

Title: **The Relationship Between History Textbooks and the Construction of the Collective Memory: The Case of Rwanda from 1962 to 1994**

The main **hypothesis** of this study is that the teaching of Rwandan history has had an influence on images of the past and of history and through them an effect on the image of the other. We are analysing the relationship between memory and history, with emphasis on the memory which is formed by the school. To test this hypothesis:

- 1) We analysed the Rwandan history textbooks used in primary and secondary school between independence in 1962 and the genocide of 1994. This period of 32 years is the only time that history has been taught in the schools of Rwanda.
- 2) To understand the effects of teaching the Rwandan history, we interviewed people who learnt history at school and also people who never went to school, on the hypothesis that depending on the periods and the curricula analysed, we would discover different discourses.

The analysis of the history textbooks and interviews concentrated on **seven themes** which are considered historically controversial (origins of population, ubwoko (ethnic groups and clans), ubuhake (cattle trading), missionaries, Belgian colonisation, the period from 1962 to 1994, and the period of post-independence). For comparison, we studied how scientific publications have treated these subjects, the effects of those publications on textbooks, and how they talk about the themes, the choices they made, etc.

The independent variables and modalities:

- 1) gender: male, female
- 2) Ethnic group: Twa, Hutu, Tutsi
- 3) Age: those who were old enough to remember the period of the beginning of the civil war (1959) and those who were not.
- 4) Schooling:
 - Those who learned the history of Rwanda in primary and in secondary school;
 - Those who learned the history of Rwanda at university;
 - Those who never learned the history at school, but who read about it or were actors in that history. These are mostly the persons who finished their schooling before independence;

- Those who never went to school.

The main results:

- 1) There was no difference between responses from men and women when they spoke of the same subjects.
- 2) There were some differences between the Hutus and the Tutsis on the different items. However on the question of origins of ethnic groups, most Hutus and Tutsis interviewees told us the same stories as they had heard them: the Hutus are said to come from central Africa (Chad, Cameroon), and the Tutsis are said to come from Ethiopia. The only difference was that the majority of the Hutus believed these stories and defended them, while the Tutsi tended to deny the difference and to refer to new research. The few Twas who were interviewed shared the opinions of the Tutsis.
- 3) Considering the description of subjects like “ubwoko” and “ubuhake”, the difference was remarkable between the older people (those who lived the period of 1959) and the younger ones. There were some differences concerning some other subjects too, but they were not so obvious.
- 4) Those who learnt history in primary and secondary school clung to what they learned in their textbooks whether they are Hutu or Tutsi. Those who studied at the university level were sceptical of what the textbooks told them and they all wanted to learn more for themselves about the reality of Rwanda’s history. Those who did not learn history at school but read about it or were actors in it didn’t accept a certain number of publications about Rwanda’s history and accused certain authors of misinterpreting it. Among those who never went to school, there was a difference between the younger ones whose vision was nearer to that of those young people who did go, and the older ones who were closer to the vision of those who read about history or acted in the events.

Significance

On one hand, these results show that a part of the history taught at school has found a place in the memory of those who never went to school: the school influences even those who don’t go to it. On the other hand, there is an important history which should be examined more deeply by historians. In fact, the older people interviewed, whether they went to school or not, thought that they had something important to say about the history of Rwanda. In sum, the textbooks put more emphasis on political aspects, those which divide the population, and less on cultural dimensions, customs and habits which “make common cause” between peoples.