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# The Intersectional Experience of Ndi Umunyarwanda: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Identity & Removing Ubwoko in Rwanda

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## Introduction

Rwanda has faced decades of conflict between three groups of Rwandans: the Abahutu, Abatutsi and Abatwa, which cumulated in 1994 with the Genocide against the Tutsi. Belgians colonized Rwanda in 1916 and enacted a “divide and rule” form of domination. The colonizers favored Abatutsi in government and education while synonymizing the Hutu identity with “second-hand citizens.” The Abahutu were 85 percent of the Rwandan population and, in the 1950’s began to use that to their advantage.<sup>1</sup> Violence sparked as Abahutu rose up and killed hundreds of Abatutsi, marking the Hutu Revolution lasting from 1959 to 1961. This period signified the end of Tutsi domination and increase tension between the Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of the Hutu Revolution and as other countries announced independence (i.e. Congo independence in 1960 from Belgium and Tanzania in 1962 from British control), the Belgians quickly switched support in favor of the majority: the Abahutu. On July 1, 1962, Rwanda became an independent state.<sup>3</sup> The Abahutu used their power to continue marginalization of Abatutsi, eventually leading to the official peace agreement, the Arusha Peace Accords in 1991. This agreement aimed to make peace between the Hutu-led government of Rwanda and the predominately Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).<sup>4</sup> Genocide against the Tutsi in April 1994. The United Nations officially reports more than 800,000<sup>5</sup> Rwandans were slaughtered by machete in 100 short days; the National Commission for the Fight Against the

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<sup>1</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> “Rwanda: A Brief History of the Country,” United Nations, accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/education/rwandagenocide.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> “Independence,” The World Fact Book, CIA, accessed September 30, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2088.html>.

<sup>4</sup> “Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front,” Document Retrieval, United Nations, accessed October 2, 2018, <https://peacemaker.un.org/rwanda-peaceagreementprf93>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, “Rwanda: A Brief History of the Country.”

Genocide (CNGL) in Rwanda states 1,070,014 deaths.<sup>6</sup>

Rwanda looks towards a peaceful future but must first heal from the atrocities that plagued the country for decades. Grass roots and government sponsored programs have worked to create forgiveness and peace in the country: Travail d'Interest Generale (TIG; works for general interests) has five locations in Rwanda that house perpetrators who've completed part of their prison sentences. At the camps, they work to rebuild the property damaged and provide agricultural support to survivors. Cooperatives such as "The Courage of Living" began from Rwandans coming together at the community level to fill the roles left vacant by genocide victims and prisoners. Many other initiatives exist country wide, one being the Ndi Umunyarwanda program<sup>7</sup>, which translates to "I am Rwandan" in Kinyarwanda.

Ndi Umunyarwanda is a nationalistic campaign that emphasizes Rwandan identification over all other parts of one's identity.<sup>8</sup> Other parts of one's identity might include one's age, gender, religion, region they were born or experience during the genocide and *ubwoko*. In the sphere of this program, the only important aspect is that all Rwandans are Rwandans. It not only emphasizes similarities, but the program denounces all differences.

However, it is not enough for individuals to just identify with their nationality. Identity is made up of hundreds of components creating a unique experience for all people. The study of the different components of identity, working together to create these unique experiences is called intersectionality. The Ndi Umunyarwanda program will be analyzed through 11 in-field interviews under the lens of intersectionality to create a full understanding of different people's experiences with the program and its overall effectiveness.

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<sup>6</sup> "Background," National Commission for the Fight Against the Genocide, accessed August 17, 2018, <http://www.cnlg.gov.rw/genocide/background/?L=0>

<sup>7</sup> Ndi Umunyarwanda (n-də oo-moon-ē-ruh-WAHN-duh)

<sup>8</sup> Victor Visathan, "'Ndi Umunyarwanda,' concept should be a legacy for posterity," *New Times*, March 26, 2015.

Research Methodology: Existing literature, theories and insights from multiple disciplines evaluated individual experiences with the Ndi Umunyarwanda program. The main source of data comes from eleven in-field interviews which were conducted over three weeks in April and May of 2017. Eight interviews were done in Kigali, Rwanda and three in Butare, Rwanda. The interviewees consisted of local academics, political officials and general citizens. The three groups were chosen to gain perspective on the way ethnicity was being taught, how it affected leaderships and how it was perceived at the citizen level. The individuals discussed identity politics in 30- to 120-minute informal, semi-structured interviews. These individuals were interviewed on the basis of understanding what ethnicity meant to them on a personal or profession-based level and observed political and cultural implications of these identities.

Eight of the interviews were conducted in English; three in Kinyarwanda. The interview in Kinyarwanda conducted in Butare, Rwanda was translated by a professor, Dr. Bernard Rutikanga while the two interviews conducted in Kigali were translated by a trilingual student, Margot Manuella. Interviewees gave permission to be recorded which were later transcribed and analyzed with ethnographic research methods and from a symbolic interactionist perspective. After demographic questions and relevant background information (as identified by the informant), the informant was asked to define how they understood the term “ethnicity.” Individuals answered with definitions, personal statements and historical recaps of the terms’ usage in Rwanda. Following, interview questions were taken from a prepared list. The informants had not seen the questions before the interview. Interviews were fluid and the informant directed the conversation with their answers. An example list of prepared questions is included in the appendix.

Taboo’s surrounding the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities were respected as these terms can

be offensive or triggering to individuals. One's *ubwoko* affiliation was never assumed, guessed or questioned directly. Based on the subject of the interviews being ethnicity, it was often disclosed organically then attached to the respondent's ideologies.

The two essential components in this study are *ubwoko* and post-genocide identities. The strength of Rwandan identity will be noted during the analysis of the interviews. Age is a variable that is only used to differentiate those alive during the genocide from those born after. Although class, political affiliation and occupation could correlate with one's *ubwoko* and post-genocide identity, for simplification, these will not be evaluated. Gender is not addressed due to the lack of representation in the sample group.

Limitations: Budget, time and travel all posed limitations. As an undergraduate student, studying abroad, time was limited to two months of preparation, three weeks of interviewing and one month of in-country analysis. Positionality of the interviewer and the official government stance on this topic assuredly impacted responses. Ten of the eleven interviewees were men and none identified as Twa. Limitations are important to note to qualify potential response bias and the sample being non-representative of all intersections. This research is the beginning to further research on experience with this program, as it is not expansive to all Rwandans. Travel limitations only allowed for interviews in two cities in Rwanda. These limitations do not discredit this research because it only analyzes the intersections that are represented and do not discuss experiences based off of gender. Overall this research is credible within its scope.

Interdisciplinarity: The evaluation of the individual experience with the Ndi Umunyarwanda in Rwanda satisfies all conditions calling for interdisciplinarity as outlined by Allen F. Repko and Rick Szostak: it is complex, requires two or more disciplines offering insights and works to

explain an unresolved societal problem.<sup>9</sup>

For example, understanding the individual's experience with the Ndi Umunyarwanda program is complex: including the concept of identity, intersectionality, defining and removing *ubwoko*, understanding the Ndi Umunyarwanda program and evaluating the words of Rwandans. Many disciplines are consulted to understand these complexities but the volume of literature on specific to the program is limited due to the program's young age. Anthropological studies, historical explanations and political science rationalizations attempt to justify ideologies of the Abahutu, Abatutsi and Abatwa identities but remains incomplete and contradictory, leaving the understanding of Rwandan identity unsolved. Written literature on the program is sparse and field interviews gather testimonies from genocidal experience more often than the post-genocide era.<sup>10</sup> There is a whole in academic understanding that can be filled through this analysis.

## **Complexities and Themes**

Identity and Intersectionality: Identity is complex; it is composed of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability, age, religion, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, power domain, family status, occupation and more.<sup>11</sup> Based in sociology, identity is socially constructed: a person cannot be separated from the people, historical events and social circumstances that surrounds them, particularly through socialization and the social groups within one identifies. The plurality of social groups intersects, making unique circumstances for all individuals, the

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<sup>9</sup> Allen F. Repko and Rick Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2017), 93.

<sup>10</sup> See Phillip Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> David Newman, *Sociology: Exploring the architecture of everyday life*. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014).

main premise of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is a method of analyzing the immense complexities in human experience through axis of social division and complex discrimination.<sup>12</sup> Different social belongings do not create identities that are “alternatives but combinations.”<sup>13</sup> These layers of identity “operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities but build on each other and work together.”<sup>14</sup>

The intersections of one’s identity are cohesive facets to one’s identity and experience. For example, a black woman can never disassociate between her gender and her race; every experience she has in a combination of the two – as a black woman.<sup>15</sup> For this person, these two parts of her identity are mutually inclusive. Mutual inclusivity relates to this study: For example, a Hutu bystander can never have an experience as just a Hutu (*ubwoko*) or just a bystander (post-genocide identity), they will always be both.

Boundaries between ethnic groups are strongly maintained due to constant devolving and overlapping of intersectional identities.<sup>16</sup> In the context of Rwanda, “‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ are ancient terms with changing meanings; terms that diachronically (across time) evolving and synchronically (at a point in time) polyvalent.”<sup>17</sup> The multiple dimensions and understandings of human experiences are unique to an individual but can expand a group of individuals who have the same or similar intersections and create dialogue between different intersections. In other

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<sup>12</sup> Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Andrew, “Multiculturalism, gender, and social cohesion: Reflections on intersectionality and urban citizenship in Canada.” In *Insiders and outsiders: Alan Cairns and the reshaping of Canadian Citizenship*, ed. Philip Resnick & Gerald Kernerman (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2005), 317.

<sup>14</sup> Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299.

<sup>16</sup> Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> Andrea Purdeková, “‘Building a nation in Rwanda? De-ethnicisation and its discontents,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8 no. 3 (December 2008): 512.

cases, it can cause mistrust, blame and stagnation.<sup>18</sup> The two essential components of identity for this study are *ubwoko* and post-genocide identities.

*Ubwoko*: *Ubwoko* is pertinent to identity and references Hutu, Tutsi and Twa categorization.<sup>19</sup>

The Abahutu, Abatutsi and Abatwa are perceived widely different from one another.<sup>20</sup> These differences have shaped the individuals and determined the fate of their descendants.

Differences between these groups are well recorded and diverse; included are height, weight, nose size, skin color, dis/ability to digest lactose and more.<sup>21</sup> Profession and wealth create distinctions in social class: the Abatutsi were wealthy pastoralists, the Abatwa poor forest dwellers and the Abahutu were agriculturalists somewhere in between.<sup>22</sup>

Before colonization, *amoko* was associated with one's clan.<sup>23</sup> During and after, it became synonymous to Abahutu, Abatutsi and Abatwa.<sup>24</sup> *Ubwoko* is translated to ethnicity, genre, tribe and type, but the most authentic translation is "kind." Every noun in Kinyarwanda has a "kind," as described by Informant IX in an interview conducted by the author in Kigali on May 3, 2017:

Ethnicity, if you try to put it into Kinyarwanda, it is called *ubwoko*. And everything, it has *ubwoko* – even animals, computers – when you try to translate *ubwoko* into English, the meaning is not ethnicity, it is kind . . . This pen has *ubwoko*, this computer has *ubwoko*, this guy has *ubwoko*. It is confusing, it could mean different things.

Informant IX continues to discuss the confusion that began when Rwanda was colonized:

<sup>18</sup> Ervin Staub, Laurie Anne Pearlman, and Vachel Miller. "Healing the Roots of Genocide in Rwanda." *Peace Review* 15, no. 3 (2003): 287-94.

<sup>19</sup> Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing neighbors: Webs of violence in Rwanda* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Newbury, "Ethnicity"; Purdeková, "Building"; Straub, Pearlman and Miller, "Healing the roots of genocide in Rwanda"; Vansina, "The politics," 37-44.

<sup>21</sup> See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Dean White, "An African Holocaust," *History Today* 64, no. 6 (June 2014): 40-46; Aimable Twagilimana, *The Debris of Ham: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Amini Jean de Dieu Ngabonziza, "The Importance of Language Studies in Conflict Resolution." *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* 2, no. 1 (September 2013). White, "An African," 40-46.

<sup>23</sup> *Ubwoko*, singular, means "kind;" *amoko*, plural, means "kinds."

<sup>24</sup> Fujii, *Killing neighbors: Webs of violence in Rwanda*.



But when the colonials came here, they brought ethnicity with its meaning of same culture, same background but here it was different...It was one people with one culture, we speak the same language. It means that, if we take the real meaning of ethnicity, our ethnic group should be Rwandanism – not Hutu and Tutsi. But people confused “kind” and “ethnicity.” We used to say we have three groups, which is based on the truth. [Three ethnicities are not based on truth.] But genocide happened because of this confusion of ethnicities.

As described by Informant IX, colonizing Belgians noticed differences and labeled Hutu, Tutsi and Twa as ethnic groups. The Westernized concept of ethnicity was directly applied to these groups.<sup>25</sup> Differentiating one’s “kind” as one’s “ethnicity” brought different implications to Rwandans: An ethnic group consists of people who share human behavior and culture. This gives members a sense of belonging to the ethnic group through shared practices, traditions and rituals.<sup>26</sup> Far and wide, ethnicity is described as a common culture, language, region, values and beliefs.<sup>27</sup> This definition was confirmed as a belief to multiple informants, specifically Informant V, interviewed by the author in Kigali on April 26, 2017: “Ethnicity is, I consider, as beliefs, cultures and perspectives that define a certain section of people. That brings them together and determines who the people of that section are and their origins.”

When asked, however, how this applies to the differences between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa categorizations, the vital notions of “ethnicity” and “*ubwoko*” were lost in translation. It was quickly denounced by Informant X, interviewed in Kigali on May 3, 2017, that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were ethnically different:

No. Absolutely no. I think that here, the context of Rwanda does not have this ethnicity. How would you define people that are speaking one language, they don’t have a second language, they have one culture, they have one leadership? ... How would you explain to me that, you know? ... But in Rwanda, [different ethnicities?] No way. No way!<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Wielenga, “Lived,” 122-136.

<sup>26</sup> Barth, “Introduction.”

<sup>27</sup> White, “An African,” 40-46.; Wielenga, “Lived,” 122-136; Straub, Pearlman and Miller, “Healing the roots of genocide in Rwanda”; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>28</sup> Informant X, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, May 3, 2017.

The argument proposed by informants is confirmed in existing literature.<sup>29</sup> Despite these arguments, it must be stated: “ethnic diversity is socially articulated and maintained.”<sup>30</sup> Belgians imposed their concept of ethnicity onto Rwandan culture and emphasized social difference between the “kinds.” After independence, the Rwandan government maintained the groups as ethnicities. The social hierarchy was cemented and maintaining this “ethnic diversity” was the easiest way for society to continue.<sup>31</sup>

Ethnicity, as defined by Barth, defines contemporary Rwanda best: “a population which ... has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.”<sup>32</sup> This explains why Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were treated as different ethnicities: individuals held membership exclusively in one of the three categories and people in those categories were distinguishable through physical appearance, economic status or association.

The term *ubwoko* alleviates confusion with ethnicity and best highlights the differences between the groups without imposing Western ideologies or emphasizing misinterpreted values.<sup>33</sup> Regardless of the ethnicity debate, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities are significant. *Ubwoko* allows a more honest evaluation of their current implications especially in relation to experiences with Ndi Umunyarwanda, a program that seeks equality through the expulsion of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities.

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<sup>29</sup> See White, “An African,” 40–46; Twagilimana, *The Debris of Ham*.

<sup>30</sup> Harald Eidheim, “When ethnic identity is a social stigma,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 39.

<sup>31</sup> Eidheim, “When ethnic,” 39; see White, “An African,” 40–46; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Fujii, *Killing neighbors: Webs of violence in Rwanda*.

<sup>32</sup> Barth, “Introduction,” 11.

<sup>33</sup> Sigrun Marie Moss, “Beyond Conflict and Spoiled Identities: How Rwandan Leaders Justify a Single Recategorization Model for Post-Conflict Reconciliation,” in *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 2, no. 1 (2014): 435–449; Moss and Vollhardt, “You Can’t.”

Post-Genocide Identities: Another set of Rwandan identities are post-genocide identities. There

are six post-genocide identities used based on informants: survivors, perpetrator, bystander, refugee, rescuer and those not born. Identities were prescribed to individuals based upon involvement in the Genocide against the Tutsi. They are

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Ubwoko Affiliation</u>
survivor	any Tutsi who survived	Tutsi
perpetrator	individual who victimized the Abatutsi	Hutu, sometimes Twa
bystander	were not victims, did not add to or stop victimization	Hutu, Twa
Refugee	individual who fled from 1959 to 1994	Tutsi
Rescuer	individual who helped Abatutsi survive	Hutu, sometimes Twa
not born	those born after July 1, 1994	Rwandan

outlined in *Figure 1: Post-Genocide Identities*.

The categories are defined as follows: A survivor subsisted, but an official survivor can only be a Tutsi. A perpetrator committed acts of genocide (vandalism, rape, murder, etc.).

Bystanders were not victims nor added or prevented the victimization of Abatutsi. Refugees are those who fled Rwanda from 1959 to the end of the genocide in 1994. A rescuer saved victims. Finally, those who were unborn were born after July 1, 1994.

The affiliation of post-genocide identities with historic *ubwoko* create complexities (see final column in *Figure 1: Post-Genocide Identities*). *Ubwoko* is prohibited from applications for education, government office or employment. In contrast, post-genocide identities are not forbidden. They grant or deny access to certain resources, for example healthcare and welfare air for survivors.<sup>34</sup> While Abatutsi/survivors are receiving healthcare benefits, the Abahutu are all presumed to have been perpetrators.<sup>35</sup> *Ubwoko* was eliminated from government discourse to avoid inequalities and stigmatization but post-genocide identities create them.

Between individuals in modern-day Rwanda “[all] parties try to behave as if ethnicity

<sup>34</sup> “Health and Social Welfare,” Republic of Rwanda, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://gov.rw/about-the-government/health-and-social-welfare/>

<sup>35</sup> See Eidheim, “When ethnic.”

‘does not count.’”<sup>36</sup> Despite their *behavior*, “[Rwandans] caution that ethnicity is as present as ever in Rwanda. They believe that if Rwandans do not use the words ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu,’ it is because they have found other ways of saying them.”<sup>37</sup> Another way to say them in through these post-genocide identities which follow *ubwoko* lines consistently.

These intersections of identity create multiple lenses of experience with the Ndi Umunyarwanda program. The complexities discussed in this section are pertinent to the unique experiences Rwandans have had with the program.

Understanding the Ndi Umunyarwanda program’s situation: The understanding of the Ndi Umunyarwanda program was synthesized from multiple sources. There is no official English version describing the program and literature surrounding the topic is limited.

Ndi Umunyarwanda was conceived at a Youth Connekt event in 2013 and adopted as a national campaign within months.<sup>38</sup> The conversation at the event “encourag[ed] children born to Hutu parents or relatives to apologise [sic] to Tutsis and to say[,] ‘Never Again’ in their own name.”<sup>39</sup> Beyond a platform for apologies, it called for a forum for Rwandans to establish an agreed upon history and speak openly about the problems that have resulted from it.<sup>40</sup> As a national campaign, it developed an emphasis on Rwandan identity and removing the use of one’s *ubwoko* in any official, public sphere. It is claimed to be “the replac[ement] of ethnic identity

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<sup>36</sup> Eidheim, “When ethnic,” 54.

<sup>37</sup> Mbaraga, “State pushes.”

<sup>38</sup> Robert Mbaraga, “State pushes campaign that critics say it is ethnically divisive,” *The East African*, November 16, 2013, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/rwanda/News/Mixed-reactions-to--Ndi-Umunyarwanda-initiative-/1433218-2075366-cjnwygz/index.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Edmund Kagire, “Initiators, officials defend genocide forgiveness campaign,” *The East African*, August 3, 2013, <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/Rwanda/News/Initiators-officials-defend-genocide-forgiveness-campaign-/-/1433218/1935194/-/kbv11az/-/index.html>

<sup>40</sup> Mbaraga, “State pushes.”

with civic identity.”<sup>41</sup> An Executive Summary sponsored by the Rwandan government summarized the program, stating it “is perceived as an effective mechanism to rehabilitate Rwandanity.”<sup>42</sup> The implementation of this nation-building encourages discussion and “a deep, ‘experiential’ understanding” for their participants of the past and their re-socialized identities.<sup>43</sup>

In contrast, this program’s legitimacy is “highly criticized” and questioned by many Western scholars and other populations.<sup>44</sup> It is said to be built on fabricated unity that minimizes differences between Rwandans.<sup>45</sup> Sigrun Marie Moss claims intersectional differences are ignored as “the Rwandan government’s recategorization policy involves (psychologically) dissolving the subordinate groups rather than improving relations between those groups.”<sup>46</sup> Instead, it is argued the top-down approach is authoritative instead of participatory and should be replaced “in such a way that people can be free to ‘live out’ their ethnic identity.”<sup>47</sup> Andrea Purdeková states, “The prospects of coexistence today are vested in making people believe a story of the past they are not allowed to contribute to.”<sup>48</sup>

The critiques resulted from various aspects including the idea that program messaging

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<sup>41</sup> Cori Wielenga, “‘Lived’ Identities in Rwanda: Beyond Ethnicity?” *African Insight*, 44, no. 1 (June 2014): 122-136.

<sup>42</sup> Rwandan Government. *Executive Summary: Ndi Umunyarwanda Evaluation*, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Ervin Straub, Laurie Anne Pearlman and Vachel Miller, “Healing the roots of genocide in Rwanda,” *Peace Review* 15, no. 3 (2003): 290.

<sup>44</sup> Kagire, “Initiators.”; See M., 2013; Romeo Rugero, “Hutu Manifesto 2016,” *Ishyaka Komunisti ryu Rwanda*. 2016. <http://communistpartyofrwanda.tumblr.com/post/134192407498/hutu-manifesto-2016>; Bret Ingelaere, “The ruler’s drum and the people’s shout: Accountability and representation on Rwanda’s hills,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011) 67-78.

<sup>45</sup> Janine Natalya Clark, “National unity and reconciliation in Rwanda: A flawed approach?” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 2 (May 2010); Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, “Introduction: Seeing like a post-conflict state,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence*, ed. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Sigrun Marie Moss, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt, “‘You Can’t Give a Syringe with Unity’: Rwandan Responses to the Government’s Single Recategorization Policies,” in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 16, no. 1 (November 2015): 436.

<sup>47</sup> Ingelaere, “The ruler’s.”; Wielenga, “‘Lived,’” 122.

<sup>48</sup> Purdeková, “‘Building,’” 512.

change based on the reading audience. In the context of Rwanda, specific perspectives and information are directed to those who speak Kinyarwanda and those who do not. Since Kinyarwanda is a localized language, much of the world cannot understand the content. Therefore, concerns of secrecy and authenticity of the program’s agenda arise from its existence only in Kinyarwanda when all other government documents exist in the three national languages: Kinyarwanda, French and English.<sup>49</sup>

The program is praised by the Rwandan government, survivors seeking peace, perpetrators pursuing acceptance and those born after genocide fighting for reconciliation. An example of this praise can be seen through a statement by Hon. Stanislas Kamanzi:

[The] Ndi Umunyarwanda program helps us to fight against anyone and anything that may want to take us back. It helps us to understand that being Rwandan doesn’t mean having the Rwandan nationality but being proud of the Rwandan identity and committed to work hard for the development of your Country.<sup>50</sup>

## Results and Analysis

The 11 informants represented six intersections of *ubwoko* and post-genocide identities (see *Figure 2: Informant Intersections*.<sup>51</sup>) Informant VIII did not disclose either intersect, therefore is categorized as “unknown.” The categories include: Tutsi survivor, Hutu perpetrator, Hutu bystander, Tutsi refugee, Hutu rescuer and Rwandan born post-

**Figure 2:  
Informant Intersections**

<b>Tutsi survivor</b>	III, VII
<b>Hutu perpetrator</b>	IV, VI
<b>Hutu bystander</b>	IX
<b>Tutsi refugee</b>	V, X, XI
<b>Hutu rescuer</b>	I
<b>unborn Rwandan</b>	II
<b>unknown</b>	VIII

<sup>49</sup> Catharine Newbury, “Ethnicity and the politics of history in Rwanda.” *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (Jan. – Mar. 1998); Jan Vansina, “The politics of history and the crisis in the Great Lakes,” *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (March 1998): 37-44.; “Geography,” Republic of Rwanda, last modified 2017, <http://gov.rw/home/geography/>.

<sup>50</sup> “REMA staff members in a dialogue about ‘Ndi Umunyarwanda’ Program,” Press Room, Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), last modified November 12, 2013, [http://www.rema.gov.rw/index.php?id=10&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=71&cHash=1dfabefcf77a99b156d24e9f24f632e9](http://www.rema.gov.rw/index.php?id=10&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=71&cHash=1dfabefcf77a99b156d24e9f24f632e9).

<sup>51</sup> See *Appendix A: Demographics of Informants* for details on each informant.

genocide. All informants identified as Rwandan, but emphasis differed along the *ubwoko* divisions. For example, refugee Informants V, X and XI and survivors III and VII identified as Rwandans but unashamedly identified as Abatutsi. Informants IV, VI and IX were Hutu and passionately proclaimed themselves as Rwandans and were eager to discuss how all people in Rwanda are *Rwandans*. These individuals emphasized that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were gone.

The interviews were grouped and analyzed by the informants' intersection with these two forms of identity. To see more context regarding each informant including age, sex and occupation, please see *Appendix A: Demographic of Informants*.

Tutsi Survivor: Two informants – Informant III and VII – identified as male, Tutsi survivors over 50 years of age. Informant III discussed his experience as an academic and Informant VII shared his personal experiences.

Informant III immediately stated that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa are not different ethnicities: “They would be best described as social classes or occupations... The differences were created: colonization. The differences which had to do with stereotyping of behavior... by the Belgians.”<sup>52</sup> According to Informant VII, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa are subcultures within the Rwandan culture. Both informants expressed stigmatized views of the Abatwa.

Informant VII believes *ubwoko* identification is dying but not dead. He discussed the stigma and meanings of *ubwoko* in modern Rwanda:

It doesn't mean much really; some people still cling to it. They'd like to see that they are identified by them. But it has a meaning in the sense that if I say I am a Tutsi at least I know nobody is going to doubt my cleanliness as far as the genocide is concerned. If I say I am a Hutu people will start saying, ‘oh what were you doing back in the genocide,

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<sup>52</sup> Informant III, interview by author. Butare, Rwanda. April 25, 2017.

were you part of it?’ It still has that kind of stain and stigma on [*amoko*].<sup>53</sup>

In contrast, Informant III states: “no body today would be harassed or discriminated against because of what he is.”<sup>54</sup> Instead the government provided each Rwandan what they need: the Twa received support (Informant III compared it to Affirmative Action), survivors got medical care and new homes, and perpetrators were reeducated to fight genocide ideology.

Overall, the two informants felt encouraged by the conversation on *ubwoko*. According to Informant VII, “[Being Rwandese] has always been my dream, to sit in a country where I’m still aware of who I am but at least I know it doesn’t come with consequences. So, being a Tutsi, if I go somewhere and someone say, ‘are you Hutu or are you Tutsi,’ I can say ‘it doesn’t matter!’”<sup>55</sup>

Informant VII spoke well on the program: “I have always spoken about [Ndi Umunyarwanda] because that is the attempt, we are creating to evaluate the past and see the wrongs and the evils of ethnicity and replace them with Ndi Umunyarwanda.”<sup>56</sup> Informant III believes the Ndi Umunyarwanda teachings are to put favoritism and discrimination in Rwanda’s past. Academic Informant III saw the older generation with an attachment to *ubwoko* that is difficult to fight against, but the program is being accepted by the younger generation.

Informant III and VII believed *ubwoko* ideology is not dead and will not die for a few generations. Claims stating unification of all Rwandans are false in the eyes of Tutsi survivors but through programs like Ndi Umunyarwanda, Rwandans are fighting this ideology. *Ubwoko* should be downplayed but cannot die, because as Informant VII pointed out, the name of the genocide keeps Abatutsi, Abahutu and Abatwa alive.

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<sup>53</sup> Informant VII, interview by author. Kigali, Rwanda. April 27, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Informant III, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Informant VII, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Informant VII, interview.



Hutu Perpetrator: Informant IV and VI identified as Hutu perpetrators. Both informants were agriculturalists over the age of 50. Informant IV was a female and Informant VI was a male. They both participated in TIG. The interviews were translated from Kinyarwanda.

Both informants clung to their Hutu identity in the past, but each felt it was “impossible” to find Abahutu, Abatutsi and Abatwa in Rwanda today; everyone in Rwanda are Rwandese. It was evident that the reeducation within TIG created this shift in *ubwoko* ideology: “Today, a Tutsi is a friend to [a Hutu] – he can go and share everything with him... There are no differences... Everyone today is in the same line – they are Rwandese. They are walking together in daily life... We don’t feel anything now, we are free from these labels,” said Informant VI.<sup>57</sup>

Informant VI saw TIG as a calling for forgiveness across Rwanda. In TIG, Informant IV learned that, “We have to avoid [bad ideology] and they teach us how to create friendships between everyone. And to make sure to talk to people with that bad [ideology]. Our country has been living on a bad past, but we are all the same... we need to make sure everyone is Ndi Umunyarwanda – no Hutu, no Tutsi, no anything else.”<sup>58</sup>

The two Hutu perpetrators believed the Ndi Umunyarwanda program was good and so was the governance promoting it.

Hutu Bystander: Informant IX was the only Hutu bystander interviewed. His experience was unique because he was involved in the creation of the Ndi Umunyarwanda program in 2014. He was 30-50 years old, a male and a member of the Rwandan Parliament. He identified as Hutu before genocide because that is what his parents told him he was with no explanation. Today, he identified as Rwandan and fights the *ubwoko* ideology.

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<sup>57</sup> Informant VI, interview by author, translated by Margot Manuella. Kigali, Rwanda. April 27, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Informant VI, interview.

My kids will know that my wife is a Tutsi by background and I am a Hutu by background and they will know what it meant in the past...they will know that the foundation of our marriage was on Rwandanism... They were born because we broke this bridge [between Hutu and Tutsi]... So, these kids will not be Hutu, they will not be Tutsi, they will be real Rwandans: that is what I breed.<sup>59</sup>

Informant IX's intention of the program was to take the blame off young people for what their previous generation had done. The program was meant to create a platform to move on together with one identity. He elaborated:

The younger generation will not understand that they have a responsibility of rebuilding this nation when they are not together. If they are pointing fingers to some young people saying, "your parents destroyed the company, come rebuild it," "your parents killed us, now come rebuild [the country]." No... They have to fight for the good for this country together.<sup>60</sup>

Informant IX emphasized that Rwanda was in a transitional period and Ndi Umunyarwanda aided in the transition. According to him, the only negative aspect was that more people were not adopting the ideology. The genocide happened because of the negative ideology, and Informant IX did his part to make sure it does not reoccur.

Tutsi Refugee: Informants V, X and XI identified as Tutsi refugees. Each spent time in Uganda but Informant XI lived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Kingdom before returning to Rwanda as an advisor to President Kagame in 2002. Informant V and X both worked in the civil society promoting peace and reconciliation. All three informants were men and Informant V was 18-30 years old; Informant X was 30-50 years old; and Informant XI was over 50 years of age.

Although out of Rwanda, the three informants identified as Rwandans although understanding the concept *ubwoko*. In Uganda, whether their *ubwoko* was not as important as

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<sup>59</sup> Informant IX. Interview by author. Personal interview. Kigali, May 3, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Informant IX, interview.

where they came from, Rwanda. The Tutsi refugees found strength in the Ndi Umunyarwanda program because it aligned with how they had identified their entire lives. They felt they were better off identifying as Rwandan and felt that others will gain from it parting with their *amoko* as well.

Informant X believed individuals only used *ubwoko* identities when it was beneficial for them, but he believed the Rwandan identity was always beneficial.

This benefits from one using *amoko* in the public sphere is what the government tried to prevent with the program. As explained by Informant X:

The government is saying, feel free to belong to any group that you want. Feel free to say that you are a Hutu, a Tutsi, or you are a Twa, but you should not, you should not use those for any political ends or economic [means]... I would obviously say that I am a Tutsi, but I don't think that means much to me in Rwanda today. Because I have no advantages or benefits that accrue from the fact that I am a Tutsi.<sup>61</sup>

Informant X believes the program “is the right way to go” and all criticism on the program is a “baseless” form of genocide ideology. He continued: “Really to me, being a Hutu or a Tutsi or a Twa, it doesn't bring the bread on the table. But being a Rwandan helps you to understand your level of one, patriotism, love, compassion, all of those strong values, human values that are needed for a day-to-day life.”<sup>62</sup>

The Tutsi refugees were optimistic regarding the program. Informant V said it best: “My optimism is that a time will come when the right will overcome the wrong. We are all Rwandese, not by mistake or pressure but by origin... This ethnicity is what brings people together. This is what makes people one.”<sup>63</sup>

Hutu Rescuer: Informant I was a Hutu rescuer. He claimed that the identification of Hutu, Tutsi

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<sup>61</sup> Informant X, interview by author. Kigali, Rwanda. May 3, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Informant X, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Informant V, interview by author, Kigali, Rwanda, April 26, 2017.

and Twa were never the problem, instead it was how *amoko* were politically manipulated by the colonialists. He identified as Rwandan but sees segregated social groups:

Up to today, we haven't managed to fight against ethnicity in the sense that when it comes to things like wedding invitations...the wedding of the Twa is 99% Twa. And it is the same for the Hutu, the wedding of the Tutsis, still the same. Politically, everyone will go to school and have all these rights. But still there is still this idea of associating and inviting and knowing each other.<sup>64</sup>

Before genocide, Informant I knew his family categorized as Hutu. "The way I was brought up, I was above [identifying by *ubwoko*]. I associated with the Hutus and the Tutsis without feeling proud of being a Hutu or undermining the Tutsis."<sup>65</sup> Today, his identity is Rwandan but struggles with his post-genocide category as he is ostracized as a traitor by Abahutu and distrusted by survivors.

Regarding the Ndi Umunyarwanda program, Informant I stated: "I believe this Ndi Umunyarwanda is beneficial, especially to the young. Had it been taught before genocide and the government focused on teaching on Rwandaness then the genocide would not have been there." He firmly believes, however, the directives for the program come from the bottom, down and "[The government] injects the spirit of being Rwandan into the community."<sup>66</sup>

Informant I saw *ubwoko* as a spreading virus that must be stopped.

Unborn Rwandan: Informant II, a university student born after the genocide, did not identify with *ubwoko* categories. He stated there is no need for Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities and it was not used: "No, there is no way that anyone can be referred to by the school or the church by the identities. It may be for people who still have genocide ideology, they may teach their children.

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<sup>64</sup> Informant I, interview by author, translated by Bernard Rutikanda. Butare, Rwanda. April 25, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Informant I, interview.

<sup>66</sup> Informant I, interview.

But properly, there is not.”<sup>67</sup>

Informant II believed Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were all Rwandan based on culture, language and geographical location. He did, however, claim that he saw a generational difference between those who held *ubwoko* ideology. Informant II identified with the Ndi Umunyarwanda program for many reasons, but especially that it was a place to learn from those directing the conversation: “If someone has a misunderstanding you have the chance to give him the proper understanding [with Ndi Umunyarwanda] and get him to the right speed.”<sup>68</sup> He suggested expansion of the program to communities, beyond academia.

“[The conversation on ethnicity] can’t ever be bad. It is always good.”<sup>69</sup>

Unknown: Informant VIII did not associate with *ubwoko* or post-genocide identities during the interview. He was the chief executive officer of the Rwandan Governance Board, in the 30-50 age category and identified as Rwandan. He was previously a professor who taught political science.

Informant VIII was aware of negating criticism but responded differently than other informants. He said:

Negating ethnicity is a good thing...When you look at it from outside, sometimes you don’t feel the pain that people have experienced being prisoners of those identities...we have been prisoners of Hutu, Tutsi identities, I don’t think we have got anything good out of it... the only thing we have gotten is just genocide? So, deterring it for me is not a bad thing...we survived [those identities].<sup>70</sup>

To Informant VIII, Ndi Umunyarwanda represented similarities in Rwandan culture and the aspiration for all Rwandans to be united. He believed in the power of the program. He only

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<sup>67</sup> Informant II, interview by author. Butare, Rwanda. April 25, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Informant II, interview.

<sup>69</sup> Informant II, interview.

<sup>70</sup> Informant VIII, interview by author. Kigali, Rwanda. May 3, 2017.

spoke of his professional experience with the program.

Further Analysis: Ultimately, informants in all intersections identified as Rwandan and that *ubwoko* has no value in the modern context. Hutu perpetrators, unborn Rwandans, Hutu bystanders and the unknown informant claimed that Abahutu, Abatusi and Abatwa do not exist in Rwanda today, directly conflicting with the views held by Tutsi survivors, Tutsi refugees and Hutu rescuers. Similarly, all Rwandans interviewed believed the Ndi Umunyarwanda program was effective, but the same split occurred when asked the downfalls of the program. The Hutu perpetrators, unborn Rwandans, Hutu bystanders and the unknown informant saw no flaws in the program. The Tutsi survivors, Tutsi refugees and Hutu rescuers critiqued its implementation.

In both instances, Hutu perpetrators, unborn Rwandans, Hutu bystanders and the unknown informant all favored Rwandan government ideologies. The Tutsi survivors, Tutsi refugees and Hutu rescuers spoke freely of their experiences and observations. The vulnerable subsections of society – Hutu perpetrators feel they must repay society for their actions, Hutu bystanders the same but for not stopping genocide, unborn Rwandans are young and malleable – shared similar ideologies. These vulnerable communities in Rwanda have been conditioned to blindly accept the ideologies of the government meaning these individuals did not exercise critical thinking or criticism in adoption. The reason for this is unknown based off of the data.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The rhetoric of the program was emphasized to perpetrators and Rwandans born after the genocide. The informants who expressed Ndi Umunyarwanda teachings most verbatim were Informants II, IV and VI: those falling in the unborn Rwandan and Abahutu perpetrator

categories. Although some skepticism came from Informant I, all eleven informants agreed Ndi Umunyarwanda ideology was a strong form of reconciliation.

In conclusion, individuals live through their Rwandan, post-genocide and *ubwoko* identities differently. This has resulted in varying experiences and reactions to the Ndi Umunyarwanda program. Some believed the program was perfect, curated by the people for the people while others felt the ideology was top-down and injected into the population.

The findings emphasized intersectional experience with the program but could be strengthened by a larger and better-rounded sample of informants. My recommendation would be to follow this study with a greater volume of interviews that includes more women, Twa representation and a more robust span of ages.

The Ndi Umunyarwanda program was seen essential reconciliation process to political leaders. However, these leaders did not consider all intersections and experiences of Rwandans before implementation. The top-down, authoritative approach intimidates Rwanda's democracy instead of allowing for participation of citizens in the conversation. If the program made changes to increase participation, it could serve all Rwandans equally "in such a way that people can be free to 'live out' their ethnic identity" in any way they choose.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ingelaere, "The ruler's."; Wielenga, "'Lived,'" 122.

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**Appendix A: Demographic of Informants**

	Age	Sex	Occupation	Category	Intersection	Date of Interview
I <sup>1</sup>	50+	Male	Agriculture	Personal	Hutu//Rescuer	25 April 2017
II	18-30	Male	Student	Personal	<sup>2</sup>	25 April 2017
III	50+	Male	Professor	Academia	Tutsi//Refugee	25 April 2017
IV <sup>1</sup>	50+	Female	Agriculture	Personal	Hutu//Perpetrator	26 April 2017
V	18-30	Male	Civil Society	Personal	Tutsi//Refugee	26 April 2017
VI <sup>1</sup>	50+	Male	Agriculture	Personal	Hutu//Perpetrator	27 April 2017
VII	50+	Male	Pastor of Anglican Church	Personal	Tutsi//Survivor	27 April 2017
VIII	30-50	Male	CEO of RGB	Political	<sup>3</sup>	2 May 2017
IX	30-50	Male	Member of Parliament	Political	Hutu//Bystander	3 May 2017
X	30-50	Male	Civil Society	Personal	Tutsi//Refugee	3 May 2017
XI	50+	Male	Presidential Advisor	Political	Tutsi//Refugee	9 May 2017

<sup>1</sup>Interview translated to English from Kinyarwanda. <sup>2</sup>This informant did not state his ethnic background and he was born post-genocide. <sup>3</sup>This informant did not state his ethnic background or his status during genocide.

**Appendix B: Example Interview Questions**

*Beginning each interview was a summary of the study with research intentions and researcher information. After age, occupation, and informant-identified background information was asked for.*

1. Understand the definition of ethnicity from the perspective of individual Rwandans.
  - a. Growing up, were you aware of ethnicity? Was it taught in school?
  - b. What does ethnicity mean to you? Could you define it?
  - c. Do you think your experience from 1959 through 1994 has shaped this idea of ethnicity? If so, how?
  - d. What about your experience post-1994? If so, how?
2. Explore the shifts in the meaning of 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa' over time.
  - a. What do you think it means to identify by 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa?'
3. Analyze the political and cultural implications these identities had (or have now) in the lives of Rwandans.
  - a. What do you think being 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa' means to the government?
  - b. What do you think it means in everyday life?
  - c. Do 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa' associated themselves in the same social circles?
  - d. How do you feel the idea of identifying as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa have shifted in your lifetime?
4. Explore the strength behind modern identifications as 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa' or Rwandan and how this fits in with society.
  - a. Are there still practices or traditions that are identified with these ethnic identities?
  - b. How strongly did you identify as 'Hutu, Tutsi, Twa' before the conflict began?
  - c. How strongly do you identify with your ethnicity now?
5. Identify positive and negative consequences and intentions of the *Ndi Umunyarwanda Programme* as it is used in the context of ethnicity in Rwanda.
  - a. How do you feel the conversation on ethnicity is today in Rwanda?
  - b. What are the positive and negative aspects of this dialogue?
  - c. Do you feel the *Ndi Umunyarwanda Programme* has had positive consequences?
  - d. Do you feel this program is negating ethnicity in any ways?
  - e. Have you heard the critique that Rwanda is negating ethnicity What is your response?