

short-term project in Rwanda show us the benefits and constraints of both. Interestingly, his project in Rwanda yielded fantastic results, and the reader learns about very delicate experiences in people's sex lives. Similarly, Silberschmidt's long research experience in East Africa tells us that it is all in the eye of the beholder: whether people will discuss sexual matters or not depends to a large extent on the attitude of the researcher. Both authors illustrate that the (dis) comfort of the researcher is crucial to the generation of data. Moreover, they point out that the commonly accepted notion that sex(uality) is a taboo blinds many researchers; taboo is often misunderstood as something that cannot be spoken about, rather like a ritual practice. Phiri, for example, beautifully shows how sex is discussed extensively, in metaphorical language. I would have liked more discussion of the tension between the various chapters on the idea of sex (uality) as a sensitive topic. Some chapters contradict others squarely and it would have been interesting if the introduction had addressed such different opinions and analyses as a theme in its own right. Sex is a delicate topic indeed; it confronts us as researchers with our own epistemological limitations. As the book testifies, there remains a constant need for reflection on the procedures and instruments of investigation, as well as on the researchers' attitude and positioning, in relation to validity of data, questions of representation, and ethics in the study of gender and sexuality in Africa.

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MARC SOMMERS, *Stuck: Rwandan youth and the struggle for adulthood*. Athens GA: University of Georgia Press (hb \$69.95 – 978 0 82033 890 3). 2012, 288 pp.

This ethnography of Rwandan youth is a valuable addition to the literature on both African youth and contemporary Rwanda, and will be of interest to social scientists interested in youth, gender relations, rural development, 'post-conflict' transformation and governance. The book is a little repetitive in places, but is written in an accessible, engaging style, mixing ethnographic detail and stories with analysis and reflection.

Sommers portrays the harsh lived realities of Rwandan young men and (to a lesser extent) young women who are literally 'stuck' between childhood and adulthood – unable to meet the exacting socio-cultural requirements to achieve adult status. This phenomenon of 'waithood' – and the pressures and risks it entails – is depressingly familiar, but Sommers details its specific manifestations in the Rwandan context. In rural Rwanda, the first step towards socially acceptable manhood is for young men to build a house. Only then can they formally marry, have children and achieve recognition as adult men. Currently, however, there is a severe housing crisis with a shortage of land, strict government regulations on where and how new houses can be built, and a prohibitive price list for building materials – especially roofing. Many young men interviewed had been working for years to purchase roof tiles one by one, and literally measured progress towards manhood in terms of tiles accumulated. Several had dropped out of school early to start on this long treadmill, although aware that they may never complete their houses.

Sommers also analyses the consequences of this failed masculinity for young women, offering insights into the realities of gender relations beneath

Rwanda's positive reputation for progress on gender equality. The inability of young men to complete a house leads to marriage delays and also leaves young women 'stuck'. Instead of achieving recognition as women through legal marriage and childbearing, young women face increased risks of informal marriage, transactional sex, bearing 'illegitimate' children and being labelled as 'old ladies' if unmarried by their mid-twenties. In response to prospects of failed adulthood and public humiliation, some youth migrate, mostly to the capital Kigali. Here, most fail to secure a stable life, facing new problems of severe un- and under-employment, hunger and social isolation. Sommers reveals that many poor urban youth face a daily struggle for survival and many young women work as prostitutes and are fatalistic about contracting HIV/AIDS.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the language used by youth to describe their situation. Sommers uncovers a vocabulary of oppositions between youth who are 'up' (or 'above') and those who are 'down' (or 'below') that literally maps onto the geographical, social and economic realities of their lives. Those who live 'above' on the tops of the hills close to the roads are more educated, wealthier, better-informed and able to access opportunities. Those who live 'below' in the remote valleys are 'ignorant', poor and have no opportunities, facing a daily life of 'digging' and distressingly low expectations. Nonetheless, their remoteness permits a kind of quiet resistance to what the government wants them to do—join associations, attend meetings and engage in unpaid communal work.

Another strength of the book is its careful but incisive analysis of Rwanda's particular style of governance and how this compounds the entrapment of poor youth. Sommers describes the ambitious 'high modernism' of the political elite and its policy of 'centralized decentralization', which entails high levels of social control and regulation of daily life (even bodies). In this vertical system, the lowest-level officials feel unable to communicate the desperate realities of the majority of youth to their superiors, as they do not align with government policy objectives. Instead, high-level officials largely view young people as non-collaborative and unproductive, and therefore in need of guidance and direction. Sommers shows, however, that current youth policies that encourage (often compel) youth to join associations are misguided. They fail to address structural problems—such as the housing crisis and social norms around masculinity—and take little account of actual priorities voiced by youth.

Sommers's description of the challenges of conducting and (especially) reporting the results of research in Rwanda will be familiar to many. At the outset, he received considerable support and interest from government officials. But when his findings appeared to contradict government policy, there were attempts to discredit and dismiss them. Sommers points to the self-censorship that is common amongst both Rwandans and outsiders who wish to work or research in Rwanda. He is candid about his own struggle to counter tendencies towards 'filtering' his results, language and tone.

In his conclusion, Sommers poses the key question about similarities and differences between pre- and post-genocide Rwanda, given the high levels of youth participation in the 1994 genocide. He is cautious to question assumptions about links between youth exclusion and violence, and stresses that the easing of restrictions on rural–urban migration has provided one outlet for frustrated rural youth. He concludes, however, that there are worrying similarities with pre-genocide Rwanda—including the controlling style of governance and the entrapment and voicelessness experienced by the majority

of youth. Overall, the book expresses a pessimism about the future of Rwanda that many scholars share.

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STEPHEN C. LUBKEMANN, *Culture in Chaos: an anthropology of the social condition in war*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press (hb \$63 – 978 0 22649 642 9). 2008, 401 pp.

Culture in Chaos is insightful ethnography and a welcome addition to anthropological studies of conflict, migration and Mozambique. Building on multi-sited fieldwork conducted in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe between 1995 and 2002, Lubkemann provides a nuanced account of the social processes that gave shape to how ‘Machazians’ (those who trace their origins to Machaze District in central Mozambique) conceptualized and dealt with Mozambique’s civil war (1977–92). One of the primary goals of Lubkemann’s work is to re-theorize the social existence of those under prolonged war and displacement (p. 1). The author particularly takes issue with the approach that considers violence as the only cause of concern for residents of what he terms a ‘warscape’; instead, violence tends to punctuate rather than characterize lives, and war reshapes but does not eradicate pre-existing social strategies and cultural understandings. This seemingly simple but often neglected point is refined by historical depth and long-term research engagement that stand as a useful counterpoint to the generalizations found in some other studies of Mozambique’s civil war.

One of the key frameworks the author employs to understand how everyday life for Machazians is conducted under conditions of war is ‘structural violence’. By this he does not simply mean inequality, but instead a dynamic process of structural change where actors can no longer achieve the kind of life to which they believe they are entitled (p. 112). Lubkemann traces this process historically, from Portuguese colonialism in Machaze, which was characterized by periodic episodes of repression combined with overall neglect, to ambitious efforts at profound transformation inaugurated by Frelimo (Liberation Front of Mozambique) in the early post-independence period. Frelimo’s attempts at carrying out a ‘social revolution’ combined with deteriorating economic prospects and the closing of migratory routes to South Africa alienated many Machazians. According to the author, the primary political goal of Machazians was not to transform the central state, but to banish it. Thus many supported the Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance) rebels because they read the movement’s lack of political content as a *laissez faire* ideology that would leave them in peace to achieve their goals with a minimum of harassment. It would be interesting here to know more about the reactions of Machazian migrants to the interventionist state in South Africa, both during apartheid and under the ANC. This small objection aside, Lubkemann’s use of the concept of structural violence is more comprehensive than those usually associated with Paul Farmer or Nancy Scheper-Hughes. The author’s focus on local ideas of the ways in which life should be, and the social relationships that underpin these ideas, helps to explain why many Machazians believe that they cannot return ‘home’ as the war remains too ‘hot’ years after the declaration of peace. Although the shooting has stopped