

Conflict over Changing Social Norms: Bargaining, Ideology, and Enforcement

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Social norms are the foundation of social life. They govern social relations and establish expectations as to how we are to act in our everyday affairs. They facilitate continuity across generations and among changing populations, and constitute an ongoing record of the history of social practices in a community. They structure social interactions in ways that allow social actors to gain the benefits of joint activity. And they determine in significant ways the distribution of the benefits of social life.

These effects of social norms are the focus of much of the work in the social sciences, including among economists, who, for example, have increasingly recognized the importance of social norms in contributing to economic performance (North 1990). While this work differs widely as to how norms substantively affect social behavior, most of it conceives of norms, at least in part, as rules. From one perspective, Coleman (1990), among others, treats norms as rules that structure strategic behavior. In his account, norms constrain behavior by affecting the incentives for various actions. They are treated as analogous to any other informal rule: people comply with norms when it is in their self-interest to do so. From a far different perspective, Bourdieu (1977) emphasizes nonconsequentialist motivations as the main explanation of norm compliance: people comply with norms because such rules define the appropriate form of behavior in a specific context. In Bourdieu's conception, when an individual acts pursuant to a social norm, that action is governed by a rule and the individual will act according to the dictates of the rule even if it is not in his or her narrow self-interest to do so.

In our analysis here we share with both perspectives the basic view that norms are informal rules that structure social interactions in ways that promote the benefits of cooperative behavior. Although we rely primarily upon strategic considerations in explaining why social actors comply with norms, we reject any narrow conception that limits compliance to self-interest and accept other non-self-interested motivations as possible reasons for compliance.¹ But explanations of social norms must do more than merely acknowledge the constraining effects of normative rules on social action. Such explanations must address the process that culminates in the establishment of one of these rules as the common norm in a community. One of the keys to the establishment of a new norm is the ability of those who seek to change norms to enforce compliance with the new norm.

We propose an approach to explain the emergence of and changes in social norms that draws on the rational choice tradition. Rational choice theorists have produced a number of accounts of the evolution of social norms.² Each starts

from the premise that social actors pursue some set of preferences in a rational way. This means that social actors seek to achieve their most-preferred outcome in the least costly manner. But from this initial assumption, rational choice theorists develop different explanations about how social norms emerge and change. We argue elsewhere (Ensminger and Knight 1997) that whenever norms have distributional consequences for the actors involved, bargaining is the primary mechanism for the emergence and change of social norms.

Here we use a bargaining framework to analyze how social conflict is associated with changing social norms. Social norms have important distributional effects on who gets what from social interactions. Social actors will differ over the form that the norm should take, with each preferring that norm that best favors his or her individual interests and preferences. With respect to norms governing economic behavior, the implications for a bargaining mechanism are clear: bargaining over norms is a conflict among economic actors motivated by conflicting material interests. But with respect to norms that govern noneconomic behavior, the benefits derived from such behavior are nonmaterial. Thus, as actors seek to determine which norms are best for them, they are not motivated by a desire for material gain. Rather they are motivated by ideological values and nonmaterial preferences. Yet conflicts of interest are potentially just as likely to occur over ideologically motivated norm changes as over materially motivated ones. Thus, we argue here that ideology is compatible with a bargaining approach: bargaining power has an important role to play in instances of ideologically motivated change.

In the bargaining account we offer here, the question of which norm will be established is resolved by asymmetries in bargaining power: the norm most likely to be established will be the one that manifests the interests of those actors who enjoy a relative bargaining advantage. We define bargaining power as superiority in resource endowments. There are many factors that can determine the relative bargaining power of the actors. One important factor that affects the ability of those who are well-endowed to impose their preferred norms upon others is access to and control over methods of enforcement. If enforcement is centralized, such control may stem from privileged access to the state or other enforcement bodies. When enforcement is decentralized, it may be realized through rewards and negative sanctions embodied in such crosscutting ties as those of the clan or kinship network.

In this chapter we develop explanations of how superior bargaining power produces social norms. We show that, contrary to various sociological criticisms of the rational choice approach (Zald 1987; Oberschall and Leifer 1986; March and Olsen 1989), explanations grounded in rational decisionmaking can incorporate power asymmetries, distributional consequences, and ideological motivations not based upon economic interests. We present the basic logic of bargaining over social norms and offer an extended example of how social conflict produces norms of marriage in an African society. This first case is a relatively straightforward instance of bargaining over distributional gains. Then we consider the role of ideology in conjunction with bargaining power as a motivation for changing social norms. Although rational choice accounts usually borrow the neoclassical habit of assuming preferences rather than examining them, here we highlight conflict over ideologically defined preferences. Finally, we consider the complex

issue of enforcement. New behaviors do not achieve the status of new norms until they are widely practiced. Therefore, we consider the evidence from a number of case studies on the role of enforcement in the process of changing social norms, giving special emphasis to factors that complicate enforcement efforts and diminish the likelihood of success for those who seek to change existing norms.

BARGAINING OVER NORMS FOR DISTRIBUTIONAL ADVANTAGE

The bargaining approach explains the emergence of social norms primarily in terms of the distributional effect of the possible norms (Knight 1992). In the classic bargaining account, social norms are a by-product of strategic conflict: actors produce social norms in the process of seeking distributional advantage in the conflict over substantive benefits. In some cases they will create norms consciously; in other cases the norms will emerge as unintended consequences of the pursuit of strategic advantage. In each case the main focus is on the substantive outcome; the development of the norm is merely a means to that substantive end. As in any bargaining situation, there are some factors that distinguish the actors and thus influence the bargaining outcome in favor of one of the parties. In our analysis, asymmetries in resource ownership serve as a proxy for bargaining power. These factors are what we usually refer to when we speak of bargaining power (Bachrach and Lawler 1981; Raiffa 1982). Asymmetries in resource ownership affect the willingness of rational self-interested actors to accept the bargaining demands of other actors. Social actors suffer significant costs for the failure to coordinate on social outcomes, yet those costs need not be suffered uniformly. Those actors who have either fewer alternatives or less beneficial ones will be more inclined to respect the commitments of those who have substantial resources. In this way, the existence of resource asymmetries in a society can significantly influence the choice of a social norm. The task of a bargaining theory of norm emergence is to identify those factors that are most likely to explain (1) how bargaining gets resolved in a single interaction and (2) how a particular outcome gets enforced and generalized for the community as a whole.

To better understand how bargaining power affects this process, it is helpful to analyze the way in which norms structure social interactions. Norms establish expectations about what people will do in common social situations and thus guide us to act in particular ways in those situations. We comply with social norms in order to gain the benefits of coordinated social activity. In analytical terms, norms structure social situations that are characterized by the existence of multiple equilibria; that is, there is more than one way of coordinating our behavior in a particular setting, but we need to establish shared expectations as to which of those ways we will actually choose. Norm creation involves the establishment of shared expectations, while norm change involves changing those expectations.

Bargaining power affects norm creation and change in those situations in which social actors differ in their preferences over which form of behavior should be embodied in the norm. Bargaining over the establishment of a norm consists of an assessment of the credibility of various claims made by the actors (either explicitly through negotiations or implicitly through their previously demonstrated behavior) about their commitments to various forms of behavior. For

example, an actor might make the following claim: "I am going to act in a particular way regardless of what anybody else does." Other actors might then respond by either asserting a similarly adamant commitment to a different form of behavior, offering a compromise that is different from any of their most preferred forms of behavior or agreeing to the first actor's demand. A bargaining explanation of norm creation and change rests on the idea that relative bargaining power will ultimately determine whose commitments will be embodied in the dictates of the social norm.

It is important to note that the bargaining model is a simplification of a wide variety of social interactions, ranging from formal negotiations of the whole community to implicit strategic behavior that converges over time to form a common norm of behavior. Central to all of these various social interactions is the common feature of multiple equilibria in the social interaction, conflict in preferences over the range of possible norms of behavior, and asymmetries in the possession of relevant resources. The explanation of norm emergence and change rests primarily on the effects of these asymmetries on the acceptance or rejection of the various commitments that people claim to have to the alternative ways of acting in common social situations.

If everyone in a community had complete knowledge of how each person assessed the benefits and costs involved in committing to the different possible ways of behaving, then bargaining over social norms would be a fairly simple and straightforward process. People could rather quickly assess the extent to which their own preferred behavior was shared by others in the community and thus determine the relative benefits of sticking to their own approach versus adopting an alternative way of acting. The establishment of a social norm would occur as members of the community made this assessment and then adjusted their own actions to the form of behavior on which most of the community converged. But there are many features of social life that complicate this bargaining process. And most of these factors affect the ways in which social actors assess the long-run effects of committing to a particular way of acting.

In this chapter we focus on two such factors: ideology and the complexity of norm enforcement. We have already suggested some of the ways in which these factors can affect bargaining over norms, and it may be helpful to clarify how these factors enter into our analytical account. First, ideological beliefs affect how people assess the relative merits of various forms of behavior. To the extent that norms structure behavior and thus affect the outcomes of social interactions, they lead to significant consequences for various ways of living. For most people their ideological beliefs are grounded in their assessment of which consequences are best for themselves and their community. Thus, when ideological beliefs enter into the consideration of the relative merits of various possible norms, they will complicate the task of assessing the costs and benefits of the different alternatives. In so doing, ideology can alter the bargaining process in many ways, the most important of which involves the willingness of both the powerful and the powerless to both maintain existing commitments and accept proposals for change.

Second, the complexity and diversity of enforcement mechanisms affect the costs of maintaining commitments to various forms of behavior.³ Sanctions are an

important source of the costs of acting. Social actors employ many forms of sanctions as a way of forcing people to keep their commitments and to comply with social norms. When people are confronted with a choice between two forms of behavior, they must take account of the costs they might incur in selecting the different alternatives. The task of assessing these costs is especially acute when the issue is one of norm compliance versus norm change. There are the straightforward costs created by those who seek to enforce compliance with existing norms, but there are also the potential enforcement costs involved in seeking to change norms. Since the task of norm change involves changing established social expectations, the process of undertaking a change in an existing norm entails a process of coordination among those actors who share an interest in the change. To the extent that the interests of each member of this group depends on the cooperation of the other members, the members will seek to establish their own sanctioning mechanisms to ensure that the reform group will abide by their new commitments to the changed form of behavior. The success of reform efforts will depend in large part on the ability of such groups to establish and maintain these alternative enforcement mechanisms.

Before turning to our analysis of the relationship between bargaining over norms and the complicating factors of ideology and enforcement, we should briefly address a potential source of confusion in our conceptualization, with its emphasis on enforcement, of social norms. We treat norms as rules that stabilize social expectations and thus establish commitments to particular ways of acting in common social situations. From a purely behavioral perspective this leads to the following problem: what distinguishes a social norm and the behavior that it induces from a mere behavioral regularity or social practice? This is an especially difficult thing for a social scientist to discern because once a social norm has been firmly established in a community, the only thing that we should observe is the regularity in behavior embodied in the norm.⁴ But there is an important distinction that lies in the differences in the reaction of the other members of the community to deviations from the regularity in the social practice.

To clarify the distinction, we must look at the problem from the internal perspective of the members of the community (Hart 1994). When an individual deviates from his normal behavior, those social actors with whom he interacts may be surprised or disappointed, but they do not feel either the need or the right to sanction him for the change in behavior. On the other hand, when an individual deviates from compliance with a social norm, the other members of the community generally feel that their expectations have been inappropriately violated and that they have a right to employ whatever means of informal sanctioning are at their disposal so as to make sure that the act of noncompliance will not be repeated.⁵ This difference in internal perspective suggests that the task of the social scientist who seeks to distinguish social norms from mere regularities in behavior is to focus on the behavior manifest in the community when deviations from regular social practices are observed. When we observe sanctioning after deviant behavior, we have evidence to support a claim that a social norm exists. To better illustrate how the bargaining approach works we turn to an analysis of changes in social norms among the Galole Orma of northeastern Kenya.

THE CASE STUDY

The Galole Orma⁶ of the Tana River District, Kenya, are a pastoral population, still partly nomadic, who live primarily off the products of their livestock (cattle, sheep, and goats). But like most pastoralists in Africa, the Orma are increasingly market-oriented and in recent years have had to adapt to considerable changes in their economic and political systems (see Ensminger 1992). Today, less than a third of the Galole Orma continue to attempt a subsistence-based nomadic existence, living off dairy products exclusively whenever milk yields will allow it and resisting the sale of their stock in order to maximize their herd size. The vast majority of Orma are now sedentary and sell stock on a regular basis to purchase their daily foodstuffs and household needs. They are effectively commercial ranchers, harvesting their annual off-take much as farmers harvest their crops. Large numbers of Orma also derive the majority of their income from wage labor and trade.

Bargaining over Political and Economic Advantage

We can begin to demonstrate the explanatory power of the bargaining approach by examining changes in norms requiring marriage outside the clan (clan exogamy) and marriage payments from the family of the groom to that of the bride (bridewealth). These examples allow us to show how a bargaining mechanism can explain the emergence of norms when either nonmaterial or material interests are involved. In each of these examples, we focus primarily on the following explanatory factors central to the bargaining approach: First, we look at how the norm affects the distribution of economic resources, power, or other benefits. For example, does the norm of clan exogamy or bridewealth distribute the benefits of marriage and family in a manner different than other marriage norms would? To the extent that a norm distributes these resources in unequal ways, there is evidence of a potential conflict of interest in the establishment of the norm that we would expect to see resolved in favor of those with the most bargaining power. Second, we look for evidence of asymmetries in bargaining power as the source of the emergence of a particular norm. Here it is important to ask whether there is a correlation between the distribution of asymmetries in bargaining power and the distribution of interests over the different alternative norms. For example, do those who disproportionately benefit from clan exogamy or bridewealth hold an advantage in the relevant resources that constitute bargaining power in the community? To the extent that there is evidence of the anticipated correlation between power and interests, the plausibility of the bargaining explanation is enhanced. And finally, we look to the method of enforcement of both existing and potentially new norms to see how it affects the capacity of those with a relative bargaining advantage to enforce compliance with their preferred norms.

Like many patrilineal African societies, the Orma have historically practiced clan exogamy; all marriages within the clan were forbidden. Here we can see how the conflict over norms governing marriage can explain the emergence of clan exogamy as well as how they are currently changing among the Orma.

While everyone in the community would benefit from some norm that struc-

tured marriages, the members differed over the nature of the particular rule. For example, clan exogamy is in the interests of elders to gain alliances, but it is not necessarily in the interests of youths who might wish to marry some of the potential spouses who are being defined as off-limits. Assuming that the bargaining power of the elders far exceeded that of the youth, perhaps by right of ownership of the cattle necessary for bridewealth payments, youth would have had little choice in the matter. Similarly, even some elders may not have been happy with the original practice of clan exogamy. Those elders who were anticipating their own marriage or that of their sons to the daughters who were originally "married out" from their group may not have been at all happy with the emergence of a norm of clan exogamy. If there was such a conflict of interest among the elders, then the norm of clan exogamy may have been initiated by the entrepreneurial behavior of some elder or elders who had the political and economic force to deny daughters in marriage to those who had most reason to expect such unions. Those most able to have made such a change would have been the elders who could "compensate" the wife-losers for their loss and thereby realize a net gain in political relations with outsiders that did not cost them equally in worsened relations with nearer groups. Enforcement could have been achieved by the refusal of elders to support in any way marriages within the clan. Because bridewealth is often accumulated from a wide circle of an individual's kin and members of the clan, such a refusal would have had a marked effect upon people's choices. Elders might also have refused to engage in marriages with families that did not practice clan exogamy. Because marriages to economically powerful families are highly desirable, even such uncoordinated and decentralized enforcement could have rapidly led to compliance throughout the society.

Within recent memory, the Orma practiced strict clan exogamy, but this norm is rapidly eroding. Orma clans are nonterritorial and responsible primarily for dispute resolution within the clan, for arranging marriages, and for such general assistance as help following droughts and contributions to bridewealth and funeral payments. All of these clan functions were in decline at the time of the first breaches of clan exogamy. The earliest remembered cases of marriage within the clan date to approximately 1980 and occurred simultaneously in the southern part of the region and in Galole.

Orma tradition recognizes three forms of marriage: by arrangement (*kadda*), elopement (*adaban*), and force (*buta*). Until recently, arranged marriages were by far the most numerous, though young women commonly eloped to avoid arranged marriages to old men. Older women, often grandmothers, were helpful in arranging for young girls to "run away" with young men in order to avoid undesirable matches. Forced marriage, where the young man literally captures the girl in the bush and rapes her with the intent of forcing a marriage, is still rare.⁷ Today, elopement is greatly on the rise. In the past, elopement did not involve intraclan marriages, but today it is sometimes the means by which young men and women of the same clan manage to get consent for their union from their parents.

At least since their conversion to Islam in the 1920s, the Orma have placed great emphasis upon virgin marriage. In the past, the fact that a boy and girl "eloped" did not necessarily mean that the marriage was consummated. Nevertheless, the parents often consented to the union after heavy persuasion on the

part of the couple's supporters. The threat was ever present that if the parents did not consent, the couple could always run away together again and consummate the marriage, thus "forcing" the issue, as the woman's marriageability would then be considerably reduced. Today, young men and women of the same clan who elope are more likely to consummate the marriage prior to informing their parents of the elopement. They may even stay away as long as three days to convince their parents of their determination. The consequence of such actions is that the parents almost always relent, and marriages within the clan are now quite common. This change in behavior also represents a change in attitude among the young regarding female virginity. Women feel less ashamed of losing their virginity prior to marriage than was the case in the past. Much to the chagrin of the elders, young men and women are marrying for love without concern for clan.

We hold that this change in norms is a direct result of the increasing bargaining power of young men and women vis-à-vis elders. There are a number of factors that have contributed to the change in bargaining power. Young men are earning a larger share of the household's income, which means that they are less dependent on their fathers for help with marriage payments and other financial assistance. If fact, sons in many cases are supporting their fathers. This is a complete reversal of past practice, where old men had complete control over cattle dispersal (the only significant form of wealth or income) until their death. In addition, joint extended families are splitting up more frequently prior to the death of the father, which contributes to independent decisionmaking. Moreover, marriage payments are also declining.

These changes in the relative bargaining power of young men also work to the benefit of the interests of young women. For their part, women also have a desire to marry for love. And sedentary women report that they seek to avoid at all costs a marriage to a nomad or a very old man. If such a marriage has been arranged for a sedentary woman, she is at great risk for elopement. The Islamic courts (*kadi*) have also enhanced young women's bargaining power by supporting a woman's right to resist a marriage that she does not wish to enter into. A virgin, commonly referred to as "a girl," can still be legally married against her will according to Orma practice, but if a "woman" is prepared to admit publicly that she is not a virgin, the Islamic *kadi* will not agree to allow a marriage against her will. More women are prepared to at least threaten such action in order to marry the men of their choice and resist the marriages that have been arranged for them. The fact that sedentary women are restricting their choice to young sedentary men also reduces the size of the marriage pool and thereby increases the chances of them desiring to marry within the clan.

For all of these reasons, the bargaining power of young men and young women has increased sufficiently for them to make more of their own marriage choices. They appear not to be concerned with the consequences of intraclan marriage that worry their elders. One source of support they have mustered comes from the Koranic teachers. The Koran does not require clan exogamy and permits marriage between first cousins. Young Orma can and do sometimes point to the well-known fact that Arabs in the district commonly marry their cousins. And Islamic leaders have felt it necessary to mention in the mosque that the Koran does not prohibit intraclan unions. There are in fact now cases among the Galole Orma of first cousin patrilineal marriage. The elders have given up

trying to fight marriage within the clan, but they still maintain that it is a bad thing. They warn that domestic disputes that arise from such unions will cause conflict within the clan among people who should always be cooperating. They also cite the example of the Somali, who though putatively clan exogamous, do have territorial clans and a high incidence of clan endogamy (Kelly 1992, 50), and as the world has recently learned, the Somali are known for inter-clan fighting. Orma elders fear that the Orma too may get to the point where they prefer to marry within the clan, which will lead to the sort of hostilities between clans that they see as the root of the recent ethnic clashes in Somalia. In short, some Orma elders subscribe to Tylor's analysis (1889) of the function of clan exogamy in maintaining political alliances and peace. We do not dispute this function, but eschew Tylor's functionalist extension that imputes origin from function. We instead look more to bargaining power to explain the norm's emergence and change.

The bargaining approach effectively explains the development and decline of clan exogamy among the Orma. It is a fairly straightforward case of the initial emergence of a norm that benefits the dominant members of the community, followed by the possibility of changes in that norm as the relevant asymmetries in bargaining power change in the community. We find a similarly straightforward example in the origin and maintenance of bridewealth systems of marriage payments.

Most explanations of the institution of bridewealth and the level of payments assume some form of supply-and-demand relationship. One of the more common arguments explaining bridewealth is that it relates to the value of women's labor: the higher the productive value of women's labor, the higher the bride-wealth (Borgerhoff Mulder 1988; Boserup 1970, 46; Hakansson 1988, 93). Another argument is that bridewealth is related to women's fertility, or to descent group rights in children of the union (Goody 1973). Mair (1969) suggests that brideprice be thought of as "child price." Still other scholars have argued that bridewealth is related to the relative scarcity of women in society, which may be exacerbated by polygyny: the fewer women there are, the higher the bride-wealth demanded (Goldschmidt 1974). Schneider (1964, 1979), Borgerhoff Mulder (1995), and Hakansson (1988) also argue that the general level of wealth in society can explain historical fluctuations in bride-wealth payments.

These hypotheses concerning bride-wealth payments are by no means mutually exclusive, and indeed there is interesting evidence among the Orma to support almost all of them. For example, in the wealthiest and southernmost third of Orma territory (Chaffa), bride-wealth in the early 1980s was approximately double that in the poorer Galole area (Ensminger's field notes; Hilarie Kelly, personal communication). In the area immediately to the north of Galole, which is poorer yet, bride-wealth was less than half that of Galole and dwindled to nothing among some very poor Boran families (with whom the Orma married) farther north. There was a wealth gradient from north to south paralleled by a bride-wealth gradient and a flow of women from north to south. Goldschmidt (1974) noted a similar flow of women to the wealthiest portion of Sebei territory. This is consistent with the notion that bride-wealth varies according to the wealth of society (see also Kelly 1992, 336). Kelly (1992, 341) also argues that women were in short supply in the southern part of Orma territory and that this contrib-

uted to the higher rates of bridewealth there. Historically, when Orma rates of bridewealth were high, they also practiced levirate marriage (inheritance of the widow by the deceased husband's brother) and had virtually no divorce. All of these factors are consistent both with Schneider's (1964) cross-cultural patterns and with his argument that high bridewealth correlates with a high degree of rights in women and offspring.

What is striking about all of these factors is that they can be incorporated in a bargaining account of the emergence of bridewealth. This follows from the fact that bridewealth as an institution or norm has significant distributional consequences; as such, bargaining power was almost certainly an agent in its creation. The institution of bridewealth, when coupled with polygyny and arranged marriages, provided an extremely effective mechanism for the concentration of women in fewer hands. In particular, it provided a powerful means by which older men (who controlled most of the wealth in pastoral societies) could attract disproportionately large numbers of spouses for themselves and their sons. In the absence of the institution of bridewealth and other coercive norms, there is reason to believe that young women would more often choose mates closer to their own age and less often choose to join polygynous unions.⁹ For these reasons we argue that bridewealth originated because it served the interests of those with more economic resources. Although there may be a tendency in many societies for women to prefer marriages to older and richer men, the institution of bridewealth greatly facilitates the practice at rates beyond that which would be voluntarily chosen by young women.

Given the significant distributional effects of bridewealth in the allocation of women, we find the bargaining explanation of the emergence of bridewealth a compelling one. And this structures our analysis of subsequent changes in the norm. Rates of bridewealth have been in decline for the Galole Orma over at least the last sixteen years. There is also talk of abandoning the practice in favor of indirect dowry (payments from the groom's family to the bride). As with any norm that was initially the product of asymmetries in bargaining power, in attempting to explain the potential decline of bridewealth, we should look initially at some restructuring of the bargaining situation.

If our argument that bridewealth served the interests of the elite by allowing wealthy old men to disproportionately monopolize women is correct, why did the older elite acquiesce in the decline of this institution? We speculate that changes in the political economy have shifted more of the income into young men's hands and, furthermore, that it is more equitably distributed among them.⁹ As young men increasingly earn their own livings in trade, civil service jobs, and wage labor, they are less dependent upon their elders for marriage arrangements and bridewealth. If their fathers refuse to allow them to marry when they are ready to do so, they have the financial means to set up independent households. What is more, young women report that they will eagerly marry young men in preference to even rich old men. Young men do not need to attract young women by offering their fathers large bridewealth payments. And given that the income disparity among young men is not as great as it is among old men, they have less reason to compete among themselves through an institution such as bridewealth. This change is also driven in part by the shift in bargaining power in favor of young women noted earlier, who are now finding support in both the

civil and Muslim courts against "forced" marriages. This undermines the ability of their fathers to hold out for marriages with high bridewealth to less desirable spouses. In 1994, a small sample of the ten most recent marriages indicated that four were elopements in which the young man and the young woman chose each other and "ran away together." The Galole predict that elopement and love marriages are becoming the norm.

But while this scenario of increasing bargaining power on the part of young men and women may explain the demise of bridewealth, it does not explain the potential rise of indirect dowry. Many cases, like the change to indirect dowry, are more complicated than the clan exogamy and bridewealth origin stories. Next we turn to the question of what the introduction of more complicated factors does to the conflict over social norms. When economic and political interests are at stake, it seems natural to assume a role for superior bargaining power based upon material advantage in access to resources. When the struggle over different social norms is about ideological differences or preferences less tied to material interest, the role for bargaining power is less obvious but, we would argue, equally potent.

Bargaining over Ideological Commitment: Whose Preferences Become the Social Norm?

We can analyze the effects of ideology on the conflict over social norms by examining the recent changes in the practices of marriage payments and attitudes toward female circumcision. In these cases we identify two major categories of ideological effects: (1) the effects on the preferences of powerful actors who seek to change existing norms, and (2) the effects of ideological commitments to existing norms on the level of resistance offered by social actors who prefer the status quo. Ideological belief can hasten change through its effect on the preferences of the more powerful members of a community. In our cases we focus on how ideology can (1) expand the set of possible forms of behavior that can be embodied in a norm, and (2) alter the ways in which social actors assess the relative merits of the existing possibilities. As to the issue of how ideology can inhibit change, we focus on how ideology can reinforce commitments to existing norms and, in doing so, make the task of changing social expectations more difficult.

Consider first the transition to indirect dowry as an example of how ideology can expand the set of possible norms. Bridewealth consists of payments from the groom's family to that of the bride. Following Goody (1973), indirect dowry is the term used for payments from the groom's family to the bride herself. As in many East African pastoral societies (Schneider 1979), the Orma have historically had high rates of polygyny and bridewealth. Among the Orma, after years of pressure on the rate of bridewealth payments, the institution of bridewealth itself may be under threat. This threat highlights how ideological factors may affect conflict over social norms.

The rate of Orma bridewealth has been declining from at least 1978 to the present, as has the incidence of levirate marriage; meanwhile, divorce has been on the rise. Simultaneously, an even more interesting story is unfolding among the Orma, involving the transition from bridewealth to indirect dowry. Unlike bride-

wealth, indirect dowry has been associated in the literature with an enhanced status for women (Goody 1990, 468; Schlegel and Eloul 1988, 306); it is also an Islamic institution.

The Galole Orma converted to Islam in the 1920s and 1930s. Their Orma neighbors to the north preceded them slightly in this conversion. The Orma to the north currently practice considerably different patterns of marriage payments than do the Galole or the southern Orma, and these are related to their interpretation of Islamic law. While the Koran does not forbid bridewealth, it does mandate the payment of indirect dowry from the husband to the wife (*mahr*). The Orma to the north of the Galole tend to pay little or no bridewealth and abide by the Islamic prescription to pay dowry, set by the Orma at four cattle. In the case of divorce, these dowry cattle need not be repaid.

Some northern elders have been resident among the Galole for many years and continue to practice their northern custom of indirect dowry rather than bridewealth, which they hold to be truer to Islamic law. One elder, described as a particularly "polite" and devout man, has never accepted bridewealth for his daughters' marriages, but insists upon *mahr*, which his daughters keep. Another group of brothers from the north have also refused bridewealth for their daughters over the past twenty years and insists upon four cattle for dowry instead. However, at least one of these elders does not turn their "dowries" over to his daughters, keeping them, supposedly "on their behalf." (Mir-Hosseini [1989, cited in Goody 1990, 376], notes that this practice is found in other Islamic societies as well.) There is considerable "talk" in the village these days that the practice of forgoing bridewealth and accepting indirect dowry instead is a good one, although to date this is merely at the level of discussion. A similar trend is reported among the Kikuyu (Worthman and Whiting 1987). What we may be seeing in these cases, including that of the Orma, is the adoption of a new norm of indirect dowry.

To date, the instances of indirect dowry are far too few to reach any conclusions about this, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest possible causes for the change. One possible explanation is that elite fathers are contemplating using indirect dowry rather than bridewealth to increase the probability of attracting more desirable sons-in-law. In the Orma case, however, the transition would not be about hypergamy (wealthy but low-status families marrying their daughters to high-status, perhaps poorer, families) but, rather, about building endogenous class relations. A father may wish to marry his daughter to another wealthy family in order to increase ties to economically and politically useful families. This perspective is of course perfectly consistent with our general thesis that bargaining power plays a role in directing the course of changing norms; it also falls in the usual category of bargaining over substantive economic advantages. But to completely explain the newfound interest in indirect dowry, we find ideology and the possibility of a preference change to be helpful supplements to the basic bargaining account.

As noted, a few religiously motivated men had utilized indirect dowry and kept the norm "out there" as yet another alternative in the feasible set. The men from the north continued to practice the norm they were raised with, reflecting an ideological commitment for which they were prepared to pay a rather high price. In 1978, bridewealth was frequently on the order of twelve to sixteen

cattle, while dowry was four. It would therefore be difficult to make the case that in the early days of this changing norm economic or political gains were motivating these elders. The costs in cattle forgone relative to the value of beneficial affinal ties appear to be too great. Significantly, this norm was not adopted by the Galole population at large when it would have represented a large economic cost and bridewealth served the interests of those with bargaining power in the society. But the existence of a possible alternative norm was preserved because of the presence of a small number of ideologically motivated people.

We would argue that this example illustrates the manner in which ideologically motivated behavior can create new "focal points" or alternative norms (Schelling 1960). Ideology may motivate a small subset of a population to engage in some form of deviant behavior and by doing so expand the set of salient forms of behavior. However, we do not believe that this alone leads to a *resolution* of the problem of norm convergence within a society. While ideologically motivated behavior may effectively increase the feasible set of alternative norms, we would hold that these new norms will not be adopted broadly in the society until they are of reasonable cost and serve the interests (material or ideological) of those with bargaining power. In the case of indirect dowry, we see evidence that both of these conditions are close to being met. In 1994, by which point the "talk" of adopting the norm of indirect dowry had intensified, it was not uncommon for bridewealth to be as little as four cattle. This means that a change from bridewealth to dowry would represent minimal loss to a father, especially if he kept the dowry cattle "on behalf" of his daughter. Part of the attraction of receiving dowry instead of bridewealth is also that dowry does not have to be repaid upon divorce, while bridewealth does. In a time of rising divorce rates, this has not gone unnoticed by fathers.

Ideology can also hasten a change in social norms by affecting the ways in which social actors assess the existing set of possible forms of behavior. The beginnings of opposition to female circumcision among the Orma may be explained by the effects of outside ideological influences. Female circumcision has received a great deal of public and scholarly attention recently, much of it motivated by human rights concerns. Both human rights groups and scholars have commented upon the great difficulty involved in changing this practice, which appears to meet with more resistance than many other norms.

The Orma practice one of the more radical forms of female circumcision, involving infibulation of young girls at about the age of eight. The operation consists of the removal of all of the female genitalia. Infibulation involves stitching the wound in such a way that only a small opening remains for urination and menstruation. Among the Orma today there is universal compliance with this norm, but there is also discussion of change.

Some young educated men claim to be against the practice and say they wish not to circumcise their own daughters. This change in preference seems to be associated with young men who have gone to school, read newspapers, and traveled more widely where they have contact with other ethnic groups and are aware of the controversial nature of this practice. They cite the medical complications associated with the operation (even including the potential for the spread of AIDS during the operation) and are aware that it reduces women's sexual pleasure. This is an example of a change in preference caused by an introduction of

new information that has caused some of the Orma to change their evaluation of the benefits of the existing norm. As in other societies (Assaad 1980), it is in fact Orma women and elders who most staunchly defend the practice.

One scene observed by Ensminger during fieldwork in 1987 speaks to the process by which preferences change. Three well-educated young men were relaxing in the evening reading the national newspaper, which happened to have an unusually long and sophisticated article about the practice and medical implications of female circumcision. The young men read the article with absolute attentiveness. One looked up from the paper after finishing the piece and said, "I had no idea there were so many harmful medical complications associated with female circumcision. I don't want my daughters circumcised." The other two young men agreed, and a lengthy discussion ensued. When one of these young men later reported his new beliefs to his wife, she laughed, at first believing that he was not serious. Then, realizing that he was, she remarked that his mother would never allow it, the assumption being that she had the final word. And indeed in this case, she did.

This vignette about changing attitudes toward female circumcision also calls attention to the inhibiting effects of ideology on social change. When people are prepared to pay a price for noncompliance with those holding bargaining power, it is more difficult for the powerful to achieve compliance with their preferred norms. In two of our cases this was not a problem, and those cases illustrate the relative ease with which compliance can be "bought" in the absence of strong ideological commitment. In the case of bridewealth, wealthy elders can effectively increase their monopoly on women (as measured by the polygyny rate) by bidding up the price of bridewealth. The same principle applies to clan exogamy: wealthy elders can refuse to cooperate or marry with families who do not comply and reward those who do with more economic help (including bridewealth contributions) and more desirable marriages. As the price moves up and down, so does the incidence of these behaviors, eventually converging on something recognized as a norm.

The case of female circumcision, however, is more complicated. While one might hypothesize that the norm originated as part of a market-driven process—that, for example, wealthy men demanded the practice as verification of female virginity—this does not explain the dismantling of the norm. The wealthy elites of the 1990s, armed with information that makes female circumcision an undesirable norm from their point of view, cannot so easily use their status to favor uncircumcised women. Such a market mechanism might facilitate a change if there was a supply of uncircumcised women. But a pool of uncircumcised women does not yet exist because there is an asymmetry of information within their own families concerning the effects of female circumcision, and this leads to different preferences concerning the practice. Generally, women and more senior uneducated elders from elite families still prefer to have young girls circumcised.

Women raise two points in defense of circumcision. First, they mention that no uncircumcised girl would be able to marry, and second they note that infibulation is used to check upon the virginity of their daughters, and thus of course to certify their purity. Even those who are against circumcision are consistently won over by the marriageability argument. No parents wish to be the first and take the chance that their daughters will not be able to marry. This of course

prevents the creation of a supply of uncircumcised women with whom willing educated males could marry, thus signaling the erroneousness of the belief that uncircumcised girls will be unmarriageable. It is a catch-22. Another source of pressure to continue the practice comes from the uncircumcised young girls themselves, who are ridiculed by their age-mates as "silly little girls" once the age-mates have themselves undergone circumcision. As a marker of maturity and membership in an exclusive society, young girls may actually plead with their parents to let them be circumcised if they fall behind their age group.

Until relatively recently, whenever rumors surfaced that a young Orma girl was engaging in sexual activity, other young girls in the village were "inspected" to ensure that their virginity was intact. Such quasi-public inspections by a few old women in the village have now ceased. Young mothers explain that it is unfair to put innocent girls through such humiliation merely because one young girl is believed to have transgressed. Now mothers are expected to examine only their own daughters. Although it is still thought that a woman who is not a virgin has little chance of a desirable first marriage, in fact these days there are many first marriages between such young women and desirable young men. Young women often elope with their boyfriends. This is important, as one of the primary arguments by women in favor of maintaining circumcision is to be able to "police" the sexual activity of their daughters. Once virgin marriage is no longer the standard practice for women, the need for verification (served by infibulation) is undermined.

But the problem of disentangling the association between circumcision and marriageability remains emotionally potent. Who will dare to test its symbolic demise? Two young Orma men reported a public discussion that took place in front of senior elders. One married young man with daughters commented that he did not see the purpose of female circumcision and no longer approved of it. The old men quickly retorted that his daughters would then never marry and he had better not even discuss such a thing. One brazen young man then proclaimed in front of the old men, "I'll marry your daughters." This young man later explained that he in fact would rather marry an uncircumcised woman, as he would rather have a sexual partner who enjoyed sex.¹⁰ A quantitative survey of three hundred Sudanese husbands who had both circumcised and uncircumcised wives (Lightfoot-Klein 1989, 7), provides support for this young Orma man's perspective. This study found that all of the husbands preferred their noninfibulated wives to their infibulated wives as sexual partners. Holy (1991, 170, cited in Hicks 1993, 79) provides corroborating evidence from Sudan that men prefer a milder form of circumcision to infibulation. Other scholars have also reported that the custom is most strongly defended by women (Assaad 1980). The enthusiasm of young Orma men for this change raises the possibility that uncircumcised Orma girls would not have difficulty marrying, but it is a big chance for them to take.

It is a chance that four Orma men chose to take together. In the late 1980s, four well-educated and comfortably employed men with families made a pact to not circumcise their daughters and to marry among themselves. This was a serious agreement made among extremely close friends. Significantly, three of the four men involved lived outside the district at the time, although their families frequently returned home and sometimes lived there. Of the four men, three

have failed to prevent their own parents from having the operation performed on their daughters in their absence and against their wishes. The fourth succeeded two years longer than the others but eventually failed. As he put it, "What am I to do? I can't take my own parents to court."

The role of bargaining power on the part of the young men fighting for a change in this norm is highly evident. It is in fact the most financially independent young men who are pushing for a change. These young men of independent means still respect their fathers and clan elders, but they have less concern for the economic sanctions of senior men. These young men are driven in part by sincere concern for their daughters' well-being and are campaigning for a change that meets with strong opposition from everyone: their wives, their parents, their in-laws, and their senior elders. This campaign has costs for the innovators, though the daughters themselves potentially suffer the most no matter what the outcome. It is important to note in this example that while a new preference is the motivation for change, only the powerful are likely to be able to effect such change. Daughters of wealthy men will have the greatest chance of overcoming the initial stigma associated with being uncircumcised, as they are particularly desirable marriage partners. But even for the powerful, this change in norm is constrained by the continuing will of the population to enforce the old norm and the inability of the young men to establish a new norm that they could subsequently enforce. We turn now to this crucial aspect of norm change: enforcement.

ENFORCEMENT

Bargaining power clearly plays an important role in changing social norms. However, superior bargaining power does not guarantee a quick, nor even necessarily a successful, change in norms. Social actors wishing to establish a new norm must undertake the task of re-coordinating social expectations. They must find a way of shifting the focus of the expectations of the community from the existing norm to their preferred alternative. The complexity of the task varies with the interests of the different community members. For those whose interests would be enhanced by the new norm once it is established throughout the community, reformers face a task of assuring those people that others will also shift their behavior. This involves a process of coordinating expectations and enforcing new commitments. To be successful they must resolve the collective action problems necessary to assure these people that their interests will not be harmed by shifting to the new form of behavior. This requires a mechanism to enforce promises to comply with the new norm. Given the effects of norm uncertainty on individual benefits, any attempt to change existing norms is risky. Reformers must establish sanctions that make it costly to renege on promises to join the reform effort, otherwise the temptation to revert to the known benefits of the existing norm may fatally undermine their efforts.

The difficulty of the task of social change is further complicated by the enforcement problems that primarily involve those members of the community who are either indifferent to or opposed to the change. The task facing reformers vis-à-vis these people is akin to the more general problem of norm enforcement in a community. Any system of social norms must be reinforced by mechanisms of

sanction that create costs for noncompliance. Unless such mechanisms are established, community members whose interests would be enhanced by forms of behavior other than those embodied in the norm will have an incentive to deviate from established social expectations. The success of any effort to change social norms rests on the ability of reformers not only to momentarily change the focus of social expectations but also to maintain the change in those expectations.

We address issues related to both categories of enforcement problems. First, we look at a feature of many efforts to coordinate the expectations and behavior of those who prefer a change in an existing norm: a long time lag between the change in the norm and the realization of the costs and benefits of that change. Second, we consider a characteristic of sanctioning mechanisms that can significantly affect the creation and maintenance of new social norms: decentralized versus centralized enforcement.

One of the most important insights from the female circumcision example is the degree of coordination necessary to effect a change. We believe that the exceptional persistence of this norm is due in large part to the long time lag between a change in the norm (at the age of eight when circumcision is carried out) and evidence of the costs associated with change (at marriage, which may be at sixteen to twenty years of age). Thus, the norm of female circumcision is unlike the other cases in which the consequences of a change in the norm are proximate to the change, thus allowing both a reasonable assessment of the relative costs of the different norms and, more important, an assessment of the credibility of the commitments of others to a change in that norm. There are many years during which parents, close relatives, and friends can rethink their decision and reverse it. And this is indeed what happened among the four families whose male heads formed a pact. This extended time lag exacerbates the task of enforcement for those seeking to put an end to female circumcision.

The time lag also seriously heightens the uncertainty for any member of the community who seeks to challenge the existing norm. Even if a father is unconcerned about the immediate economic sanctions that he might suffer from noncompliance, he will have a difficult time assessing the probabilities regarding the severity of the potential consequences suffered by his daughters in the future. The existence of a time lag between the initiation of change and the experience of the consequences of that change may therefore be crucial to explaining the resilience of norms in the face of changing bargaining power and changing preferences. The time lag exacerbates the problem for original innovators of assessing the costliness of a norm change. Parents must act before there is any evidence to suggest what effect lack of circumcision will have upon their daughters' marriageability. While some young men profess to prefer to marry uncircumcised women, to date such promises remain untested. Parents must calculate the odds that the families of willing young men may refuse to help with the bridewealth in such marriages or otherwise make it clear to the young man that sanctions, such as a refusal to cooperate in the pooling of labor or to provide aid in crisis, may be imposed.

A second issue that can mitigate the ability of those with bargaining power to effect change in social norms is the degree of decentralization in the enforcement process. While decentralized enforcement may work against the interests of the powerful by exacerbating the coordination problems faced by those who seek to

solidify a change in norms, centralized enforcement often works to their advantage, as they may be in the position to harness the enforcement apparatus of the government toward their own ends. This may be seen in the abortion debate in the United States where each side attempts to capture the state and impose its preferences through the executive, legislature, and/or judicial branches of government. In Kenya, the debate over female circumcision could very well take this form in the end. One Orma woman expressed the fear that the government was becoming more motivated to use enforcement toward this end. She speculated that men's attitudes toward circumcision were changing because they were weak and afraid of going against the government's stated preferences to eradicate the practice.

The Orma elite have already turned to centralized enforcement to push through another change in norms that could not be accomplished through decentralized enforcement. In the 1980s the Orma turned over to the government responsibility for maintaining their borders, thereby effectively hastening the demise of their common grazing system of property rights (see Ensminger 1992). More restrictive property rights were definitely in the interest of the more powerful members of the community but could not be enforced against the norm of common grazing when they were dependent upon decentralized enforcement. This is not to say that whenever the government or other centralized enforcement bodies mandate compliance with a norm that their actions are necessarily effective. For example, the government of Kenya has tried to discourage female circumcision, but its failure to *enforce* such a preference renders it virtually meaningless all over the country, including among the Orma. Similarly, primary education was made mandatory in Kenya in 1978, but a year later only 3 percent of school age Galole Orma girls and only 30 percent of schoolage boys were in school. By 1994, the numbers were far higher, but they were still well below 50 percent.

In the example of female circumcision we see perhaps the ultimate in decentralized enforcement: different preferences within the family create struggles between husbands and wives, and between elders and juniors. In an interview on this subject with a husband and wife, the husband (whose wives knew him to be opposed to female circumcision) learned for the first time that his eight-year-old daughter had been circumcised without his knowledge approximately six months earlier. The wife was quite open with him about the fact that the rest of the family had had it done in his absence specifically because they knew he would not approve.

In the case of indirect dowry in lieu of forgone bridewealth, it is quite likely that one inhibition, even in those ideologically motivated to make the change, results from the pressure of kin who would be the recipients of some of the forgone bridewealth. Just as bridewealth is acquired by seeking help from one's kin and clan, so too must much of it be distributed to clearly specified individuals upon receipt. These individuals have an incentive to discourage the "altruistic" tendencies of those who would wish to forgo bridewealth for indirect dowry and greater adherence to Islamic law.

The common theme of these various examples is that the existence of a change in relative bargaining power does not guarantee a change in social norms. Once a norm has captured the attention of a community and has garnered the

compliance of some of its members, the effort to change it must still overcome the pressures to enforce the status quo. A significant part of this pressure will come from those members of the community whose interests will be adversely affected by the change. But another distinct source of pressure will derive from the inertia of stable expectations: even if someone would benefit as an individual from a change in the norm, she will not adopt the change unless she is confident that those in the community with whom she interacts will also comply with the change. Both time lags and decentralized enforcement will reinforce the effects of pressure in support of the status quo. However, this is not to say that relative bargaining power does not (all other things being equal) afford greater ability to enforce new norms and to resist the sanctions of those who persist in maintaining the status quo.

CONCLUSION

Social norms have traditionally been the main purview of sociological analysis. As we suggested in the introduction to this chapter, an interest in the importance of norms has spread through the other social sciences as we have come to understand an important fact about social life: our formal institutions, such as property rights, some forms of economic organization, and political institutions, are significantly affected by the network of informal institutions (social conventions and norms) in which the formal institutions are created. For example, norms governing economic interactions affect the capacity of property rights and other economic institutions to enhance economic performance (North 1990). Similarly, norms governing day-to-day political interactions affect the ability of a community to effectively employ institutions of democratic decisionmaking (Putnam 1993).

Given the significant effects produced by social norms, it is understandable that social conflict will arise over efforts to establish particular norms. The main focus of this chapter has been an effort to explain how this conflict affects the changing nature of these norms. Our analysis employs a bargaining model grounded in rational choice theory. The fact that such a model can accurately explain how conflicts of interest and bargaining power generate norm emergence and norm change undermines various criticisms of rational choice accounts of social institutions. More specifically, our analysis calls into question the criticism of those who have suggested that rational choice accounts of social norms are unable to incorporate power asymmetries and distributional consequences into their analysis (Oberschall and Leifer 1986; March and Olsen 1989). To the contrary, bargaining over the distributional effects of social norms is the primary explanation in our account.

But our analysis illustrates more than this. Conflict over social norms is a complex process. We have developed here two important characteristics of that complexity. First, we have highlighted the effects of ideological commitments and nonmaterial preferences in bargaining over changing norms. Our analysis shows that conflict is an important feature of normative change even when change is motivated by ideology. In such cases ideological commitment can serve both to motivate and to resist efforts to change norms. Second, we emphasized the problem of enforcement. In doing so, we identified conditions under which

change will be hampered even when it is motivated by those social actors who enjoy a relative bargaining advantage. The main reason why these conditions inhibit change is that they exacerbate a problem inherent in efforts to change norms: change must not only be initiated, but it must also be solidified over time through efforts to enforce compliance. As the bargaining process becomes more complex, so does the task of enforcement.

We share equal credit for any insights and equal responsibility for any errors in this essay. The empirical evidence in this chapter is based on Ensminger's fieldwork with the Orma from July 1978 to February 1981, and from April–December 1987, June–July 1994, and July 1996. This chapter builds upon the theoretical framework and empirical case studies discussed in more detail in Ensminger and Knight 1997. The research presented in this chapter was sponsored by the Beijer International Institute of Ecological Economics, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, with support from the World Environment and Resources Program of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. It was conducted as part of the research program, Property Rights and the Performance of Natural Resource Systems. We also wish to thank the Office of the President, Government of Kenya, for granting Ensminger clearance on three occasions to carry out the field research upon which this chapter is based. Ensminger also wishes to acknowledge the intellectual support and institutional affiliation provided by the members of the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi. The chapter has been much improved by the comments of participants in a conference sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation, "The New Institutionalism in Economic Sociology." In particular, we wish to thank Ted Bestor, Mary Brinton, Gary Hamilton, Paul Ingram, and Victor Nee.

NOTES

1. Here we are in agreement with Nee and Ingram's argument (in this volume) that analyses of the effects of social norms on social action must go beyond a narrow self-interest conception of institutional effects.
2. For a review of these alternatives see Knight (1995) and Ensminger and Knight (1997).
3. See Nee and Ingram (in this volume) for a related discussion of the factors that affect the capacity of groups to effectively enforce social norms.
4. Knight (1992, ch. 3) addresses a range of questions related to the similarities and differences between the concepts of behavioral regularity, social rules, and institutions.
5. See Taylor 1982 for an excellent discussion of the range of informal mechanisms that might be employed to enforce social norms.
6. The Orma are split into three divisions, with the Chaffa in the southern, the Galole in the middle, and the Hirman in the northern part of the region. This study is based upon Ensminger's four years of residence and research with the Galole Orma (in 1978 to 1981, 1987, and, briefly, in 1994 and 1996), and although this intermediate group is usually representative of the entire population, this should not be assumed.
7. There may be an increasing tendency for young men and women who wish to elope to do so but to call it a marriage by force. In this way, the girl appears to her parents to be an innocent victim who has been forced into an unapproved marriage that she in fact wishes to enter.
8. This is supported by numerous testimonials of young girls.
9. While wealth, measured in livestock, was less equitably distributed in 1987 than in earlier periods, income was more equitably distributed among households (Ensminger 1992). This anomaly is explained largely by the increasing significance of income from wage labor and trade. Although the analysis did not include a comparison of incomes among young men still

dependent upon their fathers, there is reason to believe that even more equity would be apparent in such a comparison because, with the exception of the most elite young men (those in trade and holding civil service jobs), there is little difference in the income earning capabilities of sons of rich and poor men. This pattern is quite likely to change in the future as education and commerce become more significant.

10. The Orma have had considerable contact with, and there has been some intermarriage between, two neighboring groups who do not circumcise women, the Pokomo and the Arabs who live in the district headquarters.

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