Schooling and Social Change among the Bagisu of Uganda

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Abstract

In Uganda over the past 25 years, a series of mass education programmes led to an enormous improvement in access to schooling. This instigated a rapid increase in school attendance at both the primary and secondary level. While only a limited number of privileged children (mostly boys) went to school before the turn of the century, today nearly all children (both boys and girls) spend at least some time in school. This ethnographic thesis, set at a time after these educational developments, explores the socio-cultural consequences of schooling in Bunyafa, a rural area in eastern Uganda, home to the Gisu ethnic group. It is concerned with how schooling has changed social relationships and cultural practices and ideals in the domain of personhood (Part 1), family life (Part 2) and community life (Part 3). The thesis' main argument is that long-standing socio-cultural practices, principles and ideals shape the way aspects of schooling, such as the responsibility to pay school fees or schooled personhood, are interpreted and made sense of. The way in which people make sense of schooling, in turn, has a bearing on the socio-cultural consequences of schooling in a particular locality. The thesis demonstrates how this dynamic underlies various socio-cultural developments in the Gisu context, such as the emergence of a new marriage transaction, changes in access to land and, most significantly, changes in gender relations. Data were collected during 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork (spread over two periods) in which the more traditional ethnographic methods of participant observation (both offline and online), interviews and focus groups were combined with a large-scale household survey.

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CMS (Church Missionary Society)

UPE (Universal Primary Education)

UPOLET (Universal Post O-Level Education and Training)

USE (Universal Secondary Education)

A note on people and language

The ethnic group with which this thesis engages is sometimes referred to as 'Bamasaba' and sometimes as 'Bagisu'. The pronoun 'ba' means 'people of'. The name 'Bamasaba' thus means 'people of Masaba' and refers to the eponymous ancestor from which the whole group claims descent. It is said that 'Gisu' was the nickname of one of Masaba's three sons, Mwambu. Since only part of the group descends from Mwambu, the name 'Bagisu' (people of Gisu) is considered less inclusive than the name 'Bamasaba'. For that reason, the ethnic group seems increasingly to prefer the name 'Bamasaba' over 'Bagisu'. However, people continue to use both names interchangeably, while outside of the Elgon Region and also in academic literature, the name 'Bagisu' (sometimes spelt as Bagesu or Bagishu) is more commonly used. For the sake of academic consistency, I use the name 'Bagisu' in this thesis. The group of people with whom I engaged for this project were mostly descendants of Mwambu, so they belong to the ethnic group's section that is associated most strongly with the name 'Bagisu'. I am, however, very open to a name revision to achieve greater inclusivity, and so if the popularity of the name 'Bamasaba' continues to increase, I might, in later work, adapt accordingly.

The Bagisu speak a Bantu language that is structured through a series of paired prefixes. *Ba* ('people of') is one such prefix and is matched with the singular counterpart *umu* ('person of'). All Gisu people are thus referred to as *Ba*gisu while one Gisu person is referred to as an *Umu*gisu. In addition to *ba* and *umu*, two other prefixes also deserve to be introduced here because they are used in the text. The prefix *lu* means 'language of' and *bu* means 'area of', so *Lu*gisu refers to the language of the Gisu people and *Bu*gisu to the region they inhabit. I have tried to limit my usage of such prefixes to keep the text as accessible as possible (for example, the term 'umugisu' was replaced by 'Gisu man' or 'Gisu woman'), but the prefixes introduced here may occasionally be employed if replacement was difficult. Although the people I worked with speak the northern dialect of Lugisu, my translations follow the southern dialect. Southern Lugisu is also used in school books and most other written material, and is both more sophisticated (the southern dialect does not drop parts of the prefixes) and purer (the southern dialect has incorporated fewer words from Luganda, the language of the most influential ethnic group in Uganda). On the next page is an overview of how several letter combinations are pronounced in both the southern and the northern dialect, so that it becomes possible to infer from my translations how people in the northern dialect pronounce certain words.

Southern dialect	**Northern dialect**
Kh (khukhala, to cut)	K (kukala, to cut)
Ts (atsile, she went)	Z (azile, she went)
R (warorayo, welcome back)	T (watolayo, welcome back)
T (khutekha, to cook)	D (kudeka, to cook)
Kumu (kumuliro, fire)	Mu (muliro, fire)
Kama (kamapesa, money)	Ma (mapesa, money)
Kimi (kimipila, balls)	Mi (mipila, balls)

A note on currency

I have used Ugandan Shillings (UGX) as the monetary value throughout the thesis and put the equivalent in US dollars ($) between brackets. I used an exchange rate of $1.00 to UGX 3704, the average exchange rate in 2019. Table 3 presents the median wage of people in employment in Uganda, specified by their educational qualifications and region, and can be consulted to better understand the relative meaning of the various monetary figures presented in this thesis. In the Gisu region in 2017 the median wage of all people in employment was UGX 130,000 ($35.10), that is approximately UGX 4,300 ($1.20) a day. The average daily wage of a farmer in Bunyafa was about UGX 3,000 ($0.80) during the time of my fieldwork.

Acknowledgements

An ethnographic PhD project is both a very lonely and one of the most social academic projects one can undertake. The principal data source in ethnographic research is the researcher's own experience in the field and such data can, of course, hardly be shared with others. This makes the process of turning a large pile of interview transcripts, observations and experiences into an academic argument a solitary process. This project stage was an intense and difficult experience for me. After I had looked at all the data for a long time and still felt I had not discovered any order in the chaos, I occasionally felt miserable and at such moments I could not avoid the question coming to mind of 'what if I would just quit?'.

I was lucky to have a clear answer to such a question. Quitting would mean that all the people who had assisted me during this project would never see the end product of the time they had spent helping me. It would mean that the people of Bunyafa would not see me coming back one day with a PhD degree, a moment they all seemed to look forward to. And it would also mean that the valuable stories of all those I met for this research would not be written down and shared with a broader public. During the loneliest and toughest moments of this project, it was my appreciation of the wonderful relationships I had developed in this project, with people of an entirely different background, that kept me going. This thesis would not exist without the many friends I met during my time in Uganda, and I am incredibly grateful for the support and hospitality I received throughout my stay.

A few of these friends deserve to be mentioned by name. First of all, Zam Namutosi, who assisted me in the field and became a friend for life during the time we spent working together. Not only has Zam been valuable to me because of her extraordinary social and analytical skills, which she has used to considerably improve the quality of this research, she has also been a great source of inspiration. I have learned a lot from Zam's approach to life and I will cherish our friendship until our days are over. Never shall I forget the journeys we made for our study of the circumcision ritual of a group of initiates, our hikes through the hills after a wonderful interview and the ice creams near Clock Tower after a period of intense fieldwork. These were truly wonderful moments for me!

Research talent seems to be partially genetic, because Nuru, Zam's sister, also made vital contributions to the project, despite having not done much research before she started to help me during my final months of fieldwork, when Zam was occupied with other work. When I was very worried that my final months of fieldwork would go to waste in Zam's absence, Nuru not only saved my project but was able to develop new relationships with people in Bunyafa that proved extremely helpful. I am very grateful for her help and dedication in these final months.

A number of others have provided research assistance too. I would like to thank Jackline, Apollo, Charles, Womasali, Isaac and Pamela for their help with survey administration; Doreen for helping out with the survey administration and transcribing interviews; Wambere and Sowedi for their help with transport during the survey administration; Gidudu Sam for his excellent mobilisation job during survey administration; and Musa and Sarah for help with translations and arranging interviews. I thank Rachel Nandelenga for teaching me Lugisu.

The work I tried to do would have been much more difficult if the people of Bunyafa had not been as hospitable and helpful as they were. I am indebted to all people in Bunyafa, especially those living in the parish of Bukiiti, where I spent most of my time. To these people, I would like to say thanks for welcoming me in your life, making time for me and making my life enjoyable in Uganda – *mwanyala naabi*! There are a few people I wish to thank who I cannot mention by name for reasons of confidentiality. I would like to thank my two Ugandan mothers (*bamayi*) for allowing me into their house and for looking after me in the village. I cherish the warm moments we shared together chatting in our little house after a long day of work. I also want to thank all the local leaders of the village where I lived for allowing me to do the research, helping me to get access to people and events, and their protection.

Many of the people in Uganda have been a great source of inspiration to me – their wisdom and life ethics provided lessons for a young man that could not be obtained at school. There is one person among those I will never forget: Nuru Wasigali, who I came to refer to as 'yaya' (sibling). The way she handled life in light of the many challenges she faced is a great example to me and many others. I feel that my memory of her will help me to get up every time I take a fall for the rest of my life. My gratitude for that reassuring feeling is why Nuru is among the two people to whom this thesis is dedicated.

I have also been lucky with the intellectual support I received throughout this project. It was an amazing experience to work with my supervisors, Professor Cecile Jackson and Professor Arjan Verschoor. Cecile's ability to identify interesting lines of inquiry in my messy early ethnographic reports and guide me to literature and questions that would help me forward is unique. The guidance she provided has been very inspirational and helped this project greatly. It is thanks to Arjan that I ended up in Uganda and was able to make so many friends so quickly. Arjan's curiosity about human behaviour and openness to different analytical approaches, moreover, has greatly shaped both this project and my approach to research more generally. That also applies to his capacity to achieve argumentative clarity – I can only hope that this thesis approaches his standard. I would like to thank Professor Suzette Heald for her hospitality and several great suggestions during early stages of my research. I thank Dr. Ben Jones for similar reasons. Steve Russel did a great job proofreading the thesis.

I think of my Ugandan friend Joshua Balungira as an additional supervisor I had the pleasure to work with. As head of the Field Lab, a Ugandan-based local research organisation, Joshua has great knowledge of the area, language and the people with whom I worked, and I approached him many times to check if I had interpreted things correctly. I also benefitted from the reflections of Professor Timothy Wangusa, Professor Wotsuna Khamalwa and Cornelius Wekunya.

I am lucky enough to have a wonderful group of family and friends around me who are tremendously supportive. I benefitted a lot from their presence during this project. My father, mother and sister are the most important people in my life and I thank them for being there for me in good and bad times. It was a great pleasure to be with you in Uganda and to share some of my adventures with you. I got to know my partner Juul (or Juliet, as they say in Uganda) shortly after I came back from a year in the field. This was a time I felt out of place with all the experiences from Uganda which I could barely share with people, and anxious about coming up with an analysis for which I felt I did not have sufficient data. Her presence in my life made this anxious period much more bearable. I thank her for the wonderful three years we have spent together so far and will never forget the moments we spent in Bunyafa, during my second period of fieldwork. Everybody loves Juliet, and so do I!

I would like to thank Matisse Huiskens for the many inspirational conversations and the mutual support we have given each other over the years. Our friendship and intellectual collaboration are enormously valuable to me. I would like to thank another good friend, Hilmer Bosch, for the great time we had sharing an office at the University of Amsterdam.

I would like to end the acknowledgments with the person this journey began with, my mother, Florence. I vividly remember when you advised me to study anthropology rather than one of the more mainstream and financially beneficial disciplines that an unhelpful but powerful public discourse made me lean towards. It is quite likely that I would not have studied anthropology, the discipline that has brought me so much, without your guidance at that time. At crucial moments in my life you were able to know me best and help me take the right path. This project would not have happened without you, and I would not have lived a life as happy as I have done so far.

For Nuru Wasigali and Florence Kleijnen,

two great mothers who show me the way.

Introduction

Ethnographic research always raises the question of whether it is the anthropologist who does fieldwork or whether the field does the anthropologist (Hobbs and Wright 2006). For such research projects inevitably become shaped by local realities, surprises, and challenges, often more so than by the initial research plans. Gatekeepers may seek to exercise influence or control over the research process, providing the anthropologist with access to specific events, places and people while denying them access to others. The anthropologist's gender, age, personality and appearance may in a specific culture enable them to have greater access to certain topics of conversation, settings and people, but less access to others. And particular field experiences, shaped by people's subjective responses to the anthropologist's presence, as well as the anthropologist's own subjectivities, may direct a researcher to questions that seem of greater relevance for scientific inquiry than those that were written down in the research proposal. Consequently, ethnographic projects often come to engage with questions which are rather different from those that the anthropologist excitedly talked about with the flight personnel on their way to the field.

When I arrived in Uganda, in May 2018, I had not come to study schooling. Inspired by Anthony Giddens' (1990) work on modernity, I had wanted to explore how expert systems change everyday conceptions of risk and uncertainty and affect supernatural epistemologies. The Mount Elgon Region, a rural area in eastern Uganda where I had done research before, seemed a suitable place to carry out such a project. This is a relatively remote area where expert systems like hospitals, banks, mobile phone networks and irrigation systems have become more widespread over the last few decades, while the agricultural lifestyle of the Bagisu, the dominant ethnic group in the Elgon Region, continues to involve considerable uncertainties and risk-taking. The area, where different epistemologies co-exist, seemed a suitable place to put Giddens' theory of modernity to the test of ethnographic inquiry and to develop a study that could contribute to the anthropology of social change in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, during the first months of my stay in the area, while I was scoping the region with a view to narrow down my research focus and find a suitable community where I could stay, I soon found myself puzzling over a series of questions about a rather different theme. In the two decades prior to my arrival in Uganda, a series of mass education programmes – Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997, Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007, and Universal Post O-Level Education and Training (UPOLET) in 2011 – had opened up formal education to large numbers of people who previously had limited access. These programmes, especially UPE, arguably the most significant of the three, enabled many parents and children to commit to schooling (Meinert 2009). This particular history had strongly

shaped the lives of the people with whom I came to interact. Many of the things that people did, planned for or worried about had something to do with schooling. Children who had made it to tertiary education institutes, thanks to the mass education programmes, were struggling to find jobs and to help their parents develop their homesteads as a way of 'repaying' their investments in schooling. I found parents wondering how to deal with children who they had helped to progress through school, but who were now coming back to demand land because of limited job opportunities. Meanwhile, younger children aspired to continue with their schooling and demanded educational support from parents and older siblings.

Whether I talked to old farmers, young motorcycle taxi riders or women on their way to savings groups, everybody had something to say about schooling. I initially saw people's tendency to bring up the topic of schooling during conversations with me as a strategic response to my own appearance as an evidently schooled man, potentially with intentions of providing financial assistance in Uganda. Talking about schooling, I had assumed, must be a way people were trying try to connect to me and perhaps become one of the beneficiaries of the development projects many thought I had come to bring. I thought of people's references to schooling as subjective responses from the field, driven by my own appearance, and for that reason I did not, initially, give this theme much attention.

Increasingly, however, I found the theme of schooling arising in situations where my presence was discrete or in ways that did not make sense in terms of a strategic response. For example, during the first months of my fieldwork I took some time to get to know more about *imbalu*, a male circumcision ritual I knew to be of great importance to the Bagisu (Broun 1910; Heald 1998; Khamalwa 2018). When observing a preparatory ceremony, standing at the back of a large crowd, out of the ritual actors' sight, I heard an initiate being told by his mother's brother what to do after circumcision: "If you study, study. If you don't study, marry", said the uncle to his nephew. This remark implied that schooling had reconfigured the link between circumcision, adulthood, and marriage. On another day, when walking through Bunyafa, the area I would later come to live in, I encountered a meeting between two families of a newly-married couple. Rather than discussing the value of bridewealth, which I assumed was the purpose of the meeting, I was told that the families had come together to discuss the payment of a 'fine'. The fine, I was told by my guide, was a new form of marriage payment that was meant to compensate the bride's father for the money he had spent on his daughter's schooling.

When I started to pay serious attention to people's comments about schooling, I was particularly surprised by the various ways in which schooling had become intertwined with other aspects of Gisu social and cultural life. For example, during conversations with fathers and sons about pre-mortem patrilineal land inheritance, an important aspect of Gisu intergenerational relationships, people often

said that a boy's land rights are now contingent upon his level of schooling; a boy who had become schooled was no longer entitled to his father's land. Schooling had come to be seen as another way, in addition to providing land, in which fathers could fulfil their responsibility to set up their sons for adulthood.

Schooling also interacted with bridewealth payment. I came to realise this during a conversation with Sylvia, a 22-year-old recently married woman who, despite the fact that she had not finished lower secondary school, considered herself schooled (as I discuss more extensively later on in the thesis, I found that being schooled is often more about the cultivation of a certain identity than the obtainment of school degrees, although more experience is school does help one to obtain the social and cultural capital upon which a schooled identity tends to be build). Sylvia told me that her parents had invested in her schooling in the hope that she would help them in the future. However, in a context where jobs are scarce and economic opportunities are limited, Sylvia, like many people of her generation, struggled to live up to these expectation of reciprocity. In order to make sure she gave something back to her parents, Sylvia was now encouraging her husband to pay bridewealth and she was actively helping him to raise money and buy presents. Schooling was imbricated in the intergenerational transmission of land, bridewealth payments and, as the rest of this thesis will show, many other socio-cultural aspects of Gisu society.

Rather than a theme people would bring up in response to my presence, schooling, I came to realise, seemed incorporated into various domains of Gisu sociality, and the ways people incorporated schooling into their social and cultural lives shaped not only how they dealt with schooling, but also how schooling affected their social relations and cultural practices. Indeed, my observations provoked questions such as: What are the implications for the relations between fathers and sons if schooling is seen to be another way, in addition to land, in which fathers can endow their sons with capital for the future? How is the meaning of bridewealth changing if women contribute to it with a view to compensate their parents for educational investments? And what are the implications of the 'fine' for the way in which marriages are made and maintained? The way in which schooling is refracted through, and changes, socio-cultural life in the Gisu context seemed a line of inquiry that deserved further exploration, and this thesis is the end product of my attempt to make sense of these questions. It shows how schooling produces social change through the ways it is incorporated into various social relations and cultural practices – the 'indigenization' of the global product of schooling, that is, in the words of Appadurai (1996, 32).

Thus, while some of my initial research interests, notably my interest in social change, can be found in this thesis, the focus of my research is primarily the outcome of field experiences rather than a clear

or pre-determined research plan. I did not have a detailed knowledge of the literature on schooling and social change before I came to Uganda, nor did I have a clear set of research questions about schooling that I wanted to answer. My research questions about how social actors make sense of schooling in light of older socio-cultural principles emerged as I followed the theme of schooling in the field. Because schooling was imbricated in such a wide variety of social domains, these questions took me in multiple directions. With hindsight, however, I found that my analysis covered three broad domains: personhood, family relations, and community relations. I have structured the thesis around these three analytical domains; each part of the thesis corresponds to one domain. Schooling, and these domains, are, of course, gendered, and what schooling does to gendered personhood, gender relations within the family, and gender relations within the community, proved to be important. Gender, therefore, became a theme that is explored across the different parts of the thesis.

It is by no means a novel idea that schooling produces social change and a great many studies have been concerned with how it does so (Bourne 2021). I have come to engage with this literature iteratively, and in the next section I explain the way in which my analysis builds on and adds to this literature. I then discuss how this thesis adds to our understanding of how schooling affects gender relations specifically. The next three sections introduce the fieldsite, describe and discuss fieldwork, and then the quantitative survey. The last section provides the thesis outline.

Schooling and social change

This thesis builds on a series of studies that relate to 'The Cultural Production of the Educated Person' (Levinson, Douglas, and Holland 1996). Studies of this kind work within a paradigm that differs in crucial ways from two earlier perspectives on schooling and social change: modernization theory, and schooling as a conservative force (cf. Foley 2010). The former approach to schooling is rooted in a development discourse that sees development as a process of modernization – or 'assimilation' as Datzberger (2018, 125) refers to it – and has been adopted in academia by people like Alex Inkeles and David Smith (Inkeles 1975; Inkeles and Smith 1974). Schooling, when provided in the right way, was expected to produce:

> participating citizens, men and women who take an active interest in public affairs and who exercise their rights and perform their duties as members of a community larger than that of the kinship network and the immediate geographical locality. […] [I]ndividuals who can keep to fixed schedules, observe abstract rules, make judgments on the basis of objective evidence, and follow authorities legitimated not by traditional or religious sanctions but by technical competence (Inkeles 1975, 324).

By producing these competencies in students, schooling was seen to produce social change in the form of modernization. While this modernization discourse has been strongly critiqued in academia (Escobar 1995; Gardner and Lewis 2015, 30–31), it has been pervasive in policy circles and continues to inform education policies and investments in many countries, including Uganda (Datzberger 2022; 2018).

The idea that schooling is a conservative force was propagated, in the European context, by Pierre Bourdieu (1974), and critiques the idea that schooling functions as 'a great equalizer of conditions of men', as argued by Horace Man, one of the pioneers of American education in the 19th century (see Growe and Montgomery 2003, 23). Highlighting the cultural basis of class differences, Bourdieu argued that schools in post-war France were structured by the principles of upper- or middle-class culture and, as such, were considerably less suitable environments in which lower-class children could flourish. Consequently, lower-class children performed relatively worse in school and rather than acting as a great equalizer, schools turned "economic and social differences into distinctions of quality" and helped "to enclose the underprivileged classes in the roles which society has given them" (Bourdieu 1974, 42). George Spindler, one of the pioneers of educational anthropology in the USA, made a similar point in relation to ethnic inequalities based on extensive observations in American classrooms (Spindler 2000). Teachers' white middle-class background, Spindler argues, biased their classroom observations and approaches in a manner beneficial to pupils with a similar background as the teachers, but highly disadvantageous to children of ethnic minorities. Rather than emphasising the 'transformative' potential of schools, like modernization theorists, scholars who adhere to the idea of schooling as a conservative force show how schools have a socially 'reproductive' potential, especially when it comes to inequalities.

Studies within the paradigm of 'The Cultural Production of the Educated Person' challenge the emphasis put on 'structure' by authors like Bourdieu and Spindler, as well as the idea that schooling produces the same 'modern' person everywhere (C. Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a; 2004b; 2005; Levinson, Douglas, and Holland 1996; Stambach 2000). They pay attention to the ways students resist school culture and rework their own school experience, i.e. 'agency'. They argue that rather than being passively absorbed, school principles are resisted, reworked and refined by different groups of students. These studies build on Paul Willis' (1977) seminal work *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs,* which, based on an ethnography of a group of working-class students in a secondary school in England, shows that working-class children develop a counter-school culture in schools that prevents them from getting good jobs afterwards. However, whereas Willis, like Bourdieu, was still preoccupied with the reproduction of class differences, the Cultural Production of the Educated Person literature, focusing on a range of contexts mainly in the Global South, seeks to combine an interest in student agency with a concern for how schooling interacts with ethnic, gender,

race and other inequalities (rather than just class). In doing so, these studies demonstrated that the ways in which schooling is incorporated into and made sense of in societies differs across cultural contexts, and what it means to be schooled varies.

I share with these cultural production studies an interest in how the socio-cultural context of a particular locality shapes the way in which social actors make sense of schooling. While I also find Bourdieu's insights about the symbolic nature of class differences and the embodiment of class cultures useful, I emphasise, with the cultural production studies, that people actively rework the meaning of schooling in their own interest. I am less concerned than most studies of this kind, however, with cultural friction and production *in* schools. Rather, I focus on the ways in which social actors make sense of schooling outside the school gates, focusing not just on the students, but also the parents and others involved in educational trajectories. Analysing how schooling produces a new sort of person, the focus of the cultural production literature, is only part of my focus here (see Part 1). I am also concerned with the way in which responsibilities for the education of children are reworked, locally, and what that means for family relations (Part 2), as well as how educated people shape community life and continue to work on their schooled personalities after their time in school (Part 3). Much of what schooling does to social life, I hope to show, is contingent upon the way in which different practices and responsibilities associated with schooling are refracted through other socio-cultural principles.

My approach to the study of schooling and social change therefore builds on the 'new literacy' studies associated with the work of Brian Street (2001; 1993; 1995; 1984). The new literacy studies emphasise that literacy is not just a skill (as Goody and Watt [1963] emphasised in their seminal work which shaped early literacy studies), but also involves the practice of that skill in a particular cultural context. The teaching and learning of literacy requires a teacher and a student who may be in a hierarchical relationship, and the exercise of different literacy activities – from managing social media to reading the Bible – involves different groups of people. The consequences of literacy are shaped, among other things, by the way in which literacy transmission is embedded in hegemonic power structures (Street 1995), how different actors manipulate the teaching of literacy in relation to these structures (see for example Bledsoe and Robey 1993), and the meaning that is given to different literacy activities (see for example Maurice Bloch 1993). Literacy is variably made sense of across cultural contexts and people actively engage in the shaping of literacy discourses in relation to other cultural understandings of knowledge and communication, as well as in light of power relations. In a similar vein, I see schooling as a *social practice* that involves various actors – teachers, students, parents and the state – who come to interact in relation to various aspects of schooling – paying school fees, teaching in class rooms, strategies to prevent drop-out, and so forth. I explore how these various activities are made sense of

in relation to other socio-cultural principles and interests and how, through this process, social continuities and changes are realised.

Girls' schooling and gender relations

As noted above, the way in which schooling had affected gender relations emerged as an important theme in this study and gender analyses run through the various chapters. Gender ideals structure Gisu society in important ways; they provide a framework for divisions of labour within the household and dictate who is expected to do and say what in various settings, from clan meetings to funerals. The categories of 'man' and 'woman' are associated with different capacities and qualities and these are drawn upon to justify role divisions and rather strong patriarchal norms (see also Chapter 1). At the same time, the schooling of boys and girls has reached parity at both the primary and secondary level and being 'schooled' is associated with qualities and role aspirations that are at odds with older perceptions of both manhood and womanhood. It is, therefore, particularly in the realm of gender that schooling requires interpretation and is refracted in surprising ways.

The idea that the schooling of girls and women has great potential for social change is widely acknowledged, especially in the field of international development. The schooling of girls and women is seen to contribute to the achievement of a range of development goals and much of education's potential to realise social change has been associated with girls' schooling specifically (Tembon and Fort 2008). Educating girls is associated with less child and maternal mortality, improved nutrition, economic growth and the reduction of poverty, among other things (Hanushek 2008; LeVine, LeVine, and Schnell 2001; Rao and Sweetman 2014), as well as with the empowerment of women and gender equality (Roudi-Fahimi and Moghadam 2006; Shetty and Hans 2015; Stromquist 1997; Tembon and Fort 2008). Schooled women are believed to have more power in marriage and in the community because of improved labour market opportunities. They also have both greater awareness of patriarchal norms that disadvantage them and confidence to challenge these norms (Rao and Sweetman 2014; Sen 1987). The idea that schooling can empower girls and women, and at the same time feed into a broader range of development goals, has encouraged a broad scholarship on barriers to girls' access to education, as well as policies to achieve gender parity in schools (Chisamya et al. 2012; Marianne Bloch, Beoku-Betts, and Tabachnick 1998; Odaga 2020; Stromquist 1997).

Anthropological and feminist research on the relationship between the schooling of girls, empowerment and development, however, has challenged the universality of simple links, and presents a more complex picture of the gender consequences of schooling in different cultural contexts (Marianne Bloch, Beoku-Betts, and Tabachnick 1998; P. Jeffrey and Jeffrey 1994; Rao and Sweetman 2014). Various ethnographic studies carried out in schools show how factors such as teacher

behaviour, classroom practices and the curriculum reinforce gender stereotypes and can induce feelings of inferiority in women (Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach 2006; Guinée 2014; Stambach 2000; Stromquist 1992; 2020). These insights, which align with studies that emphasise school's tendency to reproduce inequalities (Bourdieu 1974; Spindler 2000), suggest that although women may benefit from schooling in terms of improved labour market opportunities, increased social standing and more, schools may at the same time be imbricated in the reproduction of a patriarchal structure that continues to fundamentally disadvantage women (cf. P. Jeffrey and Jeffrey 1994 and Khurshid 2017). In contexts where schools reproduce gender hierarchy, the lives of women may improve through schooling but only within the context of ongoing patriarchal oppression, which implies, according to feminist activist Sarah Longwe (1998), a dynamic of 'schooling for subordination' rather than empowerment.

Others, however, have argued that schooling may also help to challenge patriarchal structures and emphasise the transformative (as opposed to reproductive) potential of schooling in relation to gender. Stromquist, for example, drawing on a multidimensional framework of empowerment, discusses how schooling, as well as various other forms of education, may improve women's gender specific knowledge and possibilities for collective action to challenge social structures (Stromquist 2015b; 2015a; 1992; see also Datzberger 2018, 126–27). In doing so, she shows that the potential of schooling is not necessarily limited to empowering women within the limits of patriarchy, although she also emphasises that schools often do not fully realise their transformative potential and that an "easy equation of schooling and women's empowerment is not warranted" (Stromquist 2015b, 315). If schooling is to address gender inequality at a more fundamental level, the way in which gender equality is approached in relation to schooling must go beyond a mere concern for parity, to involve more complex understandings of gender and inequality, based on, for example, Amartya Sen's 'capability approach' (Robeyns 2006; Unterhalter [2007] 2012; Unterhalter, Longlands, and Vaughan 2022; M. Walker and Unterhalter 2007).

I share an interest with these studies in moving beyond simple links between schooling and the empowerment of girls and women, and I develop two arguments that contribute to scholarship concerned with the gender consequences of schooling. Firstly, and related to the transformative perspective on schooling, I explore the relationship between schooling and gender symbolism (see Chapter 4). The idea that gender has a symbolic dimension that may facilitate patriarchy is widely acknowledged in anthropology (Abu-Lughod 1986; Ardener 1972; Boddy 1989; H. L. Moore 1988; 2007; H. L. Moore, Sanders, and Kaare 1999; Ortner 1972). I show in the Gisu context how schooling, thanks to particular qualities people associate with being schooled, has the potential to challenge such symbolism, and may therefore work to be 'symbolically empowering'. This analysis challenges the idea

that schooling merely promotes women within the limits of patriarchy and joins scholarship that explores the transformative potential of schooling, although I also show that the transformative potential of schooling is not fully realised in the Gisu context due to the specific ways in which people tend to explain girls' school drop-out.

Secondly, by analysing schooling as a *social practice* that brings different actors into relationships with one another (Street 1995), I explore the gender implications of schooling for more everyday practices, relations and responsibilities, such as the responsibility to pay school fees. Schooling not only provides a new generation of boys and girls with old or new skills, ideas, views and confidence, but also requires parents to reconfigure their parental responsibilities and the conjugal contract as they find themselves faced with a need to raise money for their children's schooling. In the Gisu context, school-related practices and responsibilities are incorporated into conjugal and intergenerational contracts in ways that contribute to a pattern of matrifocality and paternal disengagement from the nuclear family, which have mixed effects for women's autonomy (see Chapters 6 and 7). While strongly contextual, these insights show that schooling may have a different impact for women who are the recipients of schooling (women as daughters) compared to women who are the providers of schooling (women as mothers), and the extent to which a woman experiences schooling to be empowering may change over the course of her life.

Fieldsite

This study is based on fieldwork carried out in Bunyafa, a rural sub-county in Uganda's Elgon Region. This region is located in the east of the country, near the border with Kenya, in the foothills of Mount Elgon, an extinct shield volcano. Mbale, located at the foot of Wanale, Mount Elgon's most westward extension, is the region's capital, home to a little more than a 100,000 people, and, albeit ethnically diverse, commonly known as the city of the Bagisu, the predominant ethnic group in this region.[1] There are two tarmacked roads that run from Mbale around the northern and southern valleys of Mount Elgon (see Figure 1[2]). The Elgon Region roughly refers to the area in-between these two roads, the national reserve (located around the peak of the mountain) and the Kenyan border. This hilly area is very suitable for the cultivation of various crops and hence full of agricultural settlements. These settlements are much less ethnically diverse than Mbale. Pretty much everybody in this area is of Gisu

[1] The Bagisu initially shared the city with the Teso ethnic group but later managed to claim the city for themselves. See Khanakwa (2018) for a historical analysis of this conquest of Mbale.

[2] The northern road goes from Mbale in the direction of Muyembe and then branches in the direction of Kapchorwa; the southern road goes from Mbale to Bugema and then branches in the direction of Toma and Matuwa.

origin and Lugisu, the group's language, is what most people use to communicate with each other, both in formal and informal settings.

The ecological conditions in the Elgon Region, also known as the Gisu area[3], differ according to altitude. The lowlands are located closest to Mbale and the tarmacked roads in the valleys. They reach a height of around 1000m, and are suitable for growing maize, sunflower and some cotton. The highlands, between 2000 and 3000m, are closest to the national reserve around the top of the mountain and are most suitable for growing coffee and matoke (plantain). The middle lands are located in between these lower and upper areas and are suitable for coffee and matoke, as well as maize. Historically, the area is administratively subdivided into three sections: northern, central and southern Bugisu.[4] These sections correspond to Gisu stories of origin as each section's inhabitants are said to descend from a different son of Masaba, the group's eponymous ancestor. Although the government has today subdivided the area in five districts and governs the area through these rather than the older sections, the North/South/Centre division remains an important marker of difference in the region as different dialects of Lugisu are spoken across these sections and the male circumcision ritual is performed slightly differently in each.

Bunyafa is located in the middle lands of Sironko district, part of the northern Gisu section, at a distance of about 12 miles from Mbale. Figure 1 indicates where the sub-county can be found in the wider Elgon Region. There is a marram road of poor quality – in some places it is impossible to drive faster than about 10 miles per hour, partially because of the steep hills – through which Bunyafa can be reached from Mbale by car. To do so one must take the road to Budadiri and then branch off towards Buteza at Bugusege petrol station. When using this route, it takes a little more than 30 minutes to reach Bunyafa. While this may make Bunyafa a remote area, the wider region is, as noted, full of Gisu settlement and so Bunyafa is party of a densely settled area. Along the marram road from Mbale mud houses with iron sheet roofs can be found everywhere, larger colonial style brick houses are seen here and there, as well as various trading centres where some meat is roasted and petrol might be sold.

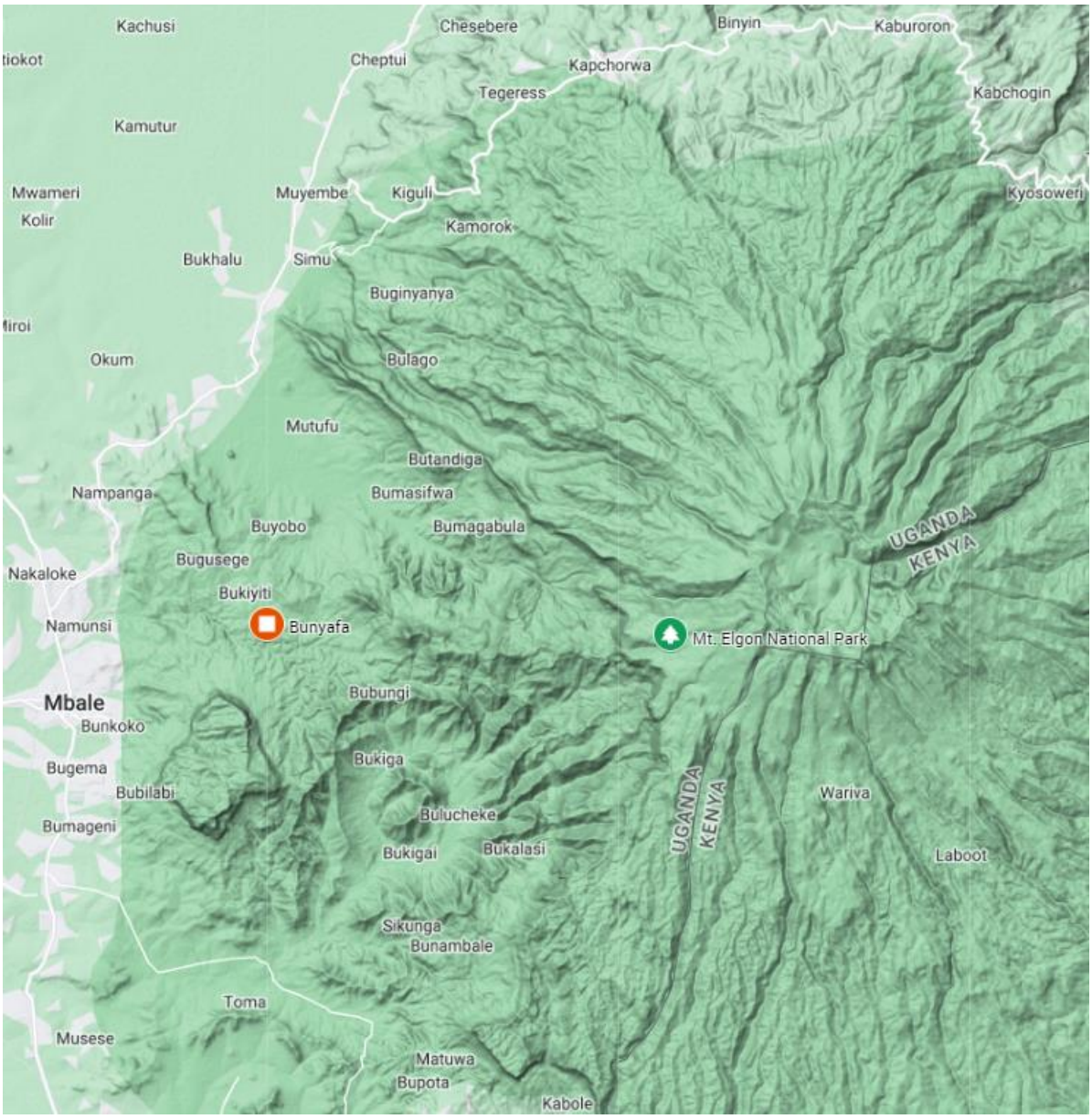
The road that goes through Bunyafa is quite busy for a marram road going into a rural area because there is a relatively big matoke trade area in Buteza, the sub-county next to Bunyafa. Lorries and other transportation vehicles regularly occupy the road to sell and collect goods at this centre, especially on Saturdays, when the market takes place. The road is also full of motorcycle taxi drivers (*boda boda*) who provide people transport to and from Mbale at a rate of less than a dollar (one way). This makes

[3] I use the words Gisu area or Elgon Region interchangeably in this thesis. They both refer to the area described in the previous paragraph.

[4] The northern section includes the districts of Bulambuli and Sironko; the southern section includes Namisindwa, Bududa and Manafwa; and the central section more or less coincides with the district of Mbale.

Mbale fairly accessible, even to the average villager, and so most people in Bunyafa go to Mbale every once in a while to visit relatives, to trade, buy stuff that is not available at local markets, or to go to school.[5] The coach park that provides access to the rest of the country is also located in Mbale.

Figure 1. Map of the Gisu area, with Bunyafa indicated



Bunyafa was being reorganised in terms of its parish structure during my fieldwork, but consisted of four parishes when I arrived. Each parish consists of about five to ten villages, but the differences between villages is hard to recognise. That is because people live in the middle of the land they cultivate in the Elgon Region and there is little space between villages because of the area's extremely high population density (see Figure 2) (Goldman and Heldenbrand 2002, 50; Kituyi 2007, 12).

[5] The *boda boda* drivers go to Budadiri and Sironko, two smaller urban centres that are more or less equally close to Bunyafa, for an equal price, but these areas are visited less often as they have much less to offer than Mbale.

Population density is, though, greatest nearer the marram road, and especially around the various trading centres. Such centres usually consist of a series of brick and cement block buildings, often owned by urban elites, where grocery, pharmacy and other shops can be found. Some centres have a small video halls where villagers can watch Hollywood films with a Ugandan voice-over or, in the more sophisticated halls, live English football matches. Barbershops of the kind described by Weiss (2009) may well be considered a part of the definition of a trading centre – they are found everywhere. Small groups of men playing board games such as ludo or cards games[6], as well as loud Ugandan music (usually played by the barbershops) add some life to these centres, especially towards the end of the day.

Figure 2. Picture of scattered households

While I introduce the history of formal education in Uganda, as well as its current set up, in greater detail in chapter 2, it is useful to briefly introduce the educational landscape of Bunyafa here. Bunyafa has six government primary schools and one government secondary school. Figure 3 is a map of the area which indicates the location of these various schools, the most important churches and mosques, trading centres and the location of my house. As can be seen on the map, schools are usually located

[6] See Jones (2020) for an insightful analysis of ludo board game play in Ugandan trading centres.

in the vicinity of churches. This reflects a history in which schooling was brought to Uganda by the missionaries, who built churches and schools at mission cells across the country (see also Chapter 2). Schools are relatively small with about four proper classrooms per school and only one group per school level (i.e. there are usually not sufficient children or teachers to split all pupils who are learning at the same school level into multiple groups). The number of pupils enrolled, though, may be rather large (Buteza PS, for example, had about 600 pupils enrolled), which means that one class can have up to a hundred pupils. Government schools are free of charge, that is, in theory, because various payments are involved at both the primary and the secondary level, as I discuss in chapter 2.

Figure 3. Map of Bunyafa

In addition to the government school, there are 7 private primary schools, usually set up by teachers who were born in the area, where the quality of education is said to be better, but school fees must be paid. These schools are often based in much smaller buildings, have less pupils, and often provide only lessons at a few school levels (e.g. Primary one to Primary four only). There was, however, one private school (Excel Primary School, included in the map) that provided all levels of education and had as many as 500 pupils enrolled. The existence of private schools reflects people's preoccupation with schooling in this area. Private schools also instigate a lot of competition between schools as they all aim to attract more learners. Parents switch schools relatively easily indeed and so many children go to multiple primary schools during their school careers. However, my survey, the details of which I

introduce below, shows that most people make use of the cheaper government schools: the large majority (88 percent) of the people went to a government school.[7]

Parents who can afford it send their best performing child(ren) to school in Mbale or another Ugandan city, where the quality of education is said to be better. This is, though, rather difficult for most parents without the support of a sponsor, which means that most children in the area go to a local government or private school. Among the people surveyed, 68 percent spent their last school years in a school in Bunyafa or another rural area, 20 percent went to a school in Mbale and the all the others went to school in another town in Uganda.[8] My house was located in Bukiiti parish, the area that covers the left side of the map. Most of the people I worked with lived in the area behind my house, along the two marram roads towards Bumadibira Town Council. The people in this area typically send their children to the two nearest primary schools or to Bugambi, the only secondary school of Bunyafa. Excel Primary School, also located in Bukiiti parish, provided an alternative for parents who could afford to pay higher school fees to get their children into a school of better quality.

Fieldwork and focus families

My engagement with the Gisu people started in 2016, when I spent 6 months in the Elgon Region to carry out fieldwork for my Research Masters project on agricultural investment decisions, in collaboration with the Field Lab, a local research organisation. When I returned to the area in May 2018 for this PhD project, I initially stayed in Mbale, the region's major town, to follow intensive Gisu language training. While staying in Mbale, I regularly visited rural areas to carry out interviews with agricultural extension officers, village leaders and regular farmers. These interviews, arranged with the help of my Field Lab connections, were part of a scoping study to enable me to make an informed decision on a more specific research focus and choice of research location. It was during this scoping stage that I slowly came to the topic of schooling and eventually decided to move to Bunyafa.

The choice of Bunyafa was informed by both strategic considerations and personal sentiment. Strategically speaking, I wanted an area that was not atypical for the wider Gisu area in terms of wealth, remoteness and access to schools, and Bunyafa fulfilled these requirements. The area is fairly average in terms of wealth because of its location between the lowlands of the Elgon Region and the higher

[7] I refer here to data from the ego-sample (introduced below).

[8] People who went to school in a rural area other than Uganda were mostly women. It is likely that these women moved to Bunyafa when they got married, but went to school in the area they were born in. Other than this there were no big gender differences in terms of the location of people's last school, nor in terms of whether this was a private or government school.

altitude plateaus closer to the top of the mountain.[9] Located about twelve miles from Mbale and almost exactly halfway between Mbale and Budadiri (the second largest town in the area), Bunyafa is neither close to urban centres nor extremely remote, and the sub-county has no privileged access to food markets.[10] With six government primary schools, four private primary schools and one government secondary school, the area is also not atypical in terms of the number and type of schools.[11]

The typicality of the area, however, was only part of the reason I chose Bunyafa as a research site. As ethnographic fieldwork requires good access to a suitable group of people, as well as a long-term stay in one particular place, it is almost inevitable that practical matters and personal sentiment also come to play a role in the choice of a research site. Does one get along well with gatekeepers? Can a suitable residence be found in a certain area? And does the idea of staying in a particular place excite one? When I visited Bunyafa during my scoping stage, I was lucky enough to get to know several exceptionally friendly farmers who passionately told me about life in the area. It was these conversations that caused me to explore the possibility of staying in this area and, after a long day of visiting different villages in the sub-county, together with one of my contacts, I was, at some point, offered a small house on the edge of a little hill with a wonderful view, a house I would have to share with a friendly woman, called Zolaika.[12] I vividly remember how the excitement of living in *that* house, surrounded by *these* people, made the bumpy ride to Mbale on the back of a motorcycle taxi – a journey I would later come to dislike – a very pleasant ride that night. While Bunyafa was a suitable research area, strategically speaking, it would not have become the location of this research without these initial experiences, and the excitement they provoked in me.

I lived in Bunyafa from July 2018 until July 2019 on my own and returned to the area for another three months of research in July 2021. This second period of fieldwork I went together with my partner Juul (locally known as Juliet), a Dutch woman I got to know back home after my first period of fieldwork. Being interested in the way people deal with schooling, but not part of a host family, I decided to work

[9] The middle land climate is suitable for coffee growing – the most important source of wealth in the region – which makes the middle land sub-counties richer than the sub-counties located in the lowlands. However, coffee yields are not as good there as in the higher foothills, so the middle land sub-counties tend not to be as rich as those higher up on the mountain.

[10] As noted, there is quite a large Saturday morning market in Buteza, a neighbouring sub-county, which many people use to sell their farm produce or to trade. But this does not compare to the sub-countries bordering Mbale or Budadiri that have a more permanent chance to sell products at a relatively high price (prices in town are usually higher than in rural areas).

[11] Uganda aims to have at least one secondary school in every sub-county and a primary school in every parish. These goals are met in Bunyafa with two extra government primary schools (six schools, four parishes). The number of private schools is not atypical given the number of government schools in the area (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017b).

[12] This is a pseudonym. Names of people are anonymised in this thesis for reasons of confidentiality.

with a number of focus families to be able to follow what schooling means to different households. With these families I established rapport through regular visits and social engagement as well as carrying out interviews with its members, including those not currently staying at home, such as children in boarding schools or those searching for jobs in town. I ensured that my sample of focus families was varied in terms of a number of characteristics: number of children, polygamy, age of parents, wealth, children's level of education, household head's sex, religion, and geographical location. In terms of geography, I decided to select eight families from one village, the village of Bungoma[13], and three families from other villages in Bunyafa. Having most families in one village allowed me to study families in the context of broader village relationships, while the inclusion of three families from other villages helped me to see what is particular to Bungoma and what is not. Table 1 provides an overview of the different focus families. Much of the data I present in this thesis comes from my engagement with these focus families, and some families will be introduced in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Table 1. Focus family overview

	Names of parents	Children	Polygynous	Age of parents	Wealth	Household head sex	Religion
1	Gidoi (m) Sharifa (f)	8	No	40s	Average	Male	Islam
2	Asad (m) Mugide (f)	4*	Yes	50s	Above average	Male	Islam
3	Amir (m) Sylvia (f)	3	No	20s	Average	Male	Islam
4	Habib (m) Zaina (f)	3	No	40s	Average	Male	Islam
5	Muzei (m) Zowena (f)	8	Yes	40s	Average	Male	Islam
6	Zolaika (f)	0	No	40s	Below average	Female	Islam
7	Leopold (m) Juliet (f)	4	No	60s	Rich	Male	Born Again
8	Francis (m) Nandudu (f)	3	No	40s	Poor	Female**	Anglican
9	Gutaka (m) Nambozo (f)	8	Yes	60s	Above average	Male	Catholic
10	Masaba (m) Samira (f)	2	No	20s	Below average	Male	Catholic
11	Mozes (m) Nafuna (f)	7	No	50s	Above average	Male	Anglican

**The man had 6 children with other women prior to getting married to this wife.*
***The husband had moved in with his wife, who occupied the house of her former husband, who had passed away. Thus, the wife owned the house, and is reported here as the household head.*

[13] This is a pseudonym. I use the real names of the sub-county (Bunyafa) and parish (Bukiiti) in which this research was carried out. I use pseudonyms when I refer to actual villages within these wider areas for reasons of confidentiality.

Studying the consequences of schooling as a social practice, that is, a dynamic that brings various individuals – boys and girls, men and women – into new relationships with each other, requires access to a broad range of people. To get such access, I chose to work with a somewhat older female research assistant called Zam Namutosi, a woman in her 40s who I got to know through the Field Lab.[14] In the presence of Zam I was able to have lengthy conversations with people who I (as a 25-year-old man) was not socially close to (women and elders) and with whom I would not have been able to talk had I been on my own (young women). Zam and I worked closely together during the first months of fieldwork, with Zam functioning as an interpreter during interviews and casual encounters in the village. During the final months of fieldwork, around the time I got to know the language and depended less on Zam for data collection, we worked increasingly independently, with Zam mostly carrying out interviews and focus groups with women about topics that could not be discussed in my presence (e.g., sexuality, see Chapter 4). When I returned for a second period of fieldwork, in 2021, Zam was unavailable to assist me again because she was too busy with her work for the Field Lab. On Zam's recommendation, I started to work with her older sister, Nuru Mutenyo. She appeared to be as suitable for the job as Zam and was of great help to me throughout the last three months of fieldwork.

The ethnographic journey I made together with Zam and Nuru was not free of difficulties, as no such journey ever is. In the first weeks of my stay in the area, Zam and I found it difficult to get people to open up about their lives and to have genuine conversations with us. Being a white man who lived on the edge of the village and moved around with a booklet in his hand, I resembled the NGO workers who ran a microfinance institution in a neighbouring sub-county. This led many to look at me as the next development worker, a perception we could not easily change. If people did not treat me with great suspicion (some thought I had come to spy on them on behalf of President Museveni), they related to me strategically with a view to get included in the development programme they presumed I had come to initiate. Some people tried to improve their chances by consistently overstating their formal education and belief in development ideals, while others emphasised their poverty and other problems. Only when I started to participate more intensively in everyday activities – going to the farm with Zolaika, following two initiates during a circumcision ritual, playing football with the village football team, joining a savings group and starting a coffee business – did people slowly realise that I was different from the other white people they knew. The gradual improvement of my local language abilities also changed people's perceptions of who I was and what I had come to do. After a difficult

[14] Zam had more than 15 years of experience with carrying out both qualitative and quantitative research as a member of the Field Lab research team. She lived in Mbale, but visited me three days a week in Bunyafa to help with the research.

beginning, people became increasingly convinced that I indeed was who I claimed to be: a university student who wanted to write a book about their life.

While my intentions became clearer to most people as time passed, most people did not assign much value to having a book written about them. They were not opposed to a book, but the importance of keeping track of cultural variation and inter-cultural learning, which I said the book was about, was clearly not a good enough reason for many to spend a lot of time helping me with my project. 'How will we benefit?' people kept asking me (even after most had understood that I was writing a book). I thus had to look for ways of 'giving back' that went beyond promising to share my book with them, especially when it came to the members of the focus families, with whom I planned to spend most time. I asked the focus families if they might consider me as a distant relative – someone who occasionally visits, who both benefits from and contributes to the household when present, but who also may be called upon in challenging situations. I had found out that the Bagisu employ a rather flexible kinship discourse – almost every unknown person is a 'relative' (*umulebe*, pl. *balebe*) – and thought that this could be a good way to establish appropriate and reciprocal relationships with people that would be manageable.

The approach worked well. All families accepted me on those terms and regularly started to call upon me when contributions to a funeral had to be made, a school fee gap needed to be filled or a sick child needed to be treated. As I managed to help out in these situations (carefully managing my reputation as 'just a student' to avoid a proliferation of demands) it became increasingly natural for me to join them in their houses for a meal or ask them to make time for an interview. Being seen as an *umulebe* also meant that I was increasingly asked to join various village activities. By becoming involved in the organisation of a funeral or the project of schooling a child, I was slowly able to join more and more aspects of village life. Simultaneously, I started to play regularly with a local football team. Being an experienced football player, my contributions to the team were much appreciated by both the players and community members, and my participation in local football became an important additional means through which I was able to strengthen my relations with people.

Though my participant observation of everyday life shaped my understanding of life in Bunyafa, this project is, perhaps more than the average ethnography, strongly informed by interviews I conducted with various people: the members of the focus families, teachers, primary and secondary school students, football players, elders, and ritual specialists. Partially, this is the consequence of my research topic. As many school-related decisions are made within domestic settings, one does not encounter such settings very often. I thus needed interviews to find out how people dealt with schooling. But the importance of interviews in this ethnography also stems from the rather closed attitude that most

Bagisu have towards each other. People generally enjoy the fact that they can hide their deepest intentions and thoughts, and emphasise that 'one can never know another person's heart'. Moreover, as displaying too much interest in another person's life puts one at risk of witchcraft accusations, people are keen to act as though they are simply minding their own business. Everyday talk is far from 'deep' and often merely a polite – but somewhat superficial – exchange. Much conversational time is indeed spent on thanking one another for various rather straightforward things (e.g. sitting on a chair) or inquiring about the well-being of long lists of relatives. Joining a casual conversation, therefore, often did not provide me with the kind of data I was looking for[15], and I found myself slowly turning to interviews more and more often to get to know people's views on various topics.

The fact that people are generally not very keen to share personal matters with neighbours, however, meant that interviews were not an immediate success either. It took time for me and Zam to find the right interview approach. When, in the beginning, I was too quick to move on to rather personal questions, I often provoked suspicion and was subtly prevented from asking further. People would say 'I knew the reason I did this' and subsequently keep quiet, a local way of indicating that further questions are not appreciated. We slowly realised that it was crucial to take sufficient time to get people to really understand the purpose of our study and specific questions. We also realised that it was crucial, in this context, to remind people about the confidentiality of interviews and prove our trustworthiness. For that reason, I was always quick to emphasise that I could not say anything about my discussions with other people when people asked me what I had found out so far. This helped to convince people that they could indeed trust me with personal matters. Through taking more time and winning people's trust, we slowly started to have more fruitful interviews.

My return to the field in 2021 had a great impact on the data I was able to collect. After I had left, I continued to stay in touch with people in various ways. I sent all my focus families some money for Christmas, kept paying condolence fees for burials, continued to respond to more ad hoc requests for support and regularly chatted on social media with several people. The fact that I kept in touch with them while at home in Europe, in combination with my return, seemed to have convinced people that I was truly concerned about them – a proper *umulebe* indeed. After my return, people were willing to share much more personal information with me than they had done earlier. It is hard to say what brought about this change. As people appreciated my dedication to them, some perhaps felt more inclined to help me with my project. Other people's lives had moved on in my absence and it made sense to them to provide an update on their life progress. A third factor might have been the fact that I got 'married' in the meantime.[16] This was something people recognised as a logical move for a man

[15] I also carried out a few focus group discussions, but I did not find these very insightful for the same reason.
[16] Juul and I did not formally marry, but were locally considered to be married.

of my age and made some people realise that I was more familiar to their lifestyles than they thought. With that in mind, some perhaps felt more assured that it was truly possible for me to understand their lives properly, and talking to me was not a waste of time. It was also helpful that I analysed substantial parts of my material and became more familiar with the literature on schooling and social change between my fieldwork periods. When I returned to the field, I came with a clearer set of research questions and had a clearer overview of the kinds of data I still needed to be able to fully answer these questions. My knowledge of the literature helped me to see things I had not seen before, for example the connection between football and schooling, and also helped me to ask follow-up questions that provoked more lively conversations. All these things greatly improved the quality of my interactions with people during the second period of fieldwork.

In addition to engaging with the focus families and the community I lived with, I also collected data in schools and on social media. I spent two weeks in a primary school and two weeks in a secondary school – combining participant observations in classrooms with interviews with students and teachers – to develop a basic understanding of the way in which schools work in the area. How schooling is made sense of outside the school gates, the focus of this thesis, is of course based, partially at least, on what happens in schools. How one manifests a 'schooled' identity in the community is indeed shaped by experiences in school, and so is the way in which schooled people engage with village organisations. To fully answer my research questions, I thus felt that I needed a basic understanding of what goes on in schools too. Furthermore, I also felt that I could not ignore the online lives of the people I studied. Many people in Bunyafa, especially those with experience in school, now have access to social media. WhatsApp and Facebook have become important aspects of village life. They shape relationships between people and are an important place in which young people share their views, ideas and build identities. I refer to online conversations and observations in various places in this thesis (especially in Part 3) and this attests to the fact that these observations also had an important bearing on my understanding of life in Bunyafa.

The survey

Halfway through my first year in the field, in February 2021, I carried out an extensive household survey. Surveys are sometimes used in ethnographic projects (Madrigal [1998] 2012), but their use is typically limited to describing key features of the research area and its people (see for example Jones 2008; Ravalde 2017). In this project, however, survey data were not merely used for descriptive purposes, but formed an integral part of the process of ethnographic inquiry, analysis and triangulation. The timing of the survey derives from this methodological approach. Carrying out the survey halfway through my fieldwork allowed me to use the statistical data to assess the wider extent

and typicality of important phenomena in the wider area, initially encountered in the case studies, and also to further explore any surprising survey data through interviews and other qualitative engagements during the second half of fieldwork. The arguments I develop in this thesis are the result of a simultaneous analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data and I tried as much as possible to embed my arguments in both types of data throughout.[17]

My choice to incorporate quantitative data in this way follows the example of Heald (1998), who had done the last ethnography about the Bagisu, and is further informed by a number of specific considerations. Firstly, as Mitchell (1979) rightly pointed out, quantitative data can be of great benefit to ethnographic research on social change. By systematically collecting data at, or about, different moments in time through a survey, one can obtain a reliable insight into how things have changed over time. The survey data, for example, helped me to see how people's levels of education and educational investments had changed over time, but also provided insights into broader social developments, such as how marriage patterns had changed. And so as Robinson-Pant (2023) argues, what education (both formal and informal) does in a particular locality may be shaped by the way in which it ties into broader transformations; in other words social change may produce education as much as the other way around. Getting a grasp of broader transformations through survey data, then, helped me to see how school practices feed into, and are shaped by, wider changes, such as the decline of bridewealth (Chapter 5) or increasing levels of male disengagement from the nuclear family (see Chapter 6). Survey data opened up new and important lines of enquiry that a purely qualitative analysis might have left unexplored.

Secondly, ethnographic fieldwork as a method of data collection gains much of its strength from the fact that it allows for the triangulation of testimonial and observational evidence – the ethnographer has access both to what people say they do and what they actually do, and they can embed their arguments in both types of data. However, certain social practices, including the way in which people deal with decisions about schooling, are not very accessible for observation. For example when does one see the way in which two parents negotiate over the payments of school fees within a specific home? Through interview testimonies, the anthropologist may get information about such practices, but these are, of course, subject to a specific kind of politics of speech and might, when analysed in a vacuum, lack reliability (Jackson 2011). An ethnographic study of such social practices can therefore benefit from the integration of other data, such as experimental games, as Jackson (2011) proposed,

[17] While I managed to do this for some arguments, I did not achieve such triangulation everywhere. Some of the qualitative encounters that revealed important dynamics took place after I had finished the survey and so could not be described or tested statistically. I also only found out about some of the survey data patterns after I had finally returned from the field.

or surveys, in which the relationship between interviewer and interviewed is of a different kind. When this is done, a degree of triangulation is achieved, anecdotal evidence is not left in a vacuum and the analysis becomes more reliable.

Finally, as an anthropologist I aim to describe social, cultural, political and economic mechanisms that inform, and produce, people's everyday actions and speech. Such generative mechanisms, as Bhaskar would call them (Bhaskar 1975; 1979; Danermark et al. 2002), have a particular way of functioning – they have causal powers and capabilities that, in interaction with other mechanisms, cause speech, acts and events in specific conditions, which anthropologists are able to observe and record, and are capable of describing through various techniques of qualitative inquiry. But while anthropologists may be able to unravel, on the basis of case studies, how such mechanisms operate under specific conditions, it remains difficult to say something about the frequency with which certain mechanisms and conditions combine to produce specific acts or speech. Such quantitative generalisations, needed by anthropologists to assess the scope of the social issues they are studying, require the systematic study of a larger number of cases, ideally randomly selected (see also Heald 1998).

The survey, carried out with the help of a team of Field Lab enumerators, included 246 individuals from all four parishes in Bunyafa sub-county, randomly selected through a multi-stage cluster sampling strategy. More information on the process of quantitative data collection, the survey itself, and summary statistics are provided in Appendix 1. I wish to limit my discussion of the survey here to an introduction of the different sub-samples, as these will be referred to throughout the chapters to come. The statistical inquiries in this thesis move between three different samples, depending on the research question addressed. First, **the ego-sample** (N=246), consisting of all selected respondents. Second, **the sibling-sample** (N=359)**,** consisting of both participants and any of their siblings who met certain criteria (they were aged between 25 and 45 years and still alive; the sample only included siblings who were less than five years older or younger than the actual survey participant).[18] Third, **the children-sample** (N=388)**,** containing all children of the survey participants who met certain criteria (the child is not in school, is older than 14 years, is currently still alive, and the participant knew their highest education obtained).[19] The samples were obtained through asking participants not only about

[18] The age range was applied so that it is reasonable to assume that all people in the sibling-sample are no longer in secondary school (so that educational careers become comparable) and all people went to school in the relatively recent past. Note that I did not ask for the age of siblings, but only if they were more or less than 5 years older/younger than the participant. Combining this information together with the recorded age of the participant made it possible to determine whether a sibling potentially did not meet the criterion of being aged between 25 and 45. In case there was a possibility of a sibling not meeting this criterion, they were excluded (this was the case, for example, for all siblings who were recorded to be 5 years older or younger than the participant).
[19] If a child's age was unknown by the participant, they were not excluded from the sample if they met all the other criteria (for these children were more likely to be older children and, therefore, meet the age criterion).

their own lives, but also about those of their siblings and children. I chose to work with different samples to be able to make more reliable estimates of educational opportunities in the Bunyafa area and to be able to analyse sibling effects.[20]

Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into three parts. **Part one – The person –** explores how schooled personhood is shaped by historical context and the ways in which schooling is incorporated in Gisu society. The first chapter introduces the people and the area in more detail, and discusses a number of features of Gisu society that subsequent chapters will draw upon as they continue to explore how aspects of schooling, including schooled personhood, are refracted through Gisu socio-cultural principles. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of schooling in Uganda and Bunyafa, and demonstrates how this history continues to shape what it means to be schooled in this area. Chapter 3 argues that schooled personhood, in the Gisu context, is associated with, and performed through, the expression of self-control. The quality of self-control is strongly associated with manhood and authority in Gisu society, a connection that finds expression in the group's most important ritual, that of male circumcision. The chapter attempts to explain why self-control has come to be associated with being schooled and, in doing so, demonstrates how schooled personhood is culturally shaped. Chapter 4 continues to explore the implications of schooling being associated with self-control in relation to gender symbolism. Schooling for girls means that girls and women can perform self-control. It therefore explores whether schooling, in the Gisu context, undermines the symbolism of patriarchy and works to empower women, symbolically, as it 'degenders' the quality of self-control.

Part 2 – The family – analyses the way in which schooling has changed social relations within the domestic group. The first chapter of this part, Chapter5, analyses the way in which schooling interferes with the making of marriages. The chapter focusses on three aspects of marriage making – timing, partnering and prestations – and provides several examples of surprising interactions between schooling and Gisu socio-cultural marriage principles. Chapter 6 is then concerned with marriage relations. It deals with the way in which schooling became incorporated into the Gisu conjugal contract,

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We asked questions about all the children of each participant unless they had more than 8 children. In that case questions were asked for either the first 8 children, or the first born and last 8 children. For participants in this category, it was randomly determined which set of children they would be questioned about.

[20] The educational careers of just the survey participants (all currently living in Bunyafa) do not give a good estimation of one's chances to succeed in school. Indeed, those who were born in Bunyafa and did do well in school are more likely to have left the region because higher education is associated with migration. Educational opportunities can, therefore, better be assessed by collecting data about the educational careers of participants' children or their siblings. Furthermore, as individuals' educational opportunities are contingent upon the presence and performance of siblings, information about the educational career of sibling sets is necessary to take these sibling-effects into account.

and shows how schooling lies at the heart of a feedback loop between matrifocality and male disengagement, deepening the crisis of masculinity that has taken root in Gisu society. Chapter 7 demonstrates that fathers interpret investment in schooling as an alternative way to set up their sons for adulthood, a responsibility that used to centre around the provision of a plot of land. This particular interpretation of one aspect of schooling (the payment of school fees) produces a reconfiguration of intergenerational relations because it affects both how parents invest in the schooling of different children and the way in which land access is negotiated, intergenerationally.

Part 3 – The community – analyses how schooling reconfigures social relationships within the community through schooled people's activities in the village and their involvement in community organisations. Chapter 8 is concerned with a new network of social relationships, created through football. Football has recently become enormously popular in Bunyafa and brings numerous people into contact with each other. The sport is an important aspect of community life and its popularity is directly related to schooling. People who play football are almost exclusively school-going youth and youth who aspire to continue with schooling in the near future. This chapter describes the sport in the area, and discusses the role football plays in the lives of schooled youth. Chapter 9 focusses on schooled adults and demonstrates how they are increasingly central figures within the community, because 1) they tend to get drawn into a range of community work, 2) their social media access provides them with privileged access to networks, news and information, and 3) schooled people set up their own community organisations. Some of the implications of this, for example that schooled people have increased chances of making a career in the village, are also discussed.

Part 1: The person

1. Place, people and patriarchal principles

Much of this thesis is about how schooling interacts with crucial features of Gisu society, gets refracted through such interactions and, as part of the same process, produces social changes. I begin, therefore, by introducing a number of crucial aspects of Gisu society that I will continue to refer to in subsequent chapters. After providing a general introduction to the people and the area, this chapter zooms in on two important and interrelated aspects of Gisu society: patriliny and patriarchy. It then moves from the societal level to that of the individual as I introduce several Gisu assumptions about male and female bodies that underly the patriarchal nature of society. I will argue that the justification of male superiority in Gisu society rests on a presumed difference in the extent to which men and women can control themselves, a difference that stems from gendered assumptions about their bodies. The theme of gendered self-control plays an important role in the first part of the thesis and, while introduced in this chapter, will be worked out in greater detail in subsequent ones.

The people and the area

The Bagisu are agnatically organised according to a pyramidal structure of patrilineal kinship layers that starts with Masaba, a mythical figure to which all Bagisu claim descent.[21] Masaba's sons – Mwambu (or Gisu[22]), Wanale and Mubuya – are the founders of the first layer and they are associated with the division of the area into the northern, southern and central sections.[23] Masaba's grandsons further divide the Bagisu into a series of subgroups that make up the third layer. These used to be the group's major clans[24] (*khyika, pl. bika*), associated with different sub-counties (La Fontaine 1960, 264), but this parallel is no longer as neat as it used to be as a consequence of the government's decentralisation policy and population growth.[25] New clans have been formed, typically around the

[21] The Bagisu are also referred to as 'Bamasaba' – people of Masaba. Stories about Masaba's origin differ (see Were 1982), but the most popular version has it that Masaba was the son of Mundu and Seera, born on Mt. Elgon. While his brother Kundu moved towards the lowlands around Kampala and came to be the first Muganda, now commonly referred to as 'Kintu', Masaba settled on the mountain and became the father of all Bagisu (see for example Mukhwana 2021; Namayanja 2013).

[22] Gisu myths suggest that Mwambu was given the nickname 'Mugisu' by the Masai. Mugisu means 'bull' in the language of the Masai. After Masai stole his cattle, Mwambu followed the raiders personally, caught them and regained his cattle. The Masai felt Mwabu's courage resembled that of a bull, and so they kept referring to him as 'Mugisu'. There is a discussion going on in the Gisu region about the ethnic group's preferred name. Most people prefer 'Bamasaba' because it is more inclusive than 'Bagisu'. Technically, 'Bagisu' refers to the people of only one of Masaba's sons (Mwambu) and therefore excludes those sections of the ethnic group that descend from Mwambu's brothers.

[23] The political structure of Inzu ye Bamasaba, the organisation that manages Gisu cultural affairs, centres around these three sections. The different sections deliver the Umukuka, the Bagisu king, in turn.

[24] Today, these old clans are sometimes referred to as the 'greater clans', but have little political meaning.

[25] The Ugandan government adopted a decentralisation policy in 1992 and has subsequently divided sub-counties into various smaller units. During my fieldwork, the sub-county of Bunyafa, of which Bukiiti parish was a part, was divided into different segments. Bukiiti parish became a town council with its own administration.

person who opened up an area for cultivation and settled there, which, in some cases, happened to be a woman.[26] By implication, these people must be related to Masaba's grandsons – hence forming a fourth kinship layer – but people are usually unable to spell out this connection. People are also not able to do this for their own connection to the founder of their clan, who, in most cases, seemed to be at least three generations away from the oldest generation alive. Clans are thus relatively big and, for that reason, sometimes further subdivided into lineage groups. These usually centre around particular descendants of the clan's common ancestor and make up the lowest kinship order. The clan and the lineage group are important political networks in the village.

The Gisu region as a whole is relatively poor, with 43 percent of the population living below the national poverty line.[27] However, people in the middle lands and highlands are somewhat better off as their climate allows for coffee cultivation, a fairly lucrative crop that does not require much labour.[28] Coffee is the most important crop for most households in Bunyafa, generating a lump sum income once a year. Matoke and sweet banana are two perennial food crops that people occasionally sell to cover daily expenditures. In addition to these, people farm a variety of seasonal food crops such as maize, beans, sweet potato, casava and millet – mostly for home consumption. Maize is the main staple crop and is harvested twice a year; at the end of the main season (between March and June) and the second season (between July and November).[29] Families who have their farms near a small stream often enjoy the benefits of cultivating horticultural crops, typically grown for the market. Cattle are kept but without grazing, as there are no large uncultivated grazing areas available in Bugisu's middle and highlands.[30] In the ego-sample, approximately one half of the people had at least one head of cattle, but no household had more than eight.[31]

[26] Clans named after women are not the result of woman-marriage (see Greene 1998) as bridewealth payment does not transfer rights in *gentricem* in the Gisu context. Further, clans are usually named after their founder, but not always. The Babikasa, for example, are the descendants of three men. One of these men asked the other two to stay around after they visited him. The clan name means "those who stay with visitors" and is thus associated with a story of origin rather than the name of a particular person.

[27] These data are derived from Uganda's Poverty Map Report, published in 2019 based on data from the 2016/17 National Household Survey (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2019b). The national poverty line is based on the estimated cost of meeting basic calorific requirements. The report shows that only the Karamoja region had a higher poverty incidence than the Gisu region.

[28] See Bunker (1987) for more details of the history of coffee in the Gisu region and the way in which farmers were able to successfully organise themselves in a cooperative union to get relatively good prices for their coffee.

[29] These two seasons are also applicable to most other food crops, though the timing of planting and harvesting differs slightly.

[30] Only in the lowlands does one find sufficient uncultivated land for people to be able to keep larger herds of cattle.

[31] 48 percent of the people surveyed had at least one head of cattle (either heifer, cow, ox, bull or calf). Indigenous cows were the most common type of cattle, and 30 percent of the people had at least one such animal.

Gisu society is both patrilineal and patrilocal, which means that a new couple set up their household in the vicinity of the man's father. A man cannot accommodate his wife in his father's house, so must have constructed (or rented) a place for himself and his wife before marriage. The typical household thus consists of two parents and their children, but it is not uncommon for such units to host a few extended family members. People live in square houses that are usually made of mud and poles, roofed with iron sheets and floored with earth and smeared cow dung (see Figure 4). Smaller houses of this kind have about two rooms (one sleeping room and a living room), but most houses have three to five rooms so that parents and children can sleep apart and teenagers may also have a room for themselves.[32] People usually cook in a more dilapidated structure attached to the house; toilets are private or shared pit latrines; and water is collected from a protected well. Larger colonial style brick buildings are increasingly a feature of rural Bugisu too, though many are still under construction.[33] These are typically built by successful grown-up children who live in Mbale or another town. While such houses are typically too expensive for ordinary villagers, many people hope to be able to construct such a house with the help of educated children at some point in the future.

Figure 4. Example of a house in the Gisu region

[32] 55 percent had three to five rooms; 32 percent had two or less; no one had more than eight rooms.
[33] 81 percent of the surveyed people who lived in an owned house had a construction of mud and poles; 12 percent had a construction of fired bricks with cement or cement blocks.

With high population density being a feature of the Gisu area, agricultural land is extremely scarce. Not a single bit of land is left uncultivated in the area and conflicts over land have been common for a long time, reflecting both the asset's importance and its scarcity (Heald 1998; La Fontaine 1967a). Destructive rainfalls, associated with climate change, have in more recent years led to floods and soil erosion, and have presumably worsened people's access to land in certain areas (Terry 2011), while the establishment of the national park in 1993 brought an end to the extension of agricultural activity further up the mountain (Kituyi 2007, 12; Norgrove and Hulme 2006). When these developments are considered together with the fact of ongoing population growth – people in the ego-sample had on average 5.2 children – it seems most likely that land scarcity has increased over the years and people do indeed own very little land today. Recent studies in the region show that the average household in the area has not much more than about 1.5 acres of land (Norgrove and Hulme 2006, 1100; Verschoor, D'Exelle, and Perez-Viana 2016, 137)[34]. The little land people own often consists of several small plots, because a system of patrilineal land inheritance that I describe below has resulted in considerable land fragmentation; the ego-sample data show that households in Bunyafa had 2.9 different plots on average with 25 percent having 3 plots or more (see also Goldman and Heldenbrand 2002, 54). Average soil fertility is also likely to have decreased in the area, because when little land is owned, there are limited possibilities to leave parts uncultivated to preserve soil fertility (fallowing) (Goldman and Heldenbrand 2002).

Governmental administration consists of three levels in Bunyafa and provides positions of authority to people in the area. The sub-county as a whole is governed by a government-appointed sub-county chief, who is responsible for the overall administration and coordination of government programs. The sub-county chief, as well as his staff members, such as the Extension Officer or the Community Development Officer are often based in Mbale and travel to work in the area. The sub-county Chief collaborates with an elected council that is headed by a chair, a person of considerable reputation in a particular locality. The council consists of members who represent different groups, such as parish representatives and representatives of people with disabilities. Some seats are reserved for women only.[35] The parish is the level of administration below the sub-country, but is of little significance. The government appointed parish chiefs mainly assist the sub-county chief with the carrying out of government programs, while the parish chairperson tends to be rather invisible in Bunyafa. At the time I arrived, Bunyafa had four parishes with about 5 to 10 villages (or sub-parishes) per parish. These

[34] The study by Goldman and Heldenbrand (2002) reports a slightly higher number of acres per household (2.2). This is most likely because their survey included households in the lowland regions of Mbale district, which are known to be slightly less densely populated than the middle and highlands.

[35] This council is referred to as the Local Council 3 (LC3) and its chairperson is the LC3 chairperson. Lower level of governance become the LC2 level and the LC1 level. I avoid these terms in the rest of the thesis to make the meaning of the position clearer.

villages, which usually consist of about 50 to 100 households, make up the lowest administrative level in Uganda. Villages are governed by an elected village council, consisting of 9 members and the village chairperson, whereby a number of seats are again reserved for women only. While the Village Council as a whole is rather inactive, its chairperson is seen as the head of the village and involved in pretty much everything that is going on in the village – from settling land conflicts to the distribution of governmental funds among beneficiaries. The village chairperson is directly elected and therefore usually well-known and respected by other villages.

In addition to the various government councils and positions that make up the government in the area, there are a range of other organisations through which people engage with each other at the community level and some are able to develop a political career. The clan is an important one among these. Clans are in charge of organising burials, form public courts in case a clan member is suspected of a crime, settle land issues and organise cultural events (of which the male circumcision ritual is by far the most important). The clan and the lineage are bureaucratised networks; there is an administration at both levels comprising of an elected committee and a chairperson (*umukuka*, pl. *bakuka*). Whether the lineage or the clan is mobilised depends on the issue at hand; a case is brought to the clan level as soon as it concerns people of multiple lineages. Clan or lineage decisions are made collectively during meetings. Women belong to both their own clan and the clan of their husband (if bridewealth has been paid) and may participate in clan meetings on both sides. However, women usually play a marginal role in clan meetings and have no voting power, even if they do decide to attend, which they often do not. While lineage groups operate fairly independently from the overall clan administration, the latter is formally more powerful and may overrule lineage decisions.

The church and the mosque engage a somewhat modest number of people in Bunyafa and mainly women (in the case of the church). The Islamic community is relatively big in this sub-county compared to the rest of Uganda: about 40% of the people in my survey was Muslim. People said that this is the consequence of Saleh, a Muslim, being the first colonial administrator of the region (see Chapter 2).[36] The administrations of the Church and the Mosque provide a way for some villagers to make a name in the area. As imam or priest, as well as in various other roles associated to the church or mosque, people get opportunities to address the crowd during religious functions and burials, and to carry out development work in collaboration with religious NGOs. There are various churches and mosques in the area (see Figure 3 in the Introduction) and pretty much everybody adheres to a religion, most certainly those who like to be seen as 'schooled'. In Uganda, where schools were set up by the

[36] Among the people surveyed, 32% identified as Catholic, 18% as Anglican and 7% as Born Again.

missions, conforming to religious ideals is associated with a schooled identity, so religion is also used to demonstrate educatedness.

The theme of religion also emerged in various conversations about aspects of village life, such as the question of whether Muslims should circumcise their sons early (conform Islamic law) or when they come of age (conform Gisu tradition). Such dilemmas were often handled rather pragmatically, however, and did not cause much friction between groups of people. Nor were there much denominational tensions between people of different religious backgrounds. These observations reflect a broader point, which is that people in Bunyafa are relatively relaxed about religion compared to people of other societies in Uganda. People identify with a certain religion, and occasionally draw on religious books to criticise circumcision practices or alcohol consumption, but their daily life is far from absorbed by religious concerns. Attendance of religious functions, for example, was relatively low, especially among Christian men, who hardly went to church.[37]

One possible explanation for this is that most people in Bunyafa take great interest in their 'Gisu' culture – of which circumcision is the most explicit manifestation.[38] (cf. La Fontaine 1967b). People strongly identify as 'Gisu' and often prioritise their ethnic affiliation over their religious one. In line with this, most Muslims got circumcised when they came of age rather than as young children, that is, according to Gisu and not Islamic tradition: 75% of the Muslims in my ego-sample were 12 years or older when they underwent circumcision. People's orientation towards their ethnicity is indeed strongly instigated and reinforced by the biennial circumcision season of *imbalu,* in which people take great interest. Circumcision festivities, taking places from August to December, engage a great number of people and brings home kin from all other parts of the country. Around the time that initiates of a certain area are going to be circumcised, roads are packed with crowds who came to witness the event and groups of people dancing around specific initiates. While the event is obviously male centric, the event does engage women too, both in ritual roles and more generally. It is said that girls cannot resist to dance when the circumcision tune is played by the local drum bands and so men and women dance together during the circumcision festivities. Circumcision mobilises entire areas and is by far the most significant public event in Bunyafa, as well as the other areas in the Gisu region.

Burials bring together large crowds of people and function as platforms for local and national politicians, as well as religious leaders, to address people and gain support. Rotating saving groups

[37] Bunyafa seems not exceptional when it comes to the role of religion in people's lives. A number of Ugandan people from different ethnic groups who spent time in the wider Gisu area told me they had observed a more relaxed attitude towards religion among the Bagisu compared to their own society.

[38] It was not uncommon for people to prioritise cultural activities over religious ones and a few people even criticised religion for spoiling culture.

(known as ROSCAs in academic literature) – often set up by NGOs – are common and are an important aspect of village life too. Such groups come together regularly to receive and distribute savings. Saving groups vary in terms of size, gender of participants, whether or not they are associated to an NGO and, importantly, the amount of money that is contributed. I did not record people's participation in saving groups, but my impression is that the large majority of the people are a member of at least one group, while many are part of multiple groups. ROSCAs are particularly popular among women and people's tendency to save is also driven by the need to pay school fees. Football is an extremely popular leisure activity – every afternoon one finds young men (and increasingly women) on their way to local pitches to practise or play matches (see Chapter 8). Tournaments are played at specific times of the year and major matches attract considerable crowds. The organisation of tournaments and the management of teams brings people together as well.

Involvement in village organisations like the clan, church and savings groups, as well as regular events like burials, circumcision and football matches, provide some ad hoc income for some villagers, especially those in administrative functions. In addition to these ad hoc sources of income and agriculture, a varied set of activities make up economic life in the village. People get involved in a range of gendered businesses to diversify their income sources, occasionally with the help of a microfinance loan. Examples of such businesses are brewing and selling local alcoholic drinks (Kamalwra or Warangi), and repairing or selling (second hand) clothes (done by women); constructing houses and selling petrol to local motorcycle taxis (done by men); and trading in coffee, matoke or horticultural crops (both). Driving a motorcycle taxi to carry people from and too Mbale and selling chapati (a kind of pancake that is eaten throughout the day), are popular occupations among younger men. Richer villagers can engage themselves in more sophisticated businesses such as having shops at a trading centre, a video hall or a pool table. Schools, hospitals and the local government provide employment opportunities for some villagers, especially educated ones, but the more high-end jobs in these organisations tend to be occupied by university graduates living in town. The occasional NGO project also contributes to wealth creation in the area and provides more ad hoc employment opportunities to educated villagers.

Patriliny and patriarchy

Gisu society is patrilineal and patriarchal, and social life is strongly organised around these two principles. As Heald (1998 Chapter 9) noted before me, ensuring the continuation of the patrilineage is essential to a man's life. His responsibility to do so is strongly emphasised in the circumcision ritual and everyday talk. Two days before circumcision takes place, boys must pass through an ancestral shrine (*lisengiro*, pl. *kamasengiro*) to ask for the approval of the ancestors. Each lineage has its own ancestral shrine and ancestors will not approve the circumcision of a boy if he is not the biological son

of his father – that is, asking for permission in the right place. Circumcision is about a son going through exactly the same procedure as his father. During the washing ceremony (*khusabisa*), which takes place the day after a boy is circumcised, the circumciser (*umukhebi*) gives the initiate the knife that was used for the operation and notes: "the knife I give you is what circumcised you. And what circumcised your father. And it has come back to circumcise you. And when you have a son, it will circumcise your son." Producing a son is important indeed and social discontent awaits the couple that delays or struggles to do so. One woman recalled the disappointment of her in-laws after she gave birth to her fourth daughter – 'still no heir' her husband's sister commented on the occasion. And a woman who has had several girls in a row can expect her husband to try his luck with another woman, I was told several times.

Patrilineal continuity is linked to the accumulation of wealth in Gisu society, a pattern one young man expressed particularly well when he reminded me that: "it is not good to be there without a [male] child. You can have wealth, but wealth needs an heir." A system of pre-mortem patrilineal land inheritance underlies this connection between the patriliny and wealth. Traditionally, Gisu fathers must give their sons a piece of land as soon as they claim to be ready for marriage, so that they will be able to care for themselves, their wife and future children (Heald 1998; La Fontaine 1967a). Sons, in turn, are encouraged to work hard throughout their life so that they accumulate more land and can provide their own sons with a satisfactory plot in the future. This system facilitates the expansion of the clan in terms of both people and wealth because of the particular way in which land ownership works in the Gisu context. Land that is bought by an individual is considered private land in Gisu society and fully owned by the buyer. Such land will become clan land, however, as soon as it is inherited. It then continues to be used by the individual that inherited the plot but cannot be sold without the permission of the clan. A man who managed to accumulate land throughout his life thus also contributes to the expansion of patrilineal wealth, because his private land becomes clan land the moment it is passed on to his sons.

Before the spread of education and the rise of both labour market and business opportunities, when farming was pretty much the only source of income available to villagers, a father had to provide sons with both a plot of land to live on and one to cultivate. Under the condition of extreme land pressure, this system has instigated considerable intergenerational tensions and conflict in Gisu society, a problem that has attracted notable anthropological interest (Heald 1998; Kituyi 2007; La Fontaine 1967a). As the reputation of all men used to depend highly on their access to land, fathers tended to delay and limit the passing on of land, while sons would rather opt for a quick receipt of a good plot. This conflict of interests underlay, according to Heald (1998), the extraordinarily high levels of inter-generational violence she observed in the area in the 1960s. Today, fathers have a wider range of

options or assets available to set their sons up for adult life, such as 'education' or 'business capital' (see also Chapter 7). They must still provide their sons with a small piece of land on which they can build a house when a son claims to be ready to do so, but do not need to provide land for cultivation. Intergenerational violence has reduced with this arrival of new ways to provide for sons, but the system of patrilineal inheritance and conflicting interests between fathers and sons remains an important feature of Gisu society, as will become clear at several points in this thesis.

When it comes to obtaining wealth to pass on to sons, individual men are left to their own initiatives. There is little collaboration between men in Gisu society, nor does a man derive much status from being associated with another man of respect. Each man is expected to develop his own household(s) and the extent to which he achieves this attests to his potential as a man (Heald 1998). 'Being born poor is not a choice, but dying poor is' is a popular saying and reflects Gisu tendencies to downgrade the importance of luck and emphasise men's responsibility for their own life. In the Gisu context, individual men thus compete with each other over resources – land, women and increasingly money – and they are encouraged to work at accumulating such resources, but in a context characterised by scarcity (c.f. Kituyi 2007) and little solidarity between men. This has given rise to high levels of violence between men, often combined with witchcraft (*liloko*) accusations (Heald 1986; Kituyi 2007; La Fontaine 1964;), and may partially explain why levels of trust are considerably lower in the Gisu area than in other areas of Uganda (Widner and Mundt 1998, 6). Appreciating these features also helps to explain why so much emphasis is put on the importance of male 'self-control', a phenomenon I return to in the next section.

Scarcity is, however, not the only challenge to the realisation of proper patrilineal continuity. A second concern centres around the position of women. With clans being exogamous, men depend on women from other clans for the reproduction of their patrilineage and Gisu marriage follows the common system of exchange of women and bridewealth between patrilineal descent groups.[39] However, while affinal connections between kin groups are highly valued and maintained through rituals that involve both parties[40], marriages are arranged by the couple themselves and tend to be rather unstable: 51 percent of men's first marriages ended in divorce and so did 33 percent of their second marriages (ego-sample data).[41] Such marital instability is partly the result of women's relative freedom to divorce. In

[39] Note that marriages between members of different lineages within clans do sometimes take place, but these do not go uncontested.

[40] For example, a boy's mother's brother plays a crucial role in circumcision and *likumba* is paid when a married person dies. *Likumba* literally means 'bone' and refers to a payment (usually a goat or cow) made by the deceased's kin to their in-laws with a view to avoid a weakening of the affinal connection which might arise due to a death.

[41] This is by no means a recent phenomenon (see Heald 1998; La Fontaine 1962), but a number of developments may have contributed to increased instability. I discuss those in more detail in Chapter 6.

Gisu society, women are entitled to divorce at any time and few social barriers prevent them from doing so. Women's relative freedom to divorce derives from women remaining strongly connected to their natal homes throughout their lives. They can find in their parents' home a place they can return to during or after marriage at all times.[42] Furthermore, bridewealth, to be received by a woman's kinsmen, is usually paid after she has given birth to children, but does not have to be repaid if the divorcing woman has given birth. Hence a woman does not put her kinsman in great trouble if she divorces.[43] Polygamy is common in the area, albeit often in a manner leaning towards serial monogamy because of marital instability: 16 percent of the men were married to multiple wives at the time the survey was conducted, and half of the men had married more than one wife over the course of their life.

So, while patrilineal reproduction requires women from other kinsmen, women are granted considerable marital freedom in Gisu society. In a context where so much emphasis is put on the continuation of the patrilineage, such female autonomy poses a considerable threat to the social system (Douglas 1966). In Gisu society this threat is neither legally fixed – for bridewealth transfers rights in *uxorem*, but not in *genetricem* – nor dealt with through strict sex taboos, of which the Bagisu know few. Rather, the way in which women's behaviour is sought to be controlled is through male force, facilitated by strong patriarchal norms. It is through such patriarchal norms that men gain a degree of control over women, particularly in marriage, and adultery is sought to be prevented.

Notwithstanding the various informal means women have at their disposal to exercise power over men (Jackson 2013; Verschoor 2008), the formal Gisu gender view emphasises men's superiority over women. This rather strong gender hierarchy manifests itself in various social principles: women have to kneel down when they greet men; chairs are reserved for men only, women sit on the floor; only men eat in the living room, women eat in the kitchen; and chicken, a local delicacy, can only be eaten by men. Furthermore, women are excluded from public decision-making and although they are recognised as clan members they are not given voting power if clan decisions are to be made. Their capacities are downgraded by men: they are said to be impatient, weak-hearted and incapable of making decisions like men. Marriage by capture is not uncommon and men are considered to have full rights over a woman's body in marriage. During a discussion with Zam about marriage relations, she mentioned that "a man's wife is considered part of his furniture. When the woman denies the man

[42] Women are subject to the spiritual powers of their natal ancestors; no son inherits a father's house, because his place must remain available for married daughters to come back to.

[43] Heald (1998) reports that bridewealth did have to be repaid in the 1960s which is in line with the memory of some of the elders in Bunyafa. But this no longer happens today. Some elders said that this changed because of a different mindset: people came to realise that a woman contributes wealth to her husband's home through labour and children, which is left unappreciated if bridewealth is expected to be repaid.

access to things of the bedroom, that could be a very big reason for the man to quarrel". The inferior status of women also finds expression in gender symbolism. For example, the right arm is called the good arm or the male arm (*kumukhono kumulayi/kumuseza*) while the left arm is called the bad arm or the female arm (*kumukhono kumubi/kumukhasi*).

Physical force in the form of violence against one's wife has been common and used to be uncontested. Nabukwasi, an elderly woman, recalled during an interview about the history of marriage in the area that:

> Whenever you would be talking with a man, you had to be submissive. […] Those days, for example, the time when I was married, if a man woke up one morning and told you 'today I want you to be seated here the whole day' and you decide to move, and he comes back when you have moved away, he would beat you. **(16/08/2021)**[44]

The novel *Upon this Mountain,* written in 1989 by Professor Timothy Wangusa, a Gisu man himself, tells the circumcision story of three young men from a village in southern Bugisu, and provides similar evidence. The novel, used earlier as a source of ethnographic evidence by Heald (1999 Chapter 4), is full of phrases that suggest the use of violence against one's wife was accepted in Gisu society: "that there is your wife. Beat her up. Beat her more often than you have done in the past whenever you feel mad" ([1989] 2005, 29), said a father to the man who fought his son. Today, more and more people disapprove of such 'wife-beating', a change of discourse some women – including Nabukwasi – attribute to the female empowerment programmes implemented during Museveni's rule over the past decades. However, such violence does still take place and not all people have changed their view on this matter. At one point during my fieldwork, for example, I witnessed an older woman taking the side of a man who was beating up his wife, because the wife 'needs to listen'.[45]

Self-control: The basis of hierarchy

As in so many societies, self-control is the foundation of social distinction among the Bagisu (Abu-Lughod 1986; Elias [1939] 2000; Heald 1998; Irvine 1990; Mauss 1973) and men are seen to be better

[44] Throughout this thesis, I avoided editing quotes that were expressed in English as much as possible. Quotes that were initially expressed in Lugisu were translated into English. My translators were trained to translate as literally as possible (even if this implied the usage of irregular English words or sentence structures). When presenting quotes, I have sometimes edited original translations to enhance readability, but only if this was possible without changing the meaning of what was said. A footnote that indicates in which language the original quote was expressed is added to each quote. The original language of this quote was Lugisu.

[45] My analysis of intimate partner violence in Gisu society differs from Heald's, who suggested that 'wife-beating' takes place, but is highly disapproved of (Heald 1998, 101). Although I agree with Heald that women do sometimes defend themselves against a violent husband, and women can take their husband to court when his marital violence goes too far, I do think that a degree of violence against wives was and remains accepted by many.

able to control themselves than women. Thus, the underlying principle of patriarchy can be found in men's supposed superior capacity to control their emotions and body (La Fontaine 1985, 125), a superiority that is made manifest in the ritual of circumcision. Male initiation into adulthood centres around the ritual cutting of the foreskin, an operation men undergo in public, without anaesthesia, and while they must stand absolutely still. Even the smallest change in expression is easily interpreted as a sign of fear or pain and must thus be avoided during the operation. Capacity for self-control – displayed during the ordeal – is what defines a man and puts him socially above women, who are, as opposed to men, said to be weak-hearted and impatient. Women are believed to be incapable of controlling their emotions like strong-hearted men, quicker to succumb to envy and gossip about their fellow women, and they are sometimes referred to as babies (*batoro,* sing: *umutoro)*. They are, for that reason, not given voting power at clan meetings and usually not given much opportunity to participate in village meetings at all – these are the domain of circumcised men only.

The presumed difference between men and women in terms of capacity for self-control stems from two gendered qualities in particular, appreciation of which makes the symbolism of circumcision intelligible. Men possess the quality of '*lirima'*, which, at this point of the thesis, might be thought of as something similar to the emotion 'anger'. According to the Bagisu, it is thanks to the quality of *lirima* that men can achieve greater strength of purpose, focus and determination – mental states that in turn facilitate greater self-control. Circumcision marks the moment a man demonstrates his possession of this quality, his control over it, and makes manifest the association between this quality and manhood. Womanhood, on the contrary, is strongly associated with 'sexuality' and, consistently, people's perceptions of what it means to become a woman tend to emphasise the development of sexual interest. This development is believed to ultimately culminate in the menarche, an event that emphasises the sexuality of women, and a young woman is often said to lack control over her sexual drive. In Chapter 4 I develop a symbolic analysis of both circumcision and the menarche which will clarify these points in greater detail. Here I merely wish to point out that, in the Gisu context, the capacity for self-control is gendered because of particular qualities that are associated with being male and female: while the possession of *lirima* helps men to achieve self-control, the association between women and sexuality is typically taken as evidence of women's lesser control over the natural passions.

A few extra words, however, need to be spent on circumcision here because the ordeal demonstrates the rather specific way in which self-control can be achieved in the eyes of the Bagisu, a view that will be drawn upon in Chapter 3. Several detailed descriptions and interpretations of circumcision have been provided by different authors. *The Power of Culture and Identity* (2018), written by Wotsuna Khamalwa, an anthropologist of Gisu origin, provides, to my best knowledge, the most sophisticated and up to date overview of the different ways in which the ritual is performed in different areas. Other,

albeit less recent, descriptions and interpretations of the ritual can be found in the works of Broun (1910), Roscoe ([1909] 1915; 2005), La Fontaine (1985), Heald (1998; 1999) and Manana (1996). With such extensive descriptions of the ritual already available in the literature, I have moved my own account of the procedure, as observed during the 2020 season, to the Appendix, and limit my discussion of the ritual in the text to those aspects of the ordeal that are crucial to the development of my arguments. Hence, for a detailed description of Gisu male circumcision, I refer the reader to Appendix 3 or the publications mentioned.

In order to achieve the kind of self-control required to manage circumcision successfully – that is, face the knife without any expression of fear or pain – the importance of 'strength of purpose' is emphasised. According to the general Gisu view on circumcision, it is through an extreme focus on the purpose of the ordeal – becoming a man – that one may forget about the pain and fear that may otherwise interrupt one's performance under the knife. Strength of purpose is thus continuously evaluated and encouraged in the weeks prior to the operation and its importance is engrained in the ritual procedures. For example, a boy must take the initiative to undergo the ordeal himself and his desire to do so must come from his heart, the organ associated with people's most fundamental passions. The dances of boys during the ritual involve intense and deliberate stamping on the floor and are seen to be a way to demonstrate a desire to get circumcised. And nearer the time of the operation, elders keep emphasising that circumcision is the only thing that should matter to the initiate at this point. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, it is men's possession of the quality of *lirima* that helps them to achieve the strength of purpose required to manage circumcision. *Lirima*, while considered dangerous when uncontrolled, is valued for its capacity to generate focus and circumcision is seen as an evaluation of men's capacity to control *lirima* – that is, whether they are able to use *lirima* to generate focus.

The way in which *lirima* is seen to develop in men, and sexuality in women, has implication for patterns of gerontocracy. Circumcision marks the moment in which men demonstrate the possession of *lirima* – the quality through which self-control can be achieved – and no subsequent event that marks a further development of this quality exists. Hence, unlike, for example, the Alwad 'Ali of Northern Egypt, an ethnic group that equally emphasises men's superior capacity for self-control (Abu-Lughod 1986), the Bagisu do not believe such capacity is achieved in several stages over a man's lifetime. While elders must be respected for a variety of reasons and find themselves in a privileged position to gain respect in the community (see for example La Fontaine 1967, 254; and Chapter 9), gerontocratic principles are not formalised in the form of an age-set system, nor given much emphasis. In fact, elder men can easily loose status and respect if most of their wealth has been taken over by their sons; there is nothing particular about their personhood that prevents this from happening (Heald 1986; 1998). Rather, what

the Bagisu emphasise is the way in which all men essentially become each other's equals after circumcision – 'you will be like your father' is commonly shouted at initiates during the ritual (see also Heald 1998, 72).

The development of women is, however, viewed differently. As Lamb (2000) has convincingly argued on the basis of ethnographic research in a rural Bengali village in India, gender – i.e. what it means to be a man and a woman in a specific society – is shaped by cultural interpretation of bodily attributes and beliefs about the bodies of the different sexes and, since bodies change over a life course, people's gender may change accordingly. While the Bagisu do not put as much emphasis on the bodily changes of women, and the implications of such changes for their gender, as the Bengali villagers in Lamb's study do, women's sexuality – the basis of their inferiority to men – is seen to change at old age. Elder women who are beyond their reproductive years and who have had their menopause are seen as less 'sexual', partially because they no longer bleed. That is not to say that the Bagisu believe such women entirely lose sexual appetite, but simply that they are no longer as strongly held in the grip of their sexuality. Older women also explicitly detach themselves from their sexuality. Several elder women were keen to tell me that they had left 'things of the world' behind, suggesting that they were no longer so interested in sex. Such dissociation between the female body and sexuality at older age gives, in a context in which control over the natural passions tends to reflect higher social status, rise to a gap of respect between younger and older women that is not seen among men.

This pattern is most clearly reflected in Gisu greeting principles. Since men have *lirima,* which renders them capable of enduring circumcision, they are superior to *all* women, and even an older woman may, therefore, kneel down when greeting a young man. A young man does not kneel down for an older man, because they are both circumcised and not different in terms of their capacity for self-control. But a young woman does tend to kneel down for an older woman, which reflects the latter's improved social status relative to the former. Thus, the principal social hierarchy arising from Gisu beliefs about variable capacities for self-control is between men and women; all men outrank women and there is no fundamental hierarchy between circumcised men. Yet, while socially placed below circumcised men, older women, somewhat estranged from the theme of sexuality, do outrank younger ones.

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Gisu society puts much emphasis on the importance of patrilineal continuity. Men depend on women's reproductive capacity when it comes to the achievement of such continuity. Yet women are relatively free to divorce, and their strong agnatic loyalties tend to undermine their affinal ones. The threat that this situation poses to patrilineal reproduction, I have suggested, drawing on Douglas (1966), is one

possible reason that so much emphasis is put on male superiority in Gisu society – for stronger patriarchal structures may help to control the acts of women. Gisu justifications of the patriarchal nature of society centre around the idea that men have a superior capacity for self-control because they possess the quality of *lirima*, a capacity they ultimately demonstrate during circumcision. Womanhood, on the contrary, is strongly associated with, and often defined in terms of, 'sexuality', and, reflecting women's presumed weaker capacity to control the self, they are sometimes referred to as 'weak-hearted', 'impatient' or 'babies'. Importantly, the chapter has introduced the idea that men and women are seen as individuals with a rather different capacity for self-control in Gisu thought. The next chapters, among other things, explore these views further and analyse how schooling has come to interfere with them.

2. The schooled person in historical perspective

In the previous chapter I referred to the way transitions into adulthood are gendered, with men expressing their superior capacity for self-control through the ritual of circumcision. The introduction of formal education marks, of course, a radical change in the way children are socialised into society, and it is therefore unsurprising that schooling is often seen to generate a new kind of adult.[46] This person, that is the schooled person, is associated with different qualities than those who have not gone to school and a specific range of behaviours and performances signal their educational background. Yet, as studies on the cultural production of the educated person have made clear (Foley 2010; Levinson, Douglas, and Holland 1996), the schooled person is far from a universal person. On the contrary, what it means to be schooled is shaped by the historical and cultural context in which people are being schooled, as well as the dynamics of class, race, ethnicity and gender with which the process of schooling intersects in a particular setting.

In this and the next chapter, I examine the production of the schooled person in Gisu society. In the next two sections I provide an overview of the history of schooling in Uganda, and in Bunyafa. I then discuss how these histories have shaped some of the qualities, orientations and interests which people associate with schooled personhood in Gisu society. I end the chapter with a note on my usage of the terms 'schooled' and 'unschooled'.

Formal education in Uganda

Formal education was introduced in Uganda by an Anglican mission from Britain (the Church Missionary Society [CMS]) and a Catholic one from France (the White Fathers) towards the end of the 19th century. The British mission arrived in 1877 and established their headquarters in Kampala, in the vicinity of Kabaka Muteesa I's palace (the Kabaka was the king of Buganda, a kingdom in central Uganda). The White Fathers, who followed two years later, did the same (Hansen 1984, 12; Ssekamwa 1997). By the time these missions arrived, Muslim traders with connections to the Sultanate of Zanzibar had already been present in Buganda. After a period of intense denominational tensions and conflicts following the arrival of the missions, the Christians emerged with much better political connections than the Muslims (Hansen 1984, 12–16; Ssekamwa 1997, 34–36). They subsequently started to spread across the country, establishing 'parishes' or 'missions' in various outskirts, with the collaboration of a following of mainly converted Baganda chiefs. Schools were usually part of these missions as people had to be able to read in order to get good access to the Bible. Educated Ugandans

[46] People were of course educated in some way or form before the advent of schools, but the way in which they are educated has changed radically with the introduction of formal education.

were also needed to further develop the colonial and missionary administrations that were set up at the time.

The British government, who had turned Uganda into its protectorate in 1894, did not have the means to engage in educational activities in the first two decades of colonial administration, so the missions established an educational monopoly (Hansen 1984, 224–25). In 1905, CMS opened Nabumali High, the first school in the Gisu region, located near the government's administrative post set up by Semei Kakungulu, the legendary Ugandan chief who opened up the east of Uganda for colonial administration (Twaddle 1993). Early educational activities centred around four main areas of work: expansion of primary education; training of catechists and teachers; technical training of craftsmen; and the education of sons of chiefs (who would later become chiefs themselves) and of young people who were then to be employed at lower levels of the colonial administration (Hansen 1984, 224–25). The educational activities of Muslims in Uganda were rather limited in this period and mainly focussed on religion teaching.

The missions managed to maintain their educational monopoly in Uganda until the 1920s. Around that time, the government needed a more rapid expansion of schooling to recruit sufficient people to carry out its administrative activities, especially people with technical training. The missions were deemed incapable of realising this and so the government itself had to step in.[47] By 1925 the government had set up the Department of Education and started to regulate educational affairs more closely, while missionaries were left in charge of schools.[48] The government did not set up many schools itself, apart from Makerere College (later to become Makerere University) in 1922, a number of technical schools, and some primary schools targeting Muslim children (who had no access to the missionary schools). The decision to leave the missions in charge of schools was mainly informed by financial concerns, but also strategic. The government thought that religious teaching had a stabilising effect on the country, as well as a positive impact on personality formation (Hansen 1984, 245). Education, nation building, development and religious conversion thus became intertwined notions early on in Uganda's colonial history, and the idea that schooling produces a new kind of person drove the expansion of formal education.

[47] This expansion of (colonial) state education also happened due to pressure from Ugandans themselves. They increasingly demanded more and better education. For example, the Young Baganda Association, a group of young and educated Ugandans, emerged around this time. They were one of the movements that put pressure on the government to invest in better education (Hansen 1984, 236 and 245).

[48] The system that developed was one in which the missionaries continued to be in charge of the day to day running of their own schools, while the government supported them financially and got involved in the development and implementation of curricula, examinations, inspections and regulation (Ssekamwa 1997, 52–53).

Importantly, the first decades of formal education in Uganda promoted the idea that schooling is a means to transcend life in the village. Most students of early missionary schools were meant to become clergymen, teachers or colonial administrators, as missionary and administrative expansion at the time were creating many vacancies in these areas of work. Missionary schools provided a literary curriculum, suitable for training students to practise such occupations. The focus was on reading, writing and Christian values, and less on practical skills like agriculture and building, which were more important skills for a life in the village. The Lugisu word for 'student' (*umusomi*) literally means 'reader' which attests to an educational history in which the emphasis was on learning to read (the Bible). Schooling came to be seen as an opportunity to become part of the lifeworld of the Europeans. Churches and schools, set up by the missionaries, instigated the idea of an "imagined community" (B. Anderson 1983) that transcended local life, and parents wanted their children to become part of this community – i.e. to get clerical and administrative occupations which they believed to be less tough and more dignified compared to the more 'deprived' agricultural activities upon which their own lives were based (Ssekamwa 1997, 61; Stambach 2009; Page 2008).

The rather negative attitude towards agricultural life that subsequently developed among the graduates of missionary schools became a problem for the government, because Uganda was an agricultural country and many students continued to be involved in agriculture throughout their lives[49] (Ssekamwa 1997, 59–61). In the decades after the start of its involvement in education, the protectorate government therefore tried to implement several policies in favour of more practical and technical education.[50] These policies were rather unsuccessful, however, and one attempt to promote adaptive education even worked counterproductively. The establishment of technical schools under the names of Rural Trade Schools, Farm Schools (for boys) and Homecraft Centres (for girls) in 1952 initiated the idea that technical or practical schooling was inferior to literary education because these schools were for students who had not performed so well in primary school (Ssekamwa 1997, 88).[51] While they provided access to the equally new 'modem secondary schools', practical secondary

[49] For example, The Colonial Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, set up by the Colonial Office in London, was very much in favour of more technically oriented education, a view they articulated in a memorandum based on the recommendations of the Phelps-Stoke Commission in 1925 (Ssekamwa 1997, 60). Also of this view was E. C. Morris, who took office as Director of Education in Uganda in 1929.

[50] Under E.C. Morris, who became Director of Education in 1929, the so called 'central schools' were introduced. These were post-primary educational institutes with a more practical bias than the academic "middle schools" (Ssekamwa, 1997, pp. 71–73). However, as most teachers were themselves academically oriented, they had difficulty implementing the more practical curricula, and these schools were abolished within ten years of being established (Ssekamwa, 1997, p. 76).

[51] This policy, implemented by the Bunsen Education Committee, went against the recommendation of the Binn's study group, a team of educational experts sent to Uganda by the Colonial Office in London to assess the educational sector in light of plans for an independent Uganda. The study group recommended that existing schools should change their rather literary curriculum into a more balanced one, containing both literary and practical subjects (Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 13)

schools that were formally considered the same level as ordinary secondary schools, the fact that technical schools were meant for students who performed poorly in primary school put this adaptive educational track below the literary one in the eyes of the public. Both the technical schools and the modern secondary schools were abolished within a decade (Ssekamwa 1997, 68, 80 and 86).[52]

The public had come to think of schooling as a way to get government or missionary jobs, which was achieved through a literary curriculum. This view was further encouraged by developments towards the end of the 1950s. At around this time, the idea of an independent Uganda started to have an impact on education. A greater number of Ugandans needed to be educated to occupy the many administrative jobs that would become available after independence. Hence the educational advisory committees and expert study groups of the early 1950s emphasised the need for a rapid increase in the number of schools, especially at the secondary level. Graduates were immediately employed in office jobs, so people were again familiarised with idea that education leads to white collar jobs and pulls one out of an agricultural life. The fact that such salaried employment led to levels of wealth that were far beyond the standards of the ordinary villager became increasingly visible too. Heald's (1998) survey, carried out in 1966, showed that the highest-earning men were all formally employed and earned considerably more than the average farmer. This finding, according to the author, reflected a "pattern of dramatic disparities in wealth, associated with modern sector employment, which has increasingly become prominent in East Africa" (p. 88-9). Private schools started to proliferate around this time too. While the government had initially not embraced such schools, it soon came to see them as a valuable additional educational channel that could help resolve the shortage of educated personnel.[53]

When Uganda became independent, the number of children going to school had therefore substantially increased, but still not enough to fill the vacancies across many occupations that had become available. The Castle Commission was set up in 1963 to recommend further courses of action. They established a new educational structure and successfully stimulated the expansion of schools, especially at secondary level.[54] Independence also meant that the ideals of 'unity' and 'African identity' became increasingly important. These nationalist concerns laid the basis for a critique of the

[52] The technical schools were initiated in 1952 and were discontinued in 1963 (Ssekamwa 1997, 88).
[53] The improved economic situation of many Ugandans also contributed to the proliferation of private schools. Crop prices were high after the second world war and a large group of soldiers had returned from the war with savings. People were more able to pay the higher school fees charged in private schools, while keen to educate their children as jobs were easy to find (Ssekamwa, 1997, p. 100).
[54] Between 1962 and 1970 the number of secondary schools increased from 28 to 73, and student enrolment numbers in lower secondary school grew from 1,991 to 29,540 students (Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 12). This increase in enrolment occurred at a time of great population growth. This seems to be the reason why enrolment *rates* did not increase with greater enrolment numbers (see Appleton 2001, 395).

denominational and racial structure of Uganda's educational system, which was subsequently dismantled, also by the Castle Commission.[55] The Education Act of 1963 brought all schools, except private schools, under the control of the government. As much as the missionaries and Muslim Union continued to be involved in schooling as "foundational bodies" (as most schools were built on church or mosque land), and they continued to be assigned with the task of looking after children's religious development in schools, this act implied that they lost control over the school as a whole and its day-to-day policies (Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 12). In the 1970s the government no longer allowed the establishment of private schools without its permission and schools had to be open to all students capable of paying the fees charged (Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 12). This brought a definite end to denominational and racially segregated education in the country.

The 1970s and 1980s were decades of political crisis in Uganda and, therefore, considerably less favourable to educational development. Besides, most government jobs were occupied by the 1970s, or even suspended during the Amin years, so a growing number of graduates remained unemployed. Educational investment no longer meant material success, which led many parents to become disappointed in education and to start questioning its value (Meinert 2009, 64; Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 12). The expansion of education stagnated under Amin and its curriculum and structure did not change much. There was a debate around the language of instruction in the 1970s – Kiswahili became the national language under Obote and Amin – but this did not lead to significant changes in schools as Kiswahili never really replaced English as the main language of instruction (Ssekamwa 1997, Chap. 12). Today, children in government schools are taught in the vernacular up to Primary 5 and subsequently in English, the language most parents prefer as they continue to see schooling as a means to introduce a child to a life beyond their particular locality. However, teachers tend to switch between the official language of instruction and the language with which most of their learners are most familiar, so in practice Ugandan schools lean towards bilingual education (Ssentanda and Wenske 2021).

[55] While the missions had lost their educational monopoly by the 1920s, they had long been able to resist government attempts to institutionalise a more secular educational system. They managed to influence both the 1940 Thomas Education Committee and the 1952 Bunsen Committee in a manner preventing them from recommending that the government abolish denominational education (Ssekamwa 1997, 122–23). Upon the advice of the latter committee, however, the Ugandan government *did* increasingly start to establish their own inter-denominational secondary schools throughout the country. The government also started to expand existing primary and secondary schools, increase investments in quality at all levels, and establish the Farm, Rural Trade, Homecraft and Modem secondary schools discussed above. But missionary schools remained an important element of the educational system and were fully controlled by the missions.

When Museveni became President in 1986, educational policies took time to be developed and implemented.[56] The Government White Paper on Education, published in 1992, became the supreme policy document on education in Uganda and continues to shape education in the country today (Uganda Burea of Statistics 2017a, 2). The White Paper mentioned Universal Primary Education (UPE) as an ambition, a plan that gained momentum a few years later and was finally introduced in 1997.[57] UPE opened up the school gates to the masses; each family was initially allowed to register up to four children for primary education free of charge, but this soon changed into free primary education for all. While jobs had been scarce since the 1970s, and a degree of scepticism about the value of education had been observed among parents, there was a lot of excitement about UPE. According to Meinert (2009), the idea of education as the gate to the realms of modernity, associated with salaried employment and a 'good life', was still strong and widespread when UPE was introduced. While parents were aware that such dreams might never materialise in the context of a limited labour market: "they still hope[d] for their own children to be the lucky ones to advance through the schooling system and ultimately get a job" (Meinert 2009, 64). Children subscribed in great numbers; primary school enrolment rose to 5.3 million in 1997, an increase of 2.6 million in one year (Appleton 2001, 396). The number of children registering for primary education continued to rise in subsequent years and had tripled by 2003 (IOB 2008, 77). The introduction of UPE was followed by Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007 and Universal Post O-Level Education and Training (UPOLET) in 2011.[58]

Increased access to education thanks to the three mass education policies, however, came at the cost of a reduction in educational quality. Following the introduction of UPE, teacher-pupil ratios increased dramatically, the availability of study materials was often insufficient, and most schools did not have enough chairs and tables for all students (Appleton 2001, 397). Teachers, often forced to engage in other income-generating activities due to low teacher salaries, were often unable to sustain the quality of education amidst these new challenges (Meinert 2009, 55). While UPE had instigated hopes of upward social mobility through schooling among many more people, it had effectively become more difficult to progress in schools. The implementation of USE and UPOLET had similar effects: they instigated greater educational ambitions, whilst making it harder for children to pass through school. Many students never managed to get far in school, became 'drop-outs' and came to think of

[56] The National Education Policy Review Commission (also known as the Senteza Kajubi Education Commission) was assigned the task of reviewing the whole educational sector in Uganda, shortly after the Museveni administration had established itself. This had not been done since the 1963 Castle Commission. They published their report in 1989, but recommendations took time to be implemented for financial reasons (Jjingo and Visser 2017, 6).

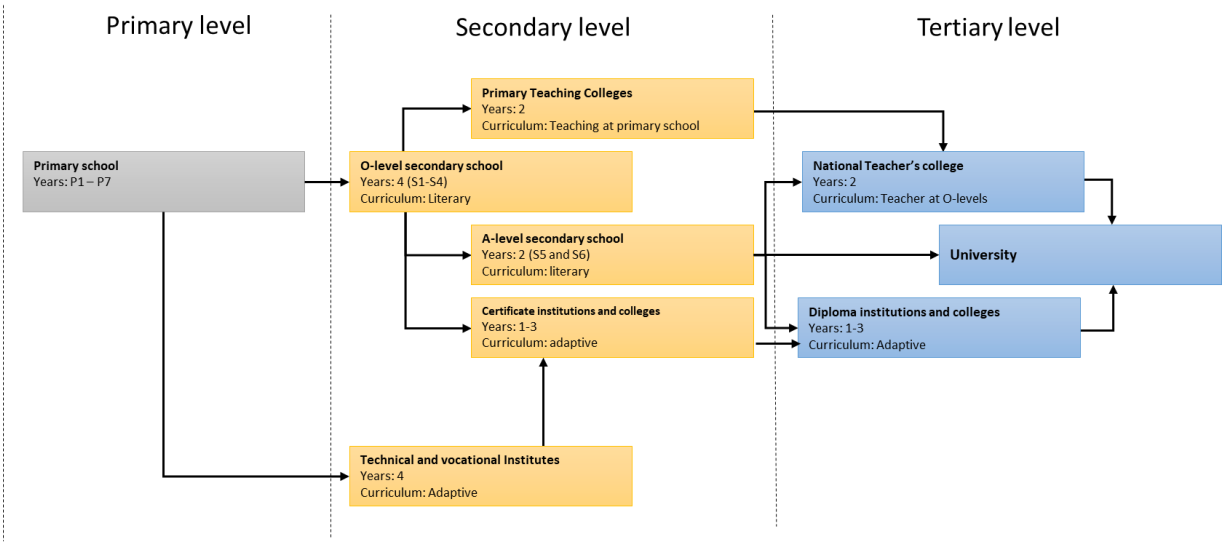
[57] Museveni promised UPE as part of his election campaign. After Museveni had won the election, UPE was introduced (Meinert 2009, 53–54).

[58] The introduction of these programmes were election promises of Museveni, meant to obtain greater support in rural areas (Huylebroeck and Titeca 2015).

themselves as 'failures' (Meinert 2009, 65) – a problem Serpell (1993) refers to as the 'moral trap' of mass education. This instigated a kind of 'diploma disease' in Ugandan schools, a tendency that can still be observed today (Dore 1976; Jones 2020, 260).[59]

Uganda's educational structure has undergone several changes over the course of the 20th century but now consists of seven years of primary school (P1-P7), four years of lower secondary education (S1-S4, also referred to as O-levels) and two years of upper secondary education (S5-S6, also referred to as A-levels). National exams have to be passed in P7, S4 and S6. Students who have passed their S4 exams qualify for vocational and technical courses, while university requires completion of A levels. The structure is schematically presented in Figure 5. Recent years have seen a growth of vocational schools in Uganda, which reflects a shift away from the idea that education generates 'job seekers' towards the idea that it generates 'job creators', a discursive change encouraged by the government. Private schools are still common in Uganda at both the primary and secondary level.

Figure 5. Formal educational structure of Uganda



Furthermore, despite the mass education programmes, costs are still incurred by those who send children to school at all educational levels. I obtained the financial requirements of a relatively cheap primary and secondary school in the area, as well as the educational costs of a private primary school. At the government primary school, costs were limited to buying a school uniform (between 7,000 and 20,000 shillings), study materials (e.g. pens and books for approx. 15,000 shillings per year), paying for examination fees (between 6,000 and 9,000 shillings per year) and a couple of other minor charges,

[59] Uganda's 'diploma disease' manifests itself in many different ways, for example: young people who attempt to solve lack of employment with further education; rather exam-oriented teaching and limited time being spent on extra-curricular activities; and great interest in exam results (strikingly reflected in the form of extensive best performer ranks being published in national newspapers after exam results have come out).

which all together added up to a maximum of 50,000 shillings ($13) per year. At the private primary school, a school fee of 180,000 shillings ($49) per year was charged on top of these minor costs. At the government secondary school, parents had to pay a 'development fee' of 46,500 Ugandan shillings per term (3 terms per year), 50,000 shillings lunch money per term (compulsory in S1 and S4), and a range of small costs and charges (e.g. scholarly materials and a range of activities organised throughout the year). Learners were also obliged to wear a school uniform of approximately 85,000 shillings. These costs added up to a total of 1,028,000 shillings ($278) for four years in secondary school, even though this school was part of the USE scheme and should presumably be free of charge.

Formal education in Bunyafa

The educational history of Bunyafa is not atypical of other regions in Uganda, but Bukiiti, the parish where I lived, and where most of my interlocutors came from, played a somewhat peculiar role in the educational history of the region. A few reflections on this history are needed, because many of the views I encountered were shaped by it. When Semei Kakungulu started to administer the area he appointed several (mostly Ganda) chiefs who were left in charge of a smaller part of the Gisu region (Twaddle 1993). Oral histographies, obtained from elders in Bukiiti, say that a man called Saleh – probably one of the few Muslim chiefs – came to administer the Buyobo region, where Bukiiti parish was located at the time. Saleh established his administrative centre in Bukiiti, a post he later left in the hands of a Gisu chief called Wambere. After several years, approximately in the 1920s, Wambere's administration was shifted to today's Buyobo, together with one of the missionary schools that was established in the area after the government had opened it up for administration.

The relocation of Wambere's administration to Buyobo was, according to some elders, the outcome of a lack of interest in education among people in Bukiiti. Wanzala Robert, one such elder, mentioned:

> Administratively, [Bukiiti] was among the first places to have an administrative headquarters. But I think because of the bad character of the people who were residing there, they could not sustain the headquarters there. Because people, as I said, they were hostile, for them killing is normal. They do not care, they are not developmental. When even they introduced schools, churches, they were not interested. Because in the whole North (of Bugisu), [Bukiiti] got the first school. […] When they had that school, people from the area refused to attend that school. **(12/08/2021)**

Two factors may have caused this scepticism about education among the Bukiiti people. Firstly, Bukiiti had a relatively large population of Muslims (possibly because Saleh, the first administrator of the area, was a Muslim) and the educational interests of Muslims focused on learning Arabic to be able to read the Quran. Muslims were less interested in formal education at the time. Secondly, while land has

been scarce in the Gisu region as a whole for some time, people in Bukiiti seemed to have had sufficient land to make a living, up to at least the 1980s. Almost all elders argued that land was abundant when they were young and one 36 year old teacher remembered how land was still being opened up for cultivation when he was young. There was, for that reason, less need for an alternative way of life that could be realised with the help of education.

Bukiiti thus saw the arrival of a school relatively early, but this advantage never culminated in a high number of graduates. Buyobo, on the contrary, the place where Wambere's administration got relocated to, has become a relatively wealthy hub in the Gisu region. A series of fairly large brick villas and a well-equipped town centre signal its material progress. People often referred to Buyobo to point to Bukiiti's relative lack of development, a difference they explained as the consequence of educational scepticism in the past. As such, people in Bukiiti, perhaps even more than others in Uganda, came to see schooling as the most important driver of development. During my fieldwork, a group of educated people from Bukiiti parish set up a group to 'develop' their home area or, as one member said: "[to] revive its lost glory" (see Chapter 9 for more information about this group). Education was quickly identified as the most important thing to focus on: "the first thing we need to do as people who have come out to revive Bukiiti, is to develop positive attitudes towards education. First of all beginning with the parents, who will in turn put it in their children", one member posted in the group's WhatsApp chat on the 22nd July 2021.

Recent educational enthusiasm coincided with a notable improvement of access to schools in the parish thanks to the mass education programmes and an increase in the number of schools. Up to the mid-1980s, complete primary schools (with all classes P1-P7) did not exist in Bukiiti. There had been a sub-grade school (with only P1 and P2) since the 1940s, but this school did not develop into a proper primary school until 1985. Several additional schools emerged in Bukiiti thereafter: a second government primary school was set up in 1986; a private primary school emerged after the turn of the century; and two secondary schools were opened elsewhere in the sub-county, one established in 1990 and another in 2006.[60]

Being schooled: Modern sector employment

While modern sector jobs have been relatively scarce in Uganda since the Amin regime and became even scarcer due to the structural adjustment programmes of the late 20th century, people continue

[60] Bukiiti Primary School was started in 1945 as a sub-grade school by some church members, but only in 1985 did it get all primary level classes (P1-P7). Bumadibira Primary School was started in 1981 by a member of parliament in collaboration with the community and by 1986 it had all classes. Bugambi Secondary School was started as a community school in 1985 but it took until 1990 before it was properly operating. Bugunzu Secondary School was started by the government in 2006.

to see schooling as a means for children to escape village life and find a job in town. The ongoing idea that being schooled leads to employment is well demonstrated by the fact that the schooled person is typically contrasted with the ordinary farmer: the person of the pen (*umundu we kalamu*) versus the person of the hoe (*umundu we khysiri*). A young boy in primary school, for example, said that schooling is the only option if one does not want to become a farmer. And a father who was sceptical about the value of schooling referred to a schooled man who ended up being a farmer to make his point. Through schooling, people assumed, one could potentially get a job and avoid the need to farm for survival.

In other words, people continue to see education as an opportunity for a radical change; a chance for children to escape the kind of life parents lived themselves, as farmers, dependent on the hoe. Parents like Mugide, mother of 4 children, for that matter, were often motivated to educate their children because of their own lack of education; through schooling, they hope their children will become a different kind of person, with a different kind of life:

> I used to admire people who study and wanted to be a person of the pen myself, and be in a good position. But my situation became very difficult [because of dropping out of school], but I now want my children, like Sumaya, to study… Be like [Mafabi] Nandala [the district's Member of Parliament], or like chairman [the local chairperson at the district level (LC5), who lived nearby]. **(30/10/2018)**[61]

Having salaried employment, or being in 'office' as villagers themselves often put it, remains a central component of people's imagination of the life of the schooled person. Hussein, a 36 year old primary school teacher who I regularly refer to in this thesis and introduce in greater detail in chapter 8, made this distinction:

> someone who is educated is talking about how am I supposed to acquire a job, like that. […] this one [who is not educated] is talking about farm issues and maybe local news, while someone who is educated is thinking about how am I supposed to get a job, how do I go to school for further education, like that. **(09/07/2021)**[62]

Having an office job tends to be associated with substantially enhanced wealth. Mugide's quote above, in which she referred to the MP and a District Representative, who are among the richest people in the area, as examples of people of the pen, can be seen as a reflection of this. People emphasised that jobs generate a considerably higher income than most people would be able to earn with farming, a more stable income, as well as a pension providing financial security after retirement. Working in an

[61] Language of expression: Lugisu.
[62] Language of expression: English

office is seen as a physically easier occupation than farming, moreover. While farming is physically tough and requires one to get dirty, working in the office means that one can earn money whilst being seated and remaining clean. As one young man put it: "I have been in this world and have realised that digging makes you grow old very fast. Digging is good, but it makes you grow old. Education can help you to find a job."

The ideas that a job can lead to increased wealth and a more pleasant way of life are important reasons why people aspire to education for their children, as well as for youngsters to aspire to education for themselves (see Meinert [2009, 51] and Whyte [1997, 44] who argue the same for neighbouring Teso and Nyole).[63] It also shapes the *kind of* education parents aspire to for their children; they typically see a university degree as the desired end point of their children's educational journey because this is what the best jobs require (see also Wodon, Nguyen, and Tsimpo 2016, 58).[64] While Frye (2012) has shown that aspiring to employment may partially be a means to construct a virtuous identity, rather than a reflection of an intrinsic belief that schooling leads to a job, such aspirations do reinforce the stereotypical image of the schooled person as an employed person.

Because parents hope their children will obtain employment through schooling, their educational investments are typically motivated by high expectations of reciprocity. Parents talked of school fees as an investment, and expected their children to pull them out of poverty if they became well off through schooling. Mugide for example, quoted above, also told me that she is keen to push her last-born daughter with schooling: "I wish she can get a lot of education and get a job. We know that she will support us when we are much older." Such reciprocal expectations also instigate a strong desire among people who do get far in school to support their own community. Hence, while strongly oriented towards life beyond the village, many schooled people are keen to contribute to life in their home community as well (see also Munro 2013; Schut 2021). This is a phenomenon I discuss in more depth in Chapter 9.

Having a job also has symbolic value in that it points to qualities associated with schooled personhood. On a daily basis, people with jobs engage in literate activities publicly; move in contexts like the hospital, the school or the bank; do not dig much; and wear smart clothes rather than a farm overall, a clear marker of a non-agricultural occupation (or clothes associated with a particular company, like

[63] For parents, moreover, the prospect of a job for their children meant their child no longer needed *their* land to make a living. Instead, the situation that arises when a child gets a job is one of complementarity between child and parents: parents continue to ensure food provision through cultivation, sometimes also for (educated) offspring living in town, while children provide financial assistance in case of emergencies.

[64] I spoke to a number of S4 students who said they wanted to do a non-university course after finishing lower secondary school because they doubted whether their parents would be able to pay for upper secondary school (and subsequently university). But these students mentioned that their parents wanted them to continue with upper secondary school (so that university remains an option).

the green overalls of the power company UMEME worn by electricians, which people would immediately recognise). Most jobs involve becoming part of organisations or administrations (e.g. the school system, the health care system, a company etc.) with a national or international network and sometimes require one to permanently or regularly stay in town rather than the village. Having a job thus reflects greater involvement in life beyond the village, and possibly urbanism, a lifestyle that is associated with schooled personhood. For women, having a job may also require a new division of labour in the household, because they are unlikely to be available to care for their children during the day. A job means the disruption of traditional gender roles and practices for women, men and children, and a new way of doing things. Readiness to deviate from traditional practices is also associated with schooled personhood, as I demonstrate below.

However, the chance that a child from Bunyafa manages to obtain modern sector employment through schooling is relatively low. To demonstrate this, let me briefly assess how much schooling people in Bunyafa tend to achieve and what the employment possibilities are of people with different educational qualifications in Uganda. As Table 2 shows, the majority of children (58 percent) in the children-sample (N=393) ended their formal education before finishing primary school.[65] Approximately 32 percent of the children had managed to reach secondary school or above, but 20 percent had ended their education while still in secondary education, and only 12 percent had actually managed to finish lower secondary school. Furthermore, only 6 percent had made it to a tertiary educational institute (either university or a post O-level course) and about 3 percent had finished in or right after upper secondary school. Gender disparity is relatively low at all levels of education: while a slightly higher proportion of boys (60 percent) than girls (55 percent) drop out before finishing primary school, there is little difference at secondary and tertiary levels.

These levels of education provide few lucrative labour market opportunities. Table 3 provides labour market data by different levels of education. The table is consistent with the idea that schooling orients people towards the labour market as the labour force participation rate (LFP) increases with levels of education, reflecting greater readiness to become employed among those with higher levels of education. Yet, among people with some secondary education, less than half of those belonging to the labour force (47%) have paid employment. The median salary of people in this category is only UGX

[65] While the children-sample data might be slightly less reliable than the ego-sample (as data were provided by parents, not individual children themselves), there are two reasons I chose to use this sample for this analysis. First, while the ego-sample consists of people who were living in the village at the time of the survey, the children-sample consists of people who were predominantly born in the village. This is useful because people with success in school are more likely to move to town and, therefore, would be less likely to be included in the present analysis if the ego-sample were used. Using the ego-sample could therefore lead to biased data showing disproportionally high drop-out rates. Second, the children-sample contains more people who were within younger age groups and went to school in the relatively recent past (65 percent were below the age of 39).

220,000 ($59) per month, less than 2 dollars a day. Thus most people who do have jobs do not have salaries that clearly mark upward socio-economic mobility.

Table 2. Educational performance in 2019 (Children-sample)

	Pooled			**Boys**			**Girls**		
Level when education ended	*Freq*	*Perc*	*Cum*	*Freq*	*Perc*	*Cum*	*Freq*	*Perc*	*Cum*
No education	23	5.9	5.9	12	6.2	6.2	11	5.6	5.6
In primary	200	51.6	57.5	104	53.9	60.1	96	49.2	54.9
After passing primary	41	10.6	68.0	20	10.4	70.5	21	10.8	65.6
In lower secondary school (O-levels)	77	19.9	87.9	35	18.1	88.6	42	21.5	87.2
After passing lower secondary school	15	3.9	91.8	6	3.11	91.7	9	4.6	91.8
In upper secondary school (A-levels)	1	0.3	92.0	0	0	0	1	0.5	92.3
After passing upper secondary school	9	2.3	94.3	7	3.6	95.3	2	1.0	93.3
In or after tertiary education	22	5.7	100	9	4.7	100	13	6.7	100
Total	388	100		193	100		195	100	

The situation of people who completed secondary school is even worse: only 40 percent are employed and at a median salary of only UGX 200,000 ($54) per month.[66] Further, people with lower secondary school qualifications are not employed by valued organisations like the government, NGOs or large companies, which may provide things like a pension. As Table 4 shows, people with secondary education are unlikely to be technicians or (associate) professionals because these occupations require post-secondary level degrees. Service and sales jobs such as a mobile money agent or a supermarket employee provide a way for secondary students to find employment beyond the village (42.3 percent had such an occupation), but it is still common for people in this category to work as skilled agricultural, forestry or fishery workers (17.1 percent) or in an elementary occupation (12.6 percent), jobs which typically emerge in local economies and lack some of the social benefits that underly people's idealisations of salaried employment.

Note that the material benefits of schooling are not limited to what one may earn through employment. On the contrary, as I will show in Chapter 9, schooled people tend to get drawn into various village organisations and are particularly well-positioned to make a political career in the village, and such engagements come with considerable material benefits (see also Jones forthcoming). However, the more informal and ad-hoc payments derived from community work are of a different order than the level of wealth people hope their children will obtain with a modern sector job, obtained

[66] It seems that completion of primary and secondary education comes with greater aspirations for employment (LPF increases), but that these ambitions cannot be facilitated by the market, which results in lower employment rates as a percentage of the labour force among those who completed primary and secondary school compared to those who did not. Moreover, people who did not complete secondary school may find themselves in menial jobs that people who completed that level no longer aspire to (see also Table 4).

through schooling. Importantly, incomes derived from involvement in community work are insufficient to escape a life based on agriculture or to live up to the expectations of reciprocity imbued in parents' investment in schooling.

Table 3. Employment by different levels of education in 2017

Level of education	Labour force participation (% of population between 14-64)	Paid employment (% of population between 14-64)[67]	Paid employment (% of labour force)[68]	Paid employment, median monthly earnings (in UGX)
No formal education	43.3	14.1	32.5	80,000
Some primary	43.9	14.6	33.3	100,000
Completed primary	55.5	16.9	30.4	130,000
Some secondary	54.2	25.3	46.6	220,000
Completed secondary	67.3	26.4	39.3	200,000
Post-secondary and above	82.9	49.3	59.5	420,000
Gisu region	34.2	16.1	47.2	130,000
Male (Uganda)	59.8	25.9	43.3	220,000
Female (Uganda)	45.7	11.2	24.6	110,000
Total	52.3	18.1	34.6	176,000

Table adapted from the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (2019a, 200–202)*. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics does not provide the N for specific subgroups.*

Table 4. Professions of people in employment in 2017

	Professionals	Technicians and associate professionals	Service and sales workers	Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	Craft and related trades workers	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Elementary occupation	Others	Total
No formal education	1.2	0.3	19.7	38.9	6.1	1.7	31.5	0.5	100
Some primary	0.1	0.2	27.4	36.5	8.4	3.4	23.7	0.3	100
Completed primary	0.1	0.9	33.8	30.8	9.2	5.4	19.3	0.5	100
Some secondary	8.5	2.5	33.3	21.4	10.5	6.0	16.1	1.6	100
Completed secondary	7,0	3.0	42.3	17.1	8.2	7.5	12.6	2.2	100
Post-secondary and above	32.3	8.1	30.0	7.0	7.0	3.1	5.3	7.3	100
Gisu region	11.0	2.3	33.5	12.0	3.1	4.9	31.9	1.3	100
Male (Uganda)	6.7	2.6	23.2	25.4	10.8	7.6	22.3	1.6	100
Female (Uganda)	6.6	1.5	39.8	29.8	5.6	0.4	14.4	1.9	100
Total	6.7	2.1	30.6	27.3	8.5	4.4	18.7	1.8	100

Data retrieved from table 2.3E of the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2019a, 204)*. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics does not provide the N for specific subgroups.*

[67] Calculated by multiplying the general employment to population ratio and the paid employment to employment ratio, presented in tables 2.3B and 2.3C. (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2019a, 201–2)

[68] Calculated by dividing the paid employment to population ratio by the labour force participation rate.

Being schooled: Exposed, enlightened, and modern

With limited access to the material wealth associated with schooling, more subtle qualities associated with schooled personhood tend to become more important. In contexts marked by job scarcity, schooling is often embraced as a form of cultural distinction, associated with the development of valued views and qualities, and, for that matter, not only valued as a means to get a job (Bolten 2015; C. Jeffrey, Jeffery, and Jeffery 2004a; Jones forthcoming; Posti-Ahokas and Palojoki 2014). To start with, schooled people themselves typically mentioned that they are more aware of alternative lifestyles and ways of doing things than those without much experience in school. They are more 'exposed' thanks to the knowledge about other places they were able to obtain through their schooling. Schooling renders one interested in, and knowledgeable about, things like the English Premier League (see Chapter 8), international politics and the home country of a visiting anthropologist. When I asked about the benefits of schooling, several people emphasised that they were able to talk to me (in English) because of their schooling, an opportunity they appreciated because of the new ideas I could presumably give them. Relatedly, schooled people were quick to ask me how things are done in my country and keen to get my advice.

The value placed on exposure by schooled people is related to their greater scepticism of 'tradition' – the particular way in which things have been done in the village for years – a tendency that has been observed elsewhere in Africa too (e.g. Ngwane 2001; Stambach 2000). The schooled I met were quick to qualify certain ways in which things are done in the village as 'ancient' or 'traditional' and to connect their tendency to deviate from such practices to their education and exposure. On the issue of having children, for example, Isaac, a young man who finished university during my fieldwork, said that his plan not to have too many children was the consequence of his 'exposure'. Ordinary villagers, on the contrary,

> are not exposed to new lifestyles. They do not see how life is different, if you approach it in a different way. Someone here in Bukiiti can move with people and the only language they speak is the one of children. They do not plan for those children. But me, as I have been through school, I have had a number of opportunities which changed my idea. **(05/11/2018)**[69]

Alfred, a secondary 4 graduate, provided another example. When I asked him why he cooks for his family sometimes, a highly feminine task in Gisu society, he mentioned that people with education do not follow practices of 'ancient times' that much. While a degree of pride could typically be observed when the schooled talked about their readiness to deviate from tradition, others saw new ways of

[69] Language of expression: English

doing things as rather threatening to the social order. Masaba, a man in his twenties without much schooling, for example, mentioned how schooled couples do not follow traditional divisions of labour between men and women, which, according to him, led them to quarrel more often.

Schooled people's tendency to be critical of traditional ways of doing things is further driven by the idea that they are the vanguards of development. Especially in the parish where I lived, the connection between education and development is rather strong in people's minds and the number of schooled people is regularly taken as a direct reflection of the area's development. At the same time, a familiar modernisation discourse, rejected in academia a long time ago, continues to shape people's ideas about what such development involves (see Ferguson 1999; Stambach 2000). The schooled as 'developed' people are expected to be 'modern' people (see Sekiwunga and Whyte [2009, 124] who suggest the same); that is, people who manage to deal with new technologies (e.g. phones, cameras and bank accounts), as well as people who are more receptive of lifestyles that are common in the Global North, such as monogamy, fewer children and greater marital loyalty. Such a modernisation discourse, and the idea that a person of the hoe and a person of the pen stand at opposite ends of the modernisation process, is, possibly unintentionally, reinforced by the Ugandan government, whose Vision Document for 2040 (published in 2013) contained as vision statement: "A Transformed Ugandan Society from a Peasant to a Modern and Prosperous Country within 30 Years".

A discourse of enlightenment, rooted in the historical connection between formal education and religion in Uganda, is used to appropriate the knowledge obtained in school. Leopold, one of the few elders in Bukiiti with some education, emphasised, when I challenged him that education does not always lead to jobs these days, that:

> education is very functional, not purposely for a job, but more for your aim. Because education is like somebody who is a Christian, that one who has ever read the Bible. Because someone who has ever read the Bible is not like the same, as a pagan, this religion gives you light, to know more about God. And your behaviour/thinking is different from the other person, the pagan. **(27/08/2018)**[70]

The connection between schooling and religion, which instigates the idea of schooling as an enlightening experience, a mechanism through which the pagan is changed into a religious person, continues to be perpetuated in different ways by today's schools. Christianity and Islam are still taught as an optional subject in secondary school; many schools mention the production of 'God fearing' or

[70] Language of expression: English

'religious' students in their official motto; most schools are still found in the proximity of churches; and some primary schools have specific slots reserved for prayers.[71]

Schooled people's familiarity with alternative lifestyles, places and environments, combined with their procedural literacy (see below) and proficiency in English, is also seen to translate into greater comfortability in handling modern environments like the hospital and the sub-county headquarters, as well as people from elsewhere. Hussein, the primary school teacher (referred to in Chapter 2), stated:

> We think someone who is educated can enter any office. […] As an educated person you know the procedure. […] If someone is not educated, they do not know: 'when I enter an office what should I do?' He [an uneducated person] just enters like he is entering his own house. But for someone who is educated can know that first of all I am supposed to knock and if I am allowed… But if I am not allowed I will have to wait, I am supposed to talk to the secretary, like that… For someone who is not educated, they fear even to go to certain offices. **(09/07/2021)[72]**

Pointing out a similar dynamic, Meinert (2009, 145–46) discusses the case of a woman in Tororo, located to the south of the Gisu region, who took her daughter who was in school with her when she had to go to the hospital. Meinert argued that schooled people are seen to have a more suitable cultural capital for the handling of such environments.

Being schooled: Literate and organised

There are several more obvious capacities that people associate with schooled personhood and assign considerable value too. Firstly, schooling is associated with literacy, a skill that is increasingly required, even in rural settings, for various activities: village meetings increasingly require minutes to be taken, savings groups require a literate person to keep track of people's savings, and government programmes typically need to be carried out by a literate broker who can keep track of delivered services and so forth (see also Chapter 9). Combined with their English proficiency, schooled people's capacity to read tends to translate into various more specific 'literacies' (Street 1993). Schooled people are said to be more knowledgeable of the law (legal literacy), they know how to handle smart phones and social media (digital literacy) and are more familiar with the procedures of specific environments (procedural literacy).

[71] The primary school in which I spent time in 2019 used to take all its students to the neighbouring church for prayer on a weekly basis.
[72] Language of expression: English

Literacy comes with financial benefits. When work requiring literacy is needed for particular community activities, for example a land agreement needs to be confirmed in writing, the schooled person that carries out such work is often rewarded with a financial payment. Furthermore, literacy is also seen to translate into greater business skills. Geoffrey, who graduated from upper secondary school during my fieldwork, argued:

> If two people who have ever gone to school, but they are not employed, they have no job, they say let's be creative and open up our retail shop, we start operating a small shop… They [will] be so accountable [able to do accounts], to the extent that within a year you will find that they have grown up… But someone who has never gone to school, has no [ability to do] calculations, maybe he is trying to buy five cartons of mirinda fruit, he is maybe buying at fifty thousand shillings, each at ten thousand shillings. He is buying five but he takes to his shop and starts selling at nine thousand shillings each carton, you get? […] Meaning that he has no… He lacks accountability. […] Of course finally he collapses in the business. **(19/07/2021)**[73]

Schooled people also emphasise that they have a greater analytical capacity. Two men who regularly participated in clan meetings stated how their analytical capacities acquired through school helped them to 'order the views' of others. They often chose to speak last so that they could position themselves well in relation to the other speakers. A schooled person knows how to create a degree of order out of chaos, which also translates into a greater capacity to plan and organise. Leopold, mentioned earlier above, emphasised this shortly after he reminded me that schooling is like becoming enlightened.

> I have been through the life of education, I am able to understand things quickly. Better than that person [who is not educated]. Because I have experienced the life of education. Now like my daughter there [former teacher], or myself, even if I start a business, I will start just planning for myself, because ABC and so on, I know it. Because for me, I read accounts, so I can open up my business and I start, making accounts for myself, without bringing someone from out. Because I know accounts and so on. You can properly [plan] for yourself. […] I have planted my sugar cane. […] Because I have land, so I go in stages. I am planting, but I am using education. The knowledge I acquired from school. I am planning, I am planning: I think in January there, when they start yielding, I may get something like 3 million [UGX, $810] or 2 million [UGX, $540], then I may go for a loan from a bank, I may get 4 million [UGX, $1080],

[73] Language of expression: English

> knowing that next year I am going to get a lot of coffee. You see, you start buying and so on, making deals like that. Because I am planning, I have the knowledge to plan. **(27/08/2018)**[74]

This reflection also relates to the point earlier made that a schooled person is able to deal with a modern environment; Leopold does not shy away from going to a bank and possesses the kind of literacy needed to deal with a bank account. Furthermore, his reflections echoes Jones' (forthcoming, 8)[75] observation based on fieldwork in the Teso region that schooled people are seen to have 'the ability to think A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3.'

On becoming schooled

So far, I have not yet mentioned anything about the level of schooling one needs in order to attain the characteristics or qualities which are commonly associated with schooled personhood, in other words the question of *when* one becomes a schooled person. This is a question without a simple answer, for the qualities, interests and orientations that people associate with 'schooledness' are not necessarily attained at once, at the same time or in the same place. As noted, Uganda has both private and government schools, with government schools being further divided into those that are part of the free education schemes (UPE and USE) and those that are not. Since such schools have different financial resources available – some charge more school fees than others – the quality of schooling differs considerably across schools. Consequently, someone who is schooled in an expensive private school may attain various qualities associated with schooling considerably quicker than someone who is schooled in a free rural government school.

Furthermore, as Jones (forthcoming, 3) has pointed out when talking about a schooled identity as a 'scaffold', a construction 'that can be built up or knocked down' over a lifetime, qualities associated with being schooled can also be obtained outside the school gates. A mother can improve her English through learning from her children, people can obtain procedural literacy through participating in village committees, and someone who sells their farm produce in other areas may become exposed to life beyond the village through travelling, rather than schooling. With schools differing considerably in terms of quality and the possibility of getting schooled out of school, it remains impossible to define 'being schooled' in terms of a particular level of formal education. More appropriate, it seems, is to think of the schooled/unschooled opposite as a continuum, along which one may progress through spending more time in school, but also through engagement in other activities.

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[74] Language of expression: English

[75] I read an unpublished version of this paper. This page number may not align with the journal publication.

I have shown some of the ways in which a schooled person is seen to differ from someone who is not schooled, and how these differences partially stem from the history of education in Uganda. Historically, missionary schooling in Uganda instigated the idea that schooling leads to modern sector jobs and is a way for people to escape village life. This idea is still common, despite the fact that modern sector jobs have been relatively scarce since the 1970s, and unemployment rates have increased due to the combined effects of the 1980s structural adjustment policies and the mass education programmes of the 2000s. While the majority of children in Bunyafa do not progress beyond primary school and the government attempts to promote vocational education, people continue to see schooling as a way to get a job and schooled people continue to be oriented towards modern sector employment. However, schooling is also associated with a series of other interests, qualities and personality features that have gained greater appreciation in the absence of labour market opportunities. Schooled people are more 'exposed', seen to be capable of handling modern technologies and environments better, and are in possession of a range of more practical skills relating to various kinds of literacy and an organised mind.

People often contrast the schooled person, referred to as a person of the pen (*umundu we kalamu*), with the ordinary and presumably uneducated farmer, referred to as person of the hoe (*umundu we khysiri*). The binary opposites of the person of the pen and the hoe point to several essential and interrelated features associated with educated personhood, albeit partially by implication. Unlike farmers, educated people are seen to be interested in white collar jobs (they work with a pen instead of a hoe), their orientation is less tied to a specific locality (they do not depend, like farmers, on land), and they have a greater interest in deviating from the way things are done in the village (farming has been practised in the village for centuries, and thus stands for a traditional way of doing things).

While the hoe/pen symbolism reflects some of the qualities associated with being schooled in Gisu society, however, it does not cover all competencies associated with schooled personhood. Indeed, one quality that the Bagisu consider critically important for all people and which is increasingly associated with being schooled, is the quality of 'self-control'. Although I have ignored this quality in this chapter, self-control is of particular importance in Gisu society and, as I will come to demonstrate, a focus on self-control allows us to see how schooling affects gendered personhood. In the next chapter, I therefore explore the quality of self-control in relation to schooling in more detail.

3. The schooled person and the quality of self-control

Among other things, being someone of the pen is associated with increased wealth, employment and a 'modern' way of life that is defined in opposition to, and increasingly deviates from, traditional and local ways of doing things. If one lacks the material markers of a schooled identity – wealth and employment – schooled 'performances' or 'styles' may become more important to signify such a social status, as has been shown in other studies (Bolten 2015; Jones 2020; Lesorogol 2008). With that in mind, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that male circumcision has not been rejected by the schooled in Gisu society in the way schooled people in other societies have refused to participate in rituals of this kind (e.g. Ngwane 2001; Stambach 2000). In these settings initiation rites have been framed as 'backward' or 'traditional' by the schooled and considered at odds with schooled personhood. Why has this not been the case among the Bagisu?

Explaining such ritual continuity requires an extensive analysis of the different functions of circumcision and is beyond my purpose here. However, initiation rituals evidently play an important role in the construction of (gendered) personalities and ritual continuity thus suggests the continued importance of specific identities and personality features promoted in the ritual. Hence, one may ask whether the ideals of firmness, focus and bodily control that are expressed in circumcision have remained important in Gisu society, and perhaps particularly in relation to schooling. The analysis I develop in this chapter suggests this is the case. As noted in Chapter 1, circumcision is primarily a reflection of one's capacity to control the self, that is, in the Gisu context, to generate the strength of purpose required to control emotions and bodily sensations such as fear and pain. A schooled person, I came to observe, is seen to be someone who possesses similar qualities; they have greater strength of purpose, which in turn helps them to be less impulsive, control their temper and, ultimately, to achieve social distinction.

In this chapter I explore the quality of self-control in relation to being schooled. I will first turn to ethnographic material to demonstrate how schooled people cultivate their capacity to 'keep quiet', 'cool down' and 'reduce the heart' to differentiate themselves from the unschooled. Through their cultivation of these qualities, as well as a range of other behaviours that centre around the control and suppression of emotions and natural passions, it seems that schooled people have come to associate strongly with the ideal of 'self-control' (*khwifuka)*. Thereafter, I explore three dynamics that help to understand why self-control is associated with being schooled in Gisu society. Firstly, I show that the way in which the process of schooling is generally viewed – both by the schooled and the unschooled – emphasises 'self-control' as a requirement for educational success. Secondly, drawing on Norbert Elias' famous book *The Civilizing Process* ([1939] 2000)*,* I will argue that a) the British colonial

administration created circumstances (a class structure with schooling as the primary means to achieve upward social mobility) in which refinement of conduct, including increased expression of self-control, were important qualities for standing a chance of achieving upward social mobility; and b) the particular ambitions and social positions of the schooled render them more dependent on a more varied group of people, which instigates greater self-awareness, constraint and control. Thirdly, and related to the previous point, schooled people's interest in community work – partially driven by their lack of modern sector employment – renders them more observant of more subtle principles of social distinction, such as the quality of self-control.

Self-control as a marker of schooling

"Wow, it seems Juliet is educated", said Nuru (research assistant) after we visited Juliet to set up an interview. "How did you notice?" I asked. "Well, she seemed to understand some English, but also the way she keeps herself. When you ask her something, she waits and responds slowly. Not quite like the other lady we saw the other day." "Which one?" I wondered out loud. "The one who shouted at you, while her husband stood next to her. In such a situation you are supposed to be humble, but she instead screamed: 'Masaba [my nickname] come and buy my *kamaleya* [eatable bamboo]!'." When Nuru copied the woman she increased her volume to emphasise the difference between the way in which that woman had spoken and the way in which Juliet, the old lady we had just met, did. She emphasised how Juliet managed to supress her emotions through managing her speed, tone and volume of speech, while the other lady talked in a more uncontrolled manner. Nuru's comment points to a broader phenomenon in Bugisu: in addition to the various qualities people associated with being schooled discussed in the previous chapter, people, especially those who consider themselves schooled, see self-control as a competency that schooled people tend to possess, or at least manage to observe, more than the unschooled.[76]

The Gisu word for self-control is *khwifuka*. This word comes from the word *khufuka*, which means 'to drive' or 'to manage', and literally means 'to control or manage oneself'. Like the English concept of 'self-control', *Khwifuka* connotes strongly to controlling one's emotions and natural passions, and forfending intuitive and instinctive behaviour – associated with emotions – in favour of more thoughtful and controlled behaviour. A school going person who tries to abstain from sex is said to *khwifuka* and so is someone who tries to avoid getting angry. But schooled people do not always use the term *khwifuka* when trying to explain how they differ from those they consider unschooled. They

[76] In Jones' (forthcoming) account of educated identities in Teso, central-eastern Uganda, a somewhat similar association between self-control and 'educatedness' comes to the front. He presents the case of a man who kept calm in a crisis, something that people associated with his education. Jeffrey et al. (2004a) also report that people in Utter Pradesh, India, saw controlled bodily styles as typical of the schooled.

often talked about more specific qualities that are reflective of the broader notion of *khwifuka*. Emotionality and lack of thought can manifest itself in different ways – a wild body, loud speech, use of inappropriate words – and self-control is therefore typically expressed through more specific qualities, such as 'techniques du corps' (Mauss 1973), techniques of speech (Irvine 1990) or techniques of dress (Abu-Lughod 1986).

One more specific quality that reflects the broader notion of *khwifuka* and which schooled people cultivate to differentiate themselves from others in the Gisu context is the capacity to 'keep quiet' (*khusila*). Schooled people emphasised how they managed to control their anger through keeping quiet, through waiting and seeing the situation through. One of the nurses in the village, for example, told me that she thanked her medical skills to her capacity to keep quiet. When she tried to learn about medicine by working in a pharmacy owned by a medical expert, she got very frustrated by the expert's wife. While the expert was teaching her a lot, his wife, who did not know much about medicines, used her as a personal assistant, telling her what to do all the time. The nurse told me she got very angry with this woman and occasionally tempted to shout at her. Doing so, however, could get her fired because the owner of the pharmacy would most likely back his wife rather than her. It was because she 'just kept quiet' that she never got angry at the woman and avoided to get fired before properly learning how to treat people.

My conversation with Ali, a 26-year-old lower secondary school graduate, provides another example. Ali had recently tried to convince his father to give him some capital to start a business, something his father had earlier promised to provide. His father refused, broke his promise, and left Ali with little prospect to get ahead in life in the near future. Reflecting upon the disappointment of his father's refusal, Ali emphasised how he kept quiet. He also mentioned that his parents and siblings, who had little schooling, find it hard to understand him when he keeps quiet in situations that give reason to be angry:

> If I ask you anything [and] at first you agree. Then [when] time reaches, I come to you [to ask]: "eh as I told you, have you got for me something?" Then you say "no, do this and this." I keep quiet and say: "no, it is ok brother [he meant father]." You know… Me, I am short-tempered but I calm down very quickly. My tempers come, if I keep quiet then my tempers calm down very quickly. That is why you see, they don't understand me very well at home there. Just like that, they don't understand me. But me I understand them very well. I can learn them very

> well, if I sit down at home like this, I can learn them very well and I know what they are thinking. And me I know where their minds are, very well. Me I just laugh and keep quiet. **(12/02/2019)**[77]

Ali's quote leads us to a second notion that schooled people occupy when differentiating themselves from a stereotypical portrait of the unschooled, that is the English notion of cooling (or calming) down. This phrase is often used in relation to anger, as Ali did in the above quote – one must cool down quickly after getting angry – but is also used more generally to refer to a situation in which someone comes back to a more controlled state after having been emotional. Indeed, in Lugisu people would typically use the phrase *khurusakho kumwoyo*, which literally means 'to reduce the heart', to refer to the process of cooling down, and this phrase is not only used in relation to anger. Someone who is very emotional at a burial, for example, may be told to *khurusakho kumwoyo kwewe* (reduce their heart), that is, to cool down. The heart is seen as the organ through which one's state is best managed. When someone desires something with their heart, they are able to generate the strength of purpose needed to forget other passions, such as pain and sexual desire, and so to control the self. If one is overwhelmed by emotions, the heart has gone wild and must be 'reduced'. Schooled people claim to have the capacity to do this well, often through keeping quiet.

Then there are a range of behaviours that centre around emotional control that people associated with being schooled. Schooled people, for example, claimed to speak in a more controlled manner. Hussein, for example, said schooled people:

> ha[ve] a way of controlling the words that they speak in public, unlike these other people [without education] who can talk anything whether obscene or something like that […] When it comes to vocabulary there is no difference. What I [am] explaining is, the educated people mind what word is being mentioned in public where as these other people can speak anything whether it is obscene or something like that. **(09/07/2021)**[78]

These kinds of reflections were typically accompanied with specific bodily expression to demonstrate that schooled and unschooled people do not only differ in terms of *what* is being said, but also in *how* they say things. Nuru, who imitated the unschooled woman to make her point about Juliet, demonstrated how people without schooling are seen to speak louder, faster and with more bodily movements. Like the more expressive orchestra conductors, unschooled people are seen to express themselves more often with rougher arm movements and employ more obvious mimicking forms.

[77] Language of expression: English
[78] Language of expression: English

Furthermore, several schooled people told me that quarrelling in public, or worse, fighting, is more common among the unschooled. One of the things that schooled people mentioned as the most important difference between their marriages and those of unschooled couples was the lack of public quarrelling. Sylvia, a 21-year-old secondary 2 drop-out who thought of herself as schooled, highlighted this point.

> Those who are not educated, there can be a problem in their home, they stand with each other on the roadside and they start abusing each other on the roadside. Subsequently, they try to explain that problem to everybody who passes by. **(31/01/2019)**[79]

On the contrary, schooled people, Sylvia explained, would not do such a thing. They have a greater ability to manage arguments in a controlled manner, and they settle them indoors and do not bother their neighbours with their own problems. Furthermore, during a few public quarrels I witnessed, a schooled person was the keenest to calm things down. During one such occasion – a fight between different families after a burial – Hussein decided to step in and calm things down because "people were talking recklessly".

Alcohol consumption leads to uncontrolled behaviour and is therefore associated with being 'unschooled'. Geoffrey, cited before, expressed this when he said drinking alcohol is for people in the village (people of the hoe, symbolic of unschooled):

> [m]ost of the people there [in the village], you know, they like these alcoholic beverages. […] They like gathering, they put there a pot, they put there alcohol, they start taking. Someone who had ever gone to school, you cannot do that, you cannot. **(19/07/2021)**[80]

The kind of uncontrolled and disruptive behaviour that can come from alcohol consumption is seen as more awkward if one is schooled. Indeed, Geoffrey later mentioned that a schooled person who wants to drink needs to do so in a controlled manner, i.e. without causing a disturbance.

> If you feel like you want to take a drink, you go, you buy, go to your home, then drink from there, after there, you sleep. How will you destroy the environment? No way because you are sleeping. But tentatively, it is not advisable to drink, but when you are addicted in such a way that you cannot leave it, at least buy, and you buy when you are finished with your work, go at home, drink, after drinking, sleep, that is how educated people [are supposed to] do their things. **(19/07/2021)**[81]

[79] Language of expression: Lugisu
[80] Language of expression: English
[81] Language of expression: English

Although the Bagisu value self-control as a universal quality that all people should try to achieve and adhere to, especially men, schooled people's tendency to differentiate themselves from the unschooled in terms of this quality does seem to manifest itself in actual behavioural differences. In local video halls, for example, I observed that unschooled people tended to sit closer to the screen and were less hesitant to comment on what happens: 'Ouch, that hurt!' when someone got shot or the screaming of 'Yaaah!' when two people are kissing. Schooled people, on the contrary, would more often sit at the back and watch in silence. If they wanted to ask me something, they would come and sit closer to me so that they did not have to shout. After several months of fieldwork, I often felt I could read the difference between schooled and unschooled people through assessing the extent to which people tried to control their emotions in everyday behaviours in settings such as the video hall. When I found out to my surprise that Isma, a man in his thirties who talked very quickly and loudly, and often woke up the village with extreme outbursts of laughter in the morning, had finished lower secondary school, people seemed to understand my confusion. "Yeah, that is just the way Isma is", said Mafabi, a 26-year-old upper secondary school graduate, when he noted my surprise.

Schooled people's investment in the idea of self-control may also partially explain why they continue to embrace circumcision, rather than rejecting it for being 'backward' or 'traditional', like schooled people have done with such rituals in other contexts. Indeed, the ideal of self-control is strongly connected to the ideal of circumcision. The 'techniques du corps' (Mauss 1973) one must possess to handle circumcision successfully stands for the importance given to a broader set of behaviours that attest to one's control over natural passions and emotions. Heald (1998) makes this principle explicit when she suggested that a man's controlled speech is seen to attest to his possession and control over *lirima*, the male force that men are said to build upon to manage circumcision (see Chapter 1). Circumcision reflects the broader ideal of *khwifuka*, which, in turn, brings together a series of more concrete notions and behaviours that schooled people build upon to differentiate themselves from those they consider unschooled. Note, however, that it is not the case that schooled people are seen to have superior competency in the kind of bodily control that is required to handle circumcision, nor do they claim so themselves. The capacity to undergo circumcision successfully remains something that all men are seen to have, and a man's superiority or inferiority in this respect can only be assessed through an analysis of his performance during the ordeal.

Schooling and circumcision: How educational success requires self-control

There are several reasons why the quality of self-control has come to be associated with being schooled. I would like to start with the idea that self-control is considered to be an important requirement for success in school, and so those who do get far in school, by implication, are seen to

have a greater capacity for self-control. This view is manifested in the rather striking parallels in the way people talk about the challenge of schooling and the challenge of circumcision. As noted in Chapter 1, the Bagisu believe that self-control can be attained through extreme strength of purpose. In the context of circumcision, a boy's desire to be cut must come from his heart, otherwise he would not be able to stand the ordeal. In a similar vein, educational success is said to require a 'heart for education' (*kumwoyo kwe lisoma*), a phrase that connotes extreme dedication, like it does when the heart is mentioned in relation to circumcision. A *kumwoyo kwe lisoma* is needed for a child to resist the temptations of sex, money and 'bad' peer groups, commonly referred to as important causes of school drop-out, as well as to manage challenges like being hungry in school, getting disappointed over bad grades and other educational challenges. A child's heart needs to be 'on' schooling to be successful, pretty much in the same way as that of the initiate's heart needing to be 'on' circumcision to stand the ordeal.

Ensuring educational focus and strength of purpose is a key concern for school-going children. During my fieldwork in a secondary school, I asked S4 students to anonymously write a response to the question: *When someone is in school and that person has a boyfriend or girlfriend, does that have a bad effect on this person's performance in school?*[82] Responses were mixed[83], but the answers of students who answered affirmatively were strikingly consistent (see Figure 6). Their answers all centred around a concern to avoid distraction and protect their focus on education. They argued that relationships lead your thoughts to be on your partner, which means you will be less capable of focusing on studying: "you can't serve two masters at a go" as one girl put it. Interestingly, one of the boys used a similar way of reasoning to argue that a relationship does *not* have a bad effect on performance in school. He argued that having a girlfriend can reduce the sexual dreams that may be disturbing one's focus on schooling (see last response in Figure 6).

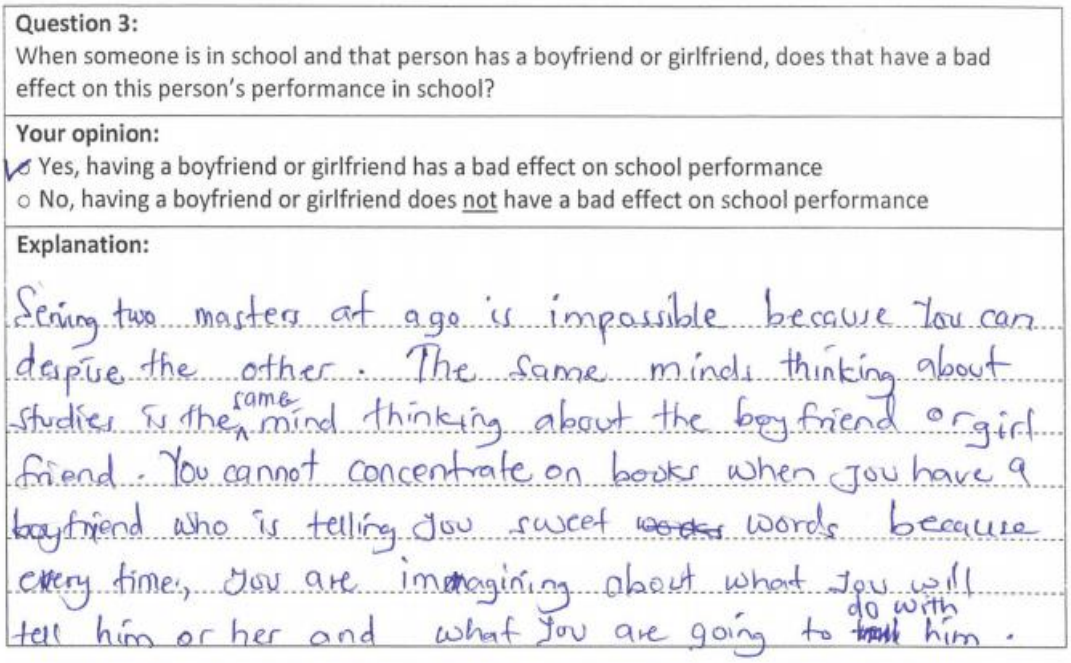
With Brian, a secondary school student, I discussed the way in which his parents encouraged him to study, as well as how he tried to avoid drop-out himself. The importance of strength of purpose was emphasised by both Brian's parents and Brian himself:

> **Floris:** Do your parents encourage you to study? **Brian**: Both my father and mother encourage me to study. They say: 'if you go to school, do not play.' They say that I should know that I have come here to get something out of it, that I should not come for other things. **Floris:** What other things for example? **Brian**: Other things like joining peer groups. These can convince you

[82] This question was part of a longer form with 4 questions in total. Students were asked to explain their answers to the questions. In total, 12 S4 students filled out the form (10 girls, 2 boys).
[83] Most of the students who wrote that having a boyfriend or girlfriend has no effect on performance argued that such a person can help out with subjects they struggle with.

to stay away from school and people in those groups are addicted to drugs. **Floris**: Is it hard for you to stay away from these groups? **Brian:** No, it is not difficult for me, because I know the reason I came here. When they want to lure me into those things, I reject it. **(24/06/2019)**[84]

Figure 6. Secondary 4 student's responses to anonymous question form[85]

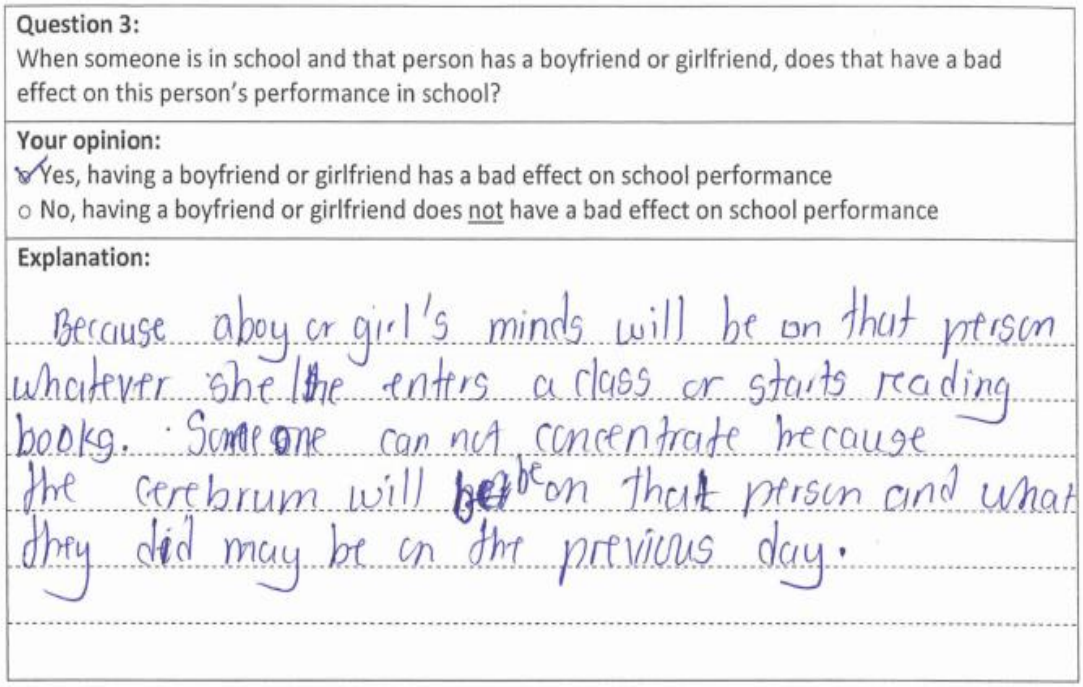


Question 3:
When someone is in school and that person has a boyfriend or girlfriend, does that have a bad effect on this person's performance in school?

Your opinion:
✓ Yes, having a boyfriend or girlfriend has a bad effect on school performance
○ No, having a boyfriend or girlfriend does not have a bad effect on school performance

Explanation:

Seeing two masters at ago is impossible because You can deprive the other. The same minds thinking about studies is the same mind thinking about the boyfriend or girl friend. You cannot concentrate on books when you have a boyfriend who is telling you sweet ~~words~~ words because every time, you are imagining about what you will tell him or her and what you are going to do with him.



Question 3:
When someone is in school and that person has a boyfriend or girlfriend, does that have a bad effect on this person's performance in school?

Your opinion:
✓ Yes, having a boyfriend or girlfriend has a bad effect on school performance
○ No, having a boyfriend or girlfriend does not have a bad effect on school performance

Explanation:

Because a boy or girl's minds will be on that person whatever she/he enters a class or starts reading books. Someone can not concentrate because the cerebrum will be on that person and what they did may be on the previous day.

[84] Language of expression: English
[85] The first three extracts are of three girls, the last extract is of a boy.

Question 3:
When someone is in school and that person has a boyfriend or girlfriend, does that have a bad effect on this person's performance in school?

Your opinion:
- ● Yes, having a boyfriend or girlfriend has a bad effect on school performance
- ○ No, having a boyfriend or girlfriend does not have a bad effect on school performance

Explanation:

Yes, having a boyfriend or girlfriend has a bad effect on school performance because when some one have a boy friend or a girl friend that person will be in class but his/her minds are very afar about his boyfriend and girlfriend and even that person has no time of reading books every he/she wants to see his boy girlfriend or her boyfriend which later can lead to poor performance.

Question 3:
When someone is in school and that person has a boyfriend or girlfriend, does that have a bad effect on this person's performance in school?

Your opinion:
- ○ Yes, having a boyfriend or girlfriend has a bad effect on school performance
- ● No, having a boyfriend or girlfriend does not have a bad effect on school performance

Explanation:

Having a girl friend prevents sexual dreams. The brain part contains Pituitary gland which has become a problem to us as learners. Therefore when having a girl friend, some Stresses are reduced Should you demd of a certain disturbance. And a girl friend in good Co-operation can save your life against enemies and even helping in weak areas were you don't understand

While his parents encouraged Brian to keep in mind the greater goal of schooling, Brian himself mentioned that "knowing the reason he came to school" helps him to avoid bad influences from 'peer groups'. Quite explicitly, Brian suggested that focus on the goal of schooling helps to avoid bad behaviour, a reflection of the typical way in which the Bagisu achieve self-control.

One boy implicitly made the connection between the heart of circumcision and the heart needed to succeed in school. Hamza, a secondary school student who had been circumcised a couple of days before I interviewed him, said:

> Now that I am circumcised, I am now starting to think like an adult, now I no longer have thoughts disturbing my education, like that debt to pay the Bamasaba [meaning: getting circumcised]. I am now going to concentrate with one heart on my studies, then later I will marry. **(21/09/2018)**

This quote not only shows the emphasis people put on the importance of educational focus, but also how the focus required for schooling – a focus that must come from the heart – resembled the one that is needed to be circumcised. Yet the quote also shows how, at a practical level, the relationship between circumcision and the process of schooling is somewhat ambivalent. While the 'thoughts of an adult' one develops through circumcision (greater self-control) help one in school, one's initial desire to get circumcised may distract one from schooling. Furthermore, in Chapter 5 I discuss how schooling is associated with childhood. This implies that, at one level, the transition to manhood disqualifies a boy from continuing to go to school after circumcision. Young men were indeed said to often drop out after circumcision.

School drop-out is often talked about as a consequence of circumstances that weaken one's heart for schooling. The implication here is that challenges (e.g. hunger in school and temptations like sex or alcohol) can be overcome by a strong heart and strength of purpose, unless such challenges are too big and alternative courses of action undermine one's focus. Talking about such challenges, Negesa (woman, 25 years old), for example, said in an interview with Zam that Ugandan students:

> don't have pocket money. You go to school when you don't have even one thousand shillings to eat something at school. That is what spoils Ugandan children like us. You have gone to school without even one hundred shilling, while you have got someone [a man] and he has given you one hundred shillings, and tells you to go and buy sugarcane… That is a way in which he can weaken your heart, and eventually you decide to leave education and you drop out of school. **(08/03/2019)**[86]

As noted in Chapter 1, the quality of self-control is strongly gendered in Gisu society. Men are seen to possess the quality of *lirima* while women are more strongly associated with, and seen to be driven by, their sexuality. This works towards a perception of women as being less capable of handling the challenges of schooling. Reflecting this view, Isaac, a university graduate, argued:

[86] Language of expression: Lugisu

> for us men, I can be strong enough to handle some situations. Like here, where we study, sometimes you can go to school without breakfast, you can stay in school without lunch. And we are raised in the same household [me and my sister]. When I am not having breakfast, she is also not having breakfast. But with girls it is very tempting. A boy can come with 10,000 Ugandan Shillings which can run her through the week. For me, no-one will give me, but I have to read. Girls have a weaker spirit. Sometimes they are not strong enough to say no. But some they have also set their dreams and say no. **(05/11/2018)**[87]

Isaac's quote points out that girls are often tempted to engage in transactional sex with boyfriends (see also Chapter 5), both because they have the option and a 'weaker spirit'. Yet, his idea that others are able to resist sexual temptation because they have set their dreams does suggest that he thinks even girls can achieve the strength of purpose needed to succeed in school. In Chapter 4 I will examine further the connection between schooling and self-control related to the gendered view of self-control, introduced in Chapter 1. What I wish to point out here is that educational success is seen to require, and hence reflects, strength of purpose and self-control.

While schooled people are seen to have self-control because educational success requires such strength of purpose, schooling in the Gisu context (and in many other places) involves practices which might easily reinforce this association between being 'schooled' and having self-control. Going through the experience of corporal punishment implies management of pain. Sports, an important component of the school curriculum, involve the development of bodily discipline and control. And, importantly, schools are preoccupied with the development of the 'mind', certainly in Uganda where the curriculum continues to be biased towards more academic study. While views about how self-control is to be achieved might vary culturally, a strong mind is typically associated with a greater capacity for self-control. In the Gisu context, for example, the metaphor of the strong and weak mind is commonly used to point out that women ('weak-minded') have less self-control than men ('strong-minded'). The parallel people draw between schooling and circumcision reflects, and reinforces, an association between self-control and schooling that may be rooted in, and is perhaps further reinforced by, everyday school practices.

Colonial education and controlled forms of conduct

While the emphasis that is placed on self-control as a marker of social distinction in Gisu society predates European influence (circumcision was practised by the Bagisu before the missionaries arrived), Uganda's colonial history has probably contributed to the notion of self-control being

[87] Language of expression: English

associated with being schooled. A discussion of Norbert Elias' famous work *The Civilising Process* ([1939] 2000) helps to see this. In *The Civilising Process*, Elias shows how changes in forms of conduct that took place in Europe between the end of the Middle Ages and the 19th century centred around greater repression of emotion, self-control and self-restraint. This behavioural change – 'the civilising process' – and its results, 'civilised forms', came to be seen as superior forms of conduct because they were associated with elitist lifestyles, and juxtaposed against 'barbaric' or 'primitive' forms.[88]

The civilising process and the increased importance of self-control was instigated, according to Elias, by two broader societal developments. Firstly, centralisation of political power and, therewith, the monopolisation of physical force, resulted in pacified social spaces in which emotions like 'anger', caused by non-physical forms of violence, had to be internalised, that is, controlled. Secondly, an increase in the variety of social functions led individuals to be increasingly dependent upon a larger number of people. Within this network of greater interdependencies some sort of coordination of conduct had to develop, which resulted in more and clearer social rules. The demands to live up to these new social forms, at some point, became so big that a 'blindly functioning apparatus of self-control' came to be firmly established in people at the time (Elias [1939] 2000, 368). Forms of conduct were most sophisticated among elites, whose position at the centre of the social structure generated interdependencies between them and a greater variety of people in different social functions. The spread of 'civilised' forms and increased refinements of such forms were encouraged by greater class dependencies and possibilities of upward social mobility. Under these conditions, lower classes were encouraged to adopt elitist forms of conduct in order to become integrated into these circles. Elites, in turn, would refine their forms of conduct to continue to mark themselves out as different from others.

The moment the colonial powers started to colonise other parts of the world they created these socio-economic interdependencies and possibilities of upward social mobility that instigate a trickling down of forms of conduct associated with 'civilisation', i.e. behavioural forms that express self-control. As noted in the previous chapter, in Uganda a clear social hierarchy was introduced between European colonisers and administrating chiefs on the one hand and ordinary Ugandans on the other, with schooling functioning as the bridge between those two classes. Hence, while forms of conduct that express self-control may have been valued prior to the colonial administration, the conditions that were created by the administration instigated a refinement of these forms, an increase in their importance, as well as encouraged greater interest in them among those with chances of upward social mobility. Because such upward mobility could only be achieved through schooling, interest in 'civilised'

[88] This was less the case for the German notion of 'civilisation' for reasons to do with their particular socio-economic structure at the time, as Elias demonstrates in the first part of his book.

forms of conduct, with connotations of emotional repression, may well have been greatest among those with this chance of schooling and social mobility.

This dynamic was reinforced by the nature of colonial education. Indeed, schooling and religious conversion were explicitly employed as tools by the colonial administration to 'civilise' the country, and religious forms of conduct themselves tend to involve a greater degree of emotional control. One of the reasons that colonial governments continued to facilitate missionary schooling in the first half of the 20th century was the presumed positive effect of religion on personality formation. Popular Ugandan school mottos such as 'to produce God fearing and morally upright citizens', displayed on the walls of many schools today, may be seen as a reflection of this particular history. Schooling and religion were together imbricated in the production of a kind of person that coincides with a 'civilised' person, someone that engages in forms of conduct that express self-control.

Finally, and perhaps a little like the 17th century European elites, the educated elites in the rural Gisu region tend to have a rather central position within broader networks of social relationships. Not only are they, by virtue of their education, more interested in jobs and in a political career in the village, which renders them more dependent on relations with others, they also tend to be important facilitators of connections between town and village. On behalf of their wider family networks they visit and deal with urban centres and help out kin in town with things they wish to realise in the village. The schooled also often 'mediate' relations between different groups (see Chapter 9). In everyday forms of conduct, the educated have to take into account a greater number of people – they have to dance to a greater variety of tunes, one might say after Scott's (1998) metaphor, with each tune reflecting the stylistic expectation of different groups of people. This effectively results in a somewhat hesitant form of dancing marked by self-awareness and restraint. An educated person, according to the primary school teacher Hussein,

> always looks at how the community will look at him, so they mind the way they do their things. Which is a little bit different from these other people who don't mind because here for us in this place they think someone who has gone to school should behave differently, should be someone who has knowledge, who is [more] knowledgeable than these other people. So it sometimes controls them in the way they behave that they want to behave in the way that suits their education. **(19/02/2012)**[89]

[89] Language of expression: English

Schooling instigates a degree of self-awareness that, according to Elias, is typical of people who find themselves in the middle of social networks and such self-awareness, in turn, instigates rather controlled forms of conduct.

Self-control as political capital

When I asked people in the village to name a man they respect a lot, they often picked Asad. Asad was not schooled and when I came to know him in 2018, I did not see any signs of wealth that put him economically above the average farmers in the village. I later heard that Asad was once a successful businessman, but had seen his economic situation worsen over the course of the past decade. Asad, moreover, had never been able to school any of his children beyond secondary school level. People respected Asad, I was told, not so much because of his economic success, but because of the way he conducted himself: he does not quarrel, is usually rather quiet, speaks only when necessary, and speaks slowly, giving the listener the impression that he chooses his words carefully. Asad is a good example of a man who displayed the possession of techniques associated with self-control in everyday life, a competency that had helped him to be elected as a local chairperson at the parish level just before I arrived in Bungoma.

The capacity for self-control is not only the foundation of patriarchy in Gisu society; the demonstration of self-control is also an important prerequisite for getting respect in the village. It produces both hierarchical gender relations and works to socially stratify men in terms of respect. Those men who manage to display greater self-control, like Asad, have greater chances of obtaining formal positions in local institutions such as the church, the mosque, savings groups and clan administrations, as well as securing votes in political elections. Techniques of self-control are, in Bourdieu's terms, a form of embodied cultural capital that may translate into political and economic capital, ultimately improving one's position in society (Bourdieu 1977). The case of Asad demonstrates that such techniques of self-control are in principle open to everyone – Asad himself is not schooled; but schooled people might, by virtue of their schooling, be particularly keen to be observant of forms of conduct that reflect self-control.

Indeed, schooled people are typically oriented towards climbing the social ladder as schooling is historically associated with socio-economic advancement, and families typically expect schooled children to help them develop the homestead. In a context in which the schooled do not easily find jobs and get promoted to social classes associated with life in town through formal employment, they continue to live in the village and are forced to seek alternative ways of developing a career. As I will demonstrate in depth in Chapter 9, local institutions like the church, the mosque or the clan provide suitable alternative avenues through which the schooled may seek such a career. As making a career

in such institutions depends strongly on one's capacity to gain respect from other people in the village, and such respect is gained through forms of conduct that express self-control, schooled people may take greater interest in internalising these forms of conduct. Schooled people strategically deployed forms of conduct that express self-control in order to get ahead in life in the village.

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In this chapter I have shown how several forms of conduct that reflect self-control, or the Gisu concept of *khwifuka*, are seen to be typical of schooled personhood in Gisu society. I have put forward three factors that may partially account for this ethnographic observation: success in school is seen to require self-control, a view that is reflected in people's tendency to talk about schooling and circumcision in similar terms; the British protectorate created circumstances in which the refinement of forms of conduct in the direction of greater emotional suppression became important to people in school; and schooled people's tendency to seek a political career in the village demands them to be observant of techniques of self-control in order to gain the respect needed for such a career. Importantly, what this chapter shows is that self-control – a quality that was initially associated with men – has come to be part and parcel of schooled personhood, an identity that is open to both men and women. This reflection raises a question that I will continue to explore in the next chapter: does schooling undermine the foundation of patriarchy in Gisu society?

4. Gender symbolism, schooling and symbolic empowerment

In Chapter 1 I briefly touched upon the idea that the Bagisu see *lirima* as a male quality and associate sexuality with womanhood. I suggested that these views contribute to male superiority in that the gendered nature of anger and sexuality implies that men are considered to have a greater capacity to control the self. I now continue to explore these gender differences relating to self-control and personhood in greater detail. I will do so in relation to the idea that personhood has a symbolic dimension that can affect the position of men and women in society. The point of departure here is that the opposite categories of Man and Woman[90] are associated with specific qualities that may reflect associations with more fundamental and abstract hierarchical binary opposites, such as, for example, Nature and Culture, that, in turn, cause a devaluation of a particular gender (Ardener 1972; La Fontaine 1985; Mascia-Lees and Johnson Black 2000; H. L. Moore 1988; Ortner 1972). Within the literature concerned with gender symbolism, the universality of categories like Nature and Culture has been the subject of debate (La Fontaine 1981; Strathern 1988), but the idea that the sexes, as categories, are embedded in a broader symbolic structure that can give rise to gender hierarchy is not questioned by those working within a Straussian idiom.

Notwithstanding the complex relationship between gender symbolism and the everyday behaviour of men and women (H. L. Moore 2007; H. L. Moore, Sanders, and Kaare 1999; Strathern 1988), it seems important for the perpetuation of gender symbolism that men and women, at least occasionally, talk, be or act in a manner seen to be reflective of the qualities that are associated with their particular gender, and on the basis of which they may be symbolically associated with more abstract categories (cf. H. L. Moore 1988). Indeed, when symbolic structures appear consistent with everyday experience they are reinforced, but when a gap between the implications of symbolic structures and lived experiences becomes noticeable then those structures may slowly change or become hollowed out. The process of socialisation, then, is of particular importance for the perpetuation of gender symbolism, as it is through gendered socialisation that boys and girls come to be people that coincide with the qualities associated with their specific sex. Initiation rituals like *imbalu* are the last step in the socialisation process; they function to test the attainment of essential qualities and, in doing so, their particular ritual outlook comes to reflect and perpetuate existing associations between the sexes and specific qualities.

As noted, schooling has involved a radical change in the way that children are socialised into adulthood, and produces a new kind of person, associated with specific qualities, interests and orientations. In a context where both boys *and* girls go to school, schooling may thus disrupt the attainment of gendered

[90] Henceforth I will write Man and Woman (with capitals) when I talk of these as 'symbolic' categories.

qualities and produce inconsistencies between gender cosmologies and everyday reality. In the previous chapter I have shown how, in the Gisu context, discourses around schooling and circumcision resemble each other in crucial ways, and how the quality of self-control has come to be associated with being schooled. If circumcision reflects what Man and Woman means in Gisu society and symbolically expresses men's supposed superior capacity to control themselves, what does schooling – accessible to both men and women – do to Gisu gender symbolism if it is talked about in similar terms, and being schooled is too associated with the quality of self-control? Does a gendered capacity for self-control produce associations between Man and Woman, on the one hand, and deeper concepts on the other, through which men come to be valued more than women? And, if so, does schooling therefore 'degender' the quality of self-control, hollowing out the symbolic foundation of patriarchy? And can we talk of schooling as 'symbolically empowering' if this is so?

In this chapter I make a number of points in relation to these questions. In the next section I introduce the idea of symbolic gender inequality in more detail and justify the particular way in which I talk of 'Nature' and 'Culture' in relation to Gisu processes of socialisation into adulthood, which I refer to as the extremes of the socialisation continuum. Then, I develop a comparison between circumcision, the ritual through which boys become men, and the menarche, associated with women's initiation into womanhood. This analysis shows how circumcision can be interpreted as a ritual which pushes men further along the socialization continuum towards the 'Culture' pole, thereby reflecting and reproducing associations between Man and Culture, in contrast to Woman and Nature. In the final part of the chapter, I turn to how schooling can function as a disrupter in relation to the reproduction of such symbolism and has potential to be symbolically empowering (for women). I will argue, however, that, in the Gisu context, this deeper empowering potential of schooling is undermined by secondary school drop-out rates because the drop-out of girls tends to provoke stereotypical comments and reflections about the female body that perpetuate the association between Woman and sexuality, signifying their supposed inferior cultural capacity.

Nature, culture and socialisation

The idea that Man and Woman are symbolically associated with other categories and that such associations in turn may account for gender inequalities is rooted in some of the basic principles of Lévi-Strauss' structuralism (Lévi-Strauss 1963). This theoretical approach to the explanation of cultural phenomena is rooted in the idea that the human brain categorises space and time. Natural phenomena that may actually exist as continua (e.g. the colour spectrum) are cut into segments (e.g. separate colours), so that we come to think of the world in terms of categories that can be grouped in relation

to fundamental binary and hierarchically valued opposites.[91] Subsequently, Lévi-Strauss argued that associations between 'something', categorised in a certain way, and the pole of a deeper binary opposite, affects the way in which that 'something' is used and the status that is given to it by a particular society. In *The Culinary Triangle*, originally published in 1966, for example, he suggests that in various societies the relatively high value that is given to smoked and boiled food, as opposed to the inferior roasted food, may stem from the association between these types of food preparation with the superior category of Culture (as opposed to Nature).[92]

One binary opposition that is commonly argued to exists across all cultures is the opposition of Nature and Culture (Lévi-Strauss 1969; Ortner 1972). The idea here is that humans define themselves in opposition to animals who have no capacity to organise themselves through social contracts. The category of 'Culture' may thus be broadly defined as everything that is created out of human consciousness – that which differentiates people from animals; while 'Nature' refers to everything that is perceived as animalist, given or conditional. Yet, while humans see themselves as cultural, they depend on nature for survival. They must, like animals, have sexual intercourse to reproduce themselves, eat and sleep, and they have natural passions and emotions. While conceptualised as 'cultural', humans are *both* cultural *and* natural. The creation of culture thus involves transcendence over nature and Lévi-Strauss sees in the incest taboo the first step of this process (Lévi-Strauss 1969). Further, in order for humans to remain cultural, they must in some way avoid succumbing to a natural state, that is, an animalist state in which no social contract is realised. Animals have no sense of kinship boundaries and no incest taboos. A degree of control over nature must be exercised through coordination, observance of rules and self-control, and child socialisation involves the attainment of the qualities required for human beings to exercise such control over nature and become cultural beings.

Drawing on the Straussian idea that, when metaphorically associated, the nature of one pair of opposites can shape the way in which another pair is seen, as well as taking the Nature/Culture divide as universal, Sherry Ortner, in her seminal paper *Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?* (1972), argued that what she assumed to be a pan-cultural fact – female subordination – is caused by a symbolic association between Woman and the devalued category of 'Nature'. She points to three dynamics that contribute to this association, all stemming from the biology of the female body. First, women's reproductive capacity renders them more involved in biological reproduction, associated

[91] The example of the colour spectrum is derived from Leach ([1970] 1996).

[92] According to Lévi-Strauss, boiling thanks this association to the fact that a cultural artifact is required for its preparation, smoking to the fact that its end result is a relatively durable product (smoked food does not rot easily) (see Lévi-Strauss 2013, 45).

with nature, while men's physiology makes them more capable of, and frees them up for, greater involvement in cultural projects. Second, the necessity for women to breastfeed their children makes it intelligible for the social role of caretaker to fall upon them. This particular role may contribute to a view of women as closer to nature in two ways: it connects women to the domestic unit, associated with a lower order of culture than the public realm in which the social contract is negotiated; and it makes women mediators between children (associated with nature) and adults (associated with culture).[93] Thirdly, the caring role of women as mothers reproduces gendered personality manifestations, with women becoming more social individuals with weaker ego/role boundaries than men. These differences are subsequently seen to reflect the Nature/Culture dualism.

Ortner's analysis received a number of critiques which can be taken as more general lessons for people concerned with gender symbolism, and demonstrate the trickiness of unravelling deeper categories in another culture (La Fontaine 1981; MacCormack and Strathern 1980). Firstly, based on ethnographic material from the Hagen people of Papua New Guinea, Strathern questioned the universality of the Nature/Culture divide, demonstrating that these categories are not recognised in Hagen thought (Strathern 1980; 1988). Secondly, things that might be interpreted by individuals from the Global North to be 'Natural' – such as the Domestic, Raw or Wild – may in other cultures not necessarily be associated with Nature or with Woman. In other words, the categories of Nature and Culture may not have the same symbolic outlook everywhere. We should therefore not be too quick to assume symbolic associations between Nature and Woman if we find a symbolic connection between 'Woman' and something that an individual from the Global North may see as natural (La Fontaine 1981; Strathern 1980). Thirdly, the relationship between an oppositional pair that is taken to reflect a Nature/Culture divide, such as Domestic/Public or Wild/Cultivated, may not actually be one of 'control' or 'hierarchy'. If these are taken as reflective of a Nature/Culture divide, then a somewhat awkward symbolic framework is created in which non-hierarchal opposites are seen to be reflective of a deeper opposite that *is* hierarchical (Strathern 1980). Finally, the relationship between Nature and Culture, as well as the categories themselves, tends to be differentially operationalised by Ortner: sometimes Nature can grow into Culture (children grow into adults), sometimes Culture is a force that works upon Nature (humans have to control their environment), yet the concepts are kept rigid in her analysis in order to demonstrate hierarchy between the two (ibid).

[93] Note that while mediating between Nature and Culture may produce associations between Woman and Culture as much as Woman and Nature, the fact that responsibility for boys' socialisation tends to be passed on to men at a later age suggests that boys' final steps towards becoming fully cultural can only be realised by the help of fellow men. So women are positioned closer to the natural end of the socialisation continuum.

While these are useful critiques and mean we cannot apply Nature and Culture oppositions too crudely, ethnographic evidence does show that in many societies people do define themselves in opposition to some sort of natural state, associated with animals and babies (Abu-Lughod 1986; Boddy 1989; Douglas 1975; Lévi-Strauss 1964). In the Gisu context adult human beings are quite explicitly contrasted with animals and babies, and the latter devalued. Remarks like 'we cannot live like animals' are commonly made by the Bagisu to emphasise the importance of organisation and observance of rules. Town people are said to have abandoned certain cultural principles and are sometimes said to 'live like animals'. Particular animals are devalued because they lack specific human qualities. The dog is known for his lack of sexual shame and disobedience of the incest taboo, while the hyena stands for greediness. A person who is seated in a manner exposing private body parts is said to sit like a dog, while a person who is too quick to grab food is said to eat like a hyena. A person who does not wear shoes is said to walk around like a chicken, a comment that is considered very insulting. People do not feel sorry for animals that are slaughtered. When I showed this sentiment on one occasion, people asked, surprised about the fact that I truly felt sorry for an animal: "why would you feel sorry for the goat, is this goat a human being?"

The category of a baby is equally employed to reject inappropriate behaviours. When a group of people do not adhere to social norms applicable in a particular setting, they are often said to 'follow the behaviour of babies'. Like animals, babies are given a considerably lower status than socialised human beings, something that is most clearly seen at funerals. While the death of an adult might engage mourners from almost the whole area, a baby's funeral is only attended by neighbours and close relatives of the affected family. Those ceremonies I attended only involved about 50 people and no mourners. Babies have not yet shown to be 'good people', so no one is inclined to mourn at such occasions, it was explained. Being a good person requires a level of socialisation that babies have not achieved, which in turn makes them considerably less valuable than adults.

In the rest of the chapter, I focus on the socialisation of children into adulthood. I will talk of socialisation in a similar way as Lévi-Strauss does: a transition from Nature to Culture that all individuals have to go through, and which involves the attainment of 'cultural capacity' – the qualities necessary to adhere to the social contract and observe social taboos. Put differently, I take Nature and Culture to be categorical products of cognitive segmentation of the socialisation continuum. My focus is not on the development of a symbolic framework in which Woman and Man are connected to other binary opposites that in turn might be seen to reflect a deeper Nature/Culture divide. Instead I use the Nature/Culture divide as a heuristic device that will allow us to see how schooling may have an effect on gender symbolism. By sticking to a conceptualisation of Nature and Culture as poles of the socialisation continuum, I avoid combining different operationalisations of the relationship between

Nature and Culture – I solely think of the divide as a continuum and that something natural can grow into something cultural.[94] I do assume a hierarchical relationship between Nature and Culture, which seems a fairly uncontroversial assumption. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that the unsocialised – the baby, or the animal – are valued more than the cultural adult and this, as I have shown above, is certainly not the case in Gisu society.

Becoming an adult in Gisu society

What it means to come of age differs remarkably for men and women in the Gisu context. While the coming of age for a man is associated with the development of *lirima*, needed to achieve the level of self-control required for successful adulthood, and to stand the ordeal of circumcision, a woman's initiation into womanhood is associated with the development of sexual interest and connected to the menarche. In the next two sub-sections I develop a symbolic analysis of the menarche and circumcision with a view to demonstrate how circumcision pushes men, symbolically, closer to the cultural pole of the socialisation continuum, while the menarche signifies women's incapacity to reach a similar cultural level. My analysis reveals that gendered initiations into adulthood are connected in the sense that the symbolism of circumcision can only be unravelled in relation to the way in which people give meaning to the menarche.

Becoming Woman: The menarche and sexuality

The Bagisu tend to portray women as individuals with a strong sexual urge. Let me turn once more to Wangusa's *Upon This Mountain* in a first attempt to demonstrate this. When Mwambu – one of the main characters in the novel – visits his sister-in-law, whose husband (his brother) works in another area, the following scene unfolds:

> 'Now tell me, my own husband [sister-in-law talking to Mwambu],' she pressed on with her accusations, 'tell me how warm this bed has been for countless moons, since your brother left? How do I keep it warm? And if it's not warm, who is to blame?' She turned sharply and faced him and threw her arms round him just above the waist-line, pressing him hard to herself. And suddenly Mwambu took fright. *Lord God, what's this?* He asked within himself. *Please, Lord…*
> 'All right,' she said, breathing in heavy spasms, 'if you want to deny that it's your job to keep

[94] This means that I am also exposed to Strathern's critique that I assume a metaphoric connection between different opposites that stand in a different relationship with one another (while Nature can grow into Culture, women cannot grow into men). However, two binary opposites do not have to have to resemble each other in terms of their internal relationship for them to be metaphorically associated. Indeed, one may question the extent to which the colours red and green are internally related, in exactly the same way as the concepts of danger and safety that these colours often stand for.

> this bed warm, I'm going to fight you!'. Was it madness or a dream? He tried to struggle free but she held him as in a vice. ([1989] 2005, 52-3)

In this part of the book a strong desire for sex gets the better of Mwambu's sister-in-law after her husband has been away for a long time and she forces Mwambu to have sex with her. The passage is, of course, unrealistic, for the Bagisu do not consider it likely that a woman rapes a man, nor are women seen to lack sexual self-control to this extent. But the rather peculiar passage does reflect the way in which women are portrayed in everyday conversations. They are said to have rather strong sexual desires, urges they find difficult to suppress.

For example, Ahmed, a young man who had been recently circumcised when we spoke, told me that women cannot be left alone for too long. When you work elsewhere for a considerable period of time, women are likely to commit adultery, even if you send a lot of money back home:

> They always say women are not as patient as men. That is why they look around for sex. Even if you send rice, meat, whatever… Women have their own slogans they use: 'the private parts of a woman don't eat meat, neither do they eat rice.' That is why they move out even if you are sending all financial needs. **(09/11/2018)**[95]

While women were less quick to make such comments about their own sexuality, and on several occasions claimed that men have strong sexual urges too, women did, in general, adhere to the idea that women have a rather strong sexual urge. Reflecting upon high drop-out rates among girls due to pregnancies, Jamila, a female teacher who got married in Bunyafa, stated: "the bad thing with women, more especially we, the easterners, [is that when] a girl reaches twelve years, they become a problem to control" – a comment that reflects a broader concern about girls' lack of sexual self-control leading to educational drop-out. The fact that Jamila mentioned that *eastern* women in particular tend to become uncontrollable when in puberty reflects a broader reputation Gisu women have in other parts of Uganda: a group of educated Teso people once told me that they know the Gisu, among other things, for the sexual disloyalty of their women.

The development of interest in sex is associated with girls' transition to adulthood. As opposed to what Jamila's comment suggests, people do not commonly associate girls' sexual development with a particular age. Every girl is believed to develop sexual interest at her own pace and the extent to which a girl has developed such sexual interest is seen to reflect the extent of the process of becoming an adult. A girl is considered a child when her behaviour does not reflect interest in sex, she is considered

[95] Language of expression: Lugisu

an adult when it does. For example, when I asked Zaina whether her daughter Laila, who had recently joined secondary school, was still a child or not, she said:

> She is still a child […] because she has not yet entered into things of the world [metaphor for sex]. The second thing, you don't find her in groups of other girls [who might talk about men]. Another third thing, when she is in a group of girls, like at school, when she realises that they are dating men, she leaves that group. That one gives me the impression that she still has thoughts of a child. Even if you tell her to go to the shop… She doesn't allow that [presumably because she wants to avoid encountering men on her way to the shop]. **(13/02/2019)**[96]

In Gisu thought, a girl's bodily growth and sexuality are linked because physical maturation is seen to imply greater sexual interest. As a girl's physical maturity advances, so does her sexuality increase, up to the point that she becomes a woman. This transition, the process of becoming a woman, is often framed in terms of girls losing control over their sexuality. As their bodies mature, at some point, girls are said to lose their minds; their sexuality gets the better of them; girls succumb to the grip of their bodies, lose rational thought, and are duped and lied to by men, incapable of seeing through such lies because of their physical state. A girl like Laila would presumably no longer be capable of walking away from chatter about men and may aspire to go to the shop rather than refuse when she is in the middle of this transition. It is assumed that girls can no longer be controlled by their parents when this process unfolds and parents are forced to let them get married at that point. Marriages come about through elopement – girls moving in with their suitor without informing their parents – a practice the Bagisu themselves find appropriate because a girl's maturation is seen to imply that she, at some point, comes to be driven by her sexual desires rather than rational thought. Zolaika, a woman in her 40s, in a somewhat unstructured comment, spoke along these lines:

> [T]hese children, especially like the girls… Us mothers, we are the ones who look after girls. […] You think she [a girl] is young in thoughts and the body, yet the person has already grown up their body. What does growing the body mean? Like moving with boys and do things there, that you don't know. If they have groups of boys, even if you talk, they don't listen. They don't take in. Now you leave… she decided for herself whether she gets married because there is nothing you can do for her now. You leave whether she gets married or what… Until herself, through experience, she will see. **(31/01/2019)**

The connection between the sexual development of women and their transition to adulthood is also reflected in terminology around womanhood and marriage. It is upon marriage that a 'girl' (*umukhana*,

[96] Language of expression: Lugisu

pl: *bakhana*) obtains the title of 'woman' (*umukhasi*, pl: *bakhasi*). The words 'woman' and 'wife' are both captured by the term *umukhasi* in Lugisu, so, linguistically, female socialisation into adulthood presupposes sexual activity for it is upon marriage that one obtains the title of 'woman'. The literal meaning of the word for female marriage, *khukhwalikha*, is 'to be sexed'. The male counterpart of this word, 'to sex' (*khukhwala*) is an extremely vulgar term that is avoided. To refer to male marriage the more neutral verb 'to take' (*khuyila*) is used. The Gisu verb 'to sex' can only be used with a male subject; women can only 'be sexed'. These gendered linguistic differences might be taken to reflect a number of things: a woman's marital move is associated with her sexuality; the quality of sexuality is associated with femininity more than with masculinity; while sexual activity itself must be controlled by men.

I have suggested that womanhood is strongly associated with sexuality in the Gisu context, a girl's bodily development is associated with her sexual development and a girl's transition to adulthood is often portrayed as a process whereby sexual interest takes the better of girls. These observations resonate with the existence of a symbolic connection between women's sexuality and their menstrual blood. In the Gisu context, a girl who has not yet had her menarche is considered not yet interested in boys, while a girl who has started menstruating is, almost immediately, suspected of sexual interest. Sylvia, a mother in her fifties for example, trying to explain why some girls have their menarche earlier than others, mentioned:

> They say that a girl who delays having her periods, it is because she doesn't have feelings [for men]. But other girls, those who start their periods early, […] this indicates that she is playful with the opposite sex. **(03/09/2021)**[97]

Culturally specific biological interpretations of menstrual blood tend to shape menstrual taboos and the powers assigned to menstrual blood in a particular society (Buckley and Gottlieb 1988, 36). The Bagisu do not have many menstrual taboos, but the few they have indeed reflect a symbolic connection between menstrual blood and women's sexuality (or, relatedly, their fertility). The most important rule is that a menstruating women must abstain from sexual intercourse. This is not because menstrual blood is believed to be dangerous for men, but because sexual intercourse is believed to intensify a woman's flow of blood.[98] A woman who has sex during her menstruation may find her period extended by a few days, or worse, faint. Sexual stimulation is thus associated with the flow of blood.[99]

[97] Language of expression: Lugisu

[98] A woman having her period is in general not considered polluting. She must wash herself well, but not be ritually cleansed; and she can continue to cook for her husband and children. Only a few men (usually Muslims) did not eat the food of a woman having her period, but that was always for religious reasons (not cultural ones).

[99] Note that my analysis of female blood differs quite substantially from La Fontaine's take on this theme. She argues that blood is merely associated with fertility and points to the dangerous powers of blood. She lists a

Furthermore, several beliefs draw a connection between menstrual blood and a woman's fertility. When a woman stops menstruating during pregnancy, it is said that the menstrual blood has turned into a baby and, for that reason, suspends the female period. The blood a woman loses during menstruation and delivery is said to be bad blood, because it did not successfully participate in the generation of life. This is reflected in some beliefs about the powers of menstrual blood and blood lost after delivery. When a woman having a period drops blood in a garden where seasonal crops have germinated, but not yet matured, it is said that they may die; and menstrual blood, blood lost during delivery and the placenta may be used by witches to cause infertility and must thus be buried out of people's sight. Of a woman having her period, furthermore, it is said that she has 'gone to Masaba' (*azile Masaba*), the common ancestor of all Gisu, which seems to draw a parallel between menstruation and patrilineality or procreation.

Having established a symbolic connection between a woman's menstrual blood and her sexuality, founded upon Gisu biology of the female body, a parallel emerges between the way in which people talk about the sexual development of girls and the way in which blood becomes uncontrollable when a girl starts menstruating. Like the menarche, which a girl cannot control, the rise of sexual interest is equally framed as something that gets the better of her. The analogy of a bucket that slowly fills as a girl comes of age, and at some point overflows, works well as an analogy to frame this Gisu view; the overflow reflects the menarche and loss of sexual self-control. This is an important reflection which also enhances understanding of the meaning of male circumcision (see next section).

Note, however, that there is a contradiction in the way in which women are portrayed in relation to their sexuality and the way in which they are expected to behave and treated. Firstly, women are not expected to act in a sexually 'wild' manner. On the contrary, propriety demands women to act hesitantly when they are approached by men and female marital loyalty is as much an ideal among the Bagisu as in most other societies. The point is that people believe that women's attempts to restrain themselves are doomed to failure. While women try to live up to cultural ideals of self-constraint, it is assumed that they can be quite easily seduced by men. Secondly, while young girls are said to become uncontrollable when they develop sexual interest, it is believed that a degree of influence can be exercised upon the development of such interest. Both parents and girls can employ techniques to delay the emergence of sexual interest, and today take great interest in doing so to avoid premature educational drop-out. I discuss these techniques in greater detail in Chapter 5, but wish to mention

number of ways in which female blood is believed to be dangerous to men (La Fontaine 1972, 164), but I did not come across such taboos, nor did old women remember the existence of such taboos in the past. This difference in findings is probably explained with reference to different geographical settings and historical developments, but in both cases, I think, one might read the absence of such taboos as indicative of limited cultural importance. La Fontaine does point to the importance of the theme of the uncontrollability of female blood.

here that, while trying their best to suppress a girl's sexual development, people consider such attempts likely to fail eventually and parents take it rather lightly if a young girl drops out of school because she decided to get married. 'Ah, you know girls', or 'we tried to prevent it, but at some point you have to let go', were typical parental comments when girls eloped while still in school.

Becoming Man: Circumcision and anger

While girls' transition into adulthood centres around the rise of sexual interest, a process associated with the emergence of the menarche, boys become men as soon as they undergo circumcision, a ritual in which they display their possession of a rather different quality: *lirima*. The idea that circumcision centres around men's demonstration of the quality of *lirima* comes from Heald's (1998) analysis of the ritual.[100] While the English word 'anger' indeed comes closest to the Gisu concept of *lirima*, it cannot capture the full meaning, notably the positive qualities associated with the Gisu concept of *lirima*. As Heald (Heald 1998, 58) writes: "[While] one might start with the idea that [*lirima*] refers to violent emotion and many ways in which the Bagisu talk about it suggest that such emotion is also experienced as overwhelming and even out of control", a man can also use *lirima* to steel himself: "*Lirima* not only has negative but also forceful and positive connotations, the force behind that strength of character which makes men courageous and determined" (1998, 59).

I did not actually hear the Bagisu themselves mentioning *lirima* as an important emotion in relation to circumcision. What they make explicit is that successful circumcision requires strength of purpose, and it is this quality they strongly consider to be a masculine one. I find the concept of *lirima* useful, though, as a way to capture that qualitative aspect of male physiology which, according to the Gisu, makes men capable of achieving strength of purpose. *Lirima*, rather than being merely an emotion, captures a spiritual quality that only men possess and through which they can generate strength of purpose. It is perhaps best to think of the quality as a male life force.

It makes sense to use the term *lirima* to conceptualise this male quality for two reasons. Firstly, because anger has the quality of generating focus; an angry man sees nothing but the target of his anger. Secondly, because anger, when left uncontrolled, can be dangerous, which resonates with the relatively high potential for violence for which Gisu men are known. When *lirima* is not controlled a Gisu man becomes an angry man indeed. Thus, *lirima* can generate focus, but can, when left uncontrolled, be dangerous too. Achieving self-control, for the Gisu, centres around the channelling of the positive quality of *lirima* – its capacity to generate focus – towards rationally identified, virtuous

[100] Although La Fontaine (1985, 122) also mentions that *lirima* is "the basis for the independence and competitiveness that the Bagisu admire in men, and in this context it is the source of eagerness to undergo initiation."

life goals, so that greater determination and strength of purpose are realised. When this is successfully done, a man becomes able to resist every-day 'destructive' temptations and impulses such as becoming violent when insulted, envious when unsuccessful, or sexually active when still in school. Strength of purpose, achieved through the channelling of anger, is needed to control the natural passions.

Circumcision is essentially a test of a man's capacity to achieve this sense of purpose and hence demonstrates his possession of the quality of *lirima*. A crowd witnesses the operation and a boy must stand absolutely still when he is cut. Any sign of fear or pain is judged negatively by the crowd and reflects badly not only on the boy himself but his entire clan. The Bagisu believe that the ability to ignore the pain can only be achieved through extreme strength of purpose; a strong desire to become circumcised is what makes the boy forget the pain. Hence it is a boy's desire to be circumcised that is tested, assessed and built up in the boy in the weeks before the operation. Let me turn to a few aspects of the ritual that demonstrate this most clearly (see Appendix 3 for a more extensive description of the ritual).

The initiative to undergo the ordeal must come from the boy himself, a fact that makes sense if intrinsic desire is seen to be the key to successful circumcision. While boys who refuse to be circumcised are eventually operated on by force, initiates are nevertheless assumed to undergo circumcision voluntarily. The idea that boys choose to undergo the ordeal themselves is strongly emphasised and seen to prove their desire to undergo the ordeal. One initiate, for example, was told by his mother's brother: "you came yourself, you came to ask for circumcision, and we allowed. Let me hope you were not forced by your father or mother", as such force would suggest a lack of desire on the part of the boy and likely result in an unsuccessful operation. Boys themselves are thus keen to demonstrate that they chose to undergo circumcision themselves. When I asked two boys whether they were not scared of the pain, they shouted: "NO! Since it is you yourself who decided you want to get circumcised."

In line with the principle of voluntariness, there is no minimal age for boys to get circumcised and initiates may be as young as 12 years old. A boy's readiness is assessed on the basis of his physical growth and, importantly, strength of purpose. Indeed, while boys are usually not held ready to face the knife until well beyond puberty, a lack of physical growth may be compensated for by demonstration of purpose. A young boy may thus insist on being circumcised even if his father considers him too young, as a way to demonstrate his determination. In fact, it is said that fathers often first refuse their son's request to be circumcised – even if they are physically mature – to test their strength of purpose. If the boy insists, he proves to be determined and is then likely to be granted

permission, for a father has no reason to worry that a determined son will fail to stand the knife properly and shame the lineage.

Strength of purpose is also what a boy must demonstrate when dancing and visiting relatives in the weeks before the operation. The dancing around circumcision (*khukhina imbalu*) involves the alternation of shaking of the chest and lifting the knees, both performed to the rhythm of the music, and jumps resulting in fierce stamping on the floor. The latter is referred to as *khusamba* (to stamp) and is of particular importance because it is through such stamping that boys demonstrate their physical and mental readiness for the ordeal. When moving through the area their guides continuously demand that the boys stamp in front of neighbours and other acquaintances to demonstrate how badly they want to be circumcised. Such stamping they would usually announce through the ringing of the bells tied around their legs, giving each series of jumps an intentional character typical of circumcision: initiation is not something that overcomes a boy, but something he is in control of.

Finally, in the hours before the operation, initiates act as if they can only think about being circumcised and no longer give way to anything. Initiates must be circumcised in a specific order, following seniority of clans and parents. However, the boys themselves act as though incapable of observing these rules. When a certain village is allowed to cut its boys – after an elder has hit a drum – they act as though overwhelmed by a desire for circumcision and must be prevented from reaching the cutting ground too early by their guides. Heald (1998) associates this with the 'bubbling-up' of *lirima* in boys. Once *lirima* has bubbled up in a man it "is seen to dictate [his] attitudes and actions […] it gives force to his motivations and impels him to action (1998, 58)." A boy is totally absorbed by his desire to become a man.

During the ritual cleansing ceremony (*khusabisa*), which takes place the morning after circumcision, the initiate is taught about his new responsibilities and the social expectations that come with manhood. One can see the Gisu preoccupation with focus and purpose in the way the circumciser teaches the boys. It is by remaining focussed on the purpose of things that destructive behaviour can be avoided. When the circumciser gives the boy an axe and a panga he says:

> The axe I made you carry right now, is for making firewood, build your own house. Do not stay in any other person's house. Make your own firewood and water, and you bathe. You make your own firewood. The panga I have made you carry right now, is for cutting your own stems. For building your own house. And use it for grazing, I am not giving it to you to cut people. If you quarrel with your brothers, do not carry the panga (see Appendix 3).[101]

[101] Language of expression: Lugisu

Boys are continuously reminded to keep the purpose of specific materials in mind, and to use these materials for that purpose alone. They must channel the positive qualities of *lirima* towards these particular purposes, generating the focus needed not to succumb to inappropriate behaviour or worse, violence: the panga is to cut stems, not to quarrel with brothers.

Heald has conceptualised the quality of *lirima* as a 'liquid', something that 'bubbles up' in the initiates, an analytical choice that resonates well with the parallel she draws between the brewing of circumcision beer, a central component of the circumcision ritual in southern Bugisu, and *lirima*. Heald sees the fermenting of beer as symbolic of the development of *lirima* in the boys. She does not, however, speak of a specific human liquid (blood, sperm, urine or sweat) that 'bubbles-up' and which the circumcision beer would subsequently stand for. Yet, the Bagisu do seem to associate *lirima* with blood. For example, a man who is 'bleeding' is said to be a danger to anyone who annoys him, because he is not in control of his anger; a man who is not brave enough to beat his enemy must go and 'bleed' again (after he has already bled during circumcision) for he does not have the anger to attack; and a man who disproportionally bleeds during his circumcision is said to be a witch or a thief – that is, someone who is incapable of channelling his anger to virtuous life goals and therefore easily succumbs to destructive behaviour.

The idea that circumcision is about men controlling blood is expressed during the ritual in multiple ways, most importantly in relation to the 'heart' – the organ that controls blood. A boy's desire to be circumcised must come from his heart, it is commonly said, a phrase that makes sense if the channelling of *lirima* – to be read as blood – is needed to withstand the ordeal. A goat's heart is put on a pole near the operational ground, an act some ritual specialists see as symbolic of the idea that boys need to use their heart to control the flow of blood that will come out of them once cut.[102] Further, in northern Bugisu, the two interventions that together make up the full operation[103] are not performed at once. After the first cut boys are supposed to dance in the village for about ten minutes, with their bleeding penis fluttering in the open, and come back later to finish the operation. Boys proudly show their bleeding penis to everybody passing by at this point which partially seems a demonstration of a degree of control over blood.

The Bagisu thus consider circumcision to be a controlled eruption of male blood around the penis and this might be taken as symbolic of men's capacity to channel *lirima* towards virtuous goals in life, in this case, becoming a man. If circumcision blood is read as symbolic of *lirima*, a physiological quality

[102] Note that the heart of the goat is sometimes replaced by the head of the goat and ritual specialists did not agree on the meaning of this part of the ceremony (see Appendix 3).
[103] Circumcision consists of two interventions. The circumciser first pulls the boy's foreskin for a rough cut and then strips the foreskin remaining around the glans of the penis.

associated with manhood, an interesting parallel between male circumcision and the female menarche can be drawn. Male blood is associated with '*lirima*' in a manner resembling the way in which female blood is associated with 'sexuality'. *Lirima* is something that bubbles up in boys as they come of age, like sexuality in girls, but, while men demonstrate their control over *lirima* through the achievement of a controlled flow of blood, a girl is incapable of controlling her sexuality, it is said to get the better of her. The menarche and circumcision may thus be seen as each other's symbolic counterparts, reflecting crucial qualities associated with Man and Woman that instigate a rather gendered perception of capacity for self-control. The idea that circumcision is the symbolic counterpart of the menarche would also explain why blood is created around the male genital and not another part of the male body when boys are initiated into manhood.[104]

In line with this idea, La Fontaine (1972, 180) has suggested that "from one point of view Gisu male circumcision rituals can be seen as a symbolic creation in men of the inherent physical power of women." If it is, however, the rather masculine quality of *lirima* that men show they possess during circumcision, it seems more accurate to think of the ordeal as the creation of men through a process that involves the demonstration of male qualities in a way that is modelled upon female maturation and, crucially, menstruation.[105] While the idea that circumcision and the menarche are each other's symbolic counterparts is clearly an anthropological extrapolation – for the average Gisu person would not recognise this – several practices and beliefs can be seen as direct evidence of such a connection. It is said that a woman having her period should not shake the hand of an *umukhebi* (someone who circumcises boys) during the circumcision season because she might bleed until she faints. This suggests that the *umukhebi* has a degree of power over both men and women's genital blood and the two blood flows are seen to resemble each other. Moreover, several taboos that recently circumcised boys must observe resemble menstrual taboos that used to be observed in the past (La Fontaine 1972) and one circumcision song says that circumcision 'pains like a serious disease in the stomach' (pain in the stomach may refer to menstruation pains; see Appendix 3 for the full song).

Circumcision and cultural capacity

Given the above analysis, and taking Nature and Culture as the extremes of the socialisation continuum, circumcision, it could be argued, pushes men closer to the cultural end of the socialisation continuum than women. This is because, firstly, the self-control required to successfully manage circumcision requires the quality of *lirima*, which only men are seen to possess. The quality of *lirima*

[104] Although in other societies male initiation by nose bleeding has also been associated with menstruation (see for example Read 1982, 69)

[105] La Fontaine (1972), however, draws parallels between circumcision and defloration and childbirth, rather than circumcision and the menarche. In that regard, my analysis differs from hers.

can be deployed to generate greater strength of purpose, which, according to the Bagisu, facilitates the self-control needed to control bodily pain during circumcision, as well as emotions and temptations in everyday life. An important feature that differentiates socialised adults from babies and animals is the capacity to control natural passions, temptations and emotions, so men's possession of *lirima* – expressed in circumcision – renders them culturally more capable than women. Secondly, if one accepts the idea that circumcision is the culturally created male equivalent of the female menarche, the ritual implicitly communicates male compensation for female inadequacy or incapacity: men demonstrate that they can do what women cannot, that is, produce a controlled flow of blood around their genitals. Men's supposed superior capacity to control their natural bodies is symbolically expressed through the ritual.

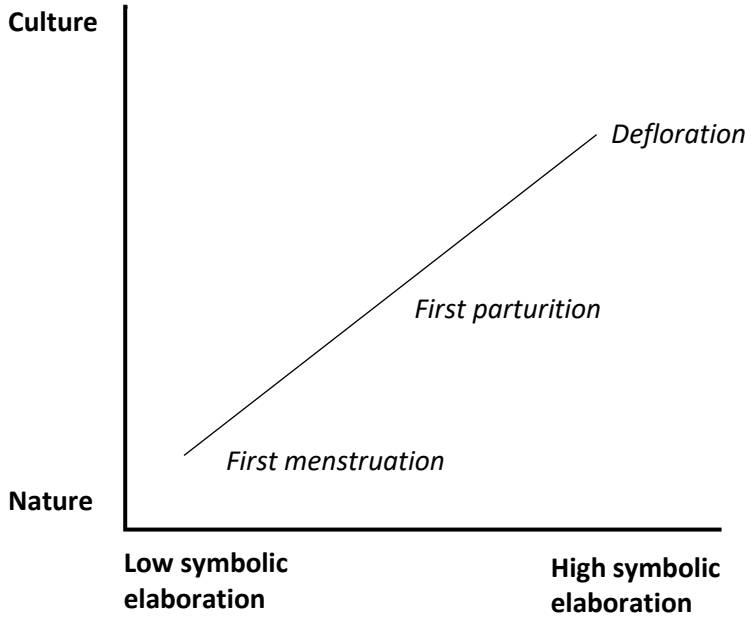
A few additional reflections strengthen this analytical point. Firstly, men are continuously told during the ritual that they must control their sexuality (see Appendix 3). A degree of control over sexual urges, a capacity that women are often said to lack, is assumed in such comments. In light of Lévi-Straus' view that people achieve culture initially through sexual self-control, this may again be seen as the assignment of greater cultural capacity to men. Secondly, it is through circumcision that men qualify to become the protectors of 'culture'. Public meetings, in which social contracts are negotiated, refined and reproduced, may only be attended by *circumcised* men. This is one of the most explicitly stated purposes of the ritual: men must go through circumcision in order to be granted access to village meetings. Finally, during the period of the ritual, which are the final moments of a boy's socialisation, initiates are guided and taught only by circumcised men. Mothers pass on their responsibility to socialise their son to the boy's male kin – a fact that is symbolically expressed in multiple ways during the ritual.[106] In his final steps towards the attainment of his full cultural capacity, a boy can only be guided by men, which presupposes that these steps transcend the cultural capacity that women can reach.

I am not the first to apply a Nature/Culture divide in the Gisu context. In her analysis of the ritualisation of the female life cycle, based on data collected in the 1950s, when female rituals were still carried out, La Fontaine (1972) drew on the paired concepts Male/Female and Nature/Culture to explain ritual elaboration around women's menarche, defloration and marriage. She argued that events in the female life cycle that involve men's control over Nature are given greater symbolic weight, as they are more in line with the more fundamental Gisu idea that Nature must be controlled. Ritual sophistication was greatest during defloration because this flow of blood, associated with a woman's natural powers,

[106] For example, every time an initiate leaves the house to dance for circumcision in the weeks prior to the ordeal, he is 'sent off' by his mother (or another female relative of the older generation); the mother passes on her responsibility to socialise the boy to the men who guide him on the way.

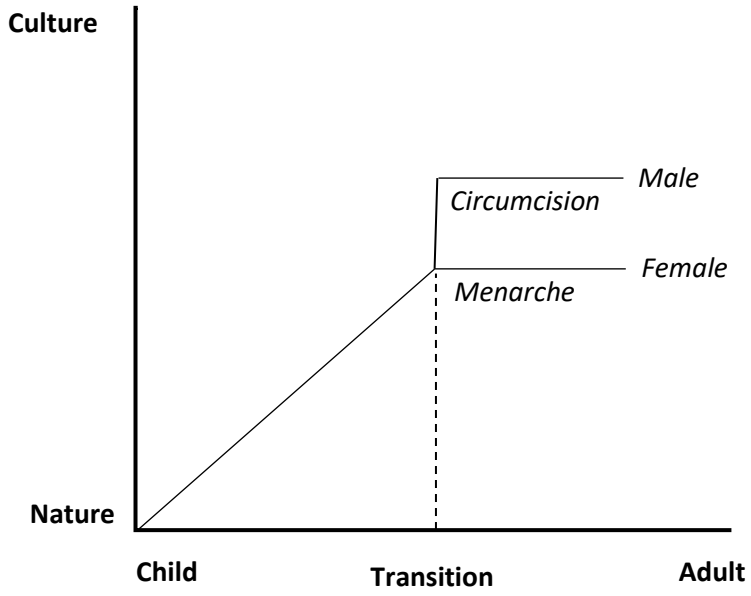
is fully controlled by men, while rituals around the menarche are least elaborate because here men have no control over female blood (Figure 7 graphically presents her analysis). In a later paper, La Fontaine convincingly warned against too crude an application of the Nature/Culture divide in other societies and emphasised that she used Nature and Culture as heuristic devices to make clear that the participants in a ritual may stand for more abstract ideas, and *who* stands for a particular concept differs across rituals: "in another context, that of the initiation of boys, the same paired clusters of ideas are represented by initiates and elders", she argues (La Fontaine 1981, 346).

Figure 7. Schematic summary of La Fontaine's analysis of female ritual among the Gisu



Like La Fontaine I also think of Nature and Culture as useful heuristic devices to point out the existence of more abstract ideas, but I have connected their meaning more strictly to the socialisation process. Children are seen to have no capacity to organise, control and regulate themselves and are as such, like animals, almost entirely natural. Socialisation induces these qualities in children, making of them cultural beings. But, as has been shown, Gisu conceptualisations of both sexes centre around an unequal attribution of such cultural capacity. Men display during circumcision their superior capacity to control themselves, while women's transition into adulthood is framed in terms of loss of sexual self-control, reflected in the particular way the Bagisu talk about the menarche. In comparison to La Fontaine's graphical presentation, my application of Nature/Culture in the Gisu context can therefore be presented as in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Male and female attainment of cultural capacity



Schooling and symbolic empowerment

Events like circumcision both reflect and reproduce gender symbolism, as do more everyday practices when they are in line with hegemonic gender cosmology (see for example Douglas 1975). In other words there is a feedback loop between existing gender symbols and actual practices; symbolic structures inform practices and are in turn perpetuated through these, and symbolic associations become more apparent when their existence is reflected in a greater number of, and more significant, social and cultural practices and principles (Boddy 1989; H. L. Moore 1988). When, on the contrary, a gap between the implications of symbolic structures and lived experiences and practices becomes noticeable (e.g. when women demonstrate they have capacities that used to be associated with men), then those structures slowly change or become hollowed out.

This, of course, is a subtle dynamic. For the symbolism that is invested in Woman as a category exists relatively independently of actual women and the roles they perform in everyday life. Woman can, on the one hand, be associated with weak-mindedness, emotion and animalism, while, in the role of mother, a woman can display great capacity to control her children and work long days without complaining; that is, put up a performance that is at odds with Woman as a category. Cultures do allow for a degree of inconsistency between symbolism and everyday practices, and the relative independence of the category-based and role-based subordination of women means there is not an immediate or direct determination of one by the other (see H. L. Moore 1999; 2007; Sanders 1999). However, symbolism must, I think, at times be reinforced through actual practices, speech, or

behaviour, and so over time the strength of symbolism can be eroded as these practices diminish and inconsistencies and challenges increase, certainly if women become more articulate about their own capacities. Societal developments that contribute to the widening of the gap between gender symbolism and everyday practices and experiences, then, may work to be symbolically empowering in a context in which female subordination has a symbolic dimension.

Schooling has the potential to contribute to the production of such a gap. Since it is through socialisation that boys and girls become adults that reflect specific gender symbols, schooling, as a new way of socialising children, can disrupt the attainment of gendered qualities and produce adults who reflect less the more abstract concepts associated with a particular sex. A comparison between schooling and circumcision helps to see one way in which schooling achieves this in the Gisu context. As noted, circumcision is seen to reflect men's superior capacity to control themselves and enduring the ordeal qualifies men for participation in the cultural domains of life, such as public meetings. Schooling, it can be said, does the same, but for both men *and* women. Indeed, educational success is said to require self-control and, as I have shown in the previous chapter, this is a quality that is associated with the schooled person. At the same time, educational qualifications boost people's legitimacy to participate in public meetings; a schooled person is qualified to join governmental meetings and take the lead in savings groups, among other things. From one perspective, then, one can say that schooling does to men *and* women what circumcision does only to men: testing and proving a degree of cultural capacity and qualifying people for participation in the realms of society in which the social contract – or in other words culture – is defended. Both the quality of self-control and the cultural domain become 'degendered' as a consequence of schooling, and a degree of symbolic empowerment is realised as a consequence.

Furthermore, in the Gisu context, women's transition into adulthood is portrayed in terms of a sudden loss of sexual self-control, a process that is associated with her menarche and seen to cause marriage (*khuwhalikha*, literally: to be sexed) by elopement. Schooling, however, is at odds with such a transition into adulthood. For girls in school it is expected that they resist sexual interest, stay in school and marry later. Schooling therefore produces women whose transition to adulthood is less strongly centred around their sexual coming of age and, in doing so, it undermines principles of the sexual Woman (as opposed to the controlled Man) that are seen to render women inferior in terms of cultural capacity.

Schooling disrupts gendered socialisation in Gisu society in a crucial manner. In the process of growing up, Gisu boys are steered towards ideals of masculinity, i.e., the attainment of those qualities that conform to abstract ideals of masculinity and render men cultural managers, superior to women. In contrast girls, when growing up, develop a cultural capacity that makes them most suitable for

marriage and motherhood, but not for the responsibilities of men. These different socialisations, one may claim, place men and women at different positions along the nature/culture continuum, or at least mean they conform, to some extent, to Gisu cosmology. However, schooling socialises girls into a form of cultural identity which does not conform to this older scheme of gender. The schooled woman is associated with greater self-control and may participate in public meetings, i.e., she comes to resemble men in crucial ways. The idea that schooling disrupts ideas about what it means to be a man and a woman came out well in a conversation I had with Hussein:

> **Hussein:** A woman does not make decisions in any clan, however rich that person may be. They are just consulted but the role of making decisions is in the men's hands, because here, woman are considered to be minors. **Floris:** Minors? […] **Hussein**: Weak-minded, like that. **Floris:** Why do you say weak-minded? What do you mean by weak-minded? **Hussein:** They think there are weak in reasoning, and being that, for us men in Bugisu here, we are circumcised… So we mainly take ourselves to be someone, someone who is strong who should be respected. [Interruption by a phone call]. **Floris:** You were saying that people in this area say that a woman is weak-minded, what makes a woman weak-minded? Why is it that a woman is weakminded compared to a man? **Hussein:** Actually that thing… We think women are weak-minded because previously we have been thinking that they cannot do what men can do. For example, when you marry a woman or even a girl at home, we cannot do the same job, the same duties. For example when it comes to home activities, a girl is supposed to do these simple simple works like sweeping or house work, then a man, previously, before education came, it was a man to fight for the family; it was a man to look for what to eat. So it was a sole responsibility of a man to do that, those big duties of hunting like that. So that is what came into our minds that women are weak, so they cannot decide. **Floris:** But has that changed now? Because you said that was those days before education came. **Hussein:** Actaully with education, women have come out to prove that they can also do what a man can do, although we still have it traditionally. But when it comes to formal settings, women can do well with work. **Floris:** Now for you, do you believe women are weak-minded? **Hussein:** I don't believe so because we are competing with them. They can also compete in education and after education they can do any kind of job that a man can do. **(09/07/2021)**[107]

Schooling, as Hussein's reflection makes clear, widens the scope of the cultural capacity of the adult female to include being schooled and, in doing so, unsettles older gender schemes as the schooled

[107] Language of expression: English

woman poses a challenge to the qualities associated with femininity such as submission, reproduction and enslavement to one's body or physical nature.

Schooling however does not always do this and may, in fact, work in the opposite direction as well. Stambach (2000 see chapter 5), for example, makes the point that schools are not isolated social institutions where gendered identities are newly formed and refined. Rather, older gender norms are also woven into the particular ways that schools function. Based on fieldwork at schools in rural Tanzania, she demonstrates how teacher/student interactions are very much informed by, and reproduce, patriarchal gender norms (see also Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach 2006; Guinée 2014; Stromquist 1992; 2020). In the Gisu context, I found that female school drop-out often provoked comments about women's capacity to control themselves, reflecting their supposed lesser cultural capacity. While I have already cited a few such comments in previous chapters – recall, for example, Isaac, who said that women often drop out of school because of their weaker spirits (Chapter 3) – let me turn to a quote by Nafuna, a woman in her 40s who dropped out of school in S3, to further demonstrate this. When discussing the problem of educational drop-out among girls in an interview carried out by Zam, she said that girls leave school because:

> These children [girls], as I told you, she can be bright but when she is stupid or dull in thoughts. Her friends deceive her. They deceive: the son to somebody loves you... When she doesn't have a phone, he [a lover] buys for her a phone, that he will always use to call her. He takes her thoughts, she forgets the goodness of education. Even if mother and father try to handle her well, when the other one [her lover] has called her on phone, at that time, the man is the one who is important to her. Even if the parents pledge: 'we shall give you this our daughter...' Most especially we women, we are the ones who always cry: 'mother, mother, you will help me if you do like this mother'. Nothing will happen, because the other one [the man] has called her, she steadily goes [to marry] but when she is bright. **(19/02/2019)**[108]

Sexual uncontrollability of teenage girls is often used to explain why many girls leave school prematurely. Even girls themselves sometimes explain their elopement and school drop-out in terms of a sudden loss of self-awareness, blinding love for a man or, in the words of one girl, a process that "covers the eyes and [causes] you [to] fail to understand what is going on". Such reflections reinforce the idea that women have an inferior cultural capacity, and, from this angle, schooling thus acts as a perpetuator rather than disrupter of gender symbolism.

[108] Language of expression: Lugisu

While girls' use of such explanations for school drop-out may imply that they become subtly imbricated in the reproduction of gender symbolism that disadvantages them, attributing school drop-out to their weaker minds or greater sexual urges is intelligible for such attributions can either be strategic or genuine. As Moore (1988) has argued, gender stereotypes can be strategically used by men and women to improve their actual socio-economic positions. For example, a man who wishes to convince others of his view may say: 'women are all like babies, we should not take them seriously'. In a similar vein, a mother whose daughter has escaped her control and left school to get married can free herself from any blame when she presents sexual uncontrollability as a female biological fact. And a girl who actually left school because she felt she was not bright enough may well say that she got 'blindsided' by a man, otherwise she would need to admit to her limited ability at school. People can flexibly employ gender stereotypes to their own benefit, which may explain why women reflect on school drop-out in the way I have described.

Such reflections can also be fairly accurate representations of what actually happens, in which case they would not be strategic but genuine. Indeed, while schooling may work to unsettle older views of the female body, children may continue to internalise these views as they grow into their culture, as long as these views are not yet fully hollowed out. Thus, a Gisu girl might not develop a strong ability to supress her sexuality because of being socialised in a context in which women are held less capable of doing so. Her 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977, 72) – shaped by prevailing gender cosmologies – has oriented her towards giving in to her love for a man, rather than to resisting such feelings. For some girls, then, elopement and school drop-out may truly have been the result of sexual urge or blinding love for a man. Yet, whether strategic or genuine the use of gender stereotypes that reflect women's weaker cultural capacity reinforces the symbolism of patriarchy and undermines the contribution that schooling makes towards the hollowing out of such symbolism.

A final point. As the schooled person is often seen to define themselves in opposition to tradition, as is the case in the Gisu context, it is common for schooled people to reject traditional practices like initiation rituals (such as circumcision) in order to perform a schooled identity (Ngwane 2001; Stambach 2000). Such rituals may thus slowly disappear or loose popularity as more people become schooled. If these rituals are crucial moments when the qualities of specific sexes are expressed, and the sexes come to be associated with more abstract categories as a consequence of their association with these qualities, the contribution of schooling to the disappearance of these rituals may be seen as another way in which schooling can work to be symbolically empowering. However, as noted, circumcision continues to be popular among the schooled in the Gisu context. In the previous chapter I suggested that this may be so because the schooled see the social quality of self-control, tested during circumcision, as important, and therefore continue to recognise the fundamental principles of the

ritual. If this is the case, the idea that schooling works towards the attainment of a greater capacity to control the self *both* undermines gender symbolism (as it allows women to become more like men in crucial ways) *and* helps to reproduce it (by contributing to the continuation of a ritual that strongly separates men and women).

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In this chapter, I have been concerned with the symbolic dimension of patriarchy in Gisu society and explored how schooling interferes with gender symbolism. I have pointed out why schooling has great potential to be symbolically empowering. By disrupting traditional ways of socialisation, schooling can produce men and women who do not reflect gender stereotypes. When doing so, it produces a gap between everyday reality and gender symbolism, so undermining the power of gender symbols and possibly hollowing them out. Exploring this line of inquiry in relation to Gisu society, I have argued that men's perceived superior capacity to control themselves, ultimately expressed in the symbolism of circumcision, puts them closer to the cultural end of the socialisation continuum than women, reinforcing symbolic associations between Women/Nature and Men/Culture that underly male superiority in everyday life. I have suggested that schooling disrupts these associations as it widens the scope of a female's cultural capacity to include being schooled. Schooled personhood is associated with the kind of self-control that previously only men could obtain, pushing one along the socialisation continuum and qualifying one for participation in the public domain. Schooling does, in a way, to men *and* women what circumcision only does to men. At the same time, however, female school drop-out is often explained through the employment of ideas about womanhood that reflect gender stereotypes which work to justify patriarchy, and this undermines the potential of schooling to be symbolically empowering in the Gisu context.

Part 2: The family

5. The making of a marriage: Timing, partnering and prestations

When I realised my research focus had shifted towards investigating how schooling is incorporated into Gisu society, after spending a few months in the field, it did not take long for me to see that my new research interests required me to explore how schooling is changing the making of marriages. Many of the observations that drove me to become interested in schooling, that is, observations of surprising intertwinements between schooling and other aspects of Gisu society, centred around ways in which schooling had become influential in marriage making. For example, I found the families of a recently wedded couple negotiating over the 'money of schooling' – a fine for marrying a girl in school; a father mentioned that he did not plan to pay his son's bridewealth because he had already invested in his schooling; and my early conversations with mothers often resulted in lengthy complaints about losses of educational investment as a consequence of daughters eloping with a man while still in school. In this chapter, I therefore investigate the relationship between schooling and the way in which marriages come about. After introducing the reader to the basic principles of marriage making in Gisu society, I discuss how schooling has come to affect the timing of marriage, partnering and marriage prestations.

The literature on schooling and marriage making demonstrates that schooling is associated with changes in all the aspects of marriage making with which this chapter is concerned.[109] The analysis I develop here contributes to and enriches this literature by following two lines of inquiry. To begin with, the analysis focusses on the way in which schooling is understood locally and explores what that implies for the effect schooling has on different aspects of marriage making. Such a perspective, I argue, helps to see several ways in which schooling affects marriage practices that have not received much attention in the literature. For example: that schooling has come to be seen as an alternative way in which fathers can live up to their paternal responsibilities of providing sons with land and bridewealth, explains why schooled men tend to marry later; or that parents invest in schooling with expectations of reciprocity, leads some schooled women, stuck in a context with limited employment opportunities, to encourage and collaborate with their husbands to raise bridewealth as a way to 'repay' their parents; and the way in which parents try to avoid daughters dropping out of school early,

[109] In terms of marriage timing, there is a literature that is concerned with how schooling affects marriage age, in particular the age of the bride and in relation to the problem of child marriage (Ajaz 2022; Archambault 2011; Blystad et al. 2020; Hodgkinson 2016; Jensen and Thornton 2003; Lindstrom, Kiros, and Hogan 2009; Unicef 2015). In terms of partnering, several studies show how the transactional element of romantic relationships in Uganda, and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, has come to intertwine with educational costs and ambitions (Mirembe and Davies 2001; Nyanzi, Pool, and Kinsman 2001; Parikh 2012; Sadgrove 2007). In terms of marriage prestations, there is a literature that is concerned with the way in which schooling affects bridewealth and dowry, both in terms of prevalence and form (Dodoo et al. 2014; Meekers 1993; Mwamwenda and Monyooe 1997; Safar 2018).

by adhering to the idea that being in school means being in childhood, has led to a local reinterpretation of the defilement law so that a new marriage prestation – 'the fine' – has emerged.

Secondly, I pay attention to the ways in which different aspects of marriage making affect each other. In doing so, I show that the effect schooling has on specific marriage practices is rather complex and often contradictory. For example, while schooling prevents girls from marrying early by keeping them in school, the way in which schooling can affect partnering practices and marriage prestations contributes to many girls having to marry (e.g. due to pregnancy) straight from the school benches. Indeed, transactional dynamics involved in romantic and sexual relationships drive schoolgirls, for various reasons to do with their schooling, to romantically interact with men, while the emergence of the fine system gives girls an incentive to marry while still in school. Furthermore, the emergence of the fine system itself must be understood in light of the particular way in which schooling affects bridewealth practices. Bridewealth payments are declining and increasingly paid in stages, a trend that is partially caused by schooling, as I show below, and this trend is partly why fines are becoming of greater interest to parents. The availability of the fine system, in turn, reduces people's interest in bridewealth, especially during the first years of a marriage. In other words, what schooling does to one aspect of the marriage-making process may undermine or strengthen its effect on another aspect, rendering it hard to develop a clear directional hypothesis of what schooling does to specific aspects of marriage making.

The main purpose of this chapter, then, is not to show that schooling affects different aspects of marriage making in a particular way. Rather, to better understand changing marriage practices, I wish to demonstrate the value of both appreciating the ways in which schooling is incorporated into a particular society – that is, in relation to other features of that society – and the interrelatedness of different aspects of marriage making. Doing so, I argue, leads to a more complex (but also, I believe, more accurate) understanding of how schooling changes marriage practices in rural Uganda.[110]

Marriage making in Gisu society

The Bagisu speak of a couple as 'married' once they live together, but bridewealth is said to formalise the marriage and has several legal implications. The process of marriage making, therefore, can be divided into three stages: *pre-marital courtship* (interactions between the couple before they start

[110] The recent past has seen a (re)awakening of a comprehensive literature that is interested in understanding changes in marriage practices, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where such changes have been remarkable (Jackson 2012a, 2012b; Johnson-Hanks 2007; Pauli and van Dijk 2016; Ruguma 2015; Temudo 2019). The role of schooling in relation to changing marriage practices is commonly studied, but not universally agreed upon (Bledsoe 1990; Dodoo et al. 2014; Mwamwenda and Monyooe, 1997; Safar, 2018). The insights developed in this chapter are of relevance to these debates as well.

living together), *marriage* (living together without bridewealth paid) and *formal marriage* (living together with bridewealth paid).

Romantic relationships are usually initiated by men. If a young man is interested in a woman, he may reach out to her in person, by phone, or send an intermediary to approach her on his behalf. Men put little effort in hiding their interests in specific women and a man who is explicitly looking for a woman to marry may inform his friends and relatives. Whilst women are usually talked of as easily seduced (see Chapter 4), propriety demands women to respond hesitantly to men's attempts to seduce them in order to avoid being considered 'easy'. Such hesitance also helps women to assess the seriousness of a man and the extent to which he is truly interested in them. Yet women may subtly indicate their interest in specific men and marriage in general. They can do this through regularly appearing – beautifully made up (showered, well-dressed and ideally with hair extensions) – in settings where it is easy for men to approach them out of sight. This, however, is a delicate endeavour as women who display their marriage ambitions too obviously are socially disapproved of.

Once contact between a prospective couple is established, they may stay in touch via their phones and meet regularly to get to know each other better. Couples who have been seeing each other in this way for a longer period could refer to one another as 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend', especially when they are relatively young. Some pre-marital courtship may be established quite explicitly to explore the possibility of getting married, but bonds may also be fairly non-committal, as I discuss below. It is quite common for couples to engage in sexual intercourse before getting married, even for those who are specifically seeing each other to explore the possibility of marriage. While the ideal of the virgin bride is still adhered to, it is at odds with perceptions of the female body that emphasise a strong sexual urge that is ultimately hard to control (see Chapter 4). People therefore acknowledge that it is fairly unrealistic for a girl to marry as a virgin and pre-marital sex is not generally frowned upon.

When a man and a woman wish to marry, the woman usually leaves her natal home unnoticed to move in with her suitor. Drawing on Heald's (1998) distinction between different forms of marriage initiation, I refer to this type of initiation as 'elopement'.[111] Local discourses around elopement frame this event as the natural outcome of a girl's growth or, more specifically, her sexual development (see Chapter 1). The assumption is that a girl's bodily growth renders her increasingly incapable of controlling her sexuality when she comes of age. A girl in puberty may easily be seduced by a man and decide to elope, even when still in school. While parents may want to prevent this to ensure educational continuation, the event is seen as eventually unavoidable. The extent to which elopement is actually the result of

[111] Other forms of marriage initiation are widow inheritance and marriage by arrangement (Heald 1998, 96), but these ways to marry are extremely rare today and therefore not considered in this chapter.

girls' uncontrollable desires or seduction is easily questioned, as I have already done in Chapter 3. What is important, though, is that such views of the female body render elopement an accepted practice. When a girl elopes she does not necessarily shame herself, nor her parents. This means that while the elopement discourse portrays girls as subject to their bodies, it, paradoxically, also creates agential space for girls to determine their own future.

Men and women are thus relatively free to choose their own marriage partner in Gisu society. Note, however, that while couples have always had a say in their choice of marriage partners, almost complete freedom is only a recent development . In the 1950s, marriage was the principal way in which politically valuable connections with other clans were established (La Fontaine 1962). Male relatives of both the prospective bride and groom thus had considerable interests in marriages and played an important role in the identification process of a prospective partner. However, even at that time most marriages arose through 'elopement' rather than 'arrangement', and if a marriage was arranged both bride and groom were given the opportunity to decline the person proposed to them (La Fontaine 1962; Heald 1998).

After a woman has moved in with a man, the couple is considered 'married'. A letter (*imbaluwa*) must be delivered to the woman's father to inform him about his daughter's whereabouts. The *imbaluwa* is usually delivered by male agnates of the groom and this is usually the first moment both families formally meet each other. The *imbaluwa* must be accompanied with a sum of money, which these days usually ranges from UGX 50,000 to 400,000 ($13 to 108), paid by either the groom himself or his father. Heald (1998, 104 footnote 11) writes that the money attached to the letter was considered a fine for abduction in the 1960s, but this is no longer the case. 'Fine' payment has become a separate marriage prestation today (see below) and money added to the letter is no longer seen to mean this. Rather, the money attached to the letter is paid as a sign of respect to the bride's father and indication of good intentions. *Imbaluwa* payment is not part of bridewealth and should be paid even if the girl was married nearby and her parents are not left in the dark about her whereabouts at all.

Bridewealth payment (*ikwe*) marks the formalisation of a marriage and has a number of implications. A woman becomes formally a member of her husband's clan and will be buried at her husband's compound when she dies.[112] Bridewealth payment gives a man greater control over his wife's sexuality and labour, thus transferring rights *in uxorem*. He gains, moreover, greater respect among his in-laws who are subsequently less quick to take the woman's side in the case of a marriage conflict. Bridewealth payment strengthens the relationship between a man and his in-laws, as well as between

[112] If a woman dies before bridewealth is (fully) paid and the deceased's affinal kin wish to bury her at her husband's homestead, her agnatic kin may demand (the remainder of) bridewealth.

the two kin groups in general, and these connections are highly valued (cf. La Fontaine 1962). A woman is only considered worthy of the payment of bridewealth if she can produce children, so the marriage prestation is also seen to be a payment for a woman's reproductive capacity. Bridewealth does not, however, confer rights *in genetricem*: children belong to the lineage of their biological father at all times and bridewealth payment does not change this.[113] In the 1950s, bridewealth negotiations would start shortly after contact between both families was established and payments would soon be made by the groom's father (La Fontaine 1962), but that is no longer the case. Today, bridewealth payment usually starts after several years of marriage, is increasingly paid in stages and often by the groom himself. Some of these changes have been instigated by schooling, as I discuss below.

Heald (1998, 99) mentions that bridewealth had to be repaid in cases of divorce but that is not necessarily the case today. As soon as the marriage produces children, repayment of bridewealth is no longer required with divorce. The coming of age of a man's first son puts him under greater pressure to finalise the payment of bridewealth because his in-laws may deny his son circumcision if bridewealth obligations have not been fulfilled. Ritual misfortune is said to await the boy if circumcision is carried out without the approval of his mother's brother. These principles partly explain why immediate payment of bridewealth is no longer in the interest of both parties, and bridewealth is increasingly staged. While the groom's kin wish to await the production of children to see if the woman is worth payment, the bride's kin are likely to have another opportunity to pressurise their in-laws over bridewealth later.

The cultural norm or prescription for an appropriate bridewealth is 3 cows and 3 goats, combined with a range of smaller items of symbolic importance (cf. Comarrof 1980). However, this cultural prescription is hardly ever realised. Richer men from urban areas may pay a bridewealth that greatly exceeds the cultural ideal to signify their socioeconomic status, while the families with whom I worked usually settle upon a lower bridewealth, one that a man and his family can realistically be expected to pay (See Appendix 2, Table 23, for an overview of the bridewealth payments of 59 marriages). Characteristics that are generally considered desirable for a woman – being humble, conforming to beauty ideals and physical strength – may also shape the eventual amount of bridewealth that parties agree upon. All bridewealth is paid to the bride's father and it is his responsibility to divide the items, some of which are meant for specific family members of the bride, among his relatives as appropriate.

There is little ceremony involved in Gisu marriages with the exception of marriages between wealthier families who may arrange for a ceremonial 'introduction' (*kumukolo kwe khwanjula*) and, sometimes,

[113] By 'rights in genetricem' I mean a man's right to claim ownership of the biological children of his wife, regardless of whether he is the genitor himself. As noted, in the Gisu context, bridewealth *does* transfer rights to a woman's reproductive capacity.

a religious wedding (*bukhwale bw'idini*). During an introduction ceremony the groom visits the bride's natal home, accompanied by friends and family, to formally introduce himself to her parents and demonstrate his respect to them. Large music speakers, tents and food for the whole village are usually part of such occasions. Bridewealth is paid during the event, usually in the form of presents which go far beyond the cultural norm to signal the groom's wealth and respect for his bride's parents. These kinds of ceremonies have turned marriage into a form of consumption, signalling social class (see Pauli and van Dijk 2016), but the emergence of such events has not rendered marriage unrealistic for poorer segments of society. While expensive ceremonial marriages have proliferated in towns, ordinary marriages (usually established without much ceremony) continue to be important and aspired to in rural settings. The procedures of religious weddings depend on the religion of the couple, but these ceremonies are even rarer than introduction ceremonies in rural areas.[114]

Table 5. Marriage duration (Ego-sample, women)

	First marriage		**Second marriage**		**Third marriage**	
Duration of marriage	*Freq.*	*Percent*	*Freq.*	*Percent*	*Freq.*	*Percent*
Lasted longer than 2 years	29	25.4%	13	30.2%	2	22.2%
Ended within 2 years	28	24.6%	6	14.0%	1	11.1%
Still together	57	50.0%	24	55.8%	6	66.7%
Total	114	100%	43	100%	9	100%

As noted in Chapter 1, marriage is remarkably unstable in the Gisu context. Half of women's first marriages end in divorce and a quarter do so within two years. Second and third marriages are somewhat more stable, but even among these marriages divorce is common: 44 percent of second marriages end in divorce, 33 percent of third marriages (see Table 5). The fact that women remain strongly attached to their natal home when married and can relatively easily divorce, makes marriage a somewhat casual event in the Gisu context. Since women who find their marriage troublesome can fairly easily spend time at their natal home (making her marriage bearable), or ultimately divorce, women can more easily try out a man with less-than-ideal marriage features or marry to pass time. Suraya, for example, a young woman who I will introduce in Chapter 8, found herself in a troublesome situation at home and decided to get married until she found a way to get back to school. With that in mind, it may not be surprising that hypergamy is not a strong feature of Gisu marriage patterns.[115] The

[114] I did not encounter one religious wedding during my fieldwork and only spoke to one man who mentioned he had had a religious wedding.

[115] Women in the ego-sample reported that their own family was wealthier than their (ex-)husband's family in 42 percent of the cases and equally wealthy in 30 percent of the cases. Only in 29 percent of the marriages did women report hypergamy. Men's estimations of relative wealth were consistent with those of women: men more often thought their (ex)wife's family was wealthier than their own family.

ease with which marriages are established may also account for the fact that there was only one relatively old woman (37) in my ego-sample who did not marry any man.

Timing of marriage

How does schooling affect the age at which men marry? Men in the ego-sample were on average 22.7 years old when they married and spent 4.8 years in-between their circumcision and marriage.[116] Statistics demonstrate no general upward trend in the age at which men marry for the first time but this may be the consequence of sampling bias.[117] There is a positive correlation between schooling and age at marriage, but the pattern is relatively weak: the average age of marriage for men who ended their schooling in upper secondary school or did tertiary education is significantly higher than the age of those who ended in P5-P7 [t(40)=-1.97, p=0.03, equal variance assumed], but all the other differences between groups were statistically insignificant (see Table 6). Note, however, that 15 percent of the men in the ego-sample had not yet married. These men were not included in Table 6 but had higher levels of education than the men who had already married. The fact that unmarried men were relatively highly educated is in line with the hypothesis that schooled men marry later. Thus, while my survey data do not show a strong upward trend in the age at which men marry, some data do point in the direction of a positive relationship between schooling and marriage age.

Table 6. Average age at marriage by level of education (Ego-sample, men)

Level of education	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
*Less than P4**	19	22.4	6.3	18.0	42.0
P5-P7	35	22.3	3.2	18.0	29.0
Lower secondary	16	23.3	5.4	18.0	41.0
Upper secondary or tertiary	7	24.9	3.2	22.0	31.0
Total	77	22.7	4.6	18.0	42.0

**There were only 3 people without education, these were included in this group*

The way in which intergenerational relationships have been reworked in relation to schooling makes a positive relationship more likely. For a man, marriage requires considerable preparations: he must arrange a place where he will be able to house his wife and future children, he must obtain an income or a plot of land to be able to look after them, and resources to pay marriage prestations. In the mid-20th century a man could count on his father's support for these preparations. Indeed, fathers were

[116] For this calculation I excluded men who were circumcised before their 13th year of birth because below this age circumcision is not a rite of passage, but usually carried out for religious reasons.

[117] Young men and women who do/did well in school, and who might marry later, are less likely to be included in the ego-sample because more often they do not stay in the village (when in boarding school or looking for work in town).

inclined to pay bridewealth for their sons, as well as provide them with a plot of land for the accumulation of wealth (Heald 1998). Notwithstanding possible reluctance among fathers to provide such support, the fact that social norms oriented fathers towards supporting their sons meant that young men would often get married relatively shortly after they got circumcised. Today, obtaining bridewealth has increasingly become the responsibility of sons themselves and land is no longer automatically provided, especially if the son is schooled. In Chapter 7 I discuss further how schooled boys are said to have received their 'share' of their fathers' wealth in the form of school fees, and so are expected to use their schooling to get a job so that they can buy their own land and raise bridewealth themselves. Schooled men therefore do not only start later with their marriage preparations because of schooling (it is hard to prepare for marriage while still in school), they also tend to get less paternal support.

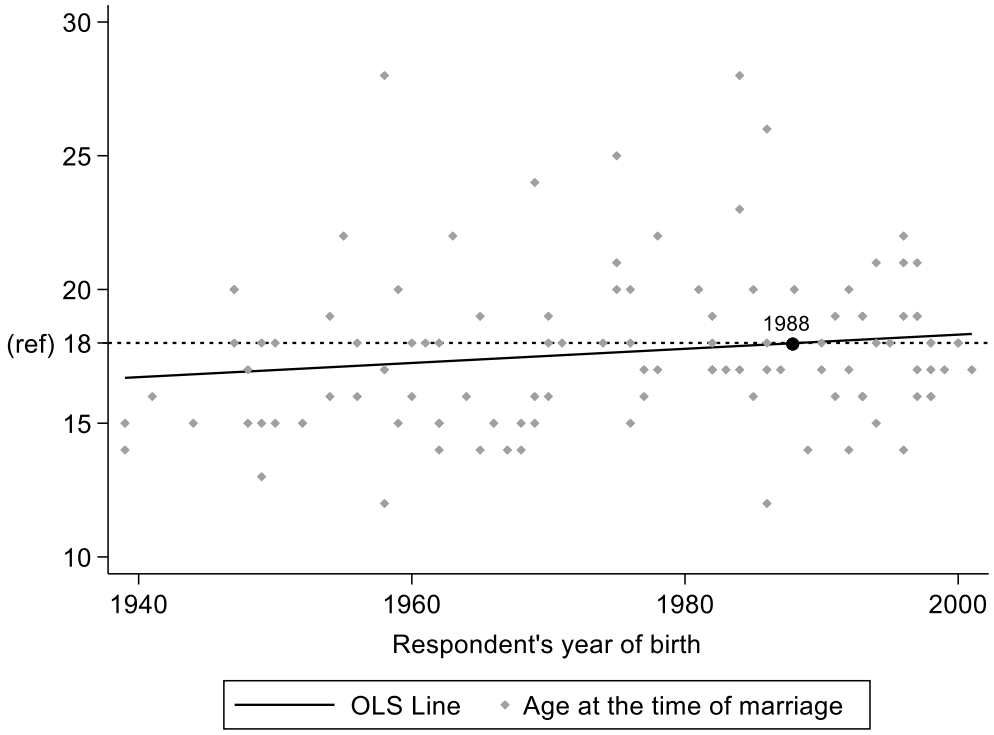
How does schooling affect the age at which women marry? Lindstrom et al. (2009, 46) distinguish three different ways in which schooling is commonly assumed to cause girls to marry later. Firstly, as it is often practically impossible or socially unacceptable to be both married and in school, every additional year a woman spends in school implies an increase in the age in which she will marry (*role discrepancy hypothesis*). This hypothesis applies to all contexts in which there is a degree of role incompatibility between being a wife and student. This is the case in the Gisu context where schooling is associated with childhood and seen to be at odds with being married (associated with adulthood), as I discuss in more detail below. Secondly, schooling gives women more possibilities to earn money themselves so the opportunity costs of marriage instead of employment increase (*human capital hypothesis*). Thirdly, schooling is said to be a transformative experience: it promotes new marriage ideals that favour later marriage and greater female independence, and it makes women more aware of alternative life courses and more confident to deviate from the traditional pathway (*social dislocation hypothesis*).

Ugandan women marry relatively early (Wodon, Nguyen, and Tsimpo 2016; Parikh 2004), and the Bagisu are no exception to this norm. In the ego-sample, the average age that women married for the first time was 17.7. As Figure 9 shows, linear OLS prediction displays an upward trend in women's age at first marriage over time that is statistically significant at the ten percent level (see model statistics below the figure), with the regression line exceeding eighteen at the point of 1988. Still, however, 46 percent of the women who were born after this year (so less than 30 years old at the time of the survey) married before their 18th birthday (N=35), even though child marriage is prohibited by law (as I discuss below).

The average age at which women marry increases with levels of education (see Table 7). The differences between means is statistically significant for the P1-P4/P5-7 group comparison [t(80)=-

1.90, p=0.03, equal variances assumed] and the P5-P7/Lower secondary and beyond group comparison [t(19,10)=-2.83, p=0.01, unequal variances assumed]. The overall pattern of women marrying later might thus partially be caused by increased schooling, as the data shows that schooling *does* encourage later marriage. However, among the women aged below 30 years old – the only age group who grew up with UPE – the majority (54 percent) said that they were still in school the moment they got married and the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of Ugandan schools for a period of two years after I left the field in 2019, is said to have led to an increase in child marriage.[118] This suggests that for many girls their main options continue to be either schooling or marriage, and that women have little time in-between schooling and marriage.

Figure 9. Age at first marriage over time (Ego-sample, women)



Model statistics: $y = 0.026X - 34.63 + e;\ t = 1.68;\ 2 - sided\ P = 0.097;\ R^2 = 0.03;\ N = 110\ and\ F(1,108) = 2.81$

While the *role discrepancy* hypothesis rests on the idea that schooled women marry later because of additional time spent in school, the *human capital* and *social dislocation* hypotheses assume that schooled women may also take more time to get married after they leave school. That a relatively large percentage of women do not take much time in between school and marriage is thus at odds with the *human capital* and *social dislocation* hypotheses. This is hardly surprising in the Gisu context. Indeed, when there are limited labour market opportunities for young women (see Chapter 2) the opportunity

[118] Several Ugandan newspapers wrote articles about this when I was doing fieldwork towards the end of 2021, and teachers mentioned this too.

costs of seeking employment instead of marriage do not increase much with schooling, and the *human capital* hypothesis is undermined. Furthermore, in a context where schools are of a low quality, many girls may not be 'sufficiently' transformed by schooling around the time they are of a marriageable age, meaning that they still lack the ideals, confidence and knowledge that is seen to orient them towards later marriage, thus undermining the *social dislocation* hypothesis.

Table 7. Average age at first marriage by level of education (Ego-sample, women)

Leven when education ended	N	Average marriage age	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
No education	13	16.3	2.0	14	20
P1-P4	23	16.5	2.9	12	25
P5-P7	59	17.7	2.5	12	28
*Lower secondary and beyond**	16	20.4	3.6	16	28
Full sample	112	17.7	2.9	12	28

**There was only one woman with educational experience beyond lower secondary school.*

Poor educational standards and limited labour market opportunities are, however, not the only reasons women get married soon after leaving school. As already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, there are another two dynamics, both related to the way in which schooling has come to intertwine with other aspects of Gisu society, that also encourage a relatively short school-marriage gap. Firstly, the transactional component of romantic and sexual relations renders school-going girls more likely to develop sexual relationships with men that easily formalise into marriages (especially when the girl gets pregnant). Secondly, the particular way in which the local defilement law has been reinterpreted in relation to schooling, and the consequent emergence of a fine system, provides girls with an incentive to marry while in school. I discuss these two dynamics below as part of my analysis of partnering and marriage prestations.

Partnering: Transactional relationships and pregnancies

The process of seduction and pre-marital (sexual) relations involves a considerable degree of transactionality in Uganda, a feature that is common to many contexts in sub-Saharan Africa (Ankomah 1999; Bohmer and Edward 2000; Bryceson et al. 2013; Cornwall 2002; Johnson-Hanks 2007; Kinsman et al. 2000; Moore et al. 2007; Sadgrove 2007). Women usually do not sleep with men if the men do not give them money or presents as tokens of appreciation, because they could otherwise be considered 'easy'. Furthermore, women typically aspire to marry a man who can support them financially and will take good care of them. Demanding gifts from their suitors is a suitable way to test these qualities, as well as to assess how interested a man is. A man therefore has to offer a woman money or other presents to convince her to sleep with him or to persuade her to marry. A man who is

willing to invest considerably in his attempts to seduce a woman displays greater interest and is more likely to be looking for more than just sex (see also Namuggala 2017; Nyanzi, Pool, and Kinsman 2001; Parikh 2012; Sadgrove 2007; Wolff, Blanc, and Gage 2000).

Transactions involved in romantic relationships are subject to abuse and people are cautious not to get tricked by the opposite sex. Men can promise women things in exchange for sex without intending to keep their promise, while women may merely pretend to be interested in a man in order to materially benefit, a practice that is locally referred to as 'detoothing' (the English term is used locally) (Sadgrove 2007; see also Nyanzi, Pool, and Kinsman 2001). The term *umuyaya* (pl. *bayaye*) refers to people who abuse the system in such a way. The *umuyaye* is a trickster, someone who plays the game of romance well but is only interested in the more ad hoc benefits of sex or money and is uninterested in a serious relationship. Both men and women can be *bayaye* and people indeed often apply the term to the opposite sex. The possibility of dealing with an *umuyaye* leads both sexes to be quite suspicious in their relationships with one another, but also encourages further abuse of the transactional component of relationships. Women who said they 'detooth' men did so because they felt most men just want to sleep with them – they accused men of being *bayaye*. While men felt women are only interested in money and blamed them for being too greedy – they accused women of being *bayaye*. Mutual suspicion and blaming are reasons for both sexes to engage in ways of dealing with each other that are actually considered morally wrong by most.

Schoolgirls are particularly suitable for being pulled both into casual and more formal relationships with men because of the transactions involved in such relationships and the possibility to abuse those. To improve their chances of success, some men who are interested in casual sex tend to target girls in need of support who are less likely to say 'no' to the gifts they have on offer. Schoolgirls, especially those from poorer backgrounds, are a suitable target for such men. Many village schools do not provide (free) lunch which means that children either have to go home to eat lunch (which is often impossible because of distance) or need pocket money to buy their own lunch (which poorer households might lack), or bring food with them (not common because breakfast is prepared hours after the start of the school day). Getting lunch during schooldays is a considerable challenge for poorer schoolgirls, which renders them vulnerable to men offering support in exchange for sex. While girls may try to dodge sexual intercourse with such men this becomes more difficult if more support is provided and principles of reciprocity put them under considerable social pressure to have sex. 'Schoolgirls get pregnant for the price of a chapati', I was often told when I asked why so many young women marry straight from the school benches.

The transactional element of relationships is also played out in the context of the labour market with men offering jobs to women with the expectation of sexual favours in return. Schoolgirls are again particularly prone to engage in such exchanges because young women who have recently graduated or are temporarily out of school to raise school fees are typically keenest to find work. Further, Uganda has a long history of student-teacher sex scandals that has not yet come to an end despite governmental attempts to prevent teacher-student sex. In such incidences, teachers typically offer students better grades and other educational privileges in return for sexual favours. This is probably one of the most abusive manifestations of transactional sex, but again one that engages schoolgirls.

It is, however, not only vulnerable schoolgirls who tend to engage in transactional sexual relationships. The practice of 'detoothing' was particularly popular among schoolgirls and not necessarily vulnerable ones. Several girls told me how they or their friends 'detooth' men by pretending to be interested in them in order to get presents. In such cases, a girl has no intention of carrying the relationship forward in the form of sexual intercourse or marriage but merely wants to earn money. She relates to one or multiple men at the same time, tries to get gifts from them, but ends the relationship as soon as she feels it becomes hard to avoid sexual intercourse. By virtue of their schooling, schoolgirls tend to aspire to a large variety of modern items, such as skin-cream, perfume and other make-up, phones and fashionable clothes, that parents, certainly fathers, may not be quick to provide for them as other household necessities get prioritised. The tactic of 'detoothing' is a popular way to obtain such items and the success of some girls, in turn, encourages others to follow their example in order to catch up in terms of lifestyle (see also Honwana 2012, 92 and Sadgrove 2007).

A lot of such transactional relations are rather casual, focussed on sex more than marriage. However, the possibility that a girl becomes pregnant means that relations of this kind are often formalised into marriages. Indeed, 'pregnancy' was commonly given as a reason for women to marry. In the survey, 11 percent of the women in the ego-sample mentioned that 'pregnancy' was one of the reasons they married their first husband, and this was even higher (20 percent) among women who married when at secondary school. Girls who get pregnant while still at school might decide to elope with the genitor of the child to avoid facing their parents with their pregnancy. Indeed, while pre-marital pregnancy is not extremely disapproved off, parents do invest a lot in a girl's schooling and try to prevent her from dropping out prematurely. If a girl gets pregnant while at school she is seen to have wasted her parents' investment in schooling and parents have good reason to be disappointed in such a child.

Consequently, girls who get pregnant while at school may feel more inclined to elope to avoid a shameful confrontation with their parents than daughters who conceive having already left school.[119]

The pattern of schoolgirls engaging in relationships with men to obtain financial support, combined with the possibility that such relationships turn into marriages as a consequence of pregnancy, may seem at odds with the finding that hypergamy is not a strong feature of Gisu marriage. However, the kind of men schoolgirls engage with for financial support are often younger men who dropped out of school (typically working as motorcycle taxi drivers or farmers), rather than relatively wealthy older men (the sugar daddy). While these younger men have greater access to income than their peers in school, they are not very well-off. And, while sugar daddies can relatively easily reject marriage when they make a woman pregnant (since their authority in the village and wealth makes them less vulnerable to the legal claims of a woman and her family), a younger man may be inclined to marry a pregnant schoolgirl if the girl's family threaten to go to court to claim a fine (see also Parikh 2012). Thus, the marriages that come about because of schoolgirls becoming pregnant through transactional sex are not likely to cause a stronger pattern of hypergamy.

Marriage prestations: The fine

Today, a considerable number of marriages involve the payment of a fine by the groom and/or his family to the parents of the bride (see also Bantebya, Muhanguzi, and Watson 2014, Terry 2011, and Parikh 2012, 2004). This fine derives from the way in which the Ugandan age of consent law is locally reinterpreted and appropriated. While the law defines defilement as sexual intercourse with a girl below the age of 18, defilement is locally also seen to mean sexual intercourse with a girl who is still in school. In fact, people consider it defilement when a girl marries while still in school even if she is no longer under-age. Furthermore, defilement cases do not usually result in legal punishment, but are settled between the family of the man (defiler) and the woman (defiled) through the payment of a fine. As bridewealth payment is declining, the fine has become an important factor in marriage initiations and functions *de facto* in a manner resembling more familiar marriage prestations. Importantly, the fine system provides girls and parents with an incentive to keep the time in between schooling and marriage as short as possible. In order to understand the emergence and meaning of the fine system better, we must first consider the ways in which parents and schools try to keep girls in schools.

[119] A few women told me they were chased by their parents to go to their suitor after they had informed the parents that they had become pregnant while still at school.

Preventing drop-out: Schooling as childhood

As discussed in Chapter 1, the predominant Gisu view of the female body assumes that a girl becomes harder to control and susceptible to lose interest in school when her body matures and she becomes sexually interested. Physical growth is seen to lead to a point that her sexuality can easily get the better of her, resulting in a temporal loss of rational thought, girls rushing into marriage and rather immediate transitions into adulthood. In order to avoid this, parents and schools try to delay the development of sexual interest in girls as much as possible. This means, for example, that girls must be kept away from social settings where matters of a sexual nature might arise, like video halls and groups of other girls (who may talk about men), and men must be kept away from girls in school. Managing schoolgirls' sexuality is a crucial concern of parents and schools, keen to prevent premature educational drop-out.

Several examples demonstrate such preoccupation with the management of girls' sexual development, of which the billboards one finds on Ugandan school compounds are probably the most striking. The general message of the slogans found on these billboards encourages girls to abstain from sex and to delay marriage (often with references to the possible negative consequences of early sex, such as HIV and school drop-out), but messages also explicitly encourage girls to avoid settings and acts that could trigger their sexuality. The blue board in Figure 10, for example, tells girls in a secondary school to avoid having the sensitive parts of their bodies touched by men. Such 'bad touches' could awaken their sexual interest, so it is important that these are avoided. Parental views on contraceptives provide another example. During a series of focus group discussions with mothers, conducted by Zam, several participants argued that discussing or providing family planning implies granting a girl permission to become sexually active, which may render her uncontrollable. With this concern in mind, one mother suggested that it is best to take girls for family planning while pretending the injection is for immunization. That way the girl is not stimulated to have sex yet she is protected against pregnancy in case she *does* have sex.[120]

People's concern to repress the sexual development of girls underlies the strong parallel people draw between 'schooling' and 'childhood'. Such a parallel makes sense if one wishes to delay a girl's sexual development. Firstly, by emphasising that girls remain children as long as they are in school, social pressure to become an adult – i.e. to allow sexual urges to emerge – is taken away from schoolgirls who are thus encouraged to remain in control of their sexuality. Further, if schoolgirls are framed as children, caretakers continue to be able to exercise a degree of control over girls. When a girl is still a child, it is legitimate for both parents and teachers to counsel and advise her, to encourage her to focus

[120] Note that people were generally wary of family planning methods because of the belief that such methods cause infertility. The possibility that family planning stimulates girls to have sex is an additional concern.

on school and forbid her to do things that may cause school drop-out. The idea that schoolgirls are still in childhood, moreover, gives them a good reason to exclude schoolgirls from settings for adults in which their sexual development may be triggered. Finally, the discourse helps to discourage men to attempt to seduce girls in school as the label 'child' disqualifies schoolgirls from being appropriate bedpartners. The latter has been an important reason for NGOs and the government to support the idea that a schoolgirl is by definition a child and actively reinforce such a discourse (cf. Parikh 2004).

Figure 10. Billboards at a secondary school

The idea that girls in school are called 'girls' as a strategy to prevent sexual development and educational drop-out is explicitly recognised. My conversation with a 25-year-old Gisu woman from Mbale on Facebook Messenger demonstrates this. After the woman posted on her Facebook account that she was neither a woman, nor a girl, but identified as a lady, I asked her about the meaning of these different concepts. She mentioned that people tend to call you girl when you are still in school 'out of respect', even if you are 25 years old, like herself, and you are actually a 'lady'. "It is respectful to call someone girl wen in school coz schools believe they can do anything to protect their students thus referring to them as girls", she wrote. When I asked her what girls need to be protected against she replied: "many, but I'll mention a few, bad peer groups, abductions, [and] protect em from things

like getting pregnant in school (thru advising)." Note that connections between schooling and childhood are also reinforced by practices within schools. The school uniforms one finds in Ugandan schools have an extremely childish outlook. In secondary schools one may find tall and fully developed women wearing childish gingham dresses, socks and shoes. Schoolgirls are not allowed to have their hair plaited or grown for they must look ignorant of sexual interest, and teachers refer to students as pupils, boys or girls – never men or women. The label of childhood is rather deliberately forced upon school-going females.

While the view of schooling as childhood is supposed to prevent school drop-out, it has a series of unintended consequences that undermine the extent to which it achieves this. Firstly, it instigates a discursive context in which dropping out of school to elope with a man can be seen to be an act of complying to social norms as girls must indeed at some point become adults, and thus break with childhood (=schooling). Secondly, the idea of the school as a place for children makes students who have increasingly obtained markers of adulthood, such as children who grow quickly, circumcised boys or pregnant girls, quick to feel awkward about being in school. For example, girls who go back to school after giving birth are often bullied because of their somewhat awkward position as adult in a place for children, and a few women explicitly told me they left school because of this. Thirdly, in relation to Uganda's age of consent law, the discourse has given rise to a fine system that penalises sexual intercourse with a schoolgirl. This system is one of the causes of school drop-out among young boys (who, after having impregnated a fellow schoolgirl, found themselves forced to flee the area to dodge defilement charges) and provides families with a financial incentive to have their daughters get pregnant and marry while in school. Next, I explore this fine system in more detail.

The fine system

In 1990, Uganda amended the age of consent law in an attempt to address the adverse social and health consequences of early marriage, including premature school drop-out. The initial law forbade sexual intercourse with a girl below 14 years old, and the amendment changed this into 18 years old, regardless of whether the girl gave her consent prior to the act. The violation was reclassified as a capital offence with a maximum sentence of death by hanging when committed aggravatedly. Both the change of age and the reclassification of the offence were applauded by women's rights activists in Uganda who had been advocating for legal change for a couple of years (see Parikh [2012] for a detailed account of how this law came about).[121] The fact that sexual intercourse with a child has legal implications in Uganda is well-known in Bunyafa and 'defilement' cases are common. However, the dynamics of such cases are profoundly localised.

[121] Under the Children Act 2016 the minimum legal age of marriage remained at 18 years with no exceptions.

Cases of defilement are usually not brought to court but settled between the parents of the girl and the boy through the payment of a 'fine' (people use the English word). If a defiler wishes to avoid imprisonment he has to pay the girl's family a fine so that they withdraw charges. The latter party, here, has a strong bargaining position as they can threaten to go to the police at any time if the fine offered does not satisfy them. Sometimes they actually go to the police, but that is often merely to demonstrate the seriousness of their demands and not because they actually seek imprisonment. If the girl's parents involve the police, a boy may be held at the police station and will not be released until a fine is paid to the parents of the girl. Payment usually becomes the problem of a boy's father as young boys are typically unable to raise the amount of money demanded. The boy is only released if the girl's family is satisfied with the amount of money paid and withdraws the charges.

As a girl's relation to schooling is locally a more important marker of childhood than age and it is mainly schoolgirls who are said to require protection against men, people often talk of 'defilement' in relation to schooling rather than a girl's age. In fact, people found it hard to believe that the actual law is just about 'age'; a local teacher claimed that it must be about both 'age' and 'schooling' when I told him that this is the case. The police, moreover, also imprison boys who have impregnated a schoolgirl rather than an under-age girl, I was told. This local reinterpretation of 'defilement' has a number of implications: if a girl conceives or marries when in school, her parents are considered more justified in demanding a fine than when she is merely under-age; fines for defilement may even be demanded if a girl marries in school while she is not under-age; and having sex with under-age girls who are no longer in school is often not considered defilement. Sharifa, a mother of two daughters who both got pregnant before they were 18, never sued her daughters' 'defilers' because:

> [t]hey left studying, they were beyond. They [the defilers] found them [the girls] outside, not in school. It's like this: if you have made a fence, your child is in a fence, if it jumps over the fence and it gets an accident out, that child has got an accident from out because she jumped over the fence. The case is then for the girl herself. They don't [press charges]… But if you [the defiler] got the girl while she was still in school then they arrest you and take you. **(22/10/2018)**[122]

People differentiate between two different defilement cases. When a fine is paid for an under-age girl, this is referred to as *kamapesa kye umwana ukhyili* (literally: money of a young child); when a fine is paid for a girl in school, this is referred to as *kamapesa ke lisoma* (literally: money of schooling). In the latter case, the fine is said to compensate the father for the fact that his investment in a girl's schooling did not materialise because of the boy's infringement (hence the name 'money of schooling'). Note,

[122] Language of expression: Lugisu

however, that *kamapesa ke lisoma* is clearly not an appreciation of the father's investment in schooling because it is not paid for a schooled woman who had already left school at the time she married. Thus, conceptually, the Bagisu differentiate between a fine for a girl who is under-age and a fine for a girl who is still in schooling, but in everyday conversation both cases are talked of as 'defilement' and considered inappropriate infringements against a premature girl (often people actually use the English word 'defilement'). Fines are extraordinarily common, especially among the younger generations. As Table 8 shows, in the ego-sample, 36 percent of the women reported that a fine (either for schooling or age) was paid by their first husband (or the father of their first child in case this was not the same person), and the same applied to 43 percent of the women in the age group below 30 years old (see category 'pooled').

Table 8. Payment of marriage fines by type (Ego-sample, women)

Age	Fine for age (kamapesa ke umwana ukhili)	Fine for schooling (kamapesa ke lisoma)	Pooled	N per category
Above 59	21.4%	10.7%	32.1%	28
45-59	17.4%	21.7%	34.8%	23
30-44	20.7%	10.3%	31.0%	29
Below 30	5.7%	37.1%	42.9%	35
Total	15.7%	20.9%	35.7%	115

Survey data confirm the proposition that defiling a girl in school is locally considered a bigger crime than defiling an under-age girl, despite the fact that it is only defilement by age that is legally forbidden. Women who grew up with UPE (those aged below 30) reported relatively high percentages of fines for being married as a schoolgirl (37 percent) and low percentages of fines for marrying as an under-age girl (6 percent), suggesting that the former takes precedence over the latter (see again Table 8). Also, for women who married when they had been above-age but in school, a fine was more often paid than for women who had been under-age but out of school (47 percent vs. 37 percent, see Table 9); and of the 18 participants who were both in school and under-age when they married, 50 percent reported that a fine for being in school was paid, whereas only 22 percent reported a fine for being under-age was paid (not visible in tables). The amounts of money paid as fines were as high as UGX 1,000,000 ($269), but amounted to an average of UGX 646,667 ($175) in the case of fines for schooling, and UGX 388,571 ($105) in the case of fines for age (see Table 10). Fines for schooling are thus higher than fines for age which is equally in line with the claim that defilement based on schooling is considered a greater

crime than defilement by age (albeit this comparison should be interpreted with caution for reasons to do with inflation[123]).

Table 9. Payment of marriage fine by situation of girl at time of marriage initiation (Ego-sample, women)

Situation respondent at time of marriage	Whether respondent's first husband paid any fine (either for schooling or age) *Yes*	*No*	*Not applicable**	*N per category*
Under-age/In school	72.2%	27.8%	0.0%	18
Under-age/Out of school	37.0%	63.0%	0.0%	46
Above-age/In school	47.1%	52.9%	0.0%	17
Above-age/Out of school	8.8%	0.0%	91.2%	34
Total	35.7%	37.4%	27.0%	115

**Not applicable means that a fine was not appropriate given the situation a woman was in at her first marriage (e.g. she was not under-age and not in school.)*

Table 10. Summary statistics of fines paid (Ego-sample, women)*

Marriage payment	N	Average amount paid (In UGX)	SD	Min	Max
Fine for schooling	15	646,667	244559.9	200,000	1,000,000
Fine for age	7	388,571	275222.9	100,000	920,000

**For older participants, fines paid were as low as 5 shillings, which, due to inflation, has become a completely unrealistic amount today. To provide a somewhat more appropriate image of the amounts involved, this table only contains female participants who were below 45 years old at the time of the interview. But as prices have gone up in the past 20 years as well, the usual amounts paid today are higher than averages presented in this table.*

Fine payment is in principle not a substitute for bridewealth payment; even if a fine is paid, parents may still demand bridewealth, but people make sense of the fine system in relation to a changing bridewealth system. As I will demonstrate below, bridewealth payment is declining, increasingly paid in stages, and first payments are typically made after quite a few years of marriage. Today, the fine may therefore be the only considerable payment a father receives immediately after his daughter gets married, which is possible because *imbaluwa* payments are relatively low. This means that the fine fills a gap that changes in bridewealth practices have created. When I asked Juliet, an older key informant in her 60s (also referred to in Chapter 3), about changes in bridewealth, she said that:

> in the past, they would force a man to pay bridewealth up to the courts of law, but that does not happen anymore. Unless a woman is studying. In that case, the parents of the girl use the

[123] As amounts paid are subject to inflation, and fines for age were more common among older participants, part of the price difference may be caused by inflation rather than local perceptions of the meaning of the crime. Measures were taken to avoid this (see comment below Table 10), but these do not fully resolve the issue.

> defilement trick to get money from the man. And sometimes a girl may not be good in school. Sometimes such marriages do not even last. **(20/02/2019)**[124]

People explicitly view the fine system in light of changing bridewealth dynamics and, although people's attempts to get fines are sometimes questioned, the system gains legitimacy because bridewealth payments are declining (cf. Parikh 2012).

Furthermore, it was said that some parents, as well as girls themselves, keen to have their parents benefit from their marriage, strategize in relation to the fine system. Juliet hinted at this when she described how people use defilement as a 'trick'. Girls may deliberately marry when still in school so that their parents get a chance to demand a fine, or their fathers may claim that their daughter was still in school when she married even if she was not. As Juliet explained:

> Sometimes the child has left school, but the father would still say that the child was still in school [to get a fine paid]. Even if the child is not good at school, a parent uses a trick to keep this child in school, and follows up on her to earn a fine for schooling. They even push girls to stay in school so that money can be earned. Some girls even stay in school, they start talking to men themselves so that parents can get money for schooling. **(20/02/2019)**[125]

In line with Juliet's analysis, Kituyi (2007, 18), in another study of the Gisu area, writes that "girls are merely kept in school in order to act as bait, so as to attract a fine for defilement for their parents and guardians in the area." A local secondary school teacher told me that some parents ask the headteacher to allow their daughters to sit in school without charging school fees, so that they can get married while still in school. While I doubt whether many people would do the latter, since this would be seen as a serious abuse of the educational system for personal benefit, it is possible that a degree of more tacit strategizing in relation to the fine system is quite common. If parents and girls truly strategize to get marriage fines paid, the system provides an incentive for girls to marry while still in school or parents to have their daughters do so. This means that the defilement law, after its local reinterpretation and appropriation, encourages girls to marry early, and does precisely the opposite of what it was meant to do.

Parikh (2004) has argued that the particular way in which the age of consent law is locally reinterpreted in Uganda reinforces male control over female sexuality. She argues that the rights of the father are seen to be violated if a girl is defiled rather than those of the girl herself. Consequently, the father is

[124] Language of expression: Lugisu

[125] Fines may thus be paid for girls who were not actually in school. This may account for the group of women who got a fine paid for them while they were actually neither under-age nor in school when they married (see Table 9).

eligible to press charges against the defiler and gains a degree of control over what happens to both the boy and the girl. Through the fine system, he can manipulate the direction of a girl's relationships. My evidence is in line with these conclusions. In fact, fathers may come to play a greater role in marriage initiations now that the fine system is to some extent replacing bridewealth. While bridewealth payments have no enforcement mechanisms – beyond social norms – defilement has the great advantage of police enforcement, giving fathers a stronger base to claim their 'rights' in the context of their daughter's marriage. However, these reflections should not distract us from the agency that girls also exercise in relation to these changing marriage prestations. Girls are keen to help their parents financially, especially in a context such as Gisu, where girls remain strongly connected to their natal home and an already strongly felt responsibility for parental well-being is further strengthened by educational reciprocity ideals. If employment opportunities are limited and/or a girl finds it hard to make it through the school system, girls may indeed strategize with the fine system so their parents can benefit from it. I also found some girls exercising such agency in relation to bridewealth, as I demonstrate below.

Marriage prestations: Bridewealth

To discover changes in bridewealth patterns I compare my ego-sample data with Heald's data on a sample of 174 men, collected in the 1960s (see Heald 1998, Table 15.2 on page 267). While this approach has considerable disadvantages[126], it does not suffer from the more fundamental problem involved in the analysis of changing bridewealth prevalence based on one sample.[127] In Heald's sample, 38 men (23.8 percent) had not been married with bridewealth (either bachelors or married without bridewealth); 11 men (6.3 percent) married one wife and paid part of their bridewealth; the large majority, 105 men (60.45 percent), married one wife and paid full bridewealth; and 20 men (11.5 percent) were polygamous men (Heald does not record whether they paid bridewealth). So, we know that at least 66 percent of all men in the 1960s sample had paid at least a part of their bridewealth (probably more, since a polygamous man is likely to have paid bridewealth too).[128] People who were married without bridewealth at the time of that survey, but who had paid bridewealth in the past, were not included in this figure. So overall the percentage who paid bridewealth is considerably higher than I found in my ego-sample: only 32 percent of the men in my ego-sample reported that they had

[126] The biggest problems are that Heald used different selection methods, worked in a different geographical area and only recorded whether monogamous men paid bridewealth at the time of the survey. While these differences may account for some variation in findings there seems little reason to suspect such changes to be considerably skewed in a specific direction.

[127] As bridewealth is often paid in stages and the first payment may be paid only after several years of marriage, differences in bridewealth payment across marriages of different generations in one sample may be the consequence of either staged payment or change.

[128] Heald counted men who had not paid any bridewealth as bachelors.

paid bridewealth at least once in their life, and this figure includes polygamous men and bachelors who had paid bridewealth in the past. Despite being based upon selection criteria that would make a higher percentage of bridewealth payments more likely, my figure is not even half of the figure in Heald's sample. This points in the direction of decreasing bridewealth payments in the Gisu region, a pattern that is consistent with Anderson's (2007) statistics for the whole of Uganda.

It is unlikely that this difference is entirely the result of bridewealth being increasingly paid in stages. To demonstrate this, I compare marriages of couples who are still together with marriages that ended in divorce.[129] Divorced marriages stand for older marriages, because marriages that ended in divorce took place a longer time ago (due to the time lag between the end of a marriage and the survey moment). Ongoing marriages stand for more recent marriages. Table 11 summarises the results. Bridewealth was paid for none of the recent marriages that have lasted less than seven years. For the older marriages, on the contrary, bridewealth was fully paid in five percent of the marriages that lasted less than four years and in 15 percent of those that lasted less than seven years. Current marriages that are older than seven years involve more marriage payments than older marriages that lasted longer than seven years (55.8 percent compared to 47.3 percent), but fewer full payments (14.8 percent compared to 21.2 percent). This demonstrates that bridewealth payment is indeed increasingly paid after several years in marriage and in stages. However, Table 11 also shows that delayed and staged payment has always been a feature of Gisu bridewealth practice (see also La Fontaine 1962). With that in mind it seems unlikely that the increase in later payments can fully account for the rather significant decrease in the number of men who paid bridewealth. It thus seems most likely that bridewealth is *both* paid less often *and* increasingly late.[130]

Table 11. Bridewealth payment by duration of marriage for current and old marriages (Ego-sample, women)

	Still together (recent marriages)			**Divorced (old marriages)**		
Duration of marriage	*Fully paid*	*Partially paid*	*N per category*	*Fully paid*	*Partially paid*	*N per category*
<4 years	0%	0%	12	5.1%	7.7%	39
4-7 years	0%	0%	13	15.4%	15.4%	13
>7 years	14.8%	41.0%	61	21.1%	26.3%	19
Total	10.5%	29.1%	86	11.3%	14.1%	71

[129] The comparison is based on marriage reported by women in the ego-sample. I switch to women here, because they often had less complicated marriage histories (which made it easier for them to recall marriage prestations of previous marriages) and have less reason to exaggerate bridewealth payment.

[130] When bridewealth is increasingly paid at a later point in marriage the stability of the practice is reduced (and thus its prevalence), so these two trends reinforce each other.

Schooling contributes to these changes in several ways. First, through the way in which it has changed paternal duties. As noted already, responsibility for bridewealth payment has changed because of schooling. Where fathers used to pay on behalf of their sons, this is no longer necessarily so, especially if a boy is schooled. Today, paternal responsibility to provide land and bridewealth is increasingly contingent upon the extent to which a father has invested in the schooling of sons, and responsibility for bridewealth has become negotiable. As it is almost impossible for young men to raise a full bridewealth in a few years, immediate payment is rather unrealistic if responsibility to pay falls upon them. Knowing this, a young woman's kinsmen are not likely to demand immediate payment. Indeed, they would risk their daughter's well-being in marriage if they forced a young and unwealthy man to pay bridewealth too soon, and they know they will get a chance to demand bridewealth again when the couple's sons come of age and their circumcision requires the permission of their mother's brother. Thus, as responsibility for the payment of bridewealth is shifting from fathers to sons because of the way schooling is made sense of in relation to other intergenerational responsibilities, bridewealth becomes more often staged and is increasingly paid after several years of marriage.

Furthermore, the fine system, strongly based on connections people draw between schooling and childhood, also means bridewealth can increasingly be demanded later. Bridewealth and fines are thus negatively related to each other, and causality runs both ways: the fine system is exploited by some parents to benefit from their daughter's marriage because immediate bridewealth payments are increasingly uncommon (less immediate bridewealth leads to more marriage fines); and the payment of fines causes parents to be less interested in immediate bridewealth payments (more marriage fines lead to less immediate bridewealth payments). Furthermore, the fine system renders responsibility for bridewealth increasingly negotiable, contributing to the shift in responsibility from fathers to sons (associated with later payment). When a father has paid a marriage fine to keep a son out of prison, this is a good reason for him to leave his son in charge of bridewealth payment later on in marriage. Otherwise he would spend a disproportionally high amount of money on a son who has done something that is socially disapproved of (marrying a schoolgirl). Gidoi, a father I will introduce in more detail in Chapter 7, for example, announced that he will not pay bridewealth for his son Ali because he planned to help him already with the payment of a fine (Ali had married a schoolgirl).

A final influence schooling has on bridewealth stems from the rather high reciprocal expectations parents attach to school investments for their children. As parents hope that their daughters can obtain a modern sector job with the help of schooling, and expect them to share part of their income with them when they succeed, they have an interest in keeping their daughters strongly connected to *their* home. Parents who have invested considerably in the schooling of a girl, therefore, tend to encourage her to prioritise getting a job over getting a husband and, in case she gets married, are less

interested in a bridewealth payment as this would weaken their claims to her income. As noted, hypergamy is not a strong feature of Gisu marriages and a girl's marriage, therefore, is not a way for families to establish connections with relatively rich families or get relatively high bridewealth. Investing in a girl's schooling to get a higher bridewealth is not a very realistic economic strategy and less so as bridewealth is increasingly staged. Thus, expectations of marital reciprocity are generally quite weak in Gisu society and are further eroded as parents' expectations focus increasingly on girls' personal investments in them: marital reciprocity is replaced by intergenerational reciprocity.

For schooled women, however, living up to reciprocal expectations is easier said than done. We have seen that modern sector jobs are scarce and the average salary of the minority of women with secondary school qualifications who *do* get a job is insufficient to send a lot of money back home. In this context, married women themselves actually become rather keen to have bridewealth paid for them as an alternative way to compensate their parents for investing in their schooling. They want bridewealth to be paid because this means their parents have at least received some benefit out of raising and schooling them. Some women told me how they put pressure on their husband to pay bridewealth and it was not uncommon for a young woman to collaborate with her husband to raise bridewealth. In such cases, both husband and wife put in money to buy a cow or other items to take to the wife's family as bridewealth. So, while expectations of educational reciprocity discourage parents to demand bridewealth, young women themselves may return to principles of bridewealth to live up to parental expectations: marital reciprocity is employed to handle intergenerational reciprocity.

As bridewealth payment is commonly associated with a decrease in women's freedom in marriage (Dodoo, Horne, and Biney 2014), the implication of this analysis would be that intergenerational reciprocity, reinforced by investments in schooling, encourages a degree of self-sacrifice among schooled women. Jackson (2012, 47), for example, mentions how Zimbabwean women preferred to be married without bridewealth so that they remain free to leave, maintain a better breakdown position and hence remain more powerful in their marriage. However, in the Gisu context, bridewealth does not have to be repaid if a marriage ends after children have been produced, and women remain strongly connected to their natal home even when married with bridewealth. This means that their position within marriage is not much affected by bridewealth payment. Even when bridewealth is paid, Gisu women continue to be relatively free to spend large amounts of time at their natal home, continue to enjoy support from their natal kin, and can fairly easily divorce. It is likely that these circumstances explain why, in the Gisu context, women have turned to bridewealth to handle expectations of intergenerational reciprocity. In societies where bridewealth payment has greater implications for women's position in a marriage, women may not employ such a strategy.

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This chapter has been concerned with the relationship between schooling and marriage making. It shows how the impact of schooling on marriage initiation is shaped by the particular ways in which schooling is made sense of in relation to other social and cultural principles and views. The emergence of the fine, which I have considered here as a new marriage prestation, is a good example of this dynamic. In the Gisu context, cultural views of the female body have instigated a discourse of schooling as childhood. This discourse, a product of the way in which schooling is locally made sense of, in turn, led people to reinterpret the Ugandan defilement law in a manner that boosted a fine system that has come to affect a considerable number of marriages today. The chapter also shows that the overall effect of schooling on different marriage practices involves a series of feedback loops. Because of schooling, among other things, bridewealth is increasingly paid in stages. This, in turn, creates space for the emergence of the fine, which encourage women to marry in, or shortly after, school. If women continue to marry early, the fine system remains in place and provides a way for parents to benefit from their daughters' marriages shortly after marriage initiation, rendering them less interested in immediately demanding bridewealth. So, the overall impact schooling has on marriage making is complex and often contradictory. And the transformative potential attributed to schooling in relation to one aspect of marriage making, for example with respect to timing ('schooling causes women to marry later'), may be undermined by the way in which schooling affects other components of marriage making.

6. The marriage relationship: Schooling, matrifocality and masculinity in crisis

Having explored some of the ways in which schooling plays a role in the way marriages are made, I now turn to the way in which schooling affects marriage *relations*. I will develop two arguments in this chapter. First, I show that schooling has contributed to a changed conjugal contract and tends to undermine the authority of fathers within households. A crisis of masculinity has become apparent in Gisu society and men increasingly disengage themselves from the nuclear family. Second, I show that in a context where a crisis of masculinity has taken root, and men increasingly walk away from their responsibilities towards wives and children, schooling has a complex impact on marriage: on the one hand, it reinforces a feedback loop between increasing matrifocality in the household and male disengagement, thereby driving couples further apart; on the other, the ambition to raise school fees for children encourages some women to stay married, despite being unhappy about their husband's contribution to the household, because they depend on their husband's assets when it comes to raising school fees.

This chapter again shows that the consequences of schooling are contingent upon the way in which schooling comes to be incorporated into Gisu relations and principles. The chapter also broadens my analysis of the impact of schooling on gender relations as it demonstrates that schooling not only has a complex and contradictory impact on Woman as a symbolic category (Chapter 4), but also shapes women's position in their actual roles, as mothers and wives, in complex ways. In the next section, I discuss how the Gisu conjugal contract has changed, partially as a consequence of schooling, over the course of the past 50 years. I then analyse how these changes have undermined men's authority in the home and produced a crisis of masculinity. I then develop my argument about the impact of schooling on marriages in this context of masculinity in crisis, and turn to two case studies to substantiate my analysis. I end the chapter with a few reflections on women's positions, options, and influence in marriage.

A new conjugal contract: Responsibility for school fees and women making money

This section explores how the Gisu conjugal contract has changed since the mid-20th century and how schooling has contributed towards these changes. The concept of the conjugal contract was coined by Ann Whitehead (1981) and refers to cultural expectations and norms of variable strength that together provide a normative template for how spouses are to behave in a marriage relationship in a particular society. The concept captures expectations about the acceptability of domestic violence, sexual behaviour, relations with natal family, and so on, but also the ideal division of labour, how income ought to be divided and who is responsible for the purchase of different goods for the home.

Importantly, the cultural principles that make up the conjugal contract are a dynamic set of guidelines. Marriage norms get changed when the myriad acts of individual agency – that is, for example, people picking up tasks that the conjugal contract does not assign to them – lead couples to renegotiate responsibilities, which leads to a revised conjugal contract, a process of social change that Giddens refers to as 'structuration' (Giddens 1984; see Jackson 2012 for a study that demonstrates these dynamics well). New behaviours and daily practices through which the conjugal contract changes may be the outcome of changing economic conditions, as well as a changing discourses around marriage instigated by cross-cultural exchanges of ideas. The government may play an important role in producing both types of change.

In the mid-20th century, the Gisu conjugal contract centred around a rather straightforward division of labour between husband and wife, with men being the jural superiors of their wives and formally in control of all household possessions (Heald 1998, 84, 95–99; La Fontaine 1959, 17). In addition to farming, women's most important duties centred around the successful running of the household – i.e. cooking, looking after the children and household chores – while men were responsible for income provision, protection and the maintenance of the family house. A couple cultivated their fields collaboratively and agricultural activities were not strongly gendered (see also Goldman and Heldenbrand 2002). Given women's responsibility for the running of the household they tended to be more closely involved in the cultivation of crops for home-consumption, and men were slightly biased towards cash crops like coffee, but this was not a strict divide. Women were expected to help men with the cultivation of cash crops if such support was asked for and men were expected to perform heavy agricultural tasks, such as ploughing, even for the purpose of non-cash crops. Income-generating activities in which men could become involved were brewing beer, carpentry, building and craftwork, and men commonly engaged in such activities in the 1960s (Heald 1998, 85).

The marriage relationship was formally presented in terms of absolute male control, and the father of a home enjoyed great respect among other household members (Heald 1998, 95). He had to be given a chair when he entered the home and both his daughters and wife had to kneel for him when serving him food. The man was the head of the household and the owner of all household possessions. Patrilocal residence implied as much, but, in addition to owning the house and the gardens, a man could also claim ownership of all household produce and his wife's possessions. The fact that a man owned the land upon which the whole family depended provided the basis for such claims: as men owned the land, they were considered justified to claim all the wealth derived from it. Yet, my oral testimonies suggest that women have always managed to secure a fair degree of control over cultivated food and incoming money. This reflects a more general feature of Gisu marriages at the time that I will discuss in more detail below: while male authority was strongly emphasised in cultural

models, women actually had a fair degree of freedom and power within marriages (see also Heald 1998, 96 and Jackson 2013).

Men's authority in the home was strongly based on other household members' dependence on men's income-generating activities, responsibilities and, importantly, land. A man was responsible for the protection of his family, as well as for raising sufficient income to pay for necessities like clothing, sugar, materials for the home and ritual expenditures. Few women had their own means of making money at that time, so they depended entirely on their husband's income-generating activities (below I present figures that support this claim). Moreover, the whole family was dependent on the food that came from land owned by a father. Male ownership of land made fathers a central and authoritative figure in the lives of his sons. Indeed, their future depended highly on the amount of land they would get from their father after circumcision: "[t]he father's wealth is the single most decisive factor in determining the chances of a man marrying and acquiring land to support his family" writes Heald (1998, 94) in light of the Gisu pre-mortem inheritance system. As fathers were free to decide how to divide their land among sons, they had a great deal of power over them. Although conflicts over land between fathers and sons have been common, such power also induced submissiveness in sons keen to display their respect for their father, in order to get a good share. The Gisu saying 'respect your father, because he carries your blessings' has its roots in the way in which land used to be – and, up to some point, still is – inherited.[131]

In various ways, however, men were dependent on women too and, as women could divorce relatively easily, such dependency diminished men's power within marriage. Being able to manage the responsibilities of a household used to be an important male quality and divorce was typically seen to be the consequence of a man's incapacity in this regard: had the man looked after his wife better she would not have left, people typically commented when a woman left her husband (Heald 1998, 100). So, divorce not only meant that a man was left without someone to take care of him and, in case a woman left her children behind, his children, but also put his social status at risk. Bachelors were socially ridiculed and those who failed to maintain a stable marriage risked accusations of thievery or witchcraft (Heald 1998, 101; Jackson 2013, 29). Women could also re-marry fairly easily, but men had to raise bridewealth again and found themselves surrounded by a greater number of competitors in the marriage market because of polygyny.[132] The relatively poor reputational breakdown positions of

[131] A polygynous man had to construct a separate house for each wife and assign each wife her own plot of land to cultivate (Heald 1998, 94–95). Some women's access to land in usufruct thus depended on their husband's decisions too and, consequently, polygynous arrangements were said to easily culminate in conflicts between co-wives even though they lived apart (Heald 1998, 99).

[132] Note that the production of children, especially sons, was expected of every marriage and a man would send a woman back home if she appeared to be infertile (or gave birth to daughters only).

men meant that patriarchal conjugal norms, such as the man being entitled to control all income, were relatively weak in strength (Jackson 2013).

A major difference between the conjugal contract of the 1960s and the one of today is that women are increasingly expected to be involved in income-generating activities and are now seen to be (partially) responsible for the purchase of a greater number of goods or services – of which school fees are an important item. In a study of female labour supply in Bugisu, Verschoor, paraphrasing Muzaki (1998), mentions that although women's participation in casual labour is traceable to the 1960s, when some women sold their labour to other farmers, it was not until the 1990s that a considerable number of women left the domestic sphere and joined the informal labour market (Verschoor 2008, 161). This is consistent with the testimonies of older people in Bunyafa. Nabukwasi, a woman in her seventies (cited before in Chapter 1), and one of the few women who had engaged in income-generating activities relatively early, emphasised that women's activities were strongly tied to the domestic sphere when she was young: "the woman in a home, at that time… You were supposed to go and dig, then come back with food, and then cook, and then also clean the house, and wash the dishes; those who stayed home would eat what you have cooked."

Table 12. Activities married women engage in (Ego-sample, women)

Activity	Freq.	Percent
Farms on own farm	69	95.8%
Farms for someone else	25	34.7%
Animal husbandry (own animals)	30	41.7%
Animal husbandry (other people's animals)	17	23.6%
Self-employed/business	35	48.6%
Salaried employment	1	1.4%

While women did not involve themselves much in income-generating activities in the mid-20th century, they have increasingly come to do so. In fact, currently, almost all women combine their domestic duties with income-generating activities. My ego-sample data show that 35 percent of the married women did farm work on other people's farms, 24 percent looked after other people's livestock and almost half the women (49 percent) had a small business (see Table 12). Furthermore, as Table 13 shows, almost a quarter of all women surveyed had had a job at some time – i.e. had worked for another person or organisation whilst being regularly paid a salary for a period of at least 3 months. This table also shows that female employment has become more common overtime: 23 percent of young women (below 30 years old) had already had a job in their life, compared to only 18 percent of the women in the oldest generation, despite the latter group having had more time to engage in paid labour over the course of their life. These findings are consistent with Verschoor's survey data on

changing gender divisions of labour in Gisu homes. In 2001, when Verschoor carried out the survey, most people said that in their households non-agricultural waged work is carried out by both men or women, while they recalled that 10 years earlier (in 1991) such work was only carried out by men (Verschoor 2008, 160). Typical income generating activities of women are trading in crops and clothes, preparing meals in a small restaurant near the roadside, brewing and selling *warangi* (the local alcoholic drink), and working on other people's farms.

Table 13. Job history of women by age (Ego-sample, women)

Age category	Never had a job	Has (had) a job	Total
60 and above	23 (82.1%)	5 (17.9%)	28 (100%)
45-59	16 (69.6%)	7 (30.4%)	23 (100%)
30-44	21 (72.4%)	8 (27.6%)	29 (100%)
Below 30	30 (76.9%)	9 (23.1%)	39 (100%)
Total	90 (75.6%)	29 (24.4%)	119 (100%)

There are several factors that explain women's greater involvement in income-generating activities, and the increased accessibility of schooling is an important one among those. Before turning to schooling, however, let me briefly touch upon two other dynamics. Firstly, the Ugandan government and international development agencies have encouraged women to start earning their own money. Since the Ugandan government published its National Gender Policy in 1997, enabling women to have better access to resources like land and income has been an important goal. In addition to having reserved political seats for women at almost all governmental levels, many policy documents discuss and address gender implications today. Uganda's policy on the maintenance of roads, for example, includes an action plan for promoting women's participation in infrastructural work: the goal is to have a workforce that consists of at least 30 percent of women.[133] The government's attempts to promote women's involvement in income-generating activities, and realise female empowerment more generally, were acknowledged in Bunyafa. When I asked Nabukwasi why women have come to increasingly move into the public domain, she argued that things changed thanks to Museveni:

> When Museveni's regime came, he came and then he empowered women, and they were raised to our level [the higher level of today]. […] He said that if a woman is schooled, she can always become a president, she can always become a police person, if she wants to enter the

[133] This policy was defined in the White Paper on Sustainable Maintenance of District, Urban and Community Access Roads (DUCAR) in 2001.

> army, she can enter the army. Anybody can lead, so, we are all equal [men and women]. **(16/08/2021)**[134]

While women emphasised how they felt encouraged by the Ugandan government, men complained that they had been left behind: "Museveni does not like us" one man said when I discussed government policies with a group of men in a local tea cafe.

Development organisations have also implemented initiatives to encourage women to raise their own income. Recent development initiatives are often biased towards supporting women (see also Jackson 2015), a tendency that is most clearly reflected in the fact that nearly all micro-finance initiatives and savings groups in the area target women exclusively. The combined effect of Uganda's policies to empower women and gendered development initiatives have encouraged women to involve themselves in income-generating activities.

Secondly, households have increasingly diversified their livelihoods away from farming. Diversification has been a necessity because of increased land fragmentation and degradation – a consequence of patrilineal land inheritance in a context of high population density. This has rendered reliance on agriculture as the sole income source less viable (Dolan 2002; Verschoor 2008). In a survey of changing agricultural practices, Goldman and Heldenbrand (2002, 67) found that people had experienced a considerable decline in agricultural output in the previous 10 years:

> Over 80% of farmers who made output comparisons reported declines for each of their main crops: bananas, maize, beans, and coffee. The extent of reported declines in output was also dramatic. Farmers reported mean production declines of 44% for bananas, 39% for maize, 48% for beans, and 46% for coffee in comparing current output with output on their farms 10 years ago.

As diversification means that more income-generating activities are carried out at the same time, this trend typically requires greater involvement of women in such activities.

Finally, increased accessibility of schooling has been an important factor that has driven women to involve themselves in income generation. To begin with, as more women have come to receive schooling, more women have come to seek jobs and move away from a life solely dependent on agriculture. Bbaale, for example, based on data of the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics, found that "women with a primary school level of education and those with a secondary level are about 3% and 5%, respectively, more likely to be working (significant at 5% level) compared to those with no education at all […]. Among the married, women with a post-secondary school education are about 9%

[134] Language of expression: Lugisu

more likely to be working compared to the uneducated" (2014, 16). Consistent with these findings, Juliet stated about Bunyafa specifically that the reason married women are increasingly generating an income has to do with their schooling:

> The girls at that time [when Juliet was young] were not schooled, they were not exposed to schooling, so they did not have that intention to work; that self-drive to work. But the girls now have learnt how to do work. They cannot sit when they come into a home. They have to do this, do that, to make a home develop. So they got schooling, and the means of increasing income in their home, that is why. **(23/07/2021)**[135]

Additionally, schooled people are often invited to get involved in community activities and organisations because much community work requires school-based skills (as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 9). Women's increased schooling has also boosted their involvement in community work, and because this sort of work is often reimbursed, this is another way in which schooling leads to women's greater involvement in income-generating activities.

While schooling has helped orient younger women towards employment and community work, schooling also means that parents have to raise school fees. This responsibility has encouraged married women, as the providers of schooling, to become keener to make money. When responsibility for schooling is analysed in light of the traditional Gisu conjugal contract, a degree of responsibility for school fees may be assigned to both fathers and mothers: fathers are responsible because they used to be in charge of raising money, while women are responsible because the socialisation of children (of which schooling is quintessentially a new component) has typically been their duty. Women are therefore inclined to engage in income-generating activities so that they can make their own contributions if their husband is unable or hesitant to fully cover school fees. When I asked women why they worked or joined a savings group they almost always mentioned they did so to raise school fees for the children.

This relationship between women's responsibility for school fees and their increased involvement in income generation involves causality in both directions, and provides a good example of how the conjugal contract changes through structuration (Giddens 1984). Women's responsibility to pay school fees may encourage them to seek a source of income, while women's increased income levels instigate new bargains between men and women over household responsibilities. If women have their own means of survival and greater financial possibilities they can put less pressure on men to live up to their end of the 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti 1988) – that is, to spend money on the household –

[135] Language of expression: Lugisu

and men's responsibility to do so may then erode. At the same time, when a woman earns money, men may draw on the old conjugal contract to claim generosity – 'I allowed you to work, didn't I' – and pressurise women to take greater responsibility for certain items, including school fees, in return (cf. Verschoor 2008). When doing so, men assign new responsibilities to women. Thus, marital responsibilities and norms become reconfigured as a consequence of changes in men and women's behaviours in marriage and the conjugal contract changes accordingly.

When it is almost impossible for people to raise enough money to cover school fees individually, and responsibility to do so is seen to lie with both fathers and mothers, one may expect, as Guyer (1988) noted, that the need to raise school fees has the potential to draw couples increasingly together, leading to more stable and collaborative marriages. However, under the new conjugal contract male authority within homes has been increasingly undermined. The high level of school fees renders it hard for men to provide sufficient income to fully cover household costs (men need women to contribute too) and women have increasingly taken over responsibilities and activities that were previously exclusively male. Furthermore, as schooling has become available as an alternative route to successful adulthood, sons no longer exclusively depend on their father's land for future success; they may look to their mother for school fees instead. A mother, in turn, can now support her children directly (through investing in their schooling) and is no longer entirely dependent on a good plot of land from her husband – which sons can subsequently inherit – in order to enhance sons' chances in life. Where men find their authority increasingly undermined, they typically seek alternative ways to perform and recover their masculinity, often through behaviours that drive them away from the nuclear family, as I demonstrate below. In such a context – that is, one in which men are increasingly disengaged from their wives and children – schooling has a more complex effect on marriages.

Witnessing masculinity in crisis

In a context in which women are increasingly taking over men's responsibilities and see their social standing rise, while men struggle to live up to the breadwinner ideal that shapes hegemonic masculinities in many African settings, men have started to abandon or deny traditional responsibilities and engage in alternative forms of masculine behaviour, often with deconstructive implications, as a way to protect their masculinity. For example, Silberschmidt (2001), based on a study of men in Kenya, argues that men have responded to the crisis of masculinity by engaging in sexual relations with multiple partners as an alternative way to strengthen male identity. Similarly, Rich et al. (2015, 388) suggest that men in South Africa's North West province engage in excessive alcohol consumption as a way to establish a masculine identity that is increasingly difficult to establish through ordinary breadwinning: "[i]t seemed that only by consuming large quantities of alcohol while still preserving the

appearance of sobriety and self-control could men effectively display an “acceptable masculinity””, the authors conclude. And Nkwake (2009), based on a study in another part of Uganda, found that fathers whose wives earn more than them are less willing to care for children, a pattern the author explains to be the consequence of male uncertainty: the more empowered a mother is, the more a father’s masculinity is undermined, and the less inclined he is to pick up roles that may further undermine his masculinity such as the feminine task of childcare.

A ‘crisis of masculinity’ has, the world over, provoked a range of responses by men that are detrimental to the stability of marriages, from sexual disloyalty (Silberschmidt 2001), to gender-based violence (Bourgois 1996; Sengupta and Calo 2016), to alcoholism (Rich, Nkosi, and Morojele 2015) and denying paternal responsibilities (Morgan et al. 2017). Such responses are seen to be particularly common in sub-Saharan Africa, where hegemonic masculinity ideals have been strongly undermined by colonial influence and, more recently, uncertain economic conditions (Lindsay and Miescher 2003; McLean 2021; Wyrod 2016). Male behaviours that are commonly associated with a crisis of masculinity indicate a pattern of male disengagement from the nuclear family. Such disengagement has been observed in many societies (Bledsoe, Guyer, and Lerner 2000; Jackson 2001; Morgan et al. 2017) and renders men ambivalent, and often marginal, figures within homes, because mothers and children view their husbands and fathers increasingly resentfully due to their lack of commitment to them.

A brief analysis of my focus families can be presented in a first attempt to argue that such a process has unfolded in a considerable proportion of Gisu homes. When I chose my focus families, I had not yet become aware of men’s tendency to disengage themselves from the nuclear family. Yet, I found that in five out of the nine focus families where husband and wife were formally still together, the husband occupied an ambivalent position in the home. In these five homes, the husband slept apart from his wife (all families), did not contribute anything to the education of children (three families), was accused of excessive alcohol consumption (two families), did not get on well with a considerable number of his children (four families) and was accused of sleeping with other women or had had extramarital children (four families). I had no reason to believe that my sample was strongly atypical in terms of marital instability, although I cannot, of course, claim statistical representativeness.

Male disengagement from the nuclear family also emerged as a consistent pattern in my fieldnotes and conversations. During the burial of the daughter of a relatively rich elderly woman in my village, a good opportunity for various politicians and other leaders to address the community, a well-known Christian shepherd, invited to speak towards the end of the occasion, spoke in a lively manner about a number of social developments in Gisu society. At one point he said:

> Today's world is bad, so people have good reason to evaluate themselves! These days, it is men who move to different houses to sleep with different women. It is not women who divorce and go to another man, but it is men who are moving into different places to sleep with different women. Come back to the good! Men these days always have a side-dish, that is not good! **(10/09/2021)**[136]

The confirmative response from the crowd revealed that the shepherd's words captured a development many people recognised. The traditional pattern of women moving between the homes of men – from father to husband upon first marriage and from husband to husband in subsequent marriages – was felt to have been turned upside down. While women continue to live in the homes that formally belong to their husbands, married men take little interest in the management of such homes, spend most of their time in town and trading centres, and sleep with women in other homes: "these days, it is men who move to different houses to sleep with different women" as the shepherd framed it. In line with the shepherd's observation, what people considered to be a male-headed household, to me, being unaware of the history of specific households, often looked more like a female-headed household. As men had increasingly estranged themselves from, and were often not seen in, the houses that were built on their land, in the vicinity of their parents, and which formally belonged to them, many homes seemed entirely run by mothers. Households that were male headed were female-managed.

The theme of male disengagement also regularly emerged when I asked people about parental attitudes towards children's schooling. At one point during a period of fieldwork in a primary school, I decided to spend the lunch break in the teachers' staffroom to collect teachers' opinions on this subject. When I took my seat in the vicinity of the P7 teacher and the school's headteacher, I tried to casually start a chat by noticing that P5 – the class I had been observing that morning – seemed to be a good class. My comment led the P7 teacher (Hussein) to reflect on the high number of drop-outs they had experienced in a P5 class a few years earlier, which gave me, in turn, the opportunity to rapidly steer the conversation towards the topic I was interested in at the time: 'what is the role of parents when it comes to the drop-out of children?' I asked.

> **Hussein:** Fathers are supposed to pay for schooling, but what you see is that the mothers usually struggle. Fathers mainly think about themselves, they do not take a lot of responsibility for their children. **Headteacher:** [nodding affirmatively] Yes, they go and they drink! **Hussein:** when we organise meetings for parents, we find that only mothers turn up. **(06/06/2019)**[137]

[136] Language of expression: Lugisu
[137] Language of expression: English

After these opening comments our conversation continued with an analysis of men's lack of interest in schooling: "fathers do not see the value of schooling" both men mentioned. Toward the end of the conversation the P7 teacher asked me whether I knew the 'joke' people often make these days: "when a father manages to make some money together with his wife, he appreciates his wife with a co-wife". Both men laughed.

While Hussein and the headteacher could talk about the disengagement of their fellow men in fairly neutral terms, my conversations about this topic with women and children, who suffer the consequences of an uncommitted husband or father, were often imbued with greater bitterness. Several of the mothers in my focus families displayed considerable emotional discomfort when I discussed their family situation with them. Nafuna, a mother of 8 children and about 50 years old, for example, shed a tear when we were discussing her life in an interview. Nafuna was an extremely hard-working woman, always to be found in the kitchen or cultivating her husband's land when I visited their household. While her hard work for the household had helped her husband to establish a number of shops in Busia, as well as to build a fairly large brick house, her husband did not share much of the wealth that had come from their collaborative efforts with her and her children. Despite the fact that he owned about ten plots of land and made money out of the businesses in Busia, he never contributed a penny to their children's schooling and made few contributions towards the household on a daily basis. One of the children mentioned during an interview that their father tends to spend his money on other women and confirmed that he had left their mother to struggle with school fees on her own. During one of my last visits when it was getting dark outside and I was about to go home, Nafuna mentioned that she had forgotten to tell me one thing about the Gisu and made a familiar comment: "in this area, when you work hard as a woman to build a man's home, he appreciates you with a co-wife". The sad expression on her face revealed Nafuna's more negative experience with the dynamic that this 'joke' captured. Ironically, a couple of weeks before Nafuna made this comment, her husband had told me that he was considering getting another woman, "since almost all the men in the area had done so".

The dynamic that underlies male disengagement from the nuclear family is a decrease in male authority within homes. While few men would, of course, admit that their own or their fellow men's behaviours are informed by undermined ideals of the male household head, the idea that male authority within homes is being increasingly challenged was clearly felt. My conversations with young men about ideal marriage partners especially revealed how men are worried about their authority within homes. Several men mentioned how they preferred not to marry schooled women, because such women can easily control them when they are not schooled themselves. During a chat I had with a group of recent initiates, one of them, an 18-year-old man who ended his schooling in primary six,

said that he wanted to marry a Musoga because "they are not sharp […], they have a low understanding. When you tell her to wash your feet she will wash you, you can treat her like a baby". While men are keen to control their women, schooling is perceived as a threat to their authority in marriage, especially by those men with little school experience themselves. This same doubt or fear applied to working women. Several people – both men and women – told me that husbands typically prefer to keep their wives unemployed, so that they remain under their control. Ironically, in order to persuade their wives to stay at home, men sometimes promise to give them what a potential employer would pay them. As men cannot often fulfil this promise, merely the possibility that a woman works is sufficient to undermine men's provider role.

Table 14. Number of different mothers with whom men produced their first eight children (Ego-sample, men)

	Number of different mothers of men's first eight children					
Age group	*Zero*	*One*	*Two*	*Three*	*Four*	*Total*
60 and above	0	7	2	3	3	15
	0.0%	46.7%	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%	100%
45-59	1	5	12	3	2	23
	4.4%	21.7%	52.2%	13.0%	8.7%	100%
30-44	3	22	14	7	0	46
	6.5%	47.8%	30.4%	15.2%	0.0%	100%
Below 30	21	13	4	0	0	38
	55.3%	34.2%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Total	25	47	32	13	5	122
	20.5%	38.5%	26.2%	10.7%	4.1%	100%

To some extent, male disengagement from the nuclear family is also reflected in the statistical patterns of men's sexual and marital behaviour. Table 14 presents the number of different mothers that men produced their first eight children with for different age groups. In the oldest age group (above 60 years), 53 percent of the men produced their first eight children with multiple women. While this is already a considerable percentage – suggesting that it has never been very common for Gisu men to sexually commit themselves to one woman – the table shows a trend towards an even greater dispersal of children among different women. Indeed, among men in the age group of 45 to 59, 74 percent had children with multiple women and the next generation is likely to reach a similar number. Among the men aged between 30 and 44, 45 percent had already had children with multiple women. This is close to the percentage we find in the oldest category while a considerable number of men in this age group are likely to father more children in the future. The statistics in this table are also likely to underestimate the actual dispersal of men's children among different women because only the first eight children were taken into account.

Table 15. Overlapping marriages (Ego-sample, men)

Number of wives married in life	Number of temporal overlaps between marriages							
	Zero	*One*	*Two*	*Three*	*four*	*Five*	*Six*	*Total*
Two	18	6						24
	34.6%	11.5%						46.2%
Three	6	5	3	4				18
	11.5%	9.6%	5.8%	7.7%				34.6%
Four	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4
	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0	1.9%	7.7%
Five	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
	5.8%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	9.6%
Six	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Total	29	12	4	5	0	1	1	52
	55.8%	23.1%	7.7%	9.6%	0.0%	1.9%	1.9%	100%

Table reports the number of instances of men's marriages overlapping in time. So for instance, if a man has married three wives during his lifetime and both his first marriage and his second marriage had not ended by the time he married his third wife, the number of overlaps is equal to two. The table only takes into account the number of overlapping marriages between the first 4 of a man's total number of marriages. This means that the maximum number of overlaps between marriages is 6 (1st marriage overlaps with all 3 subsequent marriage (=3 overlaps), 2nd marriage with subsequent 2 marriages (=2 overlaps) and the 3rd and 4th marriage overlap with one another (=1 overlap). Some men married 6 women. For these men, the overlap between marriage 5 and 6 with the other marriages is not taken into account.

Legend

Pure serial monogamy	55.8%
Mix between polygamy and serial monogamy	22.9%
Pure polygamy	21.1%

While the increased dispersal of men's first eight children among different women could in theory be a consequence of polygyny rather than sexual disloyalty, marriage statistics show that this is not the case. Only 15 percent of the men said that they were married to multiple women at the time of the survey, a percentage that is not considerably different from the percentage Heald found in the 1960s.[138] In total, 55 men said they had been married to multiple women over the course of their life, but, as Table 15 demonstrates, the majority of these men (56 percent) did so fully consecutively (i.e. they were never married to two women at the same time) and only 21 percent had the maximum number of overlapping marriages given the number of women married (pure polygamy). Statistics demonstrate that men marry and have children with multiple women, while there is no trend towards increasingly stable polygynous arrangements. Thus, what is reflected in these figures is increased

[138] In Heald's survey, 11.5 percent of the men reported they were polygamous (Heald 1998, 93). The difference between Heald's and my statistics may partially be because my sampling procedure gave polygamous men a greater chance of being selected for participation (see Appendix 1).

sexual disloyalty, continued marital instability[139] and, importantly, a pattern towards a greater dispersal of men's inter-generational obligations. The latter may, in turn, render it harder for men to live up to paternal responsibilities and reinforce a pattern of male disengagement.

Schooling, matrifocality and male disengagement

While it would be an exaggeration to claim increased accessibility of schooling alone produces a crisis of masculinity, schooling does have a considerable impact on the authority of the father in Gisu homes and, once a dynamic of male disengagement has started due to undermined masculinity, schooling tends to reinforce that pattern. As noted, an important basis of paternal authority was sons' dependence on their father's land for future success. As schooling has become available as an alternative route to successful adulthood, and access to schools may be facilitated by fathers *and* mothers, sons can increasingly orient themselves towards their mothers, especially if fathers prove less willing to support them in school. Such matrifocality undermines fathers' positions in homes and may, consequently, provoke responses of male disengagement. Where men increasingly prove to be disloyal and uncommitted husbands, women, in turn, are inclined to increasingly invest their time, resources and affection in their children rather than their husbands, to establish bonds of loyalty that will help them in old age. While a woman's sons' futures used to depend entirely on land – to be obtained through their father/her husband – she can now directly invest in their future, by paying for school fees. As a consequence of schooling, both women and children have become less dependent on men, and schooling reinforces a feedback loop between matrifocality and male disengagement: as women start to invest more in their children's schooling and sons become increasingly oriented towards their mothers, the authority of fathers is increasingly undermined; if fathers disengage themselves from the nuclear family in response, women become more likely to invest in their children and children more oriented towards their mothers, and so forth.

This feedback loop is reinforced by schooling in a second way. The shift in women's commitment from husband to children is encouraged by, and further strengthens, reciprocal expectations attached to investments in schooling. Such reciprocal expectations strengthen the commitment of children to their mother and, in doing so, further challenge men's authority within nuclear families. In homes where the mother has invested a lot of energy and resources in schooling, successful children tend to be extremely committed to helping their mother. They help her with the payment of school fees for younger siblings, they – sometimes collectively – plan to build a better house for her, and they protect her against intra-household violence. Thus, matrifocal educational reciprocity encourages children to pick up responsibilities that under the old conjugal contract were performed by the father, and if an

[139] Serial monogamy was already common in the 1960s (Heald 1998, 99).

undermined father tries to re-establish his authority by turning against his wife, children protect their mother. The bonds that maternal investments in schooling establish between children and mothers render the father an increasingly marginal figure in households, and the feedback loop has a second wheel.

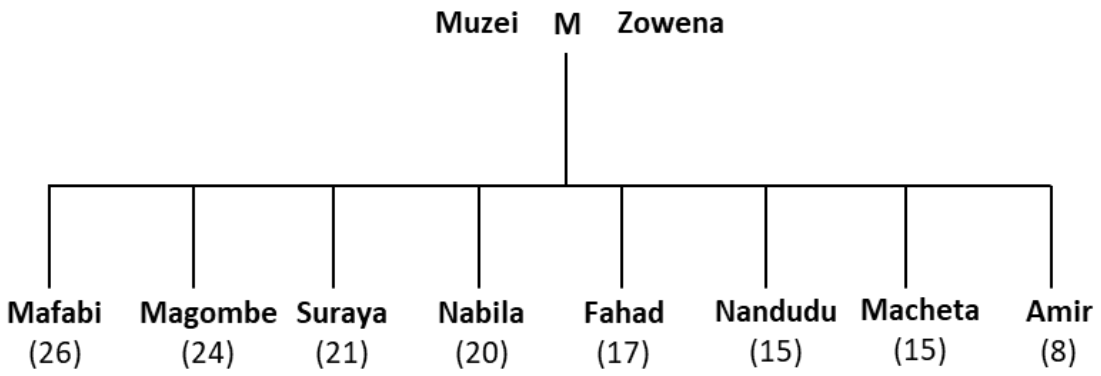
At the same time, however, women do continue to depend on men. The incomes of women often depend on assets – land, most importantly – that formally belong to men (selling agricultural crops is an important source of income for women [Goldman and Heldenbrand, 2002; and Kabahinda, 2017]). While Uganda's current Land Act states that customary land laws may not deny women access to land, and women's access to land is indeed improving (Verschoor 2008, 145), most land continues to be owned by men in rural areas, where state-control is limited and communities themselves tend not to question male bias in customary land laws. As people continue to adhere to the idea that sons are to inherit land while women are to obtain access to land by usufruct, through husbands, it is not easy for women to get access to land at their natal home (Kabahinda 2017; Whyte and Acio 2017). Goldman and Heldenbrand's household survey confirmed this: female-headed households had the least land per household member (2002, 54). While women now have the option to support their children directly through schooling investments, most women do not have the resources to set their children up for successful adulthood without the material benefits of marriage. Even if women do have an income that does not depend on men's assets – through a business or employment for example – school fees are typically too high, certainly at tertiary level, for women to be able to cover those alone (see also Guyer 1988). This means that continued collaboration with their husband is required and schooling, while reinforcing a feedback loop that drives couples further apart, also encourages women not to leave their marriage.

The case studies I present next illustrate the complex way in which schooling influences marriages in a context in which men show little interest in the well-being of their nuclear family. The first case centres around a household in which the father had an alcohol problem. It illustrates how: 1) a disengaged father instigates maternal investment in the schooling of children; 2) principles of educational reciprocity strengthen children's loyalty to their mother; and 3) matrifocal bonds – strengthened through maternal investment in schooling – limit fathers' authority in, and access to, the nuclear family. The extremity of the case makes it particularly suitable to demonstrate these dynamics, which, I believe, are common in many Gisu households, albeit possibly in less extreme ways than in the two households I describe below. The second case is about an unstable marriage, caused by a disloyal and unpredictable husband, that did not end in divorce, because of the mother's ambition to school her children.

Case study 1: A matrifocal family and a marginalised father

Zowena was in a troublesome marriage when I met her shortly after I arrived in Bunyafa in 2018. Around the time I arrived, her husband, Muzei, had lost the elections for local chairperson at the village level, after having served as the political head of the village for over ten years. His defeat did not come as a surprise to many as Muzei had not been a good leader. Shortly after he had been installed, his drinking habits worsened to the extent that he no longer took much responsibility in the village or at home and often found himself to be the cause rather than the solution of conflicts in the village. I was told that the community had wanted to replace him earlier, but, as new elections for village chairperson had been postponed several times in Uganda, they had never had the chance to do so. For me it was hard to imagine that Muzei had once been able to win the confidence of his fellow villagers in an election. The Muzei I got to know spent most of his time seated near the roadside drinking alcohol and I was often told by Zowena and her children how little Muzei had done for them over the past couple of years.

Figure 11. Family tree of Zowena and Muzei (Focus family 5)



Zowena and Muzei had eight children together (see Figure 11) and lived in a mud house, roofed with iron sheets, built on Muzei's land in his natal village. Their first born, Mafabi, was 26 years old when I got to know this family, had recently passed upper secondary school, and lived at his mother's home. He had plans of going to university, but had not come close to raising the funds needed for that and gave up these plans later on during my fieldwork. The second child, Magombe, had finished S4, established his own household in Busia and was no longer strongly connected to his mother's household. All the other children were still at home, either school-going (Nandudu, Fahad, Macheta and Amir) or, like Mafabi, planning to go back to school in the near future (Suraya and Nabila). All the children were, or had been, entirely dependent on their mother for the payment of school fees. Since Muzei's drinking habits had worsened, around the time Mafabi was in secondary school, he had not contributed a single shilling to the children's schooling, according to other household members. On

the contrary, Mafabi and Zowena told me that Muzei had sold the cows that they had earlier accumulated to pay for Mafabi's university education and 'drunk the money'.

Zowena was known in the village for being extremely dedicated to her children's schooling. "As a mother I cannot buy a dress for myself if I have not paid for the school fees of my children" she said during an interview. Self-sacrifice for the good of her children best describes Zowena's everyday life. She worked extremely hard to raise school fees and keep her household going. On a typical day, she woke up early in the morning to go to their fields to ensure the family's food provisions and tend to a few crops which were for sale; cooked lunch for herself and her children in the afternoon; then quickly milked her cow afterwards before taking a shower and finding her way back to the kitchen to prepare supper. There was no time for Zowena to attend the mosque on Fridays – an occasion that provided many other women an opportunity to take a rest. On Fridays she visited neighbours to buy some of their matoke crop which she tried to sell for a small profit on Saturday's local market. On Sundays she participated in a savings group – "to raise school fees for the children". Two days after I started living in the village Zowena asked me to come over to have lunch with her educated son, Mafabi. Her commitment to the success of her children did not stop at the payment of school fees (I think she saw me as a potential patron for her son).

While I was unable to establish a direct connection between undermined male authority and Muzei's alcoholism – he was usually too drunk to interview – Zowena's dedication to the schooling and success of her children was strengthened by her husband's behaviour. Zowena herself did not grow up with her parents and siblings. She was given away at an early age to a rich couple who lived in Bunyafa to work for them as a maid, and later married in the same village. When Muzei started drinking, Zowena's parents had both died and so had her foster father in Bunyafa. As Zowena never grew up with her siblings and her foster family were also not around (her foster mother had moved to Busia), she did not have a 'natal' home to which she and her children could easily return and count on the long-term support of kin. As her husband proved unreliable, and increasingly disengaged himself from her and the children, investing in the schooling of her children was the only option left for Zowena to secure the loyalty of a group of people who could look after her when she became old. While Zowena never went to school herself, one of her foster siblings got a job in Belize after he went to study in America, so she grew up with the idea that schooling can pay off. Her strong commitment to the schooling of her children also worked to improve her reputation in the village. Several women picked Zowena when I asked them to name a woman in the village who they respected a lot. She was appreciated 'because she works hard to school her children'.

Zowena's investment of effort and money in her children's schooling made them extremely loyal to her. After a couple of months of fieldwork, I was able to help Mafabi to get a well-paid job on a research team in a nearby town. With the salary he earned, he could easily establish his own household in the near future, but throughout my conversations with him he kept emphasising that he wanted to set up a business that could help his mother, rather than get married. Suraya, Mafabi's younger sister, got married to a man living in the same village during my fieldwork but continued to spend most of her time at her mother's home (see Chapter 8 for a longer discussion of Suraya's life). Towards the end of my fieldwork, when she had already given birth to a daughter, she decided to apply for a job as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia in order to be able to earn money for her mother and the future of her child. Her younger sister, Nabila, got an opportunity to work as a housemaid in Nairobi and regularly sent money to her mother. All these children got access to a smart phone at some point and regularly posted pictures of their mother on Facebook accompanied with words of admiration. And the last-born of the family, Amir (8), asked me if I could teach him English so that he could finish school quickly in order to be able to "buy sugar for [his] mother".

The strong bonds between Zowena and her children, strengthened by her investment in their schooling, provided Zowena some protection against her husband when he would come home drunk. While Muzei had fathered a son with another woman and spent most of his nights with her in a village about a mile away, he continued to regularly sleep in Zowena's house as well. Zowena had already claimed her own sleeping room in this house and had slept alone for years. But on the nights Muzei would come home drunk he usually tried to get into her bed or insulted her throughout the night. When this happened, Mafabi and his younger brother Magombe (when he still lived at home) usually tried to calm their father down. Their involvement sometimes led their father to turn his anger on them. The family told me about a number of fights between Muzei and his sons and one such conflict eventually led to the arrest of the father the next morning. Zowena's bond with her children helped her to maintain her own private domain in a home that formally belonged to her husband and limited Muzei's access to his own household. Mafabi, at the same time, made a bit of a career in his mother's household as his job allowed him to cover part of his mother's daily expenditures and to sometimes help her to pay debts at her savings group. "I am almost the overall head of the family now" he mentioned towards the end of my fieldwork. "Instead of looking for our dad to like, get those things, they [his mother and siblings] will come to me."

Case study 2: Married for school fees

Zaina (in her forties) and Abdul (in his fifties) had been married without bridewealth for about 15 years when I met them. Their marriage was the result of a pregnancy. After Zaina gave birth to the first of

their three children at her natal home, she felt her only option was to move in with her husband. Habib, who was from the same village, had already acquired a piece of land from his father when Zaina moved in with him, a few months after she gave birth, and the couple started to develop their homestead together by cultivating his land. When I got to know them, they lived in an average size mud house, roofed with iron sheets, about half a mile away from the main road and in the vicinity of both their families. They had initially lived in a smaller house, but they had moved to their current house after they had been able to buy the small plot on which it was built, about four years ago. Their main source of income was crop farming and livestock: the household owned three plots of land and one cow. Their firstborn child, Laila (16), was in secondary one and had been among the better performing students throughout primary school. Their second-born child ran away from home and had not been seen for several years. Their last-born child, Mohammed (10), was in primary five.

Habib, a short man, usually dressed in old farm clothes and a sultan, was a complicated character. He was extremely dedicated to his religion and keen to present himself as the ideal Muslim. When I visited him for an interview which I had arranged the day before, on a Thursday afternoon, I found him dressed up in an Islamic kanzu, barefooted, seated on a mat while reading the Koran. During interviews he often said he had left things – the education of his children, among other things – in the hands of God, and he was quick to steer our conversations towards an Islamic verse or story.

Apart from his consistent interest in religion, however, Habib was rather unpredictable. He could, for example, be extremely suspicious about my intentions, but then a few days later enthusiastically invite me to come and discuss religious matters at his home. Or he could be keen to share his plans of schooling his children with me, but then, a few conversations later, he would be extremely sceptical about the value of formal education. When a lower secondary school graduate passed us during an interview whilst wearing old farm clothes (he was coming back from cutting grass for a cow), Habib, after greeting the man politely, asked me: “that man has studied but do you see a difference between this man and myself?”; “not really” I replied; “right, there is no difference because he failed to get a job. The government is saying that we should school children, but who made a loss on that boy, the parents or the government?”.

Habib also engaged in behaviours that were at odds with his marital status and Islamic identity. I regularly found him trying to seduce a woman in the middle of the trading centre, an odd thing to do for a married man, and while Gisu circumcision is disapproved of by the Islamic community, Habib performed the role of the *umukhebi* (circumciser).

Zaina, slightly taller than her husband, thin and usually dressed in a long dress with grey slippers, was a friendly woman. She was quick to invite me for a cup of tea when I first passed her house and always

made time to chat when we occasionally ran into each other in the village. Zaina had a good relationship with her brother's son, Geoffrey, an upper secondary school graduate (cited before in Chapter 2), who I regularly found at Zaina's household too. Through her interaction with Geoffrey, as well as her daughter Laila, Zaina learned a little bit of English and during interviews she was often quick to interrupt Zam's translation if she had already understood my question, asked in English. Zaina was physically not a very strong woman and had been suffering, moreover, from a painful chest for quite a while. She said that she struggles a lot with farm work and the few times I assisted her in the fields she left me and Laila to do the heavy work. She was well aware of her daughter Laila's educational talent and dedication, and was extremely keen to help her daughter to get far in school. When I asked her about future expectations, the following conversation developed:

> **Zaina**: We plan to survive. The most important thing is life. We have to plan for the education of our children. We were planning to plant trees, but the trees we were planning to plant... They [the government] are taking away the land [where they wanted to plant the trees] from us… It is at the waterside. Now, how shall we survive? **Floris:** You are struggling with this government thing? [rumour had it that the government was taking over land near the waterside in Bunyafa] **Zaina**: [Nodding] Another plan is that we try to survive by keeping livestock. When we stay while looking after livestock, and the animals are there, children can continue with education. **(01/11/2018)**[140]

Zaina was not very happy with her marriage. She said that she had no idea what goes on in her husband's mind and had been informed that he 'had done something' (to be interpreted as: committed adultery). During my fieldwork, she spent considerable periods of time at her natal home to avoid having to live with her husband. After she attended a burial of one of her relatives, for example, she did not return to Habib and the children for about a month; she only visited them occasionally, and slept elsewhere. In the past, she had been absent for longer. Laila recalled that her mother spent about a year away from their home when they were younger. She recalled that, in their mother's absence, Habib had been mistreating her and her siblings terribly ("he never removed our jiggers", she said) which led her younger brother to run away from home.[141] Habib said that the child ran away because the wife he took in absence of Zaina did not treat his children well. Things improved, according to Laila, when Zaina returned and started to sell clothes to raise school fees for them. These testimonies, combined with my observations of this family, suggest that Habib was far from the ideal husband and, like many other Gisu men, rather limited in his commitment to fulfilling paternal duties.

[140] Language of expression: Lugisu

[141] Jiggers are small parasitic fleas which usually enter their victims through their feet, leading to itch and, if not removed in time, possibly malformed feet.

Despite being unhappy in marriage, however, and having spent considerable time away from her husband, Zaina was not planning to divorce. This had everything to do with her ambition to school her children, as the following conversation makes clear:

> **Floris:** Right now, are you happy with your marriage? **Zaina:** If the marriage is like that… how can you be happy? **Floris:** So if you are not very happy in your marriage, why don't you leave the marriage? **Zaina:** I would have left but if I leave… I know that those children will not continue studying. **Floris:** Do you mean that your husband doesn't like studying so much? **Zaina:** He likes, but he is like… he needs to be pushed. **Floris:** And you are the one pushing him? **Zaina:** Yes. **(13/02/2019)**[142]

While far from the ideal husband, Habib, unlike Muzei, Zowena's husband, had not entirely abandoned his responsibilities as a father. He was often busy cutting grass for his cow, and he always mentioned 'educating his children' when I asked him about his plans for the next five years. At the same time, however, Habib's tendency to seduce other women, unpredictable character, and regular scepticism about the value of schooling, gave Zaina good reason to assume that his commitment to their children's schooling needed continuous persuasion or pushing. She stayed married to Habib to be able to make sure that he continued to contribute to the children's schooling. Staying married to Habib also meant that she continued to have a claim on his assets, for example the trees planted for Laila's schooling and the cow (which gave milk), to raise money for school fees. With her problematic chest and relatively weak body, she did not appear to be a suited to find work, or start a business, in order to make the money needed to school her children on her own.

In sum, while schooling may reinforce a feedback loop between matrifocality and male disengagement that leads to less collaborative marriages, for many women it is difficult – if not entirely unrealistic – to school children without the help of their husband. Unmarried women tend to have more limited access to male assets – land, most importantly, in the Gisu context – which they typically need to generate the income required to cover school fees and, even when they do have a source of income that does not depend on male assets, a contributing husband makes it considerably easier to raise the required amount. Hence, some women, Zaina included, decide to stay married in order to maintain access to male assets and/or ensure the continued commitment of their husband to the schooling of their children. So, while from one perspective schooling works to undermine marital stability, it also, as Guyer (1988) suggested, provides reason for couples to stay together and, perhaps, collaborate more intensively.

[142] Language of expression: Lugisu

Women's options and influence

The above analysis shows that schooling, in addition to having a complex impact on Woman as a symbolic category (see Chapter 4), also shapes the options and influence women have in their roles as mother and wife. Space does not permit a full discussion of these changes, but the analysis does imply a number of rather direct consequences that deserve further reflection.

The double burden for women of being responsible for raising money and for taking care of children is, as others have noted before, reproduced, if not deepened, in a context where men increasingly struggle to live up to masculinity ideals (see also Jackson 2001, 20). The increased autonomy women enjoy because of male disengagement – many women have effectively become household heads in the house that formally belongs to their husband – comes at the cost of an extremely heavy workload. To secure their children's future, women must raise money for their schooling, whilst, in the absence of a caring husband, continue to look after children and the household. In cases where a woman is strongly dependent on her husband's assets or contributions for school fees, as was the case for both Zowena and Zaina, her responsibility to 'care' is no longer limited to cooking and cleaning, but may also come to involve taking care of her husband's reputation (ibid). For when a woman's husband does remain the formal owner of her house, the land she uses and possibly other assets, her position is seriously undermined if marriage discord escalates to the point that a disengaged husband tries to come back, reclaim what is formally his and asks her to leave. Women, therefore, must take care not to undermine the reputation of their husband.

Having said that, women's position in the context of her husband's clan improves when she plays an important role in her children's schooling, and this can help her when marriage conflicts escalate. When a woman is the main educator of her children she directly contributes to the expansion of her husband's clan's human capital and clan leaders, often wealthier men who reside in town, appreciate and value this. Zowena, for example, mentioned that clan elders often take her side when there is a conflict between her and her husband because they know that she is the one educating their clan members. I also once witnessed how Muzei was ruled against in a clan meeting. In terms of Kandiyoti's (1988) 'patriarchal bargain', one could say that a woman's bargain has weakened within marriage, as women increasingly struggle to hold men responsible for looking after them and their children, but improved in the context of the wider network of male kin that a woman acquires upon marriage. The impact of schooling on women's influence and position appears to be as contradictory and complex as its impact on Woman as a symbolic category.

When women are seen to be increasingly responsible for the future well-being of children, while, at the same time, a woman's capacity to help her children develop through schooling is partially

dependent on her husband's assets, the reputational marital breakdown position of women worsens. If a woman leaves her children with her husband, or she departs with them but proves to be incapable of providing for them in another way (e.g. with the help of her own kin), she may be blamed for not putting the interests of her children first. Several women told me that divorce, even if a husband does not live up to his part of the conjugal contract, is not an option as long as children are school-going, and one woman who did divorce in this circumstance was socially disapproved of. Hence the autonomy women gain through being increasingly in charge of assets and income in marriage has a the negative aspect of limited freedom to leave the marriage. And the position of women in marriage is increasingly dependent on their children's age and relationship to schooling and, as such, rather variable.

Finally, the analysis developed in this chapter also has implications for the study of women's well-being in marriage. In the context of development studies, women's well-being in marriage is often studied through intra-household bargaining models which help to understand how much power women have relative to that of their husbands.[143] However, in a context in which men are increasingly disengaged from the household, the intergenerational contract tends to become more important for women's well-being than the conjugal contract. Whether women are respected (social well-being) or have access to enough food and other basic needs (physical well-being) becomes increasingly contingent upon the extent to which a woman has educated, wealthy children and sees such wealth invested in her own household, rather than her relationship with her husband. The extent to which a child is willing to look after their mother at old age and is inclined to contribute, financially, to her household, in turn, is contingent upon a complex set of factors (Collard 2000). Sons of age, for example, are also responsible for their own household and may have to choose whether to spend income on their wife/children or their mother/siblings. Thus, while of increased importance when it comes to understanding women's well-being, intergenerational contracts are complex and the extent to which they work towards the improvement of women's positions is to be examined with care (cf. Evans 2015).

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The Gisu conjugal contract has changed, partially as a consequence of schooling, and came to undermine male authority in homes. This has provoked a range of behaviours on the side of men – marital disloyalty, alcoholism and denial of responsibility – that together work towards a pattern of male disengagement from the nuclear family. In this context – a context schooling itself has helped put in place – the influence of schooling on marriage is complex and contradictory. While schooling

[143] See Apps and Rees (2009) for a good overview of different models and Sen's (1990) cooperative conflict model for an example of a model that is popular in development studies.

reinforces a feedback loop between matrifocality and male disengagement, it also provides good reason for women to stay married. These dynamics combined, that is, estranged men and women refusing to divorce, give rise to an increase in what we might call 'female-managed households': households that are formally headed by, and live on the land of, a man, but are otherwise almost entirely controlled by women. Such households have become increasingly common in the Gisu area and are in line with a broader trend towards greater matrifocality of kinship in sub-Saharan Africa under modernity (see Jackson 2015).

7. Intergenerational relations and wealth transmission: Schooling as an alternative to land

In previous chapters (Chapters 1, 5 and 6), I have introduced the idea that, in Gisu society, schooling has come to be incorporated into an intergenerational contract that previously stressed fathers' responsibilities to provide sons with a piece of land and bridewealth when they are ready for marriage (usually shortly after they have been circumcised). Today, educational investments are seen as another way in which fathers can set up their sons for successful adulthood, and a son's entitlement to his father's land or support with bridewealth is contingent upon his schooling. People have come to talk of school fees as a form of pre-mortem inheritance – similar to land and bridewealth – and a son who has 'inherited' schooling is unlikely to receive a considerable piece of land as well. This has a number of implications for the way in which fathers deal with the schooling of children and has made schooling a central theme in relation to issues of land access. In this chapter, I explore these consequences in greater detail.

The idea that people's decisions about children's schooling are shaped by (changing) principles of land and livestock inheritance, and the other way around, gained academic acknowledgement around the turn of the century. In a series of studies focussed on gender inequalities stemming from intergenerational wealth transmission in Indonesia (Quisumbing and Otsuka 2001), Ghana (Quisumbing, Payongayong, and Otsuka 2004) and the Philippines (Estudillo, Quisumbing, and Otsuka 2001), researchers from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) argued that schooling and land are alternative forms of capital that parents can pass on to their children, and that a specific child's lack of access to land may be compensated for by greater schooling. The authors suggested that changing principles of land inheritance, gendered returns on investments in schooling and gendered returns on farm work, inform parents' decision as to whom to give land and/or schooling to. In a rural setting in the Philippines, for example, Estudillo et al. (2001) hypothesised that the pattern they observed in which sons are favoured in land transmission and daughters in educational investment is informed by male advantage in agriculture and female advantage in non-agricultural employment.

A noteworthy, though still limited, scholarship on the relationship between schooling and inheritance has since developed. Roy (2015), based on an analysis of educational investments in India, concludes that parents seem to compensate daughters' continued disadvantage in terms of inheriting property by greater educational investments and higher dowry. La Ferarra and Milazzo (2017) show how a policy experiment that gave Ghanaian boys greater access to land led them to spend less years in schools, while the reform – which did not give girls greater access to land – left girls' schooling unaffected. These findings suggest that parents saw land as a substitute for schooling, and vice versa. While these

studies focus on the investment decisions of parents, young people's interest in education might also be affected by their chances of inheriting land. However, Kosec et al. (2017), exploring whether this is the case in the context of rural Ethiopia, conclude that while larger expected land inheritance lowers people's tendency to migrate, it leaves their decision to attend school unaffected.

These predominantly quantitative investigations of the relationship between schooling and land inheritance mainly infer, based on data about people's actual educational investments and land transmissions, that parents, to a greater or lesser degree, compensate children with a lack of schooling with land or the other way around. With the exception of Lesorogal et al.'s (2011) qualitative study of wealth transmission among the Samburu of Kenya, the literature does not *directly* explore how people come to make decisions about property inheritance and schooling in relation to each other. In other words, the extent to which people acknowledge that schooling counts, in terms of inheritance, as an alternative to land, has not been explored much. This chapter will begin to address this gap in knowledge. It shows the existence of an explicit discourse that frames schooling as an alternative form of inheritance, which has important implications for parental commitments to schooling, as well as people's access to land. In other words, the extent to which schooling and land are explicitly seen as alternatives in the context of customary inheritance principles, shapes the relationship between schooling and land as alternative forms of capital that can be transmitted intergenerationally.

Stambach (2000), in a study of a Chagga community in northeast Tanzania (one not strongly focussed on intergenerational wealth transmission), found that people talked about education as a form of inheritance and drew parallels between inheriting land and formal education, similar to the way in which the Gisu, and some of the Samburu people Lesorogal et al. (2011) interviewed, talk about these things. She emphasises how such comparisons demonstrate how people incorporate schooling into their own views of the world and how schooling is used, like land, as a heuristic device to model social relationships and make sense of different people. The same thing may be said in relation to the Gisu context as a comparison between land and schooling – as opposites – works well with people's tendency to define the person of the pen in contrast to the person of the hoe. What such an analysis misses out on, however, is that a discourse of schooling as pre-mortem inheritance has more socially concrete implications for parental commitments to the schooling of children, as well as land access and land conflicts. Schooling, as a heuristic device, does not only work cosmologically, in that it helps people make sense of their and other people's position in the world and in relation to each other, it is also used politically, in the context of decisions and conflicts about land.

Schooling as pre-mortem inheritance

The traditional Gisu system of inheritance works as follows. Fathers are supposed to provide their sons with a piece of land after they get circumcised and claim to be ready for marriage. A father is free to decide how to divide his land among sons, as well as when to pass on land to specific individuals. However, a circumcised son who wants to get married has a good claim on his father's property and the cultural ideal dictates that a father ought to treat his sons equally and should provide all of them with a share sufficient for them to start their own household (Heald 1998, 95). In polygynous households, which, in the Gisu context, are structured according to the house-property complex, sons inherit land through their mother. A polygamous man has to arrange a house for each of his wives and assign to her a plot of land for cultivation upon marriage. His sons can subsequently only inherit from the plots their father has assigned to their biological mother, so sons from different mothers do not normally compete over the same land (ibid, 94-95). While fathers pass on plots of land to their sons during their lifetime, they normally keep part of their land for themselves until death. The land of a deceased man is divided among his sons in consultation with senior clan members, so sons receive their inheritance in stages. Claims of usufruct established during a father's lifetime and a son's present needs are important factors informing post-mortem inheritance decisions.

As noted, the Bagisu distinguish between clan land (*litaka lye khyikuka*) and private land (*litake lyase*). 'Clan land' refers to the land a man received from his father or bought from other clan-members (usually at a reduced tariff). A man has full command over the use of 'his' clan land in that other clan members cannot occupy it, nor determine how the land is to be used. However, a man is not allowed to sell clan land without the permission of the clan. This is different for private land – the land a man bought at his own initiative. A man can sell his private land at any time without consulting the clan. Discourses around patrilineal land inheritance emphasise that a man should use the land he got from his father to accumulate sufficient wealth to buy new plots. These he can then pass on to his own sons, transforming private land into clan land, contributing both to the perpetuation of the patrilineage and to the expansion of the clan's wealth. Women have access to land in usufruct through their fathers and husbands, but are excluded from Gisu customary inheritance practices.

This system of patrilineal land inheritance, which was firmly in place in the 1960s (Heald 1998; and La Fontaine 1967a), has evolved into a new system that incorporates parental investments in schooling. Today, a father is still inclined to provide each of his sons with support in the years after their circumcision, but no longer necessarily in the form of land. He must still give a son a small plot to build a house on if he wishes to marry, but does not need to give him land for cultivation. As noted, increased access to trading networks, greater labour market opportunities and schooling has led people to

increasingly aspire to non-agricultural careers which makes the receipt of land often not the desired form of support for children. The principles guiding patrilineal wealth transmission have changed accordingly; instead of receiving a plot of land, a son might receive his paternal support in the form of a motorcycle (to start a taxi business), money (to become a trader) or, importantly, in the form of schooling (to get a job). The extent to which a father is still expected to provide his sons with land for cultivation, as well as a son's chances of inheriting property after his father's death, is contingent upon other support he has received. While the word *mukabo* – which literally means 'share' – used to refer to the land a son received from his father, it has a broader meaning today. *Mukabo* has come to refer to the overall support a son has received from his father and a father can easily tell his son 'you have received your *mukabo* in the form of schooling'.

Schooling has come to be considered as one form of patrilineal pre-mortem inheritance – *mukabo* received in the form of human rather than economic capital – among a range of other possible forms, including ordinary land transmission. Since nearly every child goes to primary school today, formal education has become boys' first entrée into their *mukabo*, and the extent to which they can expect further support, such as land, depends on how far they get in school. As Juliet mentioned:

> If somebody produced children… If they are six, he has to organise six plots of land for those six children, unless they have educated a child. Then, he will tell you 'I sold your plot [metaphorically speaking] and I educated you, you see yourself how to get land for yourself.' **(08/11/2018)**[144]

The fathers I spoke to justified the incorporation of schooling into the old Gisu system of land transmission in two ways. They mentioned that school fees add up to considerable amounts of money – equal to the value of land – especially if a child studies for several years in secondary school. This means that a father has to sell land – actually or by implication – to educate a child and this makes it intelligible that schooling, like land, counts as *mukabo*. Besides, an educated child can presumably get a job and should be able to prepare for marriage and independence without the land of his father. He is therefore considered less in need of land to establish his own household and perceived needs of individuals have always been an important factor in land decisions (Heald 1998, 95). Further, as land was already extremely scarce in the 1960s, and the average man has more than one son, the original system of land transmission was becoming unsustainable. In my own study, fathers mentioned they simply do not have enough land anymore to give all their sons a plot. In the context of extreme land

[144] Language of expression: Lugisu

scarcity, they felt they have no other choice than to seek alternative ways to set up their sons for adulthood.[145]

The fact that people see schooling as a substitute for land, combined with the view that both fathers and mothers are responsible for school fees, and both sons and daughters attend school, implies that the intergenerational contract between fathers and sons has transformed into a broader contract between parents and children. Fathers' contribution to the schooling of girls in a context in which schooling is seen as a form of pre-mortem inheritance, similar to land, implies that inheritance rights are now extended to girls. Although people do not explicitly recognise the idea that a girl's schooling means that she has 'inherited' something (cf. Stambach 2000), the fact that, by implication, she has, may help to explain why it seems increasingly common for fathers to also take girls into account when they divide property. While daughters overall remain strongly disadvantaged in the context of land inheritance, it seems more common for fathers to pass on parts of their land to them. I spoke to several fathers who said they intended to do this. Furthermore, as mothers contribute to the schooling of their children too, the matrilineal shadow side of patrilineal wealth transmission has expanded. In addition to inheriting land through their mothers, today's sons (and daughters) also (partially) receive their inheritance directly from their mother, through educational investments. In multiple ways, then, patrilineal wealth transmission has become feminised.

It is worth stressing the fact that paternal responsibilities have changed considerably as a consequence of schooling being incorporated into the old system of patrilineal wealth transmission. The challenge fathers used to face was to set up sons with some land as soon as possible after a son was circumcised and in a manner that did not threaten his own food security and personal ambitions in middle and old age. Today, fathers' challenge is to provide sons *and* daughters with variable measures of support, of which (for sons) land is just one possibility and can be substituted for with other support, especially schooling. Fathers need to meet these responsibilities under the same constraints as before (long-term food security and personal ambitions that require capital) and in a context of changing household relations. Indeed, as the previous chapter demonstrates, fathers' intergenerational responsibilities have become increasingly dispersed, many fathers have also disengaged from household responsibilities, and other people – mothers, most importantly – may contribute to children's

[145] The fact that land transmission can now be substituted by schooling may have contributed to reduced intergenerational conflicts around land. I did not collect data on intergenerational conflicts/violence like Heald (1998) did, but based on my everyday observations I can say that the scope of this problem seems to have reduced considerably. Intergenerational tensions were still common, but I did not hear of a single murder in 18 months of fieldwork.

schooling too. This has implications for both fathers' commitments to the schooling of their children and bargaining over land, as the next two sections demonstrate.

Fathers' commitment to the schooling of children

When schooling is seen as a form of pre-mortem inheritance – one of several ways in which fathers can set up their sons for adulthood – educational investment is, by implication, 'optional' for them. Schooling is only *one* way they can provide for their sons, not necessarily *the* way, and a father who withdraws educational support for strategic reasons is, therefore, not strongly disapproved of. "Fathers have more responsibilities and options", a teacher in a secondary school mentioned when I asked him about differences between fathers and mothers with regard to educational investments. "When a child is not performing well they [fathers] can easily say: 'ah, let me go and focus on another child in another household'". Motherhood ideals, on the contrary, strongly encourage mothers to do everything to educate all their children. Since most mothers do not own land to pass on to children, moreover, they have only one way to invest in the future of their children, that is through schooling. Fathers thus have greater legitimacy to be selective with, or withdraw, their commitment to the schooling of specific children than mothers and, in line with this, teachers, students and mothers told me how fathers are quicker to withdraw support than mothers.

The fact that mothers are encouraged to contribute to school fees has also made it easier for fathers to be selective with their commitment to schooling. When a mother is inclined to chip in when a father decides to withdraw his educational support for a specific child, the child is not immediately disinherited when a father makes that decision. Table 16 provides a detailed picture of who contributed financially to the schooling of individuals, specifying both who was the main educator and additional educators (in this chapter the term 'educator' refers to a person who invested at least some money in the schooling of a child). The table shows that only 21.5 percent of the men were educated by their father alone, 51 percent[146] of the men had someone other than their father as most important educator and 38 percent[147] of the women had someone else alongside their parents contributing to their education, or others paying without their parents' help. Mothers, as well as other extended family members, are quick to take over, or assist with, school fees if fathers prove reluctant to pay. This gives fathers more opportunity to be selective with their support.

When schooling is seen as a form of patrilineal pre-mortem inheritance, fathers do not only gain greater strategic space as to which child to school, they are also incentivised to invest in the schooling of boys rather than girls. When seen as a substitute for land, investment in schooling becomes a means

[146] This is the sum of category 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9
[147] The is the sum of category 5 to 9

for fathers to fulfil their responsibility to set up their sons for adulthood, a duty they do not as strongly have in relation to daughters. Fathers who wish to invest in schooling are thus incentivised to prioritise the schooling of sons and survey data confirm that fathers are indeed biased in this direction. As Table 17 shows, men who had their father as the main contributor to their schooling reached secondary school in 44 percent of the cases, significantly more often than women to whom this applied (26 percent), according to a Kendall's Tau-b test ($\tau = -.18;\ p = .0244$).

Table 16. Who contributed to the child's schooling (Sibling-sample)

		Person's gender		
Category number	**Who contributed to person's schooling?**	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
1	*Father alone*	41 (21.5%)	11 (7.5%)	52 (15.4%)
2	*Father with help of mother*	41 (21.5%)	42 (28.6%)	83 (24.6%)
3	*Mother alone*	36 (18.9%)	11 (7.5%)	47 (13.9%)
4	*Mother with help of father*	22 (11.5%)	27 (18.4%)	49 (14.5%)
5	*Father with help of other(s)*	12 (6.3%)	9 (6.1%)	21 (6.2%)
6	*Mother with help of other(s)*	4 (2.1%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (1.5%)
7	*Other(s) with help of (a) parent(s)*	10 (5.2%)	18 (12.2%)	28 (8.3%)
8	*Other(s) without help of (a) parent(s)*	5 (2.6%)	11 (7.5%)	16 (4.7%)
9	*One other*	20 (10.5%)	17 (11.6%)	37 (11.0%)
	Total	191 (100%)	147 (100%)	338 (100%)

The contributor mentioned first was recorded as the most important contributor (i.e. the person who contributed most money). So 'Father with help of mother' means father was the most important contributor while the mother contributed too.

When analysing the average number of years spent in secondary school by those who went to this level of education, fathers again appeared to have a gender bias. A t-test shows that women who had their father as the main contributor spent significantly fewer ($at\ 10\%\ level;\ \mathrm{t}(30) = -1.96, p = .06$) years in secondary school (2.7 years on average) than those who had their mother as main contributor (3.4 years on average) (see Table 18). Mothers, who might focus more on the schooling of girls, knowing that their fathers are biased towards sons, appeared to have little gender bias when it comes to their commitment to the schooling of children. Among the people who had their mother as the main educator, women reached secondary school in 41 percent of cases and men in only 29 percent of cases, but this Kendall's Tau-b test was not statistically significant ($\tau = 0.12;\ p = .0.2182$). Among the children in secondary schools, those who had their mother as the main educator did not spend significantly more or less years in secondary school. While fathers clearly appear to be less committed to the educational success of daughters, such a bias is not seen among mothers.

Table 17. Percentage of people that reached secondary school by main educator (Sibling-sample)[148]

Main educator of the child	Child's sex	N per category	Reached secondary school
Father	*Male*	94	43.6%*
	Female	62	25.8%
	Total	156	36.5%
Mother	*Male*	62	29.0%
	Female	39	41.0%
	Total	101	33.7%

**Statistically significant at the 5% level: $\tau = -.18$; $p = .0244$; shows that men reach secondary school significantly more often than women when their father is the person who paid for most of their school fees.*

Table 18. Years spent in secondary school by main educator (Sibling-sample)

Child's sex	Main educator of child	N er category	Average number of years spent in secondary school by child	SE
Boys	*Father*	41	3.7	.2141625
	Mother	18	3.6	.315423
Girls	*Father*	16	2.7	.2845867
	Mother	16	3.4*	.2576941

**Statistically significant at the 5% level: $t(30) = -1.96$; $one\ tailed\ p = .06$*

As fathers have increasingly disengaged themselves from paternal responsibilities and gained greater agential space to be selective with the support they provide to specific children, and as mothers might also invest in sons' schooling, sons increasingly turn towards their mother for support. Despite this matrifocal shift, extensively discussed in the previous chapter, sons continue to significantly benefit from, and depend on, paternal support. There are sons who never get far in school and for whom agriculture becomes the preferred livelihood strategy, which requires land (to be obtained from fathers). And, as Table 19 shows, men who had their fathers as a contributor to their education (not necessarily as the main contributor) were almost twice as likely to reach secondary school (44.3 percent) (this difference was statistically significant with a Kendall Tau-b [τ] of 0.22 [$p = .0016$]). Mothers' contribution to men's education, on the contrary, did not significantly matter for their performance, nor did the contribution of either parent significantly matter for the performance of girls. Fathers are thus still important for sons' life chances. This helps to explain why some women are hesitant to divorce despite a problematic marriage (see previous chapter) and sons, even though

[148] Table 17 contains the sibling-sample (only participants whose main educator was either the father or the mother).

families have become increasingly matrifocal, continue to be keen to maintain a good relationship with their father. The case studies in the next part of this chapter demonstrate the latter point.

Table 19. Percentage of people that reached secondary school by parental contributions (Sibling-sample)

	Boys who reached SS		**Girls who reached SS**	
Whether parent contributed to child's education	*Number*	*Percent*	*Number*	*Percent*
Father did not contribute	18	22.5	19	35.2
Father contributed	54	44.3*	33	32.4
Total	72	35.6	52	33.3
Mother did not contribute	30	35.3	17	29.3
Mother contributed	42	35.9	35	35.7
Total	72	35.6	52	33.3

** Statistically significant at the 1% level: τ = .22, p = .0016; shows that boys have considerably more chance to reach secondary school if their father contributes to their education.*

When schooling is seen as an alternative to land, fathers' access to land may shape their commitment to schooling more generally, not necessarily in relation to specific children. Lesorogol et al. (2011, 84 and 96) suggest that Kenyan families with larger herds of cattle were less interested in schooling because they could easily ensure the future well-being of children through giving them cattle. Are Gisu fathers with more land less dedicated to the schooling of their children for similar reasons? Such a pattern is hard to assess statistically because while wealthier fathers may be less committed to schooling, their children are less likely to drop out of school as a consequence of poverty, and it is hard to control for reasons of educational drop-out.[149] I did find some anecdotal evidence that points in this direction, however. Several people told me that people had not been so enthusiastic about sending their children to school in the past because, at that time, there was land in abundance to pass on. Leopold, the man who owned most land in the village where I lived, made a comment during an afternoon chat in my living room which suggests that fathers' commitment to schooling has continued to be affected by land access:

> For the boys, the reason many of them drop out of school is because they see their elder peers not having any job. Then when they are in a household where there is money, where there is

[149] Different people have good reason to frame their own or other people's educational drop-out in specific ways to do with legitimising claims in relation to future wealth transmission (see below) and to avoid self-blame. Reported reasons of educational drop-out therefore tend to be unreliable.

> food, they may just say let me leave school, because why am I studying? Even myself, I did not push my children so much to go to school, because I am having land already. **(06/12/2018)**[150]

Leopold's comment shows that considerations of land access do not only shape fathers' commitment to schooling; sons' dedication to schooling may too be partially contingent upon the extent to which alternative forms of inheritance, of which land is the most important, are available to them. Kosec et al. (2017) explored this in the context of rural Ethiopia, but did not find a relationship between sons' prospects to inherit land and their decisions to attend school. I do suspect, however, that this link exists in the Gisu context, although my evidence is anecdotal and indirect. In addition to Leopold, several people told me about sons who decided to drop out in order to demand land. Furthermore, I did not find that firstborn children get relatively far in school, compared to other children, despite parents' aspiration to get their first child educated so that (s)he can help with the education of younger children, and last-born children dropped out relatively early too. These findings are consistent with the idea that sons take into account their chances of getting land: firstborn and last-born children are typically in a privileged position, relative to their siblings, to get a good share of their father's land (see Heald 1998, 95).

Land access and conflicts

The previous section shows that schooling has been incorporated into an older intergenerational contract, that is, it has become another way in which fathers can fulfil their responsibility to set up their sons for adulthood. This has implications for fathers' commitment to schooling in general, and the schooling of specific children. However, the idea that schooling is an appropriate alternative to land in the context of patrilineal inheritance also affects dynamics of land transmission. In this section I attempt to make this point through a discussion of two case families. The first case shows how, in the context of today's changing intergenerational contract, fathers draw on educational investments to maintain a greater degree of control over resources, and how sons' possibilities to put pressure on their fathers to get support have diminished. The second case shows how responsibilities to school children, as well as actual investments in schooling, are used to substantiate claims on land during a land dispute. This is particularly common in the context of land conflicts between husband and wife, which, I argue, are on the rise as a consequence of male disengagement from the nuclear family (see Chapter 6).

[150] Language of expression: English

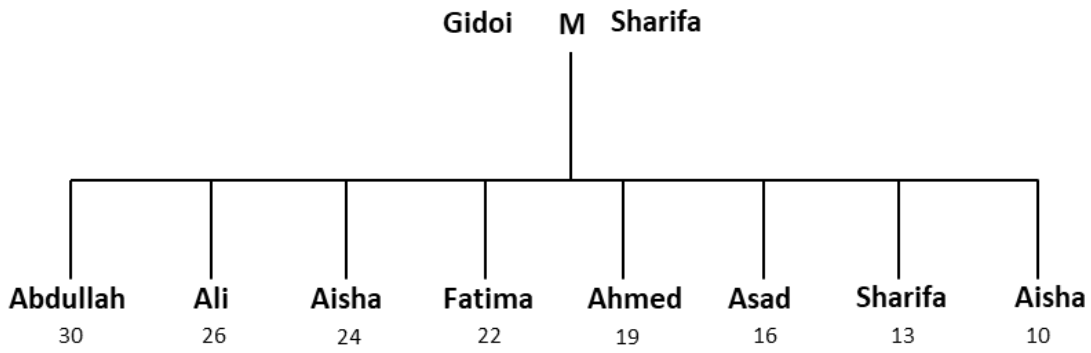
Case study 1: Managing three circumcised sons

Gidoi was elected as the new chairperson of a village in Bunyafa shortly after I arrived in the area. He got considerably more votes than Muzei, who we got to know in the previous chapter, and that was not a big surprise to most villagers. While both men resembled each other in crucial ways – they were Muslim, in their fifties, married with eight children and in possession of relatively large land holdings – Gidoi was in many respects Muzei's positive counterpart. While Muzei had an alcohol problem and had disengaged himself from his household, Gidoi was a teetotaller who prioritised the interests of his wife and children. 'As a man', he told me once,

> the first thing you need to do is look at how the people in your home are eating, and [the second is] whether your children go to school. The third thing is looking at… When someone has malaria, how are they going to get treatment? **(22/07/2021)**[151]

Gidoi worked hard to provide for his family and to arrange opportunities for his sons' coming of age (see family tree in Figure 12). His main source of income was farming. In addition to a coffee plantation, he had about an acre of land near a small stream which allowed him to grow horticultural crops throughout the year and he regularly embarked on journeys to the neighbouring Teso region to sell his farm produce. Gidoi's wife, Sharifa, spent most of her time taking care of the household, sometimes traded in sweet bananas and, at one point, went to Kenya for a couple of months to look for work to repay a loan she had obtained together with her husband. The family lived in a house made of mud and poles, roofed with iron sheets, and that was above average in terms of size and furnishings.

Figure 12. Family tree of Gidoi and Sharifa (Focus family 1)



Gidoi's reputation in the village had been slightly tarnished by the fact that his children had not done very well in school. Abdul, his firstborn son (30), had recently gotten married for the second time (after his first wife left him) and lived a small way down the road in his own house. (He had divorced his second wife and remarried again when I returned to Uganda for my second period of fieldwork). After

[151] Language of expression: Lugisu

he dropped out in P7, Gidoi gave him a small plot of land to settle on, helped him to pay *imbaluwa* two times (for both his first and second wife; half a million Ugandan Shillings in total) and lent him a plot of land near the stream to cultivate horticultural crops to raise money to look after his family and eventually to buy his own land. Gidoi's second born son, Ali (26, mentioned before in Chapter 3), was the most successful of his sons in school as he made it to upper secondary school. Gidoi told me that he had invested a lot in Ali. He sent him to schools that charged relatively high school fees which, at one point, even required him to sell a plot of land. Gidoi's third son, Ahmed (19), got circumcised shortly after I got to know this family in 2018 and left school (P6) around the same time. Gidoi's eldest two daughters got married without finishing primary school, while his last three children – Asad, Sharifa and Aisha – were still in primary school.

Being familiar with a father's responsibility to give their sons land when they are ready to marry, and the intergenerational tensions this system of land transmission had given rise to in the past, I imagined that Gidoi had found himself in a complicated situation after Ahmed got circumcised in 2018. He now had three sons circumcised within the last 6 years who were all out of school and required his support in order to establish their own households, while he had another three children still demanding school fees. The intergenerational demands upon him should have been quite overwhelming, I assumed, and so Gidoi seemed a suitable person with whom to explore the current state of intergenerational tensions. "Things have changed a bit", he told me, as he continued to explain:

> People of the past used not to educate children, but today, as a parent, you put effort so that your child studies. To have a child studying, you inject money. So when a child comes and asks for things [like land], it is possible that whatever they came to ask for is what I sold to educate that child. So if a child fails to study they have to come slowly. If they are lucky then I can give them something, but me [as a father], I am free to tell the child that you failed to study so don't ask me anything. **(16/02/2019)**[152]

Gidoi's response reflects a broader pattern of fathers maintaining control over their property in relation to demanding sons by pointing to educational investments and blaming educational dropout on children themselves. Gidoi repeatedly told me that Ali, who had received a lot of educational support, should not expect much land, because he had received his *mukabo* in the form of schooling. And, when talking about the schooling of his sons Abdul and Ahmed, who both dropped out in primary school, Gidoi was often quick to emphasise that they dropped out themselves (not because of him), so he had good reason not to give them a lot of land right away. During more general discussions about schooling, Gidoi repeatedly told me that children in the area often 'refuse to study' and claim, like his

[152] Language of expression: Lugisu

own children did, 'that they do not have brains to study'. For fathers like Gidoi, keen to live up to paternal duties but faced with (relative) land scarcity and busy establishing himself as a political leader in the village, framing educational support as an alternative to land transmission, and blaming educational drop-out on sons, helps to maintain a degree of control over land.

Fathers who say they are reluctant to give out land to a particular son because they invested in his schooling – or had wanted to do so – sometimes have good reason to say so. However, in a context in which many men have disengaged from paternal responsibilities, and others face considerable challenges in living up to these responsibilities, such words are often a form of window dressing: fathers pretend that they have done their best to live up to paternal responsibilities while they have not done that much. For example, Mafabi, son of Muzei (a father who never took much responsibility for his children [see Chapter 6]), once told me that fathers like to educate boys so that the moment they fail an exam they can withdraw their support and say "I took time [to] educate you, you must buy your own land". Gidoi's plan not to give Ali any land seems fair given the fact that land was sold to educate him, but his reflections on Ahmed's situation are more ambivalent. While Gidoi emphasised that his children refused to study, Ahmed gave me the impression that a lack of school fees was the main reason he dropped out of school. Educational careers are framed differently by fathers and sons because the question of who is to blame for the educational drop-out affects the extent to which a father is inclined to give him further support.

Sons have more limited possibilities to pressurise their fathers to provide support now that a father's duty to provide land has become contingent upon other forms of support they have provided. A father already had full authority to decide how to allocate his land among his sons in the past, but, as land transmission is easily publicly witnessed and land formally owned by the clan, land transmission was partially a public affair. This posed a degree of social pressure on men to pass on land and sons could possibly call upon agnates to pressurise their father to transmit (more) land in cases where they felt they were entitled to a greater *mukabo* (Heald 1998, 94). But as payment of school fees cannot be publicly witnessed, the extent to which fathers have lived up to patrilineal duties has become increasingly hard to assess, and sons who feel unsatisfied about their father's support can no longer call upon relatives to back their claims. The intergenerational contract between fathers and sons used to be partially enforced by clans, but is now hidden within the household. This gives fathers greater strategic space to decide how they want to fulfil paternal duties and renders sons more dependent on their fathers' decisions.

Young men like Abdul, Ahmed and Ali, therefore, have little choice other than to patiently wait for their father's support and seek to maintain a good relationship with him in order to improve their

chances of getting such support. Abdul said that he cannot put pressure on his father to give him land and Ali was keen to maintain a good relationship with his father so that he could get more support from him at some point. In the Gisu context, then, many young men are forced to 'wait' but that does not result in enormous outbursts of frustration or violence that such 'waithood' is often said to give rise to (Honwana 2012), and young men continue to collaborate with their father, to make a living and to win their trust, whilst waiting for further support (cf. Whyte and Acio 2017; see also Chapter 8 in this thesis). Children's relationship with their father gets more complicated, however, when a father has more dispersed intergenerational responsibilities and tensions within the family culminate in conflict, as the next case demonstrates.

Case study 2: A land conflict in a divided household

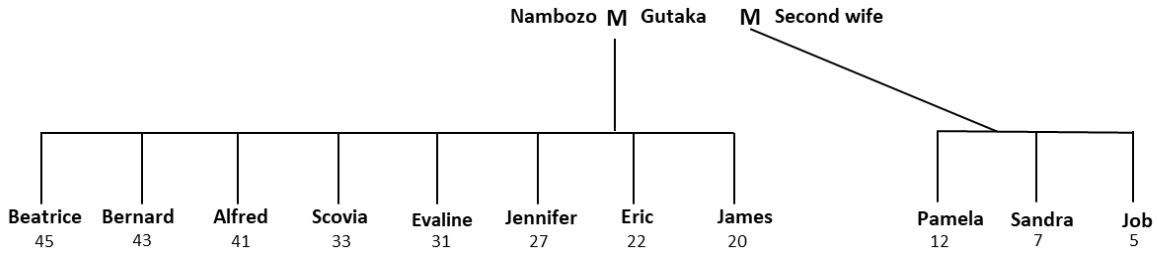
The family of Gutaka and his wife Nambozo was in the midst of a serious land conflict when I got to know them in 2018. This conflict was the result of tensions within the family that had a long history.[153] Gutaka and Nambozo's marriage was initially quite successful. As soon as they got married they started to cultivate plots of land that Gutaka had inherited from his father. Nambozo suggested that 'through hard work' they were able to accumulate more plots, while Gutaka claimed he had obtained most of his plots, including their valuable sugar cane plantation, before they had got married (these conflicting testimonies made sense in light of the land conflict the family was involved in[154]). Either way, the family soon became relatively wealthy and when I got to know them they had approximately 4 acres of land and their sugar cane plantation was earning them about 2 million Ugandan shillings per year ($540). They also had a lot of children: twelve in total, eight of whom were still alive (see Figure 13). The last two children, Eric (22) and James (20), were still living with their parents in 2018; Alfred had established his own household elsewhere in the village; Bernard lived in Busia; and the daughters had gotten married in different places. Through cultivating their land (and a little help from a member of parliament) Nambozo and Gutaka were able to educate their firstborn son Bernard until he graduated at Makerere University, which demonstrates that the couple had done relatively well indeed.

Despite the couple's early success, their relationship had become troublesome after Gutaka decided to marry another woman, about 12 years ago. When Nambozo had left the home for an unclear period of time – a few months to cultivate a few plots at her natal home according to Nambozo, a couple of years according to Gutaka – Gutaka decided to take on a new wife, because he could no longer manage

[153] In this section I reconstruct the history of this conflict based on interviews with Gutaka and Nambozo and their children Gutaka, Eric and Alfred. Some of their testimonies contradicted each other and I indicate in footnotes whose testimony I used (and why, if appropriate) to reconstruct different parts of the story.
[154] The legitimacy of land claims depends a lot on how land was obtained and since used. Both parties tried to frame the history of land in their favour in light of other current land conflicts.

the household in Nambozo's absence.[155] Together with his new wife – and the four children she had from an earlier marriage – he started to occupy the place in which he had lived with Nambozo before and soon had children with his new wife. When Nambozo heard that she had been 'replaced' she initially decided to separate from her husband and to remain at her natal home[156], but her children Alfred and Scovia – who saw their father's commitment shifting towards his hew family – convinced her to come back.[157] When Nambozo came back and, with the support of her children, reclaimed the house, Gutaka decided to construct another house for his second family a little further away down the road. Shortly after both women had (re)settled in the village, conflicts emerged over the division of land between the two houses.

Figure 13. Family tree of Gutaka and Nambozo (Focus family 9)



It was initially agreed that a small plot of the land that used to be cultivated by Nambozo and Gutaka would go to Gutaka's second wife, so that she could use that plot to look after her children. The other plots, including the valuable sugar cane plantations, would continue to be used by Nambozo.[158] Shortly after this agreement, however, tensions emerged around the sugar cane profits. With Gutaka's commitment now focused on his second home, he wanted to use part of these profits to look after his new family.[159] But Nambozo and her children (Scovia and James, most importantly) felt that the sugar cane plantation belonged to *their* home and so the harvest money should be spent mostly on their household. Gutaka said that he was increasingly denied access to the sugar cane plantations by his son James, harvest was sold in his absence and the share of the profits he was given was too low.[160] These tensions culminated in a conflict the moment Bernard – Nambozo's son with a university degree –

[155] Gutaka's testimony; according to Nambozo he just wanted more children.
[156] Nambozo's testimony.
[157] Gutaka said that the children went to call for their mother, Alfred confirmed this.
[158] Nambozo and Gutaka both suggested this, but Gutaka felt he should still be in control of the sugar cane plantation.
[159] Gutaka demonstrated that he wanted access to his sugar cane plantations. Nambozo suggested that his loyalties are only with the second home. I think Gutaka's loyalties were indeed with his second home as he almost exclusively lived in his second household, spoke very positively about his second wife and emphasised his responsibility to educate his new children.
[160] Nambozo said that she was willing to give Gutaka a part of the profits; Gutaka said that he was sometimes not given anything at all. Clearly there was disagreement on how much should go to which home.

conspired with his father to sell a considerable plot of family land.[161] Bernard had lost his job and was in need of capital to set up a business in Busia, where he lived. Gutaka, who felt he lacked access to his own land, saw in the sale of land the possibility to earn a lump sum from a plot that he increasingly failed to claim ownership over.[162] The question of whether Bernard and Gutaka could sell this plot of land divided the family, and people built on claims related to educational investments and responsibilities to justify their standpoint.

I was not present at the clan meeting arranged by FIDA lawyers[163] where it was attempted to resolve the problem, but discussed the issue with the different actors involved. Gutaka simply justified the plot sale in terms of Bernard being entitled to sell part of the land that he, as his father and formal owner of all family land, can assign to him, but drew upon arguments around schooling to explain his tendency to focus on his second household. Throughout my interviews with him, Gutaka mentioned that he needed access to (profits from) land to school his younger children. When land is used to school children, keeping land becomes a way of living up to paternal duties rather than dodging these and, as such, emphasising educational responsibilities strengthens one's claim to land. Gutaka also said that the schooling he had given his sons Bernard and Alfred should enable them to take over his responsibility as household head of his first family, that is to look after Nambozo and help with the schooling of Eric and James.[164] He passed on his responsibility for his first household to his eldest sons by reference to his educational investments in them, thereby justifying his focus on his second family.

Nambozo was against the sale and suggested that her resentful husband had brainwashed Bernard and set him up against her. I was told that, during the FIDA meeting, she reminded people how much *she* had invested in the schooling of Bernard; she claimed she had convinced her own brothers to sell part of their land to raise money for Bernard's schooling. This meant, in Nambozo's eyes, that Bernard got his *mukabo* in the form of schooling and should now help his brothers get schooled too instead of coming back to ask for more land. The land he wanted to sell, she argued, should be used for the schooling of his younger brothers (a line of reasoning the authorities agreed with during the meeting, according to Eric's testimony).[165] Both Nambozo and Gutaka drew upon educational investments and responsibilities to justify their behaviour and claims to land.

[161] Testimony of Nambozo and Eric that was in line with the way in which Gutaka said things went.
[162] Testimony of Nambozo and Eric. Selling land makes sense as a strategy for Gutaka given the land conflict, so I believe these testimonies were accurate.
[163] FIDA refers to the International Federation of Female Lawyers, a non-governmental organisation concerned with protecting women's rights and an important source of legal protection for women in Uganda.
[164] Alfred's testimony. This seems accurate as Bernard was considered to be the household head by most other children as well.
[165] Testimony of Nambozo, Eric and Alfred.

Bernard's siblings were all against the sale, but, while James, Scovia and Evaline strongly sided with their mother, Alfred and Eric claimed to be 'in the middle' and tried to bring people together.[166] While people's positions in such conflicts depend on many factors (including emotional attachments and personal experiences), the differences in attitudes between the siblings can be understood in light of their different aspirations and life stages. James was in secondary school and depended fully on his mother's immediate access to land for future school fees, since his mother (not his father) was paying for his schooling. Daughters cannot count on much paternal support anyway and so are usually not strongly oriented towards their father. Evaline and Scovia, concerned with their mother's well-being, were thus, with James, strongly against the sale.

Eric and Alfred, on the contrary, had already finished lower secondary school and were busy trying to find their way into adult life. They were more concerned than James (who was still in school) about getting access to pieces of land in the near future, for which they depended upon their father. This may be part of the reason they were keener not to frustrate their father too much and took positions in-between both parties. Gutaka himself told me that, during the meeting, Alfred and Eric suggested they should divide the land properly among all of them, so that Bernard could then decide himself what to do with his own plot. Alfred had already obtained a small plot after he got married, but felt he needed more to properly look after his own family. Maintaining a good relationship with his father was important for this purpose, as he mentioned himself:

> as you know, for me I have two mothers. The father has married another one, and my mother is this way. So if you want the father to give you land, you should handle him very well. And you should talk with him very well because he was the one to suffer to buy those lands. **(25/05/2019)**[167]

When people explicitly consider schooling as a substitute for land, and parents continue to depend on land to raise school fees, claims to land are increasingly founded upon both educational investments and educational responsibilities. Parents, mainly fathers, may refer to their investment in schooling to deny a son a plot of land, while they may emphasise their responsibility to school young children to win marital conflicts over land. Such marital conflicts over land seem increasingly common. In a context of increased marital disloyalty and male disengagement, combined with improved legal protection for women, intergenerational land conflicts are quick to become conflicts between husband and wife when children collide with their mother to prevent their father – and possibly his new wives – from accessing land (or the other way around, in the case of Bernard); the verticalization of women's

[166] It was Gutaka who suggested this division of opinions existed, and Eric agreed that this is how people were divided.
[167] Language of expression: English

loyalties leads to a horizontalization of land conflicts. Where this is the case, parental responsibilities, including responsibilities to school children, are more often drawn upon to claim access to land. Yet, while male disengagement and matrifocality may encourage children to side with their mother in such cases, fathers remain formally the owners of land and a good relationship with them continues to be important for sons in order to get a good plot later on. Intergenerational provisioning of economic opportunities has become more complex and sons coming of age need to manage their loyalties well in order to benefit.

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This chapter shows that, in the Gisu context, schooling is made sense of in the light of an older intergenerational contract between fathers and sons. This contract assigned to fathers the responsibility to pass on part of their wealth to sons, as pre-mortem inheritance, to prepare them for adulthood after circumcision. Investing in schooling has come to be recognised as one way, among a range of alternatives of which passing on land is the typical one, in which fathers can live up to this responsibility. This has several implications for parental commitments to schooling, as well as people's access to land, in a context in which men have increasingly disengaged themselves from the nuclear family or struggle to fulfil their patrilineal duties because of economic uncertainty. To reiterate these implications: fathers tend to become biased towards the schooling of sons; sons, even those with little schooling, have become less able to put their fathers under pressure to give them land; and claims to land are increasingly founded upon arguments that centre around educational investments and responsibilities. While Stambach (2000) made the point that, in Tanzania, a discourse of 'schooling as inheritance' changes intergenerational relations in that people of different ages come to use 'schooling' and 'land' differentially, as symbols of identity and social status, this chapter has shown that such a discourse also changes intergenerational relationships through the way in which it shapes educational commitments and intergenerational access to land.

Part 3: The community

8. Youth in the village: Schooling, football and managing the future

As we saw in Part 1, schooling produces a new kind of people – people of the pen – who, in a context of limited urban labour market opportunities and expectations of reciprocity attached to educational investments, often come to live, if not participate, in rural community life.[168] In Part 3 of the thesis, I am concerned with the involvement of such schooled individuals in village life, that is, with the kinds of social networks they become part of, the work they do and the reputations they develop, with a view to investigate how community life is changing as a consequence of schooled people's involvement in it. In this first chapter, I focus on 'football', an activity that has become an important aspect of community life in Bunyafa. I show that the popularity of football is strongly connected to the importance people attach to schooling and the presence of schooled individuals in Bunyafa. For example, the sport is predominantly played by young men (and increasingly women) who are still in school or have plans to continue with schooling in the future, is used to perform a schooled identity, appreciated by the community because it helps to avoid educational drop-out, and provides socio-political opportunities to schooled people. Football games, and the interactions around them, are one of the most visible and lively aspects of community life in Bunyafa and a direct result of the growth of schooled people in the area.

The chapter is, however, not limited to describing football or showing how football is linked to schooling. I also seek to understand the meaning of football in the lives of school-going youth and those with educational ambitions. More specifically, three interrelated points are developed in relation to a broader literature on football in the Global South and the role of 'time' in the lives of young people. Firstly, I show that schooled identities are performed and maintained through football as people engage with and display their knowledge of the world beyond the village – exposure – through involvement in football, and through a daily routine that involves time off and time on, like that of an employed person, which is realised through the regime of play. Secondly, I suggest that football is a way for young men and women to hold on to educational aspirations when temporarily not in school and find their way back into school. Especially women find in playing football a means to subtly resist traditional womanhood and to hold on to an alternative future that requires more schooling. Lastly, I argue that football is a way for schooled youth to maintain and expand social relationships with other schooled people and to become known in the area. This gives schooled people political advantages in the village and means that football reinforces the value of education.

[168] A variant of this chapter was submitted in the form of an article to *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* in December 2022.

It is not only rural Uganda that has seen an increase in the popularity of sport. Besnier et al. (2018) point out that sport is an increasingly popular activity across sub-Saharan Africa, especially among young men. They explain this development in light of neoliberal reforms carried out throughout Africa (see Wiegratz 2016 for a discussion of how neoliberalism has affected the Ugandan economy). Engaging in sports, they argue, figures among men's strategies to deal with the economic uncertainties and crisis of masculinity that arose from these reforms. Doing sports is popular in the neoliberal present "because of its glamour, celebration of masculinity, potential as a conduit to mobility, and promises of millennial returns" (p. 843). These authors analyse the relationships between football and schooling in terms of alternative ways to successful adulthood: schooling produces expectations of employment and progress that have become increasingly unrealistic, so youth invest in sports because the lives of successful football players provide an appreciated alternative masculinity, centred around a powerful body, migration and wealth.

The idea that the popularity of football partially stems from the devaluation of schooling, and youth seeking migration, is not uncommon in the literature on football in the Global South (Darby 2010; Esson 2013) and has given rise to concerns about football leading to school drop-out, as well as producing unrealistic aspirations (Esson 2013; Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin 2007; Poli 2010). These reflections are not quite consistent with the case of the football players I got to know in Bunyafa, and so this chapter sheds a different light on the relationship between schooling and football. In Bunyafa, football does not appeal to young men and women as an alternative to schooling, but rather is complementary to it. Football is used to cultivate schooled and student identities and is considered a means to stay in, or find a way back into, school, rather than as a stand-alone alternative route to success. Football and schooling are not alternative paths to adulthood, but complementary activities in people's attempts to become 'schooled' adults. Also, the players of Bunyafa appreciate football for its immediate benefits: making schooled friends, developing a name in the area and keeping the mind busy. I did not find a single player who hoped to find their way to Europe, or another wealthy 'elsewhere', through football. A more immediate and practical view was more common.

The analysis I develop here also relates to studies concerned with the role of 'time' in the lives of young people. In research on youth in the Global South, it has been emphasised how young people, after experiencing 'progress' in school, going from class to class, develop a problematic relationship to time after graduation, when jobs are unavailable. All of a sudden young people lack a narrative of progress over time and suffer from having too much time in the present (Mains 2007; Mains, Hadley, and Tessema 2013; Masquelier 2013). Time becomes something to be 'killed' and, lacking the possibilities to realise the social markers of adulthood, youth end up in 'waithood' – a frustrating and seemingly never ending period of suspension between childhood and adulthood (Honwana 2014; 2012).

What is somewhat underemphasised in these studies, however, is that schooling itself is often far from a process of flawless progress, but requires waiting for school fees or redoing work when exams are not passed (cf. Dungey 2017; Langevang 2008, 2044). Often, schooling can absorb a lot of time, and many people in school, or those having the ambition to go back to school, lack time rather than having it in abundance. Especially young women, when temporarily at home awaiting school fees, are not given much waiting time. When physically mature and not attending classes, these women may find themselves under social pressure, and provided with the opportunity, to get married and leave school. In this chapter I show how such women, and young people more generally, use football to cultivate a youthful identity and, in doing so, prevent themselves from getting trapped in a kind of adulthood – that is, unschooled adulthood – to which they do not aspire. Rather than 'killing' time, playing football helps young people with educational aspirations to 'create' time for further schooling.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, I provide a brief history of football in Uganda. I then provide an ethnographic account of football in Bunyafa and introduce two football players – Sharif and Suraya – whose stories and reflections I will build upon in the rest of the chapter. I then develop the three main arguments of the chapter: football is used to cultivate a schooled identity; football is used as a way to go back to school; and football provides schooled people socio-political opportunities.

Ugandan football in historical context

Football was introduced in Uganda by the missionaries, who promoted the sport in the schools they established in the beginning of the 20th century (Simiyu 2022). The English mission in particular felt that sport, including football, could contribute to their 'civilising' aims and schools were used as vehicles to achieve the inculcation of sport in Ugandan society (Simiyu 2022, 261; see also Vokes 2010). Robert Henry Walker, secretary at the Church Missionary Society (1890-1912), for example, mentioned that football was introduced in boarding schools and taught boys 'self-control and obedience to the laws of the game' (R. H. Walker 1917, 284). The connection between football, church values and, importantly, schooling was thus established early on during the colonial period and most of today's football pitches are still found at Uganda's missionary 'hubs', where schools, churches and healthcare centres are located close together (see for example the Bukiiti pitch, located in-between the school and church, in Figure 14). Historically, football has therefore been associated with development and modernisation and these connections have been perpetuated in more recent decades by development organisations who commonly use football to achieve various development goals.[169]

[169] An example of such an organisation in the Mbale region is the Child Restoration Outreach (CRO). They have their own football teams and encourage sports as a way to develop the abilities of former street children.

Figure 14. Bukiiti football pitch in between a school (on the left) and a church (in the back)

Football tournaments were initially played between schools, with Budo Old Boys – a team of alumni – being one of the country's first teams which dominated the Kampala-based leagues during the first half of the 20th century (Simiyu 2022, 257). When the Federation of Uganda Football Associations (FUFA), established in 1924, became affiliated to the *Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF)* and the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)* in the beginning of the 1960s, Uganda established its own national league. This led to a period in which watching national football became a popular activity in Ugandan society, especially in urban centres.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, people have become increasingly interested in football played in other countries, notably the English Premier League (EPL), and this has somewhat diminished the popularity of the national league. The rise of English football in Uganda is the outcome of a broader transformation of global sports business, associated with neoliberal developments such as the deregulation of television broadcasting (Besnier et al. 2018, 844–45). A number of specific radio and TV reforms made EPL games increasingly accessible in Uganda in the 1990s, and the emergence of satellite TVs and video halls that broadcast EPL matches subsequently brought foreign football to Uganda's rural areas around the turn of the century (Vokes 2010). As satellites have proliferated in rural areas since that time, access has continued to increase. EPL teams' global marketing strategies

and the 2004 winning streak of Arsenal – with a team of many players of colour – did the rest and turned considerable numbers of men into Premier League followers – and often Arsenal supporters – in rural Uganda (ibid).

Politics has been an important aspect of Ugandan football, as it has in other African countries (Ayuk 2022a) and more globally (Carr et al. 2021). After the protectorate used football to realise social change in the first half of the 20th century, since independence Ugandan politicians have extensively made use of the game as a political vehicle. Kampala's Express FC, for example, was used by the leadership of Kabaka Yekka, a nationalist Baganda party, to promote its cause and engage with its supporters; and around the time of independence, the government promoted the national team, the Ugandan Cranes, to instigate national unity (Vokes 2010). Simiyu (2022) further argues that football has been a site for the expression of resistance against political elites, and was also a vehicle for forms of resistance against British imperialism by the indigenous population. When competing on football pitches, black African and white European bodies were momentarily seen to be of equal value, in a climate that otherwise implied the inferiority of the first, he points out. More recently, a football tournament was organised in the post-conflict Teso sub-region in eastern Uganda, in collaboration with international development partners, to encourage a degree of pride and unity among villagers.[170]

Football in Bunyafa: Suraya and Sharif

The historical connections between football, schooling and politics are visible in the practices around football today in Bunyafa. The connection between the sport and schools continues to be strong. Many teams that competed in the games I observed in Bunyafa are 'school teams', although rural youth have also increasingly set up their own football teams, named after their village or clan, and independent of schools. The players who participate in local football are usually between 14 and 30 years old, and often school-going or planning to go back to school in the near future. Some players are in/have been to secondary school, others are in/have been to a tertiary educational institute, and it is relatively uncommon to find players with little schooling in these teams. Uneducated youth are often married and have no time to play football, people typically mentioned. Besides, most players came to know the game in school, an opportunity their peers without much school experience missed. Football players are generally seen as 'students', under the control of their parents, even though some have not been to school for quite some time. Players who stopped playing football were said to have 'moved on' in life.

[170] This football tournament was part of the Katine Project, sponsored and extensively reported upon by the UK newspaper The Guardian on their website: https://www.theguardian.com/katine (accessed on June 1, 2022)

Football is an extremely popular activity among school-going and school-aspiring youth. Every afternoon one finds groups of 'students' on their way to the village football pitch, almost always located near a school, or embarking on journeys to other villages to play matches against other teams. Such matches, especially tournament matches, start at about 5pm and attract considerable crowds of other youth and farmers who, after grazing their cow or digging their fields, sit on the edge of the pitch to watch the younger generation play. Tournaments were regularly organised throughout my fieldwork, especially in December and January when schools are on holiday, but proliferated during the pandemic-related school closures in 2021. When I returned to the field around that time, the various school pitches were occupied almost on a daily basis by people playing matches as part of locally organised tournaments such as The Lockdown Cup. In addition to playing themselves, many young men and women regularly watch English Premier League matches at the video halls in the larger trading centres in the area.

Football teams are set up and managed by the playing youth themselves, but older people – again, usually schooled people – may be involved as 'coach', 'doctor' or 'sponsor', and tend to be in charge of the organisation of tournaments. It is common for politicians or wealthy villagers to sponsor teams or tournaments to improve their connections with particular villages and/or improve their reputation in the area. Football is thus still used as a political vehicle, like it was in the 20th century. Because teams consist of school-going youth who might attend classes away from their home village, team members usually come and go and turn-out rates for training and matches fluctuate depending on who is around. Some teams have been able to obtain proper football kit, a ball and cones with the help of a sponsor and/or tournament prize money, while other teams have not much more than a damaged football. How to develop the team and obtain better facilities is an important concern of those involved in the game and something that is regularly debated during and around training sessions. Players try to raise money themselves to buy equipment, but also invest considerable hope in potential sponsors.

Tournaments are usually organised during school holidays, when youth studying elsewhere are at home and available to play matches. However, in 2020 and 2021, tournaments were held throughout the year because of pandemic-related school lockdowns which forced many school-going youth to spend long periods of time in the village. The Christmas Cup and the Eid Cup are annually organised and the most important tournaments. Tournaments are organised by schooled men in collaboration with the captains of the various teams. In Bunyafa, Rachid, a lower secondary school graduate in his thirties, was commonly involved in the organisation of such tournaments which gave him the nickname 'chairman of football'. When a tournament is organised, teams of different villages, clans or schools are invited to participate. Teams are usually based within about 5 miles from the tournament's 'home ground', the pitch on which matches will be played, to allow players to come on foot. A meeting is held

with all captains prior to the start of the tournament to establish rules and develop the fixtures. Each team has to contribute an amount of money that will be used to pay referees, the organiser and, most importantly, to buy a trophy for the winner (usually a goat), runner up, best player and best goalkeeper. Participation fees vary by tournament and year, but seem to range between about UGX 20,000 ($5.40) and UGX 40,000 ($10.80) per team and the tournament budget may be topped up by politicians' donations.

People take tournament matches very seriously. As noted, such matches attract considerable crowds, occasionally of more than 200 people, such as during the final of the Lockdown Cup in 2021 (see Figure 15). It is not uncommon for spectators to place small bets (500-2000 shillings; $0.10-0.50) on games and share the profits with the players during the match itself (Rachid once gave me 500 shillings [$0.10] while I was celebrating a goal I had scored for my village team). With considerable prize money at stake and a gambling crowd, tensions may rise during games and occasionally games end in a discussion or even a violent conflict between players, organisers, referees and supporters of competing teams. To avoid this, the need for fair play is continuously emphasised at matches and was the common denominator of Rachid's speeches (organiser of the Lockdown Cup) and other stakeholders given shortly before kick-off. Hence the promotion of important values continued to be an aspect of football. Good players like Mafabi and James are regularly 'hired' by other teams and areas to play matches on their behalf, which again demonstrates how serious tournament matches are taken by the people involved. Players and referees are actively supported and disapproved of during the match and an important goal receives enthusiastic celebration (crowds sometimes occupy the pitch for a minute or so to celebrate after a goal).

Football is most popular among men but also engages a considerable number of women. Not only do many women attend the men's matches, there are also a considerable number of female teams who play football themselves. Such teams, however, come together less often. The women's team I followed, for example, did not train much but only came together to play matches. Tournaments for women are not common. Women's teams play mainly friendly matches, often before an important match between two male teams so that a watching crowd is guaranteed. The practice of football by women initially encountered resistance among older generations because of worries about dress (football shorts were not considered appropriate for women), but was no longer an issue when I did fieldwork. Older gender taboos that have kept women from playing football are fading away in Uganda, like they are in other parts of Africa (Ayuk 2022b).

Two examples of young people who played football in Bunyafa are Suraya (22) and Sharif (24). Suraya, daughter of Zowena and Muzei (introduced in Chapter 6), was the captain of a female football team.

She had finished lower secondary school and had worked for a while as an assistant teacher in a primary school in the area before I got to know her in 2018. By that time, however, she had lost her teaching job and started working as a tele company agent in a village barbershop. Unlike most women in the village, she did not spend much time on farming. She was more often seated at the roadside, wearing a colourful dress and attending to her customers, or playing or organising football matches, and making plans for further education. Suraya was keen to become a 'schooled' woman – not only in terms of attainment, but also in terms of lifestyle. During one of the first interviews I conducted with her, she emphasised that she wanted to be independent and not 'just be there and produce children'. Playing football, I will argue below, helped Suraya to avoid becoming the kind of woman she did not want to be, after she spent several years out of school.

Figure 15. A well-attended match at a football tournament

Sharif (24), one of the better players of the male football team that I was a member of myself, was studying at a university in Mbale when I got to know him well in 2021. He dressed according to the latest fashion for young men, wearing sneakers, oversized t-shirts and often shorts. Sharif sometimes resided in Bunyafa, sometimes in Mbale, where his mother rented a place for him to allow him to live nearer his university, but he had been in the village for most of 2021 because of the pandemic-related

closures. He was not married and had no children. When in the village, Sharif was sometimes involved in local development programmes such as delivering mosquito nets, from which he also earned some money. But he spent most of his time helping his parents with work around the house, playing football, resting and on Sundays he often went to swim in a nearby stream with his teammates and other young people in Bunyafa. Sharif gave me the impression that he is from a relatively privileged background – his father owns two taxis and his father's brother, a businessman in Kampala, pays his university fees. He had a smart phone and regularly posted on Facebook and chatted on WhatsApp. Social media also helped Sharif to stay in touch with family members who lived in towns and these people made use of him to get in touch with people in the village. For Sharif, football was an activity that helped him perform an educated identity in the village, as well as to stay connected to other schooled people in the area.

Football as a way to build a schooled identity

As noted in Chapter 2, a schooled person – someone of the pen (*umundu we kalaamu*) – is typically defined in opposition to someone of the hoe (*umundu we khyisiri*). While an *umundu we khyisiri* is locally oriented, walking around in 'dirty' farm clothes, assumed to be poor and undeveloped and fixed in tradition, the *umundu we kalaamu* is more exposed to the wider world and interested in life beyond the village, always well-dressed, religious and connotes progress and development (cf. Meinert 2009; cf. Sekiwunga and Whyte 2009). These oppositions are of course stereotypes and do not perfectly coincide with everyday reality in Bunyafa where, in the absence of white-collar jobs, people with secondary school degrees farm, try to develop political careers through participation in local institutions and, as they have come to terms with the idea that jobs are scarce (Jones, 2020), are not strongly caught by the 'moral trap' of mass education (Serpell 1993). However, the binary opposites do shape what practices and qualities signal a schooled identity.

It is in relation to these ideas about what it means to be a schooled person that football helps young men and women to cultivate a schooled identity in the community. To begin with, football is a way in which young people demonstrate a degree of 'exposure' and orientation towards life beyond the village. Football players have considerable knowledge of European football and are keen to demonstrate this knowledge. Sometimes this is through subtle performances, like James imitating Bruno Fernandes when we kicked penalties against each other during an afternoon practice. Sometimes it was more explicit: "You want to be like Neymar?" I was asked by one of the younger players during an informal match, after I tried out a football trick commonly associated with the star player of Paris Saint-Germain. When walking back home after away matches in neighbouring villages, players regularly talked about the latest football news. On one occasion I was informed about the

result of the Dutch national women's team, played earlier that day, including the names of the goal scorers – extremely specific information. Through commenting on football players, matches and sometimes the most detailed football statistics, players demonstrated that they are exposed to what is going on outside their own locality, a quality seen to be typical of the *umundu we kalaamu.*

Exposure is also communicated through the ways in which elements of European games are incorporated into local matches. Every once in a while, teams find a taxi driver willing to drive them to a game nearby and the van is then proudly referred to as the 'players van'. Pitches usually have a particular area that provides the best view over the pitch and this is referred to as the 'pavilion'. And during one match I saw that a 'dressing room' had been created by placing two motorcycles against the wall of the school near the pitch, so that players could go 'inside' during the break (see Figure 16). The English words 'players van', 'pavilion' and 'dressing room' were not translated into Lugisu, explicating the connection with a world beyond the village that the incorporation of these elements in local football matches itself already communicates. The setting, that is, the specific features of a context in which a performance takes place, is an important element of people's 'front', the fixed aspects of particular performances through which people communicate their social roles (Goffman 1959, 22). At football matches, a setting that resembles that of European matches is created, and the people that create, maintain and act in that setting 'perform' their exposure and orientation to life beyond the village through their involvement.

Quite literally being part of a local football team introduces a person into an international structure of football leagues, a network beyond the village. Although the matches played in Bunyafa are not incorporated into the FUFA league system, players do think of their tournaments as the lowest level league, possibly the first step in a football 'pilgrimage' (B. Anderson 1983) that may end in Uganda's highest league or beyond. That is not to say that players strongly aspire to make such a journey, nor that they believe they could, but merely that involvement in football, like being in school, makes one part of a larger community of fellow players. Football facilitates imagined connections to an elsewhere – one local team played their matches in FC Barcelona t-shirts (obtained from a sponsor).

Football did not only help people to communicate a degree of exposure; players also valued the game because it allowed them to obtain more exposure. Although most games are played between nearby villages, teams occasionally get the chance to participate in tournaments in other areas. Football thus allows players to travel around, something that was valued because of the exposure it generated. Sharif, for example, mentioned:

> at least for me, I know many places because I have gone for football. I went to Butaleja for football, without football, I couldn't go there because I had no programme issues to take me

there. I went to Busia for football, that side in Bufumbo, around Mbale I have walked on each and every playground. **(07/08/2021)**[171]

When I asked him what is good about the fact that he visited these places, he said: "I happen to find new ideas, new people with different ideas, generally, meeting new people." Football, at once, helped to communicate the possession of knowledge associated with schooling and the expansion of such knowledge.

Figure 16. An improvised 'dressing room' for a football match

Another way in which football helped young people to communicate a schooled identity was the way in which the game relates to ideas about work time and leisure time. The distinction between 'work time' and 'leisure time' indicates a life of a schooled person, as it assumes a life structured in terms of duty time (at work or school) and free or leisure time (after work or school) (see also Jones 2020). For that reason, engaging in leisure activities is seen to be part of an educated lifestyle and young and schooled youth are quick to share how they spent their leisure time, as a way to perform a schooled identity. Mafabi, for example, often posted on Facebook how he had spent his leisure time that day,

[171] Language of expression: English

and the players in the team I was a part of proudly told me that they always go to the 'beach' on Sundays.[172] Football training and matches always take place towards the end of the day, because they are seen to be another way of spending leisure time. Being viewed as such, playing and watching football communicates that one has structured their life in a way similar to the typical *umundu we kalamu* (i.e. an employed person).

The idea that people, through playing football, cultivate a schooled identity, as well as obtain and expand qualities associated with such an identity outside the classroom, relates to Jones' (forthcoming) ideas about what it means to be 'schooled' in Uganda. Building on the work of Jeffrey et al. (2004a) in Northern India, Jones talks of a schooled identity as a 'scaffold', something that is not so much manifested through occupation or material wealth, but a reflection of a series of embodied qualities – exposure, literacy, development, enlightenment – that are reflected by, and reinforced through, actions in everyday life, like managing a savings group, talking English, dressing well, having a smartphone. Like a scaffold, a schooled identity can be built up and broken down, and work is required to keep it in place. Football, I have demonstrated, is one way in which people reinforce a schooled identity and, perhaps, work on qualities, such as exposure, that are associated with being schooled. However, as will become clearer in the next section, it is almost exclusively recent graduates or people who are still in school who participate in the game because, in addition to communicating a schooled identity, playing football is also associated with youthfulness.

Football as a way to go back to school

Educational careers are rarely smooth trajectories, free of interruption, nor a guaranteed success. On the contrary, school-going youth are typically forced to spend considerable periods of time at home due to inability to pay school fees. In 2021 specifically, there were the pandemic-related school closures. Many students leave school prematurely. As shown in Chapter 2, only 32 percent of children make it to secondary school and only 12 percent finishes their lower secondary school. Football facilitates continued educational aspirations and connection to schooling for youth who find their schooling and the prospect of schooled adulthood undermined by a lack of money to pay school fees, a school closure or their own physical maturity.

The Bagisu say that to succeed at school, you need to have focus and strength of purpose, a view I discussed in Chapter 3. The reason one boy in secondary school believed he would not drop out – "because I know what I came to do" – echoed such emphasis put on holding firm to educational goals

[172] The beach, I later found out, appeared to be a small stream, a few miles away from the village and mainly surrounded by rocks. It did not resemble an actual beach, but the boys used the place like most people in the Global North make use of the beach – to swim, relax and enjoy free time.

as a means to stay in school. I was often reminded that to be successful in school one needs to have a heart for education (*kumwoyo kwe lisoma*), a phrase that connotes a strong focus on learning. To achieve educational strength of purpose, in turn, it is considered important that one does not get distracted by other interests or temptations such as earning money, romantic relationships or drugs. To avoid such distractions, one must keep the mind busy; 'an idle mind is the devil's workshop' is a common saying in the Gisu area and one may lose *kumwoyo kwe lisoma* when distracted.

Practices that help school-going people to stay focussed are therefore appealing, and the attraction of football partly derives from its capacity to help people stay focused and avoid distraction. In fact, the game is quite explicitly seen and promoted as a suitable means to protect youth's focus on schooling beyond the school gates. Both players and the community see in football an activity that keeps students' mind busy during holidays or when awaiting money for school fees (see also Šafařiková 2012). Juma (19, in lower secondary school), for example, mentioned that he played football at a time he was 'seated' at home so that he would be less tempted to engage in destructive behaviour. If you do not have an interest in something like football, he explained,

> you will just be idle, you are walking without having anything forcing you to walk. So when you find some people or when you find your age mates, there are some things they can do [e.g. taking drugs] and you get interest in them. When you have an aim in what you, you yourself, you are interested in, it is somehow difficult for people to change you or to divert your minds. **(09/08/2021)**[173]

Mohammed (35), a tournament organiser, also mentioned that one of the good things about football is that it keeps youth busy. "If youth is idle, they can easily join these groups of drunkards. Youth needs to be kept busy to avoid that." Football is seen as a practice that helps youth avoid distractions that can weaken one's strength of purpose in school, an activity that protects educational aspirations.

A second way in which football sustains people's orientation to schooling is the bursaries that Ugandan schools give out to talented football players in order to have a good school football team. For some youth out of school, these bursaries, to be obtained by playing football well, provide a possible route back into school. Suraya, for example, almost got access to a good lower secondary school in a nearby town thanks to a football bursary the school offered her. (She never went because the bursary offered covered only half of the fees and her mother was unable to raise the other half.) The idea that football may help you to continue schooling in the future, by providing access to a bursary, is commonly adhered to by players in the village. As schools in search of talent sometimes organise matches in

[173] Language of expression: English

villages to see players, many players get an opportunity to try their luck. The fact that the number of bursaries available is low and only the most talented players have a serious chance of obtaining one did not matter much. People played football for multiple reasons and the idea that a player might get a bursary to go back to school was an additional benefit, one that further strengthened the idea that it makes sense to play football if one has an interest in schooling.

Finally, football helps to keep the option of returning to school realistic to youth out of school as it helps one to cultivate a youthful identity. As noted, playing football is associated with studentship and childhood. People who do not play usually say that this is because they have a wife, children or many responsibilities – i.e. they have become adults – and it is said about the players that they are still under the control of their parents. The next fragment of a conversation I had with Rachid, the chairman of football, stands for a larger number of comments I collected that reflect this view:

> **Floris**: What kind of people are the people who play football? **Rachid**: Students. They are usually between 24 and 30, and they don't have wives. **Floris**: Why are people who are not studying not interested in football? **Rachid**: After schooling they marry, then they have to get money. They have many problems, so no time to play football. But students are free, because their parents are still caring for them. Others [those who do not play] go to do a business to earn money, rather than playing football. **(22/08/2021)**[174]

Players themselves cultivate the idea that they are students, not adults, as was eminently made clear to me in the following conversation I had with Mafabi and James, two men in their late 20s and recent upper secondary school graduates. While walking back home after we watched a Lockdown Cup match, I asked Mafabi what he was going to eat that night. James responded on behalf of his friend: "We eat in the hotel, the hotel called our parents' house. Mafabi eats whatever is served. It is like the assembly at school: whatever the leader sings, is what you repeat, you have no power." Young people, I came to learn, partially come to inhabit the status of student, still under the control of their parents, through playing football, even if they are actually not in school, like Mafabi and James at the time of this conversation.

Football players also subtly communicate the youthful or even juvenile identity of a student through style and the game itself involves aspects associated with childhood. Players shower before they come to football matches and get changed at the pitch. The ritual of a football match comes to resemble that of going to school. When going to a football pitch young people walk through the village in somewhat formal clothes, showered, and carrying a (school) bag with football clothes. Players

[174] Language of expression: English

commonly wear shorts, clothing associated with 'childhood' and rarely worn among older people. There are only two settings in which uniforms are worn in the village: a school uniform is worn at school, and a football shirt is worn on the football pitch. Further, the football playing physical body is a rather uncontrolled body and therefore at odds with the controlled, straight and symmetric movement required of the Gisu adult man. Older Gisu men, therefore, do not play football at all. Finally, players' jokes often involve references to school experiences. "They say schooling is light, but what about football?", shouted one of Sharif's teammates during a warm up, implying that they are wasting their time playing football instead of learning. "Schooling is light, but football is the future!" Shakulu responded with a smile.

The performance of a youth identity or student identity through playing football keeps people in touch with their educational ambitions and keeps open the possibility of returning to school when they cannot go due to lack of money for fees or a lockdown. Students, especially girls, who find themselves 'seated at home' risk becoming further removed from a return to school the more time they spend at home. Without evidence of being in school, one is prone to lose the protected status of being a 'child', a status that comes with privileges such as parental support, few social and economic responsibilities, freedom to focus on learning and personal development and, for women, protection against male suitors. Other people are quick to expect youth out of school to engage in activities that may make it harder for them to return to school. Young men may be encouraged to find work which, when they become successful, may weaken their claims to get parental support for further schooling. Young women who are not in school are ready for marriage in the eyes of many and find themselves under pressure to move out of their natal home. Spending considerable time 'seated' (*khwikhala*) at home is not considered appropriate for a woman beyond puberty. Playing football as a way to communicate 'studentship' in the village may help youth temporarily out of school to avoid being driven further away from the school gate.

The case of Suraya helps to demonstrate how a possible return to school can be potentially undermined when seated at home. A couple of months after I got to know Suraya she moved in with her 'boyfriend' Rachid, a man in his late twenties who came from the same village (not the tournament organiser). She told me that her father Muzei – who had an alcohol problem (see Chapter 6) – had made her life at home unbearable as he kept pushing her to get married. She felt forced to move out, she said, but assured me that things had not changed much. "I may live there for only this year, because next year I want to go and study" she emphasised when I inquired about her plans. While living with a man meant Suraya appeared to be 'married' (and her siblings also referred to her as such), Suraya herself was reluctant to use this term to describe her situation, seemed not particularly dedicated to Rachid and preferred to use the term 'boyfriend' (rather than husband). The fact that she got pregnant

shortly after moving in with Rachid did not seem to intensify her commitment to marriage. When I visited her at her natal home, the day after she gave birth, she was quick to remind me about my promise to help her with schooling if a chance came around. And later, towards the end of 2021, she said "I want to go and make money, I come back and do something for myself. I don't want to be there, that I am depending on a man in the village, I have not always desired to get married, it wasn't my thing to get married."

Suraya continued to play football, however, even after she gave birth. Her continued involvement in the game, I believe, must be seen in light of Suraya's ongoing aspiration to become a different kind of woman than the one she was on her way to becoming, and her rejection of 'traditional' womanhood. Through its connotation to studentship and non-adulthood, playing football worked to keep Suraya in a position of liminality. Out of school and with a baby, she was no longer a child, but since she played football she was not really an adult either. Suraya could have stopped playing football, but then she would resemble an ordinary adult woman in the village, an identity she did not aspire to. As liminality implies open-endedness, this position better suited Suraya's ambitions of becoming a different kind of adult. Playing football helped Suraya to resist traditional womanhood and keep her future open-ended. In doing so, the game worked to keep her educational aspirations alive.

'Waithood' is often presented as a frustrating experience and a position that young people involuntarily occupy, as they want to become adults but lack the means to do so (Honwana 2012; 2014). However, for women in rural Uganda, achieving traditional adulthood – being married, serving a husband and having children – is not that difficult (Suraya was almost there). The problem is that schooled women often do not aspire to that kind of adulthood. To them, a socially more precarious position in which one is not really a child, nor really an adult – 'waithood' – may be more attractive than traditional adulthood, as a return to school remains a logical option for women in this stage and an alternative kind of adulthood may be achieved in the future. Football helped Suraya to achieve this.

In addition to disqualifying players from being fully adult, football also involves a usage of the body that challenges ideals of the submissive woman and narrow perceptions of the female body as solely a reproducing body (see Chapter 1). In fact, when I discussed the benefits of playing football with Suraya, she mentioned how the game helped her body to get back in shape, hiding the fact that she had recently been breastfeeding a child:

> If you find somebody who plays football and somebody who doesn't play, you always see the difference. For instance me, here and now, I have played but the body is just together, even

> my breasts have gone back because of playing football, even when you see me, you can't know that even I breastfeed, that I have ever suckled a baby. **(14/09/2021)**[175]

Hence, football does not only add a liminal edge to the identity of a woman like Suraya, opening up the possibility of an alternative future, it is also a part of a broader process of construction of new femininities, driven by schooling and schooled women. Youth like Suraya both avoid *and* challenge hegemonic womanhood through playing football, and the transformative capacity associated with 'youth' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005) reveals itself in an analysis of the game.

Esson (2013, 87), studying urban football players in Ghana, argues that perpetual youth is desirable for players as this improves one's opportunities to become a football player. In Bunyafa, youthful identifies are not cultivated for football, but *through* football – and the point of doing so centres around aspirations of educational continuation and, especially among women, a rejection of traditional adulthood, rather than dreams of becoming a professional player. By reinforcing the student youth identity, playing football has the capacity to disengage oneself from a particular narrative of progress, and orient oneself towards an alternative future. The game can help to resolve issues of time going too fast by creating time to explore alternative ways to progress in life and achieve adulthood. However, as a return to school and educational success thereafter is not easily realised, football, by keeping people oriented to this path to adulthood, may, at the same time, produce new experiences of time going too slow.

These reflections on the meaning of football in young people's lives echo Eisenstein's (2021) concept of 'pace'. In her study of urban middle-class (aspiring) women in Mbarara, southwestern Uganda, Eisenstein shows how in a context of increased distrust driven by capitalist transformation and the popularity of Christian prosperity gospel, 'taking time' is highly valued among young women as this allows them to study the trustworthiness of men and get inspired by God. Through 'wilfully waiting', women attempt to avoid taking the wrong path into the future and instead make sure they 'walk with' the right man (and God). Suraya, as well as other football players, can be said to be 'pacing' in a similar way as they cultivate youthfulness through playing football, therewith creating time to explore further schooling.

However, where Eisenstein stresses the relationality of pacing – women pace to seek the right man to move on with – my account shows how football *allows for* pacing, not necessarily relationally, to be practised. In Bunyafa social pressure to get married is highly contingent upon one's relationship to schooling and waiting is quick to become an awkward activity as soon as a girl out of school is seated

[175] Language of expression: Lugisu

at home. As Eisenstein herself points out: waiting is not an endless possibility. In facilitating a student identity, football grants people extra time to wait – it gives one opportunity to 'pace' – for such an identity effectively deals with social pressure to get married. After having waited for about 2 years, Suraya's pace accelerated towards the end of my fieldwork when an opportunity to work as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia arose. She decided to capitalise on it in the hope that she would one day return home with enough money to look after her daughter and mother. Rather than walking with a man, the path to the future she took was a lonely one. 'Pacing' appeared to be a practice that is not necessarily relational.

Football and socio-political opportunities

Schooled people also value being involved in local football for more immediate social and political reasons. One feature of schooling is that it brings people together on a daily basis from different localities around the school and also further away. Hence, schooling establishes more and stronger social connections between young people, and such connections are highly valued in the Gisu context. A person you have gone to school with is consistently referred to as 'Old Boy (OB)' or 'Old Girl (OG)'. The OB/OG bond is considered a rather formal relationship, which is demonstrated by the fact that the bond is sometimes compared to that of the *bamakooki* (the bond between two boys who got circumcised together).[176] OBs/OGs are expected to help each other when they find one another in a problematic situation and are encouraged to support each other in their collective search for opportunities after school. Several of the young men with whom I did life-history interviews had received help from OBs/OGs after finishing school.[177] Many school-going people also live for considerable periods of time with clan members in distant places. This means that in addition to making friends at school, school-going children also tend to have better connections within their clan and social networks of a greater geographical spread.

Through playing football, schooled youth try to strengthen and expand valued social relationships with other schooled people (see also Šafařiková 2012). One of the first Ugandan football teams, Budo Old Boys, was an alumni team, so football provided a platform for alumni to stay in touch with each other. In Bunyafa today, football players from different areas, organisers and others involved get in touch with each other to organise tournaments and meet each other during games, and playing football in front of a crowd provides the opportunity to make a name for yourself in the area. Football's role in building social networks is one of the most valued aspects of the game. Shaqul, explaining why he

[176] See for example Eric Mukhwana's *Masaabaland So Amazing* (2021). This is a popularly written overview of different aspects of Gisu culture, often structured around personal experiences of the author. On page 72, he compares the OG/OB bond to that of the *bamakooki*.
[177] Mafabi, for example, got a job at a barbershop in Kampala through an OG.

never stopped playing football, mentioned: “I am still playing football because in football right now I can say, it is that gift that I have gained a lot of friendship, I have so many friends because of football, I am somehow known because of football, that is all.” And Suraya emphasised that football makes “you get famous, [when] you play well, you are known.” Such fame has considerable advantages according to her: “the importance about being famous in football is […] that should you get a challenge, people will always come in for you. For instance, maybe you lost a loved one, the *ballers* will come as a team and they will mourn with you, [and] you also get friends.” Even people who are involved in football as organisers, like Mohammed, said how football helps to make friends. “I create friendships. I might be here, hosting a tournament, calling for a meeting. At such meetings, like eight teams can come, the team doctors may come, you see that you create friendships.” The fact that Mohammed mentioned the ‘team doctor’ as a potential football friend reflects the idea that football is seen as a way to meet *schooled* people.

In addition to helping schooled people connect to one another in the community, football also provides concrete political advantages. Tournament organisers like Mohammed and Rachid – both lower secondary school graduates, fathers and in their thirties – find in football an activity through which they can present themselves to the community and beyond, and establish themselves as leaders. Organising a tournament requires them to get in touch with all the players, get approval of the local village chairperson administration to organise the tournament, gives reasons to connect with political elites in town who might be interested in sponsoring the event, and makes them key figures during well-attended matches. Matches require a considerable degree of ‘organisation’ – from arranging the referees to setting and communicating the rules – that puts organisers ‘in the middle of things’ (Schut 2021). A tournament organiser is the hub in a web of relations that consists of team captains, referees, politicians, sponsors and a range of other people who are more loosely involved in tournaments; a position that provides a chance to perform schooled behaviours and management skills.

Football may be thought of as a new political arena that provides opportunities for mainly schooled men to make a political career in the area; an addition to the more familiar structures like the clan, the church/mosque or local political administration. Being a tournament organiser comes with serious privileges. Because of their connections with young people in the area, for example, Mohammed and Rachid were typically invited to, and consulted at, village meetings, especially when such meetings were related to the behaviour or situation of youth. They were given formal tasks when it came to addressing particular problems to do with young people. For example, both men played an important role in the Develop and Support Bungoma Group, a new initiative to promote skill development among young people in the village (see next chapter for a lengthy discussion of this group). During a function organised by this group, they were given time to address the audience and both men were elected as

committee members. Further, as noted, Rachid was given the nickname *chairman we kumupila* (chairman of football) because of his involvement in organising tournaments. Admittedly, this was a nickname rather than a serious title – happily embraced by Rachid, a character that liked to challenge social and cultural conventions in the community. Football was not bureaucratised in Bunyafa, but the choice of this nickname does suggest that people feel there is a sense in which the organisation of football resembles some of the more long-standing community organisations where the title 'chairman' is a familiar one.

Very much like traditional community organisations, football provides immediate, albeit small, financial benefits to those involved. As noted, teams that participate in tournaments contribute money to participate, and sponsors, usually politicians, might top up the tournament budget. This money is used as prize money, but considerable amounts go to stakeholders such as organisers, secretaries, referees and security personnel. And I suspect that small (literacy-based) activities like drawing up the fixture list and recording team financial contributions are – when outsourced to specific individuals – rewarded from the tournament budget as well (although people who carried out such activities usually said they did not benefit much). Good players like Mafabi, James, Suraya and Shaqul, moreover, are able to make small amounts of money by getting hired by other teams to play matches on their behalf or to participate in matches with prize money. "When there is a match which has money, a financial match, okay, a match which is competitive and you are going to be paid, they take you and you play, and if you win, you get some money out of it", said Suraya. For Shaqul, with a wealthier background, the amounts you can get by playing for other teams – about 5,000 to 10,000 shillings ($1.30 to 2.60) – were less significant, but he did mention that such payments are indeed a benefit of playing football.

By and large, these insights reflect both a continuity and discontinuity of a longer history of politics in Gisu society, as well as of football in Uganda. Indeed, in an analysis of marriage in the Gisu region, La Fontaine (1962) argued that the strong social relations with neighbouring villages – to be established, at the time, through marriages – were crucial for men's political power. Such relations helped one to settle conflicts, which was, and still is, one of the principal ways to develop a good reputation in the wider area (see next chapter). Social relations with people in neighbouring villages thus have political value in Gisu society and football is valued by schooled youth as a new way to establish such relations. The sport, then, continues to serve political purposes. Not only is football still used by actual politicians to reach out to their electorate, players and tournament organisers themselves have also embraced the game as a means to establish politically valuable social relations. Used in that way, playing football is one of the many ways is which schooled people – by virtue of their schooling – come to enjoy political

advantages and, as such, the sport reinforces the value of education.[178] The fact that players emphasise making friends as an important aspect of playing football also demonstrates the rather practical way in which players approached the sport in Bunyafa.

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Football has become one of the most visible aspects of community life in Bunyafa and this is a direct result of a growing presence of schooled people. The way in which schooling has led to the increased popularity of football in this setting, however, does not align with common academic assumptions about the popularity of the sport in sub-Saharan Africa. Literature about football in Africa has mainly focussed on urban men and typically assumes that the sport is seen, and therefore played, to circumvent schooling and realise a future that schooling no longer guarantees. Football, it is suggested, is popular because schooling is unpopular (Besnier et al. 2018; Esson 2013). In Bunyafa, however, football and schooling reinforce each other's popularity and their connection is harmonious rather than conflicting: football is used to perform a schooled identity; it helps people who are temporarily not in school to return to school; and it provides schooled people with social and political opportunities in the village. Whilst football helps to navigate one's future it is not seen as a direct route to migration, wealth or successful masculinity. In Bunyafa, football functions as a bridge between the school and society rather than the present and a distant future as the sport facilitates school-based lifestyles, networks and identities beyond the school gates, whilst many young people seek their way back to school through playing football.

[178] The next chapter provides a more extensive discussion of community politics and indicates that schooled people enjoy a wide variety of political advantages.

9. ‘I want to develop my community’: Schooled adults and socio-political relations in the village

We were seated under a canvas tied on top of four poles on the side of Habib’s home, one of Bungoma’s elders, with about 6 men who came to send their condolences. The unfortunate occasion was the death of a baby, Habib’s brother’s grandchild, whose burial was about to start. Hussein sat in the middle of the group behind a small table with a notebook in front of him. He was collecting and taking note of the different condolence fees that were brought by the people attending the burial and, being the secretary of the clan, he was preparing the ‘report’ – a bit of information about the deceased that is to be shared during the burial. “Teacher, can you put some airtime on my phone” asked Habib, seated next to Hussein, while showing him his old Nokia. His arm was shaking, giving away Habib’s lack of confidence with phones. Hussein briefly interrupted the writing of the report, took the phone and quickly did what his father’s brother asked him. He then continued with the collection of condolences and finished the report, which he read to the attendees towards the end of the event. He was the last person to speak. After Hussein’s speech the deceased baby was carried to her grave behind Habib’s house, was prayed for one last time and then buried by a group of about 25 men and a few women.

This brief vignette demonstrates a schooled man ‘in the middle of things’ (Schut 2021), involved in the organisation of a burial, acting as secretary of the clan, helping out his mother’s brother with a technological issue and addressing the audience. It is sometimes assumed that educational skills such as literacy have little applicability in rural Africa (Serpell 1993) and strong gerontocratic norms hamper the opportunities of younger people in the village (Honwana 2012, xii). Consequently, apart from a few notable exceptions (Jones 2020; forthcoming; Schut 2021; 2019), the literature on schooled people, especially studies of youth, has become somewhat biased towards the lives of schooled people in urban centres, where most of them are believed to migrate to after school (Honwana 2012; 2014; Mains 2007; Mains, Hadley, and Tessema 2013; Masquelier 2013; Munro 2013; Weiss 2009). In Bunyafa, however, I found that schooled people play an important role, and take great interest in, community life. Educational investments tend to have strong expectations of reciprocity attached to them, which means that schooled people, as much as they may seek opportunities in urban centres, are inclined to return to, or help, their natal communities at some point in their life. What roles schooled adults come to play in the village, as well as how community life changes as a consequence of their involvement in it, are therefore relevant, yet relatively underexplored, questions.

This chapter addresses these questions as it is concerned with the lives, relations and social positions of schooled people who are well beyond their years of formal education and more or less properly

progressed to adulthood – people like Hussein, who are usually in their thirties or beyond, married with children and permanently settled in the village. I argue that, by virtue of their schooling, these people tend to become rather central figures within community networks and relatively easily maintain and expand their social relations. There are three factors in particular that contribute towards this pattern, which are discussed in the first part of the chapter: schooled people are more likely to get involved in community work; they have greater access to social media; and they set up new community organisations. This has a number of implications for the socio-political structure of the community, and these will be explored in the second part of this chapter. I will argue that schooled people enjoy greater opportunities to gain prestige in the village, albeit their work as 'mediators' between the community and external actors is risky and can contribute to socially falling as much as climbing. Furthermore, while the political advantages of older men have increasingly become available to younger schooled men and women, I suggest that the consequent decay of gerontocracy is hampered by the way in which the literacy activities of schooled people are managed and appropriated by elders.

The chapter is structured around the lives of two individuals from the same village, Hussein (36) – from the vignette – and Joyce (45), who I would like to introduce more extensively here. While both Hussein (36) and Joyce (45) made a career in their village with the help of educational skills, their family background and experience in school are rather different. Hussein, the more privileged of the two, lived in the middle of the village, together with his mother and wife, in a stable brick house with an iron sheet roof, constructed by his late father. Hussein's father, a dedicated Muslim, used to be one of the big men in the area and Hussein inherited a fair share of his father's land as well as a small medicine shop. Hussein grew up in the village but later went to attend a school in Mbale, where he lived with clan members who had established themselves in town. After he graduated as a primary school teacher, he continued to stay in Mbale for a while to work for a clan member with a butchery, until he found a job as a teacher. He subsequently worked in a few schools – both government and private – and eventually started to teach in a small government school in Bunyafa, about 3 miles from his natal village, where he still worked when I got to know him in 2018. Hussein had three children. He had his first child out of wedlock, when he was doing his teacher training course; his second child with his ex-wife, with whom he spent three years in marriage; and another child with his second wife, to whom he was still married.

Raised by a religious father who studied in an Islamic school, Hussein was one of the more practising Muslims in Bukiiti. He was the secretary of the village's mosque and the twale[179], was one of the few people in the village who prayed five times a day and he regularly appeared in religious attire, certainly

[179] In Uganda, the Islamic equivalent of the Christian 'parish' is called the twale.

on days of Islamic celebration. He also occupied the position of secretary in his clan. While Hussein did have quite a bit of land, he was not much involved in agricultural activities himself. He taught during the day and usually sat in his medicine shop in the evening, watching movies on his old laptop whilst attending to customers stopping by every once in a while. Hussein had a motorcycle which he used to travel to school and to pay visits to Mbale, where he still knew a lot of people and planned to start up a business with the help of one of his clan members. He was almost always dressed in clean and well-kept clothes: usually trousers and a polo necked shirt (often with the logo of an NGO on it), sophisticated sandals and a watch. In addition to the formal positions he occupied within the mosque and the clan, he was regularly tasked with more ad hoc responsibilities, such as mobilisation for development projects or the Develop and Support Bungoma Group, a group of schooled people from Bungoma that I will discuss in more detail below. Hussein had a smart phone with access to WhatsApp and Facebook, and regularly used these online platforms.

Joyce was of a less privileged background than Hussein and got less far in school. She was abandoned by her mother at an early age and grew up with her father's sister in one of Mbale's suburbs. Her father worked as a nurse in a hospital in Kampala. After finishing primary school in Mbale, Joyce went to Bunyafa, her father's home area, where she was taken to secondary school by her father's brother. After one year in secondary school, however, she got pregnant and eloped with the child's father, a member of Hussein's clan. She spent a few months in Hussein's father's household, but moved in with her husband the moment he managed to build a house for them. When I got to know Joyce, about 25 years later, she was a mother of 5 sons and was still married. Their last born was 19 years old, and together they lived in an average size house of mud and poles, roofed with iron sheets. Joyce's husband was rather disengaged from the household; he was often not at home and I was told that he drinks too much alcohol. While Joyce invested considerably in her sons' schooling, none of her children managed to pass successfully through secondary school.

Joyce is a good example of someone who developed a schooled identity by doing 'schoolwork' over the course of her life rather than in school (Jones forthcoming). She did not progress far in secondary school but obtained a number of health-related skills through a series of medical training courses a few years after she left school: one was about immunisation, another about birth attendance. This helped Joyce, who was proficient in English because of her history in Mbale, to be elected as Village Health Team (VHT) member, a government-sponsored position in the community, tasked with health-related responsibilities. When I got to know her, she was involved in every health-related programme in the village, and locally known as '*musawu*' (nurse or doctor, pl. *basawu*). Like Hussein, she occupied various positions within community organisations for which she was elected by the people involved. In addition to being a VHT member – her most important occupation – she was the zone leader of the

Anglican church[180], treasurer of a savings group initiated by the government (a group that would come together at Joyce's home on a weekly basis) and a chlorine promotor.[181] However, unlike Hussein, Joyce did not resemble the stereotypical person of the pen. She spent most of her time digging her husband's gardens (and a few gardens she inherited from her father), was usually dressed in old farm clothes, sat on the floor and never plaited her hair. Nor did she have a smart phone.

Schooled people and community work

As the profiles of Hussein and Joyce already suggest, schooled individuals tend to get involved in a wide variety of activities in the village and occupy formal positions within community organisations, such as the clan, the church or mosque, and savings groups. A major reason for this is the expectation that schooled people will contribute to community development. I have already mentioned that people's investments in the schooling of children involve expectations of reciprocity (Chapter 2 and all chapters in Part 2). Schooled individuals are expected to use their skills to get ahead in life and support their families financially, and by sharing their knowledge, once successful. At the same time, the promotion of schooling in Uganda is part of a development discourse, that further involves better health care, the promotion of religion, gender equality and enlightenment (Chapter 2). "We need more degrees" it was said during a village meeting I attended, "because degrees can help [the village] to develop." Schooled people are considered the vanguards of development, by themselves and the community, and therefore have a strong desire to "do good" for both their families and their village more generally. Tom, a certificate holder in his 30s, clearly expressed this sentiment, common among many of the schooled people I talked to, when I asked him about his future plans:

> I want to make a primary school in my community. I want to develop my community. I want to conserve the environment through planting as many trees as possible. In case of getting friends, anywhere abroad, or within the country, I want at least to promote the welfare of the people within our community. Either through education, through medical care, through household income. So that, if people in my community, if they get income, they will be able to at least take their children to school. So that they can take care of themselves. **(20/11/2018)**[182]

My presence – a schooled man, presumably in support of development ideals and possibly with access to jobs in the development sector – may of course provoke such comments among young people in search of employment opportunities. However, the frequency with which such comments were made, combined with the fact that I heard similar comments in settings where I was merely present in the

[180] According to Joyce, the zone leader is charged with the responsibility of keeping track of the people affiliated to the church and acts as mediator between the community and the reverend.
[181] A task that has something to do with keeping drinking water clean.
[182] Language of expression: English

background, suggests that the sentiment is, at least to some extent, genuine. Besides, this strong motivation among young people to help their community 'develop' has been observed in other areas too. Mains (2007), studying young men in urban Ethiopia, found that schooled youth believe that they need to support their community through a project or business. Munro (2013) cites various schooled men and women from West Papua, Indonesia, who sought to use their education to realise development in their home communities. And Schut (2021), studying a rural community on the Island of Flores, Indonesia, noted that schooled people, by virtue of their schooling, have an interest in getting engaged in village institutions and activities that partially stems from their desire to do well for the community.

In Bunyafa, schooled people's aspirations to 'develop' the community match the idiom of development involved in many community gatherings and activities that take place on a daily basis. Savings groups are often initiated by, or associated to, development NGOs or governmental development schemes; clans may get together to discuss ways to develop the village; and various 'development' activities – from immunisation to the spread of improved seeds – are carried out regularly, engaging people as mobilisers, community representatives and local development agents. Such activities attract schooled people who are keen to contribute to the 'development' of their village, and the idea that schooled people are vanguards of development validates their involvement. Development related activities, moreover, typically require 'mediators' who help project managers from outside the community to implement projects locally. This is a role for which schooled people are seen to be most suitable because of their multilingualism and familiarity with multiple cultural styles (Ferguson 1999). In rural areas, perhaps more than in urban ones, schooled people are pulled into various activities, meetings and programmes because much of the work that is done in these settings is 'development' work.

Schooled people also tend to get involved in community work because their skills are increasingly required in the everyday activities of village bureaucracies like the church or mosque, the clan and the local government, but also newer organisations like savings groups. Minutes must be taken at clan meetings, which means that each clan's secretary must be literate; mosques in the area communicate with each other through letters, which means that the mosque's secretary must be literate; during burials a notebook is kept with the contributions of different visitors and a report must be developed by a literate person; the village council must have at least one literate person to write land agreements and perform other tasks requiring literacy (e.g. developing a sampling frame for a visiting researcher); and the various savings groups are run by literate individuals who keep track of contributions. Schooled people therefore enjoy greater opportunities to get various roles within community organisations, especially the occupations that require the ability to write such as that of treasurer and secretary. And even if they do not occupy specific positions, schooled people tend to get asked to 'help out' with

activities, for example to make notes of a meeting, send around text messages to inform people about an event, and thereby get involved in organisations on a more ad hoc basis.

Not all community organisations are equally attractive and open to schooled people. It is not a coincidence that both Hussein and Joyce occupied positions within the mosque and the church. I have discussed in Chapter 2 how schooling was introduced by missionaries and is still embedded in discourses of 'enlightenment', with school mottos often emphasising their goal to produce God fearing people. Being religious adds to one's schooled identity and so religious community organisations are of particular interest to schooled people. Further, as political and administrative positions at the local government level increasingly require a certain level of schooling, schooled people enjoy greater opportunities to get occupations within local government bodies. This is another network in which schooled people tend to be increasingly involved. The clan, on the contrary, continues to assign a lot of power to elders and is a social network in which schooled people seem somewhat less involved (although the possibilities of young people in the context of the clan are changing too, as I discuss below).

The involvement of schooled men and women in community organisations is gendered. The public domain used to be dominated by men and organisations like the clan and the mosque continue to be so. At a more general level, however, committee life has increasingly opened up to women. This opening was partially created by government quotas and, more generally, governmental discourses of gender equality, but also the financialization of rural communities (see Chapter 6). With the increased importance of cash in rural areas, budgeting and keeping financial records has become an important element of many organisations, and this task is almost exclusively done by women, who are believed to be more trustworthy with money than men. Even clans and mosques, institutions that limit decision-making power to men and continue to be dominated by men, tend to have women as treasurers. Almost all savings groups are run by women.[183] Finally, health-related activities – from immunisation programmes to birth attendance – tend to engage schooled women more often than men, while the Bugisu Cooperative Union, a collective of coffee farmers, does community work that typically attracts men.

Another way in which schooled people are pulled into community work, albeit not necessarily the work of specific organisations, has to do with people's interactions with modern institutions like the government, the hospital and the school. For unschooled people, relatively unfamiliar to the informal

[183] Many savings groups are in fact only for women as both NGO and government programmes that promote such saving initiatives tend to target women (see Chapter 6).

rules that guide behaviour in these contexts, the risk of making a socially discomforting faux-pas discourages them to go to these environments. As Joyce explained:

> You see these people who are not schooled, they fear, they don't have confidence about themselves. They say that if I speak, I will make a mistake, so they decide to keep quiet and be at home. **(14/09/2021)**[184]

Consequently, schooled people are often asked to come along if ordinary villagers need to deal with the government or another party they are relatively unfamiliar with.[185] Joyce regularly escorted people to the hospital, mediating their encounters with nurses and doctors. And when the local power supplier unexpectedly appeared in the village to disconnect illegal electricity users, Hussein was called to speak to the company's personnel on behalf of the community. Both Hussein and Joyce saw their knowledge and confidence in speaking to, and dealing with, educated people from outside the village, including me, as an important benefit of being schooled.

Finally, as Jones (forthcoming) demonstrates, being 'schooled' is not a fixed identity that gets established upon graduation and it can be lost or gained afterwards. It is partially through community work that one can maintain, (re)gain and/or communicate a schooled identity. Joyce, who spent less than a year in secondary school but was nevertheless the 'nurse' of the community, exemplifies how 'schoolwork' does not necessarily have to take place in school. The need to maintain a schooled identity in order to continue to benefit from the privileges that come with it – a range of political opportunities among other things, as the second half of this chapter will show – provides another incentive for schooled people to get involved in community work. While the football players we met in the previous chapter cultivate a schooled identity through playing football, Hussein and Joyce did so through their work for various community organisations (see also Jones et al., n.d.).

Social media and social relations

During my first months of fieldwork, I usually kept the front door of my house open in the evening. As my house was located on the edge of the trading centre, where many people came together in the evening, I hoped the open door would encourage some people to come and spend time in my small living room. This would allow me to talk to people informally and get up to date with village news. While the open door worked, and every now and then someone joined me to talk at night, it was not until people found out that I was willing to share the benefits of my Wi-Fi device that the numbers of regular visitors increased. As smart phones have become increasingly accessible in rural Uganda, social

[184] Language of expression: Lugisu

[185] Others have observed a similar tendency among schooled people in other areas in Uganda (Meinert 2009) and elsewhere (Munro 2013).

media has found its way into community life. Young and schooled people like Suraya, Sharif, James and Mafabi (previous chapter), as well as someone like Hussein, spend considerable time on social media, particularly WhatsApp and Facebook. Most of them have a smart phone and buy MBs (needed to get access to the internet) on a daily basis to use these platforms. The moment they found out that they could access free internet around my compound, many of them came to sit in my living room. Others who felt awkward about benefitting from my device sat on the edge of my compound (out of sight but within the reach of the Wi-Fi signal) to browse through Facebook and chat on WhatsApp, occasionally showing each other things they saw on their own phone.

Social media is of considerable importance to community life in Bunyafa. Social media platforms require digital literacy, which means, among other things, a fair command of English, and so it is almost exclusively schooled people who have direct access to these platforms and only a small percentage of the population is present on social media. However, my survey shows that 76 percent of the households possessed at least one smart phone and most households do have people with some experience in school. This means that access to social media is broader than the number of people with profiles may suggest as whole families get to see pictures on phones managed by schooled children. Facebook and WhatsApp are the most popular social media apps in Bunyafa and are used for a variety of purposes. In the previous chapter I discussed how schooled youth employ Facebook to display a modern identity through posts about their leisure activity. But both Facebook and WhatsApp are also important ways to maintain contacts with people in different areas, to be informed about the news, and new political groups are created through WhatsApp, as I will demonstrate in more detail below.

On WhatsApp people can send each other personal chat and voice messages and create private groups through which the group members can interact with each other. Most WhatsApp users with whom I spoke are in several large chat groups. Hussein, for example, is a member of the Develop and Support Bungoma Group, a group associated with the youth of the Islamic University and a group in which Islamic insights are shared. Such WhatsApp groups are usually fairly large, consisting of people living in different areas: the Bungoma group, of which I came to be a member, has 41 members, mainly schooled people with a connection to Bungoma village; the Islamic University group has more than a 100 members according to Hussein, mainly people from eastern Uganda (including Members of Parliament). WhatsApp groups typically have a managing board that is in charge of the group, a constitution with the group's rules and groups sometimes organise real life events for the group members.

Groups are commonly used to discuss political issues, create business ideas and, importantly, to share news. The latter function is something it has in common with Facebook. Road accidents, committed crimes, burials, and other news – local, national, as well as international – are quick to be shared on both these platforms in Uganda. Consequently, schooled villagers, given their privileged access to these digital environments, have become important brokers of information in the community. Hussein, for example, felt that people increasingly come to him to get information:

> They are now beginning to pick interest in me because whenever there is something… As people are still fidgeting to talk about it, I come out with evidence: 'this is how something happened, you see…' [while acting as though he is showing someone his phone]. Then you find this one tells the other, he also looks for you to confirm whether that is true. **(13/09/2021)**[186]

He was also quick to share news on social media himself, especially news related to his village. In July 2021, for example, Hussein posted about an accident that happened at the village's trading centre:

> It was tragic in Bungoma when one boy who seemed to be possessed was threatening to kill his mother and when he was asked whether he was serious he decided to cut off one of his fingers to show his seriousness. He alleges that his mother has failed to show him his father.[187]

Posting such news messages on Facebook and in WhatsApp groups turned him into an important source of information for clan members who lived away from Bungoma. The day after Hussein shared the above Facebook message (which had a striking picture of the boy's cut finger attached to the post as evidence of the message's validity), he was called by a relative in Kampala who wanted to find out what happened. Through posting regularly, schooled people become known among a large group of relatives and friends, who could in turn reach out to them to obtain information or, as we will see below, to help them realise something locally whilst being absent. Seeing Hussein's posts about burials and other village news, I found myself increasingly reach out to him instead of my own focus families to stay up to date with life in Bunyafa when I was away for a few days.

WhatsApp is an important medium through which people establish important social connections in other areas. Clan members who live in town, old boys and girls, as well as politicians who often employ schooled people in different villages to act as local representatives, are typically contacted through WhatsApp. Sharif, the football player we met in the previous chapter, for example, stays in touch with his educational sponsor – a wealthy clan member – through WhatsApp. And Hussein uses WhatsApp

[186] Language of expression: English
[187] The original post was in English and edited for reasons of accessibility.

to stay in touch with a Member of Parliament (MP), on whose behalf he works as a local representative (a function he got through replying to the MP's messages on Facebook).

The fact that WhatsApp provides quick access to distant relatives and other social connections, turns those with direct access to WhatsApp into gatekeepers of particular social relationships. Mafabi, for example, is the only one in his family with a smart phone. This means that his siblings and his mother Zowena can only reach out to Mafabi's sister Suraya (who went to Saudi Arabia, see Chapter 8) and me (when not in Uganda) with Mafabi's help. More generally, technological advancements – from smart phones to electricity – are typically mastered more quickly by schooled people. This means that people continuously turn to schooled villagers to get their support with small technical issues (remember Habib, the elder who asked Hussein to help him with an airtime purchase for his old phone, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter). Consequently, schooled people tend to have many casual dependants – people who occasionally make use of their expertise – which renders those schooled individuals valuable and appreciated villagers.

Significantly, schooled people's privileged access to a relatively large variety of people through social media reinforces their involvement in community organisations. Having a large social network makes them suitable to act as a 'mobiliser' when a particular function in the village is to be organised. Hussein, for example, was assigned the task of mobiliser when the daughter of a respected person in his clan passed away, and a burial needed to be arranged. He was left in charge of obtaining money from different members of the clan to cover the costs of the burial. His social media presence made him well-known among different sections of the clan and Hussein lived with clan members in town for considerable periods of time when he was still going to school. He therefore seemed the most suitable person for this task, well capable to connect to both clan members in the village and those in other areas of the country to raise funds for the burial. Hussein's role as local representative of an MP and his friendship with a foreign anthropologist may have reinforced the idea that he was capable of raising a satisfactory amount of money for the event.

Schooled networks: The Develop and Support Bungoma Group

Social media not only reinforced schooled people's involvement in long-standing community organisations, but, as this section shows, also played a role in the emergence of new organisations. The Develop and Support Bungoma Group (henceforth: The Collective) started as a WhatsApp group, set up by a powerful district-level politician. With Hussein's help, a group chat with a variety of schooled people who were born in Bungoma was created with its main aim "to promote unity, development projects and support to one another in case of challenges" and to "make Bungoma a better place to live in" – as the politician's first group message had it. One of the new group members

initiated a picture challenge shortly after the group was set up, to get to know each other better (group members lived in different parts of the country). The Collective's aim and first exercise provide further evidence of earlier points made: that schooled people are orientated towards contributing to the development of their home village (this chapter); and interested in getting to know their schooled peers in other areas (previous chapter).

Shortly after the establishment of the WhatsApp group, the politician started a discussion about two topics in the chat: 'poor performance in schools' and 'idleness or joblessness of most youth'. He encouraged people to give their views about these problems. Discussions about schooling and the situation of youth dominated the group chat for the first weeks, interrupted every once in a while by an important news message (for example Hussein announcing the death of an elder in Bungoma) and culminated in a concrete plan. Hussein was tasked with the job of registering all youth in Bungoma who are currently not in school so that a meeting could be set up with these people to identify their interests and seek ways of helping them to develop the skills needed to realise their ambitions. The Collective also started to raise condolence fees together and got local representatives – Hussein, among others – to speak on their behalf at burials, in order to promote The Collective's existence in the area. Pictures of Hussein chatting to people to make a list with out-of-school youth and pictures of people representing the collective at a burial, were shared in the WhatsApp group.

In September 2021, about 2 months after the WhatsApp group was established, the politician proposed to officially launch the new initiative through the smoking of a goat and matoke in the village. Hussein was asked to come up with a budget for such a function and money was subsequently raised by the group members themselves. The launch was to be the first time the WhatsApp group members came together face-to-face. On the day, I went to the event's location, in the shade at the front of the village's government office, at around midday. When I arrived, I found the politician and about 4 others seated and chatting, while Hussein was driving through the area with his motorcycle to encourage more people to come to the meeting. The politician, who had come by car, complained about the lack of arrangements made for the meeting: "Hussein is doing all the work alone" he mentioned shortly after I sat down. The meeting started early in the afternoon, when about 10 group members had turned up, as well as about 7 people who were not in the WhatsApp group, such as members of the village council and a few elders. Hussein, seated on a chair behind a table located in the middle of a circle, was asked to keep notes of the meeting. The event mainly centred around the introduction of The Collective to other villagers, the refinement of its aims and, importantly, its bureaucratisation: the election of a management committee was the last activity that was carried out before the goat was finally eaten. Hussein was chosen as secretary.

A couple of weeks after The Collective was launched, they organised a farewell party for me and Juul when we were about to leave Uganda, a function that further promoted The Collective's existence within the community. The Collective seems to have lost its momentum a little since that farewell party, partially because the politician, one of The Collective's driving forces, became disappointed about the group's inactivity and left the chat at some point. Whether The Collective will flourish again remains to be seen – it is now mainly used to share news messages, prayers and funny pictures or videos. But the development of The Collective, its launch and initiatives so far, do point to the fact that schooled individuals are getting together around new initiatives – football or a WhatsApp group with practical purposes – and develop social networks of their own, parallel to long-standing community networks that consist of more people with little schooling.

With WhatsApp being used as a platform where initiatives and plans are realised, a social divide between schooled people and unschooled people is increasingly made visible. I came to realise this not only during the day that The Collective was launched – when a clear divide between those who know about the group and those who do not could be observed – but also during more subtle everyday interactions. When group members were asked to contribute money towards the organisation of The Collective's launch event, for example, I found Hussein, Mafabi and Sharif joking at the trading centre about who had contributed and who had not; interactions that unschooled others present in the centre were unable to follow. Such subtle ways of communicating inclusion in the digital network of schooled people may be read as one of the many ways in which schooled people perform a schooled identity, but also suggests that the digitalisation of social relations in rural Uganda creates new social divides that, much like secret societies, centre around privileged access to knowledge that requires initiation, that is, in this case, formal education.

The schooled as the new elites: Socio-political continuity and change

The previous sections show how and why schooled people are increasingly involved in community organisations and occupy central positions within social networks. Next, I explore what this means for village politics and social differentiation within the community. I first demonstrate that schooling provides individuals with more political opportunities in the village as it helps them to become known and develop a reputation through which prestige is gained. However, realising such political potential requires careful 'performance', especially when schooled people are mediating relations between the community and external parties. This mediating role with external parties, I discuss in the second part of this section, means the political opportunities of the schooled centre around a paradox: more schooling broadens one's political opportunities, but, at the same time, may diminish the extent to which an individual enjoys the trust of the community when mediating relations with external actors.

In the final sub-section I show how elders perpetuate a degree of authority, derived from their greater historical knowledge, through managing the literacy activities of the schooled.

Political benefits of schooling: Being known and developmental

Joan Vincent's ethnographic study of politics in a small town in Teso provides an insight into how some individuals gained prestige and were capable of forming a community elite in the 1960s, acting as mediators between the government and the community (Vincent 1968). A rather easily identified group of older (but active) men were capable of obtaining positions in the local council through agricultural entrepreneurship and, importantly, using obtained wealth to create social relations: they could organise work parties, hire labour, buy a plough (to lend), give away land and establish a broad polyethnic network of affinal kin through polygamy, that came to form the basis of their political careers.

The importance of social relationships to gain political influence and prestige was an important feature of Gisu politics as well (La Fontaine 1962). However, extreme land scarcity combined with a system of pre-mortem patrilineal land inheritance, fierce competition among individual men over land and the possible threat of thievery and witchcraft, suppressed the importance of agricultural wealth creation as the basis for political mobilisation. Consequently, the connection between wealth and prestige has been relatively weak in Gisu society and the 'elites' were not as clear cut a class as they were in Teso society. Prestige was a somewhat more subtle quality in the Gisu area, gained through displaying a virtuous personality during village meetings and a capacity to settle conflicts (Heald 1998) – someone who controls *lirima* (see Chapters 1 and 4) and prioritises the interests of the community. Having a broad social network, mainly to be obtained through affinal kin, was particularly valued as this helped men to mediate between different groups (La Fontaine 1962).

These basic political principles have not changed significantly and render schooled people like Hussein and Joyce particularly well placed to gain respect in the village. As a VHT member, Joyce was often busy with mobilising people for immunisation programmes and other activities to improve people's health. Her involvement in these activities made her a 'developmental' person, someone who made a difference to the lives of individuals and seemed concerned about the future of the community. As the head of a savings group, Joyce hosted a group of women from different villages in Bunyafa on a weekly basis which strengthened her social network and gave her the opportunity to perform the role of the welcoming host – being welcoming to visitors is another feature of the virtuous person in Gisu society. The same applies to Hussein who, on behalf of The Collective, went door to door to recruit school dropouts for a programme that was supposed to take them back to school, an activity that allowed him to become known in the wider area, as well as display a developmental persona. The

developmental edge of much community work validates schooled people's involvement in these activities and, when they get involved, they become known. Through their involvement, the idea that they are vanguards of development and take community interests at heart is subsequently reinforced. This contributes towards gaining prestige.

Occupying formal positions within the clan, church and other community organisations not only invites one into village meetings, it also provides opportunities to speak at these meetings and other functions, especially for men (women speak in public less frequently). Being the secretary of the clan, it was Hussein who read the report during the burial of the child I talked about in the beginning of the chapter; as representative of The Collective, Hussein addressed the audience at a series of other burials; and, as the secretary of the mosque, he was asked to share news with the mosque attendees every Friday after prayers. Again, such opportunities help one to become known in the area, which Hussein himself was well aware of, and mentioned multiple times:

> The only thing you can benefit as a person [from a burial] is fame because when people gather and they see you talking, they say: 'this man has some good words like that… but whose son is it? This is a son to so and so, where does he live?' Like that, that is the only thing you can benefit from there. **(09/07/2021)**

> [As mosque secretary] you also become prominent among the people. […] Whenever there is a function, like the other time when we went there for burial, I was also given chance [to speak] because I am one of the leaders in the area. **(13/09/2021)**[188]

While affinal kinship networks have become less stable with declining bridewealth payments and more informal marriage arrangements, meetings around development projects, savings groups, football matches and occasions such as burials, have become more important means of establishing social relations and becoming 'famous'. Schooled people are particularly well positioned to capitalise on these political opportunities and gain prestige.

The schooled mediator's paradox: Political opportunity versus trust

A general pattern can be identified in the nature of the roles schooled people fulfil in Bunyafa. They regularly occupy the position of mediator, connecting people within the community to people and groups outside the community. Hussein was tasked with the responsibility to introduce The Collective's plan to support youth-out-of-school, and worked on behalf of an MP to mobilise political support in his community. Joyce was engaged in a variety of health-related development initiatives which she helped to implement within the community and, as zone leader of the church, acted as a bridge

[188] Language of expression of both quotes: English

between the vicar and the religious community. Mediators, Goffman has made us aware, can be thought of as 'go-betweens', people who occupy a discrepant social role whereby one "learns the secrets of each side and gives each side the true impression that [one] will keep its secrets; but [one] tends to give each side the false impression that [they are] more loyal to it than to the other" (Goffman 1959, 149). For schooled people to be able to work in roles as a mobiliser or local development agent, and representing others within their own community, they must gain the trust of external parties such as NGOs, politicians or the government. But in order to gain respect within their local community through such work, they must keep up the impression that they try their best to get the community, rather than external groups or themselves, the best deal out of the relations they facilitate through their mediation.

In Vincent's ethnographic study in the Teso region, carried out in the 1960s, political elites acted as mediators between the community and the government, the principal external actor with an interest in the community's affairs at the time. Their loyalty in such mediation exercises lay undisputedly with the local community as they were strongly rooted within their specific locality and the local council was the inevitable end point of their political career (Vincent 1968). These loyalties are different for the schooled of today. Their loyalties are considerably less obvious than those of the traditional 'big men'. Indeed, unlike them, schooled people are usually less rooted in their natal community and typically oriented towards life beyond a particular locality. In fact, the more schooling a person has obtained and the better the schools attended, the more likely it is that that person has lived considerable periods of their childhood away from their locality (to attend better schools). The well-schooled person's 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977, 72) has, therefore, become different from that of the average villager and might be more oriented towards an urban white-collar job. The result of this is a paradox that a comparison between Hussein and Joyce partially makes visible: more schooling renders one more suitable to act as a mediator in a greater number of domains, but, at the same time, instigates greater distrust within the community about one's loyalties.

Hussein had much more schooling than Joyce, a difference that translated into greater opportunities to act as mediator and develop a political career in the community. Being digitally literate and in possession of a smartphone, Hussein was able to pass on news to fellow villagers and act as a representative of an MP. Having greater literacy skills, Hussein was able to act as secretary in different village organisations. And having more qualifications, he could apply for various occupations at the local government for which Joyce did not qualify. However, as a typical person of the pen – wearing neat shoes and a watch, fluent in English, watching his own movies in the evening and regularly visiting Mbale – Hussein had a lifestyle that was different from the ordinary villager, one which involved spending time elsewhere. As a primary school teacher, moreover, he worked for the government and

his career possibilities were clearly not limited to the community level. Consequently, the loyalty of a person like Hussein is not left undisputed and to get the local community to trust him, Hussein had to continuously display his loyalty to them. He did this, for example, by greeting people extensively, engaging in forms of humour that displayed his awareness of how things work locally, and by helping out with unskilled work such as picking coffee. He also tried to avoid speaking English with me in public and, when I first arrived in the village, was reluctant to approach me. Hussein's schooling estranged him from the community, so in order to develop a political career within that community, and to capitalise on his school-based skills, he had to invest great effort in maintaining their trust.

Joyce, on the contrary, had spent considerably fewer years in school, did not look 'schooled' at all and was, habitually, much closer to the average villager. She usually wore old farm clothes, regularly walked around barefooted and sat more often on the floor than on a chair. She was one of the more extreme mourners during burials, an activity that most women with educational degrees are reluctant to engage in. She spoke some English but was much more comfortable in Lugisu so, quite naturally, we typically ended up speaking in her language rather than mine. She would usually kneel down when she greeted me, even when we were meeting each other without other people present, which suggested that this was more of a habit than a deliberate performance. Since she did not finish secondary school, Joyce did not qualify for any serious positions within the government. She was strongly embedded in local life and she had no ambition to move elsewhere. Joyce resembled the ordinary villager – the person of the hoe – to such an extent that it took me some time to realise she was considered schooled. Her relative closeness to the community, however, implied that Joyce had less opportunities to act as a mediator than Hussein. The fact that she did not have a smartphone, for example, reinforced the idea that Joyce was similar to the person of the hoe, but meant that she could not, like Hussein, act as a mediator of information.

Joyce's lifestyle gave little reason to question her loyalty and, unsurprisingly perhaps, people were quick to mention her name when I asked them which woman in the village they respected a lot. Trust in Hussein, in contrast, was less obvious, but Hussein had considerably more mediatory work he could carry out on behalf of his community. So, while schooled people's roles as mediators may reinforce their prestige within the community, adding to my argument that they are well-positioned to socially climb, such political opportunity involves a tricky paradox. On the one hand, more schooling means that people get more able to mediate relations between the community and external actors, thereby gaining greater political opportunities within the community; on the other hand, more schooling tends to further estrange people from the community in terms of their behaviour, lifestyles and ambitions, rendering them less obviously trusted. To capitalise on political opportunities available to them within the community, a schooled person must put up a deliberate performance to gain trust, which, with a

habitus that is rather different from that of the ordinary villager, is easier said than done. Mediation, then, becomes a political opportunity available to the schooled that may help the more skilful performers, like Hussein, to socially rise, while it can cause others to fall.

The prestige of elders and the incorporation of literacy

As noted in Chapter 1, Gisu society is not strongly gerontocratic, and it is emphasised how all circumcised men are each other's equals. People of prestige are, however, more often elders than youth. In addition to the principle adhered to that elder people deserve respect, two circumstances make it easier for elder men to gain prestige within the community, both related to their capacity to settle conflicts. Firstly, they typically have a greater social network in the area. This partially stems from the obvious fact that they have been alive longer, which has given them more opportunities to make friends, and means they have married sons and daughters, and so are more likely to have a broader network of affinal kin. Secondly, they have greater knowledge of how things were done, or agreed upon, in the past. For that reason, disputes about land are more easily settled by elders who have superior knowledge about the history of a disputed plot. Further, ritual problems are entirely left in the hands of elders since they are the only people who know how things were done in the past. Unsurprisingly, the clan, the organisation that deals with land conflicts and rituals, has thus been an organisation dominated by elders and a network through which elders can gain prestige in the community.

As schooling comes with considerable possibilities available to establish social relations and make a name in the area, while the importance of kinship as a means to achieve this has decreased, one of the circumstances that used to give elders a political advantage – their greater social network – has significantly diminished. What remains is their greater historical knowledge. Yet, we have seen that secretaries like Hussein keep minutes of almost every village meeting and conflicts are now often settled in the form of a written agreement. Goody (1963) suggests that such written documents instigate increased reflection on the validity of historical knowledge that is orally presented, as such oral histories can be compared to the written work available. When written histories are developed, elders lose their monopoly of the past. Is the authority of elders – derived from their capacity to orally reflect upon what happened in the past – further undermined by the literacy work of people like Hussein, who, subsequently, see their political opportunities increase even further? Have elders lost the basis of their socio-political advantages entirely, that is, both their greater social network *and* their greater knowledge of the past?

As opposed to what one may expect when following Goody's line of reasoning, I was often struck by the authority elders continued to enjoy in public meetings, especially those of the clan. This may, of

course, partially reflect continued adherence to the idea that elders need to be respected – a principle that schooling itself may strengthen as people realise that their education is thanks to the work and investments of the older generation. However, I would argue that elders have also been able to maintain a degree of authority because of the way in which literacy activities are incorporated, locally. While elders themselves typically felt a need to have their words written down, for example during interviews when they asked if I had written down what they had said, something young people rarely did, such note keeping did not, as Goody predicted, undermine their future testimonies. Indeed, the extent to which the historical knowledge of elders is undermined by young people's writing is contingent upon the extent to which people actually compare oral testimonies to written evidence. In the Gisu context, I often found that although people were keen to have things that were said written down, they were less interested to have these written records read out. People like Hussein were asked to keep minutes of every clan meeting, but never was a land dispute solved by looking at what was written about that particular piece of land in the past.

In other words, schooled people are asked to write, not to read. This means that the words of elders are given an extra touch of importance (they are important enough to be written down), but the validity of their words remains unchallenged. I once witnessed a clan meeting about a land dispute, whereby the complainant – a young, schooled man who lived in town – told me that there was a written agreement about the disputed plot. However, the agreement was never brought forward, nor talked about, during the meeting. The elders discussed the history of the plot, and came to a conclusion, while Hussein made minutes of the meeting. As the new literacy studies have shown, people tend to "transform literacy to their own cultural concerns and interests" (Street 1993, 1), often in a manner that does not necessarily radically change existing relationships (see for example Maurice Bloch 1993). In the Gisu context, the literacy activities of schooled people are employed in such a way that existing hierarchies of authority, favouring elders in the public domain, are not undermined, and even reinforced. Thus, while schooled people – both men and women – have come to enjoy various political opportunities that used to be exclusively available to older men, their political 'take over' has not been fully realised and, as many have shown before me (see for example Street 1993 for an edited volume with studies of this kind), some of the transformative potential that Goody attributes to literacy is undermined by the particular way in which literacy activities are incorporated into a particular locality.

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The relationship between schooling and social change is commonly studied through focussing on 'youth'. Having outgrown the state of childhood in which the cultural and social values transmitted

tend to be passively absorbed, the young, agential but not yet strongly rooted in adult society, may come to challenge hegemonic principles and explore new ways of doing things, especially when schooling has made them aware of alternatives (de Boeck and Honwana 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). However, as this chapter shows, social change may also be realised through the subtle everyday activities that schooled adults tend to pick up within their communities, and this is a line of inquiry that deserves further exploration. This chapter has been an attempt in that direction. It shows that schooled people, by virtue of their schooled identities, are rather central figures within the community, that is 'in the middle of things' (Schut 2021), and, because of this, they enjoy greater socio-political opportunities in the community.

A variety of reasons render schooled people more central figures within the community: their interest in helping the community and the fact that schooled people are seen as the vanguards of development, pulls them into community work; their literacy and technological knowledge makes them useful in the context of various community activities and organisations; and their access to social media puts them at the heart of social networks. Being central figures in the community, schooled people – both men and women – enjoy greater opportunities to make a name in the area, expand their social network and to gain prestige. This means that the political monopoly of older men, who in the past enjoyed better opportunities to gain prestige, is increasingly challenged and who can be 'big' is changing in rural Uganda (see also Jones forthcoming).

Conclusion

This thesis has shown how the consequences of schooling for personhood, family life, and the community, are shaped by the way in which the Bagisu make sense of schooling. The process of interpreting and giving meaning to schooling is highly contextual. How people think of different aspects of schooling depends on the way schooling was introduced in that society, how it developed over time, as well as how it interacts with socio-cultural principles, practices and ideas that are particular to a specific society. In this conclusion I reiterate how schooling has been incorporated into Gisu society, and how that has shaped the consequences of schooling in that specific context, to demonstrate that an analysis of this dynamic can illuminate significant implications of schooling. Based on this reiteration, I also spell out a number of important directions for future research.

Schooling and social change

The first analytical domain in which local interpretations of schooling have a bearing on its consequences is the domain of personhood. I have shown that the quality of 'self-control' (*khwifuka*), which used to be strongly associated with manhood, a connection that continues to be expressed during the male circumcision ritual, has now also increasingly become associated with being 'schooled'. I attributed this shift to three causes. The first cause centres around the fact that schooling is interpreted as a process that requires persistence and strength of purpose. These two qualities are also seen to be needed to manage circumcision successfully and are strongly associated with self-control in the Gisu context. This means that a person who did well in school has, by implication, a greater ability to control the self. A second cause has to do with the particular social position that schooled people occupied in colonial Uganda. As schooling qualified one for upward social mobility – that is, to become part of the class of European rulers and administrative chiefs – schooling rendered people more attuned to controlled manners and styles associated with the upper class. The final cause stems from schooled people's greater interest in improving their social standing in the community. Having the ambition to socially rise makes one keener to adopt behaviour that is respected, which, in the Gisu context, means rather controlled behavioural forms. Overall, my analysis of these causes provided the first example of how the interrelated processes of how schooling is historically introduced in a society, and how schooling is interpreted by the people in that society, shape what schooling does. In Gisu society schooling reconfigured which categories of people are associated with, and reflective of, the quality of self-control.

How schooling is both refracted by and changes social and cultural practices, principles and ideals can, I believe, most clearly be seen in relation to a second analytical domain, that of family life. The emergence of the marriage 'fine' provides a good example. In the Gisu context, girls in school are, by

definition, seen to be in childhood. This 'schooling as childhood' discourse stems from a particular Gisu view of the female body which emphasises that a girl's growth implies greater, and eventually almost uncontrollable, sexual desires. Emphasising schoolgirls' childishness is a strategy to control their sexuality in order to prevent early school drop-out. The idea that schooling evidences childhood has led to a reinterpretation of the Ugandan defilement law so that sexual intercourse with a girl in school is seen to require the payment of a 'fine', referred to as *kamapesa ke lisoma* (money for schooling). This fine is interpreted and dealt with as though it is an ordinary marriage prestation (the new bridewealth) and shapes the consequences of schooling in multiple ways. Most importantly, in providing a new system through which families of a couple engage with each other around the time a marriage is initiated, the fine system contributes to the decline of the bridewealth system. This implies both change and continuity (see also Parikh 2012); while 'negotiation' continues to play a role in marriage initiation, the payment of a fine does not have the same marital implications as bridewealth.

In addition to having an influence on the way in which marriages are made, schooling also has a bearing on the relationships that are realised through marriage: the conjugal relationship, the relationship between parents and children, as well as the relationships between siblings. Again, this influence is strongly shaped by the ways in which various aspects of schooling, such as, for example, the responsibility to pay school fees, are made sense of in relation to other socio-cultural practices, principles and ideas. Two dynamics demonstrate this particularly well: the way in which the responsibility to pay for school fees is made sense of in light of the *conjugal contract*, and the way in which educational investments are incorporated into the *intergenerational contract* between fathers and sons.

The old Gisu conjugal contract attributes the responsibility to raise money for the household to men and the responsibility to nurture the children to women. As schooling is essentially about raising children (women's responsibility) but also requires money (men's responsibility), while at the same time women have gained improved access to income-generating activities over the past decades, people have come to interpret the responsibility for school fees as a responsibility to be shared by husband and wife. Consequently, schooling further encourages women to earn money and renders children's future increasingly dependent on investments by both the father and mother. Sons especially, whose life chances used to depend entirely on their father's support, have become less dependent on this paternal support. This means that fathers' authority in domestic homes is increasingly challenged. This loss of authority feeds into a masculinity crisis that has led many men to disengage themselves from the domestic unit, rendering families increasingly matrifocal. These dynamics have mixed implications for women's autonomy in marriage (see below).

The old version of the Gisu intergenerational contract between fathers and sons attributes to fathers the responsibility to provide each circumcised son with a plot of land so that he can establish his own household. Today, however, paying for schooling is interpreted as an alternative way in which fathers can set up their sons for adulthood, a phenomenon that has been observed in other places (Lesorogol, Chowa, and Ansong 2011; Stambach 2000). Consequently, the extent to which a son is entitled to the land of his father is now contingent upon the schooling he received. This has altered the relationship between fathers and sons. For example, as payment of school fees cannot be publicly witnessed, the extent to which fathers have lived up to patrilineal duties has become increasingly hard to assess, and sons who feel unsatisfied about their father's support can no longer call upon relatives to back their claims. The consequences of schooling for intergenerational relationships are thus shaped by the ways in which schooling has been refracted by the principles that structured these relationships before.

Finally, an increase in access to schooling comes with an increase of schooled people. When these people come to live in and engage with a specific community, that community's social life may be fundamentally altered. This is another way in which schooling produces social changes that I have examined in this thesis, although the dynamics I describe in relation to this analytical domain (community) are less reflective of my broader point about the importance of interactions between schooling, history and socio-cultural principles, practices and ideas. My analysis of schooled people's role in the community shows that, in addition to changing community life through participating in older community organisations, schooled people also develop their own community organisations and networks, such as football leagues and support groups. Social media plays a crucial role in the development and the maintenance of these schooled networks and has, as such, become an important aspect of community life too. The development of schooled networks and organisations in the village context are helpful to schooled people in various ways: they give them privileged access to speak at burials and other public events; they help in the search for economic opportunities, further schooling and to deal with misfortune; and they support the cultivation of an educated identity. Importantly, my analysis shows that schooling provides improved political opportunities in the village and so consequently has changed who can become 'big' in rural communities.

The consequences of schooling for gender relations

The various interpretations of different aspects of schooling and the incorporation of schooling into different social contracts, has had a particular effect on gender relations. I have discussed the gender implications of the way in which schooling has been incorporated into Gisu society throughout this thesis. By doing so, I have developed two broader arguments about the relationship between schooling

and gender: schooling works to disrupt the symbolism of patriarchy and schooling has a mixed effect on the autonomy of women as mothers.

How does schooling disrupt the symbolism of patriarchy? Fundamentally, socialisation can be seen to entail the development of an inferior natural state of being to a superior cultural one, a process that centres around the acquisition of 'self-control'. Self-control, as such, is associated with greater 'cultural capacity' and implies more proximity to the cultural end of the socialisation continuum. I argued that circumcision – seen to be reflective of men's greater capacity for self-control – pushes men closer to the cultural pole of the socialization continuum, while women's cultural capacity is seen to be hampered by their presumed greater sexual drive. This reinforces symbolic associations between male/culture and female/nature that give rise to the view that men are superior to women. Schooling, however, disrupts such symbolism as it widens the scope of a female's cultural capacity to include being schooled and so acquiring more self-control. As noted, schooled personhood is associated with the kind of self-control that previously only men could obtain. Being schooled thus pushes one further along the socialisation continuum. Schooling, in other words, does to men *and* women what circumcision only does to men, and it produces a gap between everyday reality and gender symbolism. In doing so, it hollows out the symbolism of patriarchy and this means that schooling can work to be 'symbolically empowering'.

How does schooling have a mixed effect on the autonomy of women as mothers? In addition to affecting the symbolic category of 'Woman', schooling also affects 'women' (actual people involved in various roles). To study these more practical consequences it is important to distinguish between the schooling *of* women and the support given to schooling *by* women. This is because women's involvement in schooling as the recipients of schooling (women as daughters) may have different implications for gender relations compared to their involvement as providers of schooling (women as mothers). An analysis of schooling as a social practice incorporates both these perspectives, but in this thesis, I have put greater emphasis on the latter. I found that the way in which mothers engage with, and became responsible for, the schooling of children has rather mixed outcomes for their autonomy in marriage. Their commitment to the schooling of their children is partially driven by, and further contributes to, male disengagement from the domestic unit. While this implies matrifocality of kinship, greater protection of mothers by their children and increased influence in the context of the husband's clan – developments that all have a positive impact on women's autonomy – male disengagement also means that women often face an extremely heavy workload as they become solely responsible for both income and household work. The autonomy women gain through their involvement in the schooling of children in a context of male disengagement thus comes at a cost.

Future research

The findings of this thesis suggest two directions for future research. The first relates to the study of children's school trajectories. I have shown how aspects of schooling are made sense of in a particular context, and how this shapes how people deal with schooling. This, in turn, has a bearing on both what schooling does to various socio-cultural structures and the educational trajectories of children. While the former point is explored throughout this thesis, the latter (educational trajectories of children) is given much less emphasis, except in Chapter 7 where I discuss how the interpretation of schooling as an alternative form of pre-mortem inheritance leads fathers to be biased towards the schooling of sons. For example, while I mentioned that schooling is seen as a process that requires persistence, which, according to the Bagisu, implies a need for strength of purpose, focus and as little distraction as possible (Chapter 3), I did not say much about the implications of this view for how parents handle school-going children. Yet this view may well be the reason that school-going children who are seen to have too many friends (i.e., too many distractions) in their home area are regularly sent to a school elsewhere, where the child does not know anyone (i.e., is no longer easily distracted). Local interpretations of aspects of schooling, such as what is required for success in school, affect the way in which different children are handled in relation to their schooling. Such interpretations thus have a bearing on who has the best chances of getting schooled. This means that analyses of these interpretations may help to explain differences in the educational trajectories of children.

This thesis also demonstrates the value of studying the consequences of schooling outside schools. Schooling involves more than just obtaining certain skills, views, ideas, and the development of a schooled habitus by specific groups of people. It also comes with new responsibilities for caretakers and expectations of reciprocity. As this thesis has shown, these responsibilities and expectations also have implications for social relations, especially in the context of the family. What these implications are depends on how responsibilities and expectations are conceptualised. While this differs across cultural contexts, some interpretations might be widespread, such as the idea that school fees are an alternative way for fathers to pass on pre-mortem inheritance to sons. It is important that such interpretative tendencies are discovered, and their implications studied, in order to fully grasp the consequences of schooling in sub-Saharan Africa. Studying schooling as a 'social practice' illuminates these aspects of schooling. This analytical perspective requires us to move beyond the school gates and into communities and households to analyse how fathers, mothers and other people engage with schooling.

Studying schooling beyond the school gates may be less of a challenging task than one might initially think. For in countries like Uganda, where mass education programmes were introduced fairly recently,

and instigated great excitement about schooling, one may find that the theme of schooling is related to many aspects of social life. In such contexts almost everybody – the young motorcycle taxi driver that takes one to the village, local football players on their way to another match, as well as the old woman that tells one about marriage in the old days – finds themselves engaged, in some way, with schooling. At least, that was my experience in the context of Bunyafa, where I found schooling indeed to be everywhere.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey data specification

A total number of 250 people were randomly selected to participate in the survey through a multistage cluster sampling procedure carried out with the help of village representatives and a general mobiliser. From a list of all villages in Bunyafa, five villages per parish (Bunyafa has 4 parishes in total) were randomly selected, which means 20 villages in total. For each selected village, the political head of the village (the village chairperson) was asked to develop a list of all people living in their village, ordered by household. These lists were thoroughly assessed by a team of local enumerators. They visited all villages to approach people and confirm whether they were listed and, if not, to find out what had gone wrong. Based on the lists, the relative size of the village was determined. Subsequently, per village, an X number of households, proportionate to the relative size of each village, was randomly selected to obtain a total of 250 selected households. Within each selected household, one person was randomly selected to participate in the survey from all the people older than 18 years living in that household. We did not, beforehand, exclude people above a certain age or mentally disturbed people from participation, but judged during the recruitment stage whether a participant could reasonably be expected to manage a survey interview.

Selected participants were invited for a recruitment event, again with the help of the village representatives, where they were informed about the survey. Selected participants who, during the recruitment, turned out to be unable to participate were replaced by randomly selecting another member of their household. If there was no other household member who met the selection criteria of being older than 18, another household would be randomly selected to replace this household. Participants who were unwilling to participate were not replaced. Note that we considered people who were temporarily not around but planned to come back to a certain household (e.g. a polygamous man spending time in another household or children above 18 in boarding school) part of a household. Children who were staying elsewhere but were not considered independent by the household head were considered part of the household too. In case a household member who was temporarily not around was selected to participate in the survey, we tried to set an appointment with them at a later point or to travel to their destination if possible given financial and time constraints. If it turned out impossible to meet with such a person, they were replaced.

Interviews took place on or near the compound of the participant's household. Given that some of our questions concerned rather personal affairs, it was decided not to randomly assign enumerators to respondents, but to make matches based on age and gender – that is, older women were interviewed

by older female enumerators, younger men by younger male enumerators, etc. Apart from a few exceptions whereby a woman was interviewed by a man (due to unavailability of our female enumerators), we successfully managed to make almost all matches based on gender and age. Interviews were carried out in a manner that ensured privacy. Enumerators asked questions in the local language and filled out participants' answers on a tablet. After the interview, participants were reimbursed for their participation in the survey with UGX 6,000 ($1.62) and a kilo of spaghetti, an appreciated staple food. The fact that respondents would receive reimbursement was communicated prior to the interview (but not the amount).

Eventually, 246 people were interviewed. The 4 missing participants are two people who were unwilling to participate and two people who were not replaced. The latter two were willing to participate but stayed elsewhere. We hoped to be able to interview them later but did not manage to do so in time and they were subsequently not replaced. During the selection, 19 participants were replaced by another household member, 14 times a full household had to be replaced by another household. Most replacements were the consequence of participants being unavailable during the survey period, too old to participate or mentally ill. Three women had left the household they were initially part of in between the recruitment event and the interview. They were interviewed as though they were still living in the household as part of which they were selected for this survey. Note that our sampling procedure gives polygamous men, who may be part of multiple households in the area, a slightly bigger chance to get selected.

The questions in the survey did not only focus on the lives of the participants themselves, but also contained questions about their siblings and their children. Thus, with the collected survey data, we were able to construct three different samples: an ordinary sample (referred to as 'ego-sample') which consists of only the people interviewed; a sibling-sample which consists of the people interviewed and their siblings; and a children-sample which consists of the children of the people interviewed. Below, I further characterise the different samples and provide summary statistics. Collecting additional information about siblings and children was important for different reasons. Obtaining information about siblings was needed because one's educational career is likely to be affected by sibling characteristics (e.g. number of siblings, their gender, level of education, relative age, and more) and such sibling effects are part of my research questions. The sibling-sample allowed me to explore these effects.

The children-sample was needed for reasons to do with representation. Indeed, one cannot, on the basis of the ego-sample, say something about educational opportunities in the Bunyafa area. Since more schooling often coincides with migration, the ego-sample, consisting entirely of people who

currently live in Bunyafa, a rural area, tends to be a relatively uneducated sample (participants' siblings with more schooling are likely to have moved elsewhere and are therefore less likely to be included in the survey). Moreover, many people in the ego-sample, certainly women, who tend to move when they get married, may not have grown up in Bunyafa. Consequently, their levels of education are not a good reflection of the educational opportunities people who grow up in Bunyafa enjoyed. The children-sample solves these issues as it consists entirely of children who have at least one parent who lives in Bunyafa. On the basis of that, it can be assumed that the large majority of the children in the sample was born and raised, at least for several years, in the area. Looking at their levels of education thus gives a much more accurate insight into educational opportunities in the context of Bunyafa.

Ego-sample specification

The ego-sample (N=246) consists of only the people interviewed as part of this survey exercise. Table 20 provides summary statistics of this sample.

Table 20. Ego-sample summary statistics

	Male	**Female**	**Pooled**
Age			
60 and above	18	28	46
	14.2%	23.5%	18.7%
45-59	25	23	48
	19.7%	19.3%	19.5%
30-44	46	29	75
	36.2%	24.4%	30.5%
Below 30	38	39	77
	29.9%	32.8%	31.3%
Religion			
Catholicism	38	41	79
	29.9%	34.5%	32.1%
Anglicanism	27	16	43
	21.3%	13.5%	17.5%
Islam	53	45	98
	41.7%	37.8%	39.8%
Born Again/Pentecostal	9	8	17
	7.1%	6.7%	6.9%
Other Protestantism	0	9	9
	0.0%	7.6%	3.7%
Education (highest level attended)			
No education	7	13	20
	5.5%	10.9%	8.1%
P1 to P4	28	25	53
	22.1%	21.0%	21.5%
P5 to P7	51	63	114

	40.2%	52.9%	46.3%
Lower secondary school (O-levels)	30	17	47
	23.6%	14.3%	19.1%
Upper secondary school (A-levels)	11	0	11
	8.7%	0.0%	4.5%
Missing	0	1	1
	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%
Attended tertiary education			
No	120	118	238
	94.5%	99.2%	96.8%
Yes	7	1	8
	5.5%	0.8%	3.3%
Relation to household head			
Is the HH-Head	107	39	146
	84.3%	32.8%	59.4%
Spouse of HH-head	0	72	72
	0.0%	60.5%	29.3%
Child of HH-head	13	4	17
	10.2%	3.4%	6.9%
Related in another way	7	4	11
	5.5%	3.4%	4.5%
Was ever married			
No	19	5	24
	15.0%	4.2%	9.8%
Yes	108	114	222
	85.0%	95.8%	90.2%
Has children			
No	21	4	25
	16.5%	3.4%	10.2%
Yes	106	115	221
	83.5%	96.6%	89.8%
Total	127	119	246
	51.6%	48.4%	100%

Sibling-sample specification

The sibling-sample (N=359) consists of both participants and their siblings who are between 25 and 45 years old and still alive. The age range was applied so that it is reasonable to assume that all people in the sibling-sample are no longer in secondary school (so that educational careers become comparable) and all people went to school in the relatively recent past. We only asked participants questions about siblings who were less than five years older or younger than them, so the sibling-sample does not include siblings whose ages are not within this ten-year range with the age of the surveyed participant as its median. Note that we did not ask participants to give their siblings' exact ages (we only asked,

for each sibling, if their age difference is more or less than 5 years) so we could only estimate whether siblings met the general age criterion (25-45) based on the participants' ages. Siblings who could potentially not meet the criterion were excluded from the sample. Since we could only ask a limited number of questions per sibling (otherwise the exercise would become too time consuming) we only included questions of direct analytical interest. Consequently, we have obtained little general information for this sample and the summary statics in Table 21 are limited.

Table 21. Sibling-sample summary statistics

	Male	**Female**	**Pooled**
Sample specification			
Younger sibling of respondent	78	69	147
	38.6%	44.0%	41.0%
Older sibling of respondent	49	42	91
	24.3%	26.8%	25.4%
Respondent	75	46	121
	37.1%	29.3%	33.7%
Education (highest level attended)			
No Education	9	9	18
	4.5%	5.7%	5.0%
P1-P4	35	22	57
	17.3%	14.0%	15.9%
P5-P7	84	74	158
	41.6%	47.1%	44.0%
Lower secondary (O-levels)	45	44	89
	22.3%	28.0%	24.8%
Upper secondary (A-levels)	27	8	35
	13.4%	5.1%	9.8%
Missing	2	0	2
	1.0%	0.0%	0.6%
Position of sibling			
First born	37	22	59
	18.3%	14.0%	16.4%
Second born	40	26	66
	19.8%	16.6%	18.4%
Third born	32	30	62
	15.8%	19.1%	17.3%
Fourth born	31	21	52
	15.4%	13.4%	14.5%
Fifth born	24	12	36
	11.9%	7.6%	10.0%
Sixth born	12	18	30
	5.9%	11.5%	8.4%
Seventh born	10	15	25

	5.0%	9.6%	7.0%
Eight born	8	8	16
	4.0%	5.1%	4.5%
Nineth born	3	5	8
	1.5%	3.2%	2.2%
Tenth born	4	0	4
	2.0%	0.0%	1.1%
Twelfth born	1	0	1
	0.5%	0.0%	0.3%
Total	202	157	359
	56.3%	43.7%	100%

Children-sample specification

The children-sample (N=388), contains all children of the surveyed participants who met the following criteria: child is not in school; older than 14 years old; currently still alive; and participant knew their highest education obtained. However, if a child's age was unknown by the participant they were not excluded from the analyses if they met all the other criteria (for these are more likely to be older children and, therefore, to meet the age criterion). Participants were questioned about all their children, unless they had more than eight. In that case, questions were asked about either their first eight children or the first born and last seven children; it was randomly determined for participants with more than eight children which subset of their children they would be questioned about. The approach chosen means that first born children may be slightly over-represented in the children-sample. Like with siblings, only questions of analytical importance were asked in relation to respondents' children, which leaves the summary statistics (Table 22) again limited in depth.

Table 22. Children-sample summary statistics

	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Age			
Under 19	10	17	27
	5.2%	8.7%	7.0%
20-29	59	58	117
	30.6%	29.7%	30.2%
30-39	51	58	109
	26.4%	29.7%	28.1%
40 and above	41	35	76
	21.2%	18.0%	19.6%
Missing	32	27	59
	16.6%	13.9%	15.2%
Level of education			
no education	12	11	23

	6.2%	5.6%	5.9%
Primary	104	96	200
	53.9%	49.2%	51.6%
primary pass	20	21	41
	10.4%	10.8%	10.6%
Attended lower secondary (O-levels)	35	42	77
	18.1%	21.5%	19.9%
Passed lower secondary (O-levels)	6	9	15
	3.1%	4.6%	3.9%
Attended upper secondary (A-levels)	0	1	1
	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%
Passed upper secondary (A-levels)	7	2	9
	3.6%	1.0%	2.3%
Tertiary	9	13	22
	4.7%	6.7%	5.7%
Child's parents ever married			
No	4	10	14
	2.1%	5.1%	3.6%
Yes	189	185	374
	97.9%	94.9%	96.4%
Respondent is child's…			
Father	72	56	128
	37.3%	28.7%	33.0%
Mother	121	139	260
	62.7%	71.3%	67.0%
Total	193	195	388
	49.7%	50.3%	100%

Appendix 2. Bridewealth payment statistics

Table 23 contains an overview of the items paid as part of all bridewealth payments that were paid for the women in the ego-sample. The total number of bridewealth payments displayed in the table is 59.

Table 23. Overview of bridewealth payments

Person	Age	Husband number	Cows	Goats	Chicken	Money (UGX)	Complete	Cultural ideal
1	28	1	1	1	0	0		
2	29	1	1	2	0	0		
3	33	1	1	1	0	0		
4	35	2	1	1	0	0		
5	36	1	1	0	0	0		
6	41	1	1	2	1	0		
7	42	1	2	3	0	0		
*Ditto**		2	3	2	0	0	Yes	

8	43	2	1	1	0	0		
9	43	2	1	1	1	0		
10	44	1	1	0	0	0		
11	44	1	2	2	0	0		
12	44	1	2	2	0	0		
13	45	1	2	2	1	20,000	Yes	
14	48	2	2	0	1	0		
15	49	1	2	2	0	0		
16	49	2	2	2	1	0		
17	50	2	4	4	1	0	Yes	Yes
18	51	1	3	0	0	150,000		
19	51	2	2	1	0	0		
20	52	1	3	6	5	0		Yes
21	53	3	3	0	1	999		
22	54	1	2	3	1	10,000		
23	56	1	2	2	1	200,000	Yes	
24	57	1	2	2	0	0		
25	57	1	2	0	0	0		
26	57	1	2	2	1	20,000	Yes	
27	57	1	3	1	0	0	Yes	
28	58	1	2	2	1	0		
29	59	1	0	0	0	900		
30	59	1	3	3	1	5,000		Yes
31	60	1	1	2	0	0		
32	60	1	2	2	0	0	Yes	
33	60	1	2	1	0	0		
34	61	1	3	3	1	200,000	Yes	Yes
35	61	1	1	1	1	0		
36	61	2	2	0	1	0		
37	63	1	0	0	0	900,000	Yes	
38	63	1	3	3	1	50,000	Yes	Yes
39	63	2	1	1	0	0		
40	64	1	3	3	1	0		Yes
41	65	1	3	3	0	0	Yes	Yes
42	65	1	3	2	1	100,000	Yes	
43	67	1	0	0	0	900		
44	69	1	3	2	1	0	Yes	
45	69	1	3	2	1	0	Yes	
46	70	1	2	1	0	0		
47	70	1	0	2	0	9	Yes	
48	70	2	1	1	0	0		
49	71	1	2	2	0	0		
50	71	1	3	3	0	0	Yes	Yes
51	71	2	2	2	1	20,000	Yes	
52	72	1	3	3	1	0	Yes	Yes
53	72	1	2	1	0	900		

54	72	1	2	1	1	1,200		
55	78	1	3	4	0	300	Yes	Yes
56	80	1	0	2	0	0		
57	Miss	1	5	2	0	0	Yes**	Yes
idem	Miss	2	2	0	0	6,000	Yes	

**Person number 7 reported that bridewealth was twice paid for her (in two separate marriages)*
***Counted as complete payment despite the fact that only 2 goats were paid because cows are worth considerably more than goats.*

Appendix 3. Description of the circumcision ritual

In this part of the appendix, I provide a detailed description of male circumcision (*imbalu*). Since elaborate and important rituals like *imbalu* typically reflect crucial features of the social and cultural context in which they take place, aspects of the ritual may be drawn upon to establish the importance of various aspects of Gisu society, from the emphasis they put on patrilineal continuity to the importance of self-control for male adulthood. I have made use of the ritual in this way throughout the thesis. To allow the reader to assess the way in which I have interpreted and used different aspects of the ritual for that purpose, an extensive description of the procedure is needed. I decided to describe the ritual in its totality in this appendix rather than in the main text, so that the flow of the arguments in the various chapters is not interrupted. As I interpret various aspects of the ritual in the main text of the thesis, I limit this appendix to a description of what happens. I do point out where important themes such as male self-control, female menstruation and menarche, and patrilineal continuity can be seen in the ritual, but new or alternative interpretations are not provided in this appendix.

Boys are usually circumcised in groups, with boys from the same clan being operated next to each other, usually in the courtyard of one of the boys' fathers. Boys who are cut together undergo the ritual acts prior to the operation collectively. The description of the ritual that follows is based on my observations of a ritual trajectory of a group of four boys in September 2018 and the trajectory of one boy in December 2018. In addition to these observation I carried out a range of interviews with ritual experts to fill gaps in my notes and to get a better idea of how different aspects might best be interpreted. Note that all my observations were carried out in northern Bugisu. It is important to keep that in mind when comparing my account to that of other authors, because there are certain differences between the way in which circumcision is carried out in the north and the south of the area. Importantly, the brewing of circumcision beer, to which Heald (1998) assigns considerable symbolic importance, plays a considerably less important role in the north, where boys are, for example, not smeared with millet beer prior to the ordeal. Furthermore, while the actual operations is carried out at once in the south, boys from the north must dance through the village after most of

their foreskin is cut and return to the operational ground to finish the operation about 15 minutes later.

Every even year is referred to as circumcision year (*kumwakha kwe imbalu*), the period in which Gisu boys are initiated into manhood through the ceremonial cutting of their foreskin, usually when they are between 16 and 20 years old. The fact that *imbalu* is carried out in even years seems to have no particular meaning, because the Gisu do not attach great meaning to the even/uneven divide and it is said that the ritual took place in uneven years in the past.[189] While *imbalu* season is considered to last a full year, operations are supposed to take place between August and December only. Each sub-county is supposed to cut their boys on a specific day. The order of the sub-counties is informed by the way in which the practice is said to have initially spread through the area. Bungokho, a sub-county located about three miles to the south of Mbale, where *Imbalu* is said to originate from, is the first to cut their boys.[190] This is done at the circumcision opening ceremony at Mutoto, the main cultural ground of the Bagisu, in the presence of Gisu members of parliament, other important people and about a thousand spectators. Thereafter each sub-county cuts their boys on the day assigned to their area, with December being used as a wrap-up month for boys in school (when operated in December, the procedure and recovery time interferes least with their school program).[191]

Previously, ritual acts were carried out throughout the whole circumcision year, but I did not see anything happen until about two weeks before the operation. Elders confirmed that people had indeed done away with many of the ritual acts that used to be carried out throughout the year. For a discussion of what used to happen between January and August, I refer the reader to Khamalwa's (2018) elaborate account. *Imbalu*, as I observed it, consists of the following components. In the first two weeks, initiates 'dance' circumcision (*khukhina imbalu*) and visit relatives to inform them about their intention to get circumcised. The day before the operation, the boys undergo a series of specific rituals carried out in an ancestral shrine (*lisengiro)*, a small bush associated with the clan's ancestors. On the day of the operation, they continue to dance, now with greater intensity, until they are operated,

[189] There was a year in which a famine made it impossible for the ritual to take place. That year, the ritual was postponed to the subsequent year, that is moved from an uneven to an even year. Since then the ritual takes place in even years. Uneven years are referred to as 'the year of women' (*kumwakha kwe bakhasi*).

[190] Different myths about the origin of *imbalu* exist, but the one which seems to have most supporters has it that the practice was taken over from the Kalinjin of Kenya. When Nabarwa, a Kalinjin girl, got lost in the forests of Mount Elgon, she ran into Fuuya, a Gisu man from Bungokho. Before they got married, Nabarwa insisted that he should get circumcised, like men in her area do. Fuuya got circumcised and his wife Nabarwa gave birth to sons. When Fuuya's sons caught a life-threatening sickness, Nabarwa's brother, who had come to visit the couple, suggested that the boys were caught by the spirit of *imbalu*. They needed to get circumcised to recover. Like their father, the boys underwent the ordeal and indeed got better. That is when practice gained popularity in the area and soon became a Gisu ritual.

[191] Note that certain ritual acts are only allowed to be carried out in September which makes the December trajectories generally less sophisticated and shorter.

towards the end of the afternoon. The day after the operation they are ceremonially washed (*khusabisa*) by the circumciser. Three days after the operation, the trajectory is concluded by the eating of roasted matoke (*moché*) and the ritual burning of the banana leave skirts (*nyombe*), worn by women during *imbalu* dances.

The initiative

Boys who wish to be circumcised need to inform their fathers about this in June, so that there is still enough time for the father, who is financially responsible for the ceremonial costs, to prepare for the procedure. The initiative to undergo circumcision must come from the boy himself. In order to stand the ordeal, it is believed that initiates need strength of purpose – they need to desire manhood to the extent that they forget about the fear and pain that may come with the operation. Taking the initiative to undergo the ordeal attests to an initiate's desire and potential to undergo the ordeal successfully. A boy's desire to get circumcised must come from his heart. The 'heart' (*kumwoyo*) is the organ the Gisu consider to host a person's deepest desires, which means that only the heart can generate the strength of purpose needed to successfully stand the ordeal. Yet, it is said that boys get captured by the ancestral spirit of *imbalu* when they come of age (which makes them automatically desire the ordeal) and the Gisu allow no man to remain uncircumcised. Young boys are warned regularly that they will have to get circumcised one day and those who delay to take the initiative may be arrested by a crowd of men and circumcised by force. *Imbalu* is spoken of as a cultural 'debt' (*likobi lye Bagisu*), that each man must pay. Thus while voluntariness of the initiate is emphasized, the ordeal is quintessentially enforced upon them by ancestral and social power.

As circumcision is initiated by the boy himself, there is no minimal age and boys may be as young as 12 years old when they undergo the ordeal. However, appropriate performance – a boy must stand absolutely still during the operation – is of utmost importance for the reputation of the clan and so a father may deny his son permission to undergo the ordeal if he thinks he is not ready for it. A father usually assesses his son's readiness on the basis of the boy's physical growth and strength of purpose. Boys are not usually held ready to face the knife until well beyond the onset of puberty, but lack of physical growth may be compensated for by demonstration of strength of purpose. A young boy may thus insist on getting circumcised even if his father considers him too young as a way to demonstrate his determination. It is said that fathers often first refuse their son's request to get circumcised to test their strength of purpose. If the boy insists, he proves to be determined and is then more likely to be granted permission. However, if a father failed to raise the financial requirements of a proper ceremony – the costs of preparing food for guests and hiring a kadodi band may add up to as much as UGX 1,000,000 ($270), a considerable amount of money for the average farmer – he may refuse to give his son permission and the boy is then inclined to 'calm his heart down'.

Dancing circumcision and visiting relatives

The *imbalu* attire is made up of several aspects: colorful beads tied on strings and around the neck (*bibyuma*); an equally colorful headgear (*Iilubisi*); two to four bells tied around each upper leg (*bitsetse*); a back made up of a necklace with handkerchiefs tied around it, a belt and a tail (*mimodo*); two sticks that must be carried during the dancing (*kimisafe*) and an ankle band on each leg; the fur of the Black and White Colobus monkey is used to decorate head, sticks, tail and ankles; boys must wear shorts and walk barefooted; and before embarking on journeys they are often smeared with baby powder (see Figure 17). The point of the attire seems to be twofold: to make the boy look 'wild' by having him wear monkey skin, rough headgear and a tail; and make the boy look 'young', by having him wear handkerchiefs (needed to wash off boyhood), baby powder and shorts (associated with childhood). Circumcision, I have argued in the text, is ultimately about overcoming the animalism and wildness associated with childhood and transitioning to a social status, that of manhood, associated with greater self-control. Wildness also marks the attires of a boy's following. Crowds escorting boys tie plants around their bodies and heads, carry branches of trees and smear themselves with mud. Since the crowd escorts the boy in the first two weeks of the ordeal, the whole scene resembles that of a wild animalist boy in the bush.

Boys wear the attire for the first time about two weeks before the operation is to take place. On the day a group of boys dress up for the first time, they visit each other to roast matoke and eat a chicken. This practice did not seem to have specific symbolic meaning, albeit the activity of roasting matoke is associated with the lives of ancestors. The activity, thus, seems to communicate the importance of continuity, a theme that comes back throughout the ritual. From the moment the boys visit each other to eat matoke, until the day they are circumcised, they are guided by circumcised kinsmen, usually elder brothers, cousins and neighbors. They escort them on their journeys to relatives and indicate how they must dance. In addition to those guides, each set of boys has a following of about thirty people, made up of neighbors, siblings and more distant kin, who join boys on their journeys. Nearer the time of the operation, such crowds are usually followed by a drum band that plays the *kadodi* tune, a popular sound in the area that encourages the crowd to dance while moving around. The boy's father guides him on the day before the operation, when they visit the ancestral shrine, and the morning of the operation. His sisters are part of his following and may be smeared with baby powder too.

After the matoke is eaten, the boys are ready to dance and move through the area and to visit relatives to make their intention to undergo circumcision known. As said, strength of purpose, as a prerequisite for self-control, is considered of crucial importance during *imbalu*. Such strength of purpose is, therefore, what boys must demonstrate when dancing *imbalu* prior to the operation. Dancing *imbalu* involves the alternation of shaking of the chest and lifting the knees, both performed to the rhythm of

the music, and jumps resulting in fierce stamping on the floor. The latter is of particular importance. Instead of 'dancing' (*khukhina*), boys are often said to 'stamp' (*khusamba*) *imbalu*, as it is through such stamping that they demonstrate their determination to undergo the ordeal. When moving through the area, boys are continuously demanded by their guides to stamp in front of neighbors and other acquaintances. When arriving at a relative's home they must first stamp on their compound, before they enter the house. Such stamps are usually announced through ringing of the bells tied around their legs, giving each series of jumps an intentional character typical of circumcision: initiation is not something that overcomes a boy, but something that the boy takes control over.

Figure 17. Initiate dressed up in circumcision attire

A boy must not laugh when dancing *imbalu* and be serious all the time. Relatives living as far as 15 kilometers away may be visited, so journeys involve walking considerable distances. While the crowd escorting the boy may take breaks in-between, initiates are almost continuously made to dance by elder youth, who take turns in guiding them while the others take a rest. The nearer is the time of the

operation, the more intensely initiates are made to dance and stamp. Throughout the two weeks boys are continuously reminded of the importance of firmness and voluntariness, as well as of the ultimate consequence of not going for circumcision: getting cut by force. The following extract of my fieldnotes demonstrates this.

> Eleven days till Bakari and Mohammadi are scheduled to be circumcised. We are in Bakari's father's house, the head-quarters of the initiates, located on the compound where they will be circumcised. It is the morning after the kick-off of the boys' circumcision festivities. Yesterday, we smoked matoke (*moché*) and embarked on a walk through the area with the boys in attire for the first time. We are drinking tea in the presence of the boys, their mother, and a couple of others walking in and out as we are chatting about the evening before. At some point I asked the boys, with Zam functioning as interpreter, whether they do not feel scared now things have finally started. 'No!' they screamed simultaneously 'we are not scared, since it is you yourself who wants to undergo circumcision'. A couple of minutes later, a man entered the room and started to lecture the boys: 'you can still run away, but if you run next week, we will tie you if you run.' The man noticed Bakari was preparing the head of his circumcision attire for another day of festivities, and added: 'you should make the hat right, but your heart should also be full when you are making the hat right. You are now going to be a man.' Shortly after the man left, a circumcision song was played and people started to sing gently as they carried on with their activities: '*you have decided yourself, so don't shame people*' **(23/07/2018)**

The actual visits of relatives in the weeks before the operation follow a fairly standard procedure. When boys leave their parental home to visit a relative they must be sent off by their mother. She speaks out the words 'you go' before boys embark on journeys. Upon arrival at their relatives' place, boys must stamp in front of the host's house before they are welcomed in. They are then served a meal prepared by the host. The boys eat inside the house while the crowd is served outside. After finishing food, the boys are made to stamp in front of the host to convince them of their determination to get circumcised. The host may give the initiate a present (usually money, a hen or a goat) and, when the host is a circumcised man himself, he may speak a few words of encouragement. It is again the importance of voluntariness and patrilineal continuity which tend to be emphasized in such speeches (e.g. 'you have come to demand circumcision, let me hope you were not forced by anyone' and 'your grandfather was circumcised, your father was circumcised, and now you are also going to get circumcised').

The visit of the mother's brother, usually about two days before the operation, is of particular importance, as he is the only relative who may refuse a boy to get circumcised. Since circumcision is

seen to confirm a boy's association with his father's lineage (see next section), we may see the mother's brother's approval to undergo the ordeal as the formal 'handing-over' of the boy to his paternal relatives. A mother's brother will usually approve of his sister's son's circumcision, unless the boy's father has not yet fulfilled bridewealth duties. In that case, a mother's brother is seen to have good reason to block the event. When the mother's brother refuses, pressure is put on a boy's father to pay bridewealth. If, on the contrary, a father *has* paid bridewealth the mother's brother has no good reason to refuse and is inclined to give his sister's son a bigger gift than the average host – the bigger the bridewealth received, the bigger the gift he is inclined to give. In the Gisu context, the bridewealth system is thus reinforced through the mother's brother's power during circumcision.

When boys are dancing *imbalu*, on their way to relatives, escorted by their following, they continuously sing circumcision songs together with the crowd. There are many different songs, some which seemed to have very little meaning while others are full of metaphors that may reveal the meaning of the ritual. In one song, for example, circumcision is said to 'pain like a serious disease in the stomach', which may be read as a comparison between the pain of circumcision and that of menstruation. In the box below, I provide an English translation of four songs I was able to write down. The phrase about the stomach can be found in song 2. Dancing *Imbalu* also tends to involve drinking a local beer, *kamalwra,* so people following specific boys often carry yellow jerrycans with *kamalwra* in it.

Song 1. Circumcision is fire.
Bugisu is for Bamasaba; Mbale is for Bamasaba; Our cultural leader has ordered, that we open up the circumcision process for Bamasaba; Mutoto (cultural site) is on fire, tomorrow is for circumcision; The sisters have ordered; Madoi has already sharpened the blade; I have to get circumcised, and I become a man like my daddy and my grandfather.

Song 2. Bare and get circumcised
My sisters, come I tell you something; Let's get inside then I tell you; I have decided to get circumcised; I want to finish that burden of circumcision; How do you see my sisters?; Bare and get circumcised
Brother! Bare please; Oh oh oh; Eh eh eh; Give me some space, I raise my legs; Since I was young they have talked how painful the blade is; That it pains like a serious disease in the stomach.

Song 3. I become a man
Who will circumcise you; Madoi will do but it's so dangerous, like a buffalo; When I am about to get circumcised in the evening, when it's sunset, I will be meeting my stone; Today I cease being a boy and I become a man by tomorrow; Imbalu is a debt in Masabaland; After circumcision they will call you a man; Aya ya ya ya circumcise him then he will resemble his daddy.

Song 4. Uncle, I want to get circumcised.
Uncle [mother's brother, throughout] where are you? I want to get circumcised; They are holding a meeting at home; They have agreed that I get circumcised; Uncle, you have no reason to hold me because my daddy has paid everything; Uncle replies: 'stop insulting me'; Uncle, remember your circumcision year you took off to Kenya; Oh where is my mum? Innocent sick woman must be under pressure somewhere; Let me look for her, she cools down her pressure then I will slope to my circumcision point; Today is final, I have to sleep when I am a man; Mum I don't want to be like daddy who feared.

Visiting the ancestral shrine

The day before the operation, boys visit their clan's ancestral shrine, the *lisengiro*, a bush of around 150 square meters, associated with the clan's history. It is said that the Gisu used to bury the scalps of their dead in the bush so it is assumed that the *lisengiro* contain the scalps of the initiates' forefathers. The interest in visiting the *lisengiro* is to honor these ancestors and get their approval for circumcision. Clans with a related history share one *lisengiro*. In the morning, the initiates of the different clans are lined up in a queue and walked to the *lisengiro* by a guide, referred to as *umundu we kumwanda* ('the person who knows the way'). The boys' fathers tend to join the initiates to the *lisengiro* too. To get to the *lisengiro*, the same path must be used as forefathers used when travelling to the area currently occupied by the clan. This means that a large group of boys moves directly through people's gardens, often destroying crops, as they find their way to the ancestral shrine. The shrine is prepared by elected cultural leaders (*babidi*, si: *umubidi*) before the boys arrive. Boys are not allowed to enter until the *babidi* have consulted the snake (*indemu*), a spiritual animal through which the ancestors are said to speak. The snake is said to reside in the *lisengiro* and must approve of the circumcision of the boys. To do so, circumcision beer (*kamalwra*) made of millet, the first type of food in the area (and thus approved by the ancestors), is poured in a hole. If the snake comes out to drink it, the ancestors have given approval.

When the snake has given approval, the boys are allowed to enter the *lisengiro*, where they undergo two rituals acts. They are first spat on with *kamalrwa* by the *babidi*, an act that is said to stand for ancestral blessing. Before spitting on the boy, the *babidi* must have spit on the ground because 'the death have to eat first'. They then spit on the boy, through an upward movement, starting with the boy's feet and ending with his head. Once past the *babidi*, boys are made to jump on an egg, positioned in a hole with *kamalwra* and covered with a broken guard. Each boy is allowed to jump once in an attempt to break the egg. Before jumping they must ring their bells to indicate their intention to jump. The importance of focus and determination is implicated here, but so too is patrilineal continuity. For it is said that a boy who fails to jump on the right spot is either not of this clan (i.e. the mother committed adultery) or the ritual elders failed to call all ancestors. One may also see the ritual of the egg in relation to the female body. Menstruation is associated with the breaking of eggs and so one may read this ritual act, in which an egg is deliberately broken, as symbolic of the idea that men, during *imbalu*, achieve what women cannot: an intentional and controlled blood flow around the genitals.

Note that throughout the whole process, and certainly in relation to the acts carried out in the *lisengiro*, people refer to *kumuziro* when asked about the rationale behind different acts. *Kumuziro* can best be translated as 'doing things the same way as (patrilineal) ancestors did it'. The law of *kumuziro* is often spiritually enforced for that ancestors may cause misfortune in case it is not adhered

to. The boy must undergo circumcision like his father did, in the courtyard (*lulwani*) of one of his biological clan members, where all his kinsmen were circumcised, for he will otherwise fall sick because of not adhering to *kumuziro*. He must pay tribute to the ancestors of *his* clan, that is going to the right *lisengiro*, otherwise *kumuziro* is violated and ritual failure likely to occur. Ancestral discontent is almost always caused by patrilineal discontinuity and a boy's ritual failure may therefore be associated with adultery on the side of the mother. A successful circumcision thus implies that *kumuziro* is adhered to, and confirms a boy's belonging to the clan, his father, and his potential to contribute to the clan's perpetuation. After circumcision, a boy is encouraged to marry and produce a son, so that he indeed lives up to this potential. His son, so it is emphasized, can then be circumcised in the same way as he was circumcised himself, carrying *kumuziro* forward.

The day of the operation

After the boys have gone through the *lisengiro*, they are made to dance almost uninterruptedly until the time of their operation, apart from a few hours of sleep at night. The crowds escorting candidates usually grows in number nearer the time of circumcision so that roads tend to get packed with people celebrating circumcision at this time. Boys are no longer left alone after they passed the *lisengiro* so that they can no longer run away, although this is not emphasized much. A few hours before the operation they are made to wash themselves in a small stream and shave their genitals. This they do in the presence of male kin, but without ritual elaboration. The shaving of the genitals was said to make the genitals more accessible to the circumcizor and so seemed practical rather than symbolic.

After they washed and shaved themselves, initiates must dress up in the usual attire and dance their way to a central point in the village where all initiates come together. Since each sub-county cuts their boys on another day, people from different areas get a chance to visit the circumcision of other areas without missing out on the operation of their own boys. This means that every sub-county tends to get very busy on the day boys from that area are scheduled to be circumcised. Initiates are carried on the neck by their guides so that visitors from the whole area get to see them. Things become very hectic nearer the time of circumcision as, at some point, boys act as though in trance and no longer give way to anything. Consequently, the followings of different boys constantly bump into each other, and people are constantly spitting *kamalwra* on each other.

The time of circumcision is announced by the hitting of a particular drum by the *babidi*. Boys must be circumcised in a specific order, following seniority of clans and parents. The clan whose eponymous ancestors is oldest circumcises their boys first, and within this clan the boy with the oldest father goes first (this rule of seniority is followed during other aspects of the ritual as well, such as the entering of the *lisengiro*). When it is time to get circumcised, however, boys are very hard to control and want to

get to the ground where the operation will take place as quickly as possible. Being in a trance, they are no longer capable of observing such rules. The initiate's guides must prevent him from reaching the ground too early. When a boy's time has come he is let through by the crowd and finds his way to the circumcision area, where he will find a large group of people waiting to witness his circumcision (most operations I saw were witnessed by about 40 people and operations were filmed on mobile phones).

By then, the circumcision area has already been prepared. On the morning of circumcision, a goat is slaughtered on the area. The goat's blood is left to sink into the earth; the goat's head or heart is put on a pole positioned near the circumcision site[192]; and the goat's legs are tied around the sticks that the initiates carry when dancing *imbalu* the hours before the operation. Ritual specialists were not unanimous as to why the goat's head/heart is displayed near the circumcision site. One elder said that this used to be done only in case a boy gave birth to a child before getting circumcised. The slaughtering of the goat, then, was a way of ritually correcting for that 'mistake'. Others, however, saw the goat's heart as symbolic of the idea that boys need to use their heart to control the flow of blood that will come out of them once cut, an interpretation that is more consistent with my interpretation of the ritual. Each boy must stand in front of a stone, put on top of a sack covered with a bit of earth. This sack is supposed to catch the blood of the boy during the operation. Figure 18 shows the circumcision site of the four boys I followed in September 2018.

The operation takes place in public and a boy must stand absolutely still when the circumciser, an occupation hold by specific men only (see below), cuts off his foreskin. Even the smallest movement during the operation is taken as a sign of fear and is therefore evaluated negatively. Poor performance during the surgery does not only damage the reputation of the boy, but that of the whole clan. Today, videos of boys who did not stand the knife properly are often circulated on social media and no one wants to be the subject of such public shaming. When facing the knife, a boy must thus handle both the pain of the operation and high social pressure, which requires the greatest self-control.

The operation itself consists of two interventions. As noted, these two interventions are not performed at once in northern Bugisu. The circumciser first pulls the boy's foreskin for a rough cut and then strips the foreskin remaining around the *glans penis*. After the rough cut boys are supposed to dance in the village for about ten minutes, with their bleeding penis fluttering in the open, and then come back to finish the operation. To get their bravery acknowledged by their peers, young men have recently started to be involved in various activities in between the two operational rounds. Some allow a friend to touch their penis while they dance around, some pour paraffin on the open wound, others *piri piri*, a local pepper. One boy went as far as claiming he played football in between the two operations. After

[192] I only saw heads, but a few ritual specialist said that some put the heart of the goat.

about ten minutes, albeit some boys were made to dance around by their guides for as much as 30 minutes, boys return to the circumcision site to allow the circumciser to finish off the operation. A boy must be sure to stand absolutely still during both interventions.

Figure 18. The circumcision ground of a group of four initiates

When a boy is cut, his mother is supposed to sit on the floor of the kitchen of her house, with her feet in front of her and hands between her legs, where her boy used to sit as a baby (although other accounts have it that the mother must stand as though she is going to give birth). The boy's foreskin is given to his father. After the operation, the father puts the foreskin on top of the sack placed in front of the boy. He is supposed to close the sack, carefully ensuring that no blood is spilled, and bury the package with the boy's foreskin in it as a whole about two days after the operation in a place unknown to anyone else. After the boy is circumcised, he leaves boyhood (*umusinde*) and gains the status of a

man (*umuseza*), a transition that is welcomed by loud ululating. The finalization of the operation encourages the crowd to dance around the boy for one last time. When the environment relaxes, the women take off their banana leaf skirts and throw them on the roof of the nearest home, where they will remain until the trajectory is completed.

Until the morning after circumcision, when the boy is ritually washed by a circumciser, he cannot eat and drink with his own hands. For it is not until the washing ceremony (*khusabisa*) that an initiate is finally cleansed from boyhood, and ritually purified. Again, one may see here a connection with female menstruation as, in the 1950s, menstruating women were too considered polluting and had to adhere to similar taboos when bleeding. The initiates are given a chair and a canvas to cover themselves and sit near their circumcision spot for another hour or so – food and drinks are given to them by other men. Thereafter, the initiates enter the house near the circumcision site, usually the house of one of the initiates' father, and stay there until the ritual is completed with the roasting of matoke (see below).

The circumciser (*umukhebi*) is a rather particular figure. The occupation is associated with particular lineages and is passed on from father to son. This is spiritually inspired. A son who is meant to become an *umukhebi*, like his father, is said to be captured by the spirit of circumcision and will fall sick if he does not fulfill his duty. Certain spiritual powers are attributed to the *umukhebi*. For example, a woman may not touch a circumciser when she is in her periods, as this will make her blood flow too fast. The figure of the *umukhebi* is further shaped by a degree of mystery. When it is time for boys to get operated, for example, they are said to 'appear' out of nowhere and disappear rather quickly when the job is done. The circumciser is also in charge of the washing ceremony.

The washing ceremony

The washing ceremony, taking place the day after circumcision, is the only occasion at which initiates receive specific life lessons. During this ceremony, the initiates are visited by an *umukhebi* – not necessarily the one who operated them – who talks to them and gives them a series of items. The words of the circumciser, transcribed in the box below, are rather poetic and much of what is said seems symbolic. At some point, for example, the initiates is told 'never go to [his] mother's bed', a phrase that can be interpreted in multiple ways; it could be symbolic of the idea that men are the protectors of the incest taboo and, therefore, of culture, but it could also be reflective of the idea that circumcision deals with Freud's Oedipus complex, as Heald (1999) suggested. However, the *umukhebi* also makes a number of more prosaic remarks in relation to what is expected of circumcised men in Gisu society. He emphasizes, for example, the need to farm, build a house and to avoid steeling. A number of items are given to the boy during the ceremony: an axe, hoe and panga. I was told that boys

who go to school are given a book and a pen instead of these items, but I never witnessed this, even though one of the boys I followed, the one whose khusabisa is transcribed in the boys below, was a schoolboy.

The umukhebi started with giving the boy some sort of herbal medicine. He was supposed to put this under his thumbs whilst keeping his hands in front of him as if he was about to applaud. The umukhebi asked for water and was given a cup. He drunk and spat on the floor; he then started to teach the boy a couple of things. This is a transcript of what he said:
The words I am telling you right now, I want you to get them and I want them to stay on that seat you are seated on. You are here in blood. If your father blinked his eyes, you would not be in this family. You have to use your eyes and know what your teacher is teaching. Education is what is important. Don't think you have grown, now you have been circumcised. Your father is the speaker of the people. The young and the old take him the same. Bad behaviour is bad. Peer influence is bad. The home in which you were circumcised is from your father. Never go to your mother's bed. When you are coming back home in the night, you have to cough. When you are going to the toilet you have to cough. When you are going to the water side, you cough. Because you may get ladies at the waterside, when they are talking their things. You have to refuse to find yourself peeping at them to see what they are doing. They call that witchcraft. But when you cough, they will know that so and so's son has good manners. When you eat something and a baby looks at you, you share with the baby. You should not put it in your mouth when the baby is looking at you, that is bad manners.

Then the boy was given a wooden stick [while the circumcizer taught him not to do something when his wife is cooking]. The boys was asked to roll the stick between his hands.
I give you this piece of help to boil your own water for showering. And if you mother tells you to go and light up the fire, you do it. If you are married and your wife has gone out to collect water, do not get the firewood in the kitchen saying 'let her come back and I beat her'. Say: 'I am no longer in boyhood'

Initiate:
"I am no longer in boyhood"

Then the hoe, the panga and the axe were given to the boy, as the circumcizer continued to teach the boy:
The hoe I have made you carry right now, is for digging you garden. Dig cabbage, matoke, and people eat. When your father calls, you get up and get your hoe. Do not stay in your bed. The axe I made you carry right now, is for making firewood, build your own house. Do not stay in any other person's house. Make your own firewood and water, and you bathe. You make your own firewood. The machete I have made you carry right now, is for cutting your own stems, for building your own house. And use it for grazing. I am not giving it to you to cut people. If you quarrel with your brothers, do not carry the panga.

At this point the father was asked to bring 2000 shillings. He gave it to the circumcizer and then the circumcizer gave it to the initiate. He continued to teach the boy things while he started to undress the boy. At some point he also taught about money. This is what he said:
The knife I give you is what circumcised you. And what circumcised your father. And it has come back to circumcise you. And when you have a son, it will circumcise your son. The hoe I made you carry is what you are supposed to use for digging and you will get that money. Even if you go anywhere, you will be looking for that money. But please do not steal, but use your own sweat to get it. Now you are a big man [umuseza umukhulu], if you are in pain, you have to take shelter to cool yourself down. Yesterday is when you got naked. [The circumcizer interrupted himself to comment on a chicken that seemed to want to run away]. Be a good person, things of bad thoughts about your father, stop them. Things of beating your mother or your sisters, stop them. Don't think because I am circumcised I am now leading this clan.

Then the circumcizer cut the cup which he had used for drinking water to spit on the floor. After the ceremony a chicken was brought for the circumcizer.

Ritual closure

After they are circumcised, boys must sleep in the hut near the courtyard in which they were circumcised until the banana-leaf skirts, thrown on top of the house after circumcision, are burned and matoke is eaten. The burning of the skirts usually takes place about three days after the operation and marks the end of the ritual trajectory. I was unable to witness any such event, but the events seemed not to involve much ritual elaboration. The main purpose, I was told by one ritual specialist, is again to do away with boyhood. The skirts, made of the leaves of the banana tree, are buried and the ash must be buried by a clan member of the initiate. This cannot be done by the boy himself because, in the words of the ritual specialist, 'you are doing away with boyhood, so it cannot be you again throwing away that ash'. After this event boys are expected to move out of their father's home to live in their own hut, although that does not always happen. It usually takes about a month or so before boys are fully recovered and until that time they walk around with a canvas tied around their middle.