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## SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Trauma inflicted by genocide: Experiences of the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the trauma inflicted by the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath among Rwandans who nowadays reside in the Diaspora in Finland, their ways of coping with their trauma, and whether they thought reconciliation possible. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through interviews of 40 Rwandans, 20 males (mean age 37.6 years, SD 16.4 years) and 20 females (mean age 47.6 years, SD 14.9 years), selected representatively from 14 different locations of Finland. It was found that 57.5% of the respondents had lost one or more family member during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In this sample, 72.5% reported being traumatized, and of these, 37.5% extremely traumatized. Fifty percent reported having sleeping problems often, and of these, 22.5% very often. Seventy-five percent reported having bad dreams at least sometimes, 30% of these often, and 20% very often. Thirty percent of women and 5% of men reported having been raped. Of these, 15% of the women became pregnant due to the rape, and 10% were contaminated with HIV/AIDS. Ten percent of the respondents were born as a result of rape. Although 50% reported living peacefully with other Rwandans, 35% considered reconciliation difficult or extremely difficult. In conclusion, the Rwandan Diaspora living in Finland were severely traumatized by the genocide, and still, 22 years later, reconciliation appears difficult.

**Subjects:** Social Sciences; Behavioral Sciences; Health and Social Care

**Keywords:** genocide; trauma; Rwanda; HIV/AIDS; PTSD



Jean d'Amour Banyanga

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The research group consists of three persons. The first author, Jean d'Amour Banyanga, was born in Rwanda but is now a Finnish citizen and a PhD student at Åbo Akademi University in developmental psychology. He has personal experience of the Rwandan genocide, during which he lost nine family members. Kaj Björkqvist is a professor of developmental psychology and his main research supervisor. Karin Österman, PhD, is adjunct professor and Banyanga's second supervisor. The study is part of a larger, cross-cultural project with the title "CULTAGG: The culture of aggression against women and children" led by Karin Österman.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The Rwandan people encountered genocide in 1994, which led to the exile of many Rwandan people and the establishment of diasporic communities in the western world. Survivors from genocide are a particularly vulnerable group, and the percentage of those who have been severely traumatized is extremely high in comparison with other groups of refugees. The study examines the level and forms of traumatization among the Rwandan Diaspora in a particular country, Finland, and their experience of the psychological services they have received in their new country. The results of the study bring about information that is potentially useful in the planning of rehabilitation and reconciliation programs.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Genocide is a crime which has been committed throughout history, long before Lemkin (1945) coined the term. United Nations' General Assembly defined, in December 1948, genocide in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (Destexthe, 1995, p. 3; Kinloch & Mohan, 2005, pp. 16–18; Totten & Bartrop, 2009, pp. 3–9; Valentino, 2004, pp. 12–13). The Rwandan genocide had its origin in the colonial period when the Germans and the Belgians gave the Tutsis a more privileged sphere in political, educational and economic arenas while the Hutus were designated to do inferior jobs such as land cultivation and other hard work. In the 1950s, the Roman Catholic Church and the Belgian administration abruptly switched their allegiance from the Tutsi minority to the Hutu majority, and tried to push through reforms. The ethnic division upheld by the colonizers and the church produced much bitterness and led to a Hutu revolution in 1959. Between 1960 and 1962, 10,000 Tutsis were killed, and another 120,000 fled to neighboring countries as refugees. Rwanda became a Hutu nation, and Tutsis were marginalized and excluded from key positions (Destexthe, 1995; Tutu, 1994). On 6 April 1994, President Habyarimana Juvenal, a Hutu, and the Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira with several senior members of the presidential staff and members of the French crew that operated the plane were shot and killed in Kigali when their plane was landing from Arusha-Tanzania, to sign for power-sharing with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The Rwandan Government blamed the RPF and the Tutsis for killing the president. In retaliation, the Hutu extremists (*Interahamwe*) started to kill Tutsis and Hutu sympathizers of the Tutsis (Cook, 2006, p. 221; Dallaire, 2003, pp. 223–224; Destexthe, 1995, p. 31; Kinloch & Mohan, 2005, pp. 187–188; Moghalu, 2005, p. 16; Tutu, 1994, p. 12). In little more than 100 days, more than 800,000 Rwandans were butchered in one of the most intense genocides in known history (Anderson & Menon, 2009, p. 54; Dallaire, 2003, p. 375; Moghalu, 2005, p. 17; Prunier, 1998, p. 265; Tutu, 1994, p. 13).

The genocide in 1994 caused a lot of bloodshed among men, women and children, and it led to the exile of many Rwandan people and the establishment of diasporic communities in Africa, Europe, Australia, and Northern America. Many Rwandan people who reside in Finland after surviving the 1994 genocide against Tutsi and its aftermath went through such tragedy that they still suffer from the social and psychological wounds that the ethnic violence and the genocide left them with.

Since Finland previously has not had any significant ties with Rwanda, only a few Rwandans came to Finland to apply for political asylum after the genocide. By 2015, Finland hosted 474 (238 males and 236 females) Rwandans (Statistics Finland, 1990–2015). Rwandan people do not have many economic enterprises in Finland, but they have three churches.

### 1.2. Suffering due to the genocide and its aftermath

Although suffering is experienced by the individual, it is in this particular context based on an interplay between perpetrator and victim. It is therefore to a large extent a social experience (Kleinman, Veena, & Margaret, 1997, p. ix; Wilkinson, 2005, p. 80). Many years after the Rwandan tragedy, reconciliation among Rwandan people, both in Rwanda and abroad, is still a big challenge, since many Rwandans are burning with anger, hatred, deep frustration, and dashed hopes (Nowrojee, 2005, pp. 2–4).

There are still divisions among Rwandan people who live in the Diaspora. Since Finland does not have a large number of Rwandan nationals on its territory, and since there is no big ethnic representation in the existing community, there have not been any ethnic clashes among Rwandans in Finland. However, there is still a notable lack of trust between the two main ethnic groups. As a

result, people may be reluctant to interact and visit each other, and to participate in events such as weddings and burials (Turner, 2012, p. 138).

The brutal nature and extent of the slaughter, along with the ensuing mass migration, swiftly and profoundly destroyed Rwanda's social foundation. After the genocide, whole Rwandan populations were victimized by a continuum of violence, and individual and social suffering was ubiquitous. According to Kapteijns and Richters (2010, pp. 173–180), individuals do not suffer to the same extent during the same conditions, and pain is perceived and expressed differently, even in the same community. For refugees, traumatization is often an enduring, cumulative process that continues during exile (Van der Veer, 1995, p. 152). According to a United Nations report, the experience of violence traumatized a high proportion of the Rwandan population (United Nations, 2001, p. 9). The Rwandan National Trauma Survey found that 96% of children had witnessed violence, 80% had experienced death in the family, 69% had witnessed death or injury, 31% had witnessed rape or sexual assault, and 91% had thought they would die (Anderson & Menon, 2009, pp. 54–55; United Nations, 2001, p. 9). These numbers indicate that the percentage of the Rwandan population who are traumatized is very high. It is known that people desire to establish a family by getting married, raising children, and establishing kinship systems. In Rwandan culture and customs, being single, especially among women, is considered strange and unacceptable (Adekunle, 2007, pp. 103–104, Burnet, 2012, p. 134). However, women who have been raped are considered spiritually polluted, and they do not have dignity in their families; the children that are born as a consequence of rape are not accepted in their communities. In addition, some of the Tutsi single mothers faced rejection by surviving family members who denounced them as collaborators of the perpetrators of the genocide. The children who resulted from these rapes are stigmatized: they remained as living reminders of their mothers' shame. Thus, they engage in antisocial behaviors, and some have committed suicide in Finland.

### **1.3. Sexual abuse during the genocide and its aftermath**

During the 1994 conflict in Rwanda, rape occurred on a massive scale to annihilate the ethnic Tutsi; an estimated between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped (Amnesty International, 2004; Des Forges, 1999, p. 215; Haffajee, 2006, p. 201). According to the United Nations Special Reporters of the Commission on Human Rights in Rwanda, women and girls were systematically subjected to rape; some were killed or seriously injured by having arrows, spears or other objects pushed into their vaginas, or by being shot in the genitals. In addition, many Tutsi women were given as rewards to Hutu men who had excelled at killing Tutsi, and many were forced to submit to sex in exchange for temporary security, particularly at roadblocks. Many of them were subjected to the worst public humiliation, mutilated, and raped several times, often in public, in the Bureau Communal premises or in other public places, and often by more than one assailant (Degni-Segui, 1996; Hinga, Kubai, Mwaura, & Ayanga, 2008, pp. 2–4).

According to Rwandan tradition, virginity is a fundamental characteristic of a desired bride. Mukamana and Brysiewicz (2008, pp. 381–382) who interviewed seven rape victims in postgenocide Rwanda, wrote: "The Rwandan girls perceived their virginity as an important part of them that allowed them to be classified as girls and so it became a form of identity. By losing their virginity through rape, girls were confronted with the problem of belonging to neither the in-group of women nor the in-group of girls". The loss of identity experienced by some of the participants had affected their suitability for marriage as well as their social interactions. Discussing the stigmatization of women who were raped during the Rwandan genocide, Mukangendo (2007, p. 42) described their situation as being considered outcasts by their own community, and sometimes accused of collaborating with the perpetrators of the genocide. It is known that some Tutsi women who survived the genocide had been raped or forced into so-called marriages with Hutu militiamen. Although brides today may rarely be virgins, women who were raped during the genocide had to maintain their rape secret in order to get married. Some women who were able to keep their rape secret still had to cope with the psychological consequences of their experiences and, in some cases, rumors about their rapes circulating in the community. In addition, Tutsi wives of imprisoned Hutu men usually found themselves marginalized from every traditional support mechanism, including their husband's

ethnic group, their own ethnic group, and the general community. They were considered as collaborators with extremist Hutu killers. Some of these Tutsi wives of prisoners knew or at least suspected that their husbands had participated in, or even organized, massacres, but they faced difficult decisions about whether to reveal what they knew about their husbands' actions in order to promote justice for genocide victims and survivors, or to remain silent in order to preserve the sanctity of their marriages and what little kin support that remained (Burnet, 2012, pp. 128–134). Tutsi wives of prisoners were usually excluded from genocide survivor organizations, because the members did not perceive Tutsi wives of Hutu men as true survivors.

Nowrojee (2005) notices that throughout the Rwandan genocide, widespread sexual violence, directed predominantly against Tutsi women or Hutu women who looked like Tutsi, occurred in every prefecture. Women were held individually and in groups as sexual slaves. They were not just raped behind closed doors; they were raped in the streets, at checkpoints, in cultivated plots, in or near governmental offices, hospitals, churches, and other public buildings. Their dead bodies were often left naked and sprawling in nearby pools of blood and semen, in public view (Nowrojee, 2005, pp. 2–4). In many cases, the families of the women were killed in front of their eyes, while they were spared only in order to suffer even more. In addition, many women who suffered sexual violence and trauma during the genocide and its aftermath now face numerous challenges as the heads of poor households. Female-headed (often widows or wives of prisoners) and child-headed households are common, making up the most vulnerable of family structures (Burnet, 2012, pp. 128–134; Hinga et al., 2008, pp. 51–60).

However, the Rwandan armed force was also responsible for sexual and other violence during its military advance in the Democratic Republic Congo (DRC) after the genocide, in revenge against the Hutu ethnic population (Amnesty International, 2004; Prunier, 2009, pp. 116–125; Turshen, 2001, p. 8; UN Report on Rwandan army (RPA) genocide in DR Congo: article 512). The intensity of the sexual violence that the refugees experienced in DRC were unspeakable and incomprehensible (United Nations, 2001, p. 9). Thus, it has been extremely difficult for survivors to overcome the horrific genocide and its consequences.

#### **1.4. Trauma among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland**

Trauma may be defined as the scar that a tragic event leaves on an individual victim or on a witness, sometimes even on a perpetrator. Trauma is also the collective imprint on a group of a historical experience that may have occurred decades, generations, or even centuries ago (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, pp. xi–277). The definition used here is that trauma is the result of exposure to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, such as war, genocide, rape or abuse. It is a normal response by normal people to an abnormal situation. In another words, trauma is a catastrophic event beyond the range of normal human experience. Furthermore, trauma indicates that an event is a shock, it causes people to experience powerlessness and it challenges their psychological well-being, creating long-lasting problems (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, pp. 16–20).

Fassin and Rechtman (2009, p. 20) suggest that trauma is not simply the consequences of unbearable experiences, but also in itself a testimony to what has happened to the human being in question. According to them, trauma is both the product of an experience of inhumanity and the proof of the humanity of those who have endured it. Individuals may re-experience the trauma in dreams, flashbacks, intrusive memories, and anxiety in situations that remind them of the event. Epidemiological studies show that traumatized people, in comparison with others, tend to report lower self-esteem, greater sense of vulnerability, less interpersonal trust, more worry, poorer health, and lower levels of psychological well-being, even many years after the events had occurred (Gluhoski & Wortman, 1996, pp. 417–429); Norris & Kaniasty, 1991, pp. 239–261). In Kinyarwanda language, the word trauma is *ihahamuka* or *ibikomere byo mu mutima*, which refers to a variety of spiritual manifestations originating from the violence of genocide and its aftermath. One characteristic of being traumatized is that the subject has experienced an extremely threatening situation that goes beyond what a normal person will come to terms with. Many Rwandan people who reside

in Finland experienced the violence of the 1994 genocide and its aftermath. In DRC, many Hutu refugees were forced to turn back to Rwanda, and then again displaced by force in 1996 by the current RPA. Those refugees have experienced severe emotional and physical trauma due to witnessing relatives' death, suffering from hunger, and from diseases.

### **1.5. The international criminal tribunal for Rwanda**

After the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the United Nations' Security Council established an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) at Arusha, Tanzania, to prosecute individuals responsible for the genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law that were committed from 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1994 (Des Forges, 1999, p. 123; Huijboom & Grünfeld, 2007, p. 19; Moghalu, 2005, pp. 153–156). In creating the ICTR, the Security Council affirmed its conviction that the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda would promote a number of goals. The Security Council identified these as: (1) bringing to justice those responsible for genocide in Rwanda; (2) contributing to the process of national reconciliation; (3) restoring and maintaining peace in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region of Africa generally; and (4) preventing future violations and effectively redressing those violations that have been committed.

In order for the ICTR to fulfill its mandate, the Security Council exhorted that it should receive the assistance of all states. An article of the statute requires states to cooperate with the ICTR in its investigations and prosecutions if a request for assistance is issued. Suspects indicted by the ICTR have been arrested in many African states and European countries and transferred to the ICTR, demonstrating the respect and support foreign national governments exhibit toward the ICTR (Huijboom & Grünfeld, 2007, p. 19; Totten & Bartrop, 2009, p. 474).

Article 2 of the ICTR statute deals with genocide, as one or more of a number of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. This article is similar to article 2 and 3 of the 1948 genocide convention. Article 3 defines genocide as a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population on national, political, ethnic, racial, or religious grounds. The ICTR has been able to deliberate in an extensive way on the exact meaning of article 3. This article declares that the following acts shall be punishable: (a) genocide; (b) conspiracy to commit genocide; (c) direct and public incitement to commit genocide; (d) attempt to commit genocide; and (e) complicity in genocide.

However, the ICTR and the Rwandan traditional justice *Gacaca* were unable to deal with RPF crimes and revenge killings by Tutsi civilians (Kapteijns & Richters, 2010, p. 180; Moghalu, 2005, p. 3). Hutu refugees who fled to DRC (Zaire) in 1994 were facing a difficult situation in 1996, when the RPA launched an invasion to bring them back to Rwanda. Numerous serious attacks on the physical and psychological integrity of members of the Hutus were committed; many Hutu refugees were shot, raped, burnt, or beaten (Cook, 2006, pp. 225–230; United Nations, 2001, p. 9). Therefore, this issue brings severe divisions between the Hutu and Tutsi Diaspora in Finland, because there is a deep longing among the Hutu population for acknowledgment of their suffering during the violence. Nevertheless, genocide trials have been held in the city of Porvoo in Finland.

### **1.6. Aim of the present study**

The presents study is explorative, and aims at investigating the life situation of the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland. An attempt was made to reach a somewhat representative sample of Rwandans in Finland, and interview them about the following topics: the emotional impact of the genocide, experiences of sexual abuse (rape) during the genocide; whether psychological aid or counseling was received in Finland and to what extent; and, the possibility of peace and reconciliation among Rwandans in Finland.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sample

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through interviews of 40 respondents (20 men and 20 women) belonging to the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland of both Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups, in different locations of Finland: Helsinki, Espoo, Turku, Vaasa, Kotka, Lappeenranta, Lohja, Oulu, Porvoo, Kokkola, Savonlinna, Salo, Tuusula, and Vantaa. As far the sampling procedure is concerned, participants were selected according to the following criteria: the gender distribution should be equal, the respondents should be above 20 years of age, and they should be representatively distributed among the Rwandan communities in Finland. The respondents had been living in Finland more than 4 years and had resident permits. Some were having families, but there were also single mothers, single fathers, and individuals without family. The respondents came from Rwanda via different parts of Africa: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia; there were also some who came directly from Rwanda. The respondents came to Finland when they were 14 years old and more. There was an imbalance of age between participating men and women: The women were older (mean age 47.6, SD 14.9 years) than the men (mean age 37.6, SD 16.4 years). This age difference represents a factual age difference among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland; many men died during the genocide, more women survived.

### 2.2. Instrument

The questions were organized into a structured questionnaire (Huysamen, 1994, p. 128). The interviews consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, providing both quantitative and qualitative data. Themes covered were the impact of genocide and its aftermath, experiences of sexual abuse (rape) during the genocide, the emotional impact of the genocide, whether psychological aid or counseling was received in Finland and to what extent, expectations from the Finnish authorities, and the possibility of peace and reconciliation among Rwandans in Finland. The response range of interval level quantitative items ranged from 0 (not all) to 4 (extremely). Exact wordings of reported items are presented in the tables. The data were collected during 6 months during the period 1 August 2015–30 January 2016.

### 2.3. Procedure

All participants were interviewed individually in *Kinyarwanda* to ensure accurate understanding of the questions. In addition, all participants were told that if they felt uncomfortable at any point of the assessment they could stop without having to provide any explanation (Huysamen, 1994, p. 181; Mouton & Marais, 1996, p. 78). Each interview took between one and half to two hours. Furthermore, only 40 Rwandans were interviewed, because many people do not want to talk about their upsetting experiences and the Rwandans who stay in Finland are a relatively small community. They argue that interviews bring back bad memories and make them cry in such manner that they become disturbed.

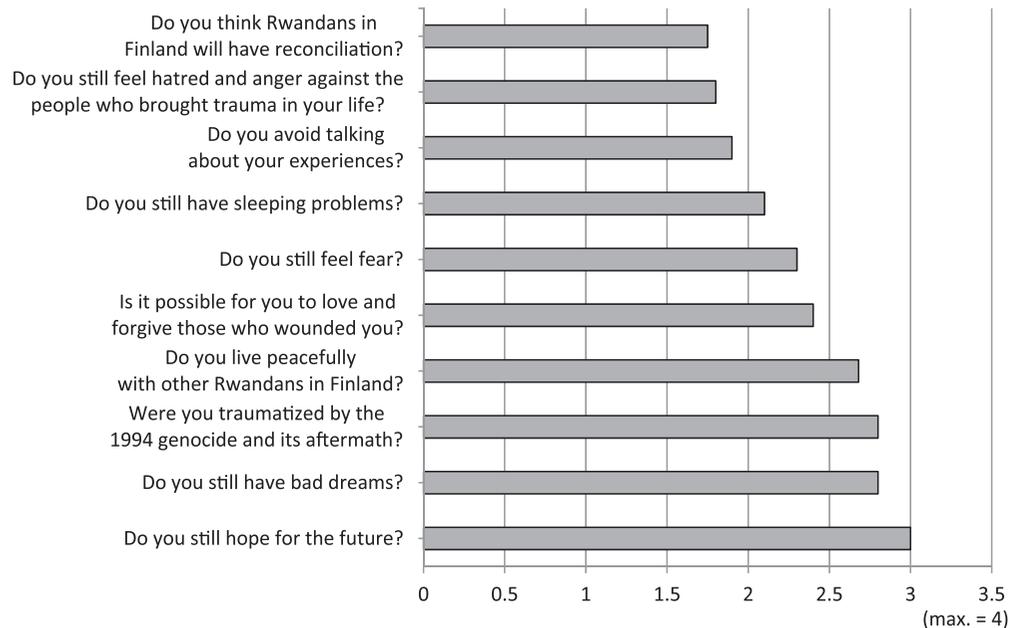
### 2.4. Data analysis

Statistical differences between for instance the genders were not calculated due to the small sample size. Quantitative data are therefore presented in the form of frequencies. Qualitative data were thematically grouped together (e.g. responses concerning traumatic experiences; help from Finnish authorities; counseling and coping strategies; hope and reconciliation; forgiveness).

### 2.5. Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the ethical board of Åbo Akademi University, and conducted with the consent of Academy of Finland guidelines on research ethics (2014). The respondents were informed of the purpose and procedure of the study and understood that their participation was voluntary and that no consequences would follow if they refused to participate in it.

**Figure 1. Means of traumatic experiences, emotions, and peace/reconciliation among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland (N = 40).**



### 3. Results

First, the quantitative results of the study will be presented, then the qualitative ones.

#### 3.1. Traumatic experiences, emotions and reconciliation

Statistical differences between the genders were not calculated due to the small sample size. A number of closed-ended questions concerned directly the traumatic experiences the respondents had had during the 1994 genocide and its aftermath. The mean responses, on a scale ranging from 0 to 4, are presented in Figure 1. The items are ordered according to response size.

As presented in Figure 1, the respondents more often than not reported themselves to have been traumatized by the genocide: in fact, 72.5% of them reported having been traumatized, 37.5% extremely traumatized. Sleeping problems were also common: 50% reported having sleeping problems often, 22.5% very often. Fifty percent reported still having bad dreams, 20% very often. Less than half of them believed that Rwandans in Finland will experience reconciliation.

Despite these stark figures of traumatization, the majority of the respondents still felt hope for the future.

#### 3.2. Victimization from rape and its concomitants

Among the 20 interviewed female Rwandans living in Finland, six of them (30%) had been raped during the genocide. Two of them (10%) had been contaminated with HIV/AIDS as a result of rape, and three (15%) had become pregnant. One of the males (5%) had also been raped and contaminated with HIV/AIDS. Two of the responding females (10%) had been born as a result of rape.

#### 3.3. Counseling and coping strategies among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland

Some of the quantitative data concerned the extent to which respondents had received psychological counseling or any other type of aid in Finland, and how much they had benefited from it. It is obvious from the results that the amount of counseling received was very little, although not non-existent. Accordingly, not many felt that they had benefited from it. Even less was the experience of help from trauma survivors' group. The biggest help they reported was from prayer and their faith. The second most important source of support was from family and friends. The results are presented in detail in Table 1.

**Table 1. Received counseling and other coping strategies used by the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland (N = 40)**

<b>“To what extent do you use the following means to help you cope with your trauma?”</b>	<b>Mean*</b>	<b>SD</b>
Do you use prayers and faith?	2.63	1.5
Do you receive any support from friends?	1.68	1.4
Do you receive any support from family?	1.68	1.4
Do you use alcohol?	1.38	1.2
Do you receive support from your pastor/priest?	1.35	1.4
Do you use psychopharmacological medicine?	1.03	1.6
Do Finnish authorities provide psychological counseling?	0.98	1.5
Have you received social support from Finnish authorities?	0.98	1.3
Do you use any traditional means to cope with your trauma?	0.88	1.2
Have you benefited from the help of Finnish therapists?	0.80	1.3
Was the therapy that you received helpful?	0.73	1.2
Have you received any support from political leaders?	0.30	0.7
Have you received any support from spiritual healers?	0.20	0.5
Have you benefited from any trauma survivors’ group in Finland?	0.13	0.4
Did you join any trauma survivors’ group in Finland?	0.05	0.2

\*Maximum value = 4.

In the following, results from the qualitative part of the study will be presented.

### **3.4. Counseling and other support received**

The respondents reported that the consequences and aftermath of the Rwandan genocide led to severe personal and social trauma, due to the deaths, degradation, and destruction of families. The study showed that 23 out of 40 respondents lost one or more family members during the genocide, and family members were imprisoned. Many young people lost their parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors, while some married women and men became widows and lost their property. The violence of the 1994 genocide and its aftermath left most Rwandans in Diaspora in Finland profoundly traumatized, far beyond the capacity of support organizations to cope with.

Some have flashback memories which often lead to crying. For this reason, they are still on medication to help them sleep. Remembrance day (7th of April each year) is especially difficult for some Rwandans, since it is a day when they relive the whole experience again, and for some, meeting with a person who look like one of their deceased family member also brings memories.

In many cases, the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland is not happy about genocide memorial sites, because of the practice of putting bones of their relatives and beloved ones on the table. Many have buried their deceased and would like to move on. However, the process of exhuming bones and identifying them, which occurs in memorial sites, continues. For many Rwandans in Finland, this is a constant and very traumatic reminder.

Psychiatry as a science or a branch of Western medicine is relatively new in Africa. Therefore, Rwandans in Finland believe that Western psychiatrists do not understand their trauma. According to cultural anthropology, trauma treatment requires understanding of the culture in question (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, p. 277). Bolton and Tang (2004) highlight as an example the meaning of “madness” in African traditional beliefs; madness can be caused by offended ancestors, and offended dead people may also cause spirits of madness. Other researchers affirm that these forms of madness tend to cause acute illnesses that respond well to indigenous healing methods (Friedman, Keane, & Resick, 2007, pp. 427–429). As a result, Africans find it difficult to believe that Western

psychiatry could help them to cope with their trauma, since psychiatrists do not know much about their culture.

Few Rwandans have been able to receive counseling by Finnish psychologists. Some were helped to get back hope and to feel that they are human beings with dignity. However, a number of them did not benefit from the counseling they received. They report that Finnish psychologists do not understand the genocide and their personal experiences. Consequently, some Rwandans prefer to rely on traditional means, church going, reading of the Bible, and testimonies to cope with their traumatic experiences. Others listen to Rwandan songs and dances; they watch their own traditional Rwandan wedding on video, they read books about other peoples' experiences or watch them on YouTube, which helps them to feel that they are not alone in their mourning. In addition, some have joined sport clubs and try to forget what happened to them through physical activity. In regard to talking about their experiences to others, some Rwandans in Finland do not like it because it brings back bad memories.

They also suggested that it might be beneficial if the Finnish authorities could organize activities such as conferences, games, seminars, sports, and summer camps, so that Rwandans in Finland can discuss their problems, as part of the reconciliation and healing process.

### **3.5. Love and forgiveness**

Those who are believing Christians, basing themselves on the teaching of the Bible in which God tells them to love their enemies and forgive them, try to forgive. Some have already done so; others say that they may be able to forgive, because there are no other alternatives. They cannot bring back their own people back to life. However, for some Rwandans in Finland, love and forgiveness toward people who brought trauma into their lives is difficult. They would avoid all contacts with those they call 'killers', in order to avoid bad memories.

### **3.6. Hope and reconciliation**

With respect to hope for the future, many Rwandans in Finland feel hopeful because they are staying in a peaceful country and enjoy total security around them; however, some who were infected with sexual diseases are afraid because they do not know what the future holds for them. They feel that their days are numbered.

The present study suggests that many Rwandans in Finland have little hope that they will live in peace with their fellow countrymen, because they do not feel at ease with or even like individuals from the other ethnic group. Furthermore, most Rwandans are not happy about their history. They wonder why there was an ethnic cleansing, why Hutus killed Tutsis in the genocide, and why Tutsis killed Hutus in DRC. Another reason for separation and suspicion is that they think that some might be spying for the Rwandan Government. Others do not want to ask for forgiveness. They argue that if Rwandans in Rwanda will live in peace with each other, Rwandans in Finland will come to live in peace as well.

The study shows that reconciliation among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland is still difficult to be achieved due to what happened in the 1994 genocide against Tutsi and its aftermath. Some Hutus blame the political situation in Rwanda, which turned to suggest that only the Tutsis were wounded, and this does not lead to true reconciliation. They mentioned that in Rwanda, memorial monuments of genocide are erected in which not all of the population are able to recognize themselves, and those Hutus who resisted the genocide seem to be forgotten or at least not taken into consideration. Some Rwandans in Finland argue that they do not have any hope, because there are no peaceful leaders in their home country who can teach the Rwandan population forgiveness and reconciliation. Their experience is that in Rwanda, it is politically correct to claim that only one ethnic group is responsible for the genocide, and therefore everyone from that background must apologize. This is simply wrong, according to them. Some Rwandans in Finland argue that people who committed the

crimes of genocide should take the responsible for what they did, and the people who were wronged should stop considering everyone else as their enemy.

Regarding the issue of how reconciliation among Rwandans in Finland may be successful, many respondents suggested that it can be achieved only through forgiveness, helping each other in both good and bad situations, and discussing what they have in common rather than talking about what separates them. They also suggest that people should speak the truth about the genocide and those who were victimized from it, without omitting anything. The whole truth needs to be known and accepted, otherwise reconciliation cannot be achieved. Rwandans in Finland should not promote ethnicity, instead they should learn from Finns about how to live peacefully with each other even when one does not agree on everything. Some respondents suggested that religion might aid in reconciliation; Rwandans should believe in that God is almighty, and if they pray unto him he will help them. Furthermore, respondents argued that reconciliation implies numerous aspects, such as healing of memories, and sharing the pain of the other. Reconciliation should not only be victim-centered, also perpetrators should be taken into account. All in all, ethnic stereotyping was seen as the biggest hindrance to peace and reconciliation among the Rwandan Diaspora in Finland.

#### 4. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to gain understanding about how Rwandans living in Finland were affected by the 1994 genocide and its aftermath, and the degree of traumatization and suffering the feel during their displacement. Another aim was to investigate to what extent they have received counseling in Finland, and what other means they use for coping with their trauma. Furthermore, the respondents were asked about how reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis living in Finland may be achieved, if at all, and their hopes for the future.

The research findings show that many Rwandans in Finland lost one or more family member, friends, neighbors, and properties during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and in its aftermath. In the sample, 35% reported being traumatized, and an additional 37.5% extremely traumatized. 27.5% reported having sleeping problems often and an additional 22.5% reported having sleeping problems very often. Twenty-five percent reported having bad dreams sometimes, 30% often, and 20% very often. Thirty percent of women and 5% of men reported having been raped. Of these, 15% of the women became pregnant due to the rape, and 10% were contaminated with HIV/AIDS. Ten percent of the respondents were born as a result of rape. Although 50% reported living peacefully with other Rwandans, 35% considered reconciliation difficult or extremely difficult. The findings of this research show that the violence of the 1994 genocide and its aftermath left many Rwandans in Diaspora in Finland profoundly traumatized.

There are some Rwandan women in Finland who were sexually abused in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi; others were sexually abused in refugee camps in the DRC, and some were infected with HIV/AIDS. Some children were born as the result of rape. Therefore, among Rwandans in Finland, there is still anger and hatred against those who brought this trauma upon them. They cannot understand how a person could kill his neighbors, classmates, teachers, co-workers, and friends. Hutus again are angry because they are not able to honor and remember their own lost beloved ones publically, and their suffering is not recognized.

According to this study, many of members of Rwandan Diaspora in Finland want to participate in peace building and reconciliation among themselves. It is thus clear that, indeed, some Rwandans were given the opportunity to talk to Finnish psychologists, and they benefited from the therapy that they were given, but they wish that Finnish authorities would arrange camps and conferences on trauma and that Rwandans in Finland may meet often in order to discuss their traumatic experiences.

Many Rwandans in Finland argue that Finnish authorities should talk to asylum seekers in order to know about their experiences. Many Rwandans feel that they need to be listened to. The authorities

should provide psychologists who are able to understand the traumatized asylum seekers' culture. There is also a need to install good reconciliation mechanisms, but, at the same time, bring justice to those who participated in the killings. The Finnish social system and how Finns treat each other are good learning examples for Rwandans in Finland. There could be more efforts from the Finnish authorities to reconcile Rwandans who live in their country. Finnish authorities should fight against racism and show acceptance and empathy toward immigrants, because people who are traumatized feel even worse if they face racism. Finnish authorities should give more time for integration to immigrants to familiarize with the system, due to what some refugees have gone through. According to the interviewed Rwandans, three years of integration is a short period for people who have been severely traumatized.

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The authors declare no competing interest.

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