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The Masculinity of Genocide: Examining the male dimensions of genocide, genocide ideology, and violence.

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Abstract:

The 1994 Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi, contrary to common perceptions, is one of the most methodological and efficient genocides in human history. The widespread use of violence, both physical and sexual, was central to the realisation of genocide ideology. This violence has a current estimate of around 1,070,000 killed, and an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 who experienced sexual violence during a period only spanning three months.¹ The genocide produced the first conviction of rape used as a weapon of genocide with the conviction of Jean-Paul Akayesu. The Rwandan Genocide had revealed the impact where gender, particularly masculinity, has within genocide and conflict. It has led me to wonder how exactly genocide impacts conventions of men, particularly masculinity and its power dynamics. Men are largely reported to be the main targets of genocide and the main perpetrators.² Contextually, Rwanda in 1994 was very traditional in its conceptions of masculinity, with traits such as being a “warrior” and a “provider” as focal points to masculine identity. My research begs the following questions: what are Rwandan concepts of masculinity? How was it used as a tool to inform genocidal activity both physical and sexual? How could it be used to dehumanize or target victims? Relatedly, what is the place masculinity has in a post-genocide society and reconciliation? Respectfully, my argument is twofold: firstly, I argue that while masculinity is not central to genocide ideology, it played a present but silent role in influencing men to commit genocidal acts and; secondly, masculinity has a role in the post-genocide healing process, trauma, and function of the family unit.

¹ National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide, “Background of the Genocide against the Tutsi,” Background of the Genocide against the Tutsi (CNLG), accessed April 6, 2020, <https://cnlg.gov.rw/index.php?id=80>); Nancy Sai, “Rwanda,” Women's Media Center (Women's Media Center, February 8, 2012), <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/conflicts/rwanda>

² Adam Jones, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 1 (August 3, 2010): pp. 65-94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520120113900>, pg.75,76)

The Rwandan Genocide Against the Tutsi in 1994 revealed one of the worst humanitarian disasters and genocides in history, with one of the most efficient and methodological killings of a targeted group in human history. The absolute eruption of death and suffering fermented by centuries of colonialism, intergroup distrust and conflict, and economic disruption, had left the small Eastern African country in a complete state of functional failure and social catastrophe. The trauma was exasperated with the international community standing idle during such widespread and destructive violence. Rwanda provides a compelling case study in violence, particularly genocide, in how relates to the various segments of our lives, and the subsequent healing efforts. This is doubly true when it comes to the issues of gender and its relationship to violence.

After the genocide had ended in Rwanda, the country was left with wounds that were deeply engrained with gender dynamics. This is especially apparent with the conviction of Jean-Paul Akayesu to the use of rape as a weapon of genocide, the use of AIDS as a weapon, the thousands of children born due to rape, and the targeted decimation of Tutsi men and boys. The genocide has produced a wealth of scholarly work and attention to the empowerment and place of women during and after the conflict that has resulted in more gender-sensitive mindsets in policy and study of conflict. However, there is a group that is hidden in plain sight, and that is the place of men. When we study the Rwandan genocide, we understand that men were reported to be the largest perpetrators and victims of the conflict, however, the discussion tends to end there. It begs the question of how men and boys were persuaded to participate in violence, and how they were uniquely targeted. What informed their mindsets into perpetrating or “turning *Interahamwe*” (a name coming from a group of young male militiamen attached to the genocidal regime). Thus, to understand how men corresponded with violence, it is worth examining the role of masculinity with violence.

For context, Rwanda in the 1990s was split between two “ethnic” groups, Hutu and Tutsi, in which the mixing of colonial race science and political management had turned their social and class groupings into weaponized and highly vitriolic social conditions for almost a century and a half.³ There was increasing economic stagnation and recession due to the devaluing of Rwandan agriculture and massive military spending.⁴ Lastly, there were insurgent incursions from neighbouring Uganda by the Tutsi refugee-led *Rwandan Patriotic Army* (RPA), which posed a threat to the Hutu-led regime of President Habyarimana and the “*Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement*” (MRND). Genocidal violence was widespread and extremely effective, with neighbourhoods imploding within themselves. Men tended to be the largest demographic of killings, but women largely experienced other forms of violence in addition to killings, most notably sexual violence.⁵

The goal of this paper is to examine the place that masculinity had in the genocide, and how traits of masculinity had manifested in assisting the carrying out of violence to the benefit of the Hutu-Power regime and its ideologies. I will be outlining and arguing how Rwandan perceptions and roles of masculinity and how they may have been used or understood that led to violence, both physical and sexual. I will also examine the perceptions and place of women in relation to men, and how those dynamics influenced violence against women as opposed to men. Further, I will explain the changes and differences in which masculinity and male gender norms have shifted in a post-genocide environment, and how they have come to be part of the healing effort to the Rwandan social and family dynamics. Lastly, it is worth stating that I am not asserting

³ Caroline Williamson, “Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda: Reconstructing Male Identity Through ndi Umunyarwanda,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 18, no. 1 (February 3, 2016): pp. 41-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1120463>, p.59)

⁴ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 66

⁵ *Ibid.*, 75, 76.

that Rwandan perceptions are inherently violent or malevolent, but inspecting how these norms and perceptions may be utilized or weaponized for violent goals. Included will be primary Rwandan accounts into gender, the genocide, and the post-genocide reconciliation process, as well as prior research of academics and NGOs. Using the Rwandan genocide as a case study, I seek to inspect the intersectional dynamics of gender, violence, genocide, and conflict.

Rwandan Masculinity:

To fully understand how masculinity could be weaponized into genocide ideology, one has to understand the features of which it holds dear. Rwanda, much like many other African societies, is deeply connected to traditional gender norms especially in the case of masculinity. Rwandan masculinity is marked with two main foci, with significant importance placed on both providership and protection. These aspects place the Rwandan man as a worker and as a warrior in his family unit and the head of his household. Additionally, because of his role as the head of the household, traditionally this has meant that he has both the right and duty as a procreator. This is contrary to the Rwandan woman as a domestic supporter and a nurturer, in other words “the ideal wife and mother.” To understand what was expected as a Rwandan woman is also important in understanding why male perpetrators may have acted against women, particularly in the form of sexual violence. In the following section, I will discuss these conceptions of both women and men to fully understand their roles in why men would be persuaded in committing violence.

Arguably, the most important aspect of masculinity in Rwanda is the role a man has as the “provider” of the household. For a man to be able to create, feed, clothe, and house his family is a highly desirable (and expected) aspect.⁶ This has placed emphasis on the role the man as a worker.

⁶ Henny Slegh and Augustin Kimonyo, “Masculinity and Gender Based Violence in Rwanda” (Rwanda MenEngage Network, September 2010), <https://www.rwamrec.org/spip.php?article291>, p.39)

This is true for the head of the household, but importantly also the eldest sons of the household.⁷ Additionally, the Habyarimana regime also idealized the peasant farmer and their labour, and expected a household to send one family member to contribute to the weekly “*umuganda*” (a collective community labour commitment), a commitment which is still practiced in Rwanda to this day.⁸ Men’s connection to their labour and to providership is a valuable relationship with his family unit, the economic landscape, and to the state apparatus.

There is also the male role as the “warrior.” This role stimulated a sentiment of aggression and power within Rwandan men. This male archetype was also encouraged by the state, with youth military schools “*amatorero*” being mandated to most young men.⁹ These schools practiced things such as war dances, spear and sword warfare, and taught values such as patriotism, courage, and discipline.¹⁰ In Kinyarwanda, this form of warrior identity is called “*abagabo*”, and was a part of Rwandan masculinity for either Hutus or Tutsis.¹¹ These masculine characteristics made the Rwandan man into the head of the family unit and household by responsibility, but also with it came authority which translated to a patriarchal relationship with women. This formed a power dynamic which a male figure had right to control and, in some cases, be domineering in sexual dynamics and family economics.¹²

There is also a relational dynamic on masculinity in how it reacts to femininity in both pre- and post-genocide timeframes. One of the largest changes from pre-genocide to post-genocide

⁷ Philip Verwimp, “An Economic Profile of Peasant Perpetrators of Genocide,” *Journal of Development Economics* 77, no. 2 (May 5, 2005): pp. 297-323, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2004.04.005>, p.308, 316)

⁸ *Ibid.*, 299, 309.

⁹ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.; Williamson is specific to writing that these are “Tutsi Masculinities”. However, it is widely understood that there are no differences between Tutsi or Hutu culture, thus their gender perceptions are understood as the same, if not extremely similar.

¹² Slegh and Kimonyo, *Masculinity and Gender Based Violence in Rwanda*, 52

Rwanda was the perceptions and expectations of Rwandan women in society. As I will discuss later, due to the effects of the genocide on the male population of Rwanda, the demand of Rwandan women to occupy traditionally male roles had changed those of women. However, it is also important to understand that Rwanda was, and still largely is a patriarchal society. Before the genocide, the role of women was closely bound to more traditional understandings and perceptions. Fundamentally, these perceptions of Rwandan women were bound to the domestic duties of the home, and to their role as wives and mothers, which were under the predominance of the husband and/or the head of household.¹³ Women's purpose and function were one that firmly resided in the private sphere of the home, and not to the public. This is a power-dynamic which was expected and heavily maintained, and women who broke these kinds of dynamics would be seen as "loose" or "loud", and any outside property or holdings were largely appropriated by men.¹⁴ In Hutu-Power campaigns, specifically the Hutu Ten Commandments, they specifically targeted Tutsi women as breaching this kind of gender role, and hailed Hutu women for their role as wives and mothers.¹⁵ Feminine sexuality was usually expressed in the same kind of sentiments, as procreative and private. The procreativity is important to remember in pre-genocide Rwanda, as the terms of ethnicity were often patrilineal, of which a person would inherit the ethnicity of their fathers.¹⁶ These norms and roles which women occupied in Rwandan society and would translate to why and how violence would be initiated on them, or in some cases save them.

To summarize, gender dynamics in Rwanda tend to conform to traditional values and roles for both men and women. Men were, and are, largely bound to their roles of the providers and

¹³ Claire Wallace, Christian Haerpfer, and Pamela Abbott, "Women in Rwandan Politics and Society," *International Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 4 (December 8, 2014): pp. 111-125, <https://doi.org/10.2753/ijis0020-7659380406>, p.112)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁵ "The 'Hutu Ten Commandments,'" Kangura Ten Commandments, December 1990, http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/henson/188/rwanda_kangura_ten.html)

¹⁶ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 42

defenders of the household; while women were bound to their roles of housemakers, wives, and mothers. These roles arguably held influence in why individuals would engage in genocidal activity, either in very proactive ways or in reactive ways. In the section to follow, I will argue that these norms were used as an influencer or as a cause to violent activity, in acts both sexual and physical.

Masculinity and Violence:

It goes without saying that violence and killing was inherently central to the genocide. It was largely universal and widespread, with communities and neighbours committing violence against one another, with both sexes and all ages participating. However, most of the violence was largely committed by men, against men (not to discount widespread violence against women).¹⁷ This arguably gives a sentiment that this was a conflict not only of ethnicity, but also a struggle of masculinity and its roles. As described previously, pre-genocide Rwanda was facing not only an economic crisis, but also a sustained perception of invasion from the RPA in neighbouring Uganda. Arguably, these both strike and agitate the two large pillars of Rwandan masculinity: the provider and the warrior. Additionally, the struggle of ascending to these roles could be seen as an influencer for young men to participate, especially in the case of young men in the *Interahamwe*. I will also discuss relations between perpetrator males as possible factors in violence. However, these do not fully explain the use of sexual violence, which needs an inspection perceived threats to the traditional family unit and gender dynamic. In the following section, I will explain how violence

¹⁷ Heide Rieder and Thomas Elbert, "Rwanda – Lasting Imprints of a Genocide: Trauma, Mental Health and Psychosocial Conditions in Survivors, Former Prisoners and Their Children," *Conflict and Health* 7, no. 1 (March 23, 2013): pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-7-6>, p.2)

could have been influenced by these aspects, the roles of men as providers, as protectors, masculine genocide groupthink, and the perceived threat to the gender dynamic.

We will begin with the role of the Rwandan man as the provider, and how it can explain the use of violence as a reaction to threats for the man to economically provide for their family unit, or to advance himself and form his own family unit. Due to the failing economics of Rwanda in the early 1990s, the ability for Rwandan men to find work and earn a living had become worse than experienced previously.¹⁸ This kind of economic hardship turned young men towards Hutu-Power as a means to express frustrations.¹⁹ This provided a kind of “Malthusian crisis” that when the genocide started, allowed for Hutu men to advance themselves economically to the disadvantage of the Tutsi. This made the selling of genocidal “*special umuganda*” particularly easy for the *genocidaires*. In fact, in the research done by Philip Verwimp, the participation in genocidal *umuganda* was largely committed by the “surplus labour” of the household, which was largely the male head of the household, or the eldest son.²⁰ The economic disenfranchisement easily coincided with the genocidal ideological framework which affirmed the Tutsi minority were parasitic to the Rwandan system, not only on the social level but also the economic level. This can be easily identified with the fourth and fifth Commandments of the Hutu-Power movement.²¹ Economic disenfranchisement also explains the motivation and incentivization of large-scale pillaging and robbery of Tutsi properties.²² There is evidence towards a pointed effort of *Interahamwe* and

¹⁸ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 66

¹⁹ Luke Fletcher, “Turning Interahamwe: Individual and Community Choices in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 1 (August 3, 2010): pp. 25-48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601163103>, p.27)

²⁰ Verwimp, *An Economic Profile of Peasant Perpetrators of Genocide*, 308, 309

²¹ Hutu Ten Commandments, 4 and 5; Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 72

²² Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* by Alison Des Forges (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1999), [https://www1.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/Leave None to tell the story- Genocide in Rwanda.pdf](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/Leave%20None%20to%20tell%20the%20story-Genocide%20in%20Rwanda.pdf), p.13, 14, 37)

militia recruiting among the lower portions of social and economic chains in Kigali.²³ The economically-deprived young man was easy recruitment for the Hutu-Power movement, the mixture of a male identity based on providership and family unit creation, and a Tutsi scapegoat provided the Rwandan man with enough incentive to participate in genocidal activity.

By definition alone, the Rwandan role of the warrior is one that is intrinsically attached to the use of violence. For the purpose of genocide, this is a trait that was well appropriated by *genocidaires* and genocide ideology, and played direct roles into both a defensive and offensive posturing against Tutsis. Defensively thinking, there was a sustained fear that the RPA could invade and could commence genocide against them, as seen in neighbouring Burundi.²⁴ This stoked the genocide ideology further, and many Hutu men were easily recruited into the authority's self-defence courses. With the assassination of President Habyarimana on the 6th of April, 1994, the pre-existing tension of fear and existential dread had broken and subsequently spilled into violence. The hysteria had turned their "suspicious" Tutsi neighbour into a threat.²⁵ Tutsi men were particularly vulnerable as they were not seen as ordinary folk, but someone who could be aligned with the invading RPA. This descended even to Tutsi boys as young as infants who could be seen as "future RPA."²⁶ This leads us into the offensive factors of the warrior role of men. Genocidaires were able to compel the martial spirit of the Rwandan male as one that was to participate in the "Hutu Revolution," that it was a Hutu's duty to hunt down and kill Tutsis, any man who refused to participate in patrols or man barricades were in line with the enemy.²⁷ A kind of fraternal attitude was developed for those who had participated in violence, with beer as a

²³ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 68.

²⁴ Fletcher, *Turning Interahamwe*, 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁶ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 73.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67,68.

reward to be bonded over at the end of a day.²⁸ The intersection of violence and masculinity was part of Hutu-Power ideology: masculinity was tied to the ability of one to be able to carry out violence and brutality, and to be properly identified into the Hutu body politic.²⁹ The readiness to use violence was not only an expectation of a man as an individual, but also his extended group dynamic.

One of the largest outcomes of the Rwandan genocide was a realization of the impacts of which conflict and genocide inflicts on women. As stated previously, the conviction of Jean-Paul Akayesu was the first in history which recognized and punished the use of rape as a weapon of genocide. This conviction comes along with the fact that the widespread use of sexual violence (both in rape and sexual mutilation) against women was a common occurrence during the genocide, with as many as a half million estimated occurrences.³⁰ Intrinsicly, this violence is gendered and is part of the underlying dynamic of gender relations and the relations between both ethnicities. These relational dynamics were methodically exploited to further genocidal ideologies and perpetration of violence.³¹ While the violence against men was one that tended to solely fall in line with extermination, the course of violence against women were not solely done in this manner. This is in part due to the patrilineality of ethnicity, in which ethnicity was largely passed down by the father, that made women essentially “less Tutsi.”³² However, because of this view of ethnicity, it provided cause for violence in the case of rape, and gave rise to a phenomenon of “war

²⁸ Ibid., 68, 69.

²⁹ Interviewee 2 (Male), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Employed at Genocide NGO (Chatham House Rules), 15th February, 2020. Recounted a case in which participation violence was used as a method of “proving they were Hutu”.

³⁰ Sai, “Rwanda”, Women’s Media Center.

³¹ Miranda Alison, “Wartime Sexual Violence: Women’s Human Rights and Questions of Masculinity,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): pp. 75-90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210507007310>, p.88)

³² Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 75.

babies” or “little killers” which were the children born from genocidal rape.³³ Some perpetrators saw Tutsi women with a potential to be “saved” from their Tutsi identities. This ties in with the notion that women could be reintegrated into the roles which were deemed socially “good,” as mothers and wives, and to realign these women into the gender hierarchy with masculine hegemony. Further, there was a perception that Tutsi women were something of “femmes fatales” and seductresses, due to their privileged, decadent, and coercive nature - were superior to Hutu men.³⁴ These perceptions spawned instances of sexual violence, which Hutu men would seek to “prove themselves” sexually by dominating Tutsi women.³⁵ The domination of women also contributed to genocidal groupthink, in which sexual violence was seen as an event that provided bonding through complicity and shared experience.³⁶

The use of violence by men in the genocide stemmed from various parts of their identities which underlined Rwandan society, whether it was their place in economics, to their society, or to women. In the post-genocide environment, these are all facets which would come to change for Rwandan men. Which outlines the manner in which gender norms can shift to serve particular interests and agendas, whether for genocide or for state formation. As seen through this section, the particularities of masculinity were used in the use of violence, but in a post-genocide context, it was used in the reformation of the socio-political order and healing of Rwanda, and the subsequent identity formation of modern Rwanda.

³³ Danielle Paquette, “Thousands of Women Were Raped during Rwanda's Genocide. Now Their Kids Are Coming of Age.,” The Washington Post (WP Company, June 11, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2017/06/11/rwandas-children-of-rape-are-coming-of-age-against-the-odds/?utm_term=.cbe000e08947; Interviewee 1 (Male), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Chief Executive at Genocide Survivor Support NGO (Chatham House Rules), 14th February, 2020. Mandate supports children born from sexual violence; term described to us was “little killers”.

³⁴ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 78, 81.

³⁵ Jones, *Gender and Genocide in Rwanda*, 81.; Alison, *Wartime Sexual Violence*, 88.

³⁶ Alison, *Wartime Sexual Violence*, 77.

Post-Genocide Masculinity:

The effects of the genocide on Rwandan society had come to have unbelievable consequences and challenges. The Hutu-led totalitarian state had completely disintegrated and ransacked of all remaining wealth on the approach by the Tutsi-led RPA. This left Rwanda as a near-failed state with deep social wounds. These social wounds were especially felt on the gender-dynamic of the country, with many women having felt the effects of sexual violence and having to fill the void from a new disproportional gender balance due to the deaths of men. For Tutsi men who survived the genocide, they had to reconcile with the destruction of their family units. Hutu men had to face the realities of the new Rwandan hegemony of the RPA/RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), and those who committed crime or violence had to reconcile and face justice to their neighbours. This had several implications on masculinity and its roles in the healing Rwandan atmosphere.³⁷ The staple roles of Rwandan men shifted and were used in a post-genocide identity formation, coming to terms with a new masculine reality and shifting gender perceptions, most of which is tied to the political changes of Rwanda.³⁸

Following the destruction of most Tutsi family units, many people had found themselves isolated from their prior source of masculine identity: their family unit which they would provide for. In a traditional society such as Rwanda in the 1990s, it is easy to imagine the loss of this kind of responsibility is surely to create a personal void for many Rwandan males. However, through this void, there was an opportunity for social cohesion and healing. Fairly quickly after the events of the genocide, a sense of shared experience and loss had many males searching to fill the familial voids by creating informal family units, with many men taking the places of male responsibility to

³⁷ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 54.

³⁸ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 50.

others around them, from brothers and uncles, to fathers.³⁹ This kind of informal network was encouraged by the kind of connection to the responsibility which men had to their family units. Men who lost their families also did not hesitate to remarry and rebuild their own family units to this sense of responsibility.⁴⁰ In the economic sense, men had to adapt their perceptions of providership to also encompass women, as the labour force demanded the inclusion of women participation. Interestingly, these perceptions are still seen as masculine but are culturally acceptable for women to assume.⁴¹ The providership may also possibly explain the support in which Rwandans give to the post-genocide RPF-led government that has prioritized economic development, as there is no economic vacuum which creates dire social stresses for Rwandan men and their provider role, this is greatly seen in the transformation of the “warrior man,” to the “working man.”

Once the horrors of the genocide had subsided, the manner in which Rwandan men postured in the sense of their “warrior” role was greatly changed due to the widespread use of violence. This role was drawn back in from its previous macro-social level and had come to be more of a private micro-social role which was contained down to the family unit.⁴² The “*abagabo*” martial identity had greatly weakened after the genocide, to something which understood as a new “*ubugabo*” (virility, masculinity) formed through “*ndi umunyarwanda*” (New Rwandicity), to

³⁹ Interviewee 2, 15th February, 2020. Stated that due to the largescale destruction of family units, informal family units comprised of survivors occurred. This is best exemplified with “uncles” or “father” roles being occupied with other unrelated survivors.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Stated that family units were quick to rebuild post-genocide, mostly due to the feeling of “emptiness” from loss of responsibility.

⁴¹ Interviewee 2 & Interviewee 3 (Female), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Employed at Genocide NGO (Chatham House Rules), 17th February, 2020. Stated that women occupying roles which were traditionally masculine (especially in the sense of providership) were viewed positively within society. However, men occupying traditionally feminine roles was not viewed kindly. Displaying a one-way movement in this regard.

⁴² Ibid., Stated that there is still a notion of the “warrior”, however, this is more protecting the family or spouse than the state. In general, men who posture as “tough guys” are seen as foolish.

build a new Rwandan post-ethnic identity and ideology.⁴³ The role of the warrior had been turned further into the role of the “worker,” which would not fight for his country, but would work hard for it.⁴⁴ Non-violence was seen as greatly preferable to violence. This was a large case for the use of restorative justice in Gacaca as well, which strived to turn perpetrators into Rwandans who looked past their violent, colonial, and ethnic history, in a direction towards post-ethnic Rwandicity, pre-colonial culture, and national unity.⁴⁵

Men also had to come with the terms of navigating a new masculinity in relation to their women counterparts, who would have an ascending role in Rwandan society. As mentioned early, the targeting of men in killings had pressured women to take up their place in the socio-economic life of Rwanda. However, men also had to be part of women’s healing processes as well, especially in the case of sexual violence.⁴⁶ Additionally, women had to be sensitive to the traumas which men faced during the genocide.⁴⁷ Due to these circumstances, it was important that gender sensitivity was included in the healing and reintegration processes and techniques employed by support services. This sensitivity could be exemplified with married couples being trained and educated on the traumas and effects which the other spouse is enduring. This builds an interpersonal understanding which fosters environments that stray away from conflict.⁴⁸ It also changes the methodology of psychosocial therapies for trauma, where men will be more open to speak about their traumas away from women, due to their continuing perceptions that men cannot be

⁴³ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 43, 50, 51, 57.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁵ Williamson, *Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda*, 43, 54.

⁴⁶ Genocide NGO & Support Organization (Chatham House Rules), 18th February, 2020. It was explained to me that in post-genocide relationships that some women would hide the fact they were victims of sexual violence, which caused stress and tensions with couples, especially with men. Likewise, women had to come with the emotional and mental traumas of men, which men were known to hide or repress often.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Part of the psychosocial therapies done by the organization is teaching women and men how to handle the traumas of the other partner.

“emotional” or “weak.”⁴⁹ This is a place where masculinity and gender have had to mold to circumstances, or for solutions to be creative and flexible in face of gender.

In the case of transitional justice and post-conflict societies, Rwanda provides an exceptional case in the understanding of how gender must be approached in order for them to be holistic, functional, and successful. For the case of Rwanda, the traditional roles and norms which society expected from men had to be molded into the new state contexts and gender realities. Further, the Rwandan case study is also a beneficial to study where civil society and the state lie in relation to state ideologies, identity formation and post-conflict reconciliation. Just as the genocide itself was loaded with gender dynamics, the reconciliation and reconstruction of the state must be sensitive to the implications of gender, not just to women, but to men as well.

Conclusion:

As discussed, Rwandan gender norms were able to persuade male perpetrators into violence by drawing upon their unique identity traits alongside genocidal ideological lines espoused by the Hutu-Power movement. These were further aggravated by economic circumstances and historical intergroup tensions. Violence and genocidal activities would have different applications which varied alongside gender lines as well, with Tutsi women receiving differential forms of violence than Tutsi men. These gendered paradigms had implications for the reformation of the Rwandan state not just in the function, but also reconciliation and the new Rwandan identity. These dynamics fundamentally changed the manner of which gender was understood and involved to the economic, social, and political systems of post-genocide Rwanda.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Men were found to be more likely to open up about their experiences and struggles when in an environment, due to their fear of being perceived as weak from the opposite gender. Thus, the organization would provide group therapy sessions with men for them to open up about their experiences.

Masculine identities have been present in conflict since the beginning of known histories, and in many circumstances, male identity was one that was intrinsically laced with conflict. For centuries, the implications of conflict and genocide have landed at the feet of men, whether holding the spear or being at the end of it. Whether it is from the Roman subjugation of Carthage or Burmese military operations in the Rakhine state in Myanmar. Understanding the specifically masculine dimensions can give new understandings of conflict and violence which would previously be hidden in plain sight. This presents itself in the manner of which men are compelled to violence, or are uniquely vulnerable to it. The continued study of masculinities relationship with violence provides a roadmap in how it can be used to benefit violent regimes and ideologies, and possibly provide warnings for violent posturing in volatile environments which may be defused with development of strategies in de-escalating tensions and rhetoric. The Rwandan case study may be extrapolated to the benefit of study such as this, whether it is by the gendered paradigms of media, state institutions, or economies, and their relationship with the citizen population of the country. With further study, we can hope for a better version of not just masculine identity in society, but humanity as well.

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Interviews:

Interviewee 1 (Male), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Chief Executive at Genocide Survivor Support NGO (Chatham House Rules), 14th, 17th February, 2020.

Interviewee 2 (Male), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Employed at Genocide NGO (Chatham House Rules), 15th, February, 2020.

Interviewee 3 (Female), Rwandan Genocide Survivor & Expert, Employed at Genocide NGO (Chatham House Rules), 17th February, 2020.

Interviewee 4, Genocide NGO & Support Organization (Chatham House Rules), 18th February, 2020.