, enacted through state-led discourses, policies and practices as an attempt to present the state 'as coherent and singular' (ibid: 10) and to 'legitimate its pre-eminence in society' (Thomson, 2013: 10). We see the state-as-parent as a hybrid construct encompassing both the specificities of the Rwandan historical and current context but crucially situated in a transnational perspective, informed by global political economy extending back to the colonial era.

Umuryango: 'hierarchy through space'

Feminist scholar McClintock (1993) observes how familial and domestic spatial metaphors are central to many national narratives. She argues that the trope of the family came to the fore in the nineteenth century to sanction social hierarchy and exclusion, based on the 'natural' order of women's subordination to men, and children to adults, and to establish a 'putative organic unity of national interests' (1993: 63). Drawing on Said, McClintock contends that during this period the hierarchy of filiative relations within the domestic sphere was transposed onto affiliative (national and colonial) institutions of governance. Yet McClintock (1993: 64) challenges the linearity in Said's framing, suggesting instead that 'the filiative order did not disappear: rather it flourished as a metaphoric after-image, reinvented within the new orders of the nation-state' through such tropes as the 'Family of Man'. While McClintock focuses on gender relations, we explore how generational relations and specifically parent-child power relations (which also intersect with gender) were, and indeed are, integral to sanctioning social and political hierarchy, in the form of one such 'metaphoric after-image', namely the state-as-parent.

Family is another seemingly transnational construct, often used in decontextualized ways that assumes 'universal applicability' and obscures variations in values and meanings (Mohanty, 1984: 347). Starting instead, from the historical and cultural context of Rwanda, family or *umuryango* in the national language of Kinyarwanda, encompasses both a relational sense including the household, immediate and extended family (Kagame, 1954) as well as a spatial dimension through the literal translation of *umuryango* as 'gate to the compound' (Vansina, 2004: 31). Within pre-colonial Rwanda, the *umuryango* controlled all aspects of child-raising, offering a structured environment where children were cared for and cared for others through intra- and extra-familial relationships (A. Kagame, 1954). Here children learnt, socialised, undertook gendered division of labour and were instructed in cultural taboos and mores (Vincent, 1954). The *umuryango* was hierarchical, patriarchal and steeped in a constellation of political and cultural-spiritual norms (Vincent, 1954). However, as the historian Alexis Kagame noted (1954), mothers and women in general were central to matters of domestic economy and the early education of both boys and girls. The *umuryango* was firmly integrated in political structures as Rwanda became an increasingly centralised state over the course of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The governing authorities could not bypass the head of the *umuryango* in any matter (A. Kagame, 1952). Only the *mwami* (king) could interfere with, or overrule, the authority of the head of *umuryango* in limited cases such as

putting an end to a bloody vendetta, and even in this instance some form of compensation was provided.

There were rare cases when the being of a child got intertwined with the fate of the kingdom to such extent that the child fell under the exclusive authority of the *mwami*. Some categories of children were deemed a danger or threat. These children included girls who became pregnant outside of marriage, the children born of such pregnancies and girls born with impairments. Since this ‘deviant’ behaviour or presumed ‘abnormalities’ were deemed a bad omen for the whole nation, the *mwami* could decree the death of these children and appoint the executioners (Bigirumwami, 1974; A. Kagame, 1954). In this instance, Rwandans were reminded that they were part of a larger *umuryango*; with the *mwami* as the ultimate patriarch. ⁱⁱ

In the late nineteenth century with first the German and later Belgian colonializing forces, Christian missions and the arrival of Islam, new institutions became central to the spatial ordering of child-raising practices and thus parent-child relations. Previously, the *umuryango* was central although not the exclusive site of children’s education. With the colonial forces came secular and religious education, which exposed children to formative influences that lay completely outside of the *umuryango*. Colonial cadres, teachers, priests, catechists and schoolmates became an additional source of knowledge and values in challenge to, and concurrence with, the *umuryango* as the epistemic horizon. The church displaced the *kirazira* (translated literally as ‘the forbidden’) of taboos and proscriptions, becoming the ‘undisputed temporal and spiritual power in the country’ including all matters pertaining to schooling (Erny, 1974: 707). It became irrefutable when the Catholic Church manoeuvred the colonial authorities into deposing and exiling the ruling monarch in 1931 (Linden, 1999). The new *Mwami* Rudahigwa was no longer the ultimate patriarch, but a child among others, as powerfully symbolized by his baptism, with the head of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, a French missionary, becoming his godfather.

Childhood and parenthood were increasingly constituted at the intersections of the local-national-global as the colonial administration and the colonial church regulated the raising of children; especially through schooling. The classroom took on a political dimension, becoming a battleground between colonial elitism and presumed rural ‘ignorance’ and between ‘Tutsi’ elites through whom the colonial authorities ruled and an emerging ‘Hutu’ consciousness in response to oppression, with children as foot soldiers if not the weapons themselves (Kamuzinzi, 2012). The manipulation of ‘ethnicity’ as a privileged mode of

socio-political solidarity and individual identity in the 1930s by colonial authorities (Prunier, 1995) went a long way to weaken and fragment the *umuryango* further.

The changing relations between the institutions of family, school, church and state reconfigured parent-child relations and parenting practices. Prior to colonialism, power in multiple forms suffused parent-children relations. Children represented ‘power’ in the form of *amaboko* (arms to signify strength or manpower) for boys and *inka* (cows) or *inkwano* (dowry), symbolising wealth or economic power for girls. Power was also reflected in the authority parents exercised over their children. This power had to be shared in some cases or relinquished altogether in others. For instance, the spiritual authority and mentorship that mothers held over their daughters (Kaagme, 1954) was seriously curtailed as it was decreed that the church had supplanted the cultural practices and taboos in matters of moral authority. The claims of schools and religious orders over children confronted parents with a reality of disempowerment that sometimes generated intergenerational conflicts.

Yet, parental loss of power or control over their children’s destiny was somewhat balanced by benefits promised by the colonial state and church. This happened through a rather swift understanding of the new political and economic reality and the need for each *umuryango* to adapt in such a way that their fortunes would change for the better. For instance, schooling often dispensed exclusively by the churches, was seen as *a passage obligé* to achieve the *développement programmé* (Moyet, 2001) envisaged by colonial authorities.

Following independence in July 1962, a republican regime led by the ethnic Hutu majority replaced the Tutsi monarchy. In this context, four concurrent and competing factors exerted influence on the *umuryango*: the dominant position of the state, compulsory schooling, the centrality of ethnicity and the influence of the churches.^{iv} Under the first and second republics, state power which had become increasingly centralized and hierarchical under the colonial authorities was further consolidated (Thomson, 2018). The state became more than a political institution; it emerged as *umubyeyi* (parent), who knows what is best for all Rwandans, not just children. From 1961 the spread of the radio enabled daily addresses from the president to be broadcast and establish a direct channel from the highest seat of power to almost every citizen; bypassing all other levels of authority (Maniraguha, 2018). These addresses more than anything shaped the persona of the president, the head and voice of state, as *umubyeyi* who dispensed wisdom and communicated care and concerns for the people.

When Orchestre Impala wished ‘*umubyeyi wacu w’U Rwanda, Habyarimana*’

(Habyarimana, our parent and parent of Rwanda) a happy 50th birthday in 1987, they echoed a sentiment that had become a taken-for-granted feature in post-independence politics.

In summary, the phenomenon of state-as-parent has long been an accepted feature in Rwanda's political culture. In precolonial Rwanda, this status was symbolic and exceptional, rooted in local cultural mores and practice, but in postcolonial Rwanda it became more instrumental and normative, transformed through colonialism, yet retaining traces of earlier symbolism associated with the monarchy. In the latter period, the traditional *umuryango* did not disappear nor was it depoliticized, but it was greatly disempowered and made subservient to a very strong state embodied in a single party regime and headed by the President as patriarch. As ethnicity was increasingly positioned as the functional framework for social and political solidarity, relational ties within *umuryango* became increasingly fractured.

Umuryango: 'metaphoric after-image'

The devastation wrought by the Genocide against the Tutsi left no family untouched. Intra-familial killings were a dominant aspect of genocide leading to fragmented relational ties, often shattered beyond repair. Few relations suffered more than those between parents and children, some children were orphaned by their own parents or adult relatives, other children witnessed acts of genocide committed by adult relatives and thousands were left orphaned or with one or both parents as long-term prisoners (des Forges, 1999).

Within this post-genocide landscape, the institutions of childhood and *umuryango* have continued to unfold, embedded in deeply rooted historical inequalities (Pells et al., 2014; Pontalti, 2018). On the one hand we can observe a continuity in the shifting of dominance from the 'filiative' to 'affiliative order' in the structuring of society (McClintock, 1993: 64). More children than ever before spend time in schools and other institutional spaces, such as the *ingando* civic education camps (Pells et al., 2014). Yet as observed previously, the trope of the family continues to pervade cultural representations as a 'metaphorical after-image' through the state-as-parent, mobilized by various actors to pursue different interests.

Scholars have highlighted the use of familial imagery by the Rwandan government to provide a language at once both 'soft and encompassing' and yet also exclusive and coercive 'to solidify its [the government's] vision of political "unity" and "division"' (Purdeková, 2015: 94). Indeed, the full title of the governing party is *Umuryango RPF*- (Rwandan Patriotic Front) *Inkotanyi* (invincible warrior). By using the discourse of *umuryango* the RPF is thus presented as a family for all Rwandans and those who do not support the *umuryango* are

positioned as outsiders and a threat (ibid.). The family therefore becomes a “‘natural” figure for sanctioning social hierarchy’ with a conflation between family/party/state in discourse and in the popular imaginary (McClintock, 1993: 63; Purdeková, 2015). The entire Rwandan population is positioned as children in relation to the state-as-parent, with President Kagame as the ultimate patriarchal figure: the ‘Father of the Nation’ (Thomson, 2018: 159). Like the *mwami* before him, and to a lesser extent, post-independence leaders, Kagame as Father is thus responsible for the prosperity and spiritual health of the nation (Thomson, 2018).

However, as ‘metaphorical after-image’ the familial order is also being reinvented through the foregrounding of the family as a central site for intervention and control (Thomson, 2018: 159). This is part of a wider project of state-engineering seeking to build national unity and transform Rwanda into knowledge-based middle-income country (Straus & Waldorf, 2011). Drawing on state sponsored narratives, policies and initiatives, in a context where state power is highly centralized, with extensive reach (Purdeková, 2015) we suggest that the filiative order, symbolic and literal is being reshaped through the positioning of the state-as-parent.

In positioning itself as parent, the state draws on discourses of parenting circulating at multiple scales. The first, draws on older, more ‘local’ registers of the patriarchal provider, yet in the current era is seen as provider of schooling or the means to study when parents are absent (dead, imprisoned, etc.) or impoverished (Kagame, 2018). The second is as guide, advisor, even disciplinarian (Desrosiers & Thomson, 2011) whereby the state sets out its expectations for children to study hard, be self-reliant and entrepreneurial both in developing themselves and the nation (Pells et al., 2014). Here the discourses employed are shaped, in part, by ‘global’ constructs of the child as human capital for national development projects, as indicated by President Kagame: ‘The cornerstone of our strategy for building a new nation and achieving greater prosperity is serious and sustained investment in human capital. Focusing on our children and youth is fundamental to realize these goals’ (cited in Pells et al., 2014: 294-295). This is part of a drive which seeks to project a vision of Rwanda’s rapid economic and social ‘development’ to international audiences and donors and given the current dependence on international ‘aid’ reflects international development priorities (Pells, 2011; Straus & Waldorf, 2011).

However, rather than seeing these discourses as mere adoption of hegemonic, globally circulating ideas and practices related to parenting and child-parent relations, the phenomenon of state-as-parent – both as symbol and as enactment of a set of social relations,

is constituted by a confluence of influences across time and scales. This enables fluidity in the tropes and discourses employed according to the interests of actors involved. Both the modes of the state-as-parent, as provider and as advisor, serve to legitimate state intervention in the domestic sphere, with particular implications for those occupying the status of parent and child. State provision of assistance with schooling costs for example, is presented as creating a sense of reciprocal obligation from children to support national developments plans, drawing on more expansive understandings of *umuryango*, as young people are told: '[t]he country becomes your family' (Kagame, 2018). Similarly, parents, especially in rural areas, are characterized by the state as lacking education and adhering to 'backward' so-called 'cultural' practices, such as sending children to work rather than school (Pells et al., 2014). Children are then urged to listen to the state who has their best interests (as well as those of the nation, given their assumed inseparably) at heart. While children often express support for this vision for the state, others, especially those marginalized by impoverishment and other factors, describe being caught between state rhetoric and responsibilities to parents (ibid.).

At the same time, more the affiliative sense of *umuryango* sits alongside the strategic mobilization by the state of narrower, nuclear ideas of family, with an emphasis on parental responsibility for child-raising. Children's failure to achieve expected educational outcomes or to adhere to other social norms can therefore be put down to family function and poor parenting, so absolving the state (Pells et al., 2014). In the context of social and economic change we can therefore see commonalities with observations from around the world on how parents are constructed as 'God-like' in determining children's lives and wellbeing and yet as incompetent and in need of expert guidance (Furedi, 2002). This creates tensions in the everyday lives of children and parents, especially impoverished or other families living at the margins of the state (Das & Poole, 2004). While such intergenerational tensions are not unique to Rwanda, the rhetoric employed by the state, which contrasts this current young generation with the 'backward' generation of their parents who enacted genocide, amplifies generational tensions (Pells et al., 2014)

In summary, the state-as-parent functions as a metaphorical after-image, whereby familial iconography is employed to naturalize social hierarchy and legitimate the creation of a national unity of interests. In so doing the state can simultaneously justify intervention in, or retreat from, the domestic sphere by drawing upon different ideas related to childhood and parenting in circulation at different scales. As indicated, there are also temporal dimensions

in not only how the phenomenon of state-as-parent and relations between social institutions have evolved over time, but also in how the taking-up and reworking of tropes from different eras, create a co-presence of ideas that resist binary categorizations of past and present - a theme to which we now turn.

Temporality in child-parent-state relations

Understanding of various dimensions of temporalities has a significant bearing on the discourses, translations and enactments of state-led policies, especially in societies labelled as 'transitional' (Mueller-Hirth & Rios Oyola, 2018). The designation of societies as 'transitional' or 'post-conflict' adheres to a problematic Western, liberal notion of time as linear, abstract and progressive (McLeod, 2013) where violence is situated as being in the past, rather than ongoing (Mueller-Hirth & Rios Oyola, 2018) and which fails to account for the coexistence of multiple temporalities (Igreja, 2012). Within this section we bring together considerations of these multiple intertwining, and sometimes, conflicting temporalities in the construction and positioning of the state-as-parent with how these shape the reframing and reworking of child-parent relations, as the state's dominant temporalization interacts with subaltern forms of temporalities.

Discourses of the state-as-parent not only serves to legitimize renewed social-political hierarchies, but also to generate single genesis narratives which legitimate violent transition through the creation of a sense of national progress (McClintock, 1993). Yet, contrary to McClintock, we contend that while the RPF-led state apparatus uses *umuryango* as a metaphorical template for the nation-state, the institution of the *umuryango* is not rendered ahistorical. Instead, the *umuryango* remains located firmly within time, recast as the antithesis of the futuristic trajectory of the state's temporal narrative, with parents characterized as being stuck in a past of resentment and guilt.

In positioning itself as a parent for the future, the state seized the post-genocide moment to invoke its credential as saviour of the nation in stopping genocide as a guarantee for the restoration of an ethnicity-free *umuryango nyarwanda* (Rwanda family). More importantly, future-looking temporalization aligns the state's vision with the purported aspirations of 'those to whom the future belongs' (Améry, 1980: 76); namely children and young people. This strategic mobilisation of multiple temporalities is illustrated by the state-sponsored Youth Connekt Dialogues (YCD). The YCD were a series of public gatherings in 15 of the 30 districts of Rwanda (May-June 2013) that brought together young people born to genocide

perpetrators and survivors, aged between 18 and 35. YCD was an initiative of Art for Peace, an association of Rwandan young artists, supported logistically by the government through the Ministry of Youth and sponsored financially by the First Lady's *Imbuto* Foundation.

Despite the state's dominant position, the reframing of parent-child relations has been the site of plural and competing temporalities. The presence of alternative and subaltern temporalities in the YCD was unmistakable. The organisation and performance of the dialogues demonstrated that plural and multidirectional temporalities (among and between state, survivors, perpetrators and second generations) were at play. For instance, during the YCD participants used temporal and directional metaphors of 'rear-view mirror' and 'windshield' to contrast the past of *imihoro*/machetes with a future of *amahoro*/peace (Benda, 2018: 130-131).

A clear example of the presence of subaltern temporalities was the participants' liberal use of ethnic terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' at a time when ethnic references had been outlawed by the severe laws against genocide ideology and sectarianism (Amnesty International, 2010). Participants in the dialogues were reluctant to subscribe to the official narrative that ethnicity has been consigned to the past. Pacifique (Rubavu YCD, 13 May 2013) reflected, "if we want to remove the different ethnicities, why not rename [genocide] to 'the 1994 Genocide against those who were called Tutsi, committed by those who were called Hutu.'" Hence Pacifique both reproduced the official narrative that ethnic identities had been imposed on the country ("those who were called") while also pointing to the idiosyncrasy of officially removing ethnicity whilst it persists in the nomenclature of genocide itself (i.e. Genocide Against the Tutsi). The Government's position that it was still early to teach genocide history was also shown to be at odds with YCD participants. "We have little knowledge of Rwandan history. We have often learnt history from our parents who give us false information to cover up their involvement in the Genocide. Why can't the government let Genocide history become part of the national curriculum?" (Anon., Burera YCD, 11 May 2013)

Out of the YCD emerged the phrase *Ndi Umunyarwanda* as a response to the ambiguities surrounding history and post-ethnicity identity. *Ndi Umunyarwanda* literally translates as 'I am a Rwandan' and can be read as a subtle critique to the positioning of children as 'becomings' or 'the future' through the conjugation of the verb *kuba* (to be) in the first person singular of the present tense (*ndi*) instead of the future tense (*nzaba*). Following the end of the YCD *Ndi Umunyarwanda* was taken up by the government as a national policy for

national identity (Benda, 2017). Both the YCD and *Ndi Umunyarwanda* as sequential and mutually reinforcing policies concerned with the triangular relationship between state-parent-children, brought to light a reworking of and resistance to dominant state narratives, through temporalities of resistance (Crawford, 2007), embodied in acts that challenge the reproduction of structural inequalities (Benda, 2017). During the YCD, by telling stories of social and economic exclusion or of wrestling with intergenerational guilt, youth challenged constructions of ethnic identities and problematized historical revisionisms, which led to the creation of the *Ndi Umunyarwanda* programme, not originally envisioned by the state (Benda, 2017).

Ndi Umunyarwanda, therefore marks the point in time where the time-sense of young people intersected and interpellated — the state's dominant (and intently linear, one might add) organisation of time. The development of *Ndi Umunyarwanda* provides an illustration of how child and youth-led programmes influence state narratives and by the same token contribute to the shaping of the evolving nature of the phenomenon of state-as-parent through a process of negotiation and subsequent incorporation, as points of convergence and/or alignment between these programmes and governmental reconstruction interests are found (Benda, 2018b).

Temporality and the reframing of parent-child relations

The phenomenon of state-as-parent has thus emerged from the metaphorical use of family in the context of state's dominant temporalization offset by other forms of temporalities. One outcome of this interaction in and over time, we argue, is the continuous reworking and reframing of parent-child relations.

Parent-child dynamics continue to evolve in a significantly more politicised *umuryango* space where hierarchy persists while the authority of the immediate *umuryango* heads has been substantially diluted as parents have been positioned as embodying a sort of 'regressive politics' (Benda, 2018) and 'backwardness' (Pells et al., 2014). This situation undermines further parental leadership already chipped and buffeted by the colonial privileging of ethnicity and genocide, both of which were state-engineered phenomena. Parent-child relations are in effect shaped by a political paradox; on one hand the decreasing power of parents is paired with rising expectations and/or blame whilst on the other the increasing power of the state (to encroach on/intervene in families) is paired with diminishing responsibility.

The dichotomies past/future and violence/peace came out strongly in YCD participants' stories on parenting; more particularly from children of perpetrators. Parenting in the past – both pre and genocide periods- was associated with value-laden expressions such as 'disappointment', 'traumatic witnessing' and 'coward silence'. It was perceived as a time of irresponsible parenting, of parents sowing bitter fruits and the children's reaping the sour identity of 'children of killers' (Bamporiki, 2010). Manoeuvring between performance of state narratives and subtle/subversive reworkings were at play, with allusion to the state as a 'selective' parent, which had not attended to the needs of children of survivors and children of perpetrators in equal measure (Benda, 2017). Thus, the state's need to be seen as the parent-for-the-future goes hand in hand with the various instances of 'plundering the past' as the state seeks to recover and reconvert traditional practices and concepts appropriate for educating children about the past for the future. However, while at times the state seeks to distance itself and distance children from 'compromised' parents, it is equally keen to reinforce the 'obedience-responsibility' relational axis between children and parents (Kigali Today, 2017).

Another illustration of how temporality is reframing parent-child relations is through what can be termed 'horizontal affiliation' or *urungano*. The YCD demonstrated how in the context of fraught relations between parents and children, the latter seek to develop forms of generational kinship informed by shared experiences of disrupted lives and contingent futures. Intragenerational solidarity thus becomes a corrective, if not a substitute, for strained intergenerational relations "We came to the conclusion that we should come together to form the pact of a generation, a pact for life (Edouard, Kicukiro YCD, 29 May 2013). This horizontal affiliation was expressed through narrative symbols such as forging a generational pact of peace without machetes, the construction of a generational 'story of us' (Ganz, 2011) and a unity of agency as 'builders of the nation' harking back to earlier, precolonial modes of intragenerational relations through the *umuryango* discussed earlier. Yet here parents are no longer the instigators, as the state has assumed this responsibility.

Thus, the temporality of the assumed child-parent cycle of dependence is being reworked to accommodate the demands of a future-oriented and technocratic state. Historically intergenerational dependence has been at the heart of child-raising and parenting practices (Pontalti, 2018). Rather than children being solely dependent on parents, children contribute

to household economic and care labour and over time there is a reversal in duties of care and nurture as stated in the proverbial case of the ageing rabbit that suckles on its kit's teats (*Urukwavu rukuze rwonka abana*). However, the state's vision of the future marked by swift changes in policies, language and information technology means that children are frequently called upon to also educate their parents, blurring distinctions of vulnerability and dependence often presumed in ontologies of the child, with the child instead being positioned as 'parent'.

In summary, the state-as-parent acts as a single genesis narrative, which extend the 'reach' of the state through discourses, policies and projects, used to legitimate the position and actions of the state, and to naturalize hierarchy and control over space and time. Yet, as the YCD and *Ndi Umunyarwanda* programmes illustrate, these ideas and practices are navigated, contested and re-worked in the everyday lives of children and their parents.

Conclusion

We have explored how bringing the fields of childhood studies and parenting culture studies into conversation might enable a richer understanding of the construction and enactment of child-parent-state relations and how these have been (re)configured over time, through the application of postcolonial, relational and temporal lenses. In this concluding section we suggest ways in which our analysis may extend theorizing within the respective fields.

First, by moving beyond the child-nation dyad, which has been a central object of research in childhood studies, we have sought to draw on insights from both fields to understand the relational positionalities of children, parents and the state. The multiple positions occupied by the state are shaped in relation to those positioned as children and parents. Yet who occupies these subject positions changes. Sometimes 'parents' are called upon by the state to educate the young and at other times 'children' to educate their elders. On occasions the state seeks to parent directly and on others, via 'parents'. Moreover, children negotiate and navigate their subject positioning in relation to that of parents and the state-as-parent, at times making claims on the state-as-parent and at others seeking to subvert state ascribed positionings. This raises the question of the extent to which ontologies of child and of parent and the presumed 'natural' order of parent-child relations are reinscribed or challenged through these enactments.

Second, we have suggested that attending to the ‘shifting sequences between...temporal orders’ (Hanson, 2017: 282) in the constitution of the state-as-parent elucidates the ways in which the state occupies fluid, multiple positionings, as simultaneously present and absent, enabling on occasions for the state to intervene in and in others to retreat from the domestic sphere, through instrumenting different ideas of parenthood and parenting drawn from various eras and scales. This reveals how the state-as-parent seeks to control, mobilise and enact particular temporalizations, as well as the ways in which children and parents enact subaltern forms of temporality to resist and rework child-parent-state relations. Applying a temporal lens therefore facilitates greater explorations of the ways in which children and parents are not only temporal beings and becomings, but the ways in which their (varied) temporalities are entangled and how this intertwining informs the unfolding of parent-child relations within the family and wider social relations.

Finally, analysis presented in this article highlights the value of a postcolonial perspectives (in both fields, but perhaps particularly in parenting culture studies where there has been less engagement). The phenomenon of state-as-parent can be understood as a ‘situated encounter’ (Nieuwenhuys, 2013: 5) co-constituted between differing ideas and practices associated with child-parent relations, at the nexus of the local-national-global. In particular, we argued that the state-as-parent acts as a metaphorical after-image whereby despite the increasing emphasis on the affiliative order through the institutions brought through colonialism, such as the Church and the school, the significance of the familial order in the pre-colonial order, did not disappear, but rather flourished as a trope to legitimate particular modes of governance and control under the guise of a unity of national interests.

Within this article, rather than starting with globally circulating discourses of parenting and childhood; an approach which can focus on the imposition of ‘universalising’ ideas and practices on ‘local’ contexts, we have demonstrated how within colonialism and its enduring legacies, ‘the global and national as co-constituted’ (Balagopalan, 2019: 25). Applying a similar transnational frame to other contexts could reveal how discourses and practices of contemporary parenting take shape as hybrid products within particular historical, political, economic and socio-cultural conditions (see also Burman, 2018) at the intersection of multiple inequalities of power, resources and knowledge production.

Notes

ⁱOur studies were separate but both qualitative research projects conducted with and on childhood and youth. We do not expand on our methodologies here given that our focus is primarily theoretical, but for more details of the studies' design and methods please see Pells, 2012; Pells et al., 2014; and Benda 2017, 2018 & 2019.

ⁱⁱThis is not to neglect the role played by the queen mother *umugabekazi* as the principal advisor of *umwami*; but an advisor who held great political sway. The symbiotic relationship within this 'asymmetrical' royal couple was essential for a successful monarchy.

ⁱⁱⁱ We have limited space to expand on each factor, although a case could be made that the other three factors are either effects of the colonial state (ethnicity, education) or an extension of powers from the state to the colonial churches, see Newbury (1988), Linden (1999) and Gatwa (2005).

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