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Memory and violence: Displaced Zimbabwean rural communities reliving the memories of the March 2008 political violence.

Mvundura, Wellington

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Memory and Violence: Displaced Zimbabwean Rural Communities Reliving the Memories of the March 2008 Political Violence.

My grandchild, ever since I lost my son to this ugly animal, violence, my mind has been a whirlwind, total confusion. In fact I am like a moving dead person trapped in between life and death. I am as much afraid to get to the past as I am to get to tomorrow.(Interview, Granny Rudo)



WELLINGTON MVUNDURA

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In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN FORCED MIGRATION

Supervised by Prof Ingrid Palmary

March 2014

DECLARATION

I, **Wellington Mvundura**, am submitting this research report to fulfill the requirements for the Masters degree in Forced Migration at the African Centre for Migration and Society of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signature……Date…….

Wellington Mvundura

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DEDICATION *I dedicate this research report to all the rural Zimbabweans who were victims of the 2008 politically-motivated violence.*

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ACRONYMS

GPA	Global Political Agreement
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
ONHRI	Organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZLHR	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

ABSTRACT

This thesis is premised on the argument that a distinct kind of narrative ('truth') about political violence, a narrative of the first-person experience, a narrative that is valued for its power to counter totalising historical narratives, is thought to reside in the subjective experience of each individual. Be that as it may, this study aimed to answer the question: What meanings do rural Zimbabweans who were internally displaced by the March 2008 state-sponsored political violence attach to this violence? In particular, the study investigated these meanings in a context where the victims remain(ed) in close proximity to the perpetrators during and after the violence. It also examined these meanings in an alleged silence by the state and local communities, and how these meanings have shaped the victims' present socio-political identities. In order to answer the question, in-depth narrative interviews were conducted with purposively selected respondents. The study assumed a qualitative exploratory design which was underpinned by the phenomenological and constructionist theoretical approaches.

It was concluded that the victims' interpretation of the state-sponsored political violence is negotiated and mediated in the course of interaction. The personal narrative of the memory attains some latent political and redemptive value when it is interpreted in a social context. The meanings of the violence particularly assume a complex moral and ethical plane in a scenario where the perpetrator remains a permanent feature in the victim's physical and social space, without any recourse. The complexity is imminent as the victim has to contend with the socio-psychological effects of the daily direct interface with their unpunished aggressor especially due to the communal nature of rural life.

It was also concluded that the 2008 state-sponsored violence was increasingly interpreted as unfinished business by the victims. More so, it was also understood to be synonymous and complicit with silence at the communal and national level. Thus, the silence was synonymous with adaptation to power relations, cultural censorship, and liminality. In terms of identity, the victims suffer an identity crisis. They have developed personalities that have arguably, failed to internalise a sense of self as trusting and trustworthy. Last, the identification of the violence as unfinished business has also led to the reaffirmation of the victims' spiritual identities as they have invoked bewitchment to avenge the death of their loved ones and in the process try to reconnect with them spiritually by invoking their spirits to seek revenge.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is premised on the argument that a particular kind of truth about the experiences of political violence, a truth that is distinct from the truths found in other forms of historical data, is thought to reside in the subjective experience of each individual. Pursuant to this, this study set out to explore the meanings that the internally-displaced, Zimbabwean rural victims of the March 2008 state-sponsored political violence construct around the violence. More specifically, the study aimed to investigate these meanings in a context where the victims remain(ed) in close proximity to the perpetrators during and after the violence. It also examined the dynamics of these meanings in an alleged 'conspiracy of silence' by the state and local communities, and how these meanings have shaped the victims' present socio-political lives (identities). To achieve these aims and objectives, the research employed a qualitative exploratory methodology which was underpinned by the phenomenological and constructionist theoretical approaches.

Noteworthy at this initial stage is that this thesis is based on a rural case study of the researcher's own communal lands (Mutambara) in the Chimanimani District of Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe. The latter province was one of the hotbeds of the 2008 election violence since the leaders of the main opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the breakaway MDC, originate from this province. It was also therefore generally believed that the greater proportion of the opposition MDC support inevitably came from this province. Thus, the Mutambara communal space, my own rural home, was no exception. Interestingly, the researcher was therefore a community member of the rural space that he was studying, and more significantly he was a witness to, and therefore somehow became an interested party in the subject matter of his study. Notably, the researcher has also shared a strong sense of community, for almost three decades, with the victims who also were his respondents in the narrative interviews that he conducted. Bearing all this in mind, this research report is thus a reflection of my personal understanding of the issues as expounded by the Mutambara victims. I have, therefore, to some extent, created meaning out of the villagers' narratives also through my own understanding of the 2008 political violence. Nevertheless, I tried as much as possible to maintain some reflective

distance by remaining faithful to the victims' own representations of their narratives and not to over-indulge myself as a fellow communal member/witness by constantly trying to also affirm my identity as a 'neutral' Masters research student. However, this presented this researcher with moral and ethical dilemmas as the methodology section will reveal.

1.2 Background

This study occurs in a socio-political trajectory in which Zimbabwean politics has been steeped in violence since before political independence from Britain in 1980. Noteworthy is that this violence became mainly synonymous with the emergence, in 1999, of strong opposition politics and countermovement from the MDC; a state-induced downturn in Zimbabwe's economic fortunes; and an attendant waning of the ruling party's [Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF)] nationalist ideology. Save for the political challenge posed by the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), from the early until the mid-80s, ZANU PF had until 1999, not faced any significant challenge to its hegemonic political supremacy and economic capabilities. Thus, the official birth of the opposition MDC in 1999 gave ZANU PF a rude awakening and subsequently, the election periods of 2000, 2002, 2005 and most recently 2008 have seen ZANU PF emerge as a party that has thrived on silencing political dissent through state-sponsored violence (Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004: xi). In a similar mould, Staunton (2009) also highlights that in every election season, especially after 2000, opposition sympathizers suffered state-sponsored intimidation or retaliation.

However, the year 2008 was a landmark period which saw the heightening of the polarization of the political landscape and the attendant deep political conflict and wide-spread, state-sponsored political violence (Raftopoulos, 2013). Owing to the emergence of the MDC as an alternative political party that could arguably bring political and economic salvation to Zimbabweans and the 'legitimating' insistence by ZANU PF on its liberation credentials, Zimbabwean citizens became deeply divided into polarized political camps where one set of partisans (ZANU PF supporters) associated with state power became responsible for most state abuses against opposition support (Amnesty International, 2008). Nevertheless, there were also occasional violent clashes of supporters from the three political parties. This violence reached its peak in the period between the announcement of the results of the first

round of the 29 March 2008 harmonised (presidential, parliamentary and senatorial) elections and the campaign period of the presidential re-run of 29 June 2008.

More so, events that had been occurring on the economic front since 2000 further compounded and fuelled a prelude to a politically violent 2008. According to Masunungure (2009a) in the run-up to the March 2008 harmonised elections, the Zimbabwean economy had reached its doldrums of all time. The ordinary people's material circumstances were in dire straits. There was a high unemployment rate of 80% (Chitiyo et al, 2008), a hyper-inflationary environment, shortage of basic commodities, the collapse of industry, shut down of the stock market and the closure or underperformance of the public service institutions (especially schools and hospitals). Thus, Zimbabwe's economic downturn contributed to a sense of unease and frustration among the population, created a tense atmosphere and laid a time-bomb for the eruption of violence in 2008. As Bond and Manyanya (2003) state, ZANU PF's nationalist discourse of the liberation struggle and national sovereignty that had been overplayed in the past two and half decades had become 'tired' and irrelevant as civil society needed an urgent solution to bread and butter issues. For the citizens, practical material needs for daily living took precedence over the political rhetoric and slogans of the ruling party which was increasingly losing popular support. Consequently, in a desperate and unpopular bid to remain politically relevant, ZANU PF appropriated state-sponsored violence in order to retain power (Amnesty International, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that violence reached unprecedented levels as ZANU PF sought electoral victory by 'any means necessary' in the 2008 harmonised elections and the June presidential election re-run. This scenario manifests how political logic cannot always defy economic logic.

Furthermore, as Human Rights Watch (2008a) notes, 29 March 2008 was a decisive moment in Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans went to the polls and changed history. For the first time since independence in 1980, the ruling party, ZANU PF, lost its majority in parliament and Robert Mugabe lost the presidential vote to Morgan Tsvangirai, the president of the main MDC opposition party. Nevertheless, since none of the presidential candidates had won by the mandated majority 51%, a presidential election re-run was scheduled for 27 June 2008. Subsequently, another accentuated episode of state-driven violence and reprisal attacks on the civilian population ensued in the run-up to the presidential re-run (Eppel, 2013). This is the period that is of particular interest in this study. It is alleged that during this period, ZANU

PF supporters, war veterans, youth militia and uniformed forces unleashed terror and violence especially in rural communities where the civilians, for the first time in history, were believed to have sold out by 'wrongly voting' for the opposition (Amnesty International, 2008).

The terror and violence which was mainly concentrated in rural communities (which had historically been regarded as ZANU PF vote strongholds) took the form of violent assaults, death threats, destruction of property, torture, torching of homes, abductions and disappearances (Human Rights Watch, 2008b). Another aspect which is of central interest in this study is that this terror and violence led to about 36 000 displacements in which about 3000 families were 'uprooted' from their homes. More importantly, the violence was systematically targeted towards MDC supporters. Thus, most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) were MDC supporters in rural communities. It is the meanings that these displaced individuals attach to the memories of this violence that this study aims to investigate. Of essence as well is how these memories shape the current socio-political lives of the displaced victims, especially in a scenario where perpetrator and victim continually occupy the same physical and socio-political space without any meaningful transitional justice process in place.

An associated development which makes these displacements fundamentally significant and unique was the invoking of the liberation-war like ***bases*** or camps. Historically, the ***base*** (camp situated in the bush) was used by the liberation fighters to mobilize and educate the rural masses on Zimbabwe's liberation war in the period between the mid-60s and late 70s (Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004). Interestingly, during the run-up to the presidential run-off, the base was reinvented and deployed in the rural communities to assault and intimidate rural 'defectors' who had 'wrongly' voted for the MDC. To this end, Human Rights Watch (2008b) reports that ZANU PF youth militia, under the leadership of military personnel, were setting up militia bases or torture camps to systematically target, beat and torture rural people suspected of having voted for the MDC. This was intended to punish them and to pressure them into voting for Mugabe in the presidential run-off. There were two such camps in my study area. Essentially, the displacement of these rural Zimbabweans is special as it was of restricted geographical space as it increasingly remained a local community-to-community or a home-to-hiding places displacement. Some strict surveillance of villagers by the youth militia and limited financial resources restricted movement beyond the affected villages (i.e.

to towns or other safer and distant rural areas). Thus, during this period and thereafter, victims and perpetrators continued to live in close proximity. This research builds on this interesting state of affairs and explores the victim's memories of the violence within such a rural set-up.

The March 29 post-election violence rendered the presidential run-off election a tragic farce and for the first time, Southern Africa Development Community heads of states declined to endorse Mugabe as the legitimate president of Zimbabwe (Eppel, 2013). This fed directly into the creation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in which power sharing between the three main political parties was envisaged as the only political way forward. For Eppel (2013) the signing of this GPA in September 2008 gave some impetus to the formation of an Organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI). The establishment of the latter in April 2009 was a milestone development that potentially opened up possibilities for the first national discussion on reconciliation, reparation and national healing (transitional justice). Subsequently, victims of political violence were quite optimistic that their needs and suffering would be considered. In principle, the ONHRI is chaired by representatives of the three main political parties of Zimbabwe, namely ZANU PF and the two MDC formations and it seeks to ensure restoration of dignity to all Zimbabweans, regardless of age, communities, organisations and the country as a whole (ONHRI, 2010). Recent studies (Mbire, 2011; Bratton, 2011) have shown that: many Zimbabweans are unaware of the existence of the ONHRI or are ill-informed of the ONHRI mandate; the ONHRI mechanism lacks a legal and institutional framework; it is politicized; and that its relevancy will end with the end of the GPA after the 2013 elections (Mbire, 2011). Thus, this research implicitly investigates the victims' interpretations of the practicality of this transitional justice by exploring the victim's memories of this violent period.

In conclusion, this researcher alerts the reader that this may not necessarily be an exhaustive socio-political and economic portrait of some background to this study. Nonetheless, it is a very critical departure point and foundation of this research thesis as it significantly helps the researcher to carve out his own contribution to theory and grounded arguments on the subjectivities constructed by the rural victims around the 2008 state-driven political violence from the inside/own perspective of the internally displaced rural victim.

1.3 Rationale

There is a gap in the current scholarly work that aims to capture the subjectivities that the internally displaced Zimbabwean victims of the 2008 election violence construct around the violence. For instance, inasmuch as the scholarly works of renowned authorities like Raftopolous and Eppel (2008), Human Rights Watch (2008a, 2008b), Bratton (2011), Eppel (2013), Raftopolous (2013) reflect extensively on the dynamics of Zimbabwe's 2008 episode of political violence, they mainly take a quantitative approach, and in the process make some limited or no reference to how the victims, as purposive and subjective actors, relive and interpret this political violence. Most literature on these victims is statistical and therefore falls short of providing a nuanced, intricate and 'thick' description from the victim's perspective. An interpretive insider's view is increasingly lacking. Thus, this study aims to partly address this gap by exploring the deep, rich, anecdotal meanings that these displaced rural victims attach to their memories of the March 2008 political violence in Zimbabwe.

More so, most studies on political violence referred to above focus on the urban population and space. Scant attention is directed towards victims who are located in the rural space. Yet interestingly, as the Zimbabwean 2008 case bears testimony, the rural population is and was relatively more vulnerable and susceptible to state-sponsored violence. The experience of the rural victim becomes particular and interesting as it is made complex by factors such as limited or no access to critical resources such as information and financial resources, limited geographical mobility to safer places and the culture of community.

Another striking phenomenon that necessitates this study is the particular spatial nature of the displaced people in that they have been and are still living in the same physical, social and political space with the perpetrators. Interestingly, this confinement of the victims with the perpetrators is a situation that was created and nurtured by the state's establishment of youth militia bases (Human Rights Watch, 2008a) that monitored and restricted mobility of the victims (suspected of having voted for the MDC) in the rural space where their re-run vote had to be supposedly given to Mugabe in the run-off at all costs. Inasmuch as other ordinary community members were affected by the violence, the target victims in this study, by further suffering an internal displacement that kept/still keeps them in close proximity with perpetrators, stand out as a special case. Therefore the meanings these 'special IDPs' construct around the memories of the violence and how these meanings shape their current identities stand out enough to warrant this study

Last, the intentional or unintentional exclusion of the Mutambara case points to a contextual gap with regard to the study of the unique features of the March 2008 political violence. This researcher originates from this rural community and witnessed the violence in all its uniqueness, hence the interest. While Sokwanele's (2008) extensive, statistical project of '***Mapping terror in Zimbabwe'*** acknowledges many hotspots of violence at that time, the Mutambara case and its unique internal displacement is absent. So this study is also motivated by the researcher's novel need and personal interest to capture the 'Mutambara narrative' with a view to contributing to the broader debates on memories and violence especially in the rural space.

1.4 Main Research Question

What meanings do rural Zimbabweans who were internally displaced by the March 2008 state-sponsored political violence attach to their memories of this violence?

1.4.1 Sub-Questions

To answer the main question, this study aims to answer the following sub-questions:

- How did/does close proximity between the displaced victims and the perpetrators shape the victims' memories of this violence?
- How do they interpret the memories of this violence in the context of an allegedly enforced silence by the state and local communities?
- In what ways have the victims' memories of the violence shaped their present socio-political lives (identities)?

1.5 Research Objectives

The research objectives are to:

- Explore how close proximity between the internally displaced rural victims and the perpetrators influences the meanings that the victims construct their experience with the political violence.
- Examine the meanings that the victims assign to the violence within an allegedly enforced silence by the state and local communities.
- Explore the influence of the constructed meanings on the current socio-political identities of the victims.

1.6 Scope of Study

Although the 2008 politically-motivated violence in Zimbabwe was experienced in both urban and rural spaces, this study focuses exclusively on the rural space of the Mutambara communal lands. The latter has four wards and this research was conducted in one of the wards, Ward 4. Ward 4 has a total of 10 villages where the fieldwork was actually confined. Most villagers in this ward are peasant farmers while a few are small retailers (sole traders), informal traders and small-scale commercial farmers. They, as is typical in most African rural societies, still believe in a strong sense of community. Zimbabwe's political economy has had a history and episodes of violence both in the pre and post-independence eras. This research focuses on the post-independence (after 1980) era in general, and in particular, the period in the run-up to the 27 June 2008 presidential election re-run. That is, the period between immediately after the announcement of the first round of the March 29 presidential election results (end April) and the 27 June presidential re-run. This period is special as it is reportedly a period during which state-sponsored political violence reached alarming levels relative to the other election periods of 2000, 2002 and 2005 (Amnesty International, 2008; Eppel, 2013). More so, this violence was mainly concentrated in the rural space, hence the choice of Mutambara communal land.

1.7 Theoretical Resources

This research is underpinned by both the phenomenological and constructionist frameworks. The former seeks to explore, describe and explain the meaning of an aspect of human experience ***as experienced*** by individuals (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Patton (1987) further posits that phenomenology focuses on how the individual lived experience is perceived, described, felt, judged, remembered, made sense of and talked about by respective individuals. Through this framework, subjective meanings of experiences of the political violence are comprehended and interpreted retrospectively as those who 'experienced' (the displaced victims) it reflect on the past. A narrative perspective of memory is taken where the memory of political violence is not fixed, determined and eternally standing still but is a reconstruction of the past in light of subsequent events (Freeman, 1993). Thus, the social constructionist perspective also complements the phenomenological approach. The interpretations of individual memories of the victims are also envisaged as being constructed and reconstructed within an existing socio-economic and political context. Much as these memories of the 2008 political violence seem individualistic, they are also a social

construction since their meaning is derived in the context of interaction within the Mutambara community.

1.8 Structure of the Study

Chapter 2 concerns itself with the research design and methodological issues. It explores the methodological dilemmas that I encountered in my fieldwork and how I reacted to these dilemmas. In this section, access to the study area and respondents; data collection through narrative interviews, purposive sampling and reflexivity are described, explained, assessed and justified. Noteworthy is that a chapter that reviews literature is deliberately omitted as the review of related literature is extensively done and spread throughout the three chapters that discuss the findings. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present and discuss the findings within the context of major debates, arguments and ideas in relevant literature. Relevant theories are also deployed in making sense of the findings. These chapters are separated only for analytical reasons as their themes and sub-themes are overarching and speak to each other. Chapter 6, the conclusive section, draws the conclusion on this research based on a reflection of the research question(s) and objectives vis-à-vis the research findings.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Access to Ward 4 Villages (Mutambara Communal Land)

From the outset it is significant to note that this researcher has been, and still is, part and a member of the study area. For the past 29 years this researcher has shared cordial communal ties with the villagers who reside in the ten villages in which he conducted this study. Thus, from a Durkheimian perspective, it could be argued that there is a strong sense of community between the researcher and his respondents and it is built upon some form of mechanical solidarity. According to Giddens and Sutton (2011) the latter is a strong sense of collective consciousness built around identifying with the same cultural norms and values, beliefs and lifestyles. Otherwise, these are communal ties built on sameness. This scenario had significant methodological implications for this researcher in terms of access.

The mechanical solidarity that defined the relationship between the researcher and the purposively selected respondents facilitated access. The respondents treated me as 'one of their own' and were therefore quite receptive and willing to give me a chance to share their experiences. Almost all the respondents were alleged MDC supporters and victims of political violence and more important to most of them was that I was one of their exemplary villagers due to my academic success rather than my affiliation to a particular political party. Nonetheless, owing to the sensitive nature of the study, I had to initially make impromptu and unofficial appointments at multifarious places like funerals, farmland, community gatherings, shopping centres, churches, beer parties and village commons (grazing land, water points) with the prospective interviewees. To guarantee confidentiality and safety of the respondents, I had to present the appointments as courtesy calls to their homesteads and most of them routinely and readily welcomed me. The fact that the prospective respondents were also friends, acquaintances, relatives and fellow church members even made access easier.

Nonetheless, there were a few complications. This was especially so in cases where, in my study area, the prospective respondents were immediate neighbours to someone believed to be from the rival ZANU-PF party or an alleged perpetrator. This raised ethical concerns of safety and confidentiality. I had to resolve this limitation to access by reaching a mutual

agreement with the respondents to meet in the evening or at other private places (other than their homes) like farms, grazing land, local hills which they considered safe and private.

It is also noteworthy that I never sought official access to respondents from local traditional leaders or local political structures since this had a very high risk of exposing the respondents to further harm and violence. This was the case because some of the leadership is alleged to have been perpetrators or facilitators of the political violence. As it was difficult for me to identify which side a traditional or political authority belonged to, it was ethically safer for me and the respondents not to seek the official approval of access from the local leadership structures.

2.2 The Qualitative Design

This study drew some invaluable theoretical inspiration from both the phenomenological and social constructionist paradigms. Both these paradigms acknowledge that meanings attached to everyday experiences are highly subjective, are social constructs and are mediated in the course of human interaction. Consequently, these two complementary paradigms proved quite influential in the situating of this study within the interpretive and qualitative research design. Taking a cue from Liamputong and Ezzy (2005) qualitative methods allowed me to present the experiences, and meanings attached to political violence from the subjective viewpoints of the victims. Qualitative techniques also allowed for an interpretive and contextualised approach, and a sustained focus on the complex creation and maintenance of meaning (Strauss, 1990). To this end, a qualitative design led to some nuanced, intricate and 'thick' description of the meanings attached to the March 2008 political violence, which quantitative methods could have increasingly failed to offer. More specifically, the narrative genre was appropriated for this study.

2.3 The Narrative Method

Story-telling or narratives were employed to elicit the meanings that the displaced villagers attach to their memories of the March 2008 political violence. This method partly draws its legitimacy for its use this study from the assertion by Uehara et al, (2001) that narratives have been used to collect people's experiences of violence and suffering. The essence of the narrative imperative is that people live 'storied' lives. To this effect, Connelly and Clandinin (1990:25) say, "Humans are story-telling organisms who individually and collectively lead

storied lives." Hence, in this study, through story-telling, the respondents managed to reflect on events and experiences of the political violence, make sense of them, construct meanings around them and present their comprehension to the researcher. Thus, storytelling was central to this thesis.

The study of personal meanings attached to organized political violence draws some meaning from, and inevitably compels one to situate it within a historical, biographical and social context (Hamber and Wilson, 2002). As a result, a methodological approach that could at least sit at the intersection of history, biography and society was appropriate. Thus, narratives fulfilled this methodological logic. To borrow from Andrews et al (2008) this method enabled this researcher to appropriate both experience-centred narratives (history and society) and event-centred narratives (biographies) of the survivors of the March 2008 political violence.

On one hand, following Patterson's (2008) analysis, event-centred narratives involved the spoken recounting of the past acts of the political violence as experienced by the displaced villagers. On the other, experience-centred narratives involved the villagers' telling of stories of their life histories that were general or imagined experiences about the violence. Thus, in the process, the narrative method allowed for the collection of contextualized, contested, mediated and, therefore qualitatively rich experiences of the victims. Otherwise, the narrative approach proved immensely instrumental in the researcher's realization of the aim to analyse the displaced Zimbabwean villagers' stories as both an expression of individual experience and a mirror of social reality (Andrews et al, 2008).

Since this study was given some major impetus by the moral and practical need to search for a specific and frequently repressed kind of 'truth' about the 2008 political violence, (a truth distinct from the truths found in state-centric discourses), I had to look no further than the narrative technique. This methodological choice resonates with Young's (2007) observation that narratives of first-person experience are valued for their power to counter and debunk totalising collective historical narratives which often subordinate and homogenise individual experiences and perspectives.

Furthermore, the use of narratives was motivated by the centrality to this study, of the objective of identity formation, reformation and affirmation in a context of organized political violence. To this end, Patterson's (2008: 13) argument is relevant, that, whatever

else a personal narrative is - oral history, anecdote, legal testimony, a response in an interview- it is also and ***always*** a narration of the self. In personal narration, a particular personal, social, cultural and political identity is claimed by narrators. Everything said functions to express, confirm and validate the claimed identity. Similarly, Elliot (2005 cited in Marshall and Rossman 2011) contends that the narrative method is especially useful when exploring issues of social identity and social change. The narrative method was, thus, in harmony with eliciting the victims' responses in relation to how their memories of the political violence have shaped their socio-political identities.

More so, due to its interpretive inclination, the narrative approach allowed this researcher to look beyond the story and also pay attention to what was not said by the victims. The appropriateness of this method for this study is evident in Riessman's (1993) assertion that a personal narrative is a subjective interpretation of events and not an exact recording of what happened. Likewise, through the use of this method, this study captured meanings that were mediated and socially-constructed around the experiences of violence, and not necessarily the experiences themselves. Therefore, through both its phenomenological and social constructionist orientation, narrative inquiry elicited a multiplicity of rich interpretations for the same experience of violence by different storytellers. Essentially, non-verbal cues such as voice projection, facial expressions, bodily gestures and the structure of the victims' stories were alternative rich sources of interpretation that the approach also availed to this researcher.

The narrative method also lends itself to a presentist approach (Halbwachs, 1992) where past events and experiences are reconstructed within the context of the present. This proved very relevant for this study because the villagers drew a lot from, and used as a constant reference point, the current Zimbabwean socio-political circumstances, in their formulations of meanings around the 2008 political violence. This is congruent to Sideris' (2003) argument that individual narratives are also situated in existing socio-cultural and institutional discourses which must be brought to bear to interpret them.

In the assessment of the suitability and final choice of the narrative approach, I was also guided and motivated by Liamputong and Ezzy's (2005) theorization that to tell a story is to take a moral stance. These authors claim that narratives are never ethically and morally neutral and narrative identity is normative and evaluative in its claims. Consequently, since

this study engaged with political violence, a sensitive area particularly shrouded by moral and normative anxiety, the narrative approach proved really relevant as it was able to capture the moral and normative trappings that emerged in the respondents' interpretations.

2.4 In-depth Narrative Interviews

One-on-one in-depth narrative interviews were the main tool used to probe for deep, rich, anecdotal stories from the interviewees (victims). I was able to execute a total of fifteen out of the twenty scheduled interviews as some of the prospective interviewees got caught up in urgent personal business. Attempts to reschedule the interviews were futile due to time limitations both on the part of the interviewer and the interviewees. Noteworthy from the beginning is that since the confidentiality and safety of the interviewees were a priority, I had to assign each interviewee a pseudonym which they chose for themselves. Hence, the names that appear in the later stages of this thesis are not the real names of the respondents.

The narrative interviews were unstructured, so they took the form of natural face-to-face conversations where this researcher gave each respondent some considerable chance to relate their experiences of, and encounters with political violence. The interviewer-interviewee interface provided by the interview situation proved really enlightening for me as it enabled me to also observe the non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, gestures and emotions of the victims as they detailed their experiences. These cues elaborated spoken narratives, told a different story or expressed unspoken/unspeakable views. For instance, the constant cursing sounds like (*nxaaaaa*) that punctuated Sekai's storytelling and the tense posture of her body as she spoke were more elaborate and original than her spoken story in expressing her desire to avenge the murder of her brother in the violence.

In terms of design, these interviews were modeled on the basis of an unstructured type of interview guide which outlined the key open-ended questions. Taking a hint from Kvale (2008) that good interview questions should contribute thematically to knowledge production, I aligned and designed the interview questions so as to answer the main research question and the attendant three sub-questions of the study. Otherwise, I broke down the provisional interview questions into themed sections relating to the meanings that the victims attached to the political violence in stated specific contexts.

It is however, interesting to note that, practically, as some of the interviews wore on, I had to abandon, to various degrees, my interview guide. In Weiss' (1995:3) words, I managed to "sacrifice uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information." Instead, I created a flexible approach in which I and the interviewee were able to turn the interview into a natural conversation where the interviewee did most of the narration. As a result, some degree of uniformity had to be sacrificed and interview guides had to be generally ignored as each interview progressed into a natural dialogue. This was mainly necessitated by the narrator raising an emergent and interesting issue which I had to follow up. In some instances, I had to totally abandon certain questions from the guide as I observed and read into the context and intensity of the narrator's emotions and uneasiness. Sometimes I had to impatiently take a back seat and listen as some respondents could not just stop once they became seemingly 'obsessed' with their emotional stories. Paradoxically, I had to, at the same time, identify with their story and become part of it, thus defying the notion of the objective, value-free researcher.

Prior to each interview, I made appointments with the interviewees. As a result, the researcher dedicated the first week of October making appointments. However, this did not close doors to more appointments since some further appointments were made in the successive four weeks while interviews were also in progress. Since the issue of political violence is a highly sensitive, risk-laden and a controversial one (which had great risk of exposing the interviewees (victims) to more harm and torture), I made the appointments highly unofficial and confidential. These appointments took a casual and unofficial form of promises of courtesy calls to discuss pertinent issues about what happened. As the target respondents were also my relatives, acquaintances, friends, church mates and fellow villagers, getting approval to meet was relatively easy. To reduce the frequency of being seen at the prospective interviewees' homes (and therefore raising suspicion from alleged perpetrators), I made these appointments at normal and routine places like funeral gatherings, churches, school meetings, community development gatherings, beer parties, farmlands, grazing lands, water points, and as and when I met a victim. If the appointment was made within the context of a public space, I ensured that it was away from the spying eyes or eavesdropping. Sometimes, at the request of the respondent, we had to reschedule the interview time and dates.

However, setting up appointments at communal gatherings such as funerals (the only convenient and strategic social occasions at which I could make appointments with victims from the furthest villages-at least 13km away) sometimes proved problematic and risky. This was especially so, if my respondent (victim) held some long-term, unspoken tension and hatred towards a perpetrator who also happened to be very close to me as a friend or relative. In such cases, each moment I tried to engage even in general talk with my would-be respondent, the 'perpetrator friend' would closely monitor the conversation or try to disrupt it in order to divert my attention to them. In a way, I was sometimes caught in the 'cross-fire' of suppressed long-standing grudges, unsettled scores between my potential interviewees (victims) and the perpetrators in which case I was expected to simultaneously accommodate both parties. As this would be potentially dangerous if I openly took sides, I sometimes had to lose potential respondents since I was forced to abandon my objective and play the 'neutral' villager until my targets left the funeral scene. Once, I missed such potentially suitable interviewees, it was difficult, due to time constraints, to follow them up for appointments as they came from very far away villages only accessible on foot.

Having successfully set some appointments, the narrative interviews commenced in the second week of October and spanned over a four week period. To maximise confidentiality and safety of the interviewees, the interviews were executed indoors at the victims' homesteads in rooms or spaces which the victims chose as safe from any potential eavesdropping. Seven interviews were executed in the evening at the request of the interviewees for safety and confidentiality as their immediate neighbours were alleged perpetrators.

Nonetheless, there were sensitive but intriguing cases where 'A' (a victim and MDC supporter) and perpetrator 'B' (perpetrator and ZANU PF supporter) share homestead boundaries. I had to devise long-winding indirect routes and use unorthodox entry points (other than the usual compound gates) into 'A's compound for an interview. This was despite the fact that this would be in the evening. This scenario was necessitated by the fact that, even five years after the violence, perpetrators aligned to ZANU PF and who are immediate neighbours to MDC aligned victims still keep a watchful and suspicious eye on these neighbours as they strongly suspect that, given that there is now relative peace, the victims could seek revenge at any given day and time. This paranoia associated with the perpetrators

who are neighbours to victims was, for instance, confirmed by Fedson, one night when I had settled in his hut for an interview. As part of his introductory remarks, he said to me:

> '…good, you did the safest thing for us to come at this time [10pm] without using the easier and direct way…Didn't you have difficulties first going round C's cattle kraal, the graveyard path, off the beaten track and finally crawling and squeezing your way into my backyard through my bushy fence? Yes if you used that side they [immediate neighbours] don't see you since my fruit trees provide you cover all the way to this hut. Yeah, my ZANU PF nextdoor [neighbor] the other day was saying to his wife: "…*it was our time when we beat them up, be careful about them, be always watchful like an eagle, he may want to avenge. I still don't trust Fedson*." Of course he hadn't seen that I was within earshot, I laughed it off…(Interview excerpt, Fedson)

There was also another catch in using the unstructured narrative interviews. The word 'unstructured' had the connotation that the interviews had no specific purpose. Also by giving the respondents some seemingly unlimited leverage in the narratives (even through questions such as 'what happened?') it appeared as if my interviewees were in a position of control in the interview process. To this effect, I draw upon Palmary's (2005) theorisation where she highlights that asking questions such as "start where you would like" in an interview is 'disingenuous' and denies that there is a clear purpose to the research. The author further maintains that such kinds of statements paint an illusionary picture of an unbiased research relationship driven by the participants which ultimately serves as a smokescreen to the power that researchers have to represent aspects of their narratives as 'proper' knowledge. This issue is explored further in a subsequent section on reflexivity.

Another notable methodological complexity that I had to grapple with was my identity (age and student status) as an insider who was conducting narrative interviews with some elderly respondents who to some extent overlooked my authority as a researcher, but emphasized my identity as someone really too young to understand the village violence. This was especially the case with two elderly respondents who had seen me grow from primary school to university. These two, would throughout the lengthy interviews constantly break to remind me that since I was by far younger than them (about an age gap of 35 years), I could not understand this political violence. One of them constantly made a retrospective reference to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle of the mid-60s as a departure point to explain the culture of violence. For instance, at some stage she remarked:

> …aaah, you, Weri [shortened version of my name, Wellington in Shona accent] you come and ask this thing of people's houses being burnt, supporters being murdered, relatives disappearing…this has a long history…you are too young to indulge in this talk only because of the 2008 disturbances. Anyway, I will tell you my grandchild, I will ignore this school [university] thing because you are still under our

> authority as elders…but you have no choice here, because I will have to begin my story way back to the 1890s when the British settlers came and stole or wealth… (Interview, Granny Rudo)

As the foregoing remark indicates, in such cases I had to be extremely patient, assume a remarkably subordinate role and wait until the narrative reached the scope of my research period (2008). However, this is not to say that I disregarded the going back to history (1890s) as this, from the perspective of Granny Rudo, had a curious connection to the 2008 political disturbances. This case, for me, was representative of the moral dilemmas a researcher has to contend with when doing research in his own community. At some stage one has to balance issues of respecting own elders (traditional authority) while at the same time also trying to assume some professional authority so as to elicit valuable and valid information. Sometimes there is a thin line between the two and it is easy to lose valuable information or to sour relations with elders if one factor is over-emphasized at the expense of the other. Inasmuch as academic research is a professional endeavour, it also has to serve and inform social relations. After all that should be the goal of social science research-to build social relations.

Notwithstanding these complexities, I successfully conducted thirteen of the narrative interviews in the participants' native language (ChiShona) while I conducted two in English upon the choice of the respondents who were school teachers. The advantage of using ChiShona was that the victims were comfortable with, and more eloquent and proficient with this native tongue and were therefore able to give context-specific, rich, detailed stories. Again, there was a mismatch between their literacy level and their capacity to effectively tell their stories in English. Each interview was one and half hour long on average. I conducted an average of two interviews a day which was dependent on variables such as the fulfillment of appointments by respondents, my level of fatigue and concentration and natural disturbances such as heavy rains and flood (I conducted the interviews at the peak of the rainy season in Zimbabwe).

All the interviews were recorded at the consent of the respondents. Recording facilitated the accurate capturing of the exact interview content and provided a permanent record to which I was able to constantly refer to during the analysis phase. These recorded interviews were gradually transcribed for easy access and reference at the analysis phase. I also took down some interview notes at the earliest available opportunity after leaving the location of the interview. This guarded against the distortion and misrepresentation of data due to forgetting. One challenge encountered with the recorded interviews was that I had to initially translate

them from ChiShona to English before transcribing them. As a result, there were some methodological limitations associated with this translation and I give them space in a separate section below.

Last, since this researcher lives in the same study area as the respondents and shares cordial relations with them, the issue of reflexivity was of significant methodological concern. The 'sense of knowing each other too well' had to be bounded and controlled so as not to compromise the information collection process and the data quality. As a result, I had to meticulously and constantly reflect on a number of major reflexivity issues as these had a great bearing on the quality of the data I was going to collect and my subsequent analysis of this data. However, as will be noted below, reflexivity was a contentious issue for this researcher. Thus, a section on how this researcher positioned himself in this study ensues immediately below.

2.5 Situating myself within the research: Reflexivity.

Reflexivity was a crucial component of my research. This was attributable to: the qualitative and subjective nature of my study; the tendency of my research to deal with victims who are considered generally 'vulnerable'; the fact that I was a member of the community that I was studying; and the fact that my study topic (political violence) was a sensitive and morally complex issue. Likewise, Palmary (2006) highlights that central to the portrayal of the 'other' is the fact of locating ourselves within the process of knowledge production. Consequently, I had to constantly consider my actions and my role in the research process and scrutinize them.

I had to be constantly alert throughout the research process that I was a member of the community that I was studying, and the respondents would experience me more as 'one of their own' than as a Wits student. While this facilitated access and rapport, I was conscientiously aware that, as an insider, there was the catch of being experienced as a patronizing, sympathizing or even liberating presence. The situation was compounded by the fact that I was dealing with my own people who were also victims of political violence. As a result, to borrow from Danieli (1984) I was prone to the inevitable reactions of overly feeling for, and identifying with the victim. There was the trap that these feelings, if unchecked,

could transcend compassion and become feelings that could be unhelpful and harmful to the victim.

However, as involved as I was, through strong communal ties, and being an insider who witnessed the violence, there were occasional instances where I was openly overwhelmed by emotions. An illustrative case is one instance when I was listening to the gruesome and harrowing narrative of how an elderly woman watched her son being murdered right in her presence. The images of oozing blood, crushed bones, minced human flesh and human waste that the respondent's narrative evoked in me found me sub-consciously cursing, swearing and almost shedding tears. Ironically, I only became aware of my own reaction when the elderly lady herself alerted me to my tearful eyes and my foul cursing! Instead, the lady ended up 'consoling' me saying, "…I understand your reaction, your teary eyes… the act [murder of her son] was devastating…you no longer have to curse, take heart my son, God will solve this…" Thus, I was at times, during some of the interviews, beyond the point where one has to remain the 'neutral', objective, value-free researcher who should try as much as possible to separate themselves from the phenomena they are studying. Therefore, the ideal situation of locating myself within the fieldwork in such a manner that my reactions did not lead me to unwittingly identify with the perpetrator by sadistically reenacting the victimization of the narrator, smothering and placating the respondent with kindness, taking on the role of rescuer was often times difficult to realize. Sometimes I could not help losing confidence and feeling helpless as the victims narrated their encounters with violence. I was, nevertheless, during the latter parts of study able to control my feelings and substitute strong emotions with saying a simple sorry, a simple nodding or shaking of the head, or simply keeping quiet and concentrate on the story.

Herman (1992) further argues that being a witness to an atrocity may result in some defensive types of 'resistance' reactions with respect to the narrator's trauma story. These reactions could include indifference to or avoidance and denial of particular aspects of the victim's narrative. To this end, it is intriguing to note how at times I was caught off guard, as a witness, as I sometimes tried to 'correct' the respondent's narrative or more acutely, tried to impose my own vantage points on a narrative thinking that I knew its exact details and therefore felt that the narrator was exaggerating or dramatizing it. Interestingly, it sometimes required some rude awakening from the interviewee for me to realize that I had become

overbearing as they reminded me that all I wanted was ***'their***' story, not mine. At such junctures, I would always impress upon myself that the essence of a story about the violence was ***not*** necessarily in its accuracy, but in the way it was perceived and presented by the narrator. However, these were normative and methodological issues which I had to learn on site during my fieldwork. So, I increasingly became cognizant that I always had to go back to the victim's story and use it as a departure point for whatever subsequent questions that I asked or comments that I made.

Nevertheless, I also later realized that the issue of somehow 'rewriting and representing' the narrator's story with some measure of my own influence was an issue I had to again grapple with at the data presentation and analysis phases. Inevitably, during coding and choice of representative quotes (processes which the narrator no longer directly controls at this stage) I was in a way determining what to include and not to include. In the process, I was in a subtle way adjusting and re-creating the narrators' original stories without their blessings. This also applies for the analysis of their stories. By choosing to analyse their stories within certain theories, frameworks, literature and debates and not others, I was assigning myself some overarching authority over the respondents' narratives. While both at a methodological and ethical level, this may be inevitable for the researcher, I tried as much as possible to minimize this by selecting quotations that were more or less representative of the theme in question, and then reproducing the selected quotations in their original form. Analysis of the narratives was also left open-ended as much as possible so as to leave room for alternative interpretations by future readers. Although this solution may not be a panacea, it at least minimizes distortions to the narrator's original story.

Again, in my study, I was aware that, although in theory, I had consistently referred to my respondents as 'victims' (implying some passivity), in practice, I had to make some serious reflection and regard them as purposive actors who could also reflexively monitor their own actions in the context of constraining factors such as political violence. According to McKinney (2007) 'victim' would imply that nothing could be changed or done, and it denies the capacity of survival and the pre- and post-violence experiences of the respondent. Thus, by keeping in mind that my interviewees still had options and choices, I reflected on them as purposive actors with agentive power. Thus, I made the deliberate attempt to treat each interview encounter with them as an engaging, interactive and learning process.

In my reflexivity I was also guided by the assertion by Palmary (2006) that, the researcher has to be conscious of how their identities are hidden or brought into the open by the research process. One week into the research, I became aware through interaction with the respondents that my 'son of the soil' identity took precedence over my identity as a university research student. Most of my fellow villagers (victims) openly confessed that they were giving me their stories not because I was at some school [university], but I was one of their own and they could entrust me with their deep secrets. That this greatly enabled me to have access to victims and their stories is barely contested, but no sooner had I realized this benefit than I began reflecting on whether I was getting detailed narratives. For instance, I gradually began to realise that, in some interviews, the victims began taking for granted that since I was one of their own, and I was also a witness, I was asking for narratives which I already knew!

For instance, during my fieldwork I began to realize that certain statements became common during story-telling. There were statements such as: 'you act as if you don't know what happened'; 'you are simply asking for a story that happened right next to your compound, you must be pretending.'; 'it's pointless to tell you the rest of what happened since you already know it from experience.'; 'didn't you lose a close relative 'X'…no need to tell you, you have firsthand details on that one [the story in context]'. Thus, the affirmation of my 'son of the soil', and 'witness' identities by the respondents posed the risk of my losing the more nuanced details of the narratives. In response, I became aware of my increasing need to probe and motivate the narrators to expand on what they perceived I already knew. In a few cases I lost the battle as the victims strongly believed that I already had answers to what I was searching for.

In locating myself within the study, I also had to reflect on my political identity. This was especially so, given that the political violence and opinions around it were partisan oriented. As Amnesty International (2008) states, most of the victims were MDC supporters while perpetrators were mostly aligned to state power (ZANU PF). The complexity of the scenario in my community was that since my family's homesteads had not been destroyed and none of my family members had been targeted, it might have been assumed through implication that we belonged to the perpetrator side. I personally was not active in the village politics at whatever level. However, in two of my interviews, I found myself in a very tricky situation when the respondents openly asked which party I belonged to. On one hand, any response to

the effect that I was MDC, as attractive and tempting as it was, could equally draw the ire of the respondents as they might have taken it as a ploy to get an interview. On the other hand, to say that I was ZANU PF would evoke suspicion, mistrust or even vengeance. In the end, I had to be innovative and revive my identity as a masters student who was supposedly not to take sides at this point. Whether, highlighting my student identity in order to suppress my political identity is what really helped and earned me the interviews is debatable. Yet the whole scenario reveals the significance and implications of political identities for researchers doing fieldwork on sensitive topics like state-sponsored political violence.

2.6 Translation and the Researcher's Position

Only two interviews were conducted almost entirely in English and in this, I barely had translation complications. However, all the other thirteen interviews were conducted in the respondents' native language, ChiShona. Although this was crucial in creating rapport with the interviewees, I was faced with the complex task of having to initially translate the interviews from ChiShona into English during the transcription phase.

Achieving functional equivalence was my major challenge as I grappled with the translation of some specific ChiShona words and proverbs into their English versions. Sechrest et al (1972:41) give a synopsis of the challenges that I faced when they say:

> *Vocabulary equivalence must take into account language as used by respondents and the possibility of terms lacking equivalents across languages. Equivalents in idiom and in grammar and syntax may be important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is probably most important of all. Direct translation cannot be assumed to produce equivalent versions of verbal stimuli.*

In a number of cases I could not find English words that provided exactly the same meaning and experiences/context as the Shona concepts or experiences I intended to translate. For instance, in reference to the methods of finding closure adopted by some victims, one respondent referred to the experience of; *kuenda kumagodobori kuti mhandu dzipengeswe.* Although I had to literally translate this in English to; (consulting witchdoctors to make the perpetrators mentally disturbed), this English translation and meaning it now conveys is somehow diluted and removed from the Shona cultural experience of the original statement. While, generally, in conventional Western culture, mental illness is understood as a

psychological, individualized pathology, the Shona statement above presents it as a social and spiritual spell cast on any enemy to seek revenge. In its original language the statement has a far deeper, context-specific, and culturally relevant meaning. Unfortunately, this was not fully captured by the English translation.

Again, from the same example, I also had to translate the Shona concept of *magodobori* to (witchdoctors). I failed to locate an English equivalent with the same conceptual intensity and richness in meaning as the Shona conceptual connotations of *magodobori*. In fact, I experienced Behar's (2003) translation dilemma whereby the stories that she recorded were reinvented by presenting them in a different language. To borrow from this author, through translation, I was 'cutting the tongue' of the teller and replacing it with my own tongue.

Furthermore, taking after Venuti (2004) my translation of originally Shona transcripts to the English language constituted my 'domestication' of the interviewees' texts. According to this concept, I was through this translation, acting as the 'invisible' translator whose final presentation of the interviewees' texts would be eclipsed so that the English reader would experience my interviewees' texts as if they were in an English text. However, on another note, Venuti (2004) also subscribes to the idea of communities that are constructed around the translation of literature. The individuals in this community imagine an academic community which is real but which they cannot access. Consequently, they require a 'bridge' in order to access this academic community. Likewise, as a researcher and through the translation of their viewpoints, I was acting on behalf of the respondents in my community by bridging the gap between them as Shona non-academics and the academic community which will be exposed to this research.

2.7 Analysis

2.7.1 Narrative Analysis *(Labovian Approach)*

Transcription sections from the interviews and interview notes that were relevant to the research questions were identified, selected and re-transcribed. This was achieved by repeatedly listening to the audio paying specific attention to pauses to identify the way the story was narrated (Riessman, 1993). Then, using Labov's criterion for what constitutes a minimal narrative, and his analytic method, narratives from the interviews were extracted and parsed into numbered clauses (Patterson, 2008). Each clause was then assigned to each of

Labov's six-part model: abstract, orientation, complicating action, result, evaluation and coda. The abstract component was used to analyse what the story was all about while the orientation was part of the narrative that that gave a background to the events (who, what, when), The complicating action analyses what went wrong-the part of the narrative that highlights the events that are central to the plot. At the evaluation phase the researcher explored and analysed what the narrator made of the complicating action. That is the effect(s) that the event/experience made in the scheme of things. The result was the stage where the researcher searched for what finally happened. The coda functioned to sign off the narrative as it returned to the present time of telling, to hand over the 'floor' to the hearer(s) (Patterson, 2008).

2.7.2 Thematic Analysis

Through this grounded theory type of analysis (Gliner and Morgan, 2000) I initially produced my interview transcripts and field notes and repeatedly and meticulously reviewed them. I did this with a view to identifying salient themes that permeated through these texts. I then employed inductive or 'open' coding to organize my data into various concepts and themes. I initially employed pile –sorting (Gliner and Morgan, 2000) to come up with broader themes from the texts. This also involved locating emblemic quotes that were representative of the themes. In my coding I was continuously aware of noting the complementarities as well as the divergences (relationships) between these themes so as to come up with coherent theories. I also kept in mind the original relationship that the research aimed to cover while at the same time remaining open-minded to unexpected/new data. I gave some serious consideration to the incorporation of the context in which I carried the research and the constant reflection on my biases as an insider in the analysis. Also from the phenomenological and social constructionist perspectives, I analysed the interview transcripts and the field notes under the assumption that meaning was created and mediated in the interview process and reality exists in fluid and variable sets of constructions.

2.7.3 Discourse Analysis

I also used discourse analysis in conjunction with thematic analysis in order to enrich my analysis. Discourse analysis allowed me to deconstruct texts in order to find underlying ideologies and discourses. I also used it to locate tensions, contradictions and complementarities within the interview texts and field notes. I also was able to look for

evaluative statements and power dynamics portrayed in the text. In the process, it meant that I also analysed the texts in relation to those who were producing them and the context in which they were producing the text.

2.8 Ethical Considerations.

Since this study was politically sensitive and could expose the interviewees to harm in the form of targeted threats or more violence, the researcher had to uphold the non-maleficence principle which upholds the need to keep the respondents safe from harm at any stage of the research (Gabrium and Holstein, 2002). In order to protect the participants from persecution or harm from perpetrators, the researcher made unofficial interview appointments in the form of routine promises of courtesy calls to village relatives and friends. These appointments were done in spaces that barely raised suspicion from alleged perpetrators. These included funeral gatherings, church services, beer parties, farmlands, watering points, business centres and grazing lands. In fact suspicion barely rose since the potential respondents had always shared cordial relations with the researcher as relatives, acquaintances, friends and fellow villagers. Formal appointments were discarded as these had the high chance of exposing potential respondents (victims) to the suspicion of, and harm by perpetrators.

To also guarantee safety for the researcher and participants, the interviews were conducted in spaces, and at times, that the respondents chose were safe from intrusion by eavesdroppers or dangerous spies. Most interviews were thus conducted indoors, in inner rooms of the respondents' houses/huts. Again this researcher did not seek any official permission from local political and traditional structures as this would have exposed the victims to more persecution. It is strongly believed, and sometimes actually known that some authority-bearing leaders in these structures were actually perpetrators of the political violence, in their own capacity or on behalf of political parties or the state.

Another ethical issue concerned confidentiality and anonymity where owing to the political sensitivity of the study, this researcher had to fully protect the interviewees' identities and facts of their private life (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Thus, the researcher used pseudonyms which the respondents chose for themselves and all the data from the respondents was coded and kept in a password protected folder with no identifying information. More so, for confidentiality, the interviews were done inside the interviewees'

houses and this was not problematic as the interviewer shares cordial relations with the potential respondents.

CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTING SUBJECTIVITIES THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE SAME SOCIO-PHYSICAL SPACE WITH THE PERPETRATOR.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that speak to the meanings that the internally displaced victims attach to the 2008 political violence especially in the context where the perpetrator is a more or less permanent feature in the victim's daily life. More so, the findings are also shaped by the fact that there have been no serious and deliberate attempts by the state and non-state actors at transitional justice, healing and reconciliation. The chapter then gives some nuanced discussion of the findings. To this end, emerging themes and sub-themes that include liminality, ontological uncertainty, truth-telling, grid of victimization and symbolic closure are explored. This chapter concludes by linking these themes to the next major over-arching theme that interrogates the variegated silences that the political violence was complicit with. Once again, I stress at this point that the names that are assigned to interviewees in the three successive chapters are not their real names, but pseudonyms that the respondents assigned to themselves.

3.2 Liminality, Ontological Uncertainty and Symbolic Closure.

A classical emblematic quote which captures the vices and caprices of having to live with the memories of a politically violent past in a scenario where the perpetrator is more or less a permanent feature in the victim's daily life was from a 76 year old grandmother whose son was murdered by alleged youth militia. She had to witness the death of her own son right in broad daylight as three youths physically assaulted him with open fists, boots and very thick canes for about half an hour until he died on spot, in front of his hut. The deceased was alleged to be an active youth leader of a rival political party and was thought to have masterminded the demolition of the three assailants' retail outlet early that morning. The 76 year-old mother of the murdered boy had this to say:

> My grandchild, ever since I lost my son to this ugly animal, violence, my mind has been a whirlwind, total confusion. In fact I am like a moving dead person trapped in between life and death. I am as much afraid to get to the past as I am to get to tomorrow. You see, all I am holding on to that is nearest to reality is the death of my son even if it has been five years since I lost him. Have you ever heard of crossroads in our idioms? Yes, I can say that I am at the crossroads of my life. And you think I am alone in this complex situation…ask around and those whose beloved ones disappeared…by the way community facts have it that more than six people disappeared without a trace in this village. I know the families are also having similar feelings where the past and future stand still…you wait, wait and wait but answers never come…The most painful issue underlying all this madness is the reality that you have to wake up and face the culprits everyday strutting about their business…like nothing happened. Yes everyday at funerals, village water points, shops, celebrations…everywhere! (Interview, Granny Rudo).

The foregoing sentiments from an elderly woman who emotionally related how she lost her son in the March 2008 political violence resonate with, and are typical of, the sentiments that I gathered from ten other respondents. Ten of these fellow villagers maintained that they could not to date account for their disappeared loved ones, hence their current 'trap' in time. This situation has been further complicated by the reality that the alleged perpetrators thought to have been working on behalf of high profile politicians and the state, still share the same physical and social space as the victims without any conviction, trial or retribution. According to David, in one of the narrative interviews, it is 'business as usual', like nothing ever happened, or like nobody ever wronged anybody. Das and Kleinman (2000) attest to the complexity of such a scenario when they argue that one of the most disturbing features of political violence is when it has occurred between social actors who live in the same social worlds and know or thought they knew each other.

According to Das and Kleinman (2000) a daily interface between the wrong-doer and wronged, without any form of mediation, truce, reparation or simply some hope for them, deepens and precipitates feelings of hatred, despair, resentment, mistrust and betrayal. This is especially the state of affairs on the part of the victims who always remain fixated in the strong conviction that 'something must be done' to the perpetrator whom they have to face and somehow inevitably interact with on a daily basis. Following these authors, it is logical to argue that the mere close proximity of a fellow villager who burnt down your house, who destroyed your source of livelihood, who kidnapped or murdered your loved one, who betrayed your trust, has long-term socio-psychological effects on the victim. According to Giddens and Sutton (2011) from the Durkheimian concept of mechanical solidarity in traditional rural society, what unites community members are shared common values, norms, beliefs, rituals and productive activities. Social cohesion derives from a collective consciousness or a general consensus over fundamental values. This consensus is supposed to

revolve around a strong sense of community and sameness that is typical of rural societies. This sense of community is supposed to be psychologically and physiologically rewarding for members of that community.

Nevertheless, in conditions of anomie (Durkheim) such as the political violence that pitted community member against community member, the victims feel totally betrayed and disillusioned especially given that they initially had the conviction that what brought them together were shared values such as preserving life and justice. Thus, premised on this argument, the continuance of victim and perpetrator [who according to Das and Kleinman (2000) thought they had a common bond] occupying the same social and physical space evokes stronger feelings of betrayal, hatred, disbelief and mistrust than if the people involved were originally strangers. The scenario is analogous to being betrayed by a family member whom you have to live with everyday. Suffice to argue that, such a state of affairs has a significantly unique bearing on how victims such as Granny Rudo interpret their suffering.

The situation of the village victim and perpetrator continuously sharing the same socio-physical space is made peculiar and complex when viewed from Durkheim's perspective that members of traditional society understand, construct and interpret their own identities in relation to those of other communal members (Giddens, 2008). For instance, in his classical study of suicide, Durkheim subscribes to the concepts of anomic and altruistic suicide in which the individual may commit suicide as a result of a breakdown or some vagueness in communal norms, or over commitment to community norms respectively. In both cases, the individual's tendency to suicide (identity) is mediated in relation to the community. On the basis of this theorization, it can be argued that with the victim and perpetrator still sharing the same socio-political and physical space, victims are increasingly likely to understand their present situation of suffering and pain not in terms of blaming themselves as individuals, but in relation to the acts of violence that the wider community of perpetrators which they continuously interact with daily inflicted on them and their beloved ones. Consequently, interacting with the unpunished perpetrator on a daily basis reinforces and nurtures the identity of suffering, pain and vengeance.

Taking this argument to a psychological framework, where memories of violence are perceived to be an individual pathology (Radstone and Hodgkin, 2006) it could be argued that when the perpetrator and victim inhabit the same space during or after the act of

violence, the mere sight of the perpetrator by the victims may evoke, in the victim, some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as recollections or intrusive memories of the gruesome details of the atrocious act. Although this bio-medical framework has been challenged for depoliticizing the victims' suffering, the idea of the individual trauma that is accentuated by a involuntary memory of the events associated with the trauma find purchase in this analysis especially where the perpetrator remains a permanent presence in the life of the victim without any medical or social attention being given to the victim. In the final analysis, it is logical to argue, on the basis of Granny Rudo's interview excerpt above and the foregoing literature that the close proximity between the perpetrator and victim, whether from a social or biomedical perspective, has far-reaching effects for the victim. These effects are evident in Granny Rudo's narrative and are further explored below.

Drawing from the theoretical formulations presented by Hamber and Wilson (2002) it can be argued that respondents like Granny Rudo and the other victims in similar circumstances are occupying some liminal space. In a state of liminality, the grief, anger, anxiety and pain resultant from the victim's direct experience with political violence and its attendant trauma continue to plague him or her, consciously and sub-consciously. The victim lives in a state somewhere between denial and obsession, where to a large extent there is failure to accept and incorporate the loss into the functioning of everyday life (Hamber and Wilson, 2002:7). Otherwise, the victims or survivors of the violence in the study cannot move on to a new progressive phase in life. According to Hayes (1998) the victims are in need of catharsis or symbolic closure. The latter entails a scenario where the trauma, caused for instance in this scenario by the deaths and disappearances of loved ones, is no longer envisaged as unfinished business requiring for instance, the compulsion to take revenge. To this end, this entrapment in liminal space as manifested in the enduring need to seek vengeance was evident in Sekai's narrative. Sekai is a middle-aged lady whose brother was murdered by youths alleged to be working on behalf of ZANU PF. Sekai says:

> I, my family and relatives still have scores to settle with those who assaulted and killed my brother. The fact that we meet the perpetrators daily at funerals, churches, community development meetings and many other physical and social places makes this urge to one day fight back even stronger. As for me, I am still, in a very unforgiving and very dangerous mode and it seems this will be a permanent mode until, one day I get my invaluable chance to avenge my only brother's death. (Interview, Sekai).

The intensity, emphasis and shakiness in Sekai's voice, her trembling body and the intermittent stops and vacant stares into space as she narrated the 'revenge' part of her story was indicative of someone truly with unfinished business. She describes being fixated in the

spirit of vengeance and this spirit still endures five years on after the atrocious murdering of her brother. Sekai, like some other survivors, is experiencing liminality. They are experiencing an uncertain time where they stand in the 'threshold' between the 'old' which may no longer work and the 'new' which is not yet clear (van Dijk et al, 2003). In other words, these victims are in a state of uncertainty, waiting and not knowing, where they have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything new. Liminality is a space in-between; it is emptiness and nowhere and therefore, by definition, these victims may lose control of their life. It could be argued that these victims of the March 2008 political violence are in need of symbolic closure-strategies of letting out their pent up emotions so that they can move on progressively with new socio-political identities. Nevertheless, this chance of moving on seems remote as strategies that facilitate closure have barely been instituted at both state and non-state levels.

As the situation stands with most of the victims interviewed, their direct experiences with the political violence and resultant trauma have, according to Jannof-Bulman (1985) shattered their individual cognitive assumptions about the self and the world. Severe forms of trauma shatter individual cognitive assumptions of personal invulnerability, viewing oneself positively and that the world is a meaningful and comprehensible place. This is also in keeping with Laub's (1995) observation that acts of political violence are thought to rapture both the continuity (continuity is associated with identity) of self and community. This rapture is enlarged by both a lack of acknowledgement or denial by others (the perpetrators in this case) about what happened and or by the inability of sufferers to acknowledge or bear witness to their own suffering. Suffice to argue at this point, that, such experiences of liminality demand recognition, at some level, through various truth-telling strategies, memorials or reparations as a way of shifting from the 'liminal unknown to liminal known' (Rampele, 1996). This is a theme that also emerged in the study and is dealt with in detail in subsequent sections.

Victims of organized political violence also attain some liminal status when trauma results in confusion and an in ability to fully understand the causes of one's suffering. This is in resonance with Granny Rudo's quotation (cited earlier on) that her mind 'has been whirlwind-total confusion'. Arguably, taking after Neal (1998) this 'bafflement' grows out of a negative encounter with a repressive or authoritarian regime which deforms rationality and foments personal and social chaos and an attendant fragmenting of the self. As a result of

trauma and a state-sponsored regime of silence and denial, basic questions are raised and remain unanswered in the victims' minds. These questions include how and why certain events either happened or did not happen and what will successively happen. A typical case of such confusion is captured in the following:

> … it's my daily pain and sorrow to wake up with the same excruciating headache of trying to resolve as to why they made my husband disappear. As if that was not enough why they confiscated all our maize harvest and the two goats? The family is now very vulnerable…again always contemplating what will happen next especially given that the aggressors are still living with us and they are walking freely as if they are blameless… (Interview, Agnes).

The bafflement and confusion that accompany acts of political violence and the shattering of the cognitive assumptions about the world, are exacerbated when the markers of the past that give it its relevancy, coherence and meaning, such as the existence and compassion of loved ones, are destroyed or rendered invisible.

As result of liminality, the respondents cited above also become ontologically insecure in terms of identity formation. An ontologically insecure person does not accept, at the fundamental level the reality of their own existence. S(he) has an unstable and a questioned sense of self and of his or her place in relation to other people (Mitzen, 2006). It therefore follows that victims of political violence such as Granny Rudo, Sekai and Agnes become ontologically insecure insofar as they fail to achieve stable individual and collective identities. As a result of the instability and unpredictability of the chaos created by exposure to acts of political violence, they develop a lack of confidence and trust in themselves, and the people around them so that the uncertainty so created makes the victims doubt their self-identity. To this end, Laing (1990) also maintains that, in an existential sense, if a person does not believe s(he) exists and that other people do not exist, as a result of a traumatic encounter, then that person does not have the necessary foundation to develop a stable self-identity.

Thus, once the victims in the study develop an uncertainty with their self-identity, they also become uncertain of their sense of belonging to those around them (perpetrators, witnesses and fellow villagers). The daily feature of the perpetrator in the same socio-political and physical space as them becomes perceived by the victims as a constant threat and danger which must be challenged. For instance, for Sekai this can be achieved through revenge. This is in line with Brown (2000) who says that ontological insecurity occurs when people begin to believe that the socio-political space around them is unpredictable and therefore the certainty of belonging to, being part of and being accepted by the community become

shattered. Consequently, respondents like Granny Rudo and Sekai become alienated both from themselves and the fellow villagers around them. As a result of the crude encounters with the March 2008 violence, they fail to internalize a sense of self and social identity. Since stability and predictability allows individuals to be more confident about their belonging, it makes it easier for them to look into the future with hope. However, this has not been the case with Granny Rudo, Sekai and other victims sharing similar experiences. As a result, they are constantly threatened by the daily experience of life with perpetrators. In the process, they become subject to fears, anxiety, dread and frustrations on a daily basis resulting in unstable and fragmented self and social identities. In short they become ontologically insecure.

Interestingly, taking a cue from Mitzen (2006) these states of liminality and ontological insecurity can be particularly the case with regard to deaths and political disappearances which thrusts an inordinate amount of unanswered (and sometimes unanswerable) questions upon the survivor. The personal perplexity and incoherence of trauma is extreme in the case of political disappearances. Since the latter featured quite prominently in, and provoked a lot of emotions during the narrative interviews, I appropriate them as a sub-theme immediately below. I also became particularly interested in them as they also epitomize liminality and ontological insecurity quite elaborately.

3.2.1 Politically-motivated Disappearances in the Villages.

As mentioned earlier on, two thirds of the cases that have resulted in the liminality and ontological uncertainty of the victims in the study concern reactions to acts of political disappearances. However such cases were also accompanied by initial violent assaults and then the abduction of the victims. According to the interviewees, nothing has been as excruciatingly painful, nerve-breaking and uncertain as lacking some knowledge on the fate of, and waiting and hoping for their missing loved ones to rejoin them. Interestingly, the issue of political disappearances inevitably gave rise to the moral and normative formulations of the significance of the physical body in the Zimbabwean culture. The body itself, and the processes of grieving around it, are of most significance in most cultures. Similarly, taking an analogue from Hamber and Wilson's (2002) case study of Northern Ireland, where they observe that it is common for the families of the disappeared to stress the importance of a 'proper and decent burial' , a male respondent I interviewed asserted:

> Five years down the line, I am no longer more bewildered and hurt by the issue of whether my missing daughter is dead or alive than the need to recover her body or remains…if she is dead. A human being is a human being, and not an animal. A human being culturally deserves a decent burial with the proper rituals. You, being an African know the cultural, moral and spiritual significance of a decent burial. The spirit of the dead must rest by giving their bodies decent and respectful burials…However; we still wait filled with doubt, anxiety and uncertainty, for her long-awaited return or at least for an explanation from those who abducted her. (Interview, Abisha).

Abisha's narrative was punctuated by him, pointedly bringing my attention to a family gravesite which was about 15 metres away from where we were sitting in his homestead. He reiterated how three of his family members who were 'resting' at this gravesite had been given respectful, ritual burials. According to him, if his disappeared daughter was actually dead, she deserved to be decently buried at this family graveyard so that her soul could find rest. Abisha's case is one of the many that I encountered in my fieldwork. Pursuant to the responses and observations, one can borrow from Malin (1994) in Hamber and Wilson (2002) and argue that the recovery of the body or its remains and the attendant burial rituals that take place around the body aid closure and, without the body, closure seems all impossible. But, if the body can no longer be recovered, because it is truly gone, the other strategy that could at least bring some closure for relatives is the revelation of the facts about the disappearance and why the person was taken in the first place.

Interestingly, Suarez-Orozco (1991) has given an illustrative case of disappearances in the Argentine case study of violence and documents how disappearances and the lack of bodies to be buried creates an ontological uncertainty among survivors and a psychological experience of what Freud terms the uncanny. This notion captures the common difficulties experienced by survivors who mourn without a corpse. "The uncanny feeds on uncertainty (Is he/she alive? Is he/she dead?)" Ibid 491). Consequently, in countries such as Argentina, mummification took on epidemic proportions following disappearances, where bedrooms and offices of the disappeared were kept as they were at the time of the disappearance, while the living anticipate their return (Suarez-Orozco, 1991). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, Hamber and Wilson (2002) have observed that some of the families of the disappeared have not cleaned out the rooms of their missing relatives. Similar explanations of the uncanny, mummification and ontological uncertainty can be brought forth to account for a very interesting, yet devastating case in my fieldwork where a mother of a disappeared son has, since his disappearance locked up his hut and left all his belongings untouched. She unlocked the hut for me and I observed that all the effects in the room had gathered thick layers of dust and she warned me not to touch or disturb any of the items in the room. In particular, she

wanted to show me a pair of sandals that still lay beside her son's bed which she claimed her son had not been given the opportunity to wear (by his abductors) on the night of his violent abduction. According to this mother, she still believes (though now remotely, since 5 years have now elapsed) that her son will one day miraculously show up and they will resume life from where he left on 27 May 2008, the night of the abduction.

Suffice to postulate that both the survivor and the 'dead' inhabit a symbolically liminal social space. Both are paradoxically, part of society and not part of it at the same time.. In such scenarios, the survivors of political violence wait in vain for their loved ones to return. Overall, the responses from the Zimbabwean victims and survivors in this study show that they have been left in an uncanny space in which they believe and hope that their disappeared loved ones will one day return home.

Hamber and Wilson (2002) further argue that the unfortunate occurrence about political disappearances is that the reality is that the material symbol (the body) that is necessary for moving out of the liminal space is seldom recovered after state-sponsored political violence. Such has been the case in the physical and social space that was under study. In such instances, the victims may advocate other avenues such as truth recovery strategies (both official and unofficial) in order to corroborate some information about what really happened. In other words the victims will be making attempts to achieve some form of symbolic closure. This points to the subsequent theme of truth-telling that permeated almost all the narratives that I got from the victims of the March 2008 political violence.

3.3 Remembering and Forgetting: 'The Damascus Moment' of Truth-Telling.

'Only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory' (Nietzche in Sturken:1997:15)

Nietzche, in this quotation depicts a dark violent past as an invisible burden that travels with victims and survivors which prevents them from living wholly in the present. In this instance Nietzche lays a foundation for the theory of remembering and forgetting that pays particular attention to the importance of pain and suffering in the relationship between the past and the present. When considering traumatic events such as political violence, victims and perpetrators may prefer either symbolic closure (remembering/ truth telling), and/or a closure of the past (forgetting) so as to move on. Eleven of the respondents similarly reiterated that

they were eagerly waiting for the long-awaited opportunity when they would be given a public forum to lay bare their experiences in public space. Most of them contended that inasmuch as this would be painful, contested and hurtful, it would also be equally liberating and refreshing as they would have partly shared and therefore lessened the burdens of a dark past. This emphasis on the narrative imperative or the primacy of remembering through 'truth'-telling was very elaborate and captured in the sentiments of one school teacher who said:

> First, I would like to thank you as a son of this land, and as a researcher for the novel and rare attempt that you have made to come to the grassroots , and capture our story. I know it is a politically sensitive story, hence the protracted silence at almost all levels. I guess this is the first such attempt to capture the stories of our suffering…that we have been longing to get told…especially in front of all in the community to bear witness. We wish if there could be more extensive initiatives of this kind at family, community and national levels…Such a gruesome story of the beatings and the humiliation I suffered in front of school children in the hands of aggressors…no matter how offending and provoking, must be told, both for me, my family, community and state to move on…it could be a Damascus moment akin to the biblical Saul's transformation from darkness to a new Paul in light! However, my experience and that of others should not be told behind closed doors like we are doing right now,…must be told at something like communal tribunals for both the aggressor and wronged to have a flatform…testifying. (Interview,Rishon)

In addition to explicitly getting direct responses from the victims for their burning desire to relate the stories of their suffering to the public, I also implicitly noticed this desire in the length of their narratives (each interview took an average of one and half hours) and the commitment and emphasis they invested in their narrations. Two interviewees even gave me second invitations so that they could enrich their narrations by adding what they may have forgotten in the first interview. Two victims openly testified to me that telling me their gruesome stories had actually been therapeutic in some way. I also deduced from the interviews that, the victims desired some form of official public testimonies which, ideally, had to assume a bottom-up approach, starting from the local communities where the political violence actually occurred to the state level. Otherwise, the victims hoped for a truth-telling strategy which they could claim ownership of possibly by being consulted by the state so that they would also be central in the decision-making process.

From these responses and observations made, it can be argued that strategies for remembering (or retrieving past acts of political violence) whether formal governmental strategies or work undertaken by communities, can provide an institutional framework in which the past can be dealt with. To this end, Hamber (1998) alludes to the notions of truth commissions, commissions of enquiry, community tribunals among others, as institutional frameworks that victims, witnesses and perpetrators can appropriate at various levels to

present and tell the 'truth' of what happened in a violent past. A common process which most respondents singled out as a critical part of their memory work and healing was the notion of public testimony.

3.4 Public Testimony

According to Cabera (1998) those who resist remembering argue that we should not re-open the wounds of the past. Yet, sometimes denying the past may not lead to the closing of the wounds. Equally, sometimes the choice to forget may also lead to closure for some victims. As evidenced in the interview excerpts so far, the victims of the 2008 political violence state that they have to remember simply because they have not forgotten! To this end Cabrera (1998) argues that "forgive and forget" is always a tempting option (often given by those who had a role to play in violence) but sooner or later, it may prove to be unsustainable in the long-term.

Be that as it may, and as reiterated by the respondents, the public testimony channel becomes a legitimate truth-telling mechanism that can facilitate catharsis or symbolic closure. By the same token, McKinney (2007) asserts that the trauma story-as-public testimony represents a therapeutic intervention that counters the depoliticisation and decontextualisation of the victim's grief, pain, suffering and loss. When the victims of the March 2008 political violence advocate remembering of the violence in the form of public testimonies, they are possibly upholding the provision for victims, witnesses and alleged perpetrators a framework to make sense of, and find meaning in their experience with state-sponsored violence.

The victims are also attempting to connect their experiences with collective and historical processes in a demand for social justice. The testimony method also gives survivors, witnesses and perpetrators a way to move from feelings of impotence, hopelessness, rage or sadness (liminality) to a position whereby they bear witness to history and their activities have political significance beyond the 'narrowing prisms' of a complicit silence (McKinney 2007: 270). Further justification for the interviewees anticipation for public testimonies can be located in van Dijk et al's (2003) argument that the construction of a coherent story in a testimony out of fragmented, incomplete and painful memories challenges defenses such as psychic numbing and allows the survivor to create at least a provisional structure of meaning and intelligibility for moving forward in life. Testimony can work to create order out of chaos. In a similar vein, Agger and Jensen (1990: 24) state that one of the most healing

factors of testimony is not necessarily the narrative production, but the ritualized 'symbolic' activity of externalizing and concretising the memory, whereby the memory becomes an object under the power of its owner.

However, it can be argued that inasmuch as the testimony method entails bearing witness to the atrocities of political violence by victims, witnesses and perpetrators alike (and therefore a liberating process), there is also a high price to pay for properly bearing witness. To this effect, I appropriate sections of McKinney's (2007) work which are relevant to my findings and assert that in the inter-subjective space created in the act of telling and witnessing, there is an allowance for the empathic transfer of trauma. Therefore, bearing witness to trauma is a sacrifice by all who are involved in the public testimony since the trauma's effects will then be embodied by both those who hear and tell the stories. Nevertheless, by subscribing to the notion of testimony in the interviews, the victims were actually elevating the truth-telling encounter to a new moral and political plane (McKinney, 2007). In empathically experiencing the survivors' suffering, witnesses renounce their individuality to become a conduit of history, a necessary condition for transforming the victim's testimony from one of personal trauma to one voicing a call for historical truth.

The findings in the study also spoke to the legitimating role of remembering political violence through public testimony and the potential of the latter to politicize (contextualize) the acts of violence. To this end, the second primary school teacher that I interviewed commented:

> …the essence of a public testimony lies in its inherent capacity to give the story of suffering a situation. Those who gather to witness the story are symbolic of history and society. One's story may not necessarily be coherent and that factual but will ultimately derive its significance from the witnesses, aggressors…and whoever is listening to it at the testimony. For me, and I also believe for other victims…the testimony…in a public space is a permanent public record in the mind, on paper, on tape…a record with witnesses who were in a way, all party to the conflict. Testimony makes it difficult to pretend that Teacher Gozden was never assaulted, humiliated and dehumanized during the run-up to the presidential run-off. (Interview, Teacher Gozden).

Gozden's comments above are congruent with Hamber and Wilson's (2002) characterization of the testimony method within a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (with the South African TRC one of the most well-known examples). The authors argue that an official TRC increasingly legitimates the multiplicity of voices that make up the national debate on a violent past. It is argued that this legitimating function of this new framing of history is crucial since during the era of repression such narratives are regularly silenced and deformed

by both ideological and repressive state apparatus such as the media, the courts, the army and the police. All the respondents in the interviews explicitly or implicitly pointed out the authoritarian role of these apparatuses in the Zimbabwean context. Thus, taking a cue from Hamber and Wilson (2002) public testimonies, and other processes to establish new truths create new spaces in which the voices of survivors, like those in this study, can be heard for the first time by a communal or national audience, many of whom previously claimed they did not know about the violent past. It can be argued that after extensive media coverage or extensive public witnessing that characterize public testimonies; the arguments that atrocities did not occur are challenged and deconstructed. In this way, the range of licit truths (and lies) is irrevocably narrowed (Hamber and Wilson 2002).

I also argue that the statement by Gozden that the presence of an audience symbolically represents history and society help us interpret remembering or memory work as a mediated and context-specific process. This is in keeping with the argument raised by Hamber and Palmary (2009) that the public recognition of suffering gives some meaning, coherence and historical significance to the suffering at individual level. If the public testimonies suggested by the interviewees in the study are to be relevant, they have to be socially, culturally and politically imbedded in a shared meaning at the family, communal and national levels. Suffering such as political violence arises from, and is resolved in a social context shaped by meanings and understandings applied to events (Summerfield, 1999). The distinctiveness of the experiences of violence therefore lies in these meanings, and not necessarily in the biographical testimony itself.

In all any notion of revealing the truth about the past is an inherently troublesome and contested undertaking. Much as the respondents overtly or covertly acknowledged that there was no one single 'truth', four of the respondents brought up an interesting dimension that there was also no one single 'truth' of victimhood. Due to the tendency of these respondents' interpretations to break from the convention, I came up with a sub-theme of 'debunking the grid of victimisation' which I explore below.

3.5 Debunking the 'Grid of Victimisation'

It was quite interesting and enlightening to note that four of my respondents; Gozden, Betty, Rishon and Mariga gave the truth-telling discourse a twist by proffering a divergent

interpretation with regard victimhood or victimization. Their similar positions on the matter defied convention whereby it is usually assumed that the labels of victim and perpetrator are categorically distinct, and where the victim is usually 'innocent' sanctified. In light of these unique responses, I appropriate La Capra's (2001) concept of 'Grid of Victimisation' for my discussion. In this grid, victims, perpetrators, witnesses and bystanders are unambiguous and categorically distinct, and victims and witnesses tend to be idealized as all good while perpetrators are all bad. Overall, the positions of these four interviewees deconstruct such a 'grid', and speak to the critical subject of how the process of remembering partly entails engagement in the dirty business of assigning/taking responsibility for atrocities and even finger-pointing. Betty's narrative is reminiscent of challenging the 'grid' when she highlights:

> In light of the violence … the elections, my brother, you also bear witness to what I am about to say. Look at X's (real name withheld) case, four houses from here. The alleged ZANU PF youths physically assaulted his mom to the extent of her fainting, they destroyed his shop to rubble and looted his merchandise and threatened to behead him when he came back from the mountains where he was hiding. Then…tables turned, on the same day, later in the evening, X targeted two of the alleged ruling party youths, physically assaulted them…one died on spot and the other died later in hospital. X also later died in remand prison, it is alleged, politicians had a hand in the death. So…it is difficult, it is complex. Who is the aggressor, who is the wronged? (Interview, Betty).

The foregoing narrative and evaluative questions from Betty, and the other three respondents pose serious conceptual, moral and practical challenges to the mythical ideology of the grid of victimization. This ideological structure jettisons psychological, moral and political ambiguity and complexity by purifying and idealizing victims and demonizing and 'othering' perpetrators (McKinney, 2007). I argue that such a characterization of victimhood is analogous to what is termed 'splitting' where representation of self and other are organized by a split between goodness and badness. However, Betty's narrative epitomizes a typical case where victimhood transcends such simplistic and reductionist boundaries to become a complex and contested identity in the wake of violence. To this effect, Hamber (1998) contends that in conflict situations, individuals can have the dual role of being the victim and the perpetrator. In my fieldwork my noticing (through observation) that, in some instances, both the houses of the alleged perpetrators were also equally destroyed to rubble, attests to Hamber's proposition.

Noteworthy is the fact that, by appropriating the interviewees' responses and constructing them as I have done, I am not implying that one cannot have certainty about who are victims and who are perpetrators. Here, my main argument is that respondents such as Betty are offering a counter-discourse to the notion of the formation of an ideology in which

psychological, social, political and moral complexity in victimhood are reduced to some form of polarization and exclusion in the truth-telling process. For instance, in the classical case of the Vietnamese veterans that Young (1995) studied, it was assumed that the veterans committed atrocities and that telling their trauma stories would, by and large, involve them speaking as perpetrators of violence. However, in the final analysis, the Vietnam veterans in the program were considered both victims and perpetrators.

Sentiments that deconstructed the distinct categorization of the perpetrator-victim dichotomy, and idealized the innocence of victims while 'othering' perpetrators were manifest in Mariga's narrative in which he said:

> While we acknowledge the genuine direct suffering of the so-called targeted people, who also include people like me…I was thoroughly beaten by the so-called ruling party youths for being a ward secretary of the opposition…I finally sat and said…these youths, are they not also wronged? I know this sounds stupid. But look, I know some of them whose relatives also died in this violence. Again some of them were sort of in a hostage situation where the underhand dealings of certain political individuals and institutions were, in an open or tricky way forcing a son to attack his father because the father belonged to the opposition. The son is wrong and he is also wronged… I once presented this idea to my close friend…he didn't see the sense…now he acknowledges it… (Interview, Mariga).

To further discuss this ambivalence of victimhood presented in Mariga's deliberations, I invest in literature and similar empirical evidence presented by Hamber (1998). The role of the so-called victims and perpetrators is often emphasized or de-emphasised depending on the political context. For instance, in the case study in which Mariga features, differentiation of victimhood largely centred on political affiliation and activities. Thus, victimhood is synonymous with political opposition members. However, according to Hamber (1998) as one delves deeper into most conflicts, what soon becomes apparent is that many actors in a violent conflict have long and variant histories in which they have had multiple roles. In simpler terms, they have been both a victim and perpetrator. The author illustrates that one of the sharpest lessons is drawn from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission where it has proved to be a mistake to narrowly define individuals. For instance, many amnesty applicants, particularly those involved in paramilitary groups like the African National Congress Self-Defence Units have revealed a complex web in which they have played the role of victim and perpetrator. This is analogous to the scenario given by Mariga above. However, these statements must not be misconstrued to imply that *everyone is a victim* after a violent conflict.

Further findings from the study also debunk the tendency of the grid of victimization to narrowly define victimhood. For instance, it was Rishon's opinion that, the problem during the March 2008 politically motivated violence is that many people focused too much on the visible physical violence at the expense of more subtle forms of violence. In reference to the latter he cited cases where in suspected opposition strongholds, polling stations were minimized. According to him, the electorate in those spaces was also victims. To this effect Statman (1995) in Hamber (1998) is relevant when he argues that defining victims too narrowly weighs on the notion of perpetrators and victims too heavily to the extent of ignorance of the unique structural issues related to victimization in the context in question. For instance, in Rishon's Zimbabwean situation, the structural issue is the lopsided electoral process. In all, the four survivor's interpretation of victimization, took victimhood to a new moral and ideological plane where reductionist and simplistic understandings of victims are brought into light and challenged.

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CHAPTER 4

VARIGATED SILENCIES AROUND THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE

4.1 Introduction

The main discussion point of the findings in the foregoing chapter revolved explicitly or implicitly around the narrative imperative, given the liminal space that the victims of the March 2008 political violence occupy. There was glaring empirical evidence that the victims still have a burning desire to recover the past through truth-telling in public space, giving the implication that this has not been forthcoming, and that there has been some silence that has been complicit with the violence. In light of the evidence and arguments in chapter 3, and other complementary findings, this chapter captures another overarching theme, silence. While this silence was shown to be experienced at individual, community and societal level, more interest and focus is on the various forms of silence that were experienced at each of these levels. Consequently, and more specifically, this section of the discussion explores silence as: an adaptation to domination by less powerful groups; some form of cultural censorship; a marker of liminality; and as humiliated silence. Despite this categorization, it is significant to realize that these forms of silence overlap and were therefore experienced thus by the victims.

4.2 Silence as Adaptation to Discourse and Repression.

The interviewees' narratives and my field notes were indicative that victims and witnesses exhibited an apparent fear and reluctance to openly and freely talk about the March 2008 politically motivated violence. This was evident at the individual, family, community and therefore national levels. This suppression of the victims' narrative was more explicit in my observation that in each encounter with my respondents, the moment I introduced and elaborated my topic, they spoke in hushed voices and immediately warned me how dangerous and extraordinary it was to discuss the violence even if it was now five years since it had occurred. Some of them were even amazed at this researcher's courage, fearlessness and 'recklessness' to bring up such a politically sensitive and incredible topic. Interestingly,

respondents like Aunt Dorcas, Chenzira, Rishon and Gozden generally indicated that the overall silence about the March 2008 election violence and other election-related violence since 2000 did not signify some lack of knowledge of the gruesome experiences, but an overall fear that most of the perpetrators were variously linked to some more powerful political or state authority. To this end, part of Aunt Dorcas' narrative offers a synopsis of this when she states:

> …you only talk of 2008. I have lived long enough, enough to also see the Matabeleland political disturbances…ok most recently the killings, kidnappings, beatings, torching, arbitrary arrests associated with the 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 elections. 2008 was extremely bad and during this time those associated…correctly or suspiciously with the MDC suffered the most. As has been the norm…you cannot confront the offender or the least talk about it. How can you talk when an offender even if he or she is your relative or fellow villager you see daily, is willingly or forcibly doing it for, and therefore has the protection of those from ZANU PF, influential politicians, the police, the government sectors? You know, but you discipline your tongue, and you are safe. Let me laugh, even when a unity government was formed in 2008 between ZANU PF and the two MDCs…people tried to talk…I think ZANU PF still controlled this new thing, yes inclusive government…instead we were told to just forgive and forget…(Interview, Aunt Dorcas)

What is apparent from Aunt Dorcas' deliberations is that the silence associated with the eras of politically motivated violence that she refers to, is not a result of the lack of knowledge on what happened. Rather, the silence is motivated by the real or imagined fear and possibility that certain dominant groups or individuals/groups that represent them have the repressive and/or ideological power to silence alternative discourses around the violence. She also explicitly singles out influential politicians, political parties such as ZANU PF, and state sectors that wield and control political power. The latter is then used to suppress and repress the multiple truths that originate from the villagers who actually were victims or witnesses of the 2008 politically motivated violence.

This analysis gains credibility in light of the argument by Brockmeier (2002) that if social memory is envisaged as a politically motivated representation of the past, that requires collective forgetting, silence may not always signal a lack of knowledge about an issue. But it may be an adaptation to power by less powerful groups whose ideology is not accepted premised on that those with power are able to silence any views divergent from their own. Thus, in light of Dorcas' narrative and my field notes, the victims' silence may well be interpreted as an adaptation of less powerful alleged MDC victims to the domination of ZANU PF and its political representatives at various levels of society not to mention ZANU PF's appropriation of state apparatus like the police, media and judiciary. Similarly, Hamber and Wilson (2002) also opine that the myriad of voices that constitute the narratives on a

violent past, are during an authoritarian era, incessantly and systematically silenced and deformed by state apparatus like the media, the courts, uniformed forces and other public institutions.

The argument of the systematic silencing of the multiple truths of the 2008 political violence victims by dominant and powerful groups such as ZANU PF, the police and judiciary gains strength in the Human Rights Watch's (HRW) (2008b) claim that since 2002, ZANU PF has politicized the police force. In Althussian terms, the Zimbabwean police force has been appropriated by one dominant political party as a repressive state apparatus. Zimbabwe's police force has since 2002 been criticized for being partisan resulting in the rule of law not being fully observed as most perpetrators of violence have not been arrested and convicted despite the fact that cases of political violence have been reported (Human Rights Watch, 2008b). The partisanship of the Zimbabwean police was detected and condemned as early as 2002, by a fact-finding mission by the African Commission on Human and People's rights. The Commission observed that the Zimbabwe Republic Police's (ZRP) Law and Order Unit seemed to "operate under political instructions and without accountability to the ZRP command structures." (HRW, 2008b:7). This coincides with the fact that most of the perpetrators are aligned to, or were working on behalf of the ruling party and the state. This explains Dorcas' observation that the perpetrators are still freely moving about the village without any convictions or arrests.

Thus, the Zimbabwean police and ZANU PF have conspired to silence the narratives of the less powerful victims (who allegedly belong to the MDC formations) by instilling fear in them through arbitrary arrests, and through the systematic protection of perpetrators. Cases of complainants, instead of offenders being arrested are prevalent in Zimbabwe. To this effect, the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (2009) cite an illustration of a case of about 88 villagers who were arrested in Nyanga for demanding the return of their stolen property by ZANU PF supporters during the run-up to the June 2008 presidential election re-run.

Dorcas' sentiments also point to the use of the various arms of government by the powerful in entrenching the 'conspiracy of silence'. These sentiments are in sync with an assertion by Moyo (2010) that the independence of the judiciary in Zimbabwe has been compromised since 2000. More specifically, the HRW (2008b) maintains that ZANU PF has compromised the independence and impartiality of the judiciary judges, magistrates and prosecutors.

According to Moyo (2010) the judges are influenced by the executive, and there is also use of threats, transfers and dismissal of judiciary staff. Thus, owing to this lack of judicial independence, there has been a partisan application of the law and this has impacted negatively on the quest for retributive justice by victims and survivors of political violence who allegedly, are mostly MDC supporters. Consequently, as the latter group has no powerful representative who can, for instance, also appropriate the judicial system to their advantage. As Carey et al (2010) state, the challenges for countries in transition (including Zimbabwe) is that in most instances, perpetrators are in positions of authority. As a result, relatively less powerful groups such as the victims of the political violence (who are mostly MDC supporters) are silenced in their quest for various forms of symbolic closure and healing.

The findings also revealed that elitist bureaucratic institutions/ processes that have been established by the Zimbabwean government to promote reconciliation and national healing (immediately after the 2008 elections-related violence) have been hijacked by powerful political entities to the detriment of ordinary civilians who were actually affected by the violence. To this end, the formation of the Organ on National Healing Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) under the authority and chairmanship of the three presidents of ZANU PF and the two MDC formations in April 2009 was a milestone development that potentially opened up possibilities for the first national discussion on transitional justice. Subsequently, victims of political violence were therefore hopeful and optimistic that their needs and suffering would be considered. Accordingly, in one particular interview, Rishon, the school teacher, elaborates:

> I was following the political events in this country…the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) was formed in accordance to Article 7 of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of 2008. It is to lead national healing and reconciliation processes especially after the 2008 political violence…led by 3 state ministers from ZANU PF and the 2 MDC parties who are signatories to the GPA. ZANU PF seemingly dominates proceedings in this organisation. Do you think as political as it is, it can represent the grassroots and the victims? Most villagers do not know of its existence and if we do, its mandate is not clear and I am not aware of its implementation… (Interview, Rishon)

Also from my field notes, I gathered that most victims were not aware of the existence of the ONHRI. Ironically, this institution is supposed to serve these same people by promoting reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the 2008 political violence. This scenario is barely surprising as the ONHRI was an elite-driven process in which the three presidents from the three political parties (as mentioned by Rishon) dominated the process to the

detriment of local communities. As a result, the ONHRI is silent on issues of retributive justice and truth-telling, and how these are to be implemented. Yet Amadiume and An-Maim (2000) argue that truth-telling and justice are central to reconciliation and healing processes. Suffice to argue that the political elite from the three political parties have, through a top-down process crafted ONHRI and, knowingly or unknowingly, conspired to silence the victims of the 2008 political violence by denying them ownership of and legitimacy over the healing and reconciliation process. Thus, taking a cue from Hamber and Wilson (2002), it can be argued that the elite-driven, top-down oriented discourse of national healing enshrined in the ONHRI can be an ideology for subordinating and silencing the diverse individual needs of the victims and witnesses of the 2008 political violence to the political expediency of 'national unity and reconciliation.' In all, I can argue that, as an ideological apparatus, the ONHRI, in this scenario, serves to protect and uphold the political interests and ideas of powerful political bureaucrats at the expense of the victims' need for genuine symbolic processes of closure.

Furthermore, as eluded to by Rishon in the foregoing quotation, the ONHRI lacks political neutrality as its membership prioritised bringing the three warring political parties (ZANU PF and the two MDC formations) together in the spirit of reconciliation. Hence, the leadership of the ONHRI is drawn from political parties and as such, the likelihood of the pioritisation of political agendas to the detriment of victims' healing has been increasingly inevitable. To this end, ZANU PF, arguably, as a dominant bargainer in the ONHRI process has managed to peddle the ideology of restorative justice through the 'forgive and forget' mantra. This has left no option for restorative justice. In this vein, the ONHRI has not made any direct attempts towards holding perpetrators of the organized political violence accountable. Logic shows that the 'forgive and forget' ideology plays well in ZANU PF's hands since the HRW (2008b) observes that most of the perpetrators of the 2008 political violence were ZANU PF supporters. This ideological logic seems to be substantiated by Cabrera (1998) when he asserts that 'forgive and forget' is always a tempting option often given by those who had a role to play in the violence.

Consequently, ZANU PF as a dominant political entity (relative to the less powerful victim groups and the two MDC formations) has created a new regime of forgetting in which the 'forgive and forget' ideology is abused to provide perpetrators with impunity for their earlier acts of violence. Thus, I argue that ZANU PF is joining history in denying and silencing the

multiple truths of the less powerful victims of the 2008 political violence. To borrow from Brockemeier (2002) in this sense, silence is relative as there is a dominant ideology that causes other ideologies to be silent as power plays a significant role in what is remembered collectively or what is silenced.

Nonetheless, the silence that permeates through the research findings cannot be solely accounted for in terms of power relations. Silence can also be actively and purposively appropriated by the victims of political violence as a form of cultural censorship as discussed immediately below.

4.3 Silence as Cultural Censorship

During the interviews it was also interesting to realize how some of the survivors of the political violence professed to actively choose forgetting as a way of handling past atrocities. To import Hamber's (2000) conceptualization, it seems these villagers have remembered to forget as a way of moving on with a new way of life. In this context, it could also be argued that the attendant silence does not signify lack of knowledge concerning the losses and pain of a politically violent past. Instead, as agentive or purposive actors, the victims emerge as culturally and politically embedded individuals who have actively made the choice to remain silent for the sake of maintaining the last that remains of the once-strong moral ties within the family and community so that life moves on to another new level. Consequently, contrary to silence being a result of dominant power suppressing a violent past, silence is a choice made for survival by victims and survivors. Thus, forgetting and drawing a line through the past, it could be argued, is as much a method for dealing with the past as remembering and truth recovery.

For instance, the essence, logic and dynamic of actively 'remembering to forget' are significantly captured by one of my respondents who comments:

> …of course, telling your story for healing and obtaining justice is critical. But I also at the same time think that 'letting bygones be bygones' is sometimes also another workable choice …as most of us did at independence after suffering repression and violence in the hands of the Rhodesian colonial regime for nearly a decade. We extended the hand of reconciliation to our former oppressors when we gained political independence in 1980…we chose to forget as if nothing ever happened for the sake of a new Zimbabwe to move forward. Now the same has worked for me at a personal level, ZANU PF youths… thoroughly beat me up, destroyed my carpentry shop, humiliated my family…as justice seems remote and avenging steers more violence, I have personally said in my mind, I have to put this behind at the back of my mind, dust myself up and look, I am back in business…rebuilt my shop and my family and the community can move forward. By the end of the day, communal ties still have to bind us together

> as villagers…it is a difficult choice given the deaths, disappearances, torching, but I have made my choice and it is working for me…(Interview, Fedson)

While it may be credibly argued that the stance taken by Fedson (choosing to forget) is dependent on the nature of the atrocities suffered, at a personal level, during the stretch of politically motivated violence, it still remains apparent that not all silence can be attributed to liminality or power relations as is usually the norm. In this instance, remembering and forgetting, contrary to popular belief, march a line close to one another. Forgetting-induced silence is chosen by victims in the same way remembering is chosen to aid symbolic closure. However, it also shows how the interplay of remembering, forgetting and moving on after a violent past is complex and context-specific as situations are not uniform.

Furthermore, the portrait of silence painted by Fedson in the interview fits well into Sherrif's (2000) theory of silence as a form of cultural censorship. To this effect, in highlighting the agency of individuals and the community not to speak about issues that they are well aware of, the author asserts that the choice to be silent does not mean insignificance of the issue or acceptance of a dominant ideology. Fedson and like-minded victims may therefore choose to be silent within the struggle of what is considered politically and socially memorable. As during the interviews, there was strong emphasis on the need for mending and maintaining a strong sense of community that had, arguably, existed prior to the violence it suffices to argue that the need to restore a strong moral fabric in the villages motivates silence as cultural censorship. In tandem to this, Sherrif (2000) argues that silence enforced by cultural censorship may represent a defense people may choose to be silent about their trauma as a way of containing the effects that its narration may bring.

Interpretation of the respondents' silence as a form of cultural censorship can also find purchase in Argent and Schramm's (2010) formulation that in a social context in which victims are forced to continue living alongside perpetrators (as is the case in this study) it may not be 'good to talk' and efforts may be focused on silencing the past rather than voicing polemical and divisive interpretations of it. In this scenario the imperative to forget for the sake of moving on and rebuilding broken communal ties takes precedence over 'opening up wounds' of a past that would otherwise never be fully healed by truth recovery. In these circumstances, Hamilton (2006) also argues that we are faced with the inseparability of forgetting and remembering, obliteration and continuity. For the author, these equations do not oppose a minus to a plus, but, rather amount to one single bifurcated process which only

in its entirety can be constitutive of a livable present. Again, the paradox surrounding silence (forgetting as a cultural contract) and remembering, is laid bare by Hamber (1998) when he asserts that, despite growing research on strategies for dealing with the past in countries that have witnessed a period of violence it is not clear how forgetting the past, or alternatively, remembering the past, actually avoids or provokes political violence in the future.

The silence that is also complicit with the violence experienced by the villagers in this study also can find explanation in the theory of liminality. Liminality has been discussed in a foregoing chapter and at this stage it is used to discuss silence.

4.4 Silence as a Marker of Liminality

As observed in an earlier discussion section in chapter 3, Granny Rudo and Sekai's direct quotations indicate their occupancy of liminal space. Similarly, Chenzira's direct quotation below which suggests her desire not to speak about the disappearance of her father, may be forever as, according to her, she has up to now failed to come to terms with it. This is a hint to her occupancy of liminal space:

> As for me, especially me, and perhaps two of my brothers up to today…for me it could be up to forever, yes. I don't want to talk about it. Even if the conditions in the village allowed me to talk..no! No! I swear, I cannot withstand the idea of speaking about the disappearance…each of the two times, this is the third with you.. I have attempted to speak about it, I break down, true, I have failed to understand it, no body, no news…No, I can't speak about it anymore. At first I thought I could help you with my story.. No, no, my ex classmate, sorry…So how is school [university]? (Interview, Chenzira)

It is noteworthy that I had to stop this interview after about fifteen minutes as I could see that Chenzira was quite distraught and shaken the moment she attempted to reflect on the disappearance. I also had to suggest counselling services for her at a local NGO. The declaration not to speak that is attendant to the situation portrayed by Chenzira and those in similar circumstances can find explanatory extent in Weingarten's (2004) postulation that silence may be attributable to individuals and society being overwhelmed at the prospect of facing up to the effects of violence. Otherwise the silence obtains from the victim's realization that uncovering the violent memories of the past can be psychologically more painful than leaving them undisturbed. Silence becomes a marker of liminality. The grief, anger, anxiety and pain resultant from the victims' direct experience with political violence and its attendant trauma continue to plague the victim insofar as to take away their ability and right to speak about it.

Taking a cue from (Hamber and Wilson, 2002) the silence emanates from the fact that in their occupancy of liminal space, victims such as Chenzira live in a state somewhere between denial and obsession where, to a large extent, there is failure to accept and incorporate the loss into the functioning of everyday life. Summerfield (1999) further substantiates that without closure, the victims can be found to be focused and fixated on the traumatic event in their lives. They become immersed in it, and thus, their pain and grief is pushed inside to the extent that they are neither able to forget nor to speak.

The theorization of the silence (evident in the interviews and my field notes) as a marker of liminality can also draw heavily from Danieli (1995) who argues that people without closure can be said to be part of society but also removed from society, torn between keeping the memory of the dead alive and being part of the living. The author terms it *conspiracy of silence* which works by intensifying the profound sense of isolation, loneliness, and mistrust of society that survivors of the political violence feel. Where violence may bring rapture between survivors and the rest of society, society will never comprehend the depth of their experience and thus do not speak of their experiences. This rapture the rest of society and the survivors therefore keeps survivors in the status of the victim in that their lives do not return to the state they were before the violence and simultaneously do not reach a level of normalcy.

4.5 Humiliated Silence

In the narratives, most respondents implicitly or explicitly professed experiencing some humiliation in the multifarious acts of political violence they encountered. More specifically Rishon, the school teacher, and Fedson, the carpenter gave gruesome encounters of the humiliation they suffered as they were physically assaulted and left naked by alleged ZANU PF youths in front of school children and family members respectively.

The ensuing silence that may affect victims like Rishon and Fedson can also be one that could be explained as an interesting and paradoxical dimension of forgetting namely *humiliated silence* (Connerstone, 2008). Perhaps it is paradoxical to speak of such a condition as evidence for a form of forgetting, since occasions of humiliation are so difficult to forget. It is often easier to forget physical pain than to forget humiliation. Yet few things are more eloquent than a massive silence.

According to Connerstone (2008) in the collusive silence brought on by a particular kind of collective scheme, there is both a detectable desire to forget and sometimes the actual act of forgetting. We cannot of course infer the fact of forgetting from silence. Nonetheless, some acts of silence may be an attempt to bury a violent past beyond expression and the reach of memory. Interestingly, when linked to the findings in the study, such silences and the desire to forget may be essential ingredients in the process of survival in the wake or aftermath of politically motivated violence.

CHAPTER 5

IN SEARCH OF AN ELUSIVE CLOSURE: REPARATION, REVENGE AND THEIR PARADOXES.

5.1 Introduction

The preceding Chapter located and discussed, within various theoretical arguments and literature, the silences that were evident in the research findings. This section takes the discussion further and reflects on the dynamics, ambivalence and complexity which inform the victims' attempts at finding resolve and closure in the aftermath of the March 2008 politically motivated violence. Interestingly, most of the findings in this section are indicative of a reorientation of, or break away from conventionally-established ways of seeking closure. In other words, the dynamics and essence of material reparation, symbolic reparation and revenge are appropriated by the victims and redeployed in more innovative, pragmatic and location specific ways of managing a violent past. Their narratives around the emergent theme of reparation speak to: the 'double-edged' nature of reparation; the prioritisation of symbolic forms, over material forms of reparation with special mention of apology; and more significantly, the appropriation and redefining of revenge as one most 'appropriate' and 'refreshing' ways of 'moving on' in the aftermath of an unresolved violent past. According to all the interviewees, noteworthy is that since the 2008 political violence, no meaningful and genuine attempts at reparation have been made, and victims and perpetrators share the same socio-political and physical space, daily.

5.2 Non-Apology and Discourse in Zimbabwean Politics.

In the aftermath of the cessation of hostilities, the objective is no longer merely a 'negative peace'-that is,-the absence of violence-but a social transformation that will restore broken social bonds and reinstate collapsed institutions (Hamber, 2009). Thus, in this dual normative context, apologies have become a useful tool of peace-building and healing for victims of political violence. According to Lazare (2004) numerous authors argue that apologies are an especially potent means of resolving conflicts and repairing damaged relationships between individuals, groups and nations. These arguments could not be further from the truth when checked against the increasing concern that the victims in this study showed towards the need for both interpersonal and public apologies. Almost half of the victims in this study revealed

that they regarded the idea of apologies as an immensely important part of a process towards healing their pain and re-establishing broken or weakened relationships with their aggressors. The respondents shared the opinion that apology is both a historical and traditional approach that Zimbabwean communities have usually used successfully to solve even large disputes. Two of the interviewees argued that apology was most appropriate in this case, where villagers with a legacy of a strong sense of community had suddenly turned against each other. According to them, apology would have a healing and reuniting effect as most affected villagers had a legacy of community to protect. To this end, David, one of the victims who were severely beaten, his livestock confiscated and his homestead destroyed had this to say:

> We really suffered at the hands of the violent 'youths' of the ruling party…but we cannot run away from the reality that we, sufferers and wrong-doers, still remain a community…maybe not as bound as before. But a rather simple but basic recipe that has traditionally reunited those in conflict in our culture is to say that one is sorry. Sorry has a lot of meaning in our culture even when it's rejected at first. I believe that the individuals in this community, even with the help of the traditional leadership…of course also the government should admit and recognize that we were wronged, they created chaos, they should accept responsibility….set pride and silly excuses aside. It seems like climbing a mountain, but who knows,...but the truth first, and then, 'sorries,' 'sorries' and more 'sorries'. Especially between us villagers, first. Face to face. I don't know of any offenders who have done that,...even the politicians themselves…no sorry. I strongly believe that government has a lot to do with it, yes, we are its people, so are the wrong-doers…they must lead and say sorry, sorry…individuals, families will see the importance of this… (Interview, David)

David's sentiments are in resonance with, and representative of those of the other interviewees who, despite explicitly and implicitly expressing their need for 'genuine' apologies, emphasized that such apology had not been forthcoming. Although these victims gave precedence to interpersonal 'sorries' at individual and community level, they explicitly and mostly blamed ZANU PF politicians and the government, especially after the 2008 and, most recently, the landmark 2013 elections, for failure to motivate the acceptance of responsibility and recognition of human suffering brought by state-led political violence. According to the victims, despite the symbolic reparative value embodied in a 'sorry', the worst case scenario has been that the government itself, as a supposed custodian of the nation, has not been forthcoming with an apology. It can therefore be argued that the ruling party (ZANU PF) as the core of the government has implicitly cultivated and legitimated the perpetrators' overall non-apologetic stance, at both the state and inter-personal levels.

Despite, the explicit evidence from victims, like David cited above, that a sorry could arguably go a long way in healing the victims and mending weakened communal ties, the prevalence of non-apology can be explained from a state-centric perspective. This is irrespective of the fact that, in the final analysis, the victims desire localized, interpersonal

'sorries'. I argue that the absence of apology at both the interpersonal and political (government) levels finds explanation in the fact that the government itself, through the ruling party, ZANU PF, was a perpetrator. This is in tandem with Blatz et al's (2009) argument that a government is unlikely to offer an apology when it anticipates a major political backlash from civic society especially if the state had a hand in fomenting and legitimating the violence for the state's own political ends. As argued in the previous sections, ZANU PF allegedly appropriated state apparatus such as the police, army and youth militia to inflict all forms of violence on supposed opposition supporters so as to win the 2008 harmonised presidential and parliamentary elections (Raftopolous, 2013).

Thus, after these 2008 elections, and the recent 2013 landmark elections, perpetrators, who mainly belonged to the ruling party, ZANU PF, still remain in positions of political authority (Carey et al, 2010). Suffice to argue that, the lack of apology from the government could be attributed to the imminence of judicial repercussions and fear of reprisal through the court system. To also borrow from Ireton and Kovras (2012) this non-apology may also be emanating from the knowledge by alleged state perpetrators, that the victim groups could be empowered by an apology which could result in a political backlash by civic society which might render a legitimacy crisis to a government which allegedly got into power on the 'ticket' of violence. Consequently, the state, or those who participated in violence on its behalf, are unwilling to apologise since they will not be prepared to give up the political power that they wield through use and abuse of violence and various arms of the political system.

Furthermore, the insistence by the victims that the government is responsible for the persistent culture of non-apology both at the state and interpersonal level is particularly interesting when analysed within the context of discourse. In Foucauldian terms, it can be argued that, ZANU PF, as a ruling party and a dominant political entity in government, has created and maintained specific and hegemonic meanings of what restorative justice is. In the process other alternative meanings that directly include apology have been suppressed, and have lost relevance, not because they are insignificant, but because they do not serve the interests of those in power. More specifically, in order to suppress apology at all levels, it can be argued that the state (under ZANU PF's control) has discursively constructed a specific language of restorative justice where the latter means nothing other than the 'forgive and forget' (HRW 2008b) ideology. Interestingly and ironically, the discursive resource of

'forgive and forget' as used by ZANU PF and the state deliberately jettisons the concept and substance of apology. Yet, as the victims in this research emphatically insist, apology is a critical element in seeking symbolic closure, and individual and community healing. Apology entails remorse, acceptance of guilt/responsibility, acknowledgement of harm, recognition of victim suffering, admission of wrong-doing and forbearance (Blatz et al, 2009). Therefore, a 'forgive and forget' discourse that is devoid of apology is made to gain hegemonic extent by ZANU PF (and those who acted on its behalf in the violence) as it seemingly makes them immune to all these commitments of a genuine apology. Taking a cue from Carey (2010) the 'forgive and forget' discourse plays well into the hands of ZANU PF and the state as most of the perpetrators of the 2008 political violence were allegedly aligned to ZANU PF. Similarly, Cabrera (1998) argues that, 'forgive and forget' (without genuine apology) is a tempting option often given by those who had a role to play in the violence.

Also, in reference to the lack of apology at the individual and community levels, Rishon, the school teacher, who is a victim of the violence, also singled out the 2008 Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) as lacking political neutrality and clear operational and legal frameworks. Hence it is susceptible to abuse and manipulation by powerful politicians. According to Carey et al (2010) in practice, ONHRI has had minimal and a politicised implementation, and has been hijacked by powerful political entities, especially those from ZANU PF in order to protect perpetrators. Again, I also argue that the ONHRI has been deliberately designed to promote, defend and uphold the hegemonic discourse of 'forgive and forget' at the expense of the reparative value of apology. The ONHRI, finds its practicality and expression through ZANU PF aligned politicians who uphold and defend the discourse of the need for perpetrators and victims to suddenly form alliances, forgive and forget, and move on. They seem deliberately oblivious to fact that individual healing through truth-telling and apology is necessary before any meaningful reconciliation can be realised. This scenario is in sync with the argument by Ireton and Kovras (2009) that political systems which force people to make 'artificial' alliances or hinder open and critical debate on restorative justice can easily prevent apologies by discouraging political elites from genuinely tackling the issue. In the final analysis, taking a cue from Nobles (2008) I argue that no matter how strong the civil support for an apology (as evidenced by the victims' need for it in this study) without subscription and genuine support

from the ruling political elites (ZANU PF, the two MDC formations and the ZANU PF –led government) apology may never come to fruition.

Furthermore, the prevailing culture of 'non-apology' that the interviewees consistently referred to can also be located in the discourse of nationalist politics that the perpetrators seemingly subscribe to. ZANU PF as a historically revolutionary party have as recently as 2000 (at the motivation of emerging strong opposition politics of the MDC) reinvented the discursive meanings around nationalism. The schema of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and patriotism has been manipulated insomuch as to consider the use of violence against 'detractors' of such values of nationalist discourse legitimate and justified. 'Detractors' entails anyone, local or foreign, who dares challenge the rulers, irrespective of a genuine need to create debate and balance on critical national issues. Thus, in the aftermath of protracted political violence against these so-called 'detractors,' perpetrators may be reluctant to apologise as they deem their end (to uphold national sovereignty) as justified. This state of affairs seems to find purchase in Ireton and Kovras' (2012) assertion that perpetrator groups may also believe that they have nothing to apologise for, and that their cause justified any means or that the victims deserved the violence they suffered. Nonetheless, this attitude demonstrates a lack of respect for the victim and their families as well as an inability to admit that even if the violence towards particular individuals could somehow be justified, their families and relatives did not deserve to suffer. Such an attitude may be a testament to the perpetrator group's pride, its fear of humiliation and fear of change to a political system that this group has always manipulated for political mileage.

Nevertheless, the insistence of almost half of the victims on the need for adopting apologies due to their symbolic value (despite the prevailing non-apology stance) spoke to the need to consider the essence, substance and complexity of apology in a post-violence setting. This theme consistently reverberated in the victims' search for localized, organically developed forms of closure to their traumatic past. As a result, the next section discusses apology as portrayed by the interviewees.

5.3 The Essence of Apology: An Insider Perspective.

Overall, half of the victims that I interviewed shared a common skeptical position that initially asking for, and granting of forgiveness and reconciliation (as dictated by the ONHRI) could be a premature, remote and an overambitious attempt at dealing with a traumatic past.

Otherwise, it was like 'short-circuiting' the victims' personal healing and possible closure. Nonetheless, there was generally overwhelming evidence that these victims, first and foremost, need apologies. This is especially so, given that, the perpetrators and the victims still remain community members and inevitably interact on a daily basis. My empirical observation that the victims in the study really need apologies is also in tune with the assertion by Ireton and Kovras (2012) that our era has been an age of apology where there are numerous examples of states, corporations and individuals addressing injurious actions in the past by issuing apologies. While highly distressed victims who, for instance lost their beloved ones through deaths or disappearances in this study, tend to stick to resentment and do not seem to expect the offender to apologise, the other half of the victims appreciate that the offender apologises, repudiates his/her deeds, expresses regret and promises to change for the better. This increasing need for apologies after the March 2008 political violence in Zimbabwe is aptly captured when Betty says:

> Yes, yes, yeah, I, and other victims like my relatives W, X, Y and Z expected…yeah and still expect the wrong-doers, some of whom are relatives and neighbours, to one day find it in their minds and hearts to come and simply say they are sorry. Maybe they fear that facing us will create confrontation and precipitate further conflict. But…they can come; anyway…all depends on what they say, how they say it and why they are saying it. …Sorry can have power if only the culprit says yes, I did this…I physically assaulted her, I destroyed her house, I was involved in the abduction of X. Then, again say "I am wrong"…without buts, explain their [perpetrators] action face-to-face to us. In fact there should be signs that the culprits are regretting all they did. Of course, also the promise that it [the offense] will not be repeated! To me, the most important and first stage is saying sorry directly between individuals, families….for the good of the community. If the government, politicians want in, they need to involve us…we have the inside story, the pain…saying sorry is very very personal my brother. Let us start between individuals and search for the meaning of their 'sorries'… (Betty, Interview).

Sekai's views speak to a scenario, where according to Hamber and Palmary (2009) the crafting and delivery of apologies has a critical symbolic element which can be one of the primary agents for concretising and ritualizing the suffering of recipients at individual, state and societal levels. For Sekai and other respondents who share similar views, what seems to be central in 'saying sorry' is how the recognition and acknowledgement of their suffering is conveyed by the symbolic acts of individual tormentors. Otherwise, for the victims in this study, what matters is the underlying symbolic value embedded in the perpetrator's apology. At this point, drawing from the Hamber and Wilson's (2002) symbolic forms of reparation such as apologies can, although not necessarily, play a critical role in processes of opening up space for bereavement, addressing trauma and ritualizing symbolic closure. However, as revealed by Sekai's deliberations, the overall content of an apology has a great bearing on its

acceptance and effectiveness. I therefore appropriate the elements of apology that Sekai highlights and discuss them below.

Drawing from Sekai's characterization of an apology, the latter's symbolic value is enshrined in its elements such as expression of remorse (*Iam sorry/ regret*); acceptance of responsibility by the perpetrator *(It's my fault/ I am wrong)*; recognition and acknowledgement of harm and/or victim suffering *(e.g. I know I caused you pain and grief)* and forbearance *(I will never do it again).* Sekai's assertion that those who violated her and her relatives should express regret is in keeping with the reasoning that an expression of remorse indicates that a perpetrator believes that an apology is warranted and cares about the victim (Lazare, 2004). Victims seek to discover if perpetrators regret breaking the social rules and if the emotional expression of regret indicates a desire on the part of the offender not to repeat the various acts of political violence that she or he inflicted on the victim. Interestingly, according to Ohbuchi and Sato (1994), studies done by researchers support the positive relationship remorse and the acceptance of an apology. Regret and remorse are an indication that the perpetrator has internalized blame is therefore ready to accept responsibility for his/her actions. However, when perpetrators do not feel much regret for reasons, like, that they were unfairly treated, apology may become a strategic ploy, one in which the offender does not have a true emotional involvement. This is argument is expanded in a later section.

An apology, by assigning responsibility, can also help offset a common tendency to blame victims for their own troubles. It is thus, understandable why the victims in this study advocate apology. According to McNamara et al (2003) the most frequently cited variables which impacted victims' negative perceptions of perpetrators were that the offender did not take responsibility or show remorse for what they did. Drawing upon the argument offered by Hamber and Wilson (2002) it can be argued that by symbolically presenting a past of politically-motivated violence in apology and the subsequent personalization of the apology, can concretise the violent past and help re-attribute responsibility. The authors maintain that the latter stage is significant because labeling responsibility can appropriately redirect blame towards perpetrators and relieve the moral ambiguity and guilt that victims often feel. From Sekai's, and other respondents' emphasis on the apology imperative, it follows that it is only when offenders (via apology) take responsibility for their actions that they accept the moral wrong. When they do so, victims perceive them more positively and more likely to accept their apologies.

Victims such as Sekai, in the study, by upholding the primacy of apology also, in the process, call for the recognition and acknowledgement of harm and victim suffering by offenders. According to Lazare (2004) on one hand, it is through such acknowledgement that a perpetrator validates the victim's pain and corroborates their suffering for outsiders. On the other hand, a promise of forbearance can work to restore trust between individuals and groups; it indicates that the perpetrator values the victim and is willing to keep them safe. Even when the promise not to reoffend may not be mentioned directly, studies find that victims may assume that the perpetrators will not reoffend when they express remorse and regret for their actions (Scher and Darley, 1997). In all, by subscribing to the symbolic representation of their violent past through apology, the victims in the study imply that the acknowledgement of the various acts of political violence, admittance of guilt and taking responsibility (by perpetrators) can re-establish trust and begin a process that opens the possibility for victims to forgive perpetrators, bringing to an end cycles of resentment and retribution.

However, some of the interviewees were aware of the complexities surrounding apology as a symbolic act done by perpetrators. More specifically, while expressing their need for apology, they were also aware of the potential traps and downside that the process could pose. To this effect, one of the interviewees whose two beasts were confiscated during the political violence had this to say:

> Uuuuuuuuum…yes saying that one is sorry for forcibly taking the part of wealth [the two beasts] that I depended on can be a good starting point. But…but, apology is not as straight forward or as simple as they make it sound. A simple sorry, from X to me….uuuuuum, but how do I know X is giving it sincerely from his heart,…what finally pushed him to come and say sorry. I may be suspicious especially with perpetrators getting a hint of the village rumours that victims are resorting to bewitchment as revenge. Look, they say W's family sought the services of an expert nyanga [traditional healer]…tha'ts why offender A is now moving around the village like a moron uttering how they abducted and killed W. So who knows…one is saying sorry no for its genuineness but for fear of potential bewitchment? (Interview, Sarudzai)

These revelations by Sarudzai, motivate attention towards the moral and ethical foundations of apology, inevitably bringing to the fore issues of the genuineness and motivation of apology. Drawing some insights from Sarudzai's sentiments and the work of Van Stokkom (2002), I argue that apology, as symbolic reparation, it seems, will only satisfy when offenders apologize sincerely and are genuinely moved by their victim's plight. Therefore an apology is conditional on the perpetrator's emotional engagement with the process. To this end, as asserted by Ireton and Kovras (2012) a more positive motivation of apology would

revolve around a desire to create a bridging dialogue which allows parties to a violent past to become more cognizant of its underlying issues and consequences. A more inclusive collective narrative can be created and both perpetrator and victim groups can re-imagine their identity. The healing created by this reconstruction helps prevent future obstructions in social relationships and can break the cycle of hatred.

Ultimately, a perpetrator may apologize to demonstrate *bona fide* empathy for the victim. According to Van Stokkom (2002) this is the most genuine type of apology and most likely to succeed. However, as insinuated in Sarudzai's case above, it is the least common type of apology in the political sphere. It attests to the perpetrators' re-evaluation of their actions and their commitment to cooperation and change. It assesses perpetrators in terms of their ability to give a deliberate moral account for wrong-doing. In Sarudzai's illustration, an offender may not feel much regret as they may feel that the political violence was justified in the name of promoting and protecting the discourse of national sovereignty. Drawing upon Von Stokkom (2002) in such a scenario, apology may become a strategic ploy, one in which the offender does not have a true emotional involvement, so as to ensure favourable restitution arrangements or to avoid further problems with punishment, such as being bewitched, as indicated in Sarudzai's narrative.

Taking the argument further, it can be contended that apology, as portrayed by Sarudzai (where it is out of self-serving motives) becomes motivated by instrumental reasons. To borrow from Ireton and Kovras (2012) apology becomes appropriated as a trade-off or buy-off. Otherwise, the expression of remorse is in exchange for a mitigation of consequences. For instance, in Sarudzai's narrative, other perpetrators of the 2008 political violence may be motivated to apologise so as to avert in advance, the likelihood of being bewitched as has happened to perpetrator 'A'. More so, the timing of the apology could indicate its use as a public relations tactic to gain sympathy from the victim. While these may be viewed as genuine motives, such 'quasi-apologies'- which could be either tactical, offering an explanation or excuses for the behavior addressed in the apology, are seen as self-serving and therefore insincere.

Interestingly, as an attempt to reduce or deal with this problematic of apology, Van Stokkom (2002) notes that some theorists have tried to develop 'proofs' of sincerity. These theorists stress that the perpetrator and the victim have to form a good picture of physical signs of

vulnerability as emitted by the perpetrator. It is ideally expected, in offering a genuine apology, that the offender must drop all defenses, and other signs of lacking moral responsibility. According to Moore (1993) in Van Stokkom (2012) it is believed that the expression of a defenceless stance prevents playing with emotions. However, I argue that it would be both impracticable and demeaning if victims would search for conclusive evidence of the perpetrator's sincerity before they accepted their apology. Offenders need not be required to express emotions that they do not believe in. It therefore follows that, a critical assessment of Sarudzai's preoccupation with respect to the genuineness of an apology, leads me to the conclusion that, should such apologies come a reality in her community, the apology process must not be loaded with the task to assess if genuine acts of apology did occur. Still, apologies, as symbolic reparation, have a significant role to play and many victims stick to their moral message.

5.4 Reparation: A 'Double-edged Sword.'

Empirical evidence from this study also reveals that societal struggles over memory also centre on the physical and symbolic markers of a past marred by political violence. For instance, the foregoing section has illuminated on apology as one such symbolic marker. Five victims were also strongly for material reparation. Thus, the overall acknowledgement and recognition of reparation by the respondents in this study partly bears testimony to the argument that reparation (symbolic and material) can be a key conduit which victims pursue in order to address their overwhelming feelings of liminality (discussed in chapter 4). However, as the findings in this study also indicate, there can equally be a downside to both forms of reparation since apart from their own intrinsic limitations, they can also be interpreted and perceived differently by different victims. This state of affairs is in unison with Hamber and Wilson's (2002) cautious evaluative statement about reparation in which they assert that that both these forms of reparation can, although ***not necessarily***, play an important role in processes of opening up space for bereavement, addressing trauma and ritualizing symbolic closure. Therefore, the ensuing findings and their subsequent discussion testify to the ambivalence of reparation.

In one of the interviews, Wesley, a bricklayer (who was also an MDC-T Ward secretary) said that he narrowly escaped death after he was severely physically attacked by a group of about 50 ZANU PF youths. The asbestos roof and the window panes of his house were all

destroyed as the violent youths tried to stop Wesley from escaping as they surrounded his homestead. With respect to material/financial reparation after this ordeal he has this to say:

> …of course, soon after the violence, when they formed the unity government, they offered me some asbestos sheets and window panes to repair my house. That was that! Look at it this way, my nephew, I sustained internal injuries whose effect I still feel today. You know that I earn my living as a builder…building sustains my family. But now, I can no longer work at the same productive rate as I used to. The beatings have incapacitated me in a significant way thereby greatly reducing my income. I now experience a sharp pain in my chest after building a few courses….a situation I never experienced before. In short…yes the issuance of materials to repair my house was a good gesture and it was a sign of appreciation of wrong-doing…to some level, they [government] accepted responsibility. , But at the same time this material can never ever compensate for the incapacitation of my body and the subsequent effect on my income. In fact after the violent act, I'm now worse of economically and health-wise than before. More meaningful compensation for me would be if the government provided me with a permanent job commensurate with my new health status or avail a loan to me to start a project which no longer requires my physical exertion as I'm now physically less productive…Once this is done, I can move on and can be at peace with myself…the state was responsible for the chaos…so must it be for compensating me. (Wesley, Interview)

Wesley's narrative is typical of a scenario where reparation assumes some ambivalence. Wesley appreciates the material assistance of asbestos sheets and window panes that the state gave him as material reparation. From Wesley's vantage position, the materials transcend physicality and become symbolic of the state's gesture of showing some remorse and acceptance of responsibility. Also by further emphasizing the vitally important need for some financial compensation and how this can increasingly allow him to "*move on and be at peace with himself,"* it could be argued that the financial assistance can actually ritualize and concretize his suffering and allow him to move out of liminal space. These deliberations and observations could be in tandem with Hamber and Wilson's (2002) assertion that material reparation and compensation can serve the same psychological ends as symbolic acts in that they can both aim to ritually create symbolic closure. This is notwithstanding the fact that financial and material reparations are often viewed as a more concrete and substantial form of help than symbolic acts. It can be argued that, when the surviving victims receive payment (as Wesley anticipates) for offences against them (and in the process forsake revenge) this can in some instances solidify and resolve them by representing the compensation for their suffering.

To further illuminate on the symbolic significance of material/financial reparation as reflected in Wesley's narrative, I appropriate the Mauss' (1998) theorization of the *Gift* which Hamber and Wilson also subscribe to. According to Mauss, material objects exchanged between people are not inert, but contain a spirit of obligation and a part of the giver. Thus, the objects exchanged are never separate from those that exchange them and the social

context of the exchange, and therefore the act of exchange is replete with rights and duties. Subsequently, to borrow from Hamber and Wilson (2002) the material reparation and financial compensation that Wesley received and anticipates respectively are embedded in the social grammar of loss, liminality, closure and responsibility. As a result, the process of healing and *moving on* that Wesley refers to does not occur through the physical delivery of the compensation or materials, but through the process that occurs around them. Drawing upon Mauss (1998) and his discussion of the 'spirit of the gift' there seems to be an unconscious principle of the transmutability of people and things being played out when the government gives reparations to the victims of political violence like Wesley. Drawing on Mauss' (1998) the 'spirit of the gift' (reparation) is analogous to compensation for the spirit of the victims of political violence. Thus, the spirit of the victim (Wesley) and the spirit of the material reparations (asbestos and window panes/or the anticipated financial help) become exchanged in a transaction between the state and the victim. Consequently, on the basis of Wesley's views and those of other respondents who took a similar position, the anticipation of the state's obligation to pay reparations results from the duty to pay victims for their suffering and loss during the political violence.

Nevertheless, as Wesley's case (of anticipation for more financial compensation) bears witness, the reality is that seldom will the sums of financial or material assistance granted ever equal the actual amount of money or time lost over the years when a breadwinner (such as Wesley) was incapacitated or in some cases when the breadwinner was actually killed. More so, it is questionable if the low levels of material reparations offered will dramatically change the life of the recipients. For instance, in many of the cases that I interviewed, where such material compensation as building material to repair damaged houses was offered by the state, most victims complained that it was insufficient and as a once-off process, it immensely fell short of transforming their lives. Thus, once again, drawing on the 'gift of the spirit' by Mauss (1998) I argue that in this scenario of the reparative transaction between the state and the victim, the spirit of the victims who suffered loss and pain, and the spirit of the material reparations offered are in disarray. In the final analysis, both the symbolic and instrumental meaning that the victims attach to the reparation is diminished and there is an attendant failure to move out of liminal space. Otherwise, the reparation offered by the state (as a part to the violence and as a custodian of citizens) will fail to ritualize and concretise the suffering

of the victims. Consequently, no substantial degree of personal resolution takes place within the victims and the trauma remains as unfinished business.

Furthermore, there were more cases that were indicative of the problematic and contested nature of the unconscious associations around reparations. Going back to the theoretical formulations by Mauss (1998:58), he identifies that, "The gift is something that must be recognized and that is, at the same time, dangerous to accept." Reparations sometimes place victims in a paradox. While reparations can constitute closure and the final acceptance of loss, they can also create problems for victims. A typically illustrative case in this study is of one elderly woman who lost her son in the 2008 political violence. Her son, an active ZANU PF youth, was physically assaulted and killed on the spot (at his homestead right under the watchful eyes of his mother) by a group of three alleged MDC youths who were seeking revenge for the destruction of X's shop. She had this to say about material and monetary compensation:

> My grandson, yes, I know that I am very poor and any form of assistance would suffice. But, I swear over my dead body that if that money, food or any items that any well-wisher or the government wants to give me is in lieu for my dead son, never! I will not take part in celebrating the death of my son by receiving any money whatsoever. Tell me, what amount of money or help can buy back my son's life? None….I don't want hear that nonsense. They [well-wishers from an NGO] came here soon after the incident and tried to give me money and items…I refused. My son's life is priceless. No amount of money, help or sorry will bring him back. Receiving that money is both betrayal and also taking part in murdering him. I would be no different from the Biblical Judas. Unless, X, Y and Z can bring back my son alive, then all is solved…that's that. They [the same perpetrators] also assaulted my son's friend the same day, and after a few hours of admission at hospital, he also died. Do you think they will accept any money…I talked to the parents of my son's deceased friend and all they want is revenge, not money… (Granny Laiza; Interview).

From my observations this elderly woman spoke emotionally and resolutely about both her son's and his friend's death. She even banged her fists on the table as she vehemently protested against the prospect of receiving any form of monetary assistance in lieu for her son's death. Granny Laiza's case is a more elaborate case that is representative of the other three cases of interviewees who also lost their beloved ones in the violence. Granny Laiza's position debunks and challenges the conventional notion that monetary compensation is usually readily acceptable to destitute victims. According to Hamber and Wilson (2002) financial reparations are often mistakenly viewed as, and spoken about by policy-makers and victims alike, as a form of more substantial and more concrete, and therefore more readily acceptable than other forms of reparation. Granny Laiza's case challenges this notion at a moral level and is in keeping with the argument that reparations may be inherently problematic for some victims who may be, for instance, uncomfortable about receiving what

they call blood money (Hamber and Wilson, 2002). The idea of 'blood money' is loaded in Laiza's statement to the effect that, "*Receiving that money is both betrayal and also taking part in murdering him. I would be no different from the Biblical Judas."* In this scheme of things, acceptance of the money signifies that the victim is an accomplice in the death, and that the death can be commodified and therefore paid off as a debt. By and large, the refusal can also be linked to feelings of betrayal of the deceased.

Granny Laiza's case is also analogous to the Argentinean example cited by Hamber and Wilson (2002) whereby some of the *Madres* of the *Plaza de Mayo* are opposed to monetary reparations, since to accept such kind of reparation is to acknowledge death. This stands in sharp contrast to the constant rallying cry of the *Madres* in Argentina, where they maintain that those who were taken from them alive should be returned alive. Accepting reparations implies giving up hope that the disappeared would return alive. Suffice to argue that when victims and their families alike, disparagingly talk of reparations as a form of blood money or betrayal (as in Laiza's case) this may be due to the fact that the reparation initiative does not coincide with the process of truth-telling and public testimony that has been alluded to in an earlier chapter. Thus, the trap would be that the financial reparation would not have been preceded by, or occurred simultaneously with the individual, psychological process of internalizing and coming to terms with the truth about the violent past and its attendant trauma. This is in keeping with Ireton and Kovras' (2012) argument that reparations and the truth about what happened must be harmonized. Otherwise, reparations should not lag behind the truth recovery about a violent past. Similarly, according to Hamber and Wilson (2002) when reparations are offered before the victim is psychologically ready, any form of reparation can be expected to leave the victim dissatisfied. Laiza's case is typical of a situation where reparation without truth makes the victim suspicious that the reparation is being used to 'buy off' their silence and terminate their insatiable quest for truth and justice.

Furthermore, and interestingly, Laiza's sentiments that no amount of financial, material or symbolic reparation can bring back her son to life is reminiscent of what Hamber (2000) aptly captures in his catchphrase ' repairing the irreparable.' More specifically, Hamber and Palmary 2009:325) say,

> *From the perspective of direct victims of political violence, and even from a collective perspective, acknowledgement, apology, recognition, and even substantial material assistance do not "bring back the dead", nor are they guaranteed to converge with,*

or ameliorate, all the levels of pain suffered. No matter what the motive, all reparations strategies suffer this one intractable problem.

Otherwise, reparations are like a 'double-edged sword' for victims. In as much as acknowledgement of social truths, apology, material assistance and monetary compensation are valuable as indicated by some respondents, it is also evident that these can never fully meet all the psychological needs of the victims. This is because these needs are disparate, inchoate and contradictory. Resolution on a traumatic past of political violence, in this case, depends on how individuals personally engage in trauma work at their idiosyncratic pace. The contested nature of reparation is also highlighted, for instance, when Van Stokkom (2009) observes that victims rate reparation low in comparison to other motivations to attend the restorative justice process, such as the desire to express their feelings about how the atrocity affected them or finding if they were targeted. As the two narratives from Wesley and Laiza attest, it is impossible to completely reconcile a victim's personal needs and the reparations that society can offer at a social and political level (Hamber and Palmary, 2009). As a result, in the aftermath of widespread political violence as experienced in 2008 in Zimbabwe, we should expect to have to live with the unsatisfied demands (for their own versions of truth, justice, compensation, etc) of victims for a long time. However, the research findings with respect to reparation provide a relatively convincing case for the argument that while all that was lost during the violence cannot be recovered; some form of personal resolution can be reached by victims through various forms of reparation.

Nevertheless, in this study, the victims increasingly give narratives to the effect that the individual and national initiatives of dealing with the consequences of 2008 extreme political violence, more or less fall short of realizing justice and closure for the victim. Thus, by importing Hamber and Wilson's (2002) schema around reparation and closure, I argue that most of the victims I interviewed have found it increasingly difficult to reach a substantial degree of personal resolution. Otherwise, the victims are still in liminal space where they continuously regard the pain, loss and grief associated with the violence as unfinished business. The victims still have not internalized this grief and suffering into their daily lives and, as the following section illuminates, they harbour a very deep-rooted and undying compulsion to take revenge.

5.5 Rethinking Revenge: Bewitchment as a Legitimate and Rewarding Act.

A commonly held position especially by the proponents of the restorative justice approach such as Clark (2007) is that while punishment of perpetrators may be necessary, the healing of victims require much more than punishment. The central argument is that the punishment of perpetrators should be facilitated in ways that allow perpetrators and victims to build relationships. More interestingly, this argument is taken to a higher moral plane with respect to revenge, a theme of significant interest in this section. Ignatieff (1998:188) asserts:

> *Revenge, or the infliction of harm in response to perceived harm or injustice, is commonly regarded as a low and unworthy emotion because its deep moral hold on people is rarely understood.*

According to McKinney (2007) this position has its roots in the rest of western philosophy and jurisprudence which has increasingly subscribed to the ideas of Kant and Hegel in denouncing revenge and distinguishing it from rational law and justice. However, despite this skeptical and rather dismissive approach to revenge, it is significantly noteworthy that a third of the respondents in this study manifested a strong case for revenge, in special circumstances, as an alternative and the most plausible route to dealing with a past of politically-motivated violence. Sekai, is among the 5 victims who harbours so much grief, pain and sorrow due to the loss of a beloved one in the 2008 political violence. She lost her brother, who was initially abducted in the village by alleged ZANU PF youths and found a day later dead in a nearby village pathway. Her sentiments and viewpoints below are representative of those of the other 4 victims when she comments

> We still have scores to settle with those who assaulted and killed my brother. The fact that we meet the perpetrators daily at funerals, churches, community development meetings and many other physical and social places makes this urge to one day fight back even stronger. As for me, I am still, in a very unforgiving and very dangerous mode and it seems this will be a permanent mode until, one day I get my invaluable chance to avenge my only brother's death. Probably you are not aware… There are four clear exemplary cases in these two neighbouring villages, where it is strongly understood that families A, B, C and D have secretly consulted spiritual healers to make those who murdered their beloved ones mentally disturbed… Yes I'm certain of two of the cases, since they are my close relatives, although this has to be highly secretive, I can assure you that they have confided in me that this is the only way they can appease their dead relatives. Right, as you will be leaving this compound, use the way past the village shops, you will see X naked, loitering and uttering supposedly how they murdered Y. It happened about 5months after the murder. Just go and witness. …it is the safest way of settling the deaths. Unlike retaliating with physical violence, bewitchment has no proof that points back to you. Again in this country [Zimbabwe] it is criminal to accuse someone of witchcraft…so you see; you execute revenge safely (Interview, Sekai).

Sekai's own experience and the four cases of bewitchment that she refers to make us reflect on human agency in the compulsion to also equally inflict harm and pain on perpetrators as a way of honouring and appeasing the spirits of their beloved ones that they lost during the violence. It is interesting to realize that in the four cases, the survivors, as purposive actors

with agentive power have deliberately resorted to supernatural means of avenging the deaths. They have, possibly, initially weighed the costs, loopholes and risks of using either the retributive justice system or direct physical confrontation. For instance, in light of this, Cunnen and Hoyle (2010) have established that in a country like Zimbabwe, where the police and judiciary act in a partisan way, with a bias towards the ruling ZANU PF party, both retributive and restorative justice have increasingly remained elusive during and after the 2008 political violence. More specifically, Carey et al (2010) single out cases where police officers in Zimbabwe have actually arrested victims who come to report their cases. Against such a background it is logical and calculative that some victims, as evidenced in Sekai's narrative, have appropriated supernatural means (bewitching offenders), which are beyond the jurisdiction of the police and the judiciary system, to express their vengeance.

The dynamic of how victims like Sekai and those villagers in similar situations have processed their liminality in the wake of their suffering is significant. In this vein, I take after Lazare (2009) and establish that at a time of significant loss most people get into a number of invisible pacts with themselves. And like Sekai and the other four interviewees have done, this can be a vow to avenge the death of a loved one, through personal vengeance. It can thus be further argued that this vow to avenge is not out of sadistic pleasure, but, instead, a way of respecting their beloved ones who were killed, to make their memory meaningful. In the same vein, Ignatieff (1998) acknowledges that revenge is a heartfelt moral desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour their memory by upholding and furthering their cause from where they left off. Consequently, by avenging the deaths and loss of their beloved ones, the victims in the study are keeping their faith and trust with the dead and between generations. It is like signing a covenant to take up the legacy of the dead in their fight for a free and democratic Zimbabwe. Consequently, taking after Ignatieff (1998), I argue that this scenario of keeping the faith and making a covenant with their dead relatives, from the individual perspective of the avengers, renders legitimacy to revenge.

Furthermore, the legitimacy of appropriating revenge to appease the departed in political violence (as Sekai's fellow villagers have spiritually done) finds purchase in Nietzche (1969:162) who says:

> *The spirit of revenge: my friends, that up to now, has been mankind's chief concern: and where there was suffering, there was always supposed to be punishment.*

Sekai's scenario and the portrait of the cases of bewitchment she illustrates are typical contexts which point to some justification of the legitimacy of revenge. As alluded to earlier on, the ONHRI process aimed at reconciliation and healing after the 2008 political violence in Zimbabwe is either silent on, or lacking in the effective implementation of truth-telling, reparation and various forms of justice. In it (ONHRI) is also embedded the discourse of 'forgive and forget'. In reference to the latter, Hamber (1998) observes that on a psychological level, for a victim or survivor to react in an overly forgiving way toward perpetrators or simply bury and forget the past is highly improbable in the short-term, and even over decades in some cases (Zimbabwe, for instance). Therefore, as a result of the limitations, and vices and caprices posed by such national processes as the ONHRI, in Zimbabwe, victims of the 2008 political violence have generally felt inhibited in expressing their legitimate rage and anger. Thus, bewitchment of perpetrators becomes the 'safest' and most subtle legitimate conduit through which victims vent out and exorcise their rage and anger. Bewitchment involves the surviving family members of the deceased victim invoking the spirit of the deceased to resurrect and fight the perpetrator or murderer who was responsible for their death. This is facilitated by the surviving victims in consultation with a spiritual healer. The invoked spirit will locate its target (perpetrator) on its own and torment the target to the extent that the target gets mentally disoriented and moves like an imbecile around the village narrating how and why they murdered the victim. Unless and until the relatives of the perpetrator consult the wronged family, ask for spiritual cleansing and pay cattle as reparation, the perpetrator will continue to be mentally disoriented. Another tricky part is how to approach the family responsible for the bewitchment as they may feign ignorance of the bewitchment until a time they feel that the perpetrator has suffered enough to honour and appease their relative whose murder was politically motivated.

Acts of revenge as alluded to in Sekai's narrative also gain explanatory and legitimate extent in Fromm's (1984) postulations on revenge. He postulates that revenge, is otherwise a magic act and, like punishment for a crime, it can magically expunge the perpetrators' acts. In Sekai's narrative, when family A sought the services of a spiritual healer to cast a spell on perpetrator X, subsequently making X mad, such an act of vengeance can be interpreted as magical reparation. As such, like reparations, Hamber and Wilson (2002) contend that revenge and punishment (and perhaps fantasies thereof) can also be a way to lay the

wandering spirits of the violently killed to rest ('…to appease the dead.' according to Sekai in the interview) and end the liminal status of the dead and the survivors.

It is also interesting to note that the appropriation of bewitchment by the families of the deceased victim(s) as a revenge strategy is a legitimate and appropriate act. I argue so, because it is a form of revenge which acts within the realm of the dead and it links the living survivors with the dead. The spirits of those who died in the March 2008 political violence are invoked by the surviving victims via a spiritual healer so that the dead can avenge by mentally disorienting the perpetrator. It is until the perpetrator's clan or family seeks recourse with the bereaved family and carry out the necessary spiritual rituals and reparations (usually in the form of at least seven herds of cattle) that the tormenting spirit can be exorcised from the perpetrator.

I also argue that this mode of revenge (bewitchment) was appropriate for the victims as it cannot be easily traced back to the avenger as it is spiritual. More so, Zimbabwean law outlaws anyone who accuses anyone of witchcraft, thereby coincidentally relieving the 'bewitcher' of any criminal offence. Bewitchment as revenge in a Zimbabwean scenario where perpetrators have not been made accountable is also less likely to attract some backlash from perpetrators. To this end, just after the end of the violence and the formation of a government of national unity in September 2008, the Vice President (Joice Mujuru) was on record on the Zimbabwean national radio, saying that anyone who had murdered someone during the violence and had been bewitched had to seek spiritual recourse in consultation with the wronged family as this was beyond the scope and capability of the state. The state could not fight an avenging spirit of a dead victim! In all, the spiritual revenge was a legitimate and appropriate way for families and individuals (victims) to appease and do justice to their relatives who were murdered in the 2008 political violence. Bewitchment is not punishable at law (in Zimbabwe) and due to its spiritual nature, unlike direct physical revenge, it barely attracts some backlash from perpetrators, and more importantly, it links the dead victims with their living relatives.

In terms of future prospects of victims substituting revenge with 'more conventional' ways of attaining closure, Sekai and Granny Laiza shared the opinion that should the government and individuals offer reparation or compensation in future, yet decide to forego the truth-telling process, it is most likely that most victims will stick to vengeance. Taking a cue from Strang

(2002) this situation is most likely since at a psychological level, most victims will not have completed or even begun their trauma work. Again, as noted by Cunnen and Hoyle (2010) most victims are likely to challenge state-centric approaches that do not involve the victims and that also overlook the underlying aspects of the violence. This is especially so, if ZANU PF as the ruling party continuously peddle the 'forgive and forget mantra'. It is critical that victims are not expected to either implicitly or explicitly forgive the perpetrators, or forget the atrocities committed especially if they claimed the lives of their beloved ones. Consequently, the vengeance imperative is likely to persist especially in its subtle and spiritual 'safest' form. Thus in the scenario under study, coming to terms with the past can only be eased by recognizing as legitimate the multifarious and contradictory agendas (revenge included) which exist among a heterogeneous community of victims.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1Introduction

This last section draws some conclusions on this research report based on a reflection of the research questions and objectives vis-à-vis the research findings. The purpose of this research report was to explore the meanings that the internally-displaced, Zimbabwean rural victims of the March 2008 state-sponsored political violence construct around the violence. Since the phenomenological and constructionist perspectives underpinned this endeavour, the experiences that are explored in the foregoing report are not memories of facts, but imaginings of facts and are therefore a selective recreation that are dependent for meaning on the victims who experienced them. They are a retrospective and interpretive reflection on the March 2008 political violence. More so, the memories are not isolated individual interpretations but they are constructed in the interactive social milieu of the Mutambara community. As a result, the conclusions drawn from the report do not lend themselves to universal application (generalizations) as they are specific to the Mutambara-based, internally-displaced, Zimbabwean rural victims of the March 2008 political violence. Also noteworthy is the fact that the relationship between this researcher (as a fellow community member and witness) and the victims has a great bearing on the elicited meanings. This is especially so, because according to Squirre (2005) a narrator tells their story on the basis of who the audience is, and the purpose they want to achieve. Consequently, the conclusions drawn here are context-specific. However, some of the arguments raised can be used as a departure point for extending debate in similarly poised cases.

6.2 Research Conclusions

From the foregoing report, I conclude that the meanings and subjectivities assigned to the acts or experiences of political violence assume a complex, delicate and peculiar moral and ethical plane especially when they occur in a socio-political context in which the victim and perpetrator have to interact with each other for the rest of their communal life. This

complexity and delicacy is particularly fuelled because there is no sign of, or immediate hope for some transitional justice mechanism at all levels of society. The meanings become morally complex as the victim has to contend with both the psychological and social effects of facing and interacting with their 'unpunished' aggressor on a daily basis given the communal nature of rural activities. To this effect, I also make reference to the immense level of loyalty which the participants give to a strong sense of community as it arguably the cementing block in everyday interactions. It is a source of trust, security and goodwill between villagers in rural societies. So, when a villager commits politically-motivated acts of violence towards a fellow villager and shows no sign of remorse both in the short and long term, it has been interpreted by the victim as the greatest act of betrayal from someone the victim had invested most of their trust in. Thus, sharing the same physical and social space with the 'unaccountable' perpetrator continuously invokes feelings of betrayal, mistrust, frustration and vengeance in the victims of the 2008 political violence.

Also in tandem with the foregoing, the research findings also speak to the conclusion that the March 2008 political violence largely remains an unresolved socio-political issue in the lives of the victims. The victims' ongoing feelings of anxiety, betrayal, uncertainty, liminality, ontological insecurity and vengeance are reflective of an increasingly unfulfilled quest for the recovery of the truth in the presence of a public audience; for some form of retributive or restorative justice; and some healing and reconciliation especially at the community level. The victims' enduring expectant and anticipatory disposition (for a resolution) is accentuated by the fact that they give a presentist interpretation of the 2008 political tumult. That is, the more they interpret the violence within the lenses of their present socio-political and economic circumstances, the more it becomes quite elaborate and painfully real that the issues of transitional justice, reconciliation and healing are still pending. The answers and solutions that the victims wait for, at the vermilion apex of desire have been long overdue (since early 2008) and seem less likely to materialize any time soon. Subsequently, I conclude that, overall, the victims interpret the March 2008 politically-motivated violence as increasingly an unfinished business.

In terms of identity formation, the victims are generally in an identity crisis. To this end, I conclude that they are ontologically insecure. The victims have lost trust and confidence in both their sense of self and collective identities as a result of the dehumanizing and humiliating acts of violence by fellow villagers and state agents. Owing to these violent acts

and the attendant betrayal of trust, the victims have developed personalities which have increasingly failed to internalize a sense of self as trusting and trustworthy, autonomous and vital, or as valid and valuable. Suffice to therefore argue that the victims have become people who mistrust and doubt their capacity to bracket off all sorts of possibilities and have, thus, lost faith in social normalcy. The loss of a self and collective identity is largely associated with the victims' belief that, as a result of the acts of violence and betrayal by fellow villagers, their rural community is now unstable, unsafe and therefore unpredictable. Consequently, the Mutambara victims now mainly perceive their daily encounters with perpetrators as a constant dread or threat to be defended against. Thus sanctuary is found in different anxieties such as isolation and implosion (liminality). Also with specific reference to the victims' social identities, it can also be concluded that the Mutambara victims have lost the certainty of belonging to, being part of and being accepted by the larger community largely owing to the violent acts and the silence complicit with it. Yet personal ambit about certainty about self-identity also needs an assurance of collective identity-being part of a group. In other words, the violent acts, the betrayal of trust and the silence from the perpetrators and witnesses all combine to seemingly alienate or estrange the Mutambara victim from the wider community. Thus, in all, the 2008 violence has shaped the victims into a people with identity deficits such that the relation to the self and the collective has been predisposed to develop in an un-integrated and unpredictable way.

At a very interesting and peculiar level, I also conclude that the violence has also resulted in the re-invention and affirmation of the victims' spiritual identities. In the name of a more subtle and safer strategy of avenging the deaths of their relatives, victims, at the family level, have consulted spiritual healers to invoke the spirits of the deceased so that they come back and settle their own scores with the perpetrators. A culture of a strong belief in invoking the spirit of the deceased to come back and fight the perpetrator has been resuscitated. This is understandable and logical in a scenario where open physical revenge (such as backlash assaults or torching of homes) would attract further persecution and more violence on the part of the MDC aligned avengers. However, this 'spiritual' strategy has not necessarily discounted other strategies of revenge which the respondents may not have revealed.

I also conclude that all the victims in this study interpret the 2008 political violence to be an experience that is complicit with a conspiracy of silence at the community and national level. For them, the violence is more synonymous with, and more unpopular for an imposed silence

than for its roots. The silences that have been associated with this violence are silence as: an adaptation to powerful discourse and repressive state apparatus; as cultural censorship; and as a sign of liminality. The main silence has been induced by the appropriation and upholding of the discourse of 'forgive and forget' by ZANU PF since most of the perpetrators are aligned to this party. As a party that has been in power for the past three decades, ZANU PF has been able to push to the background the alternative discourse of retributive justice that the other two less powerful opposition parties have been trying to push for. The state media was effectively used to reinforce and entrench the 'forgive and forget' ideology. At a more repressive level, state apparatus like the police and army was used to make arbitrary arrests and threats to anyone who according to ZANU PF wanted to challenge state sovereignty and sow divisiveness by reenacting 'falsehoods' about the 2008 violence. The police, as cited earlier on, even arrested especially MDC supporters or sympathizers who came to report acts of political violence! Thus, at both the ideological and repressive levels, ZANU PF and various arms of the state have silenced the victims' voice through pushing the victims' alternative discourses to the rear, and inducing fear in victims through force to stop them from freely speaking about the violence.

At other relatively lesser levels, I also conclude that the Mutambara victims also partly attribute the silence to what may be termed cultural censorship. This is a scenario where victims have exercised their agency as socio-politically embedded individuals, and actively taken the choice not to speak about the atrocities as a way of containing the effects that their narration may invoke. An active choice not to speak is made for the sake of building broken ties and moving on. Last, the silence has also been attributable to victims being overwhelmed at the prospect of facing up to the psycho-sociological consequences of the violence. Such a meaning of silence has especially been constructed around deaths and disappearances. Victims are between denial and obsession, where to a large extent there is failure to incorporate the loss into the functioning of everyday life.

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APPENDIX I: Information Sheet for Participants.

NB: This is simply a ***written guideline*** of the information that the researcher will ***verbally*** bring to the participants' attention.

Research title: Memory and Violence: Displaced Zimbabwean Rural Communities Reliving the Memories of the March 2008 Political Violence.

Introduction: Hello**,** I am Wellington Mvundura, and I am from the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. It is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve.

Pseudonyms: I will not use your real names in this study, so I will give you another name so that you remain anonymous.

Research Objectives.

I am interested in exploring the meanings that rural Zimbabweans who were displaced by the March 2008 post-election violence attach to the memories of this violence. I intend to investigate how the proximity between the displaced victims and the perpetrators shapes memorialisation of this violence; to examine how the memories are interpreted in the context of an allegedly enforced silence by the state and local communities; and explore ways in which the victims' memories have shaped their present socio-economic life.

What this study entails

Your participation in this study includes the following:

. Answering interview questions.

- Getting your verbal consent to participate in the interviews, only if you agree.
- If you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time, and you are not obliged to give a reason.
- The audio-recording of the narratives only if you agree.
- Conducting the interviews at your home in a space which you choose to be secure.

- The interview can take approximately between one to two hours.
- The information that will give is for academic purposes only and will be kept without any possible identifying information.
- **Risks and Counseling Services**: This study has the minimum risk that you may experience distress and trauma during or after narrating your experience with violence. In case you need free counseling services, you can go to: **World Vision Program, Stand No. 1976, Mutambara Mission**; or call them at their toll free number **+263 1117**.
- **Benefits:** There are no direct benefits

APPENDIX II: Verbal Consent Form for Narrative Interview Participants

NB: This is simply a written guideline or description of ***how*** the researcher will obtain verbal consent.

Title of research project: Memory and Violence: Displaced Zimbabwean Rural Communities Reliving the Memories of the March 2008 Political Violence.

Study Number: TBA

Principal Investigator: Wellington Mvundura (MA student)

Supervisor: Prof Ingrid Palmary (Ingrid.palmary@wits.ac.za)

Department: African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS), Wits University, 1 Jan Smuts Avenue, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

Phone number: +27 735 113 910

Email Address: mvunduraw@gmail.com

Sponsor/funder: DAAD

Researcher: please go through this carefully with the participant.

- I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.
- I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.
- I agree to my responses being used for this research on the condition that my privacy is respected.
- I understand that my personal details will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable.

- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.
- I give my consent to be audio taped during the interviews.

PARTICIPANT:

For verbal consent only (to be completed by researcher)

I (*WELLINGTON MVUNDURA*), herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the above study and has given verbal consent to participate in the study.

WELLINGTON MVUNDURA

Printed Name Researcher's Signature Date

Thanks for participating in this study.

Contact details of research supervisor, for reporting of complaints – Professor Ingrid Palmary: Email: ingrid.palmary@wits.ac.za, Tel: +27 (0)11 717 4698.

Contact details of the researcher- for further information and adverse events, contact me (Wellington Mvundura) : Tel +27 735 113910, Email : mvunduraw@gmail.co

Do you agree to take part in this study that I have described?

APPENDIX III: NARRATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Question: What meanings do rural Zimbabweans who were internally displaced by the 2008 political violence attach to the memories of this violence?

1 Can you please describe the situation in this community six months before the 29 March harmonised elections?

2 What was the general situation like in the period between 29 March 2008 elections and the 27 June 2008 presidential run-off?

3 Did any events in the foregoing periods result in any change of your usual place of residence?

4 Do you know who the perpetrators are?

5 What were notable encounters with this violence?

6 How has the continuous sharing of village life with the perpetrators influenced your reflection on the violence?

7 Can you describe any efforts to promote healing and reconciliation so far?

8 How has the presence or absence of these efforts influenced how you perceive and understand the disturbances?

9 Which healing and reconciliation efforts would you favour or suggest?

10 Have the memories of the violence altered your overall life? If so, how?

APPENDIX IV Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant's Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Interview Date	Type of Interview
Granny Rudo	Female	76 years	08 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Granny Laiza	Female	74 years	22 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Aunt Dorcas	Female	43years	08 /10 / 2013	Narrative
Agnes	Female	30 years	05 / 11 / 2013	Narrative
Sekai	Female	35 years	20 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Abisha	Male	49 years	15 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
David	Male	47 years	18 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Rishon	Male	39 years	10 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Betty	Female	49 years	04 / 11 / 2013	Narrative
Mariga	Male	37 years	22 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Sarudzai	Female	28 years	01 / 11 / 2013	Narrative
Wesley	Male	40 years	04 / 11 / 2013	Narrative
Chenzira	Female	46 years	27 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Gozden	Male	32 years	18 / 10 / 2013	Narrative
Chemwapiwa	Male		01 / 11 / 2013	Narrative

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mvundura

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER H13/08/13**
PROJECT TITLE	Memory and violence: Displaced Zimbabwean rural communities reliving the memories of the March 2008 political violence
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr W Mvundura
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	African Centre for Migration & Society
DATE CONSIDERED	16/08/2013
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	12/09/2015

DATE 13/09/2013 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Prof I Palmary

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10003, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES