

THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Capstone Project

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Dedication

To the children and youth of Rwanda:

May they find the space to express their memories, understand their pasts, and find unity based on truth and understanding within their nation.

With Gratitude

I would like to extend a special thank you to friends in Rwanda, who shall remain anonymous, for their trust and time spent teaching me about their beautiful country. Additionally, without knowing who you are, I would like to extend a thank you to those individuals who speak out for peace, freedom, and truth, often times risking their lives.

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Introduction

Since the end of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide the Rwandan government and institutions within civil society have promulgated an official narrative of the events. This version of the narrative or “official memory” has tailored public remembrance and discourse, limiting the debate about the past. In present day Rwanda, controls exist that curtail open public remembrance, education, and conversations. The role of memory thus becomes a primary consideration in government, civil society, and in the social fabric of the Rwandan people. The government and social institutions control much of the collective memory, limiting discussions of ethnicity and events that took place outside of the specific time frame considered in the official memory. Limits to memory include restrictions on the freedom of speech, a focus on minimizing ethnic identity, methods of memorialization, and control over the versions of memory that are taught in schools, celebrated during the month of April, and discussed in public spaces.

This thesis will assess the role of memory in guiding the current narrative of Rwandan society, institutions, and reconciliation – ultimately addressing the friction caused in collective remembrance, identity, and social fabric. Subsequently, this thesis will address potential processes of engaging with memory in the present about the past that could include wider truth-telling and grappling with the historical record in order to shift a population towards deeper understanding, and potentially reconciliation, in both private and public spaces.

Chapter One: Historical Overview

Memory exists at the core of history, dictating how events are recorded, how stories are told, and what is remembered or silenced. An inherent difficulty exists in attempting to give a historic overview of the Rwandan genocide without only capturing what is remembered and recorded by historians and the media. It is difficult to know what is omitted and whether the omission is a purposeful burying of history or simply details that were lost along the way. However, an account of the important moments and factors that led to the genocide, occurred during the genocide, and have transpired since helps to set the stage for an analysis of the role of memory within Rwandan society. This chapter outlines relevant pieces of Rwanda's history. The first section includes events that pre-date the 1994 genocide, including the effects of colonization, conflicts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as the civil war that began in 1990. The following section includes the events of the genocide. The final section gives an overview of the violence in the years following the genocide and issues of tension and human rights violations in current day Rwanda.

The hundred days in which the genocide occurred is the best known violent episode in the history of Rwanda. Yet, in assessing the history, this "episode" is only one period of concentrated violence within decades of tension and periods of violence.¹ However, themes emerge in comparing different time periods, from 1959 through current day Rwanda, creating foci for the analysis of the role of memory. Throughout the historical overview, the role of ethnicity, power, violence, and the regional implications of the conflicts serve as threads tying together the events.

Colonization and its discontents

¹ Hinton and O'Neill, Genocide: Truth, Memory, and Representation. (Duke University, London, 2009) Pg. 81.

Historians have attempted to trace the advent of ethnic division and animosity between the Hutu and Tutsi groups to its roots, revealing a number of hypotheses. Views on whether there is a real difference between Hutus and Tutsis vary from “no difference” to “distinct differences.”² Mahmood Mamdani in his book, When Victims Become Killers, notes four hypotheses of how the division between the groups initially formed. Firstly, he looks to the phenotype, or physical differences between groups. Secondly, he notes theorists that focus on genotype, including blood analysis, the existence of the sickle cell trait, and the ability to digest lactose. Thirdly, he considers cultural anthropology which focuses on the memory of peoples as the method for understanding the making of culture. Finally, he notes theorists that piece together past narratives through assessing archeological and linguistic evidence. An analysis of language shifts the parameters beyond simply Rwanda, as the community of Kinyarwanda speakers is much larger than the state.³ Beyond the above mentioned possible “divisions,” Mamdani notes that Hutus and Tutsis both recognize patrilineal kin groups, including lineage and clan systems, which play a role in the fabric of society.⁴

In pre-colonial central Africa, Hutus and Tutsi shared a common history, language, and culture. The groups intermarried and intermingled.⁵ The Kinyarwanda speaking people also live in eastern Congo, southern Uganda, and western Tanzania.⁶ Migrations of these populations between what are now states occurred over centuries. Due to the mixing of the two groups, which may have not been viewed as separate at the time, ethnographers and historians have also concluded that the groups are not completely separate in their origin.⁷ The overwhelming evidence shows that Hutus and Tutsis

² Mamdani, Mahmood. When Victims Become Killers. (Princeton University Press, Oxford, 2001), Pg. 56.

³ Ibid, Pgs. 43 and 51. Note: The linguistic analysis is one part of understanding why the genocide and current conflicts in East Africa are regional in nature.

⁴ Ibid, 54.

⁵ Gourevitch, Philip. We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with our Families. (New York, 1998) Pg. 47.

⁶ Ibid, 8-9.

⁷ Gourevitch, 48.

had created different types of communities, including economic, cultural, and political within the same geographical spaces. Additionally, the commonly held notions that Hutus served as the agriculturalists and Tutsis the pastoralists was not substantiated in hard evidence.⁸ As a demonstration of the geographical and social inter-mixing of the groups, Mamdani notes that the tradition of cohabitation and marriage between the two groups spans decades.⁹

Many historians point to Belgian colonialism as a marker in creating an official division between the tribes. The division became a “cornerstone of their colonial policy.”¹⁰ Thus, the advent of colonialism shifted the understanding of identity, causing it to take on a political, economic, and cultural form. From this point the meaning of being Hutu or Tutsi would shift in relation to power shifts.¹¹ In this context, power was held through community governance institutions designed by colonizing forces. In 1863 John Speke introduced what is now known as the Hamitic myth, which claimed that Tutsis belonged to a “higher order of humanity,” given their assumed Ethiopian origin and physical appearance.¹² Mamdani notes that the content of the Hamitic myth dates back to Judaic and Christian myths.¹³ The infamous hypothesis was part of “race science” which developed throughout Europe in parallel with colonization in Africa and other parts of the world.¹⁴ The colonists constructed a Tutsi hegemony where they served as the “perfect intermediaries” shuffling between the colonists and the population.¹⁵ Additionally, the Belgians sought to re-make the social structure by re-drawing maps and altering the social fabric of the states.¹⁶ Lemarchand in his book,

⁸ Mamdani, 51.

⁹ Ibid, 53.

¹⁰ Gourevitch, 54.

¹¹ Mamdani, 59

¹² Lemarchand, René. The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) Pg. 54.

¹³ Mamdani, 80.

¹⁴ Gourevitch, 50.

¹⁵ Lemarchand, 55.

¹⁶ Ibid, 9.

The Politics of Violent Conflict in Africa, points to the Hamitic myth as the single most devastating impact on Tutsi-Hutu relations.¹⁷

Throughout the following decades, the ideas ascribed to in the myth re-emerged, usually as political tools, used by both sides as an attempt to understand the perceived differences between the two groups. During colonization, Rwandan society perpetuated discrimination, including schools and work forces that were comprised of Hutu laborers and Tutsi managers.¹⁸ Racism was both enforced by colonizing forces and then adopted as a way of life within society. Additionally, Rwanda underwent “race education” where Tutsis were portrayed as a civilizing race, and were given a superior education.¹⁹ In the same vein, the “superiority” of Tutsis within society was further by colonists’ appointment of Tutsis within the local population.²⁰ However, the most devastating impact of colonialism on the population was the process of official classification that took place between 1933 and 1934. During this time, every Rwandan was identified as either Hutu or Tutsi, making social levels less fluid and making one’s identity fixed to the history of a certain ethnic background.²¹

Implicit in creating ethnic divisions is power. Ethnicity has been used throughout Rwandan history to gain power and control over populations through the polarization of identities.²² As is evident in the Hamitic myth, etc., Lemarchand refers to ethnicity as being “invented, imagined, and mythologized.”²³ Thus, elements of the ethnic divisions created by the Belgians became re-imagined

¹⁷ Lemarchand, 57.

¹⁸ Gourevitch, 57.

¹⁹ Mamdani 89.

²⁰ Ibid, 91.

²¹ Ibid, 100.

²² Lemarchand, 7.

²³ Ibid, 50.

by the communities themselves.²⁴ Catalyzed by the colonial obsession with ethnic identification, Rwandan society became further stratified. The Tutsi minority held power over the Hutu population, mainly made up of “peasants.”²⁵ As the next section will cover, the 1959 – 1962 Hutu rebellions sought to flip the power structure.

1950s – 1960s: Rebellion and Independence

The late 1950s and early 1960s mark a shift in the dynamic between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and the eastern part of the DRC. In the years leading up to Rwanda’s independence in 1961, the Tutsi population came to be seen as “the other,” viewed in opposition to the native Congolese or Rwandan populations. Leading up to the 1959 tumult, the Hutu elites seized an opportunity to exploit the Hamitic myth to their benefit by demonstrating the foreign nature of the Tutsis.²⁶ Additionally, the rapid increase in the Tutsi population in the eastern DRC, caused a shortage of land and added kindling to the mounting tensions between the populations.²⁷ In 1959, the tension turned into violence.

Between 1959 and 1962 the Hutu rebellion, also known as the Rwandan revolution, forced over 200,000 Tutsis into exile and many (up to 20,000, although numbers vary) were killed.²⁸ The violence began after the beating of a Hutu politician by Tutsi forces. The attack spurred counter-attacks by Hutus against Tutsis. The situation during the uprisings is described by Philip Gourevitch in his book, We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families, as

²⁴ Ibid, 52.

²⁵ Ibid, 31.

²⁶ Gourevitch, 57.

²⁷ Lemarchand, 14.

²⁸ Ibid, 31. There is disagreement on the number of Tutsis that were killed during this time period. (sources vary from 750 to 20,000); the number of Tutsis who were forced into exile is also debated

“roving bands of Hutus attacked Tutsi authorities and burned Tutsi homes.”²⁹ Gourevitch describes the rebellions as an attempt “to undo the wrongs of colonialism.”³⁰ In a similar vein, Mamdani notes that decolonization was the product of the empowerment of the social majority.³¹ This majority, the Hutu population, began to assert its power through violence and control of institutions. This was the first instance in which violence “demarcated Hutu from Tutsi.”³² However, the period of violence “triggered broader constitutional and political developments” that gave power to Hutu elites.³³ Finally, the rebellions brought an end to Tutsi rule, including dissolving the monarchy (or mwami).³⁴

Throughout this period, Tutsis fled to neighboring countries, including Uganda and DRC, where they took shelter and built their lives in settlements. Later, these communities would serve as the breeding grounds for Tutsi rebel movements, as many of these communities felt ostracized from their homeland and resented the inability to return home. This time period also saw the end of “formal” colonization, as both Hutus and Tutsis pushed Rwanda towards independence.³⁵ In 1962, Rwanda was officially separated from neighboring Burundi, making the country fully independent.

Civil War

In 1990, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), a group of Tutsi soldiers who trained in Uganda, entered the country, beginning a civil war. At the time, the government was controlled by Juvénal Habyarimana, who took control of the country in 1973. Under his leadership, discrimination against the Tutsi population continued, yet the amount of violence had reduced. Much attention has been

²⁹ Gourevitch, 59.

³⁰ Ibid, 60.

³¹ Mamdani, 104.

³² Ibid, 105.

³³ Ibid, 104.

³⁴ Lemarchand 31. Note: The Monarchy was officially dissolved in 1962 via Belgium referendum.

³⁵ Mamdani, 104; Lemarchand 44.

based on the role of Habyarimana's wife, Agathe Habyarimana, who had strong familial ties to Hutu power and was said to "run the throne" during President Habyarimana's term.³⁶ She had a more radical stance than her husband. Leading up to the 1990 RPF invasion, the idea that Tutsis could gain power through political means had faded.³⁷ Additionally, in 1990, as an example of the shifting tone within the country, the Hutu "10 commandments" – which would later become infamous for their clear call to Tutsi exclusion and violence – were published.³⁸

The conflict lasted from October 1990 until August 1993, when the Arusha Accords were signed in Tanzania. The peace agreement created a power-sharing government between the RPF and the Habyarimana regime. During the war, the RPF fought a guerilla style war, led by Paul Kagame. The RPF was financially backed by the Tutsi diaspora, many of whom had been exiled for over thirty years. The RPF sought to facilitate the return of refugees (from the exoduses of the 1950/60s) to Rwanda by displacing enough of the Hutu population that the regime would be pressured into concessions.³⁹ Additionally, the RPF sought to free the country from President Habyarimana's dictatorship, calling for an end to the exclusion and tyranny.⁴⁰ However, the Habyarimana regime was influenced by Hutu Power, a political group with extremist tendencies.⁴¹ To instill fear in the Tutsi population, the Hutu Power massacred ordinary Tutsi citizens to put pressure on the RPF to stop advances. Although, external to the fighting, an economic slump causing food shortages increased tensions in the early 1990s.⁴² In the three years of the war, neither side decisively won, yet the RPF successfully weakened the regime, forcing Habyarimana into negotiations.

³⁶ Gourevitch, 78.

³⁷ Mamdani, 189.

³⁸ Gourevitch, 82.

³⁹ Mamdani, 192.

⁴⁰ Hinton and O'Neill, 81; Gourevitch, 82.

⁴¹ Mamdani, 193.

⁴² Lemarchand, 116.

The civil war and peace negotiations shifted the power dynamics within the country. Mirroring the shifting power dynamic was a shift in the RPF as a fighting force. Over the course of the war, the group shifted from a rebel group or liberation army to an occupying force with real political influence. On the other hand, the Habyarimana regime, which had focused on reconciliation before the war, began to lean towards the Hutu Power movement.⁴³ In the history of Rwanda told by the current government (still controlled by the RPF), the 1990 invasion is often left out, even though this event plays a significant role as a precursor to the conflict that ended in the 1994 genocide.⁴⁴ For both sides, civil war cemented ethnic rhetoric and identities.⁴⁵

The Arusha Accords planned an end to the fighting, authorized a neutral military observer force under the Organization for African Unity, a cease-fire, and a schedule for political talks.⁴⁶ However, during the negotiations, fighting continued. In 1992, Hutu Power, organized into youth groups, massacred Tutsi civilians in northern and western Rwanda.⁴⁷ During the same time frame, the RPF undertook offensive military moves. Both political parties had more moderate representatives at the Arusha negotiations and, thus, the full nature of radicalized politics may not have been discussed at the negotiating table. Following the signing of the agreement, the presidential plane was shot down over Kigali. Although it is unknown who ultimately shot down the plane, the moment in which the President was killed triggered the beginning of the genocide.⁴⁸

1994: The Genocide

⁴³ Mamdani, 185.

⁴⁴ Lemarchand, 116.

⁴⁵ Hinton and O'Neill, 81.

⁴⁶ "The Arusha Accords," for a full text, please review:
<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/agreements/pdf/rwan1.pdf>

⁴⁷ Lemarchand, 122.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 124.

Much has been written about the Rwandan genocide in an attempt to understand how widespread violence could take place. This section seeks to outline the main events, but does not delve into the extensive detail of the numerous difficult and often unanswered questions about how and why the genocide occurred. The genocide began on April 7th, 1994 when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down over Kigali.⁴⁹ Although the genocide had been planned in advance, the crash set off mass killings through the capital city and country. Over the course of the next hundred days, approximately one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.⁵⁰ The majority of the victims were killed with machetes or beaten to death; only a few were killed with bullets. Not until 2000 would the United Nations reflect on the Rwandan genocide, officially declaring it "a failure" in terms of the international community's reaction.⁵¹

The Akazu (Hutu Power), a subset of Hutus who occupied key roles in government, planned and coordinated the genocide. The planning and execution was coordinated with local level officials and media, especially radio stations which propagated hate speech against the Tutsis. In preparation, Hutu Power supporters were organized into the Interhamwe,⁵² or local level militias that carried out the majority of the killings. Hutu Power set out to murder all Rwandan Tutsis, regardless of age or gender. Moderate Hutus were also targeted by these groups. Hutus within the population were placed in an impossible position of participating in the killings or losing their own life. Once the killings began, they spread quickly throughout the country. Lemarchand notes that "the slaughter rapidly gained a momentum of its own, drawing participants from a wide cross section of the

⁴⁹ Lemarchand, 88. Note: It remains unclear who actually shot the plane down.

⁵⁰ Note: The actual numbers debated. Human Rights Watch believes that 500,000 people died (estimates range from 500,000 to one million); as much as 20% of the population.

⁵¹ UN Admits Rwanda Genocide Failure. (BBC News, April 2000) Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/714025.stm>

⁵² Note: This word means those who stand together

population that included government officials, town mayors and councilors, members of the clergy, teachers, and nurses.”⁵³ In many locations, such as Gisenyi (a town on the border with the DRC), mayors organized killings and distributed arms to militias. In these locations, the Interhamwe searched for Tutsi victims, many of whom were killed while hiding in churches, schools, and other community buildings.

Throughout the genocide, women were particularly targeted and rape became a common weapon of war intended to further exhaust and destroy the Tutsi population. In a 1996 report, Human Rights Watch notes;

Rape in conflict is also used as a weapon to terrorize and degrade a particular community and to achieve a specific political end. In these situations, gender intersects with other aspects of a woman's identity such as ethnicity, religion, social class or political affiliation. The humiliation, pain and terror inflicted by the rapist is meant to degrade not just the individual woman but also to strip the humanity from the larger group of which she is a part.⁵⁴

Over the course of the genocide and aftermath, hundreds of thousands of women and girls were raped.⁵⁵ In the aftermath of the genocide, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) prosecuted the widespread rape as an element of the crime of genocide. In this unprecedented decision in international law, the Trial Chamber held that “. . .the rapes were systematic and perpetrated against Tutsi women only. . .sexual assault formed an integral part of the process of destroying the Tutsi ethnic group.”⁵⁶

The international community failed to respond to stop the genocide. Leading up to the genocide, Lieutenant General Dallaire of United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), the UN

⁵³ Lemarchand, 88.

⁵⁴ “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath,” Report by Human Rights Watch (1996). Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Rwanda.htm>

⁵⁵ De Brouwer, Anne-Marie (2005). *Supranational Criminal Prosecution of Sexual Violence*, Intersentia, Pg. 11.

⁵⁶ Fourth Annual Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to the General Assembly (September 1999)

mission stationed in Rwanda after the Arusha Accords, sent information to UN headquarters alerting the Security Council of arms caches, the UN mission was continually downsized. The UNSC did not act on information Dallaire obtained from an informant to seize weapons, because the action was perceived to be outside of UNAMIR's Chapter VI mandate.⁵⁷ Thus, General Dallaire was left on the ground without the appropriate troops or mandate to act. After the genocide began, ten Belgian soldiers were killed, causing the Belgian contingent to withdraw, significantly decreasing the size of the overall force. In response, UNAMIR was officially withdrawn on April 14th, 1994.⁵⁸ The situation quickly became too risky for the scaled down UN mission to act, even when the UNSC voted to restore UNAMIR's strength to 500 troops on May 13th, 1994.⁵⁹

In late June, after months of ongoing massacres, the UNSC authorized French troops to bring a more aggressive force, *Operation Turquoise*, into the country. However, at this point, the massacres of the Tutsis had begun to slow, as the majority had already been killed.⁶⁰ In mid-July, the RPF captured Kigali, officially "winning" the war. Pasteur Bizimungu was sworn in as the first president of the new regime. *Operation Turquoise* was concerned with the possibility of retaliation killings by the RPF, and thus established a safe zone for Hutus, known as the *zone turquoise*. However, critics claim that the zone in southern Rwanda served as a cover for Hutu refugees who were fleeing the RPF. The French openly regarded the RPF as their enemy, and the ongoing slaughter of Tutsis took place within the safe zone.⁶¹ As the RPF began to gain the military upper-hand and the French softened

⁵⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 872 (October 1993).

⁵⁸ Gourevitch, 154.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 151.

⁶⁰ Gourevitch, 155.

⁶¹ Ibid, 158.

their response and eventually withdrew.⁶² The French force represents the only intervention by an international force during the genocide.

Scholars look to a variety of reasons to explain how and why the level of violence occurred and to understand the moments that catalyzed it. Mamdani considers a mix of particular elements of culture and economics as leading to the genocide. In the early 1990s, Rwanda suffered a land crisis, mixed with a growing population and diminishing food production.⁶³ He additionally looks to Rwandan culture, where racism is deeply ingrained and people tend to conform to power.⁶⁴ Gerard Prunier, author of The Rwanda Crisis, speaks of Rwandan political tradition as “one of systematic, centralized and unconditional obedience to authority.”⁶⁵ During the genocide, this notion transcended both victims and killers. Similarly to Mamdani, Lemarchand points to a wide array of possible underlying causes of the genocide that range from the invasion of the RPF, to the shooting down of the presidential plane, to structural violence within Rwanda.⁶⁶ Most likely, the genocide occurred because of a number of factors that influenced different segments of the population. However, what is clear is that the genocide was not a sudden eruption of long-simmering hatreds; rather, it was planned and part of a cycle of violence that the country had been spiraling in for decades.⁶⁷

Post-Genocide years

The post-genocide years mark a major transition in governance, economic development, and attempts at moving beyond the genocide, including legal action and movements towards

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Mamdani, 197.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 199.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lemarchand, 93.

⁶⁷ Lemarchand, 79.

reconciliation and coexistence. In the nearly two decades since the genocide, Rwanda has been the site of major transitions. The post-genocide period is characterized by the control the RPF exerts over the country through governance structures, beginning with changes that were made to the constitution when the RPF first took power.⁶⁸ Under the new constitution, the presidency gained strength and the composition of parliament was altered, allowing the RPF to gain more power.⁶⁹

Four months after the genocide began, Kigali fell to the RPF. During this same time period the French established safe zones in Southern Rwanda. As was previously mentioned, thousands of people were killed within the safe zone.⁷⁰ As the RPF gained power, the Hutu Power feared reprisals from and fled into the *zone turquoise* or towards the DRC border into Goma.⁷¹ The Hutu Power and over one-third of the Hutus in the country fled the across the border, taking any portable property with them. In the process of fleeing they destroyed government offices, factories, and schools.

In the wake of the mass movement of the population, a humanitarian disaster ensued. The international community jumped at the opportunity to assist the refugees, setting up camps for internally displaced people (IDP) within the safe zone in southern Rwanda and refugee camps in Goma (and other locations in Tanzania, DRC, and Uganda) for the population fleeing across the border. Within these camps, the Interhamwe re-establish a presence.⁷² Hutu Power remained mobilized and militarized.⁷³ The newly installed government in Kigali attempted to close the camps, and return the population to their homes. One of the most noted examples occurred in southern Rwanda in the Kibeho camp. The camp existed within the *zone turquoise* and was home to a large

⁶⁸ Reyntjens, Filip. Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship. (*African Affairs* (2004), 103, 177–210) Pg. 179.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gourevitch, 158.

⁷¹ Ibid, 162.

⁷² Gourevitch, 166.

⁷³ Ibid, 167.

contingent of genocidaires.⁷⁴ In December of 1994, the RPF ran a joint operation with UNAMIR with the intention of sweeping the genocidaires out of the camp. In a rather chaotic process, the RPF attempted to close the camp, during which fighting broke out that left between 2,000 and 4,000 people dead.⁷⁵ Although no official number is agreed upon, some scholars note that possibly up to 100,000 civilians were massacred by the RPF during this time period.⁷⁶ In the wake of the violence, Robert Gersony produced a report for the UN, which allegedly identified a pattern of massacres committed by the RPF.⁷⁷ The report was quieted by UN officials.

After the genocide, the new government was left with a devastated country, humanitarian crisis, and a call for justice. In assessing the current human rights situation, critics often cite the prison situation. By April of 1995, over 33,000 “men, women, and children had been arrested for alleged participation in the genocide.” The number reached 125,000 by the end of 1997.⁷⁸ Lemarchand notes that little is said about this population, many of whom are still imprisoned.⁷⁹ Prosecutions have been slow. The legal system is stratified between the international mechanism, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, domestic prosecutions, and a local level justice system known as Gacaca. The Gacaca courts, which began in 2001, consisted of the revival of a traditional legal mechanism that attempted to alleviate some of the strain on the court system.⁸⁰ As will be covered in subsequent chapters, the community courts sought to promote healing and reconciliation through the creation of a platform for community dialogue.⁸¹ However, the legal mechanisms fail to include all of the crimes that took place during the time period, in that they do not address RPF crimes

⁷⁴ Gourevitch, 188.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 193. Note: A Commission was set up to investigate what happened at the camp.

⁷⁶ Reyntjens, 194.

⁷⁷ Gourevitch, 96.

⁷⁸ Gourevitch, 242.

⁷⁹ Lemarchand, 95.

⁸⁰ Zorbas, Eugenia. Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda. (*African Journal of Legal Studies* 29 2004-2005). Pg. 36

⁸¹ Ibid.

within Rwanda and eastern DRC, which are important elements of justice and peacebuilding.⁸²

These massacres still serve as a major source of tension and additionally risk creating a culture of impunity.⁸³

Rwanda, today, is still tightly controlled by the RPF. Gourevitch refers to the country as “a thinly veiled ethnocracy...where the government creates the illusion of power sharing.”⁸⁴ Many examples exist of people being forced to resign and into exile after bringing up human rights abuses. Even grimmer cases of murder exist for the same “offence.”⁸⁵ The RPF leadership is central to this power structure, beginning with the takeover in Kigali, the toppling of Mobutu in 1997⁸⁶, and the current sense of fear and repression.⁸⁷ Within Rwanda, internal freedoms of democracy are lacking as the structures that often limit authoritarian rule are missing.⁸⁸ This creates a difficult environment for an active civil society, which normally acts as a mechanism to create a connection between the state and society.⁸⁹ Immediately with the establishment of the new government, Hutu elites were harassed, imprisoned, and killed.⁹⁰ As elections approached, politicians were forced to resign,⁹¹ opposition politicians were jailed, and election fraud was reported.⁹² In the 2008 election, Paul Kagame received over 98% of the vote, thus essentially making Rwanda a single-party state.⁹³

⁸² Zorbas, 41.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Gourevitch, 96.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Note: Rwanda has a long standing engagement in the politics and wars in the DRC, including the 1996 and 1997 wars which ended with the toppling of Mobutu. In current day Rwanda, the government continues to deny involvement with rebel movements.

⁸⁷ Gourevitch, 97.

⁸⁸ Gready, Paul. *You are Either with Us or Against Us: Civil Society and Policy Making in Post-Genocide Rwanda.* (*African Affairs*, 109/437, Oxford University Press, 2010), Pg. 638.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Reyntjens, 5.

⁹¹ Ibid, 8.

⁹² Ibid, 11.

⁹³ Ibid, 12.

On the surface, the nation has worked towards reconciliation. In 1999, the Rwandan government created the National Unity of Reconciliation Commission (NURC) through Article 178 of the Rwandan Constitution, which has the goal of “ending discrimination and to erase the negative consequences of the genocide on the Rwandan people.”⁹⁴ Although the government has sought to impose a specific version of the genocide (and history in general) into education, cleavages in the version of history still exist. Stories diverge on the nature and beginning of ethnic polarization, as well as the genesis of Tutsi privilege.⁹⁵ Since 1997, the government has banned certain news sources from the country.⁹⁶ In recent years, “there is consensus in the international scholarly community that Rwanda is run by a dictatorship with little respect for human rights.”⁹⁷ Additionally, the constitution was altered to include the crimes of “divisionism” and “genocide ideology,” which limit the narratives of the genocide and serve to severely limit press and dialogue around the genocide.

The genocide left an impact on Rwandan society that is pervasive in everyday life, even as the population continues to live side by side. As will be discussed throughout this analysis, the memory and variations in narratives underlie the current tensions and repression, making for a society with limited freedoms and dialogue. Thus, it is vital to understand how memory works and how a positive environment can be created for memory in order to allow healing and eventually reconciliation to be at the center of the efforts.

⁹⁴ Zorbas, 38. Note: according to Zorbas this exemplifies the prominence of the government in post-genocide reconciliation efforts).

⁹⁵ Ibid, 41 – 42.

⁹⁶ Reyntjens, 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature on Memory

This literature review addresses the role of memory in the re-creation of the state and re-structuring of society after conflict, taking into account the impacts of memory on identity, politics, and governance within a broader theoretical basis as well as in specific relation to Rwanda. The inquiry will more specifically look at the memory through Richard Werbner's Memory and the Postcolony, Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Memory*, and Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer's Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present. These texts serve as a framework for the role of memory, which will then be applied to the case of Rwanda through the consideration of *The Politics of Memory* by René Lemarchand, which appears in The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa and *Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda* by Susanne Buckley-Zistel. The latter two articles illustrate how memory is manifested in Rwandan society. Through the lens of the literature, memory will be addressed through its current crisis, its private and public nature, and its individual and collective correlation to identity.

On Memory

Three foundational works on the role of memory frame the discourse on the importance of memory in present-day Rwanda. The texts include: Memory and the Postcolony: African anthropology and the critique of power by Richard Werbner; *Les Lieux de Memoire* by Pierre Nora; and Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer. The critical theories of each are outlined then further analyzed through the three threads present in Werbner's piece. Firstly, he describes memory as in "crisis" based on society's ability to contest and fully engage with its memory and complex narrative. Secondly, he highlights the tensions in the public and private nature of memory, taking into consideration the role of forgetting and counter-memory.

Thirdly, he highlights the relationship between collective memory, the social fabric of a community, and the formation of identity.

Memory and the Postcolony by Richard Werbner

Richard Werbner compiles studies that frame the role of memory, crisscrossing the African continent in the wake of colonialism. His approach centers on the way in which memory manifests itself in current-day society, "...we put our emphasis on the discovery of ongoing processes of memory work – these are the processes by which memory lives, gets realized or ruptured, is textualized, becomes buried, repressed or avoided, has its effects, and is itself more or less transformed."⁹⁸ Werbner views memory as "in crisis within the public space," and thus he looks to the public and private nature of memory as well as the community and social fabric in which it exists.

Werbner places importance on the individual and collective understanding of memory. He views the individual as a "being," connected to a sense of memory, taking into consideration how memory affects the individual's body and concepts of home. He draws a link between individuals and their relations with others – thus the formation of a community and the web that creates social fabric.⁹⁹ Furthering both the individual and community sense of "memory" as actionable, he notes the right of "recountability," or understanding of the past, including the knowledge of what took place during specific events. Recountability is discussed in cases of government oppression or violence where individuals' narratives are suppressed – noting that the individual's memories should be acknowledge

⁹⁸ Werbner, Richard. Memory and the Postcolony: African anthology and the critique of power (Zed Books, New York, 1998), 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 3.

in the public space.¹⁰⁰ This notion parallels the “right to know,” which has since become a norm in international law. Drawing on collective memory, the demand for memory is linked to a quest for identity: “memory work seeks to keep traces of the past and present alive for the future.”¹⁰¹

Acts of Memory by Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer

Mirroring the compilation style of *Memory and the Postcolony*, Bal et. al. create an anthology of case studies centered on what they refer to as cultural memory. Each of the chapters is written by a specialist within the field of memory studies, and it spans post-holocaust Germany to the contemporary United States. The book is divided between types of memories: helpful memories, disperse memories, and memories for the present. The categories serve as a framework for the various roles memory plays in the life of the individual and the collective. The authors define cultural memory as memory which is understood as a cultural phenomenon. Additionally, “memorization” occurs in the present by considering memory’s role in shaping the future.¹⁰² In their anthology, memory is active, i.e. it is not “a psychic or historical accident, it is something you perform.”¹⁰³ From the book’s inception, Bal et al. highlight the role of memories in creating narratives. “Narrative memories, even of unimportant events, differ from routine or habitual memories in that they are affectively colored, surrounded by an emotional aura that, precisely, makes them memorable.”¹⁰⁴ Narratives are how collective memories are understood in the public space.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰¹ Werbner, 11.

¹⁰² Bal, Mieke, Crewe, Jonathan, and Spitzer, Leo. Acts of Memory: cultural recall in the present. (University Press of New England, London, 1999), vii.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, iix.

Through case studies that consider their designated types of memories, Bal et al. illustrate their three-part theory. Firstly, they focus on the incorporation of the past into the present – memory becomes the vehicle making this possible. Secondly, they describe an important element of memory as including a witness to the “painfully elusive past,” thus breaking the connection between the specific memory and the individual. Thirdly, they discuss witnessing and facilitating memory as active choices, thus “...the acts of memory become an exchange between the first and second person that sets in motion the emergence of a narrative.”¹⁰⁵ The relationship between individual’s memories and their social context is visible through the creation of a narrative, placing important emphasis on understanding each of the pieces; the individual memory, the collective memory, the social or communal context, and the process by which narratives emerge.

Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire by Pierre Nora

In the context of French history and memorialization, Pierre Nora writes considers memory in present-day France. While he focuses on sites of memory, the theories behind these sites speak to the larger societal forces influencing memory. He claims that in present-day society, people attempt to memorialize the past, because “there is so little of it [memory] left.”¹⁰⁶ He states that there are no longer “real environments for memory,” which refers to open spaces for discourse about the past.¹⁰⁷ Nora’s methodology assesses where “memory crystallizes and secrets itself,” he claims that this creates a point where there is a break with the past, which he describes as “the sense that memory has been torn.”¹⁰⁸ This place becomes the moment in which the public conversation stops or is fractured in some way. Nora delineates between the individual’s memory and the social or

¹⁰⁵ Bal et al., x.

¹⁰⁶ Nora, Pierre. *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*. (University of California Press, Representation, No. 26. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, Spring 1989), 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

“dictatorial” in some cases in his discussion of the divergences between history and memory.¹⁰⁹

“...Memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual.”¹¹⁰ In his view, history is a fixed narrative, and memory “is life...remaining in evolution.”¹¹¹ He places more importance on memory as a tool for understanding the past, creating a framework for the future.

Nora focuses on the importance of memory as he discusses the “end of the tradition of memory” and the “push and pull” between actors in society that creates space for memory.¹¹² This public discourse also lays the foundation for identity. He focuses on marginalized populations, “those who have long been marginalized in traditional history are not the only ones haunted by the need to rediscover their buried pasts.”¹¹³ Through memory, groups search for their origins and identity. Nora makes two vital points that further the discussion on memory. Firstly, there must be a will to remember on the part of individuals as well as society.¹¹⁴ Secondly, Nora posits that certain moments can re-establish a new historical memory,¹¹⁵ thus affecting present memory, social relations, and group identity.

Memory: In Crisis

Werbner situates memory as a public practice that is “in crisis” in postcolonial Africa.¹¹⁶ The notion of a memory crisis is rooted in the lack of public space for memory practice, the lack of freedom for individuals to engage with memory practice, and the possibility of buried memory. While Werbner looks specifically at postcolonial Africa, Nora looks at the state of memory in France in the mid-

¹⁰⁹ Nora, 8.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 9.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid, 12.

¹¹³ Ibid, 15.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 18.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 21.

¹¹⁶ Werbner, 1.

1980s, and Bal et al. take a more global approach – pulling in case studies from a variety of regions. Each work reflects a specific context and, thus, the assessment of the role and nature of the memory crisis varies; however, this analysis seeks to understand what elements, regardless of time and context, make up the memory crisis, in order to theorize the elements of a healthy memory environment.¹¹⁷

In Werbner’s assessment, the memory crisis refers to the depletion of public space that is accessible for memory, including public occasions, elements of every-day life, as well as the ability of the population to freely engage with memory. The crisis becomes visible in moments when the “means and modes of remembrance are disrupted.”¹¹⁸ This could occur through the lack of safety in public remembrance, pressure to not remember publicly or keep certain memories quiet, or a process of forgetting or repression occurring within a society. The lack of public space for memory may signal a decrease in freedom for society to engage with “unsettled memory,” thus limiting open discourse.¹¹⁹ Embedded within the memory crisis, is the lack of “contested memory”; the tension between what is remembered or forgotten. Contestation is part of a healthy memory environment as it signals ongoing discourse, ostensibly with public structures and institutions to guide it. Drawing on possible results of contested memory, Werbner separates the efforts of “state memorialism” and the notion of counter-memory¹²⁰, forces which occur from different realms of society that may clash or potentially complement each other.

¹¹⁷ The notion of a healthy memory environment will be a part of the broader theory of memory put forth in the thesis, which is not covered in this section.

¹¹⁸ Werbner, 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

¹²⁰ Counter-memory is the notion that narratives exist in any society that challenge widely accepted memories or history. In the context of memory, the counter-memory may re-enforce elements of the dominant narrative or it may challenge it outright.

As a marker of the intersection between memory and history, Nora focuses his work on memorials as a public display of both notions. Yet, he criticizes these spaces as creating a specific and static history that is not necessarily able to contain memory in its evolving forms. Nora differentiates between history and memory in that history is more fixed, whereas memory is “life. . . remaining in evolution.”¹²¹ He considers memorials as closed off from the ongoing process of memory, which shifts and grows. Nora pinpoints the “memory crisis” within the “realization of the difference between real memory . . . and history.”¹²² Thus, there is a break between what is remembered in the public space through memorials and the memory of the past that individuals and society hold. Werbner refers to this as a crisis, where the public space for discussion, debate, and practice is not available to consider the divergence between history and memory. Thus, memory is stunted or constrained, unable to affect how history is remembered or portrayed. For Nora, the crisis is encapsulated in the end of the tradition of memory, which he states, is born out of a lack of will to remember.¹²³ Extrapolating on Nora’s theory, the memory crisis may occur when there is only uncontested history.

On the other hand, the anthology put forth by Bal et al. does not speak directly to the notion of a crisis within memory. However, implicit in the authors’ understanding of memory is its importance and role in creating a narrative. They claim that the disintegration of the narrative could occur when the memories do not provide continuity (for the individual or society), thus becoming a “memory crisis.” Looking at the discontinuities constitutes a different understanding than Werbner, who places more importance on the public nature of the remembrance and Nora who views memory as changing, not static. Bal et al. note, “narrative frameworks allow for an experience of (life) histories

¹²¹ Nora, 9.

¹²² Ibid, 8.

¹²³ Ibid, 12.

as continuous unities.”¹²⁴ This quotation draws on an assessment of continuous narratives for survivors of concentration camps during the Holocaust, who compare the broken narrative to a kind of death.¹²⁵ Narratives allow people to make sense out of experiences, thus, potentially, allowing for the individual and society to move forward.¹²⁶ While their writing touches on the memory experience of the individual, I posit that the elements of these shared narratives bring people together, as a shared culture, a community. Thus, the breakdown of the memory or the narrative within a given society could constitute a crisis.

Nora, Werbner, and Bal et al. focus on the importance of memory – thus making a “memory crisis” relevant. A consideration of how power affects the analysis will shed light on the actors, their motivations, and how/why memory is used at different moments in history. Firstly, authors make note of the use of memory to affect the present, which Bal et al. refers to as the “polemic use of the past to reshape the future.”¹²⁷ Thus, those [political elites, etc.] who control power in the present gain the ability to shape how the past is remembered, potentially a position that can shift social relations and identities. Werbner looks to the depletion of public space, which through the lens of power relations begs questions such as why and how the disruption of public space occurs. Bal et al. touch on the potential disruption caused by elements in the continuity of memory/narrative, the power imbalances of elites, political actors, communal level – stratification based on socio-economic differences – all of which are rooted in power. Thus, it constitutes a lens to view memory, even in understanding the nature of the “memory crisis,” which considers which forces hold power over memory.

¹²⁴ Bal et al, 35.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 36.

¹²⁷ Bal et al., xii.

The reason a “memory crisis” exists depends on the context and the “moment” within the context in which memory is considered. The crisis could signal state oppression, the lack of public space, desired political gains, marginalized populations, cleavages between local and national stories, or the desire of any segment of the population to stop remembering in a certain way. The power imbalance affects what is remembered or silenced, which in turn affects the freedom individuals and certain populations, especially those marginalized by the process to openly engage with memory.

Additionally, as Werbner alludes to and will be further considered, the nature of the public space must be considered. Within the notion of “contested memory,” the public space must allow a way for average citizens to engage with the public discourse. Thus, efforts may include a decentralization of power over memory, allowing citizens control over their individual memory and narrative in a way that allows for an open consideration of the past and present.

Memory: public and private

Memory exists in public and private spaces, as manifestations of the individual and collective conscience. The following section discusses the nexus between the individual and collective memory and identity; however, the two topics are intertwined within the nature of human beings existing as individuals, yet having social relations and interactions within society. The notions of public and private as well as individual and collective overlap as memory exists in each of these competing realities.

In the private space, each individual holds memories about the past, however, influenced by trauma, repression, etc. These memories encompass the individual’s life, social connections, and the life of the community and society, are held, discussed, cherished, or simply put - exist, within this space.

The private space consists of the individual and their close relations/community. Individuals

experience memory differently within the private space; however, this analysis focuses on the importance of the ability for individuals to experience memory. Examples of how memory manifests in the private space include, to name a few, the ability to mourn, practice religion, openly discuss the past; whereas examples of the public space include public mourning and burials, official days of mourning, memorials, etc.

Werbner defines public space as a critical element of memory. He draws a link between the “interpersonal power” of remembering and forgetting as a public practice and identity formation, which becomes a part of a state through institutions and civil society.¹²⁸ “My present discussion regards memory as public practice which – being at once moral, political and, often also, painfully subjective – is a product of open and unfinished realities.”¹²⁹ His framework further defines counter-memory movements as playing a vital role in demanding recognition to “make a citizen’s memory known and acknowledged in the public sphere.”¹³⁰ Thus, citizens attempt to carve out public space for memory. He looks to public commissions that are “demanding recognition as a right of recountability . . . to make a citizen’s memory known and acknowledged in the public sphere- no longer to remain a private matter.”¹³¹ The opposite of public memory, is private, or buried memories, which “produce what elsewhere I call unfinished narratives: popular history in which the past is perceived to be unfinished, festering in the present – these are narratives which motivate people to call again and again for a public resolution to their predicament.”

Memorials are an inherently public display of memory, yet they have public and private dimensions of the meaning and effect of memory. In Nora’s theory, memorials exist at the place where memory

¹²⁸ Werbner, 15.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 99.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 2.

¹³¹ Ibid.

(in a public sense) has become history, i.e. a moment that is “frozen” in time. Thus, elements of memory may be “frozen” in the public sphere. Nora’s work focuses on memorials as an expression of public memory that, similarly to Werbner, draws a connection between memory and the formation of identity. The formation of identity based on memory (and memorial) takes place in the public sphere, “the passage of memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history.”¹³² He continues by stating that in the absence of collective memory (or memorials that harness the public understanding of memory), individuals will be tasked more with the process of remembrance.¹³³ He does not extend his theory to the private space, which through an extrapolation of his theory of memory in the public space, must have elements that are more malleable and fluid.

Bal et al. view “cultural memory” as individual and social, and, thus, by extension private and public.¹³⁴ In the first paragraph of their text, they introduce the duality in memory: the public and the private. Through incorporating the past into the present, Bal et al. include “witnessing” in their theory.¹³⁵ Thus, their theory moves the memory beyond the individual. This act diminishes the privacy of the memory. While a witness could be a single person, this idea could be incorporated into the public process of memory, i.e. considering and combining individual’s memories to build a national narrative.

Public and private spaces hold their own power in terms of what is remembered and forgotten. As with the notion of the “memory crisis,” an analysis of public and private spaces inherently includes a power analysis of the means by which these spaces are controlled. What allows individuals to engage

¹³² Nora, 15.

¹³³ Ibid, 16.

¹³⁴ Bal et al., vii.

¹³⁵ Ibid, xi.

with memory in public spaces? Often times the safety, security, and trusted tie between the individuals, community leaders, and state actors who support public remembrance, discourse, and even contestation is part of creating a viable space. While Werbner touches on identity formation through memory, Nora and Bal et al.'s theories are lacking in so far as they fail to explain the individual's understanding of self and a community's understanding of its own identity are related to the public display of memory. What happens to the individual when the private display and public display radically differ? A form of cleavage between the individual, community, and state narrative may occur. Additionally, more emphasis on how memory becomes public could shed light on the process by which elements of the past are remembered or forgotten, who controls the process, and how the public version of memory is maintained or shifts.

Theme 3: Memory and social fabric; individual and collective memory

As theories discussed through the lenses of public and private memory in the previous section demonstrated, the authors additionally view memory as having individual and collective iterations. While the compilation of individual memories is the force behind the collective memory, this analysis will focus on the role and significance of the collective memory through social relations, referred to as the social fabric that makes up families, communities, and societies. Collective memory looks to shared memory, or cultural memory as Bal et al. remark, which is a bond that unites or divides people, causing the creation or disintegration of social fabric. Both Werbner and Nora link the formation of collective memory to the creation of group identity.

Imbedded in Werbner's approach to the study of memory in post-colonial states is the notion that it "touches" individuals as well as the collective, or social fabric.

“...instead our approach to memory takes it as problematic that intractable traces of the past are felt on people’s bodies, known in their landscapes, landmarks and souvenirs, and perceived as the tough moral fabric of their social relations....sometimes the stifling, utterly unwelcome fabric.”¹³⁶

Through the work of Filip De Boeck, in the chapter titled *Beyond the Grave: History, Memory, and Death in Postcolonial Congo/Zaire*, Werbner includes an analysis of social systems that are disrupted by conflict. Rooted in the post-colony experience, he signals conflict and colonization as contributing to the break down in social relations.¹³⁷ De Boeck views memory as a thread that is part of “people’s ability to continue to construct . . . meaningful reality out of the social, political, and economic paradoxes.”¹³⁸ He ties the reality that stems from these memories to the creation of social relations. These can break down through conflict and the loss of a communal memory, which he refers to as “a sense of personal and communal crisis.”¹³⁹ Yet, in the conclusion of his analysis, he returns to the notion that the memories of the collective cannot exist without the memories of the individual.¹⁴⁰

As Werbner mentions in the introduction, De Boeck further highlights the “intrinsic link between memory and identity” which requires an element of social cohesiveness.¹⁴¹ He further states, “the dismembering of collective remembering, the fragmentation of a collective consensus concerning the representations of historical “truth,” is itself a symptom of the breaking up of the social interweave as a harmonious memory environment.”¹⁴² As the collective memory splinters, social unity may shift. As the collective memory is intertwined with group/social identity, this could potentially be altered by changes in the collective memory. However the link can be drawn from the individual to the collective, or vice versa. The understanding of collective memory, the “reshaping of

¹³⁶ Werbner, 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 25.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 39.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁴² Ibid, 33.

identity” requires an “analysis of individual memories.”¹⁴³ Thus, the individual memories lead to the collective memory and understanding of identity— links which can also be made in the opposite direction.

In *Acts of Memory*, Bal et al also shed light on the importance of individual and collective memory. In a chapter by Marianne Hirsch titled *Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy*, she describes memory “as not something we have, but something we produce as individuals sharing a culture.” She goes on to say that “memory is...the mutually constitutive interaction between the past and present, shared as culture but acted out by each of us as an individual.”¹⁴⁴ The word “culture” replaces “society” or “community” in Werbner’s text. Additionally, in a chapter by Jonathan Crewe, memory is viewed as a “collective, social phenomenon” rather than an individual one.”¹⁴⁵ He draws the link between the individual and the collective, stating that the memory of the individual is a product of social memory.¹⁴⁶ In a further chapter by Carol Bardenstein on memory within the Israeli and Palestinian contexts, she looks to Nora’s work and the importance of highlighting the place of rupture in memory. Collective memory is understood as both a response to and a symptom of rupture, a lack, an absence, and “a substitute, surrogate or consolation for something that is missing.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, collective memory takes on a different form than Werbner and Nora’s descriptions, as it allows the collective to overcome what is missing in their day-to-day life, as opposed to signaling the break down in social fabric. Additionally, the chapter introduces the idea of the present community, which is described as “the construction of collective memory [that] is

¹⁴³ Werbner, 39.

¹⁴⁴ Bal et al, 37.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 75.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. It should be noted here that individuals chart different relationships with society, and thus this element of the theory is dependent on the individual and their relationship with their community/society.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 148.

inextricably linked with the construction of collective identity and imagined community in the present.”¹⁴⁸ A link is drawn between collective memory and identity formation.

In describing the nature of memory, Nora writes that it is “by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual.”¹⁴⁹ Like the previous anthologies, Nora places importance on the existence of the individual and the collective memory. Additionally, in the same vein as the previous authors, he ties memory to identity, “...the passage of memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history.”¹⁵⁰ He goes on to state that all groups search for their origins and identity, thus the collective memory is important in allowing the process of identity formation. However, he notes that memories are also held within the individuals, especially in situations in which the collective memory is not freely experienced.¹⁵¹ This may occur in societies in which narratives of segments of the population are repressed and are only shared in private or safe communal spaces, but where the narrative is not acknowledged on the state level.

The transition from individual to collective memory requires a movement or mechanism for the individual memories to become part of the collective. Implicit in how this occurs, I suggest, is a driver, an occurrence that binds people together, a process that decides which voices are heard, which memories become emblematic of the collective, what elements of the memory are interpreted, what cultural or spiritual lenses guide the process, and ultimately which voices are lost. Power balances exist throughout the process of forming a collective identity. The reverse of the described situation is that the collective memory could be imposed from an outside force; however, can

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 149.

¹⁴⁹ Nora, 9.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 15.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 16.

control over the individual's memory occur? The lack of the collective, or freedom to engage with the collective, means that the memories remain with the individuals. As Nora says, "it is important for the individual to remain as memory-individuals." The authors fail to engage with the critical analysis of power, which guides the process of collective memory formation (leading to identity formation). This sheds light on who is empowered or disempowered in the process.

Beyond an assessment of power, I posit is the vital nature of agency in the memory process. If individual memory feeds into collective memory, which in turn relates to collective and individual identity, it is important for the individual to exercise agency in the process -- especially considering the changing nature of memory which can re-establish identity and historical memory.¹⁵²

Additionally, Bal et al. note that anthropologists have yet to develop the necessary conceptual tools to analyze how social memories relate to "social futures," and thus understanding the role of agency in guiding one's social interaction on the basis of memory is uncharted territory.¹⁵³ Thus, combining a power analysis with the agency of the individual will illustrate how the individual interacts with their social memory environment. The context of memory, identity, and social interactions is crucial in understanding the Rwandan genocide and the post-conflict environment. The elements of memory discussed throughout this section frame the following discussion on the role of memory in Rwanda.

The Role of Memory in Rwanda

Turning to literature on the role of memory in Rwanda, this review focuses on the theories put forth in *The Politics of Memory*, in *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa* by René Lemarchand and

¹⁵² Nora, 21.

¹⁵³ Bal et al., 177.

Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda by Susanne Buckley-Zistel. These sources assess elements of memory described in the first section, including the notion of the memory crisis, public versus private tensions, and the importance of individual versus collective memory in relationship to identity formation.

The Politics of Memory in The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa by René Lemarchand

Through Lemarchand's analysis of the Great Lakes region, he assesses various domestic and international influences that led to the Rwandan genocide. He looks at the "politics of memory" in an assessment of current-day Rwanda and the role of memory in constructing it. Firstly, he contextualizes his assessment of memory within the government-imposed public ban on ethnicities, which legislated against maintaining separate Hutu and Tutsi identities.¹⁵⁴ Secondly, he offers an understanding of memory as "official or ethnic, collective, or individual – [it] is a preeminently subjective phenomenon."¹⁵⁵ The phenomenon includes blind spots, blurry lines between fact and fiction, ethnic amnesia, and denials of historical evidence.¹⁵⁶ Lemarchand states that legislating against ethnicity will not make it disappear, based on the role of "ethnic and individual memories [that] alter perceptions of the past, and by implication, the writing of history."¹⁵⁷ Hutus and Tutsi remember and forget the past, including divergences of memory within each separate ethnicity.

Lemarchand divides memory into three categories; thwarted memory, manipulated memory, and enforced memory.¹⁵⁸ Firstly, thwarted memory draws a connection between memory and

¹⁵⁴ Lemarchand, 99.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

recognition, thus addressing elements of Rwanda's past that are missing from the official memory.¹⁵⁹ He refers to the ban on the memory of atrocities committed against and suffering endured by Hutus. He links recognition to reconciliation, and refers to it as "highly problematic," due to the fact that a sense of healing comes with reckoning with the past.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, in the manipulation of memory, which he refers to occurring at the hands of the ruling elite, does not allow for discussions of culpability of this elite – thus the national-level memory does not address the beginning of the civil war in 1990 or the crimes committed by the RPF post-genocide in Rwanda and DRC.¹⁶¹ Thirdly, the notion of enforced memory furthers the idea of manipulated memory, creating a history or national narrative, enforced in this case by the state. Within this national narrative, Hutus cannot achieve victim status, only that of culpability.¹⁶² Amnesia surrounds elements of the past, begging the question of why and/or how a collective memory can be used to form a group's identity.¹⁶³ What is remembered and forgotten plays a vital role in the efforts of Rwandans, today, in their own identity and their ability to live side by side; however, the "amnesia" allows details of the past that still affect individuals and communities to slip between the cracks. This may serve as an obstacle to reconciliation.

Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda by Susanne Buckley-Zistel

Susanne Buckley-Zistel looks at the role of memory in the ability of Hutus and Tutsis to live side by side in post-genocide Rwanda through local level research. Through interviews, she attempts to understand what is forgotten and remembered. Her research demonstrates the subjective

¹⁵⁹ Lemarchand, 102.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 106. Note: Reconciliation is one potential end, coexistence and others will be discussed in the full thesis.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 103-104.

¹⁶² Lemarchand, 105 -106.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 107.

reconstruction or manipulation of ethnic realities coupled with diverse memory experiences of Hutus and Tutsis (as well as diverging experiences within these categories). Like Nora and Werbner, she draws a link between the formation of collective identity and memory discourses.¹⁶⁴ “...the social, economic and political cleavages still prevail, and are frequently invoked in order to determine one’s group identity as Hutu or Tutsi.”¹⁶⁵ Within memory, she refers to “chosen amnesia,” reflecting elements of the past that are no longer a part of present-day discourse.¹⁶⁶ Interviewees revealed that they hide their true feelings, and they “cautioned her not to trust the peaceful coexistence.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, interviewees insinuated that the coexistence only truly existed on the surface level. Her research yielded many important results in understanding the nature of ethnicity in present day Rwanda, including the fact that ethnic belonging may be even more important today, since a portion of the population was killed based on this division.¹⁶⁸ Memory plays a vital role in remembering and transmitting the past not only in the public space, but the private as well. However, the notion of chosen amnesia overrides public cleavages to allow for local coexistence.¹⁶⁹

Throughout Buckley-Zistel’s interviews, Rwandans portrayed the past as harmonious, describing the genocide as a “sudden rupture.”¹⁷⁰ She describes this as “social amnesia” or “a mode of forgetting by which a whole society separates itself from its discreditable past record, which could happen at an organized, official and conscious level.”¹⁷¹ Additionally, she describes memory as being particularly important in Rwanda;

¹⁶⁴ Buckley–Zistel. *Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. (Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 76, No. 2 2006), 132.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 135.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 131.

¹⁶⁷ Buckley-Zistel, 134.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 131.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 132.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 133.

“Memory, too, is important for Rwanda today – in a society which relied on oral tradition until the arrival of colonialism and which even today does not have a strong infrastructure of knowledge transmission, including education about its history, individual and collective memory constitute the basis of reasoning.”¹⁷²

Memory has historically been used to transmit individual and collective memories, and thus Rwanda as a society relies on this mechanism to form collective memory, and potentially collective identity.

From a more cynical point of view, the control over memory or re-writing of history is an element of the government’s approach to unifying the country post-genocide; however, it manages to diminish ethnic identities while increasing Tutsi rule.¹⁷³ Although this may be the reality, the bottom line for the people Buckley-Zistel interviewed was that they “depend on each other in their day to day lives, which requires cohesion....thus, the past is distorted to establish group coherence.”¹⁷⁴ She explains coexistence as the outcome of government coercion, fear of the other, and basic pragmatism.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, she touches on remembrance, which interviewees spoke of as important, yet mention that only Tutsis are remembered.¹⁷⁶ One interviewee responded, “Many have lost loved ones – at the hands of the RPA, in refugee camps or in prisons under poor conditions.”¹⁷⁷ Much of this pain and suffering has not been recognized.¹⁷⁸ A divide exists between the individual and collective memory, based on the lack of a healthy memory environment, causing friction in the ability of Rwandan’s to truly live peacefully post-genocide.

Memory in the Rwandan context

¹⁷² Ibid, 136.

¹⁷³ Buckley-Zistel, 133.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 134.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 138.

¹⁷⁶ Buckley-Zistel, 138.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 319.

¹⁷⁸ Buckley-Zistel, 146.

Buckly-Zistel and Lemarchand highlight the importance of memory in Rwanda, and more specifically, in the post-conflict make up of social relations and identity. Mirroring the previous literature review, which delineated three elements of the role of memory; the memory crisis, the public versus private nature of memory, and the individual versus collective connection to identity formation, the following section will address these topics within the Rwandan context. However, it is important to note, that the “end goal” of a society is moving out of conflict and towards coexistence, peace, and/or reconciliation. The notion that society is, indeed, moving in some direction is used to assess the literature on memory.

Memory Crisis: The Rwandan context

While the word “crisis” is not directly used by Lemarchand and Buckley-Zistel, the notion of a crisis, as defined by Werbner and Nora, is implied through the diminished public space for memory as well as its static nature. Lemarchand describes three categories of memory (thwarted, manipulated, and enforced), which indicate crisis. Each category speaks to the lack of open, public memory, and its manipulation to serve a specific end. In her assessment, Buckley-Zistel speaks to the ever-present nature of the genocide;

“More than a decade after the event, the horror of the 1994 genocide is omnipresent in Rwanda. It serves as a foundation for private arguments and public policies; the individual and collective *raison d’être* of the nation and its people is built around the genocide. Yet the presence of the genocide reaches beyond what words can capture.”¹⁷⁹

The quotation notes the importance of considering the way in which memories of the genocide manifest in present day society to understand how Rwanda can move forward. However, the underlying memory crisis may prevent this from occurring.

¹⁷⁹ Buckley-Zistel, 137.

Both Lemarchand and Buckley-Zistel describe the public ban on ethnicities moving the state towards “one Rwanda,” which in itself attempts to limit the memory of the existence of ethnicities. The limit on public memory fits within Werbner’s definition of the memory crisis. Another byproduct of the ban on ethnicities is that it has driven the divergence of memory into the private space. Thus, ethnic differences are not discussed in public, which does not mean they do not exist (or are not discussed in the private space). However, more research is required to understand the true division of memory within private spaces. In terms of maintaining peace and moving towards “reconciliation,” there is an inherent difficulty in not allowing ethnicity to be remembered openly as it is a central element of past conflicts. The ban silences the experiences of some Rwandan citizens, including victimized Hutus. Bal et al.’s notion of “memory crisis” looks to the places where memory is silenced. The “chosen amnesia,” as Buckley-Zistel refers to it, is both top-down and bottom-up, while a sense of amnesia about ethnicity and memories that diverge from the official state narrative exists. Buckley-Zistel also points to the desire to “forget publicly” so that coexistence on a daily basis is possible. However, chosen amnesia may eclipse certain cleavages, which, in a cynical assessment, could someday rupture again.

Nora identifies the roots of a memory crisis in the lack of the ability to evolve, thus creating a static national narrative. While memory can never be truly static, the current Rwandan government has promulgated a specific version of history that is taught in schools and discussed in public spaces, most notably during the days of mourning and through public memorials. Lemarchand states, “there is Kagame’s official memory, and then there is the Hutu memory. There is a Tutsi memory, and there is a plurality of memories among Hutu and Tutsi.”¹⁸⁰ Lemarchand states that the “meaning of

¹⁸⁰ Lemarchand, 107.

what happened is not fixed once and for all,”¹⁸¹ and thus attempting to fix memory around a specific point in the past [the genocide] constitutes the memory crisis.

The breakdown of the narrative framework constitutes the crisis in *Acts of Memory*. While there is an element of shared culture, i.e. everyone has the same memory of the past within the “new Rwanda,” it is exclusionary to portions of the population. In Buckley-Zistel’s interviews, people commented that “they did not want to recall specific aspects of their past” or “could not remember how the genocide started.”¹⁸² It appears that they have either let go of their individual past or are not comfortable discussing it. The official national narrative is enforced via legislation, known as the divisionism laws, which were added to the penal code to punish those who speak about “other versions of the genocide.”¹⁸³ Thus, as Lemarchand notes, memory is “enforced.”

The memory crisis signals the lack of a healthy memory environment, which may be a prerequisite for mourning, healing, coexistence, and reconciliation. The crisis denotes the divide between the individual and public spaces which underscores different versions of history. Individuals’ understanding of history, which impacts their day-to-day life, actions, and view of their neighbors is not recognized. Their experience is not legitimated within discourse, potentially leading to further divides between groups. Thus, the notion of moving forward is not based on starting from the same understanding of the past or present-day Rwanda, making the process of discourse and healing more difficult.

Tension: Public and private memory

¹⁸¹ Lemarchand, 108.

¹⁸² Buckley-Zistel, 134.

¹⁸³ Lemarchand, 99.

Mirroring the literature on memory, Buckley-Zistel and Lemarchand point to the tension between memory in the public and private spaces. A dichotomy exists between the two spaces and how individuals and communities engage with memory within them. For the individual, both spaces are important, as each person exists within their private space as well as the public space. Their own memories interact with the memories of others in defining the public space.

The public space is controlled under the guise (and reality) of coexistence in everyday life. The content of the memory itself is censored and the methods by which individuals and communities engage with it are strongly guided. The notion of the hundred days of mourning, which includes speeches and visits to memorials, oversees what people remember and how the remembering takes place. Through her notion of chosen amnesia, Buckley-Zistel demonstrates that although the tension between public and private exists, public memory is a trump card as it is necessary in maintaining relations in everyday life. However, she continues to note that “the disagreement is mainly along Hutu/Tutsi lines, and illustrates that ethnic group identity is still very significant in Rwanda.”¹⁸⁴ Although this statement is a generalization, it notes that cleavages are glossed over in the public space. Chosen amnesia manifests publicly, thus it cements the present, specific version of memory into daily life, silencing past tensions between Hutus and Tutsis.

Discussions of memory in the private space are not recognized by the state (or even institutions or specific communities), especially if the memories diverge from the national narrative. However, the individual and potentially smaller family or insular communities may recognize different narratives of the past. With the public space full of the official memory, I hypothesize that some individuals may carve out spaces in private to maintain memories. In Buckley-Zistel’s research, interviewees

¹⁸⁴ Buckley-Zistel, 138.

discussed that “in their heart” reconciliation looked different, that people hide their true feelings, they pretend memories don’t exist, and they could not remember what started the genocide.¹⁸⁵

Buckly-Zistel noted that on the individual level the “inability to remember seemed deliberate,” thus choosing amnesia.¹⁸⁶ The outward strategy is “pretending peace;” however, this notion does not necessarily guide the internal memory or healing process.¹⁸⁷

The tension between public and private potentially has detrimental effects. Firstly, the public level, where the healing is “taking place” does not include the real opinions of sections of the population. For the individual to heal, they must be able to engage with their own past, which requires an open and safe space for the process.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, Lemarchand harps on the necessity of confronting the past publically to allow people the opportunity to reconcile. If memory and narrative are elements of recognition, then allowing some of the “private space” memories into the public space would recognize more people’s experiences.¹⁸⁹ The current and potential detrimental effects of the lack of safe private and public spaces are not fully covered in the literature. Further on the ground research is necessary to understand the difficulties born out of this tension. While Lemarchand and Buckley-Zistel successfully demonstrate the difficulties present in Rwandan society, they only offer cynical future views of the country, rather than positing a more open and safe space for memory.

The nexus between individual and collective memories: Identity formation

Lemarchand and Buckley-Zistel’s articles parallel the previous articles in their discussion of individual and collective memory and the relationship between memory and identity formation. Lemarchand

¹⁸⁵ Buckley-Zistel, 134.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Note: This statement again presumes that reconciliation/co-existence is the intended outcome

¹⁸⁸ Literature on individual and community healing will be discussed in the full thesis.

¹⁸⁹ Lemarchand, 102.

notes that “conflict has individual and collective memories – based on the simple fact that it affected everyone.”¹⁹⁰ In a country in which identity, along ethnic lines, was a reason to be killed or kill in the past and in present-day Rwanda where the government has legislated against ethnic identities, the understanding of identity still exists. Buckley-Zistel clearly states in relation to her aim that she focuses on “the stories people tell to refer to their past and ask whether they facilitate or obstruct group cohesion between the former parties to the conflict.”¹⁹¹ Thus, understanding how individual and collective memory lead to the formation of identity is vital in creating a common ground to assess the conflict and move forward.

The collective memory emerges from the national discourse as well as the social nature of memory, or how a group remembers its past. The publicly discussed memories as well as the omissions become part of the social cohesion. As was previously mentioned, Rwandans note “buying” into the official collective memory to preserve social fabric. However, collective memories are not by definition “public,” and thus other collective memories may exist in private spaces. Again, this is a topic that requires more field research to gauge how memories are understood and practiced within this space.

Werbner states that the collective cannot exist without the memories of the individual, which implies a “bottom up” approach to the creation of the collective.¹⁹² However, I posit that the formation of collective memory in Rwanda comes from both directions: on one side, the state imposes a memory and, on the other side, communities maintain memories out of fear of the other, as Buckley-Zistel

¹⁹⁰ Lemarchand, 102.

¹⁹¹ Buckley-Zistel, 132.

¹⁹² Werbner, 39.

suggests or as part of the social memory of the collective as Bal et al. note.¹⁹³ Thus, the individual memories of Rwandans are influenced by both factors, combined with their own experience before, during, and after the genocide. Lemarchand contends that Rwandans' recollections of the past depend on their role at the time and their situation today. Additionally, "Rwanda's society is highly diverse, reflecting various experiences of the genocide as victim or participant, bystander, absentee or savior."¹⁹⁴ There is no one understanding of the individual's memory in Rwanda, yet, it is important to note that it exists. It has not been swallowed by the official narrative.

Both individual and collective memory are linked to the creation of identity, which is a notion carried throughout the texts, based on the manner in which identity has been galvanized for evil in Rwanda. Lemarchand quotes Nora in his piece: "Remembrance has a coercive force, for it creates identity and a sense of belonging."¹⁹⁵ In Buckley-Zistel's theory of chosen amnesia, she discusses the potential use of memory to create a "particular we-group," thus defining "who is inside and who is outside."¹⁹⁶ By altering the identity of Hutus and Tutsis, the Rwandan government is attempting to create a collective identity which stems from a cohesive collective memory of the conflict. However, the collective identity may not be a reality and, beneath the public surface, it is splintering, which could open society up to conflict. As has been noted, more research is necessary to understand how deep the divide is between the individual and collective memory and whether or not it carries inherently dangerous tensions.

¹⁹³ Bal et al., 75.

¹⁹⁴ Lemarchand, 132.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Buckley-Zistel, 134.

Looking Forward

The literature reviewed outlines the difficult tensions in the memory environment in Rwanda, highlighting the important use of memory for coping and the existence of divergent memories. Moving forward, this thesis will outline potential elements of a healthy memory environment and consider ways to open Rwanda's public and private spaces to recognize the narratives of silenced segments of the population. Thus, considering memory based on the assumption that only through altering how people relate to each other in present-day Rwanda can future ethnicity-related violence be prevented.¹⁹⁷ In order to fully assess the relationships between individuals, more research based on local analysis is needed that gives an honest assessment. Given considerations of the power dynamics, macro level policies must be informed by micro-level assessments.¹⁹⁸ The literature paints a difficult vision of the future of Rwanda; however, learning from the past, through memory processes, may be the key to understanding past and current dynamics in order to alter this vision.

¹⁹⁷ Buckley-Zistel, 148.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Chapter Three: Memory Frameworks

“Our **memory** is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing.” – Luis Buñuel

A review of the literature uncovered numerous challenges in understanding and addressing memory. In order to understand the current status of memory within the post-genocide Rwandan context, a framework is needed from which to assess a healthy or unhealthy memory environment. This chapter seeks to define memory and the elements of a healthy memory environment. In doing so, the underlying assumption, which is addressed, is that within a healthy memory environment, there is a greater possibility for healing on the individual, community, and societal level.

What is memory?

“**Memory** is an action: essentially it is the action of telling a story.” Pierre Janet

Memory plays a particularly central role in how post-conflict societies understand their identities and how individuals within these contexts heal and move forward.¹⁹⁹ Although memory is researched across fields, including natural science and psychology, it is relevant within the post-conflict field “due to its pivotal role in the re-constitution and negotiation of the present by addressing past events.”²⁰⁰ *The University of Cambridge Post-Conflict and Post-Crisis Research and Discussion Group* defines memory in the specific post-conflict context;

Memory is a label for a diverse set of cognitive capacities with which human being retain information about and reconstruct the past in (and for) the present. It is related but distinct

¹⁹⁹ Note: The assumption is made here that healing and moving forward is possible or desired. Again, this moves beyond the framework that “forgetting” is an acceptable response to conflict and trauma, which is a point some scholars would disagree with.

²⁰⁰ “Memory,” University of Cambridge Post-Conflict and Post-Crisis Research Group. Available at: <http://www.postconflict.group.cam.ac.uk/glossary-memory.html>.

to perception, imagination, or knowledge, as well as significantly connected to emotion, trauma, reasoning and morality.

Memory also plays an important part in the constitution of individual as well as collective identities by sharing, constructing, and transmitting memories within a society or group.²⁰¹

“ . . . Different approaches concerned with recalling the past, giving it a place and reconstructing it into the future, such as historical accounts, narratives and remembrance.”²⁰²

Memory, as an action, has individual, collective, and cultural dimensions. It is the force by which the past interacts with the present.²⁰³ Lemarchand focuses on the *critical use of memory*, which refers to understanding multiple sides to a story, to narrate the past. Thus, memory is multiple, allowing for different points of view.²⁰⁴ They are subjective – blurring the line between “factual truth and interpretive truth.”²⁰⁵ Additionally, he describes a central “place” for claims of memory, where they can exist immune from manipulation and appropriation. Memories become something to be protected and shared.

Why is a healthy memory environment important?

In the aftermath of conflict, individuals and societies re-create narratives of their past. Memory is a central component in the re-creation of the narrative or history. The process is complex and may involve multiple understandings of the truth that do not overlap. Individual’s memories make up the collective memory, and are woven together to form a narrative.²⁰⁶ Memory becomes the prism through which individuals and societies experience their environment, which is a vital consideration at the center of peace-building efforts. Thus, the study of memory spans from the psychology of the

²⁰¹ University of Cambridge Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Research Group.

²⁰² Memorialization Experts, Impunity Watch, “Memorialization of Grave International Crimes” (Amsterdam, 2010) Pg. 3.

²⁰³ Bal et al, vii.

²⁰⁴ Lemarchand, 108.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 100.

²⁰⁶ Note: Not necessarily the dominant narrative in the given context, as top-down narrative creation also occurs.

individual to the field of transitional justice with the attempt to understand how healing can take place that allows for people to coexist or reconcile.

Memory and the creation of a narrative may be a pre-requisite for healing, which will subsequently support processes of coexistence, and reconciliation. One of the foundational pillars of transitional justice is the notion of “moving forward” or, in other words, finding a way for a population to move forward, whether through legal, political, psychological, etc. means. The ability to move forward is tied to healing. Healing is a cross-cutting theme, spanning the political, legal, and psychological realms. Healing is important for individuals, communities, and nations as a whole. Staub defines healing as a form of “psychological recovery.”²⁰⁷ Additionally, he notes that only from a place of psychological recovery can reconciliation begin. Thus, healing for individuals is intermixed with the ability for reconciliation. Additionally, Staub notes;

After group violence healing will ideally be a group process. First, huge numbers of people have been affected—in Rwanda the whole population. Second, the violence was a group process. Third, Rwanda in particular is a collectivist, community-oriented society.²⁰⁸

Underlying the theory of a healthy memory environment is the assumption that healing is a way for post-conflict societies to move forward. Central to this process is the establishment of the truth, which will be covered in subsequent chapters. Throughout this analysis, healing will be referred to on the individual, community, and state level; each of which is intertwined and vital in creating an overarching healthy memory environment.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Staub, Ervin. Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory. (*International Association of Psychology*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2006). Pg. 868. Note: Staub writes that this is of special consideration in Rwanda where groups still live intermixed.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 784.

²⁰⁹ Note: Staub delineates elements of healing, including: “Their basic needs for security, for feelings of effectiveness and control over important events in one’s life, for positive identity, for positive connections to other people and communities, and for a comprehension of reality and of one’s own place in the world have all been deeply frustrated.” (Quotation taken from page 867)

The consideration of a healthy memory environment is crucial in creating the space for individuals and society to heal.²¹⁰ Memory initiatives may involve the competing goals of a search for the truth, a means of producing information/accountability, and support for court hearings.²¹¹ The process of narrative creation ascribes ownership to the survivor in re-gaining a sense of self and view of the world.²¹² Research on traumatic memories “has focused on the need for traumatic memories to be legitimized and narratively integrated in order to lose their hold over the subject who suffered the traumatizing event in the past.”²¹³ Trauma can cause a drastic disruption of memory, which severs the past from the present.²¹⁴ These memories require a different type of consideration as they may be harder to reintegrate into a narrative – a notion which can be understood for the individual or the society as a whole. For example, the conflict between ethnic groups in Rwanda, specifically the genocide, is more difficult to integrate into the understood narrative of the country than other periods. Bal et al note that the “fact that narratives contribute to recovery is currently accepted as uncontroversial in the field of the psychology of trauma.”²¹⁵ On a community or societal level, the process would restore an element of ownership to the affected population in understanding their history and creating a narrative.

What makes a health memory environment?

While there are a variety of definitions and strategies within post-conflict societies that address the issue of memory, there is no common understanding of the elements of memory or how it is used

²¹⁰ Note: The word “may” is used here, because this is not the only element required for healing; however, it may set the stage for the possibility.

²¹¹ Memorialization Experts, 4.

²¹² Bal, 40. Note: Not all survivors are traumatized or need or need to regain a “sense of self and view of the world.” However, in the case of Rwanda, so much of the population was affected and has suffered mental and physical health consequences.

²¹³ Bal et al, vii

²¹⁴ Ibid, 39.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 40.

that make a “healthy environment.” A healthy memory environment is one where healing is possible on the individual and societal level. This chapter seeks to tease out what the important elements are of a healthy memory environment. Many more definitions, theories, and cases exist explaining the elements and effects of a challenging memory environment, which will undoubtedly be important in the case of Rwanda. However, this does not mean that the reverse or absence of the unhealthy elements will set guidelines for elements of a healthy memory environment. While memory, itself, ranges from the nostalgic, to the everyday, to traumatic, this assessment primarily assesses in the context of healing on the individual and social levels.

Reviewing pertinent literature in the field of memory studies revealed the following elements of a memory environment:

- **Understanding:** Falling within the new universally recognized norm of the “right to the truth,” the literature refers to the ability of individuals and society to access memory and to understand history. This category manifests itself in understanding crimes that were committed, participating in dialogues that further understanding, visiting important locations, etc. *The International Center for Transitional Justice* focuses its work on truth seeking as a central element to memory, and thus memory initiatives play a role in “public understanding of past abuses.”²¹⁶
- **Contestation:** The literature demonstrated the importance of the ability of individuals and society to contest memory, in essence, to freely tell their story.
- **Levels and spaces of memory:** While memory inherently exists at all levels, including the individual, collective, and national, this category speaks to the recognition of the levels and

²¹⁶ “Truth and Memory,” International Center for Transitional Justice. Available at: <http://www.ictj.org/our-work/transitional-justice-issues/truth-and-memory>

potential divergences of narratives that may exist. Memory is both a public and private phenomenon. The literature speaks to the freedom to engage with it in both spaces, thus the individual and society can both heal with in their own space and this is understood and recognized in the public space.

- **Identity:** How individuals and societies engage with memory is ultimately a part of the individual or group's identity. Thus, memory is intrinsic to the formation of community and identity.²¹⁷

Adding to the elements of the memory environment described in the literature, an analysis of power and agency will describe how the memory environment is formed – asking the questions who is in control? Who has ownership? Who benefits? Memory exists within the nexus of politics and power, at times silencing sections of a population. In a similar vein, Lemarchand describes memory as “thwarted, manipulated, and enforced.”²¹⁸ Thus, memory environments are guided by power: whose memory is remembered? Who is silenced? Why? Additionally, in the analysis published by Bal et al, memory is described as something performed, even if not consciously.²¹⁹ Thus, a sense of agency or ownership is implied in how the individual or society engages with their memory environment.

²¹⁷ Lemarchand, 107.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Bal et al, vii.

Chapter Four: Understanding the Past: Memory and Truth

Within the topic of understanding the past as a key element of both memory and truth, this chapter will explore the individual's right to the truth, the relationship between memory and truth, and take a closer look at the role of truth in Rwanda. In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, various efforts to engage with truth were undertaken, including, prosecution efforts by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the national court system within Rwanda, and the community justice and reconciliation mechanism, Gacaca. This section will focus on the role of Gacaca to explore the role of memory, public dialogue, and efforts towards justice/reconciliation – all of which comprise the notion of understanding.

The Right to the Truth

Similar to memory, justice, healing, and many of the other words discussed throughout this analysis, truth has a multiplicity of definitions. Without diverging into a philosophical conversation, the following quotation from Naqvi's article will serve as a guide;

“Truth is a concept that is notoriously hard to pin down. It implies objective credibility but also requires subjective understanding. It suggests agreement about factual reality but also space for differing interpretations. It takes on value in the public sphere while remaining an intensely private matter for the individual, and it is honed on the past but may change our perception of the present and teach lessons about what to do with the future.”²²⁰

Transitional justice literature outlines the many benefits of “truth.” It is considered to be a vital part of the healing process, enabling a sense of closure. The acknowledgement of harm done re-creates a sense of dignity for survivors.²²¹ Additionally, truth-seeking mechanisms are key for understanding past atrocities and are intended to be restorative in nature, generally as part of a reconciliation

²²⁰ Naqvi, Yasmin. The Right to the Truth in International Law: Fact or Fiction. (International Journal of the Red Cross Volume 88 Number 862 June 2006). Pg. 272.

²²¹ Ibid.

process.²²² They acknowledge the harm done to victims. Additionally, Naqvi points to the benefit to society “collective catharsis” and “collective conscience” against the repetition of acts.²²³

The right to the truth for the individual victim has been acknowledged by international organs and courts at the national and international level, and has been written into the guiding principles of truth and reconciliation commissions and national legislation, and is considered to be a customary right.²²⁴ A resolution put forth by the Human Rights Council to the UN General Assembly drew on the body of law acknowledging the right to the truth and noted, the right to the truth “recognizes the importance of respecting and ensuring the right to the truth so as to contribute to ending impunity and to promote and protect human rights.”²²⁵ Additionally, an article published by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) noted, “The right to the truth has emerged as a legal concept at the national, regional and international levels, and relates to the obligation of the state to provide information to victims or to their families or even society as a whole about the circumstances surrounding serious violations of human rights.”²²⁶

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has led the field in codifying the individual and collective right to the truth. The Inter-American Convention, via Article 9(1) demonstrates that “ensuring rights for the future requires a society to learn from the abuses of the past.”²²⁷ The court decided the landmark case in the codification of the right to the truth. In 1988 the court ruled in the Velásquez Rodríguez decision that the state was obligated to provide the victims’ families with the

²²² Naqvi, 263.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid, 255.

²²⁵ Right to the Truth, Human Rights Council, Resolution 9/11. Available at:

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_9_11.pdf (The Resolution draws on the Geneva Conventions and the International Convention for All Persons Against Enforced Disappearances, Article 24(2)). Also, it should be noted that the “right for a society” to understand its past is not yet codified in international law.

²²⁶ Naqvi, 257.

²²⁷ Ibid.

truth about the disappeared individuals.²²⁸ This landmark case led the way to developing the individual's right to the truth, which belongs to any person who has suffered atrocities or the family members of someone who has been disappeared. The individual has the right to "discover their fate and whereabouts."²²⁹ Additionally, the right to the truth extends to society in general, and thus, creates an obligation for states to "disclose information about the circumstances and reasons that led to massive or systematic violations."²³⁰ The ICTJ phrases societies' right to the truth as "the right to learn their [individuals or families] history without lies or denial."²³¹

A Venn Diagram: Memory and Truth

Memory and truth are overlapping forces, yet, they are not interchangeable and one does not necessarily lead to the other. Memory is not inherently truth, and truth does not inevitably lead to an environment that is safe for a multiplicity of memories. ICTJ frames the overlap between the two as, "...truth and memory are not just a matter of state policy. . .they are also the responsibilities of any society striving for security, equality, and peace."²³² In the case of Rwanda, efforts to understand the truth have been undertaken by the current government as well as international actors, including the national court system, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and to some extent the Gacaca system. These systems deal with "forensic truths," referring to those which can be proven.²³³ On the other hand, memory initiatives have the possibility of addressing "social truths," which refers the overlap between truth and memory, as there may be multiple versions of memory and truths within a population.²³⁴ Few efforts to access and understand memory have taken place,

²²⁸ Park, Gloria. Truth as Justice (Harvard International Review, 2010) Available at: <http://hir.harvard.edu/big-ideas/truth-as-justice>.

²²⁹ "Right to the Truth," International Center for Transitional Justice. Available at: <http://ictj.org/gallery-items/right-truth>.

²³⁰ Naqvi, 257.

²³¹ "Right to the Truth."

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Memorialization Experts, 4.

²³⁴ Ibid.

including memorialization and Gacaca, the latter of which will be discussed in this section. In other post-conflict contexts, truth and memory have both been products of historical inquiry, community dialogue, and other reconciliation efforts. However, for sections of the Rwandan population, both truth and memory remain suppressed.

The process of engaging with memory and searching for elements of truth can be extremely difficult for individuals and societies. Efforts focus on certain elements of truth (for example, national versus local level) and thus putting parameters around truth is a process in which it should be acknowledged that “memory and truth-seeking is political.”²³⁵ Inherent in the types of truths that are discovered and the nature in which they are used is the notion of power. Michael Foucault referred to truth in the assertion, “truth isn’t outside power, or lacking in power: . . . truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint.”²³⁶ Naqvi continues through the lens of Foucault to note that “truth” is a “construct of the political and economic forces that command the majority of power within the societal web.”²³⁷ While each of the reconciliation and justice processes that have taken place in post-genocide Rwanda weave together power and the type of truth displayed, Gacaca creates a particularly open, yet controlled, space for understanding what took place during the genocide.

Phil Clark in his book, The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda, introduces three types of truth, which created a helpful framework to analyze Gacaca (and other memory initiatives). He points to the legal truth, the personal/therapeutic/emotional truth, and finally, the restorative truth. In the nexus between truth and memory, these prescribed categories of

²³⁵ Memorialization Experts, 35.

²³⁶ Naqvi, 257.

²³⁷ Ibid.

truth may overlap with memories or the space between memory and truth may diverge. In a general sense the notion of truth telling is that it may provide a sense of healing on the individual and community level through regaining a “sense of belonging.”²³⁸ This “sense of belonging” concerns how the truth is expressed and thus, shaped, to aid in the rebuilding of the social fabric of a society, thus it points to the communal aspects of truth as opposed to the individual.²³⁹

Gacaca: Broad Participation in Memory and Truth

In 2001, Rwanda officially began a community level dialogue and legal process that built on traditional community legal systems. From 2001 to 2012, Gacaca engaged much of the population in a post-genocide rebuilding process. Across the country, nearly every adult has participated.²⁴⁰ The meetings, which take place at the community level with judges and, often, government officials, were designed to allow victim and eye-witness and preparatory testimony to be heard and ultimately to decide on a punishment for the perpetrator. Philip Clark notes that one commentator called Gacaca “a face-to-face confrontation with truth.”²⁴¹ Ultimately, the outcome of Gacaca relies on people’s participation, engagement, and trust in the process.²⁴² The government of Rwanda claims that Gacaca is a mechanism by which the country can rebuild a sense of national unity. National unity appears to be a cornerstone of the reconciliation process and thus community dialogue falls within this effort.

Gacaca opened the possibility of dialogue on the community level, thus allowing the possibility of truth and memory sharing in public, structured setting. This level of discussion about past atrocities

²³⁸ Clark, Phil. *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda*. (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 192. Note: Many studies exist showing the danger of truth telling, including, but not limited to, re-traumatization of the victim.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 187.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, Introduction.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 201.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 151.

had not yet occurred in Rwanda. The mass participation signals the engagement of the population in understanding the events of the genocide. Additionally, based on the structure of Gacaca, the population owns the process, creating a sense of ownership over justice, understanding, and, potentially, healing.²⁴³ Through his research, Clark views Gacaca as a “central element in moving towards reconciliation.”²⁴⁴ He cites the space for public discourse that is open and fair to be the driving factor. Thus, genuine engagement with the truth, including the memories of individuals, is required.²⁴⁵

One of the primary intentions behind Gacaca was to air truths about the events of the genocide. The process targeted the community level, since “bigger fish” perpetrators were tried at the ICTR or through the national court system. The individuals Clark interviews report that “much truth has come out and participation is generally high.”²⁴⁶ In the same vein, *Think Africa Press* noted that with such high participation, the truth dividends are also high.²⁴⁷ Additionally, he quotes a government official, as stating, “at Gacaca, the truth ultimately comes from the population.”²⁴⁸ Overall, Clark cites that there is a sense of agreement on “the population” owning the process.²⁴⁹ Gacaca is one of few spaces for communication and, for some, it is a way to overcome what Clark refers to as “a conspiracy of silence.”²⁵⁰ Through participating in the proceedings, members of communities that are often disenfranchised, including women, have the ability to participate not only in discussion, but

²⁴³ Clark, 133.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 166.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 138.

²⁴⁷ Clark, Phil. “The Legacy of Rwanda’s Gacaca Courts.” (Think Africa Press, 2012) Available at: <http://thinkafricapress.com/rwanda/legacy-gacaca-courts-genocide>

²⁴⁸ Clark, 138 and 189; Clark translates the Gacaca manual to say: “Don’t forget it is from the population that the truth will emerge.”

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 141.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 142.

also in the process of rebuilding the social fabric of the community.²⁵¹ Commentators argue that Gacaca is “vital for the reconstruction of facts,” which in a sense is a “reconstruction of memory.”²⁵²

Gacaca has drawn widespread criticism. Not everyone shares the optimistic view of “truth” being shared during the proceedings. Critics point to an inherent problem in having a traumatized population make legal decisions, in a situation where few checks exist on the proceedings.²⁵³ The proceedings are not absent of the power structures that exist within society. Individuals that Clark interviewed claim that Gacaca became another mechanism for elites to control the population.²⁵⁴ Some believe it serves as another mechanism through which the state can impose legal and historical truths on the population.²⁵⁵ Additionally, Clark cites concerns about due process and the protection of rights of genocide suspects and that it encourages punishment of Hutus. The process reinforced the Tutsi monopolization on victimhood by creating an open space to air grievances against Hutus.²⁵⁶ Finally, commentators note that the culture of silence in Rwanda has created a cultural preference and “requirement” not to discuss the genocide or the truths of what occurred in public.²⁵⁷ This makes it very difficult for individuals to tell their story. Thus, even if people are required to attend the hearings, they may not engage with truth-telling or reconciliation processes.²⁵⁸

Additionally, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a study in 2011, which looked at the limitations of fair trial procedures in the Gacaca process. While the study does take into consideration the reason for the government’s selection of Gacaca, to find a quick and informal

²⁵¹ Clark, 143.

²⁵² Ibid, 203.

²⁵³ Ibid, 141.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 138.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 201.

²⁵⁶ Hinton and O’Neill, 88 and 91.

²⁵⁷ Clark, 201.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 213.

mechanism to deal with the high volume of cases, HRW is critical of the actual proceedings. “The government made a number of substantial compromises, particularly in relation to the rights of the accused, judges’ qualifications, and applicable legal standards.”²⁵⁹ These compromises led to unfair trials, which is a critique also put forth by Amnesty International, who claims the trials did not meet the international standards for fair trials.²⁶⁰ Additionally, the level of community participation declined over the years, as community members found parts of the process to be “bureaucratic, slow, and tedious.”²⁶¹ The government took to making participation mandatory and fining individuals who did not attend. The report also found that both Hutus and Tutsis feared speaking against false accusations for fear of retaliation, community shunning, or out of fear of the “poorly defined laws of divisionism and genocide ideology.”²⁶²

The benefits, and traumas, caused by Gacaca are still unclear. Clark openly states that it is contested as to whether Gacaca leads to truth.²⁶³ The original intention of Gacaca was to create a space where parties could interact, interpret, and rearticulate personal testimony, thus fulfilling Clark’s category of “truth-shaping.”²⁶⁴ While Gacaca has provided a space of dialogue, it did not fulfill the realm of “truth shaping,” meaning a sense of communal understanding of what occurred during the genocide.²⁶⁵ According to Clark, the population remains deeply divided about whether Gacaca has assisted in the peace process.²⁶⁶

²⁵⁹ Report by Human Rights Watch, 34; Zorbas, 36

²⁶⁰ Safer to Stay Silent, Amnesty International (Amnesty International Publications, 2010). Pg. 12.

²⁶¹ HRW, 90

²⁶² Ibid, 92.

²⁶³ Clark, 186

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 188.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 189.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 224.

In June 2012, Gacaca officially ended, closing the 11,000+ community courts.²⁶⁷ As was previously noted, Gacaca has unearthed many truths, some in the form of legal facts, about the events of the genocide. While, Gacaca in itself may play a role in the healing process, the next steps for the creation of a more complete narrative are unclear. “Gacaca’s compilation of testimony from 11,000 communities now provides a rich, diverse reservoir of historical material regarding genocide crimes.”²⁶⁸ The opportunity exists for the creation of a historical record, further dialogue, and engagement in the process.²⁶⁹ The critiques that memory is “neither plural, nor openly contested” carry over into the Gacaca process.²⁷⁰ Gacaca is bound by the time period of crimes (i.e. only 1994) that are discussed and the crimes within the time frame (i.e. only crimes against Tutsis). The process does not openly contend with the crimes that this thesis will demonstrate are still within the “veil of secrecy.”

²⁶⁷ Clark, Think Africa Press.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Clark, 208.

²⁷⁰ Ibrek, Rachel. The politics of mourning: Survivor Contributions to Memorials in Post-Genocide Rwanda. (2010 3: 330 *Memory Studies*) Pg. .2

Chapter Five: Contestation and Memory

“Thinking or grappling with the past is conspicuously missing from Rwanda’s official memory – in other words, a sustained effort to recognize the profound ambivalence of the notion of guilt. What persists to this day is . . . collective memory pressed into shape by being repressed.”²⁷¹

An integral part of the healthy memory framework is the ability to contest memory. The literature on memory demonstrates the importance for individuals and society to contest the dominant narrative and tell their own story. As was quoted previously, Lemarchand notes that memory is multiple, and as such, a healthy memory framework may incorporate various narratives into the overarching historical narrative of the conflict/context. This chapter will address contestation within Rwanda through restrictions on the contestation of memory, including, silences, fear surrounding the discussion of plural narratives, and the lack of freedom in public discourse.

Contestation

Central to memory is each individual’s experience as well as their current understanding of their past experiences, as memory may shift over time. The multiplicity of memory combines to create, in essence, a social or societal memory of the past. A more open, or freer society, will allow individuals to engage with memory in a manner that best suits their needs, whether it is simply marking absence, celebrating the past, actively seeking healing, or any other possible outcome. Additionally, the ability to publicly engage with memory allows the experiences of individuals and communities to be validated. As Werbner notes, an environment lacking in contestation fits the description of a “memory crisis,” which creates opportunities for suppressed, buried, and/or enforced memories. Thus, memories become hidden from the every-day, creating a tension between what is remembered and forgotten. Contestation signals ongoing discourse and openness, which is important as memory

²⁷¹ Lemarchand, 102.

shifts over time. In a freer society, civil society may lead the process to provide a structure of individuals and communities to continue to engage with memory.

As nearly the opposite of the manner in which individual narratives form a collective narrative described above, Rwanda's memory is enforced from the "top." The narrative, in essence, the memory of the genocide is imposed by the government, and is re-enforced via social structures and the fear imbedded in society. The multiplicity of memories and narratives becomes a complex challenge in a society that has undergone such trauma as Rwanda, yet where communities and families (from both ethnic groups) must work and live together in order to survive and move forward. In Rwanda, the dominant narrative omits elements of history from the official memory, creating silences.²⁷²

This chapter will discuss ongoing silences, such as the memory of atrocities committed against Hutus (by the RPF army), the lack of discussion around culpability of elites/the ruling party, ongoing human rights abuses, and the crimes committed before and after the genocide by the RPF.

²⁷³ What is remembered and forgotten plays a vital role in the efforts of Rwandans to define their identity and continue to live side by side; however, the "chosen social amnesia," or silences, allow details of the past that still affect individuals and communities to slip between the cracks. As will be discussed in later chapters, the "chosen social amnesia" may be a phenomenon that plays out in public spaces, but that their memories are still palpable in private spaces. This may serve as an obstacle to reconciliation in that public spaces are not accessible for all memories and all narratives of the conflict. The subsections of this chapter will further discuss elements of Rwandan society where contestation does not occur.

²⁷² Lemarchand, 102.

²⁷³ Ibid, 103-104.

Contestation and Rwanda

“There is Kagame’s official memory, and then there is the Hutu memory. There is a Tutsi memory, and there is a plurality of memories among Hutu and Tutsi. . . .the meaning of what happened is not fixed once and for all.”²⁷⁴

While, in reality, no static memory or narrative of the Rwandan genocide can exist, the Rwandan government teaches in schools, discusses in public spaces, and commemorates during the period of mourning and public memorials a very specific version of the genocide and the context in which it occurred. The government’s narrative is driven by the narrative of Hutu guilt in the four months of the genocide, it does not consider the factors that led to the genocide or that have transpired since. The narrative positions the RPF as stopping the conflict and rebuilding the country without ethnicity. A study commissioned by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, a branch of the government, defines the ongoing problems within society;

The weight of genocide and recidivism of deadly identities: Genocide wounds which are not yet healed up in the society, genocide judicial management which does not meet expectations, **plural memories -often incompatible- of genocide**, existential fear, misunderstanding about historical processes and identity-based crimes which are still under way. .²⁷⁵

The study continues to note that all survivors [Tutsis] are ready for forgiveness, “despite their lack of preconditions for reconciliation.”²⁷⁶ While the events that led to the genocide and the “preconditions for reconciliation” need more unpacking, the study paints a static picture of a society that is moving towards unity and healing.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Lemarchand, 103.

²⁷⁵ NURC, page 29 [emphasis added]

²⁷⁶ NURC, 31.

²⁷⁷ Note: While elements of forward movement may be occurring in Rwanda, I posit that there is a danger in painting a picture of the whole society through this lens.

The dominant narrative does not make room for contestation by actively suppressing efforts that share clashing stories. In present day Rwanda, the press suffers from a lack of freedom, human rights abuses are ongoing, fear surrounds public discourse and civil society, and dissenting from the dominant narrative carries legal implications. Reyntjens notes that, “Spaces of free expression are almost all invaded or reduced to a minimum in order to prevent contestation.”²⁷⁸

Divisionism and Genocide Ideology

“To speak of shared responsibility for the genocide, or of Tutsi violence against Hutu – indeed, to criticize the present-day government of Rwanda at all – is to risk the accusation of sympathizing with the killers.” – Rene Lemarchand²⁷⁹

In an effort to move past the painful divide between Hutus and Tutsis, which the present day Rwandan government believes is the root of the past conflicts in Rwandan, “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” were enacted through additions to the Rwandan constitution. Between 2003 and 2008, Rwanda held a series of parliamentary commissions to investigate the crimes, which included public denunciations of hundreds of Rwandans and international organizations. Many people were accused and were not given the opportunity to “clear their name” through fair investigations or trials. The idea of divisionism and genocide ideology is to prohibit hate speech, which Amnesty International claims is a legitimate aim. The problematic issue with the laws is the “vague and sweeping” language that in reality criminalizes speech that is protected under international and domestic laws. Amnesty International takes the argument a step further and claims that the vague wording is deliberate and allows for human rights to be violated. The laws have manifested in tight restrictions on media surrounding elections, the population fears speaking out because the laws are so unclear, people are discouraged from testifying in criminal trials, and

²⁷⁸ Reyntjens, Filip. *Constructing the Truth, Dealing with Dissent, Domesticating the World: Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. (African Affairs, 110/438, 1–34, 2010), Pg. 13.

²⁷⁹ Lemarchand, 107.

perhaps, must devastatingly, “the laws have had a corrosive effect on mutual trust in a society already fragile after the genocide.”²⁸⁰

Genocide ideology was not officially defined until 2008, although it had been a part of the Rwandan Constitution since 2003. The definitions are found in Articles 2 and 3 of Law Number 18/2008:

Article 2: Definition of “genocide ideology”

“The genocide ideology is an aggregate of thoughts characterized by conduct, speeches, documents and other acts aiming at exterminating or inciting others to exterminate people basing on ethnic group, origin, nationality, region, color, physical appearance, sex, language, religion or political opinion, committed in normal periods or during war.”

Article 3: Characteristics of the crime of genocide ideology

The crime of genocide ideology is characterized in any behavior manifested by acts aimed at dehumanizing (sic) a person or a group of persons with the same characteristics in the following manner:

1. Threatening, intimidating, degrading through defamatory (sic) speeches, documents or actions which aim at propounding wickedness or inciting hatred;
2. Marginalising, laughing at one’s misfortune, defaming, mocking, boasting, despising, degrading createing (sic) confusion aiming at negating the genocide which occurred, stirring (sic) up ill feelings, taking revenge, altering testimony or evidence for the genocide which occurred;
3. Killing, planning to kill or attempting to kill someone for purposes of furthering genocide ideology.²⁸¹

The laws have been widely criticized, as they are used to impose the victor’s version of history and justice on a population through fear and the suppression of dissent. “Laws on divisionism and genocide ideology allowed the elimination of dissenting voices and the imposition of the RPF

²⁸⁰ Safer to Stay Silent, 8.

²⁸¹ Ibid, 13.

reading of the truth and history.”²⁸² In August 2009, Reyntjens reports that approximately 900 people were in prison based on genocide ideology accusations. The laws grant the current government a “monopoly on truth”. Lemarchand discusses a darker, more sinister view of the laws, “it provides the government with a convenient weapon to ban almost any type of organized opposition. . . control over ethnic identities and memory does little more than suppress them.” Additionally, the laws extend to government officials. Lemarchand notes that Hutu government officials who brought up human rights abuses, particularly those committed against Hutus, were often forced to resign or died in mysterious circumstances. Even references to identities that fall outside the “One Rwanda” campaign are “met with informal public shaming campaigns” that, at a minimum, label the individuals as “genocide sympathizers” or “negationists.”

Restricting Freedoms

Since the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the press has suffered from a lack of freedom, as information is suppressed and the inability to contest action taken/not taken by the government or in relation to elements of the conflict persists. In his article, *Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship*, Reyntjens notes, “. . . the spaces of free expression are almost all occupied or reduced to the minimum in order to prevent any contestation.”²⁸³ The controls on media have allowed for the government to maintain a certain level of control, yet have allowed crimes, such as those that will be described throughout this chapter, to go un-investigated and/or punished on the domestic and international levels. Silva notes that, “Rwanda has been able to achieve an impressive degree of stability at the price of imposing tight controls on the media, civil society, and political parties.”²⁸⁴ Newspapers are continually pressured, journalists exiled, and civil society organizations that do not

²⁸² Constructing the Truth, 16.

²⁸³ Reyntjens, Ten years On, 8.

²⁸⁴ Silva-Leander, Sebastian. On the Danger and Necessity of Democratisation: Trade-offs between Short-Term Stability and Long Term Peace in Rwanda, (Third World Quarterly, Vol. 29, No. 8, 2008, pp 1601–1620), Pg. 2.

agree with the party line are banned and then disgraced in the international arena.²⁸⁵ Genocide ideology forms a blockade in the freedom of speech, as it heavily curtails what journalists can share with the Rwandan public. This has affected international and domestic media sources, curtailing other versions of memory that cannot be discussed in the public space.²⁸⁶

Since 2000, many of the human rights violations have targeted journalists or political opponents of the regime.²⁸⁷ As an example, in 2008, the Rwandan Ministry of Information accused BBC and the Voice of America (VOA) of destroying the unity of Rwandans based on articles the news sources published, announcing that the government had the capacity and the right to suspend their broadcasts if the situation persisted.²⁸⁸ The next year, the Kinyarwanda service of the BBC was banned.²⁸⁹ In 2009, the Rwandan government passed a new law pertaining to media, which further restricted the freedom of press. Additionally, journalists who were considered “critical of the government” were barred from press conferences, and thus could not access necessary information.²⁹⁰ Restrictions on newspapers were enforced through the High Media Council (HMC), which is a government institution that is intimately tied to the RPF.²⁹¹

In the lead up to the 2010 elections, for example, the HMC enacted tighter regulations on media sources that were critical of the government. Two Kinyarwanda newspapers, *Umuseso* and *Umuwugizi*, were suspended during this time due to the “threat they posed to national security.” The editors of

²⁸⁵ Reyntjens, *Ten Years On*, 20.

²⁸⁶ *Safer to Stay Silent*, 28.

²⁸⁷ Silva-Leander, 9.

²⁸⁸ Reyntjens, *Constructing the Truth*, 4.

²⁸⁹ Note: The news source has since been reinstated.

²⁹⁰ *Safer to Stay Silent*, 12.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 12.

both newspapers fled Rwanda during this time period after receiving threats.²⁹² Additionally, journalists of the Kinyarwanda newspaper, *Umurabyo*, were imprisoned after publishing opinion pieces on the election that “criticized government policies and made corruption allegations against senior government officials.”²⁹³ They were charged with threatening state security through genocide ideology. In June of 2010, Jean-Leonard Rugabage, a journalist for *Umuwugizi*, was shot and killed in Kigali. He had recently published an article linking Rwandan intelligence officers to a shooting, which he had been investigating.²⁹⁴ The environment for the freedom of speech is clearly limited; however, the details on what can be published or discussed remain unclear. This leaves space for the government to silence dissent, but also creates a culture of self-censorship within society. “...one understands the self-censorship applied to express themselves freely have been killed or maimed, have “disappeared,” or are in jail or exile.”²⁹⁵ Thus, journalists fear the repercussions for reporting on certain topics and choose not to do it. This creates a gap in the information available to the population.

The lack of freedom of speech that persists in Rwanda is in violation of international and domestic law. Firstly, the Rwandan constitution ensures freedom of association, assembly, opinion, and the press.²⁹⁶ Secondly, as a signatory to international treaties, Rwanda is violating the rights laid out in the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), both of which contain articles that guarantee the freedom of assembly and

²⁹² “Unsafe to Speak Out: Restrictions on Freedom of Expression in Rwanda,” Amnesty International (June 2011, London), Pg. 4.

²⁹³ Ibid, 5.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Reyntjens, *Ten Years On*, 21. Note: By the end of 2002, the International Crisis Group concluded that the media were ‘atrophied and muzzled’.

²⁹⁶ *Safer to Stay Silent*, 13.

expression.²⁹⁷ Only under very limited situations can states derogate from these rights. The murky legal space created by divisionism jeopardizes free speech, making it very risky to criticize the government or express dissenting opinions in public spaces.

Similar to the media, civil society faces the nearly impossible challenge in contesting acts and/or the government's narrative based on the lack of free public discourse. Civil society organizations, especially NGOs, which are considered to play a "monitoring" role, are often expelled from the country or their actions are highly curtailed.²⁹⁸ Reyntjens, notes that, "civil society was eliminated by an autonomous force. Since the second half of the 1990s, human rights defenders, advocates of rural development, and the NGOs generally have been threatened by arrests, "disappearances", and intimidation."²⁹⁹ Stemming from the divisionism and genocide ideology laws, the Rwandan government dismissed reports published by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that criticized the lack of public space for civil society. Additionally, the government considered members of HRW staff as *persona non grata*, citing that the reports amounted to "sabotage and an assault to the memory of those who died in the genocide."³⁰⁰ Reports by multi-lateral bodies were given the same treatment, and were considered "revisionist literature" when they mentioned RFP crimes.

The government tightly controls all aspects of civil society, limiting the spaces of free expression³⁰¹ and thus allowing the prevention of contestation of the dominant narrative. In this realm, the government "frowns upon dissent and wants civil society to partner in service delivery."³⁰² Human

²⁹⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 19 and 20(2).

²⁹⁸ Reyntjens, *Constructing the Truth*, 3.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

³⁰¹ Reyntjens, *Ten Years On*, 8.

³⁰² *Safer to Stay Silent*, 26.

rights workers interviewed by Amnesty International shared that the laws make them fearful of completing their work and they often delay publishing any delicate matters. Beswick notes that this “creates a climate of fear and uncertainty in which individuals become reluctant to challenge the regime because they are uncertain of what the consequences may be.”³⁰³

The government additionally maintained a tight grip on NGOs, as the driving force of civil society. The government enacted legislation in April 2001 that gave the government “powers to control the management, finances, and projects of national and international NGOs,” further control the space in which civil society can operate.³⁰⁴ As previously cited, the government accused various NGOs of “sowing the seeds of divisionism,” including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, CARE, and Trócaire.³⁰⁵ In May 2003, a member of parliament “publicly threatened Rwandans who help international human rights defenders.”³⁰⁶ This threat was tied to the government’s accusation of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International’s work, which was considered to fall under the law of divisionism. This action created a hurdle for Rwandans to engage with civil society. In response to the NGOs that intervening the wake of the genocide, the government sought to regulate the activities through required registration and approval for expatriate staff. The regulations went further, giving the government the authority to suspend or dissolve organizations.³⁰⁷ While the government should interact with civil society organizations and have some form of registration for civil society organizations, movements to rid the country of organizations that are not directly in line with the government’s platform, limits contestation.

³⁰³ Beswick, Danielle. *Managing Dissent in a Post-genocide Environment: The Challenge of Political Space in Rwanda* (*Development and Change* 41(2): 225–251 (2010)). Pg. 22.

³⁰⁴ Gready, 642.

³⁰⁵ *Front Line Rwanda Disappearances, Arrests, Threats, Intimidation and Co-option of Human Rights Defenders 2001 – 2004*, (International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Ireland, 2005), Pg. 83

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Frontline*, 92.

The lack of freedom and ability to contest the regime plays out starkly in the political arena. While much theoretical work has gone into defining “political space,” for the sake of this analysis, Beswick defines it as “...the ability of actors other than the government to critically engage in debate on government policy and practice.”³⁰⁸ Movements that oppose the RPF exist, particularly in the Rwandan diaspora, where more space exists for dissent.³⁰⁹ However, internally, beginning with the process of political transition that took place in mid-2003, no space was created for dissent. As the constitutional draft was circulated and approved, the only campaigns that existed supported the text, “without a single voice of dissent.”³¹⁰ Another example is that of Victoire Ingabire, who sought the presidency in the 2010 elections. The government undertook a media campaign denouncing her as “espousing genocide ideology and divisionism.” She was then officially charged with genocide ideology. She pled not guilty, fled the country, and remains a loud anti-government voice in the diaspora.³¹¹

Beswick defines three categories of influences on the Rwandan political space, including the commitment of donors to good governance, the determination of the ruling party to maintain control, and the fear and self-censorship within civil society.³¹² Thus, opening the political space would require a multifaceted approach that focuses on the state and civil society. She continues, noting, “. . . that directing attention on one side of this equation at the expense of the other may be ineffective.”³¹³ Additionally, she outlines a role of “encouragement” international donors can play in opening this space. Additionally, Gready takes a more positive look, positing that electoral politics, progressive development initiatives, and the dependence of the government on outside actors may

³⁰⁸ Beswick, 1.

³⁰⁹ Reyntjens, *Ten Years On*, 15.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

³¹¹ *Safer to Stay Silent*, 26.

³¹² Beswick, 2.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 7.

create occasional spaces for civil society. They need to be “identified and exploited by donors and civil society.”³¹⁴ In his view, agency does not only lie with the Rwandan government, and he encourages other actors, such as civil society organizations and international donors to play a role in creating more freedom for discourse within society.

Silences: crimes that are not be contested

Crimes that contest the dominant narrative of the Rwandan government have been silenced. Hidden behind vague laws of divisionism and genocide ideology, the government controls the dominant narrative of the conflict. Thus, reports of crimes that do not fit into this narrative are silenced, rarely spoken about in public spaces and go unprosecuted. The Rwandan justice system itself represents a form of victor’s justice, as the RPF “won” the war by stopping the genocide and installing a new government. The regime has proceeded to make decisions surrounding prosecution and justice. Firstly, on the international level, the government has continually blocked efforts of the ICTR to prosecute crimes of the RPF.³¹⁵ The government pushed to have only the crimes committed during the genocide by the Hutu Power tried at the ICTR. One such example is the dismissal of Carla del Ponte as the head prosecutor for the ICTR. In discussing her dismissal, del Ponte claims that “politics played a big role,” noting the Rwandan government’s role in wanting to stop investigations into crimes “committed in 1994 by members of the ruling political party.”³¹⁶

The RPF also committed crimes during this era: “In 1994 and 1995 the RPF’s military wing was responsible for killing unknown numbers of civilians both Hutu and Tutsi (although, most crimes

³¹⁴ Gready, 642.

³¹⁵ Reyntjens, *Ten Years On*, 33.

³¹⁶ Steven Edwards, “Del Ponte says UN caved to Rwandan pressure: Former chief prosecutor speaks out about forced exit,” *National Post*, 17 September 2003, Page A13.

were committed against Hutu).³¹⁷ Some estimates of civilian casualties at the hands of the RPF are over 100,000. One of the most publicized events was the massacre in the Kibeho IDP camp in April of 1995.³¹⁸ During efforts to close the camp, RPA soldiers fired on the remaining displaced people, killing thousands. This massacre, and others, occurred in a discreet fashion, which made them difficult to investigate. "...Areas where they were committed were declared 'military zones' which could not be entered by outsiders, and the remains of victims were removed or burned."³¹⁹ Killings perpetrated by the RPA against civilians are rarely discussed publicly, "...and then only at great peril...they remain unnamed, erased from the national imagination."³²⁰³²¹ Rejntens notes that witnesses, including those from international organizations, feared expulsion and reprisals and thus remained silent.³²² These crimes have not been fully investigated and no steps towards prosecution have been made, adding to the already prevalent culture of impunity.

Additionally, as has been mentioned, human rights are continually violated in present day Rwanda. Politicians are forced to resign and are sent into exile.³²³ Rejntens notes that "there are not so many other countries where, in the absence of regime change, so many ministers, MPs, high-ranking army officers, civil servants, judges, diplomats, and civil society leaders have been jailed, killed, disappeared, or driven into exile abroad."³²⁴ Opposition parties have disappeared in the lead-up to elections. Beswick notes that "explanations offered by interviewees for such disappearances

³¹⁷ Hinton and O'Neill, 82.

³¹⁸ Rejntens, *Ten Years On*, 19

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

³²⁰ Hinton and O'Neill, 91.

³²¹ Although it is outside the scope of this paper, Rwanda has continually violated international law via involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "The Rwandan army twice invaded neighbouring Zaire-Congo, where its initial security concerns gave way to a logic of plunder. It has caused protracted regional instability and derailed the transition process in the Democratic Republic of Congo." (Rejntens, *Ten Years On*, Abstract)

³²² Rejntens, *Ten Years On*, 22.

³²³ Rejntens, *Constructing the Truth*, 8.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

mentioned the role of the Department of Military Intelligence.”³²⁵ Interviews describe the department as a type of secret police, with a network of informants that are used to manage political dissent. They were described as being present at gacaca hearings, polling stations, and other politically-related gatherings.³²⁶ The fear Rwandans experience, based on the notion of being watched and monitored, leads to the self-censorship previously described. Again, the culture of fear serves as a mechanism by which Rwandan society self-regulates potential dissent, closing the political space, and burying the memories of survivors that don’t fit into the dominant narrative of the nation.

Conclusions

The static memory of the genocide put forth by the RPF-controlled government does not permit contestation in public spaces. The government has created a system whereby individuals can be punished by law for speaking against the government, and, in the alternative, will be publicly slandered or worse. The fear imposed by the possible punishment leads to a self-censorship that further closes public spaces for discussion, including the role that civil society, the media, and politics can play. Memories that do not mirror the dominant narrative become buried, suppressed, and forgotten in the public spaces. Reyntjens notes that “. . .Rwanda is still experiencing a period of political transition. . . [and] ethnic polarization is worse than ever in the past, social conformism and the need to be administered have not disappeared, and the war is not over.”³²⁷ As the regime continues to seek control over people and space,³²⁸ the ability to fully contend with the events of the genocide slips further away, leaving a society that is splitting underneath an illusory peaceful surface.

³²⁵ Beswick, 19.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Reyntjens, *Genocide and Beyond*, (Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 9, No. 3 1996). Pg. 248.

³²⁸ Reyntjens, *Constructing the Truth*, 2.

Chapter Six: Levels and Spaces for Memory

“Remembrance is essential in stopping the cycle of violence.”³²⁹

This chapter addresses two fundamental pieces of the memory environment. Firstly, the levels in which memory exists will be explored, from the individual to the collective and national. Between these levels, memory may play a different role, adding to the potentially diverging nature of narratives. Secondly, this chapter will address the public and private nature of memory, as it exists in both realms. The literature on memory speaks to the importance of the individual’s and community’s freedom to engage with memory in both spaces. Thus, the personal and public are intertwined, both forming important elements of a healthy memory environment. As an example of the levels of memory and the nexus between the public and private, this chapter will focus on memorials in the case of Rwanda.

While field research on the topic of this thesis is particularly difficult due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the potential repercussions for the researcher and, especially, any individual who is interviewed, this section may be the most difficult. Through conversations with Rwandan friends, I only glimpsed at the surface of this challenging topic and the real difficulties and risks in having open conversations. The authors of the sources I draw from in this section also note the difficulties. Susanna Buckley-Zistel notes this in her article, which focuses on “chosen amnesia.” She describes her experience in the following excerpt;

“While conducting research in Rwanda it became apparent that, although memory about the genocide was considered to be very important, some aspects of the past were eclipsed from the discourse. Interviewees frequently made their omissions explicit, stating that, despite their public attitude and occasionally even their participation in reconciliation projects, in their hearts it looked different . . . This inability, however, does not point to a new or

³²⁹ Ibrek, 11.

different interpretation of the past or a fading memory, but rather implies that the memory is still stored in the mind, even though the group does not (choose to) have access to it at present.”³³⁰

In some cases, research remains difficult because of this sense of chosen amnesia, and in others it becomes impossible due to the fear that is pervasive within society. From my personal observations, albeit limited, individuals and communities remain stalled by the potential consequences of charting their own course in how they contend with or experience their memories of the conflict. Thus, within the context of memorialization there are opportunities for further research to truly understand the effects these efforts are having on the population.

Split Memory

Central to the understanding of memory in the Rwandan context is the post-conflict make-up of the country where individuals from both ethnic groups continue to live side by side. Although the memories and memory processes that are prioritized and categorized at the individual, communal, and national level vary, the need to continue to live and work together transcends these levels. Buckley-Zistel believes that “the past is eclipsed because maintaining daily life takes priority.” This section will look at how individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole express and engage with memory.

Although the levels of memory diverge, the levels are interrelated and to some extent interdependent. The influence of memory flows in both directions in Rwanda. Firstly, the national-level version of the narrative of the conflict influences the communal and individual memories, altering people’s memories and experiences. Secondly, individual’s memories add to the communal understanding of the conflict, which in turn influences the national-level understanding. In a healthy

³³⁰ Buckley-Zistel, 133.

memory society, these patterns would freely flow in both directions; however, for reasons covered in the previous chapter, this pathway is more difficult in present day Rwanda. Drawing on the literature review in the first chapter of this thesis, memory, in De Boeck's writing, is a thread that is "part of people's ability to continue to construct. . . meaningful reality of the social, political, and economic paradoxes."³³¹ Thus, it connects the individual's understanding of the world, to their community and social relations, which on a large scale become the country's experience and memory.

Werbner describes the memory crisis as a breakdown in the freedom to express memory at the previously described levels. The loss of these practices, or in some case beliefs, can constitute a personal or communal crisis. Central to understanding the role of memory are power and agency, the latter of which plays out at the national level. In Rwanda, the government plays a strong role in dictating how memory and memorialization are to happen, when they will happen, and who will be involved. Firstly, beginning of April 7th, each year, to commemorate the beginning of the genocide, Rwanda enters into 100 days of mourning. The words "Never Forget" are written on purple banners and spread throughout the country.³³² The 100 days are full of speeches, visits to memorials, a certain type of music, and a general somberness that is pervasive in society. The process is very structured, and Hinton and O'Neill, note that "the national genocide memorial ceremonies are extremely dense sites for social production and nation-building."³³³ Thus, they note the government's use of the mourning period to continue to memorialize a certain narrative of the genocide as well as to further instill a sense of "one Rwanda" onto the population. Buckley-Zistel

³³¹ Buckley-Zistel, 133.

³³² Lemarchand, preface xii. Note: "The watchword in Rwanda today symbolized by the moving memorial to Tutsi victims is "Never forget" – but there is an unspoken subtext: "Never remember!" – the 1972 genocide of Hutu in Burundi, the massacre of Hutus refugees in eastern Congo, or the systematic elimination of Hutu civilians during and after the 1990 invasion of Rwanda by Kagame's soldiers."

³³³ Hinton and O'Neill, 95.

notes that “ethnic identity is suppressed in the public discourse.”³³⁴ Additionally, the national level commemoration ceremonies place the memory of the genocide into the context of current political issues. The subtext of which is a further consolidation of Tutsi power.³³⁵ While remembering the atrocious acts of 1994 serves a purpose, the remembering is not inclusive, and some past crimes and ongoing human rights abuses are not remembered, thus further alienating segments of the population.

Collective memory also exists on the community level. On this level, collective memory looks to shared memory, or cultural memory, as the literature review noted. However, on the community level, the collective and individual senses of memory are much closer, in that, space may exist for dialogue, such as the Gacaca courts where the memory of individuals becomes part of the community narrative. Additionally, survivors’ associations and other community groups may provide a sort of outlet for memories; however these groups are often influenced by the umbrella organization or political ties at the national level. Additionally, there is a tendency to model local-level ceremonies after the national commemoration ceremonies. Thus, Vidal notes, “... Rwandan citizens have little public space left to mourn in the fashion that best suits their needs.”³³⁶ On the other hand, in some communities the church has played a role, “community-level ceremonies, first conducted in early 1994 under the direction of local Catholic parishes, better served the needs of psychological healing and social reconciliation than the national ceremonies.”³³⁷

In a healthy memory environment, the methods by which people engage with memory provide the opportunity for healing. At the core of this is the notion that it should be a free process, thus

³³⁴ Buckley-Zistel, 143.

³³⁵ Lemarchand, *The Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, (Unpublished Paper), Pg. 7.

³³⁶ Hinton and O’Neill, 100.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

individuals can choose how they engage with it. This does not mean that there are no structures, but rather that, individuals choose or not to engage with those that exist. This includes activities such as the Gacaca courts, commemoration ceremonies, visits to memorials, or participation in other community or national level activities.

For many individuals the trauma is still vivid. It cannot be avoided in daily life. Structured mourning may not fit the process which the individual seeks. Individuals and family units may have their own practices for mourning and/or commemorating the dead. Along these lines, there is a gap in the literature. Among other clinical mental health diagnoses, post-traumatic stress disorder, is still prevalent in high numbers. Therapy is beginning to become more common practice.³³⁸

Spaces: Private and Public

The previous part of the chapter highlighted the split between the levels in which Rwandan's feel that they can express their memories, or at least versions of their memories. This split parallels what is discussed openly in public and private spaces, thus defining what is remembered and forgotten. This section will examine the tricky space that memorials inhabit, tying together the public and private spaces as well as the personal and the political.

Memory exists in public and private spaces, as manifestations of the individual and collective conscience. The following section discusses the nexus between public and private memory, looking at the nature of human beings as individuals, yet having social relations and interactions within society. The notions of public and private as well as individual and collective overlap as memory exists in each of these competing realities. In private spaces, individuals have the opportunity to

³³⁸ Personal Observation, NURC conference, June 2012.

remember, believe, and mourn in ways they chose. For many individuals, how they chose to engage with these memories is influenced by the trauma of the violence and, potentially, repression or PTSD associated with the events. This description of the private space includes the individual as well as their close relations. On the other hand, individuals may feel free to act in the public space if they experience a sense of safety and security in doing so. Activities such as remembrance, discourse, and even, contestation are all possible actions in creating a public space. The actions taken in these two spaces may diverge, as the stories told and the sense of collective identity may limit what takes place in the public space. Additionally, private spaces may also be limited. While the home creates a space that is, in essence, private, Rwandans may be socialized to remember or address memories in a specific way that limits their engagement with the vivid stories of their past. Werbner refers to these as “buried memories,” which produce what he calls “unfinished narratives: popular history in which the past is perceived to be unfinished and festering in the present.”³³⁹ Outside of Gacaca and other forms of community dialogue it is unclear what forums exist.

Memorials

“My present discussion regards memory as public practice which – being at once moral, political and, often also, painfully subjective – is a product of open and unfinished realities.”³⁴⁰

This section will discuss public spaces through the use of memorials in Rwanda. Memorials are an inherently public display of memory, yet they have public and private dimensions of the meaning and effect of memory. In Nora’s theory, memorials exist at the place where memory (in a public sense) has become history, i.e. a moment that is “frozen” in time. Thus, elements of memory may be “frozen” in the public sphere. Over 500 official memorials exist throughout the country; some

³³⁹ Werbner, 9.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 99.

created by the government, others by community associations, and still others by individuals.³⁴¹ At some sites, skeletons are left intact in the position the person died, others display the bones of victims neatly arranged in rows, and still others consist of modest crosses at sites of mass burials. Memorialization has been positioned as a central part of the healing process of Rwandan communities and society as a whole. However, inextricably linked to the memorialization process is the power it implies to choose how history is remembered through the, at times, static narrative of the genocide. While the majority of the more than 500 memorials are “part of a state-led endeavor to promote a collective identity,” they are also shaped by the concerns and efforts of genocide survivors.³⁴² In fact, Ibreck claims that the survivors constitute the largest group of “active contributors” to the creation of the memorials. Thus, they sit squarely at the intersection between the personal and the political, at times serving both ends.

The Role of Memorialization

This section will focus on the role, purpose, and actors memorialization through the lens of memorials, which have the following definitions;

‘memorialisation’ is used to denote only deliberate action to preserve the memory of a violent past, rather than *ad hoc*, spontaneous acts of memorialisation that emerge after violence. . .the Principles put forth in this Policy Brief are intended to inform decision-making by policymakers and practitioners on memorialisation as a planned action. . .³⁴³

Additionally,

The International Center for Transitional Justice points to “architectural memorials, museums and commemorative activities” as part of memorialization.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ Ibreck, 334.

³⁴² Ibreck, 2.

³⁴³ Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, Impunity Watch, (Perspectives Series, January 2013), Pg. 3.

³⁴⁴ “Truth and Memory,” International Center for Transitional Justice.

Memorialization is now viewed as a tool of transitional justice, one which, can be mutually reinforcing through other transitional justice mechanisms.³⁴⁵ It is part of the broader toolset that aims to create an environment for coexistence or reconciliation through memory, as well as the other transitional justice processes, such as justice, peace, and healing. According to the ICTJ, the central goal of memorialization is to preserve the memory of crimes.³⁴⁶ However, the act of memorialization should be placed alongside other initiatives that “contribute to a more holistic tackling of violence.”³⁴⁷ In that sense, memorialization activities seek long term change, and thus the process must be designed allowing for shifts in memory and interactions between individuals or society with the memorial. Additionally, the purpose may be to bring groups together;

“Where a memory impasse exists between polarised groups, the value of engaging people in the production of memory rather than attempting to impose memory or see it as end needs to be recognized, as does the contribution that memory initiatives can make to dialogue. Here memory is used as a starting point, a basis for discussion across ethnic, political, regional or similar divides.”³⁴⁸

Memorialization can, potentially, create a space for the acknowledgement of different narratives. However, timing and context are crucial in navigating varying histories between groups.³⁴⁹ It is important to note the following;

“But while multiple narratives are constructive and should be encouraged, it does not follow that reconciliation or relinquishing demands for justice are an inevitable or indeed necessary consequence. This distinction should be clear. Multiple narratives and mutual recognition of suffering do not provide a justification for the crimes that were committed, and providing space for the multiplicity of discourse should not be equated with an attempt to reconcile narratives or groups.”³⁵⁰

³⁴⁵ Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 8.

³⁴⁶ “Truth and Memory”

³⁴⁷ Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 8.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, 10.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, 11. Note: It may still be too soon to attempt this goal of “multiple narratives” in Rwanda, even though it is part of healthy (or healthier) memory environment.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, 12.

The transitional justice aims of coexistence or reconciliation may not directly stem from the creation of a memorial, but rather from the memorialization process that surrounds the memorial that brings groups together and develops a new space for understanding. The organization Sites of Consciousness views the purpose of memorials as taking the space created for understanding a step further, and states that they should play a civic role in the life of the community.³⁵¹

It should be noted that memorialization is not always constructive and the creation of a memorial is not always the right choice, especially in the recent aftermath of violence. It is possible that efforts can further divide communities.³⁵² Additionally, in a more sinister outlook, “memorial sites can be used to force a specific ideology onto society.” The previously mentioned article on the possibility of evaluating memorial efforts notes the possible role of memorials as a political resource, they could “glorify” as opposed to memorialize, focus on only one point of view (one-sided victimhood), and close the space for debates of alternative narratives.³⁵³ Community interactions with memorials in Rwanda suffer from many elements of the previous list. Additionally, the creators of memorials often imagine them serving various roles, which may create a blurry purpose and competing goals.³⁵⁴

The purposes of memorials, outside of memory and remembrance, should also be mentioned, including preservation and restoration of human and structural remains and documentation and research on the events.³⁵⁵ Cook notes that preservation or restoration may have an education component, thus educating visitors on the events using the actual physical remains. This effort is not always separate from memorialization, in that preservation efforts may show what happened in the

³⁵¹ Hamber, ˇSevˇcenko, and Naidu, Utopian Dreams or Practical Possibilities? The Challenges of Evaluating the Impact of Memorialization in Societies in Transition, (The International Journal of Transitional Justice, Vol. 4, 2010, 397–420). Pg. 8.

³⁵² Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 13.

³⁵³ Hamber, ˇSevˇcenko, and Naidu, 23.

³⁵⁴ “Mass Atrocities,” Course taught by Bridget Conley-Zilkic, March 2013, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

³⁵⁵ Cook, Susan. The Politics of Preservation in Rwanda, (2005), Pg. 4.

past by leaving sites unchanged.³⁵⁶ In the wake of mass killing, research and documentation takes place to establish “an authoritative account of particular events based on primary sources,” which may be later used in legal cases.³⁵⁷ At many of the sites, these goals overlap.

Actors

Memorials, or broader memorialization processes, may involve various actors in society as well as be designed for varying segments of the population. *The Guiding Principles on Memorialization* note that local, national and international actors are more often involved in the development and implementation of these initiatives.³⁵⁸ Additionally, ICTJ notes the role of civil society: “In many cases, by launching commemoration activities, civil society has been the catalyst for states to assume their duties.”³⁵⁹ It is important to note that states often do not have the choice of whether or not to engage in memorialization activities, as they may be a public response to a tragedy or pushing of a certain political platform.³⁶⁰ Thus, the efforts are started by the population and/or the state in response to tragedy. Additionally, these processes may be supported by outside actors. In the case of Rwanda, the international community, in the case of Rwanda, is invested in the process via the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and visitors who want to understand the horror that took place.

While first and foremost, memorials should be created (or at least create space for) for the survivors of violence, to acknowledge what happened, there are other competing interests in the process. One such interest is the role of outsiders visiting the location. Cook reflects on this reality in Rwanda, “Although people shy away from the idea that genocide sites might represent some opportunity to

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 5.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 6.

³⁵⁸ Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 3.

³⁵⁹ “Truth and Memory.”

³⁶⁰ Hamber, ˇSevˇcenko, and Naidu, 2.

generate income from foreign visitors (tourists), the desire to expose the world to the gruesome reality of what took place in Rwanda in 1994 is also evident.”³⁶¹ As was previously mentioned, memorials may serve more than one purpose, thus blurring their purpose and effectiveness.

Methods

Although memorialization is not a new phenomenon, little evaluation has been done in terms of generating best practices in the field. However, in a report published after the *Meeting of Memorialization Experts* in 2012, Guiding Principles were put forth to inform practitioners and policymakers. “The eight final [agreed upon] principles are: context; critical self-reflection; participation; complementarity; process; multiple narratives; youth; and politicization.”³⁶²

Additionally, the importance of local ownership over each step of the process is highlighted – from planning to ongoing engagement with the site/act – is vital.³⁶³ *The Guiding Principles on Memorialization* note that participation may open space for local narratives and thus further engagement of the population with the memorial. Ibrek notes that memory work is a response to loss, an expression of grief, and a practice of mourning. She vividly portrays these three purposes through interviews;

“An architect explained how creating a memorial brought him close to the members of his family killed there: ‘When you work with memory you meet the victims.’ With so many dead and so few left to mourn them, private bereavement necessarily became a public matter. Survivors united around a shared experience and as a practical necessity, because the normal social arrangements surrounding bereavement had collapsed.”³⁶⁴

Most importantly, the actors involved must assess and understand the space that exists for memorialization, which highlights the “character of the ongoing discourse about the past violence. . .

³⁶¹ Cook, 16.

³⁶² Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 1.

³⁶³ Ibid, 7.

³⁶⁴ Ibrek, 8.

which influences the parameters of acceptable narratives.”³⁶⁵ An article that discusses evaluations of memorial efforts notes that “memorials and memory sites are often treated as finite objects or goods.” Thus, there is a lack of understanding about how this space shifts and how people, varying groups of people, experience the site over time.³⁶⁶ Additionally, as has occurred in Rwanda, memorials are created as tools of politics or nationalism, eclipsing the opportunity for mourning of some groups.³⁶⁷ However, this does not mean that the memorials become static, in fact this may open a space for political resistance, giving survivors a mechanism through which to express themselves.³⁶⁸

The literal mechanics of memorialization may include, “burying victims together in a common cemetery, building some kind of monument, or by leaving the pits, schools, churches, etc. untouched as visual reminders of the killing . . .”³⁶⁹ Memorialization may also happen through commemoration days, moments of silence, and countless other practices that societies have developed in response to tragedy. Although the previous examples have highlighted the communal aspects of memorialization, it also may be a private act, such as families visiting graves on a certain day or remembering the dead through a certain practice. Memorialization processes are malleable, flexible, and should be designed to meet the needs of those who are mourning and those who seek to remember.

³⁶⁵ Policy Brief: Guiding Principles of Memorialization, 1.

³⁶⁶ Hamber, Ševčenko, and Naidu, 4.

³⁶⁷ Ibrek, 3.

³⁶⁸ Ibrek, 4.

³⁶⁹ Cook, 16

National and Public

Memorials play an important role on the national (and public) stage in Rwanda. At the over 500 memorials throughout the country, many of them display bones, blood stains still visible on walls, the belongings of those who died, and other graphic reminders of the horror that took place. “The predominant strategy of memorializing Rwanda’s 1994 genocide has entailed leaving massacre sites intact and displaying the bones of the dead – or, in the case of one memorial, preserving thousands of corpses in powdered lime.”³⁷⁰ Guyer vividly describes the memorials through the following reflection;

“Far from being sanitized spaces of worked-through mourning or barren sites without clear traces of the violence that occurred there, Rwanda’s genocide memorials are raw and macabre. They are uncomfortable—physically, emotionally, and intellectually. The response that they occasion is due not only to *what* they commemorate—the one-hundred-day genocide of the Tutsis and Hutu moderates in April 1994 and the absent testimonies of those murdered—but *how* they commemorate it—with “shelves and shelves of skulls and bones.”³⁷¹

Although many of the memorials are created by survivors, the overwhelming narrative of the memorials is that supported by the RPF.³⁷² Firstly, the memorials tell one narrative of the genocide, paying no mention to crimes committed outside of the lens of “Hutus killing Tutsis.” Thus, there is no communal space for individuals or communities who mourn in a way that doesn’t fit this mold. Secondly, Rwanda does not have a history of displaying bones as a memorial process. Vidal notes that, “. . .the displaying of bones could be understood to reflect the enduring absence of mourning and working through, it may be rather that the bones continue to prevent mourning from taking place.”³⁷³ Some argue that the memorials may be part of ongoing trauma.³⁷⁴ Thirdly, the memorials

³⁷⁰ Guyer, Sara. “Rwanda’s Bones” (Duke University Press, *boundary 2* 36:2 (2009), Pg. 3.

³⁷¹ Guyer, 3.

³⁷² Ibrek, 3

³⁷³ Guyer, 5.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, 5.

are hyper-politicized and are a tool of government repression that is instrumentalized for contemporary political agenda at all levels of government.³⁷⁵ Fourthly, Ibrek notes that survivors often complain and rally against slow government policy surrounding memory work and memorialization. Survivors felt that their views were not taken into account and that memory was not “given sufficient priority.”³⁷⁶

Community

Between the national narrative and memorialization process and that of the individual or family is the community level. In many communities survivors’ organizations developed in the wake of the genocide. These committees were formed to create memorials or to organize commemorations.³⁷⁷ Although not all survivors chose to join these groups, “preferring to keep memories and mourning private,” Ibrek notes that many do join.³⁷⁸ Many of these survivors associations on the community level exist under the umbrella of IBUKA (to remember), a national level non-profit that “gathers genocide survivors associations.”³⁷⁹ Much of the funding comes from government and private source, and only a few sites actually have national oversight.³⁸⁰ Ibrek notes the tensions that exist between the national level and local organizations.³⁸¹ However, these groups play a critical role in the memorialization process through gathering and preserving remains as well as organizing ceremonies.³⁸²

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 16; Cook, 1.

³⁷⁶ Ibrek, 7.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 5.

³⁷⁸ Ibrek, 5.

³⁷⁹ “Ibuka: Bringing Together Genocide Survivors” Available at: <http://www.ibuka.rw/>.

³⁸⁰ Cook, 10.

³⁸¹ Ibrek, 6

³⁸² Ibid.

Many of the memorials on the community level are “created out of a sense of grief and community.”³⁸³ Hinton and O’Neill note that community level commemoration activities take on a different tone than those on the national level in that they are more focused on mourning “loved ones lost in the violence and on fulfilling traditional and imported religious obligations towards the dead.”³⁸⁴ Memorials are viewed as part of the healing process. Ibrek notes that “survivor commitment persists [in Rwanda, specifically] because of the extent of human losses – more mass graves have been found each year requiring more reburials – and because of the extreme violence of the atrocities, which prolongs efforts to restore dignity and seek consolation.”³⁸⁵ Additionally, she notes that “survivors are tenacious and dedicated participants in memory production,” and this effort sometimes coincides with state efforts or diverges from it.³⁸⁶

Personal and/or Private:

“The intensity of mourning in Rwanda is a consequence of the scale and horror of survivors’ bereavement.”³⁸⁷

Cook notes that there is a “widespread desire to remember and honor the dead,”³⁸⁸ however this does not mean that individuals and families want this to be done publicly or as a communal activity. Firstly, as can be expected, there is no single opinion on how to treat the dead. In some cases Rwandans did not bury the dead until their suffering was recognized.³⁸⁹ In other cases, families could not bury the dead due to a government law stating that bodies had to be buried in public cemeteries,³⁹⁰ robbing individuals (who had located the bodies of victims) the opportunity to decide where to bury the dead. Secondly, public memorials may re-traumatize individuals. A Rwanda

³⁸³ Ibrek, 9.

³⁸⁴ Hinton and O’Neill, 100.

³⁸⁵ Ibrek, 9.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, 13.

³⁸⁷ Ibrek, 9.

³⁸⁸ Cook, 16.

³⁸⁹ Hamber, ˇSevˇcenko, and Naidu, 1.

³⁹⁰ Ibrek, 6.

psychiatrist noted in Ibrek's study, "it is important that there is a time to remember, but it must be organized so that we don't distress people. Even within families there are no agreements about this. There are some people who say that is the past and we need to look to the future."³⁹¹ Thirdly, there are groups of Rwandans who are not considered "survivors" and thus they cannot mourn in the public space. Central to this group of people are Hutu survivors whose suffering is not recognized.³⁹²

Additionally, some individuals and families "want to mourn privately without interference from the state."³⁹³ Although it can be assumed that individuals and families mourn and practice types of memorialization in private spaces, there is a gap in the literature on what exactly this looks like. On the other hand, perhaps individuals cannot engage with the current processes of memorialization. Guyer notes the impersonal nature of the memorials, in that no effort has been made to identify the individual skeletons or bones nor are the names of the dead displayed. "Yet, by refusing to return names, identities, or individualities to the dead. . .the persons are recognized only as members of a population."³⁹⁴ Furthermore, the memorials often display bone types, not even full skeletons, further breaking apart a sense of identity of the individual. Thus, the memorials memorialize death, or genocide, in general, as opposed to the lives and deaths of individuals.

Conclusion

"How can people live together when the remains of the dead, the abhorrent evidence of what stands between them, makes such a violent—and also incoherent—claim on the living, or, in other words when the living still haven't figured out how to place—comprehend or bury—the dead? When bones take the place of stories?"³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Ibrek, 9.

³⁹² Ibid, 3.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Guyer, 9.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, 7.

In a healthy memory environment, individuals will be able to freely engage with memory on each of these levels. In Rwanda, the public space is still limited by government influences. In order to heal and take important steps towards coexistence and reconciliation, I posit that the individual must have a sense of agency in the process. Their memories and experiences must be acknowledged and woven into the narratives of the communities and the potentially multi-narratives of the country. Although narratives diverge, the dialogue and ability to mourn and heal may further the objective of national unity. The current state strategy of only allowing one narrative will leave groups unheard with festering wounds. As the next chapter will explore, intricately tied to the process of memory is the shifting nature of identity as they are interdependent.

Chapter Seven: Memory and Identity

“Memory has a coercive force, for it creates identity and a sense of belonging.”³⁹⁶

Violence stemming from differences in identity is one of the most cited reasons behind the ability to divide a population, such as the division that occurred leading to the Rwandan genocide. In this context, the word “identity” is usually prefaced with the word “ethnic.” Both words are socially constructed ways of understanding oneself and the relationship between self and community and nation. Both were built and specifically influenced in the lead up to the genocide, and to a large extent remain influential in Rwandan society today. This chapter will look at the formation of identity and the relationship between identity and memory. Then, the analysis will be applied to the Rwandan case study of the formation of national unity through the notion of “One Rwanda.”

Identity

“Narrated life stories are distortions, not descriptions, of life as lived.”³⁹⁷

Individuals’ memories, in their subjective natures, play a large role in the understanding of identity. Memory, in essence, is the narrated version of each individual’s past, which as a force, affects their day to day decisions. Ricoeur notes that this effort to narrate one’s life is a sustained effort to “integrate life events and actions into a unified whole,” thus giving a sustained coherence to one’s life.³⁹⁸ The vast body of theory on the creation of identity considers the question of how narration and lived life are related and how they influence each other. Implicit in the notion of influence is the

³⁹⁶ Buckley-Zistel, 132.

³⁹⁷ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler. *Changing Conceptions of Psychological Life* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London, 2004). Pg. 33.

³⁹⁸ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 28.

direction in which it occurs. From this notion, stem the following questions: Do individuals live their lives in a certain way based on a certain narrative, thus imposing a structure on life? Or, does the way individuals live their lives create this structure? Is there a natural coherence between the two?³⁹⁹ While, the questions are unresolved in the field of psychology, the elements of the questions point to the various influences on the individual that are both internal and external in nature.

In his essay *Ricoeur, Narrative, and Personal Identity*, Polkinghorne highlights elements of the formation of individual identity. The first element of an individual's personality is "the felt sense we have of who we are that underlies the articulated narrative composition we tell about ourselves."⁴⁰⁰ Thus, he first notes the internal component of our identity. Complementary to the internal, is the section, which refers to the created self-story. This element of identity is a narrative that configures actions into "meaningful wholes and thereby unveil an order and coherence that was not previously experienced."⁴⁰¹ Individuals have the ability to retrospectively attribute meaning to actions, thus combining the internal and external influences. Memory is the mechanism through which individuals reconstruct or reinterpret the past. In this same vein, Polkinghorne notes;

"Memory is not a container of taped replays of life events. Recollection is a partial reconstruction of the past that attends to and connects memory traces according to the press of present needs and interpretations."⁴⁰²

The narrative is thus malleable. Memory becomes the tool by which the narrative can shift, thus altering one's perceptions of how events shape one's identity.

While some of the effort to create an individual's identity is internal, much of it is influenced by the context, including the social, historical, and cultural influences.⁴⁰³ Identities are formed through the

³⁹⁹ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 28.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 41.

⁴⁰² Ibid, 43.

interactions between individuals and larger groups within society (such as religious, tribal, community, etc.).⁴⁰⁴ Thus, identities are multi-faceted. Individuals maintain various elements of their identity, including, professional, religious, family, personal, etc at the same time. Moshman notes that the “ideal atmosphere for identity formation, is one in which individuals are politically and socially free to construct diverse interpretations, ideologies, and commitments.”⁴⁰⁵

While in a healthy memory environment, individuals and groups within a society would be free to develop identities, these same freedoms can be manipulated to control the process. While the government of Rwanda strives to rebuild a national identity in the aftermath of the genocide, references to multiple narratives (thus, multiple identities) are viewed as threats to this process. The freedom to develop these narratives (and in some senses, actually reflect on the past) may seem “to threaten the macro goals of some transitional justice processes.”⁴⁰⁶ In Rwanda, the story of ideology and identity mix, as over time individuals became strongly influenced by external forces that led them to intensely identify with their “ethnic” identity, above other identity markers.⁴⁰⁷ Rwandans learned over time to categorize themselves as Hutu or Tutsi, beginning, as was described, with the advent of colonization. However, in the lead up to the genocide, these labels took on more sinister meanings. Thus, they divided the population along a specific line, without room for all of the ethnic complexities.

In the aftermath of the violence, with the attempts to rid the country of ethnic categories, new and additional categories have sprung up for both Hutus and Tutsis (although under different names).⁴⁰⁸

The new categories are largely based on experiences during the conflict, such as where individuals

⁴⁰³ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 198.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 197.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 202.

⁴⁰⁶ Hamber, ˇSevˇcenko, and Naidu, 22.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 183.

⁴⁰⁸ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 192

spent time as refugees and at what point they returned to Rwanda. Rwanda's future will, firstly, depend on how the past is reflected upon and incorporated into the national narrative. Secondly the future will depend on how individuals are permitted to engage with this narrative and create their own narrative and fluid identity that once again mixes internal and external influences in a more balanced manner. Finally, Moshman notes that "such a dichotomization of history fosters a continuing dichotomization of identities."⁴⁰⁹ This quotation paints a picture of a country that could again experience division based on identity.

The power of ethnicity

In Rwanda, ethnicity became the strongest factor in an individual's identity. In the lead up to the genocide, multi-faceted identities ceased to exist⁴¹⁰ as the Hutu Power called for a "cleansing of the country" along ethnic lines. While the roots of Hamitic Myth and the increasing level of importance placed on ethnicity were previously discussed, it is important to note that in the post-genocide years ethnic identity still plays a role in Rwanda. All individuals must carry ID cards, which note that they are "Rwandan," but serve as a mechanism for the government to check if they re-registered in the country after the genocide.⁴¹¹

Based on the ethnic nature of the conflict, ethnicity is still a central factor in Rwanda today.⁴¹²

However, open discussions about ethnicity became taboo in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. Thus, other signals of identity were developed. One such identity is that of a "survivor," which is a synonym for a Tutsi individual who survived the genocide. Outside of this realm are Tutsis who entered the country in the wake of the genocide as well as Hutus (who may or may not

⁴⁰⁹ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 203.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, 201.

⁴¹¹ Hinton and O'Neill, 85.

⁴¹² Buckley-Zistel, 138.

have participated in the genocide). The new labels, which are still “charged with ethnic connotations,” do not leave room for Hutu or others who were victims of the genocide. The identity of survivors is solely Tutsi,⁴¹³ thus, leaving segments of the population in essence “identity-less” in the eyes of the nation. The ethnic divide is still felt in the distribution of power in Rwanda. Thus, individuals in powerful positions within government or business are most likely Tutsi, even though the government claims to believe in power-sharing in the “post-ethnic” state.

However, other identifying factors are again gaining traction, including socio-economic class, professional status, regional affiliation, gender or age. Bert Ingelaere claims that these factors also played a role in the genocide, citing the micro and macro level political and social formations.⁴¹⁴ Additionally, “the genocidal violence reflected both the goals of the supra-local forces and factors—mainly the Hutu-Tutsi cleavage mobilized by political actors for political purposes – and their local shadows – struggles for power, fear, coercion, and the quest for economic resources and personal gain, vendettas, and the settling of old scores.”⁴¹⁵ Polkinghorne notes the indirect references to ethnicity saying they are visible “in many spheres of social life, such as identity politics, memorialization, and transitional justice.”⁴¹⁶

One Rwanda: the re-creation of a state “without” ethnic identities

In the aftermath of devastating violence, the Rwandan government’s plan to re-create national unity appears, on the surface, like a bold move towards reconciliation. The message of national unity began at the first genocide commemoration, which took place in 1995, one year after the beginning

⁴¹³ Hinton and O’Neill, 89

⁴¹⁴ Ingelaere, Bert. “Peasants, Power and Ethnicity: A Bottom-Up Perspective on Rwanda’s Political Transition.” (*African Affairs*, 109/435, 273–292, 2010), Pg. 2.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴¹⁶ Dona, Giorgia. *Interconnected Modernities, Ethnic Relations and Violence* (2013 61: 226 originally published online 25 September 2012 *Current Sociology*). Pg. 15.

of the genocide.⁴¹⁷ At this speech, no mention was made of ethnic identities. Rwandan officials point out “that the aim of the state at this critical juncture is to build a nation, and the first step towards this daunting task is to do away with ethnic labels once and for all.”⁴¹⁸ The discussion of ethnicity became taboo, and as was discussed in previous chapters, the government implemented the measures of “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” to ensure that other versions of the narrative were not promulgated. Lemarchand notes that the above mentioned crimes, “offer the new nation-builders a unique opportunity to legislate ethnic identities out of existence.”⁴¹⁹

The notion of “One Rwanda” and national unity, put forth by the government, have come under much criticism for the lack of actually addressing the reasons that led to the genocide and as a cover for the consolidation of Tutsi power within the government. Firstly, the method appears surface level within society, not actually addressing grievances, and creating a framework for the population to simply accept a new identity (as “Rwandan”), thus to be part of enforced reconciliation practices. However, studies that have focused on identity suggest that “ethnicity remains a central factor for Rwandan social identity and that today ethnic group identity is meaningful (arguably even more than before the genocide) or that the Hutu/Tutsi distinctions are more rigid than ever.”⁴²⁰ Lemarchand additionally notes an example from Burundi: when “ethnicity was forbidden” it became an even stronger vector of grievances that remained and could potentially be mobilized.⁴²¹ Thus, legislating against ethnicity does not make it disappear. Although, there is pressure from the government and society at large, individuals are in some ways re-writing their narratives with different frameworks for identity. From these narratives emerge the new labels. These are more “experiential,” referencing

⁴¹⁷ Hinton and O’Neill, 88.

⁴¹⁸ Lemarchand, *The Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, 1.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Ingelaere, 3.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

time spent as a refugee in Tanzania or the Democratic Republic of Congo, in some cases signaling ethnic identity and in other cases, remaining vague.

Secondly, critics note that the regime promotes the idea of national unity on an ideological level, but that “the actions of its representatives contradict this policy.”⁴²² Ethnicity still maintains a tie to power. In a similar desire to hold power as the Hutu extremists, the Tutsis have consolidated power. Tutsis continue to hold a monopoly on the high positions in government and security forces. Within the Tutsi population, many of the power-holding individuals grew up with President Kagame and were similarly exiled in Uganda. While both Hutus and Tutsis hold positions in other government bodies, the key positions are still held by Tutsis. A cable by the US government, released through Wikileaks, describes Hutus who hold positions in government as figureheads, who still defer to their Tutsi counterparts on important matters.⁴²³

The government remains convinced of their strategy to eradicate ethnicity, as the “One Rwanda” campaign has been referred to in the subsequent years of commemoration in April, marking the beginning of the hundred days of the genocide. This year, President Kagame, focused his annual commemoration speech on the importance of teaching Rwandan youth about the genocide, which he claims occurred due to “bad leadership.”⁴²⁴ Thus, ethnicity is missing from the equation, or at least it is missing in the public sphere. However, through the publication of the “Reconciliation Barometer” the government tracks the penetration of the notion of “One Rwanda,” as national unity and reconciliation are inextricably linked in the eyes of the government. Conducted in 2010, the study notes that seventy-two percent of the population strongly agreed that they are proud to be

⁴²² Hinton and O’Neill, 88.

⁴²³ US Embassy in Rwanda: Power in Hands of a Powerful Tutsi Minority with a Few Incompetent Hutu Figureheads. (AfroAmerica Network, 2011). Available at: <http://www.afroamerica.net/AfricaGL/2011/09/04/rwanda-power-minority-tutsi-incompetents-hutu-figurehead/>

⁴²⁴ Kwibuka, Eugene. “Kagame Wants Genocide Curricula Included in School Curricula.” (The New Times, April 8, 2013) Available at: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15321&a=65729>

citizens of Rwanda and forty-six percent strongly agreed that all citizens share common values.⁴²⁵ Additionally, nearly 100% of Rwandans were reported to believe that “most Rwandans believe that reconciliation is an important priority” and that “the everyday actions and behavior of most Rwandans promotes reconciliation.”⁴²⁶ Over seventy percent of Rwandans reported that they want their children to think of themselves as Rwandan, above other identities.⁴²⁷ Thus, at first glance, based on reporting by the government, it appears as if the efforts towards national unity are shifting the way individuals configure their identity, and that the trumping of national identity over ethnic identity appears to be creating a more peaceful nation. However, the study also revealed that between 30 – 45% of the population, depending on age group, believed that “although it is against the law, some Rwandans would try to commit genocide again, if conditions were favorable.”⁴²⁸ Although it is unclear who respondents were referring to, when answering this question, it does speak to underlying tensions and the belief that violence is still possible.

The government’s effort (and adaptation to the plan by society) elevate national identity over ethnic identity. However, this instills the ideology of the RPF.⁴²⁹ It does not contend with the events of the genocide and subsequent human rights abuses. While, identity as a Rwandan may be a part of an individual’s identity, it should not be outwardly forced as the “trump card” to other elements of identity. Lightfoot, Lalonde and Chandler note that “choosing to be Rwandan is a collective act of solidarity.”⁴³⁰ However, it should be one taken freely and not at the expense of other identifying factors. Thus, the government should seek to open discussion and memory around the genocide,

⁴²⁵ Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (2012), Pg. 59.

⁴²⁶ Ibid, 53.

⁴²⁷ Ibid, 54.

⁴²⁸ Rwanda Reconciliation Barometer, 55.

⁴²⁹ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 203. Note: Not that these are necessarily on the same level of violence; however, deeply held grievances may lead to future violence.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 199.

allowing the population to seek to understand it, rather than “explain it away.”⁴³¹ Moshman believes that “. . . there should be processes of reflection, such that “we might foster identities, and selves, capable of resisting the call to genocide.”⁴³²

⁴³¹ Lightfoot, Lalonde, and Chandler, 204.

⁴³² Ibid.

Conclusion: Steps Forward

The creation of a healthy memory environment underscores the ability of the individual and society to engage in conflict resolution, peace-building activities, and, in other words, to continue to exist and move forward. Memory forms the prism through which all actors engage with their society and is, thus, a vital consideration. The process is complex as individual's memories, communal memories, and those that exist within the national history do not overlap. However, a healthy memory environment welcomes cleavages as points of discussion and engagement for individuals, civil society and the state. To reiterate a necessary point, memory should be understood as separate from truth and history, even though the three categories may overlap in their content.

The previous chapters demonstrated the elements of a healthy memory environment through case studies of where Rwandan society falls short. The case studies highlighted the following points; the relationship between memory and understanding, the importance of contestation of memory, the levels and spaces that exist for memory, and the important tie between memory and identity. Each of the chapters assesses a certain element of Rwandan society, such as Gacaca or the freedom of speech, and considers it in the context of a healthy memory environment. Implicit in these case studies are power and agency. Not all actors have control over their own memory process or how they are able to engage with memory in communal and public spaces. In Rwanda, the government has created a monopoly on what is remembered and the practices through which it is done. Agency, or the expression of memory, in a way that does not conform to the dominant narrative is considered to be “against the state.” The monopoly on memory trickles down into state institutions,

civil society organizations, and social-checks that exist within communities.⁴³³ Each of these elements disallows the broader range of memories and/or public acts that fall outside the accepted range.

The following recommendations, set within the framework for a healthy memory environment, view Rwanda as a country needing to create more open memory processes in order to shift a sense of agency to the population.

Memory and Understanding

- The Right to the Truth: Based on the right to understand the past and to have access to this information, Rwanda should move towards taking a wider look into crimes that were committed before, during, and after the genocide. While this effort may be politically untenable under the current administration, efforts to move in this direction by local groups, civil society, and international groups should take place.
- Historical Inquiry: As other societies, such as Guatemala, have done in the wake of violence, Rwanda, pushed by the international community, should consider the creation of a commission for historical inquiry. The commission should be a mix of internal and external actors to find a balance between Rwandans and the international community perceiving it as unbiased but also creating mechanisms for ownership within the country. A broader understanding of crimes may be a first step in opening up the society to broader discussions about violence, moving communities towards unity or cohesion based on actual fact.
- Education: Public education should allow for deviations from a solitary narrative of the violence. Students should be able to engage with a wide variety of facts and understanding in

⁴³³ Note: “Social-checks” refer to interactions within communities that are based on social norms. I posit that certain discussions of genocide and ethnicity have become taboo in these spaces.

relation to the genocide, and thus move towards building conflict resolution skills and understanding of conflict. One recommendation is to include a broader understanding of the conflict in school curriculum as well as skill building seminars on conflict resolution and identity focused on the individual as multi-faceted. Additionally, NGOs and civil society organizations can establish extra-curricular activities that focus on non-violent conflict resolution, community organizing, and peaceful leadership. Education should also occur outside of the school setting, such as through television and radio programming. Currently two organizations, including Search for Common Ground – Rwanda and a Dutch NGO LaBenvolencija⁴³⁴ host radio programs that focus on peacebuilding through conflict resolution education.

Memory and Contestation

- Removing censorship: The censorship and infringement on the freedom of speech should be limited to allow a fuller picture of the past and current events within the country to be debated. Additionally, looser restrictions will increase the amount of information people have access to, thus becoming part of their memory and narrative.
- Safer environment for press: Due to imprisonment and in some cases disappearances the efforts of the press to cover topics of human rights abuses and past events that challenge the government narrative are limited. Thus, the stories that are told are limited. More security must be developed around the freedom of press or a reduction in the press repression instilled by the government. This is a potential area where civil society can take the lead in advocating for freer press. Of course there will be limitations and risks to this type of

⁴³⁴ Staub, 879.

advocacy, but it is within the potential role for civil society – as a liaison between the government and the population.

- Safer environment for political opposition: The international community should increase pressure on Rwanda to have free and fair elections. The first step towards this goal is creating limits on the intimidation of opposition parties and individual party members. The second step is increasing electoral regulations and monitoring to decrease voter fraud. Both recommendations are areas where civil society can strengthen its presence. Possible approaches include election monitoring in the lead up to the election and on the day of the election to reduce intimidation and voter fraud. Rwandan civil society organizations can coordinate with international actors to have a strong presence during important political transitions in the country.
- Revision of vague laws: The laws pertaining to “genocide ideology” and “divisionism” should be repealed or at least significantly curtailed. If the laws are to be revised, because repeal is not an option, they should be written in a more detailed form that creates clarity around the crimes that fall within the two categories. The current laws are written in a vague manner allowing for wide interpretation by authorities. Not only does this allow for expansive government action, but it instills fear in the population due to a lack of clarity about which actions are considered illegal. The laws should be written in a detailed, specific manner that speaks to limiting hate speech, not all speech about the genocide that does not fall within the government’s narrative. While this recommendation poses a huge challenge under the current administration, civil society organizations should work, carefully, with international organizations to advocate for change. Although the situation is difficult, internal, although risky, and external advocacy may create pressure for change. Additionally, at the time of elections, civil society organizations should put forth a revision of the law on

the ballot or pressure candidates into accepting revision to the laws as a part of their platform.

- Open civil society: In Rwanda, civil society is tightly monitored. The government should allow for and civil society should fight to create a more open space for community organizing, activism, and in general, the important work that they do. Memory should be allowed to exist in a multitude of forms that are not considered threatening to the nation. This form of contestation is part of a healthy memory environment as it signals ongoing discourse that is guided by public structures and institutions.

Levels and Spaces for memory

- Recognition of diverging narratives: Narratives will diverge, as memories of a conflict are not the same between individuals and communities. As a country, Rwanda must acknowledge these divisions, while noting that it is not reason for further division or conflict. Instilling a specific narrative within a population will serve to marginalize those who don't fit within the model.
- Space for open collective processing: More spaces and opportunities should exist within the civil society and communities to engage with memory processes. The current model is limited in time frame to 100 days and to topics, within a specific narrative. However, the model should be open to including more people and more opinions, in a situation that does not carry legal weight, as the Gacaca Courts did. Nora notes that there is a “push and pull” between actors that create this space. It includes more memory practices, such as memorials or discussion forums, or simply, a change in perception that would allow individuals and

communities the freedom to engage with memory as they would like to, without fear of repercussions.

- Private spaces: Based on the research completed in this field, it is unclear how individuals engage with memory or memorialization in private spaces. However, as a country, Rwanda should move to respect and encourage this form of practice. Thus, allowing for people to engage in private or public, based on their choosing. Individuals should be free to move between these spaces in their mourning and healing process.
- More inclusive memorials: Memorials should tell more than a static narrative of a complex and changing conflict and post-conflict situation. As Werbner suggests, they should be open to a multitude of versions of grief and, thus, the freedom for individuals to engage with memory as they want to. There should be space for individuals to create memorials, or preserve memories, that do not fit within this structure. These efforts should be supported and celebrated by communities, civil society, the government, and the international community.

Identity and Memory

- Shifting identity: Rwanda should envision itself as a nation where identity is fluid. It is neither statically “Hutu or “Tutsi” or more inclusively, yet still static, “Rwandan.” Individuals should be allowed to develop a variety of identities and exist within all of them. Thus, national pride should be celebrated, but not at the expense of other forms of identification. Open and secure dialogue, as opposed to the burying of differences, will foster healing between groups. Thus, there should be space for individuals to engage with memory and be

open to the impact it has on their identity. This is a process that can be structured by civil society and government institutions.

- Continuous individual and community narratives: All of the above categories seek to create a situation where individuals and communities can write inclusive and healing narratives of their past experiences. More information about the past, mixed with the ability for open public dialogue, will allow individuals and communities to overcome the gaps in the past created by traumatic events and the ongoing imposition of an official memory. Bal et al note the importance of the experience of the narrative frameworks of lives as continuous unities.

The structural changes outlined in the previous sections stem from the overarching need for a more open society in which civil society and strong democratic institutions are developed to guide the process. Many of the recommended changes will be difficult to implement in Rwanda's current society. Efforts towards creating institutions and encouraging inclusion and openness are directions that society should move to create a healthier memory environment. Through opening society up to addressing the past, Rwanda will be able to grapple with the violence that occurred and the ongoing challenges. Whether the "end result" is continued coexistence or deeper reconciliation, this is a vital process for Rwanda to continue. In the past, unexamined tensions that existed under the surface, made it possible for neighbors and friends to pick up arms against each other. Although it will "take generations to heal,"⁴³⁵ it is a necessary direction to move in to protect future generations from the same fate that took hold of the country in 1994.

⁴³⁵ Lemarchand, 8.