ABSTRACT
Sexual violence during the Bosnian War (1992-1995) and the Rwandan genocide (1994) has been analyzed thoroughly, but limited attention has been paid to how sexual violence differed in these two conflicts and why. This will be investigated by doing a comparative analysis. Kirby’s modes of feminist analysis will be used as framework, and attention will be paid to the relationship between the construction of ethnic and gender identities and particular forms of sexual violence. It will be demonstrated that forced impregnation characterized Bosnian sexual violence, whilst mutilation of female body parts and murder after rape were prominent in Rwanda. I argue that this can be explained by looking at how these forms of sexual violence were the result of mythology and shared beliefs and were being used by ethnic leaders to re-construct ethnic and gender identities to serve their own political objectives. Because these myths, identity constructions and leader objectives were different in Bosnia and Rwanda, the forms of sexual violence were as well.

INTRODUCTION
Sexual violence in conflicts has gone from being considered an unchallenged by-product of war to being thoroughly scrutinized from a range of perspectives. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (henceforth referred to as Bosnia) from 1992 to 1995 was the first conflict in which sexual violence was given massive attention at the time it was happening. After Bosnia, sexual violence in conflicts has been studied in Rwanda, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Uganda, and Indonesia.¹ Significant progress has been made in understanding the motivations for sexual violence. However, it is only quite recently that the considerable differences in what sexual violence looks like in various conflicts have been highlighted.² Important variations in frequency, form, and motivation have been overlooked, and sexual violence has been analyzed as one phenomenon at the expense of a more detailed understanding of the varieties it consists of. The conflict-specific processes of sexual violence, and its variation in aims and methods, must be examined to refine our knowledge of this phenomenon.³

This dissertation is a comparative study of two of the most important case studies in the research on sexual violence in conflict: the war in Bosnia (1992-1995) and the Rwandan genocide (1994). These two cases followed a similar pattern of leaders of ethnic groups targeting women’s bodies, and as a result, the women experienced very high rates of sexual violence.⁴ They were both ethnic conflicts in which sexual violence was deployed as a strategy of war. However, the types of sexual violence that was reported from the two conflicts differed substantially, and explaining this will be the aim of my thesis.

These differences will be studied from a feminist perspective, incorporating research on the construction of ethnic identities. Based on a review of the current state of the literature, two approaches to sexual violence in Rwanda and Bosnia are identified as particularly pertinent: first, mythology and cosmology and second, the motives of leaders. In his classification of the feminist literature on sexual violence in conflict, Kirby calls these two approaches mythology and instrumentality.⁵ The perspective of the construction of ethnic identities is included to complement his feminist framework. This aims to enhance the understanding of how the interaction of ethnic and gender identities shaped the sexual violence, and how ethnic leaders used mythology to legitimize it.

The following research questions will guide this investigation:
1. How did sexual violence during the Bosnian
conflict differ from that during the Rwandan conflict?

2. What role did myths and shared beliefs within each society play in shaping sexual violence?

3. How did the construction of ethnic and gender identities influence the types of sexual violence?

4. How did ethnic leaders affect the forms of sexual violence?

I believe this dissertation will address a gap in the feminist literature on sexual violence in conflict. In past years, scholars have theorized on the varying prevalence rates of warfare rape, but the research on why sexual violence takes on particular forms in given conflicts is limited. Studies on this topic are often based on one case study only, but by doing a comparative study, it is easier to identify contrasts. This dissertation will create a juncture between the research on sexual violence, the construction of ethnic identities, and the ethnographic study of violence. The latter concept is here defined as “how cultural forms and cosmologies shape and inform violence.”

I will argue that a key difference between the sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda was the presence of forced impregnation in Bosnia, and of sexual mutilation and the intent to kill by, or directly after, rape in Rwanda. The explanation for this is three-fold. First, beliefs shared within a common culture, such as mythology and cosmology, created frameworks for the perpetration of a particular form of violence within the country. Second, mythology was manipulated to help construct gender and ethnic identities that suited the purposes of the ethnic leaders. Lastly, because leadership motives were somewhat different between Bosnia and Rwanda, these identities were constructed in different ways to legitimize particular forms of sexual violence that suited the leadership’s objectives.

The main contribution of this investigation will be to expand the feminist understanding of sexual violence, and highlight how it consists of a variety of violent practices that are dependent on context-specific circumstances. The processes behind forced impregnation are, for example, not the same as those behind sexual mutilation. There are several reasons for why it is important to study the meaning of violence. For example, it can assist the identification of perpetrators to ensure that they are prosecuted, as types of violence may say something about who performed it. Furthermore, Fujii argues that not studying the dynamics of a given form of violence could cloud our understanding of the atrocity and hamper the rebuilding of societies.

This is particularly true for sexual violence, which is often laden with meaning. For example, communities having experienced forced impregnation would be likely to face other challenges than people who have been subject to mutilation and killing. By demonstrating and explaining the differences between Rwanda and Bosnia, the aim is to create an awareness of the situation specific characteristics of sexual violence and to promote a less generalized approach to the study of this issue.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The subsequent section is the literary review, in which I will look at feminist approaches to the study of sexual violence and explain my choice of framework. After that is a brief section reviewing the available data on sexual violence from the Bosnian war and the Rwandan genocide. The three consecutive chapters make up my analysis. I first look at how myths and cultural beliefs created a guiding framework for sexual violence. Then, I address how the construction by political leaders of ethnic and gender identities was used to justify and contextualize certain kinds of sexual violence. Lastly, I look at the role of leadership motives.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LITERATURE**

This section will establish the state of the literature on the topic of sexual violence and define the scope of my research. I have chosen to approach sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda through the feminist international relations perspective, first and foremost because this has been dominant in shaping the international community’s view on rape. Feminist scholars have also written extensively on Bosnia, albeit less on Rwanda. There is not only one feminist approach to sexual violence. Rather, there are plenty of approaches and while some are coherent with one another, others are less so. The fundamental element that unites them is that sexual violence is an expression of male domination over women. By combining this framework with theory on ethnic identity construction and a close comparison of Rwanda and Bosnia, I aim to expand on the feminist understanding of sexual violence in conflicts.

The feminist literature on sexual violence is situated within the feminist international relations theory. This theory emphasizes the impact of gender on decision-making processes, power distribution, and conflicts and everyday life. It argues that women and
men face challenges in politics, war, and quotidian life that are contingent on their gender, and that women are often disadvantaged in these situations. The first major feminist work on rape is that of Susan Brownmiller. She argued that rape was an expression of the patriarchal power structures in the society, a way for men to dominate women, and that rape had been used throughout history to ensure this domination. This was a crucial contribution to the development of a feminist approach to wartime rape, written in a time when it had not yet been acknowledged as anything more than an unpleasant by-product of war. It was the extensive sexual violence in Bosnia in the early 1990s that urged feminists to change this perception. The most important contribution of feminist scholars to this topic was to present the theory of sexual violence as a strategic weapon of warfare, meaning that rape is employed intentionally to promote the war effort. Today, this is the most widely acknowledged theory of rape in conflicts, and sexual violence is understood as a public and not a private matter. This has been crucial in convincing major international players, such as the UN Security Council, to consider it a security issue and hence an issue for them to address.

Rape in Bosnia was interpreted to be strategic, aiming at the destruction of the enemy group by attacking their women, spreading terror and prompting them to leave their homes, feminizing the enemy men, and proving them incapable of protecting their women. Although it has been less investigated in comparison to Bosnia, rape in Rwanda has also largely been deemed strategic. An example of this is the case against the mayor Akayesu, who was convicted of encouraging rape of Tutsi women. As mentioned above, feminist literature is both diverse and at times contradictory. Internal disagreement existed particularly around the question of whether this violence was a result of misogynistic attitudes in peacetime and translated into extreme violence when societal inhibitions disappeared during war, or whether it was an orchestrated strategy on behalf of the political leaders designed to target particular groups of women. In the Bosnian and Rwandan societies, women were symbols of the honor of their family and their ethnic group. Hence, rape could be defined as part of ethnic cleansing or genocide. I argue that it was less the misogynistic attitudes and rather the construction of combined ethnic and gender identities in peacetime that prepared for the sexual violence during these conflicts, along with its promotion by political leaders. This will be further illustrated later on.

The differences within the feminist literature can be organized in a number of ways. Henry, Ward, and Hirshberg divide motivations for rape into three main sections: individual, sociocultural and situational factors. Skjeldsbaek arranges it according to who can be considered a victim of sexual violence: all women, a targeted group of women, or a targeted group including both women and men. However, these frameworks are better suited to explain why rape happens, but less able to account for why certain forms of violence take place. This dissertation does not aim to explain why violence starts in the first place, but rather why when it does, its structure is not random. Kirby proposes a more useful model in which he divides the feminist literature on sexual violence into a three-branched system of modes of analysis. Instead of structuring it according to potential motives or victims, he argues that all feminist analyses fit into one out of three lenses that determine how we understand various aspects of sexual violence in conflict. He calls these instrumentality, unreason, and mythology. “Instrumentality” refers to the literature dealing with sexual violence as an instrument of war, i.e. strategic sexual violence. “Unreason” summarizes the approaches arguing that desire and male bonding drive sexual violence. The third lens, “mythology”, focuses on the effect of imagery, symbols, beliefs, and myths. The lens that is most relevant to employ depends on the case studies in question. In Rwanda and Bosnia, instrumentality and mythology are the most relevant modes of analysis. There are close ties between the first and third lens in both conflicts, and myths, symbols, and stereotypes were often used and abused by authorities to create common grievances and self-serving interpretations of the other ethnic group, the conflict, and what to believe or not believe. It is often the case that more than one mode is needed to explain the pattern of sexual violence in conflict; hence the crux is to identify the most relevant modes of explanation. The problem with using unreason in the cases investigated here is that it focuses primarily on the individual or small groups. It attempts to address the illogical, pathological and deviant, and its ideal type is the “soldier-sadist”. Independent of how horrific the sexual violence perpetrated in Rwanda and Bosnia was, it did follow logic, albeit a sick logic, and it was not deviant. It was ordered or condoned by political
and military leaders. Instrumentality and mythology addresses the behavior of collectives, such as military units, political elites, national communities, military discourse, and cultural institutions. Together, “mythology and instrumentality recognize the functional and collective aspects of violence.” Due to the aim of this inquiry, to better understand the effect of cultural, societal, and elite constructions of ethnic identities on sexual violence, it was deemed that unreason was less relevant as an analytical lens when reviewing Bosnia and Rwanda, and it will not be considered here.

Feminist analysis has been criticized for failing to address other identities than that of gender, and for explaining the reasons for sexual violence in war as largely identical, based on global male domination over women. However, particularly in the case of Bosnia, it was argued earlier that the intersection of ethnic and gender identities determined which groups were targeted. What has been less researched is how the construction of ethnic and gender identities affect the particular forms of sexual violence that were employed. To better illuminate this, I will look at how the construction of ethnic identities was related to sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. To do this, the theory of instrumentalism from the study of ethnic conflicts will be incorporated. This and feminist international relations theory on sexual violence are essentially similar in that they both attempt to explain the relationship between violence and the construction of ethnic and gender identities respectively. By devoting two chapters to the feminist framework, mythology, and instrumentality, and one combining research on the construction of ethnic and gender identities, the origins of particular types of violence will be clearer than if I just employed a gendered perspective.

Instrumentality in the study of ethnic conflict and instrumentality as a mode of analysis of sexual violence are two different, albeit related concepts. Ethnic conflict studies define instrumentalism as the shaping and changing of ethnic identities according to circumstances, often manipulated by leaders to serve their political aims, such as mobilizing and re-interpreting well-known myths. For the purpose of this analysis, which takes a constructivist approach, identity is defined as a social category with particular membership rules and criteria for qualification, including Tutsi, Bosniak and woman. These are not fixed but constructed, and so are the boundaries between different identities. Cultural discourse and ethnic identities are dependent on the construction and mobilization by elites to produce violence. Leaders may manipulate ethnic identities to promote strategic sexual violence, which was the case in Bosnia and Rwanda. However, this does not have to be the case whenever strategic sexual violence takes place.

The Current Perception of Sexual Violence in Feminist Literature

The understanding of sexual violence in conflict has expanded rapidly given that it first received broad attention only two decades ago. First of all, the literature has moved away from the one dimensional female victim—male perpetrator dichotomy. Although policy makers still fail to address male victims on the same terms as female ones, the literature is increasingly acknowledging the presence of male victims.

Data on sexual violence in the Sierra Leone Civil War suggests that groups including female members perpetrated one in four incidents of reported gang rape. Similar data exists for the Democratic Republic of Congo where, in 2010, 41 percent of female victims and 10 percent of male victims of sexual violence report to have been victimized by female perpetrators. Addressing gendered assumptions is important, not only because the experiences of male victims should be a part of the official story of sexual abuse, but also to end the perception that sexual violence is a women’s issue. Feminist literature is increasingly deploying a gendered lens that includes men as well as women.

When sexual violence started to be addressed in the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda, the main concern was to establish the presence and prevalence of it, and not what shape it took. The fact that the type of violence could say something about who perpetrated it and for what reasons was not prioritized, except for the case of forced impregnation in Bosnia. Considerable variations in both rates and types of sexual violence in different conflicts have been noted in more recent studies. These discrepancies seem to be independent of whether the conflicts fall within the same category, such as that of ethnic conflict.

Furthermore, the literature has moved through stages where the general understanding of the motivation behind wartime rape has been explained in different ways. Initially, sexual violence during wartime was captured by the concept loot-pillage-and-rape, meaning that it was considered an inevitable by-product of war. The atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda were the
key catalysts that changed this perception. In this next stage, a general agreement developed in academia and the media in which it was deemed a strategic choice of political and military leaders. This was an important step towards an increased understanding of wartime rape, and was particularly apt to describe the sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. Today, the literature is attempting to move beyond the equation rape equals weapon of war through broadening the scope of understanding by acknowledging that it is not always ordered as a strategic measure by leaders. Sexual violence occurs both in conflicts where soldiers disregard their leaders’ orders, and where they comply with them.\(^{37}\) The more relevant consideration is whether leaders forbid, condone, or encourage it. To address sexual violence accordingly in current conflicts, it is crucial not to be blinded by the experiences of Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s where sexual violence indeed was strategic.

Scope of Investigation

In a comparative analysis, it is important to identify where the case studies are similar and where they differ, to be able to determine if there are other important factors that can explain the phenomenon in question. Rwanda and Bosnia are in many ways very different countries, but in the context of this dissertation, this is not a hindrance. Taking into account the wide variety of case studies on sexual violence, they share fundamental similarities that make them suitable for comparison. Both cases were ethnic conflicts where one group was targeted disproportionately and where the rates of sexual violence were incredibly high. Both places showed evidence of strategic sexual violence and a fierce renegotiation over how ethnic and gender identities should be constructed. Political and military leaders played an important role in inciting and directing the violence.\(^ {38}\) They were both societies in which women were defined by their relationships with men, and where political leaders determined the female national identity.\(^ {39}\) These similarities make it possible to analyze both cases using mythology and instrumentality as modes of analysis. Still, as will be shown in the subsequent chapter, the violence perpetrated in Bosnia and Rwanda differed from each other in crucial aspects.

By choosing the lenses with which a phenomenon is investigated, one also determines some possible answers. This dissertation prioritizes identity politics over—for example, economic and pragmatic explanations for violence such as using rape to create group cohesion or participating in violence to gain economic and social advancement.\(^ {40}\) Furthermore, it will deal with Tutsi and Bosnian Muslim female victims, despite the fact that there also were female perpetrators and male and female Hutu, Serb, and Croatian victims.\(^ {41}\) Sexual violence against men has in later years received much needed attention, but this was not the case during the investigations of sexual violence in the 1990s.\(^ {42}\) There are a number of reasons for why male victims of sexual violence are not addressed in this article. One major reason is the accessibility of trustworthy data. If data on the different forms of sexual violence against women is limited in the two chosen case studies, it is almost nonexistent with regards to male victims. Documentation is made particularly difficult given that few men admitted to having been sexually assaulted.\(^ {43}\) However, some research has established that it happened; for example, Oosterhoff, Zwanikken, and Ketting argue that, based on data from local medical centers, it is clear that sexual violence against men was a regular feature of the war in Croatia.\(^ {44}\) There are also indications that violence targeting the male reproductive capacity was used during the Bosnian war, for example castration and genital beatings.\(^ {45}\) This might be evidence that the rationale of ethnic cleansing aiming to reduce the Bosniak ability to reproduce affected both men and women.\(^ {46}\) It is known that men were victims of sexual violence in Rwanda as well, but no official numbers exist, and not a single case of male rape victims was addressed in the Gacaca courts.\(^ {47}\) Another factor making comparisons of female and male victims difficult is the discrepancy in how sexual violence against men and women is reported. Sexual violence against men is very often reported as torture, whilst it is reported as sexual violence when the victims are female.\(^ {48}\) For example, it is often the case that castration is registered as mutilation and rape as torture.\(^ {49}\) Sexual violence is in many cases torture, but torture is not necessarily sexual violence. Hence, I wished to avoid conflating and potentially confusing data on sexual violence versus data on torture. It is by no means the intention of this article to diminish the experience of male victims of sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. It is rather a cautionary measure to avoid drawing conclusions based on almost nonexistent evidence.

For the purposes of this paper, some key defini-
tions should be established. Sexual violence in conflicts is by the UN defined as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity against women, men, girls or boys.” This fails to refer to sexual mutilation specifically (except for enforced sterilization), but recent scholarship includes sexual mutilation in its definition of sexual violence, and so will this thesis. It will also include killing by means of rape or in direct succession of rape because it was a striking feature of violence against Tutsi women in Rwanda, but this will only be addressed under the instrumentality lens.

The forms of sexual violence that will be examined in this analysis are forced impregnation, sexual mutilation, and killing in the context of rape. I use the terms forced impregnation and forced pregnancy interchangeably to mean “the unlawful confinement of a woman forcibly made pregnant, with the intent of affecting the ethnic composition of any population.” This is a restrictive definition, and its focus on intent makes it difficult to prosecute this crime. However, it is important to avoid the mistake made by Carpenter to judge pregnancies as a result of mass rape to be forced impregnation, leading her to argue that Rwanda experienced this violence as well. It is inevitable that mass rape leads to cases of pregnancy, but considering this forced impregnation confounds the motivations behind the practice, which will be elaborated on later. Sexual mutilation and mutilation of female body parts will both be used to refer to violence targeting breasts, genitalia, and abdomen as a site of reproduction. This excludes non-gendered violence, which is also common in relation with rape, such as beatings, cigarette burns and kicks. This is to focus the investigation on violence that aims at more than the infliction of pain. Killing in the context of rape is either rape aiming to kill, the deliberate spread of HIV, or murder after rape.

These three forms of violence were chosen because they are the most characteristic of sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda, and because they are explicable within the modes of analysis that I employ. Forced impregnation has come to be understood as the defining feature of sexual violence in the Bosnian war. In Rwanda, female body mutilation and murder in association with rape were particularly characteristic of violence against women. One type of violence that was prevalent in both Rwanda and Bosnia, which I will not have opportunity to address here, is gang rape. I mention this because recent literature considers gang rape as a defining feature of conflicts with high levels of sexual violence, and that this is used for bonding purposes in groups with low social cohesion. Gang rape was an important form of sexual violence, but it is poorly explained within the analytical framework of mythology and instrumentality. To understand gang rape, it is better to look at it from the perspective of unreason, focusing on group dynamics of shared guilt. There were obviously also cases of opportunistic sexual violence and sexual slavery as a reward for the men who were fighting, which also fits within the framework of unreason. I acknowledge these, and that my analysis will not address all factors that determined the type of sexual violence in my case studies.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ETHNIC GROUPS PRIOR TO CONFLICT**

This section will give a brief introduction to the ethnic relations in Bosnia and Rwanda prior to the outbreak of violence, and outline the beginnings of the conflicts. The topic is vast and multifaceted, and this section does not pretend to do it justice. It is, however, important to have a basic understanding of the greater contexts of the conflicts and ethnic tensions, as many of the reasons for the outbreak and targeting of Tutsis and Bosniaks had a crucial effect on the perpetration of sexual violence.

The origins of ethnic conflicts are prone to be condensed into an idea of ethnic hatred that reaches its limits and boils over, known as primordialism. The Rwandan genocide was initially a victim of this academic strand, which has lost much of its momentum. Today, an ethnic community is generally understood as a loosely pre-existing group with some common denominators such as language, religion or physical attributes, which has been cemented into an ethnic identity by the artificial classification of political leaders, academics, and administrators. This division is often used as a tool for “the unequal distribution of the economic, educational and other benefits of modernization.” Hence, when referring to ethnic tension, it does not signify a biologically programmed hatred between Hutus and Tutsis or Serbs and Bosniaks, but rather a conflict that has been constructed with ethnicity as the parameter.

In Rwanda, the ethnic division of its people into three groups—Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa—was mainly so-
cioeconomic. This was based on the responsibilities each group had traditionally held in the country. The Tutsis were traditionally cattle herders, the Hutus were peasants, and the Twa (1 percent or less of the population) were hunter-gatherers. Cultural differences were close to nonexistent, and they shared language, religion and culture. Except for the socioeconomic variety, the main contrast was physical, although this was a stereotype with many exceptions. European observers, who during the end of the nineteenth century were obsessive about the concept of race, vastly exacerbated the differences between the groups. The Europeans thought the Tutsis were more intelligent than the other groups, and the German and later Belgian colonial powers determined the position of Hutus and Tutsis in the political and social hierarchy. Tutus were given political power and privileges, which they maintained until Rwanda became independent in 1962 and the Hutus claimed political power. This history created grievances and socioeconomic tensions between the Tutsis and Hutus, and these intensified in the years prior to the genocide. Rwanda was under the authoritarian rule of President Habyarimana from 1973 to 1994, during which he targeted the Tutsi minority. Rwanda was experiencing a civil war from 1990 to 1994 between the government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), mainly formed up by exiled Tutsis, and in 1993, the country was hit by economic crisis due to failing exports. The genocide started after the President’s plane was shot down on the April 6, 1994, an act the RPF was accused of, although it was never proven. Hence, the tension between Hutus and Tutsis was not primarily due to fundamental ethnic differences, but a result of a struggle to access political and economic resources. The existing stereotypes of the ethnic groups were, however, used to exacerbate animosity and justify the targeting of Tutsis, which in turn affected what type of violence was considered “legitimate” to inflict upon them.

In the case of Bosnia, there is one identity factor that made distinction between groups within the population easy—religion. Croats, Serbs, and Muslims spoke the same language, but were Catholics, Orthodox and Muslim respectively. Bosnia was one of the most heterogeneous regions in Yugoslavia, and interethnic marriages were common in urban areas. Whilst it was less so in rural parts, it was the region with the highest interethnic marriage rates in the Former Yugoslavia. The relationship between the groups in Bosnia was good prior to the war, and this neighborhood-enemy dichotomy has been a major focus of the analyses of this conflict.

Again, political and economic grievances cast in a nationalistic discourse helps explain the abrupt animosity. Yugoslavia experienced an economic and political crisis after the communist downfall and the country’s breakup in the late 80s and early 90s, and nationalism became the new legitimating force for political power. Political and religious leaders actively used ethnic discourse to redraw “boundaries of exclusion/inclusion” that determined access to resources and territory. Furthermore, ethnic identification had been important in Tito’s regime, where political representation was divided along ethnic lines to ensure proportional representation. Nationalist leaders used the fear of becoming an ethnic minority in a new state to gain power and justify their claims to resources. It was also true that, “Fear and war help to coalesce populations into clearly defined nations,” as failure to be fully included into an ethnic group, when resources and protection is contingent upon ethnic belonging, left one vulnerable. Milosevic and other Serb nationalist leaders used the Serb fear of being a minority in Bosnia actively to justify his aim of creating a Greater Serbia. The war started shortly after Bosnia declared independence in 1992, when Bosnian Serbs began the siege of Sarajevo, taking over for the Yugoslav People’s Army. By the end of 1992, the Serbian forces had ethnically cleansed and controlled 70 percent of Bosnia.

EVIDENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN RWANDA AND BOSNIA

This section will review data on the sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda, and provide evidence for how it was different. Both Rwanda and Bosnia are infamous for the brutal and extensive sexual violence that took place during the conflicts, and it should be noted that these are not representative cases of wartime sexual abuse. Sexual violence is very difficult to document, and quantitative data on the number of people who have experienced particular forms of violence is close to nonexistent. At most, an estimate of the number of rapes and pregnancies during the conflict can be made. Without this quantitative data, it may seem like this investigation has little evidence

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^1 Read more about these physical stereotypes on p.65.
to refer to. However, in the literature on sexual violence, it is very common to give priority to qualitative sources of information such as interviews, and roughly estimate how common or uncommon a certain practice was based on how many victims refer to similar atrocities and how widespread the victims state that the practice was. Key reports on the sexual violence in Rwanda and Bosnia—such as *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath* (1996), *Rwanda: Broken Bodies, Torn Spirits; Living with Genocide, Rape and HIV/AIDS* (2004), *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Rape and Sexual Abuse by Armed Forces* (1993), and the report by the UN Commission of Experts (1994)—use testimonies from survivors and witnesses as their main evidence. Hence, I consider it legitimate that I use the same information. Still, the lack of quantitative data should make one cautious of being too assertive in drawing conclusions about how frequent certain practices were in Bosnia compared to Rwanda.

**Sexual Violence in Rwanda**

The extent of the sexual violence in Rwanda by far exceeded that of Bosnia. Based on the reported pregnancies as a result of rape, it is estimated that somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped. However, this method is problematic since many women were killed after being raped, and many pregnancies were ended or not reported. Bijleveld et al. arrive at a lower boundary of 354,440 rape victims, the vast majority being Tutsi women, and calculate that 294,440 of these were murdered. This is based on an estimate of how many Tutsi women were killed and an estimated ratio of 80 percent of murdered females having been raped. Bains and African Rights support the claim that a majority of the rape victims were murdered.

In Rwanda, the forms of violence that are frequently mentioned in testimonies are rape, gang rape, mutilation of sexual organs and breasts, murder after rape, sexual slavery, and deliberate transmission of HIV. Examples of mutilation of female body parts are violence towards the vagina, the cutting off of breasts, and impalement through the vagina. The perpetrators were Hutu militias (Interahamwe), the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and civilians. The fact that some forms of violence have not been reported, such as forced pregnancies, is not evidence of it not having taken place. However, without having found a single reference to forced impregnation in these reports, it is legitimate to argue that it was not a frequent occurrence. This is interesting in comparison with Bosnia, where the issue of forced pregnancies dominates the literature.

**Sexual Violence in Bosnia**

The number of rape victims is equally contested in Bosnia, where the estimate is between 20,000 to 50,000. The number of Muslim civilian women who were killed in direct relation to the Bosnian war is judged to be between 5,019 and 5,894, but there is no data as to whether they had been victims of rape before being killed. However, given that the number of rape victims is so much higher than that of women who have been killed, it can be concluded that a majority of rape victims were not murdered. Sexual violence in Bosnia was either explicitly ordered or at least condoned as a part of the war strategy, shown by its occurrences in different places throughout the country and following similar patterns of violence. The most direct evidence of this is the RAM plan of the Serbian military that proposed the raping of women and children as an effective weapon to break the enemy resistance. However, its existence has only been reported and not proven.

The sexual violence in Bosnia was defined by the forced impregnation that took place, and it is one of the most important examples of this type of sexual violence. The strategic use of forced impregnation as a tactic of war has been thoroughly documented, and the evidence is abundant. Rape camps were established where women were raped with the explicit aim of making them pregnant. Those who got pregnant were held until an abortion was no longer possible. There were gynecologists in the camps to examine the women, and those who did not get pregnant were punished. Many testimonies state that the Serbian soldiers told the Bosniak women that they were to carry Serbian babies. Sexual violence in Bosnia was almost always perpetrated by someone of a different ethnic group, with Bosnian Serb perpetrators and Bosnian Muslim victims being the most common pattern, particularly in the rape camps. Many of the rapes were gang rapes, and some reports mention mutilation of female body parts. However, two of these three sources citing sexual mutilation do so on the basis of the reports by one Croatian journalist, Ines Sabalic, and it is difficult to find...
any other backing for her claim. Although rapes were often brutal, involving kicking, beating, and cutting, there is little reliable evidence of the same deliberate targeting of female body parts as that which took place in Rwanda. Women were not only detained for the purpose of impregnation, but also to be of sexual service to the soldiers.

Sexual violence in Rwanda and Bosnia shared some common characteristics, such as a high frequency of rape, rape targeting a given ethnic group, and gang rape. However, they are clearly different in some aspects, the most evident being forced impregnation, mutilation of female body parts, and whether or not sexual violence ended in murder.

THE MYTHOLOGICAL LENS

Mythology, cosmology, and shared cultural beliefs are not actors in and by themselves. However, they play an important role in how we understand the world, which in turn shapes our actions. This first part of the analysis will address how shared beliefs within Bosnian and Rwandan societies created a framework for forced impregnation in Bosnia and for sexual mutilation in Rwanda. This does not suggest that Bosnian and Rwandan cultures were particularly prone to violence, but rather that some forms of violence were more likely to occur in one place than in the other. In this regard, it is important to understand how people make sense of violence in culture-specific ways. Investigating the mythological aspect of rape demonstrates how “it obeys the internal requirements and limits set by a particular socio-symbolic order.” Rejali argues that, “Unlike many kinds of violence, rape is shot through with symbolic significance and must be contextually analyzed.” Sexual violence in wartime must be understood through sociocultural practices in peacetime. Hence, given that sociocultural contexts differ between places, it is legitimate to assume that the forms of sexual violence do too.

Feminists have paid particular attention to the forced impregnation that took place in Bosnia, and the following analysis takes this as a starting point. However, it is in comparison with Rwandan mythology and cosmology that the very specific underpinnings of the forced impregnation in Bosnia are clearly demonstrated. It is interesting that only Bosnia experienced forced impregnation, although both societies had an official practice of patrilineal heritage—that is, the idea that identity is passed on to future generations based on the father’s identity. This outcome depended partially on how well-established patrilineal heritage was in traditional beliefs. Forced impregnation is not a given consequence of ethnic conflicts with high levels of sexual violence, as the prominent feminist analysis of the Bosnian case seems to suggest at times.

Forced Impregnation

Forced impregnation in Bosnia has, in feminist research, been interpreted both as genocide and ethnic cleansing. By occupying Bosniak wombs, the Bosniak population became victim of “measures intended to prevent births within the group.” Furthermore, the impregnation was considered to increase the Serbian population, as the babies were fathered by Serbs, and to contaminate the Bosniak community biologically and psychologically. This interpretation assumes that patrilineal heritage allowed for women to be reduced to “a biological box.” All the ethnic groups in Bosnia, including Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, shared the belief in patrilineal heritage. This belief made it possible for Serbian soldiers to tell Bosnian Muslim women who had been raped that they were carrying Serbian babies, and for that to be believed by both the perpetrator and the victim. This was an incredibly powerful image of Serbian intrusion, beyond the very intrusive act of rape, particularly because all parties shared the tradition of patrilineal heritage.

Patrilineal heritage is not unique to Bosnia, however. It existed in Rwanda, as well, as a legacy of the Belgian colonial rule. However, it was traditionally believed that although men brought the most important contribution to the fetus through their semen—the “gift of self”—the female also contributed to the creation of the fetus. Furthermore, in pre-colonial and early colonial times, Hutu men could marry Tutsi women as a form of social advancement, and their children would then be considered Tutsi. Hence, officially, the father’s identity determined the children’s ethnic membership in Rwanda. However, patrilineal heritage was less well rooted there compared to Bosnia. When ethnic relations were stable, people of mixed parentage were considered to fully belong to the group of their father, but in times of tension, the dominant ethno-political group determined ethnic belonging. Prior to the genocide, the tolerance of mixed identities decreased rapidly. Therefore, the intrusion of the ethnic boundaries by the impregnation of women of the other group was not considered
evidence of the perpetrating group’s victory and potency. Rather, children of mixed ethnic identity were perceived by the Hutu extremist leaders to be a threat to the boundaries between the ethnic groups. Hence, forced impregnation would not have had the same destructive potency in Rwanda as it did in Bosnia, which made it less relevant as a strategy of sexual violence.

Another commonly shared belief and concern in the Bosnian society contributed to make the reproductive capacity of Bosniak women a target. Due to the lack of physical differences between the ethnic groups, there has traditionally been a strong fear of the possibility of nurturing a baby who is the result of a woman having been secretly impregnated by a man from another ethnic group. An expression of this concern with illegitimate pregnancies is a marriage ritual that was still in practice in the 1990s. Before the wedding, a woman (not the bride) was supposed to accuse the groom of having fathered her (nonexistent) child. This contrasts to the case of Rwanda, where people perceived that there were significant differences in appearances between the ethnic groups. A Tutsi was typically considered tall, with a long nose and long fingers. Although people in reality frequently did not fit into the stereotypical looks of their ethnic group, the belief in the importance of these categories made them real to Rwandans. The fear of impregnation by a man of another ethnicity was not common in Rwanda, again making forced impregnation less likely to be perpetrated there.

Cosmology and Sexual Mutilation

The inscription of meaning on the body through violence has been investigated particularly in literature on torture, and Taussig claims that “far from being spontaneous, sui generis, and an abandonment of what are often called ‘the values of civilization’ such rites have a deep history deriving power and meaning from those values.” Sexual mutilation is also a form of torture, and the two are often conflated in research on male victims, as this type of violence is much more likely to be recorded as torture for men and sexual violence for women. In Rwanda, it is clear that the bodily violence that took place, especially the extensive violence against female, male, and stereotypically Tutsi body parts, had significance beyond the immediate physical damage. In her famous study of Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Liisa Malkki argued that “necrographic maps” are used to shape violence. Necrographic maps are cognitive representations that inform the destruction of the body of the ethnic other, based on myths and stereotypes of that ethnic group. These collectively held cognitive representations are generalized understandings of how the body of the ethnic other is differentiated from the physical body of the ethnic self. By mapping out these physical differences, given violent practices are reserved for specific groups of people and targets are identified based on deviances from the physical stereotype of one’s own ethnic group. According to Malkki, these maps “help construct and imagine ethnic difference” and “through violence, bodies of individual persons become metamorphosed into specimens of the ethnic category for which they are supposed to stand.” Actors do not necessarily have to be fully aware of the connection between their beliefs and actions, but the presence of such maps make certain forms of violence particularly meaningful.

Rwandan cosmology has been studied in relation to the genocidal violence mainly by anthropologist Christopher Taylor, whose work is invaluable in that he studied Rwanda both before and after the genocide. In his 1988 study, he found that traditional cosmology still had relevance for how people explained events in their lives and within the state. Cosmology is a system for understanding the world that “entails evaluations and moral premises and emotional attitudes translated into taboos, preferences, prescriptions and proscriptions.” The Rwandan cosmology emphasized the importance of good flow—both in the body and society—of liquids such as blood, breast milk, menstrual blood, semen, and water. Blockages were understood to be very harmful, and this translated into perceiving women who did not menstruate or had small breasts (as a sign of inability to lactate) as abominations. They were dangerous to the whole community, and it was considered the king’s responsibility to eliminate them. Taylor has argued that the genocidal violence in Rwanda, sexual violence and mutilation included, bore evidence of being shaped by Rwandan cosmology’s preoccupation with the concept of flow and blockage. He explained the prevalence of breast oblation, impalement, and disembowelment of pregnant women as an expression of this flow and blockage dichotomy. These practices targeted typical female sites of the flow of bodily fluids, and by blocking these, Tutsi women became abominations.
within the Hutu state. Making roadblocks the sites of
massive killing and throwing dead bodies into the rivers have also been mentioned as examples of this cos-

Using the mythological lens on Rwanda and Bos-
nia in a comparative study shows how certain forms
of sexual violence were underpinned by given beliefs,
myths, and cosmology particular to each of the two
countries. It is not sufficient to simply employ the
feminist idea of the social construction of women as
symbols of the nation and of their families’ and com-

As part of a general pattern of nationalism taking
over for communism in Bosnia and Serbia, women's roles in the society were redefined according to
the needs of the political elites. Instead of the com-
munist ideal of the independent female comrade,

This approach to motherhood was highly hypocriti-
cal. Bosniak and Albanian women were scorned and
considered uneducated for having many children, in
contrast to the modern and educated Serbian women.
At the same time, Serbian women were considered too
independent and insufficiently preoccupied with their
motherhood due to their low birth rates, and a woman
who chose to have an abortion was, in national dis-
course, considered to be a “traitor” of the nation."134
Given that the defining, most threatening characteris-
tic of Muslim women was constructed as their moth-
erhood, forced impregnation targeted the core of their
identity.

In 1993, the extremist Hutu magazine Kangu-
ra stated about Tutsis that “a cockroach cannot give
birth to a butterfly. A cockroach gives birth to another
cockroach.”135 This illustrated that shortly before the
genocide, Hutu extremists perceived Tutsi women as
incapable of having Hutu children. Hence, the con-
struction of Bosniak women's identities assisted in
making forced impregnation a logical instrument for
Serb leaders, while these conditions were not present
in Rwanda.

The Construction of Tutsi Women as Sexual Objects

The Hutu extremist propaganda was very con-
cerned with Tutsi women prior to the genocide. In
Rwanda, like in Bosnia, women were primarily valued

Forced Impregnation

The way Tutsi and Bosniak women’s identities
were constructed in the public sphere determined what
kinds of sexual violence were perceived as relevant to
the perpetrators. Hinton argues, using the Nazis and
the Khmer Rouge as examples, that both “sought to
expunge the impure, but they constructed the impure
in different ways.”131 The way a group’s identity is per-
ceived determines how we consider it legitimate to
treat its members.132 A major contrast in how Bosnian
Muslim and Tutsi women were constructed prior to
the genocide was that Muslim women were portrayed
as baby producers, while Tutsi women were reduced
to sexual objects.

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CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC AND GENDER IDENTITIES

INSTRUMENTALISM: THE CONSTRUCTION OF
EGHIC AND GENDER IDENTITIES

This section will focus on the topic of manipu-
lation of ethnic and gender identities by ethnic elites
and leaders, and argue that this encouraged the per-
petration of mutilation of Tutsi women and the forced
impregnation of Bosnian Muslim women. In Rwanda
and Bosnia, the reformulation of ethnic and gender
identities before and during the conflicts was very ac-
tive, but they were reformulated differently. Fearon
and Laitin argue that there is a close relationship be-
tween the strategic construction of ethnic identities
and violence, and this claim will be supported here.130
for their motherhood. However, prior to the genocide, Tutsi women were sexualized by extremist Hutu propaganda, which strongly contrasted the stereotype of the devoted Hutu mother and wife with the beautiful, seductive Tutsi mistress. This propaganda radicalized the social construction of bodily difference between Hutus and Tutsis that stemmed from the Hamitic myth of the colonial period in Rwanda. This myth told the tale of how the Tutsis were the superior race originating from Ethiopia, and how they were much more European both mentally and physically compared to the typically African Hutus. The Hamitic myth was internalized by Rwandan leaders long before the genocide, and it was used by Tutsi leaders to try to legitimize their continued high social status post-independence, and by Hutu leaders to construct Tutsis as a foreign, imposing group unworthy of ruling Rwanda.

The Hamitic myth did not only construct differences between Hutus and Tutsis, but also developed gender-specific characteristics. Tutsi women were constructed as more beautiful than Hutu women, and this beauty was seen as a powerful tool with which a Tutsi woman could trick a hard-working Hutu man into marrying her, to later become her family’s servant. This fascination with the female Tutsi body is illustrated by the fact that many Hutu extremists had Tutsi mistresses and continued to take Tutsi mistresses even after May 1994, when orders had gone out that Hutu men with Tutsi wives and children should kill their families. Baines argues: “In the private sphere, male internalization of Tutsi beauty and unavailability fed a desire to possess and control Tutsi women. Double-edged, the same beauty of Tutsi women posed a threat to the Hutu nation.” Hence, as a part of the genocide, it was important to destroy the attraction of the Tutsi woman.

The explanation behind the incitement to violence in the Rwandan genocide has been explained as driven by elites, particularly by using media outlets, such as the radio and magazines to build up ethnic hatred. However, this top-bottom instrumentalist approach has struggled to explain how elite propaganda translated into active involvement of a large number of perpetrators, and has failed to account for the personal, economic, and local reasons to participate in the killing. These explanations are, however, concerned with why violence broke out, and not so much with the varying types of violence that were perpetrated. To understand why Tutsi women were raped and mutilated when they, in most cases, were ultimately killed, one must pay attention to how the image shaped by extremist propaganda legitimized forms of violence that targeted them based on their ethno-gendered identity. Although local leaders participated in directing and encouraging the sexual violence, I argue that this was primarily done within the framework of Tutsi women constructed as sexual objects by Hutu extremist propaganda on the national level, as sexual mutilation took place on a nationwide scale.

An example of how Hutu extremist discourse targeted Tutsi women by manipulating the image of their ethnic and gender identity is found in the three first commandments of the infamous Hutu Ten Commandments, published in Kangura in 1990. These dealt explicitly with the unsuitability of having a Tutsi wife, of her traitorous and seductive capabilities, and of how superior Hutu women were as mothers and wives. Cartoons were also frequently used to illustrate Tutsi women having sexual relationships with the UN forces, luring them to support the Tutsis, and challenging the Rwandan sexual norm by depicting oral and anal sex, depriving them of their status as respectable women. This gendered propaganda did not only construct Tutsi women as sexual objects, but created different categories that judged which Rwandan women belonged to the state, and thus were worthy of protection. According to this discourse, Tutsi women were non-citizens, and the only holders of full citizenship rights were Hutu women loyal to Hutu power. The construction of Tutsi women as sexual beings before the genocide “foreshadowed the sadism perpetrated by extremists on the bodies of their victims” and created necrographic maps to guide the violation of their bodies.

Sexual mutilation of Tutsi women was a means of revenge not only against their community through their function as ethnic boundary makers, which feminist analysis tends to emphasize. It was also a punishment of Tutsi women, arising from the constructed image of them as enemies worthy of targeting and further strengthened by the stereotype of the beautiful, socially superior Tutsi woman whom Hutu men did not deserve. Adding to the already complex tensions of gender and ethnicity was the low social status of Hutu militiamen, the majority of which were poor and unprivileged. This status had been exacerbated by poor economic conditions in the years leading up
Sexual violence and mutilation of female bodily beauty was a powerful means of revenge and establishing dominance. A survivor of sexual violence reported how she had heard the perpetrator say “You Tutsi women, you have no respect for Hutu men,” and searched for the women with higher social status in order to violate those they would be least likely to attract under normal conditions. Fujii recounts an episode that demonstrates the powerful symbolism of extra-lethal violence, which is violence performed face-to-face that transgress shared norms of how to treat people, such as sexual mutilation. A mayor in central Rwanda had two Tutsi women confined in his house where they were raped and later murdered, and after they were killed, they were displayed naked in the village for all to see. This violence targeted the stereotype of a Tutsi female identity because “it made a mockery of the norms of modesty that most young women followed and played upon the racist trope of Tutsi beauty by displaying the bodies in the most degrading position possible.”

Because of this pre-genocidal concern with the physical body of Tutsi women in Rwanda, and not the female body primarily as a symbol of the nation such it was in the Bosnian war, it is not surprising that mutilation of female body parts was prevalent in Rwanda. However, although the reports of sexual mutilation based on constructed characteristics of ethnic and gender identities are much less frequent in the case of Bosnia, there are examples that illustrate how stereotypical appearances informed violence. Olujic interviewed a young woman who had been told by Serb soldiers that she could not possibly be a Muslim woman because she had not shaved her pubic hair (stereotypically a Muslim tradition in Bosnia), so before they raped her, they brutally shaved her.

This section has shown how elites built on ethnic stereotypes and myths to crystalize images of the ethnic other. By doing this, violence was legitimized and incited against a group to target the characteristics of that identity; motherhood in the case of Bosniak women, and beauty and sexuality in the case of Tutsi women. This instrumentalist analysis is included to bridge the gap between Kirby’s mythology and instrumentality modes of analysis by illustrating how myths became a tool for reshaping identities in times of tension, and how this identity construction was used to justify violence grounded in the leaders’ aims and objectives. How leaders’ fundamental motives in the overarching conflict affected sexual violence will be the concern of the last chapter.

THE INSTRUMENTALITY LENS

According to Arendt, violence is defined by being a means to an end, and “violence requires an objective by which to define and guide its function.” Sexual violence is no different, and the objectives of the political leaders in Rwanda and Bosnia shaped the violence that was perpetrated. The concerns of the extremist Hutu leaders and the Serb political leadership shared some commonalities, but were also different in important aspects. Both wished to express their domination over the Tutsis and the Bosniaks to ensure their own position in power, but this was based on different preoccupations and political conditions. In this chapter, murder in connection to rape will also be addressed, in addition to forced impregnation and sexual mutilation.

The Serbian President Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic and Mladic were worried, or at least legitimated, their rise to power within a nationalist discourse of concern, that the Bosnian Muslim population would become too large in relation to the Bosnian Serb population due to the high Bosniak birth rate. In Rwanda, the Tutsis were by far the minority, but they had traditionally held a privileged position in Rwandan society, which had created an inferiority complex in some Hutus. Given the civil war between President Habyarimana and the Tutsi refugee rebel group Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ending with a power sharing agreement, the Arusha Accords, Hutu power dominance was challenged.

Forced Impregnation as an Instrument of Demographic Manipulation

As mentioned above, one important concern amongst the Serb leaders was to decrease the Muslim birth rate and increase the Serbian population. The leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church called the low Serbian birth rate “the white plague”, and together with several Serbian political parties, the church published a document called “Warning”, promoting births in Serbian areas and discouraging births in Albanian and Muslim areas. By a policy of forced impregnation, both motives could be achieved.

Impregnating enemy women occupied their wombs temporarily and potentially permanently. On the other hand, the wombs were occupied temporarily, since the Bosniak women who became pregnant by
Serb soldiers were carrying what was considered a Serb baby. Hence, they could not conceive with men of their own ethnic origin for the duration of their pregnancy. On the other hand, the womb was occupied permanently because raped women often were ostracized by their families, rejected by their husbands, or had limited possibilities of getting married. Bosnians warn against feminist analysis accepting the incorrect perception of the baby’s identity being determined by the father, and argues that this is to continue treating women as baby containers. Though the concern is understandable, it is only by employing this illogic that we can see how the demographic concerns of the Serb leaders could translate into a strategy of forced impregnation. It should also be taken into consideration that both perpetrators and victims often considered the baby to be Serb. Although the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats shared the tradition of patrilineal belief, this had to be actively promoted by the Serbian leaders and was not automatically accepted, particularly in urban areas with a long tradition of mixed marriages. Forced impregnation was also a means of helping to populate the Serbian nation. The fetus was not only an enemy because it belonged to its father’s ethnic group, but also because it was referred to as a future soldier that would fight on the Serbian side. Most reports on forced impregnation in Bosnia mention testimonies from rape victims explaining how Serbian soldiers told them that they had been inseminated with Serbian babies who would become soldiers that would kill them. Forced impregnation would be an unlikely strategy in Rwanda, given that the Hutus were by far a demographic majority and that the extremists did not aim at halting the Tutsi birth rate, but instead at extinguishing the already living members of the group. Weitsman summarizes this well:

Instead of using rape as a mechanism to propagate more Hutus, it used rape as a mechanism to try to take life […] This differentiates the mass rape in Rwanda from that in Serbia. In Rwanda, rape was a tool used to destroy Tutsi women; it was not undertaken with the express purpose of impregnating them.

Rape and Murder

The Hutu extremists had a clear agenda of exterminating the Tutsis by murder. The genocide was preceded by huge amounts of propaganda encouraging the killing of “tall trees” and the extermination of “the cockroaches.” Except for the genocide in Srebrenica, the violence against Bosnian Muslims is classified as ethnic cleansing. The Serbian leaders were more concerned with expelling the Muslims from their homes than with killing them (although many were indeed also killed, the vast majority being men). This is a simplified version of two complex conflicts, but this was the fundamental difference in the aims of Serbian leaders and Hutu extremists. The majority of Tutsi women who were raped were murdered afterwards, whereas Bosniak women were less likely to be killed in comparison. To explain why so many women were killed after having been raped in Rwanda and not in Bosnia, it is crucial to consider that Rwanda experienced a genocide and Bosnia experienced ethnic cleansing.

The Hutu extremists in Rwanda had no need to increase the Hutu population, as it was already a majority constituting 85 percent of the population. They did, however, wish to eliminate the Tutsi population. This included the unborn, and extremist radio programs encouraged the disembowelment of pregnant women. Malkki also recorded this in her study on Burundian Hutu refugees after the genocide against the Hutus in 1972, and one interviewee explains this atrocity as an attempt to destroy not only the future of that child, but also the future of the entire ethnic group. Some testimonies also argue that the deliberate transmission of HIV was used to inflict a slow death upon the victim and to spread HIV amongst the Tutsis. In Bosnia, it was not necessary to kill rape victims to achieve the political aims of the Serbs. The aim to ethnically cleanse the Bosniak population was achieved by using sexual violence to terrorize the population into fleeing their homes.

This section has aimed to illustrate how forced impregnation and murder in association with rape were used to achieve the strategic plans of leaders in Bosnia and Rwanda. Leaders were pivotal in shaping the form of sexual violence both because they used it to achieve their given political aspirations, and by promoting their self-serving construction of Tutsi and Bosniak women’s identities in the national discourse.
must widen its scope to account for variations in the forms of sexual violence. Sexual violence should be understood as a continuum of political, societal, and conflict dynamics within the country where it is perpetrated. Feminist literature provides a good framework for doing this, but it has to be combined with an analysis of other relevant elements in addition to gender relations. In Bosnia and Rwanda, one of the most important dynamics interacting with gender identity was ethnic identity.

The most pertinent variation in the forms of sexual violence was that forced impregnation was virtually nonexistent in Rwanda, while it was an important form of sexual violence in Bosnia. Also, mutilation of female body parts in Bosnia seems to have been rare in comparison to Rwanda. This posed the question about why two ethnic conflicts experiencing strategic sexual violence on a massive scale produced very distinct ways of targeting women with sexual violence.

Three factors have been identified as crucial, and they all essentially deal with how groups of people were targeted for violence based on how the perpetrators constructed their identity. These are mythology, the use of myths, and common beliefs by leaders to construct ethnic and gender identity, and the motivation for this being leadership objectives in the conflict. Bosniak women were constructed as a threat based on their reproductive capacities, and this was a result of Serbian leaders’ concern over the high Bosniak birth rate and situated within the traditional belief in a patrilineal heritage. My analysis does not comprehensively explain why people participated in violence in the first place. However, it does illuminate why, when sexual violence did break out, it did so in the form of forced impregnation.

The same framework of myths, identity construction, and leadership motives explains sexual violence in Rwanda, but because Rwandan myths, identities and motives were different from those in Bosnia, other types of sexual violence took place there. Rwandan women were constructed as sexual objects that were a danger to the Hutu ethnic group based on their ability to charm Hutu men whilst working for their own ethnic community. This was used to legitimize violence against Tutsi women as a part of the aim to annihilate the Tutsis, and it was situated within myths of Tutsi women’s beauty and superiority to Hutu men, and a cosmology that considered people with blockages in the flow of bodily fluids abominations. Therefore, sexual violence in Rwanda was characterized by mutilation of female body parts to destroy the seductive power of Tutsi women over Hutu men, and by killing them after rape to eliminate the Tutsis completely.

Further study on variations in forms of sexual violence should attempt to address how the construction of identity is translated into violent action more clearly. So far, both feminist analysis and theories of ethnic conflict struggle to do so. This comparison of sexual violence in Bosnia and Rwanda, which from afar might seem rather similar, illustrates that close attention must be paid to the conflict-specific processes in each particular case study if feminist scholars desire to give a credible account of the diversity of wartime sexual violence across conflicts.

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