

Hidden Inequalities: Rwandan Female Politicians' Experiences of
Balancing Family and Political Responsibilities.

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Abstract

The number of women participating in Rwandan politics has significantly grown since the second half of 1994 (after the civil war and Tutsi genocide). Gradually, especially in parliament where women now compose 63.8%, this has attracted the attention of scholars and the international community. While Rwandan government and the international writers document Rwanda's relative progress on increasing and promoting women's participation in politics, the majority of academic work to date has investigated women's representative role and in most cases explored women in the legislature. Little or no academic work has focused on female politicians' experiences of balancing their traditional female responsibilities and the public (male-stream) roles they are now taking on.

Using semi-structured one-to-one interviews with female politicians in the cabinet, lower and upper chambers of parliament, local government and from women's major groups (umbrella and networks), this dissertation examines the women's narratives of their lived experiences of balancing their private and public roles, and what impact this has had on their lives and career paths. This thesis argues that despite the relevance of women's access to political posts/work, failure to tackle gender inequalities in all areas of socialisation reshape and reinforce patriarchy in significant ways – especially due to increased time and work penalty that appear not only detrimental to women's lives but also to the country's social-economic development. Change in these circumstances seems to require a cultural shift, almost as large as the cultural shift that brought women into politics. This thesis also argues that women's substantive representative role is better understood if the social-political contexts within which they live and work are considered. This study contributes new ways of understanding and theorising women's political participation in Rwanda (and in similar contexts) to policy makers and activists.

Dedication

To my late mother Esperance Kayitesi I dedicate this thesis.

Acknowledgements

To begin with, I would never have been able to finish this research without the guidance and tutorship of my supervisors Prof. Diane Richardson and Prof. Janice McLaughlin to whom I owe a lot of gratitude – there are no words enough to express my gratitude. I am sincerely grateful for their excellent guidance, focused teaching, caring, patience, and for providing me with an excellent study atmosphere.

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With God, all things are possible.

List of Acronyms

CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
EA:	Economic Affairs
ECOWAS:	Economic Community of West African States
EDPRS:	The Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
ES:	Executive Secretary
EU:	European Union
FFRP:	Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires
GBV:	Gender Based Violence
GMO:	Gender Monitoring Office
GNU:	Government of National Unity
GTM:	Gender Training Manual
HE:	His Excellence
IPU:	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LG:	Local Government
MIGEPROF:	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

MINALOC:	Ministry of Local Government
MoG:	Ministry of Gender
NA:	Not Applicable
NEPAD:	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGP:	National Gender Policy
NISR:	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NWC:	National Women Council
RAUW:	Rwanda Association of University Women
RPF:	Rwandese Patriotic Front
RWPF:	Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum
SA:	Social Affairs
UK:	United Kingdom
UN:	United Nations
UNCRWC:	United Nations Commission for Refuge Women and Children
UNDPI:	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA:	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, there has been a systematic and rapid increase in the number of women participating at various levels of Rwandan politics (Kantengwa 2010; Burnet 2011; Bauer 2012). For example, since 2003 Rwanda has had the highest number of women in parliament in the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU 2013), and a significant number at different levels of leadership (see Table 1.p.20). The Rwandan government's will to promote women has been seen as an important factor in this increase. This is illustrated through the adoption and enactment of different laws and regulations, in putting forward gender responseive policies and in creating organs specifically charged with gender equality and women's promotion¹ (see Appendix I). However, whilst it can be argued that the Rwandan government has made significant efforts to promote gender parity in political decision-making positions (Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; Bauer 2012), this thesis aims to explore how the benefits of women's participation in politics may be curtailed by how they have to balance the family and political roles.

The focus for this research is to examine to what extent women's participation in politics has changed social-political gender inequalities in the private and public spheres through interview study of women politicians themselves. I caution that this research does not aim to examine women's representational capacity as both representatives of women or in terms of transforming political processes. However, in Chapter Four I will describe how Rwandan women acceded to politics and briefly discuss the effect it has made on political processes for the purposes of contextual clarity and emphasis.

The research started with three main questions which were revised through analysis of the first six interviews:

- Does involvement in politics change gender roles across the private and public spheres?
- Do women politicians' experiences of balancing political and family roles vary by level of involvement in government?

¹ In this research, gender machineries is used to refer to government organs charged with gender equality, and /or women's empowerment.

- Is there cultural precedence for women's participation in politics for Rwandan future generations?

Although the above questions informed my research, the interviews gave rise to themes that were not explicitly incorporated in the questions. Thus, through analysis of the first six interviews I reviewed the questions as follows:

- Does involvement in politics change gender perceptions and roles across the private and public spheres?
- How are women politicians' lives impacted by the workplace context and culture?
- Do women politicians' experiences of balancing political and family roles vary due to motherhood responsibilities?

This chapter begins with a brief description and history of Rwanda to enable an understanding of the Rwandan approach to gender equality and women's empowerment today. Embedded in this history also, is a brief account of understandings of gendered roles in Rwandan tradition. This is followed by a short description of the thesis structure.

Geographical and Population Depiction

Rwanda is a small landlocked country situated in East Africa², bordering with Uganda in the north, Tanzania in the east, Burundi in the south and the democratic republic of Congo in the west (see Appendix II). Rwanda's size is 26,338 square kilometres, inhabited by a population of approximately 10,537,222 (2012 National Census). The same census report indicates that women compose 51.8% of the Rwandan population.³ Although Rwandans speak the same language, there are three official languages: a local language, *Kinyarwanda* that makes communication easy for all Rwandans, French and English. Rwandan citizens are called *Abanyarwanda* in general, but if reference is specifically made to women, they are referred to as *Abanyarwandakazi*.

² Rwanda is usually placed in Central or East Africa. In this research I decided to place Rwanda in the East African region following its current classification. Also, before Rwanda joined the East African region in 2009, some Rwandan scholars already designated it in EA (see Ntalindwa, 1999:14)

³ See Women account for the majority of the population of Rwanda, <http://statistics.gov.rw/publications/article/women-account-majority-rwandan-population>, accessed 20/03/2013.

Historical antecedents

Rwanda was first colonised by the Germans in 1899 to 1916 as part of the East African region (Prunier 1995; Ntalindwa 1999; Hintjens 2001). In 1924, the League of Nations handed Rwanda under Belgian rule, which ended with Rwandan independence in 1962. Some writers assert that pre-colonial Rwanda was a strong and developed state (Newbury 1988; African Rights 1995; Ntalindwa 1999; Sharlach 2007) composed of three ethnic groups (Tutsi, Hutu and Twa⁴) and ruled by a king from one Tutsi Clan.⁵ Historically, there are contested views about whether Rwandan ethnic groups were biologically or social-economically constructed (e.g. see Hintjens 1991; Ntalindwa 1999). Just as the formation of these groups is contested, there is also contestation about what exactly these groups refer to. Some scholars refer to them as clans, while others call them ethnic groups.

A considerable amount of literature emphasises that pre-colonial Rwanda was an organised state, with the three hierarchical but flexible groups of people sharing the same culture, language, and all living in the same territories (Omar 1995; Ntalindwa 1999; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). For instance, writing about the class-based evolutionary nature of these two groups, Omar (1995:10) claims:

When the first Europeans arrived a century ago, they found a true nation: the *Banyarwanda* people. The *Banyarwanda* were divided into three groups: *Hutu, Tutsi and Twa*. The three shared the same language, the same customs, the same political institutions, and the same territory. What made them separate was not that they were distinct "tribes", but that they were distinct categories within the same nation. [...] A hierarchical but nonetheless flexible and reciprocal political system was transformed into a rigid politicised caste structure.

Although there seems to be contested definitions of the three Rwandan ethnic groups, the majority of researchers argue that Hutu, Tutsi and Twa identities became rigid with the introduction of identity cards in 1933 where a Rwandan had to belong to one of the three groups. Despite the attempt to formalise Rwandan groups into Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, Hintjens (1999:253) argued that “when identity cards were introduced in 1933, this created related problems, since it was impossible to know for sure who belonged to which ‘racial’ group”. Two major reasons have been suggested as to why it is hard to

⁴ The Twa of Rwanda are classified as natives and pigmy people who traditionally lived as hunters and gatherers. According to Adekunle (2007) the Twa lagged behind the development of the country because they lived in forests. This chapter will not elaborate on Twa ethnic group due to its passive role in the social, economic and political spheres of the country.

⁵ See Government of Rwanda website, <http://www.gov.rw/History>, accessed on 5/11/2012.

physically draw a line between Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups: several researchers argue that in pre-colonial Rwanda, Tutsi and Hutu identity were fluid and it was possible to move from one to another depending on the number of cows accumulated (Kean 1995; Caplan 2012); and it is also argued that intermarriages made it even more difficult to differentiate some Hutu from Tutsi and vice versa. In fact, Rwandans who witnessed the genocide commonly believe that some Tutsis survived the genocide because they (ideologically) had Hutu features and also that some Hutu were killed because they had Tutsi features.

Historically, ethnicity in Rwanda was used politically to polarise ethnic divides that led to successive massacres, from the late 1950s, reaching a peak in 1994 when a genocide that claimed more than one million people in a period of 100 days took place (Human Rights Watch 1996). The ethnic hatred that played a part in this historic year in Rwanda appears to have been rooted, especially, since the colonial periods. Prunier (1995) and Buscaglia and Randell (2012) for example, argue that the Belgian colonial rule replaced traditional Rwandan barter trade systems with a cash-crop economy. They introduced harsh forced labour under the administration of the Tutsi monarchy and chiefs, which was viewed as exploitation and repression for the Hutu ethnic group. They argue, it is this brutal and exploitative administration that heightened ethnic divisions between the Tutsi and the Hutu. Also, Hinterjens (1999) asserts that instead of the Belgian colonial administrators being seen as agents of colonialism and its exploitative nature, rather the Hutu saw Tutsi administrators as the agents of their suffering. Des Forges (1999) observed that Belgian colonial administrators employed the mythology of superior race through Tutsi chiefs accompanied by segregation and suppression of the other two Rwandan ethnic groups. The Tutsi predominantly occupied leadership posts, controlled services such as education and administered work (Omar 1995; Human Rights Watch 1996; Sharlack 1999; Kimonyo 2000).

Additionally, an education paper by the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI) (2012)⁶, briefly describes the situation between 1959 when the Hutu Peasant Revolution took place and 1994 when the Rwandese Patriotic Front ended the genocide and overthrew the government. The report states that Belgian colonial administrators fell out with their Tutsi allies and that the periods between 1931- 1950s were time of power struggle between the Belgian authorities and the Rwandan

⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/education/rwandagenocide.shtml>, accessed January 2013)

authorities (Monarchy) and heightened ethnic tensions. Amidst ethnic discord and divisions, encouraged by the Belgian colonial masters and military, in 1959, Hutu elites led a rebellion and overthrew the Rwandan Monarchy leading to mass killing and an exodus of the Tutsi ethnic group into neighbouring countries (Prunier 1995; Hinterjens 1999; Kimonyo 2000). The UNDP report (2012) states that the time between 1959-1961 is reported to have been a period of violence and political upheavals where a large number of people (predominantly those labelled as Tutsi) were killed, while an estimated 120.000 (UN Id.) took refuge in the neighbouring countries to escape violence and death.

While many Rwandans, predominantly Tutsi were exiled, Rwanda received its independence in 1962. Several writers argue that post-independence regimes consolidated power on an ethnic ideology of segregation and divisionism (e.g. see Prunier 1995; Shyaka 2004; Caplan 2012). Concomitant to this view, the second republic's (1973-1994) president Juvenal Habyarimana, is reported to have continuously objected to Rwandan refugees' returning home. As illustrated by (UN Id.), the president alleged that the country was too small to accommodate Rwandan refugees if they returned home:

They (refugees) continued to call for the fulfilment of their international legal right to return to Rwanda, however, Juvenal Habyarimana, then president of Rwanda, took the position that population pressures were already too great, and economic opportunities too few to accommodate large numbers of Tutsi refugees. (UNDP 2012)⁷

While the two post-independence regimes (1962 – 1973 and 1973-1994) continuously objected to the return of refugees and gripped power on the basis of ethnicity and segregation, the Tutsi refugees carried out a series of scattered attacks from 1963 onwards, leading to massacres of civilian Tutsis living in Rwanda as “political scapegoats”. These killings were followed by other exoduses of Tutsi refugees (Prunier 1995; Des Forge 1999, Ogata, 2010). In her article exploring the linkage between the fragility of some African states and insecurity in the 1990s, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ogata (2010:184) mentioned that by the 1980s Rwandan Refugees living in Rwanda's neighbouring countries had amounted to 480.000, and that the ruling government continued to deny them the right to return to their home country.

⁷ This report was not paginated.

After thirty years of forced exile, on 1st October 1990, the Rwandan refugees' movement led by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) initiated a civil war. Throughout the civil war (1990-1994), it is commonly said that many Tutsi and a sizeable group of Hutu who were in opposition of the second republic government (1973-94) were imprisoned and/or killed (Ogata, 2010). In April 1994 a plane carrying the Rwandan and Burundian presidents was shot down leading to a hundred dark days where the then government moved from targeted killings to a nationwide hunting and killing of Tutsi, and Hutu who refused to be lured into and/or join the killing of Tutsi (Hinterjens 1999). In July 1994, with the RPF in power, researchers such as Ogata (2010) report that a new flux of about two million predominantly Hutu refugees left the country either in fear of revenge from Tutsi or of having to face justice due to the atrocities they had committed.

At the end of the genocide and war, in July 1994 a transitional government known as the Government of National Unity (GNU) was instituted and it lasted until 2003. This was a period of nation-building and reassurance of hope to the people that had been left devastated by the effects of political turmoil and ethnic divide. This may partly explain the Rwandan government's attempt to reduce ethnicity tensions by encouraging the idea of *Rwandanness* (Hogg 2009; Kayumba 2012), arguing that Rwandans should see and value themselves as Rwandans and not through an ethnic mirror. This is illustrated by laws and policies, as well as in political speeches, including when politicians meet with Rwandans in diaspora. For example, this is reflected in the following quote extracted from the Rwandan president, Paul Kagame's (2012)⁸ speech while meeting Rwandans living in Uganda:

There is no point in making distinctions between Rwandans based on their backgrounds or those in Rwanda(n) and Uganda. We are all the same and should work for our country and our common good. Good politics transcends ethnicity and borders, ... Rwandans should add value “Agaciro”⁹ wherever they are.

Rwandanness campaigns aim at reversing the historical ethnic tensions and divisions that characterised Rwandan community especially since the colonial era. As already discussed, before 1994 the only direct mechanism of differentiating who is Tutsi, Hutu

⁸ <http://www.gov.rw/President-Kagame-concludes-three-day-visit-to-Uganda>, accessed January/2013.

⁹ “*Agaciro*” is literally translated to mean “value”. However, in recent years *Agaciro* in Rwanda is used with a great importance to include a sense of “patriotism” where a Rwandan with *Agaciro* aims at nation-building. For example, when the West frozen aid to Rwanda in 2012 because of Rwandan government's alleged involvement in the conflicts in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Rwandan government initiated *Agaciro* Fund where Rwandans with an income were expected to give themselves *Agaciro* by voluntarily contributing to that fund.

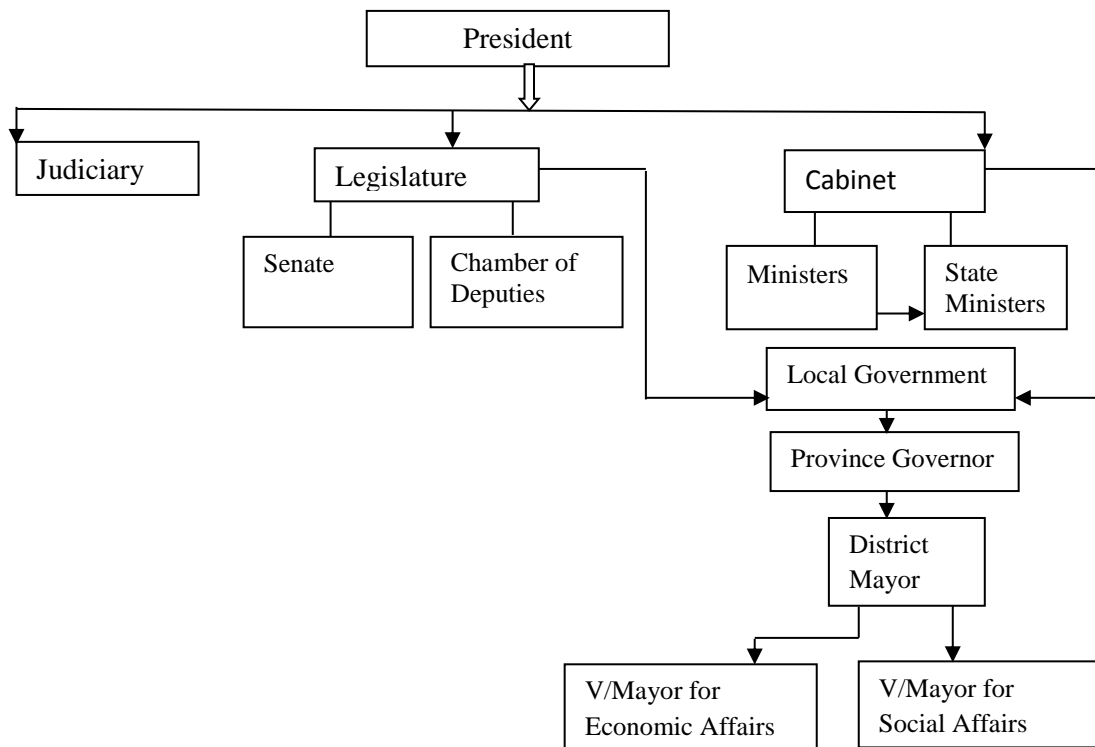
or Twa was attested through one's national identity card because physical differences between the Hutu and Tutsi (especially) were blurred. Today, while Rwandans, especially those living in the same community, can have an idea of who belongs to which ethnic group, the abrogation of listing ethnicity in the national identity cards has been succeeded by a single identity since 1995.¹⁰

Other attempts to foster a single identity (*Rwandanness*) are also illustrated by the 2003 Constitution's insistence on the "principles of national unity" in how the government should be composed (e.g. see Article 98). Rwanda is a republican state with a multi-parties system composed of ten political parties,¹¹ with RPF in power since 1994, officially elected for the first time in 2003 and then again in 2010. For the purpose of clarity, in the following paragraphs I will go on to introduce the relationships and composition of the government bodies under study (the cabinet, the two chambers of parliament, and local government). Rwandan government is composed of three branches which are constitutionally independent and these are the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The following chart indicates the three branches of government and will be followed by a detailed description of the Constitutional relationships between them. However, it should be noted that while the Judiciary is indicated on the chart, I have not elaborated on it because it is not part of this study.

¹⁰ A number of steps to reverse ethnic divide that had been formally instituted by the regimes before 1994 have been taken. For example, prior to the 1994 genocide, education and government policies were rationed according to ethnic percentages rather than merit. In contrast, today education in public schools is free for the first 9 years and the rest levels are accessed by merit through a national exam scheme.

¹¹ See Rwanda Political Parties' website: <http://www.forumfp.org.rw/?Organization-Structure>, January/13

Chart 1: Hierarchical organisational chart showing the three political levels studied in this thesis.



The Rwandan president is democratically elected every seven years and the 2003 Constitution (hereinafter Constitution) allows only two terms. S/he has great responsibility and powers provided for by Constitution, for example, s/he is the head of state, the head of cabinet, the guardian of the Constitution and is charged with guaranteeing national unity (Articles 97 and 98 of the Constitution).

The cabinet is charged with policy formulation and implementation. It is composed of ministers and state ministers, with a prime minister as the head of ministers and the president overseeing this organ. The president has powers to “determine” other members to the cabinet if s/he deems it necessary (Article 116 of the Constitution). The Constitution stipulates that both the cabinet and the two chambers of parliament (Deputies and Senators) have legislative powers while Article 97 endows “executive powers” to the President and the cabinet. Members of the cabinet are appointed by the President with recommendation from the Prime Minister based on proportional representation in the parliamentary Chamber of Deputies, and these are accountable to the President. S/he also has powers to appoint other competent people not belonging to any political parties.

The Constitution provides for two Chambers of Parliament: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies has two missions: legislative and government

oversight. It is composed of 80 members representing different political parties and other social categories such as women. The composition is as follows, 53 elected by universal suffrage through a secret ballot; 24 women are elected by specific councils in accordance with the administrative entities; 2 members elected by the National Youth Council; 1 member elected by the Federation of the Association of the Disabled.

The Senate was introduced and enshrined in the 2003 Constitution with a single term of eight years. It is composed of 26 members who are either elected or appointed by the president. Article 82 provides that at least 30% of the members must be women and also that former heads of state if they formally ask to become members must be part of the 26 senators. The 26 members are constituted as follows: 12 senators elected and representing provinces and the city of Kigali, 8 appointed by the president, 4 selected by the organisation of political parties, 1 representative of private universities and 1 representative of public universities and other institutions of high learning.

Articles 127 – 139 of the Constitution, detail the relationship between the executive and legislature. While the two government organs are independent from each other and while the two roles cannot be held at the same time, the cabinet members can sit in parliamentary debates if they so wish. Additionally, the cabinet is answerable to the president and the parliament. Although deputies can cast a vote of no confidence to a cabinet minister, the senator/s cannot initiate a motion of no confidence against a cabinet minister despite them being charged with overseeing the government. The president reserves the right to pass the vote of no confidence against the cabinet minister who received a vote of no confidence from the chamber of deputies. If the vote of no confidence is not passed by the president, the minister in question retains her/his duties and signatories to the motion cannot launch it again. The prime minister has a legal duty to inform both Chambers of parliament about government decisions. Important to note also is the fact that while the president can dissolve the Chamber of Deputies, in consultation with the prime minister, the presidents and speakers of both Chambers of parliament and the president of Supreme Court, he cannot dissolve the Senate.

The Rwandan government administrative structure is also divided in two levels, the central government, and the local government. The central government is generally charged with policy and coordination while the local government is the implementing structure of government policies and laws. Rwandan administrative structures are based on a hierarchical system. The country is divided into five provinces each divided into districts, sectors, cells and the *Umudugudu* (Village) level which is the smallest unit of

administration (Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC): Administrative units)¹². For the purposes of this research I will only describe the role of provinces and districts in order to clarify the political role of the mayors and vice mayors who were among those interviewed in this research. The provinces act as linkages between central government and decentralised organs. The key political figure at this level is the governor, who is also the chairperson of province coordination committee and s/he is also appointed by the president and approved by the Senate.

The district is designated as the “basic political-administrative unit of the country” (MINALOC Ibid.). The districts are headed by a mayor with the vice mayors in charge of economic affairs and social affairs under him/her. While the decentralised organs are directly answerable to the MINALOC, they can receive directives from other government bodies especially the executive and legislature because they are the coordinating and implementing organs of the central government. At different levels of politics, the Constitution requires at least 30% of women’s participation and, as I will discuss in the next Chapter, the Rwandan key policies such as the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and the National Gender Policy (NGP 2010) (see Appendix I) conditions implementers to mainstream gender in all programs and activities. However, to analyse the complexities involved in the processes aiming at achieving gender equality in Rwanda, it is first important to understand gender relations in general and the traditional status of Rwandan women and the effects of the genocide on women’s lives. In the following discussion I will highlight the historical traditional status of a woman in Rwanda and how women’s lives were impacted on by the historical social-political situations discussed above.

Gender Under Rwandan Tradition

In Africa, it does not matter whether a woman is a successful politician, possesses three Ph.Ds and runs the most successful business in town; if she has never married and/or is childless, she is perceived to be lacking in a fundamental way. Girl children are raised and socialised into this ideology and few ever question or challenge its basic tenets. (Tamale, 2004:20)

Buscaglia and Randell in their study detailing the legacy of colonialism in the promotion of women in Rwanda argues that women’s promotion as a concept was introduced for the first time in 1956 by Belgian colonial administrators with an aim “to

¹² <http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=450>, March/2013

enhance women's position in the society and to encourage what was supposed to be a more developed conception of femininity" (2012:69). These writers claim that the colonial women's promotion was based on a gendered division of labour, thus women's education was focused on educating women "fitting" for elite and male politicians but did not focus on women's rights to self-determination (this will be elaborated later in this chapter). In other words, this suggests that it is during this time that patriarchal ideology and gender inequalities were institutionalised, which in Buscaglia and Randell's (2012) view has influenced understandings of women's promotion in Rwanda. The gendered division of labour institutionalised during the colonial era continued to influence women's empowerment in Rwanda. For example, Newbury and Baldwin (2000a:3) in their analysis of the role of women's organisations in tackling gender issues in the aftermath of the Rwandan civil war and genocide in 1994, state that women's rights in Rwanda started to be visible by the late 1980s and early 1990s prompted by rural women's economic needs. During this time, they claim, the Rwandan government focused on women's promotion through specialised activities such as women's communal funds where women could access micro-credits to start small businesses.

Despite women's engagement in economic activities, however, in most African traditions (Tamale 2004; Cornwall 2005, Oldfields et al. 2008) and in Rwanda in particular (Human Rights Watch 1996; Hamilton 2000; Kantengwa 2010), a woman's place is primarily seen through gender roles associated with reproduction and domestic responsibilities. Differences between men and women have been based on differing responsibilities. In Rwandan tradition when a child is born its upbringing depends on whether it is a boy or a girl. For instance, children of different sexes are nurtured to assume feminine or masculine characteristics (Jefremovas 1991; Hogg 2010). Up to today, Rwandan women are under pressure to assume "female" roles and a feminine lifestyle (Hamilton 2000; Schindler 2008; Cofe 2010).

Gender relations in everyday Rwandan tradition can be observed in proverbs, everyday ways of life, and in the different roles played by women and men in the family and social relations generally (World Trade Press 2010)¹³. While men are expected to work to provide for the home, women are generally expected to maintain the household (and

¹³ World Trade Press, (01/01/2010), Rwanda Society and Culture Complete Report: An All – Inclusive Profile Combination All., World Press, Petaluma, ISBN: 9781607804208, www.WorldTradePress.com, accessed on October/2011

farm the land) and its members' health, both emotionally and physically (Jefremovas 1991, Schlyter and Chipeta 2009). In Rwanda specifically, this kind of situation is expressed by proverbs such as “*ukurusha umugore akarusha urugo*” or literally meaning that “the man with a better wife has a better home”, and “*umugore n'umutima w'urugo*”, meaning “a woman is the heart of the home”.

While the above proverbs might seem to depict a positive image of a woman in Rwanda, the same proverbs implicitly suggest that a woman's place is in the home, and appear to impose a moral duty on women to take full responsibility for maintaining the home. Writers corroborate a common belief among Rwandans that the contemporary women's political promotion builds on the Rwandan historical respect for women (Smith 2008; Powley 2009; Cofe 2010). Those who believe in this legacy cite the fact that in the pre-colonial era before the late 1880s, Queen mothers ruled with their sons. In his study “*Women in the World Historicity*”, Smith (2008: 122-30), for example, describes how Queen mothers¹⁴ in East Africa, including Rwanda, played a prominent role in decision-making processes: “In Rwanda the queen mother was also powerful and often central to her son's accession”. The respect accorded to Rwandan women was also noted by Powley (2009:8-11), when she quoted the Belgian colonial authority's Rwandan cultural assessment report which referred to Rwandan culture as respecting women generally: “One witnesses the great respect given to a woman, especially if she is the mother of a number of children”.

However, despite some women's influence during the pre-colonial era being perceived as a positive culture as regards women's decision-making powers, it was nevertheless based on patriarchal ideology. The fact that only sons inherited the Crown reflected the secondary status of women. The above quotes also imply that a woman's respect was conditional to her capacity to nature and nurture children. Several studies about Rwandan women and decision-making assert that women's views were traditionally passed through a male relative, especially their husbands (Jefremovas 1991; Powley 2009), which also reflects how women's involvement in public and family matters was discouraged and restricted. For instance, Powley (2009:11-12) critiqued the contemporary belief among some Rwandans who claim that in the pre-colonial period, Rwandan culture was traditionally good as regards gender relations:

Although Rwandan culture is sometimes celebrated as exceptional among African cultures for promoting women's influence in the public sphere, in many

¹⁴ In Rwanda women could not inherit the throne but the mother of the ruling King was very influential.

cases women were expected to defer to men or to wield influence indirectly through their husbands. Traditionally, women did not speak publicly, especially in the presence of men. A woman who dared challenge men in public was considered insolent.

The traditional values of masculinity and of patrilinearity kept women in the state of permanently assisted persons. The succession of family property was absolutely passed on to male children (Hamilton 2000; Brown and Uvuza 2006). This situation put women in a vulnerable state of dependence and often resulted in the underdevelopment of their capabilities. In a woman's education, emphasis was placed on the need to respect her husband, her father, and her brothers, and to be bound by their rules (Buscaglia and Randell 2012)¹⁵. Within the literature it has been argued that until 1994, traditionally a woman had to be under custody and protection of a male relative; her father, her husband or her brothers (Jefremovas 1991; Burnet 2008; Schindler 2008). It is generally believed that this patriarchal order still exists in most families, especially in rural Rwanda, where gendered cultural norms are still strong (Burnet 2012, Buscaglia and Randell 2012). The male lineage patriarchal ideology has influenced the family's perceptions and treatment accorded to girl-children. It is believed that one of the traditional ways in which a girl was disadvantaged emanated from her marital status, which positioned her as her husband's belonging. This made her foreign to both of her family affiliations, whether biological or marital. For example, in her article demonstrating women's role in reconstructing Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, Hamilton (2000) claims:

... traditional education for girls did not include formal schooling, but instead preparation for her as wife and mother. There was no incentive to educate a girl because the economic gains from her labour went to another family as soon as she married. (2000:6-7)

To emphasise her point, Hamilton (2000:7) quoted an interview with Harelimana, the then head of the legal affairs division in the Ministry of Gender and Women's Promotion; "In Rwandan culture, a girl's school is in the kitchen." This view is emphasised by a Rwandan proverb: "*umukobwa ni gira uve aha*" literally meaning "a

¹⁵ In their study aiming to "trace the genealogy of discourses and practices relating to the empowerment of women in Rwanda" Buscaglia and Randell (2012:1) concluded that Rwandans' understandings of women promotion is rooted in the colonial administrators institutionalising of patriarchal ideologies implemented through their policies of welfare for women in the 1950s. They argue that while men were educated and groomed for the public sphere, women were taught and socialised for the private sphere, fitting for mothering and wifehood.

girl is get ready to go”. In other words, while still a girl, Rwandan women were seen as being in transit to marriage and often regarded by her biological family as someone who should get ready to leave as soon as possible. However, in order to eradicate marrying-off girls at a young age, and for the promotion of girls’ education, among other factors, in 2001 a law to protect children’s rights was adopted. It provided harsher punishment and considered sexual relations with a girl under 18 years a crime. Marital age under law is 21, below which (18-20), permission must be sought¹⁶.

As in Hereliman’s view, it is a common belief that the traditional prime place for a Rwandan woman is in the kitchen to prepare her husband and other family member’s meals – one of the key components of the traditional obligations of marriage. Marriage constitutes a big part of a woman’s status in Rwandan culture. Getting married promotes *Umukobwa* (girl) into *Umugore* (woman). In Kinyarwanda *Umukobwa* refers to any unmarried female, and *Umugore* is used to refer to a woman who has ever been married. Socially, Rwandan women are restricted to the two categories and their attached status. Although single women can have children, this is socially scorned and such women are called names, the most common term used is *Fille-mere*, a French term to mean girl-mother.¹⁷ Although traditional perceptions of women are steadily changing as shown by factors such as the promotion of girls in education and in professional courses such as sciences, it is still common to hear people cautioning a single woman that a woman’s first qualification is a husband (*Umukobwa dipulome ya mbere n’umugabo*) as commonly cited in Kinyarwanda language.

Similarly, some studies in Africa also show that marriage and motherhood form the prime social status of a woman to the extent that being single may impede a woman’s other rights, such as political participation. In the neighbouring country Uganda, Ahikire (2004), illustrated that sometimes single female political candidates had to promise the electorates that they will get married as soon as they are elected to parliament (if unmarried), when questioned about their marriage status. In Malawi also, Kamlongera (2008:475) argued that being married contributes a lot to a woman’s political success. She suggests that this is because “most African traditions champion marriage over singledom...” This would appear to suggest that single women and/or women without children are considered unfit to lead, suggesting that women’s capacity

¹⁶ See Law No. 27/2001 Relating to Rights and Protection of the Child Against Violence.

¹⁷ Socially, *fille-mere*, a French term to mean girl-mother is used to refer to a woman who had child/ren outside marriage – socially the woman in question is considered ‘loose’ and immoral.

and ability are conditional to maternal experiences of managing marriage and childrearing responsibilities.

In her study exploring gender balance and governance in post-genocide Rwanda, Burnet (2008:25) argued that Rwandan culture submitted women to patriarchal rules. She referred to this as “Rwandan ideals of chastity and emotional reserve for “daughters and wives”. Such a woman might endure and submit to abuse; an art socially taught to most young girls from childhood (Jefremovas 1991; Human Rights Watch 1996; Powley 2009). Likewise, the traditional expression “*nuko ingo zubakwa*”, meaning “that is how homes/marriages survive”¹⁸ suggests that women are expected to endure hardships in marriage. The common understanding is that such slogans are used when a woman laments and/or seeks advice from her family and friends about marriage hardships or violence inflicted through marriage. This is significant because it reflects masculine power and gender hierarchies that may determine women’s understanding and level of responsiveness to their rights.

In most African societies, similar gender power relations exist. The Baganda of Uganda, for example, has an equivalent proverb suggesting that quarrelling with one’s husband is a taboo: “*Kaggwe ensonyi; ng’omukazi ayomba ne bba*” literally meaning “shameless as a woman quarrelling with her husband.”¹⁹ Women’s subordination to violence inflicted by their male partners is socially encouraged by several African traditions. Basing his study on Uganda, Wyrod (2008) contends that gendered traditional norms creates tensions as regards which women’s rights must be protected and promoted, and a Ugandan feminist Mbire-barungi (1999) argues that patriarchal norms (associated with marriage especially) clash with feminist norms of individual rights. For instance, in most African traditions (Mbire-Barungi 1999; Cornwall 2005), and in Rwanda, a wife’s failure to meet her husband’s expectations may lead to conflicts, violence, adultery on the side of the man, and/or wife dismissal. This kind of behaviour is traditionally tolerated as expressed in several Rwandan folktales and proverbs like “*amafuti y’umugabo nibwo buryo bwe*”, meaning “a man’s mistakes are his way of doing things”, and “*impfizi ntiyimirwa*” meaning “a bull cannot be stopped from going for any

¹⁸ While it is hard to find the real contextual meaning in English, it is the equivalent of “that’s life”. In other words, for a woman whose marriage is not working or who is enduring hardships (including violence) from her husband she is told to hold-on to the situation as almost all women are in the same situation. However, it should be noted that gender based violence, including beating is punishable by Law No 59/2008 of 10/09/2008 on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence.

¹⁹ I grew up in Uganda (Kampala) and studied Ganda Culture and language (Luganda). .

cow” – social justification for some men’s outside of marriage sexual behaviour on the one hand and on the other hand the traditional perceptions about women as sex objects. Following the UN Decade for Women which began in 1979 (Mexico City 1975; Copenhagen 1980; Nairobi, 1985; Beijing 1995), women’s rights have become more visible internationally. A significant body of feminist literature across regions illustrate that these conferences influenced many governments to integrate gender in their development programs (House-Midamba 1990; True 2003; 2005; Moser 2005; Walby 2005a; Ahikire 2008). In a change from earlier global women’s conferences, rights promotion at the Beijing Conference (1995) focused on gender rather than women (Moser 2005)²⁰. This shift was also emulated by the Rwandan government’s approach to women’s promotion. After the Beijing Conference (1995), the Rwandan government reformed its approach from a focus on women to focusing on gender and women’s empowerment. For example, this can be seen in the way the current Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion was restructured in 1997 from its original mandate as a Ministry of Women Affairs to a Ministry of Gender and Social Affairs,²¹ as illustrated by Powley and Pearson (2007:3) in their article about how women parliamentarians engaged their male colleagues in the fight against gender-based violence.

Recognizing that there could not be a sustainable improvement in the lives of women without a change in the relations between women and men, Rwanda shifted from a “women” approach to a “gender” approach to development in the post-conflict environment of the mid-1990s.

In recent years there have been steps taken in regard to gender equality especially in the areas of law and policy and the patriarchal boundary restrictions seem to have been loosening since 1994 (Burnet 2008; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Kantengwa 2010). For instance, gender hierarchies and roles are changing and most women have moved out of the private sphere in search of work at all levels (Burnet 2011). The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) report (2012)²² for instance, stated that 45.5% of the civil servants are women. However, before I go on to consider the current women’s political participation, in the following section, I will discuss Rwandan women in the aftermath of the genocide.

²⁰ See also, <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women/>, accessed, 15/03/2013

²¹ The Ministry has changed a few times and today it is referred to as The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF).

²² <http://statistics.gov.rw/publications/article/women-make-majority-among-civil-servants-rwandas-healthcare-industry>, 10/11/12

Women in the Aftermath of the Civil War and Genocide

In the aftermath of the war and genocide, the Rwandan government is believed by scholars (Burnet 2008, Kayumba 2010) and the international community to have embarked on eradication of all forms of discrimination including gender based discrimination. However, addressing gender inequalities generally and gender parity in political positions specifically appears to require governments to demonstrate and reaffirm political goodwill and commitment beyond legislation and numbers (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale, 2008). For instance, one of the major ways to foster gender equality emphasized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS),²³ is to address challenges of combining family duties, and political responsibilities, coupled with strategies to address women's low capacity and men's long presence in politics. This points to the need to address gender specific issues and perspectives that make the institutional working culture unfriendly for female politicians. In the West, feminist researchers (e.g. Phoenix and Woollett 1991; Richardson 1993; Tobias 1997; Knijn 2000; Craig 2007; 2009; Wharton 2012) have shown that some of the issues that affect women in the workplace (in this case political work) include working time, work schedule, maternity leave laws, work overload, and gendered stereotypes.

The aftermath of the genocide has been widely documented (e.g., see Nowrojee, et al. 1996; Fein 1999; Newbury and Baldwin 2000a; 2000b). No stone was left unturned, the infrastructure, the economy, the political structure, the cultural setup, the whole life of the country was destroyed. Such a situation ushered in a period of agony and suffering, more especially leaving behind a large number of widows and orphans and separated families. The widows and female orphans had no rights to property; most of them had not accessed education because traditionally they were perceived to depend on their male relatives or marital family, who largely saw them as foreigners (e.g. Cofé 2010). Melvern (2000:445), for example, described the aftermath of the genocide as:

There was no triumphant victory. The country had been ransacked. There was not a penny in the public coffers. There were no offices intact, no chairs, no desks, no paper, no telephones, nothing at all. ... Outside the capital, whole families and communities had been destroyed. Livestock had been killed and crops laid to waste. Everywhere there were ditches filled with rotting bodies. Rwanda was in a state of extreme shock, crippled to the point of catatonia. The rotting human remains that lay impiously scattered about the countryside, like

²³ ECOWAS Gender Development Center (2005), Prospective study on women's capacity building for regional integration, Executive summary.

debris after a great storm, and the haunted souls of those still breathing were apt symbols of this shattered nation. ... An estimated 250,000 women had been widowed. At least 100,000 children had been separated from their families, orphaned, lost, abducted or abandoned. ... An estimated 300,000 children were thought to have been killed... We will never know the number of victims in the genocide... the figure now generally accepted is 800,000.

As Melvern asserts above, there was no victor, the *Banyarwanda* in general had lost their heritage, but the women did not only lose relatives, and property, but their traditional protectors and providers – the men. Several researchers, such as Newbury and Baldwin (2000b) and Bruck and Schindler (2009), found that the early successive massacres (since the late 1950s), and the genocide mostly targeted men, thus leaving most women and girls widowed and/or orphaned. The war and genocide, for instance, is believed to have left behind a population composition of 70% women among which 34% were female headed house-holds (Human Rights Watch 1996; Hamilton 2000, Powley 2005). Although the genocide survivors suffered most²⁴ (Powley 2005; Bruck and Schindler 2009), all Rwandan women, whether survivors of the genocide, wives and relatives of genocide perpetrators, or the old case-log²⁵ Rwandan refugee returnees, encountered massive challenges and had to find ways of addressing them (Newbury and Baldwin 2001; Burnet 2008; Devlin and Elgie 2008). For example, Newbury and Baldwin (2000b:3) argue that “almost every Rwandan woman has a dramatic story – of hunger and deprivation, fear, flight, and loss of family and friends. The ubiquity and the depth of suffering are striking, even five years after the war and genocide.”

The misery, the physical and emotional suffering, and the need to survive and to support their families appear to have made most women resilient. As a result women rose up out of necessity to find survival for themselves, but also those who depended on them such as their surviving children, and other children and needy people in their custody as was emphasised by Hamilton (2000:1): “Today Rwandan Women are taking on new roles and responsibilities out of sheer necessity. Despite numerous challenges, the public space for women’s participation has actually expanded in the past five years.” Focusing on Rwanda, El-Bushra and Mukarubuga (1995) have argued that despite devastating effects on women, conflicts can provide change in gender relations which might

²⁴ For instance, Powley (2005:158) stated: “Women were targeted during the genocide on the basis not only of their ethnicity, but also of their gender: they were subjected to sexual assault and torture, including rape, forced incest and breast oblation. Women who survived the genocide witnessed unspeakable cruelty and lost husbands, children, relatives and communities.”

²⁵ In this research, the old case-log refugees refer to the Rwandan refugees who left the country until 1994 when the genocide and the war came to an end.

positively impact on women's capacity and self-esteem, but also women's public role and status. During the war and in the aftermath of war, El-Bushra and Mukarubuga (1995:20) claimed that women continued to search for and to provide solutions to their difficulties. They became autonomous and self-confident in "the process that they resolve never to slip back into the old ways, when they were beholden to men ..."

Reconstructing Rwanda in general and rebuilding lives specifically was a huge task to the newly formed transitional government, which had no resources to support such families. Rwandan women stepped out of the houses to search for work, sustain themselves and those who were under their care, and rebuild their communities; the government also tapped into their capabilities especially since in the aftermath of the genocide there was scarcity of labor (El-Bushra and Mukarubuga 1995; Hamilton 2000). The Rwandan government holds that, as a country with limited resources and lack of minerals, human resource development is a key factor to sustainable development. This has often been emphasized by Rwanda's president Paul Kagame. For example, in 2007 he asserted:

It is painfully evident that gender inequality constrains growth and poverty reduction. Frankly, Africa is missing out on productive potential of more than half its population. ... The situation in Rwanda is not unlike other African countries. Rwandan society has similarly been characterized by unequal social, economic, and political relations between men and women. But, fortunately, things are changing. During our struggle for a better Rwanda, we firmly believed in equity, equality and opportunities according to the capabilities of all Rwandans, women and men.²⁶

Rwandan government's commitment to women's empowerment was expressed through their continued inclusion of women in politics and this started before gender quotas were legalised in 2003. Rwanda's first parliament, for example, (transitional) in 1994 was a single chamber composed of 70 seats with 8 (10%) held by women. In January 1997, women's representation increased from 10% to 17.1% and in November 2000 it again rose to 25.7%.

In 2003, Rwandans underwent dramatic political changes that would impact on women's lives. A new Constitution was adopted and it provided for at least 30% of seats for women at all decision-making levels. It also provided for 24 women representative's seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In addition to the constitutional

²⁶ Speech by Paul Kagame at the International Conference on "Gender, Nation Building and the Role of Parliaments" Kigali, 22/02/2007

changes, the year 2003 marked the first democratic elections where Rwandans elected a president, eighty members of the Lower House (48% were women), and twenty-six members of the Upper House of Parliament.

In 2008, the Rwandan government broke the world record by being the first country ever to reach and to exceed gender parity when women acquired 56%²⁷ seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The provision of quotas alongside twenty-four women elected in reserved seats appears to be the major reason behind a large number of women in Rwanda's parliament's Chamber of Deputies. This reason can also be illustrated by the fact that women's participation is higher at this level than any other political levels under study. Table 1 below shows women's political participation in the cabinet, both houses of parliament and Kigali city district mayoral posts since Rwanda started democratic elections for parliament and local government in 2003 and in 2006 respectively. The statistics provided in this table was gathered from the National Gender Policy (NGP) (2010), the Inter-Parliamentary Union report (2013, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>), the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) website (<http://www.statistics.gov.rw>), the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) website (<http://www.gmo.gov.rw>), and Rwanda National Electoral Commission (NEC) website (<http://www.comelena.gov.rw>).

²⁷ In relation to the 2013 Rwandan Parliamentary Elections, James Munyaneza (19/09/2013) of AllAfrica.com reports: The just-concluded parliamentary elections have handed women an overwhelming majority in Rwanda's Parliament, an unprecedented 64 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. ...Besides the 24 exclusive women seats which were decided in Tuesday's indirect election, women also won 26 of the 53 openly competed for seats in Monday's general election as well as one of the two slots reserved for the youth in yesterday's poll", available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309190110.html>, accessed 20/September/2013

Table 1. Percentage of female politicians per political position under study since 2003 to 2013.

Year	Cabinet		Parliament		District	
	Ministers	State Ministers	Senators	Deputies	Vice mayors	Mayors
2003	18.2%	31.3%	30%	48.8%	NA	NA
2006	19.6%	36.8%	30%	48.8%	NA	3.3%
2008	NA	NA	38.5%	56.3%	NA	6.7%
2012	28.6	66.7	34.6	56.3	S.A 83.3%	9.7%
					E.A 16.7%	
2013	38%	37.5%	38.5%	63.8%	NA	NA

E.A: Economic Affairs

S.A: Social Affairs

NA: Not Available

However, despite the numbers being positive and progressive, and as emphasised by National Gender Policy (NGP 2010), women politicians appear to predominantly occupy secondary positions as state ministers or vice mayors. The gendered nature of their positions is also evidenced by the fact that women mayors are drastically fewer than men and as vice mayors, women are mostly in charge of social affairs while men are predominantly mayors or vice mayors in charge of economic affairs (see also NISR 2012; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). The NGP (2010:15) shows that women's participation in most decision-making areas is not equal or may also be based on gender categorisations of women and men:

In the area of decentralisation and community participation, gender inequality lies in the under-representation of women at different administrative levels. For example, at the district level women as Districts Mayors represent 6.7% and men 93.3%. Women as District Vice-Mayors in charge of social affairs represent 96.6% while men as Vice-Mayors in charge of economic affairs represent 86.6%.

Researchers have raised a number of factors linking Rwandan upheavals to women's promotion since 1994 (e.g. El-Bushra and Mukarubuga 1995; Schindler and Berlin

2008; Bruck and Schindler 2009; Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010). The underlying factors most cited by researchers are widowhood and/or single motherhood (women assumed traditionally 'male' roles, which to a large extent exposed women's capacity), war and conflicts within which women actively participated, the country's need of a labour force (Schindler and Berlin 2008; Bruck and Schindler 2009) and the country's politics of inclusion and *Rwandaness* (Hamilton 2000; Kayumba 2010).

Further, several researchers argue that it is easier to mobilise and involve women in decision-making in the aftermath of conflicts and war (Tamale 1999; Powley et al. 2003; Bauer 2012) than in stable countries (Tamale 1999; Jibrin 2004; Bauer 2012). Although in some countries women have been side-lined in political transition, Bauer (2012) argues that since the 1990s countries emerging out of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region²⁸, through the use of quotas and other affirmative actions, have progressively increased the number of women in political participation - more especially in parliament.

While such reasons may account for changes in women's lives and women's political participation in Rwanda, (El-Bushra and Mukarubuga 1995; Baines 2003; Schindler 2009), it has been argued also that Rwandan society is still managed under patriarchal ideology (Kantengwa 2010). For a similar case, though not related to post-conflict situations, in Malawi, Kamlongera (2010) described the multifaceted and multidimensional challenges that female politicians are faced with in the journey to equality. Female politicians may not only be charged with political work, but they are also expected to execute their family responsibilities; and, also high and above their male colleagues' political work, they are thought to be answerable to their fellow women's needs which also adds related pressure (see also Childs (2004) in the case of UK). In effect access to the public sphere, though positive, increases women's workload due to traditional divisions of labour.²⁹ This is the focus of this PhD which looks at the gendered circumstances that female politicians are faced with and how this situation affects their lives. It explores the contradictory nature of advocating and adding women

²⁸ The Great Lakes Region of African is explained by Akhavan (1996: 327) in footnote 13 as "The Great Lakes of Africa consists the countries bordering Lake Victoria, Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika, including Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire".

²⁹ My own experience and observations of women working in managerial and political roles supports feminist analyses of the cultural norms that shape women's citizenship and political participation (e.g. Tobias 1997; Ahikire 2004). What is clear is that improving access without also tackling the cultural filters through which gender is grounded, is insufficient to yield meaningful change in women's lived experience.

to politics without tackling the gendered nature of cultural and social-political settings in both the private and public spheres.

In Rwanda, and most neighbouring countries such as Uganda (Mbire-Barungi 1999) and Burundi (Falch 2010), traditionally a woman who is assertive, outspoken, and brave in the pursuit of her rights is socially considered to be, “shyless”, manly and as having no respect. In Kinyarwanda such a woman is referred to as *igishegabo* (manly-woman) or *umushizwisoni* (shyless/uncontrollable), and in Luganda she is referred to as *kyakurasajja* (manly-woman). Identifying her as such renders the woman in question to be regarded as obstreperous or disruptive. Such cultural-based stereotypes may influence women’s understanding of themselves and confidence. This partly explains why there is a need to understand female politicians’ lived experience in their own perspectives in order to theorise women’s political roles. Although, from 2003 to now there has been a systematic increase of research about women in Rwandan politics, especially the legislature, dominated by studies analysing women’s representative role in the Chamber of Deputies (Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; 2009; Burnet 2008; 2011; 2012; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Hogg 2009; Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010; Cofé 2012), there appears to be limited or no research as regards understanding the experiences of women politicians in Rwanda, which is the focus and rationale for this research.

Women’s promotion in political decision-making in the Great Lakes Region generally and in Rwanda in particular (Bauer 2012) has improved so fast, but the traditions that constrain women from full and free participation in the public sphere are still lagging behind. As in Rwanda, some researchers who study African female politicians’ performances seem not to analyse how such constraints may affect women’s performance and/or understanding of their rights (Mbire-Barungi 1999; Kamlongera 2010). For instance, literature on how the gender division of labour generally, and motherhood specifically, impact on gender equality and women’s political participation in Africa seems not to exist.

This research attempts to bridge the gap between existing research about women and politics in Rwanda. Most researchers, as I will discuss in the following Chapter, appear to not look into how gender relations (women’s lived experiences) intersect with women’s political work, and also they appear not to tap into the women in questions’ own perspectives of their experiences as women politicians. This further affects academic scholarly theorizing in such a way that women’s perspectives are not

conceptualized to address diversity and different contextual experiences that women face in their struggle for equality and for challenging gender. For example, research that studies how other women consider the impact of women's political participation, such as Burnet (2012), without also investigating the female politicians' perspectives might generate results reflecting the society's gendered biases and stereotypical views about women and politics. This research is the first of its kind that has linked Rwandan women's participation in politics with social-political gender norms and gender inequalities. In my pursuit to analyze this linkage I will examine how the respondents were balancing family and public roles.

Thesis Structure.

The thesis is composed of seven chapters with three data chapters (4-6). Chapter Two discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this research. It also provides the historical background to understandings associated with women's political participation in Rwanda. In doing this I explore both the local and international meanings of women's participation in politics, which I subsequently use to discuss the women's narratives about their experiences. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology and methods used to conduct this research and discuss the processes involved in analysing data. Chapter Four explores respondents' views about why women have managed to enter into politics in large numbers in Rwanda. It provides background information to the rest of the data chapters as regards the rationale behind women's understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment in Rwanda, and highlights some effects of women's participation in political levels under study.

Chapter Five examines the kind of responsibilities and duties that female politicians were engaged in in the private sphere and how that affected their lives, and career paths. This chapter explores respondents' views about the historical status of a Rwandan woman, and how such status impacts on women's lives in modern Rwanda. Chapter Six explores women's experiences of motherhood, care roles and politics. It also examines the links between women's experiences in the public domain and private domain as regards the interconnectedness of these spheres.

In Chapters Five and Six I also highlight women's experiences and understanding of gender equality at work. These chapters explore whether gender equality translates into an institutional culture that is suitable for both men and women, including working

experiences. The last chapter, Chapter Seven, summarises the key findings and possible implications of the findings for women's lives, career paths and, to some extent, the Rwandan approach to women's participation in politics. This chapter highlights theoretical and methodological challenges for further consideration in similar research studies in Rwanda.

I purposely separated motherhood and other family work in different chapters despite their close interconnectedness to illustrate that motherhood has similar but dramatic effects on female politicians' lives and career more than any other family responsibility. In Rwandan culture, motherhood is considered an important part of a woman's life and also considered an important aspect for Rwandan society (Hunt 1990; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). Thus, highlighting this social importance as regards gender equality might change the perceptions about gender and women's rights as regards politicising domestic work. It might also reinforce existing feminist research suggestions about theorising women's political participation in view of women's experiences rather than just their representational roles, this is because their gendered experiences is likely to highly impact on their performance – ideologically and practically.

CHAPTER TWO: Conceptualising Women's Political and Family Roles

Introduction

In this chapter I draw on literature in order to understand the women in this study's experiences of balancing political and family responsibilities. The chapter theorises and defines the major concepts that were used in this thesis including how gender equality is conceptualised under Rwandan gender policy. Understanding gender equality in the Rwandan policy perspective is crucial in analysing the interviewees' behaviour and understanding of gender equality, especially because these women were involved in policy making either directly as formal politicians or indirectly as women activists. There are two main sections in this chapter. The first section describes gender equality as a development goal for Rwandan government through different policies and laws. It explores the relationship between the Rwandan approach and the international gender and development approach; and how that relationship influences Rwandan's understanding of gender equality. Section two situates gender equality in wider understandings of women's rights. This includes drawing on literature from elsewhere in Africa, and studies conducted in the West. Due to the limitation of literature about work and family, and about women and politics beyond the parliament in Rwanda, I will draw on different sources of information such as commentaries, empirical research, public speeches, legal and policy documents, web based discussions (especially Rwanda Association of University Women website) and reports. .

Setting the Scene

Globally, women's political participation has been widely researched, with most scholars analysing this in relation to three main areas of representation: *descriptive* (Young 1990; Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Phillips 1995; Studlar & McAllister 2002; Childs 2004; Kittilson 2006; Dahlerup 2006; 2007, Bauer 2012), *substantive* (Thomas 1994; Wängnerud 2000; Grey 2002; Ross 2002; Childs 2004; 2006; Britton 2006; Celis, et al. 2008; Bauer 2012) and *symbolic* (Mansbridge 1999; Atkeson 2003; Child 2004; Lawless 2004; Verba et al. 2007; Karp & Banducci 2008; Koning 2009). In this study, I draw on the definitions of these concepts provided by Coffé (2012) in her investigation

of the conceptualization of female political representation as understood by female representatives in the Rwandan parliament. I draw primarily from Coffé because her concise and clear definitions are situated in the Rwandan context. Coffé (2012:286) defined the three forms of representation stating that *descriptive* representation “concentrates on the number of women in Parliament”; *substantive* representation “is preliminarily concerned with the effect female representation has on policy outcomes and political styles and cultures”; and *symbolic* representation refer to women parliamentarians as “role models for women in society, inspiring them to engage in political activity and discussion and serving to increase political trust”. She critiques most research on women’s political representation for studying each form of women’s representation in isolation while they are, in fact, interconnected.

Despite the relevance of studying the various forms of women’s representation, many researchers who focus on women’s political participation fail to examine the challenges that may affect their lives which, is the focus of this thesis. They also seem to assume that women who are elected to public office are automatically empowered to challenge the status quo, thus, they are studied in relation to their symbolic, descriptive or substantive roles.

Rwandan women’s political participation is theorised by researchers in two main ways. One camp studies women’s political participation in Rwanda to showcase good practices as regards women’s promotion (e.g. see Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; Pearson and Powley 2009; Uwineza and Pearson 2009; Kayumba 2010), while the second camp critiques Rwandan female politicians’ substantive representation (Longman 2006; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Burnet 2008; Hogg 2009). As an example of the second approach, Hogg (2009:34)³⁰ argues that women’s political participation is a political move to “exclude any form of political dissent or ethnic identification”, and appears to criticise women politicians for not challenging this ideology. In another example of research that analyses Rwandan women politicians’ substantive role, Burnet (2012) seems to understand urban and top female politicians experiences in a simplistic way when she asserts that Rwandan gender approach has “overturned” historical

³⁰ While Hogg’s (2009) research may be pertinent to studies about identity politics, her research, considering that she explored identity politics in Rwanda basing on female politicians substantive role, these women are assumed to be elite and opinion leaders in the Rwandan community. However, Hogg did not indicate whether she considered the women in question’s perspectives about whether they would wish to advance their ethnic identities rather than pursuing a gender agenda for Rwandan women who are poverty ridden.

patriarchal paradigm and female politicians are reaping a lot of benefits from political participation:

Additionally, the RPF's women-friendly policies overturned the colonial and postcolonial patriarchal gender paradigm, whereby husbands worked and made important decisions while wives managed the domestic sphere and remained financially dependent on men. Yet urban, elite women have reaped the greatest benefits from those changes, thanks to increased access to salaried jobs, including lucrative positions in the national legislature and ministries, and greater purchasing power (for items such as automobiles, clothing, and domestic services), whereas rural peasant women in elected positions in local government have seen their workload increase and their economic security undermined. (2012:191)

From the above quote, Burnet appears to analyse the patriarchal institution in a very simplistic and narrow way, as does most research about gender equality in Rwanda. As already discussed, research findings might be misleading especially if the phenomena is not based on the subjects of the research. In her research into cultural changes in gender roles as a result of gender quotas, it would have been significant, in some ways, if Burnet (2012) had explored the perspectives of women politicians themselves. Despite Burnet's (2012: 191) claim, women's economic autonomy in Rwanda has not resulted "in a gender revolution". Rather, changes in gender roles and gender relations more generally, will require a cultural shift as large as that which brought women into the workplace.

While there is wide research about Rwandan women politicians' achievements and their failures as regards influencing political processes, there is hardly any research investigating women politicians' lives from their own perspectives. It is important to understand and theorise women's perspectives about their experiences of balancing political work and family responsibilities as this will not only illustrate possible linkage between women's participation in politics and gender equality, but is also significant in understanding women's perceptions of gender equality and how this influences their behaviour (see Coffé 2012). In this research I explore the cultural and socio-political norms and practices that impact on female politicians' lives and career development. Based on interviews with women politicians at different levels, this PhD examines their perceptions and experiences of balancing private responsibilities and public work and how that impacts on their lives

Employing one-to-one interviews, I analysed the interviews in order to understand the women's experiences, whether they face gender inequalities, and other gendered

obstacles such as capacity or expertise, what impact this may have on their lives, and if these experiences influence their understanding. With a sample of fourteen women from both houses of parliament, Coffé (2012:294) concludes that it is crucial to understand female politicians' perspectives on their representative role as politicians because this is linked to "the way they behave". While my research is not focused on female politicians' understanding of their representative role as in Coffé's study, the idea of studying women's lives from their own narratives is crucial to this thesis.

Of the three forms of representation, this research is influenced by an understanding of descriptive representation advanced by its advocates such as Young (1990) and Dahlerup (2006; 2010). These researchers assert that women's political participation is crucial for democratic governance and gender justice, specifically equality of access for female and male citizens. Dahlerup (2010) claims that while it is important for women to represent women, they should also be free to govern and legislate the way they want without being pressured to represent other women or advance gender equality. She argues for example: "we cannot judge women politicians solely on their capacity to radically transform the society as this is a goal many of them may not even share" (Dahlerup 2010:18). While this thesis does not question the relevance of women politicians' representative role, it explores how women politicians in Rwanda experience political participation as a citizenry right that men and women should equally benefit from. I question whether the Rwandan government's gender equality approach has transformed gender inequalities through an analysis of women politicians' views and experiences.

Many scholars argue that the term "woman" has no universal meaning and have suggested that women have different needs depending on race, region, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and location, among other factors (Young 1990; Richardson 1993; Phillips 1995; Hirschmann 1996; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Yuval-Davis 2005). Similarly, Rwanda has diverse and multi-faced social-economic and political categories that might impact on women differently. For example, even among female politicians, women's experiences and needs might be influenced by, generational differences, ethnicity, economic status, education level, and whether they are urban or rural. As Hirschmann (1996:63) contends, as regards equality between men and women, it is not enough to add women to decision-making, it also requires deconstructing the "socioeconomic model within which they seek both to work and to maintain their personal lives". Such scholars advance the recognition of gender differences and

diversity as a prerequisite for gender equality and for the intersectionality of difference in the process of equality between men and women. Yuval–Davis (1997) for example, claims that difference should be addressed continuously throughout the gender mainstreaming processes rather than visioning it as a stand-alone project.

Despite the wide consensus among feminist researchers about women’s diversity and differences (e.g. Evans 1996; Tobias 1997; McLaughlin 2003), several feminist researchers also contend that women have commonality in relation to gender relations and women’s rights (Morgan 1984; Tobias 1997; Okin 1998; Dietz 2003; Jayal 2003; 2011) and that there is good reason to utilise the category “woman” in order to have grounds for activism. In her work aiming to bridge feminist movements in the United States of America (USA), Tobias (1997) claims that women in most societies share subordination to men, which makes the concept “women” a social category whose issues should be politicised and contextually addressed. Tobias (1997:xiii) strongly believes that the distinct issues that affect different women exhibit different dimensions of the same patriarchy rather than an issue of categorisations among the social category “woman”. For example, in her preface (1997:xiii) she argues that feminist critiques of different issues affecting women are “just part of the process of extending insights and connections previously overlooked” rather than divisions within feminism.

In the African context, Tamale (2004) in her study entitled “*Gender Trauma in Africa: Enhancing Women’s Links to Resources*”, although recognising the importance of difference, concluded:

...more important, is that regardless of the differences that may exist between and within African women, all are affected by and are vulnerable to the conceptual and functional space that they occupy in the domestic sphere. ... the term is used *politically* to call attention to the common oppression that African women endure by virtue of their simple membership to the social group called “women”.

The application of difference among women in the context of this thesis raises two major questions: how and which women’s differences should be incorporated in the wider struggle for gender equality? And, in what social-political and economic playing fields should difference be emphasised or played down? In line with Tamale’s approach, despite the differences that may exist among Rwandan women, this study employs the concept of “women” as a social category with a reflection on distinct issues that may affect the respondents differently. This is not to suggest that there may not be different categories of women that require special attention. For example, in Rwanda it

is commonly believed that majority of the Twa³¹ group are lagging behind development processes in comparison to the Tutsi and Hutu (see Thomson, 2009). However, the subjects of my research are women in a relatively similar context because they all hold a similar social-economic and political status. Whilst they have some unique individual or collective challenges depending on, for instance their political experience, women in a similar situation across different levels of politics may face the same challenges. For example, women with young children across different political levels in this study faced similar challenges that were not experienced by their childless colleagues within the same level of politics.

In the wider struggle for women's rights in Rwanda, several authors emphasise that Rwandan female politicians work in a spirit of sisterhood and in partnership with other women's organisations to foster women's rights (Hamilton, 2000; Pearson and Powley 2008; Kayumba 2010; Bauer 2012)³². These researchers argue that Rwandan women's universal approach to womanhood has enabled them to establish a strong collaboration between female politicians and other women's groups, including rural women through the National Women Councils (NWC) structure, and has also allowed women to form caucuses and fora across ethnic differences including for example, the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum (RWPF) also known as *Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires* (FFRP).

Gender in Rwandan Policy

The establishment of the GNU after the war and genocide (see Chapter One) ushered in a period of politics of inclusion of all Rwandan people, including gender equality (NGP 2010)³³. The commitment to gender equality in Rwanda is manifested, for example, by the 2003 Rwandan Constitution which has a number of articles in reference to gender equality, the existing gender machineries charged with gender equality and women's

³¹ See Thompson for a detailed explanation about the general Rwandan demography and uniqueness of Twa people.

³² For the context of Rwanda, a country where women's promotion is believed to still be young and largely influenced by the global developmental approach to gender equality, rather than women's grass-root movements and gender and feminist theories, it is not clear how activists can advance the concept of difference.

³³ It should be noted that the first version of the NGP was adopted in 2004.

empowerment (see Appendix I), and leadership political speeches such as the following speech by the Rwandan president Paul Kagame³⁴:

Another example of building a shared leadership in our country is demonstrated by the impact of the 2003 Rwandan Constitution that retained the core values of political inclusiveness.

Gender is integrated in the country's basic development documents such as Vision 2020, which outlines Rwanda's long-term development goals, and the EDPRS which is the mid-term strategy document that guides the country's Vision 2020 implementation for the years 2013-2018. In these documents gender is categorised as a cross-cutting issue that must be mainstreamed in all sectors (e.g. finance, justice, foreign affairs, agriculture, etc.). While this section will not detail the status of gender equality in all the country's policies, emphasis will be put on the NGP (2010) and the Gender Training Module (GTM) (2011) as key conceptual documents that define and "provide a framework for promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women" in Rwanda (Abbott and Rucogoza 2011:12).

The Rwandan government's policy on gender illustrates that gender equality was adopted to foster social justice and principles of non-discrimination. For example, the NGP (2010) states that Rwanda's gender mission is based on the government's general commitment to good governance and social justice:

The national gender policy is in line with Vision 2020 in terms of creating an environment conducive to the promotion of social security, democratic principles of governance, and an all-inclusive social and economic system that involves effective participation of all social groups within the population. (2010:13)

However, despite such commitments, gender inequalities still exist. For example, although there are positive gender laws and policies in Rwanda, they exist alongside some that reinforce gender hierarchies. At the time of this research, most family issues were still codified as "private" and discriminatory laws still existed and were enforced by some authorities. For instance, the Family Code (under review) explicitly provided for the husband's supremacy over his wife: "the man is the head of the family and his opinion must prevail" (Article 206). In the Kinyarwanda version of the law (original version) the word "Head" is referred to as "*Umutware*" translated to mean master or

³⁴ Paul Kagame, 20/03/09, Keynote speech at the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Promise of Leadership Dialogue, <http://www.presidency.gov.rw/speeches/169-20-march-2009>, February/2012.

boss. Traditionally, the humble way for a wife to refer to her husband relates to mastership. Additionally Article 83 of this law confines a woman to her husband's domicile.

Although the NGP (2010) does not define gender equality, it states that gender inequality results from the patriarchal structure that accorded men supremacy over women in all aspects of life "The issue of gender inequality is embedded in patriarchy as a system that accords more powers to men than women. Thus, boys are attributed more value than girls" (2010:8). Patriarchy, although not defined by NGP is defined by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion's (MIGEPROF) Gender Training Module (2011) as the "Systemic societal structures that institutionalize male physical, social and economic power over women. [...]. These structures work to the benefit of men by constraining women's life choices and chances."

Similarly, feminist scholars such as Tobias (1997:3) define patriarchy as "a state whose ethos reflects the characteristic of masculine gender". In this research, masculinity, which is used interchangeably with the term "Malestream" (Charles 2008:40), is used to mean aspects of the society that reflect the male model of life and subjects women to gendered biases and inequalities. These beliefs and practices may be social-cultural, economical or political, practiced in the private and public spheres of Rwanda. In order to analyse the Rwandan government's approach to gender equality as regards equal political participation, it is crucial to understand how gender equality is defined and applied as a development policy.

In their study, *Building Rwanda: A Struggle Men Cannot Do Alone*, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (UNCRWC) (2000) illustrated that when gender equality campaigns started in Rwanda in the second half of the 1990s, there was resistance to the term "gender equality" and as a result women activists decided to use the model of "complementarity"³⁵ of sexes to curtail resistance. The publication quoted a UN gender focal point officer, Kayisire Letitia:

In 1995-1996, the word "gender" meant [to men], "Ah, you want to take our place." We needed to find other ways to say it. So we used the word *ukuzuzanya*, which means "complementarity," rather than *uburinganire* or "equality." (UNCRWC 2000:10)

³⁵ This study did not inquire on whether in the Rwandan context the origin of the concept "complementarity" emanates from scientific definitions (e.g. see Evans 1996) or from the Rwandan traditional gender roles of men and women as complementary (Ubwuzuzanye).

Similarly, in a study exploring how indigenous Rwandan culture impacts the numbers of women participating in Rwandan politics, Pearson and Uwineza (2009)³⁶ found that in Rwanda gender equality understandings were based on the concept of complementarity (as understood from its vernacular translation “*ubwuzuzanye*”) rather than equality between men and women. In this study she stated that:

Rwandan cultural understandings of gender have historically revolved around division of labour rather than equality between the sexes. [...] Despite the orientation of gender relations in Rwanda toward complementarity rather than equality, tension remains between those aspects of Rwandan culture that promote and those that undermine women’s worth. (2009:9)

Ultimately, this approach may allow women to access some political posts whilst maintaining the cultural and socio-political underlying factors behind gender inequalities. Thus, research analysis suggests that gender equality must transcend formal equality of numbers to concomitantly address perspectives particular to women and men. For example, it is significant to concurrently address issues that inhibit women’s equal participation in politics while also addressing issues that prohibit men’s equal participation in domestic work. Notwithstanding the significance of gender complementarity in equality advocacy, some feminist researchers in the West (see Evans 1996; Tobias 1997; Lister 2003), while recognising the role of complementarity and difference for gender equality, caution about slipping back into gender categories. For instance Lister (2000:37) argues that: “The challenge is to pursue the project without slipping back into a false universalism within the gender categories and to maintain truly differentiated analysis which does not degenerate into tokenism”. Other researchers such as, for example, Evans (1996) have criticised complementarity for perpetuating patriarchy and failing to liberate women from oppression and inequality. She argues that despite cultural feminists’ emphasis on culture as regards advancing complementarity and women’s special characters, the approach is problematic because of two major reasons: Firstly “it faces the danger that female virtue can be used against women, and has been.” Secondly, “it ignores difference among groups of women, or is unable to address them adequately” (Evans 1996:78).

Importantly, complementarity as applied in Rwanda, appears to be limited to women’s access to work but not transformation in gender hierarchies and relations. As discussed

³⁶ Due to limited literature on Rwandan indigenous culture, Pearson and Uwineza based their research on interviews with Rwanda history and culture scholars, elders and ordinary citizens and women policy makers (2009:7).

in Chapter One, Buscaglia and Randell (2012) date this conception of gender equality in Rwanda to the colonial era where a binary between the private and public spheres was institutionalised. They claimed that while men had the opportunity to be educated to become leaders, and were oriented in professional courses such as medicine, until the 1990s education for women was mostly oriented towards non-professional courses such as primary school teaching and nursing. Buscaglia and Radell (2012) explain that when women accessed paid work, it was for the purposes of complementing men's managerial work and/ or teaching other women homely skills. Similar to Buscaglia and Randell (2012), an earlier study conducted by Hunt (1990) described how the Belgian colonial policies systematically confined women in Belgian Africa to gendered roles of "proper" wife and mother in order to complement the male "*évolué*" (elite):

According to the mission guidelines for a program of social assistance for women, workshops and house visits would be organised to teach the wives of *évolué* domestic skills [...]. Pleasing husbands was one of the reproductive labour skills advanced by the program. ... Teaching women domestic tasks would give wives education "parallel" to their husbands. (Hunt 1990: 454)

While there appears not to be literature on gender relations in Rwandan society before colonialism, it suffices to note that the theorisation and institutionalisation of the binary roles of men and women that were imposed and inculcated by the Belgian system of colonial administration shaped gender relations, hierarchies, and power in the Rwandan community. Hunt (1990) went on to detail ways, in which female domesticity was instilled in Belgian Africa. Note also that she mentions how men were lured into disciplining their wives if they did not conform to the set standards of "good womanhood":

House visits, contests and ceremonies, sewing, housekeeping, motherhood classes, and meetings to solicit the cooperation of husbands in disciplining wives were interlocking elements in the Belgian colonial project to refashion gender roles and instil a Western family ideology.... (1990:469)

This suggests that men were given material (through paid work) and moral powers (as heads) over their wives which was especially mirrored through gender divisions of labour, labour that ideologically appears to have taken male and female specialised features in Rwandan society (Hunt 19990; Buscaglia and Randell 2012; Herndon and Randell 2013). While the idea of complementarity during the colonial era worsened the binary between the private and public spheres and confined Rwandan women to the private, feminist approaches to complementarity generally aimed to open the door for

women's public engagement. For example, complementarity of men and women is reflected in ideas that foster the belief in women's special qualities (Dahlerup 2010; Wilber 2011), such as honesty and commitment to work, and interests such as fostering social issues, as the basis for political participation (e.g. see Evans 1996; Phillips 2005). Likewise, in contemporary Rwanda, as UNCRWC (2000) and Powley (2009) emphasised (earlier quotes), gender equality is commonly understood in terms of women and men having different social capabilities that have to fulfil or complement each other³⁷ in the country's development.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that assumptions about "special" characteristics may add another burden to women's work if not advanced concurrently with the argument for political citizenship. While both male and female politicians may be accountable to their constituents, coupled with their family work women are also believed to be accountable to women specifically. This was found to be the case in Rwanda (Burnet 2011), however, to be clear, this argument does not aim to negate the significance of women's representation. Rather, it is to point out that in the "Malestream" workplace of politics, such expectations can lead to an increased workload for female politicians in comparison to their male counterparts, which may not only jeopardise gender equality but also may make women more fatigued and under stress.

The other challenge with advancing women's "special" characteristics, advanced by feminists such as Hirsch and Keller (1990), relates to the perpetuation of gender roles and stereotypes where women's education and work might be assimilated to gender roles. This argument was discussed earlier in relation to how historically Rwandan women's education was confined to gender roles (Buscaglia and Randell 2012), which they claim has continued consequences today and is reflected in the political posts that most women hold. It is this contradictory nature of gender equality in Rwanda (that adds women to the public sphere, but also places social expectations on them to maintain gender roles), largely ushered in by the era of women's promotion since colonial times (Buscaglia and Randell 2012), that influenced this study about how such a balance affects women politicians' lives.

³⁷ As a civil servant in the MIGEPROF (2000-2005) was part of the national gender training team involved in nationwide gender awareness and training of trainer's workshops at different levels. In these training workshops, the trainers always stressed complementarity (commonly known as *ubwuzuzanye* in *Kinyarwanda* Language) of men and women as the key aim of gender and development. Such awareness campaigns influenced a general understanding and policy approach that appear not to yield strategic actions towards substantive gender equality and gender transformation.

In the United Kingdom, Walby (1990) argued that progress toward women's rights should be assessed along forms and degrees of patriarchy. With this argument Walby appeared to provide a clear way forward to progressive processes of gender equality without denying the steps taken or gains made. She said:

I want to distinguish conceptually between degrees and forms of patriarchy. The former refers to the intensity of the oppression of women and the latter the different shapes this takes. (Walby 1990: 92)

This suggests that while we should appraise the achievements, for example the achievements registered by Rwandan women politicians in representing women's interests (Powley, 2008; 2009; Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010; Bauer 2012), as Walby suggests it is also important to draw attention to the need to continuously identify different forms and degrees of patriarchy. In line with this research, either those who uphold Rwandan women's achievements, or those critiquing their substantive representation, fail to investigate how patriarchal ideology and practices impact on these women's lives, which may in turn hamper gender equality.

Similarly, a number of African scholars argue that in most African countries women politicians and activists have been indoctrinated into a gender approach that does not challenge gendered hierarchies that continue to submit women under patriarchal ideologies (e.g. see, Tamale 1999; 2000; Lewis 2001). For instance, Tamale's (1999) book "*When Hens Begin To Crow*" unveils the strength of social-cultural impediments to gender equality. In her study, based on Ugandan women parliamentarians' experiences, she argues that despite women accessing politics through affirmative action, their working environment was hostile due to the prevailing understanding that women are not meant to be politicians. Tamale (1999:1), explains that the title of her book was adopted from one female politician's experience; she was howled at by a man during her campaigns for parliamentary election in 1996 in the *Luganda* language, "*Wali owulide ensera ekokolima?*" meaning, "Have you ever heard a hen crow?". In Rwanda too, a similar proverb exists, "*nta nkokokazi ibika aho isake iri*", which is translated, "a hen cannot crow in the presence of a rooster". In Rwanda, whilst women have accessed political office and are making strong strides as regards influencing policy and development activities for other women (e.g Powley 2005; Bauer 2012), in the data chapters, I will explore women's narratives to find out how their lives have been impacted by their political work, and how their experiences inform and influence

their work. In the following section, I will go on to discuss the Rwandan government's approach to gender equality as a development goal.

Gender mainstreaming

The NGP (2010) emphasises the promotion of gender equality and equity in Rwanda by mainstreaming gender concerns in all sectors of the country's development programs (NGP 2010:20). Gender mainstreaming is defined in the GTM (2011:8) as:

The process of ensuring that women and men have equal access to and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making, at all stages of development process, projects, programs or policy.

Apart from the definition of gender mainstreaming, there appeared to be no tool that elaborated on how to mainstream gender in development and different area programs³⁸. Also, as emphasised by different assessment reports and the NGP (2010) specifically, there seemed to be lack of gender and women's rights skills to effectively engender policies and implementation processes. Earlier in this chapter I discussed how "complementarity" as a concept was introduced to curb resistance to gender equality and that its introduction limited understandings of gender equality. In the following quote this idea is reinforced but also helps to explain the persistent hostility to women's rights:

It goes without saying that misinterpretation of the notion of gender has made it synonymous to women's business, which developed a sort of silent resistance in a significant number of men and women. This has contributed, among other reasons, to limited efforts for gender mainstreaming. (NGP 2010:14)

Several researchers have suggested ways of gendering the mainstream body politic (Verloo 2001; Rees 2003; Geisler et al. 2004; Walby 2005a; 2005b; Cornwall et al. 2007) for gender equality. For example, discussing the development of gender mainstreaming in the EU, Woodward (2004) as quoted in Walby (2005b:334) suggested three "velvet triangle" areas where expertise for gender mainstreaming can be most effective: "feminist bureaucrats, trusted academics, and organised voices in the women's movement". Although the Rwandan government has identified gender

³⁸ While the responsibility for gender mainstreaming appears to rest on individual sector organs, it is done with an assumption that all sectors will have the expertise and will to engender their policies and activities. On one hand, conceiving gender as a cross-cutting issue is significant because it makes gender equality an obligation for all rather than just the gender machineries. However, the lack of skills and/or will to integrate gender in a practical way may mean that gender equality will remain rhetoric.

mainstreaming as a process of integrating gender in all sectors and programs, neither the NGP (2010) nor GTM (2011) elaborates on what the process of mainstreaming gender will entail. Instead, several of the Rwandan government's development documents have a sentence about gender being a "cross-cutting issue" (e.g. see NGP 2010:10). This understanding and categorisation of gender issues and perspectives has been challenged by researchers in Africa. For example, Ahikire (2008:30) argued that in Uganda, positioning gender mainstreaming as a "cross-cutting" issue has limited its meaning to a "rhetoric level, hanging on that one sentence usually appended onto policy statements". In Rwanda too, despite serving as a "reminder" sign, it does not mean that actors understand and/or have the will to mainstream gender.

While today Rwandan society generally understands that women can lead, and accords women politicians respect as argued by some researchers (e.g. see Devlin and Elgie 2008; Brunet 2011), cultural norms of maleness and womanhood have changed insignificantly, suggesting that gender equality is narrowly interpreted. According to Walby (2005b), there are different ways to define gender mainstreaming depending on gender equality models. She states that there are three major models of gender equality advanced by feminist research: "models based on sameness (equal opportunities, or equal treatment), on difference (special programmes) and on transformation" (Walby 2005b:325-6). She goes on to mention that Booth and Bennet (2000) claim that the three models can complement, rather than exclude or contradict each other, thus, having a "trilogy" relationship. In other words, Walby suggests that the three models work simultaneously to bring about gender equality not only between women and men, but also within the same category by addressing different needs of actors and beneficiaries. Working with Walby's "trilogy" model, gender mainstreaming that does not work towards transforming patriarchal ideologies may not bring about meaningful equality. The Rwandan approach to gender equality appears to apply the equal opportunities aspect of gender equality (for instance use of gender quotas) in politics but fails to address difference and transformation in a practical way. This suggests that it is lacking in terms of articulating the underlying factors behind gender inequalities due to a failure to address the root causes embedded in cultural and social-political norms which affect men and women's lives differently.

In other places gender mainstreaming has been defined in a broader sense to include a wider spectrum of gender equality elements. For example, the European Commission (2008) defined gender mainstreaming as a process that not only adds gender

perspectives to the existing order but also deconstructs and reconstructs the existing order in order to incorporate gender equality perspectives:

The (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policy making. (2008:10)

This definition, as also argued by Walby (2005b), implies that gender equality requires going beyond equal opportunities to a consideration of gender differences and transformation. However, other researchers caution that going into deep differences (among women) may jeopardise the focus on major gender issues and perspectives that affect women generally in a certain community. For example, Woodward (2005) argues that resources and competition among different forms of inequality may negatively affect gender mainstreaming. And, for young democracies coupled with women's movements that are still young this might be a challenge if not accompanied by sufficient gender analysis skills and feminist approaches (discussed later in this chapter) as pertains to the case in Rwanda. Regrettably, women's promotion is largely perceived as women's responsibility, yet women might be struggling to grapple with political work, coupled with other challenges, as argued by Powley (2005:161):

These women carry a double burden, as they must find ways to insert a gender perspective into a new range of issues—foreign affairs, for example—and yet remain loyal to their constituency of women in a country where the basic development needs are so great and women still lag behind men in terms of rights, status, and access to resources and education.

The transformational potential of gender mainstreaming is not currently included in the (limited) Rwandan definition of gender mainstreaming and this may impede understanding of social-cultural obstacles to women's free and equal participation in politics. Some feminists argue that gender differences are determined and ingrained in cultural beliefs or myths (Cornwall 2007; Kamlongera 2008; Wharton, 2011). For instance, Kamlongera (2008:749) has argued:

Simply incorporating women into politics will not guarantee women's empowerment. Women face various challenges in order to stay in politics, and additional challenges if they seek to play a meaningful role by representing women's gendered-specific interests.

Similarly, Walby (2005b:322-23) argues that as gender mainstreaming is sometimes contested, it needs "negotiations" rather than simple adaptation of new policies because

gender norms compete with the institutional (already set) culture. Promoting gender equality in the areas of politics and legislation as well as in society as a whole appears to be a long and complex process. According to Rees (1998), gender equality should lead to transformation of gender relations. In this she suggests that gender mainstreaming challenges the model of sameness advanced by liberalists that assimilate women to male norms (see also Gatrell, 2011)³⁹. While liberal feminists emphasise the principles of equality between men and women through political and legal reforms (Mills 1998; Nussbaum 2000; Kirton and Green 2000), other feminists such as Gentile (1994) and Cornelius et al. (2000), emphasise that gender equality can only be achieved with a consideration of different issues and perspectives that affect men and women differently. Gender stereotypes and gender inequalities have been developing for a long time and do continuously change (Mikell 1997; Wharton 2011; 12); any initiatives to remedy those inequalities must be strategic and long-term oriented (Williams 1999; Williams, and Cooper 2004; Walby 2005a; 2005b; Kamlongera 2008). In other words, the absence of discrimination is not sufficient to promote gender equality, but should rather be accompanied by concrete activities and positive measures contributing to substantive equality, equal opportunities, equal access to opportunities, and equivalent results.

Feminists and women's rights activists have influenced policies and laws to incorporate gender equality elements that promote women's political participation such as affirmative actions, quotas and reserved seats in the case of Rwanda. However, although these strategies have contributed significantly to increased representation and the visibility of women in Rwanda's public arena (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Burnet 2011), as researchers such as Walby (2005b) and Ahikire (1999) have argued, "integrationist"⁴⁰ approaches do not challenge the existing gender relations but instead are used to achieve the existing gender goals.

Recalling Ahikire's (2008:30) idea discussed earlier, Tamale (2004) echoes the critique that gender perspectives are not taken seriously, even by some African regional bodies.

³⁹ While complementarity approach appears to foster women's special qualities that would bring new perspectives to leadership and development, difference appears to emphasise women's special needs in the workplace that may relate to their biological roles (such as the needs for pregnant woman or breastfeeding father) and their needs resulting from the historical gender inequalities (such as stereotypes, biases and discrimination).

⁴⁰ Walby (2005:323) defined integrationist approaches as "those that introduce a gender perspective without challenging the existing policy paradigm, instead "selling" gender mainstreaming as a way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals."

She challenged the level of gender mainstreaming in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (2004:19): "It is quite obvious that gender issues in NEPAD are reflected as an afterthought and are generally relegated to only footnote status." The failure to mainstream gender perspectives, especially those relegated to the private sphere, hampers transformation of gender relations in general and fails to address issues that affect female politicians' rights, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Several scholars of gender and development argue that to mainstream gender in the development processes necessitates gender expertise (Woodward 2003; Walby 2005a; Rees 2005; Lombardo 2006). In this research, gender expertise means the knowledge and the capacity to articulate gender issues and those issues that affect women's participation in politics differently from men. Some researchers on the African continent have gone further and argued that analysis of women's political participation should consider women's capacity to understand their rights, and political processes (Longwe 2000; Dahlerup 2006). For instance, drawing her analysis on experiences of women political representatives in different countries, Dahlerup (2006) stressed that in order to study female politicians' representative role, there is need to understand the working norms and culture and the political situation within which female politicians operate. Additionally, in her study: "*The complicated relationship between sex, gender and the substantive representation of women*", Childs (2006) contends that women's level of awareness and feminist attitudes should be linked with the effectiveness of their political participation. In the case of Rwanda, Burnet (2011) reinforces Childs' idea that women's descriptive participation carries a symbolic message that may change cultural attitudes towards women and leadership. Concomitantly however, women's participation is also a source of work and livelihood that women, like men, should have (Tamale 2004).

In her analysis of the third millennium development goal, gender equality and women's empowerment, Kabeer (2010) stresses the pertinence of women's capacity to assert for their rights and claims that women must be empowered to understand, articulate and assert their rights. She (2010:13-14), defined empowerment as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability". She argues that an ability to make choice is only possible with the existence and accessibility of alternatives. Further, she asserts that the process of empowerment entails "three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources, and achievements". Kabeer (2010:14-15) went on to define agency in relation to empowerment:

Agency in relation to empowerment, therefore, implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations. [...]It encompasses not only “decision making” and other forms of observable action but also the meaning, motivation, and purpose that individuals bring to their actions; that is, their sense of agency. Empowerment is rooted in how people see themselves – their sense of self-worth. This in turn is critically bound up with how they are seen by those around them and by their society.

Similarly, researchers such as Longwe (2000) and Nzomo (1997) challenge women’s empowerment that does not impact on family, community and government patriarchal hierarchies and ideology. Borrowing from women’s movements in the North, Longwe in her study “*Towards Realistic Strategies for Women Political Empowerment in Africa*”, (2000:28-29) argues that women should be empowered to mobilise for “gender issues” in order to address both direct and indirect gender discriminatory practices that affect women’s rights. Related to the above suggestion, women’s empowerment to make choices, to articulate and assert for their rights, and to impact on political processes requires gender and women’s rights expertise, networking and solidarity, and resources to address discriminatory policy and practices. As mentioned earlier, adding women to politics without the capacity to articulate and assert for their rights may not be sufficient to meet the assumed role of women’s substantive representation (see Waylen 2007 in relation to assumed gains from women’s political participation in South Africa).

This suggests that women’s access to politics is as essential as building the capacity of those who have accessed it to make substantial input to political process and results. The capacity and expertise required for female politicians includes the capacity for gender mainstreaming. In this research capacity is understood to mean resources, agency, and both formal and informal skills required to mainstream gender perspectives and issues in social-political and development process. While researchers such as Ahikire (2008:29) assert that African women shy away from being labelled as feminists in favour of “activists”, this may be a result of contextual approach and understanding attributed to gender equality and/or feminism. The lack of expertise and understanding of feminist theories and gender mainstreaming approaches may lead to misinterpretation of gender equality and subsequently lead to misguided gender mainstreaming. For example, in Rwanda, gender and women’s studies was not available as an academic discipline within Rwandan universities until 2011 and before that, most Rwandan gender experts acquired knowledge from short gender training workshops. However, using international women’s conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Rwandan women activists influenced policies and laws to adopt affirmative action strategies such as quotas and special seats to increase women's political participation long before gender was a formal area of study.

Gender quotas

As discussed in Chapter One, the adoption and implementation of gender quotas in the 2003 Constitution was the foundation for increased numbers of women in Rwandan politics. Nevertheless, as the literature illustrates, the Rwandan government did not only use quotas to promote women in politics, but also applied a number of strategies concurrently (Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010; Wilber 2011; Bauer 2012). For instance, Wilber (2011:1) summarises how Rwanda achieved a high level of women's participation in the Chamber of Deputies:

Mechanisms for reaching gender parity included a gender ministry with a substantial mandate; women's councils elected at the grassroots and represented at the national level; a women-only ballot; a gender-progressive constitution shaped by women leaders in government and civil society...

Additionally, Abbott and Rucogoza (2010:16) outline the composition of the women-only ballots mentioned by Wilber above: "Twenty-four seats in the Lower Chamber of Parliament are reserved for women and these are elected by women."

It should be noted that numbers of women participating in the Chamber of Deputies is considerably higher than numbers of women politicians at other levels of politics (see Chapter One Table 1) primarily because of the constitutional special seats allocated to women parliamentarians while affirmative action in other decision-making areas are restricted to gender quota of at least 30 percent. As discussed in Chapter One, the NISR (2012) report illustrates that the increase in numbers is not evenly distributed in all decision-making areas and in some places women's positions are gendered. A summary of the public service gender disaggregated data posted on NISR website⁴¹, shows that although women's access to strategic paid work posts, such as Ministry Permanent Secretaries, Supreme Court Judges, and Senators and Deputies Chairing Standing Committees, had risen above 30% by 2012, there existed gender gaps in some levels of leadership including what they identified as "key positions" in regard to areas that most affect women's lives: "Key positions, such as heads of learning institutions, hospital

⁴¹ <http://statistics.gov.rw/publications/gender-statistics-public-sector-rwanda>, 28/03/2013

directors and senior officers of the police force to mention a few, show big gender gaps with very few women”.

Though quotas were formally introduced in Rwanda in 2003, elsewhere they have been in existence for decades and their importance and application has been contentiously debated by feminists (e.g. see Tobias 1997; Childs 2006; Dahlerup 2006; 2010; Childs and Krook 2006). For example, in the USA, Tobias (1997) argues that despite increasing the number of women in politics, affirmative action through quotas put group needs ahead of individual needs, did not meet its intended prime goal of compensating African-American women but instead benefited white middle class women. She also claimed that “women in the entry-level jobs” hardly benefited from affirmative action because their problem was “not access but equal pay” (1997:126-131). In relation to the Rwandan situation, as discussed above, affirmative action through quotas appears to be facing similar situations. For example, women occupy generally secondary posts and this increases as one goes down the political level ranking.

Some researchers also argue that gender quotas may become a “ceiling” to women’s participation in politics, and that women may be subjected to tokenism rather than representing women’s rights (Tripp 2006; Longman 2006; Hogg 2009). However, the Rwandan case appears to demonstrate a contrary view (Bauer 2012) in this respect. Despite researchers such as Longman 2006 and Hogg 2009 who are critical of Rwandan female politicians’ substantive representation in relation to the country’s politics generally, other authors (Hamilton 2000; Powley 2003; Burnet 2011; Bauer 2012; Coffé 2012), claim that Rwandan female politicians have made strong strides in advancing women’s rights’ policy, and that their presence has had a positive descriptive, substantive and symbolic effect considering the definitions provided earlier. For example, as regards “quota ceiling” women’s participation has continuously increased (Powley 2005; Dahlerup 2010, Bauer 2012) in all areas, though some areas have benefited more than others.

In addition to influencing the number of women in politics, Rwandan women politicians appear to have been effective in various other ways (Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; Burnet 2008; Kayumba 2010; Kantengwa 2010; Bauer 2012). For instance, since the late 1990s, Rwandan female politicians in collaboration with other women’s groups have influenced the review of a number of laws, advocated for the adoption of new laws, influenced policies to protect and promote the girl-child’s rights (including severe punishment for sexual violence, and improved educational environment), and laws that

advance women's equal rights to access and control over property both from their biological and marital families despite dealing with a genocide legacy of rebuilding their lives and societies.⁴² In fact, several researchers argue that in Rwanda in particular (Burnet 2008; Powley and Pearson 2009; Bauer 2012), in the Great Lakes region (Tamale 1999; Goetz 2002; Bauer and Briton 2006; Bauer 2012), and in other young African democracies such as in South Africa, female politicians have substantially put women's issues on the political agenda through policy and law (e.g. see Waylen 2007). Beckwith (2007) challenged critics of gender quotas who argue that women elected through gender quotas may become tokens (Kanter 1977; Tripp et al. 2007) rather than pursue women-friendly policies. She asserts that, "There appears to be general agreement that where women constitute less than 15 percent of a legislative body, women's influence will be constrained" (Beckwith 2007:29). Her argument rings true in the Rwandan context because, for example, Rwandan female parliamentarians are reported (see Powley and Pearson 2008) to have managed to pass some policies and laws (GBV Law 2009) that had previously received resistance from men after they attained 48% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 2003. However, Childs and Krook (2006; 2009) warn about the need to distinguish between "critical mass and critical actors", suggesting that numbers alone may not be enough. They argue that despite the significance of critical mass, women with required expertise and experience, and within the right circumstances, are more likely to meaningfully impact on political processes and institutional transformation suggesting that:

Four factors seem most important to investigate alongside the role that critical masses of women have in bringing change to political process and outcomes: the position of the female politicians in question; their time in office; both their own and their political party's ideology; and finally, the reactions of, and to, the women politicians. (2006:495)

Interpretation and understanding of the effectiveness of women's participation in politics appears to require a researcher's immersion in the local social-political environment. Otherwise, basing one's research on interpretation of theories and concepts without a critical analysis of the practical lived experiences of the phenomena

⁴² For a specific example, at the time of interviews in 2010, the female Parliamentarians in collaboration with women's lobby groups engendered the national budget and provided for sanitary pads to school girls from poor families because it was discovered that most of these girls struggled to attend school during menstruation due to lack of proper sanitary towels. These examples stress how women try to deal with particular issues that affect women and girls in an attempt to engender development and policy processes.

may provide a partial insight and blurred results. For example, Tremblay (2006:503) emphasised this idea: “If political representation refers to normative theory and concepts, the way it is translated in practice depends on complex cultural and institutional settings specific to each country.”

In the African context, Longwe (2000) stressed that strategies to support women’s access to politics in Africa (such as quotas) must not only target access to positions, but that it should also work towards liberating women from “subordination and servitude”. This appears to suggest that political positions for women are not an end goal, but one among a number of strategies for attaining gender equality. Gender inequalities are culturally as well as structurally based. Thus, in Rwanda, any attempt to understand and to alter gender inequalities requires understanding issues that affect women differently from men.

Gender and Feminism

In the second half of the 20th century, women in the West rose up to challenge the patriarchal systems by claiming their rights relating to equal participation in public life, among others (Pateman 1989; Tobias 1997; Werbner and Yunval-Davis 1999). Known as “second wave feminism”, their campaigns led to revolutionary changes, including women’s increased participation in politics. Contrary to Western countries’ roots of women’s rights in women’s movements (Spender 1983; Walby 1990; Hirschmann 1996; Tobias 1997; McLaughlin 2003), Rwanda’s promotion of women generally, and women’s political participation in particular, is believed not to have originated from grassroots women’s movements but mainly from factors such as the RPF’s policy agenda (Burnet 2008; Kayumba 2010), which is influenced in part by development partners, donor countries, and international women’s movements through international conventions (NGP 2010; GTM 2011).

A number of studies on the African continent challenge the development gender equality approach for not addressing the real issues underlining gender inequality embedded in most African cultures, despite the success registered as regards acceding political posts (especially) due to approaches such as affirmative action (Tamale 2000; Cornwall, 2007; Ahikire 2008; Baines 2010; Bauer 2012). In the case of Uganda, for example, Tamale (2000:11) argues that “the benefits of women from the affirmative action experiment are limited by the fact that it was a top-down policy imposed by the

state”. While I hesitate to use the term “imposed”, with its significance, however, it is unfortunate that also in Rwanda, gender equality understanding has been limited by a top-down approach that is not accompanied by an effective grassroots women’s movement. In fact, for Rwanda, much research has argued that the “political will” of the ruling party has facilitated the quick pace of women’s promotion, and that in most cases the dragging pace of change in the wider culture is to a large extent due to lack of appropriate skills to articulate the real issues that affect women, as also emphasised by the NGP (2010). In the case of Western movements, Tobias (1997:244) claims that for “Second Wave” feminism “it was not just a piece of the proverbial pie that women were after, but some fundamental changes in how the pie was put together in the first place”. Limitations to understandings of gender equality in Africa and in Rwanda in particular are also due to conflating gender equality and feminism. In most developing countries, and Rwanda in particular, understandings of feminism have been limited to radicalism where women seek to overthrow men’s power in the society, and as a Western imposition (e.g. see Ahikire 2008). While this research does not explore the origin of such beliefs, Western feminist theoretical conflicts have addressed this issue and in some ways point to similar perceptions. Tobias (1997:253), for example, in her explanation about the evolution of feminism that gave rise to the three strands of feminism in the American context claims that “Third Wave” feminism considers “Second Wave” feminism too radical and narrow in focus. Similarly, based on USA experience, Schrof (1993:70) claims that “third wavers are accurately aware of their predecessor’s reputation for being hateful to men, focusing on too narrow a set of goals, and marginalising minority and low-income women”. Such beliefs seem to influence resistance towards (Western) feminism in most of the South, and appears damaging to perceptions (including of women) of gender equality and feminism. For example, Mikell (1997) explains the atmosphere that African female activists were faced with in the early years of African feminism. The following quote also reinforces the idea that most countries adopt gender in the development process as a result of international pressure rather than local initiatives:

In the 1980s, pressure from the Western countries and international lending agencies forced African leaders to begin restructuring their economies and political systems, integrating women into development, and creating greater equity for women and families. ... Women’s struggle for increased participation ... is a sensitive issue because their leaders perceive it as externally generated and therefore respond in a “disemic” manner. (1997:2)

Similarly, from a Rwandan perspective, Pearson and Uwineza (2009) found that Rwandan people generally understand gender equality and feminism as foreign terms imposed by the international community. They quoted one of their interviewees, a renowned Rwandan governance expert, Professor Rutayisire to emphasise this point:

“Terms like gender, equality, and human rights are Western-driven concepts that have a basis in the individualistic systems and culture of the West. Traditional Rwanda had its own context and values systems which are hard to compare with today’s values.” (2009:8)

Likewise, in Rwanda’s neighbour Uganda, Ahikire (2008) argues that while feminism introduced gender to foster women’s rights, in the South it has developed as a standalone concept that is sometimes used against feminism. She asserts that the Ugandan understandings of gender equality are built on “essentialised notions” that distinguish men and women as “natural categories”, which she argues has shattered identification of social issues that affect women’s lives:

First; they tend to be built around essentialized notions that simplify men and women into natural categories rather than focus on the social factors that fuel gendered inequality. Second; such measures never question the frame within which they are created and therefore never encourage structural changes. Gender mechanisms aimed to sustain gender equality are often born from a feminist critique but as they are incorporated into development and peace building processes they end up white washed, diluted or even resented. (2008:29)

She went on to emphasise her point by quoting some common statements said by female activists in denial of feminism:

The watered down version of the concept of gender has progressively made it possible for it to be used and/or abused, comfortably even in anti-feminist circles. I use the case of Uganda to illustrate some of these issues.

“I am a gender expert but I am not a feminist”

“I am a gender activist but I do not like feminism”

“Feminism is a luxury for the West and not for African women”

Likewise, a Western feminist Humm (1995), in her book: “*Practicing Feminist Criticism*”, argues that conservative narrow perceptions and interpretations of feminism has led to biased and limited understandings of feminism. She argues that feminism is wide and covers different contexts as far as women’s rights are concerned:

Feminism criticism rarely resembles the ‘propagandist’, ‘lesbian plot’, ‘narrow’, ‘ideological’ labels stored in the filofaxes of politically correct Conservatives. ... Feminism is not prescriptive or essentialist, but inhabits critical practice in

stimulating shapes. There is no single feminism but many different interpretative methods... (1995:xi)

As Humm (1995) argues in the preceding quote, gender equality as a concept of equality may not be the problem, but the problem appears to be its application. This is significant to this thesis that explores female politicians' experiences of balancing family and political roles because the problem seems to be the narrow understanding of gender equality than the policy itself (NGP 2010). If applied broadly, to reinstate Walby (2005b)'s three models of gender equality (sameness, difference and transformation), it is more likely to be attained, but if gender equality is reduced to one perception - complementarity, then it appears to set in challenges to meaningful gender equality as - Powley (2009) claims in the case of Rwanda. While the promotion of women appeared to be largely driven by the ruling party, there still existed resistance and women activists had to find gender equality sensitisation ways based on the indigenous positive cultural norms. For example, a number of studies show that many Rwandan women evoke cultural "motherist" attributes. To quote Burnet (2008:17): "These female lobbyists couched their advocacy to male audience in terms of family-oriented, "motherist" politics by appealing to the men's sense of justice for their own mothers and daughters' rights".

Such as in Rwanda, critiquing gender and feminism as Western concepts is common among African scholars (e.g. see Oyewumi 1997; Mikell 1997). Several African scholars have created other concepts that they believe are more applicable to the African patriarchal system (see Mohanty 1988; Ogunyemi 1985; 1997; Acholonu 1995) rather than gender or feminism. For instance, Acholonu (1995), argues that African women's gendered situation cannot be categorised under feminist norms but rather as "motherism" which, in her view, as quoted in Lewis (2001:6) encompasses, "motherhood, nature and nurture". This contradicts views of other African feminists (e.g. Tamale 2000; Ahikire 2008), who argues that, in the South, shying away or resisting feminism has limited women activists' and policy makers' understanding of issues that affect women's lives.

Although cultural differences must be acknowledged as a source of knowledge, and though gender as a term might not have equivalence⁴³ in different African languages,

⁴³ In Rwanda for example, gender has no equivalence and has been translated into two words: *uburinganire*, meaning *equality* and *ubwuzuzanye*, meaning *complementarity*. The two terms are generally used interchangeably or sometimes concurrently despite the fact that the two terms represents two different gender concepts.

scholars such as Acholonu (1995) who assert that gender relations never existed in such African traditions, seem not to understand the intersectionality of gender in different spaces and different sites of interactions. They tend to limit gender relations to maternalist features of a woman, and also to assume an essentialised view of an African woman. However, traverse other areas such as social-economic status, and power,⁴⁴ this thesis argues that addressing gender issues and women's rights require a combination of approaches – approaches that address “equal opportunities” and “difference”. In this thesis, I share the perspective of feminists who argue that sameness and difference approaches are not binary but similar and complementary in approach and that difference between men and women is a result of gendered stereotypes and not biological (Scott 1990; Evans 1995; McLaughlin 2003). Evans (1995:3) argues that besides biological differences women and men are same and that: “sameness” is not “identical”. The significance of Evan's argument relates to the fact that for a country such as Rwanda, “sameness” forms the basis for gender equality, which must be accompanied by tackling distinct issues that affect men and women differently. She went on to explain that:

[Liberal feminism] begins with a claim of “adequate similarity”, that is, of no differences that could justify discrimination on the grounds of sex. Where differences other than the biological at their most basic are said to occur, this school sets out to disapprove their existence, or to show that they are the products of socialisation by families or schools or by, for example, medical experts, or the mass media, in later life. [...] Here I distinguish between a claim of equal capability now, hidden by stereotypical beliefs held about women, and a claim of potential equal capability, taken away from women by the social arrangements that have made them “second class”. (1995:12-13)

In her study entitled “*Beijing Plus Ten, or Feminism at the Crossroads?*” Lazreg (2004:1), asserts that the concept “woman” has been replaced by “gender” and this has led to a problematic articulation of women's rights. Despite the relevance of Rwandan culture and invocation of “motherist” ideology in women's promotion as highlighted by Burnet (2008) and Powley (2009), it has not changed gender relations. Whilst the “motherist” and complementarity approaches may curb resistance, it may also limit understanding of gender equality to the concept of complementarity and thus perpetuate

⁴⁴ A simple example can be drawn from two similar traditions: Rwandan and Buganda kingdoms. In Rwanda, the Queen mother had more powers than men, and also among the *Baganda* of Uganda, royal women were more powerful than the male commoners. This is illustrated by the fact that a royal female among the *Baganda* was referred to as *Ssebo* which is equivalent to Sir. Although these women's status was gendered within their specific group, outside their group, they were more likely not to be respected on basis of their maternal identity, but social status.

the traditional binary between categories “men” and “women”. The challenge with this approach or strategy relates to when and how should it be used, especially in contexts such as Rwanda where gender and feminism skills are still basic to the majority of policy makers, including female politicians. For instance, this understanding of gender in the development process, in Rwanda, has done little to transform gender hierarchies and inequalities. This is evidenced by different documents that assess Rwandan gender equality status. For example, more than 6/21 constraints for achieving gender equality enumerated in the NGP (2010:18) are related to failure by institutions and individuals to understand gender perspectives. These include for instance:

- Resistance to behavior change and poor understanding of gender concepts;
- Biased perception that women are not made for decision making,
- Limited institutional instruments including policies, strategies and plans for gender mainstreaming;
- Limited capacities and technical skills in gender analysis and planning for effective gender mainstreaming in all development sectors including the public sector, private sector and the civil society.

Lazzreg (2004:1) further, argues that the global understanding of gender and development has “swept over much of the once called “third world feminism”. In the West, Humm (1995:x) in her introduction of feminism, claims that feminism is tasked with two key factors failure of which it has no objective: “the task of critique (attacking gender stereotypes) and the task of construction. Without this second task (sometimes called feminist praxis) feminism has no goal”. In Rwanda too, as suggested by the above challenges listed in the NGP (2010), women’s political participation appears to be stuck on increasing women’s numerical participation and engendering the law and policy, rather than to address real issues that affect women’s lives. While there are special measures to increase the number of women in decision-making generally and politics specifically, the cultural filters in which gender inequality is based have received less attention as this research will attest.

In another study by Ahikire (2004), “*Towards Women’s Effective Participation in Electoral Processes: A Review of Ugandan Experience*”, she argues that during the Ugandan election campaigns, “while men were required to articulate a visionary strategy, women were required to engage in soul-searching and personal defence” (Ahikire 2004:7) indicating how they will adhere to traditional traits of womanhood. She mentioned that some female candidates were forced to kneel to the electorates so as

to show their allegiance to custom. This reflects how most African female politicians struggle to balance conflicting interests – pushing for women’s rights, and accessing and maintaining political work. As this research will show, this reflects the contradictory nature of government driven gender equality approaches if not accompanied by a strong women’s movement to challenge the status quo. Further, it appears to challenge not only gender equality but also social justice.

Despite biased or limited understanding of feminism, the literature suggests that feminism is evolutionary in nature and covers a wide range of issues that negatively affect women’s lives in different contexts, including the Rwandan case (see Humm 1993; Tobias 1997; Dietz 2003). For instance, Dietz (2003:399) asserts:

... it is important to recognize that feminism is a historically constituted, local and global, social and political movement with an emancipatory purpose and a normative content. It posits a subject (women), identifies a problem (the subjection and objectification of women through gendered relations), and expresses various aims (e.g., overturning relations of domination; ending sex discrimination; securing female sexual liberation; fighting for women’s rights and interests, raising “consciousness,” transforming institutional and legal structures; engendering democracy) in the name of specific principles (e.g., equality, rights, liberty, autonomy, dignity, self-realization, recognition, respect, justice, freedom).

She seems to suggest that women need to reconstruct their understanding of feminism and gender in a more positive way. Tarnishing and shying away from feminism appears to come with a cost to meaningful equality. Thus, it is imperative to not only provide for equal opportunities through legislative policies such as quotas, but also to address women’s specific needs and perspectives at work and in the home. According to Devlin and Elgie (2008), in Rwanda, despite the large number of women parliamentarians, the working culture has not changed to respond to women participants’ needs. Devlin and Elgie (2008:8) gave examples of the working time and meeting schedules which were still male oriented although most of their female respondents “complained about shouldering a big burden of caring responsibilities” in the private sphere. In the following section I go on to consider these issues and explore the relationship between gender, the private and public spheres.

Gender, the Public, and Private Spheres

Analysis of Rwandan government’s policies appears to indicate that there is no direct reference to addressing gender perspectives relating to women’s traditional roles such as

care work. And yet, since the second wave of feminism, feminists have argued that women's roles in the private sphere contribute significantly to gender inequality (Richardson 1993; Tamale 2004; Crompton 2007; Gauber 2007; Henz 2010). These researchers argue that the binary between the private and the public spheres reinforces patriarchal relations between the two, not least because it tends to "apoliticise" the private sphere.

Epstein (2006) argues that despite legal guarantees for gender equality, women are still barred from equal participation in the public sphere by entrenched gendered cultural norms that normalise and perpetuate existing beliefs and understanding of gender roles. Likewise, Tamale (2004:3), argued that for most women in Africa: "masculine standards operate as a delicate "glass ceiling" that stops many women from entering the public world". For Stratigaki (2004), if the promotion of gender equality fails to tackle inequalities relating to family work between men and women, more women will access work but amidst gender inequality and patriarchal ideology. This suggests that women are more likely to be more burdened with responsibilities in comparison to their male colleagues and male partners (Thompson and Walker 1989; Walby 1990; Williams 1999; Cornwall 2005; Schlyter and Chipeta 2009; Miller 2011). Some of the major areas that researchers have mentioned that perpetuate gender inequality and patriarchy include: care, time, and institutional cultural norms (Pheonix 1991; Richardson 1993; Epstein 2006; Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Baker 2010).

Within Western feminism, the binary between the public and private spheres has been challenged (see Pateman 1988; Walby 1990; Williams 1999; Wharton 2011) since the first wave of feminism. Some feminists have argued that it is through industrialisation that white middle class women were relegated to the private sphere to care for the home and family while men went out to work, which in a way oriented path-ways for social-economic and political status for women and men. In Africa, Tamale (2004) provides a critical analysis of the link between resources and women's "domesticity" resulting from the binary drawn between the private and public spheres. For instance, she argued that:

While the patriarchy defines women in terms of domesticity, it simultaneously draws an artificial line to separate the domestic (private) arena from the public one. ... Women are confined (read trapped) to the domestic arena – a space where men rule over them as heads of the family – while men spend most of their time in the public realm. (2004:20)

Buscaglia and Randell (2012:71) quoted a Belgian colonial report to show that Rwandan women were relegated to the private sphere and shaped to become “(r)real ladies of the house, able to keep the house clean, to make the interior pleasant and to offer a cleaned table, an appetising meal and washed linen to their husbands when they come from work” by the colonial administrators. This has become a legacy for most Rwandan women today despite their level of education or level of public engagement. A Rwandan woman is primarily measured by her marital status, and her ability to maintain a “good” wife and mother social status, which is basically mirrored through gender roles. Thus, whilst women have accessed political work, they are still “trapped” by traditional gender roles and expected duties.

Again, in Rwanda, while some women accessed paid work before 1994, they were very few and the majority were in the traditionally female related jobs such as teaching, catering, and nursing (Hunt 1990; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). Pettman (1999), a Western feminist, argues that when the state fails to address women’s domestic and reproductive roles, it is women who are made to carry the load. She (1999:212) also suggested that “active citizenship requires material conditions which support and enable women’s participation in the public/political sphere.” This appears to be applicable to cultural contexts such as Rwanda, where gender relations are still strong and to a large extent women still charged with domestic and social roles. This can be exacerbated by the fact that in Rwanda, domestic work is largely done through traditional means, such as using charcoal stoves rather than an electric cooker.

Research about women’s rights in the African continent associate gender inequalities with gender division of labour especially, meaning that without addressing cultural barriers in all sectors of life, gender justice may not be achieved. Njongu and Orchardson-Mazrui (2005) in their study entitled “*Gender Inequality and Women’s Rights in the Great Lakes: Can Culture Contribute to Women’s Empowerment?*” argue that boys and girls’ roles are socialised and determined by gendered cultural norms and practices which in return affect their gendered status in society: “Through the process of socialisation within the family, in educational institutions and other social spheres, boys and girls are conditioned to behave in certain ways and to play different roles in society” (2005:2).

They go on to argue that women’s rights and capabilities may be hampered by policy and legal frameworks. In most cultures, the legal and policy frameworks are culturally based, with a strong likelihood that they will maintain some patriarchal ideologies:

But it is not just through socialisation that inequalities are planted. Glaring gaps in policy, legal frameworks and investment opportunities make it difficult for women to perform to their full potential in social, economic and political spheres.

To remedy the cultural transformation gap as regards women's equal political participation, Werbner (1999:221), argues that women's full rights attainment should start with cultural domains which subordinate women to men's superiority:

My central argument is that women's active citizenship starts from pre-established cultural domains of female power and rightful ownership of responsibility. These culturally defined domains, or the attack upon them, create the conditions of possibility for women's civic activism which, in the face of male resistance, comes progressively to challenge authoritarian structures of power, usually controlled by men.

As regards Rwanda, several authors recognise women's achievements (e.g. Powley 2005; Bauer 2012), however, although there has been social change and women can access political positions and other areas of public work, they have to assimilate to the male model of work and to also maintain their traditional feminine status, especially, as mothers and wives. Whereas in Africa most researchers contend that the private and public spheres are intertwined in relation to women's rights (Oyewumi 1997; Tamale 2004; Cornwall 2005), it is hard to find studies that target specific issues that affect substantive gender equality between men and women. For instance, there are a number of studies about women's political participation in Rwanda, but it is difficult to find a study that targets and elaborates how female politicians' engagement with politics is impacted by cultural and ideological norms embedded in gendered power relations and associated roles. Only studying women's descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation is to study women in isolation of the gendered circumstances surrounding their lives.

Several researchers especially from the South have challenged the essentialist approach of human rights that do not consider the culturally entrenched gender biases and discriminatory practices that affect women's day to day lives (Longwe 2000; Stratigaki 2004; Epstein 2006). Baines (2010:141) argues that gender equality in development theories is understood to mean organisational openness to women's numerical participation other than understanding it as "harmful gendered organisational cultures, policies or practices". The failure to incorporate what is considered as domestic work in mainstream working environments and policies retards women's realisation of freedom

and career path. In such circumstances, Hirschmann (1996:63) argues that “Women’s claims for equal opportunity and equal rights to compete in the marketplace without challenging how “marketplace” is structured, for instance, left women with a double day...” Rather than seeing women’s access to political citizenship (as voters and elected officials) as gender equality, Walby (1990) asserts that political rights are just one area of patriarchy that must be addressed alongside other forms of patriarchy. She outlines six key patriarchal structures that have to be addressed concurrently:

These are the patriarchal mode of production; patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions including religion, media, education... (1990:93)

Additionally, Hirschmann (1996:63) claims that male-oriented structures “catches women in a double bind”. She argues that either women are treated the same as men or they are treated as completely different from men, both of which, are inherently “masculinist”⁴⁵ in nature. To explain this, I will base my argument on Tobias’s (1997:3) definition of patriarchy, which she argues is based on “characteristics of masculine gender”, and that it reflects power relationships between men and women in formal groups (in this case political work) and in the family. In reference to working women in the USA, Tobias (1997:5) uses the words “double bind” to explain how women were faced with a dilemma in attempting to meet expectations relating to the balancing of family and paid work responsibilities:

So the American female finds herself in a double bind. Insofar as she experiences the ambitions of a careerist, she is not feminine, and insofar as she accedes to the needs of her feminine nature, she will not be taken seriously as a professional.

As regards motherhood specifically, numerous Western researchers have written about work and family balance and related challenges that affect women’s careers and lives (Richardson 1993; Crompton 2006; Craig 2007; Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Gordo 2009), sometimes referred to as the “Mummy Trap” to borrow Rhode’s (1998:349) concept. These writers suggest that gender equality can only be reached if men and women share the benefits and burdens of work and care in the public and private spheres. Several studies argue that the importance attributed to motherhood (Richardson 1993; Baker 2010) and to work for money or remuneration in today’s monetary society

⁴⁵ In this thesis masculinity is used to refer to structural, cultural and political traits assimilated to male standards of work and behaviour, which may include work schedule and time, institutional norms and infrastructure (see Segal 1993; Connell 2005) .

has led to an unprecedented tension between the two (Phoenix 1991; Skeggs 1997; Tamale 2004; Miller 2011). Physical presence and time at work is very important in the competitive world of politics. Women are expected to put in the same time as men to work at the same competing level (Hirschmann 1996; Williams 1999; Gatrell 2011, Miller 2011), although women may need to put in extra time in comparison to their male counterparts. As mentioned earlier, this appears to be an unfair situation because women are caught-up in a “double bind” if not a triple bind or multiple bind – multiple, because women politicians appear to be facing pressure from different angles, such as being expected to fulfil family duties, meet a good employee/politician model, and meet women’s and female activists’ expectations.

Gender roles and motherhood are some of the major factors raised by researchers that affect women’s career and lives while juggling paid work and family because they determine ways in which most women allocate their time-use (Phoenix et al. 1991; Richardson 1993; Craig 2007). Time allocation of women and men influences family life, public life, and their ability to pursue and realise their private and professional goals and aspirations (Williams 1999; Henz 2004; Miller 2011). For example, Phoenix and Woollett (1990:15) illustrated that motherhood is composed of both an identity and the acts of giving birth and nurturing children: “Regardless of whether women become mothers, motherhood is central to the ways in which they are defined by others and to their perceptions of themselves.” Richardson (1993:1) adds marriage to motherhood, and argues that these aspects are important to a woman’s life and can bring fulfilment if women are socialised to believe so:

Though not all women perceive femininity as a reward, for some its association with motherhood is an important aspect of what they get out of being a mother. [...] Such feelings are likely when women are strongly socialised to believe in marriage and motherhood as central to their lives and their identity, and when the alternatives for women are limited.

Similarly, in Rwanda (Hunt 1990; Jefremovas 1991; Baines 2003; Adekunle 2007; Buscaglia and Randell 2012), and in most African cultures (Kelly 2000; Tamale 2004; Cornwall 2005; Ahikire 2008), while seen as a restriction on women’s liberty and lives, motherhood appears to also be important to the majority of women as a source of social status and fulfilment. In most African traditions, every woman is expected to become a mother; failure to do so is to be considered “abnormal” and “half-human” to quote a Ugandan feminist Tamale (2004:20):

Single, childless women carry a permanent stigma like a lodestone about their necks. They are viewed by society as half-baked, even half-human. Thus, the domestic roles of mother, wife and homemaker become the constructions of women's identity in Africa.

In the case of Rwanda, Hamilton (2000:6) stated:

A woman's value in Rwandan society is related to her status as a wife and mother, or in other words, to her household and proactive functions. Women are expected to adopt a reserved, submissive attitude.

Ironically, research shows that paid work does not reduce domestic labour (Oldfield, et al. 2008; Özbilgin 2009; Miller 2011), thus most working women work a "double day" and sometimes not being as efficient as expected to be in the home. These dual roles may create conflicting responsibilities for female politicians. However, elsewhere, studies of women, family and work, argue that most working women find time to compensate for family work (Skeggs 1997; Crompton 2006; Glauber 2007). Glauber (2007), for example, contends that mothering and marriage are some of the major factors that increase the amount of time that women work in the home. She argues that while marriage and childcare increases women's time at home, it reduces men's time in the home because the wife, as discussed earlier, is expected to solely assume domestic work. Similarly, Craig and Sawrinar (2009:685) argues that in Australia women find it difficult to balance work and family mostly because "committing substantial time to work is incompatible with the time that is required" for family work and care responsibilities. Craig (2007) explains that balancing work and childcare impacts on women depending on the age of children, whether women have support (State or private) and whether women have childcare responsibilities or not. She referenced Baxter et al. (2005) to emphasise the point that even when the couple (man and woman) both work full time, women's work in the family continues to compose over twice the man's household labour.

The importance of motherhood in Rwandan society and its impacts on women's lives, coupled with the absence of literature on motherhood in Rwanda, influenced the decision to analyse and discuss the data on motherhood separately (Chapter Six) from analysis of the other domestic responsibilities that women do (Chapter Five). The separation aims to provide a detailed exploration of how motherhood impacts on female politicians' lives and career in Rwanda. Lewis (1991) and Tobias (1997) argued that working mother's experiences of balancing motherhood and work are constrained by notions of what is a good mother, and good employee. Women's experiences appear to

be more difficult if women have limited support from government and if their choices within motherhood are restricted by cultural norms and policy (Richardson 1993). For instance, the new Rwandan labour law (2009, article 66) avails working women only two alternatives to choose from. It provides for twelve weeks maternity leave with only six weeks full salary payment. If a woman decides to take full duration maternity leave the remainder six weeks will be paid at 20% of her full salary. This may be interpreted to mean that, in Rwanda, the apoliticisation of motherhood and/or contradictions around the government's development agenda, have sometimes led to disadvantaging women's lives in favour of development policies. And surprisingly, despite the value attached to motherhood, and the impact it makes on women's lives, literature about Rwandan women politicians rarely mentions how family responsibilities generally and motherhood in particular affect women's life choices, as regards work and day-to-day life. While a working woman in Rwanda is given six weeks choice between salary and childcare, this choice might be difficult for some women more than others. This would depend on a woman's economic capacity, available facilities/tools, partnered or single, and whether she is able to get help with care - either from her partner, relatives or paid childcare. Choice itself has been associated with contextual realities. For example, Crompton (2006:12) questions the "basis upon which a woman's choice is made as "choice" will be shaped (or constrained) by the context within which choice is being exercised". This echoes an earlier idea posited by Kabeer (2010), who asserted that women should not only have alternatives to choose from, but that the alternatives must be seen to exist and be able to access them. For most working women in Rwanda, choosing between full salary and childcare is like choosing between "a rock and hard place".

Conclusion

While women's access to politics and paid work may be seen as a positive step in gender equality, it seems burdensome and overloading to expect the same woman to solely (and perfectly) execute traditional family roles. The relative absence of childcare appears to constrain women, affects their economic status, increases workload, puts women under pressure and stress, and perhaps unsurprisingly, many women in such situations may feel guilty for not fulfilling their responsibilities as expected (see Skeggs 1997; Gatrell 201,1 in a different context). The binary between the private and public spheres and the domestication of care responsibilities (Williams 1999; Tamale 2004), coupled with the gendered nature of care and domestic work, suggests that although

there is a lot of talk about how it is good for women to enter the workforce this is difficult as little or no support exists for them if they do. In such circumstances, and in circumstances where countries have no childcare policies whatsoever, as is the case in Rwanda, there is a need for equal sharing of care and paid work responsibilities between men and women (see Richardson 1993; Fraser 1994). This argument, however, does not aim at negating the importance of political responsibility for caring roles, or deconstruction of institutional working culture and infrastructure to accommodate maternal roles. Instead, as discussed earlier in this chapter, gender equality approaches requires transforming gender relations, gender biases and stereotypes, gender power hierarchies and gender-based inequalities. As researchers such as, for example, Stratigaki (2004) suggest, this necessitates tackling gender inequalities both in the private and in the public spheres. In the next chapter I will go on to describe the methodology and methods used to conduct this study before going on to examine some of these issues drawing on the findings.

CHAPTER THREE: Studying the Lives of Rwandan Female Politicians

Introduction

This chapter discusses the background to the research, the research design, the nature of the samples and the access processes involved, followed by ethical issues and interview process, and finishes with data analysis. Major issues described in this chapter include how I recruited the respondents, how I negotiated space and time for interviews, and how I worked with gate keepers and/or research advisors. It also describes issues regarding the pros and cons of conducting interviews in a presidential election campaign period; interviewing people known to the researcher, both as a person and as an activist, and explores issues relating to interviewing elites and those in positions of power.

The research aims to bridge the gap in academic research that investigates female politicians' political role in two major ways: firstly, by developing knowledge founded on the women's perspectives and understanding of their experiences, which is more likely to influence new scholarly understandings, and approaches to women and politics, and secondly, attempting to bridge the gap in scholarly studies as regards intersectionality between women's representative role and the social-political lived experiences. This may also help policy makers and activists to broaden their understanding, approaches and activities geared to addressing gender inequalities.

Epistemological Approach.

My motivation for conducting this research developed out of my activist passion for gender equality and women's rights. Charged with gender analysis and training in the Ministry of Gender, and later as a consultant partly working on women and children's issues, gave me an insight on the multifaceted nature of gender inequalities in Rwandan society and inspired me to examine the experiences of female politicians as regards balancing their private and public roles. This experience influenced me to explore the extent to which Rwanda's promotion of women in decision-making positions is impacting on women politicians' lives. Working close to some of these women and having an insight into their lived experiences made me question the idea of gender equality in the Rwandan context. I decided on taking an academic inquiry approach to

knowledge discovery, which would equip me with the theoretical, conceptual and methodological understanding of women's rights. A reflection on my previous knowledge as an activist also allowed a better understanding of women's perspectives. Thus, I thought that by exploring these issues basing my quest on women considered to be better equipped to achieve their rights in Rwanda would give me better understanding of women's lives more generally (see Harding 1991). Additionally, the decision to conduct research with women who are believed to be at the highest levels of knowledge acquisition, formulation, and dissemination was based on the assumption that their views are more likely to represent understandings of gender relations and equality in Rwanda; as the saying goes in Kinyarwanda "*ijya kurisha ihera ku rugo*" or "*Ujya gutera uburezi arabwibanza*" which has a similar meaning to an English proverb that says "However far a man goes, he must start from his own door."

Many feminist researchers who advocate for qualitative research (Nielsen 1990; Harding 1991; Shulamit 1992; Few, et al. 2003; Hesser-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Marshall and Rossman 2006) argue that understandings of women's experiences should be based on their own perceptions with an aim of putting the participants' perceptions at the centre of knowledge conception. This thesis focuses on the ways in which women politicians perceive their experiences as women politicians. The methodology is broadly influenced by feminist research methodological approaches such as Yeandle (1984); Harding (1991); Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Letherby (2003); and Rossman and Marshall (2006) who emphasise, especially, reflexive interpretation, and researched and researcher collaboration in research. For example, Letherby (2003:5) stresses the idea of the researcher's position within the research process. The feminist research approach highlights "situatedness of the researcher who should also be in possession of feminist consciousness but also attuned to the dominant class" (Nielsen 1990:10).

Interpretation and understanding of women's participation in politics appears to require knowledge or a researcher's emersion in the local social-political environment.

Otherwise, basing one's research on interpretation of theories and concepts without a critical analysis of the practical lived experiences of the phenomena may provide a partial insight and blurred results. For example, Tremblay (2006:503), emphasises this idea: "If political representation refers to normative theory and concepts, the way it is translated in practice depends on complex cultural and institutional settings specific to each country." Thus, I would like to emphasise that being part of the culture of the research context unveiled to me the unseen forms of gender relations which may not be

visible to an “outsider” researcher for example (Maynard and Purvis 1994; Hesse-Biber, et al. 2004). This is not to suggest that only women should conduct feminist research but that experiential knowledge is significant to research and that researching women should be by researchers wishing to understand, promote and advocate for women’s rights and women’s well-being (Tobias 1997).

Being a feminist or woman, and above all from the same cultural background has an added value in understanding the issues related to emancipator driven research as in this case (Shulamit 1992; Birch 1998). This is what Shulamit (1992:6) call “self definition”. However being an insider, especially if you are known to your respondents can be detrimental to information gathering as the respondents may talk about what they think is in the researchers interests. Nonetheless, my personal experience outlined above, suggest that I had some epistemological knowledge in the research area. Thus, I was aware that some scholars challenge the idea of “self definition” arguing that it leads to subjective research results, which I methodologically addressed by basing my knowledge on the women’s personal stories. For example, Marshall and Rossman (1999:7) state that:

Immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study, values and seeks to discover participants’ perspective on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is both descriptive and analytic, and relies on peoples words and observable behaviour as the primary data.

Statistically, the progressively increasing number of women’s participation is factual and indicates that gender roles are changing in Rwanda. However, in order to understand whether the numerical participation is changing patriarchal hierarchies between men and women, and gender inequalities, I decided to use a method of inquiry that allows women themselves to narrate their stories. Harding (1987) questions knowledge gathering that is not situated in women’s lived experiences and Kelly et al. (1994) suggests that feminist social research approaches should be based on women’s own perspectives on the phenomenon. As discussed in Chapter Two, most of the researchers about women politician (predominant parliamentarians) in Rwanda not only fail to establish their findings on the women’s own stories or perspectives, but also, the majority do not consider women’s social-political subjectivity as an important factor in knowledge gathering.

As an exploratory study, I decided to use qualitative research with semi-structured one-

to-one interviews (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). I used this approach due to three major reasons: the respondents being elites, it allowed room for new ideas; it also allowed a safe environment for the women to talk about sensitive personal experiences, and because they were considered to be busy thus hard to mobilize for focus group method. It would have been extremely difficult to organise politicians around focus groups due to the nature of their work and status. Also other methods such as biographical research (see Miller and Brewer 2003:15-17) seemed not appropriate to this research that focuses on exploring female politicians actual lived experiences of balancing family and political roles.

The research methodology also benefited from a certain level of observation (Mies 1983), attending conferences, review of scholarly materials, government and Non-Government Organisation (NGO) reports, and political speeches; which widened my knowledge and understanding of gender issues and perspectives. I explored literature about Rwanda, and similar contexts both in the region, and internationally in order to locate the respondents' experiences in the wider theories of gender equality and women's empowerment. This also aimed to contextualise, and broaden sources of information and knowledge considering that research about Rwanda in this area is limited.

Writers such as May (2001) and Mason (2002) stress that to research deep-rooted cultural myths and norms that affect women, semi-structured open-ended questions are crucial to gain access to their ideas and accounts. Choosing one – to – one interviews in this case, aimed at generating conversations that enabled me to gain an understanding of the women's experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (May 2001). For instance, I asked if gender was a development goal in Rwanda, how gender was formally defined and how they understood and defined gender (refer to Appendix III for Interview Schedule). Responses to these questions addressed gender as policy but also gender as lived, reflecting whether the interviewee's lived experience responds to the norms of gender equality as policy in Rwanda.

The interconnectedness of interpretative practices (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3) involved in the interview process helped me to understand in depth meanings and contradictions that I would not get if, for instance, I had only analysed statistical data. I needed a methodology that would allow me a certain level of direct interaction and to personally interview the participants. I was interested in observing the participants mood and gestures, and the actual working circumstances while recording their stories.

Therefore, I restricted my research methodology to one-to-one interviews because I anticipated that some of the information provided by the participants would be private and/or sensitive, thus, they may not be free to talk in the presence of others.

Important to note also is the fact that qualitative research draws on multi-methods allowed by interviews which enhances the quality of data collected (e.g. see Reinharz 1992). Qualitative research scholars contend that there is no single method that can capture or fully understand the different complexities of people's experiences (Rossman and Gretchen 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; 2002). In the case of Rwanda, the rapid increase of women's numerical political participation obscures proper understanding of equality between men and women, and women's rights. And, while there is research on women's descriptive and substantive representational role (e.g. Powley and Pearson 2008; Burnet 2011; Bauer 2012), there are few, if any, studies analysing how political participation has impacted on female politicians' lives.

Participant Sampling

One cannot study the universe-everything, every place, all the time. Instead, the researcher makes selections of sites and samples of times, places, people, and things to study. (Marshall and Rossman 2006:62)

Being a native and an experienced female activist in the research country facilitated the sampling exercise considering factors such as, access, awareness of geographical issues, financial resources, security issues, and timing. Sampling was, however, not easy considering factors of my financial status as a self sponsored student, and to a lesser extent as a PhD student who has to complete studies in a specified period of time. I would have also loved to interview female politicians working at the grass-root levels (which was also emphasised by many of my respondents) but resources restricted this.

As discussed in Chapter Two, women are not a homogenous group (Young 1990; Harding 1991; Maynard and Purvis 1994; Phillips 1995; Sawyer 2000; Yuval-Davis 2005). The women in this study do not speak for female politicians at all levels of leadership in Rwanda, nor even all women at the same levels covered by this research, as women's experiences may lead to distinct issues. Nevertheless, I argue that women have shared gendered experiences (e.g. see Tobias 1997) though diverse; for instance, a woman might face distinct issues due to disability, social-economic status or more than one social identity that might intersect in the life of one woman or group of women

(Crenshaw 1989). Although the number of interviews were relatively small (29), the samples were chosen carefully in an attempt to reach diverse range of women in order to capture the multifaceted issues that affected women politicians at different levels of politics.

This aimed to attain a broader exploration of how politics impact on female politicians. In her study “*Qualitative Research and the Generalizability Question: Standing firm with Proteus*”, Myers (2000:3) emphasises this point by asserting that:

The goal of the study may be to focus on a selected contemporary phenomenon ... where in-depth descriptions would be an essential component of the process. In such situations, small qualitative studies can gain a more personal understanding of the phenomenon and the result can potentially contribute valuable knowledge to the community.

As regards how ethnicity affects women differently, I decided to follow the general political ideology that gives importance to *Rwandanness* rather than ethnic identity in my recruitment focus (see Chapter One, pp.6-7). Considering the history and politics around ethnicity in Rwanda (Kayumba 2010), and considering that the majority of my respondents were themselves policy makers, asking questions about ethnicity was not feasible and was most likely to affect the quality of my research. With an aim to make African accomplishments in promoting women in parliaments known, Bauer (2012), in her article surveying and synthesizing the literature about women’s representative roles in African Parliaments in the last quarter century, found that gender relations in Rwanda were not influenced by ethnic divide⁴⁶. However, I do not want to suggest that ethnicity is not significant but it also appears to be such a big concept that it may have overwhelmed the gender issues that the women were facing.

In this research politics is used to mean both formal and informal politics. I sought to sample women from two major categories: women in formal politics to include women in mainstream politics; and women in informal⁴⁷ politics to include women from civil society organisations (CSO). The formal political site included three levels of government: the executive, the legislature and the monitoring and implementation

⁴⁶ Despite gender being not influenced by ethnicity, this does not mean that some women in Rwanda might not have different issues relating to their ethnic background. For instance, a woman might face challenges relating to supporting relatives who lost their family members during the genocide.

⁴⁷ In this research informal politics is used to mean organisations involved in civil society activism. While the women in this category are not in formal politics, they in some ways influence and are influenced by politics, for example, through cooperation within their associations and networking with women politicians on issues of their organisations’ interests.

independent government organs. The legislature and the executive were also broken into smaller units of political levels. In the parliament I sought to recruit women from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate while in the Executive I interviewed women Cabinet ministers and those from Local Government – mayoral positions in Kigali (as will be shown in Table 2). As regards informal politics, women’s associations in Rwanda are many, thus I decided to sample via the women’s NGO Umbrella network Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe (Pro-Femmes) and the Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW). This was because Pro-Femmes is a representative network of the majority of women’s associations in Rwanda, while RAUW is an association of the Rwandan educated women activists for girls and women’s rights (members are both from formal and informal politics).

Geographically, I decided to focus on different sites of political and civil society organisations in Kigali where women were more accessible. However, in no way did this aim at convenience, rather it was for the purposes of research feasibility. In a few cases, respondents were also used as gatekeepers to aid snowballing. For example, there were cases where an interviewee was the same person formally positioned to provide permission of access to the rest of the women in the organ she headed. In cases where I personally knew the person before the interviews, I also talked to them about the categories I wished to interview and requested their assistance with identification. This was significant to the sampling process because it allowed easier access and identification of women from different background that would have been hard for me to know. For example, this helped in accessing female politicians from the rural and urban areas, mothers and non-mothers, and single mothers.⁴⁸ It was also useful in terms of formalizing my research process due to administrative bureaucratic formalities.

Initially I had planned on interviewing 35 participants, as illustrated in Table 2 below. For the government positions, number distribution was generally based on the proportion of women’s posts at each level. As regards sampling a lower number from women’s groups, I based my decision on two major reasons: firstly, that the organisations were representative of other organisations, and that their views are complementary and secondly, used as “check and balance” to minimise would be rehearsed responses. In majority of the interviews more than one method was used,

⁴⁸ It should be noted that most information about the women in this research’s background is not discussed because of anonymity and confidentiality purposes. Most of these women new each other fairly well and this set a challenge to this research as I had to omit some information that would have been useful to data analysis.

however, for most of the women I sent formal application letters to the respondent because their working positions were obvious. For instance, this was more practical for Ministers, heads of organisations and V/Mayors. As regards members of parliament, most of them were accessed through snowballing. The following Table illustrates the breakdown of the number of planned and accessed respondents by political positioning.

Table 2: Number of planned and accessed participants by political category		
Category	Planned Number	Accessed Number
2. <u>Formal Politics:</u>		
❖ Cabinet Ministers	6	3
❖ Local Government (Vice/Mayor)	7	6
❖ Parliament:		
➤ Lower Chamber	9	10
➤ Upper Chamber	7	4
❖ Independent government gender mechanisms		
➤ Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)	1	1
➤ (NWC	1	1
2. <u>Informal Politicians (CSO)</u>		
❖ Pro-Femmes ⁴⁹		
➤ Pro-Femmes secretariat	1	1
➤ Member Associations	2	2
❖ RAUW	1	1
Total	35	29

⁴⁹ Pro-Femmes was found in 1993, but became very popular after 1994 genocide due its role in rebuilding Rwandan society. It is currently composed of 48 member organisations all working in line with women's rights advocacy and promotion. For further information visit www.profemme.org.rw/index2.html, November 2012

Women were drawn from different levels of leadership with the aim of exploring the distinct issues that may be affecting them differently. Female politicians were chosen from within different policy levels, and at and within different implementation levels of politics. Drawing respondents at different levels of leadership, it was hoped, would be helpful for deeper analysis and understanding of gendered perspectives and issues (e.g. Morris and Lyon 1996) that female politicians in Rwanda might be facing. Further to this, I also strategically targeted female politicians who had worked in different political categories, mothers and non-mothers, and single and patterned mothers so as to tap into distinct issues that they may be facing differently. In the majority of these cases the women were able to point out how women face distinct issues due to different levels of political participation, especially depending on working circumstances.

My research participants are categorised as elites because in Rwanda politics is conditional on a certain level of education, although the level of educational requirements for the samples under study vary. For instance, the executive and local government positions are conditional on a university degree while parliamentarians are only required to be able to read and write⁵⁰. Marshall and Rossman (2006) contend that interviewing elites provides valuable information because of their social and political status. This means that elites are assumed to be informed beyond their cultural boundaries and thus are able to connect with most contexts. Nevertheless, I was aware that interviewing elites has both its advantages and challenges. In this case, my participants were not only elites but also politicians. Some of the anticipated challenges included: scarce time, hard to access, and the fact that they may want to change the course of research. One of the underlying factors behind the use of advisors and snowballing aimed at responding to such concerns. Furthermore, May (2001) in his study entitled, "*Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process*", points to the importance of the researcher's awareness of the social settings as regards understanding some of the social dilemmas. Having worked in the locale and with women in similar categories in Rwanda, I was aware of the "rules of the game".

As part of this project, I put in place a small advisory team composed of four women (two local experts and two international experts) selected because of their expertise in

⁵⁰ A Ugandan Journalist, Arinaitwe Reports (29/03/2013): "... a certain level of education is not a requirement to contest for a parliamentary seat. NEC says that as long as a Rwandan of 21 years of age who has never been sentenced to jail for more than six months and can read and write is free to vie for parliamentary slot", <http://www.independent.co.ug/rwanda-ed/rwanda>, read online, 03/April/2013

women's development in Rwanda and/or internationally. Marshal and Rossman (2006:203) advise researchers to have research "critical friends" who can question the research analysis throughout the process. These women were well known to me and to some I had shared my desire for doing a PhD in this area way before I applied for admission. The four women were consulted on an individual basis and depending on their availability and commitment to my work because they were volunteers.

Both local experts were formerly politicians, serving either as a minister or a general secretary (currently known as permanent secretary) in the ministry in charge of gender and women's empowerment⁵¹. My selection was based on the assumption that they were aware of the local and global debates about women's rights due to exposure to different women's rights international conferences and debates. Also, my knowledge of these women indicated that they had good knowledge of the issues both through their life experiences and their working experience. Additionally, as female politicians generally and formerly women's leaders they were also assumed to be aware of other women's conditions. This is crucial because I needed to be in touch with people who could continuously inform me about any changes relating to women's political participation in Rwanda given (especially) that I am now based in England.

Like the local experts, the international experts were also known to me and had vast working experience on women's rights in Rwanda. They are internationally recognised gender experts. For example Dr. Shirley Randell was initially working for Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and later the first director and initiator of a gender and women studies department in Rwanda. She is a renowned international feminist from Australia. The second advisor Elizabeth Powley is an American activist who worked in Rwanda and conducted a number of surveys on women's political participation in Rwanda, a number of which have been referenced in this research. Additionally, the international experts had close interaction with Rwandan female leaders at individual, collective and working levels. This suggested that there was correlation between their interaction, with awareness of gendered issues that female politicians in Rwanda were facing; at least to a certain level.

In relation to accessing participants, a number of strategies were used (and in most cases all used to access one respondent), the major ones included formal application letters (Appendix IV) through administrative structures, using gate keepers, identifying

⁵¹ The local advisors' names are not mentioned due to their political positions in Rwanda and they are not aware of each other as regards advising this PhD.

individuals by attributions and personal background as posted on Rwandan government website/s and NGO websites, snowballing, internet and telephone calls, and in a few cases I approached a new respondent while I waited for an interviewee in their secretariats.

Research Schedule

The interview questions (Appendix III) were designed to explore how female politicians are balancing family responsibilities and paid work, and in which ways participation in politics has impacted on their lives and career paths. I undertook intensive reading about feminism and feminist research to understand the historical and theoretical setting of women's rights and empowerment. My desire to get a deep sociological⁵² understanding of the situation of female politicians as it relates to the research questions took me through four drafts adjusted according to observations made during supervisions. With the assistance from my supervisors, the question designing process was also about self discovery as a person influenced and situated in the same cultural context of the study in question (Hersse-Biber et al. 2004:12-14). Additionally, the questions were specifically formulated to minimise my bias to the fullest extent possible by opening up questions to avoid leading questions for example. The preliminary readings, and the Rwandan empirical texts about women's political participation provided the basis for themes around which the questions were drafted. The interview schedule was organised into four broad areas.

The first section focused on respondent's background information (e.g. previous work, personal information, how they entered politics, what made it possible for women to come to politics in big numbers, and meaning of gender equality). The second section looked at ways in which women experienced balancing family and political roles and how it impacts on their lives (e.g. issues of motherhood and mothering, time worked a day, how political work impacts on family work and relations, and whether women felt that they were fulfilling their responsibilities both in the family and at work). The third

⁵² Having no background in sociology, I had to read and get equipped with sociological perspectives and theories that would enable me to analyse gender issues and perspectives that are related to women's rights and empowerment. Intensive reading, especially of feminist theories both from the South and the West helped in tuning my understanding of the would be normal gendered nature of "womanhood" in Rwanda. With my legal background, sociological theories gave a strong insight into what kind of questions I needed to ask the respondents in order to bring about narratives around meaningful gender equality responses.

section initially aimed at exploring whether women politicians' experiences varied by their level of involvement in politics and domestic work. However, during interviews the theme that emerged most especially from their stories related to the challenges of balancing motherhood and political work. Therefore, this section was revised to focus on ways in which motherhood and mothering impact on women politician's lives, while varied experiences due to political involvement became a follow-up question. The final section looked at women's social-political experiences in the workplace and in which ways they would want to see things change. Interviews were rehearsed with two female friends who were degree holders although none of them had any experience in gender and women's rights or in politics. However, it allowed me to reflect on the synergy of questions and gauge the length of interviews.

During data collection (see next section), respondents raised issues that were pertinent to the research phenomenon, which were incorporated in the research questions. For instance, such issues included the role of modern house tools in reducing women's workload. The participants received three guide questions before the interview on the information sheet (see below) to allow them to understand what to expect during the interviews. Where formal procedures of seeking interviews were involved, such as with cabinet ministers or members of an organisation such as Pro-Femmes, a letter of introduction (Appendix V) and the interview request letter (Appendix IV) were submitted to the secretariat with attached information sheet (Appendix VI). In other cases, I either sent these documents by email or handed them to the respondent personally – in all these cases I had talked to the respondent on the telephone and arranged with them how to get the information-sheet to them. Although I was known to some of my participants, I was well aware that for people to talk about their personal lives, they really needed to know the “whats” and the “hows” of the research as I go on to discuss.

Information sheet and Consent Form

The information sheet (Appendix VI) contained background information for respondents to understand the nature of my research before agreeing to interviews and sign the consent form (Appendix VII). It aimed at giving participants basic information about the research before deciding on whether to take part. It was also aimed at allowing respondents to think about the research and build confidence before the actual interview. Despite my attempts to send the information sheet prior to the actual

interviews, in most cases the respondents had not read it before the time of interview. In addition to most respondents' busy schedule that did not allow time to read the information sheet prior the actual interview, they may also have not received the information sheet for the following reasons: the secretary may have forgotten to attach it to the letter of request especially where more than one participant were identified from the same organ, or the interview appointment may have been fixed at short notice on the phone, or the participant might have displaced the information-sheet before reading it. In two cases where the respondents were non English speakers, I interpreted the information-sheet for the participants before the interview in addition to a brief introduction provided on the telephone. I did not translate the information sheet and the questionnaires because most elite Rwandans, especially the Francophones, do understand the English language at a basic level and I also knew that before any interview I would go through the consent form and the information sheet with the respondents for reasons of clarity. In all of the interviews I carried with me a spare copy in case the respondent forgot it or did not get it before interview time.

As regards the consent form, I provided it to the respondent to read and then asked if she had any concerns or questions for me to answer, then I would go on and ask her to sign it if she agreed to be interviewed. Where the respondent consented interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed for analysis. However, with my prior non-academic research experience, I knew that consent forms were rather unpopular in Rwanda. I personally had difficulties with finding a way of servicing it to my participants and was also not comfortable with asking someone to sign for talking about her life experience, more especially considering that the majority of women were high profiled personalities. Marshall and Rossman (2006:89) state that "informed Consent is based on principles of individualism and free will – also a uniquely Western cultural assumption". While it is important to officialise consent with the respondents' personal signature, in my case I found this practice not applicable to all cases. For instance, the majority of the respondents especially from formal politics appeared to be uncomfortable with it. What seemed to be unusual, and of concern to some of my respondents was not the information on the consent form but their actual signature, although I did not establish why.

Basing on Humphries and Martin (2000) ideas, I explained to the participants that the consent form was a university ethics committee approval requirement for no reasons other than proof of expression to participate in the study. I further mentioned to them

that it is intended to protect their rights as participants by providing sufficient information about the study for them to fully understand its aims. Their acceptance to sign it seemed to be built on the idea of interviewer and interviewee trust, perhaps in part because of my “insider” status (Klenke 2008). Similarly, Silverman (2005) argues that informed consent is crucial because it explains how the data will be used and recorded. In my case also, it was important in terms of assuring my respondents that the information obtained would be securely kept and that it was to be used by me alone and for the purposes of writing the thesis. This was helpful as regards soliciting trust from ten interviewees who did not know me especially. It acted as a bond between the interviewee and interviewer especially because it bears a signature from both of us.

Ethical Issues

Several qualitative research writers assert that interviews pose a number of ethical and practical complex issues (see Seale 2002; Marshall and Rossman 2006), depending on the type of interviewees involved and the type of research. Additionally, if the research is of a sensitive nature, for example, if it involves political critiquing or social and criminal exploration, a high level of confidentiality and anonymity is involved and the researcher may have to walk an extra mile to convince the respondents that they will not be personally identified. In relation to my research, there were serious ethical and practical issues involved because my respondents were public figures and politicians deemed as opinion leaders in Rwandan society. Despite them being educated adults, responsible for personal judgement and able to consent to the research, asking about personal experiences is more likely to give rise to sensitive information that is private to the interviewee. In my research I was aware of the fact that the participants may become emotional as they narrate their stories or life history, and above all I was aware of how their life stories if not kept anonymous may affect someone’s career, family relations, and/or public image and status. For instance, in Rwandan tradition family issues are considered private; exposing a respondent’s narration as regards her family has the potential to create conflicts in her family. Exposing such information without anonymity, especially given that the interviewees were public figures, is likely to attract public attention (e.g. media and press) and/or social stigma. This is evidenced by one case where the respondent hesitantly signed the consent form but in return refused to be tape recorded. However, despite this respondent’s negative perception of a consent form, my explanations to the respondents included my commitment to confidentiality

and anonymity and that they had a right not to answer a question that they did not wish to and that they had a right to withdraw from the research any time.

Application of some research ethics has been such a tricky and challenging process. This is more evident in relation to the application of consent forms, confidentiality and respondent anonymity. Rwanda is a small country and most development activities centre on the capital Kigali. In the political circle, especially, the majority of the people know each other making it hard to include some personal narratives in case that would lead to identifiability of the woman in question. For instance, I decided not include respondent's titles or office, some of the background information such as marital status, work experience, and whether they lived and worked in different cities with their husbands. It was a conflictual process for me, I felt like I am betraying my feelings and also being unjust for not representing the respondent's views properly. In some circumstances respondents did not feel the necessity for anonymity and expressed this when I asked them to sign the consent form. For some respondents, considering that my respondents were politicians, and/or activists, they had wished to be identified with their views. However, much as I had to abide by research ethical and confidentiality rules, it also would have been difficult for me to draw a binary between suitable and unsuitable information for anonymity.

Having completed the project approval procedure, my next step was to meet the necessary logistical needs. These included transport (both to and from the country of research, and within the country), accommodation, communication, living facilities, and childcare. Meeting these needs was a prerequisite for the research success due to two major reasons: as a self sponsored student with no continuous income, and having my one year and five months child with me in the field. A lot has been written about the challenges of motherhood and paid work, (Phoenix et al. 1991; Richardson 1993; Crompton 2007; Craig 2009). In this context, one of the foreseen challenges that I had to minimise was to reduce the "overload" (Lewis 1991) of work relating to balancing motherhood and fieldwork, especially as regards respecting interview appointments. Together with limited resources, this also influenced my decision to conduct research in one geographical area in order to manage travel distance from one respondent to another. With logistical factors settled and mind at peace, then I was ready for fieldwork. However, this does not mean that there were no challenges as regards these issues as explained in the following section.

Field Work

Having completed all the procedures, documents and forms required for fieldwork, I set off for Kigali (Rwanda). I initially planned to conduct my fieldwork in two phases over six months: the first phase scheduled to begin in May/2010 to last for approximately three months, and the second phase to be determined later after analysing the first set of interviews conducted during phase one with an aim to focus on the major themes raised in phase one. However, as I will describe in the section on fieldwork supervision, interviews went well and all were done in the first phase. I and my supervisors took this decision based on analysis and pace within which the pilot interviews were conducted. We agreed to reduce the data collection period to a shorter period which lasted approximately five months. Although this was intensive and somewhat stressful, it was better than going back for a second phase at a later stage due to a number of reasons including, a possibility of political changes after presidential elections and due to logistical challenges.

Getting settled in Rwanda

On my immediate arrival in Rwanda, I attended the *International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Promoting, Accelerating and Sustaining Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* with two major targets: to update myself with current issues relating to women's empowerment including political participation in Rwanda, and to follow-up on the interview application letters I had sent before leaving the UK. This was a conference that was attended by Rwandan female leaders and activists of all categories. The two targets were largely met; I followed up on my letters with respondents who attended the conference, and also gathered contacts of other women who might be interested. In the same week I also made sure that I had all the materials and office ware needed for my research such as photocopied information-sheets and consent forms, enough paper, envelopes and proper locking area for my research materials.

Meeting research advisors

I contacted and separately met three of my advisors in the first week I arrived in Kigali as the fourth was not in Rwanda. I had initially sent them my information sheet and interview schedule for comments and observations. This time I met with them to seek their views on the information-sheet and the interview schedule, to touch base, seek views about participant access, and to seek general updates including on women's promotion, and safety as this was a time when grenades were (scantly) being thrown in

public places coupled with the fact that the country was soon having presidential elections.

Recruitment and interviews

As already discussed, I had previously worked for the Ministry of Gender and Women's Promotion which gave me the opportunity to know and work with a number of politicians in Rwanda – especially women politicians. I am also a member of the same women's groups as most of the women interviewed. In order to recruit participants, different approaches were used depending on the political category level; whether I knew the person or was going through a gate keeper; and whether the respondents are organised in a form of a group or association. Additionally, as mentioned above, I attended women's rights conferences and public lectures partly targeting meeting potential participants (or gatekeepers) who would help me to identify participants. I got some background information, for example, I got contact telephone numbers and emails, and respondents' political parties and constituencies from the government of Rwanda website⁵³, which helped with selecting respondents based on various factors, such as political parties. Although I had made initial contacts during conferences, on the telephone, or by email with several respondents before I left the UK, there was still a good number that I had not accessed especially those from local government. I officially submitted a written letter requesting an interview appointment with the information-sheet attached. This was difficult and time consuming because it involved going back for a follow-up or making a phone call to the secretary – in most cases more than once. For the women that I did not personally know or have their personal contact details, I either made use of snowball and gate keeper methods to introduce me and my research to the participant. This reduced what otherwise would have been a bureaucratic and lengthy waiting period, especially as my research would not have been a priority for this category of participants. If I had no gatekeeper I used formal procedures, which as I mentioned before involved submitting an interview request letter to the secretariat after which I followed up with a phone call. This was the hardest category to access because it involved more than one time follow-up calls and/or driving to the office. In rare cases it involved having to call the participants themselves. Calling a Minister in this case, for example, was a hard decision and last resort option because one would not know the most appropriate time to call or how the Minister would consider it. As a result it was

⁵³ <http://www.gov.rw>, this website provides linkages to the three branches of government (Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary) and key government bodies instituted under each branch of government.

on very rare cases that this approach was used - in one particular case the secretary advised me to speak to the minister on the phone, I called her, she picked the phone and told me she was busy and that I should deal with the secretary. Then another member of staff advised me to send an email to her and attach the information sheet-again, which worked. I had to use all the strategies possible to get this participant because I considered her one of the most important participants due to her responsibilities.

I wanted to interview female ministers whose department had been cited by parliamentary participants as key ministries for gender-mainstreaming piloting. I submitted my application letters to those that were headed by women. Interview cancellation was common, including several at the interview scene. Knowing that most of the respondents in this category were busy politicians, coupled with the fact that they are women, who after work, may be rushing home to do their domestic chores, I expected this and made myself ready for short notice appointments or cancellations. Apart from a few cases where the participants knew about changes in time and forgot to notify me about interview cancellation, I was notified beforehand or as soon as it happened. A good example of such cases is when an interviewee was called at short notice by her colleague to attend to a presidential campaign in their district just four minutes into the interview. The interviewee apologised, sighed and quickly picked her bag to leave. While she was letting me out of her office she politely said “Justine why don’t you just write what you see, this is the way we work, it is so stressful my dear”. Similar situations happened to three of my respondents at the level of local government leadership. In two of these cases, the respondents managed to allocate just a few minutes while one had to be rescheduled. At the ministerial level, there were no cancellations; instead, those that I did not manage to interview did not schedule the meetings at all although one of them had put a note on my request asking the secretary to find time for my interview which did not materialise until I left. However, this might explain that in most cases the ministers, unlike the mayors, might be aware of their programs before hand.

To deal with cancellations, I made provisional interviews. In cases where the sample category had a large number to draw from (such as the Chamber of Deputies and CSOs), snowballing was very useful because I always identified participants with a provisional respondent who would be someone I knew well and who would be motivated to talk about my research area. This was useful as a response to cancellations and timing. When a respondent was not available and informed me in time, I managed

to get another participant under the same category of research interest⁵⁴. Imperative to note here is the fact that knowing the place and the culture of your research environment helps a lot in expecting and dealing with these types of challenges. Having conducted research and worked with the government before, I prepared for cancelled and postponed interviews.

For the Nineteen (out of thirty-five) individual participants that I personally knew, I followed the same route. I submitted an interview request letter but later followed this up with a phone call without having to go through the administrative assistant. Generally these interviews were easier to arrange. Although there were a number of cancellations still, at least I was in contact or even in control of my schedule. Generally, identification of participants was manageable and allowed me to follow the process and identify which respondents to try to interview first. As a result, in the beginning, I targeted formal politicians as I believed that they would be the ones to get involved in the elections at high levels. Additionally, even within formal politics, I prioritised the hard to reach participants first, especially those I did not know and did not have gate keepers to intervene on my behalf if need be. In the next section I go on to describe how data was collected.

Conducting interviews

The interview schedule was tested out using three pilot interviews which I transcribed and sent to my supervisors for observations. Although I had twice tested the research schedule to gauge interview timing and synchronization, I had not conducted pilot interviews with women politicians before going to Rwanda for the actual fieldwork. Additionally, from the pilot interviews the supervisors needed to see whether the research questions were responding to the aims of the study before going any further. The three pilot interviews were part of the general interviews and were selected from different research categories save for the Ministers. One interview was conducted with a long time serving member of parliament. This participant also is a member of the ruling party, and she had children both before and after joining politics. The second pilot was identified by one of my advisors as a feminist who joined politics from civil society activism. The third pilot was from a women's group that is a semi-government organ that represents women throughout the administrative levels including the first chamber

⁵⁴ The "reserve" respondent was usually someone I personally know. I was honest and provided full information about the range of time it might take me to reach her, for example. Five respondents were kind to allow this arrangement and they all took place in the respondent's office. Only one reserve interview failed because the respondent was called upon to attend to an ill child.

of parliament. I chose this one particularly because of her direct involvement with women's rights advocacy and women's empowerment roles. In my understanding, although the NGP (2010:12) outline three Government gender mechanisms (see also Appendix I), the NWC appeared to be the only mechanism that is specifically charged with women's promotion without being tied to gender relations. Choosing pilot interviews from differing backgrounds aimed at testing different themes in the schedule. After receiving the supervisors' feedback I reflected on them and then revised the research schedule to respond to big themes that were emerging.

With the feedback and go ahead from my supervisors, I started to plan how best the interviews could be managed and conducted. Important to note is the timing of these interviews. The interviews started at the time when Rwanda generally and politicians in particular were getting ready for presidential elections. I arrived in Rwanda on the 17th of May while elections were to take place on the 9th of August. Though the actual campaigns had not yet started it was clear that preparation was underway, especially for the local leaders. This situation meant that I had to move faster before the actual campaigns started in order to get interview time. The practical observation of unscheduled working environment, the physical stress and tiredness, and the apologetic feeling expressed by most respondents who had to cancel interviews at the last minute (sometimes a number of times) was also a source of information to my research. Additionally, observing this situation appeared like I was studying the practical part of these women's narratives of their working institutional culture, just as two of the women reiterated "Justine why can't you write what you are seeing?" It emotionally connected me with the research, reinforced my knowledge about these women's experiences and reinforced my vigour for exploring and documenting Rwandan female politicians working environment.

However, it should be emphasised here that conducting research at this particular time was in a way a gamble. I anticipated participants being busy and inaccessible; however, I consulted with my local advisors who advised me to go ahead with my research plans because politicians are always busy anyway. One of them also pointed to the fact that there will be cases when some of the politicians will have time despite presidential campaigns. I concluded that conducting interview would be easier in this period rather than in post-election due to the following reasons:

1. Good time for observations in order to practically explore women's working institutional environment;

2. I considered this time less busy for the politicians than in the aftermath of the elections when they might be pre-occupied with reviewing and refocusing policy and programmes;
3. I anticipated a change in government and/or a reshuffle which might affect my participant sample in terms of category and number,
4. Lastly, easy access of participants due to campaign forums. I attended campaigns whenever possible to meet with female politicians who moved around campaigning for their political parties.

Resultantly, while the campaigns were going on around the country, it did not stop my interviews. As already mentioned, the majority of the respondents in formal politics were interviewed after one or several cancellations. However, I had no guarantee that interviews would not have been postponed if the research was conducted outside election preparations and campaigns. The major challenge associated with this timing was related to use of resources like fuel and communication and management of my time.

Interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 1hr and 45 minutes, this required focus especially for respondents who had a very short time. Planning and managing short interviews was a challenge, but it was a learning process and I kept adjusting accordingly. In very short interviews, I used the key themes, with less emphasis on background information. Tape recording allowed time maximisation while acquiring as much information as I could. In one out of twenty-nine interviews, recording was not accepted by the respondent. However, she allowed as much time as I wanted, and asked me to get back to her in an email if at a later stage there was something that was not clear to me. While my interviews were recorded there are times when I made notes. For instance, when a new idea or theme was raised by a respondent, in case of an emotional narrative⁵⁵ or in case the respondent using a vernacular term that would be hard to translate and also when a respondent raised a point that I thought might be a good example and/or quote.

However, despite my attempts to maximise information gathering methods by continuous adjustment to the realities of fieldwork, I was aware of some of the weaknesses of interview methods (e.g. see Kvale 1983). For instance, Rwanda is a small country which allows easy communication of policies. With this in my mind I

⁵⁵ The women became emotional when they were especially talking about their failure to spend quality time with their children and in a few cases about marital discord relating to domestic work and time spent out of the home.

anticipated that respondents may cite common beliefs around gender relations, which would overshadow individual gendered experiences. Much as it was hard for me to draw a clear line between such information and individual lived experience based information provided by respondents, I used focused probing during interviews.

Being Rwandan and known to the majority of participants, was advantageous in relation to easier access, and to a large extent as regards getting trust and openness from the participants. Most of the participants who knew me, were open to me with hope that my research would contextually represent their views and advocate for change required to progress women's rights in Rwanda. But also, I was aware that being Rwandan could be disadvantageous in some ways. For example, some respondents might want to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear rather than talking about the real issues that may affect their lives. Another challenge that I predicted related to the sensitivity of the women's individual life experiences. As mentioned earlier, family issues in Rwandan tradition are so secretive and I being Rwandan, unless the respondent knew me pretty well, might question my ability not to talk about her situation to other people. As already mentioned however, I explained that all the information given to me was going to be treated with high confidentiality and anonymity.

Fieldwork supervision

Supervision was conducted by way of Skype. There was back and forth systematic communication with supervisors which involved both verbal and written transcripts sent by email. The communication related to any issue of concern to my research and where necessary to my life. These included comments and observations on transcribed interviews, changes to the research period and research schedule, suggestions from research advisors and interviewees, and personal concerns. Supervision was done in due time and in an effective way. For example, for reasons of confidentiality and security of data, we agreed that we use the university emailing system. Another example of online fieldwork effective supervision is that it was decided that I conduct as many interviews as I could and finish fieldwork in one phase based on the preliminary analysis of the first 6 - 8 interviews.

Supervision continued and was scheduled every month, and some times more than once a month if we needed to discuss anything urgent. During supervisions, notes of striking points were taken and later cross-checked with supervisors' written version sent to me by email. This process helped with polishing my research methods if any new themes

emerged. Additionally spontaneous and efficient supervision during fieldwork facilitated not only data quality but also shortened fieldwork duration by two months.

Transcribing and Translating

Seventeen out of twenty-nine interviews were undertaken in Kinyarwanda, and the rest were conducted in English. Also a few of the interviews conducted in English, the respondents were originally Francophones thus affecting the quality of English which will be reflected in some of the quotes. In some cases languages were mixed and it included more than two languages. Kinyarwanda and English were predominantly used, but also there was scant usage of French and Luganda languages. In all these cases, I personally translated the interviews in English.

Although I am fluent in Kinyarwanda, English, and Luganda⁵⁶, my understanding of French is very basic. However, I made it clear at the beginning of my interviews that I did not understand French giving the respondents two options. In most cases where French was used, it was those words that are commonly used in Rwanda and have taken a local language meaning. If I did not understand the word used, I noted it down and I asked the respondent to tell me the meaning in an appropriate time without breaking the conversation. It is important to note that, in most of the cases where respondents mixed languages, my observation was that they were talking about emotional issues or they wanted to emphasise a point. Sharing the multiple “identities” with these respondents created a friendly interview environment for them to narrate their experiences and views in the language they deemed most suitable.

What simplified my work also is the fact that I am an experienced simultaneous interpreter which made my translating while transcribing easier. The actual translation took place during transcription, and it was done simultaneously. I did not involve another translator for two reasons: because I thought that a translator may not understand the context of the interviews or may not necessarily be a gender expert thus distorting data validity as emphasised by Simon (1996), cited in Temple and Young (2004:165) “The solutions to many of the translator’s dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities”; and also because of ethical issues regarding

⁵⁶ In this case, a few of the respondents who grew-up in Uganda, knowing that I knew the language, their narratives switched back and forth between English, Kinyarwanda and to Luganda.

confidentiality and anonymity for reasons discussed earlier in this chapter, such as Kigali being a small place where most people are likely to know each other. Doing translation by myself was easier and closer to the actual meaning because I was involved in the interviews and could connect with the silent pauses, the mood, and gestures used by participants.

By listening, typing and note taking I was able to memorise, master and translate interviews. The process of listening and note taking during data collection made transcribing easier in terms of understanding and of typing speed. Other scholars such as Twinn (1997) in her exploratory study examining the influence of translation on the validity and reliability of qualitative data in nursing, illustrated cases where a translator's lack of contextual and cultural meanings may lead to distortion of information, thus jeopardising the interviewee's views and experiences. Being an insider, and understanding the language/s and its cultural and theoretical setting, positioned me to carry out translation by myself. However, there are times when I have had to quote directly some information in the local language. This has happened in circumstances where I cannot get the equivalent slogan or saying in English that could bring up contextual meaning. In such cases however, I have provided in the text the literal meaning or an explanatory meaning of such a saying, word or gesture in the footnote.

Conducting translation and transcribing simultaneously had both advantages and challenges. On the positive note, it was cost-effective because I did not pay for translation services, simple in management as I did not have to deal with a third party, quicker because I did not have to write two different language based transcripts, and above all it helped with being closer to the respondent's meanings of their narratives. On the negative note however, it was very time consuming and tiring. Much as I saved time through simultaneous translation, it took me longer than if I only had to transcribe the interviews from one language. At a certain moment it felt like a "heavy load" that I had to lay down for some time. However, I took a break from translating and transcribing and spent a few weeks on literature review covering some of the concepts that had started to emerge.

Data Analysis

Supervisions and the literature review introduced me to the existence of different ways of research analysis that I could draw from. Geertz (1973:9) defines analysis as "sorting out the structures of significance". This means that I had to find the most effective way

to sort out the significance of information provided by my respondents during data collection given sample size and time demands of a PhD. Kvale (1983:9) argues that analysis of interviews is “time-consuming and stressing” and often brought to an end by the time limit of the research period rather than satisfactoriness in data analysis.

Notwithstanding the relevance of this argument however, Miles and Huberman (1994:10) pointed out that whatever approach taken for qualitative research analysis, there are three major steps to be taken: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verifications. I began analysis with revisiting notes taken during interviews, transcribing and sometimes from listening to the voice recorder. Identified themes were then highlighted on the margins of the transcripts. I reduced my data by coding and re-coding data into themes and subthemes (this will be discussed later in this section).

While conducting analysis, I was well aware of some of the critics of qualitative data analysis such as Draper (2004:644) who argued that “a common criticism of qualitative data analysis is that it is very subjective and merely reflects the researcher’s own biases and interests”. Subjectivity plays a part in this research and is the foundation of this research due to my position as explained in the introductory section. As emphasised by several qualitative scholars (Kvale 1983; Nielsen 1990; Harding 1991; Shulamit 1992; Few, et al. 2003), subjectivity in research gives meaning to research, but this does not mean that research of this kind is based on personal interests of the researcher. Rather my aim was to focus on women politician’s personal lived experiences of balancing their private and public roles, which could be best addressed by qualitative semi-structured one-to-one interview method. To achieve this, I repeatedly listened and worked with the transcripts which enabled better understanding of the respondent’s ideas. For example, reading transcripts while listening to its recorded version enabled me to analyse data through the actual narratives and gestures (for instance hitting the table or raising one’s voice). – taking me back to the actual interview mood at the time of the interview.

Bryman (2004:399), asserts that data analysis is “inter-looped” in data collection and data analysis stages, however, in my case, analysis during data collection was limited by the pace of interviews and uncertainty. I aimed at collecting as many interviews as possible before the actual presidential election period, but also I had always to be ready to find and/or fix an alternative interview if there were cancelations. However, it should be noted that preliminary analysis took place during the first six interviews (three pilot interviews and three other interviews), as well as during the transcription and translation

process. The first six interviews analysis aimed at testing the questions' ability to elicit rich data.

During data collection, basic analysis work included fieldwork note taking and listening to recorded interviews before starting the next day. Reading through the notes taken and listening to recorded interviews sometimes led to new questions for probing or for initiating a new question. For example, one of the new concepts mentioned by a respondent was that modern house equipment would facilitate women in doing their house roles quickly, and as a factor that would persuade men to do domestic roles. I consequently used this as a probe question in other interviews for further development. This analytical stage, which Bryman (2004:399) calls "*interactive*" made it possible to examine whether the unique issues raised by a respondent were raised by other (even if not all) respondents and in which ways. Data analysis during data collection provided room for flexibility in the research process, especially considering some researchers' caution about the credibility of qualitative research methods (Boulton and Hammersley 2006; Walliman 2006). In other words, qualitative research methodology allowed me to interpret and to incorporate new ideas. At this level of the research process, analysis enabled my research to be directed by the respondents' views (Patton 1990; Eisner 1991; Walliman 2006). For instance, Walliman (2006:129) stated:

Periodic analysis of collected data provides direction to further data collection. Adjustments to what is examined further, what questions are asked and what are carried out is based on what has been already seen, answered and done.

However, most of the analysis took place after data collection. This involved revisiting the already transcribed data for further analysis. I typed and translated each interview concurrently, and during this process I made note of any striking ideas of importance on the margin of the page as suggested by Patton (1980), and which in the same vein, Sapsford and Jupp (1996) suggest is necessary for the sake of analysis. This became a tool in identifying common and diverging perspectives across interviews.

Being aware of the challenges associated with understanding non-verbal expressions I employed Swift's (1996) ideas about listening to the audio records as many times as possible. This was done with an aim to submerge myself into the data and its surrounding mood. Additionally I was aware that continuous listening to audio recorded interviews helped with validating transcripts and translation. This was an effective tool of analysis to the extent that I could even remember quite a number of interviewees that

raised the same issue and what meaning accorded to it. Though this was a tough and time consuming process, it would have been difficult to familiarise with the data for the 29 interviews conducted. At a later stage, in the drafting of the three data chapters (4-6) specifically, listening to tapes was useful in cross-checking suitability of quotes.

I again listened to each tape while reading each transcript before coding the interviews according to themes which would later be coded according to the key research questions. Though aware of how hard and time consuming it would be, it made it easier for me during the actual coding of data and identification of similar concepts, a process which Bryman (2004:408) says that is the “starting point for most forms of qualitative data analysis”. I then concentrated on reading each transcript while recording and/or highlighting as much information as I could find. Then I started to go through my notes identifying relations with each transcript. At this time, I started to code which idea was raised several times by different interviews, was it raised in different wording, are there some that can be merged, and trying to see if there were connections or disconnections across the interview transcripts. I then grouped the transcripts per major ideas coming up; a process similar to what Bryman (2004:402) called “selective coding”. This exercise helped me to keep track of the major ideas coming up and starting to merge similar ones into a theme.

At this stage I revisited my list of questions and started to relate ideas to questions so that I can link data to the general conceptual framework of the research, a process which was followed by cutting, and pasting quotes, and aligning them to themes and subthemes. I renamed and merged those that seemed to mean the same or be under the same concepts. After cutting the quotes I created word documents for each theme, with same quotes put into more than one folder because there were correlations across themes.

What seems to be the final stage of manual coding was the act of aligning concepts to the wider theoretical framework. Sequencing of ideas at this stage had started to come up. This was very useful because it helped me to use the generally accepted concepts that will be easy to understand by my readership. I reduced the codes and narrowed them to a manageable and effective thesis that responds to the interviewees’ lives (Kvale 1983; Marshall and Rossman 1995) but also dropped some concepts in order to focus on those that were key to the research questions and raised by the majority of the respondents. The data was now starting to be clearer, narrower and enjoyable, thus shading a clearer picture for chapterisation which seemed to be shattered by the massive

data recorded and transcribed at the beginning of data analysis. After this process the next step was to explore and document how participation in politics impacts on Rwandan female politicians' lives.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the methodology and methods used in data collection. I began by describing the research design emphasising feminist research theories that advance the importance of respondents' "voice". I described the approaches used for sampling and access and went on to explain the method used: semi-structured one-to-one interviews. I then went on to explore the major ethical issues that emerged with a focus on consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. In each of the sections of this chapter I discussed some of the challenges encountered and how I addressed them. The rich data obtained was not only informative but the whole data collection process was also a learning and therapeutic process for me. In the following three data chapters, I will explore the themes that emerged from this process beginning with the next chapter discussing how Rwanda women accessed politics, a brief analysis of their gains from political participation and a concise analysis about their representational role.

CHAPTER FOUR: Situating Women in Politics

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, Rwanda is well regarded for its success in promoting women to decision-making positions; especially in the chamber of deputies where women compose 63.8% (IPU, 2013) of the total number. While there is research detailing the achievements made by the women and Rwandan government as regards women's promotion, there is hardly any research focusing on the process involved in including women in politics. The women interviewed in this study described their political journey from the early years (second half of 1990s) of women's promotion into politics up to the time of the interviews (2010) and commented on their anticipated way forward. Their accounts reflect the complex and multi-faced task of situating women in the context of politics in the presence of political will but in most cases with the lack of skills to articulate female politicians' perspectives (see Chapter Two), coupled with a highly gendered and polarised gender division of labour (Hunt 1990; Bock and James 1992; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). For example, the first cohort (part of the transitional government 1994-2003) of female parliamentarians who were interviewed illustrated how female politicians (all appointed) who made it to politics faced a male dominated and biased environment that they believed looked at female members as a "bunch of women that had to be there", to use words of one of the respondents. This is further exemplified by the 2003 parliament and the 2006 local government elected interviewees who used words such as "mobilised", "pushed" and "forced"⁵⁷, which reflects how hard the process of empowering Rwandan women to join decision-making was.

This chapter describes respondents' views on how and why it was possible for women to come into politics in large numbers, and goes on to discuss their views about the ways in which they benefited from political participation and the kind of challenges they experienced at work. It is divided into two major sections. Section one examines the underlying factors behind female politicians' journey to political involvement. It examines respondents' views about why and how the Rwandan government attained

⁵⁷ Though the respondents used words like "forced and pushed", they appeared to be used in a positive sense. Until 2006 Local Government elections, the women's accounts suggest that Rwandan women feared politics and also appeared to have an inferiority complex to the extent that women's organisations in collaboration with female politicians, with the support of international organisations used strategies such as awareness and training meetings to mobilise and coach women in preparation for campaigns.

large numbers of women's political participation in less than two decades. As illustrated by most research on Rwandan women and politics (e.g. Powley 2005; Kayumba 2010; Burnet 2011; Bauer 2012), it took the concerted efforts of women's groups solidarity (including female politicians forums) on the one hand, and the government's efforts on the other, to continuously encourage women to take up political posts (Baines 2003; Powley 2003). Analysis of the respondents' accounts in this study suggest that though both of these factors seemed to be at work, the government was perceived to have played a key role – a role that appears to have enormously contributed to women's self-esteem and confidence to take up political posts, as I will illustrate in this chapter.

The second section of the chapter explores whether women's involvement in politics is seen to make a difference to political processes and outcomes; especially for women rights. While most respondents upheld their role in representing other women, they also acknowledged that they had not done enough to transform the institutional culture, and believed that this was partly because women participation in a patriarchal society is a contentious issue which may require step by step approaches in order to curtail resistance. Female politicians who held this view commented that the priority was to transform policy and laws, and to alter social attitudes towards women and politics. However, the majority of the women felt that they had made dramatic changes to policy, laws and social attitudes and thought that it was time for cultural and institutional transformation in a more practical way (see Chapter Seven). As argued across this thesis, and as Lister (2012:376) proposes “the re-gendering of citizenship needs, first, to embrace both individual rights (and in particular social and reproductive rights) and political participation, broadly between the two”.

Women's Accession to Political Participation in Rwanda

This section examines women views about ways of addressing women exclusion from politics in Rwanda. Respondents held similar views on the major factors that alleviated gendered discriminatory practices and norms that they believed had hindered Rwandan women from political involvement. The majority of the women suggested that political will seemed to be the cornerstone to fostering women's participation in politics. Other factors that were mentioned included an enabling policy and legal framework, and solidarity between female politicians and with other women organisations. However, there were varying opinions on whether some strategies – for instance affirmative action - should continue or come to an end. A few respondents also mentioned that women

mass participation is not in all areas, and sometimes women's participation is based on gendered stereotypes that associate women with improving social issues.

As shown in Section Two of Chapter One, the war and genocide left unprecedented challenges to the country. In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwandan women picked the broken pieces to rebuild lives and society (Human Rights Watch 1996; Powley 2005; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Kantengwa 2010), demonstrating their capabilities. In some ways, therefore, it is not surprising that the Rwandan government sought to tap into those capabilities in the country's journey to recovery and development. This may partly explain why the Rwandan approach to women's empowerment is top-down and based on development models (as discussed in Chapter Two) rather than changing patriarchal structures (see Chapters 5-7). For example, Carol's (Deputy) account reflected this idea:

The RPF was fighting against discrimination of any form then it brought this kind of striking a balance including based on inclusivity regardless of sex, education, name it ...

This dominant view was also expressed by Mariana (Senator) who believed that the post war and genocide period paved the way for social-political change aiming to correct past discriminatory tendencies, including gender inequality:

The major reason as to why we are where we are today is due to the efforts that the government has put in. Basing on the current trends of our country – a country that just came out of war and genocide, there was need for nation-building, in the area of nation-building we - there was a need to correct past mistakes or what was not right in the history of this country. Among those areas that needed to be corrected was the role of women in this country's leadership.

Burnet (2008:6) reiterated the idea of inclusion:

The regime has increased the participation of all citizens in the political system ... Finally, the regime has increased the representations of under-represented groups, particularly women and youth.

The above quotes appear to demonstrate that non-discrimination and diversity politics after the war and genocide was the hallmark for including women in Rwandan politics, suggesting that there is a strong link between the government's gender approach to development with post conflict Rwanda realities (see Chapter One). Likewise, several researchers argue that some post conflict countries adopt gender equality as a development goal and governance strategy (El-Bushra and Mukarubuga 1995, Waylen 2007; Ahikire 2008; Wängnerud 2009; Falch 2010). It is argued that this is more likely

to result from the fact that most of these countries design new policies to rebuild their nation providing an opportunity to push for women's rights to political participation.

However, in Rwanda according to the women this appeared to happen amidst a blurred approach to gender equality. The interviewee's ideas about the source of the Rwandan government's approach to gender equality were divided. While some respondents argued that women promotion is "homemade" to borrow Carol's (Deputy) words: "it is not something that really, is imported or just a style or fashion that has come out of the Beijing or this other kind of whatever, international influence or convention, but it is within, its homemade...", other respondents mentioned that it was also influenced by international commitment to development, as illustrated by Omega's (Executive Secretary (ES) view:

You know the government knows that if they don't promote women – you know the women are the ones who have been left behind for many years. [...] so you find that for the government to develop the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the government cannot leave women behind since they comprise the biggest population.

Similarly, as regards Africa, including Rwanda, Ballington (2004:14) in her report entitled: *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences*, concluded that in contemporary Africa international policies have influenced women's mobilisation:

Over the past few decades women's mobilisation has been influenced by recommendations from the international community, especially the 1975 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

Notwithstanding the source/s of the Rwandan government's approach to gender equality, there is a visibility to women's participation in politics. On the face of it however, despite the Rwandan government's emphasis on the importance of women's role in nation-building, some of the female politicians who joined politics in the early years (the late 1990s to 2003) of women's promotion in Rwanda said that it was hard to express their views in parliament at that time. The major reasons cited by these women were related to the fact that women's participation in politics was still new and unfamiliar making it harder for them to challenge gender power and inequalities. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, in Rwandan society women were traditionally socially, economically and politically subjected to men's supremacy. It is therefore no wonder that changing this patriarchal order to allow women access to social-political

and economic rights was socially resisted. For example, in Chapter Two I discussed how women activists had to avoid mention of gender equality and instead adopt a maternalist approach to curb resistance.

As researchers such as Newman et al. (2011) and Burnet (2013) suggest, at the time of data collection there still existed resistance to gender equality especially from the male members of Rwandan society - including some male politicians. Most of the women in this study reflected that some male colleagues had accepted women's participation as a social-political compromise. For example, Juliet described how some of their male colleagues' attitude toward female politicians was "as a certain equation that had to be there" and that female members of parliament were put in the same "ditch":

... they felt we had to be there, it was some kind of an equation that had to be there, yah, if the equation had to be worked-out, a certain number had to be there like that and we have to be there like that, even when you are in serious debate they kind of dismissed you in a certain way. There was a certain ditch they put us, in a certain basket and did not expect us to be anything beyond; if we were ten, we were supposed to be thinking like those ten women, ... (Juliet, Deputy)

Juliet went on to say that she felt that the current attitude towards female politicians among male colleagues was more positive now compared to those days (second half of 1990s):

I even see some colleagues in parliament when I first joined parliament, the way they would treat us and the interaction with each other is completely different from the men we are with today. The men we are with today not only are they supportive, they are even understanding, you can see they are understanding, they are appreciating.

As the attitudes towards women and leadership become more positive and the number of women politicians increase, the women said that they gained more confidence and they were more able to influence political processes. For example, Carol (Deputy) who joined parliament around the same time as Juliet, expressed similar views stating that in the beginning it was very hard for female politicians to influence laws and policy to protect and promote women's rights:

As a woman leader the experience I have seen in Rwanda, in the past, actually by the time I joined the parliament in 1999, it was very difficult even to pass a bill of law talking about succession and inheritance but today I think that we even claim more of that kind.

Similarly, Fannie (Deputy) who entered parliament in 2003 drew a comparison between herself and female parliamentarians who joined after the 2008 parliamentary elections.

Her view was that the newest cohort of female parliamentarians might have joined with more confidence than most of their predecessors, reflecting the importance of women representation:

What I want to be thankful for mostly is that I joined the 2003 mandate but the new entrants are not like us when they joined. By the time they joined they were already when they were in leadership levels somewhere, you see, they came with the capacity to understand that also the woman is able, if our colleagues joined, if they managed, we can also manage, so when they came they had no much fear like we had so they were sharp.

As shown in Chapter One and Two, Rwandan women were historically traditionally confined to the domestic sphere and not expected to speak in public, especially in the presence of men – socially, shyness is seen as a good trait in a woman. It is therefore likely that some Rwandan women had fear and lacked self-esteem to compete for political positions until the government and women organisations embarked on the efforts to mobilise them. Despite the challenges that the first cohort of women politicians faced, the women's accounts suggest that the gendered bias had eased with time and they attributed this to political will of their top leaders. They suggested that if top leaders are committed to women's political involvement, it is highly influential in changing social attitudes towards female politicians. Likewise, literature (e.g. Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010; Wilber 2011) shows that Rwandan women did not only take advantage of the post-conflict nation-building process, but that there was also a political will ladder to climb on in terms of progressively increasing the number of women politicians, as I will go on to discuss in the next section.

The political will to enact gender equality

Most of the women interviewed described how, in their view, the promotion of women in politics was constrained by women lack of confidence and fear of competition with men for political posts. These women held the view that political will provides a platform for women to overcome fear and cultural barriers. As is commonly heard in Rwanda, when asked about the reasons behind large numbers of women in Rwandan politics all of the women mentioned political will, especially by the Rwandan President Paul Kagame (The president) and the RPF political party, as the foundation for women's involvement in politics. The following quotes exemplify this dominant view:

Things were transitional and then joining politics, ... was by appointment. ... they (RPF) needed females to put into parliament so I was contacted as their member, as a follower if I could take up a job of being a parliamentarian

representative. At that time, I think the RPF had 13 members in parliament about half of whom were females and that is how I joined in 1999. (Juliet, Deputy)

I see the major contributing factor to be the role of political leaders we have especially His Excellence the president because he has an extra-ordinary will, he has an extra-ordinary will and dedicates time to this. (Lucia, Deputy)

The majority of the women suggested that the Rwandan president's support for gender equality and women's access to political posts served as an advocacy tool for gender equality. Indeed, most respondents expressed the view that if the president or leader of the country explicitly and practically supports women involvement in politics, the nation might follow suit:

It is the leader's commitment, the leadership that has made it possible. Because, in Rwanda we say that (*"umwera uturutse ibukuru bucya wakwiye hose"*⁵⁸) there can't be the existence of the commitment from the country's top leader, the existence of political will from those who work with him, and then it becomes impossible. (Maureen, Minister)

What is unique to us is the president of the Republic, but that was from the beginning, uuuh; as time goes on many people took it on board for sure; whether it is ministers as leaders, as leaders of what... the most important thing that really made us get involved in politics is the political will because "where there is a will there is a way". (Florida, Local Government/ LG)

The Rwanda president's level of involvement in encouraging women to join politics is reflected in his speech during the 2003 parliamentary elections as quoted by Powley (2005:159). Paul Kagame did not only appeal to women to compete for political posts, but he also encouraged them to vote for gender sensitive men:

We shall continue to appeal to women to offer themselves as candidates and also to vote for gender sensitive men who will defend and protect their interests.

While in an earlier quote Juliet (Deputy) mentioned that the first group (1994-2003) of women parliamentarians were approached by their political parties (especially the RPF) and appointed, a few women mentioned that during the democratic parliamentary elections since 2003 political will alone would not have been sufficient if women were not identified, mobilised and convinced to stand for elections:

The women as we have progressed, if you look at women since 2003, in the year 2003 all of us who joined were mobilised to join, so much energy to convince us

⁵⁸ A Kinyarwanda proverb with similar meaning to an English proverb: "As the tree, so the fruit". The author decided to align it to an English proverb because its literal meaning might not make sense to non-Kinyarwanda speakers. Literary it would be translated as "the dryness of the skin that begins from the important part, by morning it has scaled all-over the body".

to join was used, please campaign for the parliament because you have the capacity, and you would say go away, I remember I was a member of the NWC and they could say to me “go”, and I would refuse; I would think or my God how will I stand in front of people, you could see that they were actually forcing us. (Yuta Deputy)

There was a lot of trainings, so many trainings, a few women who were aware of women’s rights stood up and sensitised women to form associations, speak out, say your views, do this and that. [...] So you can understand, the country put in so much energy. (Georgia LG)

... they used to push women, women join, women join, women join until 30% was established, and they said that there must be at least 30% in the parliament and everywhere else; but you could still find that women were asking themselves – are we really going to join, should we really join - will they vote for us? (Binty LG)

Other respondents compared the difference in relation to Rwanda’s achievements and the achievements of other countries in the region in relation to pertinence of political will. Despite its challenges, such as limiting understanding of gender equality (see Chapter Two), the women held the view that the top-down approach to women’s empowerment might be effective in a number of important ways, such as in increasing women’s participation in politics, in adopting policies and laws that promote and protect women’s rights, and as regards putting in place mechanisms and machineries charged with women’s promotion:

To put it in our constitution that in all decision-making positions women must be at least 30% was not hard. But in other places, in other countries in the region it requires the existence of the top leadership then – in Rwanda it is indeed different. (Maureen Minister)

...the political will has been translated into policies, legislations and other documents. It is more the political will that has favoured the existing, a number of policies in place, institutional mechanisms in place, for example the Ministry of Gender, the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the NWC and such alike. (Doreen, Civil Society Organisation (CSO))

The political will is translated into those actions and that is why we have a very gender sensitive legal framework. I know in some countries you can draft a very, very good law but when it comes to present it to the competent organs sometimes it can take a very long time without being approved and we are happy that we have even the political will. (Kate, ES)

In her study on *Vulnerabilities of Feminist Engagement and the Challenge of Developmentalism in the South: What Alternatives?*, Ahikire (2008) expressed similar views and claimed that in Uganda, engendering policy and law was made difficult by the absence of leadership political will. She argued that Uganda’s women promotion

was engineered by global development political motives, and lacked the political will to change gendered policies and laws that would impact on women's rights in a meaningful way.

However, notwithstanding the significance of political will, another Ugandan scholar Tamale (2000), criticised the top-down approach if it is not accompanied by a strong women movement or appropriate gender expertise to address gender perspectives that affect women. In her reference to the benefits of affirmative action in the Ugandan case, Tamale (2000:11&14) argued:

The benefits to women from the affirmative action experiment are limited by the fact that it was a top-down policy [...]. There is a risk that affirmative action may become a hollow victory, which has little potential to shatter the institutional aspects of sexism in Uganda.

Similar to Tamale's argument, analysis of findings from this study suggests that despite the perceived relevance of political will, it is pertinent to study how the women in question experience this participation in bid to analyse how this has been translated in their lived experiences (see Chapters 5-6). However, as the women commented, the first step that the Rwandan government and women groups took was to open the flow to women's political participation, and as the women narratives highlighted, this was not an easy task especially as it involves changing attitudes both of the society and also building women's self-esteem. In order to provide a firm foundation for women access to politics in particular, and to improve women's legal rights generally, the women said that they embarked on engendering policy and legal frameworks and noted the significance of gender quotas, as I will go on to examine.

Gender quotas

Some studies about female politicians' role in influencing policy and legal frameworks for gender equality argue that there has been limited success irrespective of increased numbers (e.g. see Burnet 2008; Hogg 2009; 2012). For instance, Burnet (2012:204) claims that Rwandan female politicians: "rarely mobilise around women's issues and in some cases have voted for legislation that reduced legal protections for women or eliminated women-friendly policies." However, Burnet's view is challenged by Herndon and Randell (2013), who argued that such researchers perceive Rwanda democratic processes in a Western democracy lens and that they have failed to see the realities of Rwanda as a country that had the most devastating genocide and is still

rebuilding itself. Despite Herndon and Randell's recognition of the fact that women's empowerment and visibility in the public has not been replicated, for example, in the home and in the social life, they applaud Rwandan women's courage in overcoming their post war and genocide challenges and the achievements they have registered as regards incorporating women's issues in policy and laws.

In her recent study, despite questioning the impact of gender quotas in women's political power and democracy in Rwanda, Burnet (2012:205) concluded that: "The impact of gender quotas has been broad and deep, since they apply to all levels of government, from parliament all the way down to the "village" (*umudugudu*), the smallest administrative unit." All of the women in this study who accounted for the process involved in promoting women into political posts were convinced that putting in place gender specific and gender sensitive laws and policies was significant as regards solidifying women's political access. They predominantly cited policies and laws which provide for gender quotas and women specific posts that have led to an increase in women's numbers.

While this research did not explore the impact of adopting specific laws to Constitutional gender quotas, a few respondents suggested that if the specific laws and democratic processes were not adapted to the Constitution, women participation rates in Rwanda would be lower. A number of women stressed that to deal with women's exclusion from politics it is not enough to have Constitutional guarantee but that specific laws such as, for example, political party regulations should adopt Constitutional provisions about gender quotas:

... also having on the list of political parties, we had women, for example in our political party women also were put on the front, meaning that you have a man, you have a woman, like that, it is not like when you have men first on the list and women coming last. ...we went beyond 30% and now we have 56% in the first chamber of parliament which is big increment we might even go beyond it. (Ester Deputy)⁵⁹,

Specifically why it has become much better it is because in the election law it is enumerated as to how women come to parliament, there is the 24 who represent women, when you add on those who represent political parties, considering how political parties are represented in parliament, that is why it has been unusual. (Yuta, Deputy)

The other reason is the laws that regulate political parties, it stipulates that discrimination is not permitted in Rwanda and that the 30% must be respected

⁵⁹ Ester was among the first group of female representatives and is likely to have actively followed and advocated for women's political participation progress.

by political party's directorate organs, all these helped to have more women in decision-making positions. (Alicia, Senator)

In this research, most respondents explicitly articulated the relationship between, political will, adoption of gender equality laws, and women's access to political positions, and appeared to claim that the political will must be reflected in policies and practice. And for Norah (Deputy), good laws without action cannot lead to gender equality:

About the policy, gender equality can only be reached if the law is applied, for example, in the Constitution a woman and a man is equal before the law. This is to say that our laws shows the political will, we have enough laws, policies and programs. The will is not only in words but is implemented through our laws and that is something that can be verified.

Some respondents' comments about the provision of quotas in the Constitution illustrate the perceived relationship between laws and social change. While it is likely that not every political party or politician has the will and commitment to support promotion of women in politics, the dominant view among women was that the provision of quotas in the Constitution and specific laws provided a firm foundation for women's rights promotion. Similarly, Dahlerup (2005:150), in her study analysing how electoral quotas can and has augmented women's political representation (including Rwanda), emphasised that quotas "force" decision-makers to select women:

Quotas place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process, first and foremost the political parties. Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give women a chance which they do not have today in most parts of the world.

The women in this study emphasised that critical mass was important as regards role modelling, voting and decision-making powers. Most of the women who were interviewed seemed to be impressed by strides taken to promote women in politics and suggested mass participation also contributed to this success. Those women suggested that female politicians' political participation had symbolically, descriptively, and substantially represented women (see Chapter Two, p.2). They affirmed literature that advocate for critical mass (Grey 2002; 2006; Childs 2004; 2006; Childs and Krook 2006) when they mentioned that when women agree on a policy or issue, they are able to advocate and have it passed because they are the majority (see also Powley 2009).

For example, interviewees from parliament argued that they were able to pass some laws that challenged male power because of the large number of women. For example, Ester (Deputy) mentioned:

I think you have talked to other people, this has a very big impact, having many women in parliament... when we have a law and we have agreed that it will be passed, it must be voted, they (men) cannot stop it.

Fannie (Deputy) held similar views:

And what is specific to our parliament is that it passes laws that are gender sensitive. There is no more problem, why so, because being the majority you are able to accomplish something' ...for instance, that Gender Based Violence (GBV) Law, it took a whole year but if women were not many, up to now it would not have been possible to pass it.

The majority of the women believed that they represented women although they also acknowledged being representatives of all Rwandans (see also Coffé 2012). Those women emphasised how Rwandan female politicians try to comprehensively address socially discriminative practices against women through the process of influencing policy and law. For example, Juliet (Deputy) illustrated how important the physical engagement of women is in promoting women's perspectives:

We have done it well because once we are there we try to comb each and every corner of where women's lives are disadvantaged and bring it to the fore front, and so speaking, on behalf of women we have been loud and clear; and so, over time I think the women of Rwanda are going to learn or are learning that to do anything you have to be there.

Collette (Deputy) expressed a similar view point:

Taking the example of female members of parliament, we have initiated and supported laws that promote family and social harmony, [...] now we are working on the family code and as you know it has many articles that are gender discriminatory like the article that stated that a man is the head of the family.

She went on to say:

In addition to laws we also influence policies, for example we have started to engender the Rwandan budget, identifying issues that affect girls and women like this year's budget has specifically provided for health needs of the female students including sanitary pads.

However, despite women's increased participation in politics over years, a small number of respondents were critical of the fact that quotas were not implemented at all levels and that there were still gaps in relation to the number of women in decision-

making in some sectors of leadership such as in education, at lower levels of leadership and in other areas such as business:

So at what level are women represented and where does the 30% apply and where does it not apply. So to me, I would not say that we have really reached parity even if you would elaborate it further and say that maybe we have attained equality in the parliament... (Doreen, CSO)

Now, 56% in the parliament I am always following on the figures how much do we have in the local government leadership, not even the 30% that is written in the Constitution, the way we go down, how much do we have in the educational leadership like heads of aah, the chancellors and the heads of the universities... (Joy, CSO)

We are happy that in Rwanda there are different programs, but we want to go deeper, we want to go very far, if we talk about trade where are women, if we talk about export where are women? (Omega, ES)

Analysis of the interviews in this study appears to suggest that to increase the number of women, as a marginalised and historically discriminated group, in politics is not a simple task and requires multi-tiered approaches. Those approaches mentioned by the respondents included mobilisation, identification, capacity building, financial support, and, positive discrimination strategies; in other words it requires a “whole package” approach. In her analysis about why UK missed the opportunity for sex parity in the 2010 general elections, Childs (2010:109) echoed this point:

There appears to be no single answer for women’s descriptive representation that holds for all times and places. [...] However, there are a large number of hypotheses that purport to explain the variations in women’s descriptive representation. These can be broken down into cultural, socioeconomic and political factors... None, in themselves, have been found to be sufficient.

It is significant to suggest that without comprehensive and strategic actions like putting in place reserve seats where women elect representatives among themselves (at least in the initial stages of mobilisation), it might have been hard to have equal numbers in political positions in a context where traditionally leadership and politics was a reserve for men (see Hunt 1990; Kantengwa 2010; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). The women’s narratives, as discussed earlier, highlighted how some women lacked confidence and appeared to be scared of campaigns. The amalgamation of strategies such as identifying “able” women, convincing them, encouragement (assurance) from top politicians’ speeches, availing resources for training and campaigns and allowing some women to compete among themselves other than men, was considered more likely to create a pool of women leaders who can act as symbols for other women. The significance of this, as

argued by the women interviewees, is that most women who join politics in this way become confident and are more likely to compete with men in the following political elections, while giving way to new entrants of women through women alone competition. This is evidenced by the Rwandan parliamentary elections of September 2013 that increased women's percentage from 56.8 to 63.8%.

The analysis of the interviewees accounts in this study suggest that Rwandan women (in formal and informal politics) appeared to have made great strides in relation to engendering policy and legal frameworks, especially given that this happened in hardly two decades since the war and genocide against the Tutsi of 1994. The women's achievements seems to reinforce Childs' (2006:527-528) idea about the significance of both "critical mass" and "critical actors" in as far as women's representative role is concerned. In addition to the existence of political will, and policy and legal frameworks discussed above, women's solidarity and partnerships were also identified as playing a key role as regards female politicians' achievements (discussed in the next section). They acknowledged the role played by women's organisations in addressing latent cultural norms that hindered women from political involvement. Likewise, other studies have commended the work done by women's organisations in Rwanda in providing support and empowering female candidates before and during political campaigns (e.g. Powley 2008; Kantengwa 2010). The following section analyses respondents' views in relation to female politicians' partnership with women's associations, international NGO and men to promote women's rights.

Women's solidarity and partnerships

Despite the existence of political will and positive laws aimed at increasing the number of women in politics, female politicians experiences of their journey into politics suggests that it would have been difficult to attract them if women's groups (both governmental and non-government) did not engage with the process to address social barriers such as, for instance, women's low self-esteem. Women's organisations⁶⁰ represent different categories including civil society, community based organisations, and female politician's forums. As the quotes below illustrate, in Rwanda the civil society seems to work closely with the government,⁶¹ especially in relation to women's

⁶⁰ The key organisations include Profemmes Twese-Hamwe, and its member organisations, FRWP, NWC, MGEPROF, GMO and the donor organisations such as UN Women.

⁶¹ The partnership between government bodies and the civil society has been criticised by Burnet (2008; 12) as a weakness in as far as civil society's role to challenge Rwandan government is concerned. However, although I highlight this issue as an area for further study, despite the dilemmas relating to such

rights. Respondents mentioned that women's organisations' partnerships contributed to addressing traditional and cultural barriers to Rwandan women's involvement in politics. For example, Omega (ES) had this to say:

The government of Rwanda has engineered the whole process of women's promotion by putting in place different mechanisms to help the women realise their potentials. So, the mechanisms which were put in place by government helped to put the initiatives together especially the NWC. ... the collaboration between the government and the CSO especially the women associations. ... even other partners, United Nations and other bilateral partners, all these forces were put together really to empower the women...

Female politician's achievements are thought to have been possible, especially, because they network with women's organisations (Powley 2005; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Wilber 2011). For example, Rwandan female politicians have been lauded for solidarity and networking as a sign of sisterhood as regards fighting for and promoting women's rights (e.g. see Powley 2005; Powley and Pearson 2007), and as a sign of peace-building for a country shattered by ethnic hatred and violence (Hamilton 2000; Kayumba 2010). However Powley (2005:160) cautioned that it will be "problematic in the long run to consider Rwandan women as a single constituency". She compared this approach with "mature democracies where women disagree on policies and desired outcomes". Nevertheless, the existence of women's solidarity and partnerships discussed earlier suggests that women appear to discuss women's perspectives and reach a certain level of agreement. The women in this study mentioned that women's organisations, gender state machineries and the international community collaboratively mobilised and empowered female candidates for the successive parliamentary and local government elections. For example Benita (CSO) said:

We tried to sensitise very many women from all sectors to participate in those campaigns and indeed we are very happy about what we did, it was fruitful because most of the women that we sensitised on how they will handle themselves during campaigns, most of them were through and they became parliamentarians.

Hamilton (2000) in her study on "*Rwandan's Women: The Key to Reconstruction*", noted that Rwandan female politicians in particular and women activists generally,

partnerships, Rwandan women appeared to use it as an opportunity to negotiate and "use" the government to achieve several of their interests.

seemed to work in partnership. Through their forums⁶², they united on women's perspectives, despite belonging to different social and political affiliations. This is also reflected in my data, for example Mariana (Senator) mentioned how through the RWPF female parliamentarians in both chambers worked together for women's rights:

For example in parliament, in FFRP we have identified all the laws that were gender discriminative and asked the concerned organs to review them, we also initiated some that did not exist like Gender Based Violence (GBV) law.

Other women in this study described how different women's organisations collaborated to encourage and to support women to take-up political posts:

I remember the last parliamentary elections of 2008, the NWC, the MIGEPROF, in collaboration with Pro-Femmes, they conducted training on leadership for women candidates to the parliament elections. And, even some of those women who doesn't have enough financial support, they benefited financial support from those institutions in order to help them to conduct their campaigns. (Kate, ES)

There was also help from the civil society; Pro-Femmes played a very big role, those organisations that compose Pro-Femmes contributed a lot, ... all together facilitated and evidenced women's capacity and contributions to development. (Georgia, LG)

As regards mobilising and empowering women however, one respondent cautioned that if men are not sensitised to understand the rationale behind gender equality and what their role should be, it might have a rebuttal impact. Juliet appeared to believe that men's ignorance about gender equality appeared to be one of the major reasons why they do not assume traditionally female roles in the family, and that men were starting to get "afraid" of women's empowerment (see also Burnet 2012):

I think somebody needs to get close to men because they seem to be afraid of this era; they don't know how to go about it. You see the mistake we make and which we have made in Rwanda we concentrated on women empowerment – getting women – bring them, bring them, wherever they are bring them and what about the men. Do they know what is happening and I am sure they must be at a loss, and somebody, I remember last time we were talking about this; how we juggle the public and the private and so where are the men in this? What are they thinking about? Are they sure about tomorrow? Do they know what they are supposed to be doing? Do they know how to go about it and why? (Juliet, Deputy):

⁶² Rwandan women generally and female leaders in particular have formed forums which enable them to put together their efforts in relation to women's rights. Some of these forums are: The Rwanda Women Parliamentarian's Forum and Unity Club, which is a forum for current and former female members of the executive branch, and the wives of male members of the executive branch including the first lady.

Similarly, although she did not focus on interviewing women politicians at central level, Burnet (2012) found that men were angry because women were out of the home for long hours, and that women empowerment, for example women being more assertive in the family, has led to family discord. However, the women's accounts and other research (e.g see Herndon and Randell 2013) suggest that Rwandan men had started to create associations that mobilise other men to engage in gender equality promotion, which in the long run may partly respond to this challenge.

Although I did not explore the role of men in women's promotion, a few of the women who were interviewed expressed the view that they did not only make partnerships with women organisations, but they also made partnerships with their male colleagues and men groups that promote gender equality (see also Pearson and Powley 2007; 2008; Herndon and Randell 2013). In their study, Pearson and Powley (2007:17) referred to Rwandan female parliamentarians' partnership with male colleagues as "strategic". They argue that female parliamentarians partnered with their male colleagues to solicit more votes to pass the GBV Law because at the time women were still less in numbers than male parliamentarians. Irene (Deputy) said that such partnership should begin with one's husband to male colleagues because traditionally men have power over women, and that gives them superiority in decision-making. According to Irene, however, women are conditioned to proving their ability to male colleagues:

So there is need for partnership between men and women, for example if men – especially if one's husband fights women's participation and ridicules or despises them whenever they say or do something, that would discourage them from doing anything. But in showing that what we need is equality of rights, then we have also to show that we are able. Because of our ability, men have joined hands with us.

Many of the women who discussed their partnership with men argued that working in partnership with men is likely to alter social attitudes about women and politics on one hand, and attitudes about women's perspectives on the other. Partnership with gender sensitive men was seen as strategic in terms of influencing social change for women's rights. This is significant in women's rights advocacy because it may indicate that women's promotion is a concern for all and may also show that women's promotion benefits all but not just women. For example, both Fannie and Kate stressed this point:

When we initiated it (GBV Law) we were four women and four men, ...but it was after consensus and then men also accepted the law and at the time they were more than us. (Fannie, Deputy)

I would like to emphasise the support from some men; they are not all, but some men are gender sensitive. They see - as they work with women they find women are capable... (Kate, ES)

Women's partnership with men in activism for women's rights is not unique to Rwanda. A Bi-Annual Journal of Women for Women International (2007) "*Engaging Men in Women's Issues*": *Inclusive Approaches to Gender and Development*" showcased a number of Africa countries (including Rwanda) to explain the importance of engaging men in changing gender relations. In this journal, while Floods (2007:11-12) cautions that engaging men in women's rights activism "has been fuelled in part by non-feminist and even anti-feminist motivations" he concludes that "building a gender-just world will bring benefits to both women and men, and the reconstruction of gender relations will require their shared commitment and involvement." As Irene suggested earlier however, the burden for women's promotion appeared to be largely women's responsibility.

Political representation of women

When the respondents were asked whether they perceived themselves to be women's representatives, some claimed that most female politicians are aware of their constituents needs, most likely due to their own lived experiences. Others reflected on how they identified themselves with the gender inequalities suffered by women as a social group. For example, Allen (Senator) said:

I think when women are providing the leadership they bring-in a lot of expertise like, they bring in a lot of passion, when we advocate for these issues first of all you have to know before we participated in these senior leadership positions we were at the glass-root, so our coming to the leadership positions we bring in all these - you know, like this is the life for you, when you talk about poverty, when you talk about challenges in education system, when you talk about issues of health, this is something we have lived before. It is our testimony and that is why when we at women's participation in various standing committees like the budget committee which has been headed by Constance in the parliament, people know that her negotiation skills on the budget are so focused on family, women, and children. (Allen, Senator)

Similarly, Aida (LG)⁶³ stated:

I realised when I reached in parliament that majority of the women had come from rural areas and they fully understood their constituent's problems. And that is reflected in the voted laws, in the evaluation systems and accountability systems we have today.

⁶³ Although Aida was at local government by the time of data collection, she had formerly been a member of parliament.

Similarly, note how Binty (LG) in the following quote personalises women's challenges as her own by use of "we have to":

The area that drew my attention immediately was related to the needy people, more especially I would look at a woman, her daughter, and her child to make sure that they are in education, education is what I prioritised. ... If a girl says she has no fees, I will personally follow it up... So I feel that, we have to attend school, by all means I feel that women must be educated and informed.

While women may have different life experiences, several respondents' accounts suggested that in similar situations, women may understand women's perspectives more than their male counterparts. For example, in Juliet's (Deputy) view Rwandan women are learning that they must be in politics for their perspectives to be addressed:

I don't foresee a situation where the women of Rwanda are going to feel that it will be done on their behalf. It is a big lesson that is being taught on hands-on involvement. You are there, once you are not there someone else will represent you in his or her own way, but once you are there you will do it the way you want.

This highlights that for some female politicians personal experiences of (traditional) womanhood might inform their work - particularly in matters relating to women and children rights. For example, the preceding respondents raised two major issues: firstly, that if women are not in decision-making their perspectives are likely not to be known and that if they are known, they may not be well articulated and addressed; secondly, that female politicians are more likely to be informed via their gendered roles and experiences.

Most respondents suggested that another aspect of Rwandan female politicians' representation role is changing social beliefs about women in leadership (see also Burnet 2011). In some of the women's opinions, the level of efficiency portrayed by female politicians seems to impact on the sustainability of Rwandan women's participation in politics. For example, Maureen (Minister) said:

The fact that we are doing our work perfectly it will lead to the new generations not fear politics and continuing the good work we are doing. And these things help, sometimes there are times when you think that something is very hard just as you start it, but when you think that if so and so managed to do this, why not me and then when you start it is doable.

This quote illustrates that the desire to change social attitudes about women in leadership may not primarily be focused on oneself, but with a broader focus on the future of women entering politics. Additionally, Maureen's account implies that having

women in politics builds other women's self-esteem. As discussed in Chapter Two, it suggests the importance of symbolic representation in a context where women's political participation is new, and where a nascent women's movement is young and unskilled. However, for these women this appears to have been achieved at high price. The majority of the women claimed that Rwandan female politicians have to work harder than male colleagues to prove to their bosses and the wider Rwandan community that women are good leaders; which might not be the case in the same kinds of ways for male politicians:

I think men, I don't know why, I can't be quoted here but the few women that were in local government that time were more successful than the districts that were being managed by men. And I think it came to the point that when you are a woman leader you must give an example because you even are a woman even at your place of work (Florida, LG)

Now today to change people's mentality, to change how people see women, it requires women who joined politics to work and be more productive than their male counterparts because you don't have to disappoint the ones who gave you that work. (Maureen, Minister)

The above quotes, whether referring to a personal experience, or whether the respondent made reference to other female politicians' work, suggest that many female politicians take on a gender agenda in their work. These women aim to bring women's perspectives to political processes whether indirectly through role modelling or directly by influencing policy and law or both. However, as women and politics scholars such as Dahlerup (1988); Tobias (1997); and Grey 2006 argue, "women are caught between two conflicting expectation" (Grey 2006:493). Analysis of interviews suggests that these women were expected to perform as much as men or be more efficient than their male colleagues in order to prove themselves and also represent women. For instance, some of the women who were interviewed believed that through their work and behaviour, they were able to impact on social attitudes towards women and leadership.

Many respondents felt that female politicians are committed to work and have integrity due to their feminine upbringing and experiences and through hard-work and integrity. However, some of their views reflect the gendered nature of women's work (as discussed in Chapters One and Two), which often correlated with women traditional roles, such as caring. For example, Colette (Deputy) made this point:

Women have proved to deal with social issues more than men because of the experience they get from dealing with their own family challenges ever since

their childhood. Also consider the fact that most female leaders at local government and parliament are chosen from teachers and nurses.

Most women were of the opinion that due to their gendered experiences, women are not corrupt in comparison to their male counterparts. Additionally, a large number felt like that in part because women were making a difference to the quality of service delivery. The majority of the respondents in this study believed that women were receptive, not corrupt, and more committed to work than their male counterparts. They also felt that female politicians' hard work and efficiency had changed the social perception that women have no leadership qualities to the belief that women are more likely to be better leaders in comparison to men. For example, Colette (Deputy) illustrated this point about women's integrity with an example stating that among the detained government officials for corruption and embezzlement charges there were no women⁶⁴:

Women took up family responsibilities after the genocide in 1994, today it is believed that women are more committed to their work and are less corrupt, look at how many leaders have been detained due to corruption and embezzlement - - only one woman is suspected.

Martha (Minister) made a similar comment:

On the other hand you see that people have expectations from a woman which you find that it is also - most times you hear comments in corridors, you know women have unique talents that they were given by God, women are so committed to their work, women are not corrupt.

Despite the women in this study's views about Rwandan female politicians feminine features of integrity, approachability, and not being corrupt, Burnet (2012:203) claims that her research interviews indicated that female politicians both at local and central levels were seen as the same as men in being corrupt and unapproachable. However, the data showed that the women felt that generally female politicians work had created a positive impression that appears to make women in politics socially accepted (see also Herndon and Randell 2013). Additionally, the respondents thought that social perceptions about gender equality were changing, as I will go on to discuss in the following section.

⁶⁴ At the time of data collection, the government was taking action against corrupt government officials at all levels. While I could not access the statistics to analyse gender disaggregated data, the general belief, and as indicated by media, was that none of the culprits were female.

“Women participation in decision-making has become a culture”

The majority of those who were interviewed believed that their sacrifice and striving for efficiency and effectiveness in their political work in general, and women’s promotion in particular, had contributed to changing the public image of women as far as joining politics was concerned. Convinced that women’s participation in political decision-making has become a culture, Martha (Minister) said:

If you witness elections, even if it is something informal, for example, ...the other day I was in (information cut for anonymity) where we were forming a society that brings together the business people... So we put in place a team that should start to study the formation of that society, we had volunteers to make that team, but someone shouted “we have abused the Constitution because there is no woman in this team”.

She went on to say:

You feel that there is something at all levels. They are influenced by the fact that women must have a view in whatever happens. She must be among the decision makers; it is something that has become part of the culture. Generally there is that expectation that when you appoint a woman to leadership it makes good results and I think that among the Rwandans, I think for sure it happens naturally.

Also, Doreen (CSO) mentioned:

It has sort of come up as natural that before a certain committee is setup or before a certain position is given to both men and women, they will say that we have to have at least 30% of women because this has been translated into legal instruments.

These illustrative quotes seem to suggest that even when there are no women volunteers to join a committee the need for women to join will be raised. Earlier on I discussed how many of the respondents argued that it was through mobilisation and sometimes “pushing” that women joined politics, and that this appeared to be the case in most instances. These comments are significant in showing how in Rwanda women’s access to politics appears to necessitate more than just positive policy and law, to concrete strategy and actions that would change cultural beliefs, working conditions, and foster women’s confidence. Crucially, women’s hesitance to volunteer or compete for decision-making posts suggests that, women’s empowerment as regards altering gender relations and power, appears to be a step by step and long process, especially when feminism and gender awareness is low.

Binty (LG), with excitement, however suggested that women’s leadership has now reached the grass-roots. Her account reinforces the view that all categories of Rwandan

women were in politics at most levels of decision-making – including the Village level (*Umudugudu*) Level of administrative structure. Being a female politician at district level and having social affairs in her attributions, Binty was in a good position to comment on this:

Whether you leave here and go to *Mageragere*, even if you live here and go to Kigali rural, whether you live here and rich *Kanyinya*, a woman, oh my God, even among those who were left behind by history (Twa)⁶⁵, my friend their wives are the leaders of *Imidugudu* of their locations because they say that we are also, we have to work, we also must have rights...

Similarly, Fannie (Deputy) who also joined parliament from grass-root politics as a member of the NWC commented that:

It has made the rural women, women joined leadership positions right from the grass-root, they have become aware now, they have joined and initiated income generating activities, the woman says, “I have to have money so that I can join politics”; because to become a leader you must have money.

However, although this study and other researchers (e.g. Kayumba 201; Burnet 2011; 2012; Coffé 2012) show that gendered perceptions towards women and politics has drastically changed, a few respondents, and as discussed in Chapter One and Two, stated that women’s posts are largely gendered. Despite the significance of identifying and mobilising women to join politics, in a context where gender and feminist skills are limited (NGP 2010), there is correlation with mobilising women for gendered posts. When responding to the question whether there were stereotypes that affected female politicians’ participation, a few women lamented that most female politicians occupy social related and/or secondary posts to those of men, even when their profession is different or higher in status than their male boss, for example, Carol (Deputy) said:

Even if the political environment has enabled women to come to the decision-making levels it can be said that the stereotypes still exist, I always argue with the minister of local government where they have decentralisation and what not, you find that having women mayors needs a lot of, a lot of research and it is as if it is automatic that a male mayor is the one that is capable and women are incapable. Secondly, like this in the structures of the district levels where they have the vice mayor in charge of social affairs and the vice mayor in charge of economic affairs, you can hardly find a woman who is competing for a mayor or for economic vice mayor. It is as if it is designed that they have to be in charge of social affairs and those are the stereotypes. ...they just think of a male candidate is capable better than, and it is terribly marginalising the legal

⁶⁵ As discussed in Chapter One, the Rwandan Twa are considered to be the original inhabitants and are still lagging behind in the development arena as compared to Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups.

framework, the other potentials, the other ideology, the other philosophy and the decision-making.

Whilst Collette (Deputy) agreed that having more women in traditional role-related posts is a stereotype, she also believed that it was a necessary “evil” for the time being⁶⁶. She explained that most women are professionally trained in those areas and that Rwandan women’s issues and needs relate to social affairs, thus she deemed it more advantageous to be addressed by women than men:

It is true, but a reality and a necessity to me – let us be realistic, it is just 16 years down the road, most educated women are from those professions and the mind-set of the Rwandan community even our leaders cannot change in a trickle of an eye. On the other hand, it is positive we are still laying the foundation for development – it is women most affected by social issues and women will deal with them more effectively because they themselves have gone through similar challenges.

However, a number of women thought that it was time to move away from traditional stereotypes, and quantity of participation towards quality participation. For example, similar to those who challenged the gendered nature of most political posts, a few respondents challenged the idea of numbers of women; suggesting that there is also a need to consider women’s capacity- reiterating Childs and Krook’s (2006; 2009) claim about the need to traverse numbers and focus more on “critical actors”. For instance Stella and Juliet commented:

So when we have quality women who are brought-up in this generation, in this thinking that there should be equal opportunity for both men and women I think we need enough cadreship of women, enough numbers of the right quality in all different spheres. We are now, are now big numbers in decision-making but we need enough numbers in enough quality in all areas. (Juliet, Deputy)

But again the numbers are good for people to believe that they have equal participation but we can not only look at numbers but we have also to consider the capacity and experiences... now it is good that women’s capacity be reinforced so that in future we look for both numbers and capacity, free competition – that is how I understand it. (Stella, Senator)

While the women extolled the strides taken to increase the number of women in politics and leadership generally, and how their presence in politics had changed social attitudes

⁶⁶ This reflects how complex it is to deal with women’s issues. While it is important that men and women compete freely and occupy non-gendered posts in politics, the “standpoint” (e.g. see Collins 1997, McLaughlin 2003) view advocated for by numerous feminists appears to support the view that women occupy areas of politics that affect them because they are the ones “most” suitable to understand women’s perspectives.

towards women and politics, they also acknowledged that time had come for women in politics to work towards meaningful gender equality. Notwithstanding the challenges that the women mentioned, which are discussed in detail in Chapters Five and Six, they narrated some personal gains from political participation which I will examine in the following section.

Individual Benefits from Political Participation

Feminists and women's rights activists have argued that economic empowerment contributes a large part to women's rights attainment (Lister 1990; Tamale 2004; Kantengwa 2010; Kabeer 2010). For the majority of women in this study, political work contributed drastically to improving their livelihoods and status. While the majority of research on women and politics in Rwanda investigated whether female politicians are making a substantive difference to politics (Longman 2006; Hogg 2009), it is equally important to consider how participation in politics advances women politicians' economic and social status, which is likely to also impact on their families and development in general (see also Williams 1999). For example, Aida (LG) described how political work has impacted on her life and that of her children:

Political work has impacted on me on many fronts, economically, knowledge wise, confidence, and of course my children have benefited status wise, and above all I am so happy to be part of the team that is working to solve the problems of my country for now and the future.

Similarly, Stella and Lucia mentioned that political work gave them a good salary which raised their confidence. This seems to suggest that women's political participation is likely to impact on other areas of a woman's life such as her economic status and self-confidence:

Economically also I have a better salary, I have a car that I could not have bought before, even if it is a loan but I pay it with my salary which also increases my confidence. (Stella, Senator)

Mostly it has impacted on me in economic and social status. I also have access to most things that I would not access if I was just a working woman, for example, I can easily access most of the services that people need in life because of my political status. (Lucia, Deputy)

Additionally, some female politicians views about how they have benefited from political involvement illustrates that political participation is likely to improve a woman's social and familial status. In Chapter One I discussed how Rwandan women

are socially perceived to depend on their husbands, which partly influenced a woman's status relative to her husband and other members of her marital family especially.

Mariana (Senator), for example, believed that her family treats her differently from how they would treat her if she was not a politician⁶⁷:

... playing a role in the country's leadership is also my pride, and in my family I feel it has raised my standards, promoted me or raised my status. For example the way they treat me now as a leader probably wouldn't have been the same if I wasn't.

Likewise, Fannie (Deputy) thought that political work seemed to make women more assertive as regards discussing family matters with their husbands:

If I am in politics as a woman and my husband is not in politics, he is doing other work or he is even in politics, in some ways we can now understand each other. The other time men used to sit, work alone, think alone, about everything, but now that the Rwandan women are in decision-making it has made them get involved in all things.

While Mariana and Fannie were single, Irene (Deputy) who was married illustrated a similar point. Her experience suggests that being in politics builds some women's confidence in relation to self-expression and assertion of views in the family, even though the husband may wish to exercise his decision-making traditional powers:

When a woman joins politics you learn to share ideas, to say your views, so sometimes it becomes a shock when your husband says something and you tell him your view. For example, when you are discussing the budget, he expects to decide how the money is used and when you say that; you know what, even if it stands like this, I am of the view that... he asks if that is what gender is about, hahaha.

As in Irene's statement in the preceding quote it is common in Rwanda to hear people sarcastically asking a woman who is assertive of women's rights that challenge gender relations whether that is what gender is about (see Chapter Two)⁶⁸. In the following quote, Irene reflects how cultural traditions in Rwanda perpetuate gender hierarchy and inequalities. She described how men have powers to make the final decision even when it might not be in the best interests of the family. Although she thought in such

⁶⁷ Mariana's profile and background indicates that she is an experienced lawyer, has had good jobs before joining politics, but even with such a background that appears to be rare with the women of her age group, she can still state that political involvement has given her a better social and family status.

⁶⁸ Although some respondents suggested that being in politics had altered their status in the home, Chapters Four and Five and six show that domestic work and power relations have not changed a lot, especially because gender is understood to mean complementarity.

circumstances husbands' powers are reducing, she mentioned that relatives continued to rebuke and discourage women from exercising their rights:

You know he is used to giving orders that would be taken for granted, because traditionally the man makes the final decision - but that has changed. Nevertheless, some relatives like mothers and mothers-in-law continue to discourage women from challenging men – it may affect one's confidence.

Notwithstanding some researchers' argument that women are best suited to promote women's rights (Grey 2002; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Childs 2010), other research highlights how women are often the custodians of the culture – including culture that discriminates and violates women's rights (Mbire-Barungi 1999; Cornwall 2005; Ahmed 2010). As reflected in Irene's account, in most African societies and in Rwanda particularly, while educated women are likely to access information on women's rights, older and uneducated women are likely to foster what they consider to be the "up-right" morals of a traditional woman (see Mbire-Barungi 1999 for the Ugandan experience).

A number of the women said that political work was empowering in relation to increased skills and information. For example, some of the women said that they accessed and also learnt how to use the internet, and got accustomed to seeking information through media and the press in order to enhance their knowledge and information that could in return enrich their work. Additionally female politicians are also likely to get exposure which might lead to increased knowledge on their rights:

If you are in this work, you are more informed..., you are involved in different decisions, different national programs, ... you are much better than the woman who is not involved day by day because, when you talk to her, you find that she... gives most of the time to her own work, but for those issues relating to the national programs, you find that she is not informed. (Valetta, LG)

I am connected to the internet, I provide my views, I learnt how to listen to radio, you know, things like that. And sometimes I am invited by journalists to provide a talk like I am doing with you and that opened my mind and I feel like I am obliged to know much so that I can be able to give my views on what I know. (Florida, LG)

Several of the women stated that they were happy to be among the top decision-makers of the country. Most of the women's work appeared to be influenced by nation-building spirit, and gave some female politicians a sense of self-worth and confidence. For example Maureen (Minister) said:

It is also a reputable work and I am happy to be among the policy makers for my country. This work has given me a lot of exposure both inside and outside the country and my family is also happy with it. (Maureen, Minister)

The impact it has made is a good impact to me because I am serving a country with my energy, I am paid and I am able to properly provide for my children, I am able to support them, they are able to attend good schools. (Georgia, LG)

Most respondents raised the issue of how political participation provides not only paid work, but is also likely to empower women with self-esteem, confidence and access to networks, suggesting that political involvement is an empowering process for many women:

The reason I am saying that positively is because it revealed to me what others see in me that I never knew I had, that makes me, I mean the capacity if I can say.[...]. It gave me exposure, I have networked, it brings a lot of positive things, the whole lifestyle changes, and also the opportunities are also increased. (Martha, Minister)

Personally it has brought me to exposure and exposure that gives me tools and the skill of addressing the issues around me – nationally or even internationally. So, I feel empowered to address, to be in any environment and, I can just take decision... and secondly, personally I feel it has impacted in a feeling that I take decision that changes, my nation. (Carol, Deputy)

A number of the women also expressed the view that despite the challenges related to political work, such as a heavy workload (see also Chapters Five and Six), being politicians gave them a different feeling and satisfaction:

Some private sector jobs even earn more than us, I think I earned more but worked less than I am today. My satisfaction comes from the work achievements – the feeling is different. (Mariana, Senator)

Personally, what I can say about what has changed in my life as a woman, the first thing is that you get more confidence, thinking about this big trust from others, it gives you self-confidence. (Stella, Senator)

In line with how politics had impacted on women's families several respondents with children mentioned how political work had enabled them to adequately provide for their children. While this is also reflected in several of the preceding quotes, Mariana (Senator) mentioned how she was trying to give her children most of the things that she lacked in her childhood. Linking their political work's economic benefits to those of their children suggests that they attach a lot of importance to their children (see discussion in Chapter Six). For example Mariana (Senator) stated:

I think it paves a way for my children, I try to solve all the problems I went through when I was young, when I was looking for a job, what I lacked when I was young as a student, I try to give them all I lacked when I was young.
(Mariana, Senator)

While the quality of life in terms of material access had improved for some women, especially those with older children, and are able to get and/or afford better services for their children, juggling political work and family responsibilities and roles had increased women's workload, and also led to feeling guilt, pressure and stress. Several writers have argued that women's political involvement is not only about good governance (access) but also equal citizenry rights (women's human rights), (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995; Yuval-Davis and Pnina 1999; Rhode 2003; Paxton et al. 2007). However, this idea does not necessarily negate the importance of female politicians' representation role (see Chapter Four: 21-27). As the Kinyarwanda proverb "*ijya kurisha ihera ku rugo*" meaning, "a cow starts to graze at its compound" (implying that one needs to care about him/herself before others), political work gains for women are citizenry rights that both men and women should equally share. In rue of this argument, an American researcher, Paxton et al. (2007:10) argued:

It is important that women, as half the population, appear in politics even if they legislate exactly the same as men. But if women bring to office different interests and priorities than men, arguments for their inclusion are even more powerful.

This research found that due to continuation of traditional gender relations and gender practices, women are still charged with family work, thus suffering work "penalty", even though some may not see this as inequality. In reference to the relationship between the private and public spheres as regards women's status and rights to resources, Tamale (2004:24) argued that some women have internalised and normalised gender inequalities: "... the dualism between private / public life constructs social structures in a way that normalises gender inequality. Male domination as the status quo is constantly defended and protected." Similarly, Pateman (1992) concluded that addressing gender inequality in relation to women's political participation necessitates measures to address gendered forms of exclusion within governing processes and institutions.

Additionally, researchers such as Falch (2010) in her study: "*Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal*" suggests that female

politicians working in a post-conflict situation are likely to work in challenging circumstances. For instance, competing development and political priorities, and in some cases female politicians are likely not to have efficient skills about political process in general and women's substantive rights in particular (Powley 2005; Falch 2010). Despite the gains that female politicians had attained as a result of their political work, they faced a lot of challenges in the workplace. As discussed in Chapter Two, Walby (1990) draws researchers and activists' attention to uphold achievements in gender equality, but also continuously identify different forms of patriarchy for change. Walby's argument is synonymous with some of the ideas expressed by several respondents (see also Chapter Five and Six), who argued that Rwandan women's promotion is stuck to numbers, policy and law transformation, while in real life gender inequalities, including gender based violence continue to exist. Some respondents illustrated this with situations where a female leader may fail to report domestic violence because this would affect her public image and career as resulting from traditional domesticity of family matters, commonly referred to in *Kinyarwanda* language as "*ibanga ry'urugo*" literary translated as "family secret" meaning that family secrets are private and should not be brought to the public. Failure to change the status quo, as discussed in this Chapter, may result from lack of capacity as I will go on to discuss.

Capacity and Skills

Contrary to the achievements and gains the respondents mentioned in the preceding sections, they also mentioned a number of challenges they faced. One of the major challenges that most respondents mentioned was lack of sufficient capacity and skills to manage family and political work. While most female politicians that I interviewed were degree holders, many of them had no leadership skills and political experience before entering politics. In some respondents' views, female politicians had distinct capacity needs which appeared to be linked to their newness to politics. For example, it was suggested that some female parliamentarians may have basic levels of education and exposure that requires capacity building on entry to politics, without which their level of participation is likely to be impeded:

Even I think, take for example today I become a new member of parliament ... if I come from the rural area and I have never used a microphone, I have to be trained how to use the microphone. I have even to know if I have to talk on

behalf of women, how can I raise the issue, how can I prepare myself to present this issue to others in order to convince them. (Kate, ES)

I am not a member of the parliament but I heard that they have these – but it is a general thing, they need some training for computer, training for ICT, I mean exposing them in aah, you know, in different areas, I think it is something which can be recommended... (Omega, ES)

Alicia (Senator) suggested that some female politicians' lack of substantive representation and assertiveness is not likely to be deliberate, but to result from lack of analytical skills:

Some women still lack the capacity, for example even women in parliament, some are still silent, they don't participate, even in the local government, we have women who represent other women as counsels to the district committees, but they don't talk or even on behalf of their fellow women. They need capacity building...

She went on to say:

But because they don't have the analytical capacity to discuss with women or among themselves so that they can express women needs in the different meetings – that is where the problem lies – because these things of gender – when we talk about gender mainstreaming – that is how things are.

Other respondents also described how most female parliamentarians from rural Rwanda faced specific issues regarding relocation to the city:

Some women who come from the village, for example, they face problems relating to relocation, imagine she will come with the rest of the family, or sometimes the husband will stay if he has been doing his work there until there is an alternative – you know men are not like women that you will just pack your things and follow your husband. So imagine, ... a woman, ... maybe who has never had any business to do in Kigali in all her life. (Irene Deputy)

It is all about capacity building, now we are talking about articulation, I remember a discussion two years ago was about participation, if I look at my colleagues, these were women who were serving at sectors. (Allen Senator)

They are facing challenges because they are required to deliver and delivering something you don't understand is the worst experience ever, right, first of all you don't have the capacity, second of all, you don't know what you are supposed to deliver, third you have the pressure from people, from your constituency in this case the women because we are their constituency. (Joy CSO)

In line with highlighting the need to juggle family and political roles, the majority of respondents also suggested that some female politicians lacked planning and organisation skills. The women who raised these issues seemed to suggest that balancing family and political roles might not only require professional skills but

continuous trainings to develop informal skills that may help women manage their workload and related stress. For example, the capacity needs that were mentioned ranged from skills such as time management to work coordination:

... things to do with organisation, coordination of work, I think it requires a lot of training so that for an individual, if it is something that should take 20 minutes, then it should be done in 20 minutes.... This is why like now the female leaders, I am of the view that they should get a lot of trainings in relation to leadership skills, management and a like, so that they can utilise time as they have to, so that they don't use a lot of energy beyond their capacity. (Maureen, Minister)

Omega (ES) emphasised this view, and also underlined managing politics dimensions:

Also the capacity, giving us the capacity to manage both, to manage the family, to manage our career, and, if you are a politician, manage that also.

Kate (ES), raised the point that some female politicians' work is likely to be constrained by lack of skilled staff, and material resources that would make work easier and efficient, and indeed help with juggling family and political roles:

Most of the time even the staff within your entity, they are not sufficient enough it becomes very stressing, the capacity is low, the human resources, even the equipment, you can find some leaders who don't have a laptop or a wireless and she has to submit a report. If she is going back to her home, she can't find a wireless, it becomes very difficult for her to submit the report and she has to stay in the office until she sent the document.

Several women commented that lack of sufficient experience, coupled with traditional expectations of proper "womanhood" characteristics was more likely to affect female politicians' capacity to articulate and defend their rights in a traditionally gendered institutional culture. As a result, a number of women held the view that women's promotion was stagnant on access to political posts. For instance, in Allen's (Senator) view, some female politicians' capacity required reinforcement for them to be able to articulate their needs, arguing that it was time to shift from numerical empowerment to addressing female politicians' perspectives. This argument is significant because the Rwandan approach to gender equality appears to focus on sameness, for example by putting in place laws that give equal rights to men and women, girls and boys such as equal rights to inheritance. Notwithstanding the importance of such laws, it is equally important to address distinctive issues that affect women and men, girls and boys differently - against which gendered cultural norms may constrain applicability of law.

Whilst some studies on Rwandan female parliamentarians have critiqued their effectiveness in relation to substantive and governance principles (Longman 2006; Burnet 2008; 2011), these studies seem not to consider women politician's capacity and challenges. The respondents mentioned that a number of Rwandan female politicians were not only new to politics but they also lacked such a background. For example, Allen (Senator) and Kate (ES) said the following:

It is the first time they step in the parliament building, it is the first time they come to Kigali and the people want them to give political speeches immediately, no; look at the time it has taken us, long ago when we joined school when we were like 21, can you imagine. (Allen Senator)

We know men are in politics since a long time we have men who have been ministers for a long time, those who have been members of parliament for a long time, but the women I can say they are new, become new comers in politics. (Kate ES)

Scholars such as Grey (2006) and Beckwith (2007) argue that female members of parliaments' (politicians) representational role and effectiveness should be linked with the gendered nature of newness (first time) to politics. This seemed to be one of the major factors that affected the female politicians in this study. Data analysis suggests that female politicians' engagement with substantive representation appears to be not only about representing other women, but also working to empower themselves to meet the competitive requirements of office (in addition to broader social expectations).

Most respondents commented that it is not only women who are new to politics, but that the Rwandan women movement is also new, largely lacking gender analysis skills. Earlier in this Chapter I discussed how in Rwanda women's movement to politics was not primarily a result of activism but rather of a political (top-down) ideology of inclusiveness. This seems significant in analysing women's awareness of their substantive rights because it is more likely to influence the way they articulate and assert for them. And, for researchers, understanding of women's perceptions and awareness of their rights in different contexts is likely to provide more balanced and nuanced research results (e.g. see Dahlerup 2006; Kabeer 2010). In the following section I go on to discuss how the women in this research were affected by social expectations and public scrutiny.

Women, Social Expectations and Public Scrutiny

Most of the women interviewed felt they were under public scrutiny and some of them said that being in political office was like “walking on egg shells”. This is significant in as far as gender equality is concerned, and it seems likely to influence women’s substantive politicking. Indeed, the risk to lose public and familial respect and/or to lose one’s job may compromise women’s assertiveness to influence political process and outcomes. This was evidenced by the fact that a number of the women expressed their dissatisfaction about what they perceived as the gendered public scrutiny by their colleagues and Rwandan society, and also said it influenced their working patterns:

Due to society scrutiny, a female leader is more concerned, and work more than men – even things that men will not worry about a woman will be pointed fingers at and it will be blamed on her sex rather than her capacity or personality. You find yourself working with all your energy and sometimes foregoing your family responsibilities. ... and the pressure to live up to that is also huge. (Norah, Deputy)

It is a lot of work, it is stressful because being so careful, you know, pleasing everyone makes it even harder for the woman. And yourself you need to build your career, you need to be happy about what you are contributing. (Omega, ES)

You have to prove that you are as able as a man because they may give you same type of work and face challenges or problems like the man would face. But when you face those problems they won’t see it like the man would face the same problems or challenges, instead they will say eeh, eh, it is a woman, she wouldn’t definitely go beyond that. (Maureen, Minister)

Several respondents also said that a female politician risked losing her job if she did not meet the political (gendered) standards. They suggested that social-political expectations of how female politicians should behave, and what they should produce, can put them under great pressure and stress. In a disappointed mood and tone, Allen (Senator) lamented the fact that female politicians are socially expected to be “perfect” in terms of both family and political responsibilities, and decried the fact that women politicians mistakes⁶⁹ are not tolerated (see also Lewis 1991):

I think the society has not really given us that leeway, they expect us to be angels, which is not possible, you know, they want us to excel in everything...

⁶⁹ In this situation I use the word “mistakes” to refer to gendered cultural norms that are not classified as crimes under Rwandan law. For instance, one of the women parliamentarians described a situation of a colleague who was stigmatized for getting married to a man young than her, while it is socially accepted for a man to marry a woman much younger than him as long as she is not a minor. While I did not look into this issue, this can be used against the women during political elections, reflecting the strides and sacrifices that women have to make in order to access or retain their political posts. While there is no research documenting Rwandan women’s experiences during political campaigns, for a similar discussion, see Nzomo (1997) and Ahikire (2004) for the cases of Kenya and Uganda respectively.

We have to be the traditional women, they want you in both positions. You have that, you have to be a typical Rwandan woman and also be a public figure or politician, it is very difficult you know, you have to be a humble woman, a beautiful woman, and you know, can you imagine?

She went on to mention how some female politicians had lost their jobs, in her view, most likely because they had crossed the socially prescribed feminine characteristics of a female politician who is expected to be a public role model and a custodian of Rwandan culture. This is significant because it seems to reflect the gendered discriminatory nature of the workplace. For example, Allen expressed her disappointment with an example of a colleague who lost her job because she was in a culturally unapproved love affair with a man. This kind of scrutiny may also make women themselves have internal pressure to live up-to the gendered required standards instead of challenging them and/or sacrifice their work:

... it is not so much what, about what we say – it is more about our lives – you know. We are human beings we can make mistakes or have accidents like one of my colleagues in the parliament, we lost a member of parliament just because she had an affair, you know. It was put in papers for being a very bad story, it is not a joke we have actually lost two of our colleagues – three actually.

Omega (ES) raised similar issues and added that women politicians are also scrutinised for representing women even if they are not women representatives:

They want their Justine to go back and be accountable to them. ... for example, the 24 women (representatives), it is easier because they have to go back to their constituencies – but those women who are coming to the political party they are answerable, they are accountable to the political parties, but so long as you are a woman, the community will want you regardless you are from the political party or you are from the 24 seats.

Although the analysis demonstrated that the women faced distinct issues, which were also informed by their different backgrounds, a few women said that female politicians were socially perceived as a homogenous category and were scrutinised as a group, but not due to their specific political responsibilities or actions. Likewise, the Rwandan tradition emphasises this stereotype as illustrated by the saying that “*umukobwa aba umwe agatukisha bose*”, literally meaning that “one bad girl smears all”. This seems to influence some women’s perception of themselves as a category who should bond in order to promote and defend their rights and each other. For example, Julienne (Minister) suggested that female politicians should embrace the sisterhood spirit, this

time not about transforming policy for other women, but to protect one another from gender-based judgements that would affect their career and self-esteem:

Even now days we are in positions but when you do a very little mistake, there are people who are evaluating us “Oh she is a woman what do you expect from her.” We should be there to change the mentality of our people by performing ...by owning the process of women promotion. So we have to be steady and fight for our performance, fight for the people to change their mentality. ...so you have to see the problem with your colleague as your own problem, you have to see the success of your colleague as your success.

Also, in Joy’s (CSO) view, the women did not own the processes of gender equality to influence it in their favour:

It is like dressing-up in a beautiful dress and a gown that is not yours. And I really want you to analyse this in my sense and I think you get it. If it is not yours it looks beautiful on you, it looks wonderful, it is styled, ...it really has changed our image which is fantastic, but you know what I want to own that image, I want to walk the talk, I want to feel what other people feel about us.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how women politicians worked in a sisterhood spirit to engender policies, however, in the case the social-political issues that the women encounter at work, there seemed to be lack of sisterhood and partnership⁷⁰. Similar to Julienne’s idea of the necessity for women’s dialogue and solidarity, Nzono (1997:233), in her study: “*Kenyan Women in Politics and Public Decision Making*”, argued:

...even where it appears gender-equity policies are in place, women need to monitor their implementation. ... complete reliance on the good will of policy makers and bureaucrats – many of whom are men – may bring some reforms, but not fundamental change.

The majority of the women interviewed seemed to understand their involvement in politics as access to (prestigious) work, and influencing policy and legal frameworks for Rwandan women (especially), rather than as challenging (the male oriented) institutional culture. Being in such a situation might lead to an amalgamation of challenges and excitement – which is likely to be a challenge in itself. Several of the women interviewed stressed that they were excited about politics and had not yet started to identify what might institutionally affect their individual and collective rights:

⁷⁰ In an earlier discussion in this chapter, Allen described how three female politicians lost their work for reasons she thought men could easily walk away with, if the women had allied and stood with the women who in Allen’s view were victims of gender inequality, it would have probably made a positive impact – at least a deterrent one.

When something is new, you like it, you are excited about it, you don't even see the bad side of it. You only see it as a good thing, you have been discriminated against, you have been abused, eeh; now you are told rise up – you work tirelessly and even burden yourselves. Now we have not yet identified what might not be right, we are still excited about, we are many, we are many, we are many..., women lets work, women lets work, ...you see that is where we are at, we are still settling and maybe after we shall start to identify what is wrong. (Fannie, Deputy)

We are still building the foundation, we are moulding women's rights, and for everyone constructing it is always hard, but I think that once we are done with building the gender biased attitudes of Rwandan people ... I think we will work in a less stressful environment. (Ester, Deputy)

Childs (2006) asserts that to understand women's substantive representation there is a need to also study the working environment. Additionally, Baker (2006) suggests that feminism and women's rights aims are not only about acquiring equality to resources, but also improving women's collective and individual lives. Thus, analysis of the respondent's accounts suggests that while studying female politicians' representative role, it might be necessary to look at the context in which they live and work (See also Baker 2006; Childs 2004; 2006; Dahlerup 2006; Beckwith 2007; Kabeer 2010).

Conclusion

Although there was strong evidence about the rapid increase of women in political decision-making and work generally, a political will to facilitate gender equality (Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010), existence of gender sensitive laws and policies (Abbott and Rucogoza 2010), government machineries (NGP, 2010), and a large number of women's organisations (Devlin and Elgie 2008), some researchers have argued that this has not been translated into meaningful gender equality and that women are still primarily seen and measured against reproductive traditional norms (Schindler 2009; Burnet 2008; 2011; 12; Herndon and Randell 2013) leading to gendered biases and gender based public scrutiny. This kind of institutional culture is contradictory to principles of inclusiveness and equality the women said Rwandan government's gender equality was founded on.

CHAPTER FIVE: “Mutima w’Urugo” (“Heart of the Home”)

Introduction:

Rwandan social relations and the division of labour in the nuclear and extended family are managed along gender lines. The patriarchal structure in Rwanda creates power hierarchies that in most cases place girls and women under the power of their male relatives as husbands, fathers and brothers (Jefremovas 1991; Human Rights Watch 1996; Buscaglia and Radell 2012) and traditionally charge them with domestic responsibilities. Analysis of the women’s accounts in this study and literature on Rwandan women and politics (e.g. Devlin and Elgie 2008; Burnet 2008; 2011; Kantengwa 2010) illustrate that the patriarchal boundary restrictions seem to have been changing since 1994, and that most women in Rwanda, despite being responsible for domestic work, have moved out of the private sphere in search of work at all levels (Burnet 2011; 2012).

The title to this chapter is adopted from a popular Rwandan proverb, also cited by three respondents: “*Umugore n’umutima w’urugo*”, meaning “a woman is the heart of the home” - implicitly to suggest that the woman’s place is in the home. Despite the proverb sounding positive, it is usually used to caution women about their expected roles in the home, valued through “naturing” and nurturing for the nation (see also Chapter Six). As discussed throughout this thesis, women are socially “valued”, but primarily perceived to belong to the private sphere no matter how successful they are in other areas of life (e.g. see Buscaglia and Radell 2012; Burnet; 2012).⁷¹ The majority of the women who were interviewed in this study expressed the view that gender equality and their citizenship rights were curtailed by traditional female roles and norms, and that they were still charged with family duties and domestic work associated with traditional feminine roles, despite having less time due to their public roles. Though a few said that women should maintain their traditional roles in the home and society, most of the women lamented about having no support from their male partners and, to a less extent, their relatives and the government. All of the women interviewed mentioned that the workload they faced and the failure to meet familial expectations put them under pressure, making them feel guilty, anxious, and fatigued.

⁷¹ For similar findings see Tamale (2004) and Ahikire (2008) in the case of Uganda and Falch (2010) in the case of Burundi and Nepal.

The analysis of the data discussed in this chapter illustrates that there is a contradiction between women's traditional roles, and the government's gender approach to development, and inclusivity policies. The chapter is divided into two overlapping sections. Section one discusses gender relations in the home, and what it means to be a "good woman" in Rwandan society today. Section two explores the unpaid work that female politicians were engaged with in the private sphere and how that affected their lives and career. The major issues discussed are: gender division of work, the kind of work the women did in the home, and the impact of domestic work on their lives and career.

Social-cultural Context within which Women Politicians Live and Work

While Rwanda has managed to identify and modify some cultural norms and legal provisions that are gender biased and discriminatory (e.g. see Abbott and Rucogoza 2011), several women suggested that there seems to be persistence in maintaining some traditional norms especially when to change them would challenge male power. For instance, Yuta (Deputy) expressed this view:

Here in parliament the other day we were discussing the family code ... the Minister of Justice had come to explain it and he mentioned that there were (discriminatory) elements that were taken out, he gave an example of an article that stated that the man is the boss of the family, and continued to say that there is no need of the law saying that the man is the boss because the family unit is based on partnerships and a man and a woman are equal before the law and all have the same rights; men became resistant.

She went on to explain why she believed men resisted:

Because for a long time they were taught by the Rwandan culture that the man is the boss of the family and the woman is the one to care for children and such, they cannot understand it – if those in leadership cannot understand it, what about those [...] who are not leaders – it is hard to understand these things and usually change takes a long time.

Omega (ES) made a similar point:

But still the way men would take the culture of men being the leaders, of men being the decision-makers, of men being the right people to do the right thing is still there.

Accounts such as these seem to suggest that changing gender relations is difficult due to its embeddedness in culture. These quotes also suggest that changing gender relations challenges power relations, thus, those socially positioned in power are likely to hold-on

to their powers. This is significant in relation to female politicians' lives – while they may have power in the public eye, they are likely to have less power in the home especially in relation with male relatives. Respondents accounts suggested that most female politicians, like the majority of Rwandan women, were still facing subordination, exploitation and oppression from their husbands (research conducted by the MIGEPROF (2004) has made similar points). Analysis of interviews suggest that most women were usually expected by their husbands to execute traditional female roles in the home no matter how much they may be limited by time and responsibilities at work:

There are men who still think that they are bosses in the home, they are bosses in the family as guaranteed by the law and he also abuses that boss position. He can even spoil your work intentionally so as to show you that he rules and has power over you. He may even make you miss a very important meeting or make you go to it late intentionally – these cases exist today because we talk about this with some women. (Rona, Deputy)

Colette (Deputy) made a similar comment:

We are still fighting with the negative remnants of the female traditional image, where a man considers a woman to be like his property that he can abuse whenever he likes.

A few women such as Kate (ES) believed that gender relations in Rwandan society are psychological, suggesting that gender relations were normalised and accepted as culture. The women with this view believed that men expect their wives to maintain a docile and timid traditional character no matter what level of leadership they might be at. For these women, given time, the problem appeared not domestic work per se but being perceived by men as their subjects or servants for that matter:

And then also the other factor is I think psychological, men most of the time, they consider themselves as superior to women and whatever, you become a minister, when you go back home you have to be obedient and to continue to do some of the things, of course she has to continue but when she has time to do that.

Reflecting Kate's view, while talking about her personal experience, Juliet (Deputy) referred to gender inequalities as "kicks". Juliet was one among a few of the women interviewed who expressed a willingness to challenge traditional gender boundaries. Her experience also seems to suggest that to defy gender biased norms may require exposure to one's rights and gender equality norms:

I plunged myself early into a male dominated profession and maybe I started getting the kicks early enough or too early in my life and then here in politics, maybe I am fed-up – I can't take it any longer. I don't mind doing all the work as long as you appreciate, you appreciate that I have done that, but the moment you think that it is your right to sit back and I do the work because I am a female that is where I feel that there is an injustice.

In a similar context, Alicia (Senator) mentioned that some men had a superiority complex, thus behaving “funny”, which seemed to mean behaving arrogantly towards their wives:

Men have superiority complex, for example, a man thinks that because his wife is a vice mayor she is going to look down on him thus behaves in a funny way. These cases happen, but it is not alarming, no one has conducted research on this and I don't know to what extent we can quantify this. There are cases where there is violence in the homes and this is based on hearsay.

Also, Omega (ES) said:

He was so supportive but because he needed me to be around, you know, he complains, things are not in a proper way, things are not good as they used to be and then we would discuss and I would tell him that sometime these things will be over.

In today's Rwanda, gender-based violence including beating a wife is punishable under the Gender Based Violence Law (2009). Despite the different mechanisms put in place to alleviate gender-based violence, anecdotal evidence through media, news and conferences show that violence against women is one of the key security issues in Rwanda. A number of other respondents mentioned that women had started to report domestic violence but that for a female politician it was more likely to come with a heavy social (and career) price. Also, some claimed that some women did not report abuse due to fear of rejection by colleagues and/or for reasons of respectability. A female politician who decides to make domestic violence public, leave an abusive marriage and/or divorce challenges female norms of chastity and submissiveness. She is likely to be considered disobedient and a bad public role model. This seems to explain why most women (especially politicians) shy away from reporting violence and / or divorce. For example, Joy and Fannie commented:

Once you talk to the people who are abused when they are in leadership they ask you, “how can I report that?” – it is like taking my kitchen sink, you know, my kitchen dirty sink outside, washing my dirty sink in public. (Joy, CSO)

Imagine you are in top levels of politics, you are a parliamentarian, you are a minister, the public learns that you are divorced or separated from your husband, or in a divorce process; as a woman who should be a person with integrity, do you think it is easy? Some have done it; honourable... divorced with her

husband. Here in parliament it was too much, and her husband had even started to write about her in newspapers. (Fannie, Deputy)

Analysis of the interviews showed that some female politicians might bend to their husband's instructions so as to avoid being abused or divorced, for different reasons depending on the woman in question. Many of the respondents suggested that female politicians may adhere to abusive husbands to protect their image, while other women may stick to him for survival. For example, Yuta (Deputy) suggested that gender equality is conditional to a male partner's willingness and also said that she would prefer to put up with some of her husband's abusive demands rather than divorcing him:

So to say that all people are equal it will depend on the husband, if I have a husband who believes that "I will only wear a shirt ironed by you" – he can say that I am not wearing any other clothes apart from the ones you ironed for me – the type of man who does not move with modernity or timing, instead of divorcing, you will always find time even if you go home beyond 9:00 pm.

In her most recent study Burnet (2012), appears to suggest that family discord was mostly found in the homes of female politicians in rural and at lower levels of politics because they were not earning enough to match their husbands expectations. Although her study shows that female politicians do face distinct issues resulting from different factors, including political levels, this PhD found that top politicians also worked in difficult circumstances. Contrary to Burnet's (2012:191) claims, "overturned the colonial and postcolonial patriarchal gender paradigm", and the Rwandan approach to gender equality (Chapter Two), this thesis suggests that the economic gains are not enough to explain such a rosy picture about gender equality in Rwanda. In fact, Burnet's (2012:191) assertion appears to be in contradiction with several respondents' comments about how they were faced with a conflicting situation between meeting paid work (male) norms such as working late hours, and the traditional expectations (by husbands especially) that women should be in the home at a certain hour and/or take care of their family members. This thesis found that the women were overwhelmed and burdened by so much work due to multiple roles from both institutions.

The general view was that most female politicians may fail to report abuse because of the traditional norms of submissiveness, appearing docile, and keeping family secrets that are traditionally associated with "good" womanhood. It is likely that a woman who reports abuse from the family will be socially blamed, and ostracized by people around

her, and this might be detrimental to female politicians' political career because they are socially expected to be the custodians of the culture through role modelling.

From the discussion in this section, the traditional perceptions of a "good" Rwandan woman are still influenced by gender stereotypes and inequality evidenced, especially, through family work and gender power relations. This has also added more workload and related stress to women because while a good woman was socially expected to get married and to take good care of her husband and children, today she is also expected to be co/bread winner and also expected to emulate female traditional traits in the work place which, is based on malestream norms and practices. In the next section I will go on to examine respondents' views on what constitutes a "good" Rwandan woman.

Being a "Good" Woman in the Rwandan Tradition

Most respondents who answered the question about what constitutes a "good" woman in Rwanda found this hard to define. This is significant because a good woman is someone who traditionally adheres to socially ascribed feminine characteristics. In an attempt to define a good Rwandan woman, the women mentioned characteristics relating to the way a woman is traditionally expected to behave, dress, and speak; and that her behaviour should socially bring respect and honour to her family. As discussed in Chapter One, women learn the norms of good womanhood from their childhood through socialisation. Tamale (2004:20), for example, argues that in Africa "Girl children are raised and socialised into this ideology (patriarchy) and few ever question or challenge its basic tenets". In most African traditions, and in Rwanda, a good woman is socially expected to get married and to take good care of her husband and children (see also Chapter Six). She is expected to nurture and nurse the ill members of her family⁷² (Hunt 1990; Geisler 2004; Cornwall 2005; Buscaglia and Radell 2012). In the larger part of Rwanda, a good woman is expected to stay and to take care of the home and work in the fields (Schlyter and Chipeta 2009; Burnet 2012) while her husband goes out to work for money. Where women have accessed paid work, they are still expected to maintain the traditional roles within the home and also emulate such feminine roles in their public work. This is significant because, as I discuss in this chapter, it shapes and influences women's perceptions about themselves and gender relations.

⁷² While Rwandan women are traditionally expected to succumb and to respect their husband, this research did not establish whether this respect was expected to be reciprocated.

Some of the characteristics of a Rwandan good woman identified by the women in this study included dressing “decently”, speaking slowly and in a low tone, being obedient and respectful, and attending to her family responsibilities “efficiently”. The women’s accounts suggest that there is no single narrative that can define a “good” woman in Rwandan culture. For example, Doreen (CSO) suggested that a good woman in Rwandan tradition is beyond what words can describe:

The society, the family still expects you to be the good woman, that good woman; the good woman in quotes. The good woman, that is a good woman who cooks for her children, a good woman who cooks for her husband, a good woman who takes care of the family; Justine a good woman means aaah, how do I say this; a good woman means so much traditionally that I cannot describe in words; about what you do, how you do it, what you say, how you say it, how you look, how you dress and what you dress, aaaa a good woman?

Despite difficulties in defining a good woman, the analysis of interviews highlighted how feminine traits are based on strong social norms that if not performed well a woman risks her reputation, which for female politicians may jeopardise her career. In this study, interview accounts suggest that it is not only society that enforces such beliefs, a good number of the women also held similar views. For example, Yuta (Deputy) mentioned:

I personally believe that a good woman in the home is the one who understands that she is a woman, ...the one who understands her responsibilities as a woman, the one who respects her husband no matter what level he is on – most of our husbands are not in politics, they are in other private sectors but when he comes home he should feel that there is a woman in the home.

She continued to explain that a good woman should not only respect her husband but that she should also earn him respect:

A good woman is a cultured woman... a good woman is, if you are married, you must earn respect to your husband without saying that I am a member of parliament, I am a minister....

In Norah’s opinion, working women should emulate the heart of the family (*mutima w’urugo*) qualities in the workplace:

A good woman in Rwandan society is that woman who is married, who looks after her husband properly, have children and nurture them properly. She has to be a woman of the family, who stays at home and becomes the “heart of the family”. So, when you get out of that home to the public, you then become the heart of the society.

From the above quote, and as will be illustrated from analysis of the women's accounts in this study, Rwandan women are expected to perform gender, failure of which socially derogates them from being respected. There is social pressure on Rwandan women to conform to gendered cultural norms and this is reinforced at all levels of socialisation. This is significant in understanding the women's views and behaviour especially that gender skills in Rwanda are limited as indicated in the NGP (2010:21).⁷³ Drawing from one of the national media papers for example, while reporting on the Rwandan preparations for the 08/03/2012 international women's day, the journalist reported that most Rwandans, more especially the elderly, are concerned about how Rwandan young people of today, especially women, behave. Below I translated a quote from one of the women interviewed by the journalist⁷⁴ who specifically challenged women for failure to meet "heart of the family" characteristics. The quote reinforces the idea discussed in Chapters One and Two relating to how gender relations were institutionalised based on gender hierarchy and roles (see also Hunt 1990 and Buscaglia and Radell 2012):

When we were growing up, we were socialised on how to be a "good" girl (*Umwari*)⁷⁵ very early, characteristics of a girl like cleanness, obedience and dignity. Yes not many attended school, but we were cultured (discipline) and we were obedient. We were taught all domestic work and you would find that we managed very well because of obedience. The girl was very cautious because she understood that she must become a good "*mutima w'urugo*" (heart of the family).

This proverb was also cited by some respondents while defining a "good" woman in Rwandan society. For example Mariana (Senator) said:

In Rwandan society a good woman is described by the Rwandan proverbs, the good woman is the heart of the family (*Umugore n'umutima w'urugo*), the good woman is a brave woman, the one who saves for the family, a good advisor, the one who keeps family secrets, the one who takes care and is obedient to her husband, and the one who raises her children with discipline, yah.

⁷³ While there appears to be rhetoric awareness of gender equality in Rwanda, there is limited academic skills to empower most Rwandan policy makers (including women) with sufficient skills to analyse, articulate and either assert for their rights or integrate them in their work as a "cross-cutting issue", a requirement set by Rwandan governments' key policies such as Vision 2020 (see also Chapter Two).

⁷⁴ Ndayisenga, F. 29/07/2012, Iterambere ry'umugore n'umukobwa, indangagaciro na kirazira by'umuco nyarwanda, IZUBA RIRASHE, at <http://www.izuba.org.rw>, August 2012

⁷⁵ While *Umwari* literary means a girl it goes beyond just being a female to include social expectations of a "good" girl. *Umwari* to most people is different from *Umukobwa* – which also means a girl. *Umukobwa* can mean any woman who is not yet married irrespective of whether she is socially believed to be a "good" girl or not while *Umwari* is usually used in reference to a girl who is perceived to fulfil both gender and feminine characteristics.

The above quotes seem to illustrate contradiction in social expectations that a good woman should adhere to domesticity at the same time as being in the public sphere. In an earlier study by Hunt (1990), and in a more recent study by Buscaglia and Randell (2012), it is argued that at the time gender identity and gender division of labour was institutionalised in the first part of 20th Century by Belgian colonial administrators, Rwandan social-economic setting partly allowed women's confinement to the home while men worked in the public sphere of life. However, today the Rwandan social-economic and political scenery has changed and women are also in the public sphere. The women's accounts show that they were faced with conflicting roles as regards meeting family responsibilities and political work expectations. To use Sudarkasa's (2005:3) words, "women are out of and inside the home" in this case to mean that female politicians work a double day by working both in the private and public spheres. The following quotes illustrate this dominant view:

Traditionally a good woman is a good mother, a loving mother, a caring mother. I think in the last 15 years people now look at a good woman in terms of our policy definition as a dedicated woman and maybe a woman who is able to play a role in her community – of course in addition to motherhood roles. (Allen, Senator)

So being a good woman, it is not just about staying at home because you may be staying at home but fail to be useful to it. That is possible but the good woman is the one who fulfils her responsibilities, whether they are responsibilities in the home or whether it is her responsibilities at work. (Valetta, LG)

Norah (Deputy) and Omega (ES) suggested that women should devise means to manage their husbands and commented that some men expect their wife to execute the family role and be excellent in the public for their honour:

You have to know how to manage your husband's moods / attitude and respect him but also place him in his right position. But it should be done carefully to pass on the right message properly.

You know sometimes he is not happy but at times if it is a success, I have done a very good speech, I have done a very good mobilisation, someone told him that your wife is doing a very – then it becomes a motivation and then he comes back to me.

Interview analysis suggests that the social-cultural norms relating to being a traditional "good" woman conflict with employee standards, where women are expected not only to "behave" as male colleagues but also to put in as much time (e.g. see Richardson 1993; Williams 1999; Tamale 2004; Crompton 2006; Glauber 2007). Most female politicians said that they worked under pressure related to proving themselves and to

impress others, including their bosses, Rwandan community generally, and their male partners. As I go on to discuss, instead of challenging the institutional culture, most female politicians seemed to adhere to the challenging circumstances (also argued by Burnet 2011). This appears to partly explain why some women said that they give priority to paid work rather than family responsibilities.

From what the women in this study said, it seemed there were no mechanisms to address female politicians' gender specific needs such as favourable working conditions. Analysis of the interviews suggests that the burden to deal with institutional structural inequality appeared to be left to female politicians, both as individuals facing challenges or collectively as women. And, in the spirit of nation-building, some female politicians may see themselves or be understood by others as not being "good" politicians if they spoke out about gender inequalities and biases faced by women politicians. For example Allen (Senator) argued:

We have to strategize, it is a strategy, we have always to keep advising how best we can go because, if you say I have issues, there is a new term in this country that says "*Intore ntiganya ishaka ibisubizo*".⁷⁶ So the "*intore*", a good female "*intore*" her big expectation is to seek the solution.

She went on to say:

Yaah, of course it is very challenging like you see it is very demanding and when you talk about politics in my definition you are talking about service, you talk about sacrifice, so you sacrifice a lot in terms of your family, in terms of your friends, and yah, it is not easy.

While the *Intore* were only men, in today's Rwanda, all Rwandans are expected to be patriotic and thus be *intore* in whatever they do as indicated by one of the three missions of *Itorero* outlined on the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission website "To streamline the national service program (*Itorero ryo ku rugerero*, promote the culture of patriotism and recognizing positive achievements of Rwanda."⁷⁷ Again while a good woman is expected to be at home at a certain time and attend to family responsibilities, most of the women interviewed in this study said that they worked until late hours, which appeared to affect some of the female politicians' relations with their husbands. A few of the women expressed the view that some men still control their

⁷⁶To mean that "a patriot does not complain but seeks solutions" *Intore* is a historical word to refer to the men who were King's pages / servants under a structure known as *Itorero*. In today's understanding *intore* can be translated to refer to a "patriot"

⁷⁷ <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/reconciliation-tools/itorero.html>, June 2012.

wife's sexuality by monitoring her movements and who she interacts with. For example, Doreen (CSO) described how she sometimes had to respond to her husband's phone-call inquiring why she was not yet at home. In an irritated mood, (switching between three languages) she mentioned that her husband would be jealous if there were men in the meeting:

You tell him today I have a board meeting and you know when they start and how long they take; and what is your problem anyway, it is a women only meeting, there are no men involved, what are you scared of? [...] To him it would be a problem if there were men, he would say; "th---iis o---ne, are there men in meetings she goes to?"

Omega (ES) raised a similar point:

Also some women are seen as having affairs with their male counterparts and this is a stereotype, but strong and dangerous one. Sometime you have to work late and may be with your male counterpart; you know, aah, there will be no place for only women to work.⁷⁸

While these women have accessed politics in Rwanda, the working culture was stressful to most of them. The women seemed to be facing a dilemma over being expected to perform "well" as politicians and as traditional women, suggesting that women carry the burden to maintain family harmony and to meet the "malestream" standards of work. Similarly, it has been argued by studies on women and work that in most countries working women bear the burden of trying to fit into the masculine workplace (e.g. Andersen and Siim 2003; Baines 2010).

Due to the workload and stress associated with juggling multiple roles, the majority of the women said they re-organised their family roles to suit work schedule and demands. For example, respondents raised issues where work seemed to "spill-over" to the family and vice versa. This is illustrated in the following quote from Lucia (Deputy), who, while responding to a question on whether there are times when she feels she has not fulfilled her responsibilities, spoke about how family issues are likely to affect work efficacy:

Definitely, it sometimes happen because of many programs happening at the same time and you even forget to leave behind money for food, and only realise when you are a big distance away from home because your mind is preoccupied. You are thinking, I am late I must rush to work, I have to drop off children, and

⁷⁸ At the time of research, there were allegations in papers about sexual relations between female and male politicians. However, for almost all those cases the journalists could not prove this. Additionally, it is common to hear rumours and accusations against women working at grass-roots politics to be having sexual affairs with their male colleagues.

forget that you did not give-out money to buy food stuff. [...] This happens to me, ... and yet I have young children and this disturbs me the whole day.

She went on to say:

This means that you may be sited in the office or in plenary but when your mind is on all that happened at home. I mean, here in parliament, we are supposed to read laws, make your contribution or advise or listen attentively about what others are saying so as to make your contribution or vote for the right thing; but when you have no peace then you won't have time for that; meaning that you may miss your work, or be ineffective because of the problems you left at home or those issues that you did not arrange or manage properly.

Maureen (Minister) lamented that political work was unscheduled and stressful and that to strike a balance, women have to choose a lesser challenge:

So I would conclude that yes it is a challenge because in politics it is so demanding. It requires you time in the office and it might require extra hours beyond the normal office hours; eer but all in all, if you don't get well prepared it can backfire, it can bring problems to your family.

Also, even though sex life is considered a family secret in Rwandan tradition, one respondent mentioned that by the time she goes back home, she is too tired to make love to her husband:

Political work is so heavy and stressful like when you deal with a stressful situation, by the time you get home, you are stressed and when someone talks to you, you find yourself howling at them. There are times when you ask yourself questions – you imagine what your husband think about you, he has come home, he touches you and you tell him please excuse me today, I am so tired today. You plead with him not to make love. You come home the following day, again he touches you, the same happens, and you say to him (*wokabyarawe*)⁷⁹ you again plead to him, please pardon me, I am dying, am very very tired and when you can't plead with him anymore then you decide to close your eyes and say ok I have accepted. (Binty, LG)

Stella (Senator) had a similar view:

This puts one on stress, ...maybe there is something that is not accomplished in the family and your husband awaits you to do it – you can imagine the situation

⁷⁹ The Kinyarwanda word “*wokabyarawe*” has no direct English translation but contextually, Rwandan tradition accords a lot of importance to parenthood. This word is used in a pleading manner to ask someone to have mercy by wishing them to have children. In Rwandan culture, the most important cultural blessing is in wishing someone to have children and also to implore someone you wish him/her best blessings! The importance of children in Rwandan culture is expressed in greetings by wishing for someone to be blessed with children, usually greeting someone younger than you: “*gira abana n'abuzukuru*” literally meaning “have children and grandchildren.” In contrast, reference to infertility is used in annoyance to curse. One of the worst curses or abusive words is to say to someone that “*Gapfe utabyaye*” meaning I wish you die childless.

and the mood. Here you just try by yourself to keep steady because the most important thing is work. (Stella, Senator)

Most women, held the view that meeting their husband's and society's expectations of a good woman as regards fulfilling the perceived female responsibilities in the private and public spheres was stressful, burdensome, and somewhat impossible. Feminist writers such as Walby (1990) assert that patriarchal ideology and practices change with circumstances in form and degree as elaborated in Walby's (2005b) later work; meaning that even when women make it into politics, patriarchal gender mechanisms are likely to continue to shape their lives and work (see also Mbire-Barungi 1999; Dolan 2001; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). The female politicians interviewed in this study complained about the amount of work they were socially charged with. In Florida's (LG) view, for example, the work load and the subsequent pressure appeared to be too much that if there is no good relationship between a female politician and her husband the woman can commit suicide which reflects the level of anxiety that some women may be dealing with. She seems to suggest that the husband must not only share in family work, but that he should understand the kind of work she does, and above all should be able to support her:

Of course the major problem I see, if you have a bad husband who does not support you then you can be frustrated and even commit suicide because it is so demanding that you have to be here on time and sometimes we are even called upon at night and if the husband is not supportive then you get too frustrated and commit suicide.

The women described how traditional expectations of gender relations and female roles seemed to be part of their daily routines, despite having political roles. For example, many of the women gave accounts of how they have to financially, emotionally, and physically take care of the family. It is worth noting that, while gender relations have socially and legally changed to allow women to participate in the public realm, changes in gender roles are not replicated in the private sphere. The analysis of women's accounts suggests that the private sphere is characterised by gender inequality in subordination, oppression and exploitation by their husbands. Most of the women who were interviewed felt that female politicians were still charged with work related to management of the home, children (see Chapter Six), and husband. Similarly, research about gender equality in the region shows a similar situation (e.g. Wyrod 2008; Schlyter and Chipeta 2009). For instance, Wyrod (2008) in his study: "*Between Women's Rights*

and Men's Authority: Masculinity and Shifting Discourses of Gender Difference in Urban Uganda", argued:

Women's political participation has been successfully framed in a way that most Ugandans find palatable; however, for many men, and some women, men's authority within the home remains incontestable. Attempts to reconfigure gendered power relations within the domestic sphere, such as changing marriage laws or the division of labour within the home, are seen as excessive. Wyrod (2008:819)

Talking with sadness, Sada (CSO), put forward a view shared by the majority of the women that "good womanhood" mirrored through gender roles appeared to be static, despite economic and socio-political changes that have facilitated women's access to paid work:

Regarding the law, regarding to rights, regarding to political participation...the laws and policies, we do have those for sure. But in relation to the level you called the private sphere, what we call sharing roles at all levels, whether in the public or whether in the private, there has been something like - it came to a standstill – we are in a status quo, we call it a status quo state. Meaning that nothing is changing, there is no increment, there is no reduction, nothing is changing. It has become like, it is like the way it was in days of my grandmother or my mother as I told you I am an elderly woman, the roles for a woman are still the way they were; apart from adding on the public ones, what can I say really – that is how things are here in Rwanda.

In summary, the women's accounts in this study suggest that gender and power relations in the Rwandan patriarchal structure seem to perpetuate a boss and servant, and owner and possession kind of relationship between a husband and wife. It was cited by the majority of the women that to be a good woman, for example, one has to be obedient to her husband, meet his expectations of managing family responsibilities and also that the women politicians were socially expected to emulate feminine characteristics in the public sphere. Most family conflicts were seen as resulting from women's failure to execute domestic work to their husband's expectations (see also Burnet 2012). In the following section I go on to discuss female politicians work in the family and how they felt it affected their lives and career.

Family Roles and Responsibilities

In this research family work covers a wide spectrum of unpaid family work (both nuclear and extended family) that women do in the private sphere. Here, I am using

Young's (2006:21) definition of women's primary role –reproduction to define family work: “By this concept is meant not only biological reproduction but also all those tasks involved in the caring – daily physical and ideological maintenance – not only of children but also of adults, primarily male.” The women's description of their family roles consisted of both management and execution of roles and responsibilities which included: care for their husband and other relatives, shopping for the family, cooking, cleaning, and managing domestic worker/s. Domestic work relating to children is discussed in Chapter Six.

Some women gave a detailed account of the kind of work that women were likely to be charged with in the home. These accounts suggest that this work involves both planning and execution. For example, Sada (CSO), with dismay, discussed in detail the kind of responsibilities female politicians are expected to execute in the home and how hard balancing such work with political work is:

Shopping, you have to do shopping, even the situation of having to know that there is no onion, there is no salt, eeh Justine do you know monitoring, being responsible for a big project of the ministry, or you are a permanent secretary somewhere, you are managing finances, managing the staff and the whole life of a certain ministry somewhere; and you add on managing that other project that make us survive. The daily project of where the socks are; where the shirt is; is it ironed? - because you may be having a domestic worker but, you must make sure that it is ironed properly and give it to your husband or if he picks it from the hanger, he has to be sure that you already monitored - monitoring to see if it is properly ironed; are electricity units over, you have to know that and top it up. There are many issues that the woman is charged with in the home.

She went on to say:

It is the wife who is charged with knowing whether people will have three meals a day. She is the one to know that the house is clean ... whether a visitor slept well and in clean bed-sheets, all that – who has time to talk to the visitor, the patient in the hospital, was food taken to him/her? The person in prison, was food taken to him/her? How is he doing? The questions that a child may ask you every time; the growing child, the teenager, all that is her responsibility. We may not say that 100% there is no man who may help his wife, but even if he is to help her it is still the woman's responsibility.

The state of domestic work that Sada (CSO) described seem to be what Benita (CSO) referred to as “ focal point of the home” when responding to the question of whether gender roles have changed in the homes of female politicians. Benita also suggested that this means female politicians' workload is more than that of their male counterparts:

A woman has got a very big role. Though the woman is a parliamentarian, the roles she has, the roles she has are very many compared to a male MP. Well you know women have got a very big task of being the focal point of their homes.

The majority of women suggested that husbands are in themselves an addition to the workload. For example, Lucia (Deputy) seemed frustrated that she still had to serve her husband in addition to other family responsibilities. Although she acknowledged that some men have started to “slowly” understand that women have other work apart from domestic roles, she also mentioned that the understanding is still very slow compared to the pace of increased roles that female politicians are charged with:

Husbands who in themselves - are like children, whuh, while still in bed he asks you, “Are my clothes ironed?” “Are my shoes polished?” “I cannot find my socks where are they?” Imagine – he cannot wakeup and cater for himself, apart from giving himself a bath. He wants everything to be ready by the time he wakes up, he should find all lined-up for him, warm water in the bathroom, breakfast ready on the table, cloths ironed, shoes polished, socks on top of shoes, plus you to be ready by the time he is done if you have to go with him somewhere or use the same car.

She went on to say:

The domestic work is still done by a woman, it is you to know your family’s well-being, it is you to know whether your children are well, it is you to know who is ill, what is needed in the family, what will the family eat, all that; I cannot detail it all – a woman has to be present in a very way.

Many of the women held the view that they conform to gender biases and inequalities because of social expectations, and social norms that they are expected to perform:

There are various factors at play here; basically it is the society expectations and critics that may push a woman to work so hard but also the experience. We do a lot of work from our childhood as compared to our brothers you know. (Juliet, Deputy)

But for the women you feel that you have to do it so that nobody laughs at you, you must be perfect so that you don’t take a law in the parliament and be embarrassed. This means that us the women work in stressful conditions, you want to be perfect with everything, be effective at work, be effective in the family, be effective at home and all that it is one person. (Ester, Deputy)

Similarly, Andekunle (2007) in his book on “*Culture and Customs of Rwanda*” noted that despite women’s accession to political posts, gender roles in families had not changed. As discussed in the preceding section, the traditional norms of good womanhood appeared to subject women to subordination (see also Hunt 1990;

Buscaglia and Randell 2012), which is mirrored through gender roles with specific reference to “respecting and obeying” one’s husband. Researchers such as Ozbilgin (2009) suggest that through family work, gender supremacy, power and hierarchy is maintained and perpetuated. Several respondents in this study also argued that the persistence of a gender division of labour in Rwandan families appears to be built in the normative gendered cultural norms expressed through taboos and sayings, and challenged some traditional barriers that prohibit men from doing domestic work. For example, a few of the women said that a man who does family work in Rwanda is considered to be “bewitched” (“*baramuroze*”) by his wife. This is also supported by hearsay in Rwandan society where a man who is close, supportive, and/or helps his wife in domestic work is socially considered to be bewitched by his wife as remarked in the following quotes:

And also we have another experience where a man become very supportive to the wife, but the community still - it is like they say in Kinyarwanda “*baramuloze*” - he has been bewitched by his wife. It is like he is not normal, we have those experiences. (Kate, ES)

Those who are still sticking to the traditional barriers are influenced by the fact that people will call them names and laugh at them saying that “my wife has bewitched me, I am not doing this work in case someone see me and say that my wife is my boss and I live under her orders”. (Binty, LG)

Rona (Deputy) and Benita (CSO), respectively lamented that when a man’s attitude is still based on traditional gender roles, there is the likelihood that the woman will be the one in full charge of family work. They also suggested that men who are “gender sensitive” understand and support their wives:

I want again to come back to the relationship between husband and wife because if they are moving on the same pace of understanding, it makes life easier than when one is still rigid on the attitudes founded on the customary law which says that a wife is the one charged with all the work in the home to the extent of bringing down the husband’s clothes; yet they are just in his sight or on hangers where he can reach for them himself.

Well for the - whuuuum family issue, I know men who are gender sensitive they understand their wives who are in politics, who are also like parliamentarians because women – men who are positive they are very happy because they know his wife has got a very good job, at the end of the month she is going to bring something in the home.

The majority of women believed that men fear stigmatisation based on losing their “boss” status if they get involved in female traditional roles in the home. Although several respondents said that some men were positive about their wives work,

especially, because they were bringing money to the family, they did not mention whether the men's positive understanding is likely to make them share family work with their wives. The above quotes suggest that social beliefs around gender roles are still strong in Rwanda, posing a barrier to changing gender roles in the families of female politicians. A few women lamented how a home can be in a mess if they are away due to their husband's inability to take care of it. For example, Norah (Deputy) emphasised this by mentioning that even if one had a maid, it may not make a big difference to the well-being of the family. She expressed an earlier view illustrating a conflict of interest of some husbands who are happy with their wife's income but are not willing to get involved in domestic work:

He respects you because you are able to contribute money in the family – even the extended family will respect you. But in relation to domestic chores, no matter how much you pay your house workers, there will always be a mess, and the man unfortunately will not consider the fact that you are away working and step in to bridge the gap. Norah (Deputy)

This same point was further reinforced by a number of respondents who stated that some men will do female traditional jobs if commercialised or professionalised to earn money. However, they also suggested that such men are more likely not to do the same work in their homes because such work may socially be considered to challenge male power or manhood in the family power hierarchies. To some extent one might argue that men's doing work traditionally associated with women for money but not in their homes challenges the binary nature of the public and private spheres, and appears to indicate that traditional norms and gender roles can change with social, political and economic circumstances (Walby 1990; Gavison 1992; Tobias 1997; Ahikire 2004; Buscaglia and Radell 2012). Additionally, it seems to illustrate that the private and public divide is less associated with the nature of domestic work but more with gender hierarchy, power and resources, as Lucia (Deputy) articulated (see also Hunt 1990; Tamale 2004; Buscaglia and Radell 2012):

What happened is that things which did not yield cash was left to a woman but, when it comes to activities that will bring cash the man will even touch charcoal or make his hands dirty but when he gets to his wife he again becomes the boss, yet in another place he was touching charcoal, he was peeling *matooke* (green banana), he was doing all the kitchen work you can think about. But when he comes back to his home, he withdraws and leaves it to the “owner”.

Sada (CSO) expressed a similar view saying that a man might do traditional female roles when he is still single but stops as soon as he gets married:

The women's roles in the head and mind-set are despised more especially because they have no salary, they have no respect ...the moment he marries whether he cooks from a cooker that came from the West or a charcoal stove that consumes less energy, it is all the same it is the woman's work.

Women's paid work and the expectation that the same women should fulfil domestic and social responsibilities appears to illustrate a contradiction between modernity and gender traditional norms, and theory and practical changes. In fact, several respondents saw the gender division of work in their homes as an old tradition that perpetuates exploitation against women. Rather than seeing women's domestic work and paid work as double work, and as work that may not sometimes be carried-out simultaneously, the women lamented that their male partners in particular and Rwandan society generally, see men's involvement in domestic work as a Western imported culture. The women suggested that men were stigmatised as result of two major factors: Firstly, Rwandans generally associate men's involvement in domestic work with Western culture and, secondly, persistent traditional boundaries of men and women's work in Rwandan society. For instance, Georgia (LG) said:

Our husbands are still holding on to the old traditions of saying that a man is a man to the extent that he may not wash plates when the house-worker has left. He may indeed decide to take children to a restaurant when food is available, but because he cannot cook it – meaning that they are still the traditional men. They cannot do domestic work, it is evident, whether he is educated or not – he even tells me that if he went to Europe he would not wash plates or cook like those men.

Stella (Senator) also illustrated the traditional unequal power relations exercised through family work when she mentioned that a woman's failure to execute family work to the husband's expectations may make him violent and subsequently lead to divorce. Additionally, she suggested that sharing of work between a woman and her male partner was Western:

The Rwandan men are still tied by the tradition – those who go to the West they must do it, but I have heard from the hearsay that Rwandan men especially those who go to the West – non-diplomats because diplomats are allowed to take domestic workers, some divorce because they refuse to change. We have examples of families living in Belgium who have divorced because men fail to adjust to the new lives and yet women cannot do all the work alone. ...It is unbearable because she could not work in both fields and the man started beating her which is a crime there, thus they were divorced – it is hard to correct people's culture.

The “intruder” label associated with certain understandings of gender equality and feminism is also likely to be a hindrance to women’s assertiveness for a change in gender roles. Again, in such circumstances, women may be influenced by social norms associated with individual respect and reputation. Some respondents (and anecdotal evidence) suggested that in Rwanda women who are vocal and assertive are considered (labelled) feminists and/or uncultured:

Once you bring that gender thing, note what will happen to you in this country, they will start to close doors on you, they will start to say that Justine you have been in the UK for one year and now you have come back to tell us what to do, or ... is always not in Rwanda she is always bringing those American things.
(Joy, CSO)

While this research did not examine in detail female politician’s views about feminism, most respondents who were asked whether they considered themselves feminists did not identify as such (see also Chapter Two). The majority did not only say they were not a feminist, but they were also critical of feminism as “Western” culturally:

I don’t know, that terminology puts me off sometimes. Feminism is like fighting for female members of the society to be there, and they are already there ... it is a question of equilibrating, and maintaining, and complementarity and ... we don’t have to have women ahead of the men neither do we want men ahead of the women. We want all of them to see what is important for one another, what is a right given without favours and bias. (Carol, Deputy)

Colette (Deputy) held similar views to Carol claiming that female leaders have to guard the Rwandan culture from other cultures. Using an example of sexuality rights specifically, she mentioned that Rwandans should continue to meet traditional social expectations such as getting married:

We have to lay boundaries around our social norms and our identity because we are better than many countries around us. For example, we do not have to emulate bad norms like homosexuality. We have to copy good norms from other countries but also preserve our culture. It is women who can impact on Rwandan’s lives and preserve our values. This is the major role of women in politics.

She went on to say:

We should not look at the financial stand and benefits like some Western women have done. Though making money, we need to raise our children properly, show them love, even have children because our society will not respect you if you don’t. Democracy should not be doing what you want as the West call it, it should be doing what is right to you but in the social context.

Again, while this research did seek to not investigate the women's perceptions of Western values as regards gender equality, several women interviewed returned to it. While the majority criticised what they perceived as an imposition of Western values of "democracy" generally and feminism particularly, a few women thought that such critics were exaggerated and acted as a barrier to understanding the real issues that affected women's lives. As discussed in Chapter Two, resistance to some gender equality norms as "Western" culturally is not a case of Rwanda alone but it is evident in most countries in the region (Cornwall 2005; Ahikire 2008). This is significant in so far as perpetuation of gender relations is concerned, because it is likely to create a situation of "blindness" to some gender inequality and discriminatory practices such as those fostered by a gender division of labour, similar to what Mitchell (1975) referred to as "unconscious" in Walby (1990:95), and as "silent continuities" by Cornwall (2005:13). While Walby (1990) has reservations about Mitchell's concept of "unconscious", the respondents views about normalised gender norms in the Rwandan culture appears to require a theory that would help in understanding entrenched patriarchal ideology, and this is well articulated by Walby's (1990:95) analysis of Mitchells argument:

Mitchell argues that we cannot understand the oppression of women without a theory of the unconscious since a concept is necessary to theorise the deeply entrenched patriarchal ideology in people's psyches. Patriarchal practices are continued because of the way our minds are ordered from generation to generation.

Traditionally, Rwandan women are expected to liaise between families (both marital and biological). However, from what the women said, political work compromises this role, affecting the woman in question's social and familial relations. This kind of situation is also likely to put her under pressure and cause feelings of guilt. As in the definition of family work provided earlier, the women indicated that they were still expected to attend to social tasks, especially those related to their relatives and friends, despite having less time due to political work. However, a number of women mentioned that, despite the pressure, guilt and anxiety, they had started to take some risks by not adhering to certain social responsibilities in line with available time:

There are times when you have to sacrifice some values like the relations with extended family, it is a must it has to change completely, I don't have time to visit relatives, I don't even have time to attend their weddings, even burials you send a text message; "I have heard about it, take courage, I will visit you" - it is always I will visit you. For example, it is now six months, my birth area is in ..., my brother had a baby and he informed me, it is almost seven months I have

failed to go there. ... whenever he calls me on the phone I fear to respond because he cannot understand it. (Therese, LG)

Alicia (Senator) expressed a similar point:

When one is in politics you get lost in it, you cannot have time to visit the sick, visit those who lost their beloved ones, you are completely unavailable, people ask to visit you and you tell them that I am not available, it is a problem indeed.

Regrettably, some women commented that the extended family members and neighbours attributed lack of time to visit them or to participate in social activities to the women's thinking that they were too important to attend some friends and extended family's matters, what Omega (ES) called "so big":

You find that they will think that when you are a leader – you know there are these obstacles which will make them take you the way you are not. Even if you talk the way you have been talking, even if you act the way you have been acting, but so long as now you are a leader, it gives that kind of - people taking you the way you are not. ... "She cannot come now because she is so big".

While respondents mentioned that some men had started to engage with some domestic work while their wives were away for work, they suggested that the perception of those men appeared to be that of helpers rather than being based on the principles of equal partners. The significance of this kind of attitude is that no matter how much the husband may help, his wife will continue to be seen as in-charge of domestic work. In such circumstances, in order to balance family and public work, most of the respondents had other people helping with work, and a few had modern tools that simplify domestic work. The following section discusses which people, and to what extent, female politicians received help with family work.

Help with domestic work

As a number of writers suggest (Diane 1993; Tobias 1997; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Miller 2011), women's moving into the workplace does not necessarily reduce their domestic work. Although division of labour in the home had not changed, women politicians devised means to make domestic work and paid work manageable. It is a common practice that the majority of Rwandan families with working women have domestic workers⁸⁰. A few women in this study also mentioned that they had purchased

⁸⁰ It is crucial to mention that most domestic workers are also women, especially young women who did not get a chance to have an education. While this research did not explore the experiences of these

modern tools. However, respondents' accounts suggest that the quality of most domestic workers and the prices of modern tools and/or lack of proper infrastructure were not enough to liberate them from daily monitoring and execution of family work. This is reflected in Ester's (Deputy) experience:

If I am lucky to be at home over the weekend, I am the one who works in the kitchen. ... also in relation to general cleanliness at home, I try to get a day every week to monitor and make the house workers clean, you know very well that if the domestic workers know that you are out of the house they tend to ignore their work. So for me they are aware that there are days when I wake-up early in the morning to monitor the house. This makes them know that whether I am away on my return I will monitor everything and tell them that you have not done this or that well.

Florida (LG) made a similar point but added that in her case she pays domestic workers with her salary. While I did not ask respondents if they paid domestic workers with their salary (rather than the husband), it is commonly believed that domestic workers and the work they do are a responsibility of women. The interviews illustrate that for most working women, it appears that they are expected not only to pay domestic workers, but to ensure that they keep the home organised (to the satisfaction of their male partners):

You get somebody to step-in in to some of those roles, like I don't have to be there and cook but once in a while I do cook, ...and all that. So you make sure you get someone to do some of the work or else it is not possible. I have a house girl and I have another, somebody a guard I make sure that from my salary I pay them and get some work done.

Similarly, Sada (CSO) stated that the responsibility for domestic work remained the wife's and the domestic workers were only implementers:

The maid has no responsibility to make arrangements for all that, or to be sure that everything is prepared or not. She has – instead she/he is a person responsible for the execution of the responsibilities but the responsibility is still charged with the wife.

Overall, for the majority of the women, domestic work was seen to still be a woman's domain in which she was expected to monitor and manage its wellbeing or hire somebody to do the work other than sharing it with her husband. This family order,

women, researchers such as Basing et al (2012) and as commonly heard on media shows, illustrate that some female domestic workers face sexual harassment and a lot of them end up being sexually abused by the male members of the families they work for. This is a challenge for gender equality in as far as promoting women of different levels and with different issues is concerned. It would be significant if a study about how women's access to paid work without changing gender roles and hierarchies impact on other women's rights.

coupled with conflicting private and public roles, appeared to limit women's work and career development. This is also emphasised by some literature on African feminism (Mbire-Barungi 1990; Falch 2010; Akujobi 2011). For example, in the immediate neighbouring country Burundi, Falch (2010:15-16) argued that Burundian female politicians career development and performance was constrained by family roles (see also Chapter Six in relation to childcare responsibilities):

Furthermore, female politicians are expected by their husbands to uphold their traditional roles as wives and mothers, conflicting domestic and political responsibilities make it difficult for them to spend as much time on politics as their male counterparts, and on many occasions women are obliged to leave political discussions to take care of their domestic duties.

A few women challenged the traditional gender division of work in the family and strongly asserted that men and women should equally share family work. For example, in Lucia's (Deputy) view, when men assist with domestic work only because the female partner is not in the home, it is not equality. She seemed to be frustrated about the idea that most men who carry out domestic work seem to take a helper role status rather than an obligatory one:

There is still a problem, he thinks that he is just helping like a replacement, a rescuer when the wife is not there, just when the woman has gone for an official duty, like now when I slept on the field and he comes in to help, but not as his responsibility. So the day a husband will understand that he can do domestic work even when the wife is around; then that's when we can talk about change – about gender equality – we haven't reached that stage and it will take some time.

In a similar vein, Juliet (Deputy) challenged gender power relations and asserted that in the family both men and women should equally share in family responsibilities depending on who is better at a certain task, not because of one's sex:

So, if only in the home I do where I feel I am better and my male colleague understanding I am doing it because I am better at it and he recognises that, and where I think I am less better they do it better at a given time not always feeling that it has to be you to do this because biologically you are a female.

On the contrary, perceived mainly as helpers, several respondents' stories suggest that men's work was limited to certain tasks such as monitoring, rather than doing the actual domestic work. For example, the following quote from Ester (Deputy) typifies the dominant response:

The other factor is that when I am not around, what I have been doing, then my husband will do. Aaaaah for example, when he comes back home in the evening

he asks: have you eaten food, have you taken a bath or even helping them with their homework. In other words, I am very fortunate because we try to help each other but I think that it is because I do these things and he feels indebted to assist me when I am away so that I don't be overloaded.

Stella (Senator) also mentioned that her husband helps with domestic work and that this facilitated her to balance the public and private spheres. She stressed that going to the same school with her husband might have reduced power relations between them and in some way made it possible for them to understand and help each other with work:

I am so lucky because I went to the same school with my husband, so we understand and support each other, we both leave home for work and we come back to meet in the house; and the children are big now so it facilitates me in fulfilling my duties in both arenas.

Of all the respondents, only one woman mentioned that work was mutually shared in their home, and that this was crucial in making her political responsibilities more manageable. She suggested that the relationship between the wife and husband is crucial in relation to men's involvement in domestic work. This interview suggests four factors that may influence a man's positive attitude towards family work: dialogue about domestic work, the husband's attitude towards equality, the existence of modern tools, and having no young children. Additionally, she mentioned that they have not even had a maid for a whole year:

In my family we don't have demarcations. Actually, it has enabled me to do my duties because I am one of the women that have a lot of work on my head or in front of me. ... We agreed to manage our family, even himself he has no (inferiority) complex, actually it is all about complex, ...again he is someone who is more of academic that he can sit on his computer, research, do work, office work, probably there is this culture where the men like going to bars and takes long time and it could be that. (Carol, Deputy)

She went on to say:

We have spent a complete year without a maid, there isn't anybody external, it is me, my husband and my children, plus visitors who come especially my mother in-law, my mum, who come and we look after them. Even my small boy, he knows how to put-on a rice cooker, and he knows how to put on the kettle and make himself a cup of tea – so is the father (my husband), whoever comes first does this.

Though Carol (Deputy) mentioned that her husband might be participating in family work because he is an academic and most of the time at home on his computer, most of the women were of the view that such cases are relatively few. In Rwandan tradition a

man is expected to go out in the evenings and meet with other men. The majority of the women said that most Rwandan men spend most of their off-work time outside the home irrespective of education levels. And yet, domestic work appears to require time in the home (Thompson and Walker 1989; Cornwall 2005). For example, Lucia (Deputy) stressed:

... he is still a man who goes out, go out to chat with other men, go for sports and exercises, and you the woman rush home to organise and do some work. So you can imagine it is so stressful.

On the other hand Rwandan women are expected to be in the home at certain hours with or without domestic responsibilities. For example, with irritation, Joy (CSO) mentioned that:

... a beautiful wife should be at home at this hour not doing interviews in a bar, you know a wonderful wife or girl, whatever, should be home preparing for the husband. Now I am never heard anything in the society saying that my husband should go home early to prepare for me, because he doesn't need to prepare, he knows what to do, he knows how to do his things, he thinks it is his right, but for me there is preparing for the man – for the husband.

Despite the few social changes that have occurred in recent years, the general opinion was that resistance to concrete change in gender roles was still at large and that most women had given up on challenging the status quo. For example, Juliet (Deputy) lamented that in order to reduce resistance that could block an effective change for future generations, most of the current cohort of female politicians have decided to go with changing attitudes:

Gender roles have not themselves changed because once you try to change them you will find some resistance. So, some of us have agreed to go with changes in perception hoping that we impact the wider society, hoping that we impact on the young generation. But as for making a rupture in the old practices it is not easy I think.

While most respondents' accounts demonstrated that they were in full charge of domestic responsibilities, this thesis found that their male counterparts were not. Female politicians were faced with a double shift of work which reflects double standards in relation to gender equality, and women's rights. The interview analysis also highlighted that failure to fulfil their traditional roles as expected was likely to make the women feel guilty, stressed and pressurised to live up to social expectations. Importantly, for those female politicians who could afford modern tools they seemed significant because

gender roles appeared to have not changed and modern tools made work easier and less time consuming.

Modern tools

Women in this study had differing views about modern tools such as, for example, microwaves, cookers, and washing machines, in relation to gender equality. While all respondents who answered the question could see the value of having them in the home, the majority of the respondents mentioned that without changed attitudes, modern tools might not make men and women equal as regards domestic work. Some of the women claimed that modern tools can only attract some men to participate in family work. Respondents also mentioned that modern tools were still inaccessible especially because, there was not enough electricity in some places and that they were expensive for most of the Rwandan middle and lower class families. However, the general view was that modern tools were important in various ways such as in reducing workloads in the home, attracting some men to serve themselves and in reducing tension between the husband and wife. Despite the relevance of modern tools however, most women said that they were still using traditional tools, which made their work harder and more time consuming. For example, Alicia (Senator) stated:

We are still doing domestic work traditionally. For example cooking, we are still using methods that take a long time, it is hard to go home from work and start to cook, imagine going home to make a charcoal stove, then peel whatever you need to peel.

The women mentioned that most modern tools need less time for monitoring and usage. For example, Yuta (Deputy) believed that modern tools partly allow her to balance family and political work and also suggested that they assisted her to meet her husband's wish to eat food cooked by her, thus, reducing any conflict that would arise otherwise:

Personally I have tools that make my work easier and my husband likes my food but I don't go home to cook on the charcoal stove, I have a cooker, I have a microwave. [...] If your husband says today I want to eat your food, you will be having everything in the house and in ten minutes food will be ready, or you will get the microwave in the kitchen. You know of womens' secrets, there are men who demand to eat food only cooked by their wives in the home, you may not even cook it by yourself but just pretend and tell him it was cooked by you, he will eat happily thinking that it is you who cooked that food.

Rona (Deputy) thought that modern tools will make cooking easier for her and would facilitate any member of the family to prepare meals easily and quickly:

In the homes we need the facilities or tools that would fasten work. For example, we need tools that make cooking easier. If I go home for lunch and I have to return to work, I need tools that would allow me to prepare something quick in the short time I have; where I can quickly, prepare something to feed my family. Or if any of them arrives home first, then can prepare something.

Women who believed that modern tools can influence men to get involved in some family work also thought that most of the traditional tools used in majority of the homes may be an obstacle to men's involvement. For example, the process involved in lighting and cooking using a charcoal stove may hinder men from participating in cooking because it makes the user dirty, and is time consuming:

It is such an important thing and I always say this to women, for a man to bend and do something at home with our traditional tools, lighting the charcoal stove for example, it is very hard. But when we have these other tools they can for instance, take care of themselves. For example, I cannot wake up to warm my husband's food if he comes late, he will put his food in the microwave and warm it for himself, ... For tea he asks us who would like a cup of tea so I can make it for you, he says this because he knows it is easy for him to do it – he won't make a charcoal stove. (Ester, Deputy)

I think so, it can change men because the available tools are traditional tools depending on one's level of income, if it means cooking, for example on charcoal stove, but if you had such facilities I think he would be able to do everything by himself, but we have to help each other. (Valetta, LG)

Whilst modern tools may have relieved some female politicians from some tasks, made some work easier, and attracted some men to participate in domestic work, this may not translate into gender equality, as illustrated in Yuta's (Deputy) case above.

Additionally, despite the fact that modern tools have the potential to aid change in gender roles, several interviewees raised challenges associated with accessing them and expressed regret for not being able to afford them. The major issues raised were: modern tools are expensive, the lack of enough electricity, and electricity being expensive:

We don't have enough electricity; it is hard to afford an electric cooker because it is very expensive. These are facilities we need, to wash cloths you have to get a washbasin and hand-wash the cloths, it is not like in the developed world where you use a washing machine. We have no machines to help in simplifying our work. (Alicia, Senator)

If you look at how many hours we sleep in a day, they are few. Even if I reached home at 9pm, if I had the modern tools it would not stop me from doing the - my responsibilities in the home. ...I would look for such tools, but low electricity that is not enough to facilitate usage of those tools such as the cooker, the washing machine - all those modern tools which could ease work and make us closer to our homes makes it hard. (Valetta, LG)

The new equipment may help, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) may help, of course for us you know that we have a problem, you may have equipment but sometimes you cannot use them because electricity is so expensive, the infrastructure may also be a hindrance because most of the modern tools use electricity. (Kate, ES)

The use of “make us closer to our homes” by Valetta seems to suggest that when some female leaders fail to fulfil domestic work, it can make them feel like they are far from home. The analysis also suggested that this kind of affect impacts on most of the female politicians’ lives, and that many of them get stressed and anxious when they fail to fulfil gender roles.

In contrast, however, several women believed in cultural transformation and said that the most important factor for gender equality was attitudinal/cultural change rather than having access to modern tools. They used the word “mindset” to show how gender division of labour is rooted in the Rwandan culture and stressed the need to liberate minds. In an earlier discussion, the quote from Carol (Deputy) linked her husband’s involvement in family work with education. In the following quote Stella (Senator), echoed a similar view when asked her view about educated and uneducated men as regards understanding gender equality:

The educated men are different from uneducated men in some way. I will explain this; they are aware of some roles because in most cases they attended school and used to cook for themselves while at school, in certain schools, depending on where they were educated. This would help if we had modern tools, if it means to cook for himself then he can cook for himself, he can do all that. However, all starts with the mind-set.

While a few respondents mentioned that some educated men would easily adapt to gender roles in comparison to uneducated men, several respondents stressed that it is changed attitudes that will alter traditional gender roles, not education or modern tools. For example, Sada (CSO) believed that even if there were modern tools in the home the man may not do domestic work so long as he feels that it is women’s work:

It is commonly said that if there were modern tools, not traditional ones or those that would not make a man dirty, does not make a man bend his back, facilities that would make a man feel like he is not doing the woman’s work ... some say that they will like it but what I have seen in the daily life, unless he is single but the moment he marries whether he cooks from a cooker that came from the West or a modern charcoal stove that consumes less energy, it is all the same, it is the woman’s work.

In Colette's (Deputy) view, most educated men intentionally refuse to take-on gender roles unlike uneducated men who refuse because they are ignorant of gender equality but once taught could easily change. This reinforces an earlier view suggesting that women's empowerment targeted only women leaving the men unaware, which has created a gap between men and women's awareness of gender equality⁸¹:

Uneducated man, if given explanation is most likely to be better than an educated man because educated men may just decide not to do what is right even if he understands. It is unfortunate that efforts to sensitise men and the Rwandan community in general has not reached the rural community.

According to Maureen (Minister), modern tools and attitudes towards the gender division of labour serve different purposes as regards gender equality:

But having modern tools is one thing and changing the attitudes so that a man can also help with domestic work is another thing; just like it is in the Western countries where men take responsibility to help with family work and feels comfortable to do work that was traditionally allocated to women. ...it is not those modern tools, they are not enough, it requires changing people's attitude so that he is not seen by other men as a shame, so that the public don't think that he is ruled by his wife.

Doreen (CSO) had a similar point:

Aaar well aaam, eeeeh, before you have the modern tools, [...] well it could reduce the amount of work, it may also contribute to some percentage, but I think we need to work more on the mind-set, because somebody would go for the traditional tools usage as long as they understand why they are contributing or doing it.

In fact, Georgia (LG) cautioned that modern tools would only facilitate gender equality for the rich who can afford them, but not for the poor who have to depend on traditional tools:

If they have the capacity to buy those tools, if they can afford the cooker or the washing machine it would be wonderful. But this does not rule out the fact that that is equality for a rich person, then how can the poor person reach equality.

A discussion about the importance of modern tools usage in gender roles is important. Several women thought that modern tools were important in making their workload easier and in reducing family tensions rather than the altering gender division of work in the family. Despite the significant role played by modern tools, a woman's adherence to such demands from a male partner illustrates male power and appears to suggest that

⁸¹ Burnet (2012:201) found that in the rural communities, men are not aware of women rights and this worsens family conflicts when women go out to work and fail to meet their husband's expectations as regards domestic work: "Rural respondents attributed the increased discord to men's ignorance about women's dignity and rights."

a woman's level of education, economic status, or political post without cultural change, may not empower her to challenge gender power and male superordination. Majority of the women held the view that modern tools are a secondary factor to cultural shift in altering gender roles.

Conclusion

Data and interview analysis suggests that while women were accessing political work, this has not yet translated into gender equality because generally, men have not yet assumed their share of domestic work responsibilities. Most of the female politicians appeared to be faced with high workloads in the home and in their public roles. In reference to Chapter Two, the Rwandan National Gender Policy (2010) calls for gender mainstreaming in all sectors (fields of life). However, analysis of women's accounts suggests that there has been little change in gender relations in the family and that attitudinal change should target the community at large to reduce social stigma attributed to a man who helps his female partner. Data analysis highlighted how in some of the female politicians' homes power relations have not improved, and in a few cases it led to increased marital discord and breakage of families. It was mentioned that some men become insecure, and sometimes jealous of their wives, thinking that they are involved in adultery if they stayed at work until late. Some respondents associated this with stereotypes relating to men's control over women's sexuality. Balancing family work and political work, as discussed above, includes various activities, dilemmas and pressures; however, it appeared to become more complicated for the women if it involved childcare as I will go on to discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: Motherhood and Politics

The impasse is at least partly because caring for children remains largely invisible to social and economic accounting. For several reasons, the issue is not clearly recognised. First, a lack of acknowledgement of the social value of children has sidelined from mainstream enquiry the question of their cost and upon whom it falls. Second, the problem has been made confusing by the widespread elision, both popularly and in social and economic theory, of the issues of gender and parenthood. Third, social research has concentrated on changes in the market sector at the expense of direct investigation into the non-market sector not least because, until the advent of reliable time-use data, there has been a lack of empirical information on how life is lived in the home. (Craig 2007:131)

Introduction

The ways in which respondents described the value attached to motherhood and the challenges associated with balancing motherhood with paid work are discussed in this chapter. The issues relating to motherhood and childrearing that were mentioned included traditional norms of motherhood, the rights of a woman as an individual and as a mother / carer, and management of motherhood and caring (issues of resources, time, and emotions). For example, women mentioned stress and pressure, having too much work coupled with limited time, and uncertain working schedules that affected time for childcare. It is important to mention also that women did not only raise issues relating to work but also issues relating to their children's welfare, such as the physical and emotional health of the child, the child's security and protection from violence, and the quality of children's informal and formal education.

Several studies argue that the importance attributed to motherhood (e.g. Richardson 1993; Baker 2010) and to work for money or remuneration in today's monetary society has led to an unprecedented tension between the two callings for working women (Pheonix and Woollet 1991; Skeggs 1997; Miller 2011). Similarly, in this study of female politicians in Rwanda, motherhood was raised in all but two of the interviews among the issues that affect female politicians' work and career development. In Rwandan culture motherhood is not only seen as an act of giving birth to children, but it is a way of life, it is about emotions, about behaviour, about identity – it is a whole woman's social life. Motherhood as an identity goes beyond fertility to include identity, status, and nurturing and rearing of children (Human Rights Watch 1996).

This chapter explores the relationship between identity and motherhood; how female politicians in Rwanda juggle balancing motherhood and their political roles; and what impact balancing the two has on their lives. It is divided into two sections: section one analyses the social norms attached to motherhood in Rwandan. Section two is a broader debate exploring whether women's political involvement transforms the institutional culture. This section explores the women's views about the nature of political work, and work schedule in relation to gender equality and social justice. It examines female politicians' accounts about their life and career challenges – whether political involvement and the gains discussed in Chapter Four has lead to rights such as self-determination, liberty, freedom of choice, and gender justice (Richardson 1993; Walby 1994; Evans 1996; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999; Kabeer 2005).

Motherhood and Rwandan Tradition

In this section I explore female politicians' social-political image as child-bearer and rearer within the restrictions of social norms. I analyse when and how childbearing and rearing is expected to happen traditionally. Finally, I show how these norms can influence and impact on female politicians lives and career path. In Rwandan culture motherhood is highly valued and has played an important role in shaping the identity of women (Hunt 1990; Jefremovas 1991; Hamilton 2000; Baines 2003; Adekunle 2007; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). A woman's identity is primarily regarded as that of a mother (*Umubyeyi*)⁸², thus every woman is expected to bear and rear children for the continuity of the marital family lineage and its reputation, and subsequently the society (e.g. see Hunt 1990; Adekunle 2007). Several women illustrated that, traditionally, a Rwandan woman's respect is conditional on her fertility and/or marriage. They suggested that motherhood and mothering was a source of most women's social status, pride, hard work, and fulfilment as discussed in the following section.

Motherhood as identity

Giving birth is socially acceptable when it is done under certain prescribed parameters – heterosexual marriage. In traditional Rwanda, premarital pregnancy was regarded as a

⁸² The Kinyarwanda online dictionary defines "*Umubyeyi*" to mean parent, from "*Kubyara*" also, defined as "giving birth". However, socially, *Umubyeyi* has both biological and gendered connotations and is both a noun and an expressive word; used for instance, to refer to a woman as a kind, receptive and forgiving person. Notably, the expression *umubyeyi* is sometimes used without any knowledge of the woman having given birth or not. The implication is that this seems to suggest that a woman is a mother of all, and that under normal circumstances every woman should bear children.

social taboo and unmarried women who became pregnant would be banished⁸³. At worst, premarital pregnancy led to death and the hearsay among Rwandans is that such women were thrown in the forest to be devoured by wild animals or were thrown in a lake to drown (see also Jefremovas 1991; Powley 2009). In today's Rwanda, women are not as severely punished for pre-marital pregnancies, however, they are socially despised and stigmatised. However, if performed "well", motherhood to the majority of Rwandan women forms their primary identity – not the level of income or political post. For example, many of the women in this study spoke about how Rwandan society expects every woman to become a mother, failure of which derogates a woman from "normality" and brings loss of respect. They reflected on how a woman without children is likely to be socially stigmatised, disrespected, and may lose confidence and self-esteem:

You know how a woman without children is considered in our culture. Whether she is married or not though not being married is also an additional problem. You know she cannot be respected, and she will not be at peace with herself because she is a human being who may definitely need both, but more so because of her status in the community. So I don't think that such a woman will also be confident and do her work peacefully. She will be struggling to change her status and be bothered by the comments that people make about her due to that situation. So, I think for me I better go through the challenges of childrearing than not having children. (Stella, Senator)

[...] children help with an individual's equilibrium because it makes one feel that her life has sense, you have a reason to work because you toil and work for your children taking them from one level to another, the fact that you have to be their role model – that kind of thinking empowers you and you perform better. (Mariana, Senator)

Children will take so much time but all in all you need to plan and balance the two because children are very important in a woman's life – even in our society if you have no children or not married, people will not respect you or think you are a responsible person. (Irene, Deputy)

The above quotes reflect different social opinions about the importance of motherhood in Rwandan society. For example, for Stella and Irene, motherhood is more of a social compulsion while for Mariana it appears to be personal belief⁸⁴. In Stella's view a woman's status emanates primarily from childbearing – but only through (heterosexual)

⁸³ While the exact timing of this practice is not written about, many Rwandans believe it used to happen and verbally make reference to it, and it is also documented.

⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two however, women are part of the society and their knowledge is in some ways influenced by social norms (e.g. traditional and religious) that govern their society. In this case, a woman's beliefs about motherhood might be informed by the norms of her society unless the women are empowered enough to understand and to challenge social norms that violate their rights (e.g. see Kabeer 2005).

marriage. She talks about how single women will try as much as they can to get married and then have children “she will be struggling to change her status...” Her view is backed by anecdotal evidence, where it is not unusual to hear people making bad or negative comments about a married woman without children as it is usually presumed to be the woman rather than her husband who is infertile. For a female politician, then, biologically having no children of her own, especially if it is not her choice, may compromise her confidence and/ or performance. This is also illustrated by other research on Rwandan women. For instance, Human Rights Watch (1996:14) noted:

Women’s ability to seek opportunities beyond the home have been greatly limited by the idealized image of women as child-bearers. Women are most valued for the number of children they can produce, and prior to the genocide, the average number of children per woman (6.2)⁸⁵ was one of the highest rates in the world.

This implies that motherhood for most Rwandan women has been a social tool used systematically to subordinate them in a way that has historically compromised most aspects of their lives and self-determination. The above quote also suggests that there is contradiction between care and work. While a woman is solely expected to provide childcare, as also discussed in Chapter Five, she is also expected to work in order to provide for children. This appears to challenge the binary nature of the private and public spheres which is built on the gender division of labour (Tamale 2004; Craig 2007; Falch 2010; Buscaglia and Randell 2012). The lack of respect for a woman without children, the social stigma attached to it, however, illustrate how strong the stereotypes are concerning motherhood as a woman’s *prime* identity in Rwandan society.

The majority of the women’s accounts illustrated that such beliefs were also shared and nurtured by women themselves. All the women who had children (28/29) had a special attachment to their status as mothers. For example, the majority of these women believed that children are a source of happiness and healing when faced with certain kinds of stress. Several mothers mentioned how after a stressful day at work they were reinvigorated by their children on returning home. The importance of children is so grounded in Rwandan culture to the extent that in Coral’s (Deputy) view it is hard to imagine a female politician’s life without children, which is a kind of stereotype. She

⁸⁵ Basinga, et al. (2012:12) states that the number has been reduced to “an average of 4.6 children” by 2011. Additionally, the Rwandan government, through speeches and debates, encourage Rwandan families to limit children to caring capacity number, at most three children per family.

added that women should be confident and self-aware, and not be intimidated by those who think that working with women of child bearing age is risky:

I imagine a woman politician who do not have children, who just goes home and meet the extended family issues⁸⁶ without her own child who relieves her from the stress; so really saying that it is the best, some people could say that it is the best, ..., and sometimes they say that women in the producing age are difficult to work with but other women also could have other complications. ... all this needs planification, how do you program yourself? At the end of the day it comes back in self programming, in self-awareness, in self-esteem and in self-empowerment. Beyond the self then other factors will help as you can manage.

Similarly, Norah (Deputy) stated:

Some people say that - that person (without children) is always in a bad mood – children always bring happiness. You laugh with them, pray with them and that relationship and managing them will impact your leadership – humanity – it has a positive impact on your leadership- you learn how to forgive. But someone without children; it will be evident in their leadership.

Elsewhere, there has been a great deal of research analysing how motherhood is an impediment to gender equality, and how motherhood as an identity perpetuates gender hierarchies (Phoenix 1991; Richardson 1993; Craig 2007; Baker 2010; Gatrell 2011). However, although there is limited literature on motherhood in Africa, in her study about “*Motherhood in African Literature and Culture*”, Akujobi (2011)⁸⁷ illustrated how childlessness in some African societies can jeopardise a woman’s social identity. As reflected by the respondents’ accounts in the above quotes, she also argued that motherhood status in this context can either ruin a woman’s status or save her from trouble:

Motherhood is so critical in most traditional societies in Africa that there is no worse misfortune for a woman than being childless. A barren woman is seen as incomplete, she is what Mbiti calls “dead end of human life not only for genealogical level but also for herself” (Akujobi 2011:3)

Whilst motherhood is socially important in Rwanda, an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant is typically seen as committing a “deviant” act and causes a social scandal. For example, in a recent study about “*Abortion Incidence and Postabortion Care in Rwanda*”, Basinga, et al. (2012), illustrate that irrespective of social sanctions

⁸⁶ Most Rwandan households have extended family dependents, or in need of support. Due to economic constraints extended family issues appears to be a burden for majority of Rwandans today.

⁸⁷ Akujobi explores women’s religious and traditional perception of themselves as mothers and how they make sense of their motherhood experiences. This was done with an aim to analyse their narratives with feminist perspective, and she concluded that motherhood is both ideological and institutional.

about premarital pregnancy, they do occur especially among young women and more especially among vulnerable women (e.g. domestic workers and students)⁸⁸. Again, although abortion is illegal, the level of abortions reported in this research in some ways appears to correlate with social stigma and general perceptions about premarital pregnancies and childbearing.⁸⁹ Significant to mention, is the fact that the same woman who is socially scorned and stigmatised for carrying a premarital pregnancy is legally punished if she aborts⁹⁰:

...because the practice of contraception among unmarried women is perceived as being an indication of promiscuity. That young women become sexually active a little over half a year prior to marriage, that many are not practicing contraception or not practicing effectively, and that strong sanctions exist against having a child while unmarried are some of the key factors leading young women to obtain abortions. (Basinga, et al. 2012:12)

Whereas most of the cases relating to premarital pregnancies happen to young women, this does not mean that unmarried women would not wish to have children and/or live a single life. The stigma associated with premarital pregnancy seems to be a hindrance to women who would wish to have children either because they are losing hope of marriage or because they do not wish to get married. For example Doreen (CSO), though a married woman, illustrated this point:

I think some women may wish to, but it is hard - but it is starting to happen among the young people – not in politics of course. This woman may decide to have a child or more but does not want to be under a man. The female politicians would not have that choice but we---ll, personally I would prefer that choice; because, hahaha, Justine please don't disclose my name, hahahaha. [...] I wish

⁸⁸ For example, in a newspaper article reported by Fred Ndole in The Sunday Times, 31/07/2011, he cited a situation where just in one district there were 56 pregnancies in secondary schools: "This follows a report by the National Women Council, indicating that 56 school girls in the district were found pregnant": <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14703&article=9961>, accessed, 21/09/11. Again, on 04/02/2013, the same newspaper, in an article by Steven Rwembeh, reported 26 (ages 14-17) pregnancies discovered in one school ("*Groupe Scholairie*", Ntsinda District) and many of these pregnancies allegedly attributed to one male teacher. These cases of premarital pregnancies and girl-child abuse appear to be reported because they are big numbers, but it seems that there are many more cases which go unreported because it is a single case and/or not reported by the victim or her parents.

⁸⁹ On page 15, Basinga, et al. (2012) reported that 96% of all health centres in Rwanda reported treating post-abortion cases. Notwithstanding abortions that are carried-out safely and/or have no complications and may never be recorded by hospitals, the level of unsafe abortions appear to have correlation with the level of premarital pregnancies in Rwanda. Although there may be other factors that may cause a woman to seek abortion, social stigma was raised as one of the major factors that compel women to risk their lives with use of unsafe abortions as the only alternative available to them.

⁹⁰ The Newtimes news, supra note 7, accessed 11/11/2011 reported that "Musanze Intermediate Court this week, sentenced three teenage girls to a one year jail sentence each after finding them guilty of undergoing abortions." Regrettably this happened at the backdrop of the girls testifying that "the man who had impregnated them swayed them to do so". This is sheer double victimisation.

these women would have children if they wished to but the traditional, the traditional community expectations is oooh, she has had a child without a father?

Doreen was a lone voice with a wish to have had children but stay single, this seems an important point in as far as women's choices and gender and sexuality is concerned. Just like Doreen, "Justine please don't disclose my name" there is hearsay about women who are not married and wishing to have children but barred by the social stigma around children outside marriage. This suggests also that there may be cases where women might decide to marry primarily to get children in the socially acceptable conditions, just as Doreen might have opted to do. This is significant in as far as women's choices to determine whether to become mothers or not, or get married or not, as well as how and when to become mothers, is concerned. Doreen mentions that a few women in Rwanda have started to have children when they are single, but stresses that this is not a socially tolerable choice for female politicians – female politicians because they are public figures came under gendered scrutiny (see Chapter Four). It might be expected that the quick and rapid increase of women's participation in politics in Rwanda would influence the traditional norms about motherhood and childrearing; but most of the women thought that traditional norms of motherhood and childrearing appear to have remained largely the same and largely unchallenged.

Female politicians seem to be caught between two conflicting social norms around motherhood. While a Rwandan woman is socially expected to become pregnant and bear children, the interviews indicated that the workplace was seen as relatively hostile if female politicians become pregnant, irrespective of whether they are married or not. Several respondents, as well as some authors (e.g. see King and Botsford 2009; Gatrell 2011), argued that the maternal body is not socially expected at work, and that if women had children, the working culture is not favourable to childcare. For example, Irene (Deputy) commented:

One lady was pregnant and a male colleague said that "didn't we say this?" They have started to get pregnant (laughs), didn't we say that? They have started getting babies. This one is going to take four months sitted at home".

Carol (Deputy) said that unlike her first job, as a politician she found mothering very difficult:

The woman who has a baby in the political work; I can compare my situation. My first one and the second I was still in the ministry and the third one I had already joined the parliament. They are two different things; the one in the

political work is so tiresome, very, very tiresome because you don't manage your time.

Some of the women reported that female politicians can face distinct issues from women doing similar work if they became pregnant. In her personal experience Irene (Deputy) felt pregnancy was a wrong thing to do while a politician and expressed this with words that depict irresponsibility "...appear like a person who is stupid ... someone who doesn't know what she wants". Although she did not mention the fact that she had all her three children while working, her background indicates that Irene's three children were all born while she was a working woman and in managerial posts. However, it is only during her third pregnancy (as a politician) that she felt embarrassed about motherhood. Irene also mentioned that "... I became the first person not to take it in", meaning that she felt that other people also thought that by becoming pregnant she was an irresponsible person as childbearing and rearing is perceived to affect time at work (see Chapter Two), which appears to suggest that political work is considered to be incompatible with childbearing:

When I realised that I was pregnant I became the first person to fail to take it in, I said whum what do I do? How can this happen? I am going to appear like a person who is stupid, someone with no knowledge, someone who doesn't know what she wants; I asked to join the parliament, it is me who asked to be on the list, I am here for the job, now what can I do? In the beginning I tried to hide it to the extent that when I had my baby nobody knew about it.

Other respondents reinforced Irene's point by suggesting that for a long time Rwandan politics was a sphere of men and when women accessed politics their colleagues expected no pregnant women in the workplace. For example, Juliet (Deputy) mentioned that politics was not meant for women planning to have children thus some politicians were still "shocked" by seeing pregnant women at work:

[...] if you appear there to be pregnant you are one in a thousand so it is not a familiar sight. Even me when I joined parliament none of us got pregnant, simply because, I think the age group that was there had already finished with the business or either they are no longer – they did not want to get pregnant because there were some who were not yet married.

Similarly, in the UK context, Gatrell (2011) found that discrimination against pregnant women in the workplace is founded on beliefs that pregnant women are unhealthy, for example, and that they are emotional thus cannot take rational decisions if they are in leadership and managerial posts. Gatrell (2011) quoted Acker (2003) to stress that

motherhood, especially pregnancy and care of young children, is one of the reproductive roles that is used by employers and working colleagues to discriminate and stigmatise women in managerial and leadership posts:

Acker (2003:56) observes how, in the context of management and organization, women's maternal 'bodies... their ability to procreate, their pregnancy, breastfeeding and childcare...are [treated as] suspect, stigmatized and used as grounds for control and exclusion'. (Gatrell 2011: 77)

Similar to Eagly et al. (2002) and Gatrell (2011) finding that pregnancy was considered unhealthy at work, the women who talked about this issue did not regard pregnancy an illness, rather they felt that the problem lies with the working conditions that are not maternal/gender sensitive. For instance, when responding to the question of whether motherhood impacts on a female politician's life and career, a few respondents returned to their experiences of pregnancy:

The pregnancy is not a sickness, I move with the pregnancy, I can think, I can implement and then the management is like any other. And a male politician can take a leave and he can fall sick, and then I think it is a matter of how you look at it. (Carol, Deputy)

While not seeing pregnancy as an illness, some of the respondents did believe that pregnant women had different needs that should be acknowledged. For, example, Doreen (CSO) mentioned that in some circumstances the allocated work might be dangerous both to the mother and the baby she is carrying in her womb, even when the mother is in a healthy condition:

Look at the time, you know, you are expecting this child; aaah may be let me refer to the current situation ... we are coming into presidential elections. You are supposed to wake up very early in the morning to be assigned to a certain district where you are supposed to travel how many kilometres per hour from Kigali. Maybe you will depend on water, you know sometimes pregnancies affect us differently, ... but the fact remains that in a way, you are vulnerable to any kind of situation.

Several Western writers claim that in today's competitive world some women have resorted to career building first and child bearing at a later age, while others have given-up the idea of child bearing (Richardson 1993; Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Severinson et al. 2010). Interview analysis from this study suggests that the latter is likely to be a hard choice for Rwandan women, as childlessness might bring contempt.

The women were asked what their views were about being in politics with and without childcare responsibilities for a female politician. The majority thought that childcare

while in politics is a big load to carry. Yet, the majority of the respondents said they preferred to carry that load than be without children. However, whereas the women said that motherhood was important to them, their perception appeared to be partly influenced by the social value attributed to motherhood. For example, Mariana (Senator) emphasised this idea:

I think for those without children, unless she is young waiting to have them in the future, but the one without children – it is a big problem – you know what it means even in our society – it is better to have children anyways.

Analysis of respondents views about motherhood, whether they are gendered or not, whether motherhood is crucial in Rwandan tradition or for the woman herself, suggested that what seems to be at stake is women's freedom to choose what is best for them – when, whether or not to have children. This is also argued by Akujobi (2011:3): “Yes, motherhood is vital but it should not be all that the woman is made for. It should be a matter of choice as some women would rather not experience motherhood.”

Ironically however, while Rwandan society considers motherhood to be important, childrearing is left to the family and/or mother. Research analysis seems to suggest that this is basically more an ideological issue than it is an economical issue. Literature has shown that though some states have managed to provide social care, childcare has largely continued to be a private affair whether in developed (Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Gatrell 2011; Yerkes 2010) or developing societies such as in the case of Rwanda. Charles (2008:39), argued that gender transformation requires to “simultaneously” address both “economic structures and the status order of society”. This suggests that the patriarchal ideology that confines women to gender hierarchies and gender roles must be transformed together with institutional working cultures. As Gordo, (2009) suggests in the case of Germany, institutional transformation may also require resources, for instance to transform infrastructure to allow maternal bodies and roles at work; together with awareness-raising aiming at attitudinal transformation. The laws and policies in Rwanda emphasise gender equality but socially even women themselves may still cleave (unintentionally) to social negative tendencies (Hirschmann and Di Stefano 1996; Devlin and Elgie 2008). For example, Irene's self-blame suggests that the stress she suffered does not emanate from carrying an unplanned pregnancy, but relates to how it will be perceived by her work colleagues.

Social understandings of childcare

In this study, the majority view was that Rwandan social norms were such that the women who felt that men should be responsible for childcare as much as mothers still felt that men's role in parenting was primarily as helpers and not equally responsible. What was also evident from the analysis of interviews was that even where men are involved in childrearing, their involvement was specific to certain tasks, for instance monitoring whether children have eaten, and this was more likely to take place when the mother was away.

Many of the respondents stated that mothering should be a private affair (instead of public childcare) and also said that in many families and the families of female politicians in Rwanda, mothering is still a woman's role. A few respondents such as, for example, Lucia, were disheartened and/or questioned the social responsibility of motherhood as a sole or primary responsibility of a woman (see next section). However, despite having public roles, many of the women felt that no matter how much work a female politician has to do, she must also be in full charge of mothering and other domestic roles. As I have argued, childcare is traditionally a responsibility of a mother, failure of which is likely to impede on a woman's familial and social image. Resultantly, most respondents saw their husbands or male counterparts as "helpers" not as someone with whom they shared equal responsibility for childcare. The following quote from Ester (Deputy) illustrates this dominant point:

Most times I worked in the upcountry, there are times when I had to travel with the little child. Eer but it was so hard because you imagine that your child would become sick. So when you have little children it is definitely difficult because you have to be close to them, but if the father of your children accepts to stay with them it is no big problem.

The use of the word "accepts", suggest that the father is not under the same obligation to take care of his children. This can happen even in situations where the child's health is at risk as Ester mentioned above. Similarly, Omega (ES) lamented that even in areas where the man has more skills than a woman he may not use them to benefit the family in the home:

... the facilitation, the care of the children, the tradition that you are the one who is supposed to do it – maybe the man would come to support you, even I remember, even me I was telling my husband that you know that – I would tell him that take my certificate and I take yours, yours have AAA (grades) principles and you want me to train your children while mine maybe has B, C and alike.

There were contrasts in respondents' views about men's role in childcare. While most women who argued for gender equality and expressed how hard it is to balance political work with childcare were at local government leadership level and in the lower chamber of parliament, the cabinet ministers argued with conviction that it was a woman's duty to keep her traditional roles and excel in both spheres:

The way you handle yourself at work, it is the same way you have to perform very well at home so that you do your work well not to fail your responsibilities at home. It is also a problem, it is a problem if you do your office work very well and back at home your children are dull and poor in school, your children have no discipline... (Maureen, Minister)

We should not forget our responsibilities as women, as mothers, as sisters, as daughters to somebody. We are, anyway you will not change your being a woman, you are still a woman even in your job you are a woman, but being a woman does not mean that you are a weak person. (Julienne, Minister)

Whereas this research did not establish why there was contrast in views due to respondents' political levels, analysis of respondents background seems to suggest that respondents whose views supported a gender division of labour in the family had no women's rights activism in their background. By contrast, those who argued for gender equality were predominantly younger and/or those who were activists and exposed to modern debates about equality rights. However, this seems to be an area of further exploration to determine how women's awareness of their rights is influenced by: generational differences, background of activism, and level of income.

While this research did not explore generational differences, the respondents' accounts as regards to pregnancy and mothering seems to suggest that female politicians may face distinct issues due to age differences. Several of the respondents were of the view that political participation may affect young women who are still of childbearing age and want to have children. While a number of them who had passed childbearing age, and had adult children, mentioned that political work was easier, and some specifically mentioned putting in as much time as the men, those with childcare responsibilities lamented that it was difficult and stressful to juggle politics and motherhood. For instance, some women suggested that young women wishing to have children should not aspire to go into politics until they are done with giving birth and caring for young children:

I do think that young women with a plan to have a child should put political ambitions on hold until they finish having children; because it requires a lot of

sacrifice, it is too, too hard to get time, the work needs enough time, the baby also is in need of enough time. (Therese, LG)

Therese went on to emphasise her point:

... I really feel that whoever wants to join politics it is a heavy responsibility, it is better not to have babies, one of them will fail, one of the two will fail. You either will accomplish your work and forget the baby which will be a scandal, or you will attend to the baby which is what we wish, then work will fail.

Another respondent went so far as to suggest (with an apology) that it is better if politics is left to widows, and those with older children:

Whuum, it requires those that are a bit elderly, those with experience, those with, I can't say this because it would appear bad, it sounds bad really but in the first mandate⁹¹ for example most women were widows. When you are a widow with older children you can play politics very well because your demands at home are less, I have seen this in my experience. (Yuta, Deputy)

With difficulty and hesitation she went on to say:

... although it is not something that you can put in your research, you cannot propose that the widows alone should be the ones to be put in politics – but this is something I witnessed personally. They would go with no much responsibilities like those who are married and with little children – this I have seen working well for women.

Underlying these experiences and opinions is the idea that the working environment is masculine (Hobson 2002; Gatrell 2011), so much that women who work in it must be those without care roles. For these women, the institutional culture seemed to challenge the gender equality norms that the Rwandan government adopted as a development goal (see Chapters Two and Seven). For example, Yuta mentioned that politics was best suited for elderly women, with older children, and widows and/or women with no husband. The combination of the three factors reflects power relations and how challenging it is for a female politician to balance work and motherhood (see also Crompton 2006; Glauber 2006; Baker 2010; Wharton 2012). Additionally, the above account emphasises the point made earlier about distinct issues suffered by the women of different ages as a result of reproductive needs.

The view that women should finish child bearing and rearing before joining politics appears to reinforce a gender division of labour, discrimination against women, and assumes that childrearing should be done by women. As has been discussed elsewhere

⁹¹ The first mandate referred to here is the parliamentary elections of 2003. Yuta's comment emphasises Juliet's who entered politics during the transitional government in the late 1990s when she earlier mentioned that she did not see any pregnant woman in parliament unlike since 2008 elections that has brought in young women.

in this thesis, gender equality might not be attained by women's access to decision-making and work only but rather by a comprehensive approach, including awareness-raising for their rights. This affirms existing research asserting that women's promotion calls for a holistic approach that deals with all issues of power relations (Dipboye and Colella 2005; Burnet 2008), both in the home and institutionally. Having discussed the social norms surrounding motherhood and mothering in Rwandan society, I now turn my discussion to female politicians' experiences of balancing childcare and political work.

Balancing Work and Childcare

In most African societies and in Rwanda particularly, motherhood and mothering are intertwined (Akujobi 2011). The women's accounts suggest that a Rwandan woman's social identity is not only conditional to motherhood, but also that it is conditional to her capacity to mother her children into responsible citizens. This is further reinforced by Rwandan sayings such as "*Ikigoryi kiba ikya nyina*" meaning that "a stupid child is of the mother". A similar proverb is expressed among the *Banganda* of Uganda: "*Omwana omusiru siru anakuwaza nyina, omwana umugezi asanyusa kitawe*" meaning "A wise child brings joy to his father, a foolish child brings grief to his mother". These proverbs suggest that the mother is socially blamed for children's failure because of her traditional responsibility as nurturer of (her) children into responsible person/citizen, while on the other hand the father takes pride in the well nurtured (on his behalf) child. Phoenix et al. (1991:7) definition of mothering restates the Rwandan social understanding of childrearing:

"Mothering" refers to the daily management of children's lives and the daily care provided for them. Incorporated within the term "mothering" is the intensity and emotional closeness of the idealised mother-child relationship as well as notions of the mothers being responsible for the fostering of good child development.

Several researchers elsewhere argue that women's mothering roles have not been reduced by their entrance in the public sphere of paid work, but that women have instead cut down their leisure time to get enough time for childcare (Craig 2007). In Rwanda, women might have not had a leisure culture as in the West but did have a social life with extended families in activities such as ceremonies. Respondents' accounts illustrated that female politicians with children cut their time for social

activities, and to some extent time with extended families and friends, to find time for mothering.⁹²

This section examines female politicians' experiences of managing childrearing and political roles. The following discussion shows that although women may be in the public sphere, the environment is not yet equal and equitable. The laws and policies are a positive step (see Chapter Two), but socially and in practical terms the environment appears not yet ready to accommodate the maternal tasks of women (Hobson 2000; Mcdonagh 2010). Analysis of the interview accounts illustrate that in the public sphere female politicians were expected to maintain traditional traits of womanhood as well as be "like men", and yet fulfil traditional expectations of womanhood in the private sphere. While it is not easy for most Rwandan women to balance work and mothering roles, the analysis indicates that female politicians faced distinct issues depending on the age of their children, whether they are single or married mothers, the availability of facilities and resources, the level of the husband / partner's involvement, the amount of work, and work proximity from home.

Work proximity from home, age of children, and childcare

The interviews highlighted that political work often involves uncertain working conditions and working outside the home either in the field within the country or going on missions outside the country. The analysis of interviews suggest that such circumstances may affect the women in question's mothering and/or parenting role and put them under pressure, no matter what the age of children is or whether a woman has a partner or not. Childcare seemed to worry and stress the women more than any other family role especially when they had work outside the home. Several women also thought that this affected their children. This appeared to be all the more so when their husbands were not engaged in parenting:

When women are far from home they are afraid, I do not know but in Kinyarwanda "*baba bahangayitse*"⁹³ (are worried) because they don't know what will happen to their kids. (Kate, ES)

Sometimes they grab your bag and hide it so you don't go to work. When you are leaving for work they ask if you are coming back home – imagine what children are going through. If their fathers were close to them, the children

⁹² In modern Rwanda, fitness and leisure activities such as sauna, massage, and gym tonic have been introduced. Although I did not explicitly ask the women whether they attended such activities, their accounts suggest that many of them were likely not to find time outside their family roles and paid work.

⁹³ "*Baba Bahangayitse*" literary means "they are worried" however it is beyond the normal worry, it involves a certain level of stress and anxiety in this context.

would not be in such a condition. As they grow-up however, they get used and are also able to take care of themselves. (Norah, Deputy)

For Martha (Minister), breastfeeding mothers find it even harder if their work involves going to mission for some days:

But for most missions outside the home or country it is such a challenge and you can imagine if it is a big period, you cannot store breast milk that can stay for all those days; that is a challenge to parents indeed.

Today Rwandan women have accessed most decision-making posts and in a few areas they have surpassed the glass ceiling (30%) provided for by the Constitution (see Chapter One), but on the basis of the experiences of women in this study, women appeared to be limited by mothering tasks especially. This is not an isolated situation for Rwanda, but occurs also in other countries. Craig (2007) expressed the fact that in the West, generally, women who are not mothers have been found to enjoy more gender equity work participation and earnings than mothers. To emphasise this point Craig (2007:10) cited Williams (2001) in claiming that “far more significant than the “glass ceiling” that inhibits promotion of women beyond a certain point, there is a “maternal wall”. This suggests that even when there are policies for women to access politics, as in the case of Rwanda (see Chapter One), women are still likely to be constrained by motherhood responsibilities.

Motherhood as an issue that restrains women’s equal participation in politics seems to portray a more complicated situation than just childcare. Motherhood appears to be more about gender subordination which consigns childcare to women other than both parents. Some of the women, for example stated that a woman may be forced to quit her job or career development if motherhood responsibilities conflict with childcare. In such circumstances, respondents argued that mothering is affected by the age of children, and/or working away from home, for instance, Therese (LG) commented:

My child who was the first in class became the last when I was posted in Kibuye for work. ...that made me quit that job, I resigned, when I returned home the child became the first in class again, understandable that a young child is in much need of her mother’s close presence, so, so much, beyond so much I think, I don’t know how to say this.

In a similar situation, Georgia (LG), illustrated the same point with an example of her colleague who quite school to care for her child as a result of malnutrition following failure to get time to juggle care for her baby, school and work. In this case, the problem

appears to be a failure to get time to monitor if the baby had been properly fed by the maid, which could have been a role of both parents rather than just the mother:

I want to let you know that a mother one day gave us an example that she always left work and straight away to school and she realised that her child suffered from kwashiorkor⁹⁴ and yet she bought all sorts of milk, all the things she bought for her child the babysitter did not give them to the baby...

Georgia (LG) went on to mention some of the issues that may differently affect mothers of young children more than mothers of older children:

The person with little children and the person with older children will not worry at the same level because what worries them has different effects. For example the babysitter may decide to quit anytime even without your notice, what happens then if you have a little child you will not work until you find another one but if your child is in school or can stay at a neighbour's that will be different – yes you will worry but not in the same ways.

Therese (LG) made a similar point:

The needs of this work requires your children to be older because though you have a lot of work to accomplish, you are at least sure that your child will not fall in a charcoal stove, will not be starved or may not suffer from kwashiorkor, at least you are very sure she can serve herself with food while at home and if something is missing she is also able to say it.

Many respondents mentioned that participation in politics opened the opportunity to develop their skills through education (see Chapter Four). While a mother of older children might have flexibility in how many days she can be away from home, a mother of young children, as in the preceding case and that of Therese, might find it very hard or even give-up on her wish to go for further studies or take a good job. Physical presence and time at work is very important in the competitive world of politics. Women need to put in the same time as men to work at the same competing level (Williams 1999; Tamale 2004; Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Miller 2011). In such circumstances, most respondents suggested that this is a big problem for young female politicians who expect to bear children. This view was expressed more by mothers of young children. Older children may be able to take care of themselves or instruct the maid what they want, or even be accompanied by a maid or driver to see a doctor, unlike for babies or infants. For example Joy (CSO) said:

⁹⁴ The on-line medical dictionary, <http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/kwashiorkor>, define kwashiorkor as “a form of protein-energy malnutrition produced by severe protein deficiency; caloric intake is usually also deficient. Symptoms include retarded growth, changes in skin and hair pigment, edema, immune deficiency, and pathologic changes in the liver”, October 2013.

It definitely does matter – the young children need more of the parents' time in terms of physical attention. But in terms of getting quality time for your children to talk with them you may not be there 24hours.

As discussed earlier, analysis of the women's accounts highlights how in Rwanda, mothering and political work reflects age difference in the needs of women between the late 1990s to 2003 cohort of female politicians who were mostly older women with no small children, and the 2008 group of female politicians several of whom were still young and expected to have children or had young children. Analysis of the respondents' views about mothering suggests that while most female politicians with children face challenges balancing childrearing demands with work, mothers of young children appeared to face more difficulties (see also Potancokova 2008; Craig and Swarikar 2009 in the European context). For example Alicia (Senator) and Georgia (LG) said:

There is a big problem especially related to children, most of them are still young with little children or are still having children. You know for us we are older and our children are now big and at university level, so we are like men and we can put in as much time as the men themselves. But those women with little children between 0-10 years it is a big problem for women more especially that there are not yet systems to care for little children. (Alicia, Senator)

Let me give you my personal example, right now I have two children, one is twelve years and the other one has eight years, I am not surely stressed so much, I know that if she gets any problem she will let me know. (Georgia, LG)

In an earlier quote from Therese (LG), she pointed out that her daughter's education deteriorated due to her absence during work upcountry when her daughter was 10 years of age. In contrast, the same daughter at age 18, and her siblings, of which the smallest was 14 at the time of the interview, are all supportive and helped their mother's work. Also, it seems this was possible because Therese explained to her children the nature of work and why she must do that work. In comparison to the time when they were young, Therese mentioned that then her daughter was too young (age ten) to understand her. However, Therese acknowledged that her daughters are affected by her absence but this time she feels the effect does not require her to quit her job so as to take care of them:

The difference is clear, today my first born is eighteen years of age, that one who was six years when I left for further studies, those days she had ten years when she became the last in class, and the young one is now 14, we had a dialogue before I campaigned because now they can understand that "Mum has a lot of work, "to have work is the only way I can be in school", ... because you have to support them.

Some of the women found a lot of emotional support and courage from the fact that children do understand their long hours of absence. Therese (LG) for example, went on to say that her children offered help with her dressing. Telling this she became emotional, her voice became shaky and choked, in fact, she seemed to suggest that instead of monitoring them as a mother they were now the ones monitoring her well-being:

[...] in fact you find that they support me instead... When I get home I find that clothes – it is no longer me who organises the cloths, ... even the shoes and the hand bag that matches, they advise me on how I should dress-up (she is choked / emotional).... in the morning you find that they have made soup for me and say “please Mum don’t go without eating something”, and yet I may be, I don’t have time for it.

Similarly, Aida (LG) mentioned how her children have started to help her in the work she does:

Definitely it is burdensome and difficult for them but when they understand it makes a whole load of difference. they are patient, and they are also part and parcel of the job, for example sometimes my children make me aware of things that may be not ok in the ..., and in some way they support my work.

In contrast, women with young children emphasised the idea that lack of time for children makes most female politicians with childcare feel guilt and shame. Yuta (Deputy), for instance, mentioned how she wakes up to see her son before he goes to school, reflecting how women manage their situation. It is important to note that Yuta’s experience emphasised the idea that partnered female politicians with children may face fewer challenges in comparison to their counterparts who are single mothers (see also Jimenez-Lagares et al. 2009; Baker 2010). This is expressed when she mentions that her husband works with the maid to prepare the children for school:

Most times the maid prepares them and takes them to school together with my husband because sometimes I am extremely tired to be able to wake-up early morning; you can understand. The young one is still very young, imagine he has finished a bath by then and ready to go to school. So it makes me embarrassed, so I wake up quickly and greet him, so and so “*ça va?*”.⁹⁵ Now it is exams time, did you pass yesterday; did you get good marks, you see we spend a few minutes together and then off he goes. So you have something, you feel something in your heart.

⁹⁵ Which means “how are you?”

Most of the women interviewed also expressed the view that their work prior to taking up political ideas allowed more care time and stressed how transiting from daily and close childcare to less time for childcare affected them. In some circumstances a woman may have to “choose between two evils”, irrespective of the pain, guilt and anxiety that may be involved. This is indicative of how women may have to take risks to orientate their well-being (Skeggs 1997) to fit-in the malestream workplace demands, and which also contradicts gender equality. For instance, Iren (Deputy) described how she found it hard to not spend quality time with her children:

In the beginning leaving my children was such a pain to me, one day my daughter paid me and said “Mummy don’t go.” I asked her what has happened, she said “Mummy you are not going.” Then I started to explain to her, you know I have to go to work because I get paid, I enumerated all the things I buy for them. Whenever I mentioned something she said that “we have it.” She ran to the house in a money pass where she had 100 Rwanda Francs and she said... “Don’t go here is the money, isn’t it what you want Mummy; I will pay you but don’t go”, hahah, imagine such a situation.

It was even harder for Rona after her husband died. As a single mother and sole provider for her children, she painfully decided to continue with education in another district, where she could not afford to live with them, in order to secure a job that could allow her to provide for her children in the future. Rona’s account also emphasises a significant point discussed across this thesis; that domesticity generally and childcare specifically affects women’s level of involvement in the labour market, constrains their career development, and affects them emotionally. Nevertheless, as also claimed by Craig and Sawrikar (2009), Rona suggested that the affect appears to reduce as children grow-up and can understand their mother’s situation:

I always thought that my children; their father is dead and now I have left them for studies – but because they need to survive I had to do it because I could see where the country was heading, where development was heading. I could see ahead of me meaning that I had to move with the competition – which I clearly explained to them- they understood it and I said thank God they have understood.

In contrast, Julienne (Minister)⁹⁶ blamed women for men’s failure to “help” with family work. Although the majority of women felt that men were only helpers with domestic

⁹⁶ Julienne is one of the civil servants that were directly charged with gender equality and women’s promotion in Rwanda. Her view about gender roles seems to show a gap between policy and the required skills to implement it. As I discussed in Chapter Two, there seems to be lack of gender analysis skills and feminist attitude in Rwanda.

work (see Chapter Five), unlike Julienne they did not put the burden on women to remind their husbands about it. She specifically highlighted that the public sphere should not interfere with the private sphere:

But our behaviour as women also can fail to motivate our husbands to help us, so we have to help them to help us. [...] So, of course I have to help him also to help me. So if there is something he may forget because it is a woman not a man job, I have to remind him, remember that children need to take milk twice a day, such that he may control the nannies at home. So I think being a public figure does, should not interfere with the private life.

From these women's experiences of motherhood, it appears that generally the lower the child's age, the more stressed the mother. And, while the majority of partnered mothers mentioned that their husbands helped with childcare especially when they were away, single mothers said that they were solely responsible for their families. The next section goes on to discuss single mothers' views about whether they face distinct issues.

Single motherhood and partnered parenting

Six single mothers were interviewed: four widows, one woman who had had a child outside of marriage, and one divorcee. As already mentioned, outside marriage single motherhood is culturally stigmatised in Rwanda. Though the single mother who had never partnered in raising her child had ideas that were not raised by widowed or divorced single mothers, the issues they raised were complementary rather than distinct. Nevertheless, being a single mother all her child's life exposed her to challenges that other women may have not experienced or raised during the interviews.

As in the preceding section, the difference between single mothers and partnered mothers was felt to be more salient when female politicians have to work away from home. Two of the six single mothers mentioned that their biological children were older, but they had little children from their extended families that they took care of. According to Fannie (Deputy), single mothers in politics face distinct challenges from other mothers in politics irrespective of the age of children, though she regarded it as harder with little children. The issues she raised ranged from economic, to security of the child/ren and government policy:

I have challenges, there are challenges that we as single mothers meet that other women do not meet. I, Justine, I am not lying to you, ... If a person is a lone parent, it is a problem. Let me give you an example, now we are going to go to Gisenyi for three days, I only live with a maid, I have tried to find someone to leave behind but I have failed to get one; I have even tried neighbours. There are

security guards that you may hire who may cause more problems when you leave them with the maid in your home; you see; do you understand? It is necessary to have another person living with you.

She went on to say:

Before you leave you ask yourself about the family you have left behind because there is no time even if you are a single parent and you have older children, there will be no time when you don't have young children at home, relatives you know African culture – extended families and you have no one to look after them when you leave. Whuum? ... it is harder for a single woman because a married woman would leave the husband in charge.

This point was also made by Doreen (CSO) (though married):

We have families of single mothers, single mother headed households, mothers without families who have nobody to complement them. However a home with a woman and man that is husband and wife, I think the men would really contribute to situations where they need to support women.

While the married mothers in the study typically left their children with maids monitored by their partners, the single mothers without help from relatives had no option but to leave children with domestic workers, as Fannie explained. The kind of worry and stress endured by female leaders who are single mothers appeared to be different from female politicians who have partners. In some of the earlier quotes, respondents mentioned how their husbands helped with children when they were away for public work. It was a different situation for female politicians who were single mothers. These women had to either get help from relatives and/or domestic workers. For instance, in her case, Rona (Deputy), managed to get a relative to look after her children while she attended university. Having such assistance would make the life of a female politician who is a mother easier especially when she has to work far from home⁹⁷:

In 96 my husband passed away. When he passed away--- this time I felt like heaven had fallen on my head. I thought to myself, I wanted to finish studies, now this man has died, how will I finish my studies? ...However, my aspiration persisted; I said that, I must look for other strategies that will facilitate me to resume school. I thought deep and planned until I found a relative who could stay with my children so that I resume school and finish the last phase.

In the quote above Fannie (Deputy), mentioned how leaving behind guards and maids may cause more problems. She did not specifically mention what those problems may

⁹⁷ While Rona (Deputy) was successful in finding a relative to care for her children, some single mothers might not have this choice, posing serious challenges to their work and career building.

be, but, in my interviews with other respondents they mentioned issues of defilement, and other types of child abuse that may be committed against children if not closely monitored by their parents or responsible adults. For instance, Colette (Deputy), also a lone mother, said:

We are lucky we still have the culture of paid domestic workers, but most of them are inefficient, in fact some of them are part of the problem – in this country we have so many cases of defilement carried out by house workers, gate keepers and relatives. In fact this brings me to your question and these are some of the effects: violence against children, social values lost, discipline for children, environmental influence, poor educational performance and failure, drugs, and psychologically related effects like your children being violent or traumatised and many other effects, and this affects the future of the country because children are the future.

In addition to lack of relatives to help with childcare, coupled with the existence of child abuse in Rwanda, respondents also highlighted how there was lack of proper childcare. However, as regards balancing family and work specifically, single mothers appeared to face more challenges than their partnered colleagues. In fact, the single mother in such a situation is not able to participate on an equal footing with a mother who has the opportunity to be assisted by her husband. For example, Alicia (Senator) stressed this quoting survey results:

Even the nursery facilities or schools that have nurseries are very few and expensive. In the senate we conducted a survey to find out how many children were attending nursery school and we found-out that they were only one hundred forty-five thousand, but the demand was almost one million children meaning that there is a demand that was not attended to.

Additionally, there is no policy in Rwanda that aids mothers in such circumstances, thus single mothers will have to meet the costs of childcare on their own. While married female politicians might have their husband's income to supplement theirs, a single mother is more likely to be solely responsible for the upbringing of the child. This may not only be stressful for a single mother but, as Crompton (2006) suggests, it drains her economic status.

In the absence of a husband or partner, the lack of relatives and/or professional and affordable care facilities was such a hard situation that appeared to be unique to the single women with children. Putting in place affordable childcare facilities is more likely to make female politicians who are mothers work easier, more so single mothers (Phoenix 1991). Nonetheless, according to some Western feminists (Yerks

2010;Wharton 2011; 2012), although some Western states such as the UK have adopted childcare policies, this has not taken away caring roles from the family which due to gendered division of labour generally falls on the responsibility of the woman. In some cases however, respondents suggested that juggling the balance between political work and childcare affected female politicians depending on the political post, and work attributions within the same post, level as discussed in following section.

Political post, work attributions and childcare

While at a certain level of politics women may be facing similar challenges – if children are of the same age group - the majority of respondents suggested that there may be differences that relate to the attributions allocated to the individual female politicians because this may drastically affect how much time remains for childcare. For instance, as elaborated in Chapter Five, female politicians working at the local government level appeared to deal with more challenges than their counterparts at the executive and legislature.

In the following discussion, respondents' accounts suggest that it is important to consider the specific needs of different categories of women at work for equality to be achieved (Phillips, 1987; Webner and Yunval-Davis 1999; Hobson 2000, Glauber 2007). Notwithstanding the relevance of a commonality approach to women's rights that Rwandan women employed since the 1994 genocide, as discussed in Chapter Two, the research findings indicated that individuals and subgroups within the "category women" faced distinct issues that appeared to affect equality. Women who had childcare and work with a fixed schedule appeared to find it easier than women with childcare and uncertain working schedules. For example, in relation to childcare, Allen (Senator) described her experience at two different levels of political work:

In the Senate it is very relaxed, it is not very challenging like when I served in the ministry, and it is different because when I was serving as a minister it was executive work, but here it is legislative, ..., so ours is like a monitoring role. ...I think in the senate I like it better in terms of my responsibilities at home; like I get time to pick my kids at school which I never done when I was a minister.

Where working conditions appeared to be harder (more malestream), women, especially with mothering responsibilities; faced more difficulties in balancing political work and family responsibilities. For instance, while Allen (Senator) said that it was relaxed in the Senate and she had time for her family and for social activities, Binty (LG), lamented at

how complicated and hard it was to balance childcare and political work at local government due to uncertain and unplanned schedules:

... the meeting schedules, the weekend meetings, the meetings that start at dawn, the meetings that end in the night, those meetings make mothers' lives very complicated.

Further, a few respondents mentioned that female politicians might be at the same level of politics but with different attributions, thus different amount of work and working conditions. This idea seems to be unique to parliament. It was mentioned that female parliamentarians heading a committee and those serving on committee leadership have more work than their colleagues in the parliamentary house. Resultantly, female head and members of parliamentary committee leadership with childcare appeared to face more challenges than their counterparts without childcare responsibilities, whether on the committee leadership or as members of parliament generally. For example, with pity, Yuta (Deputy) described how she works so hard that she hardly got time for her children:

I have not been at home since morning even for lunch, and this week since Monday we have had a lot of work in the committee working on the internal regulations law of the presidents of committees, I have been coming to work, then go for a meeting, after the meeting then I would reach home at 10:00pm when my children are already in bed....

The research analysis suggests that there are two major issues identified as important in this situation: Firstly, the women in question's individual rights to a healthy life, and happiness, As regards the effects on woman's health this can be both emotional and physical. Several respondents expressed feelings of restlessness resulting from perceived failure to give quality time to their child/ren which is more likely to cause feelings of stress and fatigue. In fact for some women if the pressure was too much and because their absence appeared to affect their childrens' upbringing and health, the mother quit work as in the case of Theresa cited earlier in this chapter. Secondly, that women's identity appeared to be overshadowed by motherhood – in such cases the woman as an individual seems to vanish. Research analysis of the interviews also suggests that the women were likely to sacrifice themselves for work and childcare. This was illustrated by Iren (Deputy) when she spoke about how she has to recuperate childcare time after political work:

But I made sure that I try to bridge the gap. Whenever I get home, I do all I can to get close to them, I play the ball with them or put the little one on my back, give them candies and gifts sometimes you try, to be closer.

For the majority of the women interviewed, motherhood and having quality time with the children was a source of fulfilment, however, to achieve this level of expectation appeared complicated and oppressive for them. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the gendered nature of care in this context undermines women's choices. Basing her research in the USA, Williams (1999:3) found that the gendered nature of care is more likely to curtail women's capabilities, career path and rights:

The commonplace observation is that women are hurt by the hard choices they face. Once the focus shifts away from women's choices to gender system that sets the frame within which those choices occur, we see that domesticity's peculiar structuring of market work and family work hurts not only women but also men, children, politics and our emotional life. Williams (1999:3)

Similarly in Rwanda, this thesis found that emotional and physical affect, and family discord (discussed in Chapter Five) had various effects including the "spill-over" effect where the situation at home affected some women's work and vice versa, For example, the lack of quality time with the children was also seen to affect childcare and the woman's work and/or education. Having discussed the challenges that female politicians may go through while balancing politics and mothering, and how different categories of women face distinct issues, the focus in the next section is on managing mothering and public roles looking at the mechanisms employed by Rwandan female politicians to execute their parental and political roles.

Childcare and Political Work Penalty

The women's accounts demonstrated that female politicians with childcare were facing distinct and more challenges than their female colleagues without childcare responsibilities (See also Richardson 1993; Skeggs 1997; Craig 2007; Craig and Sawrikar 2009 in the Western context). Basing her study in UK, Gatrell (2011) argues that when a working woman has to take maternity leave, is in need of breast feeding time or is called up to attend to a sick baby, the likelihood is that it will not be well received by colleagues at work. Therefore, the woman in question may not only be stressed by mothering challenges but also the anxiety relating to how her absence from work may be considered by her boss and colleagues. In this study, for example,

Valetta⁹⁸ (LG) pointed out that though all women have work pressure, the pressure for a woman with childcare and the pressure for a woman without childcare is different:

The pressure for the person with children is not the same as the pressure for the person with no children. ...I have seen this happening to my colleagues. It is common, someone may leave the child in the hospital and come to work. This has happened several times, for example, while we are in a meeting someone can whisper to you and say that “we are here seated in a meeting but my child is admitted in the hospital”.

Iren (Deputy) told a similar story, she argued that despite gender equality being a common rhetoric in Rwanda, the working culture was still hostile to maternal roles. She made reference to a male colleague who reiterated how it was anticipated that women would become pregnant, give birth and take time off to care for childcare:

One lady was pregnant and a male colleague said that “didn’t we say that? They have started to get pregnant (laughs), didn’t we say that? They have started getting babies. This one is going to take four months sitted at home”.

While some countries especially in the West have provided for social care policies and strategies to support working mothers (Crompton 2006; Craig 2007), Rwanda has not as illustrated in this section. Interview analysis suggests that female leaders were faced with a stressful and heavy workload, partly because childcare is a family affair and attributed to mothers. Some researchers have referred to this kind of situation as “penalising parenthood” (Rhode 1992:155), and “Time penalty of parenthood” (Craig 2007:46-50). Despite the heavy load, the majority of the women believed that childcare and family affairs are a private affair. Focusing on the Rwandan parliament to study women’s substantive representation, Devlin and Elgie (2008:12) emphasised this point:

... a change in the working-hours or calendar of parliament was absent in the Rwandan example, and there has been no change in the lack of childcare facilities in parliament. [...] The interviews reveal that the deputies do consider balancing domestic and public responsibilities to be a difficulty, but apparently this has simply not led to any suggestions for policy change.

In the UK, Lewis (1991:197), found a similar situation and argued that it was oppressive if women are required to perform and conform to social norms of ideal mother and ideal employee: “Clearly, this image is as oppressive as the ideology of the stay-at-home mother, because it implies that women can comply with the cultural

⁹⁸ Valetta is a married female politician but without children witnessing the kind of pressure that her colleagues with parenting roles undergo. Considering how sensitive it is not to have children in Rwandan society, I did not ask Valetta whether she preferred not to have children although I believe that it was necessary for this research. Also when talking about her background, when it came to her being married without children, Valetta seemed to say it with a sudden shy and uncomfortable smile.

prescriptions of a good mother and a good worker, without modifying the demands of either.”

The women in this study highlight three major problems that they encountered in the struggle to balance political work and childcare roles: lack of professional child minders, very few and expensive *crèche* and nursery schools, and unfavourable working conditions. For example, Iren (Deputy) stated:

I think what is needed is that our children get a place to be taken care of. Or if a child remains at home, but should remain with a professional person, I don't know, ...it is expensive but at least you know your child is in proper hands, they are professionals, they know how to take care of my child properly.

This quote portrays the problem of lack of day-care facilities in Rwanda. Many of the women were faced with a situation where they themselves had to step in to assist the unprofessional and/or illiterate young girls, predominantly from the rural community, who do childcare work in Rwanda, which worsened their stress and increased their workload.

Respondents' described how they had devised means to find time outside political work for care of their children. For example, some of the women mentioned that they forego social relations and activities to find quality time with their children. Additionally, some also mentioned that while at work, they sometimes used phones and other communication facilities to monitor the well-being of their children. By allocating time outside political work to do care work, female politicians seemed to be faced with double work. As Lewis (1991) illustrated, compensation of quality time with children may alleviate guilt but can exacerbate overload. Therese (LG), for example, illustrated this idea. However, her quote suggests that this is therapeutic because it reduced her guilt and stress resulting from not having quality time for children:

Usually I take files for signature, so that they are (children) close to me because maybe I have spent how many days not seeing them, I decide to say that instead of going home at 10:00 pm today let me go at 7:00 pm and take these files. As they watch television, one can say “Mum come and see this, it is fun”, and to be called Mum again (so emotional), I also miss that, ahahaha.

Other means mentioned by respondents to have contact with their children included taking children with them if work was far away from home, “remote” childcare monitoring by use of telephone calls, purchasing and using appropriate facilities such as breast pumps, and finding time in between work to go home. This may mean that women politicians with childcare responsibilities may have to spend more resources

than their colleagues in order to fulfil their political roles. In the case of physical absence, for example, strategies like telephone calls were used to make sure children were well catered for as Lucia (Deputy) illustrated:

What one does is to keep on phone asking your maids and sometimes your husband – you know in most cases men are not in the home, how children are, whether they were properly fed, whether they have done homework, if they are picked from school on time.

The majority of the women contended that although women without children might face social pressure and stigma relating to singlehood and/or lack of children, in terms of work load, and related pressure and stress they seemed to be in a better situation than female politicians who were mothers – whether single mothers or partnered mothers. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, family work in Rwanda is relegated to the private sphere, thus seen as “apolitical”. This patriarchal ideology appeared to influence the majority of the female politicians to the extent that they felt that childcare was a private issue not worth advocating for change institutionally. This was also emphasised by Devlin and Elgie (2008:8) in their study:

The extra responsibility of caring for their children at home was often dismissed as a problem for “women in general” or “women everywhere”, and not as something deserving of particular attention in their own workplace, the parliament.

Interview analysis suggests the woman’s work post may facilitate easier balance of family responsibilities and politics. As a minister, Martha was the top decision-maker in her organisation. Thus, she was somewhat freer to “sneak out” than someone who would fear the boss’s sanctions in case she did not abide by work schedule. Mathas experience illustrates how resources and flexible work schedules are likely to reduce the amount of pressure that women bare as a result of balancing mothering and working in politics, although this was not a possibility for most of the women interviewed:

I had my last child when I was doing this work and I breastfed all my six months without giving anything to my child. ... I have money, I have the capacity to buy bottles, I have the capacity to buy milk and keep it in the refrigerator, I have a car, I can sneak out and go home a few minutes and be back, I have almost all I need. (Martha Minister)

Some women also said that when facilitated, or where possible, they take young children with them if their duties involve spending days away. For example, Martha (Minister) also said she took her child with her for the government retreat because

facilitation for mothers with young children was provided. What this implies is that even in the absence of a written policy, strategies can be deployed to cater for “special needs” – if raised. Notwithstanding its relevance however, the woman in question bears an added burden of managing the logistics of taking a child with her and yet, as Ester lamented in earlier discussion, it would have been better if the husband assumed parenting responsibilities (if the situation allowed):

... I took her to the government retreat because at that time there was facilitation for that; because, that is possible.

Nevertheless, as women excel in political participation in particular and work at large there seems to be a need for strategies that can bridge the gap between work and childcare responsibilities. The women said that they needed facilities that can make both paid and family work easier in order to effectively balance their responsibilities in the two spheres. For instance, they mentioned the need for full support from their family members (especially for married women), the husband, the need for affordable and professional childcare and changed working culture. For example, in Omega’s (ES) view there is a need to change the institutional culture:

You need support from your family, you need support from the leadership, you need support by, there is a time we were talking that even the government should consider this because to consider this that if there are meetings; what time do you call for the meetings?

Additionally, Rona (Deputy) said that there was need for childcare facilities:

This is leading to talking about those facilities which people should start to look for. [...] I am talking about *crèche*, nurseries, and even if you are to leave them with the maids, they also have to be professionals and people of integrity with the capacity to give proper care to children. [...] So to achieve all that, it requires high capacity, capacity to be able to bring a professional maid, or if the day-cares are put in place you must have the capacity to afford them – they are still very few and very expensive.

Notwithstanding the relevance of childcare facilities, it is significant to mention that caring for children requires equal share from both parents if gender equality is to be attained. However, the fear of losing power might partly influence some men’s failure to adapt to gender equality in the home as argued by Wyrod (2008) in the Ugandan case. Altering gender roles may mean altering cultural norms that emphasise male power. While it was suggested that some male partners of female politicians have started to “understand” gender roles, the dominant view was that many of them have not

yet started to get involved in the actual work in the home. The majority of the women also thought that it was too soon to expect change in gender relations and roles and cautioned about taking a radical approach, as it may backfire:

The understanding has changed but in terms of the actual roles not yet, I think we've been there for too short a time yet the roles that have been part and parcel of our culture have been there for a long time and the key players have been in it for a long time. (Juliet, Deputy)

I think we should not run so fast to stumble men because they were also raised and were socialised in a certain way. (Irene, Deputy)

There seems to be indicators for a way to change the institutional culture to address such issues if raised. For example in an interview, Allen (Senator) mentioned that she managed to influence change in working time in her place of work by claiming her right to childcare after normal Senate working hours. In her view, female politicians should fight for their rights:

When I joined the senate meetings would go up to around 9:00 in the evening and I had a baby, my son was about two years, I complained and said Mr President, we need to change the schedule, I need to breast-feed, I need to do home care, so the meetings starts at 9am and end at 6pm, so we should change that you know. Unless you speak out and explain and convince it is a movement.

However, it appears that change in gender relations takes place over a long time, especially because it is dependent on cultural transformation. For example, when asked who they thought was responsible for establishing professional and affordable childcare facilities, the majority of the women thought that childcare was a family issue thus must be done by the private sector. Only a few thought that children's well-being was the government's responsibility and that the government had an obligations to facilitate and manage the process. In fact, none of the respondents linked childcare facilitation with gender equality or women's rights.

Work, time and schedule

In earlier sections, I discussed how working time and schedules impacted on female politicians as regards domestic work and motherhood. In this section it is discussed in relation to gender equality and institutional culture. Political work time and work schedule was identified as one of the major factors affecting female politicians, especially when it involved balancing public and private responsibilities generally. Western scholars have similarly found that most working women face a work "penalty"

as a result of juggling paid work and family due to working in malestream working conditions especially (Richardson 1993; Hirschmann and Di Stefano 1996; Craig and Sawrikar 2009; Craig and Powell 2011). Most of the women in this study said that they worked long hours, and were dealing with stressful work:

I work twice or a double day but I try to balance the two, you are needed in both areas and yet in political work there is planned and unplanned work. When you are a teacher you plan your work but in politics nothing is planned, there is always something urgent and unplanned, so, you have uncertain schedule – you have to be patient. (Stella, Senator)

You know we are politicians, something important arise, huur; a security meeting takes place because something is going wrong, this and that has happened and we have to attend to it, there are programs that have been organised maybe in a certain country relating to people; and there we go. [...] Working late hours is a big problem because you can find a woman in the office at mid-night, and maybe the husband is already at home for you are still busy in the office and nobody understands that you are dying with work, surely the amount of work we usually have, it is very difficult, addressing people's needs day by day creates a lot of work for us. (Valetta, LG)

With disappointment, Kate (ES) mentioned that uncertain work (from third party) seemed to affect her work because it alters her plans:

We have to consider even the planning of the work for - of politicians. I know we are all planners, but we have to consider the planning and we have a plan but sometimes we don't respect plan as we planned. We get a lot of urgency from outside, from our stakeholders where you are supposed to contribute to and sometimes your plan is not well respected. I think people have to think how to plan smartly and effectively and respect what we have planned for.

Other women talked about planning challenges associated with gender perspectives at work. The multidimensional nature of gender perspectives suggests that women's political access cannot be singled out from other rights (e.g. see also Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995). For instance, a few women challenged work planners for not considering women's and men's perspectives while scheduling meetings and/or work:

Sometimes it is the insensitivity to womanhood that make people setup work in late hours. [...] Also as I said women should be able to aaam, open-up, express the – the - the issues that affect them because if they don't those issues will not be known, men will not know them for us. (Doreen, CSO)

Collette (Deputy) believed the unplanned work and work time was a problem most likely because the law did not explicitly state how it affects women:

The work planners must respect working time and try as much as they can to plan work in the usual working hours. For these challenges to be eradicated it

must be written in the labour law. We have maternity leave and breast feeding hour provided by the law.

Western feminist scholars have emphasised the need for consideration of gender difference in the workplace. For example, Evans (1996:3) argues that gender equality requires “equality in difference”. She claims that difference in equality “concerns the quest for equality of the sexes – equality of rights and of opportunities, and more radically, of conditions.” Also, other research (Pheonix 1991; Richardson 1993; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999), suggests that while women are likely to face distinct issues from men in the workplace, even among women, there might be specialised needs for different categories of women. Interview analysis suggests that in the Rwandan context, female politicians face distinct issues that are likely to affect their level of participation, career development, and family relations. For example, in some respondents’ views, work time and schedule impact on female politicians differently, suggesting that different impact is mostly due to the amount / nature of work, and level of political engagement. Nevertheless, most respondents commented that the amount and nature of work that female vice/mayors were faced with seemed to set more challenges than for other female politicians in the study. For example, some vice/mayors commented that they were on work alert for 24hours:

It is completely different, very different, very different indeed. In fact I do think that there should be Decrees based on what post and work that people do, because a leader in the decentralised organs leadership, we don’t have even a minute to ourselves. [...] But for such reasons, like the member of parliament has time, for us we have not even enough money, at night when you are in bed they call you and you must wake up and go, we have no program, the decentralised organs are in a particular situation, they are particular in comparison to other leadership organs, some have time, it all depends on what post you have, what post people are at. (Therese, LG)

Similarly, Georgia (LG) and Valetta (LG), who were also female politicians within local government, in different districts, said they also served other administrative organs, like central government, and the legislature, which affected their working schedules:

Working for the grass-root levels you are answerable to all things... So whether it is a ministry..., whether it is the parliament..., the senate is the same, to the extent that the senators visit us a lot to monitor whether some policies are implemented, the ministries visit us to monitor if we implemented their policies, I mean to say we are the ones – if it is said that we are the engine it means that we are answerable to many things.

At the district level, the organ above me, or the organ heading mine, might any time say to you that “come for this and that meeting” when you yourself had planned to do this, as much as it is and go home early, you have seen that, you have seen how many times you looked for me⁹⁹. We are always running around responding to emergencies.

Norah (Deputy) who was a regular member of parliament reaffirmed this when she described the normal working hours for Rwandan parliament and said that she gets more time to attend to her family in comparison to her former work. She also emphasised the view that failure to execute family work makes some women feel like they are far from their homes (see also Chapter Four). In Norah’s view being able to do family work makes her a better mother and wife:

I start work at around 9:00 in the morning until midday. In the afternoon, I start at 3:00 I am always here in the plenary until 6 or 7pm. However, compared to the work I did before, I have more time to attend to my domestic work. I can say that now am a better mother and wife than ever, all the time I am not in parliament I am at home doing domestic work.

Allen (Senator) made a similar point:

I can get time to go for weddings, which I never done as a minister, so it is different in terms of assignment, in terms of accountability, I think in the senate I can – I do not know but what I can tell I can say that the roles have reduced. ...it is like I plan my agenda. [...]So it has also given me time to balance my motherly work – I can do my masters degree.

However, while female parliamentarians were seen to have a more flexible and less hectic schedule, some female parliamentarians mentioned that their schedule and flexibility depends on one’s parliamentary responsibilities. They suggested that those who headed and/or were members of parliamentary committees faced similar time and work schedule challenges as female ministers:

I say attributions because not all members of parliament do the same amount of work. Those heading committees have more work than just a regular member of parliament, not all ministries have the same amount of work for example.
(Collette, Deputy)

Here we do work as a group and you are not answerable individually – maybe those who head committees, here we have people heading different committees, maybe they may have more work than others like maybe putting-in more work than the rest of us. (Irene, Deputy)

⁹⁹ Valetta made reference to the fact that many of my interviews with her were postponed, in fact there is a time when we were four minutes in our interview and she was called upon by the Mayor due to an emergency.

While most of the women in the study experienced hard and stressful working conditions, they seemed to condone them partly because working conditions appeared to be built on the concept of nation-building. For example, in Rwanda work is planned against “*imihigo*”¹⁰⁰ meaning “performance contracts” (Government of Rwanda 2011; Versailles 2012) and all Rwandans are expected to be *Intore* as discussed earlier. This approach started with the districts but it is steadily being adapted to most government structures. Like their male counterparts, Rwandan female politicians are expected to competitively perform so as to earn marks to their constituencies, failure of which may jeopardise their perceived competence and “patriotism”. Though women and men’s performance were measured on equal terms, a number of women expressed that they have to make extra efforts to meet political performance expectations, which in a way challenges the principle of gender equality and social justice. For instance, Binty (LG) said:

In Rwanda people work so hard, it is not women only but women work more because she wants to put in more efforts so that they won’t say that she has failed, if you join and decide to be absent or be slow at work and yet men are at work you may get lost.

In a similar view, Maureen (Minister) expressed how balancing family and political responsibilities required women politicians to work even harder:

But specifically I will personally say that it is a challenge to be married and yet do a type of work that requires you to be available all the time, day and night you have to be available. ... because you have a husband and all husbands need special care... – he doesn’t feel good if his wife does not do for him what he wants her to do for him. For children it is the same case.

Although female politicians at all political levels encountered uncertain schedules, for female politicians working in local government it appeared to be a daily challenge - especially in the case of district mayors and vice mayors; generally who, in my perception, appeared to be physically more fatigued than the rest. For these women work time uncertainty seemed to be a norm rather than an exception. For example, two of the women who had worked at both parliament and local government thought that work at the local government was more complex to juggle with family responsibilities. These women also mentioned issues such as other work orders from different political

¹⁰⁰ The word *imihigo* comes from the *guhiga* which literally means to pledge or compete (author’s translation). Initiated in 2006 by President Paul Kagame, “the *Imihigo* (performance contract) approach is used by government bodies for both planning and implementation of national programs based on districts, priorities. Each year, the National Evaluation Team carries out the Districts “*Imihigo* assessment”

structures that disrupt their own planned work, and emergencies that must be responded to:

I think it was harder when I worked for the local government than any of my other jobs. Though the schedule is not certain at times here in parliament, but I find it easier than when I was for example an executive secretary. The work at the local government level is so uncertain and there are emergencies always – you are dealing with people – development of people – it is so challenging in a country like this. (Lucia, Deputy)

On the other hand however, it is too stressful. There is a lot of work and you get to meet all sorts of problems that sometimes are so complicated. Plus I no longer have enough time for my family as I would be if I would still be in parliament or any other office. (Aida, LG)

But, the “all” time expected political work, especially of female vice/mayors, coupled with family work seemed to put most of them in such situations under pressure and stress. In this chapter, I have discussed how female politicians who were also mothers (of young children especially) faced distinct issues from female politicians whose children were adults, or those without children. Though most respondents said that they give priority to work, and that they are more likely to make up time for family roles, the malestream working conditions evidenced through long hours of work, unplanned work schedules and the prevalence of gender biases and stereotypes appeared to make it difficult for them to balance political work with family responsibilities.

Conclusion

While the area of motherhood and politics has not attracted much scholarly research, as this chapter has shown, it is a significant issue that affects women politicians’ lives and career path. It is significant to discuss how motherhood and mothering, coupled with other family work that female politicians in Rwanda do because they seemed to require so much time of their lives – time as an important factor in the competitive labour market. Most respondents seemed to be overwhelmed and burdened by so much work both at home and in paid work. In fact Burnet’s (2012) findings suggested that gender relations and gender roles in the private sphere is more likely to be a barrier to some women’s entry in decision-making positions – especially at grass root levels. The interview accounts also suggest that though women are in the public sphere they appear to continue to suffer from gendered power relations and inequalities. And as some studies analysing patriarchal structures (Walby 1999; Richardson 1993; Tamale 2004)

and/or women and work (e.g. Craig 2007; Glauber 2007; Craig and Powell 2011) argue, Rwandan women movement to work has not altered patriarchal structures. Instead, there has been social changes and patriarchy continues to transform and to subject women into subordination and exploitation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusions and Recommendations

Research Positioning

As a lawyer, a women's and children's rights activist, and formerly a civil servant charged with engendering national policies and laws and providing legal counsel to families, I have always had lingering questions about what is gender equality in practical terms? And what impact it has made on Rwandan women's lived experiences, particularly that of female politicians? My quest for answers to these questions influenced my desire for a PhD and course of study that would enable me to explore feminist and gender concepts, and critically examine the lived experiences of women from gender equality policies and processes in Rwanda. As I began to investigate theories of gender equality and of feminism, however, I realised that gendered roles and gendered power relations influence and determine how women and men behave, largely determine their life opportunities, and impact upon their lived experiences. In other words, I found that gender forms a large part of how women understand and practice their rights as citizens. The literature shows that feminism and gender equality is supposed to liberate women from gender discrimination and inequalities by bringing women more freedom, more choices, and more space (e.g. see Hirsch and Keller 1990; Richardson 1993; Evans 1995; Hirschmann 1996; Tobias 1997; Ahikire 2004; 2008).

The research is founded within feminist sociological theories regarding gender equality and difference (Pateman 1989; Tobias 1997), public and private spheres (Hunt 1990; Richardson 1993; Tamale 2004; Buscaglia and Randell 2012), gender and citizenship (Pateman 1989; Walby 1994; Yuval 1997; Oakley 1998; Yuval Davis and Webner 1999; Hobson 2000) and social justice debates (Oloka-Onyango, and Tamale 1995; Nussbaum 2003). Basing my research on these concepts, I analysed the meanings the women in this study put to their lived experiences of balancing home and work life. These concepts have been linked not only to women's rights but to social justice and good governance norms generally. Globally there has been consensus that gender equality is a requirement for the attainment of social justice, good governance and sustainable development (e.g. Kabeer 2005; Paxton et al. 2006; 2007; Charles 2008) as evidenced by legal and policy frameworks adopted at international, regional and national levels.

However, while there has been an increase in the number of women at different levels of decision-making in Rwanda (Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Burnet 2011), and in the Great Lakes region, (Paxton et al. 2007; Waylen in Goertz 2008; Bauer 2012; Coffé 2012), numerous writers demonstrate that there has also been a failure to challenge entrenched unequal gendered power relations both in the home and institutionally. The findings of this study suggest that the widely celebrated number of women in Rwandan politics tells one side of the story about women and politics and, subsequently, gender equality. The other side of the story is told by the women in this study. As discussed earlier, this thesis aims to bridge the gap in policy and scholarly studies by basing findings on women's own perspectives about balancing family and political responsibilities. Through analysis of their experiences this research found that women politicians' social-political subjectivities are an important factor in knowledge-gathering and in understanding the complex nature of gender inequalities.

Analysis of the interviews indicated that the majority of the women were in a "double bind", in one way, due to juggling the balance of family roles and political work; and in another way, struggling to meet the "mainstream/malestream" (Oakley 1998) standards of work while maintaining the ideals of a traditional Rwandan "good" woman (Chapter Five). The struggle to balance the public and private spheres for most of the women affected their lives and the majority had work overload, fatigue, stress, and feelings of pressure and guilt. These effects on women's lives were worsened by the gendered cultural, social, and political norms that were used as yardsticks for public scrutiny, which appeared to influence many of the women's decisions and behaviour.

This study is original, timely and suitable to be conducted in Rwanda as a country where gender equality and women's promotion is perceived as a success story (e.g. see Hamilton 2000; Powley 2005; Kayumba 2010; Bauer 2012; Coffé 2012), where gender has become part of political rhetoric especially among the elite community (Burnet 2011). I examined how the women in this study balance their family roles and political work as told by themselves, which gave me a deeper understanding of various ways in which patriarchy works to sustain gendered power relations and gender inequalities (even when women assume positions of power).

In this chapter, I will summarise key findings of the research, and make suggestions for considerations pertaining to practice and future research. Some of the findings reinforce existing research, while others constitute new scholarship about women in politics in Rwanda. I will emphasize here the major factors of gender equality that I found rather

lacking in existing policy and literature. These themes are discussed in three sections. Section one discusses the limitations related to the conception of and approach to gender equality in Rwanda. In section two, I will link the limitations to women's understanding, articulation and assertion of their rights both in the family and workplace. And lastly, I will make suggestions for further consideration by different actors in section three.

Summary of Findings

Access to and participation in politics

The successive upheavals and conflicts that befell Rwanda from the late 1950s to 1994 changed the social-political and economic order of the country. In the late 1990s, women's participation started to become visible. In Chapter Four, I described the major factors mentioned by the interviewees and drew similarities with those identified by other studies. In order of significance the major factors that influenced women's participation in politics in Rwanda appear to be:

- The political turmoil that destroyed the social, political, and economic fabric of Rwandan society which gave room to restructuring of Rwandan community;
- Rwandan women's resilient response to sustaining themselves, the orphans and the needy during the devastating days of need in the aftermath of the genocide;
- Women politicians' solidarity and partnership with women's organisations and men; and,
- The existence of political leadership, which created a favourable environment for women's promotion.

Considering the necessity for survival and active participation in rebuilding their community, it is little wonder that the Rwandan government, especially the ruling party (RPF), embarked on tapping into women's capacities. For a country like Rwanda, with limited resources and lack of major minerals, human resource development is a key factor to sustainable development (Vision 2020:13).¹⁰¹ After the genocide, by 1996, it is estimated that women composed 54% of Rwandan population and 34% were household

¹⁰¹ http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/fileadmin/General/Vision_2020/Vision-2020.pdf, June 2013.

heads.¹⁰² Thus, leaving women behind development initiatives would have negatively impacted on Rwanda's development processes.

The research findings indicate that more and more women have accessed politics (Chapter One and Four especially), and men are starting to engage (in a limited way) with the care of children (Chapter Six), which suggests that women's access to political work is also influencing, though slowly, gender roles in the home. There is enough qualitative and quantitative evidence showing the progressive increase in numbers of women in decision-making positions, and as regards engendering policy and legal frameworks (Powley, 2003; 2005; 2009; Burnet, 2008; 2011; 2012; Kantengwa, 2010; Kayumba, 2010, Buaer, 2012). The impact of women's political participation is significant as discussed by a variety of feminist, human rights, and developmental scholars (Phillips 1995; Lovenduski 1997; Weldon 2002; Powley 2005; Childs 2006; Atkenson et al. 2007; Karp et al. 2008; Bauer 2012; Burnet 2012) and in no way is this contested by this research. Although a single case, as also argued by Powley (2009), other nations can learn from Rwandan government's gender responsive strategies (especially the electoral mechanisms) to increase the number of women in politics. Another factor that is worth noting by women's movements is the Rwandan women's solidarity and their emphasis on working in partnership with other women groups and men (Powley and Pearson 2007; Carlson and Randell 2013), both in advocating and lobbying for incorporation of women's issues in policy and development processes.

This study reinforces existing literature arguing that equal participation of women and men in decision-making presents a balance that represents the composition of society (e.g. see Childs 2010; Bauer, 2012). In Chapter Four I discussed how the women described how they strategically engaged with increasing the number of women in decision-making, how they introduced new political ideas on the political agenda which address women's gender-specific needs, how they influence Rwandan community's perspectives of women and politics and how all the women I interviewed expressed understanding that in some ways they represented their fellow women (see also Lovenduski 1997; Reingold 2000; Grey 2002; Coffé 2012). However, while it may be true that women's participation represents the composition of the society, limiting their participation to access rather than changing the status quo to include women's

¹⁰² For instance Newbury and Baldwin (2001:27) state "A demographic survey conducted by the government in 1996 estimated that 54 percent of the population was female and that 34 percent of households were headed by women. ... These figures show the importance of taking gender into account in efforts to reconstruct Rwanda after the genocide."

perspectives in the workplace threatens the principles of gender equality, social justice and good governance, which are more likely to affect not only the individual women but also sustainable development (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995; Williams 1999; Tamale 2004).

Although all of the women highlighted the significance of equality gained through legislation and policy and suggested that it is the pillar for women's rights, as discussed in Chapter Four, the analysis suggests that legislative quotas may change cultural attitudes towards women and politics, due to symbolic representation especially, but not gender biases and inequalities. For example, as discussed in the data chapters, only four of the women said that there has been some improvement in the ways in which they and their husbands manage domestic roles. In contrast, however, all of the women said that women's access to work/politics has reduced their time in the home, thus reducing the time they spend on domestic roles and responsibilities and that for those who were married, this had frustrated many of their husbands causing marital tension. This is significant to gender equality because while women are encouraged to participate in the country's development, this is not always reciprocated by support from their male relatives in the family and the government.

Gender inequalities, biases, stereotypes and discrimination still existed both in the home and workplace, and the numbers are still low in some areas especially as regards the top decision-making posts at different levels of politics (see also NGP 2010). This research asserts that unless women's political participation takes a holistic approach and address different spaces and levels of socialisation, gender inequalities may not be effectively altered. To juxtapose the themes mentioned earlier in this chapter, analysis of the findings gave rise to four significant theoretical insights about women's participation in politics, and gender equality generally:

1. That women's political participation requires multi-approaches targeting behaviour change as quotas alone might not be sufficient despite their relevance;
2. That where there is a political will and women's access is top-down, there is also need for a strong women's movement to complement (Weldon 2002) and to "use" the system to advance women's concrete rights;
3. That women's political participation requires expertise and resources to articulate and address women's specific needs at all levels, and

4. That, theorising women's participation in politics requires consideration of contextual realities and understanding of the women's perceptions about their lived experiences.

This research analysis found that the significance of Rwandan women's access to politics, relates, among others, to women's rights to political participation and work, and its relevance as regards symbolic, descriptive, and to a certain extent substantive representation. However, as regards changing gender power and inequalities to practically impact on women's gendered lived experiences little has been done. Whereas Rwandan women might find it easier to access politics and other decision-making posts today, the home and the institutional culture largely remains masculine. Analysis of interviews suggest that this is partly related to the top-down political route to women's access to politics, which has not been accompanied by an effective women's movement and the required institutional expertise to understand and address gender perspectives and issues. This research argues that there is need to articulate a feminist agenda that will practically and effectively transform gender inequalities in the home and in the workplace by transcending numbers present in government posts.

Whilst women may not face much resistance in accessing politics and decision-making positions, the majority of them appeared to be struggling with a "work penalty" relating to balancing family and political work. The research findings suggest that far from liberating women from gender subordination; political participation has increased their workload and generally adapted patriarchal norms instead of eliminating them. The research analysis suggests that women's participation was not reciprocated by a cultural change, thus increasing spaces for gender hierarchies and inequalities within the public and private spheres of socialisation as I will go on to discuss in the following section.

Women politicians, the private and public spheres

In Chapter One I outlined some "soul-searching" questions which I used to explore whether participation in politics brought the women in this research more freedom, more choices, and more space. When I analysed the interplay between the private and public roles that women said they executed daily, I found that the patriarchal ideologies of the male as the ideal model of the society (gender power relations, gender hierarchies and gender-based inequality and injustices practiced through gender biases and stereotypes) influenced understandings and conceptualisation of women's participation in Rwandan politics. It is significant to raise the issues and the kind of family work that

female politicians in Rwanda do because they seem to require so much time within their lives. And yet, women's participation numbers appear to give a positive picture and to conceal women politicians' lived experiences. It seems that scholarly studies, policy makers and women activities tend to ignore the interplay of gender perspectives with regard to the complex nature of how these women balance their private and public roles and how this constrains gender equality.

While some respondents believed that gender equality is understood¹⁰³ by many Rwandans ("has become a culture"), including some male partners of female leaders, their description of domestic duties and relations suggests that power relations and gender roles have not changed much (Burnet, 2008; Devlin and Elgie 2008; Kantengwa, 2010). This research analysis shows that the majority of the women were faced with heavy workload and time penalty and had stress, fatigue, and frustration. Feminist theorists encourage researchers investigating the lives of oppressed and marginalised groups to search and understand the "silent voices" by looking beyond what appears to be common and normal. For example, Wharton (2011:2), argue that "Understanding gender requires us to go beyond the obvious and to reconsider issues we may think are self-evident and already well understood."

Although there is leadership and political will, and a favourable environment to engender political processes, nonetheless, analysis of the interviews show that there was lack of gender justice and gender equality both in the private and public spheres. In the homes, for example, domestic work was still divided along traditional gender lines and women said they were still charged with traditional female responsibilities despite acquiring political work. It seems that as long as family relations are based on a gender division of work, men and women cannot participate in politics equally.

While access to paid work has the potential to improve women's livelihoods, and to a certain extent their social status, respondents claimed that gender relations and power still affected their lives, equal political participation and their citizenry rights (still of a less social status compared to men). For example, most of the women mentioned that they were still in charge of family work (see Chapters Four and Five) and yet the working environment appeared hostile to maternal responsibilities. Likewise, other studies suggest that women's economic empowerment without mechanisms to change

¹⁰³ As discussed in Chapter Two, gender is generally understood as complementarity but not equality. Thus while a good number of Rwandans are perceived to understand gender, gender identities remain intact, and women, despite accessing paid work they are also expected to perform gender and gender roles.

gender relations within the home and workplace, is not enough to bring about gender equality and justice (Nzomo 1997; Mayoux 2001; Mosedale 2005). The latent gender inequalities perceived to be a family private affair are more likely to have effects not only to the individual lives of the women in question, but also their family members.

The unchanging gender relations in the private sphere are significant in relation to women's participation in decision-making and the relationship it has with their career path. As discussed in the previous chapters, and also as many researchers argue (e.g. see Walby 1990; Tamale 2004; Buscaglia and Randell 2012), the binary between the private and the public sphere appears to strengthen and perpetuate patriarchy. Research findings suggest that women politicians continue to endure and to suffer gender inequalities, and are expected to perform both traditionally considered feminine and masculine tasks. In other words, women are socially expected to maintain and to perform the social (feminine) characteristics of the "good" Rwandan woman, while assimilating to masculine standards of a working male (Chapters Two and Four).

This research found that in Rwandan society women and men were differentiated by gender roles, gender stereotypes and expectations, and women's specific biological roles such as pregnancy and breast-feeding. In the family, the major challenges the women mentioned related to caring and home maintenance although a sizable number also mentioned being under pressure to maintain extended family social and economic responsibilities. Responsibilities, and social expectations relating to performing gender, as this research suggests, requires going beyond equal opportunities to inclusion of special measures to address both gender division of labour and related ideologies (Liff and Wacjman, 1996, Tobias 1997, Walby, 2005b).

As Ahikire (2008) suggests, this research found that women's access to political work without symmetric strategies to deconstruct and transform gender relations and ideology leads to "a double-edged sword" for women. It is a double edged sword because despite women accessing public work, it has come with a heavy workload, and as this research indicates, for the married women failure to meet their husband's expectations relating to domestic work and submissiveness has sometimes polarised family relations. While the idea of family conflict was not raised by many respondents, a number of women mentioned that they had heard about them, and knew colleagues who were undergoing violence but could not make it public for reasons of respectability, conformity to social norms, and fear of a likely backlash to their job and career building. Similarly, in her exploration about how other women perceived women politicians in Rwanda, Burnet

(2012:191) asserted that “Many Rwandans, male and female, lay the blame for the perceived disintegration of marriage as an institution on this “upheaval” of gender roles.” The analysis suggests that the private sphere seems to be an institution with hidden and exposed forms of patriarchy which tend to take many forms, and largely set the social-cultural and political standards that impact on women and men’s lives differently. This, suggesting that to deconstruct and reconstruct gender inequalities requires to strategically filter gendered cultural sites and beliefs, and to practically put in place measures to address historical gender imbalances.

This research also suggests that what is perceived as gender equality in Rwanda, is basically economic and social-political changes that have allowed women in the workplace, while still requiring them to maintain the patriarchal status quo by conforming to masculinity while maintaining and performing femininity. The women’s conformity, whether conscious or unconscious, does not mean that they are happy or that gender equality has been attained in their workplace or family, instead research analysis suggests they individually find coping mechanisms (e.g. see Skeggs 1997 in the case of UK). As discussed in Chapter Four, political work seems to come with a lot of pressure. This suggests that if female politicians (as all of my respondents expressed) have pressure from political work, and pressure from family work, it can be too much and have devastating effects on the women in question’s lives including their well-being. Researchers such as Walby (1990) and Baker (2010), argue that affect can be transferred from one sphere to another, thus it is more likely to negatively impact on the woman in question’s life, relationship with her family, performance at work, and career path (see also Williams 1999). This point brings me to the following discussion on gender equality and difference.

Gender difference and equality

The women’s understanding of gender equality is significant as regards the quality of influence they can make on agency and structural gender inequalities. In the Rwandan case, gender equality appeared to be perceived as sameness in terms of rights and as complementarity in regard to political participation. This approach to equality has broken ice as regards equality of numbers (quantity) but not quality of life as regards women’s gendered traditional status - which is more likely to make women’s political access and participation fragile. Fragile because the system and process of political access and participation in Rwanda, according to the analysis of interviews, has not tackled the inherent social-political gender inequalities and biases that sprawls across

the public and private spheres. Consciously or unconsciously, gender equality perceptions appeared to be based on the notion of complementarity of two sexes, which perpetuated gendered norms of an ideal man and ideal woman (see Chapter Two). This understanding of gender in Rwanda, despite the political will, appeared to be a major hindrance to meaningful gender equality, and has continued to subject women to gender biases and gendered power relations. By only focusing on women, and not making men aware of equality of responsibilities in the home, for example, the policies appear to increase women's work while the men's roles are little changed.

Similarly, Rees (2005) argues that the ideology of sameness appears to be built on masculine ideas, thus fails to address women's specific needs, and culturally hidden forms of inequality. Analysis of interviews suggests that women's access to politics was understood as complement to men but not as equal players whose distinct needs must be addressed in order to participate on an equal footing with men. In the UK, McLaughlin (2003:6) stated that "The difference debates produce a 'loss of innocence'..." as regards different perspectives and issues that affect people due to social and identity positions. In other words, equality as sameness conceals issues hidden in patriarchy as a system that determines gender inequalities, while difference exposes them. For example, while all respondents believed that political participation is equally women and men's right, the majority of the women conceived domestic work to be a woman's role. The majority of the women who were assertive about the fact that men should share domestic work, saw men as just helpers (because women are out of home) not as equally responsible. This suggests that in as far as the need for female politicians to articulate their specific needs at work is concerned, they seemed not to have taken it on board. In spite of the large number of women in politics, there has not been enough capacity for female politicians to challenge issues of masculinity at work and in the home (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Burnet 2011; Carlson and Randell 2013).

The polarisation of domestic and public spheres, as most feminists argue, reinforces and perpetuates patriarchal ideologies (Walby 1990; Bock and James 1992; Richardson 1993; Okin 1998; Yunval-Davis and Webner 1999; Tamale 2004), which to a large extent explains why equality based on complementarity is likely not to bring about gender equality in access to politics, participation and as regards gains accruing to both men and women. Even with the relevance of gender complementarity, understanding and approaching gender equality as such, as discussed in Chapter Two and in the data chapters, shields and is more likely to perpetuate the patriarchal status quo. Just as

affirmative action has been relatively successful in increasing the number of female politicians in Rwanda (Kantengwa 2010; Kayumba 2010; Abbott and Rucogoza 2011), affirmative action should be employed in areas of difference due to distinct issues between men and women or among women if complementarity as an approach to equality is to succeed.

Likewise, literature suggests that difference must be applied for distinct social groups to work in equal conditions – in this case men and women, and among women themselves (Bock and James 1992; McLaughlin 2003; Crompton 2006). James (1992:52-55) argued that equality and difference “are held to stand in a relationship of means to end”, women’s political participation should not only be about adding women, but rather about transforming the institutional culture (Hirschmann 1998; Craig 2007). There was lack of equilibrium between women’s involvement in the public and men’s adaption to family roles in the private sphere while the institutional culture has also largely remained masculine. Women were still discriminated against and faced gendered inequalities, such as gendered public scrutiny and work penalty.

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, beyond the “glass ceiling” there appears to be a “feminine/good” woman wall that if not broken might infringe and freeze women’s movement and promotion in Rwanda. So, while women have attained public visibility and are assumed to have power, the impact they can make is significantly undermined and they appeared to carry the consequences. This research argues that it is significant to apply a holistic approach that includes addressing women’s perspectives at work such as changing working culture and provision of a conducive infrastructure, capacity building for women, and a politicisation of the private sphere, including sensitisation about women’s rights at community level aiming at behaviour change in order to liberate both men and women from gendered traditional roles that affect women’s and men’s lives differently.

This research studied women’s experiences as lived both in the public and the private spheres in order to document women politicians narratives about social, cultural and political “latent” gender inequalities (hidden in gender roles pertaining to motherhood and “wifely duties” especially) that affected their lives and career paths, which the Rwandan gender approach and the NGP (2010) seem to ignore. I found that gender equality in political participation and women’s rights promotion in Rwanda is limited in terms of articulating the underlying factors behind gender inequalities embedded in social-cultural day-to-day lived experiences.

Motherhood and wifely duties were found to be the hardest to balance with political work. And yet, while there appeared to be great importance attributed to motherhood and wifely status in Rwandan community, there seemed to be no measures in place to socially, economically and politically integrate these expectations and experiences in the social-political shift that has brought women into the workplace. In a study “*Contemporary Motherhood: The Impact of Children on Adult Time*”, Craig (2007:131) captures the dilemma relating to women’s access to work without adequate reciprocal measures to address the gendered nature of care roles:

Having children has in recent years become increasingly problematic, despite its centrality to the human condition. Caring for and raising children has not been adequately integrated into the social shifts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular the fact that women earning money now requires them to commit time away from home. ... there has been inadequate compensatory adjustment in either the public or the private sphere. The labour market has made little accommodation to women’s unequal responsibility for children...

Despite such a working environment, the analysis suggests that a good number of interviewees appeared not to take some gender inequalities seriously or even understand them as such. Such women were still influenced by gender norms which limited their assertiveness for their rights despite the presumption that they were educated, and somewhat politically aware. The lack of awareness of entrenched and hidden gender inequalities reinforces feminist researchers who emphasise that women should be given skills and empowered with feminist attitudes and gender skills (Rees 2005; Childs and Krook 2006; 2009; Ahikire 2008; Kabeer 2010). This is significant because it may empower women to transform their lives and gender relations rather than conforming to gender inequalities.

Although the women strongly believed that they had been able to influence policies on behalf of other women (discussed in Chapter Four) it appears that they have not been able to challenge institutional practices that impact on their participation. Other researchers (e.g. see Skeggs 1997; Hirschmann 1998; Mbire-Barungi 1999; Pearson and Uwineza 2008) have illustrated that women are shaped, but also shape the culture that suppresses their rights and some of them are likely not to see some gender biases and inequality as violating their rights. In the context of Rwanda specifically, where gender and women’s studies is hardly two years old, and where women’s promotion is top-down and based on development approaches rather than women’s movements, unless

women are aware of their rights, they may not be able to articulate and to assert for change in gender power and inequality.

The research found that even the women who were aware of gender inequalities were reluctant to assert and push for them in a radical way as they believed that this would jeopardise the peaceful and smooth influence they were making to policy and laws (including practical areas such as the budget). In general terms though, most women's accounts suggest that they moved to the public sphere with traditional female status and identity, and were perceived and expected to perform gender so as to be legitimately accepted and respected as politicians. This research suggests that women (especially in the place of work) should join their voices and challenge gender power and inequalities instead of harnessing them.

As some researchers argue (Walby 1990; Richardson 1993; Tamale 2000), unless patriarchy and power imbalances between men and women are meaningfully challenged, women's access to political positions appears insufficient to produce social transformation that will lead to the Rwandan government's goals of gender equality and social justice. Failure to address women's specific needs in the workplace, and to foster a shift in male oriented work cultures illustrates double standards in as far as gender equality and women's rights are concerned, and violates the Rwandan government's principles of good governance, diversity inclusiveness, and gender equality enshrined in policies and laws.

Way Forward

In the following section I will go on to highlight implications of the research for policy makers, researchers and activists based on the women's recommendations and narratives, and the theoretical arguments made in Chapter Two especially. These recommendations range from capacity building, policy review, infrastructural feminization to new ways of understanding and theorizing women and politics in Rwanda. Before making general points however, I would like to highlight an issue that I think is significant to understand women and politics in Rwandan. It is crucial for researchers to understand the interception and intersectional nature of patriarchy as it operates in different spaces of socialization, especially the private and public spheres in this case. Imperative to note also is the fact that this complex nature of gender happens in the backdrop of insufficient gender and feminist skills as discussed in Chapter Two.

Further, in a context where most female politicians seemed to juggle with issues such as career development, gendered political environment, political awareness, and traditional expectations of good womanhood, future research might need to examine how such circumstances may affect female politicians' practical representation role. This study argues that the quality of women's political participation would improve through, especially, women's understanding of their rights, strong women's activism empowered with feminist skills and attitude in order that they can negotiate and assert for their rights, the government's willingness to allocate resources, and behavioural change campaigns at community/family level.

Suggestions for policy

Some female politicians lacked basic skills like computer skills, gender and feminist analytical skills, and basic materials such as having internet access at home or basic modern tools. In this context, it is no wonder that the women found it harder to balance family and political work. Respondents' accounts about some female politicians' lack of capacity suggests that in some contexts, like that of Rwanda, female politicians require some level of capacity building in relation to political and governance processes and women's substantive rights (see also Ahikire 2008) such as, for example, the need for infrastructural feminine specialised tools, such as childcare facilities. Woman's promotion requires a comprehensive approach that will tackle patriarchal tendencies at all fronts – private and public (Mbire-Balungi 1999; Tamale 2004; Crompton 2006).

Whilst there may be no translation for the term gender in Kinyarwanda, making it even harder to localise it, the women's understanding of gender equality was fluid. For gender to be meaningfully integrated in development and human rights promotion processes there is a need to reconceptualise gender to include not only equal opportunities but also activities geared to consideration of how women and men are differentiated by historical gender power relations and inequalities. The respondents suggested that changing gendered norms and attitudes should be scaled up to reach grassroots.

Institutionally, there seems to be a need to put female politicians' well-being on the political table, and to adopt strategies that will make women's participation in politics more equal, including "shaping and implementing the policies needed to empower women and advance gender equality in a meaningful way", to use the words of the

Rwandan President.¹⁰⁴ As women access politics in particular and work at large, there seems to be a need for strategies that can bridge the gap between paid work and domestic responsibilities, especially those that relate to maternal roles such as childcare. For instance, the majority of the respondents mentioned the need for more and affordable childcare nurseries, though they had differing views on whether it is a role of the government or the private sector (which appeared to relate to women's understanding of gender and women's rights). While a few thought that it should be the government's responsibility to put and/or facilitate putting in place childcare facilities, the majority thought that it should be the private sector's responsibility.

While I recognise that the Rwanda government (as a third-world nation and one rebuilding its economy) might not be able to become a welfare state, to reduce obstacles to women's political participation, work overload and penalty, and the related stress and pressure, attempts should be made to provide or facilitate basic childcare facilities such as affordable *crèche* and nursery schools as recommended by most women interviewed. This thesis suggests that if childcare and child safety measures were in place women with young children would work in a more efficient, equitable and less stressful environment.

Again, whilst the women recommended that women should nurture their children in a gender equal way to change the tradition, this largely requires mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns at family level. For instance, allowing girls and boys to do the same family chores rather than basing chores on gendered beliefs. However, this might also require the adult members of the family to practically and equally get involved in domestic work so as to model for the young ones. Campaigns and scholarship about responsible fatherhood – encouraging fathers to spend quality time and to care for children could be important in improving the amount of work that some women politicians do especially in the home.

Whilst I acknowledge the achievements of the Rwandan government and the women's movement, it seems necessary to refocus gender conception and approach, and to develop mechanisms and strategies that will transform gender ideologies and inequalities. It appears that the Rwandan gender equality approach has given rise to a partial understanding and practice of gender equality that is largely restricted to

¹⁰⁴ President Kagame Paul, 17/05/2010, Speech at the International Forum on the Role of Leadership in Promoting, Accelerating and Sustaining Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Kigali, Rwanda, accessed, 26/May/2011

women's access to work and decision-making posts. Such a state of affairs was critiqued by several respondents, who argued that women's promotion was stuck and in a "status quo" requiring reanalysis and refocusing to transformational gender values. Thus, there is a need to put in place gender mainstreaming frameworks that will guide strategic engendering of policies and activities by different actors (as shown in Appendix I of this thesis).

In the workplace there is a need to adopt a gender agenda that is more sensitive to gender diversity and difference. If the internal procedures and schedules address women's constraints at work, this will not only lead to gender equality but might also minimise marital conflicts and breakages that might result from women's failure to meet the traditional family expectations of a woman. I would argue that this should (specifically) target men's long and outright reign that makes the working environment masculine and unfriendly to women. This appears to require, for example: changes in work schedule and time, better maternity and paternity leave policy, and infrastructural changes that facilitate maternal roles, coupled with strategies aiming at challenging gendered attitude and behaviour change.

This research proposes that the government, women's activism groups, and human rights activists needs to adopt measures to address gender biases and gendered scrutiny against women. The analysis of interview data suggests that public bias and scrutiny were some of the key issues that appeared to restrict women's assertiveness and freedom of choice. While I do not intend to suggest that women, just as men, should not be accountable for their behaviour (especially given that these are public figures considered to be role models), women and men should be measured by the same yardstick if equality is to be attained. If not, the biased treatment is more likely not only to affect women's political participation, but is also likely to intimidate some women from asserting for their rights.

In regard to political posts, much as it might be pertinent for women to head social related organs as an area that might be socio-economically affecting more women than men, if not applied well it is more likely to reinforce and perpetuate gender biases and gender roles. Additionally, it is important that women also hold top decision-making posts just as men, especially in those appointed posts. This is significant for two major reasons: (1) This will change the biases about women as second to men, and (2) making women top decision-makers is also likely to allow women more influence on political processes and outcomes than if there is someone else making the final decision in an

organisation. In the private sphere, this PhD recommends improving how family work is done, such as for example making modern tools accessible, addressing gender roles division in the home, coupled with mechanisms to address cultural norms that perpetuate inequality in the home.

Recommendations for women's groups (including female politician's forums)

As discussed in Chapter Two, Rwandan women politicians, perhaps also other women politicians in similar contexts, appear to require support and solidarity from elite women and specifically women's organisations. Analysis of the data reflected that rather than supporting women politicians' political participation and representative role, most women's organisation and researchers critique how far they represent women issues. This is likely to put women politicians under more pressure, while this can affect their representative role positively, it can also put-off some women or make them more likely to be defensive. Additionally, while in no way do I want to suggest that women politicians should not be accountable to their constituencies and women, negative criticisms (condemning) may make them feel isolated from other women; therefore, I propose that women pressure groups in support of women politicians could be significant as regards drawing their attention on issues that affect women. For instance, the women mentioned some key areas for reinforcement: evaluation of gender promotion, identifying women politicians' capacity building needs, and how to reconceptualise and theorise gender equality in the Rwandan context.

While women mentioned that they worked in sisterhood through their different forums, a few appeared disappointed that they only discussed issues of interest to other women but not to advance their own interests as female politicians. I go on to propose that it could be significant if female politicians, especially through their forums discuss their challenges and advocate for a meaningful gender equality.

Therefore, I suggest that it is important for women's activist groups and gender and feminist scholars to encourage and empower grass-root based women's movement to complement the government's good will for women's promotion. This is likely to bridge the gap between policy and law, and practice. Also, it will bridge the gap between participation in numbers (quantity) and fairness (quality) for both men and women. Women scholars, women politicians and women activists' sisterhood and partnership is significant in the struggle for women's empowerment and women's rights promotion. But, specifically, Rwandan women politicians' seem to need to reinforce

working in sisterhood; not only in advocating other women's interests but also the interests of female politicians and working women generally.

Suggestion for future research

As mentioned throughout this thesis, in a context where most female politicians seemed to juggle with issues such as career development, gendered political environment, political awareness, and traditional expectations of good womanhood, future research might need to examine how such circumstances may affect female politicians' lives, career path, and substantial representation. Throughout this thesis, I illustrated that there has been limited scholarly research exploring women politicians' lived experiences as told by themselves. In this context, and as argued by feminist researchers such as Childs (2004) and Celis (2008), to investigate female politicians' representative role requires first of all to understand the contextual realities. This is important in the case of Rwanda where women's participation in politics is, for instance, still new and unskilled as regards gender issues and feminism. The other contextual factor that may make Rwandan female politicians' lives and their representation complex is the social-political and economic playing ground, especially due to the legacy of the war and genocide. The existence of political leadership will in Rwanda provides a good case study exploring how women's lack of political experience and newness may impact on the women's social-political representational role.

Women's accounts and experiences raised a number of questions that were not discussed in this research. As discussed in Chapter Three, I would have liked to examine the views of male partners of the women I interviewed, but this was not feasible and attainable due to time and resource constraints. Thus I recommend research that examines the views of both the women and their family members. This would widen research findings about the women's lived experiences juxtaposed with the circumstances and understandings of their family members, especially their male partners. The husbands' views would lead to more nuanced research outcomes and recommendations for policy makers, activists, and academic researchers. Interviewing men is also likely to show whether men and women perceive and perform gender perspectives differently. Soliciting both men and women politicians' perceptions about gender perspectives, in a country renown for promoting gender equality would bring new perspectives to academic and policy formulation approaches.

This research found that most posts that women held, especially with in the local government were gendered. Research targeting why this is so and what impact it has on women's lives and as regards influencing policy processes and outcomes would be significant. Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct a study focussed on how, why and what are the prerequisites for women politicians to transform gender relations rather than conforming to them.

Analysis of existing literature shows that the majority (if not all) of academic research focuses on Rwandan women parliamentarians. It can be argued that such research is based on Western and/or advanced democratic political systems that emphasis the role of the legislature in democracy and also because of the dramatic numbers of female members of parliament. This thesis proposes that in order to explore gender equality processes and outcomes in Rwanda, there is need to refocus research away from the legislature, to include other influential levels of decision-making such as the executive and decentralised organs, especially the District and Sector levels. Instead of concentrating research on the parliament as the tendency appears to indicate, the Rwandan context suggests it may be more useful to target local government and the cabinet (executive) levels. As Pearson and Powley (2008) mentioned, in Rwanda, the executive appears to be the most powerful organ of the government, evidenced, for instance, apart from GBV Law (2009), by the time of data collection all other laws were initiated by the executive branch. As for my proposal about researching women in the decentralised levels of politics, it is because they are the linkage between central government and the people, thus playing key role in informing policy formulation and service delivery.

Whilst some respondents felt that women's promotion in Rwanda was in a status quo and needed to progress, this will only happen if female politicians understand their concrete rights and are able to pursue them. As Childs and Krook (2009) also argues, this research found that this will require both critical mass and critical actors. Several feminist researchers suggest that to alter gendered subordination and discrimination, women should articulate, negotiate, and be assertive (e.g. see Mikell 1997; Wangnerud 2009) about their rights. However, this argument does not aim to suggest that only women should carry the burden for gender equality, but rather, as discussed in this thesis, that women, through their experiences and with the right skills are better suited to articulate what affects them (e.g. see also Nzomo 1997; Lovenduski 1997; Grey 2000; Kabeer 2010). Thus, as most African feminists argue (e.g. Mikell 1997; Tamale

1999; 2004; Ahikire 2004; 2008), African feminism needs to re-invent itself and influence gender developmental processes. Women in Rwanda, in particular, need to theorise and to challenge the existing status quo and advocate for meaningful incorporation of women's perspectives in order to transform gender relations and inequalities.

Finally, it is significant to study about how women's access to paid work without changing gender roles and hierarchies impact on other women's rights. This is in response to an earlier discussion relating to sexual abuse committed against some female domestic workers abused by the male members of the families they work for.

Appendix I:

Key Government Mechanisms, Women's Forums and Policies and Laws

- ❖ The following table shows major policies, laws, institutional gender mechanisms (GM) and women's umbrella networks that have been instrumental in promoting women's rights in Rwanda.

Key government gender policies and laws, GM, and Women's umbrella organisation.	
<i>State Gender Tools</i>	<i>Role</i>
Gender Mechanisms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender Budgeting Office ➤ Gender Focal Points ➤ The National Gender Cluster ❖ <i>Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)</i> ❖ <i>National Women Council (NWC)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promote equality and equity for both men and women and ensure empowerment of women through the national development processes of Rwanda. - To ensure public funds response to gender perspectives. This was piloted in four key sectors: health, education, agriculture and infrastructure. -Mainstream gender in all development sectors and to promote gender equality and equity at all levels. -Facilitate collaboration and coordination of all interventions in area of gender by sharing experiences, generating new ideas, identifying gaps, lobbying and advocating for achieving gender equity and equality in sectors across the country. -Monitor implementation and progress towards gender equality. -Put together views of all Rwanda women without discrimination. -Train women to analyze and solve their own problems together -Encourage women to participate in the development

	<p>of country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensitize women on the culture of patriotism and working for the country -Enhance the ability of women to carry out their own activities -Represent women in the governance of the country to enable them participate in the government programs -Encourage women in the fight for equality and complementarity between men and women.
<p>Key Women’s Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FRWP¹)</i> ❖ <i>Pro-femmes / Twese Hamwe (Pro-Femmes)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to the capacity building of Parliamentary Women in the framework of their parliamentary role in general and of their position of advocacy for the consideration of gender dimension within the parliamentary mission, structure and axe strategies. <p>“An umbrella organisation composed of 59 associations whose mandate is advancement of women, peace and development”.²</p>
<p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Vision 2020</i> ❖ <i>Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) 2013-2018</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The long term development framework that highlights the development goals for Rwanda. Gender is a crosscutting issue in all development programs. -The mid-term strategy for implementing Vision 2020. As with Vision 2020, gender is a crosscutting issue in EDPRS

¹ Initiated in 1996, FRWP brings together women across political and social ideologies and differences for cause of “gender integration”. It is composed of all women from both houses of parliament. For further information visit, <http://www.rwandaparliament.gov.rw/parliament/forumrwpf.aspx>, accessed 12/11/2012

² <http://profemmes-twesehamwe.org/> 12/03/2012

<p>❖ <i>National Gender Policy 2004; 2010</i></p> <p>❖ <i>The East African Community Gender and Community Development Framework (2009).</i></p>	<p>-This provides a framework for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.</p> <p>-It commits member states to integrate women and women perspectives into development activities at all levels of community development plans.</p>
<p>Laws</p> <p>❖ <i>Rwanda Constitution, 2003</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Organic Law Governing Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, 2003.</i></p> <p>❖ <i>Law of Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Succession,</i></p>	<p>-It sets the basis for gender equality legal framework, for example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Article 9(4) which guarantees at least 30 percent of women's posts in decision making organs; II. Article 11 prohibiting discrimination based on sex; III. Article 26 that provides for equality between husband and wife in family matters; IV. Article 52 (2) and 77(3) ordering political parties to promote equality of women and men in state electoral posts and work; V. Articles 76 (2) providing for 24 reserved seats for women only ballots, and VI. Paragraph 9 of the Preamble recognises the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1980) (CEDAW). <p>-Provides for at least 30% seats for women in parliament, and on political party lists.</p> <p>-Also reinforces the constitutional twenty-four special seats for women in the Chamber of Deputies.</p> <p>-Gives equal access to and control over resources to</p>

<p>1999.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Labour Law, 2007</i> ❖ <i>Gender Based Violence Law (GBV) 2009</i> ❖ <i>The Optional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in African</i> ❖ <i>Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1980)</i> 	<p>husband and wife, and provides for equal rights to family property for sons and daughters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -At birth, a working woman is entitled to six weeks of fully paid leave. She can take extra twelve weeks and receive only 20% of her salary. -From the day the child is born, she is also entitled to an hour of breast-feeding for 12 months. -Prohibits and punishes gender based violence, including domestic violence. - Calls on States Parties to theoretically and practically commit to addressing all forms of discrimination against women. It also advances women's rights enshrined in international law such as the right to abortion which Rwanda has adhered to. <p>Ratified and referenced by the 2003 Rwandan Constitution, CEDAW is treaty for women's human rights.</p>
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This information was gathered from:

- ❖ The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR): <http://www.statistics.gov.rw>, December/2012;
- ❖ The Gender Monitoring Office: <http://www.gmo.gov.rw/>, March/2013
- ❖ The Prime Minister's Office: <http://www.primature.gov.rw/pm-office/affiliated-institutions>, March/2013;
- ❖ The National Gender Policy (2010): <http://www.migeprof.gov.rw/>, accessed, 03/2013;
- ❖ Rwanda Country Report of 2009 on the implementation of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action: http://www.migeprof.gov.rw/IMG/doc/BEIJING_15_REGIONAL_RWANDA_REPORT March/2013; and

Document on Legal and Policy Framework for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Rwanda: <http://ipar->

rwanda.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=85&Itemid=151,
accessed June/2011.

Appendix II

Geographical and Administrative map of Rwanda



This map is extracted from <http://www.mapsofworld.com/rwanda/>, accessed on 20/03/2013

Appendix III A:

Interview Schedule- Female Politicians: The Intersection of the Private and the Public Spheres in Rwanda

Background Information	Does involvement in politics change gender roles across the private and public for female politicians in Rwanda?	Are women politicians' experiences varied by the level of involvement in government? <i>And domestic roles?</i>	What perspectives do female politicians have on what can enable women's participation in politics to be sustained in the long term?
<p>1. Can you tell me some information about your background before you joined politics? <i>Political parties, teachers, activists, ngos, and rural or urban.</i></p> <p>2. What do you think has made it possible for women to come into politics in such numbers in Rwanda?</p> <p>3. What does gender equality</p>	<p>7. In your view, why would a woman want to go in politics?</p> <p>8. Has women's participation in politics changed gender roles in the families of female leaders? How would you explain that? In what ways have they changed?</p> <p>Under what circumstances (child care, husband care, other domestic roles?</p> <p>9. What are the prevalent gender</p>	<p>16. What is your day to day work life like? How do you balance it with other responsibilities you have in life? <i>Working time, maternity leave Care services, home location</i></p> <p>17. How has your involvement in political work impacted on you? and your family?</p> <p>18. What are your main domestic roles? Who else other than you?</p>	<p>24. How do you envisage women's political participation in the coming years in Rwanda? <i>What will bring more women into politics? What will put them off? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Rwandan politics in relation to women's participation?</i></p> <p>25. How and what would you like to see changing?</p>

<p>mean as a development policy goal?</p> <p>3. Is it significant to current Rwandan government development agendas? Why?</p> <p>4.a. What is gender equality in your view? How would you relate it to social justice? <i>Relationship to women's political participation.</i></p> <p>4.b. Do you think other women (activists, politicians) would define gender equality in the same way?</p> <p>5. Would you consider yourself a feminist? If yes/no why? <i>If yes what are /should be the key goals for feminist movement in Rwanda?</i></p> <p>6. Is how you think about gender equality influenced by</p>	<p>stereotypes in Rwandan society?</p> <p><i>Will this situation change?</i></p> <p><i>What will influence the change?</i></p> <p><i>Do you think having more women in politics will affect this?</i></p> <p><i>How long might this take?</i></p> <p><i>How does it vary?</i></p> <p>10. Do those stereotypes influence what women in politics can do? Have you found them to be an issue? Can you think of specific examples?</p> <p>11. What does it mean to be a good woman in the Rwandan society? How might this influence a female politician positively and negatively? <i>Rural, urban, educated, uneducated, different regions.</i></p>	<p>19. Would your experience be different if you would be at a different political office / level</p> <p>20. Motherhood appears to be one of the major challenges facing working women. As a politician what are your experiences?</p> <p>21. Would you say that a female politician without children's experience is different from those with children? Would the age of children matter in this case? Are there other factors which might affect the impact of being a mother?</p> <p>22. As a woman, how do you balance your work, and the mentioned domestic responsibilities?</p>	<p><i>In the home, in the society, in the workplace</i></p> <p>26. In relation to your recommendations, would you mention some of the key actors? In which way can they intervene or make change?</p> <p>27. Do you have anything else you want to say that I haven't asked which would be relevant to add?</p> <p>28. Have you any questions you want to ask me?</p>
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<p>feminism? <i>If so in what way?</i> <i>If not, why not?</i></p>	<p>12. How might circumstances in family relations impact on a female politician's life (social and career)? <i>Marital circumstances, relationship with husband/children, health.</i></p> <p>13. In your view do you think being in politics has changed the social image about women and politics? <i>In the family, in the society, in the workplace?</i></p> <p>14. Are there times when you feel that you are not fulfilling any of your roles properly? <i>Can you give me an example?</i> <i>What is the biggest problem for you?</i> <i>How do you manage that?</i></p> <p>15. Do you discuss these kinds of issues with other female</p>	<p>Mothering, <i>Home chores (family supplies, cleanliness, care for husband, community work, etc)</i> <i>Care of relatives.</i></p> <p>23. Do you think female politicians face distinct issues in comparison to other women in similar types of job? Leaders of private companies</p>	
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	politicians? Anyone else? <i>What issues?</i> <i>Solution?</i>		
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Appendix III B

Interview Schedule- Female Politicians: The Intersection of the Private and the Public Spheres in Rwanda

How are women politicians' lives impacted by the workplace context and culture?	Does involvement in politics change gender perceptions and roles across the private and public spheres?	Do women politicians' experiences of balancing political and family roles vary due to motherhood responsibilities?	Closing: Reinforcement and Sustainability
<p>1. Can you tell me some information about your background before you joined politics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Political party, -Work (teacher, activists, ngos), -Civil status, -Children or not, -Rural or urban. <p>2. What do you think has made it possible for women to come into politics in such numbers in Rwanda?</p>	<p>8. What is your day to day work life like? How do you balance it with other responsibilities you have in life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working time, -Maternity leave, -Care services, -Home location. <p>9. What are your main domestic roles? Who else other than you?</p> <p>10. Has women's participation in politics changed gender roles in the families of female</p>	<p>15. Motherhood appears to be one of the major challenges facing working women. As a politician what are your experiences?</p> <p>16. a. Would you say that a female politician without children's experience is different from those with children?</p> <p>16. b. Would the age of children matter in this case?</p> <p>17. Are there other factors which</p>	<p>24. How and what would you like to see changing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In the home, -In the society, -In the workplace. <p>25. Do you think having more women in politics will affect this?</p> <p>26. How do you envisage women's political participation in the coming years in Rwanda?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What will bring more women into politics? -What will put them off?

<p>3. In your view, why would a woman want to go in politics?</p> <p>4.a. What is gender equality in your view?</p> <p>How would you relate it to social justice</p> <p>Relationship to women's political participation?</p> <p>4.b. Do you think other women (activists, politicians) would define gender equality in the same way?</p> <p>5. What does gender equality mean as a development policy goal?</p> <p>6. Is it significant to current Rwandan government development agendas? Why?</p> <p>7. In your view do you think being in politics has changed the</p>	<p>leaders? How would you explain that?</p> <p>11. What does it mean to be a good woman in the Rwandan society? How might this influence a female politician positively and negatively? (Rural, urban, educated, uneducated, different regions)</p> <p>12. What are the prevalent gender stereotypes in Rwandan society?</p> <p>Will this situation change?</p> <p>What will influence the change?</p> <p>-How long might this take?</p> <p>-How does it vary?</p> <p>13. Do those stereotypes influence what women in politics can do?</p> <p>-Have you found them to be an issue?</p> <p>-Can you think of specific examples?</p>	<p>might affect the impact of being a mother?</p> <p>18. As a woman, how do you balance your work, and the mentioned mothering responsibilities?</p> <p>-Childcare, -Home chores (family supplies, cleanliness, care for husband, care for relatives) -Social/community roles.</p> <p>19. How has your involvement in political work impacted on you? And your family?</p> <p>20. Would your experience be different if you would be at a different political office / level</p> <p>21. Do you think female politicians face distinct issues in comparison to other women in similar types of job?</p> <p>-leaders of private companies</p>	<p>27. In relation to your recommendations, would you mention some of the key actors?</p> <p>In which way can they intervene or make change?</p> <p>28.a. Would you consider yourself a feminist?</p> <p>28.b. If yes what are /should be the key goals for feminist movement in Rwanda?</p> <p>29. Is how you think about gender equality influenced by feminism?</p> <p>If so in what way? If not, why not?</p> <p>30. Do you have anything else you want to say that I haven't asked which would be relevant to add?</p> <p>31. Have you any questions you</p>
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<p>social image about women and politics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In the family, -In the society, -In the workplace. 	<p>14. How might circumstances in family relations impact on a female politician's life (social and career)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Marital circumstances, -Relationship with husband /children, -Health. 	<p>22. Are there times when you feel that you are not fulfilling any of your roles properly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Can you give me an example? What is the biggest problem for you? -How do you manage that? <p>23. Do you discuss these kinds of issues with other female politicians? Anyone else?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What issues? -Solution? 	<p>want to ask me?</p>
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Appendix IV.A

Access Letter for Ministers

Justine N. Uvuza
PhD Candidate, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
Newcastle University
5th Floor Claremont Tower
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

Re: PhD Fieldwork in Rwanda

Dear Madam Minister of.....,

I am a Rwandan PhD student at Newcastle University in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, United Kingdom. I am supervised by two academics with significant experience of the areas I am working in. I will be conducting fieldwork in Rwanda from May - October 2010. My thesis research looks at how Rwandan women politicians are balancing the private and the public spheres, and how that impacts on their lives. I am exploring questions such as: How are women politicians balancing home and work life? What are the pressures they face? Are they taking on more public roles while still responsible for so many hours of domestic labor? My approach is influenced by feminist debates about women's responsibilities across the private and public sphere. In general, I wish to focus on these questions, and others, by interviewing Rwandan female politicians.

I am hoping to conduct one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 35 female politicians from the cabinet, both chambers of parliament, local government, and from women's major groups (umbrella and networks) such as Pro-femmes and Rwanda Association of University Women. I am requesting for an hour of your time please.

Attached to this letter are the research participants' information sheet and a recommendation letter from my school. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on Justine.uvuza@ncl.ac.uk or jordanu04@gmail.com or on my phone numbers: +44 (0) 7761533388 and after the 17th/05 /2010 on my local number: 0788303836.

With great thanks,

Justine Uvuza



Appendix IV.B

Access Letter for Presidents of NGOs

Justine N. Uvuza
PhD Candidate, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology
Newcastle University
5th Floor Claremont Tower
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU United Kingdom

Dear Madam President of.....,

I am a Rwandan PhD student at Newcastle University in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, United Kingdom. I am supervised by two academics with significant experience of the areas I am working in. I will be conducting fieldwork in Rwanda from May - October 2010. My thesis research looks at how Rwandan women politicians are balancing the private and the public spheres, and how that impacts on their lives. I am exploring questions such as: How are women politicians balancing home and work life? What are the pressures they face? Are they taking on more public roles while still responsible for so many hours of domestic labor? My approach is influenced by feminist debates about women's responsibilities across the private and public sphere. In general, I wish to focus on these questions, and others, by interviewing Rwandan female politicians.

I am hoping to conduct one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 35 female politicians from the cabinet, both chambers of parliament, local government, and from women's major groups (umbrella and networks) such as Pro-femmes and Rwanda Association of University Women. I am requesting for an hour of your time please.

Attached to this letter are the research participants' information sheet and a recommendation letter from my school. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me on Justine.uvuza@ncl.ac.uk or jordanu04@gmail.com or on my phone numbers: +44 (0) 7761533388 and after the 17th/05 /2010 on my local number: 0788303836.

With great thanks,

Justine Uvuza



Appendix V

Re: Letter of Introduction for Justine Uvuza

To Whom It May Concern:

We are the academic supervisors of Justine Uvuza. Justine is undertaking a PhD with us in the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, at Newcastle University, UK. Her research is examining a variety of issues that affect women politicians in Rwanda. We would be very grateful if you could offer any assistance for Justine undertaking her project, particularly in relation to introducing her to women who it would be appropriate for her to include in her studies. If you have any questions you can contact us by the email listed below.

Yours sincerely

Professor Diane Richardson
Diane.richardson@ncl.ac.uk

Dr Janice McLaughlin
janice.mclaughlin@ncl.ac.uk



Appendix VI

Participant Information Sheet

PhD Research Project:

Female Politicians: The Intersection of the Private and the Public Spheres in Rwanda

Research Student

Justine Uvuza
Newcastle University
5 Floor, Claremont Bridge
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NE1 7RU, UK
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Research Supervisors

Prof. Diane Richardson
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Dr. Janice McLaughlin
5 Floor, Claremont Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU, UK
Janice.mclaughlin@ncl.ac.uk

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take this information and read it carefully. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like any further information, please let me know.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

In Rwanda, since 1994, a lot of achievements have been registered in relation to women's promotion. This is evidenced by the number of women in different areas of Rwandan decision-making positions – for example, The Chamber of Deputies is comprised of 56.6% female members (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2010).

However, while Rwanda has gained a lot in terms of women's participation in decision-making, there is a need to look at how that has impacted on the lives of the women in question. The study will include the experiences and perspectives from female leaders in the cabinet, in the first chamber of parliament, in local government and from major women groups. It is based on three major questions:

- Does involvement in politics change gender perceptions and roles across the private and public spheres?



- How are women politicians' lives impacted by the workplace context and culture?
- Do women politicians' experiences of balancing political and family roles vary due to motherhood responsibilities?

2. What will happen if I take part?

What I will require of you is an hour of your time. The research will be carried out from May to October 2010. If you agree to take part in the study I will contact you to arrange a time with you to carry out the interview at your convenience.

3. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be confidential. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research. Your name and address will not be recorded on the interview transcripts. Your participation will not be discussed with others outside my supervision team (who will not be informed of your personal details). Your name and identifiable details will be changed, and I will ensure that your involvement remains anonymous. I will not discuss anything you tell me with people known to you; however, you are free to discuss any issues covered by the research with anybody you wish.

4. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be used in attainment of a PhD degree, for academic purposes and if possible to inform policy development. Anonymity and confidentiality will still be in place. The findings will also be shared or presented at conferences.

5. Contacts for Further Information

Justine Uvuza
Tel: 0788303836
Email: Justine.uvuza@ncl.ac.uk or jordanu04@gmail.com

Thank you for reading this information sheet.



Appendix VII

Consent Form

Study: Female Politicians: The Intersection of the Private and the Public Spheres in Rwanda

Research Student:

Justine N. Uvuza.

Research Supervisors:

Prof. Diane Richardson and Dr. Janice McLaughlin, Newcastle University.

Please delete as appropriate:

Have you read the information sheet? YES / NO

Have you been given a copy to keep? YES / NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? YES / NO

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study? YES / NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time? YES / NO

Are you happy for this interview to be audio-recorded and later transcribed? YES / NO

Do you agree to your personal data being stored on a secure database, to be accessed by Justine Uvuza ONLY? YES / NO

Do you agree to take part in the study? YES / NO

NAME

Signed

.....

Date

Signature of Researcher

.....

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