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Survivor Accounts of Sexual Violence in the Holocaust and Rwandan Genocide: A Comparative History

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SURVIVOR ACCOUNTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE HOLOCAUST AND RWANDAN GENOCIDE: A COMPARATIVE HISTORY

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ABSTRACT:

This research seeks to analyze and understand the approach and treatment of victims of sexual assaults stories and accounts using case studies of the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. Research was conducted by collecting and reading first-hand accounts of survivors and their experiences of sexual assault, then analyzing the historical response following the events. The two case studies are synthesized and compared in this project to understand which attributes of political and social policy effected the reception of stories of victims and witnesses of rape and assault. Both genocides are affected by unique struggles in collecting witness accounts, as well as stigma around traumatic data of this nature, and approaches to these stories shifted widely between the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda. This research advocates for a treatment of sexual violence and rape in genocide as an unavoidable part of human history, not just a woman's issue, and an area that demands more attention than has been given to it.

Introduction

Since the Holocaust, there was and continues to be a reassessment on how sexual violence is studied and understood. Much of the atrocities in genocides or war times are skimped over in many contexts, and despite being a sensitive topic, there remains a necessity to engaging with these stories no matter how often disturbing. The constancy of sexual violence throughout history should not come as a surprise, particularly in wartimes. Giving proper attention to victims and telling their stories without hesitation is the only correct response, as well as re-assessing one's own personal understandings of these historical event, to ensure that attention and care is given to the survivors of sexual violence in the Holocaust, in Rwanda, in genocide, and in history as a whole.

This paper will act as a survey over the nature of sexual violence in the Holocaust, and in the Rwandan genocide. The topics covered will include the nature and attributes of the violence experienced, and the way in which survivor stories and testimonies were gathered and received following the events, and what changes were observed. In concluding this paper seeks to use these examples to look at what role sexual violence plays as a part of genocidal history and human history, and how individuals can use this information.

First, to note some distinctions for the purposes of this paper. The survey of sexual violence includes but is not limited to rape as an act of violence but looks at the multitudes of ways that women's bodies and parts of their biological sex were used against them. The terminology used fluctuates from "sexual violence" to "rape", but all of sexually violent acts are considered in this paper. There are brief looks at sexual violence against men, but unfortunately there are limited sources to go off. These stories are equally as important in the conversations of

how sexual violence is understood in genocide, but the majority of this paper will be focusing on the experiences of women.

The Holocaust

The victims of sexual violence from the Holocaust long have had their voices silenced. The stories of victims of sexual assault during the Holocaust are stories that long were not seen as important enough to spend time researching and understanding. Sexual violence presents itself in varying avenues in the history of the Holocaust. In this first portion of the paper, we will look at the instances of sexual violence that occurred leading up to the concentration camps, inside the concentration camps, and after liberation. This will act purely as a survey of what accounts we have now, but not as an exhaustive database.[1] The sexual violence against men and women during the Holocaust reveals a lesser-known side of the oppression and control implemented by Nazi's, and the recent nature of the scholarships and accounts exemplifies how challenging the gathering of minority stories are due to both the deeply sensitive nature of traumatic experiences, as well as the suppression as a result of social and institutional stigma around sexual violence.

Sexual Violence at the Start of the War

Contrary to many peoples' assumptions due to well-known narratives such as Anne Franks, most Jewish families did not hide together, and many women attempted to hide "in plain sight". Due to this, the amount of sexual assault endured in hiding is shocking. An important attribute of sexual violence against Jewish women throughout the whole war is the German rules for soldiers and Gestapo against "fraternizing" with Jewish women. There were strict guidelines called *Rassenschande* (racial defilement) against doing anything with the impure and subhuman individuals. This would greatly affect the way sexual assault would be responded to, as in many instances women were simply incapable of saying anything about it—if they did, they would be

[1] The time range will start at the beginning of the war in September 1939, and primarily, the focus will be on Jewish victims, but sexual violence effected men and women from every side of the war.

killed[2]. Some survivors wouldn't share their stories for decades after the war. Some were incapable of sharing it even with friends or family they were hiding with. Jewish women in hiding were highly vulnerable to enemy perpetrators, "rescuers", and even the Jewish men they hid with. A survivor's story told by Joan Ringelheim depicts the experience of being molested by male relatives that were in hiding with her and being incapable of saying anything because of the risk of being denounced.[3]

The conversations of consent complicate the understanding of sexual violence in hiding, as we find examples of individuals using sex—sometimes under the guise of romance—to prevent being sent away. A particular testimony of Gottesfeld Heller tells of her engagement with a Ukrainian soldier when she was a teenage, in exchange for him hiding her and her family. In testimonies, it is clear that her family knew of the sexual engagement between her and the soldier, and she herself has presented her story in a way that makes sense to her. Today, we have the role of determining how power dynamics and the situation at hand effect consent in regard to relations such as these[4].

Sexual violence occurred regularly during the pogroms and rounding up of Jewish people prior to being sent to camps. These would occur in cities during pogroms and in the ghettos where many Jewish people were sent to live instead of their homes. The violations varied from rape to forced abortions. In an account from Emmanuel Ringelblum, a soldier in Sosnowiec was reported going into Jewish homes and forcing the men and women to commit sexual acts in his

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[2] Waxman, Zoe "Rape and Sexual Abuse in Hiding" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 131

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

presence[5]. In Lvov, there is an estimate of thousands of women who were dragged out of their apartments during a pogrom and raped and killed in the middle of the street, violence reaching the utmost of extremity, including acts such as mutilating the breasts and genitalia[6]. Accounts of the Rossava pogrom cited a rape of a Jewish girl in public as a "focal point" of the pogrom, and that every other Jewish girl and woman were raped and left in the streets[7]. In this pogrom, accounts describe no differentiation given by age, reporting a public rape of a 70 year old woman, as well as a 12 year old girl, as well as the brutal murder of parents desperately attempting to protect the naked bodies of their daughters.[8] In ghettos, gang rapes were common occurrences, happening inside of barracks or in the streets, and almost always the eyewitnesses recounting these events were not the victims, as the soldiers would kill their victims after or during the act. If they did return, they returned half dead[9].

In some occupied territory, there were no ghettos into further into the war. In Ukraine, Jewish people were rounded up and shot into mass graves and ravines—the burden of this form of execution is what led to the creation of death camps. In some instances, occupied territory was shared, such as Transnistria, which was a territory controlled by Germany and Romania. Often here, what was observed was Romanians having different "rules" than Germans, meaning they would openly go and round up young girls to take to the soldier's barracks to "do rounds". In one

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[5]He was reported to be arrested. Source: Hedgepeth, Sonja M, Saidel, Rochelle G. *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust* (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 4

[6] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p19

[7]Astashkevich, Irina *Gendered Violence: Jewish Women in the Pogroms of 1917-1921* (Academic Studies Press 2018) 42

[8] Ibid

[9] Testimony 45238, USC Shoah Foundation VHA

account we have of this happening, four girls did this for one night and did not come back alive [10].

Sexual Violence in Camps

Sexual violence would begin immediately upon arrival at the camps. The initial form of assault we see is one of stripping women of their identities, something that was influenced by gender expectations of the time. Womanhood was associated with the outward appearance—hair—and hormonal processes such as menstruation. Removing those removed many women's ability to ground themselves in their gender identity. Women were shaved as soon as they arrived at camps, which according to collections of testimonies and oral accounts, prompting confusion and trepidation regarding one's identity. Anna Heilman, a survivor of Auschwitz, describes herself and women around her as being without shape, "rag dolls made by the clumsy hand of a young child,"[11] which was paired alongside experiences of losing mensuration from malnutrition. Women would be subjected to examinations which involved being stripped from head to toe and searched extensively, including genitalia. In many instances these "examinations" would include penetrative rape [12]. Sexual humiliation would frequently follow in the "admission" to the camp, including being forced to stand around and/or dance naked.[13] Little

[10] Podolsky, Anatoly "The Tragic Fate of Ukranian Jewish Women under Nazi Occupation 1941-1944*" Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 106

[11] Flaschka, Monika J "Only Pretty Women were Raped: The effect of sexual violence on gender identities in concentration camps*" Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 82

[12] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 23

[13] ibid

to no differences were seen between labor and extermination camps regarding forms of sexual violence, other than the frequency and location

A major form the sexual violence inside camps took was in prostitution and brothels. Prostitution either was organized into brothels or "unofficial" in the form of bartering sex for being spared, or even just for food. [14] Brothels were generally unique to labor camps to act as a form of motivation for harder work. In 1941, Henrich Himmler visited Mauthausen and ordered the construction of two brothel barracks to help motivate workers.[15] Official brothels were made in Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Dora Mittelbau, and others. Women were not always Jewish, and were chosen by being specifically picked, or would be cornered into "volunteering". Oftentimes it was seen as better than certain death to increase chance at survival by allowing oneself to be put into a brothel. Sometimes, women were entirely tricked, being told in ghettos or transit camps that they would be taken somewhere with food, clothes, and good work, not being told that the work was sex. Beyond all of this, the work would include medical experiments in treating STDs.[16] In Ravensbruk, an all-woman's camp, extensive moves were made in the brothels to avoid attachments between the soldiers or "patrons" and the women. Women would be switched out frequently in their rooms so the men would not know who they were seeing each time[17]The kickback against this was often intense, as women could be and more often than not were victims to shaming from other men and women in the camps, as the idea of sex work was seen as disgraceful, and that those women should have chosen death over having sex with the

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[14] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 23

[15] Williams, Jessie "Sexual Violence against women during the Holocaust: Inside and Outside of Extermination Camps" *History in the Making: Vol 14, Article 6 2021*

[16] Jacobs, Janet *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, genocide, and collective memory*

[17] Somner, Robert "Sexual Exploitation of Women in Nazi Concentration Camp Brothels*" Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) 82

enemy. Sometimes, the backlash from other prisoners was the other way around, and there was instead anger regarding the "privilege" of sex work.[18] Regardless, even in the instance of volunteering, there is no doubt that there was no choice given—when there is only a choice between death and the sacrifice of dignity and bodily autonomy, there is no actual choice given.

Other forms of assault that took place were assaults on motherhood. This began prior to camps in the push for mass sterilization. In 1933, the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring" was enacted and any German citizen who was seen to have disabilities was forced to be sterilized. This escalated until anyone who was seen as racially inferior was sterilized. Approximately 30,000 Roma were in Germany during this period, and though we do not know an exact number, a large percentage were forcibly sterilized.[19]

Abortions, similarly, were practiced with the same motivations despite being illegal in Germany. Often the act of forced abortions was seen in transit and ghetto camps, such as Terezin. Conception was illegal in Terezin, meaning that any woman who became pregnant was forced to have an abortion. Any woman who refused would be deported to a camp, and any doctor who refused to report pregnancy would be considered an accomplice.[20] Inside of camps, there exist accounts of inmates with backgrounds in medicine practicing abortions on women to save their lives.[21] Such a distinction must be made but it also must be understood that the situation still is one of violence against woman, as most of the pregnancies would be a result of

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[18] Jacobs, Janet *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, genocide, and collective memory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 49

[19] Ben-Sefer, Ellen "Forced Sterilization and Abortion as Sexual Abuse" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 157

[20] Ben-Sefer, Ellen "Forced Sterilization and Abortion as Sexual Abuse" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 154

[21] ibid

assault, or a result of the situation. The choice was never allowed for these women, because of the restrictions on pregnancies and birth, and the constant state of assault.[22]

The unfortunate reality is that sexual violence did not stop with the liberation of the camps. On the contrary, the rapes often were the first thing that occurred upon the liberation of a camp. Often Soviet soldiers would see it as the "least" that women survivors could do, carrying the attitude of "we freed you, so you owe us". In one personal account, survivor Ellen Gatz depicts the experience of being assaulted by Russian soldiers while she hid immediately after liberation, and when stopped by another soldier who reminded them of her status as a Holocaust survivor, they responded "A woman is a woman."[23] For many woman, there was no place to go immediately upon liberation, so they would find themselves in the homes of the soldiers who saved them—safety, in exchange for sex.

There exists far less information on certain groups regarding sexual assault. Specifically, when it comes to queer victims in the Holocaust and people groups outside of Jews, firsthand accounts become less and less. When looking at queer victims, the main reason for this lack of information is the intense stigma around queerness during the 20th century. As well as that, according to recovered SS documents, any act of same-sex practices that are done by soldiers or police was punishable by death.[24] In fact, documents recovered describe the interrogations of SS soldiers who admitted to having sexual relations with male Jews in camps—whether or not these were argued to be consensual is unknown.[25] Still, the assaults undeniably existed.

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[22]Yerushalmi, E. *The Ban on Births in Shavli Ghetto from the Diary of E. Yerushalmi, Records of Shavli,* (Jerusalem, 1958) 188-189

[23] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 18

[24]Grau, Gunter *Hidden Holocaust: Gay and Lesbian persecution in Germany 1933-45* (Cassell, London 1993) p. 192, 272

[25] Ibid

In his memoir on his experience in camps, Heinz Heger recounts being forced into brothels to have sex with women as a "cure" for his homosexuality, all while being watched while SS soldiers.[26] In an account on Berlin postwar, author Miriam Gebhardt admits to the lack of research on male victims of assault. "….aggression against "defenseless" women could be exploited politically," she writes, "whereas male victims of sexual aggression fell outside the binary patriarchal framework…."[27] Multiple accounts in Berlin specifically exist of assault by American soldiers, such as a report on June 1946 of two American soldiers forcing two teenaged boys to perform oral sex—accounts such as these were labeled as sexual offense with children.[28] In some accounts, such as Bad Kissengen who was assaulted by four American soldiers, his account was only seen as credible because there were no "perceived signs" of him being a homosexual.[29]

Within the camps, the sexual violence on queer men reported were castration through force or coerced volunteering. Reports indicate that in Buchenwald, most homosexual prisoners were castrated.[30] Other accounts describe forced assault and sadistic orgies in Buchenwald towards the queer men there.[31] When it comes to queer women, there was debate occurring during this time about the criminal nature of lesbian acts, as some argued that despite lesbian thoughts or actions, there still remained consistent usefulness in regard to repopulating.[32] Ultimately, there remains extensive areas of further research to be done on the topic of Holocaust

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[26] Heger, Heinz *The Men with the Pink Triangle* (Alyson Publications inc. 1980) p97
[27] Gebhardt, Miriam *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War,* (Polity Press, 2015) p 23
[28] Gebhardt, Miriam *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War,* (Polity Press, 2015) p 23
[29] ibid
[30] Grau, Gunter *Hidden Holocaust: Gay and Lesbian persecution in Germany 1933-45* (Cassell, London 1993) p. 265
[31] Ibid p. 269
[32] Ibid p. *72*

sexual violence. Especially when it comes to queer victims and other minority groups who were victims in this genocide. This is another way this research emphasizes the call for more or continued scholarship in certain areas.

Rape as a Tool of Genocide and Historiography

The response to the survivors was not one of understanding. In most cultures, sexual contact with enemies was perceived to be an inexcusable breaking of collective boundaries—immoral and deserving of condemnation. Even when it came to rape, victims would still be seen as the "real enemy", the "enemy within," the one who betrayed their peers. As Nomi Levonkron puts it in her article of sexual violence in camps, "In wartime, a woman's sexuality became the essence of her being,"[33] This results in how long of a process it was to get any personal accounts whatsoever on the events and violence experience, because of how much shame links itself with sexuality. There instead become the dilemma of speaking for oneself but risking ostracism. In other instances, such as the intense increase of rapes in Berlin after the war, actions were excused because of them being seen as being the "wrong victims" in comparison to Holocaust survivors.[34]

When looking at the implications of this research and information, the first step is to regard the effect of trauma. Researchers and mental health experts have reported the shame and guilt felt by survivors of rape from the Holocaust. In some instances, there have been observed trends of women rarely sharing first-hand personal accounts of bartering with sex, only ever

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[33] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 20

[34] Gebhardt, Miriam *Crimes Unspoken: The Rape of German Women at the End of the Second World War,* (Polity Press, 2015) p24

referring to a friend, or another. Whether this is true or a form of separation from the action is up for debate. For women who survived and returned or found lovers after the war, there is little room to be able to articulate what occurred to them without the recurrent repulsion from loved ones. The nuanced effect trauma has on memory must be remembered when going through accounts[35]

Further implications can be analyzed in the realm of gender theory. Joan Ringelheim describes the issue of gender with the idea of "split memory". She writes:

> "What is meant by the notion of a 'split memory'? First, gender is considered irrelevant to the Holocaust. This results in "forgotten" memories; memories that are misunderstood by the survivors or not taken as Holocaust-related and thus split form the Holocaust. Second, there is a dividing line between what is considered personal and private to woman, and what has been designated as the proper collective memory of the Holocaust. These private and personal experiences are known to have happened and are sometimes mentioned. But, they are usually severed from serious talk about the Holocaust. This results in 'ignored' memories which eventually also turns into forgotten memories"[36]

Looking at the historiography of sexual violence in the Holocaust illustrates the importance of this issue, due to how long of a process it was for sexual assault during the Holocaust to be given any attention to. When scholarship began to be pursued on sexual violence during the Holocaust, is was complicated by the lack of precedent in Holocaust studies, and the span of time that had passed meant that many survivors had passed or determined they were done sharing their stories, which limits the amount and kind of data available.[37] Victims were apprehensive to speak out due to fear of shame, retaliation, or lack of being believed due to

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[35] Linn, Ruth and Dror, Esther "The Shame is Always There" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 279

[36] Joan Ringelhein "Genocide and Gender: A split memory" gender and catastrophe, ed. Ronit Lentin (London, 1997)

[37] Fangrad, Alana, *Wartime Rape and Sexual Violence* (Author House 2013) 15

skepticism scholars had early on regarding the legitimacy of these accounts of rape.[38] As mentioned previously, the German views of Jewish women as dirty and forbidden made it hard for victims to convince others of their experiences. Another reason was when survivors started participating in interviews, these tapes were often geared for sharing with family members or students, meaning the interviewees were less inclined to share traumatic experiences.[39]

Sexual assault in wartime has long been seen as "routine", or an expected side effect,[40] meaning that little scholarship attention was given to instances of assault in the Holocaust. In Israel, researched on gender and assault only began in the last decade.[41] Even then, little witness accounts existed either because of the immediate murder of victims, or the fear of coming forward. Nomi Levonkron writes "It is far easier to count the number of skeleton than the number of those raped: skeletons are far more tangible and visible, but the living women who were raped ide, for they fear the stigma that is likely to cling to them if they reveal what was done to them."[42]

The changes really began after criminals from Rwanda and Yugoslavia were charged in trials specifically with crimes of sexual violence.[43] The legal comprehension of sexual violence as an international crime and a war crime changed drastically throughout the 20th century. Rape

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[38] Fangrad, Alana, *Wartime Rape and Sexual Violence* (Author House 2013) 17

[39] Fogelman, Eva "Rape during the Nazi Holocaust: Vulnerabilities and Motivations" *Rape: Weapon of War and Genocide*, edited by Carol Rittner (Paragon House 2012) 19

[40] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) 13

[41] Ibid 15

[42] Levonkron, Nomi "Death and Maidens: Prostitution, rape, and sexual slavery during World War Two" *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) 16

[43] Jacobs, Janet *Memorializing the Holocaust: Gender, genocide, and collective memory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p 57

was declared a war crime in 1919, but never prosecuted as such prior to the Rwandan genocide[44]. After World War II, there was not a side of the conflict that were *not* accused of mass rapes, and yet both of the courts set up by allied countries in Tokyo and Nuremberg to prosecute war crimes did not account for or recognize crimes of sexual violence.[45] It would be years until the issue came to the attention of the UN Security Council, following the mass rapes in former Yugoslavia. The Security Council would state in December 1992 that the systemic detention and ape of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina was an international crime to be addressed.[46]

As mentioned before, a main component of the delay of any legal response to sexual violence in cases of war and conflict, was that historically rape was and always has been expected during war as means of "satisfying troops".[47] Women were purely seen as a spoil of war, something that could be taken and won after a victory, more often than not seen as rightful rewards upon liberating land. This remained the case even following the UN Security Councils statements in 1992. A United Nations report in 1998 would state rape to be "accepted as an inevitable, albeit unfortunate reality of armed conflict."[48] This was especially the case in the Holocaust, with the mass rapes of women considered to be an inevitable part of the crimes of Nazis, and not seen as anything demanding different treatment than the extermination crimes specifically. To put simply, rape prior to Rwanda was seen as a part of war, not a tool of genocide.

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[44]Department of Public Information "Sexual Violence: A tool of war" (2014) https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/assets/pdf/Backgrounder%20Sexual%20Violence%202014.pdf

[45]Department of Public Information "Sexual Violence: A tool of war" (2014) https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/assets/pdf/Backgrounder%20Sexual%20Violence%202014.pdf

[46]ibid

[47]Dixon, Violet K. "A Study in Violence: Examining Rape in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide" Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, 2009 http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=89

[48]Ibid

The International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda trial of Jen Paul Akayesu in 1998 following the Rwandan genocide would establish the concept of genocidal rape as different than wartime rape. This was the first tribunal enacted since World War II and would be the first-time rape was pursued as a war crime[49]. Akayesu was declared guilty of crimes against humanity which including specifically the orchestration of mass rapes as a form of genocide[50]. This ruling was significant legally as it put down the foundation for the understanding of rape in genocide, at least in the legal scope.

Rwandan Genocide

Hutu propaganda was spread among Hutu individuals leading up to the Rwandan genocide. This material gives us an insight into what perceptions of Tutsi people were shared and had by many Hutu and influenced the start of violence. Hutu men were informed that anyone who married a Tutsi woman--or even made one his concubine or "secretary" –were all considered to be traitors. Hutu men must know that the Hutu girls were more "dignified and more conscientious in their roles as women, wife, and mother."[51] This material was doctrine among extremist leaders and read out loud at meetings, encouraging Hutus to exclude all Tutsis from public life.[52]

[49]Dixon, Violet K. "A Study in Violence: Examining Rape in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide" Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, 2009 http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=89
[50]Ibid
[51]Hamilton, Heather. "Rwanda's Women: The Key to Reconstruction" *Refugee Women, UNHCR and the Great Lakes Crisis,* (Journal of Humanitarian Assistance, 2000) 4
[52] Ibid

Nature of Violence

The nature of the crimes in Rwanda were extreme in violence and frequency. The Interahamwe used rape as a deliberate mechanism of killing Tutsi women. In that regard, most of the rapes took place at the hand of Interahamwe men and militia. The violence occurred in every form and location—essentially, no woman was free from rape, and there was no place where militia would not commit sexual crimes. In most cases, women were killed during or after the rape, and in others, they were in such bad shape that they were left for dead. Some would survive, others wouldn't. One witness reflected that "To survive, you had to let yourself be raped."[53] Amongst the militia, the crimes were committed by about every soldier, although there were instances that differed such as an account by a survivor named "Clementine" that said that two of the older militia men who had attacked her refused to rape her, but had encouraged the younger ones to do so.[54]

The forms of violence that occurred are unspeakable and hard to hear or read about. That being said, the level of trauma experienced by Tutsi women is absolutely essential to know in order to fully comprehend what happened in Rwanda, and ultimately what violence humans are capable of. A frequent occurrence was genital mutilation. This included machetes mutilating breasts and vulvas, as well as disfiguring women genitalia with boiling water or displaying parts of it on sticks. There are also frequent accounts of women witnessing other women having their wombs cut open and unborn babies removed.

[53] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 46

[54] Ibid

Sexual slavery was another commonly seen component of sexual violence in Rwanda. Interahamwe men gathered up women to choose which of them would be taken.[55] What would occur frequently was others disapproving and saying that Interahamwe who took sex slaves should not wait long to kill them to not risk the women giving birth to more Tutsis.[56] Something that would occur on the other side of that spectrum was some women choosing to become wives to their Hutu captors in order to avoid being killed. Essentially, achieving a form of freedom at the terrible cost of autonomy and being sexually assaulted on a regular basis. It's important to acknowledge the situation that would drive a woman to choose to be marri[57]ed to an Hutu Interahamwe, and under those circumstances, despite it being a marriage, there is no sex that occurred that is not classified as rape. Another implication of this is for the women who chose to stay with their captors even after the end of the genocide. Many had children, or really any other place to go. One account describes the story of an eleven year old girl who was chosen to be an Interahamwe soldier's wife.[58]

There are reports of crimes that were less common but still deserve attention. For instance, reports describe sexual crimes committed against Hutu women as well as Tutsi women. That being said, this occurred most frequently when Hutu women were mistaken as Tutsi women[59], or as a form of "punishment" when Hutu women were found out for hiding Tutsi women in their homes.[60] Hutu women also existed as perpetrators, both in killing and in rape.

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[55] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 53

[56] Ibid 54

[57] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 56-57

[58] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 58

[59] Ibid 65

[60] Ibid 67

There are documented testimonies reporting Hutu women who pushed or goaded their neighbors to rape Tutsi girls and women--sometimes, these individuals they motivated were their own sons.[61] Cases like these are important to include in understanding the sexual violence as it illustrates how much the poisonous ideology of Interahamwe infiltrated the minds of these perpetrators. It also highlights how much Interahamwe men and women pushed and encouraged the behavior in each other. Some accounts describe Interahamwe who purposefully had those in their groups who were HIV-positive to rape Tutsi women to deliberately spread the disease.[62] In general, it can be understood that the violence of the genocide though extreme does not take away from inevitable frequency and risk of sexual assault for women.

Experiences of Victims Following the Genocide

Following the events at Rwanda, victims struggled to recovery physically and mentally. The quantity of pregnancies both during and following the genocide had lasting implications for the heath and lives of victims. In some cases, pregnant women were faced with the choice to keep or abort the child. A survivor by the name of Bernadette described that after the war she found out she was pregnant, but had an abortion, saying that it was "…not really an abortion. The baby just came out dead,"[63] The reality of the physical harm that women experienced meant that keeping children was more often than not just possible. On top of pregnancies, an estimated 70 percent of survivors tested positive for HIV (Waller, 85). The community and global response

[61]Totten, Samuel "The Plight and Fate of Females During and Following the 1994 Rwandan Genocide" *Plight and Fate of Women During and Following Genocide,* edited by Samuel Totten, 137-168. (Transaction Publishers, 2009) 111

[62] Totten, Samuel "The Plight and Fate of Females During and Following the 1994 Rwandan Genocide" *Plight and Fate of Women During and Following Genocide,* edited by Samuel Totten, 137-168. (Transaction Publishers, 2009)

[63]Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 43

to providing healing for the survivors was grim, most saying that there was little to no support for physiological, economic, physical or spiritual recovery. A woman said:

> "Women are alone. They have lost everything. But there are no programs for them. No-one speaks about the survivors. No one talks about their problems. We are watching what the world will do for the survivors and what it does for the returnees and the refugees. This is a problem for reconciliation. There needs to be assistance for victims, not just for refugees, prisons, and returnees. It's unbalanced. Concretely, there is nothing for the women and yet they constitute the bulk of the survivors." [64]

The existence of children born of rape became an astronomical issue. It is understood that around 3-5 thousands children in Rwandan today result of rape.[65]

As for any sort of accountability or justice on behalf of victims, it was poorly achieved. One survivor acknowledged the number of perpetrators that escaped or were killed, asking: "How can they be prosecuted? They are not even here."[66] Multiple primary source accounts from women share the disturbing lack of true accountability that was held to rapists. Jeanette Uwimana said "I don't go to the gacaca courts anymore, because the people we are accusing are being released. I don't see the point in taking the risk of sharing my testimony there if it doesn't make any difference,"[67] Gloriose Mushimiyima said that she would "…never testify at the gacaca courts, because my sister was beaten on her way home from the…court where she

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[64] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 70

[65] Temple-Raston, Dina *Justice on the Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists, Their Trial for War Crimes, and a Nation's Quest for Redemption.* (New York: Free Press, 2004) 154

[66] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 46

[67] de Brouwer, Anne-Marie and Ka Hon Chu, Sandra *The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence,* (Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre 2009)

appeared as a witness,"[68] Adela Mukamuseonera shared how her rapist was accused but released, meaning she would have to continue to interact with him on a regular basis. Beatrice Mukandahunga said simply that "…there is no justice in the gacaca courts."[69]

The recovery from the trauma looked different for every individual who survived. For some, they considered themselves permanently damaged, not able to reach a point of recovery or healing. For some, as stated above, despite the permanent damage, they felt no need to go to the courts or pursue justice, sometimes because they felt it was useless. Others shared another perspective, such as Marie Jeanne Murekatete in her testimony:

> "I don't feel the hatred towards the Hutu. I have never accused those who killed my family at the gacaca courts, because they won't do anything for me. The killers can't bring my family back, so I don't see any point in accusing them. I do have advice for others who suffer: as a genocide survivor who is HIV positive, has lost two husbands and is responsible for four children. I think anyone who has traveled the same road as I have should pray and be patient. Just be patient."[70]

The level of violence experienced by women in Rwandan effected the essence of being a woman, having intense implications for gender and perceptions of gender. A survivor named Olga interviewed following the genocide describes that: "With that rape I lost my identity as a girl. When a friend of mine invites me to a party I can't go.... I don't know if when I go I have to be with the girls or with the women. I am not a girl, and I am not a woman."[71]

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[68] Ibid
[69] Ibid

[70] de Brouwer, Anne-Marie and Ka Hon Chu, Sandra *The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence,* (Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre 2009) 58

[71] Amnesty International, *Rwanda: "Marked for Death", Rape Survivors Living with HIV/AIDS in Rwanda* , 6 April 2004 http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR470072004

Some of the legal issues that arose following the genocide including responses to the survivors and the response to the children born of genocide. Unlike orphans of genocide, children of rape did not have any sort of government assistance. Aid focused on the women victims, versus also helping the children, meaning that many grew up homeless, in poverty, or in general feeling rejected and stigmatized by their mothers and/or surrounding communities.

As well as the children, there was also the issue of the women who survived, who frequently were the sole survivors of the household. Following the genocide, there was seen an increase of women-headed households. In 1998, thirty-four percent of households were women-headed, which was a 50% increased from 1991. Most of these women were widowed from the genocide, many had families to provide for or had taken in war orphans. This effect had major implications economically, as the 1998 statistics revealed that in Rwanda, female-headed homes were more likely to live in poverty[72].

Rape as Genocide and Historiography

Following the Rwandan Genocide, stigma complicated the research around sexual violence. Victims experience shaming within their communities, one survivor saying that "...after rape, you don't have value in the community,"[73] Furthermore, complications included women being hesitant to share their stories due to some of the perpetrators still living alongside them, often times, as their neighbors.[74] The reality of women who were severely harmed mentally and

[72]Hamilton, Heather. "Rwanda's Women: The Key to Reconstruction" *Refugee Women, UNHCR and the Great Lakes Crisis,* (Journal of Humanitarian Assistance, 2000) 6

[73]Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 25

[74] Human Rights Watch Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath, (Human Rights Watch Press, 1996) 25

physically being stuck living next door to the men who did it and receiving little to no response was a disturbing reality of the events.

The legal pursuits for change and justice opened up continued dilemmas, particularly around the crime of sexual assault and what to do with witness testimonies. The Office of the Prosecutor blamed Rwandan women for not wanting them to disclose sexual violence due to cultural sensitivities, which is a claim that multiple researchers proved to be false.[75] Ultimately, instead it was seen that sexual violence was considered in the courts to be the least relevant of the crimes being investigated.

Regional conflicts continued after the genocide, complicating the process of assessing the damage to the population and to the women victims. Trials were unsuccessful in achieving justice, and contrasting the response from the Holocaust, outside organization began assessing the violence to women specifically. The Human Rights Watch report cited in this paper that specifically used survivor accounts to share the level of brutality and rape experienced was collected and written in 1996, and journalists would overtime began collecting witness stories from victims, and later on, from their children. The resources objectively were different in the late 1990's than following the Holocaust, but the stark contrast was seen in the response to these stories. Put starkly, it was impossible to avoid sharing the reports of Rwanda without engaging with the rapes.

[75] Mibenge, C.S "All the Women Were Raped: Gender and Violence in Rwanda" *Sex and International Tribunals: The erasure of gender from the war narrative. (*University of Pennsylvania Press 2013) 67

Sexual Violence as Genocide: Connecting the Dots

Looking at the two genocides in this paper, there are common themes that emerge regarding the nature of sexual violence during these events. In both instances, victims were told--by members of their communities or in courts--that their experiences were not of the highest importance. We saw this in how some members of the Jewish community felt that discussion of rape took away attention from all that the Jewish population had experienced. Rape was not given proper attention in any trials following the Holocaust, similarly to in Rwanda when rape was seen as the "lesser" of the crimes committed.

Other connections include the forms of sexual violence, specifically when looking at the act of rape. The kinds of rape that were experienced in both the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide include mostly sadistic rape, or, rape that was committed far beyond desires for sexual gratification. Legal scholars define sadistic rape as including torture, pain, and a desire to control the victim[76]. In many cases this includes fulfilling a fantasy of the rapist, and in the context of genocide, this "fantasy" is the eradication of the victim group, and the dehumanization. Jewish people were dehumanized to the point where putting women in brothels or using them for bodily pleasures was constant, or, rape and torture was a "deserved punishment" for existing as a Jew. Similarly in Rwanda, it was a level of sadism where being a Tutsi also "deserved" a level of violence we can barely fathom. As well as sadism, we see in both cases examples of rape of entitlement. We see this frequently in the Holocaust following liberation, or in cases of individuals hiding Jewish women and then forcing sex on them as an obligation. In Rwanda, we see cases similar of Hutu men hiding Tutsi women but then coercing them into sex.

[76] Simons, Dominique A. "Sex Offender Typologies" Department of Justice: Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking, 2015 https://smart.ojp.gov/somapi/chapter-3-sex-offender-typologies

Similarities are seen as well in the language used to describe the events, a sanitized language that would result in detriment to the survivors. In both genocides, the language used before during and after by perpetrators were sanitized. The Holocaust bore names such as "final solution", "special treatment", or "evacuation" and "resettlement". An interesting point of comparison is the description of Rwandan genocide as "ethnic cleansing", "liquidation", "bush clearing". What is a significant note regarding this language, is that during the Rwandan genocide, many of these terms were used not just by the genocidaires, but heavily by surrounding countries, like the United States, in order to avoid activating global pacts that would require the US to step in, had the word "genocide" been used.[77] Asa result of this sanitization of the language used to describe the genocides, the victims of sexual violence in both instances suffered from self-hatred and self-blame, shame from even other members of their community, a general lack of understanding for the suffering they experienced.

The reasons making these connections is important, is because it lays the foundations for understanding the role of rape in genocide. These are but two examples but are two examples nearly fifty years apart, but already bearing clear similarities. This is because rape is a fundamental tool in genocide, sex weaponized and violence amplified to further dehumanize and destroy victims, mostly women, and frequently a product of patriarchal norms of violence. In cases of conflict and war, rape is most understood as a "side effect" of sorts of conflict. A man will take advantage of the inevitable mess of conflict to forcibly take sexual rewards. But in genocide, rape takes an added purpose, often central to a directive from a regime or overseeing party. It acts as a tool and weapon of political or social motivations, or from gendered dynamics.

[77]Waller, James E. "Rape as a Tool of 'Othering' In Genocide" *Rape: Weapon of War and Genocide,* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Paragon House, 2012) 91

pJames Waller notes that "...rape can fulfill visions of genocide and ethnic cleansing by leading to physical death, community breakdown…and the dilution of the next generation."[78]

Genocidal Sexual Violence as a Human Issue, not just a Women's Issue

A common trend observed within the broader study of sexual violence in conflict and in genocide is the often-tacit understanding of sexual violence as being a "woman's issue", or, a part of woman's history. In many regards, it is important to address the dangers that women experience simply by being women. The disproportionate violence and danger existing throughout history is amplified in times of conflict and wartime. With that said, there is also nuance in how this information is then applied to education and the response to these topics by individuals. Ultimately, the conversation turns to one of: how much can we study rape as a women's issue, if it is rape because women's are not seeing as human beings, but are dehumanized to the point of being objects? Catherine A. McKinnon questions the way in which violence against women complicate the understanding of human history:

> "If women were human, would we be a cash crop shipped from Thailand in containers into New York brothels? Would we be sexual and reproductive slaves? …Would our genitals be sliced out to "cleanse" us…to control us, to mark us out and define our cultures?...Would we be raped in genocide to terrorize and eject and destroy our ethnic communities?...if women were human, would our violation be *enjoyed* by our violators? And if we were human, when these things happen, would virtually nothing be done about it?"[79]

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[78]Waller, James E. "Rape as a Tool of 'Othering' In Genocide" *Rape: Weapon of War and Genocide,* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Paragon House, 2012) 91

[79] McKinnon, Catherine *Are Women human? And other international dialogues, (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006) 45

McKinnon suggests that by nature of being a woman, humanity is taken. The implications this has for studying sexual violence is heavy with complications and nuance. To what extent does violence become a rooted part of women's history? Many of the forms of violence seen in the Holocaust were experiences unique to women, such as sterilization and forced abortions. Scholar Monika J. Flaschka used first-hand accounts of the Holocaust to determine that there were increased chances of being raped for those who carried more feminine traits, such as pronounced curves, or those whose shaved heads grew back hair faster.[80] Data like this suggests a level of gendered norms playing a role in the crimes, again linking the violence to women and gender. That being said, we must identify these realities also as a product of the patriarchal society of the 20th century, not as any deterministic attribute of being a woman. Holocaust scholar Joan Ringelheim noted that there was no gender during the Holocaust, instead, the extermination was against all who were deemed "subhuman", regardless of gender or age.[81] This is a vital piece of analysis, as it is important to not associate sexual violence as only a part of women's history, or in turn, associate women's experience in history only with sexual assault, and attacks against menstruation and birth. Ringelheim's argument can be extended as well to the Rwandan genocide, as the magnitude of violence was never lessened even if it was against a woman or a child. The experiences of women were unique in the sexual violence, but the rape and violation were a mechanism of genocide, not a matter of gender.

Another key component to this conversation, is the differences that setting, and context have in what women experienced. In concentration camps, women are in a vulnerable and

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[80] Flaschka, Monika J "Only Pretty Women were Raped: The effect of sexual violence on gender identities in concentration camps*" Sexual Violence against Jewish Women in the Holocaust,* by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Brandeis University Press 2010) p 82

[81] Joan Ringelhein "Genocide and Gender: A split memory" gender and catastrophe, ed. Ronit Lentin (London, 1997)

"accessible" location for dehumanizing crimes, while during Rwandan genocide, multiple accounts looked at in this paper attest to the way that perpetrators used rape to violate *all* Tutsi women. Because of this, there is not one correct approach to *both* genocides when seeing what role gender played during the event.

While women are specifically vulnerable to sexual violence, I argue that sexual violence needs to be regarded as equally a part of *human* history. It is just as much a part of men's history as victims themselves and as perpetrators, but at the end of the day, is an inescapable reality that must not get passed off as a woman's issue. This is especially the case when studying genocide, where rape is a weapon of oppression and dehumanization.

Catherine McKinnon says that "…rape [is] to be seen and heard and watched and told to others: rape as spectacle. It is rape to drive a wedge through a community, to shatter a society, to destroy a people."[82] Rape was a crime of genocide, a destruction of a people seen as subhuman. This is why in both Rwanda and the Holocaust; rape was so frequently in public spaces. Public exposure or ritualization of rape is specifically done to strip rape from the "private domain", to remove any emotional or intimate aspect of sexuality, and to symbolize it as punishment.[83] Ultimately, it is a merging of a person and their "role" as the thing to be used and discarded, which also creates a "group-think" among the targeted people-group, causing them to see themselves as the subhuman group and fear their own selves in the face of violation.[84]

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[82]McKinnon, Catherine Are Women human? And other international dialogues, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006) 85

[83]Card, Claudia. "Rape as a Weapon of War." Hypatia (1996) 7

[84]Waller, James E. "Rape as a Tool of 'Othering' In Genocide" Rape: Weapon of War and Genocide, edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth. (Paragon House, 2012) 92

Sexual Violence and the Definition of Humanity

In studying humanity and history, you ultimately will study violence. Human history is rich, and complex, and violence is an inevitable component of the story. Engaging with the layers of systemic oppression that is seen in conflict and genocide is necessary for a thorough understanding of what it means to be human--there is no learning about humanity and what that means without engaging with systems of power and violence. This is deeply the case when it comes to sexual violence, which remains to be an unavoidable reality of human history, and complicates the question of what it means to be *human.* As Catherine McKinnon notes in her quote earlier, the treatment of women in past and present seems to imply a lack of humanity, an understanding of womanhood that exists with an inevitability of violence. This conversation goes beyond just women, as this paper has included instances of male victims of rape. This conversation is one of to what level is our definition of humanity and what it means to be human limited by systems of power and the ideologies that drive people to commit crimes of genocide.

Sexual violence is highlighted in this paper as a tool of genocide, but also complicates the questions of humanity, violence, and power. Survivors of rape experienced a kind of dehumanization that is a definition aspect of rape--bodies demoted to objects of physical gratification or deserving of destruction. The motivations behind rape suggest that rapists do not perceive their victims as fully human, a reality furthered in genocide where perpetrators further this view of their victim as un-human with heightened violence with the end goal of death of a people, not just a person.

Understanding the shifts of sexual violence in the global legal scale helps inform the discussion of how rape is understood and treated in human history in general. Historically, sexual violence has been an inevitable part of times of war as well as times of peace. Despite this, there

was little sociological and psychological history with the crime itself for a concerningly long time. Freud and Kreft-Ebbing are two scholars who studied sexual disorders but did not mention rape in their works, as well as other social theorists such as Marx and Engels, despite their work fixating on the exploitation between classes. Because of this, for the most part feminists were the ones studying rape in its respective historical contexts.[85]

When studying and learning genocide, there is no eradicating the prevalence of sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence is an unavoidable component of conflict, and in genocide, an unavoidable mechanism of mass destruction and bodily deterioration. Alongside the acknowledgment of sexual violence in genocide, is also an acknowledgement of the frequency of erasure of these stories that is seen following the events. In the case of the Holocaust, stories were delayed in being heard and acknowledged due to a failure to recognize rape as a crime of humanity, and a key weapon of genocide. In Rwanda, women felt silenced by the systems around them, their stories frequently squandered by their neighbors and the systems that were supposed to defend them.

Beyond these two instances, there also are implications for the way academics engage with topics of sexual violence and rape. These issues are not commonly delved into in basic learning around genocides or history in general--as a generalization, people do not like reading or hearing stories of trauma of this level. While it is important to recognize the atrocities of these stories and the sensitivities we must have when engaging with these stories, there also exists a need for telling and hearing these stories. Atrocities are not easily engaged with, but as survivors did not have a choice, we have an obligation to hear their stories, and to hold them carefully, and not squander them.

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[85] Brownmiller, Susan, *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape. (*Simon and Schuster, 1975) 14

Moving Forward: Call for Further Research

The stories and testimonies explored in this paper are only the surface of the material existing on the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust, let alone other genocides throughout history. This is a necessary thing to note, because despite an unknown but extensive number of stories that were never told or collected, there is still far too much that can concisely be put in a single paper. There is certainly endless room to explore other cases of genocide, furthering the understanding of rape as a tool of genocide. Waller emphasizes this in her paper, listing other examples of genocide to emphasize the extent these stories go:

> "During the Khmer Rouge's genocidal rule in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979, approximately 250,000 Cambodian women were forced into marriage. As many as 64,000 internally displaced women experienced war-related sexual violence between 1991 and 2001 in Sierra Leone. A mental health worker in that conflict said that 'being raped is like being bitten by a mosquito, it's that frequent.' Between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls in Rwanda were raped during the 1994 Genocide."[86]

It is necessary and needed to continue to engage with the stories and material we have of genocide and sexual violence. So frequently we see the trauma and the shame that complicates the collection and comprehension of these stories following the events, and it serves as a reminder of our role to hear and learn from these experiences.

Scholars pursuing highlighting these accounts found that they didn't know how to start integrating these stories into the broader narrative. Joan Ringelheim remarked: "Without a place for a particular memory, without a conceptual framework, a possibly significant piece of

[86]Waller, James E. "Rape as a Tool of 'Othering' In Genocide" *Rape: Weapon of War and Genocide*, edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth. (Paragon House, 2012) 86

information will not be pursued," which is highlighting the lack of space that existed for stories of this nature. Part of the obligation then for scholars handling the history of genocide is to take the necessary steps to managing deeply traumatic topics both for themselves and then in the academic field. There are limits to the way that these topics can be taught and discussed because of the sensitive nature, but ultimately the stories are these survivors cannot be shied away from. Furthermore, the reality of the world we live in is one where sexual violence is not an infrequent occurrence, meaning there is even more at stake to normalize conversation and awareness about the ugly potential of mankind, and the extend of violence that individuals are capable of. Genocide education is necessary, and sexual violence is an unavoidable part of the discussion.

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Appendix: Honors Symposium Presentation

Presented on the panel: *"dear reader": Testimony, Poetry, and Power the Historical Narrative*

SPU Honors Symposium, May 20, 2023

Hello everyone. [introduction]

My project started to take shape in August of last year when I was on a study abroad trip in Prague studying the Jewish experience in the Holocaust. I was starting to learn more about sexual violence inside concentration camps and ghettos. Despite having been passionate about Holocaust history for a good part of my life, I hadn't known prior to the trip that there had been high percentages of brothels inside concentration camps, where soldiers would have access to women prisoners. These brothels even acted often as a motivator of sorts for Jewish male inmates. This sent me down a process of wanting to know more about this, why I had never learned about it in any of my education, was it something I had just missed, or was there attributes of this history that wasn't given the same attention. This quickly turned into wanting to understand sexual violence within genocide as a whole.

The project took shape to be an analysis of survivor accounts of sexual violence during the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide. My goal was to analyze the way that sexual violence has been understood and studied throughout history, and the response to these victims following the events of each genocide. Ultimately, I wanted to answer my question of *why is this such an under-represented experience in many historical narratives, and what can we do to advocate with these survivors?*

As Rebecca introduced in the previous speech, knowledge recovery is vital when it comes to sensitive testimonies and stories that we have throughout history. Part of what occurs in that "middle stage" she mentioned, is part of what influences what stories get highlit, what stories get pushed, heard, and remembered. And this is where historiography comes in! How do we how human testimony gets preserved, but then how certain parts or experiences within those testimonies get forgotten, parts that are hugely influential for understanding being human, and unrepresented peoples? That is what my project aims to look at.

My focus in this speech will be on the analysis and implications part of my research and I will not go in depth on the specific forms of violence that I examined in my paper, due to the intense sensitivity of these subjects. The content I utilized was troubling to read and graphic in nature, and while I believe it is vitally important to understand the extent of cruelty that humans are capable of, I avoid that specific language in this presentation. Regardless of that, this is an extremely heavy topic, and I want to make sure everyone present is comfortable stepping out if they do not feel mentally equipped to engage with this content.

First, a quick definition.

The way that I define sexual violence in this project is violence not limited to rape, but also includes the multitudes of ways that women's bodies and parts of their biological sex were used against them. I want to note that I did spend some time researching sexual violence against men, but unfortunately due to heavy stigmatization and other variables, scholarship is limited, so I focus a majority of my project on the experiences of biological women. In the Holocaust, women from all people groups experienced assaults, during, and after the war. To cover all of it would be impossible, so most of my focus is on Jewish women. In Rwanda, men and women both Hutu and Tutsi experienced sexual violence by both men and women perpetrators, but again, my focus in my paper is one Tutsi women and their experiences of violence at the hands of Hutu men. For both Rwanda and the Holocaust, my understanding of sexual violence includes sexual slavery, prostitution, and sex under the guise of promised survival and coercion.

In my research I focus on primary sources, the testimonies from survivors of sexual violence themselves. All primary sources, of course comes with variables you have to consider when doing research.

In the case of genocide studies, some of the variables you're going to encounter are the effects of trauma and PTSD on the recounting of human experience

When studying the Holocaust, we have the privilege of having extensive collections of oral histories, such as the Shoah foundation collections. With the Holocaust research I was doing, the biggest variable I had to consider was one of age. Women were not given really any space by anyone following World War Two to share their stories of sexual violence, due to

stigma, around rape, around consent, and around sexuality in general. Because of this, many woman never told their stories. Eventually there started to be more space made for these women, but of course, this meant a lot of the stories and oral histories we have are with individuals that are in the later part of their lives, where memory starts to become difficult.

> In my research of Rwanda, a significant variable was one of political climate. Rwanda was more recent, and sexual violence also played a overt role as a weapon, as Hutu perpetrators were told directly to violate all Tutsi women regardless of ag**e.** With that beginning knowledge, I thought there would be more accounts of these crimes, and while there were many, the situation in Rwanda left little room for women to be able to openly share what had happened to them. This was often due to safety, as many of them still had to live amongst perpetrators, and often, next door to their rapists.

Upon finishing the research stage of my project, I landed upon a few key points of similarity:

Firstly, the treatment of survivors and lack of justice. In both genocides, survivors of sexual violence were essentially told that the crime of rape or sexual violence was the “lesser” of crimes that occurred in the genocide as a whole. In both cases, women who ended up pregnant with rapists' babies faced intense stigma and shaming.

Following the Holocaust, Jewish women who spoke out on the sexual crimes they experienced frequently experienced backlash from members of the Jewish community who felt like talking about crimes of sex was “taking away” from the broader push for justice against Jewish people, despite the fact that some Jewish women being assaulted even during the liberation of the concentration camps they had just survived.

In Rwanda, courts were set up after the genocide to pursue justice, but what was seen was that the environment was not conducive to women’s experiences, the seemingly “lesser” issue. This is catastrophic, as scholarship has made it clear that there was no safe women in the Rwandan genocide, and many scholars suggest that it is likely that every single woman survivor was raped. one survivor saying that, “to survive, you had to let yourself be raped”. Today, it is estimated that 3-5 thousand children exist in Rwanda as a result of rape. One survivor said:

> "Women are alone. They have lost everything. But there are no programs for them. No-one speaks about the survivors. No one talks about their problems. We are watching what the world will do for the survivors and what it does for the returnees and the refugees. … Concretely, there is nothing for the women and yet they constitute the bulk of the survivors."

The legal comprehension of what sexual violence was as an international and war crime shifted drastically during the 20th century. Rape was declared a war crime in 1919 but never prosecuted as such prior to the Rwandan genocide. Following World War Two, *all* sides of the conflict were accused of mass rape, but no courts accounted for these crimes. Historically, rape was considered commonplace during war , a UN report in 1998 even saying that rape was to be accepted as an "inevitable, albeit unfortunate reality of armed conflict". Essentially, rape prior to Rwanda was seen as a part of the war, not a tool of genocide.

The international criminal tribunal of Rwanda, trial in 1998 would start that establishment of genocidal rape as different than wartime rape, putting down the foundation for understanding rape in genocide in the legal sense.

I want to transition into some of the implications for my research on sexual violence in genocide. Ultimately, I believe that rape and sexual violence are a undeniable tool of genocide, but also an undeniable part of human history.

Oftentimes in historical education, sexual violence is considered and understood to be a "woman's issue". If you can recall a history textbook mentioning rape, it is often under a section discussing experiences unique to women. But to what extent do we only understand violence as a woman's issue?

Catherine McKinnon has an outstanding quote about women and violence in which she says,

> "If women were human, would we be a cash crop shipped from Thailand in containers into New York brothels? Would we be sexual and reproductive slaves?

> …Would our genitals be sliced out to "cleanse" us…to control us, to mark us out and define our cultures?...Would we be raped in genocide to terrorize and eject and destroy our ethnic communities?...if women were human, would our violation be *enjoyed* by our violators? And if we were human, when these things happen, would virtually nothing be done about it?"

McKinnon suggests that by nature of being a woman, humanity is taken. The implications this has for studying sexual violence is heavy with complications and nuance. To what extent does violence become a rooted part of women's history? During my research of the Holocaust, much of the violence I found women experiencing were unique to their biological sex, such as forced abortions, as well as scholarship suggesting that women who were more "feminine" in quality has a higher likelihood of being assaulted. Still, I argue that these attributes are a result of the patriarchal nature of the historical context, and it must be understood that in genocide, there is no concept of gender. During the Holocaust, it was an issue of extermination no matter the age or gender. In Rwanda, the magnitude of violence inflicted did not differ or lessen for men or women, with rape becoming a tool and means of inflicting such destruction. A weaponizing of sex, but not an issue of gender.

Considering the differences as well in a concentration camp and a genocide such as Rwanda where there were outright calls to Hutu populations to assault all women, there is without a doubt complicated nuance to the discussion of sexual violence and history. I argue that rape and sexual violence need to be regarded equally as a part of human history. It is a part of men's history. It is not solely a part of woman's history.

Using Catherine McKinnon's quote as a starting point, I pose this question. To what level is our definition of humanity, and what it means to be human, limited by systems of power and the ideologies that drive people to commit crimes of genocide.

Sexual violence is highlighted in this paper as a tool of genocide, but also complicates the questions of humanity, violence, and power. The motivations behind rape suggest that rapists do not perceive their victims as fully human, a reality furthered in genocide

where perpetrators further this view of their victim as un-human with heightened violence with the end goal of death of a people, not just a person.

With those implications in mind, the question then stands on how we are to engage with topics of sexual violence and rape. As I mentioned at the start of this presentation, this stage of knowledge recovery demands assessment of how human testimonies get under-represented by systems of power, social enviroments, or our own fear of things that make us uncomfortable.

As a generalization, people do not like reading or hearing stories of trauma of this level. As shifts around these testimonies shifted, scholars pursuing highlighting these accounts found that they didn't know how to start integrating these stories into the broader narrative. Joan Ringelheim remarked: "Without a place for a particular memory, without a conceptual framework, a possibly significant piece of information will not be pursued," which is highlighting the lack of space that existed for stories of this nature.

If you take anything away from this presentation, its this: Holocaust studies is something that took decades to develop. Sexual violence took even longer to become a widely accepted part of that study. In Rwanda, somehow people manage to learn the basics, but gloss of the systematized and sadistic rape of women from child, to elderly.

There of course, demands sensitivity when teaching and handling these issues. Atrocities are not easily engaged with, as as I stated at the start, these can be deeply triggering topics. but as victims did not have a choice, we have an obligation to hear their stories, and to hold them carefully, and not squander them.