Trauma, memory, and spirituality in the experiences of women who survived the Gukurahundi atrocities

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Pretty Abraham   Prof Philippe Denis

Student   Supervisor

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ACRONYMS

CCJP   Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

UN   United Nations

UNWomen   United Nations Women

ZANU   Zimbabwe African National Unity Patriotic Front

ZAPU   Zimbabwe African peoples Union

ZANLA   Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

ZIPRA   Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

SGBV   Sexual and gender-based violence

HRW   Human Rights Watch

ABSTRACT

In conflict zones, women and girls are frequently the most vulnerable and suffer the most harm. Their precarious position makes them easy target for heinous human rights violations such as rape and torture. Women survivors of these atrocities often must live with vivid and horrifying memories of rape, war, and death for the rest of their lives. This was the case for women who survived the Gukurahundi massacres in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland and Midlands areas, where the Fifth Brigade army committed grave human rights violations. The violence that happened between 1983 and 1987 left communities wounded and destabilised. Understanding women's traumatic experiences in the context of their surroundings is crucial for understanding how they process, recall, and deal with traumatic experiences. Furthermore, women's experiences of trauma constitute an important starting point for understanding their lived reality. The goal of this study was to document women's accounts of the Gukurahundi massacres as well as to examine how they remember and cope with their traumatic past. This study also looked into how women express spirituality and construct meaning in the aftermath of the atrocities. The findings reveal that sexual violence trauma memories are highly detailed and enduring, even over long periods of time. Survivors recall their rape experiences clearly and in great detail, and their memories have shaped their current worldview. The personal experiences that women relate in this study include not just a history of what happened during Gukurahundi, but also the ongoing suffering and pain that they continue to endure in the present. Despite a possible Christian background, the women make no mention of their Christian faith and instead rely on their African traditional beliefs to construct and find meaning for their trauma. as a result, the chain of events and their repercussions are understood from a cultural standpoint.

Chapter 1

1.1 Background

The Matabeleland and Midlands regions in Zimbabwe have a long history of violence, which has left a legacy of pain and trauma. The experiences and past memories of this region have thus been powerfully shaped by violence. Communities were severely scarred and destabilised by the violence of Gukurahundi, which occurred between 1983 to 1987. Gukurahundi is a Shona word which means the early rain which wash away the chaff before the spring rains. Following Mugabe's ascension to power in 1980, his administration was constantly threatened by dissidents[1]. In 1983, the Government deployed a military unit called the Fifth Brigade, a North Korean trained army to the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces to supposedly deal with dissident activities. The Fifth Brigade was unique from all other Zimbabwean army units as it directly subordinated to the Prime Minister's office and not coordinated into the typical armed force structures. This army unit was responsible for killings, mass detentions, disappearances, torture, rape, and other gross human rights violations committed against civilians in this region. When the violence ended in 1987, at least 20 000 Ndebele people had been murdered. ZANU PF mostly recruited from the Shona majority, whilst ZAPU had a large support base among the minority Ndebele. Some scholars (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012 and Ngwenya 2014) believe that Gukurahundi was a political strategy by Mugabe to create a one-party state. He sought to weaken and destroy the main opposition party ZAPU, led by his opponent Joshua Nkomo and its support base. The Matabeleland and Midlands

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[1] Dissidents were disgruntled ex ZIPRA the military wing of ZAPU. It also comprised of a group of dissidents called Super ZAPU which was trained and funded by South Africa

regions were Nkomo's strong support bases. The violence ended in 1987 when the Unity Accord was signed, leading to the proclamation of 22 December as the Unity Day in Zimbabwe.

This violence to date remains a dark chapter in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions. 38 years after The Gukurahundi massacres, this issue is far from being closed. According to Rwafa (2012: 323), "Zimbabwe is confronted with painful past events due to the past's unresolved legacies". Rwafa perceives the country as a "wounded nation where surviving victims of Gukurahundi are still simmering with anger, resentment, and frustration". The Gukurahundi violence left people with both emotional and physical scars. As one of them said, "This wound is huge, and deep…the liberation war was painful, but it had a purpose… The war that followed was much worse. It was fearful, unforgettable, and unacknowledged" (CCJP 2007: 96). One would assume that after such a traumatic event the nation would have undertaken a healing process to deal with devastating effects of the violence. Unfortunately, the Government has done nothing tangible in terms of publicly acknowledging the atrocities. For many years, the Government refused to acknowledge the Gukurahundi atrocities and criminalised any talk of it. President Mugabe dismissed it as a moment of madness, downplaying its effects on the victims. Gukurahundi was more than a "moment of madness" as President Mugabe would have us believe. Gukurahundi remains a period of conflict that has been neglected for a long time causing public outcry every time it is brought up. The Mnangagwa administration opened space in 2018 for people to engage on the issue. However, his position has been questioned by many civic society activists as insincere, and a means to gain support in the Matabeleland region. In a meeting with Mnangagwa in Bulawayo, civic society organizations operating under the Matabeleland Collective banner[2] told President

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[2] The Matabeleland collective is a network of Civil Society Organizations and Churches based in Bulawayo, Matabeleland region

Emmerson Mnangagwa that people in the region did not believe he was sincere in addressing the Gukurahundi issue (Sithole 2020)[3]. This sentiment is also shared by Prof Welshman Ncube who believes that Emmerson Mnangagwa lacks sincerity to resolve the controversial Gukurahundi issue (Matendere 2020)[4].

Various Gukurahundi scholars (Eppel 2006, Ndlovu 2009, Motsi 2010, Ngwenya 2014 et al.) have stated that Gukurahundi victims are psychologically and spiritually wounded. This is because, trauma alters people's view of the environment by "creating a screen for experiences and perceptions associated with potential spiritual events" (Farley 2007: 3). To cope with the aftermath of Gukurahundi, people have adopted a variety of methods, including drunkenness, traditional rites, and a fervent belief in God (Ndlovu 2009: 237).

In rural Matabeleland, spirituality and community are at the heart of life, and Eppel (2006) argues that Gukurahundi is a spiritual issue that tore into the core fabric of the affected communities. According to Shari Eppel[5] many people in Matabeleland believe the region is haunted by the "angry dead," who were buried in the wrong place and did not have the proper rituals performed at the time of their murder and burial. "People say these angry dead are the ones who make bad things happen in the family and the community, to keep reminding them: I am in the wrong place,

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[3]Sithole, P. 2020. Mnangagwa not sincere: Gukurahundi victims, Newsday newspaper 15 February. https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/02/mnangagwa-not-sincere-gukurahundi-victims/

[4] In an exclusive interview with Southern Eye, Prof Welshman Ncube, a constitutional lawyer, and politician, said Mnangagwa had so far not shown seriousness in resolving the issue despite his public stunts on the issue. Ncube was part of the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, which documented the Gukurahundi atrocities. https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-191550.html

[5] Healing the dead (A documentary on Gukurahundi Genocide Exhumations). https://youtu.be/5PutviwpOoo

I need to come home". This spiritual aspect is also highlighted by Ndlovu (2009) where survivors emphasized that they would like Gukurahundi to be addressed culturally as "*iGukurahundi idinga isiko*". *Isiko* refers to culture or tradition, denoting that victims favour cultural approaches to addressing the problem. With respect to Gukurahundi, Werbner (1991:187) notes that there was a rise of sangomas (spiritual healers) to deal with the spiritual legacies of the violent episode. As Eppel puts it, in order to "heal the living there is need to heal the dead".

Zimbabwe is a Christian country, and most rural people follow African traditional religions, Christianity, or a combination of the two. As the Gukurahundi occurred among religious mission schools and hospitals, the Church is an intrinsic aspect of Gukurahundi memory. Second, Gukurahundi victims belong to various religious organisations and faiths, which is likely to influence how they respond to their traumatic past. According to a study by Ndlovu (2009) , formal and informal religious worldviews and dispensations were cited by almost everyone as the cause for their continued survival in the aftermath of Gukurahundi (2009: 202). One female survivor in Ndlovu's study says, "I gave myself over to faith and told myself that God allowed whatever happened to happen. It is in the past … and I should look to the future. That is how I understand the occurrence, and that is how I continue to live amidst the trauma". The participant claims that her faith in Christ has helped her heal from her trauma, albeit it is still a work in progress (Ndlovvu 2009: 217).

Culture and spiritual dimensions are connected in Zimbabwe, as they are in many other Southern African countries, and this applies to practitioners of both traditional and Christian faiths. As a result, any meaningful and effective recovery programme will need to address these factors in some way. The mixture of Christian and Ndebele traditional religion in dealing with the dead and

disappeared in the wake of Gukurahundi is a key aspect of the social and cultural dynamic. Religion and spirituality are commonly mentioned in discussions about post-traumatic healing and how people interpret crises, the coping mechanisms they use, and the short and long-term trauma impacts.

According to Heal Zimbabwe[6] (2015), the salient point is that the victims of the Gukurahundi era are in dire need of trauma healing, reparations, and counseling. The "beginning of healing would enhance the possibility of reconciliation, while the beginning of reconciliation would further the possibility of healing" (Staub et al. 2005: 302). Drawing from South Africa and to a certain extent Rwanda, we learn the importance of reconciliation after conflict. The process did not only reveal human rights abuses committed but also served as a healing tool to relate stories and experiences, to address acts of remorse, forgiveness, and reparation. The primary goal of reconciliation is to rebuild and unify a scarred nation by restoring broken relationships, ensuring healing and sustainable peace. This process of reconciliation includes acknowledgment of guilt and reparation as well as providing a platform for survivors to share their experiences. According to Hamber, the traumatic experience is not the only issue that must be addressed. When deciding on a healing plan, it is vital to consider how the individual or his or her community understands the experience. This is due to the fact that different violent political acts can have diverse cultural meanings and consequences (Hamber 2003: 78). That is to say, the cultural context, beliefs, and practises influence how a community or individual reacts to or is influenced by a specific act of violence. Reconciliation is a much more significant step, with deep spiritual roots. However, this has not yet happened in the communities that were affected by the Gukurahundi violence.

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[6] Heal Zimbabwe Trust (HZT) is a Zimbabwean NGO established in 2009 whose mandate is to prevent and transform conflicts through social justice and human rights protection.

As the primary victims, women were left with little community support, profound physical, and psychological trauma. The "traumas women experience exceed the scars written on their bodies and their minds by the violence that they witnessed, and the violence afflicted on them" (Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014: 88). According, to *The Standard Newspaper (*Maphosa 2019), during an all-female meeting conducted by the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) in Entumbane high-density suburb in Bulawayo, some women reportedly wept while narrating their horrendous Gukurahundi experiences to the NPRC. This emotional response perhaps indicates the immense suffering these communities continue to suffer decades after the Gukurahundi violence ended. As Cole (2004: 87) notes, "not only is pain social, but it is also historically constituted and expressed so that painful symptoms can, in some cases, be read as a kind of archive of historical memories."

Vambe (2014: 295) states that the legacy of Gukurahundi still lives on as people have not forgotten the pain of their trauma and the atrocities of the past are still very raw to them. Musanhu, an NPRC commissioner, said "listening to survivors' testimonies was heart-rending. The stories that women told were heart-rending and very emotional; no one deserves to go through what some women went through during the Gukurahundi era"[7]. Musanhu emphasized the need to create gender sensitive structures for the women to tell their stories and hear women's experiences of Gukurahundi.

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[7] Quoted in The Standard Newspaper
https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2019/08/04/gukurahundi-victims-narrate-harrowing-tales/

Women's multiple conflict experiences tend to be ignored or not highlighted in detail, especially in the post conflict situation. "African women typically have to negotiate their claims to their own, authentic voice and history, within and between two systems of pernicious and homogenizing generalization which both render them invisible, voiceless and outside of history" (Du Toit 2008: 419). While I am conscious of various studies done on Gukurahundi with references to women made, I am not aware of any study that has zeroed in on women's experiences; hence there is room for a study on women during and after Gukurahundi.

To expose the truth about the Gukurahundi massacres, the Legal Resources Foundation and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) produced a report entitled "Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace" in 1997. The CCJP report is the only authoritative and comprehensive report that extensively documented the Gukurahundi atrocities. The report compiled statements from victims and other key informants during the Gukurahundi era. The report was an endevour by civil society to expose the events in the early 1980s. In a previous study, a gender analysis of the report that I conducted revealed some shortcomings and gaps in the academic literature on Gukurahundi. The research findings revealed the widespread, systematic use of rape against women and the brutality of the violence perpetrated during that time. Though the report was comprehensive, exposing the brutality of violence, the principle of gender equality was naively spelled out as women are reported as extensions of men. Women's experiences are included in the report but not in detail as they are included based on merely being victims. Furthermore, there is no gender-disaggregated data in the CCJP report, which examines how the violence-affected men and women differently. Moreover, one cannot overlook the fact that the CCJP report was compiled at a time when gender issues were not common in Zimbabwe. Issues

of gender in the country at the time were generally a new phenomenon, and the treatment of gender issues was not a priority. The Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (2004: 1), described the country as a "highly unequal society" in terms of gender equality.

It is against this background that this research seeks to emphasize the enduring legacy of the Gukurahundi violence among women survivors, how it affects the memories of a certain number of women. "Women's stories reveal gaps and contradictions in available information. By talking about themselves, they insert themselves into the discourse" (Brown 2013:7).

Various non-governmental and civic society organizations like Habakkuk Trust and The Center for Innovation and Technology have, over the years, sought to break the silence on Gukurahundi by documenting victims' testimonies. In the African context, the narratives of surviving victims on how they move on with their lives in the wake of such tragedies are invaluable. I approach the Gukurahundi violence from a gender perspective by employing a feminist lens to document and understand women's experiences. Men have done much of the academic research on Gukurahundi. This study's significance is that it exclusively brings to the forefront the experiences of women during and after Gukurahundi by inserting women's voices into the academic. I attempt to bring the women from the margins to the center and to hear their subjugated stories by developing a body of knowledge and scholarship of women's lived experiences to understand what and how they remember as well as how they express spirituality in their narratives. Notably, feminist therapy values the trauma survivors' cultural context as culture conditions how a person responds and processes trauma. It also understands that spirituality can either be a stumbling block or a resilience factor in trauma recovery. "Feminist standpoint epistemology challenges us to examine society through women's eyes critically. What do women's experiences teach us about how society

functions as a whole? Do women's experiences and the knowledge gleaned from these experiences offer us unique perspectives and insights into the world around us?" (Brooks 2011: 57). Baker (1998: 1-2) raises valuable questions about historical narratives: How do we hear and write women's voices, and what happens when we try? In examining women's experiences , it is imperative to ask guiding questions as raised by Brooks and Baker. Overall, studies of women's circumstances require a gender perspective to guide the examination of gender power relations that may be harmful to women's health. This research will, therefore, be guided by these questions.

1.2 Motivation for research

The motivation for this research was driven by personal experiences of working with various non-governmental organizations in the Matabeleland region. On the job, experience involved frequent field visits and interaction with communities affected by Gukurahundi. It revealed that the issue of Gukurahundi is still raw at an intense level decades after the violence ended. A case in point is a lady who shared her story during a trauma healing workshop in 2009. She narrated how memories of witnessing her husband's painful death continue to haunt her. She wailed out of control as she narrated her story and how particular objects, and smells give her flashbacks of the horror she experienced. This kind of response seems to be the norm in Matabeleland as many people have not been afforded the opportunity to deal with painful memories and past traumas. In relation to this study, I am both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' of Malawian descent. However, by virtue of being born and raised in Matabeleland, I carry the wounds of the society that I was raised in and empathise with the victims of Gukurahundi.

1.3 Key research question

The key research question is how women Gukurahundi survivors, supported by the Habakkuk Trust and The Center for Innovation and Technology (CITE), recall, share and deal with their experiences of trauma.

1.4 Research sub question

The main research question can be divided in the following sub questions: The first sub question is what are the experiences of women survivors of Gukurahundi supported by the Habakkuk Trust and CITE; The second sub-question focuses on how women survivors of Gukurahundi remember and express their traumatic experiences. The last sub-question seeks to uncover how the women articulate spirituality and how it helps them cope with their traumatic past. These questions will thus guide the research.

1.5 Objectives

The objective of this study is to document the experiences of the women survivors supported by the Habakkuk Trust and CITE; to analyze the women's narratives; to understand how they deal with their traumatic experiences and to explore how spirituality is articulated by the women survivors of Gukurahundi.

1.6 Methodology

Given the restrictions that the UKZN Research Office imposed on researchers to protect research participants from Covid and the impossibility to travel, the research, which was originally intended to rely on fieldwork, is largely based on Internet sources, particularly the first three chapters. As

mentioned in the Declaration on Plagiarism on p.2 and in consultation with the supervisor, I made a conscious effort to quote sources as diligently and meticulously as possible. This study is a desktop research that will utilize Internet sources and two documentary footages on Gukurahundi as relevant data sources.

According to Karlin & Johnson (2011: 1), "new media has not only opened up new avenues for communicating with audiences, but they have also created new opportunities for data collection and analysis". Documentaries provide social change through storytelling and can be an invaluable source of data. They serve as a powerful medium for research knowledge mobilization. Since the Gukurahundi, "there has been a culture of denialism among ZANU PF officials" (Rwafa 2012: 319). Various non-governmental and civic society organizations have taken the lead in seeking the truth, acknowledging that the events occurred and assisting victims in various capacities. These organizations have produced various documentaries on Gukurahundi to open up debate on the issue and the injustices perpetrated.

In this study, I rely on two documentaries conducted by two organizations, namely Habakkuk Trust and The Center for Innovation and Technology (CITE). These two documentaries were chosen because they both focus on women's experiences during and after Gukurahundi. Second, as previously stated, due to Covid limits, I was unable to undertake fieldwork; as a result, I chose these two documentaries because they were recent recordings produced in 2020. The two documentaries were accessed via YouTube, which is a public domain on the internet. The documentaries share victims' experiences from Lupane, Tsholotsho, and Matobo in the Matabeleland region during and after Gukurahundi. The survivor's perceptions represented in the

documentaries will offer a window through which it is possible to understand the phenomenon under study. The documentary by Habakkuk Trust entitled 'Untold stories of women' captures women's stories of rape and torture. This documentary has five women sharing their testimonies during and after Gukurahundi. Habakkuk Trust is a Christian organisation based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe that was created in 2000 by a group of Church leaders and concerned individuals. The organisation's goal is advocacy, research, and information dissemination, as well as capacity building in the Matabeleland region. The documentary's focus, according to the executive director of Habakkuk trust, Dumisani Ngwenya[8] was to reveal effects of Gukurahundi on women and have a body of documented knowledge to guide future truth recovery efforts.

The second documentary by Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE), entitled 'I want my virginity back' which involves 17 women captures women's rape testimonies. The documentary focuses on the victims' plea for acknowledgement, healing, and rehabilitation. The 50-minute documentary was shot in a variety of places throughout Matabeleland, particularly in communities severely devastated by Gukurahundi, such as Matopo, Kezi, Lupane, Nkayi, and Tsholotsho. CITE is a non-governmental organisation established in 2015 with the mission to create space for creativity and promote "artivism" which is the creative fusion of art and activism for social change[9]

According to CITE director Zenzele Ndebele, the documentary's goal was to create public awareness about the Gukurahundi crisis. The documentary was the finale of CITE's first virtual Asakhe Film Festival, which took place from October 9 to October 30, 2020. The Film Festival aimed at highlighting the importance of transitional justice using film and testimonies from the

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[8] https://www.pressreader.com/zimbabwe/newsday-zimbabwe/20200813/281788516418049
[9] https://cite.org.zw/

survivors. In an interview with Newsday (2020), Ndebele explains that the title 'I want my virginity back' was decided after a thorough assessment of the stories of the participants. Some women indicated that they want their virginity restored, which is how the title came about.[10].

In both documentaries some of the women's faces are blurred to conceal their identity. Both documentaries were released in 2020, hence they are able to expose the women's past experiences and their enduring legacy of the trauma. The documentaries use voice-overs, flashbacks, music, and images to drive its narrative ahead.

According to memory scholars such as Wood & Hammons (2012: 80), "the nature of memory is subjective", and credibility is achieved through the use of multiple stories together with other kinds of research to balance conflicting memories and interpretation. Therefore, secondary data will also be consulted to validate information, fill in the gaps in the information given, and analyze data. I will rely on methodological triangulation, which involves using multiple data sources and approach to researching a question. According to Heale & Forbes (2013: 1), the objective of triangulation is to increase credibility and validity in the findings through "the confirmation of a proposition using two or more independent measures" as a means to add richness and depth to a research inquiry. Data collection will involve extensive reading and analyzing a vast collection of existing documents on the secondary sources, published books, and academic articles will be consulted. The most authoritative text on the Gukurahundi atrocities, "Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands in 1980 to 1988", will be consulted. Various academic scholars refer to this report for historical background

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[10] https://www.newsday.co.zw/2020/11/cite-launches-i-want-my-virginity-back/

and testimonies. This provides evidence of archival material, interviews, media reports, legal records of clients, human rights reports, case files, academic research, medical records, photos, and evidence of exhumed bodies. The photographs show us the brutality of the atrocities committed during that time and enrich the readers' understanding. Since this study will entail an in-depth study of the aforementioned sources, it will be qualitative research.

1.7 Theoretical framework
Feminist standpoint theory "From margins to center"

1.7 a) Introduction

The feminist ideology is founded on the intrinsic belief that women suffer injustice because of their sex; hence their varied contexts must be the locus of feminist analyses. It is a feminist worldview that provides for a new way of understanding the problem by drawing on the experiences and insights of women as a marginalised and oppressed minority. Feminist research generates knowledge by drawing on women's experience of living in a highly inequal society where women are subordinate to men. Moreover, feminist research "generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences and uses these experiences as significant indicators of the 'realities' against which hypotheses explain women's lives in a manner that may be tested and yield existential and phenomenological significance" (Chege 2010: 106). The outcome is a richer, diverse understanding of the unique views of different women leading to empowerment and improved social policies.

As previously mentioned, this study seeks to bring women survivors' experiences of Gukurahundi to the forefront and in academic discourse. Such research requires a framework that embodies

women's experience by applying a feminist lens to view the women's stories and analyze them. According to Harding (1987: 7), women should be allowed to share their experiences, in their own terms and their voices in the best way they know-how as their reality is embedded in their experiences. In turn, feminist scholars should understand women's lived realities as portrayed by their stories paying particular attention to what is said and what is not said. Their silences are not underestimated (what they say by their silences) as they form part of the analysis. "Feminist theories are the most significant theories used for analyzing women and men's status in society while trying to bring a change to women's subordination caused and reinforced by gender inequalities in patriarchal societies" (Diop 2017: 4). Therefore, this research was conducted with this in mind in the broad context of the Feminist Standpoint Theory.

"It its initial formulation, feminist standpoint theory followed classical Marxism in grounding ideology critique in a theory of objective truth and in drawing political prescriptions from a theory of the objective interests of women" (Hawkesworth 1999: 135). A new wave of the feminist movement emerged in the late 1960s due to feminist consciousness both inside and outside academia. Women's increasing awareness arose from their recognition of disparities in the exclusion of their voices and experiences in a variety of settings. In academia, their own life experiences contradicted with their research studies and theoretical frameworks they were learning. The fact that women's voices and experiences were insufficiently researched highlighted the prevailing social inequalities. This saw the emergence of the Feminist Standpoint Theory and debates around it. This theoretical perspective argues that knowledge stems from a social position and suggests that research has ignored and marginalized women's unique experiences. By making women's experiences the point of entry for research and scholarship, feminist standpoint scholars

begin to fill in the gaps and exposing the rich array of new knowledge within women's experiences.

1.7 b) What is a standpoint?

"A standpoint emerges from, but is not reducible to, the individual actors' specific experiences sharing a social position" (Steckle 2018: 39). Standpoints explain in-depth the given conditions of the lives of people in marginalized or subordinate social groups and are not to be understood as merely different views of the same object or entity. To achieve in-depth descriptions of people's social position, "standpoints thereby seek to create new conceptual and discursive tools, thus creating new forms of expression and knowledge that allow for articulating those conditions in ways that are not distorted by the ruling androcentric conceptual system" (Steckle 2018: 38-39). A standpoint is not simply a perspective occupied simply by the fact of being a woman. It is a perspective that values and emanates from one's socio-historical position as a starting point. "Standpoints, therefore, theorize from and derive their epistemic privilege from the gap in the everyday lives and experiences of subordinate groups. So too does the focus on gender itself: gender appears, emerges, as a phenomenon, we can all see only from the perspective of women's lives." (Harding 1991: 68).

Our social reality experiences are highly likely to be conditioned, shaped by the dominant ways of thinking and life forms regardless of whether we are located in a priviledged or subordinate positions. Standpoints enable one to introspect and see their own beliefs and practices with new eyes. Privileged groups have the opportunity to "critically evaluate the ignorance routinely generated by positions of social privilege by seeing things that might otherwise have been

invisible" (Steckle 2018:41). It is through this introspect that those in positions of social privilege can learn a great deal about themselves by allowing their thought to be informed by standpoints' accounts. This is the position that I take, to critically analyse the voices and experiences of women with an open mind so as to see what might otherwise have been invisible. We see from below by educating ourselves about women's struggles, looking at our ignorance, and discovering the many assumptions that have guided us. As an African female scholar, I approach this research from a Zimbabwean woman's standpoint. Baker (1998: 1-2) raises valuable questions about historical narratives: How do we hear and write women's voices, and what happens when we try? Therefore, I choose to examine women's narratives with new eyes and hear their stories with empathy. Also, as a black African, I understand that African spirituality touches on, and informs every facet of our lives as Zimbabweans, hence I closely examine the spiritual constructions of Gukurahundi as articulated by women survivors.

1.7 c) Feminist Standpoint theory as an analytical tool

Imre Lakatos (1970:132) "defined an analytical tool as a heuristic device that illuminates an area of inquiry, framing a set of questions for investigation, identifying puzzles or problems in need of exploration or clarification, and providing concepts and hypotheses to guide research". The feminist standpoint theory works towards valuing objectivity as a goal of inquiry, while at the same time accommodating, analysing, and understanding the position of women in relation to their social location, power, and unique experiences. It stands on the notion that marginalized individuals' perspectives can help create a more objective account of the world. Feminist standpoint theorists have introduced conceptions of "situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1991), "subjugated knowledges" (Collins, 1990), and "strong objectivity" (Harding, 1991) in a bid to

account for the multiplicity and diversity of women's perspectives and experiences without succumbing to relativism. All the concepts mentioned above value objectivity and are all premised on the thought that women's experiences are multi-faceted based on their position, locality, and context. Feminist standpoint theorists build on each other's work, hence the common goal of advancing epistemologies of women's experiences and to redress women's historical misrepresentation and exclusion from hegemonic knowledge canons. Postmodern feminists advise feminists to be wary not to totalise and exclude when speaking for and about women. To rectify these exclusion and misrepresentation problems, "a more diverse range of human experiences first needs to be consulted and integrated into a scientific practice for a more situated and contextual form of knowledge, rather than a universal truth" (Steckle 2018: 2).

A feminist standpoint theory thereby makes women's experiences the starting point whereby knowledge is constructed from women's concrete life experiences. "By making women's concrete life experiences the primary source of our investigations can we then construct knowledge that accurately reflects and represents women" (Brooks 2011:56). As Collins (1990: 209) puts it, women's concrete experiences should always guide the research process and provide the ultimate "criterion for credibility".

In conducting feminist research and beginning the analysis process, one has to provide a baseline of inquiry by questioning the motives and interests that are served by the construction and development of the knowledge. Such research then infuses a gender approach to ensure that women are consulted, and their voices heard in the process. One can therefore think and theorise about how the social world works from the perspectives of those systematically assigned socially

subordinate locations. Therefore, the feminist standpoint theory calls for objectivity to better understand and respond to marginalized and neglected social groups interests, questions, and concerns. As an analytical tool, feminist standpoint theory proposes a way of gathering data for analysis that surmises multiplicity and complexity. Researchers must consider competing accounts of the same phenomenon where multiple views have been collected allowing for plurality and diversity creating a clearer picture of women's lived experiences (Hawkesworth 1999: 150).

The feminist theory helps to illuminate the forms in which women's lives and personal narratives are constructed. It provides a lens through which to view life stories refracted from different angles, highlighting how women's experiences are multi-faceted. "Standpoint theory can be fruitfully adopted as an analytical tool that illuminates an area of inquiry, framing a set of questions for investigation, identifying puzzles or problems in need of exploration or clarification, and providing concepts and hypotheses to guide research" (Hawkesworth 1999: 132). Oksala (2016: 392) suggests, "feminist theory must retrieve experience" to allow for new depictions of reality. The argument raised by Oksala is that experience cannot be merely reduced to theories of social construction and that "the evidence of experience crucially makes collective political action possible by allowing us to not only identify with other people but to dis-identify from the singularity of our position by connecting our experiences to others".

The feminist standpoint theory argues that all knowledge is socially situated. There is "neither universal womanhood or femininity", as these are constructed based on women's varied social contexts, experiences, desires, and interests, which are subject to change. Therefore, it explores interconnections between diversity issues and to empower women socially, economically, and

politically (DeVault & Gross 2012; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Brown emphasizes that "women's experience is thoroughly constructed, historically, and culturally varied, and interpreted without end" (Brown 1995: 41). This account argues that the feminist standpoint theory, as a critical approach, "needs not to imply representationalism or relativism" as women are not one group of people with the same backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Their oppression varies by culture, religion, color, economic level, and educational attainment. Furthermore, African women have a different starting point as gender construction in Africa intersects with the socio-cultural and historical backgrounds. African women are victims of racism, neo-colonialism, culture, religion, socio-economic mechanisms of operation, and dictatorial or corrupt systems, in addition to sexism and patriarchal social systems. In addition, "they have unique experiences in addition to the shared sources of oppression" (Bayu 2019: 55).

Proponents of the feminist standpoint theory argue "that we do not live in a unified, common world", hence seeks to deconstruct the concept of the universal woman and avoid ethnocentric bias or essentialism. In exploring the constructions of gender inequality, we recognize that each woman's life story differs (Goel 2017: 4). The notion of totalising grand narratives or a theory of everything is ruled out under this approach. It rejects portraying women as a cohesive, monolithic entity against patriarchal social forces and androcentric ways of thinking, as problematic as their challenges and backgrounds are. Women come from every ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and culture. As a result, their experiences, , difficulties, and opinions differ from one another. Concerns over what could constitute feminist viewpoint "epistemological foundations arose as a result of the rejection of the universal woman as a fundamental or essential notion" (Steckle 2018:43). Harding discredits the idea that women's experiences, activities, struggles, or perspectives are all

the same (Harding 1991: 174). Distinct cultural groupings of women have different kinds of social experiences or viewpoints, or struggles.

All knowledge is bound by locality and is contextual considering the influence of social context. The idea that all knowledge is enabled or limited by social context including "knowledge generated by standpoints", is "situated knowledge" a term initially coined by feminist philosopher Donna Haraway (1988). As a result, every social position both allows and restricts what researchers can learn about the subject of their inquiry. In this regard Harding (1991: 211) claims "that one can argue for the scientific and epistemological advantage of starting from the lives of those who have been devalued, neglected, excluded from the center of the social order; who provide perspectives from the other side of racial struggles; which enable a different perspective, one from everyday life; which in some cases provide outsider within perspectives." Harding and other feminists contend that in order to replace the traditional topics of knowledge, new models of knowledge are required. As a result, feminist viewpoint theory aligns with "current approaches to epistemologies of ignorance". They articulate and give voice to the things that are ignored by the "dominant knowledge systems" (Steckle 2018: 9.)

The feminist viewpoint theory is dedicated to uplifting women, but it also requires critical analysis of society, culture, and ideology. It is a theory of knowledge formation as well as a way of conducting research and a call to political action (Brooks 2011: 54). The feminist perspective pushes us to view and comprehend the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women, and to use oppressed women's knowledge to spearhead social change. Marginalized groups are placed in positions that allow them to ask new questions and propose new answers to

problems that have been neglected, suppressed, or explained away in the past. Women as a marginalized group are seeking to establish more favorable conditions for gender equality and justice. Feminist standpoint scholars encourage us to study society through the lens of use women's experiences. A feminist perspective is a mode of seeing the world, a point of view on social reality, that is based on and formed directly from the experiences of women. The next step is to put what we have learned from women's experiences into practice.

1.7 d) African feminism as a branch of standpoint theory

Under the umbrella of postcolonial feminism, African feminism can also be considered as a branching feminist standpoint ideology as it considers context and positionality of women. African feminists (Oyewumi 2003, Coetzee 2017, Bergman 2016, Diop 2017, Bayu 2019 et al.) contend that African women's bodies are inextricably linked to their cultural surroundings. They claim that mainstream Western feminism failed to recognise the diverse races, socioeconomic places, cultural aspects, conditions, and multitudes of intersectionality that African women experience. Western feminism according to Bergman (2016: 8) wields the kind of hegemony that allows them to define other people's identities. African feminism therefore contends that western feminism is unsuited for African women since it views them as oppressed, uneducated, and oppressed. In a nutshell, western feminism does not regard third-world women as free, unconstrained by their own norms. Coetzee (2017: 5) emphasises that "the African woman must be aware that she is not only a woman but also an African and a citizen of the Third World ".

The dominant kind of feminism in the West should therefore not be seen as universal. Bergman (2016:11) claims that Western feminism is too privileged and bourgeois to understand African

feminist issues and that the solutions to our problems should not come from the West. African feminism was therefore established to create a form of feminism that acknowledges and considers the conditions and needs of African women. The phrase African feminism refers to a holistic, thorough, and culturally appropriate theory that tackles issues affecting black African women and has come to reflect "the collective nature of African scholars' distinctive portrayal of their issues within their own contexts" (Diop 2017: 6). African feminists attempt to adapt its meaning and application to meet unique African contexts, Sub-Saharan African cultural and traditional identity, and African tradition preservation.

It is a framework based on tangible experience and struggle (rather than just theory) reflecting African women's distinctive portrayal of their struggles within their respective circumstances whilst addressing cultural concerns and inter-ethnic acculturation, socioeconomic exploitation, and oppression. The African feminism paradigm is based on African women's experiences, hardships, worries, and consciousness throughout the historical period, both colonial and traditional. African feminist perspective recognises "the importance of social and cultural circumstances and the social formation of meanings in terms of individual development and how these meanings affect women's lives" (Diop 2017:12). As a result, it is pertinent in this context of examining Gukurahundi women survivors. This framework will enable me to untangle and peel back the layers of rape's sociocultural-political-religious construction of Gukurahundi atrocities

Second, African feminism acknowledges and emphasises the primary relevance of motherhood and childrearing which forms the identity of the African woman. In Africa, the position of the mother is a position of authority itself. Motherhood is empowering and not disempowering as seen in western feminism (Bergman 2016: 11).

Lastly, it is a framework that prioritises context, positionality and intersectionality (Coetzee 2017: 7). Intersectionality refers to specific types of oppression that intersect, such as race and gender. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to a single type of oppression and that oppressions interact to produce injustice. The idea of intersectionality is that "all politics are identity politics" (Cho et al 2013: 800). Cho et al. demonstrate intersectionality as a legal analytical tool in a variety of cases including injuries to women in minority population. Intersectionality, according to Cho et al., is a dynamic approach of analysing multiple axes of power and inequality. In specific settings such as violence against women, structural intersectionality defines the "multilayered and routinized forms of control" (Cho et al. 2013: 797). In order to comprehend and intervene against the social reproduction of power, intersectionality must be interpreted through its substantive articulation. Positionality on the other hand refers to how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society. Misawa (2010: 26) emphasises the fluid and relational qualities of social identity formation by noting that "all parts of our identities are shaped by socially constructed positions and memberships to which we belong" and which are embedded in our society. The overlapping patterns of subordination demonstrate how specific groups of women were made particularly vulnerable to abuse, as well as to ineffective solutions that failed to consider the structural features of the setting. The rape of women survivors of Gukurahundi, for example, is an example of how ostensibly specific harms to women are also harms to the larger community. The rape of Ndebele women as a minority group was a clear case of power and dominance which needs to be examined. By employing a grounded praxis approach, positionality and intersectional prisms not only dig and reveal multidimensional structures of power and dominance, but they also confront the contexts that shape and impact women.

1.7 e) African woman's theology

Watson (2003) remarks that the reader, for the feminist theologian, can no longer be gender-neutral. Therefore, a theological lens will also be employed to analyse how women in this research interpret and deal with their trauma. In exploring an African woman's theology, I look towards the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was formed in 1989 in Ghana by African women theologians to tackle issue affecting African women . The Circle for Concerned African Theologians African women theologians have been mobilising to make known that women's issues have been marginalised. African women's theology adds another dimension to feminist theory, the importance of culture. For African women, it is not only gender, race, and class that influence how they are treated, but also cultural beliefs. Concerns of women's oppression are linked to racism, economic injustice, and religious and cultural practices that can be harmful to African women, according to Phiri and Nadar (2011:83). Maluleke and Nadar describe the relationship between religion, culture, and gender socialisation as "the unholy trinity" in underwriting a culture of violence against women (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14). Women have different experiences and contexts, hence their experiences of faith and God come from different contexts, therefore one needs to be sensitivity about this fact (Adonis 2017:66). Oduyoye (2001:16) explains that African women's theological reflections intertwine theology, ethics and spirituality. We must affirm the plurality in the cultural and theological interpretations of our experiences as people living in the borderlines of religious, cultural, racial and social plurality. As a women's theology, the point of departure of African women's theology is women's experiences. After that, there is a reflection on the experiences identified in the stories. The reflection is from the perspective of the Christian faith.

Kanyoro (2001:36) reminds us that in the African indigenous thought system, culture and religion are not distinct from each other. In Africa, Kanyoro teaches that all areas of life are part of culture and religion. There is, therefore, no part of a person's life in Africa where culture and religion do not play a role. It is, therefore, a great threat not to be critical of culture. Cultural practices are at the core of African culture and, therefore, part of our identity as being African. Kanyoro (2001:163) emphasises that the task for women theologians from Africa is to find ways to incorporate discussions on culture in conversations of faith and spirituality so that women find it safe to speak about issues that harm their well-being and prevent them from flourishing. "Our stories are a basis for theology", in speaking about faith, women find their own ways to speak about God and create symbols, concepts, and models relevant to their context to express their understanding of their religion (Kanyoro 2002:23).

However, culture is a double-edged sword. In some instances, culture is like the creed of the community identity. In other instances, culture is the main justification for difference, oppression and injustice, especially women. At times women's actions are deeply rooted in patriarchal socialisation. When women reflect on women of Africa as the custodians of culture, Kanyoro encourages empathy and understanding. The influence of culture is what women in Africa add to the feminist discourse.

1.8 Data Analysis

This study will utilize a gender approach in analyzing the data; based on the idea that gender is an essential variable to understanding the phenomenon under study. As previously mentioned, a feminist theory will be adopted as a lens to analyze the data. What is important to acknowledge is that a feminist lens allows us to look at text closely to analyze how women are portrayed. Women's

voices become a "central tool in feminist methodology", as language is also used to analyse the situation (Chege 2012: 9). Chege goes on to quote Humm (1995), who states that life histories comprise the analysis of women's experiences based on oral narratives, resulting in feminist knowledge. Life narratives become potentially potent in dealing with women's oppression in many situations when they reject universalism and focus on individual stories. When assessing data from feminist gender study, the researcher should consider not just what is the case, but also why it is the case.

Researchers must create strategies for listening around and beyond words to "recover" certain aspects of women's lives. Therefore, a narrative analysis will also be employed to analyse the women's stories in the documentary footage. "Narrative analysis is a genre whereby researchers interpret stories told within the research context and shared in everyday life. Narrative inquiry is conceived of as both a philosophical/ theoretical approach that orients the researcher to storied lives, and as a methodological strategy that focuses on using stories as data" (O'Toole 2013: 177). By focusing on different factors, scholars who undertake this form of analysis come up with a variety of interpretations and findings that are all equally substantial and important. These aspects include, but are not limited to, the structure of the story, the functions it fulfills, the story's content, and how it is narrated (Parcell & Baker 2018: 1069). Stories are dense with hidden information. It is necessary to go deeper into the meaning outside of the telling moment in order to acquire a greater comprehension. The in-depth examination of the participants' stories reveals both what is going on and the participants' interpretations of why it is happening (Feldman et al. 2004:150). Taken together, both the feminist methodology and narrative analysis, enable approaches that

enable direct hearing and listening to women's life stories in considerable detail. This would enable the researcher to construct a more complete picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

a) Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is used in research "where narratives are the object of study" and where narratives are the tools to explore human memory or experience. When narrators tell a story, they give "narrative form" to experience (Bamberg 2010: 3). The narrative form can be defined as a series of events, experiences, or acts with a plot that connects the different elements into a coherent whole? By examining form, structure, and content, narrative analysts try to figure out why the story was delivered the way it was and what the storyteller was trying to say. What does he or she include and what does he or she leave out? (Feldman et al. 2004: 148). This is the approach that I use in this study to analyse women's stories of Gukurahundi.

Individuals frequently make sense of the world and their role in it through the use of narratives. People's awareness of social and political relationships is distilled and reflected through storytelling. "As a result, narratives can be argued to seek to explain or normalise what has happened; they spell out why things are the way they are or have become the way they are" (Bamberg 2010: 3). This requisite is rooted in the very nature of stories because they frequently contain multiple interpretations. Narrative analysis is mainly concerned with how meaning is imbued on experience, particularly human experience in real-life settings. "Examining stories in terms of their cohesive components" has an impact on how they are told as well as their thematic and structural makeup (Bamberg 2010:15-16). Thus, narrative analysis is a structured technique that accounts for how people position themselves in the context of greater social life by presenting

stories to an audience. "Narratives are stories that organize events across time and structure the accounts of these events in ways that give meaning to the storyteller's experiences" (Stephens & Breheny 2013: 14). In attempting to interpret these accounts, it helps attend to these narratives rather than abstract themes or facts. The stories themselves are important information.

Narrative analysis examines how people construct their self-accounts. The issue is not whether the argument is correct or whether the events in question occurred, but rather how people interpret what the storyteller is trying to say through the story. People tell stories to persuade, and we are concerned about the meanings they are attempting to express through their stories. This type of analysis is useful for untangling the numerous arguments in a story because stories frequently contain several arguments. There is a need to look beyond the story, looking in linguistic means and other bodily means. The word choice and "linguistic structure" inform the researcher about how the storyteller makes sense of the events narrated (Strandman 2009: 351-352). In addition to asking "what is there," Strandman recommends that the analyst question "what is not there?" by looking behind the text.

Traditions of narrative analysis from "both rhetoric and semiotics" recognize that one way of creating meaning in is through attention to opposites embedded in discourse (Feldman 1995; Feldman and Sko¨ldberg 2004). Elements of the story frequently have meaning based on what they are implicitly contrasted with, or, in other words, what they are not. When a storyteller describes a situation, one way to discover meaning is to pay close attention to what they are implying is its opposite.

People are storied beings, and in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of people and their experiences, researchers must begin with their stories. People's stories, on the other hand, are profoundly rooted in "narrative frameworks and narrative contexts" that make up what is conceptualized as "institutional storytelling" (O'Toole 2018: 175). O'Toole refers to these as "narrative landscapes," which he defines as "storied terrains in which narratives and stories are crafted and told". In turn, story analysis often entails a multi-layered approach with a focus on form (how the narrative is told), content (what is said in the narrative), and context (where the narrative is generated and told) to demonstrate the aspects of temporality, sociality, and place.

Personal memory and collective memory are intertwined. When somebody remembers an event, he or she is influenced by how other people remember the same event. This is the understanding that stories do not exist in isolation. Individuals do not speak from a single point of view when presenting stories because they draw on existing storylines, public discourses, and the stories of others. The positions of storytellers change over time depending on which discursive resources they employ (Esin et al. 2013: 5). "Using a more systematic approach to analyzing the story's participants, we can begin to notice how identity and experience are constructed at the intersection of personal, interpersonal, and cultural narratives" (Stephens & Breheny 2013: 15). These three intertwined analytic levels help understand narratives in research.

b) Sampling of Documentary Footage

Many contemporary social researchers are increasingly relying on video as a valuable resource. Researchers often have access to "naturally occurring" video data due to the rising availability of video in people's everyday lives (Jewitt 2012: 2). I downloaded the documentary footages on

YouTube for analysis. Analysing video data can be overwhelming. It might lead to overly detailed and weak analysis if not properly managed. Any analytical technique used must be connected to the data question being asked. It is, therefore, essential to determine which analytical tools can help answer the research questions most effectively. The method developed and used in this research is based on concepts derived from various scholars and their research work. I drew from other researchers experience of using video as data (Riessman, 2003; Feldman et al., 2004; Jewitt, 2013; Esin et al., 2008; Bailey, 2008). I will use this guidance from these researchers in formulating a systematic and rigorous approach that works for this research.

Analysis will begin with the researcher watching the documentary to the end to explore the characters and storyline. Identifying the storyline is vital in getting the gist of the story. The storyline is the primary point; therefore, "identifying a storyline or coming up with a summary of the story allows for the researcher to have a very clear and concise idea about the argument they want to focus on in the analysis" (Feldman et al. 2004:154). This first stage of the analysis will entail examining the documentary footage to discover the characters, settings, events, and stories. I will also take note of the visual prompts and voice-overs within the videos and watch the documentary footages over and over again, taking note of anything that stands out. Repetition is vital as it allows one to take note of something that they may have missed.

c) Transcription

The second level of analysis involves transcribing the documentary from video to verbatim text. Jewitt (2012: 6) warns that visual data is more difficult to process since it takes a long time to transcribe. A systematic strategy is needed to represent visual features on a transcript. I observed

this to be accurate and decided to follow a systematic approach in transcribing the video data to written text. Each women's story will be transcribed and labelled. Each narrative will be sorted out and recorded on a separate document. This process of transcription will involve documenting both the verbal and non-verbal cues paying close attention to their story and background.

Riessman (1993: 56) recommends starting with a 'rough transcription,' which is a first draft of the full interview that contains all of the words as well as other notable elements of the story, such as emotions and pauses. This enables researchers to use video data to rigorously and systematically analyze the participants as well as how their language, facial expression, gaze, gesture, and body elaborate one another. Recordings are transcribed into written form so that they can be investigated thoroughly, coupled with analytic notes. Verbal and non-verbal interaction together shape communicative meaning. "Transcriptions need to be very detailed to capture talk features such as emphasis, speed, tone of voice, timing, and pauses, as these elements can be crucial for interpreting data" (Bailey 2008: 127-128). There is no way to achieve an end to this type of data collection because levels of information can be enhanced and checked continuously (Esin et al. 2013:7). Therefore, transcription will be carried out in multiple rounds.

Translating stories is critical for researchers working across languages or between versions of the same language. The videos by Habakkuk Trust and CITE have English subtitles. However, I noticed that the subtitles did not capture everything that the women said. This prompted me to translate the videos from Ndebele into English. The memos and notes will be retained throughout the data reduction and interpretation process to establish an analytical paper trail and compare fresh data with emergent conclusions.

d) Coding

The foundation of narrative analysis is premised on the understanding that the stories themselves are essential formations. Once all the stories had been collated. The data within each story was coded, and an analysis of the codes will be conducted. I will search for emerging themes patterns in relation to the research questions taking note of issues and discrepancies.

Extracting and clarifying meanings within the stories is also essential to analyse them in the story's context filling in the missing part of the argument to guide the interpretation. This entails going further into the meaning of the story. Various scholars use the word mining for information, which suggests digging deep to uncover that which is hidden within the stories. This means that stories can be mined for information that would otherwise be overlooked, discarded, or labelled as missing. "What is unspoken but suggested may be overlooked, disregarded, or difficult to communicate to others; hence, the method's strength is based on the multiple readings that a single text enables" (Feldman at al 2004: 168).I will thus micro analyse every little detail taking note of the survivors' verbal and nonverbal cues while sharing their experiences. The emerging themes will be analysed in great detail using the feminist lens, as described in the theoretical framework. Micro analyzing allows for a deep focus and rich examination of the women's stories within a broader gendered social and historical context. This constructionist approach process is tied to and makes sense of the findings within specific historical and cultural contexts (Esin et al. 2013:8).

1.9 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 is a skeletal presentation of this study. It outlined the research topic, background, motivation for the study, the research questions and objectives guiding this research. Furthermore,

research methodology, theoretical framework and data analysis approach were defined in great detail.

Chapter 2 will delve into the academic literature that has preceded this research on women in conflict in sub-Saharan Africa violence. As noted in the theoretical framework and data analysis strategy it is imperative to understanding women's social and historical context; hence, academic debates around this topic will be analysed.

Chapter 3 will unpack the aspect of trauma, memory, and spirituality by analysing academic debates around these subject areas. This chapter will also examine trauma and spirituality from an African perspective as this study is situated in an African setting.

Chapter 4 will document women's testimonies of Gukurahundi. will attempt to highlight the general themes, observations, and analysis in relation to the research questions. It will also describe how the stories were told, how and what the women remembered. Trauma and memory in the legacy of Gukurahundi will then be unpacked, drawing from the findings.

Chapter 5 will unpack the issue of Spirituality drawing from the women's narratives and themes gleaned from the finding

Chapter 6 is the conclusion where a short evaluation of the findings, and reflections on the research process will be made. The conclusion will be rounded off by proposing some suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Women and Conflict in sub-Saharan Africa

2.1 Introduction

Violence against women during conflict has been recognised as a serious global issue because of its serious adverse effects on women. The impact of conflict on women cannot be overstated as they suffer the most socially, politically and economically. The conflict and post-conflict environments have adverse effects on women in Africa, raising several worrisome gender issues. Various research and international institutions have demonstrated the importance of addressing concerns of women's security, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and trauma in post-conflict countries. There is consensus among various scholars that women's conflict experiences and consequences are fundamentally different from men's (Puechguirbal 2012, Sandole-Staroste 2015, Shepherd 2010, Maedl 2011 et al.). Through studies conducted in numerous African countries, researchers discovered a significant prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in armed conflict. This is because armed conflict presents socio-political conditions, during which gender-based violence escalates. Patriarchy resurfaces during the conflict and post-conflict situations, marginalizing women. As a result, gender inequalities against women and girls are often exacerbated during conflict periods (Mootz et al. 2017: 2). "Violence cannot be explained without including gender as an analytic category. Accounting for war without including gender as analytical category leads to gender blindness which means that information will not just be incomplete, it will be unreliable" (Sandole-Staroste 2015: 8). Sandole-Staroste further highlights that you cannot understand the other without understanding the one, hence the need to examine the complex pathways that constitute gender-conflict relationship. Therefore, understanding gender dynamics as well as conflict dynamics becomes critical. For most women, the end of the

conflict is marked by the excessive impacts of trauma as well as social and economic consequences; hence the ramifications of conflict on these women must be clearly understood.

When analysing women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict areas, it is important to remember that conflicts were previously analysed through a traditional lens. Bennet (2010: 1) maintains that "gendered embodiment is a political process that has imprisoned, tortured, and wounded millions of women and girls". Bennet further asks valuable questions about women's security concerns during conflict and its adverse effects. "How do we think beyond this reality? How do we rethink relationships between gender and violence so that we are neither deaf to what is experienced within different African contexts nor reified into agency caricatures? How do we think about the victimized African woman, ravaged by war, to be pitied and developed whose lives have been radically violated by conflict and war-mongers?" (Bennet 2010: 2) It is, therefore, paramount to analyse conflict from a feminist standpoint perspective. Detailing how armed conflict connects to gender-based violence in conflict-affected places begins with the question: How does armed conflict relate to gender-based violence? A feminist perspective sheds light on gender relations between men and women prior to and during conflict, as well as the differential impact of war and violence on them.

In this context, there is a wealth of research on women's experiences and how they have coped in post-conflict African countries. This chapters' contribution is a modest attempt to review women's situations in conflict and post-conflict Africa using a feminist lens. The literature study is based on the collective experiences and insights of many individuals in war-torn Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as empirical data from numerous researchers and international humanitarian organizations. The basis of this chapter is to examine scholarly literature and other forms of publications on

women in mass violence by concentrating on four essential areas, namely 1) understanding violence against women, 2) realities faced by women in conflict, 3) sexual violence in conflict, 4) legal frameworks on women and security.

2.2 Understanding violence against women in armed conflict

"War is not a uniform phenomenon, nor its gendered consequences the same" (El Jack 2018: 19). Exploring how gender impacts women and men's experiences of wars and conflicts, as well as the similarities and vulnerabilities that link their experiences across Sub-Saharan Africa, is essential. In her analysis of gender and violence, El Jack emphasizes the unequal interactions between women and men in terms of gender roles, relationships, gendered behaviours, and their access to decision-making during conflict and post-conflict situations. She claims that our usual examination of "male supremacy and patriarchy is limited to these power dynamics" (El Jack 2018: 20). Shepherd (2010: 154) further describes gender relations "as a zero-sum game where only one can win at the other's expense", revealing how tipped the scale is between men and women.

According to feminist theorists, gender-based violence in armed conflict is primarily founded on, and perpetuated by, "patriarchy and hegemonic heterosexual masculine expectations intensified by militarization and aggressiveness norms built for men in armed conflict" (Banwell, 2014, Mootz 2017, Leatherman, 2011, Puechguirbal 2012 et al.). Hegemonic masculinity is a male-centred order that prioritizes men over women in terms of power and privilege. It is an "organizing structure of power relations, attained through interactions reflecting others' authority and dominance" (Leatherman 2011: 17). According to Leatherman, "individuals enact diversified, fluctuating, and modifiable constructed masculinities (e.g., dominant and subordinate) and

femininities (e.g., victim and combatant), both of which are influenced by cultural conditions, including the culture of armed conflict." In armed conflict settings, the transitory and dynamic manifestation of gender, combined with the struggle for control, frequently fosters various forms of interpersonal violence, including gender-based violence. Thus, women are already at a position of disadvantage and vulnerable to violence and abuse. Patriarchy is a social-political structure based on male hegemony expressed through dominance and the marginalization of other experiences. Violence against women, on the other hand, is a visible manifestation of a domineering tendency. It is normalized through claims of "cultural acceptability and community desensitization to extreme forms of violence" (Bennet 2010: 12-13.) Violence against women is just the pattern within which a culture of violence breeds and becomes an intricate part of the social fabric. Because of pre-existing gender imbalances, violence exists on a continuum from the battlefield to the household.

Violence against women becomes an integral part of exerting power over women and maintaining a male hegemony system. Bennet endorses Skjelsbæk (2010) claim that rape in conflict is an "accentuation of pre-existing gender relations as opposed to a new phenomenon emerging with hostilities' eruption". Therefore, sexual violence is feminized because it occurs more frequently among women (Bennet 2010: 12). Existing patterns of sexual assault against women are exacerbated by conflict in two ways. First, as communities break down during and after conflicts, the incidence of daily violence, particularly domestic violence, rises. Second, in male and military conflict circumstances, forced sexual relationships, forced marriages, and sexualized violence against women and girls escalates (El Jack 2018: 23). Pre-existing gender relations are amplified

in a conflict zone, so if a woman is seen as a man's possession in peacetime, it will be amplified even more so in wartime.

Masculinity is characterized by aggression, militarization, and power, whereas femininity is characterized by weakness, passivity, and submission to power. During armed conflict, men's authority and masculinity are typically associated with weapons such that a man without a gun is sometimes not regarded "a real man". "War is a time when officials promise to make men out of boys, and being a good soldier is synonymous to being a real man" (Cohn 2013: 24). The result is a patriarchal social order that normalizes the aggressive, heterosexual, dominant behaviour associated with masculinity and females' subjugation.

A gendered conflict analysis seeks to unearth the root causes of violence against women, as well as the context, and the dynamics of conflict in order to better understand and address the issues of gender inequality. To achieve meaningful change, challenging frameworks that support violence and women's marginalization would necessitate the overthrow of social structures and standards within society.

2.3 Hardships experienced by women in conflict and post-conflict societies

Many social science scholars from the field of political science, gender studies, and international relations, have pointed out the gendered aspect of conflict and violence. The majority of the articles and publications interrogated in this section are written by scholars who have experience working with women in conflict zones through international organizations like the United Nations and its organs, International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and many more.

Women's social and psychosocial concerns are a significant issue in Africa's conflict and post-conflict settings because of a myriad of factors. Women have been left politically, economically, socially, and psychologically crippled as a result of the destructive effects of wars. When the conflict ends, many societies and warring parties emerge by using amnesties as a means of encouraging reconciliation and peace. Amnesties have been criticized as ineffective on several fronts because they encourage "a cycle of impunity", with heinous crimes going unpunished, unacknowledged, and unaddressed (Maina 2012: 4). In many cases, the post-conflict period exacerbates the anxiety and demands of local female populations as women must deal with the feelings of seeing their offenders go free. This has negative implications for individuals' overall health and well-being and causes repeated patterns of psycho-social trauma. Peace agreements are useful and important processes for ending conflict between warring parties, but they should not be viewed as a mechanism for victims healing. The continual presence of the abuser or rapist in post-conflict society fills women with anxiety and trauma. Blanket amnesty processes tend to free "armed personnel from their responsibilities, at the expense of affected citizenry, who walk the streets with their tormentors and/or are even governed by them. For example, after the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord, amnesty was granted to the 3,500 members of the Fifth Brigade and 122 dissidents" (Ndlovu 2019: 15). In fact, Eppel (2004: 50) notes that "the 1988 amnesty was one in a long line of amnesties since 1979 and is part of an established pattern of perpetrators being pardoned at the expense of victims". She goes on to say that by the year 2000 Zimbabwe had issued more than five amnesties. These amnesties are an example of how the state institutionalises and produces silences. Ironically, Zimbabwe's Human Rights Commission Act of 2012 and Zimbabwe's Constitution, approved ahead of the 2013 elections, prevents commissioners from

dealing with any political violence committed before 2009 and grant amnesty for human rights abuses committed before this time. By so doing, they have thus ensured that Gukurahundi crimes cannot be tried within Zimbabwe (Ndlovu 2019: 15).

Gender-based violence manifests itself in a variety of ways, including physical abuse, rape, sexual assault and coercion, stalking, incest, sexual harassment, sexual mutilation, and female trafficking. In conflict zones, these types of violence are common, and they are often accompanied by mental and health concerns. Understanding the challenges and how they are intertwined with the other issues impacting women in post-conflict settings is crucial. Returning to ordinary life has posed psycho-social challenges for many girls and women. Women's chastity is highly valued in most African societies. It is extremely difficult for many girls and women who have been raped to get married. The majority of the survivors' have little chance of marrying, and the idea of having to provide for them for the rest of their lives prompts their families to reject them. In a culture that reveres marriage, these girls and women develop feelings of isolation compared to married women. "The possibility of getting a suitor in the community after what they have experienced is unlikely. Even in the rare instances where this has happened, most girls and women are so traumatized that they cannot maintain these relationships" (Maina 2012: 5).

Gender-based violence is linked to serious health issues for women. Injuries, gynaecological illnesses, mental health disorders, bad pregnancy outcomes, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, chronic reproductive health difficulties, and increased women's risk of future illness are examples of these (World Health Organization 2013, El Jack 2018: 23). In northern Uganda, many victims of the Lord's Resistance Army abductions contracted STDs, including HIV/AIDS (Maina,

2012). Several concerns are linked to the HIV/AIDS crisis: First, there is the possibility of secondary stigmatization as a rape victim with a sexually transmitted disease. The second point to consider is the potential impact on reproductive health. For example, traumatic fistulas caused by violent rape and obstetric fistulas caused by a lack of prenatal care are common among women in eastern DRC (Kelly et al. 2011: 4). In other words, when the use of sexual violence in armed conflict increases, so does the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health difficulties.

The psychological implications of violence are often more severe than the physical consequences for many women. Women's self-esteem is frequently eroded as a result of violence. Rape, guilt, loss, and death of spouses and children cause psychosocial traumas that put individuals at risk for a variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, and suicide. Gender-based violence in armed conflict has been linked to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, recurring nightmares, difficulty concentrating, irritability, outbursts of anger, physical pain, feelings of helplessness, and suicidal thoughts (CCJP 1997, Ngwenya 2014, Motsi 2010). In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide "some survivors reported that their persecutors told them that they had been allowed to live so that they might die of sadness" (Musingafi et al. 2013: 56). Notably, a mother's mental health may have an impact on her children's mental health, reflecting a familial effect. Witnessing maternal physical or sexual abuse can have negative consequences for children's growth and general physical health. For example, "Ugandan children who were internally displaced because of armed conflict described experiencing several culturally bound categorizations of mental distress" (Mootz et al. 2017: 3).

The act of sexual violence degrades, damages, and marginalizes the woman. "Rape in war holds several social repercussions for women, whereas forced impregnation exacerbates the victims' suffering. Thus, being forced to bear a child symbolically brands victims while also committing bodily and mental harm to the woman" (Seto 2015: 180-181). It is believed that every surviving female was raped during the Rwandan genocide. It is estimated that rapes committed during the genocide resulted in between 2000 and 50000 "*enfants de mauvais souvenir*" (children of bad memories) (Musingafi et al. 2013: 56). In the Democratic Republic of Congo, one out of every ten women had a child as a result of rape, putting her at a higher risk of social isolation (Kelly et al. 2011: 6). Women and girls face stigma, humiliation and are often rejected by their communities, and their families refuse to assume responsibility for the "bush babies" (Maina 2012: 5). Rape survivors bear children whom they must feed and take care of. They are abandoned by their families, leaving them to fend for themselves and increasing their vulnerability to further sexual violence and exploitation. For instance, in the DRC, of the women surveyed in a study by Kelly et. al (2011), 75.7% were raped, 13% of women had a child from rape, 29% of women raped were rejected by their families who viewed the women as contaminated, and 6% were rejected by their communities. Empirical evidence from Kelly et al., reveals that the stigmatization and rejection of survivors of violence remained a dominant theme. Rape victims were subjected to the same customs and labels that had formerly been reserved for female adulterers. Women who had sex outside of marriage, whether voluntarily or by force, were thought to bring misfortune to the household and lead to cycles of blame and anger between a husband and a wife. Kelly et al. also states that in focus groups, women stated that having a child from rape was one reason the family or community might isolate a woman. She also points out that when a woman has a child out of

rape, the father is unknown, leaving the woman alone to bear the burden of raising the child and face negative community reactions. (Kelly et al. 2011: 5).

The issue of children born as a result of wartime sexual violence complicates the process of rebuilding and reconciling post-conflict nations. When these children reach a certain age, they may demand to know more about the conflict and their own personal history. War children are a subset of children who have been affected by war. Children born as a result of war are defined by Carpenter as "persons of any age conceived as a result of violent, coercive, or exploitative sexual relations in conflict zones" (2007: 3). Their status is under-documented; at worst, it is ignored, with many peacebuilding initiatives failing to cater to their exceptional circumstances. Children's identities created of wartime sexual violence are built based on violent techniques of "personalized warfare" such as forced impregnation, sexual brutality, and militaristic sexual exploitation. "These practices employ the psychological and emotional aspects of conflict while also involving complicated issues relating to identity, gendered norms, and trauma associated with war-related violence" (Seto 2015: 173). The marginalization of these children is caused by conflicts of identity In the African culture, the child's identity belongs to the father's community. Rape survivors are subjected to systematic kinds of ostracization, shame, and humiliation as a result of pregnancy. They may face additional socio-cultural challenges if they disclose their experiences and the existence of such children. Children born from wartime rape frequently face negative health impacts related to sexual violence, as well as additional complications related to concealment of their existence. These children are frequently shunned and rejected by their mothers and communities as they embody the identity of a "child of the enemy". Their presence serves as a reminder to the women and community of their suffering.

Seto's argument provides a more in-depth analysis of children born as a result of wartime rape and shows the complexities of reconciling for communities following conflict. The issue of children born of war rape draws upon overlapping themes of trauma, reconciliation, and forgiveness. "Children born as the result of rape are constructed as part of the method in which the woman endures the pain caused by rape" which becomes a double trauma. "This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the second rape" (Du Toit 2009: 299). Children born in war are confined to the periphery of the war crimes debate, where they are primarily linked with the perpetrator rather than a worthy group. Despite the fact that war rape is now recognized internationally as a crime against humanity, these children are rarely acknowledged except in the context of sexual violence. Seto's reference to the excluded war children repositions them from the margins to the centre. It redefines them as worthy groups that need to be part of the discourse on conflict violence and peacebuilding. Children born as a result of wartime sexual assault are "undeniably a part of modern warfare's political equation", and they represent the political tension that the victimized and perpetrators communities embody (Seto 2015: 184). These children are not "enemies or friends, but both. Their hybrid status as children of two cultures leads to their greater insecurity" (McEvoy-Levy cited by Seto 2015: 185).

In the complicated milieu of post-conflict cultures, dealing with social and psychological concerns is a problem. The social suffocation of conflict-affected communities is exacerbated by the difficult reality of everyday living, poverty, and limited survival opportunities. For women survivors, the economic consequences of conflict and post-conflict contexts are numerous. Countries emerging from conflict are typically characterized by high female school dropout rates,

high levels of poverty, and in some communities, early marriages or pregnancies are widespread. Women, in particular, struggle to compete due to low literacy rates, which limits their participation in all aspects of life.

Mootz et al. (2017) reveal through their study in north-eastern Uganda that the death of a husband creates widow status for women creating a diverse set of challenges for women and their children. When the father, or sometimes both parents, are killed in armed conflict, the youth are left without assistance from their families, putting them at a higher risk of gender-based violence. Orphaned girls are left vulnerable and may resort to sex work or early marriage for survival. For instance, the teenage girls' narratives in north-eastern Uganda "demonstrated agency regarding utilizing early marriage as a form of survival. Most, for instance, referred to early marriage as a viable option, given their cultural context" (Mootz et al. 2017: 16-19). The importance of education in improving women's living conditions cannot be emphasized. In post-conflict societies, it is necessary to create an environment that encourages more girls to return to school. More females in school affects not only their own well-being but also the well-being of their families and the community as a whole.

2.4 Sexual violence conceptualized as a weapon of war

The scholars in this category explore the definition of sexual violence and how it might be interpreted in times of war. The focus here is the nexus between sexual violence and war. To determine if the existing strong distinction between rape in war and rape in peace is viable, these variables must be critically analysed from a feminist perspective and their underlying assumptions elucidated. It is worth noting that the scholars in this category are gender experts who have

conducted substantial research in various African conflict zones; as a result, they aim to explain. and address sexual violence in war.

Sexual violence against women and girls is as old as humanity, with women and girls being the most common victims. "Rape and war have gone hand in hand since the days of Helen of Troy", according to Wachala (2012: 533). Sexual violence in armed conflict has a long history, and its prevalence has been presented as a problematic and unavoidable, consequence of armed conflict. Prior to the 1990s, this crime was widely ignored, neglected, and ostracized legally, intellectually, and politically (Canning 2010: 851). However, it has gained extensive media, political, and academic attention over the years. After the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia in 1993, sexual violence during conflict was treated as a human rights violation (Skjelsbaek 2010, Wachala 2012).

Rape and sexual crimes against women were for a long time the elephant in the room. The sheer number of scholarly works devoted to this topic indicates that the taboo that had made it impossible to investigate this wartime phenomena academically has been loosened to some extent. Reporters, African feminists, activists, and theorists have been deeply involved in a number of debates around gender violence in Africa as well as documenting sexual brutality in a variety of conflicts. There is a strong consensus that sexual violence is used strategically in war as a "weapon of war". Skjelsbæk (2010: 30) reiterates that conflict and rape are "two sides of the same coin". This means that sexual violence is part and parcel of warfare, which Ayiera dubs as "one of the greatest conspiracies of silence" (Ayiera 2010: 9). Eva Ayiera, an African feminist human rights lawyer, asserts that "there has been a measure of acceptance that rape goes hand in hand with the violence of warfare" (2010: 8). She demonstrates this by presenting all the terms used in the rape and war

discourses. Phrases such as "rape as a weapon of war;" "the war is on women's bodies"; and "the rape capital of the world" have become common in the global language on sexual violence in conflict circumstances, designed to convey the deliberateness of sexual violence in conflict settings.

Furthermore, labelling rape as a weapon implies that mass rape is systematic and has a particular effect in warfare. The generated phraseology aims to use shock tactics to evoke the motivation to act and confront sexual assault. Since sexual violence in armed conflicts became a worldwide concern, the development of the international discourse on sexual violence has been nothing short of exponential in terms of revealing the topic of sexual violence. Discourse and policy have begun to reform to challenge sexual violence as an inevitable result of armed conflict and adopt appropriate accountability mechanisms.

A conflict zone is an area where gender inequality is at an all-time high. As a result, sexual violence is feminised; it occurs primarily to women. This conceptualization asks: "Were all women raped simply because they are women? Or is the war zone a place where women, in general, are at greater risk of being victimized through crimes of sexual violence than in the non-war zone?" (Skjelsbæk 2010: 33). Jane Bennet builds on Skjelsbæk by stating that "almost all forms of rape, domestic assassination and brutality, sexual harassment, trafficking, and sexual abuse of children are carried out by people gendered as men. Thinking through the connection between gender and violence has to entail a distinction, a line, between "the doers and the done to" (2010:2). What Bennet is emphasising is that because of their vulnerability, girls and women "the done to" are the main victims of sexual violence.

As previously mentioned, rape in war is not a new phenomenon. The documentation, on the other hand, varies and is incomparable from case to case. Overwhelming statistics of women raped during various conflicts in Africa have emerged from various studies and reports, revealing its prevalence and systematic use in a war situation. Rape as a weapon of political violence appears to have expanded significantly in recent years in Africa, with sexual violence conflict profiles now prevalent across the continent. Many human rights researchers and practitioners agree with Major General Patrick Cammaert, former commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), who stated that "being a woman in an armed conflict has probably become more dangerous than being a soldier" (Dewey & St Germain 2012: 30). Rape and sexual violence have been and continue to be methods of terrorising opponents in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the case of Rwanda, the sheer magnitude of sexual violence inflicted on Rwandan women during the 1994 genocide was immense. The special rapporteur for Rwanda stated in 1996 that sexual violence was both systemic and used as a weapon. Children under the age of 18, elderly people, pregnant ladies and women who had just given birth were not spared. Women who were deemed "untouchable by custom" (for example, nuns) were also raped, and corpses were raped shortly after being killed (Wachala 2012: 535). It is estimated that between 250 000 and 500 000 women and girls experienced sex crimes (U.N., 2015a, Human Rights Watch 1996: 48). Rape, gang rape, and sexual slavery, as well as genital mutilation, were all common. Simultaneously, military and civilian officials did nothing to stop it, even participating in it (HRW 1996: 48).

Since 2013, the use of rape and sexual slavery in the Central African Republic has been remarkedly high. The Human rights watch report, documents 305 cases of rape and sexual slavery carried out

against 296 women and girls by members of armed groups between early 2013 and mid-2017. The report also notes statements from victims that "they said we are their slaves," (Human Rights Watch 2017). Various militias in the Central African Republic take advantage of the region's conflict environment, raping women at gunpoint, often following looting (Raleigh et al. 2015: 14). There have also been reports of forced marriages, mutilations, and other heinous acts of sexual assault against women and children (U.N. 2013).

According to the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) report, there were between 215,000 and 257,000 rape victims in Sierra Leone during the conflict. The following statistics are revealed in the report: rape (89%), being forced to undress/stripped of clothing (37%), gang rape (33%), women abducted (33%), molestation (14%), sexual slavery (15%), forced marriage (9%), and insertion of foreign objects into the vagina or anus (4%). Furthermore, (23%) of the women who had suffered sexual violence reported being pregnant (PHR 2002: 2- 4).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has been dubbed "the rape capital of the world," has been at the forefront of international controversy (Margot Wallstrom, the U.N.'s special envoy, cited in Africa Research Bulletin 2011). The use of sexual violence against women as a weapon of war has become so common in this conflict, particularly in eastern DRC, that it has been called the "war within the war" and a war in which "women's bodies are a battlefield (*le corps des femmes est un champ de bataille*)" (Sadie 2015: 450). Many women and girls were tortured and raped during the DRC conflict. Sexual exploitation of women and girls as young as six months old was recorded. The International Rescue Committee recorded 40 000 incidences of sexual violence between 2003 and 2006, which it claims is "only the tip of the iceberg" (Dallman 2009: 6). According to United Nations estimates, 200 000 women and girls were sexually assaulted

between 1997 and 2009, with over 8000 incidents reported between January and September 2008. Statistics obtained by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) from its 18 field offices in the DRC from January 2010 to December 2013 record 3 635 incidents of sexual violence (rape and gang rape) by armed groups and state forces. Of this, a total of 73 % were women, 25% were girls, and 2% were men (Sadie 2015: 451). Women and girls have been raped and sexually assaulted on a "never-before-seen" magnitude in eastern DRC (Nolen 2005:56 cited by Meger 2010: 126). In a study by Ohambe et al. (2004), based on interviews with victims and perpetrators and an analysis of 3000 files relating to cases of rape and sexual violence in the South Kivu region of eastern DRC, four types of rape were identified: individual rape, gang rape, rape where victims are forced to rape each other, and rape involving the inserting of objects into the women's genitals. In a study by Kelly et al. in eastern DRC (2011: 3) two-thirds of women (68.9%) reported gang rape, and 46% of women reported being abducted (forcibly taken from the place of the first rape encounter for more than one day) by their assailant. Many of the rapes were followed by torture, especially if the victims resisted. Rape with instruments such as guns, abduction of the victim, forced incest was also reported.

The data presented above is only the tip of the iceberg but demonstrates the pervasiveness of conflict. These appalling figures expose war's brutality and are a direct result of the misuse of power and violence unleashed by war. Gang rape is the most common type of rape against women. This is the trend in many other African crisis zones showing that women and girls are far from protected during conflict.

If sexual violence is regarded as a weapon of war, it must have specific characteristics that distinguish it from other kinds of violence and weapons of war. With today's superior military

technology, one could expect aggressors to choose to use weapons. Skjelsbæk (2010: 27) argues that this "surprising tendency of aggressors to involve themselves and their bodies as part of warfare illustrates tendencies of greater intimacy in combat between aggressors and victims".

As previously stated, feminist scholarship has contributed to a better understanding of rape and sexual violence as acts of violence, dominance, and control aimed at preserving patriarchy. The United Nations accurately theorises about sexual assault in war: "Since perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are often motivated by a desire for power and domination, rape is common in situations of armed conflict and internal strife. An act of forced sexual behaviour can threaten the victim's life. Like other forms of torture, it is often meant to hurt, control, and humiliate, while violating a person's physical and mental integrity" (UNHCR et al. 1999). When examining sexual violence, it is important to consider why it is such a powerful weapon on the battlefield. It is also vital to recognise that sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum; it is often followed by other forms of violence, such as torture or murder, making it difficult to isolate the impacts of sexual violence on their own. What we can establish is that using sexual violence in addition to other types of violence amplifies the consequences intended by the offenders. Sexual assault becomes "part of a range of actions and behaviours that male soldiers are socialised to perform" (Skjelsbæk 2010: 27). Skjelsbæk contends that the "ultimate goal of rape in war is to communicate, and produce or maintain dominance", and as used strategically with ulterior motives (2010: 34). Rape is employed because women in patriarchal societies are such easy targets both physically and socially. With this conceptualization, all women in the war zone are regarded as potential targets for sexual violence because the goal appears to be the manifestation of "notions of militaristic masculinity, rather than the targeting of the individual woman" (Skjelsbæk 2010: 34-35). In a study conducted in the eastern DRC Maedle (2011) provides a unique glimpse into the victims'

perspective on sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups on them. Most women believe they were raped for a variety of reasons. These comprised strategic purposes, as well as opportunistic behaviour to displace communities, instil fear in them, punish them, and gain or destroy magical powers. The first two answers were the most popular among the participants. Fewer women than predicted claimed that the rapes were carried out to punish their communities (Maedl 2011: 145).

"The construction of heterosexual masculinity through external social institutions and the socialisation process that occurs in the military" is an essential aspect of rape in conflict (Canning 2010: 852). Understanding the societal constructs of masculinity is necessary for understanding why soldiers voluntarily choose to engage in rape and sexual violence. For starters, sexual violence can be viewed as a manner of upholding patriarchal structures by confirming masculinity. In a combat zone, males are not only expected to be men, but also to be aggressive. Understanding militarised culture is therefore crucial to comprehending the conflict zone's gender component. The male perpetrator's militaristic masculine identity is manifested through the use of sexual violence. Militarism is founded on the erasure of individual identity. Furthermore, it is reliant on troop loyalty as well as cause commitment. According to Enloe (1993:52), "the glue of militarism is camaraderie, the base of that glue is masculinity," especially heterosexual masculinity. Militaries require "real men," and being a real man in this environment entails concealing feelings of insecurity, gentleness, and other feminine qualities. "Rape is not an aggressive expression of sexuality, but a sexual expression of aggression, a manifestation of anger, violence, and domination" (Raleigh et al. 2015: 12). As a result, sexual violence reinforces aggression and brutality in armed units and groups and is sometimes promoted or accepted as a morale booster or a prize for valour. In wartime, a combination of these factors could make it easier for men to conduct sexual assault. Individual soldiers find it difficult to refuse to rape because this shows

weakness which goes against militaristic heterosexual norms. This does not imply that all male soldiers will commit rape, but it is part of a broader military strategy.

Baaz and Stern (2009) analyse soldiers' accounts of mass rape in the DRC. Their article focuses on the interpretations of masculinity and femininity provided by soldiers. Baaz and stern highlight how soldiers' narratives are laced with narratives of power and dominance over women. According to them, "the main ideal of masculinity that the soldiers drew on to explain sexual violence was that of the (hetero)sexually potent male fighter" (Baaz & Stern 2009: 505). This school of thought regards the soldier's sexual needs as a natural driving force that must be satisfied by women. War is thus a place where toxic masculinity surfaces. Banwell (2014: 51) concurs that the portrayal of masculinity highlighted by Baaz, and Stern (2009), "is replicated in many other military institutions worldwide".

Secondly, armed groups "frequently use sexual violence as a deliberate strategy to weaken, torture, humiliate, intimidate, and destroy individuals and communities" through an expression of domination (Bastick et al., 2007; U.N., 2015, Maedle 2011, Raleigh et al, 2015, Skjelsbæk, 2010 et al.). When objects (such as sticks, bottles, rifle butts, and bayonets) are used in rape, the goal is to create "an experience of horror and power" (Raleigh et al. 2015:13). When sexual violence is perpetrated against women and girls, it is frequently done with the intent of humiliating their families and communities. When a soldier rapes a woman from the opposing side in a war situation, it conveys that the woman's husband or father is unable to protect not only the particular woman, but also his property, his country, and his nation. It is used to disrupt family and community structures, most visibly when armed groups commit public rapes in front of the

community, compel family members to see each other's rape, or even force people to perpetrate sexual violence against family members (Raleigh et al., 2015, Maedle 2011).

Thirdly, sexual violence might be viewed as a means of eroding the culture of the opponent. Women are frequently viewed as the biological carriers of a culture or ethnic group. The biological basis for a specific nation is lost when its procreative powers are managed, either through forced pregnancy or by making it impossible for women girls to have children in the future. Their cultural identity as a woman is not taken into account. "Bearing the enemy's child (i.e., attributing the rapist's ethnicity to the child)" and nursing it for years may be life-long torture for the individual mother (Skjelsbæk 2010:28).

Skjelsbæk (2010) further illuminates the gender dimension of rape in war by conceptualizing them into three categories: essentialism, structuralism and social constructionism. The following conceptual frameworks are various approaches to conceptualising wartime sexual assault in the context of gender analysis.

According to Skjelsbæk, the first category, which he refers to as essentialism, asserts that "all women in a conflict zone are victims of sexual abuse to assert militaristic masculinity". Because the purpose appears to be the embodiment of ideals of "militaristic masculinity", rather than the targeting of the specific woman, all women in the combat zone are viewed as possible targets for sexual assault under this conceptualization. The essentialist discourse is the most appealing and extensively employed, as it is based on the idea that women get raped simply because they are women (2010: 34-35).

The second category, structuralism, asserts that targeted women in war zones are victims of sexual abuse because they belong to certain ethnic, religious, and political groups. The concept of patriarchy is thus complicated because it is no longer seen as simply "men having power over women, but as men belonging to the most powerful ethnic, religious, or political groups wielding power over "their" women (in order to protect them) and over the women of the "other" group (by potentially attacking them)". The structuralist approach also seeks to explain why particular women are targeted more than others, and how the use of sexual violence in a war zone might be linked to the conflict's political goals (Skjelsbæk 2010: 35-38).

This idea is an attempt to comprehend the reasoning behind the targeting of both men and women with sexual assault in a combat zone. The key element of masculinity is power, and the basis of violence against both men and women are not the hetero- or homosexuality of an individual male actor, but rather the intention to "masculinize the perpetrator's identity while feminising the victim's identity". This conceptualisation brings together the essentialist and structuralist concepts. First, it recognises that women are more vulnerable to sexual abuse in war than men, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. Second, it recognises that certain groups of women are more vulnerable than others in a war zone, depending on their ethnic, religious, or political affiliation. However, the explanation provided by this conceptualization is considerably different from the explanations provided by the other two, primarily because it does not argue that the world is intrinsically static, as the other two do. In times of warfare, men have also been victims of sexual violence (Skjelsbæk 2010: 38-40).

Using Skjelsbæk gender dimensions, one notes that the dominant discourse or conceptualization amongst the scholars discussed above is the essentialist discourse. The literature reveals a strong

consensus amongst scholars that conflict is gendered, sexual violence is an inherent part and women, and girls are the primary victims. Undoubtedly feminist scholarship has understood rape and sexual violence as instances of violence, dominance, and control aimed at maintaining patriarchy and women's subordinate position. They suggest that any compelling analysis of this phenomenon must involve a gendered perspective of the conflict zone. Attempting to analyse sexual violence without comprehending the conflict dynamics is insufficient. There has also been some form of acceptance that rape is an inevitable part of the war. However, it is apparent that despite a robust global dialogue on sexual assault, the international community remains incapable to eradicate it in crisis situation. Another trend in the discourse on sexual violence is that sexual violence is commonly underreported; hence information on how many women have been raped remains scant. Sexual violence is rife with "underreporting and delayed reporting, making determining its scope challenging" (Charlesworth & Chinkin 2016: 173). The invisibility of women's sexual assault suffering can be attributed to the existence of cultural taboos. As long as sexuality is not discussed in society, it is difficult for women to speak out about sexual abuse. Instead, they keep sexual assault and rape hidden out of shame and guilt. With the stigma associated with being a survivor of rape, underreporting will continue to prevail. "Documenting sexual violence in war, that is, getting the numbers right, identifying the perpetrators, the victims, the contexts in which the violence occurs and identifying the victims' security, medical and psychosocial needs, continues to be an insurmountable challenge" (Skjelsbæk 2010:48).

2.5 Rape as a crime against humanity in the context of legal frameworks

The evolution of international law in the areas of sexual violence and armed conflict has progressed since the 1990s. This progress is reflected in several international forums, protocols, legislation, and resolutions. Rape of women during wartime is increasingly regarded a human rights violation and treated as a crime against humanity, following the systematic use of rape in the Rwandan genocide (1994) and the former Yugoslavia (1993). The phrase crimes against humanity is used as a broad umbrella term for numerous human rights abuse cases that are linked in the sense that such violations impact the entire international community and are thus subject to international justice. "It is the therefore the concept of humanity as it transcends the individual because when the individual is assaulted, humanity comes under attack and is negated" (Wachala 2012: 540).

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) established in 1993 and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) established in 1994 were the first war tribunals to include rape and sexual violence as war crimes. Thus, both have made several ground-breaking decisions, which have placed sexual violence against women on the international agenda. "The ICTR acknowledged rape as a crime against humanity and named forced prostitution and indecent assaults as crimes against humanity" (Bennet 2010: 10). Without a doubt, both the ICTR and the ICTY made significant advances in the prosecution of rape and sexual assault in armed conflict, as well as important codifications of the law of crimes against humanity. Both the ICTY and the ICTR have the same list of crimes, which includes murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, detention, torture, rape, persecution on political, racial, and religious grounds, and other inhumane actions. Any intentional violence against civilians during an armed conflict, including rape and sexual abuse, is a violation of international humanitarian law. If the violence is "part of a systematic or widespread attack" against a civilian population, it is deemed a crime

against humanity as well as a war crime, according to the International Criminal Tribunal. Rape, in this perspective, could be viewed as one form of violence that provides for "plausible deniability" (Maedl 2011: 132). Both tribunals made significant headway in ending impunity now that the avenue to prosecuting rape as a crime against humanity had been opened.

The definition of rape has been critical to the successful prosecution of rape as a crime against humanity, and it sparked much debate in both the ICTR and the ICTY. Due to a paucity of criminal prosecutions for rape in armed conflict prior to these tribunals, there was no recognised international definition of rape (Wachala 2012: 541). It can be seen that the evolution of rape as a crime against humanity is critical on two levels. For starters, rape in armed conflict is recognised as a criminal offence committed against the victim. According to Wachala (2012: 542), "The elephant in the room is now clearly visible". Secondly, the development of rape as a crime against humanity has contributed to the international definition of rape itself. Rape as a crime against humanity is critical, as more charges are now feasible as a result of the establishment of the International Criminal Courts.

The efforts of human rights and women's rights activists to curb sexual violence, as well as the global outrage over the widespread and calculated use of rape, propelled sexual violence out of the shadows and into the front-page agenda of international discourse. This resulted in strong rhetoric and the establishment of international standard-setting protocols and instruments on sexual violence, establishing it as a global issue, outlining a solution, and demanding action to end the crisis. Even the language used in international discussions about sexual abuse in conflict has evolved. "Gender-based violence came to encompass a vast range of potential violations: rape,

domestic assault, abduction, trafficking, incest, sexual harassment, beating, and murder of wives and sexual partners" (Bennett 2010: 27). Legal frameworks are important because they operate as a tool to govern peoples' behaviour, enhancing the visibility of violence against women, and providing a basis for state accountability and advocacy.

International law now has a number of tools for combatting sexual violence and prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence as a result of different achievements. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN Security Council 2000) has addressed the gendered consequences of conflict and violence on women since the founding of the ICTY and ICTR. While Resolution 1820 (UN Security Council 2008) declared rape and sexual assault in armed conflict as a war crime and a threat to human safety as well as international peace and security. The formation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998 was another watershed moment in international humanitarian law and human rights. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was the first organisation to hold government officials accountable for genocide and other significant international crimes committed during armed conflict, such as rape and sexual brutality. Prior to these advances in international law, rape and sexual assault were seen as unfortunate by products of war and armed conflict. Women are no longer regarded as "booty in wartime" (Wachala 2012: 535).

For this study, l will focus on UNSCR 1325, UNSCR 1820, and the Rome statute of the ICC. Many resolutions have been passed, but the three listed above offered the starting point in tackling sexual violence in war.

a) UNSCR 1325

Recognizing the gendered dimensions of conflict, the international community has established a comprehensive international normative framework on women, peace, and security (WPS) to address the effects of conflict on women and girls and to strengthen women's participation in peace processes at all levels. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on October 31, 2000, passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, recognising the disparate and distinctive effects of armed conflict on women. The resolution acknowledges that a deeper understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, as well as suitable institutional structures to ensure their safety and full involvement in the peace process, can make a substantial contribution to international peace and security.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "remains the core normative framework for addressing the agenda on women, peace, and security" (UN Women 2017: 8). With Resolution 1325, the Security Council addressed security problems and their gendered implications and preconditions for the first time. This was a watershed moment in worldwide commitment and engagement for women's involvement in peacekeeping and security. In cases of armed conflict, "Article 10 of UNSCR 1325 calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict" UNWomen 2017:9). In addition, Article 11 of UNSCR 1325 underlines all governments end to impunity and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls. Other Security Council Resolutions have been passed in response to UNSCR 1325.

b) UNSCR 1820

UNSCR 1820 was the first Security Council resolution to address sexual violence in armed conflict. Resolution 1820, adopted by the United Nations Security Council in June 2008, condemned the use of sexual violence against women and children as a weapon of war. This resolution stated unequivocally that "women have a right to sexual integrity, which must be maintained in all combat situations" (Du Toit 2009: 286). Its adoption can be traced back to three distinct developments. To begin with, new conflicts have resulted in new documentation of the systematic use of sexual violence against civilians. When it was passed, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was making international headlines with allegations of sexual abuse (Skjelsbæk 2010: 43). Resolution 1820 takes sexual violence out of the private realm into the public sphere emphasizing peace and security concerns for women and girls. It singles out sexual assault as a tactic of war, claiming that it "may significantly exacerbate circumstances of armed conflict and may obstruct the restoration of international peace and security" (Atuhaire et al. 2018: 4-5). This is possibly the most significant achievement of UNSCR 1820. Conflict-related sexual violence committed by armed groups, including state security forces, militia, and rebel forces, is classified as a war crime and a crime against humanity under the resolution. As a result of this conceptual shift, sexual violence comes under the jurisdiction of states, governments, and their military. This means that militaries, nations, and governments are not only prohibited from committing these acts of violence, but they are also required to protect vulnerable groups from such violence and to incorporate sexual violence analyses in overall security assessments. Member states are responsible for assisting victims, ending amnesty for perpetrators, and constructing infrastructure to alleviate and tackle sexual violence in conflict.

Resolution 1820 has led to remarkable progress in addressing sexual violence in conflict. However, the reality is that sexual and gender-based violence against girls' and women continues on a large scale in conflict situations. Convictions for rape in war have been extremely rare. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence presents several significant challenges. Inadequate understanding of its effects on peacebuilding, failure to associate it with conflict-related sexual violence, and concerns of assigning responsibility for addressing sexual violence to specific actors continue to impede the process of addressing sexual violence concerns. Despite the fact that Resolution 1820 has resulted in significant progress in addressing sexual violence during conflict, "limiting interpretations of what constitutes conflict-related sexual violence limit its impact" (UN Women 2012a). Secondly, this is exacerbated by the lack of attention paid to conflict-associated sexual violence in Resolution 1820, which only emphasized conflict-related sexual violence as a security issue, resulting in a new hierarchy of sexual violence within post-conflict peacebuilding policy. Thirdly, the UN argues that it is the member states' responsibility to address conflict associated with sexual violence. However, states may lack political will, defend cultural or traditional practices, or lack the funding to address such violence.

In most situations, the state is to blame for cases of sexual violence against women. The UN's only emphasis on individual and member-state responsibility makes it difficult for victims to seek justice and retribution. Furthermore, "the structural inequities that lead to sexual violence outside of conflict are frequently deeply established in society and hence difficult to modify" (Atuhaire et al. 2018: 7). To address the complete spectrum of sexual assault, an approach that focuses on low priority, limited definitions and conceptualizations, restricted intervention strategies, and a lack of responsibility is required.

c) Rome Statute

The establishment of the International Criminal Court was an important breakthrough in international law (ICC). The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an international tribunal and intergovernmental institution based in The Hague, Netherlands. The International Criminal Court (ICC) commenced operations on July 1, 2002, when the Rome Statute, a multinational treaty that acts as the court's foundational and regulating document, entered into force. The Rome Statute is the treaty that founded the International Criminal Court. It was adopted on July 17, 1998, in a diplomatic meeting in Rome, Italy, and went into effect on July 1, 2002. The Rome Statute established four major international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression crimes. Only these four basic international crimes are investigated and prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) under the Rome Statute (ICC 2002: 3). The International Criminal Court (ICC) is the first and only permanent international court with the authority to prosecute individuals for international crimes. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a court of last resort that only hears the most serious crimes committed by citizens of member nations or crimes referred to it by the UN Security Council. Its purpose is to complement existing national judicial systems, and it may exercise jurisdiction only when national courts refuse or are unable to pursue. "Under Articles 6, 7, and 8 of the Rome Statute states that combatants guilty of committing widespread, systematic sexual violence against any civilian population will be charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity" (Banwell 2014: 45-46).

The ICC, for the first time, provides a broad definition of sexual assault in conflict. Significantly, the ICC's definition of crimes against humanity has been expanded beyond the limits of the ICTY and ICTR. The definition of rape, according to the Statute, is where:

1. The perpetrator invaded a person's body by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the victim's body or the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body.

2. The invasion was committed by force, or by the threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent (Wachala 2012: 543).

Article 7 of the Rome Statute defines certain forms of gender-based crimes within international criminal law in unprecedented ways. Rape, sexual enslavement, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilisation, and any other form of sexual violence can now be prosecuted as a war crime or crime against humanity. Rape is considered not only as a war crime but additionally if it is committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population. As an international crime, rape and sexual violence have the potential to empower women by allowing them to use international law as a powerful tool to confront atrocities perpetrated against them during armed conflict (Wachala 2012: 533).

Despite the fact that rape and sexual violence are recognised and denounced as crimes against humanity, "blanket amnesties have been granted for these crimes" (Banwell 2014: 50). This amnesty provision has created serious and difficult questions about how justice would be served by offering amnesty to individuals who have harmed communities, particularly women. To a greater extent, granting amnesties becomes an approval of women's abuse. In many post-conflict African countries, the social challenge and dread of confronting and dealing with persons who

have perpetrated abuse is a cause for concern. Justice has been regarded a privilege rather than a required component of post-conflict states. The International Criminal Court lacks universal territorial jurisdiction and may only investigate and prosecute crimes committed by nationals of member states or crimes referred to the court by the United Nations Security Council.

Despite advances in international law and regulation on sexual violence in armed conflict, girls and women are still sexually exploited during armed conflict. Because of the lack of a consistent criminal justice infrastructure, the disruption of informal protections from households and the community, and gender imbalance in decision-making, rape continues to be used as a war tactic (Walby et al. 2015: 173). Unfortunately, total elimination of this problem may be unattainable.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter drew out the ground on which numerous, differently anchored discourses concerning sexual and gender-based violence in conflict are taking place among researchers. Contributions from diverse academics, policymakers, and activists are highly laden with the explicit purpose of raising awareness, disclosing, and breaking the silence on sexual abuse. One of the most significant advances in the fight against sexual violence has been illuminating the extent, nature, and scope of sexual assault occurring in armed conflict settings. There is a firm conviction amongst scholars that rape is part and parcel of war. Sexual violence and conflict are intertwined and often exacerbated by conflict situations. Violence against girls and women, including mass rape and sexual torture, is not an exception in so-called "new wars" or "complex political emergencies", but is the norm in contemporary armed conflicts (Maedl, 2011: 131). Thus "women's bodies are weapons in the frontlines of conflict" (Raleigh et al. 2015: 25).

The fundamental finding of this chapter is that rape serves many distinct purposes and strives to inflict maximum pain and damage. Sexual assault is not just an aspect of the conflict; it is the war. Rape in times of conflict frequently conveys the idea that military tactics are intimately linked to sexual assault. Rape and other types of sexual violence against women in armed conflict settings are not only the product of a specific armed conflict, nor are they the result of undisciplined troops. This type of assault appears to be perpetrated on women on purpose in order to embarrass them and their men who are unable to protect them. Thus, the whole community is humiliated and demoralized. The perpetrators actions are intended to cause grief to the individual woman while also robbing the wider group of its humanity. "The penis therefore becomes a weapon of war" (Wachala 2012: 534). The empirical evidence offered in this chapter makes this element of sexual assault in wartime very evident.

There are two crucial aspects to consider while mapping the evolution of gender and violence in Africa: for women, the division between war and peace is false. Their exposure to violence is not limited to conflict situations. The level of violence may be greater and appear to be distinct during armed conflict, yet it reflects the everyday experience of violence against women. The scholars in this chapter underline that woman are targeted for sexual assault for two reasons: first, they are in a situation where patriarchal gender relations are reinforced, and secondly, they are female embodiments of different socio-cultural identities. The significant increase in awareness and willingness to discuss sexual assault in conflicts should have prevented or reduced the high prevalence of the crime. The reality, on the other hand, is much grimmer. In conflict circumstances, sexual assault has gotten more sophisticated, pervasive, and atrocious, and current remedies have not been effective in discouraging or stopping it. Rape is on the rise, and the statistics shown in

the chapter demonstrate the severity of violence against women. Of course, these statistics are mostly estimates, and the true total is almost certainly greater. Because of cultural, religious, and personal reasons, women are hesitant to come out when raped. Human Rights Watch reported in 2009 that official numbers are skewed and do not provide a whole picture.

The classification of sexual assault against women as a war crime has been hailed as a significant step forward in international law. It is clear that the understanding of sexual violence in war has progressed from being under-recorded, under-analysed, and misunderstood as a private matter to being widely documented and analysed and is now part of international peace and security discourse and policy development. Several legal tools have been put in place to end impunity against women in armed conflict. Despite evidence of progress in this area, the international community should not be complacent about the progress made in dealing with sexual assault in armed conflict. There are several incidents of women being sexually assaulted throughout Africa's military conflicts. For example, despite improvements in international law, large-scale rape and sexual violence against women continue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan.

Given the brief backdrop depicted above, it is critical to concentrate on two broad aspects. Sexual and gender-based violence cannot be addressed unless the cultural and customary origins and expressions of uneven power relations are addressed. Addressing sexual and gender-based violence involves more than just institutional reform and increasing the number of women. It necessitates addressing the underlying roots of the problem, notably current gender norms and power dynamics. A gendered analysis of sexualized violence in wartime is required, as well as an

approach that calls it out and introduces instruments to prevent it. Rape will continue unabated unless and until the rape stories are told. "People must hear the horrifying, think the unthinkable, and speak the unspeakable" (Skjelsbaek 2010: 15). As previously demonstrated, conflict has a negative impact on women's health and well-being. Women are left emotionally scarred. The psychological implications of violence on women cannot be understated. Chapter 3 will, therefore, examine the trauma, memory and spirituality from an African perspective.

Chapter 3

Trauma, Memory, and Spirituality

3.1 Trauma

Gender is a critical "determinant of health and has tremendous power and impact on differential susceptibility and exposure to mental health risks and consequences" (WHO 2013: 4). It affects women's power and control over the factors that influence their mental health. Gender is important in identifying vulnerability, exposure to various mental health hazards, and how different sexes deal with and process trauma. Women and men encounter different sorts of trauma and have different reactions to it, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Women are more likely than men to be traumatised.

Furthermore, women are twice as likely as males to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, have longer post-traumatic symptoms, and are more sensitive to stimuli that trigger memories of the trauma (Ainamani et al. 2020, WHO 2013). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a "mental illness that can develop as a result of being exposed to extremely threatening or terrifying experiences. PTSD can develop as a result of a single traumatic experience or as a result of repeated stress exposure" (Bisson et al. 2015). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report, one out of every 12 adults suffer from PTSD at some point in their lives, and women are twice as likely as men to develop PTSD following trauma exposure. Women will experience PTSD at a rate of 10%, whereas men will experience it at a rate of 4%. Sexual assault is the most common traumatic event that triggers PTSD in women, and the impacts can be severe. 1 in every 3 raped women develops PTSD, compared to 1 in every 20 non-victims (WHO 2013: 3). Some women are

at a higher risk of violence than the average woman. These include poor, single, divorced, uneducated, and widowed women are more likely to suffer from the physical and interpersonal consequences of trauma.

Drawing on the feminist standpoint theory highlighted in Chapter 1, feminist research is a scholarly inquiry and analysis of social interactions with the goal of producing knowledge that is explicitly based on women's lived realities in a world. One needs to understand the experiences of women from their standpoint and reality. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse trauma and trauma models from a women's standpoint using a feminist lens. This involves analysing what is traumatic and understand, how trauma affects human experience and how social location interacts with trauma. In the context of trauma exposure, gender serves as both a risk and a resilience element. From a feminist perspective, "one must always think about how gender informed the traumatic experience, the response to the experience, women's expression of that response, our responses to those expressions, and the cultural context. This, in turn, helps define what is traumatic and what is not" (Dritt 2010: 20). In understanding sexual violence and trauma, there is a need to draw on contemporary feminist debates and approaches. This is because power dynamics in social environments shape and constrain women's experiences. Understanding women's traumatic experiences in the context of their circumstances is therefore critical and our understanding of trauma needs to be modified. As a result, women's testimonies of their trauma become a vital starting point for.

The American Psychiatric Association (2013) defines trauma as "the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways: directly

experiencing the traumatic event(s); witnessing, in person, the traumatic event(s) as it occurred to others; learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend (in case of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental; or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)". Post-traumatic stress symptoms and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the most common psychological distress measurements in the aftermath of trauma. The American Psychological Association (APA) has established a standard approach to PTSD. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V, APA 2013), PTSD can occur when a person is subjected to an incident that involves real or threatened death, major harm, or a harm to the bodily integrity of self or others. "PTSD was officially recognised by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. Initially, PTSD was strongly linked to post-combat stress in the aftermath of the Vietnam War" (Gilbert 2014: 25). However, this diagnosis soon began to apply to a wide range of traumatic experiences. Post-traumatic stress symptoms include difficulty concentrating, depression, interpersonal difficulties, irritability, outbursts of anger, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares, and hypervigilance, confusion, heart palpitations, severe anxiety, exhaustion, lack of appetite, suicide, loss of memory, low self-esteem, feelings of guilt and shame, feelings of complete powerlessness, paralysis of any initiative, chronic mistrust, feelings of isolation, loss of faith and sleeplessness (APA 2013; Smigelsky, 2014; Bisson et al., 2015). In addition to psychological symptoms, intense fear, helplessness, or horror on the part of the person who experienced they may be experienced immediately after the traumatic event and can continue to recur over many years.

Throughout the twentieth century, trauma research mostly focused on the experiences of troops returning from conflict. Sexual violence has now been added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (DSM-5) as a potential stressor for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of outstanding advocacy and lobbying by feminist scholars and activists (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). "Rape trauma syndrome, or the negative psychological effects of rape", is suggested to be traumatic responses similar to war (Mohammed 2018: 17). This shift came as a result of decades of feminist action and study advocating for the awareness of sexual violence's psychological effects. Feminists have been "among the most vociferous critics of the DSM for its bias against women, its medicalisation of women's experiences, and [for] constructing suffering as an individual pathology rather than a response to social injustice" (LaFrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2013: 123). Existing conceptions of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been criticised by feminist scholars (Brand, 2003; Webster and Dunn, 2005; Brown, 2013; Tseris, 2015; et al). These criticisms centre on how trauma responses are often seen pathologically rather than normatively, and how the diagnostic system castigates victims, labelling them in ways that deprive their experiences of meaning, history, and context. Brown claims that the criteria for defining trauma as an occurrence "beyond the scope of human experience were androcentric, failing to account for sexualized violence and other assaults that occur so frequently in a woman's life" (Brown 1995: 100). Responding to the categorisation of a traumatised person, Brown, one of the pioneers of feminist therapy, asks: "What purposes are served when we formally define a traumatic stressor as an event outside of normal human experience and, by inference, exclude those events that occur at a high enough base rate in the lives of certain groups that such events are, normative, normal in a statistical sense" (1991:123).

As Brown argues, rape, incest, and battery were not considered traumatic events for a long time because women mainly experienced them. She contends that traumatic events do not have to be beyond the scope of human experience. Trauma models medically diagnose victims of sexual abuse, defining the consequences of sexual assault in restricted, medical terms, and limiting women's autonomy to choose how they experience and interpret sexual violation. This therefore demonstrates that the "medicalized framework of sexual violence and trauma" is highly individualising (Mohammed 2018: 21). Until the mid-20th century rape and even more so incest tended to be ignored when it threatened social harmony due to the need to preserve the social order as opposed to an attention to the lived experience This of course was a gendered phenomenon.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders dominates the conversation on trauma in mental health. Until recently, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which was classified as an anxiety disorder, was the only recognised trauma-related disorder. A person must meet particular criteria set forth by the DSM to be diagnosed with PTSD (Chumbley 2016: 5). Although a wide range of experiences and events can be psychologically distressing, not everyone who is exposed to traumatic situations develops PTSD.

The "increasingly normative trauma discourse" is regarded as universal. As a result, this discourse has grown to dominate, requiring individuals in non-clinical contexts to interpret their experiences as trauma to receive support (Mohammed 2018: 102). This frequently requires women to explain their experiences in medical and psychological terms in order to be eligible for formal supports and resources, such as counselling. Furthermore, because PTSD is increasingly associated with "genuine trauma," victims who appear stoic or unaffected are viewed as less credible by both

doctors and courts. Women are forced to adhere to the stereotype of "disordered victims" in order to seek justice (Luckhurst 2008: 7). As a result, whether or not women exhibit PTSD symptoms, they are pathologized since the possibility of not being traumatised or wounded by rape is "not only characterised as rare but as abnormal" (Gavey & Schmidt 2011: 444). Despite evidence that not all raped women experience trauma, "the notion that it may be possible to experience rape and suffer no lasting, devastating psychological effects is less often articulated than is the discourse of harm" (Mohammed 2018: 23).

Tseris (2013: 154) extends these critiques by querying the medically oriented understandings of trauma as often containing deterministic assumptions about women's lives following abuse or violent situations that they may not recognise women's resilience. Morrow and Hawxhurst further highlight that conventional psychotherapy systems encourage women to adjust to their prescribed roles (2010: 40). In other words, women are seen as the weaker sex socialised to be docile victims by societal ideas with conventional psychotherapy at times reinforcing that notion. This kind of stance does not recognise women's growth and resilience in the aftermath of a traumatic event. In certain ways, the field of neuroscience can also be utilised to stigmatise traumatised women, citing their biological vulnerability to trauma symptoms while downplaying the social context in which the trauma occurred (Tseris 2013: 158).

Trauma models reflect a broader trend of medicalising women's experiences and obscure women's daily social experience. Trauma discourse, which is a biomedical model, does not recognise other daily stressors. For example, an African survivor of trauma must deal with the chronic and daily stresses of poverty and structural violence. This, too, can exacerbate the trauma that they

experience. Brown, 1995 (cited by Mohammed 2018: 22) claims that "trauma models fail to account for the psychosomatic effects of everyday experiences of gendered oppression". Tseris (2013) concurs that "trauma models fail to account for how social forces are translated into individual illness and become embodied as individual experience". Within this observation, Tseris and Brown provide a landmark point that reveals that trauma therapy and trauma models may be ineffective if they do not occur within a broad social movement that questions women's continued exposure to trauma.

In the APA definition of trauma, trauma is viewed as an episode rather than a process reflective of other factors. Traumatic events are often described as, and believed to be sudden, unspeakable, overwhelming, and disorienting. These descriptions may be apt concerning the initial trauma. Such labels do not necessarily fully capture the trauma (Ibrahim 2009: 251). Therefore, defining trauma as one episode fails to account for other traumas like historical trauma, race-based trauma, and intergenerational trauma. "Trauma models should thus be expanded and diversified" to consider Africans' historical and current-day experiences (Fast & Collin-Vézina 2019: 126). Motsi and Masango (2012) dispute the term 'post' in PTSD. The term 'post' fails to accurately describe trauma. It disregards the survivor's ongoing trauma issues, which can last years after the occurrence. While it is true that the term 'post' refers to the event itself rather than the experience, these events have not concluded in the eyes of the victims owing to emotional scars, disabilities, disappearances, and damage. The survivor's world has been completely and irreversibly altered by the incident, and they must come to terms with their "reality and a new normal". Trauma is thus not a one-time event, but a continuous state of pain or suffering (Motsi & Masango 2012: 4).

Moreover, the severity of PTSD symptoms increases with trauma load, or the number of stressful encounters. Ainamani et al., (2020: 2) postulates that this trauma load is the "dose-response effect or building block effect. Like a building block, each traumatic event type adds up to the vulnerability of mental illness", especially among the survivors of trauma. It must be noted that intergenerational trauma, historical trauma, race-based trauma, poverty, and daily life stressors become building blocks that increase the trauma load in victims leading to repeated traumatisation. In this regard the term post becomes questionable.

Despite the efficacy of the medical-diagnostic approach in treating physical disorders, I concur with the scholars who have questioned its legitimacy as the dominant therapeutic model. Trauma is not a unitary concept of universal truth. The lives of trauma survivors are often complicated. Understanding women's narratives mean that "women are not confined to a one-size-fits-all assessment of their experiences" (Tseris 2013: 161). Each traumatic experience is context-specific; hence the outcomes should not be generalised to all. Tseris (2013: 159) quotes Gilfus (1999) who stated that the "difficulty with the medical model of emotional trauma is that it typically assumes that all trauma" experiences result, predictably, from psychological problems. Trauma response is multifaceted, and multiple people respond to trauma differently. Not everyone who experiences trauma will exhibit overt signs of trauma or PTSD.

"Trauma survivors may exhibit some or all the range of responses concurrently or physically" (Dritt 2010: 66). When alone, a survivor of sexual violence, for example, may experience trauma symptoms such as flashbacks and anxiety, while displaying resilience and resourcefulness in relation to his or her children. This nuanced picture of strengths and difficulties calls into question

conventional notions of "resilience as simply the absence of symptomatology" (Tseris 2013: 161). Some women may be able to make sense of their victimisation experiences as a result of the diagnostic categorization. It does not, however, allow women to discover their voices. Understanding women's stories entails acknowledging that their experiences are not universal. A gender lens to viewing trauma enables us to see how socialisation and social location presents both strengths and challenges associated with trauma recovery. As a result, some feminist therapists and scholars have advocated for broadening the definition of trauma to more accurately reflect daily oppression and its effects on mental wellbeing. Feminist debates stressed the importance of feminist consciousness-raising, critiquing the conventional psychotherapy methods, and led to the development of feminist therapy. Feminist therapy is the practice of therapy informed by feminist political philosophies and analysis. It is based on "multicultural feminist scholarship on the psychology of gender, power, and social location", and it aims to advance transformation and social change (Brown 1994, Dritt 2010).

Trauma theory, driven by feminist ideas, questions the conventions of traditional women's mental health interventions. It is a holistic model that stresses the importance of working with women concerning their bodies, environments, and contexts. (Morrow & Hawxhurst 2010: 40). It acknowledges that an individual's psychological well-being can be harmed by the socio-political environment. Feminist trauma therapy also criticises the experiences of marginalised people, such as sexism, racism, classicalism and heterosexism.

Notably, feminist therapy values the trauma survivors' cultural context as culture conditions how a person responds and processes trauma. It also understands that spirituality can either be a

stumbling block or a resilience factor in trauma recovery. Feminist therapy expands its scope to cover groups of people who may be "psychologically or spiritually wounded" as a result of being marginalised due to race, ethnicity, religion, or sexuality. The majority of definitions and trauma frameworks exclude specific groups. Despite having undergone large-scale trauma, certain populations of people have been omitted from trauma frameworks (Webster & Dunn 2005: 132-133). Dritt (2010: 6) proposes working with clients using a "bio-psycho-social-spiritual/existential approach" because trauma impacts brain and body systems, the conscious as well as the personality, shaping people's meaning-making systems.

a) Poverty as an exacerbating factor of trauma

Sub-Saharan Africa is an area plagued by some of the world's worst human rights atrocities, decades of armed war, and disease epidemics. In addition, the region has the highest proportion of individuals living in poverty. Poverty is defined as living on less than $1.25 per day, according to the World Bank (2012). Not only does Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest percentage of people living in poverty, but it also includes around a quarter of the world's "chronically poor". Conflict has been described as "the single most important driver of poverty and human misery in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Smigelsky et al., 2014:127). As a result, the impact of war and conflict contributes to persistent hardship conditions that contribute to persistent poverty and trauma. When it comes to trauma, those in the lowest socioeconomic levels are the most vulnerable. In the African setting, it is impossible to analyse trauma without considering how poverty exacerbates women's suffering. Women bear the brunt of poverty in Africa, and poverty is a daily stressor that can lead to women's re-traumatisation. Gender is conceptualised as a structural determinant of mental health and mental illness "that runs like a fault line, interconnecting with and deepening the

disparities associated with other critical socioeconomic determinants such as income, education, employment, and social position" (WHO 2013:11). Gender acquired risks are numerous and interlinked, owing to women's increased vulnerability to poverty, discrimination, and socioeconomic hardship. The health social gradient is significantly gendered. Women account for over 70% of the world's poor, with Sub-Saharan Africa home to 59% of the world's poor women (UNWomen and UNDP report 2020). In Zimbabwe, poverty is endemic. An estimated 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, and 34% live in extreme poverty. Population-based studies of women in Zimbabwe (WHO 2013 and 2020) found that women suffer the most from mental health problems. The information presented above shows a strong correlation between socioeconomic status, gender, and mental health. Adverse poverty is linked with a considerable increase in mental illnesses among women.

Trauma is defined as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event. Interestingly, the loss of property and community that often led to poverty for many people in conflict situations is often not included in the list of "violent events" by traumatologists. As noted earlier, trauma is not one event but a process where other daily stressors can exacerbate the trauma. Using Sierra Leone as a case study, Ibrahim (2009) questions trauma's universality and its systems. Through the testimonies of women affected by the civil war, Ibrahim (2009:254) notes that the women, as they narrated their experiences, focused more on their continued suffering and helplessness, making their post-war lives a continuum with their traumatic war experiences. The initial trauma that the women experienced may well have been about their experiences of being abducted, raped, and displaced. However, their ongoing trauma is entrenched in the material conditions of their existence. Women repeatedly concentrated on survival fears rather than prior traumas. The lack of

enough food was always the first issue to arise in this study, followed by either poor health care or fear for their current security, and last a lack of quality education for the children. The struggle for survival was more immediate than a focus on the traumas they had experienced. Undeniably, the evidence presented in this study echoes the World Health Organisation's conclusions that poverty is a variable in the continuum of trauma.

Clarks research findings (2018) working with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina and interactions with several nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) are consistent with Ibrahim's findings (2009). The women in his study expressed problems and stressors that they face on a daily basis. They desired financial stability; they were concerned about health issues, the high cost of living, and the futures of their children. "The significance of daily stressors warns against oversimplifications of trauma." Stressors in one's daily life can worsen old trauma or produce new forms of trauma. However, it is crucial to note that, while many survivors of sexual abuse are still affected by their war experiences, the assistance that they require is not always tied to their war trauma (Clarks 2018: 805).

The majority of the global burden of disease caused by mental health disorders is borne by low and middle-income countries. "They are exacerbated further by poverty, overcrowding, and general suffering" (Schnyder et al. 2016:7). One of the most important difficulties to address in diagnosing and treating post-traumatic stress disorder is the scarcity of resources in low and middle-income countries. Globally, there is considerable disparity in the distribution of health resources. For example, the West has more psychiatrists than most African countries. Most African hospitals are severely understaffed and underfunded. (Kaminer & Eagle 2010; Motsi 2010;

Smigelsky et al., 2014). African countries lack the expertise required to assess traumatic experiences in the context of PTSD. When faced with millions of trauma survivors across the continent, it is obviously a luxury to be able to provide one-on-one counselling. It is therefore not surprising that in low and middle-income nations, over 90% of patients with mental illnesses go untreated. This poses a significant obstacle to evidence-based therapies for PTSD and other illnesses because they are often resource-intensive, rely on adequately qualified personnel to provide them, and assume the availability of a requisite health infrastructure. Most poor and middle-income countries lack these resources, making it difficult for them to provide services similar to those already provided in developed countries.

Furthermore, "societal issues may hinder the healing process" (Hayner 2011: 152). In effect, trauma transcends the psychological and becomes, for these women, an indicator of systematic marginalisation in which economic deprivation and severe poverty are a continuum of the traumas they are battling (Ibrahim 2009: 259). The trauma suffered by these women challenges the commonly prescribed notions of trauma. The concepts of neurology, traumatology, and psychology are problematic because they superimpose psychological over physical or material trauma. Ibrahim's study contests the distinctions made in psychoanalysis between the mental and the material, drawing attention to the often-neglected aspect of poverty-induced trauma. One could argue that most traumatic experiences are not random, unexplainable incidents, but rather are tied to everyday situations of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration (Ibrahim 2009: 249-250).

Poverty is not outside the range of usual human experience and therefore should be treated as part and parcel of trauma as the two are inextricably linked. Women's experiences especially in poor countries are focused more on their continued suffering and helplessness as a result of poverty and structural violence, making their post-war lives a continuum with their traumatic war experiences Their trauma from rape, torture, and brutality cannot be treated in isolation from the poverty-induced trauma they experience daily. In essence, the psychological and poverty-induced traumas are inextricably linked and should be treated as such.

b) An Afrocentric view of trauma

The conceptualisation of illness and mental health is a "cultural construct as the surrounding larger society around oneself influences personal views of health problems. Culture depicts the modus operandi of a group of people and their shared values" (Schubert 2018: 30-31). Individuals' personal meanings of traumatic experiences are shaped by the social context in which they occur, impacting how they understand and give meaning to the trauma. It also significantly influences how someone deals with trauma and conveys traumatic stress through behaviour, emotions, and thinking. Trauma intersects in many ways with culture, history, race, gender, and location. As Green (2004: 26) states, "specific types of events may be differentially traumatic across cultures, and how specific stressors are perceived and processed may vary depending on the culture of the individual and the community". As this research is centred on an African case of trauma amongst women survivors of Gukurahundi, it is imperative to bring an African understanding to trauma and spirituality. Motsi (2010) defines trauma in a Ndebele cultural perspective and in a way that the survivors of Gukurahundi put it. The majority of survivors in his study use the word

"ukuhlulukelwa" which means to be spiritually and emotionally traumatized (Motsi 2010:155-156)

This study is premised on the Afrocentric approach that advocates for the need to conceptualise the world in ways consistent with African people's history and apply that knowledge in relation to the context. Africans' reality relies on culture, African sources, spiritual systems, moral teachings, the fluid connection of community, nature, and spirit. Afrocentrism is commonly defined as "African peoples' study using an Africa-centred lens" (Ebede-Ndi 2016: 66). Afrocentricity argues that African ideals and values must be placed at the centre of all discussions involving African people, culture, and behaviour. The Afrocentric concept seeks to identify and situate African people's placement or subject place in social, political, and cultural discourses. African ideas, symbols, and interests as articulated in African world views and ideologies provide a clear framework for comprehending African reality (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 7).

Cultural differences are vital to the Afrocentric perspective, and they should not be overlooked. Culture has an impact on every aspect of mental health. The culture of a specific society influences the social norms, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours held by a group of people. Trauma can be defined in many ways by an individual's socio-cultural background or by the beliefs and attitudes that a person has learned or internalised. Trauma-inducing events may be vulnerable to cultural construction, allowing individuals' reactions to traumatic situations to be impacted by their society's attitude or conventions around the occurrence (Nevhutalu & Mudhovozi 2012: 180-181). Trauma can be experienced differently in different communities and cultures depending on religion, beliefs, traditions, and how people view the world and live. Understanding trauma and how to cope with it differs in the African community, Asian community, and Western community.

Therefore, it is imperative to understand trauma from a cultural standpoint and consider the socio-political context.

The West has spearheaded the trauma research and influenced the world globally. Trauma studies were pioneered by psychology and psychiatry, which have continued to set the benchmark and regulate the approaches that scholars rely on. Brown observes that the APA Diagnostic and Statistical Manual is the "bible of psychiatric diagnosis, and the criteria for a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder" (Brown 1991: 119). The PTSD diagnostic category's relevance to non-western cultures has been debated. There is an on-going argument amongst African scholars, psychologists, and psychiatrists (Ibrahim 2009; Kaminer & Eagle 2010; Motsi &Masango 2012; Ebede-Ndi 2016; Schubert 2018 et al.) about the relevance of the biomedical approach to trauma and the universality of PTSD despite cultural difference. The contribution of the biomedical approach is invaluable and should be recognised; however, they argue against the biomedical model's universal application without considering the socio-political and cultural contexts.

The bio-medical model, on which western medical knowledge is based, assumes that diseases are universal, and it focuses on health from a purely biological base. As a result, minority populations have consistently been pathologized. The "model overlooks the importance of an individual's engagement with the outside environment in the development of sickness, the perception of sickness, and the moulding and presentation of symptoms and reaction patterns" (Schubert 2018: 32). Psychological suffering is tied to a wide range of socio-political factors, including culture. African scholars have argued that the PTSD diagnosis is a Western approach that fails to capture the complexities of trauma experienced by Africans since it concentrates on a single traumatic event. It ignores, for example, how societal factors such as colonialism, political

disenfranchisement, and economic oppression can be chronically traumatising, as well as culturally responses to trauma (DeLoach & Petersen 2010: 47).

As a result, the PTSD diagnosis does not account for the complexities of traumatic experiences for all individuals or cultures, nor does it accommodate clients with non-traditional symptom constellations (DeLoach & Petersen 2010: 47). The DSM (APA) diagnostic does not take into account socio-cultural background factors associated to the traumatic Because reactions to traumatic experiences in other cultures do not always fit into western cultural standards, the model's applicability in cross-cultural situations has been called into doubt (Schubert 2018: 32). Furthermore, Schubert emphasises that information derived from therapeutic work with trauma survivors from other cultures suggests to more diverse repercussions that are not adequately captured by PTSD symptoms. Musisi acknowledges that most mass trauma studies indicate to a basic set of mental health symptoms in traumatised individuals, but that these symptoms may manifest differently in different cultural contexts (Musisi 2004: 80). Not all trauma survivors will exhibit the same reactions as outlined in the DSM. The claim here is that there is a risk of underestimating trauma responses by confining them to psychological trauma. One might argue that because of the diversity of cultural circumstances, it is impossible to expect the diagnostic to be applicable to all cultures globally. Contextual factors impact how people experience, respond to, and explain traumatic situations. These contextual elements are used by society or individuals to experience what is considered traumatic. The social, political, and cultural realities in which people live and use to make sense of what occurs to them are all contextual variables (Nevhutalu & Mudhovozi 2012: 183).

Culture also influences how a trauma survivor's surroundings, or social network, interprets the event or chain of events. The survivor's community has an impact on his or her recovery from post-traumatic symptoms. When discussing healing solutions, it is critical to consider how the community and individuals understand traumatic events. Even when people are traumatised, it is critical to understand how trauma is perceived in different cultures and how individuals react to it. Furthermore, depression symptoms are frequently culturally influenced, leading in a failure to seek therapy for a variety of reasons, including the notion that depression is symptomatic of a weak mind, poor health, a troubled soul, and a lack of self-love. In Africa, the word "mental health" has negative implications that stem from stigma. Suffering and sadness are initially endured in silence and seclusion and are often only discussed with family members and close friends when situations deteriorate and continue. Because self-control is regarded as a traditional virtue, emotions are regarded as weaknesses expressed only by inferior individuals (Nevhutalu & Mudhovozi 2012: 182). For example, women who have been raped continue to face significant hurdles and stigma from their family and community. Yohani & Okeke-Ihejirika (2018: 387) argue that "any kind of sexual interference is viewed in the African cultures as devaluing the woman". The lack of social acknowledgement of the victims may affect their reaction to trauma and negatively influence their psychological recovery. Women who have been raped are stigmatised in their communities, resulting in a loss of self-esteem and self-worth, leaving them to suffer the agony of humiliation and guilt alone (Motsi & Masango 2010: 5). As a result, victims of rape frequently suffer in silence as a coping mechanism to avoid stigma. By suppressing the experience, women can essentially avoid the psychological symptomology and focus on continuing with their lives. Not talking about it, disclosing it, or dwelling on it becomes a survival strategy.

The conceptualization of resilience is also different within African culture. People's individual responses to trauma reflect their "personalities, resiliency, and cultural background". (Mutambara & Sodi 2018: 2). For example, the concept of motherhood or wifehood in the African culture may, at times, affect how women respond to trauma. There is a common expression in Zulu and Ndebele culture that *'Umfazi yimbokodo'*, which means that a woman is a rock. This gives the notion that a woman in the African culture is indestructible. This pressures women to act like superwoman projecting themselves as strong, selfless, and emotionless in order to cope with traumatic stress and depression. One might, therefore, not show overt signs of PTSD as outlined in the DSM.

Motsi (2010) brings to our attention to how different cultures deal with trauma and express emotions by describing how Ndebele's and Shona's express grief. Ndebele's are generally much more composed in expressing emotion, while Shona's are strident and outrageous. Therefore, it might seem easier to diagnose the more expressive one than the one who seems more composed. This reveals a distinct cultural response to trauma.

According to the DSM, PTSD is defined as a traumatic experience that affects the victim's body and mind. From this perspective, the definition of PTSD is non-inclusive and reflects an individualised approach. The medical and psychiatric fields evaluate a person from "an egocentric standpoint", ignoring the societal origins and progression of mental illness (Motsi & Masango 2012: 1-2). This concept of the egocentric self relates to a view of the individual as a self-contained, autonomous entity. The PTSD model is believed to have some shortcomings, such as focusing on the individual while downplaying the impacts of trauma on the traumatised person's family, friends, and other people in the traumatised person's social circle. It also fails to recognise that trauma can be experienced collectively by the whole community. "Unlike in Anglo-American

cultures, where an emphasis is placed on the individual, the African-centred world view sees the 'I' (self) and the 'We' (community, nature) as interdependent" (Waldron 2012: 41).

In contrast to the individualistic approach of the Western worldview, Africans tend to view life communally, seeing themselves as part of a larger whole. Africa has a more sociocentric view of the self, in which individuals exist within social interactions and networks from which they obtain their feeling of self-worth, self-control, sense of belonging, and sense of security. In both a physical and spiritual sense, our sense of being as Africans is drawn from our sense of belonging and community. An individual is an individual because he or she belongs to a community. Thus, an individual is intertwined with the whole tribe and community and cannot be understood in isolation as issues exist in the sense of collective responsibility. As a result, pain and stress are viewed as an issue that affects the entire community rather than simply an individual.

Finally, Western philosophy holds that a person is made up of mind and body, and that trauma is a mental state; thus, psychological, and psychiatric approaches see a person as an egocentric self-made up of mind and body. "The separation of the mind and body in western culture neglects to incorporate the impact of trauma on one's spirit and spirituality, facets of the human experience essential to Africans" (Webster & Dunn 2005: 133). Belief in the spirit realm is an essential component of the African worldview. There is no separation between religious and secular life, and one owes their existence to others, both current and former generations (Motsi & Masango 2012:3). They believe in a world of the dead, who communicate with the living through their spirits. According to Mashau (2016:3), ancestors are often seen "as the living dead, capable of bestowing both blessings and curses on their descendants".

Calamity may be interpreted through a religious or spiritual lens, especially in Africa. For example, in Zimbabwe, death, sickness, misfortune, and other traumatic events are usually believed to have spiritual connotations. This is the belief in most African societies. Certain traumatic events may be attributed to evil spirits, witchcraft, or ancestors being angry. The family may then seek answers through traditional healers or prophets. As a result, trauma impacts a person's physical, social, mental, and spiritual well-being (i.e., the whole person), and as a result, the community also is negatively affected. With this in mind, Motsi and Masango (2012: 7), propose redefining trauma from a mental health problem to a psychosocial problem as events and their impact overrides a threat to self and must be considered as a threat to the family, and community. Possessing cultural sensitivity and understanding people's needs involves understanding that no one treatment or diagnosis fits all.

3.2 Conceptualization of Spirituality in Africa

Religion and spirituality are frequently included into the post-traumatic healing process, including how people perceive crises, the coping mechanisms they choose, and the short and long-term trauma effects. Spirituality alters people's view of the environment by "creating a screen for experiences and perceptions associated to potential spiritual events" (Farley 2007: 3). It also assists people in interpreting and explaining the world, as well as developing views, values, and ethics. Religion and spirituality are both important for a person's psychosocial well-being. Spiritual and religious beliefs have been found to aid in coping and resilience during times of adversity (Mutambara & Sodi 2018: 2).

Spirituality can be experienced or expressed through a wide variety of traditions and practices. Many Africans believe in a symbiotic relationship between the natural and supernatural worlds, where deceased ancestors reside and continue to exercise influence over the living. Spirituality is culturally specific, and it implies different things to various people in different cultures. Most individuals believe in some form of transcendence, or the belief that there is more to life than the tangible or practical, as well as activities that give meaning and purpose to people's lives. Spirituality becomes the vehicle through which that meaning is sought, and it is concerned with the structures that offer meaning and purpose to a person's life while also assisting them in dealing with the vicissitudes of existence (Cornah 2006: 6). Spirituality and religion are often misunderstood to mean the same, and yet they are different. Overarching and interwoven themes can be found in religion and spirituality. Both stem from the desire to recognise and protect what is sacred (Park et al. 2017:8). Religion is a set of shared ideas, values, rituals, and practices that a social community uses to experience and connect with the sacred or divine. "Religion is an institution with structure", rules, and commands that must be followed. (Foy et al., 2011; Pargament, 2013; Anastova, 2014).

On the other hand, spirituality is defined as "the search for the sacred, with sacred referring not only to God or a higher power but also to other aspects of life that are perceived to be manifestations of the divine or imbued with divine-like qualities, such as transcendence, immanence, boundlessness, and ultimacy" (Pargament et al. 2013: 7). While the belief in God or gods is a necessary part of faith and religion; individuality and innovation characterise spirituality, which is not institutional or traditionalistic. When it comes to spirituality, there is no one God or entity that can be referred to as the higher power. Belief in a higher power or belief in something more substantial might transform someone into a spiritual being.

Moreover, unlike traditional religions, spirituality is open in the sense that it is not determined by rules and regulations but rather by experiences. Spiritual people believe in a 'higher power' without necessarily calling this power God (Fangauf 2014: 138). Spirituality can be realised in a religious environment, or it can be extremely personalised and completely separate from religion. "Spirituality is broader and more individualistic", whereas religion is more dogmatic, conventional, institutional, and includes the aspect of shared understanding within a group or community framework (McIntire & Duncan 2013: 103). People may claim to be spiritual but not religious. Kaminer and Eagle extend further by highlighting that even trauma survivors who are not particularly religious may draw on a spiritual framework to make sense of their experience (2010: 65). The connection with God or a higher power is regarded as a critical component in spirituality, as it is associated with the 'self' and one's way of being in the world. Spiritual practices, " alter the neuronal chemistry of the brain", providing a sense of serenity, safety, and happiness while also reducing anxiety, stress, and depression (Reis & Menezes, 2017: 765).

In traditional African religion, God is elevated above and beyond the ancestors, and he is referred to as the supreme creator or entity, as well as the universe's primary pillar. Ancestors then serve as intermediaries between the living and God (Mokgobi 2014: 2). "An African is African not by the colour of his or her skin, but by the extent to which she or he is primarily governed by or has internalised, through the influence of upbringing and culture, which emphasise the influence and importance of spirituality in the mental constitution and health of an adult human being" (Nwoye 2017: 49). The African world view perceives the spiritual and material as one, valuing spiritualism, oneness with nature, and communalism based on the quest for harmony, connectedness, and transcendence (Ebede-Ndi 2016: 74). This view acknowledges that the spirit permeates everything,

and everything in the universe is interconnected. There is value and connectedness to spirit, to ancestors and the community as a whole. "African spirituality simply acknowledges that beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life, and therefore African religion cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane" (Olupona, 2015).

African spirituality does not require the separation of the spirit and the mind; it demands that the various aspects of being spirit, mind, heart, and body be a single integrated whole in vital connection with all else that is also spirit. This is the central African principle. "The human spirit is a trifold, which can be understood as referring to the before-life, the earth-life, and the afterlife. Earth-life itself is also trifold, unfolding and radiating in the cycle of belonging, being, and becoming. Thus, the human spirit progresses from the before-life, through the cycles of belonging, being, and becoming that constitute earth-life, into the afterlife" (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 14). Belonging describes the connection that exists between each individual and the family, clan, and community into which they are born. The primary feature of belonging is connection, and all experience of existence is dependent on it. Belonging, which is linked to the sense of being known, generates the spiritual, emotional, and mental context in which the spirit articulates and animates being known. Life becomes liable through connection and belonging serves as the context or bridge for the self to progress from the ante-conscious to the conscious (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 15). This anchors one in a collective experience, from which meaning emerges. Many Africans continue to hold onto traditional beliefs and practises during key or essential life phases (such as birth, initiation, marriage, death, incurable illness, and other daily issues). These ceremonies give meaning and purpose to a person's life while also connecting them to their ancestors, family, and community, giving them a sense of belonging.

Spirituality can shape one's view of the world by explaining why certain events occur, whether good or bad. Beliefs in a higher power can help enforce a better sense of control and meaning (Anastova 2014: 11). As Mashau (2016: 3) states, in most African traditional culture "there is nothing that happens without a cause". In the African worldview, the earth, or visible physical world, is the home of created things, whereas the unseen, spiritual realm is the home of the spirits, including divinities, ancestral and ghost spirits, clan deities, and other unknown, invisible malevolent forces (Nwoye 2017: 48). In the indigenous African worldview, illness and mental health issues are perceived to be an imbalance of the body and an imbalance in one's social life. A breakdown in one's kinship, familial bonds, and relationship with one's ancestors can all be linked to this imbalance. Ancestors can offer guidance and bestow good fortune and honour on their surviving dependents, but they can also make demands that, if not met, can bring suffering to the individual and their family. Many Africans are influenced by this belief and believe that the basis for people's failure or success in this world is due to the actions and motives of hidden spiritual agencies. Therefore, trauma in the African context should be viewed based on cultural beliefs in African spirituality.

Despite the fact that humans rely on culture, it can be a double-edged sword. (Motsi & Masango, 2012). Failure to observe or adhere to certain beliefs and practices can become a traumatic experience. This, in turn, can either facilitate or impede healing. Many African scholars (Ibrahim 2009; Kaminer &Eagle 2010; Motsi 2010; Smigelsky et al. 2014; Schnyder et al. 2016) observe that the inability to provide a decent funeral for loved ones is a major source of spiritual strife in Africa. Motsi (2010) mentions our primary context, Zimbabwe. Commenting on the

Gukurahundi atrocities, he remarks that the failure to give a proper burial for loved ones continues to haunt the survivors.[11] Gukurahundi "desecrated the cultural values of the Ndebele people" in a way that left them without a support system (Tarusarira 2013: 96). People suffered the loss of their loved ones in silence and the lack of a body to mourn caused serious psychological distress. Community and healing rituals are inextricably interwoven. Rituals have been the way of life of the spiritual person because it is a tool to maintain the delicate balance between the body and the soul. It is so deeply connected to human nature that any time it is missing, as is the case in the Gukurahundi era, there will be a lack of transformation and healing. Denying traditional burial is a subversion of cultural values, and that offends and disturbs the survivors. Another dimension to the spirits of the dead, which touches the perpetrator, is avenging spirits. Killing an innocent person is believed to result in the deceased person's spirit becoming an avenging spirit. Maxwell (1999: 206) describes it as a "restless spirit of an innocently wronged person, aggrieved and dangerous to the living". Desecration of the cultural system through Gukurahundi ruptured the framework of meaning the survivors hang in their daily lives in a world characterized by fortune and misfortune. African religions, under which funeral rites fall, give a framework within which to explain complicated things that happen in people's lives and sometimes provides a practical response to them.

Most societies dispose of their deceased in accordance with spiritual traditions developed and passed down over generations. Death and life are inextricably linked in African society; they are not mutually exclusive notions, but rather exist on a continuum. Thus, in many African beliefs, death is merely a rite of passage to another realm of existence. Ancestors are people who have died

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[11] According to the CCJP report and other articles on Gukurahundi, many victims were abducted and disappeared; some were buried in mass graves, makeshift shallow graves whilst others were thrown into mineshafts and pin latrines by the 5th brigade. As a result, many of these victims were not afforded proper burials.

but still exist in the community and communicate with their relatives. For this reason , individuals must be given a dignified burial, complete with religious rites. Smigelsky et al. (2014), gives an example of the Kisii culture in Kenya that dictates that if a person is struck by lightning, the deceased should be buried at the very spot where they died. If this is not observed, it can bring anguish to the family.

In South Africa, most indigenous cultures believe in retrieving the dead's spirit from the place of death and accompanying it home. This is to ensure that the spirit of the departed does not wander but rests in peace. If proper burial procedures are not followed, it is believed that the deceased would become a wandering spirit, unable to exist properly after death and thus posing a threat to those they have left behind. From these examples, it is evident that spirituality is of significance in burial rites. Participating in these rituals and ensuring the loved one's proper burial strengthens bonds with family and community while also bringing closure and enhancing recovery. The examples above show how culture can influence the meaning of traumatic events and how trauma symptoms are interpreted. "These cultures dictate healing methodologies", customs, and rituals that govern mourning after a tragic death. Culture is a crucial component to consider when dealing with trauma (Schnyder et al. 2016: 6).

Most indigenous peoples' beliefs about mental health and healing differ greatly from Eurocentric perspectives (Fast & Collin-Vézina 2019: 132). There is, however, a paucity of empirical research on indigenous approaches to trauma and remedies such as African spiritual pathways to healing. The majority of evidence-based psychotherapies are based on Western psychology theories, whereas developing-country psychologies are primarily "oral, under-researched, and under-

published" (Kaminer & Eagle 2010; Schnyder et al. 2016). In Most African communities, therapeutic strategies that are based on conventional western paradigms or practices are often not an option for many because they are not commonly provided, there is a stigma attached to them, and more importantly, as specified by the women in Ibrahim's study in Sierra Leone (2009), "it is not part of their culture". The perception of mental illness has a negative cultural value and to seek psychosocial counselling is to present oneself as "mentally unstable". Perhaps this is one reason many Africans are skeptical about embracing the biomedical model and more likely to rely on their spirituality to transform feelings of depression. Schnyder et al. (2016: 6) gives an example of a widow who lost her husband in a flood that destroyed her home and much of her valuables. Despite the fact that the widow had been severely traumatised and shown practically all of the signs of PTSD, she was hesitant to accept any offer of therapy. The concept of psychotherapy was foreign to her and instead she relied on traditional and religious healing methods. Her interpretation of the incident was entirely spiritual.

In many of our African cultures, family and community resources become important sources of healing since healing is focused on a group, the family, or neighbours from the community rather than an individual. Patients are not left in isolation; they are accompanied, and the healing process is a communal task. Traditional healers are trusted to help deal with trauma as they focus on the spiritual aspect. The traditional healer's function is to determine why the harmonious relation has been disturbed and apply an appropriate healing method. African traditional healing discourse mainly focuses on a troubled relationship communicated to the person or patient as pollution (De-Sanchez 2003: 72). De-Sanchez further highlights that the healing process leads towards two aims, first, bringing the disturbing relation back to its good order. This might be achieved by

conversations with all parties concerned in the healer's house and calming ancestors' rage by respective sacrifices. The second is a cleansing of the polluting "substance." These cleansing methods applied interior and exterior, such as bathing, inhaling, emetics, and enemas.

Rape in the African context is associated with being unclean or polluted. Most of the women survivors of rape in Ibrahim's study (2009) had participated in or desired some form of cleansing ceremony as an essential catharsis for both them and their community. Having experienced bodily and other violations, these women felt the need for such ritual (Ibrahim 2009: 262). Ibrahim argues that traditional healers are more effective in treating trauma-related psychosocial problems than trained mental health workers because they are easily available and accessible to the community and share the same world view. Fast and Collin-Vézina (2019: 132) note that the intensity with which indigenous peoples engage in ritual processes may be more important than the length of time required to heal. Dancing fiercely at a traditional ceremony may bring as much cathartic relief as discussing difficulties over a longer period of time, resulting in community balance and harmony.

With the emergence, spread and growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the concept of being delivered has become widespread. However, a certain number of Pentecostal churches are aggressively opposed to traditional African religion. Others, like the Zionist, white garment or the Shembe church combine Christianity and African Traditional Religion without any problem. These churches view traumatic events and misfortune from a spiritual lens. Instead of seeking help from traditional healers, some individuals may opt for faith healers, priests, or prophets for help or deliverance. The phrase "being delivered" refers to survivors' being "rescued, saved, or set free

by a supernatural person or power" (Fallot and Blanch 2013: 376). Some prophets use holy water in addition to prayer. Some African independent churches may combine the Christian holy spirit and ancestral spirits to diagnose and offer healing to trauma victims which falls within traditional healing.

This further emphasises the link between culture, spirituality, and trauma. All these alternative narratives are rooted in the survivor's experience and culture. Spiritual practises, both personal and communal, can help with trauma healing. In African religions, ritual is a vital means of healing and transcendence, experience, and spirit integration. "Spiritual restoration occurs within the sacred spaces of African spiritual practice" (DeLoach & Petersen 2010: 42). They are essential components of most cultural understandings, reminding us of the relevance of the cultural settings in which violent trauma is experienced and processed (Fallot and Blanch 2013: 376). While the cultural or religious belief systems about how the world works may differ, they all provide a framework of causes and consequences that people can use to make sense of life experiences, including trauma (Kaminer & Eagle 2010: 66). The utilisation of rituals that blend western trauma treatment with indigenous culture rituals is one aspect of Sub-Saharan African culture that stands out as a possible outcome for adaptation. Most Africans are conversant with both traditional African and Westernised belief systems, and when wrestling with the meaning of a traumatic experience, they may draw on a combination of belief systems.

Imposing solutions or delivering pre-packaged remedies to uniquely African problems will only result in re-traumatization, whereas cultural sensitivity and the accurate diagnosis will result in the proper treatment. "Culture-sensitive psychotraumatology" means assuming an empathic and

nonjudgmental approach while attempting to comprehend everyone's cultural background (Schnyder et al. 2016: 1). It entails understanding how culture increases the meaning of the patient's life history; the cultural components of a patient's condition; and how cultural ideas influence personal meanings. The importance of spirituality in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be overstated. "Social relationships are deeply woven into the fabric of life for many communities in sub-Saharan Africa, and the case for social support as a protective factor against post-traumatic stress is strong" (Smigelsky et al. 2014: 132). People and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are the most valuable resources for resolving trauma. Thus, combining Western psychology theory and practise with the best indigenous knowledge and experience from Sub-Saharan Africa will offer more effective approaches to understanding and addressing trauma.

3.3 Spirituality as a pathway to healing

In several studies, religion and spirituality have been recognised as essential characteristics associated with healing and recovery from trauma. Trauma not only affects human beings socially, emotionally, and physically, it affects their spirituality. It can either promote spiritual well-being or decay (Kusner & Pargament 2012: 220). The varying facets of trauma exposure interact differently with the victim's spirituality depending on the spiritual development stage and the available spiritual support and familiar spiritual coping behaviours. This engagement will lead to distinct assessments of the trauma and the individual's level of self-efficacy in dealing with its repercussions. It could necessitate the reconstruction of essential beliefs, values, meanings, and assumptions about the world and one's place within it. The ultimate impact of the trauma may lead to either "maturation or disintegration of the person's spiritual development", which, in turn, may result in either "resilient personal growth or development" of physical or psychological difficulties

(Foy et al. 2011:91-92). Given that religiosity and spirituality are useful coping mechanisms for many people, it seems to reason that they would be favourably connected with resilience .

Furthermore, each individual's unique combination of positive and negative religious or spiritual coping habits has major consequences for post-traumatic adjustment and growth. Religion and spirituality can provide a sense of stability, control, and significance throughout difficult life situations. Regardless of the difficulties that persons who have been exposed to violence encounter, trauma can eventually lead to good developments, such as those referred to as post-traumatic growth. First, trauma survivors may gain a stronger sense of self, since people who have survived awful circumstances may recognise the courage it took to do so. Second, individuals may remark that their revitalised sense of self is accompanied by an openness to new possibilities and future aspirations. However, recovery does not always imply a return to pre-trauma levels of well-being or functioning; it does imply that the recovered individual is integrating and working through the trauma in a way that provides hope for a chosen and positive life pathway (Fallot & Blanch 2013: 372). Religious or spiritual coping, according to Pargament (1997), is the intersection of the "search for meaning in ways related to the sacred" (p. 32) with the "search for significance in times of stress" (p. 90). This can result in either positive or negative spiritual coping strategies.

Positive religious coping includes behaviours such as benevolent religious reappraisals (redefining the situation as potentially beneficial and benevolent), seeking spiritual support (searching for comfort and reassurance through God's love and care), and religious forgiveness (looking to religion to let go of anger, fear, or hurt associated with the situation). Positive religious or spiritual coping has been linked to more positive post-traumatic outcomes such as improved mental health, happiness, life satisfaction, optimism, hope, positive affect, self-esteem, social adjustment, post-

traumatic growth, and spiritual growth (Foy et al. 2011, Fallot & Blanch 2013, Anastova 2014, Harper, & Pargament, 2015 et al.).

In contrast, "negative religious coping includes behaviours such as reappraisals of God's power (redefining God's power in the situation), spiritual discontent (expressions of confusion and dissatisfaction with God), a punishing God (redefining the situation as punishment for one's sins), and demonic reappraisals (defining the situation as an act of the Devil)" (McIntire & Duncan 2013: 102 -103). By focusing on external forces (punishing God, evil spirits, witchcraft), a certain type of religion prevents traumatised people from accepting the reality of the trauma and starting a healing journey. This denial is the biggest obstacle on the road to recovery. This negative spiritual coping reflects a person's spiritual pain, struggle, dissatisfaction, and turbulence in response to traumatic circumstances. It manifests in one's spiritual disposition and is linked to more severe issues and negative post-traumatic consequences, such as distress, sadness, anxiety, post-traumatic stress symptoms, anger or hostility, suicidality, social dysfunction, and spiritual harm (Harper, & Pargament 2015: 359). Trauma can cause a significant shattering of long-held religion and belief systems, as trauma survivors may come to doubt the existence of God, the gods, or spiritual forces they previously believed in. Even in the absence of PTSD or other symptoms, trauma can provide a significant challenge to our belief and meaning systems. Survivors of trauma frequently struggle to comprehend why the tragedy occurred and why they were singled out as victims. They may struggle with how to reconcile the trauma with their core expectations and beliefs about themselves, other people, and the world, leaving them feeling vulnerable, distrustful, and uncertain. Survivors attempt to generate explanations for the horrific incident as well as meanings that will assist them to make sense of the world. If not resolved, this heightened sense of

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vulnerability and shattered faith is what Kaminer & Eagle (2010: 65) refer to as the "crisis of faith". This "crisis of faith" may result in what Foy et al. term "red flags". Loss of faith, negative religious coping, guilt, and lack of forgiveness were highlighted as "red flags" These are signs of spiritual struggle or "stuck points" Trauma survivors who exhibit spiritual "red flags" may appear to be "stuck or derailed" in their trauma processing and healing journey (Foy et al. 2011: 95).

a) Resilience

Foy et al. (2011:91) define resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress". In other words, resilience is the human ability to adapt, maintain, or regain some level of normal functioning in the face of adversity. Resilience does not mean that the source of trauma is removed. It means that the victim is able to face the trauma situation and live with it in a positive way. Individuals' resilience experiences are frequently portrayed as part of a "spiritual journey" that includes a lifelong search for meaning and purpose. Resilience is not fixed in time and does not manifest itself in the same way at various stages of development. Therefore, resilience is a function of a family's ability to cushion the consequences of high-risk, adverse circumstances (Foy et al. 2011: 92). Spiritual beliefs and practises are valuable resources in coping with life crises because they help to cushion the immediate impacts of extremely stressful situations, enable cognitive processing of their significance, and assist in finding their rightful place in one's life narrative. It is crucial to remember that resilience does not always imply the absence of PTSD symptoms. "Trauma survivors can experience PTSD and other psychiatric symptoms after trauma while also experiencing some positive outcomes" (Kaminer & Eagle 2010: 72).

It is possible to identify resilience strengths and resources, as well as potential spiritual "red flags". It is crucial to remember that positive and negative spiritual coping strategies are not mutually exclusive. They might happen at the same time or at different times during the trauma healing process because resilience is a gradual process. Resilience offers the power to recover from crisis and trauma and relies on the contextually dependent resolution of tensions encountered across cultures and contexts. Coping ability relies not only on how people sense a traumatic event but also on their internal and external resources, which define their vulnerability. Outcomes differ depending on the individual's personality and relational, communal, cultural, and contextual factors (Rance 2015: 4-5).

3.4 Traumatic memory

A traumatic incident occurs when a person encounters something terrifying and overwhelming, resulting in the loss of control. "To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Gilbert 2014: 25). The traumatic event is haunted by the traumatic memory re-enacted in the victim's mind and cannot simply be left behind. Rather than possessing the past, survivors of trauma are possessed by it. Often the trauma survivor cannot take control of their memories because they appear to defy comprehension. Such is the nature of the horror they have experienced that it is beyond the imagination; it is equally impossible not to remember (Hitchcott 2013:82). Hitchcott (2013: 83) refers to trauma as, *(prison de douleur)* "prison of pain".

Traumatic experiences are processed and remembered differently from other life events. They are also encoded in the brain differently than everyday memories. Compared with everyday memories, traumatic memories contain richer sensory components and higher emotion levels, making traumatic memory special or unique (Porter & Birt 2001). "Emotion superiority effect" indicates

that emotionally arousing events are more likely to be remembered than non-emotional ones. Negative stimuli are remembered more accurately, "more vividly, and with more details" than positive and neutral stimuli (Grégoire et al. 2020: 2).

Ibrahim (2009) ask valuable questions about traumatic memory, "Should we remember? How do people remember? What do they remember, and what do they forget about traumatic experiences? Is memory a passive depository of facts or an active process of creation of meaning?" These questions become a valuable point of departure and inquiry on traumatic memory. Memory is always subject to the cycle of remembering and forgetting at both individual and collective level (Zmbylas & Bekerman 2008: 129). How trauma victims remember or forget their most horrific experiences is of paramount importance as it sheds light on how traumatic memories are stored, processed, and reconstructed.

Memory and recall do not operate in the same way that a tape recorder does, constantly recording events to be recalled later command. "Traumatic memory is regarded as a still frame, a mental picture that is vivid in one's memory and packed with intense emotions" (Motsi & Masango 2012: 3). As a result, traumatic events are remembered and narrated differently than routine ones. When we recall an event from our past, it is recreated from elements scattered across the brain. Reminiscence is always a reconstruction. It is not as simple as reloading a videotape for mental replay. The living brain is dynamic, and even the most vivid traumatic memories are not literal, unchanging reproductions of what occurred (McNally 2005: 818). Berger (1997:571) describes the survivor as a living "black box", a repository of information. By referring to survivors as a living black box, Berger emphasises that traumatic memories are rich raw data sources. The

difference between ordinary memory and traumatic memory is that a traumatized person is helpless. He or she does not have to capacity to choose what to remember and what to forget. According to Haskell and Randall (2019), memory is fundamentally the capacity for storing and retrieving information. Memory involves three processes: encoding, storage, and recall. "The access, selection, reactivation, or reconstruction of stored internal representations" is referred to as memory retrieval. Memory works to alter information over time. Because of repeated retrievals, we retain and modify features of other memories. Certain significant experiences may be remembered for the rest of one's life after being traumatised, which is an adaptive outcome (Haskell & Randall 2019: 180).

Moreover, memory, or the act of remembering, is more than just retrieving information from a memory bank; it also entails the formulation, motivation, and assertion of claims. What counts as forgetting is determined by context and, because memory narratives involve the significance of the past to the present, this context may have to do with what is important to the narrator of a memory experience (Ibrahim 2009: 263). Zmbylas & Bekerman (2008: 126) maintain that "traumatic events are experienced as overwhelmingly terrifying at the time of their occurrence, remembered all too well, engraved on memory and seldom forgotten". They go on to say that due to dissociation or repression mechanisms, a significant fraction of survivors are unable to remember their experience. However, forgetting does not imply amnesia. At times, memories are too painful to remember, and the brain represses them to cope. Thus, not thinking about trauma for a long time is not the same as being unable to remember.

"Dissociated trauma memories are far from benign", slowly destroying victims' lives. For healing to occur, these hidden memories must be "excavated and emotionally processed" (McNally 2005: 817). Victims may display physiological manifestations of traumatic memory that are not always accompanied by a narrative memory of the incident. In other words, victims may be completely unaware that they have experienced significant trauma, but their bodies will "keep the score" by manifesting PTSD symptoms. The body remembers even if the mind does not. Accordingly, spontaneous panic attacks, for example, cannot be assumed to be implicit manifestations of a dissociated recollection of a sexual assault (McNally 2005: 818). Neuroscience suggests that the brain stores traces of information that are later used to generate memories, but it does not always present a perfectly correct picture of an event when it is recalled (Peres et al. 2007: 344). When people are traumatised, they frequently recall snapshot images, feelings, and physical sensations, such as panic, scents, taste, and pain.

Some aspects of traumatic memories are more vividly remembered than others. These are referred to as enhanced memories. Because they are traumatic and overwhelming, they are imprinted more profoundly in memory. Victims frequently concentrate on certain sensory elements from the assault. They may recall distinct odours but have little recollection of other aspects of what occurred. For example, a person may remark, "I will never forget!" a profound recall of an experience, with regard to some specific component of it that appears irrevocably imprinted upon them (Haskell & Randall 2019: 22). Rwandan women were haunted by specific "key moments" of the genocide, which resurfaced in their current narratives. Each woman's testimony focused on major defining moments of the genocide that were unique to them. Gilberts observes that most of the women remembered specific dates more vividly. This is due to the significance of the date in

their recall of the event. The date becomes the point of reference for recalling the memory. Moreover, physical signs of trauma also form the key moments that define what is remembered and recalled. The visible signs become a memory of the trauma imprinted on both the body and mind. As Ibrahim (2009: 265) notes, "the body is the first-hand witness", physical evidence of what occurred and what cannot be forgotten and a particular resonance that denotes a memory of the suffering.

Various studies have shown that gender differentially affects memory recall and quality. Porter & Birt, 2001; Baer et al 2006; Loprinzi & Frith, 2018). Women mostly outperform men in memory recall, remember most details, including minute details, more than men overall. Females access memories more quickly than males, date them more precisely, and describe them with more emotional language (Loprinzi & Frith 2018:1-2). Porter and Birt (2001: 112) note that women in their study thought about the traumatic experience more often and reported more details. What seemed important for the women was recalling how they felt, still feel, where they were, what they were doing, and what time of day it was when the event or act occurred. Overall, women recall much more details than mean, and their narratives tend to be much richer and detailed.

Trauma frequently causes separation from the present because the idea of time is disrupted. There is a tension between experiencing the past in the present and regaining control over the memories (Gilbert, 2014). For the survivor, the experience of trauma becomes, in Ley's words (quoted by Gilbert 2014: 119) "fixed or frozen in time and refuses to be represented as past, but is continually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present". In this case, the storyline has been recreated and is made up of frozen moments of pain. Furthermore, our brain is capable of travelling

back in time, into the future, and back into the present. These recollections serve as a link between the past, the present, and the future. When a memory from the past is brought up in the present, the brain creates or recalls another memory (Chang & Shors 2018: 6).

Sexual trauma is encoded differently than routine, everyday experiences in life. In comparison to other traumatic situations, sexual assault has one of the highest incidences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Women who have been sexually assaulted are not only more likely to remember their assaults, but they also have more vivid memories than women who have been through other types of traumas. Several studies with sexual assault survivors have found that memories of sexual trauma have "higher levels of vividness and clarity, more sensory components, and are assessed as having a higher overall quality" (Peace et al.,2008, Gilbert 2014, Chang & Shors, 2018 et al.). Sexual violence trauma memories are highly detailed and enduring, even over long periods of time. Thus, sexual violence memories can last a long time and be remembered more vividly and in greater detail, both subjectively and objectively, even years or decades after the experiences (Peace et al. 2008: 11).

Sexual violence survivors have more recurring thoughts about the past than individuals who remember other stressful life situations, making it more difficult to forget sexual trauma. Chang and Shors conclude from their various studies with sexual assault victims that women with a history of sexual violence not only have a stronger stressful life recall, but they also have a greater memory for specific details. They were more likely to remember the experience and regard it as a key part of their life experience. These distinctions in memory detail suggest that sexual violence recollection is more like "watching a movie than a physical reaction". Moreover, on top of being

detailed, the sexual trauma narratives are more coherently predictive of PTSD (Chang & Shors 2018: 6).

Memory in the form of a story requires the integration of emotion or cognition influenced by existing cultural meaning in order to provide an account of an event (Brown 2013: 13). Traumatic experiences are rarely recounted in the traditional narrative format. According to Kokanović and Stone (2018:26), there is a disconnect between how people experience trauma and suffering and how they may narratively describe such experiences. Survivors might begin to control their narrative through the narrativisation process (Clark 2018: 806). Furthermore, while it might be argued that survivors' narratives can never tell their whole story because elements of that story will always remain part of their unconscious mind, storytelling can bring out what Freeman has termed "the narrative unconscious". The "narrative unconscious" can be defined as those culturally entrenched components of one's history that have yet to become part of one's story (Freeman 2012: 344). Sources outside the individual's perimeters become woven into the fabric of memory, allowing for contextually richer and thicker narratives (Clark 2018: 807).

A traumatic incident adds a dramatic "plot twist" into one's life storey, jeopardising narrative coherence and one's sense of self. As a result, a crisis of meaning emerges, potentially shattering preconceptions about how the world works and one's place within it. Trauma survivors must therefore come to terms with their shattered life stories (Jirek 2017: 169). At times this leads to silence as cannot put into words trauma. "Silence in trauma narratives or silence as a narrative becomes a chosen position" (Kokanović & Stone 2018: 22). Van der Kolk et al. (2007 cited in Motsi & Masango 2012: 6)) suggest because "trauma survivors cannot change their past; they must

place traumatic memories in the proper context and reconstruct them in a personal and meaningful way". Individuals do not create meaning in a vacuum; rather, they draw selectively from numerous discourses validated by their families, social groupings, communities, and civilizations. As a result, individuals' identities and life experiences are constantly shaped by a variety of political, cultural, and social forces (Jirek 2017: 168). Traumatic memories are not hurdles to be erased, eliminated, or avoided (as these efforts will fail), but rather a bridge from the past to the present and the future (Meichenbaum 2008: 9). Meichenbaum proposes that memories should not be forgotten, but rather kept and sanctified. Traumatised individual need to "move toward memory" rather than "move past memory."

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to critically analyse the definition of trauma and PTSD as used in western medical and psychiatry contexts to develop an appropriate feminist and African understanding. This was done in an attempt to show how the western viewpoint differs from the African worldview. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can affect anyone; however, trauma-related disorders and therapies vary by culture. The dominant western model of trauma and healing does not consider individual survivors' socio-political and cultural context and traumatised communities (Gilbert 2014: 34). Although very efficient in the situations for which they were intended, trauma therapy interventions can be ineffective when administered without an awareness of the specific needs and circumstances of people, families, and communities (Chumbley 2016: 5). "We need to remember that the western mental health discourse introduces core components of western culture, including a theory of human nature, a definition of personhood, a sense of time and memory, and a secular sense of moral authority. None of this is universal" (Ibrahim 2009:

251). As various critics discussed in this chapter have demonstrated, trauma theory may be inadequate when dealing with localised traumas that do not fit the western model.

Furthermore, even when the term trauma is used to describe a woman's experience, it is clear that concealed assumptions can limit the options for how a woman's identity can be constructed and understood. There is a need for a social explanation of women's psychiatric presentations, rather than explaining women's emotional challenges in terms of brain-based diseases or behavioural distinctions inherent in being female.

Moreover, daily stressors and poverty as an exacerbating factor of trauma cannot be overlooked when dealing with victims from poor communities. Poverty adds to the trauma load, and programmes that have attempted to address psychological issues and concerns have been continually undermined by the dire living conditions and economic challenges that these communities face on a daily basis. Addressing social and psycho-social concerns alone will not suffice unless the economic difficulties are addressed holistically.

The debate about what counts as trauma continues to redefine our conceptions of trauma and, in many ways, helps present a better understanding of the phenomenon. Africans are not a homogenous group of peoples. As an African, I position myself alongside African scholars who advocate for an African centred psychology as I understand the importance of cultural beliefs and how they influence everyday life. African culture and spirituality influence how trauma is understood and interpreted. These aspects of African worldview also influence healing methodologies, resilience and recovery. "We cannot take for granted that all treatment-seeking

trauma survivors speak our language or share our cultural values. Therefore, we need to increase our cultural competencies" (Schnyder et al. 2016: 1). Community and family connectedness are important aspects of rehabilitation in various cultures. When disseminating psychotherapies for PTSD across cultures, several additional challenges need to be considered: many low- and middle-income countries have limited resources available and suffer from a poor health infrastructure. One must also remember the resilience of individuals and communities in dealing with trauma, which necessitates recognition of traditional, individual, and community coping strategies and resources that foreign professionals frequently overlook. (Musisi 2004: 81).

Lastly, traumatic events leave permanent scars on the mind. Trauma does not go away. Its memory alters the course of the individual's life and how he or she interacts with family and society. Sexual trauma memories are "superior" to other emotional memories and are recalled far too vividly even years after the event (Peace et al. 2008: 12). Sexual trauma leads to high levels of PTSD and is remembered vividly as the traumatic memory plays out in the mind's eye. Sexual trauma memories are associated with higher levels of vividness and clarity, as well as more sensory components and a higher overall quality. More research is needed to understand the sources of resilience and mental health ability that most women maintain in the face of violence in their lives. The arguments raised by feminist scholars and African scholars are commendable and bring a new perspective on trauma. However, we cannot throw away the baby with the dish. In as much as the conventional methods of psychotherapy has its shortcomings, it is still relevant. It just needs to be tailor-made to suit people's different context by looking at other factors and determinants that may cause and exacerbate trauma. There is a need to take a nuanced approach that incorporates both feminist therapy and African centred psychology when dealing with African women.

Chapter 4

Mobilizing memory and recounting the experience of Gukurahundi women survivors

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is based on the documentaries produced by Habakkuk Trust and The Center for Innovation and technology (CITE), and shares women survivors' testimonies during and after the Gukurahundi atrocities. I made a conscious decision to anonymise all the women by using codes to label data i.e., W1 stands for woman 1. The Habakkuk Trust video footage titled 'Untold stories of women' consists of five women whilst the CITE video footage titled 'I want my virginity back' involves 17 women. Most of the women in the videos had their faces blurred to conceal their identity. Parallels and contrasts in subjects gained from the literature review were identified by interpreting each life narrative as a whole and making comparisons across cases. This chapter examines the legacy of Gukurahundi by interrogating the various emergent themes identified from the women's testimonies. Narrative analysis and a feminist standpoint theory were used as a mode of inquiry to critically examine and analyse the women's stories in order to build a holistic argument. Narrative analysis involves listening around and beyond words focusing on different elements, which include the way the narrative is presented and structured, the roles it performs, the narrative's contents, and the socio-political setting in which they are told. It is not just about what is said, but what is implied or not said, as this too reveals hidden information. Taken together, narrative analysis and the feminist standpoint theory allow us to look at women's stories closely and to analyse how women share their stories in the context of their socio-political context.

The accounts highlighted in this chapter reveal the physical, emotional, and psychological trauma that the women experienced during Gukurahundi offering a window into their experiences during and after the Gukurahundi atrocities. A discussion on trauma and memory is built as guided by the literature discussed in the subsequent chapters. Additionally, the memory-making of Gukurahundi is discussed in this chapter, analysing what the women remember, how they remember and put in words their past experiences. This, in turn, will illuminate how the memory of their past informs their post-conflict world view.

4.1 Trauma and PTSD prevalence

All the women in the two documentary footages experienced trauma either directly or indirectly as witnesses. The events caused profound trauma as victims continue to suffer from the trauma of their unresolved past. The women's stories are very emotive and laden with feelings of sadness, grief, and despair. Positive stories and messages of hope are notably absent from the narratives. There is trauma expressed in their eyes, mannerisms, and the intensity in which the women narrate their stories. Some of the women use many hand gestures as they narrate their stories, and when they articulate a very painful memory, they shrivel up, put their hands in between their legs and look down.

All of the women had trauma symptoms and met the DSM-V criteria for PTSD. Re-experiencing, avoidance, negative cognitions and mood, and arousal are the four diagnostic clusters identified by the DSM-5.Women survivors of Gukurahundi presented with high levels of PTSD exhibiting obvious trauma symptoms: crying, prolonged distress, depression, heart palpitations, lack of forgiveness, anger, self-blame, fear, shaking, anxiety, and flashbacks. The findings revealed that

experiencing rape was associated with the highest conditional risk of the prevalence of PTSD in women. The women maintained that they were emotionally and psychologically affected by the traumatic impact of the violations. The following statements made by the women are clear indications of PTSD:

> ...This issue is very painful. When l see a soldier wearing a red beret my heart sinks. That trauma from the past is evoked. I see a monster who can abduct me anytime….(W2).

> …I really do not think l will get to forgive. I just do not see it hey. Again, l do not know… I really do not know… Aggghhh l really do not think l will ever forgive I just do not see it… (W4).

> …What troubles me the most is that my husband Mr. Ndlovu today is a poor man because of me. He lost his possessions because of me. Me, the one who cost him everything and brought poverty to him. When l look at this man l feel so much pain …if you see me break down and cry, it is what it is….even if he is quiet it does not console me, instead he is the one who comforts me. This thing has affected me so badly (shakes her head). I do not even know where to turn to… W3

> …I have uncontrollable heart palpitations even till today. It cannot go away. I have a condition of heart palpitations and since you are here inquiring about this, my heart will beat uncontrollable, that is what l am feeling now…" (is seen in the video walking away, holds her hips, puts her hands on her head and stares into the horizon with tears in eyes) …(W4).

> …When l hear people talking about Gukurahundi l feel afraid. I feel so much pain in the inside. I really feel the pain… (W1).

> …It is very painful when you remind us of those times…(W7).

> …It is very painful (long pause). It is painful, very painful l am being honest. It hurts very, very, very much. Now you are here opening our wounds... (W14).

> …When I think about those events, I get scared, and worried. l am even shaking because what we went through was truly painful… (W17).

As they share their testimonies of Gukurahundi, women survivors continue to articulate that they are in great pain. The women survivor's testimonies are loaded with references to an unbearable and inexpressible nature of pain and the heavy burden of loss. One woman gave the following testimony: *"I do not know what can be done because this thing is painful and does not go away, it does not end, even when issues are discussed especially concerning Gukurahundi, that old pain rises again*" (W2). Such sentiments were common with most of the women. This is not physical

pain but the emotional pain that overwhelms them. Women survivors of Gukurahundi are in what Hitchcott terms a "prison of pain" (2013: 83) as their painful past continue to haunt them even 38 years after Gukurahundi ended. Their descriptions of pain also show how trauma's psychological pain manifests itself through physical symptoms like crying, flashbacks, heart palpitations, and shaking. As emotional pain manifests as physical pain, the emotional and physical become inseparable. Other PTSD symptoms that they experience are grief, sadness, depression, fear, anger, distrust, lack of forgiveness, resentment, and frustration.

The lack of hope pervades many of the women's testimonies as messages of hope, optimism, and forgiveness were absent. This could be because these women have not been allowed to heal as, for many years, the Zimbabwe government denied the events downplaying its effects. For many years in Zimbabwe, there was a culture of silence in which survivors were suppressed and any mention of Gukurahundi was criminalised on several fronts by those who perpetrated the atrocities. The most typical defense against the harm posed by the exposing of collective trauma to the perpetrators' public image is to deny or minimize the painful events. If the trauma never occurred, not only is the accused perpetrator innocent of any crime, but there is also a complete inversion in the perpetrator-victim relationship in which the victim is, in fact, the aggressor who makes false accusations against others (Hirschberger 2018: 9). This form of victim blaming, which is widespread in sexual crimes, is more difficult to maintain in communal trauma. In collective trauma, this form of victim-blaming, which is widespread in sexual offenses, is more difficult to sustain. This type of victim-blaming that is frequent in sexual crimes is more difficult to sustain in collective trauma cases because of the number of witnesses and the substantial amount of physical evidence that is hard to dismiss.

"Perpetrators can experience their crimes as trauma in the sense that the commission of the crime itself causes a psychological injury to the perpetrator, which can result in particular adverse physical, social, or emotional consequences" (Mohamed 2015: 1162). Interestingly, one testimony describes the psychological consequences endured by Fifth Brigade soldiers as they are haunted by the demons of their actions. Some of the soldiers were ultimately traumatized by the atrocities they committed. One lady narrates how one soldier who was notorious for murder went mad. Her account is as follows:

> *…A soldier named Magagasa, who was notorious for killing, went wild and started shooting randomly near a hospital saying funny things until other soldiers apprehended him. I suspect he had gone (speaks in Shona) insane because of numerous killings he had committed…* (*W15*).

Kadar (2005: 81), defines "testimony is a form of narrative used by the socially insignificant and powerless or ordinary people to communicate traumatic personal and historical events". Testimony ensures that the victims' stories are heard, challenging the official narratives of those in power. Life histories are essentials to challenge the grand narrative since they create multiple and diverse narratives that contest the already existing narrative. Ndlovu-Gatsheni points out that history remains guarded by ZANU, who control the national narrative around key historical chapters in Zimbabwean history. According to the Zimbabwean government, the official narrative is that the Fifth Brigade was deployed to deal with the dissident problem. Survivors' statements reveal some inconsistencies between the government's official narrative and women's real experiences. If the Fifth Brigade were deployed to deal with the dissidents, one is forced to question why women and young girls were tortured, raped, and murdered despite the fact that they were mere civilians. This

calls into question the grand narrative, which no longer suffices as the only account of Gukurahundi attrocities.

Feminist research derives its concerns from women's experiences and uses them as important markers of the realities that explain women's lives. According to Schaffer and Smith (2004: 4), "through acts of remembering, individuals and communities narrate alternative or counter-histories from the periphery, which are voiced by various types of subjects who are typically disregarded, silenced or overlooked". As mentioned in Chapter One, while I am aware of various studies done around the Gukurahundi, she is unaware of any study that has focused solely on women's experiences of Gukurahundi. In a previous study, a gender analysis of the CCJP report, I discovered some shortcomings and gaps in the academic literature on Gukurahundi. Women's experiences are included in the CCJP report and other studies but not in detail as they are included based on merely being victims. Therefore, the women's narratives are not just stories of what happened, but they also illuminate the long-term socio-economic impact of trauma on women. Feminist research aims to document survivors' stories, to tell what happened, and to try to bring that missing puzzle piece of our history to the forefront because it is rarely discussed, and unless women share their experiences, no one will know the full extent of the trauma they have endured and continue to endure. "By talking about themselves, they insert themselves into the discourse" (Brown 2013: 7).

Marginalised women, particularly survivors of genocides, "have thus come to use testimony as a means of reclaiming their place in history, of making their voices heard and to cease being the mute victims of oppression" (Gilbert 2014: 29). They function as 'lay historians' as Hirschberger

puts it (2018: 3). These women are able to break the silence and bear witness on behalf of those who have died. Therefore, "women's testimony becomes a repository for the names of the missing victims", speaking not just for themselves but also for victims who have died and survivors who remain silent (Gilbert 2014: 57). Survivors of atrocities speak for others and to others. In documenting Rwandan women's trauma experiences, Gilbert (2014: 57) argues that "breaking the silence that has dominated many women's lives" is a vital step in the ongoing process of overcoming trauma .

a) Collective trauma

Whole communities in Matabeleland and Midlands were affected by Gukurahundi. Gukurahundi women's narratives not only provide insight into individual experiences of pain and suffering, but also into communal or group experiences. Thus, the women's experiences reflect both personal and communal pain, which Gilbert (2014: 89) refers to as "social suffering" that communities face as a result of war, torture, and political persecution. "The collective memory becomes one's memory; the collective aspirations become one's aspirations, and the pains and woes of this collective are experienced as genuine personal suffering" (Hirschberger 2018: 6).

The psychological response to a traumatic event that affects an entire society, as well as the recall of a horrific event that occurred to a group of people, is referred to as collective trauma. It implies that the tragedy that is etched in the group's collective memory becomes a crisis of meaning as it shatters society's foundation (Hirschberger 2018: 1). Communities affected by Gukurahundi undoubtedly struggle to comprehend what happened to them and why it happened. The powerful feeling of significance engendered by collective trauma perpetuates the trauma's memory and the

difficulty to let go of the past. This collective pain becomes the focal point of group identity and the lens through which communities in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions comprehend their social surroundings and present circumstances.

b) Intergenerational trauma

Transgenerational transmission of trauma is when the past's unresolved traumas are subliminally transmitted from one generation to another (Adonis 2016: 2-3). The memory of collective trauma is preserved, and subsequent generations are led to "incorporate the trauma into their collective self" (Hirschberger 2018: 20). Those born after the Gukurahundi atrocities developed what Hirsch suggestively described as "post-memory, that is, the fact of 'remembering' the experiences of the previous generation in the communities which they grew up (Hirsch 2008: 106). The term "post memory" refers to the relationship that the generation that came after those who witnessed collective trauma has with the experiences of those who came before them. They only remember these events through the stories, images, and behaviors they were exposed to growing up. These experiences were so thoroughly and efficiently conveyed to them that they seemed to be memories of themselves (Hirsch 2008: 107). Post-memory, like memory, is a reconstruction of the past that has an impact on current and future generations since "memories can be generated rather than experienced, and once generated, they become an experience" (Ndlovu 2019: 171). This is the case with one of the young women born in 1988 who heard the stories of Gukurahundi from her mother and witnessed her sister, a child born out of rape, being subjected to stigma and ill-treatment.

Reference to transgenerational trauma is made by a young woman who, despite not having witnessed the Gukurahundi atrocities, heard the stories from her mother and also witnessed her

sister, who was a child born out of rape, being subjected to stigma and ill-treatment. Her testimony

is as follows:

> *I was born in 1988, but the pain I am still feeling inside is unbearable…. I had my sister born in 1983, he (father) hated her so much because she was a product of Gukurahundi. Whenever my mother tells us about Gukurahundi I feel so much anger and pain because of what she was subjected to including rape. So, when my mother married my father, he made sure that we had everything…… But my other sister, he hated her, he would say he does not talk to a child of murderers and treated her like an outcast and that traumatized my mother even up today causing her to have high blood pressure which she still has up to today. Whenever she sees soldiers or security guards carrying toy guns it traumatizes her because of those sad Gukurahundi memories. My sister ended up committing suicide because of the ill treatment she suffered owing to that Gukurahundi label. We went to school and got everything we needed but she could not because of the label that she a child of Gukurahundi. Yes, I am a born free (*Begins to cry and fails to continue with her testimony)*. (W12).*

W12's reaction is a testament to the fact that children come to bear witness to the parent's unresolved trauma. She never personally experienced the Gukurahundi atrocities but is also deeply traumatised as she shares tha*t "the pain I am still feeling inside is unbearable"*. The memories shared by her mother have become her own. Growing up with such inherited painful memories shapes her identity and world view. W12 also expressed with clarity the stigma her sister faced to the point of committing suicide. Her testimony reveals the stigma that children born out of rape endure.

4.3 Sexual and Gender based violence.

Rape in war is not a new phenomenon and has been documented in many different conflicts in Africa. In most studies, the results reveal the widespread, systematic use of rape against women. Undoubtedly "it has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in an armed conflict"[12] (Dewey & St Germain 2012: 30). The women's testimonies of Gukurahundi reveal how

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[12] Comment made by Major General Patrick Cammaert, former commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

vulnerable women are to sexual and gender-based abuse during times of conflict. Rape is used to terrorise and punish women who are thought to be affiliated with the opposition; in this case, they were perceived as being associated with dissidents. In some instances, the Fifth Brigade made it clear that they were being punished for supporting dissidents, being mothers, wives, daughters of dissidents as highlighted below:

> …They captured and raped me saying I deserved to die because I was carrying a dissident (W17).
> …Soldiers killed many newborn babies by smashing them against the wall saying that they were sired by dissidents (W6).

Rapes, according to Ngwenya (2014: 27,30), were seen as "a way of creating a generation of Shona babies, another way of increasing Shona dominance over Ndebele", as Fifth Brigade soldiers would tell their victims that they were creating a generation of Shona babies. In contrast to rapes committed by the Fifth Brigade, those perpetrated by dissidents were viewed as an abuse of authority (Alexander et al 2000: 223).

Rape appears to be the primary cause of trauma-related diseases and PTSD in women, since the women exhibit severe physiological and psychological symptoms. The finding that women were subjected to higher levels of sexual violence replicated other studies that revealed that women are more frequently exposed to sexual violence in war and post-conflict settings. Undoubtedly sexual violence is unquestionably utilised as a weapon of war and strategically employed. According to Skjelsbæk (2010: 33), rape in conflict is common, systematic, and serves a definite goal. During Gukurahundi, girls and women were forcibly rounded up and taken to the Fifth Brigade camps, where they were gang-raped on multiple occasions. This was the norm as one woman shares:

…so, they took us… there were many of us; we filled a classroom. In the middle of the night, each soldier took one of us. So, what would happen is that each soldier would take you and rape you, then take you

back, and another soldier would take you and rape you. That is how it was from the time you left home...
(W2).

The testimonies reveal the brutality of the sexual violence committed by the Fifth Brigade. The starting point for most women's narratives was the sexual violence trauma they experienced. Most of the women were young girls at the time and continued to refer to this in their testimonies. The women's testimonies reveal that rape was both systematic and widespread. Acknowledging that sexual violence was systematic and widespread prompted women to reflect on their own experiences as well as those of their families and communities. Sexual violence did not just include rape but also included genital mutilation and being stripped naked.

Women's Gukurahundi narratives revealed four different types of rape. Individual rape, gang rape, rape in which victims are compelled to rape each other, and rape including the insertion of items into women's genitals were all examples. Most women reported that they were abducted (forcibly taken and raped for more than one day) by their assailant and gang raped. Gang rape was the most prevalent, revealing the pervasive nature of the conflict. The women were gang-raped or raped multiple times at different times. Further, most women fell pregnant from the multiple rapes they experienced. Sexual violence was rarely isolated; it was frequently accompanied by other forms of violence, such as beatings and torture.

In the accounts recorded below, women share their sexual violence ordeals at the Fifth Brigade's hands. This is the testimony of W2, which reveals the harrowing details of the multiple rapes that she endured. She narrates as follows:

….They locked us in one of the classrooms. There were many of us we filled a classroom …in the middle of the night each soldier took one of us. This time they were more soldiers than us. So, what would happen is that each soldier would take you and rape you then take you back and another soldier would take you again and rape you…he dragged me to the other soldiers and said to them you see this one was trying to escape she was trying to run away because she thinks she is better. What we will do is burn the thing that she is trying to run away with. They took a burning short stick and they asked me to lie down and open my legs then l lay down and took that burning stick and shoved it between my legs… (shows us the scar in between her legs)*. The burning coals broke off and fell on my thighs and private parts...*

Her ordeal after being burnt in her private parts was not over as she was later raped by another soldier.

..The soldiers that were burning me had now left. I was feeling so much pain ….a soldier came to me and asked me why don't l go inside the classroom…I told him they have burnt me, and he slapped me on my face and asked who burnt you?...he took me and raped in in that condition…

W2 rape experience is unique, but, in many ways, it is similar to the testimonies shared by other women who were both physically assaulted and raped. Other testimonies of women survivors are as follows:

…I was young…they were forcibly sleeping with me without consent. This was traumatizing (hlukuluzayo) as there was no love shared. In everything you need to have a choice l did not have a choice…." (She puts her hands in between her thighs and begins to rub her hands)… (*W5*).

…They even raped us in front of our in-laws knowing that they were scared to come to our rescue. (*W18*).

… One of them stabbed me on my buttocks. They killed my young brother. When l was crying for my young brother that is when they stabbed me here., l have a huge scar. I have two scars. One of the soldiers raped me and beat me and ordered me to walk as he wanted to kill me ahead. When we had walked a distance, he lay me on the ground, got on top of me and made me his wife. I had not agreed … (*W22*).

…Soldiers suddenly appeared. They started asking me things that I did not know. One of them tried to hit me on the cheek with a gun but missed and bayoneted my arm…. they started choking me, some were pulling my legs and arms while beating me. I was wearing a dress and panty: they beat me until I was naked…. They had severely beaten me on my vagina, it was swollen. I never thought I would be able to retain my womanhood…... my grandmother used some traditional herbs to treat

my wounds. After that I was really struggling to cover myself with blankets while sleeping because if I did, my skin would peel off until they devised a strategy of laying bricks by my side so that the blankets would not touch my body… (*W10*).

When Gukurahundi first started, soldiers came and forcefully took away our teenage girls, and raped them willy nilly, very young girls. As for us, we were made to open our vaginas and they would beat us, and we were beaten by young soldiers. I had a daughter who had a big body; one of the soldiers took out his knife and sliced her thigh (hand gestures)... He went on to hit my husband with his gun. He also took a clay pot full of burning charcoal and smashed it on his head. My husband died with those broken ribs…Its very painful when you remind us of those times). My child who was mutilated, got ill, and succumbed to that wound. They sliced her because she refused to have sex with her sibling. They said they must have sex in front of us, but they refused and were almost beaten to death (*W7*).

Reference to forced incest is made by W7 when she mentions that her daughter was sliced on the thigh for refusing to have sex with her siblings.

The Fifth Brigade committed the majority of sexual violations. However, two women offer a counter-narrative that reveals that dissidents were also responsible for some of the sexual violence cases, though on a smaller scale compared to the Fifth Brigade, as noted in the accounts below :

In 1983 I had a baby who was less than a year old and I was still breastfeeding…So during the day, dissidents would come and beat us, accusing us of working with soldiers. They also raped us the same way the soldiers did. They would capture us in the presence of our parents and order us to carry blankets and rape us in the bush.(W19).

…I further faced more traumatic times when I was raped repeatedly by dissidents who took turns to rape me even though I was a new mother. Even now I struggle to walk because of the severe beatings and countless rapes that I suffered. (W14).

Some of the accounts also reveal reproductive health issues that the women experienced as a result of rape. These included haemorrhaging and miscarriages, as detailed in the accounts below:

I had just given birth, they battered me on my womb. It was 3 days after l had given birth… In the evenings l was forced to attend their pungwes[13]… later they would order us to go to their bases where they raped us. So, after my first baby l experienced numerous miscarriages because of my damaged womb. Doctors told me my womb is damaged… This affected me a lot because l was married and wanted many kids. I never had any more kids because of the beatings… (W21).

…I was a child l did not know and l just followed him not knowing he was taking me to the pits that they had dug up. When we got there, he ordered me to get in and I refused. He removed his belt, tied my neck, and dragged me in. So, when he was dragging me his knife fell and opened a deep scar on my thigh. I have a scar here. I was now crying but no one heard me….He then said to me, if you do not give me what I want, you will die in here, threatening me with his knife. I was a child, and he did as he pleased with me. He then raped me, left me in that pit bleeding and crying. I spent the night in that pit because I could not come out due to damage caused when he was raping me… If you ask elderly women to inspect me, they will confirm injuries on my vagina…(W13).

Pregnant women and new mothers were not spared from rape and assault. This is shown in the testimonies highlighted below:

I then went back home in Gwamba to give birth where I delivered without complications. Soldiers then passed by again after I had delivered asking "when last did you see the dissidents?"…... He then ordered me to follow him where he raped me (W9).

Those soldiers abused me for a very long time, and I was a new mother…. They ordered me to run, I refused telling them to kill me if they wanted so they kicked me again and I fell on my face. .I was a new mother l had given birth a week prior. They beat me until my operation was affected. More soldiers came and they slept with me despite the fact that l had just given birth. Up to this day I still cannot walk properly (W14).

…they captured me and raped me saying I deserved to die because l was a carrying a dissident child (umntwana wabo pasi). They raped me whilst l was pregnant (W17).

…During Gukurahundi in 1983 I had just given birth to my lastborn. Soldiers came and severely battered me on my vagina leaving me with permanent injuries… many of us were left with permanent injuries… (W20).

The testimonies show that rape or sexual assault was often accompanied by physical violence, which included detention, severe beatings, and torture. This was the modus operandi and tactic

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[13] Compulsory all night vigils.

used by the Fifth Brigade. Some of the women have permanent disabilities and health challenges from the beatings and rape they endured.

> ...I feel so much pain and even physically I think my body was affected as my back is always sore because of numerous counts of rape... (W16).
>
> ...Many of us were left with permanent injuries and to date my ribcage is still damaged. I cannot lift heavy items, not even a 20l bucket of water... (W20).

W4 is seen in the video limping. She then narrates:

> *The Gukurahundi issue was a bad experience for me, even today l am still disabled. I now walk with a limp... Because of a hip dislocation that l suffered while running away...* (W4).

Other commonly cited health complications cited by women include high blood pressure and heart problems.

> *...Aggghhh as l am here l am not well. I now have high BP. I have BP child of God* (W3).
>
> *...I have uncontrollable heart palpitations even till today. It cannot go away. I have a condition of heart palpitations and since you are here inquiring about this, my heart will beat uncontrollable...* (W4).
>
> *...My mother even up today causing her to have high blood pressure which she still has up to today...* (W12).

According to Skjelsbæk (2010: 34), the goal of rape in war is to "communicate, produce or maintain dominance", and to be used strategically with ulterior purposes. Rape is frequently used to injure, control, and humiliate people while also violating their physical and mental integrity. The brutality of the rapes was to give an experience of horror and power. Most of the women were tortured, beaten, stabbed, and then raped. Even if the women had injuries from the beatings and torture, they were not exempt from being raped. An example that struck out was that of a woman who was repeatedly beaten, raped and had a burning stick shoved into her vagina. When she was

caught trying to escape, she was raped in that condition. This shows that the nature of the rape was to inflict maximum pain on the victims.

Some of the acts in the women's testimonies are clear indications of humiliation; for example, women were forced to expose their vaginas by young soldiers, some were beaten on their vagina, whilst others were forced to strip. Moreover, testimonies also reveal that women were raped in front of their parents and in-laws. The purpose of forced incest and women being compelled to have sex in front of their parents and in-laws was to humiliate their families and communities. It is utilized to destabilize family and community systems. Today these communities are scarred because of these rapes. The women express pain and anger for the rapes that they endured. Some women's pain and anger come through even more strongly in the repeated assertion that the soldiers took their virginity.

As previously mentioned, sexual assault is frequently followed by other forms of violence in order to create a terrifying experience. What we can establish is that using sexual violence in addition to other types of violence amplifies the consequences intended by the offenders. The motive is to instil fear within them, punish them, and gain or destroy their communities. Today the women live in fear; the sight of a soldier overwhelms them with fear as some noted that they still live in fear and get scared when they see soldier or security personnel. They also live in fear that history would repeat itself, and they would experience what they experienced during Gukurahundi.

Sexual violence is frequently feminised. It often happens to women because they are female. On any given instance, a soldier was likely to kill the boy child and rape the girl child, according to

women's accounts of soldier interactions. This shows the differential impact of war on men and women. Skjelsbæk (2010) elucidates the gender dimension of rape by conceptualizing various approaches to comprehending wartime sexual violence as part of a gender analysis. Women during Gukurahundi fall under Skjelsbæk's second category, which he terms structuralism. This conceptualisation highlights the fact that targeted "women in the war zone are victims of sexual violence for specific ethnic, religious, and political groups". "The understanding of patriarchy is thus rendered more complex because it is no longer seen as simply men having power over women, but as men belonging to the most powerful ethnic and political groups having power over the women of the other by potentially attacking them" (Skjelsbæk 2010: 35-38). Gukurahundi was both political and ethnic. In this case, women were targeted because they belonged to a certain ethnic group which was Ndebele and were perceived to support ZAPU, who had a strong support base in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions. They were also perceived to support dissidents.

Women's rape experiences are associated with stigma, rejection from their communities. Yohani & Okeke-Ihejirika (2018: 387) argue that "any sexual interference is viewed in the African cultures as devaluing the woman". This could explain why some women talk about losing their virginity and how the rapes made them feel like "rejects". Gukurahundi caused marital strife because some women were accused of being prostitutes who slept with soldiers.

> *…For me it cost my relationship because my boyfriend who was the father of my child was told by his family that he could not marry me because I was a prostitute who slept around with both soldiers and dissidents in front of the mother. It pains me a lot because he could not marry me as I was seen as a prostitute. I now have a child and I could not marry his father because they said I was a prostitute. It pains me when l think about it* (W19).

> *By the time we got married we were no longer virgins but rejects because of soldiers who were raping us carrying guns. So, we want our virginity back* (W11).

> …Gukurahundi also created problems in my marriage because my husband started accusing me of sleeping with soldiers… (W16).

The fact that these women are speaking up about their sexual violence experiences is critical in breaking the cultural taboo surrounding rape. "Because rape carries such a heavy stigma, women who have been raped are typically hesitant to speak up about it" (Gilbert 2014: 206). This reluctance to talk about their experiences helps them escape the stigma and feelings of humiliation Women rarely tell their husbands or community members about their rape experiences. For women who have never disclosed to their families, their silence is an act of resistance to social marginalisation and stigma. As a result, women's silence appears to be an act of defiance against being labelled or identified for what happened to them. Breaking the rape silence is thus critical, not only for casting light on the challenges survivors have in sharing their experiences, but also for assisting in addressing the segregation of rape survivors who have been marginalised as a result of their ordeal.

4.4 Children born out of rape.

In conflict situations where rape is widespread young girls and women fall pregnant from the sexual violation they experience. "The issue of children born as a result of rape during warfare affects how post-conflict societies rebuild and reconcile" (Seto 2015). In the case of Gukurahundi, rape has resulted in the birth of children whose fathers are unknown. Furthermore, the mothers of these children were minors when they were raped and became teenage mothers. Forced impregnation exacerbates the victims' suffering. As a result, being forced to bear a child stigmatises victims while also causing physical and mental trauma to the woman. The children conceived as a result of rape have been a source of double trauma to the women, and identity concerns, as illustrated in the narratives below, have compounded their pain:

…I ended up registering my child with my surname. He is also a Ndlovu. I did not know his father this also has messed up my son's life because he does not know his father…. (W5).

….I realized that I was pregnant what would I do being pregnant?...... I gave birth to my child. I took a birth certificate for him using my surname. Even today he does not know his father. It is even hard for me to explain to him what happened for him to be here… (places hands in between the thighs and looks down) Even if he has a problem that requires a father I do not know how to address it. I told him that look my son your father ran away when I fell pregnant… (looks down) where was he mom he asks? I have no explanations to give him, I have failed... there is a time my son wanted to marry and pay bride price(crackling in her voice, becomes emotional, takes a deep breath, sighs looks down and cries) it got to a point where he said if my father were around, he would be the one helping me… (W2).

…of that child that I got as a result of rape in January 1984. My child was born on the 25th of January. This child is giving me problems. I do not know her surname since I was raped. Up to today my child cannot have children of her own. When I consult prophets they tell us to look for her family /father. Where will I find him ha? (pauses). I do not know them, do not even know their surname. This is the pain that I experience. My main worry now is I do not know her father because I was raped. She is failing to have kids, when I consulted prophets, they told me to look for her relatives, but I do not know them not even her father's surname…... Where will I get her relatives when I was raped in a pit"? (W13).

…I still feel that pain because of the child of whom I do not know his relatives and I do not know his father. I am not going to lie its very painful. On top of being beaten we were raped. I have a child born out of rape. I am being honest. I do not know his surname I just gave him my surname, but he was born from gorillas (begins to cry) (W14).

In Siwale[14] they had dug pits and we were ordered to get in and have sex with any of the soldiers. When you refused, they would cover you with sand up to the hip level. Thereafter they would cover your head with plastic and pour water until you passed out, then rape you willy nilly. There were many of us and I am certain that many of us have children from these Gukurahundi's. (Speaks in a very angry tone) Today these kids are suffering, we do not know their fathers because some of them were Shona from places like Murehwa or Mutoko. How will I find him there? Now these children are suffering because we were raped by the Gukurahundi's (W8).

By carrying children who belong to the perpetrator, they experience what Du Toit (2009: 299) terms "the second rape". The children are a constant reminder of the rape they experienced and serve as a constant reminder of the incident. Already impoverished, the demand for more resources

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[14] Siwale is a village in Lupane, Matabeleland North.

exacerbates an already grim scenario as they must care for these children. Women specifically stated that when a child is born as a result of rape, the father is unknown, leaving them to shoulder the responsibility of raising the child alone and facing negative community reactions. Most of the children born out of rape do not know the history of their existence. This has been kept from them. The women remain silent to protect their children and grandchildren from the emotional burden of information about the horrors of the Gukurahundi.

One woman revealed the turmoil she feels in trying to tell her son about how he was conceived. She shares that she told him his father ran away whilst she was pregnant. This weighs heavily on her as she narrates:

> *Even today he does not know his father. Even for me to explain to him what happened for him to be here is difficult… It is difficult for me to tell him, but I was thinking that I could write in my notebook, just write the whole story, and explain everything in a notebook and leave it in the open. I know these young people like to pick up books and read. Maybe he will know and perhaps ask me then I can tell him.(W2)*

Silence is a coping mechanism, and information is withheld to ensure children's normal development. Children born out of rape face a myriad of factors linked to their identity. This will be discussed in greater detail below as l tackle its spiritual significance.

4.5 Poverty exacerbating trauma.

Conflict affects women's economic security; hence poverty becomes a building block that exacerbates their trauma load. In the aftermath of conflict, women are left struggling and trying to reconfigure their disrupted livelihood. The carry the brunt of taking care of the family with limited resources. This, in turn, undermines the future economic independence of women. In trying to capture the psychological impact of trauma, we cannot divorce the impact of specific traumatic

events from the impact of "ongoing structural violence in the form of extreme poverty and socio-economic disempowerment" (Kaminer & Eagle 2010: 152). For women survivors of Gukurahundi, trauma transcends the psychological and becomes an indicator of economic deprivation and severe poverty. The initial trauma that the women experienced may well have been about their experiences of being abducted, raped, and displaced. However, their ongoing trauma is entrenched in the material conditions of their existence. In a country with a high inflation and a high rate of poverty, it is no surprise that for many women, poverty exacerbates their trauma. These women struggle to make ends meet and provide for their families. This is clearly articulated in their narratives as they share their daily struggles of fending for their families. Not only are they paralyzed by psychological trauma, but also by poverty-induced trauma. Their traumas continue because they lack basic necessities such food for their children. Their maternal instinct comes out strongly in their narratives as they are mostly worried about their children's futures and ask nothing for themselves. Failure to fend for their families leaves them with chronic feelings of disempowerment. They continue to be traumatized by poverty that leaves them in a constant state of despair. Most of the women harbour feelings of helplessness, despair, and desperation. Such thoughts are not about their painful experiences but about being poor and seeing no way out of their situation. In addition to their experiences of living in abject poverty, failing to provide for their children has been traumatic for them. Evidently, from their testimonies, the violation had a socio-economic impact on them. The women mention that their lives and that of their families could have been different had they not suffered at the hands of the Fifth Brigade.

It is clear from the testimonies that the trauma of poverty pervades their family life. The women are constantly worried about the well-being of their children. The women express these sentiments all too well in the narratives below:

> *My children suffered a lot; they never got an education. I would not have failed to educate my children had my property not been taken[15]. All my wealth was taken away from me they took all my livestock and squandered it. My children suffered a lot. They are not even educated……the Gukurahundi plundered everything even the property in the house they took. (*W3).
>
> *What hurts me is that we were left struggling a lot and have gone through tough times….we struggled a lot* (repeats it thrice) *(*W4).

Most post-conflict countries are characterized by high percentages of female school dropout, resulting in high levels of poverty. Most of the women survivors of Gukurahundi were robbed of the opportunity to finish school, which ultimately resulted in limited prospects and opportunities to better their lives. W5 believed that her experience of being raped and having a child robbed her of the opportunity to further her education as she was forced to drop out of school. She attributes that her lack of education is directly responsible for the socio-economic difficulties that she and her family are experiencing.

> *They disturbed my life because I could have finished school and became a teacher or nurse because at the time, they took me I was doing form 3. They have destroyed my life in a big way. Now I am suffering had it not been for what happened I should be earning my own money. I still feel pain, a lot of pain . I lost out on a chance to have a good life. My parents had dreams for me when they sent me school. But I ended up not educated because of the child I now had, with no father. My son also lost out he only has grade seven. That is where he stopped. He grew up with no future because I did not have money to send him to school...* (W5).

It is worth noting that poverty has a ripple effect, as highlighted by some women's narratives. As a result of their poverty, their children could not go to school, and also suffer from economic marginalisation. W5 highlighted in the above testimony further shares that *"…this has affected my son's life…he grew up with no future because I did not have the money to take him to school. My son also lost out, he only has grade 7, that is where he stopped".* Like many women survivors of

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[15] Her property and livestock were plundered and looted by the Fifth Brigade.

Gukurahundi she believes that her traumatic experiences also directly affected her children and robbed them of better prospects and opportunities.

On the other hand, W1 sense of helplessness stems from her sons' death. She reveals that her son was educated as she shows off his certificates and diplomas. Her son was severely beaten and tortured by the Fifth Brigade resulting in him having a mental illness and ultimately dying years later. She believes that she would not be struggling if her son were still alive because he would have looked after her. Moreover, she now has the responsibility of taking care of her late son's children, further compounding her sorrows as she cannot adequately provide for them.

> *Gukurahundi caused me great pain. My first-born son died mentally disturbed due to all the beatings suffered. They beat him badly and he lost his mind before he died. I am looking after his orphans. The three children that he left behind because of Gukurahundi…I really feel grief for my first born who was educated…* (W1).

The reality of everyday life, poverty, and limited survival opportunities are enough to leave conflict-affected communities disadvantaged hence the feelings of hopelessness and despair that the women feel as they worry about their children's future. Furthermore, one notes that exposure to different types of daily stressors increases the severity of PTSD symptoms. Daily stressors and poverty increase the trauma load for these women, becoming a "building block," which adds to their vulnerability and repeated traumatisation.

This study, therefore, shows the socio-economic effects of war on women. Trauma, when combined with widespread instability, poverty, and a lack of essential services, not only exacerbates mental suffering but also makes it more difficult for people to be economically and

socially productive (World Bank 2016). In order to achieve the World Bank's goal of eradicating extreme poverty, psychosocial needs must be addressed.. If women are economically disenfranchised, their recovery depends on the type of material help they get. For these women to heal, they need psychological and socio-economic support to tackle their psychological needs and basic everyday needs. Individuals and communities can benefit from psychological and socioeconomic intervention programs that help them heal psychological traumas and reclaim their livelihoods. As a result, women will be able to achieve economic independence. These will ensure that they can provide for their families and send their children to school.

4.6 Disappearances and missing persons

During Gukurahundi many people were abducted, and some were never seen again. Forced disappearances served as a form of psychological torture. As a result, the surviving victims were subjected to psychological and social strain, leading to long term depression (CCJP 1997: 181). Some women do not know the whereabouts of their family members who disappeared and as a result, have not had the opportunity to mourn or bury their loved ones. This is expressed in the testimonies below:

> *Gukurahundi severely affected us. I am a widow today; my husband was killed. I do not even know where he was buried...* (W6).

> *...They took my father at night.... They took him for good. We kept thinking he would come back but no. Some said check in this mineshaft or check in Sivomo ... we found transport and went there but nothing. We did not have a clue where they killed him. We just did not have any information....if they search closely concerning the skeletal remains, they could take us to go and have a look we could find his remains . We could remove his remains and give him a decent burial....we really desired that, but we failed to. We heard that they were thrown into a shaft...(W4).*

W4 speaks in the plural form, which implies that many other families were also searching for their relatives who had been abducted and disappeared. W4 choice of vocabulary implies that she is situating herself within a community of survivors rather than merely recounting her own personal experiences.

4.7 Memory recollection and reconstruction

Analysing how events are narrated requires a keen eye and alert ears to hear beyond the words and tone. Women's stories were coherent, detailed, and full of emotion. The women remember with ease every little detail of their experience, including the time of day they encountered the soldiers, what they were doing, and their conversation with the people around them, including soldiers. The women told a continuous and detailed account about their lives before, during, and after the trauma. Secondly, the women's stories were intelligible, organised, and logical. Some women incorporated the trauma into their worldview or belief system. The urge to speak from personal experience was clear in many women, though, in certain instances, they made references to other family relatives and the community as a whole.

The traumas of their past still haunt women survivors of Gukurahundi. It comes out strongly in their narratives. They do not have the privilege of forgetting their traumatic experiences as one woman highlights that ". *I will never forget Gukurahundi atrocities even in my sleep I can tell you what happened*". If these women's memories are too traumatic, why don't they let them go and move on with their lives? "Why do these people cling to their traumatic memory as a cherished possession? Why do they not want to move on and let bygones be bygones?" Hitchcott (2013: 82) clarifies that the nature of the horror that survivors of trauma experience are beyond the

imagination; it is equally impossible not to remember. "To be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Gilbert 2014: 25). The traumatic memory is re-enacted in the victim's mind and cannot simply be left behind. Trauma survivors are possessed by their past rather than owning it. Hence when a woman remembers, she is often in a vulnerable position.

Several research involving sexual assault survivors have found that memories of sexual trauma are connected with "higher levels of vividness and clarity, sensory components, and higher overall quality and coherence"(Peace et al. 2008, Gilbert 2014, Chang & Shors 2018 et al.) Sexual trauma memories are extremely detailed and persistent, even over long periods of time. As a result, sexual violence memories can withstand the passage of time and be remembered more vividly and in greater detail, even years after the events. It has been 38 years since the Gukurahundi atrocities, and yet the women have not forgotten and remember their experiences vividly and with much detail. What seemed important for the women was recalling how they felt, still feel, where they were, what they were doing, and what time of day it was when the event or act occurred. Overall, women recall much more detail, and their narratives are rich. The women use more emotional terms when describing the memory as they continue to express within their narratives how much pain they are in. As they share their stories, the women do not struggle to recall their memories. They recall the experience and regard it as an important element of their life story. The women employ imagery in their stories to ground their terrible experiences in a concrete reality, stressing the sensory, such as sound, smell, and physical sensations. This sensory experience generates a compelling image for the audience, forcing them to visualize the full extent of the trauma as if seeing the survivor's recollections play out in front of them.

Traumatic events are remembered all too well and engraved on memory. What they remember is of significance to them and becomes their point of departure. Some aspects of traumatic memories are more vividly remembered than others as they are imprinted deeply in memory. These are referred to as "enhanced memories" and they are inscribed into the women's memories and shape their narratives (Haskell & Randall 2019: 22). Women were haunted by particular 'key moments' of Gukurahundi, which constantly resurface in their present narratives. For most women, the rape they experienced was their key moment that is imprinted in their memories. This becomes the vantage point from which they tell their story. Remarkably some of the women were able to remember specific dates despite the time lapsed. An example is one woman who shares that her brother was murdered on the 19th of February. She recalls the events leading up to her brother's death, including the date. This is because the date was significant and imprinted in her memory of the trauma.

> *…My young brother Philemon leaves on the 19th. His intention was to visit our mother where l had left them. They got him off the bus in Figtree. They murdered him on the 19th of February. I do not forget that date…* (W3).

Secondly, some women mention the year 1983 in their testimonies and do not mention the subsequent years up to the time Gukurahundi ended.

> *…During Gukurahundi I was a youth and I remember it started in April 1983. I was working in Bulawayo and got a letter that my parents had been beaten back home… I came across a sea of soldiers. As I passed by greeting my neighbours, one of the soldiers, Kamiripiri, ran towards me and ordered that I register and come for pungwe that night…*(W8).

> *When Gukurahundi started in our area in Lubindi, I was 17 years old. They took everyone to Lubindi Camp I think in March or April 1983...* (*W13*).

The specific dates and years that they recall are entrenched in their memories hence not forgotten. This year is entrenched in their memory as this was the start of Gukurahundi. According to The

CCJP report (1997: 47), the Fifth Brigade was first deployed in Matabeleland on 26 January 1983. The year 1983 was the most brutal as the soldiers went on a killing rampage. This could be the reason why this year is stuck in the women's memories.

Thirdly the *pungwes* (all night vigils) that women were forced to attend are referenced by most women. The following statements below refer to pungwes as a point of reference in most narratives:

> *…They would take us after knocking off at school to attend their night* pungwes *at Rest Camp where we were forced to dance to Mai Vadikondo songs…* (W11).
>
> *…They were teaching us their songs, dancing to* amasidisnyongoro*, forcing us to dance and march and whenever you went out of step you were thoroughly beaten. I stayed in Siwali for a month (*ngigida amadisnyongoro*) dancing to amadisnyongoro, doing pungwes where I fell ill…* (W13).
>
> *…What we went through here in Maphani in 1983 was very painful. They made us dig and root out trees with our hands, forcing us to attend their pungwes singing and raping us…* (W8).
>
> *…Soldiers would come and capture us in the presence of parents and force us to attend their all night Pungwes singing in Gomoza…* (W19).

The *pungwes* were another defining moment for the women That constantly resurface in their narratives. The women were forced to sing and dance at these *pungwes*. They were then beaten and ultimately detained and raped. All the above-mentioned key moments become the vantage point from which they recall their memory and reconstruct their narrative.

The physical scars that the women carry have become permanent sites of memory. In their memory articulation, women mention their physical scars, with some showing off their scars as highlighted below:

> *… When I got burnt I jumped up and the stick fell. As I did this one of the burning coals broke off and fell on my thighs. The coal got stuck on my thigh…(*shows off a scar on her thigh as she shares her testimony) (*W2).*

> *…One of the soldiers stabbed me on my buttocks. That is when he stabbed me here, I have 2 huge scars…(W22).*

The scars and physical disabilities acquire a special resonance because they denote a memory of the suffering and are physical evidence of what occurred and what cannot be forgotten. The maimed bodies serve primarily as a reminder of the reality of the massacres, suffering, and trauma. The women's scars and disabilities become their unofficial history and form part of the memory narrative. As Ibrahim notes, "the body is the first-hand witness", physical evidence of what occurred and what cannot be forgotten and a particular resonance that denotes a memory of the suffering (2009: 265). More important, the scars have become permanent sites of memory. Having to live with scars or a disability or health challenges for the rest of one's life forms part of the ongoing pain and suffering. Ndlovu (2019: 158) states that "the idea of the body as a site of memory is a real concept". The sexual violation women experienced denote the idea that women's bodies were also extensions of the battlefield; hence this draws on the body's idea as a memory site in itself.

Trauma frequently leads to dissociation from the present as the concept of time is disrupted. There is a tension between recalling the past in the present and regaining some control over the memories. The memory tends to outlive the historical events' fluidity across time. W2 highlights that:

> *This thing is painful, it does not end, it really does not go away. Even when issues are discussed concerning Gukurahundi, that old pain rises again.*

The statement "this thing is painful; it does not end" highlights that there is always something that reminds them of Gukurahundi. The sentiments that the pain does not end reveal that trauma continues to be felt unabated across time and demonstrates the long-term impact of Gukurahundi.

Survivors of trauma exist in both past and present simultaneously as their memories of the past are at times relieved in both past and the present tense. This demonstrates how the experience of past trauma plagues the present and is crucial to understanding how the traumatic event has radically altered survivors' perception of time. For Gukurahundi survivors, it is clear that their concept of time has been shattered, and they share their stories in both past and present as if it is the experience is replaying itself in the present. "Recounting the past in the present tense gives a sense of urgency to the story, bringing it into our present as the audience" (Gilbert 2014: 119). We also begin to visualise the story as we are also taken into that moment.

Remarkably, most women automatically switched from speaking Ndebele to Shona when talking about encounters with the Fifth Brigade. It is interesting to note that the Shona expressions used by the Fifth Brigade stuck in their minds and still came up when they told their stories. In addition to the language the women took on an authoritative and harsh masculine tone. Thus, language is employed to distinguish between the perpetrator language and the survivor's language. Furthermore, as previously stated, the Fifth Brigade spoke Shona and made victims, and survivors sing Shona songs and chant Shona slogans, hence their memories are still based on the assumption that all the soldiers were Shona.

Gukurahundi's memory is associated with soldiers as the primary face of human rights violations. The Fifth Brigade soldiers are referred to throughout the Gukurahundi narratives. Women in general emphasized that any soldier in uniform triggers the trauma they experienced. Hence when they see a soldier in uniform, they have flashbacks of what they experienced as highlighted in some of the quotes mentioned earlier.

The names of two of the soldiers who were part of the Fifth Brigade came up in some of the women's testimonies. One of the soldiers named Magagasa was identified as being the leader notorious for brutal murders:

> *One of the soldiers , Kamiripiri, ran towards me and ordered that I register and come for pungwe that night and I did so (speaks the exact words that the soldier said in Shona), then I proceeded home… (W8).*

> *…Soldiers captured me and raped me all night. In the morning they severely beat me and sent me away….I never went out up to the time soldiers left our place. But before they left a soldier named Magagasa, who was notorious for killing, went wild and started shooting …(W15).*

> *…When I came here there was this notorious soldier by the name Magagasa who was leading Gukurahundi. Soldiers raped me, many of them taking turns to rape me on countless occasions. (W16).*

Lastly, there is a widely held belief that all the soldiers were cruel and merciless. Whilst it is clear from the narratives the brutality of the soldiers, one testimony sheds a different light as one lady narrates how one soldier showed her kindness and helped her escape. She narrates:

> *…They sat me down , one of them gave me biscuits but I could not eat because my mouth was swollen, and I was feeling pain right through my entire body… As his colleagues were busy burning the houses, this solder said to me 'if I say run, you run away, even if you hear me shooting, I won't be shooting at you , keep running'. So, as they were coming out, he ordered me to run , I tried to run but fell down. He kept on shooting deceiving his colleagues that he was shooting at me… (W10).*

4.8 Conclusion

Gukurahundi left a legacy of pain and trauma to survivors in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. Undoubtedly the women still live with the trauma of their unresolved past. From the testimonies highlighted above, it is clear that survivors have not forgotten their experiences, and they continue to feel the pain of the past as raw to them as if it happened yesterday. The women are vulnerable and transparent about their life experiences related to suffering, pain, and trauma.

In recounting their ordeals, they wove their own experiences with the experiences of other women, family, and community as a whole. They did not merely talk about themselves but others as well. This is what Hirschberger (2018) terms collective trauma, which is trauma experienced by a whole community and forms part of their history and identity.

Women's testimonies reveal the gruesome nature of the atrocities committed during Gukurahundi by the Fifth Brigade. As a result, women experienced physical, emotional, and psychological trauma. The extracted accounts highlighted in this chapter are just the tip of the iceberg of what the women shared in their stories. It was impossible to include every testimony and detail from the 22 women. However, the few selected testimonies offer a window to women's experiences of Gukurahundi, the brutality of the rapes and beatings they endured, and the psychological and socio-economic impact Gukurahundi has on them. However, it is important to note that this study has limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, because this research solely relied on video footage, I could not probe further on various topics raised by the women to get more details.

Chapter Five will pay particular attention to spirituality as I explore how spirituality shaped women's understandings of trauma, children born out of rape and missing relatives who were never afforded decent burials.

Chapter 5

Spirituality and the construction of meaning in the aftermath of Gukurahundi

5.1 Trauma and Christian faith

According to empirical study, there is a conceptual relation between trauma and religious beliefs. Spirituality can serve as a foundation for people to make sense of their reality. (Meichenbaum 2008; Manda & Magezi 2016, Harper & Pargament 2015; Park et al. Currier, 2017). According to Leo et al. (2021: 1-2), when a person suffers a traumatic event, "they attempt to understand the trauma by making assessments on the meaning of the occurrences". In the aftermath of tragic experiences, people frequently turn to religion and spirituality for solace. There is no uniform religious response to trauma. For some people, the experience of trauma incites people to use religious beliefs as a coping mechanism. "They may have a divine, intrapersonal or interpersonal focus. In the divine realm, people may focus their coping efforts on countering threats to their thoughts, feelings and relationship with God or a higher power. In the intrapersonal realm, coping may centre on resolving internal questions, doubt, and uncertainties. In the interpersonal realm coping may concentrate on reliving relational tensions and conflicts over spiritual matters" (Harper 2015: 353). The trauma may be interpreted as a test of devotion to God. In such cases, they would say, "this is God's will. I do not understand, but I trust God". Some people consciously deepen their faith through suffering as they seek comfort and closeness to God.

Trauma, on the other hand, might result in a religious or spiritual belief crisis as the survivor attempts to make sense of what has happened. Others would say: "Why should I suffer so much?

Where was God in my suffering? Who is this God who allows so much suffering? I cry, and God does not respond". When these people are confronted with unexpected traumatic occurrences, they attempt to reconcile the events' meaning with their prior belief systems in a way that maintains their view of the world as meaningful and predictable. For example, Africans who had been converted to Christianity shift back to African Traditional Religion (ATR) when this new religion does not provide answers to their existential needs and questions (Akin-Otiko & Abbas 2019: 34. They turn to ATR to make sense of the trauma and to seek solutions in dealing with the trauma.

According to ZimStat (2017: 6), Christianity is the dominant religion in Zimbabwe, with most Christians continuing to practice elements of their traditional religions. With this background, it is surprising that there is a great silence on Christianity in the women's narratives. The women survivors of Gukurahundi, who presumably belong to churches and probably go to church, did not speak of God in their testimonies. Usually, when something bad happens, people refer to their faith and God's will to make sense of the trauma experience. Despite a possible Christian background, these women did not volunteer religious responses. Their silence may be interpreted in different ways. Firstly, one of the producers at Habakkuk Trust highlighted that woman are still very angry and constantly articulated how angry they were even off-camera[16]. Women's silence on their faith silence could be because the women have not yet dealt with their traumatic past and are overwhelmed with anger and resentment. Secondly, silence highlights a methodological issue. The fact that there was no empirical research done, but only a theoretical interaction with the documentaries was a limitation. Empirical work using face to face interviews could have strengthened and enriched the analysis of the phenomenon under study. Relying on video footage

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[16] Facebook conversation with Mthabisi Phiri on the 15th of April at 2.50 pm. Mthabisi Phiri is a videographer and editor of the Habakkuk Trust documentary.

accessed online meant that I had no access to the women to probe further and ask guiding questions on how women use faith is a coping mechanism. Possibly if the producers had asked the right questions, perhaps responses might have come up.

Some of the basic tenets of Christianity are faith, hope and forgiveness. Each of the world's main religions emphasizes forgiveness, and the Christian faith is no exception. Unforgiveness, on the other hand, is a "negatively perceived emotion that activates the stress response", putting ones mental and physical health at risk. (Worthington et al., 2019: 1). Most of the women are angry at the government and ZANU PF, and their anger comes out strongly in their narratives, as highlighted in the testimonies below:

> *Many people have forgotten about all this, and they are now embracing Gukurahundists. ZANU PF* the big rooster*. So, when I see them (ZANU PF), even eating a rooster [17] reminds me of the sad old past (W6).*

> I am a proud Zimbabwean. I am proud of my country, but I do not think ZANU will ever heal my wounds. They will never heal (W8).

The anger, guilt, hopelessness, and lack of forgiveness in their women survivors' narratives is what Foy et al. (2011: 95) identify as spiritual red flags. According to Foy et al., spiritual red flags are indicators of spiritual struggling or "stuck points." Trauma survivors who display spiritual "red flags" may appear to be "stuck" or "derailed" in their trauma processing and recovery journey. Spiritual red flags are warning signs of spiritual or religious struggles and can potentially exacerbate PTSD amongst survivors. Even though women survivors of Gukurahundi are silent on their faith, one can thus use Foy et al.'s analysis in an attempt to explain the women's responses

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[17] One of the most popular symbols used by the ZANU PF party is a cockerel.

as a spiritual phenomenon. The anger, guilt, hopelessness, and lack of forgiveness can be viewed as a sign of spiritual or religious struggle.

5.2 The "theology of silence" within the churches.

The church is supposed to be an "agent for change in the community due to its influence and proximity to the community. The Bible calls for the church to be salt and light of the world" (Motsi 2010:7). In times of crises, the churches may rise up and openly condemn the violence, provide shelter, food and medical assistance to victims. However, in conducting my research I could not find any literature that detailed the work of churches during Gukurahundi. According to Gukurahundi scholars (Motsi 2010, Tarusarira 2017, Muwanzi 2018, Chitando, & Taringa 2021), churches have been primarily complicit in the Gukurahundi silence taking a backstage position (particularly during Mugabe's tenure). Gukurahundi is widely regarded as a taboo subject, an untouchable subject, and a "burning issue that churches fear may burn their fingers" (Chitando & Taringa 2021:194). Therefore, Motsi asks; How can the church, which has been silent be innocent and be an agent of change and healing? (2010:43)

However, whilst most churches negated their role, the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe was the first to break the silence around Gukurahundi through the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). In 1997 the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) produced the report "Breaking the Silence. Building True Peace; A Report of the disturbances in Matabeleland and Midlands 1980-1988", which provides evidence of the Gukurahundi atrocities and the human rights abuses during that period. This is the only comprehensive report on Gukurahundi to date. The Catholic Church and its commission were

instrumental in promoting and defending human rights during the 80s and 90s. By collecting data and compiling the report, they provided evidence of the atrocities that happened in Matabeleland. The CCJP report includes in appendix letters written by priests at various missions recounting their horrors of what they witnessed and appealing for help and intervention. The Catholic missionaries were very instrumental and the first to sound the alarm on what was happening in their areas. The Catholic mission staff in the various diocese in Matabeleland and Midlands monitored events in their regions and kept invaluable documents mission hospitals recorded every victim in detail. They kept records of events as they happened and forwarded them to CCJP Harare. On 16 March 1983, Catholic representatives and CCJP chairman Mike Auret, Bishop Karlen and Bishop Mutume met with President Robert Mugabe. They presented him with a dossier of evidence of atrocities. This dossier included a statement by the Zimbabwe Catholics bishops conference entitled "reconciliation is still possible" The team strongly condemned the government's actions calling upon the government to "maintain order" (CCJP 1997:58).

Chitando and Taringa (2021) draw attention to the culture of fear, silence, and numbness that has generally characterised the churches' approach to Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe. The silence relating to mass killings is often social, political, and academic. In the case of Gukurahundi, Chitando and Taringa add theologically. They contend that "silence appears to have struck a deadly covenant with denial" (Chitando &Taringa 2021:190). They noticed that high levels of discomfort, disquiet, and apprehension were present in interviews with church leaders on Gukurahundi. Most church leaders had never discussed this openly before. They saw Gukurahundi as highly political and outside the churches scope or mandate. They have internalised Mugabe's rhetoric that the church's main business is to focus on the spiritual and that politics is the domain. Banana (quoted by

Muwanzi 2018: 12-13.) argued that the church lacked practicality during the Gukurahundi era. From a religious standpoint, the church had been silent, hiding and negating its role in the theology of silence. Banana (1991) accused the church of "being content with a theology of silence, claiming that it lacked a theology of condemnation, confrontation, redemption, and protest, rendering it ineffective". Muwanzi (2018: 12) identifies weaknesses of the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe (MCZ) as "growing cold feet, becoming silent, and lacking the machinery to establish facts on atrocities"; hence, failed to play an effective advocacy role during Gukurahundi.

Secondly, most churches, including leaders and ordinary people, especially those not rooted in the Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces, emphasise "forgiveness". This discourse of forgiveness in Zimbabwe is common, especially as both the church and the government have pushed a "forgive and forget" agenda (Ndlovu 2009: 198). Gukurahundi is often cited as a horrific and unfortunate event that belongs in the past and must remain there. "Biblical passages relating to Jesus calling for one to forgive are often cited to suggest that Christians have no choice when it comes to forgiveness. "In Pentecostal rhetoric, forgiveness is encouraged as the feelings of deep anger and pain are associated with negative spiritual energy and deemed anti prosperity" (Chitando &Taringa 2021:192)

Thirdly, the church is caught up in the dilemma of dealing with the spiritual legacies of Gukurahundi. Motsi claims that often the church is too irrelevant because it is too removed due to its lack of engagement (Motsi 2010:178). Many victims were buried in the wrong place and without proper burial rites. Some people disappeared, and their whereabouts are unknown. It is believed that innocent people who were killed become angry avenging spirits, and this has negative consequences. Not burying one's dead in the Ndebele culture, to which many of the victims of

Gukurahundi belong, implies living outside their protection. Also, families have not undertaken rituals or gone through umbuyiso, an important ceremony in Ndebele culture that is supposed to be conducted a year after the death. Umbuyiso is a ceremony where the dead spirit is officially brought home and inaugurated as an ancestor. Unfortunately, mainline churches have not attended to this traditional spiritual need of the relatives of the dead and disappeared victims of Gukurahundi. Instead, they have stigmatised indigenous religious conceptions of healing. As it is understood today in Zimbabwe, Christianity was introduced by the western missionaries, mainly of the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutherans, Anglican, and Methodists churches. Missionary Christianity was understood as part of the process of civilisation and modernisation. This meant undermining all traditional health and labelling traditional healers as witchdoctors (Gunda, 2007:230, 238). The advent of Christianity hence saw the stigmatisation of umbuyiso. The missionaries condemned and prohibited the practice (Ranger, 2004:114). Mainline churches have not made any significant changes to understand African spirituality in relation to trauma and sickness. The process of umbuyiso seems contradictory to the doctrines and practices of most mainline churches as the spirit of the deceased is recalled back. Pentecostals emphasise healing and deliverance from the terrors and insecurities inherent in African experiences of evil powers and sorcery (Gunda, 2007:242). The spirit of the deceased is deemed demonic or translates to the devil.

However, the African independent churches accommodate the aspect of African spirituality. Anderson (2001:199) writes that "in many AICs in Southern Africa, the prophet-healer has taken over the function of the traditional diviner-healer." This form of Christianity "dovetailed with the expectations of indigenous people because they could see into the future, they could demonstrate extra-ordinary power manifested in miracles and healings" (Tarusarira 2017:112). This explains

why most women survivors in my study resorted to consulting prophets in dealing with misfortunes affecting their children born out of rape.

The mixture of Christian and African religion in dealing with the dead and disappeared in the wake of Gukurahundi is a key aspect of social and cultural dynamic. The church needs to consider all these variables to contribute to forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, and integration.

5.3 African Traditional religion and Gukurahundi

The feminist standpoint theory argues that all knowledge is socially situated, affecting how women's lives and personal narratives are constructed. All knowledge projects, according to Steckle (2018: 22), are socially situated activities that are responsive to and "conditioned by the discourses and cultural norms of the community in which they are generated". Culture depicts a group's way of life as well as their shared values and beliefs. Individuals' personal meanings of traumatic experiences are impacted by the social setting in which they occur. In the context of Gukurahundi, women convey meaning to events by drawing on their background and culture. Therefore, the chain of events is understood from a cultural perspective; hence, it is critical to understand women's lived realities by paying particular attention to what is said and what is implied or what is not said. As survivors talk about their children born out of rape and the disappearances of loved ones, they draw on their socio-cultural context. It is important to analyse these issues within their socio-cultural context and listen beyond the story, out of which meaning occurs. Thus, it is not what the women say but what is implied or not said.

a) Children born out of rape.

According to African cultural beliefs, the problem of children born as a result of rape has spiritual ramifications. The "'I' (self) and the 'We' (community, nature) are interdependent" in the African worldview (Waldron, 2012: 41). Individuals in Africa are expected to exist within social relationships and networks from which they derive their self-worth, self-control, sense of belonging, and sense of security. An individual is unique because he or she is connected to others in the community. Belonging describes the bond that exists between each individual, their family, clan, and community. Belonging is defined by a sense of connection, and all aspects of existence are dependent on it. Belonging, which is linked to the knowledge of being known, generates the spiritual, emotional, and mental context in which the spirit expresses and animates being known. "Life becomes liable through connection and belonging serves as a context or a bridge for the self to move from the ante-conscious to the conscious" (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 15). This anchors one in a shared experience, from which meaning emerges. Children born out of rape face a myriad of challenges as their identity is not known. Furthermore, issues of belonging further complicate their integration into the community.

The enemy's identity is embodied by these children.; hence they are both insiders and outsiders. Even if the maternal family has accepted them as their own, they do not fully belong to the family or community. Their insecurity is exacerbated by their hybrid status as children of two cultures. In most African communities, a father's surname is considered important, and the child's identity belongs to the father's community. However, where the father's identity is unknown, the child assumes the mother's surname. Identity issues raise complex issues about belonging and connection to the spiritual. The spiritual, in this case, refers to the family lineage and ancestry. It

is often believed that the mothers' ancestors do not recognise the child and that the father's blood is calling for the child. This, in turn, results in misfortunes falling on the child as long as he or she has not connected to his father's lineage. In such cases, the child is expected to find his father's clan and certain rituals performed to introduce him to the ancestors. This is articulated in Gukurahundi narratives according to which women had to give their children their surname as the father was unknown. In Sub-Saharan Africa, single-mother-parented households are widespread, and mothers typically give their children their last names. Children do not always seek to live with their absent biological fathers as it is not his absence that is the issue, but rather that children need to know their fathers. Nonetheless, as children grow, questions arise as to why they are using their maternal surname. Taking on a father's surname creates a legitimate sense of self-identity and belonging to the right family (Nduna 2014: 35). Failure to use one's paternal surname is thought to result in the loss or absence of ancestral protection, negatively altering one's life and bringing misfortune. For women survivors of Gukurahundi, the identity issues of their children cause them emotional turmoil. One woman shares:

> *As I speak today, I am still hurting because of that child that I got due to rape. This child is giving me problems. I do not know her surname since I was raped. Up to today, my child cannot have children of her own. When I consult prophets, they tell us to look for her family /father. Where will I find him, ha? I do not know them, do not even know their surname. My main worry now is that she is failing to have kids; when I consulted prophets, they told me to look for her relatives, but I do not know them, not even her father's surname. My daughter has since lost her marriage because they say she is barren. Where will I get her relatives when I was raped in a pit?* (W13).

The spiritual aspect of the identity issues of children born out of rape is disclosed in W13's testimony above as having negative ramifications for the child and may bring personal troubles and misfortune. In this case, this woman's daughter is barren and lost her marriage. The prophet's solution is to locate her paternal relatives, which is impossible as the father's identity is unknown. This story shows that the situation of children disconnected from their paternal ancestry is

considered as spiritually problematic. According to Nduna (2014: 31), surnames play a role in personal cultural identity and difficulties with surname seems to cause a constant sense of unhappiness and alienation among some Africans. Taking on a father's surname offers a child a valid identity and allows them to learn about their family's history and ancestors.

Secondly, in most African societies traditional rituals and ceremonies require the extended family's presence, most importantly the father or the father's family from which the child's identity is borne. When the connection to the father's family, clan and ancestors is missing, it creates emotional stress as highlighted in the following testimony:

> There *is a time when my son wanted to pay a bride price. It got to a point where he said if my father were around, he would help me… (*W2).

Such key events in one's life require the presence of a father or a paternal relative. Many other ceremonies, including marriage, provide meaning and direction to the individual's life. These ceremonies also connect one to the ancestors, family, and community, with clan names often recited, giving a sense of belonging. When the father is unknown, it means the paternal side will be absent, causing emotional turmoil.

b) Need for decent burials for victims.

The various components of being spirit, mind, heart, and body must be a single integrated whole in essential relationship with everything else that is also spirit, according to African spirituality. This is a fundamental African principle. The human spirit is divided into three parts: the before-life, the earth-life, and the afterlife. "Earth-life is trifold as well, unfolding and radiating in the cycle of belonging, being, and becoming. Thus, the human spirit progresses from the before-life

to the afterlife via the cycles of belonging, being, and becoming that comprise earth-life into the afterlife." (Piper-Mandy & Rowe 2010: 14)

The CCJP report (1997: 201) clearly distinguishes between dead persons and missing persons. The dead are the people whose deaths were witnessed. This also implies that it is known what happened to their remains, whereas missing persons refers to persons who were known to have been abducted from their homes or incarcerated and never seen again. In both cases, the families did not mourn their relatives and carry out the burial rites. The Fifth Brigade was known for insisting on no mourning for the dead, and as a result, no proper burials took place. Bodies were left where they were killed to rot away. Bodies were buried in mass graves or individual graves but not in a culturally acceptable place or manner. Many victims were burned alive inside huts, and their bodies were not removed; instead, they were buried in makeshift graves with the earth moulded over them. Due to deaths from beatings and torture, some bodies were buried in mass or individual graves at Fifth Brigade camps. Lastly, some bodies were dumped in mineshafts and pit latrines, particularly in Matabeleland South and North (CCJP 1997: 202-203).These conditions have an impact on those who are supposed to mourn their dead; their grief is not compensated for by a proper burial, and the mourning process remains incomplete, which Ngwenya (2014: 33) refers to as "impaired mourning." Motsi (2010) comments that failure to provide a decent burial for loved ones after the Gukurahundi massacres continues to haunt the survivors.

Eppel (2006) shares her experiences with an NGO called the Amani trust. Eppel details two competing worldviews that are at play, one based on psychological notions of PSTD, and the other one based on the idea that there is no strict boundary between the world of the dead and the world

of the living. While Gukurahundi survivors displayed PTSD symptoms, Amani staff discovered that the survivors did not recognise counselling as a basic need in a post-trauma situation and did not always define the worst consequences of violence in terms that corresponded with standard psychological diagnostic tools. This echoes the sentiments made by African centred psychologists discussed in Chapter 3. Eppel (2006: 110) further highlights that the Amani Trust was pulled away from this approach by the rural leadership in Matabeleland South, who revealed that the worst problem left behind by the violence was the angry dead who were murdered and buried without ritual in clandestine graves. This has led to the belief that the angry dead are responsible for hardships and illness for their family members.

In Ndebele tradition, pleasing aggrieved ancestral spirits seems to be extremely important. The Amani trust discovered that the community prioritized giving the deceased an honorable funeral, as well as another ceremony known as *umbuyiso*, which is conducted a year after the death (where the dead spirit is officially brought home and inaugurated as an ancestor). In her study on the necessity of decent burials, Ndlovu (2019) mentions that the older generation emphasized that they would like Gukurahundi to be addressed culturally as "*iGukurahundi idinga isiko*". *Isiko* refers to culture or tradition, denoting that victims favour cultural approaches to addressing the problem. The following statements captured below from participants in Ndlovu's 2019 study illustrates the spiritual implications of Gukurahundi and the dominant thinking of families and communities in Matabeleland.

> You see places like Njelele [a national prayer shrine in Zimbabwe]. It does not rain any more. The blood of the dead speaks. Zimbabwe is dry … and is struggling as a country. It is because of the blood of the dead that is Unaccounted for (2019: 128).

> This thing needs tradition, my child. We need to go back to Njelele, a spiritual shrine in Zimbabwe, and appease our ancestors (2019: 209).

We want the bones of our parents and family members back. We want to bury them. The deceased are angry. As a result, my life has been difficult, riddled with failure, death, and poverty because the blood is heavy upon this land. This is why it does not rain any more. The blood of the dead speaks (2019: 210).

The participants in the Ndlovu study use culture to explain personal misfortune and drought, which has affected Zimbabwe for many years. They believe that the spirits of those who died during Gukurahundi are angry; hence advocate for *isiko* in dealing with Gukurahundi. Culture is significant because it explains the lens through which victims perceive Gukurahundi and convey the healing they believe they require. According to Ndlovu (2019: 238), "one way culture can assist is through traditional healers, whose abilities can appease the dead and bring peace to surviving families".

Disappearances and death "may have more profound effects since death and misfortune are always events of extreme concern for the entire extended family" (CCJP 1997: 181). There is a strong belief that people who are not given proper burial rites can reincarnate as deadly tormenting spirits. In this regard, these spirits may haunt the people who caused their death, as well as their family and can even bring calamity to communities and a nation. These spiritual beliefs compel African families to perform proper rituals for the burial of the dead, and anything that prevents this from happening can leave a family expecting future misfortunes.

Death and life are inextricably linked in African society; they are not mutually exclusive concepts, but rather exist on a continuum. Thus, death is merely a rite of passage to another plane of existence in many African traditions. Ancestors are people who have died but still live in the community and communicate with their families. In the Ndebele belief system, the ancestral spirit plays an integral

part in mediating between the living and God. According to their belief system, it is the ancestors who offer advice, punish, and guide them. For the dead's spirit to enter the spirit hierarchy, certain rituals must occur before, during, and after burial. If these processes are not fulfilled, it is perceived that the spirit remains in limbo. As a result, individuals must be given a dignified burial, complete with religious or spiritual rites. Even though Christianity has become widespread in rural Zimbabwe, many still retain their traditional belief systems in tandem with Christianity. Eppel (2006: 116) highlights that in his work with the Amani Trust, the traditional leadership requested exhumations to ensure that the bones in the forest were properly relocated to the right place. Eppel explains further that in Matabeleland, every year in August before the summer rains, the traditional leadership organises the forest to be cleansed of bones and any elements of dead animals. If this is not done, the belief is that it can lead to drought, which occurs often in Matabeleland. However, the shallow graves pose a dilemma for traditional leadership. Some relatives have gone to various graves or sites to perform rituals to appease the angry spirits, but they believe this is not enough as long as victims are not afforded proper burial and burial rites.

One cannot deny that there is a need for decent burials following customary funeral rights for survivors to mourn their dead. Graves and remains can be identified through testimonies from those who still remember. With the aid of forensic expertise, the remains can be identified and given to their surviving families for reburials. In a process called "Healing of the Dead", the Amani Trust, along with an Argentinian organisation called the Argentinian Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), offered their expertise, and assisted in the exhumation of bodies as a necessary step in providing decent burials following cultural rites (Eppel 2006: 114). However, the organisation was shut down in 2002 by the Zimbabwe government. Major (2015: 171) draws on the Rwandan

experience, noting that "the bits and pieces of individual bodies: clothing, personal possessions, ID cards, bones and skin are in other forensic and vernacular mass grave exhumations interpreted as substantial if not critical information, which would be used to establish the identity of the individual and the specific history of the mass grave site". Recovery and, where possible, identification of remains are frequently regarded as critical components of post-conflict reconciliation and trauma healing initiatives. This propels national political projects aimed at resolving or consolidating a collective memory of the past conflict. In Rwanda, some of the bodies of the departed have been reconnected with family or at the very least reorganized with the social space in which they formerly resided, providing surviving relatives with some sense of closure (Major 2015: 166).

The Amani Trust's work has shown that exhumations and reburials are possible and a necessary step towards emotional healing. The primary aim was to foster communal solidarity and healing, as well as to provide closure for the deceased through a dignified funeral. Participating in these rituals and ensuring the loved one's proper burial enriches closeness with the family and community and brings closure for and enhancing recovery. Furthermore, initiatives must promote cross-generational thinking synergy. It is not enough to undertake traditional rituals to resolve Gukurahundi if the process excludes the second generation, who are less likely to be familiar with different rituals (Ndlovu 2019: 242-243).

Chapter 6 is the final chapter, which summarizes the primary ideas emerging from the various exploration targets from the thesis's various research objectives and draws conclusions through a

critical discussion of women survivors' testimonies It closes with a critical reflection on the way forward in terms of Gukurahundi and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

Women's stories of Gukurahundi reveal the extent of their trauma and vulnerability. In the context of this study, the personal experiences that women share is not simply a history of what happened during Gukurahundi but also the continued suffering and pain that they continue to endure in the present. Gukurahundi has left a legacy of pain and trauma as victims still suffer from the pain of their unresolved past. On the surface, it would appear that there is peace in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces as people continue with their daily lives. One may easily assume that people have forgotten and moved on from their painful past. This is far from the truth as the testimonies of the women reveal. Gukurahundi may have stopped in the public's eyes, but to the victims, it has not ended; hence the statement mentioned by some of the women survivors that *iGukurahundi ayipheli*, Gukurahundi does not end. Outsiders may even argue that talking about Gukurahundi may reopen old wounds. This line of argument assumes that the wounds have healed. However, this notion is contradicted by the evidence given by the testimonies presented in Chapter 4. The wounds have not healed. They are still raw as if they happened yesterday. This being said, these women's resilience needs to be acknowledged. Despite their traumatic experiences, these women have managed to survive and take care of their families. It is not easy to share one's experiences of trauma, especially rape. It is commendable that they were able to open up about their rape trauma and relive those traumatic experiences. By putting their suffering and into words, the women are on the road to recovery. The narration of a traumatic event has also been theorised as therapeutic. Berger (1997: 74) argues that "because trauma shatters the narratives that structure our lives, we can only be healed by telling our stories again, by representing in words the trauma

that now controls our mental images, thoughts, actions, even our bodily functions beyond the reach of language. Language, and especially narrative, allows us to work through trauma rather than acting out the trauma symptomatically". The hard secret of storytelling is reliving the past no matter how painful. Like surgery, "the medicine is in the pain. Without pain, the pursuit of a state of freedom from pain is redundant" (Duran cited in Aho 2014: 200)

Standpoint analysis produces knowledge through thinking about the social and material conditions of marginalized people's lives. By adopting a feminist standpoint, this study has allowed us to see women's experiences with new eyes and grasp their reality from their standpoint. We would have fallen prey to underestimating their pain and trauma owing to the time-lapse. Gukurahundi may have ended, but its effects are still being felt up to today by the victims and have shaped the post-conflict worldview of the affected communities. If not addressed, this legacy will continue into the next generation who already bear the painful memory of the past generation.

The next step is to draw on what we have learned from the experience of these women. Once again, I take it back to questions raised by feminist scholars that are highlighted in Chapter 2, where Bennet (2010:2) asks valuable questions about women's security concerns during conflict and its adverse effects. "How do we think beyond this reality? How do we rethink relationships between gender and violence so that we are neither deaf to what is experienced within different African contexts nor reified into agency caricatures? How do we think about the victimised African woman, ravaged by war, to be pitied and developed whose lives have been radically violated by conflict and war-mongers?" The findings of this research point to a significant problem in terms

of gender-based violence. War only exacerbates pre-existing gender inequalities present in our society. There is a need to tackle issues of patriarchy and gender inequality in everyday life.

Most Gukurahundi historians and advocates are fixated on and mostly limited in their attempts to explain the incident's horrors, focusing primarily on the deaths and tortures related to the crimes. These elements will consistently be a significant part of the Gukurahundi portrayal and are in this way not to be disregarded, but they have resulted in other aspects of the occurrence not being adequately described and explained. As a result, I believe that this research is unique in that, while it discusses Gukurahundi violence, it also discusses other forms of violence; it primarily highlights the experiences of women during and after Gukurahundi. It also sheds light on the socio-economic implications of Gukurahundi on women. Addressing social and psychosocial difficulties alone would not suffice unless the economic challenges are addressed holistically. Effectively addressing trauma in this context requires intervention strategies that will tackle poverty and the daily need of these women and their children. This knowledge undoubtedly helps to frame sustainable interventions that the women may require to heal.

6.1 Implications for future research

War children represent a special category of war-affected children. Their status is under-documented; at worst, it is ignored, with many peacebuilding programmes failing to cater to their exceptional circumstances. There is a whole generation that may never know their identity. As Seto (2015: 184) correctly observed, "children born of war are relegated to the margins of the war crimes discourse, where they are associated mainly with the perpetrator rather than a deserving group recognition". Undeniably, children born as a result of wartime sexual violence unmistakably

demonstrates how children are an integral element of modern warfare's political equation, and they epitomise the political tension that the victimized and perpetrators communities embody. There is a need for research on children born out of rape during Gukurahundi. Such research would inevitably frame them worthy groups that need to be part of conflict violence and peacebuilding discourse.

Further research is also needed on intergenerational trauma in the Gukurahundi discourse. There is a generation that also carries the pain experienced by the direct survivors of Gukurahundi as some of the narratives in Chapter 4 revealed. This generation though not directly affected, grew up hearing stories from their parents and relatives. Such research will help understand post-memory concepts and illuminate suitable intervention strategies to help them deal with their transferred trauma.

Though my research has filled the gap of women's experiences of Gukurahundi and contributed to this area of knowledge, further research is needed to document more testimonies of Gukurahundi survivors so that information is not lost to history. Some of these stories might one day be valuable information for exhumations and reburials for families to recover and find closure. Over time, witnesses will die. The tackling of memory needs to be a priority for those still alive.

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