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The Exalted Women of Rwanda

A critical discourse analysis of female gender essentialisms within the

Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process

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Abstract

In 1994 Rwanda was consumed by one of the bloodiest genocides in modern times, culminating in 800,000 dead after twelve weeks. As the country has taken significant strides towards uniting the country across ethnic lines, Rwanda has seen a clear increase in women's representation in decision-making positions. This has been hallmarked by the inclusion of women in the post-genocide reconciliation process. The objective of this study has been to explore the collective perception of women in reconciliation in Rwanda through the employment of critical discourse analysis, featuring government and civil society representatives. Transcending Rwanda as a unique case, the concept of female gender essentialisms postulates how limited understandings of women's roles in peace and conflict impedes their agency and key findings suggest that the Rwandan reconciliation process is laden with essentialist assumptions of women, evidenced by the narratives of women as bearers of life, non-agents and peacemakers. This representation of women is attributed to the government's attempts at reconstructing the social fabric of Rwanda. Paradoxically, the very tenets that have sought to increase the participation of women in the post-genocide reconciliation process perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes, threatening not only reconciliation but also the greater quest for women's emancipation in Rwanda.

Key words: Rwanda; genocide; post-genocide; reconciliation; gender; gender essentialisms

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Abbreviations

CNLG	Commission for the Fight Against Genocide
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
HROC	Healing and Rebuilding our Communities
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

"Men managed badly. We are trying to see if women succeed where men failed."

Executive Secretary of CNLG, Jean de Dieu Mucyo (2009)

"There are no losers. When women advance, everyone benefits."

President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame (2015)

April 2015 marks 21 years since the Rwandan genocide, which is commemorated by an annual week of national mourning *Kwibuka* (remember in Kinyarwanda). The genocide, which saw an estimated 800,000 people being slaughtered in a little over 100 days, remains etched into the collective memory and, as Rwanda has taken significant strides towards reconstruction and, most importantly, reconciliation, the government has sought to unite the country across ethnic lines (Kohen et al. 2011: 102). Emerging from one of the bloodiest genocides in modern times, Rwanda has simultaneously undergone a transformation in gender relations and witnessed a clear increase in women's representation in decision-making positions. Following the 2013 elections, Rwanda's Parliament saw 64% of its seats being taken by women, remaining the highest percentage of female parliamentarians anywhere in the world (al Jazeera 2013). Throughout the post-genocide years, women-friendly policies have been promoted, leading to Rwanda being hailed as a 'gender revolution' and 'gender-equality trailblazer' (Baines et al. 2008). The government has also been lauded for its inclusion of women in peace and reconciliation. According to Katengwa, in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, "the issue of gender equality was aggressively integrated in peace building initiatives" (2010: 74). In 2007, President Kagame was awarded the African Gender Award on account of his engaging women in peacebuilding (Burnet 2008: 369).

This comes at a time when gender is increasingly being encouraged in peacebuilding. The Beijing Platform for Action reinforced the link between women's increased involvement and the safeguarding of local, national and international peace, also describing women as a force for conflict resolution (1995: Art. 18). In 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 outlined the importance of including women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, now widely regarded as a landmark shift in gender-sensitive conflict policy (S/RES/1325). This emphasis on women's participation in peacebuilding has dominated conflict transformation; however, Vincent offers a warning about perpetuating stereotypical assumptions of women in

peace, with the main concern being "its essentializing assumptions regarding who and what women are" (2003: 7). The underlying problem with this, according to Hudson, is the failure to see women as individuals with diverse and sometimes even opposing post-conflict needs (2009: 296). Sjoberg and Gentry contend that this gender discourse places expectations on women to play roles assigned to them due to their perceived peaceful nature. Paradoxically, this reduces women's agency, as the limited understanding of women's capabilities hampers their entering into expanded arenas of social and political life (2007: 10, 21-29). Given these potential implications, it is of key importance to explore why women are continuously linked with the ideals underpinning peacebuilding, and to ascertain potential impediments to the greater quest for women's liberation. It is for this cause that this study is offered.

2 Research objective

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the perceived role of women in the Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process. By studying Rwanda as a unique case, emerging from the ashes of genocide while simultaneously promoting women's inclusion in its reconstruction, this thesis aims to explore women's participation in peacebuilding and add to the overall understanding of changing gender roles in post-conflict societies. This thesis will centre on critical discourse analysis and employ the theoretical concept of female gender essentialisms in order to ascertain which ideas, values and norms dictate women's participation in the reconciliation process. Bringing greater insight into the social construction of Rwandan post-genocide society, the role between language and social reality will be explored by means of examining the collective view of women. This analysis will use a two-tiered approach and feature data gathered from both government documents and from civil society representatives, targeted at identifying discourse formation, function and consequence. In line with the research objective, the following research questions will be employed.

What is the discourse underpinning women's participation in the post-genocide reconciliation process?

What function do these discourses serve and what are the implications of their existence?

3 Contextualizing gender, genocide and reconciliation

3.1 The Rwandan genocide

On the evening of April 6 1994, a plane carrying Rwandan President Habyarimana was shot down en route to Kigali. Within the space of an hour, roadblocks were put up in the capital and members of the opposition attacked (Mayersen 2012: 14). Against the backdrop of a fragile peace agreement, the plane crash acted as a catalyst to trigger the Rwandan genocide, with an estimated 800,000 being killed over twelve weeks; since described as "the fastest, most efficient killing spree in the twentieth century" (Power 2002: 234). During the systematic elimination campaign, an average of 10,000 persons were killed daily (Tobin 2012: 28).

In order to fully comprehend this genocide, a brief overview of Rwanda's colonial past must be presented. Believing the Tutsi to be more intelligent, the Belgian authorities introduced an *apartheid* system which enacted the systematic discrimination of the Hutu[1] (Baisley 2014: 41-42). However, as Rwanda declared itself independent in 1962, Belgium shifted its support to the newly-organised Hutu opposition, with the first elected President of Rwanda, Grégoire Kayibanda, being Hutu. Thus, Rwanda remained, argues Gourevitch, an ethnically bi-polar state (1998: 67-72).

In October 1990 the Tutsi rebel group Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched an offensive to overthrow the President and end the persecution of Tutsi in Rwanda. The *coup d'état* brought with it civil war which lasted until 1993, when a fragile peace was agreed upon through the Arusha Accords, albeit increasing the ethnic tension between the groups (Gourevicth 1998: 97-98). With the primary aim of overseeing the peace agreement, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was established in 1993 and was present in Rwanda throughout the genocide (S/RES/872). However, the international community acted swiftly to reduce the mandate of the force once the genocide had commenced, in order to preserve vital self-interests. Preferring the terminology 'acts of genocide', in order to avoid the Genocide Convention of 1948, UN resolutions remained feeble and the global community silent (Power 2002: 335). In July 1994, the RPF seized Kigali, effectively ending the genocide. Bill Clinton has since named the Rwandan genocide as one of the biggest regrets of his Presidential tenure

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[1] It should be noted that, while Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were perceived to be racially different, this remains contested; today, it is generally acknowledged that these divisions are socially-constructed and born of Rwandan precolonial society (Mayersen 2012: 2-4). It remains illegal in Rwanda to denote individuals by their ethnicity. Subsequently, use of the terms Hutu, Tutsi and Twa is forbidden (Government of Rwanda 2003: Article 9).

(Bennet 1998). Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has also voiced remorse, saying that; "the international community failed Rwanda" (2004).

3.2 The Rwandan reconciliation process

Vowing to never relive the horrors of 1994 again, the newly-formed government rolled out the reconciliation process on both the political and inter-personal level. Two major government institutions, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG), were established to reconcile the population (Ndangiza 2012: 2-3). Whilst focusing efforts on reconciliation, extensive judicial initiatives were also introduced to adequately address the surplus of former *génocidaries*. Via domestic trials, and the *Gacaca* courts, Rwanda administered justice to the perpetrators, whilst the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, trialled the orchestrators of the genocide. Notably, the ICTR set a new precedent when stipulating rape as an act of genocide by convicting Jean-Paul Akayesu, who was responsible for ordering the mass rape of Tutsi women (Jones 2010: 81).

Within the international community, the reconciliation process in Rwanda has principally been lauded as a success, as the country has crucially avoided a relapse into mass violence. In the 2010 Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer, produced by NURC, 97% of respondents stated that Rwandan identity took precedence over ethnicity, with the terms Hutu, Tutsi and Twa seemingly lacking significance (Crisafulli and Redmond 2012: 9, 82-84). However, Kohen et al. argue that, in the government's attempts to foster social cohesion using a 'reconciliation through unity' approach, victor's justice has been allowed to take precedence (2011: 95). With reconciliation in Rwanda largely a state-driven process, the government alone has dictated both the agenda and the means of reconciling. The process has featured largely symbolic acts, for instance the erecting of memorials and the issuing of public apologies (Brounéus 2008: 302, 307). Conversely, the government has been accused of seeking retribution over reconciliation by allowing the cycle of violence to continue through the public execution of Hutu prisoners (Kohen et al. 2011: 87, 94-95).

3.3 Women's experiences in post-genocide Rwanda

The post-genocide period in Rwanda has allowed women to assume roles traditionally reserved for men, with Powley arguing that female participation has improved significantly in both the

political and economic spheres (2005: 159). However, while gender equity has increased, more conservative views have also been promoted. Traditional values of womanhood have been upheld during the reconciliation process, with, in particular, family-oriented views of women being reinstated, in order to mend the social fabric of the country. As such, their participation in peacebuilding was awarded to women on account of their femininity; Meintjes writes; "women became the bedrock of constructing the peace through their roles as mothers and caregivers" (2001: 72). Hudson echoes this sentiment, and suggests that the record participation of women was laden by stereotypical female attributes of purity and peacefulness, something which "Rwandan society desperately needs to call upon" (2009: 304). Herdon and Randell contend that women have been upheld as powerful symbols of healing in the aftermath of genocide, depicted as beacons of peace (2013: 75).

Scholars have pointed to gender bias in the handling of the post-genocide reconstruction of Rwanda. In a study of the judicial processes, Hogg notably identified the unequal treatment of women and men, with female *génocidaries* frequently absolved of guilt under the banner of so called 'male chivalry', resulting in lesser sentences for women than for men (2010: 81). Male witnesses, prosecutors and judges perpetuated the stereotypical assumption that women are unable to commit heinous acts by passing more lenient sentences, and Hogg writes that they were "infected by gender stereotypes that they either cannot perceive of women as criminals or feel protective towards them in spite of their suspected or proven criminality" (*Ibid*). This resulted in only 6% of prisoners in Rwanda being women, something which does not concur with anecdotal evidence from the genocide (*Ibid*). In a similar study of the post-genocide Rwandan refugee crisis, Hamilton surveyed the treatment of civilians in refugee camps in neighbouring DRC and found that the dominant discourse in the handling of refugees was governed by assumptions of women (along with children) as non-combatants, worthy of assistance (1999: chapter V). This is juxtaposed with the treatment of men, who were *de facto* assumed to be ex-combatants who had participated in the killings. Hamilton highlights "their assumption - based on stereotypes about gender roles in war - that women and children are automatically innocent, and young men are automatically guilty" (*Ibid*). This is in stark contrast to the different roles played by women during the genocide. In the prelude to the killings, Gallimore contends that numbers of women in the Rwandan army had increased, due to Hutu women having signed up inspired by the spread of anti-Tutsi propaganda (2008: 19). Also, the *interahamwe* saw more women join in the struggle for what was perceived to be Hutu ethnic survival. Women participated in the killings, both directly and indirectly, notably encouraging

fellow male militia to rape Tutsi women (*Ibid*: 22). Taylor argues that women were agents during the genocide on a par with men (1999: 154). In contrast, Powley contends that women also suffered greatly during the genocide, frequently subjected to non-lethal violence such as rape and torture (2005: 158). As such, women assumed many different roles during the genocide - as perpetrators, bystanders and victims.

In the aftermath of the genocide, many scholars have argued that women have found it difficult to heal and find forgiveness. Hamme-Hategekimana presents a study in which the majority of women have been unable to find emotional peace in post-genocide Rwanda (2009: 58). Crucially, widespread PTSD still exists among female survivors, with anxiety, fear and sorrow being a part of daily life. These feelings are often coupled with a sense of injustice and unconquerable power imbalances; Hamme-Hategekimana concludes that these sentiments risk impeding the overall success of the reconciliation process (*Ibid*: 50). In a similar vein, Brounéus has conducted research into men's and women's attitudes towards reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. Central to the study is the 'women in peace' hypothesis, suggesting that women have more positive attitudes towards reconciliation (2014: 125, 128). Findings have demonstrated the contrary, with women being significantly more negative in their attitudes vis-à-vis trust, co-existence and participation in the *Gacaca* courts. Women reported having experienced traumatic events to a higher degree than men, and consequently, Bronéus writes; "women were less likely than men to believe that most people can be trusted or that others will try to be fair" (*Ibid*: 143). Notably, men surpassed women in believing in post-war coexistence.

4 Theoretical framework

4.1 Gender essentialisms

Butler has contributed greatly to the understanding of femininity and masculinity as social constructs, far removed from the biological determinant of sex and the biology-as-destiny premise (1999: 9). Rejecting the notion of women (and men) as a homogenous group, Butler argues that gender is neither causal nor fixed. Instead, it is constantly being defined and redefined in a cosmos of power relations and in systems of representation (*Ibid*: 10). However, scholars argue that an essentialist view has traditionally dominated the gender discourse. According to Connell, gendered identity is constantly being created within the notions of contrast and distinction. As such, masculinity is defined in direct opposition to femininity (1995: 68). Carpenter offers the term gender essentialisms to describe these reductions in

identity, categorizing genders according to preconceived roles and responsibilities. Gender essentialisms are defined as "tropes associating men and women with mutually exclusive and oppositional attributes" (2005: 296). These norms carry and continue the notions of accepted actions for the genders, and limit our understanding of behaviour to stereotypical assumptions regarding male and female roles.

4.2 Female gender essentialisms

Within the realm of international relations, Carpenter continues that women are frequently portrayed as innocent, dependent and vulnerable, thus signalling the need to offer protection and assistance. Women are shown as caregivers and charged with safeguarding those who cannot protect themselves, principally children and the elderly (2005: 305-306). These narratives reiterate women in accordance with narrow stereotypes, but also act to deny men adequate protection in times of hostility. Simply, by framing women as bystanders to violence, men are inevitably perceived as combatants. Gender essentialisms thus carry understandings regarding who is in need of protection, solely based on the values communicated in the discourse (*Ibid*: 303).

In Carpenter's gender essentialisms, perceived womanhood dictates perceived manhood, and vice versa. In other words, oppositional attributes reinforce and manifest stereotypical images, working to the disadvantage of both genders. Sjoberg, however, offers criticism of Carpenter, holding that feminist understanding is missing in this line of argument. Carpenter is criticized for disregarding the overwhelming disadvantage women are subject to, while Sjoberg argues that gender stereotypes of women, as innocent, vulnerable and in need of protection, act to undermine women's agency, limiting both autonomy and authority. Sjoberg contends that the gender essentialisms correctly identified by Carpenter are symptomatic of a wider discourse emphasizing the dominance of men and the subordination of women (2006: 892). Acting in chorus, Tickner and Sjoberg denote this as "ideal-typed masculinity sitting on top of the hierarchy of gender tropes, contrasted at the other end of the spectrum to a subordinated femininity that is a necessary 'other' to the powerful, hegemonic masculinity" (2011: 4). As female gender essentialisms portray women as innocent and vulnerable, women are systematically marginalized and impeded in many areas of social life (Sjoberg 2006: 892). This definition of female gender essentialisms, reflecting the societal power imbalances ultimately obstructing women's emancipation, overlooked by Carpenter, will serve as the main basis for

examining women's participation in the Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process. Below, this concept will be theoretically explored in relation to peacebuilding.

4.3 Female gender essentialisms in war and peace

Within female gender essentialisms, women are held to carry different narratives in war and peace, pertaining to the same imagery and underlying assumptions. Here, Sjoberg presents the 'beautiful soul' narrative, contending that women in conflict often are portrayed as innocent, peaceful, apolitical and withdrawn, eliminating any justification for their agency. Women's violence is instead associated with flaws in their femininity, maternity and/or sexuality (2010: 58). The presumption is that women, inherently, are more peaceful than men, and thus require extraordinary circumstances in order for them to choose to actively engage in combat or political violence (*Ibid*: 60, 64). Sjoberg and Gentry argue that these essentialist narratives aim to make sense of women's violence, depicted as different from men's violence and participation in conflict (2007: 29). While men choose to fight of their own volition, women engaging in conflict are forced to surrender the peaceful core of their womanhood. Typically, conflict is believed to erode the fabric of social life, often paving the way for new gains for women. However, Turshen argues that, while gender roles are often renegotiated after war, sexist beliefs remain. These assumptions centre on women's natural duties as regards safeguarding peace (2001: 83).

In line with the 'beautiful soul narrative', Sjoberg and Gentry put forward the mother, monster and whore discourse theory, stipulating that women are categorized in accordance with certain narratives when choosing to engage in violence (2007: 27). These aim to explain the women who do not conform to the traditional conceptions of femininity. The mother narrative attributes women's violence to fulfilling their biological destinies as wives and mothers, either through being a nurturing mother, ready to take up arms to defend those around her, or acting as a vengeful mother, who, due to being denied her maternal *raison d'être,* seeks to harm and cause suffering to others (*Ibid*: 31-35). Conversely, the monster narrative puts forward the notion that women engage in violence due to a "biological flaw that disrupts their femininity" (*Ibid*: 36). Violent women are demonized and shown to be breaching their fundamental instincts as peaceful, innocent and nurturing when they decide to injure or kill. Compared to men, depicted as predictable and rational in their violence, violent women are stripped of any ability for rational decision-making during conflict. Lastly, the whore narrative centres on women driven

by sexual desire to commit heinous acts, ultimately equating women's violence with their sexuality (*Ibid*: 41). This seeks to categorize women's violence in terms of violating the purity and innocence of the ideal. These narratives hold women to be peaceful, firmly placing conflict, such as ideology-driven genocide, within the male domain.

These essentialist narratives of women's violence are all united by a perceived core of womanhood. The general understanding of what a 'real' woman is, is laden with values of peacefulness, innocence and self-restraint (*Ibid*: 51). As such, together with essentialist assumptions of appropriate female behaviour in violence and war, there are, by default, perceptions of women in peace. Carpenter shows how women's maternity acts as a presumed predisposition for peace-making, arguing that; "women's role as mothers is linked to an assumption that they are inherently peaceful, which has led some actors to frame women as peace-building resources" (2005: 306). According to Sideris, post-conflict society is often laden with the traditional notion of women as peacemakers, on account of their inherent nurturing instincts and victimization during the conflict (2001: 50). Sjoberg holds that the systematic denial of women's agency and autonomy in violence only strengthens their role in peace and reconciliation, thus acting to mutually reinforce each other (2010: 56). By emphasizing what women are during violence, assumptions of women during peace become clearer. As such, the same gender narratives that act to categorize women at war, categorize women during peace. Turshen presents women's peace activities as a welcomed "natural extension of their nurturing and caring domestic roles as wives and mothers" (2001: 91). Women's peace activities are encouraged, despite the prevalence of often well-documented evidence of female participation in conflict (*Ibid*: 90).

Sjoberg contends that female gender essentialisms factor into a broader power matrix, often acting to legitimize a certain agenda. Frequently employed as *casus belli*, the portrayal of women serves to motivate and mobilize war. Innocent and pure women are worth protecting and thus constitute a moral license to engage in violence (2010: 61). Female gender essentialisms also serve to limit the realm of women's roles and responsibilities. Through the designation of certain attributes, women are positioned within the private sphere and most notably the household domain, ultimately creating a 'natural' space for them. This part of the essentialist narratives acts to distinguish between the private (in which women are situated) and matters of state (in which war is situated) (*Ibid*: 65). Continuing this line of thought, Carpenter argues that the manifestation of gender essentialisms seeks to tie into a broader, pre-existing

cultural discourse (2005: 311-312). Essentialist narratives portraying women and men in accordance with certain characteristics are mediated by the broader, strategic environment in which they are found. As such, systems of representation are permeated by strategy, crucially resonating with pre-existing norms. This serves to continue to create and recreate the limited understanding of gendered participation. In post-conflict settings, Helms argues that women risk getting caught in a paradox since they are charged with achieving reconciliation on the basis of their perceived qualities while also being subject to restrictive gender essentialisms (2003: 15-17). This creates a setting wherein women struggle to transcend their assigned roles, keeping them locked into stereotypes (Herndon and Randell 2013: 80). According to Hudson, peace can only be consolidated when the true variety of women's roles in conflict, beyond the myths of femininity, is acknowledged and upheld (2009: 295-296). Connell concludes that essentialisms only act to limit the full participation of men and women (1995: 72).

5 Methodological framework

5.1 Research design

Although once described as the "poor cousin among social science methods", by Van Evera (1997: 3), Yin maintains that case studies offer the ability to focus on a single setting whilst simultaneously providing a more holistic outlook on social phenomena (2014: 4). Flyvbjerg suggests that case studies offer closeness to real-life situations, presenting a wealth of information and offering the unique ability to add or detract from a specific theory (2006: 223, 227). As such, this thesis will follow a case study design, ideal for studying the Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process. This will be directed through different qualitative data collection methods; document analysis, interviews and direct observations.

Yin offers four principles which increase the case study's validity and reliability, and which will be key to the implementation of this study. Firstly, evidence must be collected from multiple sources; secondly, it must be archived in a case study database; thirdly, a chain of evidence must be demonstrated; and fourthly, care must be exercised when handling electronic data (*Ibid*: 118-129). These principles guided the data collection in Rwanda and data analysis in Sweden, and served as key objectives to ensure the high quality of the study. Data collection ultimately began upon arrival in Kigali, Rwanda, in late November 2014, and concluded after nine weeks upon departure for Sweden.

5.2 Data collection

5.2.1 Sampling

This thesis is based on a two-tiered approach, i.e. seeking to include direct accounts from Rwandan civil society as well as key documentation from the government. With regard to civil society, seven organisations agreed to participate either through observations and/or interviews (after initially approaching ten preselected organisations). These organisations vary in mandate, ranging from community trauma counselling to liaising with international partners on peacebuilding. Including these was a conscious effort to feature different parts of the post-genocide reconciliation effort, which should be viewed as a wide and varying effort. For reasons of anonymity, none of the organisations will be named, featured here as 'Organisations A-G' instead.

5.2.2 Interviews

The primary source of data collection was semi-structured interviews with representatives from civil society organisations. According to Yin, interviews constitute solid evidence for case studies and increase the researcher's insights into the complex social phenomenon at the centre of the study (2014: 110). When conducting the interviews, the primary objective was to foster a relaxed atmosphere whilst gently steering the interview in the preferred direction of inquiry. The aim was thus to create a setting where the respondent felt comfortable and in control, yielding more spontaneous and natural replies. However, Yin warns of the possibility of bias on the part of the respondents, and the inherent need to please the interviewer (*Ibid*: 76-77). As the research aims to explore gender essentialisms within the reconciliation process, bias will only serve to highlight the issue. As such, interviewing constitutes the foundation for critical discourse analysis in which all evidence will be viewed through discursive perspectives (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 158). This helps further validate the choice of method.

The respondents were either paid or unpaid staff, generally depending on the financial capacity of the organisation. Creswell argues that case studies should ideally employ the maximum variation in sampling, but due to the limited time spent in Rwanda, the selection process was directed in order to gain fruitful data (2007: 129). Thus, the sampling was a purposive hinging on pre-selected respondents (Silverman 2010: 141). Pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, the key objective was to pose similar questions to all respondents. For this purpose, an interview

guide[2] was designed. However, from a discourse-analysis perspective, varying answers, and even contradictions, provide a rich vein of material. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that a "discursive understanding treats attitudes and the self as interrelationally constituted, as emerging out of discursive acts and performances in social interaction" (2009: 228). As such, the pursuit of objective representations of the respondents' reality and inner meanings dissolves, instead directing the analytic inquiry towards the discursive production of the social world, using interviews as a finely-tuned method (*Ibid*: 230).

All the interviews, except for two that were conducted in Kinyarwanda, were held in English. Below is a list of respondents (1-13), presented by organization. The sampling group comprised five women and eight men, varying in age from early twenties to mid-sixties.

- o 'Respondent 1' female, co-founder of 'Organisation A' [40 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 2' male, co-founder of 'Organisation A' [49 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 3' male, director of 'Organisation B' [58 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 4' male, country director of 'Organisation C' [63 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 5' female, volunteer at 'Organisation C' [41 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 6' male, founder of 'Organisation D' [24 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 7' male, director of 'Organisation D' [52 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 8' male, programme director of 'Organisation D' [41 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 9' female, administrative assistant at 'Organisation E' [53 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 10' male, coordinator at 'Organisation E' [48 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 11' female, consultant at 'Organisation E' [37 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 12' female, country manager of 'Organisation F' [36 minute interview]
- o 'Respondent 13' male, programme director of 'Organisation G' [45 minute interview]

Additionally, three separate interviews were conducted with scholars regarding gender issues and post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda. These were held in Kigali and will act to consolidate the findings of the analysis.

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[2] For the interview guide, see Appendix 1.

5.2.3 Direct observations

Observations were also selected in order to collect data for the study. Conducted in the real-world setting of the case, Yin maintains that observations significantly add insight to the analysis (2014: 113-114). According to Bryman, unstructured observations can aid the creation of a narrative account of the participants' behaviour (2012: 273). Although not a given methodology for discourse analysis, perhaps, especially with native language of Rwanda being Kinyarwanda, observations contributed to a deeper understanding of the reconciliation process, and helped strengthen relationships with the people being studied. Observations were made at office facilities and field sites, and comprised the following events, presented in chronological order.

- o Reconciliation workshop with 'Organisation C' [3 day observation]
- o HROC[3] workshop with 'Organisation E' [3 day observation]
- o Peacebuilding institute with 'Organisation D' [1 day observation]
- o Peace radio with 'Organisation A' [1 day observation]

5.2.4 Document analysis

The final method employed is document analysis, which is a key technique in case studies but also provides evidence of discourse analysis; to this Yin claims that it is crucial to look beyond documents in terms of containing unmitigated truths and objective realities (2014: 108). Although not noticeable, perhaps, documents produced by key players, such as governments, offer the ability to perpetuate a subjective understanding of the world. This renders document analysis highly suitable for this study, as discourse continues to be constructed and reconstructed through texts such as policy documents and speeches (Bryman 2012: 537).

Documentary evidence was sourced from the Rwandan government and the NURC. Each can be viewed as a significant document in the reconciliation process, with one constituting an important policy document and the others key speeches on reconciliation made by the President.

- o NURC (2005) *The Role of Women in Reconciliation and Peace Building in Rwanda: Ten Years after Genocide 1994-2004*.

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[3] HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities) is a training course designed to bring together survivors and perpetrators, facilitating trauma counselling and education concerning the psychological effects of mass violence.

- o Kagame, P. (2011) *Keynote Address by H.E. President Paul Kagame to the High Level Meeting on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Rwanda's Experience*. November 8, 2011. Kigali, Rwanda.
- o Kagame, P. (2014) *Speech by H.E. President Paul Kagame, 20th Commemoration of Genocide Against the Tutsi*. April 7, 2014. Kigali, Rwanda.

5.3 Limitations of the study

As the research objective is to identify discourse formation, function and consequence, the study will seek to generalize and find common narratives in Rwanda. As such, personal accounts will not feature in the thesis. Aiming instead to identify shared perceptions of women's participation in post-genocide reconciliation, the study will not bring forward individual women's voices. This may test the feminist purpose of the thesis, as shedding light on women's experiences is seen as the foundation of feminist research (Bryman 2012: 410-41). However, critically examining discourse also acts to challenge asymmetrical power relations in society, which include unequal gender relations.

Ingelaere argues that life in post-genocide Rwanda constitutes a complex social context to examine as a foreign researcher, made difficult by the government's attempts at image control and by subsequent self-censorship among the Rwandan population (2010: 52-53). Instead, it is necessary to look beyond the Kigali-based elite, made up of English-speaking professionals, when researching the reconciliation process, as this offers only a superficial and misleading portrayal of the general situation of Rwandans (*Ibid*: 52). This presents another potential drawback of this thesis, as the majority of data was gathered in Kigali from the 'urban elite', as described by Ingelaere. Nonetheless, the sampling and methodology remain aligned with the research objective, ultimately rendering them suitable for the study.

5.4 Ethical considerations

5.4.1 Research in Rwanda

While Rwanda has taken significant strides towards achieving peace and prosperity, the genocide and post-genocide reconciliation process remains contentious. Gready argues that the Rwandan government has adopted a 'you're either with us or against us' mentality, systematically inhibiting social commentary (2010: 641). Regrettably, when conducting research, it is vital to take into consideration the political climate in Rwanda. Proceeding with

sensitivity becomes important so as not to invoke the government's condemnation; consequently, the full anonymity of all those featured in this research has to be preserved, thus, serving to protect the respondents from any potential backlash from this study.

Moreover, according to Jessee, the Rwandan government has sought to protect its public from poorly-designed studies by international researchers, which in the past have inflicted emotional distress on respondents, even contributing to re-traumatization (2012: 267). In light of this, respect for the people featured in this study has been demonstrated during all stages of the process. However, it is also worth remarking upon that the research conducted does not feature those directly benefiting from reconciliation, i.e. vulnerable people such as survivors or perpetrators. Interviews have only been conducted with facilitators of organisations, and observations have only taken place after close deliberation and the elimination of potential backlashes. The informed consent of all stakeholders has guided the process[4].

5.4.2 The Western feminist researcher

Moving on to the discussion of positionality, this thesis remains governed by liberal and feminist values. Sultana maintains that it is of key importance to reflect upon the constructions of one's own identity when conducting research; indeed, these values were strengthened upon entering the 'field' (2007: 382). Liberalism and feminism are personal beliefs, but also products of the Western context of which I am part; my understanding of gender is most probably born of the Western view of gender (Thuiwai Smith 2008: 60). This highlights the importance of value systems in research; thus, anytime an outsider conducts research in another setting, a unique and inherent set of values, a cultural orientation and structures of power pertaining to both the researcher and the researched, factors into the construction process. With this, Tuhiwai Smith voices concern over the tendency of Western scholars to conduct research through so called 'Imperial eyes' (*Ibid*: 58-59, 66). While there may exist a genuine awareness of positionality, the researcher remains unable to fully eradicate the assumption that Western ideas are logical, and simply the only way in which to make sense of the social world.

Opie contends that feminist research runs the risk of reproducing the unequal power relations often lying at the very centre of the research problem. The relationship between the researcher

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[4] This was conducted through verbal consent, with respondents agreeing to participate after having received a spoken explanation of the research objective and design.

and the researched thus needs to be scrutinized in order to avoid the "textual appropriation of the researched" (2008: 362). Instead, Opie argues that good research mandates the researcher to present competing voices within a society – voices that also challenge preconceived notions. As such, the ideological conviction of the researcher should not dictate which accounts are included in the final report (*Ibid*: 365). This has been a conscious strategy from the outset and perceptions of women, however divergent, will be highlighted and anchored in a broader discourse analysis aimed at assisting in women's development in Rwanda. Taking this into account, however, Alcoff argues that the practice of speaking for others, as is frequent in social research, only seeks to reinforce the social positions and asymmetrical power relations between the researcher (the speaker) and the researched (the spoken for) (2008: 485-486). This adheres to the premise that those who are in need of advocacy must advocate for themselves, in order to bring about real change; yet, Alcoff also states that it would be irresponsible to not highlight those who are oppressed and the surrounding circumstances in which oppression continue to exist (*Ibid*). As such, there is value in researching social inequalities, as was the intention in this thesis by means of employing a critical discourse analysis.

6 Critical discourse analysis

6.1 An introduction to discourse

The study of gender essentialisms within the Rwandan reconciliation process will be conducted using critical discourse analysis. This will centre on documents produced by the government and on interviews with civil society representatives, both of which will be viewed as a cohesive body of work. Gready contends that, in the case of Rwanda, the national government exercises key control over civil society, and as such, non-governmental organisations remain "state-determined" (2010: 656). With regard to the reconciliation process, civil society has been given the role of facilitating peacebuilding and reconciliation activities in-line with the government's approach. Ndangiza and Mugabo argue that the reconciliation process, in its entirety, is based on a national vision, with all actors conforming to national strategy (2008: 14). Wielenga contends that the NURC was responsible for developing a collective narrative of remembrance, which has permeated the many facets of Rwandan society (2012: 12). It can thus be concluded that texts from the government and civil society reconciliation process follow the same line, and will be treated accordingly.

Foucault has played a pivotal role in conceptualizing discourse, offering insight into discourse analysis and construction. The Foucauldian constructivist approach offers discourse as a powerful social phenomenon, constituting what is perceived, and ultimately accepted, to be true (1972: 115, 117). In other words, truth is created discursively (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 13). The production of discourse, according to Foucault, centres on linguistic activity such as texts, sentences and statements, which act to limit and define discourse. As such, discourse is continuously being recreated in a fixed and firm fashion (1972: 87, 99). Foucault maintains the need to actively exercise discourse analysis, in order to avoid succumbing to its command; of paramount importance is the need to constantly examine, deconstruct and challenge discourse (*Ibid*: 26, 52).

6.2 Conducting critical discourse analysis

While it is generally contended that Foucault's discourse theory has influenced the emergence of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough crucially expands its social criticism (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 91-92). Anchored in the ontology of critical theory, critical discourse analysis seeks to observe the broader conditions in which text is produced and interpreted, with the importance of ideology and ideological sense-making being highlighted as instructive for the formation of discourse in society (Fairclough 1989: 86-90). This also provides the epistemology of critical realism, offering the ability to identify and challenge discourse in society (Bryman 2012: 29). This ontological and epistemological point of departure will thus help guide the thesis, in order to make sense of the findings in relation to discourse.

Expanding Foucault's theory, Fairclough specifies discourse as text, interaction and social context (1989: 109). The social conditions that surround discourse relate to text production and interpretation by the members of the discourse, and in turn these conditions correspond to three different social organisational levels; i.e. the social environment in which the discourse is found; the social institution which constitutes the medium for the discourse; and lastly; the level of society. Exploring these three levels links with viewing discourse as the broader, dynamic relationship and following Fairclough's model of analysis entails committing oneself to analysing the multifaceted relationship between texts and the social conditions in which they appear (*Ibid*: 25-26). To this end, three key stages of critical discourse analysis are put forward; description, interpretation and explanation. *Description* relates to the text design, *interpretation* to the relationship between text and interaction, and *explanation* to how the relationship

between interaction and social context is organised (*Ibid*: 109). These stages will serve as the basis for data analysis in the study.

Commencing with the description stage, Fairclough presents analysis of vocabulary, grammar and textual structures. Reflecting upon this will provide a deeper insight into the text, and touch upon issues pertaining to experiential (knowledge and beliefs), relational (social relations) and expressive (social identities) values. This will reveal which messages are put forward by means of vocabulary choice and structure. For instance, applying euphemisms, metaphors, synonyms or even antonyms has the ability to portray powerful imagery and allows the researcher to locate ideological assumptions (*Ibid*: 112-138). Linking to the research objective of exploring female gender essentialisms, it is also recommended by Fairclough to explore words used to describe ostensibly oppositional beings, e.g. men and women (*Ibid*: 116).

At the interpretation stage, a deeper analysis of the relationship between the text and social structures is explored. Examining this relationship, which is mediated by discourse, thus looks beyond text formation. The values enshrined in the text being examined only become operative when they correspond to common-sense assumptions in discourse (which also provide texts with values), adding value to the analysis. Crucially, interpretation centres on both what the text contains and how it is interpreted by the reader – or, member of discourse. This interpretation is the direct result of internal or external cues in the text, which only become valid when part of underlying ideological assumptions (*Ibid*: 140-141). Moreover, incorporated in interpretation are presupposed notions regarding the messages woven into the texts, be they sincere, manipulative or ideological in nature. One example of this, offered by Fairclough, is frames of perceived womanhood, activated by cues in the text regarding what it is to be a woman (*Ibid*: 152, 159). This illustrates how critical discourse analysis was conducted in order to comply with the research objective.

Reaching the final stage, explanation constitutes the broadest (and subsequently also the vaguest) form of analysis. The objective is to identify discourse as a social process and practice, pre-determined by social structures. Here, discourse is seen as constituting unequal power relations, wielded by authority and driven by ideology (*Ibid*: 162-166). Crucially, Fairclough concludes that this closing part of the analysis must be guided by theory, since the analysis must avoid untheorized assumptions of society; here the concept of female gender essentialisms will guide the analysis. Sjoberg and Gentry emphasize the importance of discourse analysis for

understanding the portrayal of men's and women's roles in war and peace, advocating gendered voices that ultimately evoke "discursive destabilization" (2007: 53). As participation is dictated by stereotypical assumptions of gender, female gender essentialisms are anchored within a dominant discourse. In a reality of conflicting stories, this dominant discourse dictates what is exalted and, subsequently, what is overlooked. Sjoberg and Gentry argue that "what is said matters, but what is unsaid matters as well, and the context, the source and the knower of who speaks and who does not all matter in the telling of stories and making of assertions" (*Ibid*: 52). Thus, conducting critical discourse analysis lends itself to the primary aim of this study, and crucially falls within the frames of the theoretical framework, interpreting the underlying assumptions of women's participation in the reconciliation process.

7 Results and analysis

By employing critical discourse analysis, it was possible to uncover collective perceptions of the role of women in the Rwandan reconciliation process. By means of engaging both civil society and government, three prominent narratives of women emerged - women as bearers of life, women as non-agents, and women as peacemakers. These frames depict women in accordance with ostensibly inherent attributes and behaviours during peace and conflict, appearing undisputed and being carried by means of the deployment of gender tropes and female gender essentialisms. The narratives will be illustrated through the use of quotes from the data.[5]

With women charged with the wellbeing and protection of those around them, as well as with consolidating a culture of peace in post-genocide Rwanda, these narratives feature in a broader interplay of discourse pertaining to the reconstructing of society and a simultaneous exaltation of traditional values. These narratives are continuously being created and recreated, generating a broader impact on both women and men during the post-genocide period.

7.1 Conceptualizing women in reconciliation

7.1.1 Women as bearers of life

Throughout the reconciliation process, women are presented in terms of being endowed with a natural ability for, and an interest in, fostering peace. This is intrinsically linked to an

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[5] For additional quotes serving as the foundation of the discourse analysis, see Appendix 2 where these are categorized in accordance with the three identified narratives.

essentialist understanding of womanhood, permeated by qualities of innocence, purity and peacefulness. Primarily, the portrayal of women is connected to the roles assumed within the household, most notably as mothers, wives and homemakers. The emphasis of these roles seeks to signify a special concern uniting all women. As such, there exists no disparity between women and mothers - the assumed natural state is motherhood. This transcends the notion of individuality, and seeks to categorize women as a homogenous group. Furthermore, womanhood and motherhood work to mutually reinforce each other, acting only to increase the essentialist perception of women.

Crucially, women are represented as the bearers of inherent values with the capability of transferring these to others. These values centre on preserving the welfare of those around them. The biological function of giving life thus appears to concur with the emotional function of protecting life. As highlighted in the quote below, the NURC attributes the aptitude of women for serving in post-conflict settings to maternity (2005: 18).

"As bearers of life, women can offer a special perspective and experience which will help to overcome prevailing life-destroying methods of dealing with human problems and conflicts. Since military conflicts and diplomacy, which have traditionally been exclusively orchestrated by men, have failed to be a reliable system to safeguard peace, the inclusion of women in all stages of the peace process becomes imperative."

Women are primarily seen as capable of instilling peaceful values into children, acting to transfer a certain set of values to future generations. This positions women as nurturing, able to assist in the peaceful development of those around them. In the following quote, Respondent 4 draws attention to the key role of mothers in peacebuilding activities.

"Women that are equipped, they're good mothers and they know children […] The reason why reconciliation that is brought by women will be spread to the country easier because they spend time with their children and those children, their generation, the future generation, the future president, the future, that's the hope of our country."

As women have ability to give life, then, this is also assumed to create a reluctance to claim lives, and a greater respect for the sanctity of life itself. Respondent 2 maintains that women are more concerned about life.

"When, you know, women they seem to be good advisors and they are more careful in whatever they do. I do appreciate their carefulness I have learned from women, and how they, they are also concerned, this concern, having concerns for life, they become life protectors. They become more caring, the have caring spirit in them."

With capability comes responsibility, and women are ostensibly charged with the peace of future generations. As such, the interest in preserving life, on account of giving it, becomes a moral mandate for women to comply with. As illustrated in the quote below, the NURC maintains that, while women may have themselves sparked many activities within the reconciliation process, this only serves to manifest their natural duty. Refraining from this obligation results in tearing the country's social fabric apart (2005: 9).

"In the Rwandan genocide, some women played an active role in planning and executing the genocide and as a result, some children got involved in the killing of fellow children, raping women, women killing their own children and husbands, men killing their own children and relatives."

This sentiment is echoed by Respondent 2, who argues that violence during the genocide can be traced back to failed childrearing, allowing youth to become corrupted by destructive forces.

"For example see the mothers of the *interahamwe*, those who committed the genocide, maybe in the past they might lose the opportunity to teach them positive values and what has been the result is killing people. Now it's time to change course, it is time to change the situation and educate our children and help them grow up with commitment to living together with humanness. So the activity is just to mobilize women just to play their role, because in many families you may have parents who are irresponsible, especially men, but when women play their role we are sure that things are going well."

Introducing ethical principles to future generations is located within the duties of mothers, with fatherhood notably absent in the narrative. With the broader notion of parenthood overlooked, mothers are burdened with the success of not only childrearing, but also of state-building. This responsibility for their nation is illustrated in the following quote by the President, when touching upon the post-genocide participation of women (Kagame 2014).

"When we passed an inclusive constitution that transcends politics based on division and entrenched the rights of women as full partners in nation-building, for the first time – we were choosing to be together."

To this end, women are being mobilized to participate, which serves as the basis for their increased inclusion in the public sphere. Paradoxically, however, the employment of essentialist

narratives of women as nurturers and homemakers reemphasizes the ostensibly intrinsic connection of women with the household domain, with women still being responsible for the wellbeing of their families. While women are charged with the welfare of the household, they are also more broadly connected with the welfare of the nation; yet, agency remains limited to the community level. This is illuminated in the quote below, in which Respondent 7 claims that women's influence is extended to surrounding members of the community.

"And when you help the women, the woman will help more than you can help, because they have that kind of link, there are some exception, but they have more link with the family than nobody can have in that way [...] How we build peace in a small cycle, in family, in neighbour, neighbourhood, women do that more than men."

This quote also calls attention to women's perceived ability to persuade husbands and other male family members to abstain from violence. Women are portrayed as key players in discouraging men to engage in conflict and to adhere to healing and forgiveness after wrongdoing. Employing this narrow depiction acts to limit women's agency to the activities of men, as it positions women's power within the realm of the activities of others.

7.1.2 Women as non-agents

Overarching the assumption that women are naturally endowed with peaceful qualities, on account of their gender, is the positioning of women within homogenous experiences during conflict. This rests on the notion that women will naturally be vulnerable and exposed during times of war, often as victims of ruthless violence. This reemphasizes the notion of the innocent woman in need of protection, and acts to limit the authority maintained by some women as active participants in conflict. Perceptions of the non-agent woman are laden with attributes of weakness and innocence. As such, women are positioned not only in accordance with perceived characteristics, but also as victims, civilians and non-combatants. Highlighting this narrative is not to deny women's actual vulnerability during conflict, since it indeed warrants concern, but to illustrate the problems arising when women's participation is portrayed using stereotypical gender tropes. As illustrated in the quote below, Respondent 3 argues that non-agency during violence constitutes a moral licence to promote women's engagement in the household domain.

"You find normally there are men involved and who suffers at the end of the day when there is conflict, violent conflict, normally those things are initiated and implemented by men but women are the people who suffer. It's like if we have a family and there is a husband, there is a wife and kids, normally if you give an opportunity to the woman in a household, a family, they won't get involved because they are the ones who have suffered a lot

and they are not the ones who have started all these conflicts, but then the conflicts, I mean the effects spill over to the women. So I think it was the idea […] that since these are the most vulnerable, it's better to give them the upper hand."

This sentiment is echoed by Respondent 4, who contends that women were innocent bystanders during the genocide. This perpetuates the image of a collective, shared experience of what women are assumed to have experienced – juxtaposed with what men are assumed to have experienced.

"It's because women have been traumatized for a long time, have been left behind, we have a lot of women who have been raped, we have women who have been tortured, we have women who have husbands as killers, the people who, those also have the problem of trauma. Imagine you don't want to make genocide, but your husband is committing genocide."

Respondent 3 maintains that the merits of women engaged in peacebuilding come from their experiences during the genocide.

"They are peace builders, they have had enough of the conflicts and everything has been spilled over to them so they understand better, they know the benefits of peace […] That's the logic behind having more women."

Crucially, vulnerability during war is presumed to foster clemency and forgiveness during peace. Women portrayed as innocent victims are considered to have an increased ability to find reconciliation, even after severe wrongdoing. This corresponds to an essentialist view of women during conflict and post-conflict; however, while agency is rejected in the form of assuming any other role than that of the victim, agency is promoted during peacebuilding. Women are upheld as agents of peace, ultimately charged with safeguarding the family and the nation. This sentiment is echoed by the NURC, bolstering the vulnerable woman's moral authority in the reconciliation effort. With the extension of agency in fostering a culture of peace, an essentialist narrative of women's roles during conflict is reinforced. In the following quote, women are reduced to victim status, positioning their bargaining power in past experiences of suffering (2005: 18).

"The war and genocide had a disproportionally strong impact on women, as rape and genocide survivors, widows, and heads of households and care takers of orphans. That is the position of women as victims and participants in the genocide and their unique post conflict needs."

Respondent 5 contends that the tendency for being wounded and the ability to forgive work in tandem, mutually reinforcing one another. This is attributed to a woman's simple nature.

"They're emotions are quite, to get to their emotions is simple. So those are the people who are easy to have, to be wounded, they're vulnerable. So they are also people who can be easier to forgive […] Women are more peace builders than men. It's easier to, they're vulnerable, it's easier to be hurt and also it's easier to forgive."

With vulnerability comes weakness and fragility, and Respondent 4 argues that women's special circumstances during conflict serve as the primary incentive for increased female participation in the reconciliation process, whilst also offering an essentialist depiction of women's communicative needs.

"They want to process, they want to be together, they want to share, they want to express, because it's like a burden that has been coming for a long time. So they need for themselves the chamber of sharing […] But men also need their room. They also need room to process. But most of the affected people in the community in Rwanda I consider them to be women. So reconciliation have to take consideration of gender, so women have to be considered and helped more."

With the power to forgive, as well as to foster a culture of forgiveness, women are positioned within the central movement of the reconciliation process. The NURC reemphasizes women as pillars of the post-genocide transformation, serving to inspire fellow community members (2005: 47).

"In many situations women went out of their way to forgive their enemies as one pillar of reconciliation. This is a good model that can be emulated in other place and also serve as a lesson to men."

With calls to strengthen the position of women during the reconciliation process, the responsibility for reconciling the nation falls at their feet. This builds a rhetoric, permeated by gender essentialisms, to extend a moral licence to women to operate as peacebuilders.

7.1.3 Women as peacemakers
As previously identified, there are clear assumptions regarding women's attitudes towards peace and conflict. This rests on an essentialist narrative of the good woman advocating the cessation of hostilities, whilst correspondingly bringing communities together post-conflict. Women are attributed with a perceived natural ability for peacebuilding, with both the capacity

and the desire to consolidate peace. With this conviction comes the presumption that any action taken will be in the service of peace and development, framing women as a benevolent but ultimately homogenous group. As illustrated in the quote below, the NURC believes that the natural composition of women is to protect the interests of all those around them (2005: 18).

"Their long experiences in their role as peacemaker, women in the family as mothers, wives and sisters where they prefer problem solving through open communication, honest discussions of differences and dialogue among all concerned parties. They are used to resolving disputes through the best means of ensuring that at least some of the concerns of all conflicting parties are met – a win/win situation – a family model which seeks fairness and reconciliation rather than victory and retribution."

Echoing this sentiment, Respondent 3 maintains that women not only have an affiliation with but also a deeper appreciation of peace. This holds that all choices made will be of benefit to others through the promoting of normative ideals, such as human rights. Also, this suggests that there exists a link between the number of women included in a reconciliation effort and its success.

"The laws they pass they're more […], they're more connected somehow, they're more affiliated to peacebuilding and human rights. Because naturally women, that's what we believe. They're really peace lovers. They love peace. It's not common to hear women waging war or waging a revolt, so when it comes to making laws and stuff, or even making decisions, they're always peacebuilding decisions. Human rights based decisions, equality, so that is the whole idea. So the impact is there, most of the laws, most of the, you find there is some element of peacebuilding. If you talk about even reconciliation, they're humble compared to men. I'm not saying that all men are rough, but women are naturally soft."

The intrinsic desire for peace is rooted in women's ostensibly greater need for close social relations and societal cohesion, taking precedence over any hostility or animosity. According to Respondent 10, women have an innate will to safeguard the wellbeing of others, even going as far as to reject the existence of any ethnic strife and genocidal ideology among women.

"If you observe really quite well, women are the ones who make up a big part in reconciliation. Women are the ones who can see everyone equally, a Rwandan woman there are many things that she can do better than the men in reconciliation. Because she can be able to attract kids, even a woman can lead discussions of many men around her. So you can't really compare men to women, they're not the same. Even that about ethnic groups, women don't care about it."

It is assumed that this goodwill qualifies women to find a way forward in the aftermath of conflict, seeking instead to foster cohesion and reconciliation. As shown in the quote below, Respondent 13 contends that women of different backgrounds have found common ground, united by womanhood in their desire to build peace.

"Women even though they have different backgrounds have been able to go beyond the past and who are trying to live together and build, rebuild a new Rwanda. […] They have to help each other. So they need to live peacefully in order to continue to, for a better living, I think it is, it is not forced. It is coming from within themselves."

As such, the ability and desire for peace create a stronger obligation towards the reconciliation effort, with a personal and close interest in the outcome. According to Respondent 7, this will is derived from their essentialist nature.

"I think women they need reconciliation, all need it, everybody need that, but the commitment is not the same […] Because maybe women are more close to the humanity level […] I think women have been leaders in the process of reconciliation, this is my understanding."

When women are considered to have a greater commitment towards reconciliation, they risk being charged with its progress. The overarching view of women as greater encouragers of peace is also based on the presumption that they choose to refrain from violence. Notably, the NURC denies women's agency and perpetuates the notion that women choosing to engage in conflict do so against their natural state. This eliminates any justification for women's decision-making, and paves the way for the prospect of manipulation and coercion. In the quote below, the NURC contends that women who participated in the genocide did so against their will (2005: 25).

"Those who were manipulated to participate in the genocide were very ruthless and those who had the courage to protect their neighbours did so in extreme self-sacrifice."

Respondent 5 elaborates on the assumption that women are both incapable and unwilling as regards choosing violence. Women are viewed as mythic, peace-loving creatures bound by a need for stability, compassion and peace.

"So women should be more, because their hearts, normally they're like people who have pity, they cannot do bad things for the country because of that pity. Because I consider that always a woman has a pity, so I see that they cannot do something bad for the country because of that pity."

With an overemphasis on nonviolent and peaceful values, the positioning of women within the post-genocide reconciliation process becomes a valid choice for the leadership. The strategic and cultural frames governing this positioning will be elaborated on in the upcoming chapter.

7.2 Giving meaning to discourse

When examining three narratives centring on women's imperative role within the reconciliation process, a discourse grounded in female gender essentialisms transpires. Identifying this discourse warrants a broader consideration of the normative circumstances in which it operates and, therefore, it needs to be placed within a wider strategic context, seeking to identify not only societal structures but also the formation of social roles.

7.2.1 Reconstructing Rwanda

Through the positioning of women within the reconciliation process, a deliberate and wide-reaching government design emerges. While the main focus of the post-genocide leadership has been to foster peace and reconciliation in Rwanda, it has sought to crucially alter the social fabric of that country, viewing this as an important step in reconstruction. According to Thomson, the Rwandan policies of unity and reconciliation constitute an ambitious social engineering project, engaging many different facets of societal reform (2013: 110). Creating a new blueprint for the post-genocide period, the government has attempted to recreate the social fabric of the country. However, this process has been marked by coercion and strong-arming on the part of the leadership, and Thomson argues that social control is exercised when demands are made for strong commitment on the part of citizens participating in the reconciliation process (*Ibid*: 114).

Building on this, Kayumba maintains that the government has acted with a sense of moral authority in its dealing with post-genocide reconstruction since the RPF (now the ruling party) was responsible for ending the genocide (2010: 317). The discourse surrounding reconciliation is notably permeated by a rhetoric of resilience and independence, with the leadership maintaining a 'good enough' rebuttal to any point of criticism. In the following quote from his speech at the 20th Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi, the President offered the

following statement. While asking for patience and understanding from the international community, to ward off criticism of the government being too authoritarian, the President maintains a strong position in following the course of reconciliation (Kagame 2014).

"The insistence on finding our own way sometimes comes with a price. Nonetheless, let's stick to the course. To our friends from abroad – I believe you value national unity in your own countries, where it exists. Where it doesn't, you are working to build it, just as we are. We ask that you engage Rwanda and Africa with an open mind, accepting that our efforts are carried out in good faith for the benefit of all of us."

Sundberg contends that Rwandan post-genocide governance has been permeated by a rhetoric laden with nationalist pride and an emphasis on individual responsibility. Citizens have been taught to adopt virtues of self-reliance, hope and pride while simultaneously rejecting laziness and complacency (2014: 247). Falling in line with government policy has been promoted as being necessary for the full development of the country; Sundberg writes that there is a "public discourse that reminds people of the possible consequences that might come from refusing to conform to state regulation and demands" (*Ibid*: 266). To this end, reconciliation in Rwanda has often been described as a question of survival, upheld as a government necessity and civil obligation, underlining the commitment needed from all stakeholders to not relive the horrors of 1994. This rhetoric highlights a broader leadership culture in post-genocide Rwanda, a 'by all means necessary' mentality, which seeks to reject any condemnation of the strategies implemented. In the quote highlighted below, women are anchored in this quest, stressing the importance of increased female participation (2005: 12).

"That is why rebuilding lasting peace and reconciliation among Rwandans is not a matter of choice but of survival […] It is in this regard that gender features now very strategically in all fora."

Respondent 2 employs a similar use of language in illuminating the potential implications of a failed post-genocide reconstruction process. In the following statement, an emotionally-charged rhetoric positions reconciliation as an obligation – not as an option.

"The country was and has been really divided and it was a must to find ways to reconcile otherwise we could all die […] So the reconciliation here started at political level looking for tolerance, for coming together, tolerance and sharing the common vision of this nation as one nation and one society. Whatever has been done has been focusing on reconciliation."

As such, a framework emerges working towards legitimizing the policies implemented to facilitate peace and reconciliation. Crisafulli and Redmond argue that, during the post-genocide period, the government has stressed the notion of good citizenship, with individuals fulfilling the roles assigned to them and thus contributing to the greater effort of rebuilding the country. Rwandan reconstruction has thus been hallmarked by individual performance and commitment (2012: 107). In a society where public support and citizen participation have been crucial, women have been made to enter into the realm of peacebuilding and reconciliation on account of their perceived inherent qualities but also in order to provide essential services to the country, services which are assumed to come naturally to women. Crucially, essentialist narratives pertaining to roles during war and peace have been deployed, in order to solidify women's input into the national effort. In the short quote below, by the NURC, the essence of this rhetoric is captured (2005: 24).

"Leaders in this country cast a strong light in a dark space and women followed it."

While this does not hold that women did not choose to engage in community rebuilding of their own volition after the genocide, it does suggest that the government identified and acted upon essentialist understandings of women's abilities during peace. The NURC manifests this in highlighting the strategic frames which surround women's increased participation (2005: 13).

"The Government of Rwanda demonstrated its will to give women the trust and responsibility of rebuilding the nation by appointing them to all positions of leadership and responsibility in society."

The link between promoting women and facilitating the reconstruction of Rwanda transpires through this rhetoric, serving to highlight the power of female gender essentialisms. Women are invited to participate, albeit with certain requirements attached to their entering the public arena. In the new Rwanda, the advancement of women has become conditional upon the promotion of the country, as shown in the quote below by the NURC (2005: 14).

"Women can influence peace and reconciliation if they are empowered to participate and take major decisions at community, local, national and international levels. The government of Rwanda has in the last ten years put in place several measures to ensure that women are given to fully participate in decision making in different organs."

In light of this, Kayumba offers discourse analysis as a way of understanding the rise in the number of women decision-makers in post-genocide Rwanda (2010: 42). In the aftermath, political participation shifted away from ethnicity as the primary identity marker (since Rwanda has historically been plagued by different waves of Tutsi contra Hutu rule) towards gender as the primary identity marker. In other words, since the leadership has sought to demobilise ethnicity, gender has instead been promoted as the main social category governing Rwandan society. Thus, increased female participation can be understood as the result of a top-down approach by the ruling elite; Kayumba argues that the "promotion of 'equality between men and women' does not only provide the political vocabulary, a way of talking about politics, of what is possible and impossible, but can also be seen as a way of organising and legitimising political power" (*Ibid*: 324). As such, gender is used as a strategic method of exercising and retaining control. Moreover, Kayumba also emphasises the inclusion of women in socioeconomic and political decision-making as being connected to the rebuilding of Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, connecting this line of reasoning to previous scholars (*Ibid*: 193). Burnet echoes this sentiment and contends that the post-genocide period has been marked by a clear change in the social landscape (2012: 217). Women have been made to assume more advanced roles involving decision-making, which has then been linked to the wider transformation of society. In the following quote, the NURC maintains that women have stepped in to shoulder a unique responsibility in the wake of the genocide (2005: 30).

"This is part of the new responsibilities women have come to assume after the 1994 genocide they have come to fully accept the responsibility and role of rebuilding the country."

Respondent 2 helps to brings attention to this link, by underlining the key role of women's voices in the national reconciliation effort.

"And maybe what is of importance in Rwanda is that the voice of women has also been heard."

Taking the unique political context of post-genocide Rwanda into account, it is possible to identify the strategic frames that have sought to promote women's inclusion in the reconstruction effort. In creating Rwanda anew, the leadership was seeking to pioneer a new social order in society. However, the values promoted also extend backwards in time, and resonate with the traditional core of the country.

7.2.2 Adhering to tradition

While Meintjes argues that gender roles have been transformed in the aftermath of the genocide, with women working alongside men to rebuild the country, more conservative views of women have also been promoted (2001: 72). As such, in the attempt to mend the social fabric of Rwanda, a return to traditional values has taken place, coming at a time when the government has also promoted the strategic inclusion of women in new spheres of decision-making, thus creating a powerful paradox.

According to Burnet, the reconciliation process has been permeated by perceived precolonial values, centring on the rationale that the advent of European rule changed the social constitution of Rwanda and unleashed the ethnic strife that eventually culminated in genocide some decades later (2012: 151). While the Belgian colonial authorities did cement the ethnic divide between the Hutu and the Tutsi, this apparent exaltation of precolonial Rwandan life has been made a hallmark of the rebuilding of the country. Sundberg labels this a politication of history and argues that the reconciliation process, spearheaded by the NURC, has centred on the refashioning of traditional ideals and principles, revamped as Rwanda's 'new' old culture. This return to historic Rwandan citizenship has been governed by the production of so called "neo-traditional inventions", constituting community participation in old-fashioned programmes, e.g. *Ingando* (solidarity camps) (2014: 264). In the quote below, the NURC gives new light to past ways of life, highlighting their importance for the modern-day Rwanda (2005: 8).

"One culture with values that promoted harmony, stability and peace. This is illustrated by the fact that there is no history of killings and genocide between the social groups of *Banyarwanda*[6]. Values such as patriotism, integrity, heroism, excellence, protection of those in need and who seek protection from imminent danger, preservation of life and certain taboos like killing children and women were inscribed in the Rwandan culture. All these cultural values were eroded with the advent of Western culture, colonial rule and the policies of post-independence regimes."

By tapping into tradition, and most importantly culture, the reconciliation process sought to rally the people of Rwanda. The quest for unity has been achieved, as such, through the mobilizing of old values, extending beyond the years of ethnic strife, civil unrest and genocidal ideology. Crisafulli and Redmond argue that leveraging culture, with the aim of reconciling the

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[6] The Kinyarwandan word for Rwanda.

nation, has become a hallmark of the post-genocide period (2012: 72). The NURC maintains that cultural cognizance is central to the reconciliation effort's success (2005: 46).

"The leadership must also draw inspiration from cultural values that enhance peace. The role of Rwandan culture is so strong in rebuilding peace that reviving the positive cultural values […] is extremely important and urgent."

In his 2011 keynote address, the President connected the importance of culture to the post-genocide period in Rwanda. Notably, cultural values are connected to the aspirations of the people, highlighting the government in depicting all Rwandans as having an intrinsic desire to return to the old ways (Kagame 2011).

"A country's response to a given situation should be informed by its specific circumstances and context. Success will be determined by a country's practical experience and solutions, based on the choices it makes, and, above all, the genuine aspirations of its people."

Following this, Thomson offers the Rwandan overemphasis on cultural values as a way of ensuring the full compliance of the population in the reconciliation process (2013: 119-120). Here cultural awareness can be seen as a tool for mobilizing people into either action or, as in this case; participation. When tying this strategic frame to gendered participation, the increase in the numbers of women in the aftermath of the genocide can be understood in terms of the government deliberately tapping into cultural beliefs pertaining to essentialist narratives. As shown by the NURC below, women are traditionally believed to perform better during reconciliation efforts (2005: 23).

"In the Rwandan cultural context women are better placed to prevent violence or to mediate between individuals who have differed. This is exemplified through names given to women/girls such as *Nyampinga* – Solace, *Ghuzamiryango*."

Respondent 4 offers a similar view, contending that women are seen as more nurturing and peaceful, something which has affected the design of the post-genocide reconciliation process.

"It doesn't mean, say that women cannot lead, they can, and they do, but when you go into the reality of Rwandans, we are moving from traditional areas to modern areas, where people can be considered together. It's treating equal. But we cannot forget our past has influenced our decisions, and our life, where women are considered still as nurturing."

To this end, culture can be understood as governing the discourse surrounding the increase in the participation of women in the post-genocide period. Coupled with the strategic frames developed by the post-genocide leadership, this creates powerful forces governing women's inclusion in public life.

7.3 When language shapes reality

One potent impact of discourse is the cues it provides for the reading of reality, and the way in which it helps individuals understand the world around them. Considering the implications of the essentialist narratives of women as bearers of life, non-agents and peacemakers within the Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process thus assume key importance. The female gender essentialisms uncovered not only affect women but also men.

7.3.1 The impact on women

As previously discussed, the identified narratives regarding women in peacebuilding are based on a collective imagery of women's perceived 'true' nature, behaviour and role in society. Returning to discourse analysis, the central tenet remains that our understanding of the world shapes the social reality in which society continues to develop (Fairclough 1989: 25). As such, the stereotypical assumptions that are fostered within these narratives ultimately risk impeding women's full emancipation in Rwanda. Portraying women as weak, vulnerable and innocent harms our understanding of the strength that also exists within them, as well as the ostensibly insurmountable challenges that continue to be overcome by them every day. The maternal and nurturing values attributed to women prevent us seeing women beyond their roles as mothers, and reject the notion of them choosing to refrain from domestic life. Similarly, the notion of the non-agent woman during conflict ignores the women who have decided, and continue to decide, to engage in violence for ideological reasons, instead placing women as passive bystanders to the world that is changing around them (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 4-9). Alas, the positioning of women as a collective group possessing these normative ideals continues to restrict our understanding of women's agency and to undermine their authority. Holmes shows how the portrayal of women as non-agents during the Rwandan genocide and post-genocide period limits their agency and lowers their voices in society (2014: 268). While Holmes attributes this to discourse born of the international media, perpetuating stereotypical imagery of African women, this thesis has shown that essentialist beliefs also exist among Rwandan actors.

Instead, it is necessary to present a nuanced portrayal of women's contributions. Not all women are peaceful; not all women are violent. There is no one single experience for women in Rwanda, and women differ today in their post-genocide needs and desires (Burnet 2012: 216). Unfortunately, women locked into collective stereotypes will never fully reach emancipation (Herndon and Randell 2013: 80). Sjoberg maintains that the presence of female gender essentialisms impedes our understanding of women's abilities, ultimately limiting their roles and responsibilities (2010: 65). As such, any context that overemphasises women's homemaking and nurturing attributes will also continue to position them within the household domain and private sphere (*Ibid*). According to Fester, while Rwanda has undergone significant changes in gender equity in the aftermath of the genocide, its government policy has ended up reinforcing outdated gender norms. The private sphere continues to be dominated by women, perceived as female territory, and thus women are consciously disenfranchised; according to Fester; "as long as there are structures promoting and reinforcing patriarchy gender equality, the feminist project of women as citizens is unattainable" (2014). Concurring with this, Kayumba argues that, while women are allowed to make new political claims in post-genocide Rwanda, these are still being dictated by terms set by the government (2010: 323). The rise in women's participation in Rwanda thus warrants praise; however, it is crucial to examine the circumstances under which women have been allowed to enter, and to illuminate the complications that may arise. While women may be allowed to attain decision-making positions under the premise that they will facilitate peace and development, they are not free to participate on a par with men. This renders the increase in the number of women in post-genocide Rwanda hollow, missing the mark as regards achieving women's liberation.

However, throughout this debate, it is crucial to highlight the many scholars who maintain that the concerns of women are not adequately included in post-conflict peacebuilding. This argument offers women as the advocates of peace on the basis of their intrinsic nature, but also that a more gender equal society that will be less violent, thus reducing the risk of conflict (Bjarnegård & Melander 2011: 142). This brings merit to the debate; however, as Vincent contends, the inclusion of women in peace processes is often justified by postulating the need for women's voices to be heard. While this is a legitimate claim, due to the norms dictating women's inclusion the voices of women are instead viewed as *the* perspective needed in order to consolidate peace, deeply rooted in female gender essentialisms (2003: 7). This almost symbolic inclusion of women is instead described as a 'hollow talisman' (*Ibid*). Concurring with this, Benhabib contends that this approach, although seeking to improve women's

situations post-conflict, only acts instead to reinforce women's subordination and to "valorise the very centre that is problematic to begin with" (1996: 44). Hudson contends that this will end up failing the broader quest for reconciliation, since treating women in accordance with their perceived essential qualities ignores their different roles (either as victims or former perpetrators) and vital needs in the post-conflict setting (2009: 289, 296). Instead, women must be viewed through the prism of the myriad of different roles they hold in real life; thus, this presents an important piece of the greater peacebuilding jigsaw puzzle. Therein lies the fundamental concern, and ultimately the fundamental consequences, regarding the 'add women and stir' approach to post-conflict peacebuilding (Cohn et al. 2004: 137). Principally, the issue of concern is not *whether* women are included, but rather *how* they are included.

7.3.2 The impact on men

When considering the implications of the essentialist narratives of women, it is of key importance to also explore the potential consequences regarding men's participation during the post-genocide reconciliation process. Interpreting the silence of the discourse thus becomes imperative, as the norms concerning women's roles inevitably end up dictating men's roles (Carpenter 2005: 296). As gender essentialisms hinge on inherent and oppositional attributes between the sexes, assumptions regarding men are created in the mirror image of women.

Holmes maintains that the essentialist view of women as peaceful firmly places them within post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, but coincidentally acts to reduce men's claims to peacebuilding. Contrary to women's campaigning, that of men is instead considered to be more 'political' in nature and thus deemed potentially more volatile, on account of an essentialist reading of their perceived nature (2014: 50). A review of the findings of this thesis would seemingly indicate that the high regard held for women's participation would result in a lesser consideration for the inclusion of men. As shown in the essentialist narratives of women, men, when mentioned, are depicted as wrongdoers, i.e. either as perpetrators during genocide or as *fainéants* during reconciliation. Witworth highlights this issue and argues that gender essentialisms during war and peace are of fundamental concern for all individuals, succinctly writing that "the positioning of women and men as either combatants (men) or victims (women) has implications for both women and men" (2004: 27). Thus, it is important to remember that men are also affected by the female gender essentialisms governing women's role in post-genocide Rwanda.

With women upheld as the agents of peace, the chief responsibility for reconciling a post-genocide country falls to them. This presents a situation whereby men risk losing their positions as active stakeholders in the same process, having marginal input and featuring only as beneficiaries rather than facilitators. The underlying assumption that men do not have the same needs and abilities as women risks alienating them from the reconciliation process, with potentially severe impediments to trauma healing and future conflict resolution. Unfortunately, while essentialist views of women crucially limit their agency, the same assumptions also act to undermine men's ownership of the reconciliation process. Sjoberg argues that men are often upheld as the primary protectors of vulnerable women; hence, the stereotypical notion concerning women bolsters the marginalized role of men. Sjoberg writes that this is an intrinsic connection; by linking "femininity to helplessness, and masculinity to saving women from their helplessness" men's own vulnerability is neglected (2006: 899). Ultimately, this risks leading to disenfranchisement and marginalisation on a wider level; with women in Rwanda ostensibly being exalted, men risk being overlooked.

To combat this, Vincent urges those engaged in peacebuilding to reject the notion of female and male attributes, and to instead embrace the idea that women and men alike are capable of committing good and evil. Both women and men can advocate conflict; similarly, both women and men can advocate peace. Instead, a peace and reconciliation process should seek to exalt ideals that are universal, and abandon potentially harmful stereotypes laden with essentialist understandings of womanhood and manhood. Vincent writes; "the idea here is to recognise that these are human virtues and human ills; they do not adhere timelessly, biologically or necessarily to any particular gender or to any particular man or woman" (2003: 9). Hudson concurs with this, maintaining that gender mainstreaming should be at the forefront of understanding the gendered complexities of peace and conflict, not the glorification of any one sex. Hudson also argues that; "considering gender fully, through mainstreaming, inclusion, and transformational strategies could make peacebuilding processes more representative and more effective" (2009: 318). Thus, aiming for gender awareness – as opposed to overemphasising the role of women - will create the setting needed for the free and full participation of all individuals in the Rwandan reconciliation process, fostering peace as well as gender equality.

8 Concluding discussion

8.1 Reconsidering reconciliation in Rwanda

During the years following the 1994 genocide, Rwanda was praised for its inclusion of women in the post-genocide reconciliation process. Since then, the international community and scholars alike have branded Rwanda a trailblazer within the gender in peace movement, with awards and critical acclaim having been presented to the leadership on account of its engaging women in the aftermath of the genocide (Baines et al. 2008; Hudson 2009: 302). Yet, in this study, I have argued that, while women have seen great improvements in their access to decision-making positions in Rwanda, their emancipation remains threatened by the continuous perpetuation of female gender essentialisms. Paradoxically, the very tenets that have sought to justify women's entry into new arenas of political life will also keep them locked into limited understandings of their capabilities, thus cementing outdated gender norms. With essentialist narratives of women as the bearers of life, as non-agents, and as peacemakers, the way in which they have been engaged only acts to undermine their agency and authority. When women do enter into the political domain, as they have done in Rwanda, their participation will hinge on the delivery of services correlating to a perceived essential nature, such as advocating peace.

While the reconciliation process in Rwanda warrants praise, especially for successfully breaking the cycle of ethnic violence between the Hutu and Tutsi, the important gains made in the post-genocide period should also be highlighted. Undeniably, the women of Rwanda have played an important part in supporting individuals, families and communities devastated by the genocide. Herndon and Randell argue that women were instrumental in taking care of the vulnerable in post-genocide Rwanda, especially orphaned children, capitalizing on society's maternal imagery of women (2013: 75). Thus, it is important not to deny women this agency and ignore their own willingness to facilitate reconciliation in Rwanda. Ouzgane and Morrell claim that, while African feminism does not easily lend itself to being defined, the general body of work has been aimed at rebutting Western feminist scholars' assumption of African women as easily being subordinated. On the contrary, it is argued that African feminist work has fully embraced the concepts of sisterhood and motherhood as points of strength, as well as, importantly, agency. Interestingly, agency is defined both through collective identities and through the ability to effect change as a group (2005: 5-6). However, given the sheer power of discourse, this thesis argues the existence of detrimental effects of perpetuating essentialist and collective readings of women – and men – in reconciliation.

While attempting to include women *en masse* in the reconciliation process, the resulting unintended and unbridled consequences risk impeding its successful outcome. In an apparent paradox, the desire to facilitate reconciliation has resulted in the perpetuation of female gender essentialisms, ultimately undermining the very objective of reconciling the Rwandan population. An essentialist reading of women's abilities, needs and interests in violence and post-violence distorts individual aptitudes for either reaching forgiveness (as victims) or seeking atonement (as perpetrators). Locating women in ostensibly shared experiences rejects individual experiences, ultimately harming Rwanda's prospects for a peaceful future, as illustrated by the assumption that women are not as concerned with ethnicity, resulting in the failure to adequately include women when attempting to address Rwanda's troubled history of ethnic strife between the Hutu and Tutsi. Likewise, due to the supposition regarding the non-combatant woman, the women who chose to engage in the genocide might suffer from not being engaged in the demobilization efforts. Thus, it is crucial for the leadership of Rwanda to promote a more nuanced framing of women, recognizing that peace can only be fully consolidated once women's roles post-conflict are acknowledged and embraced (Hudson 2009: 295-296). Until then, the Rwandan post-genocide reconciliation process is crucially failing to meet its moral objectives; thus, there is a great need for the country to review and revise its implementation.

8.2 Future research

This study has aimed to highlight the importance of going beyond the sheer number of women included in peace and reconciliation processes, focusing its point of inquiry on the way in which women have been allowed to participate. While exploring discourse is key to understanding the norms governing women's inclusion, this thesis has chosen not to feature individual testimonies. To this end, the findings presented could be complimented by accounts of the lived experiences of women in post-genocide Rwanda. Future research should investigate whether women considered themselves affected by the presence of female gender essentialisms. Moreover, additional research can compare the findings of this thesis by exploring the prevalence of male gender essentialisms, and seek to contribute to a rather underdeveloped theoretical framework of men's roles in peace. This would ultimately allow both the women and the men to not only give meaning to their participation in post-conflict settings, but also to contribute to a deeper understanding of the gendered dynamics of peacebuilding.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Ethical considerations

- Purpose: To gain a deeper understanding of gender in Rwandan reconciliation process

- Interviews confidential: Names changed and transcript only handled by me

- Semi-structured interview. Speak as freely as you want

- Audiotaping ok?

- Introduce interpreter. Permission?

- Free to terminate participation at any time: During interview or during study

Background information

- Tell me about yourself (background, education, interests)

- Background with organization

Reconciliation in Rwanda

- Describe the reconciliation process to a newcomer in Rwanda.

Progress?

Accomplishments and remaining work?

- Describe important values of the reconciliation process

- Describe Rwanda's influence on the world

- Describe challenges and threats to the reconciliation process

- Describe opportunities and strengths in the reconciliation process

- Describe your organization's work in reconciliation process

Objectives?

Accomplishments?

Gender and reconciliation

- Describe how gender is used in the reconciliation process

Programs?

Objectives?

Challenges and opportunities?

- Describe how your organization uses gender

Definition?

Targeted programs for men/women?

Objectives?

Women and men in Rwandan reconciliation process

- Men and women have different roles?

Role of women?

Role of men?

- Contribute to different things?

- Specific peacebuilding characteristics women/men?

- Same or different needs in reconciliation?

- Women and men satisfied with the process?

- Ideals of men and women in society in Rwanda?

Finally

- What does your organization hope to achieve within reconciliation process?

Closing

- Do you want to add anything?

- Do you have any questions?

- Who should I visit to learn more?

- Thank you! Token of gratitude

Appendix 2

Quotes used for critical discourse analysis.

Women as bearers of life

NURC (2005: 9):

"Traditionally women as a social category generally did not go into active service in war nor did they participate in any form of war instead they were the most credible agents of peace, supporters and nurturers of life."

NURC (2005: 25):

"Women's initiatives to rebuild trust and harmony within their communities spontaneously developed mothers to take their rightful positions."

NURC (2005: 36):

"Reviving the positive cultural values in Rwanda today is an uphill task but it can be achieved if women are included fully since they have constructively played a key role as educators and mediators of society since time immemorial."

NURC (2005: 23):

"As the first agents of socialization, women are natural teachers for peace education to their children. In playing their roles as parents, services providers, teachers, they are ideal for instilling into their children such values: respect for others; the peaceful solution of conflicts and problems; sharing; partnerships; tolerance; a sense of justice; equity; and equality of the sexes, all of which are qualities of sustainable peace. Peace education should be extended to the primary school level where women constitute the bulk of the teachers. Here, they have the responsibility to influence attitudes towards peace at the very foundation of formal education which is likely to have a lasting effect in the shaping personality of the future adult."

NURC (2005: 47):

"Women have a strong potential for educating their children and imparting on them positive cultural values that enhance peace and reconciliation. In areas where women have come together and worked towards reconciliation; their children have spontaneously followed their examples women have a big role to provide basic education and up bringing for children to embrace the culture of peace. This forms the basis of women working towards and promoting sustainable peace."

NURC (2005: 23):

"Deconstructing – from a woman's perspective – their biological and economic roles at both household and community levels and the manner with which these roles are influenced by armed conflict reveals issues which give women the moral authority to claim their place of honour as agents of reconciliation and peace"

Respondent 3:

"If there is a husband that has a better wife, having a better wife is having a better family. If you have, if I am a man, and have a family am married, if I have a better wife than my colleagues than I have a better family, better wife means better family. That's what it means. So if you have, if you want to develop a nation, then you have to have a better family and a better family is a better wife in the family […]. Then you have a better family. If you have a better family you have a better country which is peaceful."

Respondent 8:

"We've seen also women who have emerged in this peacebuilding work. And I would say that women, to me, can be even more successful because they have, they naturally have this soft approach and they can have influence on people if they do this, particularly in Rwanda."

Respondent 12:

"They played a very positive role in encouraging their brothers and their husbands in prison to ask for forgiveness. Yeah, to ask for forgiveness. They would go to prison and advise their husbands or brothers […] They did that because they were convinced it was the best way of rebuilding the country."

Respondent 5:

"Because if they can be easier to forgive, can be reconciled easier, so it's good to merge, work them together, because they can influence easier their husband."

Respondent 13:

"Imagine for example if you see your mother having a friend, you become automatically a friend to your mother's friend. And the children become friends because their mothers are friends as well. So I think it should be something, a component to be strengthened if we want to achieve true reconciliation."

Respondent 2:

"With this caring spirit they can make force to protect or to keep countries safe, because they are concerned, and also another thing which is very important to me is that they are the best educators, as they stay long time with the children they can help in impairing positive values from them to children, and so on."

Respondent 4:

"We work completely equal, but there is some value added we give to the women […] It's helping them spread this medicine of reconciliation which is going to spread also to their children, because children spend a long time with their mum than their fathers."

Women as non-agents

NURC (2005: 10):

"The Rwandan genocide shattered the dense local friendship networks and community solidarity that had traditionally provided solace and support for women."

Respondent 10:

"Women receive easily what they are being told, so everywhere you can go in Rwandan society you can see that women are very powerful. I don't want to support women more than men, but I think that they are able to bring a lot in."

Women as peacemakers

NURC (2005: 29):

"It was until women realized that the displacement caused untold sufferings, including deaths on the battle field, diseases, starvation of their children, they started considering the option of heeding the call of the leader to return to safety in the zones controlled by the government."

Respondent 2:

"Seeing a woman widow, whose husband and children were killed and staying alone at home, being capable to forgive and reconcile with someone who killed her family. This is a miracle, and in Rwanda we can learn, in many cases around the country, that this kind of miracle is possible."

Respondent 8:

"Women tend to be soft and they don't really learn to use violent means in case of conflict, so. I think this is a role we can't overlook. This is a side of the reconciliation process and cross-cutting."

Respondent 12:

"They were convinced it was the best way of rebuilding the country but also to ask for forgiveness […] There were some incentives, so they were mobilized, they were, they had awareness on those incentives and they helped the relatives."

Respondent 3:

"Whatever laws they pass, whatever laws are enacted or passed in Parliament are peace. So it's better to have more women, and even the laws that are actually, whether in development, whether in, women are better than, they are more peaceful than men."

Respondent 7:

"They are more close with their heart, as we used to say, than their mind. And men are more close with their mind than their heart."

Respondent 10:

"If you look in our society, I think that women might play a big part, more than men. You see how they're created, their love, even their psychology, the way they think. I think the play only a big role in reconciliation."

Respondent 5:

"The participation of women in reconciliation, a woman is a great weapon or an instrument when I see women in my country […] I consider them as people pure of reconciliation."

Respondent 3:

"Women are, as I said, they're very good in terms of peacebuilding, they're peaceful actually, naturally, so the more you put them, more of them in the systems, the more they come up with peaceful programs"

Respondent 5:

"They are good morals, and also they will continue to work hard, so they are not, they don't give up easily. And then good things happen, if you have the pity, you're a hard worker and you don't give up, and also you're courageous to do your things, something can be built well. And also I see that women, they like peace."