(RE)CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH NARRATIVES:
HOW MEMORY SHAPES THE PRESENT AND FUTURE FOLLOWING MASS
TRAUMA
A Case Study on Rwanda

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Abstract

The importance of memories and how they are shaped politically to influence identity perceptions is the focus of this paper. Specifically, how following mass trauma state actors select memories to nourish national narratives that build the post-conflict nation. Post-genocide Rwanda is explored and how centring the memory of genocide at the core of national identity redefines what it means to be Rwandan. Defining post-genocide Rwanda places Tutsi-victimisation and survivorhood at the forefront of Rwandan identity. This, disallows Hutu and Batwa public acknowledgment of their memories and marginalises the unacknowledged memories of Hutu and Batwa. Identity perceptions are reconstructed under post-genocide Rwanda explicitly as inclusive and promoting unity but this thesis shows that genocide identity perceptions remain in post-genocide Rwanda concealing ethnic discrimination under narratives of unity.

'How have genocide narratives (re)constructed what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda?'

1. Introduction
1.1. Rwanda: Land of a Thousand Hills

"we exist in a state of permanent commemoration every day in all that we do, in order to remain faithful to that choice" Paul Kagame, Kwibuka 25

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is heavily covered in areas of academia. Majority of the literature is concerned with the actual events of 1994, what factors led up to it and how the nation dealt with the large number of perpetrators in an effort to reconcile the country. Interestingly, very little has been explored in reference to how genocide memory has been used to redefine identity perceptions in Rwanda and what it means to be a Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda (Longman, 2017; Baldwin, 2019). This is noteworthy as the role of memory in politics is regarded as playing a vital role in reconstructions of identity in post-conflict areas. Yet, the literature on Rwanda does not reflect this importance; considering the importance of reconciling memories during periods of transitional justice following mass atrocities especially, in cases where each side views itself as victim of the other (Kriesberg, 1998; Straus, 2019). Rwanda is such a country whereby each side views itself as victim, with all sides living within the same borders and whereby its traumatic past is used to conceptualise its present reality.. The interest of this thesis then, is to pay particular attention to how memories of genocide are negotiated through narratives which come to re-define what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda.

It has been 26 years since the genocide in Rwanda claimed over 1 million Rwandan lives. In 2002 Kagame's new government came into power and since then, a new constitution, flag, national anthem and national seal have been adopted and laws asserting ethnic denial and revisionism have been put into place and ethnic markings have been removed from identity cards (Staub, 2006; Haskell, 2011; Umutesi, 2006; Hintjens 2008; Longman, 2017). In addition, yearly the country undergoes a 100-day state-sponsored mourning period known as

Kwibuka[1]. Despite all these reconciliation efforts, scholars have note that genocide memories are not a unifying factor (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Lemarchand, 2006; Longman, 2017; Reyntjens, 2004); pretending of peace is a widely accepted norm yet, Rwandans remain frustrated of their robbed civil and political rights (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Reyntjens, 2004). Furthermore, ethnicity remains salient, commonly used in everyday disputes whereby hierarchies of suffering are commonplace (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Ingelaere, 2016; Meierhenrich, 2020); with some purporting that this "unity" is a disguise of ethnic amnesia which masks the discrimination faced by many (Lemarchand, 2006, Reyntjens, 2004). This defines the puzzle of this thesis, how is it that despite all reconciliation efforts aimed at unity that scholars find ethnicity to continue to be an important factor in post-genocide Rwanda?

The research question of this thesis therefore asks, how genocide narratives in post-genocide Rwanda reconstruct what it means to be Rwandan in post genocide Rwanda? The question is concerned with how identity perceptions are nourished through the various hegemonic narratives that are present within post-genocide Rwanda and thus looks to the reinterpretation of shared collective history of Rwandans. The question is relevant in political science as narratives have an important role in shaping people's experiences, this is especially important following periods of mass traumatic conflict which is further complicated when perpetrators and victims reside within the same country; making Rwanda a good candidate for my case study.

The centrality of genocide as 'Genocide Against the Tutsi' places Tutsi suffering at the forefront. This thesis will look to constructivism to explore how narratives function, and how the dominant genocide narratives in Rwanda highlight Tutsi suffering whilst disallowing a space for other non-genocide crimes to be remembered. I will use Narrative Analysis to explore how certain narratives in Rwanda are employed, how they interpret collective memory and how they memories are used to redefine identity perceptions in post-genocide Rwanda.

The structure of this thesis will begin by exploring the existing literature on the case of Rwanda pertaining to the genocide of 1994. This will be followed by a theoretical framework which will explore the way in which constructivism can explain for the way in which identity perceptions are nourished by collective memories which adopt chosen memories in the narratives employed to aid Rwandans in understanding their past, present and future. This will then be followed by a methodology whereby I indicate the process of choosing narrative analysis, why it is sufficient and how I apply it to my case. Then, an interpretive analysis will

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[1] Kinyarwanda word for "to remember".

look at various speeches and other supporting documentation which allow me to study the narratives within post-genocide Rwanda. This will be finalized with a discussion which will incorporate my findings with how they can be explained by the theories of constructivism. This will lead to my conclusion which finds that my expectations of narrative analysis are met. Whereby, it is seen that the narratives which are used to reconstruct Rwanda are on the one hand supportive of unity yet, at the same time create identity boundaries whereby genocide and ethnic identities continue to exist implicitly within post-genocide Rwanda.

2. Literature Review

"In order for the nation to move forward in unity, it must be able to deal with its past"
Haberstock, 2014, p. 1

This review will explore various literatures in academic research regarding the topic of the Rwandan genocide. The debates a structured temporally. Firstly, debates pertaining to pre-genocide conditions leading up to the events - the causes - will be explored. Then, debates relating to the period during the genocide will be discussed, specifically, the identities of perpetrators and bystanders; herein, local Hutu perpetrators, bystanders and the bystander international community. Lastly, debates on the post-genocide period are reviewed, precisely, how justice and reconciliation were sought in Rwanda. While the reviewed literature is of importance when the case of Rwanda is considered, this thesis will take a slightly different focus. My research will look at the post-genocide period however it will differ from the reviewed literature as it is concerned with: how state-sanctioned narratives centre official genocide memory in reconstructing a reconciled post-genocide Rwanda. Specifically, how these narratives redefine identity perceptions in Rwanda and what it means to be a Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda.

A substantial portion of existing literature on Rwanda is directed toward the pre-genocide conditions that contributed to genocide. This literature goes beyond the primordial explanation for genocide of the "Hamitic Hypothesis"[2] which points to genocide as a result of purely ethnic origins corrupted by colonial bifurcations of Rwandan identity. Genocide rather, is attested to more complex factors: as a result of historic, social and regional factors

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[2] 'the assertion that African 'civilisation' is due to racially distinct Caucasoid invaders from the north' (Eltringham, 2006)

exacerbated by political manipulations of ethnic identity dynamics by elites (Uvin, 1998,1999; Lemarchand, 1995; Hintjens, 2001; Newbury & Newbury, 1999; Walling, 2013). Hintjens (2001) referred to the events as "state-sponsored genocide", whereby ethnic identities were politicised for mobilisation purposes. Genocide is not attributed to ethnic tensions alone but rather as rational tools of policy attainment (Verdeja, 2012). This literature is important to recognise that socio-political causes were a main driver of genocide in Rwanda with a keen understanding that the genocide was not merely caused by "tribalism" as a direct result of colonialism; a narrative endorsed by the current government of Rwanda (NURC, 2001). This literature does not go beyond causes of genocide. This thesis however, is interested in how identities - in this case ethnic - are politically manipulated in the aftermath of genocide. My concern is toward how memories of genocide are utilised within the hegemonic narratives which have come to redefine Rwandan identity in the post-genocide period, acting as political tools in themselves.

Another relevant discussion in reference to the Rwandan genocide pertains to the identities of the perpetrators and their motivations for participating in genocide. As previously mentioned, the causes of genocide were not inherently ethnic. However, ethnic and class cleavages in Rwanda pre-genocide were cross-cutting whereby, 'the economics of discrimination were very much at the heart of what was otherwise a caste conflict' (Waugh, 2004, p. 81). Some have attributed the high participation rate of perpetrators to an interaction of main factors consisting of a debate between obedience and/or agency. The main factors include: (a) the tradition of *Umuganda*[3] and respect for religion allowing for a culture of discipline to be ingrained into society (Waugh, 2004); (b) structural violence such that, mass poverty, deprivation of education, choices and information led to high levels of frustration, desperation and anger (Uvin, 1998; Waugh, 2004); (c) state-sponsored anti-Tutsi sentiments (Uvin, 1998; Adler, Loyle, Globerman & Larson, 2008). Moreover, Verwimp (2005) found that over 50% of perpetrators were of peasant status as they "could expect to gain from participation" p. 319, thus, supporting the concept of agency (see also Adler et al, 2008). In support of obedience/coercion, a study found that most perpetrators interviewed were afraid of their militant leaders fearing they would be killed as "enemy collaborators" (Adler et al, 2008). Nevertheless, most of these studies have been carried out with perpetrators already serving their sentences. Therefore, limited research exists on female perpetrators (Burnet, 2008; Adler,

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[3] 'Umuganda is a practice that takes root from Rwandan culture of self-help and cooperation, in traditional Rwandan culture, members of the community would call upon their family, friends and neighbours to help them complete a difficult task' (Rwanda Governance Board)

Loyle & Globerman, 2007), perpetrators who fled Rwanda (Loyle & Davenport, 2020) and bystanders (Donà, 2018). Donà indicates that bystander labels add to collective Hutu guilt as their lack of participation was viewed as passive rather than as a form of "passive resistance" and contests the homogenous understanding of bystanders which is what the dominant perspective leans toward. The literature on the identities of perpetrators and their possible motivations for killing is relevant to studies on the Rwandan genocide and informs this thesis to the extent that it provides a background understanding of perpetrator identities without simplifying motivations to "tribalism" as is often endorsed by the government. While my thesis is interested in identity perceptions and conceptualisations, it is concerned rather with, identity conceptualizations in Rwanda in the post-genocide period whereby reconciliation has been sought.

Another significant academic discussion on Rwanda is concerned with the interference or lack thereof from the international community as an explanation for genocide occurring to the magnitude that it did. This group goes as far as labelling bystander nations as perpetrators (Greenfield, 2008). Scholars indicate that western powers took advantage of the socioeconomic conditions in Rwanda and allowed for genocide to occur (Cameron, 2012; Hintjens, 2001; Lemarchand, 1995). These reactions ranged from complete inaction to poorly thought through initiatives (Lemarchand, 1995). They indicate that the failure was not just with states but with the UN whereby, the Security Council's initial response was a reduction in the size and responsibilities of UN operations in Rwanda (Barnett, 1996). This group indicates that the international community is responsible for the genocide, allowing for crimes against humanity to go unchallenged. This view is strengthened when UN interventions through radio in neighbouring Burundi diffused hostile situations, whereas General Dallaire's requests to do the same in Rwanda RTLMC[4] were denied (Waugh, 2004). This body of research is important in realising the potential influences of soft power from the international community in matters of peace and security. My focus however, is to explore how the Rwandan governments' use of genocide memory is negotiated in reconstructing the nation post-genocide.

Another momentous body of research in relation to the Rwandan genocide is concerned with reconciliation and how the Rwandan government sought justice and reconciliation. This was primarily through the use of truth-telling, retributive justice and social institutions. This literature largely focuses on the work of *gacaca* courts whose main aim was to 'eradicate the "culture of impunity"' (Wolters, 2005, p. 67) and 'institute justice conducive to reconciliation'

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[4] Radio Station in Rwanda which would broadcast Tutsi Killing orders

(NURC, 2002, p. 14). *Gacaca* was hailed for incorporating traditional forms of justice with western ideals of justice (Doughty, 2016). Research on *gacaca* indicates the courts were viewed as the most efficient method to not only deal with the large number of "suspected *genocidaires*" but also as a means of healing through truth-telling (Amstutz, 2006; Haberstock, 2014; Brower & Ruvebana, 2013; Rawson, 2012; Waugh, 2004). Staub (2006) indicates that truth must be sought from all sides allowing for accountability of responsibility. Some scholars posit that retributive justice as it was carried out in Rwanda was at times detrimental toward reconciliatory efforts (Clark, 2014; Drumbl, 2005; Parent, 2010). This is supported by findings in Rwanda which indicate that exposure to traumatic events during genocide were associated with less support for reconciliation and *gacaca'*(Pham, Weinstein & Longman, 2004). Similarly, Amstutz (2006) indicates 'political reconciliation is not an inevitable by-product of justice' p. 547. As *gacaca* only required truth-telling for Hutu perpetrators, this disallowed a public space for accountability for other genocide related crimes such as the mass organised RPF killings of Hutu civilians (Longman, 2017; des Forges, 1999; Umutesi, 2006; Lemarchand, 2006). Other research on reconciliation involves reconciliation through education and church (Amstutz, 2006; Carney, 2015; Russell, 2020). The research on *gacaca* and reconciliation through social institutions whilst important, should be studied alongside other forms of reconciliatory methods. This thesis recognises the symbolic importance of *gacaca* on Rwandan society and of reconciliation through social institutions in studying post-genocide Rwanda. Nonetheless, this body of research does not go beyond reconciliation through socio-political institutions. This thesis is related to the aforementioned literature, however, aims to go beyond these institutions by looking at political narratives. The focus here is on how the Rwandan government utilises discursive means to re-produce narratives of genocide memories which reconstruct the boundaries of identity and what it means to be Rwandan post-genocide.

As shown, there is ample literature when it comes to the topic of genocide in Rwanda. The literature reviewed inform my thesis to a certain extent. They cover topics of how genocide came to realisation; especially, how political manipulations of ethnic identities contributed to violence. They indicate the debates surrounding identity and the concept of perpetratorhood both directly and indirectly; and finally, discussions surrounding justice and reconciliation are explored. However, they all differ with the central aims of this thesis. This thesis is primarily concerned with how official memories of the genocide are utilised in state narratives and how these re-imagine what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda. I hypothesise that this research will indicate that the use of official genocide memory substantiated through reconciliatory narratives which have aims of maintaining unity amongst Rwandans under the

banner of oneness has a key problem. In perpetuating these narratives, there remains a concern of maintaining genocide identities in post-genocide Rwanda; that is of, perpetrators and victims/survivors. This is argued to be detrimental to sustaining reconciliation in Rwanda and working against efforts toward *Abanyarwanda*.

3. Theoretical Framework

"Memory without forgetting is impossible"
Zehfuss, 2006, p. 226

In exploration of how genocide narratives are utilised to (re)construct what it means to be Rwandan, identity is recognised as an important element to explore. Specifically, how the application of collective memories of genocide utilised in official narratives reconstruct Rwandan identities. In order to do so, this thesis borrows from theories of constructivism. These theories provide insight into how memories are used to inform narratives and how these affect identity boundaries. The section is structured by briefly outlining what schools of constructivism posit. Identity is conceptualised, paying particular focus to ethnic identity. Thereafter, collective memories are discussed in pertinence to how they affect group boundaries; followed by an explanation of narratives, what they are, how they are formed and utilised for political means. The section will be concluded by an explanation of how identity, memory and narratives are all inextricably linked and that they come to inform and redefine boundaries of group belonging following periods of mass conflict.

Constructivism posits reality to be socially constructed, views state actor behaviour as important and recognises the significant role that power plays in identity formation through the use of memory and narratives (Gee, 1999; Hopf, 1998; Wendt, 1995; Zehfuss, 2002); social structures exist within social practices (Wendt, 1995). One's reality is not a natural phenomenon but is socially constructed, '…something common, shared' (Zehfuss, 2002, p. 261). The world is understood in relation to one's position in it (Nabers, 2015). Constructivism is appropriate for this thesis as identity, memory and narratives are all socially constructed within systems of relation; whereby, agents are understood in relation to their structures and vice versa. Identities exist within systems of relation where meaning is understood in relation to subjects and objects.

Identity is socially constructed (Bell, 2006; Kriesberg, 1998). One's identity is conceptualised through 'historical, cultural, political and social[ly] consistent' meanings (Hopf, 1998, p. 176). Identities are maintained through repetitive processes such as rituals (Sumartojo, 2016; Zehfuss, 2002). For example, national identity may be sustained through recitation of the national anthem on national holidays. Identities are relative, providing connections between agents and structures, individuals and society (Zandberg, 2010; Zehfuss, 2002). They are situational; individuals have multiple identities at any given time which may be stable in some situations and threatened in others; they may contradict or coincide, they may be intertwined as "hybridized" identities (Gee, 1999; Wodak, 2009; Smith, 2009). They are never static but generally remain relatively stable. The identity category of interest to this paper is ethnic identity (interchangeably used here with ethnicity). Ethnicity is dynamically constructed, fluid, subject to change and open to negotiation (Chandra, 2006; Gurr, 2000; Horowitz, 2013; Wimmer, 1997). When one's ethnicity significantly affects peoples' experiences, in extreme cases, this may lead to ethnic crisis. Ethnic crises such as genocides are seldom purely ethnic and are related to material and/or political struggles which are called upon in times of contention for mobilisation purposes (Auerbach, 2009; Chandra, 2006; Wimmer, 1997). This is relevant to mention as Rwanda's ethnic erasure is attributed to ethnicity being inherently problematic which is in opposition with constructivist identity conceptualisations.

Identities are negotiated in (re)constructing nations following periods of mass conflict. This is because conflict and mass trauma challenge and change identity perceptions of "self" and "other" (Lupu & Peisakhin, 2017). During these post-conflict periods boundaries are demarcated of who belongs and who does not (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Without an "Other", it is difficult to form a collective identity signifying the "Self" (Kriesberg, 1998). This self and other duality also means that identities are not neutral. Dichotomies result such that one's identity is treated as superior to the other and exists in opposition to another e.g., victim/perpetrator, good/evil (Milliken, 1999; Nabers, 2015; Zehfuss, 2002). Coding identities is a continually contested process involving power which produces meaning in social groups in the name of nationalism and/or opposition (Bell, 2006; Hopf, 1998). Coding is essential for state actors to assign certain rights to identities to access state resources such as access to survivor funds.

Identities are related to memories as traumatic memories affect group identities. For example, having experienced genocide, Tutsi memories of victimisation inform their identities as victims/ survivors. Collective memory is therefore relevant for this thesis. Collective memories are socially constructed versions of the past (Halbwachs, 1992; Neiger, Meyers & Zandberg, 2011). Following mass trauma, some memories are valorised playing an important role in shaping political perceptions, affiliation and action (Bell, 2006). As only some memories are valorised, this also means that some are forgotten. Selective remembrance involves selective forgetting (Bell, 2006; McCormack, 2017; Sturken, 1997; Winter, 1995). This ranges from '...neglecting the past all together or selectively remembering some', a common theme following genocides (Smith, 1999, p. 19-20). Collective memories inform cultural identity by acting as replicas of experiences available to be retrieved or relieved, specifically selected by state actors from their cultural repertoires to suit their current situational circumstances (Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, 2000; Jeanne-Marie Viljoen, as cited in West, 2017; Halbwachs, 1992; Neiger et al, 2011 Sturken, 1997). Important to note, is that perceived injustice such as failing to acknowledge some groups memories of victimhood keeps these memories alive and dormant seeking to find expression (Ashplant et al, 2000; Stanley, as cited in Ashplant et al, 2000). Collective memories therefore, define group boundaries, reaffirm inner hierarchy, recognise protagonists and uses the past as lessons to guide and instruct communities in the present (Neiger et al, 2011). Essentially, to make sense of the present requires an interpretation of past events.

One way in which governments make sense of the present by interpreting the past is by subsuming collective memories into the official narrative of the nation. Official memories here - which are adapted from selecting certain collective memories - refer to the hegemonic narratives that commemorate mass trauma at the level of the nation-state (Ashplant et al, 2000). Excluding some memories from official memories allows state actors to avoid accountability; by reconstructing the nation without confronting their past, further reinforces boundaries of a particular we-group and disallows for collective healing (Smith, 1999). These national narratives informed by official memories are understood to be hegemonic in that they 'encounter little opposition' (Subotic, 2013, p. 307). Subotic (2015) notes that genocide narratives in particular, because of their pertinence to the "crime of crimes" embed collective memories which cannot be challenged thus, strengthening these hegemonic narratives and their influence on perpetrator and victim identity perceptions. Therefore, collective

memories are socially constructed versions of the past and narratives are the stories we tell about these memories.

Narratives are stories that are happening or have happened to a collective and are required for (re)constructing nations (Auerbach, 2009; Subotic, 2015). They tell of past traumas and glories aiding state actors to construct a common political past which, is required in conceptualising the present and future collective identity of a nation (Auerbach, 2009). They are therefore, important building blocks for ethnic and national identity and encourage collective group cohesion. Narratives exist at all levels however; national narratives are of interest to this thesis. A nation may be understood as a '...named human population sharing a historical territory, common memories and myths of origin, a mass, standardized public culture and territorial [space]…' (Smith, 1999, p. 231). National narratives are crucial in periods following crises such as genocide as these periods require identity redefinitions due to the catastrophic challenges on communal self-understandings (Auerbach, 2009; Bell, 2006). Narratives in this case are the stories told about nations past, which come to construct what it means to be from a certain nation, what this nation stands for and what the future this nation is working towards. Issues arise when individuals or collectives within nations perceive their individual/group narratives to contradict or to be unrepresented by the official narratives endorsed by governments which is likely the case in Rwanda as this thesis argues.

This theoretical review has outlined identity – ethnic and national - , collective memory and narratives. Following mass trauma, identity perceptions of "self" and "other" are challenged as is the case in Rwanda which led to the identification of perpetrators and victims/survivors in regard to the genocide. In the period following genocide, reconciliation is necessary and there is a challenge to reunite Rwandans under one banner of national identity. My expectations of this thesis however, are that Rwanda's national reconstruction around the collective memories of genocide has created narratives which aim to reconcile the nation into a united Rwanda. Yet, I expect to find through the application of narrative analysis that, this focus on genocide as a central theme in reconstructing Rwandan identity maintains strict perceptions of identity in pertinence to genocide; that is as perpetrators and victims/survivors. The implications of this are that what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda is not *Abanyarwanda* but rather, a maintenance of "self" and "other" between survivors and perpetrators who are implicitly aligned with ethnicity which ultimately works against reconciliation efforts.

4. Methodology
4.1. Narrative Analysis (NA)

The above theoretical framework has displayed the interconnectedness between identities, collective memories and how narratives are produced to make sense of the aforementioned. The focus here is: how genocide narratives in Rwanda have (re)constructed Rwandan identities in post-genocide Rwanda and what it means to be a Rwandan. In order to study what and how these narratives are portrayed, I utilise narrative analysis which takes an interpretive approach toward studying qualitative secondary data. Narrative analysis has been chosen as it is appropriate for studying these post-genocide narratives which (re)construct identity in Rwanda. Rwanda is an appropriate case to study the interplay between narratives, memory and identity considering the immense impact the genocide had and continues to have on Rwanda's nationhood. Studying Rwanda as a case-study allows one to view how narratives are formed through the interpretation of collective traumatic memories; and, how these are utilised to redefine the boundaries between "self" and "other" in redefining national identity following periods of mass trauma which challenged national self-perceptions.

Narrative Analysis (hereafter NA), refers to various methods of interpreting text or visual data which have a storied form (Figgou & Pavlopoulos, 2015). For this thesis I will apply one method which looks at how certain narratives are utilised to achieve particular communicative purposes (Figgou & Pavlopoulos, 2015). Namely, how the Rwandan government utilises genocide narratives to communicate what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda, how this is accomplished and the implications on Rwandan identities. NA has shown to be beneficial in deconstructing how narratives affect identity as is shown through various works on narratives and identity (see Subotic, 2013, 2015; Bamberg, 2011; Josselson, 2006). NA allows one to study the "constructedness of our knowledge" (Josselson, 2006, p. 3). This is because 'narratives change and shape identities of social actors, give meaning to their actions, and create discursive space in which some social actions make sense, and other become unimaginable'(Subotic, 2015, p. 193).

NA provides tools whereby, stories and structures can be investigated, how they work, who produces them, what they mean, the mechanisms by which they are consumed, how they are accepted, silenced or contested and what effects they may have (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008). This NA will consist of analysing various documents which are indicative of the hegemonic genocide narratives in post-genocide Rwanda. These will include 15 speeches by President Kagame and First Lady Jeanette Kagame. As a portion of them written out in Kinyarwanda, I use google scholar to translate these with a Burundian friend fluent in Kinyarwanda to double-check the translations. Taking into considerations the limitations of accessibility to documentation I look to other supportive texts. These include the Report on the Evaluation of National Unity and Reconciliation by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), the Genocide Archive website, the *Kwibuka* website, the revised national anthem[5], an itinerary of how a day during Kwibuka events are organised, an Imbuto Foundation Newsletter.

4.2 Process of Analysis

In order to study the narratives, I searched through YouTube as there is commemoration material on the website. I searched through the Genocide Archives website, the Kwibuka website, the Imbuto Foundation and Unity Club (state sponsored agencies headed by the First Lady Kagame). Moreover, I did a general google search with the key words "Rwanda" "Genocide" "Post-genocide Rwanda" and "Abanyarwanda". Once locating specific texts, I read through all the written texts thrice. The first time to understand the context and content of the text and the second time by coding present themes and the third to double check. This led me to find 2 dominant narratives which I code GM for narratives pertaining to genocide memories and CR (Contemporary Rwanda) for narratives pertaining to the post-genocide values of Rwanda. The narratives present within the sources encourage unity (*Abanyarwanda)* and also maintain genocide identities such as those which talk about survivors/victims and or perpetrators which, highlights that these narratives co-exist. Explicitly, dominant narratives encourage unity. However, implicitly, because this unity has been garnered as a result of reconciliation the source of this unity looks to genocide in the name of "never again" and reminds Rwandans of the boundary between survivors and perpetrators.

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[5] The national anthem of Rwanda was revised in 2002 to in line with the values of post-genocide Rwanda

4.3 Choice of Texts for Analysis

These sources have been chosen as they are indicative of the hegemonic state-sponsored narratives surrounding post-genocide Rwanda as they are produced by the state or state agencies whose narrative of unity and reconciliation has relatively been uniform since 2002[6].The choice to analyse texts by primarily Paul and Jeanette Kagame is for practical reasons. The first is that information dissemination in Rwanda is highly controlled by the state whereby most documentation that is accessible to outsiders is in the form of speeches in pertinence to the genocide especially in reference to commemoration and, which are usually presented by President Kagame or Madame Jeanette. Secondly, while the literacy levels of Rwandans has risen over the past two decades to 73% by 2018 (World Bank , 2020), English proficiency remains at 5% by 2008 and is generally viewed as the language of the elite leadership (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). Because of this, genocide narratives which are typically presented throughout the year but especially during the *Kwibuka* period between April and July are typically delivered in Kinyarwanda. Televised speeches available to the public in English are typically delivered by President Kagame and only the most recent are accessible as they have been downloaded on YouTube whereas older speeches are unavailable or require special permission from the government to be acquired[7]. Furthermore, speeches available in text tend to be accessible through government endorsed agencies (i.e., Imbuto Foundation) which are headed by either one of the Kagame's thereby limiting the scope of available source material.

5. Empirical Analysis- word count 2240

In the following section I outline my interpretive analysis of the chosen documents for this thesis. Through NA two dominant narratives are present throughout. As mentioned, narratives act as building blocks for national identity' (Auerbach, 2009). These are (a) narratives of genocide memory (coded as GM) and (b) post-genocide Rwanda (coded as Contemporary Rwanda, CR). Rwanda's process of (re)constructing collective national identity involves memorialising the genocide through a singular narrative which highlights Tutsi suffering whilst

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[6] The year in which Kagame was first elected as president of Rwanda
[7] See Archive website: https://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php/Category:Kwibuka_Videos

marginalising non-Tutsi victimisation. Simultaneously, narratives geared toward national unity with a firm stance that history may never repeat itself are are also present. The analysis indicates that the dominant narratives co-exist yet they communicate opposing messages. The structure of this section will look at the dominant narratives and the various motifs that uphold these narratives. Overall, the dominant narratives are concerned with remembering the genocide through centring Tutsi victimisation, celebrating Tutsi survivorhood and honouring self-sacrifice owing the current state of post-genocide Rwanda to Tutsi. These narratives simultaneously marginalise non-Tutsi memories of victimisation. Narratives co-constitute each other and there is much overlap between narratives supporting unity and those which centre Tutsi suffering. The analyses overall suggests that there exists no public space whereby alternative narratives of genocide memory and alternative expressions of post-genocide Rwandan identity may be freely expressed ultimately, redefining boundaries of who belongs and who does not – these narratives have implications on what it means to be a Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda.

5.1 Narratives of Genocide

5.1.1 Construction of Collective memories: Genocide Against the Tutsi

A prominent narrative present in post-genocide Rwanda is that of 'Genocide Against the Tutsi' which, highlights Tutsi victimisation and suffering. This narrative is omnipresent in post-genocide Rwanda as the title chosen to memorialise the event asserts a singular lens to view the events surrounding genocide.

Genocide narratives are at times encapsulating. This includes references to the genocide which are vague or general suggesting inclusive recognition of suffering. This includes referrals to the events such as *'genocide that was carried out in this country' (P. Kagame, 1995); "story of a country that was once terrorised, traumatised 23 years ago" (J. Kagame, 2017); 'lesson we have learned from the abysmal genocide…exclusion and discrimination benefit no one' (J. Kagame, 2015); "we know exactly where Rwanda came from' (J. Kagame, 2010).* Such general references to the genocide suggest a unified understanding of collective Rwandan experience of genocide, that the genocide was experienced by all Rwandans to some degree.

More often within the analysed sources however, emphasis is placed on Tutsi suffering. This involves statements such as "*Tutsi of the region, were on of the first victims in our country" (J. Kagame, 2012); "genocide of Tutsi plus moderate Hutu. I mean, I had problem*

getting involved with this debate…as if playing around with names is of any substance to anyone. We lost people…That's what I'm saying is absolute nonsense" (P. Kagame, 2017). The post-genocide regime asserts that ethnicity is outlawed from public debate yet, effectively refers to Tutsi time and again to remember the genocide. Reference is repeatedly made toward Tutsi victimisation. Hutu victimisation however, is downplayed and at times denied with an emphasis on a singular view on victim and perpetrator. This can be seen in statements such as: *"Why were there refugees…why were the same people repeatedly targeted for persecution and massacre from the late 50s to the 1990s?"* (P. Kagame, 2019). *"so those people who were targeted will be targeted again, and even others won't be targeted, those who were not targeted in the past will not be targeted in the future"* (P. Kagame, 2017). This narrative asserts that Tutsi have been the only victimised group in Rwanda yet, during the genocide period as well as throughout the nation's history all groups have been victimised on account of their ethnicities. This is strengthened by distinct assertions that victim status is only endowed upon Tutsi. Membership to agencies such as AERG[8], AVEGA[9], IBUKA[10] and the Unity Club are all based upon being a victim of the "Genocide Against Tutsi" thus Tutsi identity is required access to these agencies. These agencies are endorsed by the Government of Rwanda and are publicly distinguished as Rwandan Agencies of support. This is evidenced with national programs being carried out through foundations such as Imbuto Foundation which endorses 10 national education programs and which was initially created for '*providing a holistic approach…women deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS during the Genocide Against the Tutsi'* (Imbuto Foundation, 2021). Overtime Imbuto has come to encompass national projects targeting '*health, education, youth and economic empowerment' (Imbuto Foundation, 2021)*. The line between victim/survivor support agencies and national agencies is a blurry one. Programs which were initially created for the support of Tutsi victims have been extended to national levels in support of developmental goals.

This narrative therefore erases the experiences of Hutu victims and of lesser known Batwa victims. When non-Tutsi victimisation is referred to as needing more recognition, these crimes are referred to as massacres and the response to such attempts is repudiated such as referring to non-Tutsi recognition as *"nonsense"* and at times as *genocide ideologies/denial.* Therefore, non-Tutsi do not receive the same level of recognition publicly in memorialisation of suffering. This is perpetuated through statements such as *"some people say that the national*

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[8] Association of student survivors
[9] Association of Widows and Orphans of genocide victims
[10] Survivors Fund

fund for Assistance to vulnerable genocide survivors is a way of discriminating…the government decided to specially assist vulnerable genocide survivors because they fell victims of a bad governance of previous regimes" (P. Kagame, NURC, 2001). The demarcation is a asserted by the government. In contrast to the highly publicised victim/survivor organisations, massacre victims may access the MINALOC fund which is mentioned once in the literature analysed. Whereas, victim/survivor agencies are not just ever present within the sources, but all speeches analysed by J. Kagame have been under the Imbuto Foundation and the Unity Club. The narrative maintains "hierarchies of suffering" whereby emphasis is placed on the plight faced by Tutsi victims allowing them access to various state accesses such as funds and reinforced public recognition. Strikingly, is the absence of Hutu and Batwa peoples. Hutu is mentioned only three times within the source material in comparison to Tutsi which is often mentioned. Whereas Batwa are entirely absent from the source material.

The lens by which the genocide is remembered places a key emphasis on Tutsi victimisation whilst denying Hutu and Batwa victims public recognition asserting the notion that genocide was an event that singularly negatively impacted one group.

5.2 Narratives of Post-Genocide Rwanda

5.2.1 Construction of a state in permanent commemoration

A predominant narrative seen throughout the source material and concerned with the nation of Rwanda post-genocide is, the reminder of a million lives lost. Similarly to other narratives, the reminder of losses to Rwanda is at times inclusive to Rwandans. For example, *"remember that more than a million lives were lost in the genocide" (P. Kagame, 2014); "about a million people were killed" (P. Kagame, 1995); "over 1 million lives lost" (J. Kagame, 2017).* The narrative is not just present in direct reference to the genocide but is also used generally in regard to current programs in post-genocide Rwanda, such as "*1,000,000 Rwandans out of poverty" (J. Kagame, 2015); "help build the lives of millions" (J. Kagame, 2016).* The one million motif is a stark reminder that post-genocide Rwanda rests on the constant reminder of genocide. At a glance, this reminder may seem neutral as a reminder of Rwandan lives in general. However, this narrative exists alongside the narrative of victim/survivor status which is that which only recognises Tutsi victimisation.

The narrative of 1,000,000 losses is asserted alongside the reminder of "*never again",* - a present narrative throughout the sources analysed - will Rwanda go through genocide again. Further ascertained by the president's reminder that Rwanda exists *"in a state of permanent*

commemoration" (P. Kagame, 2019). Being in permanent commemoration through the consistent assertion that the past must be remembered in order to pave way for the future also means to constantly remember what is being commemorated and why. In post-genocide Rwanda, this translates to constant reminders of survivors/victims in Rwanda which endorses a strong "survivor nationalism" (Baldwin, 2019). This is accomplished through a 100 day *Kwibuka* period which is entirely dedicated to victims/survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi. Events include yearly vigils set up as "A walk to remember Genocide victims" and "A night of remembrance" whereby all Rwandans are required to participate in retracing the routes by which Tutsi were killed, other event programs include Speeches by AVEGA/AERG/IBUKA members[11], survivor testimonies, re-enactments of genocide experience, and talks against genocide ideology' (Night of Remembrance Itinerary, 2003). All events pertaining to Kwibuka focus on Tutsi victims/survivors and occur for 1/3 of the year where it is acceptable to publicly discuss the events of the genocide, yet, disallows alternative memories of genocide such as Hutu victimisation to be included as part of the events.

The term survivor indicates someone who has experienced something very unpleasant and continues to be affected by it (Collins, 2021). Statements such as *"...urge you to continue to strive for survival" (J. Kagame, 2012); "they were targeted for who they are" (P. Kagame, 2017); "there are still those who have genocide ideology" (J. Kagame, 2017)* further indicates that Tutsi identity is still challenged in post-genocide Rwanda. This supports the need to maintain constant commemoration. The survival trop is often present alongside that of sacrifice. This is seen in various documents *"I owe it to the many survivors" (J. Kagame, 2017); "survivors are the only ones with something left to give, their forgiveness" (P. Kagame, 2019); "we have asked them to make the sacrifices necessary to give our nation new life" (P. Kagame, 2019).* This serves as a reminder that honour is paid to Tutsi who and who continue to be honours yearly. This asserts the notion that while there exist dominant narratives that push for unity and reconciliation, simultaneously, there also exists the dominant narrative on how the genocide is to be remembered and who constitutes as a victim/survivor. Thus, pushing a singular victim/perpetrator narrative where Tutsi are automatically victim/survivors and the absent Hutu are collectively perpetrators. And, that the current state of affairs is because of Tutsi, this implicitly says to other groups that they are indebted to survivors and therefore, Tutsi. This disallows public space for non-Tutsi victims to be included in state-sponsored remembrance and recognition.

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[11] This depends on the year as the speeches vary per region and per year

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5.2.2 Unity through *Abanyarwanda*

A grand narrative that is ever-present within post-genocide Rwanda has been shown to be that of Unity. Unity through Abanyarwanda primarily focuses on the goals of Rwanda to maintain peace. Yet, as the source material has shown, there are often contradictions between unity and constant reminders of the boundary between perpetrator and victim/survivor. This is distinctly seen with the national anthem which on the one hand celebrates oneness and simultaneously hints to the boundaries between singular genocide identities.

National symbols were reconstructed in the post-genocide period. This included the national anthem which earned the new name of "Rwanda *Nziza*": translating to Beautiful Rwanda or Good Rwanda. The national anthem was decided through involvement of the public whereby a national competition was held (Vesperini, 2001). This competition decided the new composers of what can be considered one of the most influential national symbols as it is recited throughout the *Kwibuka* period and in reference to any national event. Involving the public is in line with unity as all Rwandans were given the opportunity to be involved in Rwanda's post genocide reconstruction. The awarded winners were namely, Faustin Murigo of Karubanda prison in Butare Province and Capt. Jean Bosco Hashakaimana of the Rwandan Army Brass Band (AfrolNews, 2002). The choice to indicate the title of the winners was an explicit demonstration of reconciliatory efforts.

However, post-genocide Rwanda is built on the memory of genocide and this is evident in the statements such as *"those among us who perpetrated the genocide or stood by passively are also art of our nation…the witness of perpetrators is irrefutable proof if any was still needed that genocide happened" (P. Kagame, 2019).* This statement further demonstrates that the identity of perpetratorhood is necessary to Rwanda's existence as it is a reminder of why Rwanda is where it is. When this is looked at in reference to the choice to indicate the institutional affiliations of the composers of the national anthem this double message is clear. Choosing a winner from the Butare prison indicates that Rwanda welcomes all under post-genocide Rwanda. However, at the same time this is a symbolic reminder of the most intensive killings in the initial weeks of genocide which had the largest number of Tutsi massacred in Butare in the shortest period of time, experiencing a loss of about 75% of the Tutsi population (des Forges, 1999). Similarly, the choice to include the other composer's affiliation is a direct reminder of the strong military presence of the regime which was also a present motif within the sources analysed.

The above interpretive NA depicts that in post-genocide Rwanda's efforts to reconcile, there is also a need to remember what has led to post-genocide Rwanda. Essentially, the remembrance of genocide is pertinent to the current identity of post genocide Rwanda. This has implications on post-genocide Rwanda and what it means to be a Rwandan.

6. Discussion

This thesis has utilised theories of constructivism to explore how genocide narratives in post-genocide Rwanda have reconstructed what it means to be Rwandan in post-genocide Rwanda. These theories aid in studying how the use of collective memories may be utilised and applied through national narratives which are utilised to reconstruct and redefine national identity perceptions following mass trauma such as genocide. The above analysis has indicated that post-genocide Rwanda is reconstructed on the basis of unity and reconciliation. The analysis has also shown that post-genocide Rwanda centres the official memory of genocide on the memory of genocide which in Rwanda is hegemonically understood as "Genocide Against the Tutsi". These two grand narratives co-occur yet are contradictory as they push for unity yet maintain a boundary between former genocide identities which transform into separate post-genocide identities. This discussion will explore how the theories explain for ….

Identities have been identified as being socially constructed. As identity has been explained to exist within systems of relation whereby one's position in the world is understood relative to their socio-historical meanings, post-genocide identities are constructed in relation to their identities during the genocide. For those of Tutsi descent their identity in post genocide Rwanda rests upon survivorhood. Official narratives centre the collective memories of Tutsi through framing the events around genocide solely on the victimisation experiences of Tutsi whereby strength and moral superiority is awarded to those of Tutsi descent resulting in a survivor identity. These survivor identities are maintained through repetitive processes as has been shown with the annual *Kwibuka* period which entails a national commemoration of genocide whereby public mourning is encouraged. The theory shows identities to be relative; survivors exist in relation to those who perpetrated the genocide. Therefore, survivor is to Tutsi as perpetrator is to Hutu. Ethnicities may have officially been removed from post-genocide Rwanda however, there remain ethnicity by proxies whereby experience as a Rwandan continues to be defined in relevance to one's ethnicity.

The stark commemoration of Tutsi victimisation exists alongside the erasure of "Hutu" from post-genocide Rwanda. Unlike Tutsi which undergoes a transformation into post-

genocide Rwanda as survivor, Hutu and Batwa identities are almost entirely absent. There exists no narrative space whereby Hutu and Batwa memories may be expressed and/or recognised officially. When they are not silenced, they are denied entirely with "hierarchies of suffering" put in place that remind Rwandans that Tutsi suffered the most and no alternative conceptualisation of identity are allowed within post-genocide Narratives. This coding of identities allows the government to valorise Tutsi suffering whilst reproducing meaning of what it means to be Rwandan and escape responsibility of RPF related crimes.

This has maintained a self/other dichotomy whereby Rwanda as the self is also Tutsi as the self as state sponsored efforts toward survivorhood are simultaneously efforts toward one national identity. Those of Hutu and Batwa descent are encapsulated as Rwandans yet their hybridized identities as self and other contradict post-genocide national identities as their collective memories are neglected and silenced thus marginalising their experiences. Since collective memories inform cultural identity, when certain groups' memories are not just absent from the official collective memories but argued to be of less importance this informs those whose memories are missing from the cultural repertoire that they do not belong and boundaries between identities are reinforced. This is further strengthened when certain identities allow access to access resources. This contradicts with the efforts toward unity and the aims of *Abanyarwanda.*

The implications of this are when groups believe their treatment in pertinence to their identity is contradictory or unrepresented by the official narratives which construct post-genocide Rwanda, then resentment is likely to build and the boundary between self and other is stratified further. This thesis has shown that the official narratives in Rwanda on the one hand encourage a united Rwanda and simultaneously, prompt a "right way" to interpret the past which is meant to define the present and pave way for the future. As previously mentioned, when one's experiences in pertinence to their identity vis-à-vis ethnicity significantly negatively affects their experiences, this may lead to ethnic crises. My expectations that this thesis would display that centring genocide as a central theme in reconstructing Rwanda continues to implicitly align Rwandans experiences with their ethnic identities despite ethnic identity being explicitly removed from Rwandan lexicon. Indeed, according to my findings, two co-existing yet opposing narratives are salience. My thesis suggests that genocide narratives in post-genocide Rwanda continue to align peoples experiences with their ethnicities despite the explicit aim at reconciling Rwandans.

7. Conclusion

The above thesis has explored how narratives in post-genocide Rwanda utilise official memories to construct current identities. These narratives on the one hand endorse unity and the determination toward reconciliation. Yet, simultaneously the dominant narratives due to the centrality of genocide within the narratives maintains genocide identities: that is, of perpetrator-victim/survivor. These translate to implicit ethnic demarcations within the current hegemonic narratives of Rwanda. Essentially, genocide narratives in post-genocide Rwanda have reconstructed what it means to be Rwandan along ethnic lines without explicitly doing so. Therefore, Rwandans post-genocide experiences continue to be defined by their relation to genocide identities this maintains that whilst all Rwandans may be considered as Rwandans their experiences as Rwandans continue to vary. Thus, going against the aims of unity and *Abanyarwanda.* For more encapsulating narratives, would require the opportunity for alternative collective genocide memories to be inculcated into the dominant narratives of Rwanda thus encouraging more inclusive conceptualisation of post-genocide Rwanda

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