# The truth in lies: Evaluating testimonies of war and genocide in Rwanda

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## *Abstract*

How should researchers treat questions of veracity when conducting interviews in settings rent by political violence, such as war and genocide? To what extent should researchers trust personal narratives and histories that are generated in politically sensitive contexts? The paper argues that the value of narrative data does not lie solely in their truthfulness or verifiability; it also lies in the meta-data that commonly accompany these testimonies. This paper analyzes five forms of meta-data: rumors, inventions, denials, evasions, and silences. The paper shows how these meta-data can serve as important guides to the researcher as to the power relations that shape informants' current lives, the ways in which informants are making sense of the researcher and her activities, and how much informants trust the researcher to bring them no harm. Meta-data indicate how conditions and circumstances in the present color and shape what people are willing to say about violence in the past, what they have reason to embellish or minimize, and what they prefer to keep to themselves. The paper draws on nine months of fieldwork the author conducted in Rwanda in 2004, the majority of that time spent interviewing people in two rural communities and central prisons.

Angélique told a harrowing tale. “They said I had Tutsi blood,” she explained. Her voice was soft, her demeanor somber. It was our first meeting after a long day of multiple interviews. I was in Rwanda to talk to people who had lived through or participated in genocidal violence. The year was 2004—ten years after a civil war that had installed a new regime and a genocide that had cost the lives of half a million people.[1]

We sat side by side on a damp log, the ground still wet from rain. I was eager to hear her story, for here was a woman, I had thought, who was Hutu but had nonetheless been targeted for killing because her mother was Tutsi. Angélique continued her story. Some neighbors had dug a hole where she was able to hide with her youngest strapped to her back. Her rescuers covered the hole with leaves, providing adequate camouflage for the night. The next day, Angélique and her baby managed to flee to safety with other Tutsi from the area.

Angélique’s experience would have been another piece of data I was collecting on rural mass violence that took place in Rwanda between 1991-1994, against the backdrop of civil war. Her story was consistent with those from other genocide survivors I had interviewed as well as published testimonies of survivors from across the country (e.g., African Right (1995), Des Forges (1999)). Survival, as Angélique’s story illustrated, was often a matter of luck and the life-saving gestures of friends, neighbors, and strangers.

Each time I traveled to the research site where Angélique lived, I looked forward to learning more. As the interviews continued, however, I noticed that rather than give more details about her experience surviving mass violence, Angélique became less precise. The more I probed, the sketchier her story became.

[1] For background on the Rwandan genocide, see Des Forges (1999), Prunier (1995), and Straus (2006). The estimate of 500,000 victims is from Des Forges (1999).

Angélique seemed to have other things on her mind. Her present life was filled with struggle, she explained before the start of one interview. After the war, Angélique had returned with the other refugees who had fled across the border, but the government denied her “survivor” status. Worse, the other Tutsi survivors also denied that she was a survivor. This meant that Angélique was not eligible for the benefits the government had promised to genocide survivors, such as government-built housing and assistance with her children’s school fees.

By our fourth and fifth interviews (which spanned a period of several months), it started to occur to me that Angélique had made up the entire story of having escaped the mass killings of Tutsi. Her statements on various topics were not adding up. When I asked why her former Tutsi friends would have denied that she was a survivor (like them), she said it was because her husband was Hutu. This seemed odd since other survivors I met had also been married to Hutu. When I asked her what had become of her husband, she said she did not know. This also struck me as odd—that no news of him had ever gotten back to her through other refugees. When I asked about her parents’ background, she gave similarly vague answers. At one point, she went beyond all credibility when she told us that her father had had thirty-nine wives. Polygamy was common in this part of the country but I had never heard of any man having more than two or three wives. I was beginning to doubt everything she had told us.

How should researchers deal with questions of veracity in the field, particularly in post-war or post-genocide settings when the stakes run particularly high? To what extent should researchers trust personal narratives and histories that are generated in politically sensitive contexts?

This paper argues that the value of oral testimonies researchers collect in communities that have recently suffered violence does not lie solely in the truthfulness of their content. It also lies in the meta-data that accompany the testimonies. By meta-data,

I mean the silences, evasions, half-truths, lies, and inventions that people include in their stories, wittingly and unwittingly. These meta-data are important indicators of the current social and political landscape, how that landscape shapes, bends, colors, and refracts people's memories of the past, and what they are willing to say about past episodes of violence. They are also important guides to how informants perceive the researcher, including the power relationship between the two parties, and whether informants trust the researcher not to bring them any harm.

## *Fieldwork setting*

In 2004, I conducted intensive interviews in two different rural communities and central prisons. I asked people what they saw and did during the period of the civil war and genocide (1990-1994). I also asked people about their lives before the genocide to understand the broader social context in which the events of 1990-1994 took place.

The two research sites were located in two different parts of the country; one in the north which I call "Kimanzi" and the other in the center-south which I call "Ngali." [2] The two regions differ in topography, political history, and culture. The community of "Ngali" lies south of the capital of Kigali. Its landscape is low rising hills, dotted with thin clumps of trees and fields of coffee, bananas, and other staple crops. Dirt roads and footpaths criss-cross the terrain.

To the north of Ngali, near the northern border that separates Rwanda from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, lies the community of "Kimanzi." The physical topography of Kimanzi is strikingly different from that of Ngali. Where Ngali is compact, Kimanzi is spacious. Houses, roads, and fields spread out across a much larger expanse. In Kimanzi, it is even possible to achieve that rarest commodity in this, one of the most densely populated countries in the world—privacy. Many houses are not

[2] I use pseudonyms for all place names below the level of province and for all the people who participated in this study.

visible from either the nearest road or the closest neighbor's house. The only area where houses cluster closely together is the *umudugudu* or housing the RPF-led government[3] built for survivors of the genocide. Kimanzi's *umudugudu* sits next to the district center, where district-level officials, such as the mayor, conduct their daily business.

The nearest urban centers to Ngali and Kimanzi are the main provincial towns of Gitarama and Ruhengeri, respectively. Each town features an array of small businesses, government offices, banks, and post offices, as well as a central prison. The Belgians built the system in the 1930s and the structures seemed to have changed little since that time. One or two guards, sporting rifles that look like they came from the same era, man the main gate where vehicles and pedestrians enter. A simple brick wall extends from the gate, but does not always enclose the grounds completely. At the main prison in Ruhengeri, for example, the brick wall ends where the prison's fields begin, providing unencumbered access to land where prisoners grow crops for food.

Once inside the gate, visitors enter the main courtyard, where a variety of everyday activities are usually in progress, including volleyball games, chores, and the occasional English lesson. The prisoners are easily recognizable in their blush pink uniforms, which generally consist of a short-sleeve, button-down shirt and shorts, that show signs of wear.

Inside the courtyard, behind a closed steel door, sits the "real" prison where the inmate population is housed. Only those with work duty or other legitimate business are allowed outside this interior space, where visitors must obtain separate permission to enter. The overcrowded conditions inside make work duty as well as interviews with a

[3] RPF stands for Rwandan Patriotic Front. The RPF was a rebel movement made up mostly of Tutsi exiles that attacked Rwanda on 1 October 1990, launching a four-year civil war. Following the assassination of the Rwandan president on 6 April 1994, the RPF relaunched the civil war, advanced quickly throughout the country, and declared victory on 17 July 1994. The RPF has been in power ever since. For detailed information about the war, see Des Forges (1999), Prunier (1995), Dallaire (2004), and Ruzibiza (2005). For an excellent analysis of the peace process, see Jones (2001).

foreign researcher a welcome respite. Indeed, many prisoners were more than happy to talk with me just for the opportunity to spend some time in an open space.

Across the two research sites and prisons, I conducted 231 intensive interviews with 82 people (37 people in Kimanzi and 45 in Ngali). All lived in one or the other community at the start of the civil war in 1990, except for three people who had fled to Ngali from another *secteur* when the genocide started. I used purposive sampling to find people who, together, represented a broad spectrum of experiences and participation in the genocide. They included people who killed, rescued, and resisted as well as those who pillaged, profited, and protested; people who fled the violence as well as those who stayed put; prisoners who confessed[4] their participation in the genocide and those who maintained their innocence; people imprisoned during the war and genocide (1990-1994) and those imprisoned afterward; people who claimed to know little about what happened and those who claimed to have seen everything. Missing in this sample were many of the local leaders of the genocide, most of whom were already dead by the time of my fieldwork or still living in exile. In these cases, I queried others about them. The goal of these and other strategies (discussed below) was to capture the widest range of vantage points possible to ensure that the data would not be biased in any single direction, such as, for example, in the direction of survivors, who had but one particular view of the violence. As Carolyn Nordstrom (1995, 137) observes: “Individuals do not make up a generic group of ‘combatants,’ ‘civilians,’ and ‘casualties’ but an endlessly complex set of people and personalities, each of whom has a unique relationship to the war and a unique story to tell.” Talking with a diverse cross-section helped to capture this complexity.

[4] By confessing their participation in the genocide, prisoners became eligible for a reduced sentence (at the discretion of the courts). At the time of my fieldwork, none of the confessed prisoners I interviewed had had their dossiers processed and thus had yet to benefit from this program.

Within my sample, I tried to achieve a balance of men and women and a wide range of ages to ensure that the sample was representative of each community's demographic composition before the violence. Despite my best efforts, men in my sample outnumbered women 4:1.[5] I had better luck finding people of different ages. The youngest person I talked to was 30 and the oldest was in her 80s[6] at the time of my fieldwork.

I conducted the interviews in Kinyarwanda, the native language of all Rwandans, with the help of a French-Kinyarwanda interpreter. My interpreter was a woman who had grown up and lived in Rwanda all her life. She had a great deal of experience working in rural regions all over the country, and a particular talent for putting people of all backgrounds at ease.

We conducted interviews in people's homes or in the home of a centrally located resident, where people knew to find us. In the prisons, we conducted interviews in a private room or private area in the main courtyard. No matter the location, to ensure privacy, we always asked anyone within earshot (including children, prison guards, and other household members) to leave, a request people honored.

At the start of interviews, my interpreter gave a full introduction of her and myself as well as a detailed explanation of our project. This explanation took several minutes and included assurances that we would not share the person's testimony with any authority or other person. It also let the informant know that he or she could say no to our request for an interview or stop the interview at any time. One reason for giving such a lengthy explanation up-front (besides to obtain informed consent) was to demonstrate

[5] Though I made a concerted effort to achieve a balance of men and women, I ran into what is a common problem with doing fieldwork in most, if not all, countries in Africa (and probably elsewhere). It was harder to find women to talk to because most women did not feel they had anything to say. Men, by and large, did not exhibit this type of self-censure; they also tended to be easier to locate than women because they often congregated at central, public locations.
[6] Exact ages are imprecise because some informants gave different birthdates at different interviews.

that we had nothing to hide—that we were who we said we were. Accurate and detailed self-presentation is especially important in conflict settings where suspicions of others, particularly outsiders, can run very high. With overly simplified explanations, one runs the risk of raising later suspicions if people find out more details that do not jibe with their initial understanding (Sluka 1990, 122; 1995, 284). We tried to anticipate people's questions and concerns through the introduction. At the end, I asked for the person's verbal consent, and after obtaining consent, I asked if the person had any questions for us before starting the interview.

Gaining the consent and trust of informants was particularly important in light of my overall research strategy.[7] My strategy was to interview a core group of people multiple times over the course of the interview period (which lasted six months). I used a "funnel" method to whittle down the number of people with whom we spoke at each round of interviews, as time constraints did not make it possible to speak with all 82 people multiple times. In the first round, we spoke with all 82 people in the sample; in the next round, we spoke with a subset of that original number; in the next round, a sub-set of the previous sub-set, until, by the end, we had spoken to a handful of people in each research site and prison at least five times.

The reasoning behind this strategy was that over time, people would become more comfortable with us, and thus more forthcoming. The strategy seemed to pay off. In later interviews, I was able to probe sensitive topics in detail, such as crimes to which confessed killers had not formally confessed and issues of ethnicity. With multiple interviews, I was able to glean information that I could not have collected in a one-shot interview or through survey questions. Another key advantage of this strategy was that I

[7] Gaining informed consent is also central to ethical practices of fieldwork, a subject that I do not deal with directly in this piece but which certainly bears on questions of data quality and reliability. On the subject of ethical challenges of fieldwork, see Wood (2006), Vanderstay (2005), and Sluka (1990).

was able to apply what I learned from one interview to other interviews. This process of learning sometimes involved finding a better way to phrase a question or, other times, pursuing the same line of questions with multiple people, as a way to triangulate responses and to ferret out more details.

## *Types of meta-data*

When I conducted my fieldwork in 2004, it had been ten years since the genocide and civil war. In that period of time, memories undoubtedly changed. People forget some details and mis-remember others. They re-arrange chronologies, confuse sequences, and give much greater weight to some moments over others. In addition, people in closed social environments most likely develop consensus versions of events. Most of the prisoners we spoke with, for example, had been in prison for at least eight years, some close to ten. In that amount of time, it is likely that prison culture helped to produce a particular way of talking (and perhaps thinking) about the genocide and civil war. One common claim that circulated in the prisons, for example, was the "double-genocide thesis," which posited that the Tutsi RPF had also engaged in a genocide of Hutu civilians.[8]

In this section, I identify five forms of meta-data that commonly accompany narrative data. The five include rumors, inventions, denials, evasions, and silences. Like all taxonomies, these categories are imperfect. They point to a range of meta-data that shape the stories people tell and thus the quality of data that researchers can expect to collect in post-violence settings. They are not comprehensive, however, as there are likely many other types of meta-data that infuse and inform what people say to researchers. [9] The importance of these (and other) meta-data, I will argue, lies in what

[8] For an empirical test of the double-genocide thesis, see Verwimp (2003).
[9] Other forms of meta-data might include jokes, asides, gossip, and whispers. (Any of these could also be the focus of research and thus constitute the main data.) Additional forms include

they tell us about the informant, the power relations in the informant's community, political conditions in the country at large, and the relationship between the researcher and the informant.

### Rumors

Ethnographers of war and violence have noted the central role that rumors play in periods of extreme uncertainty and insecurity. Cut off from other sources of information, rumors sometimes stand in for knowledge, as Anna Simons (1995) argues in the case of Somalia. Rumors help people make sense of uncertain or threatening situations. They can also goad people to violent response, such as the rumors that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 (Das 1998).

Rumors also arise about researchers in the field for similar reasons—because people in violent settings have strong and obvious reasons to mistrust and be wary of outsiders. Linda Green, for example, talks about the rumors that arose about her and her research assistant when she began going to Mayan women's homes to interview them (after conducting initial interviews in neutral, public places). As Green (1995, 115) explains, "Above all else they had not wanted the *gringa* to be seen coming to their house. Under the scrutiny of surveillance the women were afraid of what others in the village might say about them and me." Green's experience reminds us that a researcher's presence is never neutral; it therefore behooves researchers to think through how they might best detect and mitigate the risks and dangers their presence brings to those who consent to speak with them.

Like Green, I, too, encountered many rumors about my interpreter and me during the course of my fieldwork. Not only did these rumors circulate within the community;

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activities and postures that the informant exhibits during interviews. For example, one prisoner brought a small notebook to his second interview and took notes throughout the session. At the end of the interview, my interpreter asked him what he was writing down and he said, "your questions." Because I was afraid this man was intent on sharing the questions we asked him with other prisoners, I decided not to interview him again.

they also passed between the research sites to the prisons (through visitors) and back again from the prisons to the communities. Prisoners heard about our activities in their communities, just as people in each community knew which prisoners we had talked to in the local prison. This system of surveillance was nearly air-tight. Our status as outsiders with a car also made our presence conspicuous. None of this made the "information" that people passed on about us any more reliable than if it was based on pure hearsay. Yet, what people did say about us, true or not, was important for us to know since it affected our access to people in the community and what people were willing to say to us.

Some rumors focused on the kinds of relationships we had with those we interviewed. One rumor, for example, was that we gave money to the people to whom we talked. While innocuous on its face, this type of rumor, I knew, could easily generate resentment and jealousy on the part of an informant's neighbors. It could also raise false expectations among people who consented to speak with us. Thus, it was important to dispel this rumor. One way we did so was purely by accident. We had gone to the next door neighbor of a woman we had interviewed several times, thinking the man was someone else. Only after the interview did we learn he was not the person we had been seeking. The "mistaken" interview turned out to be fortuitous, however. At our subsequent interview with the woman living next door, she told us that she was glad we had gone there because it convinced the man that we were not giving money to our informants, as he had claimed we did.

Some rumors revealed people's suspicions about us and the dangers they associated with talking to us. One rumor was particularly troubling because it painted our activities as threatening, hence, worthy of suspicion. The person who told us this rumor was a prisoner we had interviewed twice. He began the interview by posing his own question (which I invited informants to do at the start of every interview).

> A woman told me that you passed close by my house. The driver called my child. My wife told the driver that the child didn't know anything because he was still too young during the war. I am asking if you went to my house. I don't have any other questions. When we get out of prison, the others are saying that you want to take us to Arusha [207A, #2/2].

I asked him who the woman was (who related this rumor). He said it was the wife of another prisoner, both of whom came from the same *secteur* as he but from a different *cellule*.[10]

The prisoner actually recounts two rumors he has heard in this brief passage. The first is about my driver[11] approaching his young child to ask questions about the genocide, prompting protests from the child's mother. The second is about my intentions to take this man (and other released prisoners) to Arusha (Tanzania), presumably to be tried at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda which is located there. I denied both rumors in the strongest terms possible. I explained that we had no idea where he lived (though admittedly it would have been easy to find out or drive by without knowing). I also emphasized that my driver had nothing to do with the research and would never have approached his young child or anyone else for that matter.

I then used this opportunity to investigate how prisoners vetted the information they heard through the rumor mill. I asked this prisoner how he and the other prisoners could tell whether news they heard from the outside was true or not. He said that it was possible to tell.

> There are times when you can figure out the truth. If someone knows that we talked with you [and] all that happened at our house and that these people are telling us that they saw your car, you might think it's true. But in terms of false news, it's difficult to tell [207A, #2/2].

[10] A *secteur* is comprised of about 4-8 *cellules*. Each *cellule* is made up of roughly 100 households.

[11] In addition to a full-time research assistant/interpreter, I hired a driver who was skilled at navigating rough, dirt roads and looking after my car, which was old and in constant need of repair.

What reassured me was the fact that he did bring this rumor to me for confirmation, rather than assuming it to be true. Whether he believed my denials or not is uncertain; the interview, however, did proceed without a hitch.

Rumors like those this prisoner recounted helped me to understand the source of people's fears and what they believed they were risking by talking with us. This rumor was by no means the only one we heard that indicated people's level of suspicion and wariness about our activities and intentions. One woman we interviewed multiple times, whom I call Thérèse, was visibly nervous and frightened about talking about the genocide. She articulated her fears more than once. At our third interview, she told us that every time we came, she worried that we would ask her about "the politics of the genocide" and that she was afraid that talking about that period would get her in trouble. I asked her if anyone had bothered her as a result of talking with us. She said yes, that after we would leave, people would come to her house to ask what we wanted. She added that no one had harmed her. The rumor she had heard was that my interpreter and I were working for the Rwandan government and that we were talking to people about the impending *gacaca*, a government initiative that sought to establish local-level "courts" to try the 120,000 prisoners who had been accused of participation in the genocide.[12] At the time of my fieldwork, *gacaca* was scheduled to begin nationwide in the coming months. Her fears prompted me to ask her about the motives behind rumors in general.

> *Q. During my stay here in Rwanda, I have noticed that Rwandans like rumors. Why do they like rumors?*
>
> Perhaps they want to know what you are up to though people just love rumors. Even if you stay at home, you always hear rumors about yourself. If you are rich or poor, there is no shortage of rumors. If you have children or not, there are always rumors and it's just like that.

[12] For background on *gacaca*, see Waldorf (2006) and Zorbas (2007).

> *Q. Do people accept all the rumors as true, without question or hesitation?*
> Yes, you hear them and you let the rumors go because they don't change anything in anyone's life.
>
> *Q. For the most part, the people believe these rumors as the truth?*
> Most people believe that these rumors are lies, that there is no truth in them [Thérèse, #3/7].

Thérèse's answers indicate that rumors are an inevitable part of everyday life. No matter what you do or who you are, people will talk about you. People love to trade in rumors even if they do not believe them. Given the prominent position rumors occupy in everyday life, what Thérèse fears is not who my interpreter and I really are, but what her neighbors say we are. It is the identities her neighbors assign to us (and not our real identities) that cast suspicion on Thérèse for having talked with us.

Over time, Thérèse's fears subsided; so, too, did the salience of the rumor that we were working for the government. At a later interview, Thérèse even confirmed that her neighbors no longer regarded us with suspicion, but had come to think of us as "friends" dropping by for a visit. She herself likened our visits to that of a priest—we come for short visits, then we leave, but we always come back again. The shift from threatening government agents to welcome visitor reassured me that our continuing presence was not getting Thérèse into trouble with her neighbors or local authorities. It also indicated that she had begun to trust us.

Not all rumors typed me and my interpreter as menacing. Some were far less troublesome but equally telling about the different ways in which people were making sense of who I was and what I was doing in their communities. One woman we had interviewed told us a rumor that was circulating about me as she walked us toward our next appointment. The rumor concerned a local woman who many years before had had a child with a *muzungu* ("foreigner," usually a white foreigner) man. The rumor was that I was this woman's long-lost daughter come back to her natal hill. The rumor not only

amused me, it also provided a glimpse into how people were defining me and explaining my recurring presence in their community. As Sluka (1990, 121) points out, people will use pre-existing categories to define outsiders. This was clearly what the rumor illustrated. That is, people were not typing me as Westerner or American or Black, White, Asian, or Hispanic, the racial categories that Americans use to type themselves and others. People were typing me according to their own categories; in this case, the categories were *umunyarwanda* (Rwandan) and *umuzungu* (foreigner). From my first days in the country, people had put me in the first category. What this rumor confirmed was that even people in my rural research sites were reading me this way, not just urbanites in Kigali.

That people were defining me through ethnic categories provided a useful entry point for talking about ethnicity. This was crucial since the government had officially banned talk of (Rwandan) ethnicity. Focusing on how people were constructing my ethnicity and why they constructed it one way and not another allowed me to probe a subject that was critical to my research, without violating or appearing to violate the government's ban.

As the examples above show, rumors can act as gauges for how people make sense of a researcher's presence, activities, and identity. Making such determinations is critical in settings rent by violence, when social relations are fragile or fractured and when talking to the wrong people can get a person in trouble. Rumors can also point to the source of people's fears about who the researcher really is and what people feel is at stake if they agree to talk to the researcher. Finally, rumors indicate the dynamics that can limit what people will say in interviews. If people believe that the researcher is acting in ways that appear threatening or overly aggressive (like tracking down a prisoner's child without his knowledge), there is clear reason for informants to be less than forthright in interviews. If however, people come to believe that the researcher is who

she says she is (e.g., an American PhD student studying the genocide), then people should have less reason to be mistrustful and fewer reasons to lie or prevaricate.

### Inventions

Perhaps more threatening to a researcher than rumors are lies or intentional fabrications or distortions. Through triangulation, cross-checking, follow-up questions, and other techniques, researchers usually try to ferret out lies to get closer to the truth. While researchers should use these techniques, they should also treat lies as meta-data that are valuable in and of themselves. Lies or any kind of fabrication or invention can shed light on the state of mind of the informant as well as the state of political and social relations in which the informant is embedded.

This paper began with the story of Angélique. Over the course of five interviews, I began to suspect that what she had been telling us was not entirely the truth. The point at which I became certain was when she said that her father had had thirty-nine wives. Thirty-nine seemed implausible. And as Dean and Whyte (1970, 126) note, when a story appears implausible, there is reason to question it.

It was at that point that I was certain that Angélique had been spinning tales but was her purpose deception? While at first I felt annoyed at Angélique's obvious distortions, I soon came to believe that she had not lied to deceive us. Instead, I came to believe that she had made up the story of her escape from killers to make sense of her current situation. The war had left her a widow with many children to feed; her house was small and rickety (even by local standards). If she did not know or want to know what had happened to her husband, perhaps it was because she knew that such knowledge would not help her cope with her present circumstances.

It is important to note that Angélique's story of being hunted down for having "Tutsi blood" might have contained elements of truth. It is quite possible that Angélique's

mother was Tutsi. It is also possible that her father had had multiple wives. And if Angélique's father was as rich and powerful as she claimed he was, then perhaps she had first-hand knowledge and experience being associated with a person of power and prestige. It is also possible that Angélique was hunted down during the massacres of Tutsi despite being Hutu. There were many Hutu who became targets for various reasons: some because they were members of a rival political party, some because they were rich, some because they had a personal conflict with a family member or neighbor. In other words, it is possible that parts of Angélique's story were true without the overall story being true. Thus, it is important to identify what level of truthfulness or accuracy one is seeking in the data.

It is also important to note that Angélique was not the only person to exaggerate or embellish. Sophie was over 80 years old when we first met her in 2004. [13] During the genocide, she had rescued twenty people by hiding them in her small house. Despite her advanced age, Sophie was vivacious and seemed to relish the attention our visits brought. And while she loved to tell stories, dates were usually a blur to her. At one point, for example, she said: "It's been ten years" to explain why she could not remember the specific year in which the event in question had taken place. Sophie did not claim to remember everything, but like most good storytellers, she was committed to whatever story she did tell. Did Sophie embellish at times? Undoubtedly. Did these embellishments hurt her credibility or turn her stories into lies? I would argue not. Sophie's stories were not litanies of facts but narratives with characters and plots. It was not dates that were important to Sophie, but who did or said what to whom and why.

It bears pointing out that Sophie, too, felt marginalized by the rest of her community. Unlike Angélique, however, being marginalized for Sophie meant having

[13] Sophie could not recall her birth year and thus gave different years at different interviews; judging by more reliable temporal markers, such as the birth of her children, I estimated her age to have been around 80 years old in 2004.

greater freedom to say and do what she wanted. It made her more forthcoming, not less. Being more forthcoming did not necessarily make Sophie's stories more reliable in terms of factual accuracy; it made her testimonies more available to cross-checking with other sources. By contrast, when the details of Angélique's story became less precise and more fantastical, it became harder to confirm any part of the story, even with her. Indeed, it was my inability to gain greater clarity from Angélique that made me suspect the veracity of her story as a whole. And when I began questioning everything that Angélique had told us, I began to ask different questions of the data she provided. Why would someone make up a story like that? What is the story behind the story? At the very least, Angélique's testimonies hinted at the value she placed on being recognized as a "victim" or "survivor." My sense was that the value people placed on these categories did not reflect purely material motives—what they could get from the government (or perhaps a foreign researcher) by being classified as a "survivor." It had to do with a type of social hierarchy that was in place at the time, a hierarchy that placed survivors near or at the top.

I interpreted Sophie's embellishments, by contrast, as coming from a place of critique. Sophie had strong opinions about the world and was openly critical and disapproving of others, including her neighbors. One of the reasons she told us she had always kept a small circle of friends was because as a young girl, she learned that having too many friends invited betrayal. For Sophie, the goal of relating stories to us was not to invent a new life history that made it easier to cope with present realities, as seemed to be the case with Angélique, it was to demonstrate her willingness to speak openly and frankly about anything.

As the contrasting examples of Angélique and Sophie show, lies, fabrications, and embellishments, can say quite a bit about the social and political geography the researcher is traversing. These geographies shape and color not only how people re-

construct the past, but also how they re-construct their own identities to accord with present realities.

### Denials

Another discursive strategy that shaped people's testimonies was denial. I encountered denial when talking to people who were not genocide survivors but survivors of violence that occurred after the end of the civil war and genocide.

The most memorable encounter with denial occurred in the northern research site of Kimanzi. I had asked the local authority if there were any women "*rescapés*" who might be willing to talk with me. By using the word "*rescapé*," I had assumed that my meaning was clear—that I had wanted to talk with survivors of the violence targeted at Tutsi civilians, which had taken place in that region in January-March 1991. When the "female survivor" the local authority had sent arrived for her interview, I had certain expectations about how the initial interview would go. Genocide survivors were usually quite willing to talk about their experiences during the genocide. Thus, when I began with questions about the period of 1990-1994, I was taken aback when she answered by focusing her response on the period after 1994.

> *Q. Where did you live during the period of 1990 to 1994?*
> I lived here in the *secteur* Kimanzi, *cellule* R—.
>
> *Q. What happened to you during this period?*
> I encountered some problems from the war. Especially the war of 1997 when they struck me with knives and machetes.
>
> *Q. Who struck you during the war of 1997?*
> It was the *Inkotanyi* [sobriquet of the RPF].
>
> *Q. Why did the* Inkotanyi *strike you in 1997?*
> I don't know why. They were killing people. They wouldn't even let the children go because the day they struck me, they left with my two small children, the youngest was still nursing and the other [who] was born just before the youngest.

*Q. What did the* Inkotanyi *do with your two children?*
They killed my two children and threw them into the forest. It was the neighbors who picked up the bodies.

*Q. Before 1997, did you ever have problems with violence?*
No. Again, when I arrived home, the *Inkotanyi* also killed my husband and I remained all by myself in this cruel world.

*Q. Were you there when your husband was killed by the* Inkotanyi*?*
No. The hospital would ask my husband each time to find me some nutritious food for my convalescence. My husband disappeared when he went to Ruhengeri [town] to find me some meat.

*Q. Was there violence here in [*cellule*] R-- before 1997?*
No. The problems started after the arrival of the *Inkotanyi* in Rwanda.

*Q. When did the* Inkotanyi *arrive here at [*cellule*] R—?*
I remember that they arrived here in 1997 after having made all the Rwandans return, coming from the Zaire, and they started to kill the people. [317, #1/2]

In this short passage, I made three attempts to get the informant to talk about the period of 1990-1994 and each time, she refocused the question on the period she wanted to talk about—the "war of 1997." To highlight her victimization, she denies that any violence took place in her *cellule* before 1997. Instead, she links all the violence in her community to the arrival of the RPF, when she and her family became targets for killing. She also dates the RPF's arrival to 1997, overlooking a particularly bold RPF attack that had occurred in her region in January 1991, which her neighbors (who were also Hutu) had no problem recalling and recounting.

This informant was not unique in her denial of violence that occurred prior to her own victimization. Other women who lost their husbands after the war and genocide also maintained that there had been no violence before they and their families became targets and victims. Do the denials of these women amount to lying? While I did not find their denials credible (in light of other testimonies), I did not think of their denials as simply lies or deceptions. Rather, I concluded that what was paramount for these women was their own victimization. This required me to inquire into their experiences as victims

first, before trying to talk to them about other forms of victimhood. Only by allowing these informants to speak about their experiences of violence could I get them to acknowledge, however grudgingly, that others were targeted for violence at an earlier period. It was as if acknowledging the violence perpetrated against other victims took away from their status as victims. In a way, they were right. In its *gacaca* initiative, the government had reserved the term "survivor" (and by extension, the notion of "victim") for Tutsi who escaped the genocide. By doing so, the government was effectively denying the experiences of Hutu survivors of the genocide as well as victims of other forms of violence, such as violence committed by the RPF and former government militia-turned-rebels. Furthermore, by attempting to restrict my questions to the period of the 1990-1994 civil war and genocide, I, too, was designating these women's experiences as "irrelevant" since the "data points" they were providing fell outside the temporal boundaries I had established for my research.

What these women's denials taught me was that informants do not experience violence in the same neat, analytic packages that we researchers use in our fieldwork. Rather, people experience, remember and recount violence through the lens of their own victimization. This meant that I could not pre-specify a designated time period and expect that informants would go along with my categories, especially when my demarcations did not match their experience, or worse, denied them. Their denials of others' experiences reflected others' denial of theirs.

### Evasions

In addition to denials and inventions, I also encountered strategies of evasion and avoidance on the part of some informants. Some people avoided answering particular questions; some answered by omitting important information; others avoided being interviewed altogether. What I quickly learned was that avoiding certain questions

or being interviewed did not necessarily mean that a person had something to hide. Similarly, agreeing to be interviewed did not indicate any level of honesty or openness on the part of the informant.

People who avoid being interviewed may do so for quite mundane reasons. During the course of my fieldwork, for example, I came across people who were bored by the interview process. They were disinterested in telling their story or answering my questions. I had no reason to suspect these people had something to hide. In one case, for example, it was a man who had rescued many Tutsi during the first wave of mass killings in Kimanzi. We had interviewed this man briefly on two occasions, and it became clear that he was not interested in sitting for any more interviews. At no time did it seem like he was avoiding further interviews because he had something to hide. My impression was that he simply preferred doing something else with his time.

In other cases, it may well be that a person avoids being interviewed because he or she does have something to hide. We interviewed one young woman, for example, who was still quite angry at having spent five years in the central prison in Kigali. She had been accused of participating in the genocide. After speaking with us on two occasions, she agreed to speak with us again. At the next two appointments, however, she was not at home. At the second missed appointment, her neighbor greeted us and said that the woman had left the house before we arrived in order to avoid us. In this case, the woman's absence did raise suspicions that she knew or had done more during the genocide than she wanted to admit.

The second example was even more pronounced than the first. It concerns a man I call Cain. The local authority suggested we talk to Cain because he had been *conseiller* (or local head) of Ngali after the war. Cain was also a genocide survivor. Since we were having trouble finding people that day (because it was market day), I jumped at the opportunity to interview him.

Entering his house, I noticed that Cain seemed to be fairly well off by local standards. He had a young wife and a daughter dressed in a secondary school uniform who greeted us in French. There was a scale on a table near the front door, which seemed to indicate that he was a merchant of some kind. He also held a wad of 100Frw bills in his hand throughout the interview. It was not so much the amount of money he held in his hand (which was not insignificant by local standards), but the fact that he was holding any bills at all that grabbed my attention. As we sat down, he made a big show of welcoming us into his home.

I began the interview as I had with other genocide survivors—that is, with the expectation that this man would talk openly about his experience during the genocide. As the interview progressed, however, I noticed that rather than getting more detailed (as was usually the case with survivors), his answers became less detailed and more general. He began the interview saying that he had seen everything. He explained that in 1994, Hutus were being trained to kill Tutsi. He also volunteered the name of the local person who was in power at the time. As I continued my questions, however, he began claiming not to know the answers.

> *Q. How did the attackers know who the Tutsi were?*
> I don't know how they knew that, but they had made lists well in advance and used those at the time of the killing.
>
> *Q. They made the lists before the shooting down of the president's plane?*
> I don't know when they did it.
>
> *Q. Did the war that started in 1990 change anything here in Ngali?*
> We heard that there was a war at the border, that the *Inyenzi-Inkotanyi* [common reference to the RPF] were attacking Rwanda. The friendships between the people began to erode and what do you know, there was a conflict between the ethnic groups, saying that the *Inyenzi* were Tutsi.
>
> *Q. After having arrived at R— [the* secteur *where he fled], what did you do next?*
> We stayed at my father-in-law's until the arrival of the *Inkotanyi*.

*Q. When did the* Inkotanyi *arrive at Ngali?*
I don't know because I wasn't here at Ngali.

*Q. at R--?*
I don't remember. I was in the house [of his father-in-law]. I didn't go out at that time.

*Q. Were you threatened during the time you were staying at your father-in-law's house?*
I was threatened.

*Q. Who threatened you?*
It was the people who destroyed my house who were threatening me—the Hutu people who were hunting the Tutsi people.

This entire exchange struck me as odd for a survivor. Many prisoners, including confessed killers, claimed to have seen everything and then became vague and sketchy when I asked them to give details of what precisely they saw or did. This man was showing the same tendency. With prisoners, even those who had confessed their participation in the genocide, I understood this sketchiness to be a strategy to deflect guilt or minimize responsibility for their deeds. This man was a genocide survivor so his evasions perplexed me. He states that there were lists circulating, but claims not to know who had drawn up the lists or when. Yet, if such lists had existed (and other testimony corroborated this point), they had to have been drawn up with the help of local people since only locals would have known which households were Tutsi. Cain's claimed ignorance of who drew up the lists seems at odds with his knowledge of who was in power in Ngali at the start of the genocide.

He then tells us that he fled to his father-in-law's house and stayed there until the arrival of the RPF. He also says, however, that he did not know when the RPF arrived in Ngali. This did not seem believable since his father-in-law's *secteur* adjoins Ngali. It is also odd that when I brought the question back to his own experience being targeted for killing that he falls back into a very general discourse, rather then providing more precise details about which Hutu were targeting him. Were they outsiders? Neighbors? Military?

Family members? Cain avoids divulging such details, and resorts instead to the unassailably general statement that “the Hutu were hunting the Tutsi.”

All of these evasions puzzled me during the interview. Then, as we were leaving the man’s house to walk back to the car, my interpreter pointed out that Cain must be the brother of a prisoner we had recently interviewed. This prisoner was also a Tutsi survivor of the genocide and had told us a rather complicated story of how he came to be imprisoned. While the details of his story were a blur to me at the time, what I did recall was his emphasis that it was family problems that had landed him in prison. My interpreter had figured out the link when she recognized the names Cain had given for his parents (in response to a routine set of questions I asked at initial interviews).

Another clue that Cain was being deliberately evasive was when he told us that he had only one brother and that that brother had died in the genocide. What he neglected to mention was that he had another brother who was languishing in prison accused of being a *génocidaire*. That omission was clearly telling but telling of what? After our initial interview, which did not last long, we asked Cain if we could come back another time. He readily agreed. We made an appointment to talk with him again in two weeks time. When we returned on the appointed day, he was nowhere to be found. We left a message with his wife that we would return on another specified day. On our next appointed day, he was again nowhere to be found. We then asked the *responsable* if he had seen Cain. The *responsable* made his own inquiries but said he could not locate him either. It seemed clear that Cain was avoiding us. His behaviour piqued my curiosity, for why would a survivor have reason to hide from a researcher conducting research on the genocide? What could he have to hide? He was among the targets of the genocide, after all, not the perpetrators.

Because he had made himself scarce, I decided to inquire about Cain to others. One of the first people I asked was Sophie, the 80 year old rescuer, because I knew that

she would speak openly and frankly. She told us that even before the genocide, Cain was not well-liked. She also told us it was he who had his brother imprisoned over a long-standing conflict between the two brothers. I asked others about Cain as well. One survivor told how Cain had tried to coerce her into accusing someone she did not know of having participated in the genocide; Cain threatened to kill her if she did not go along (she refused). I also asked his former friend, who had been the *conseiller* of Ngali until the start of the genocide (when he was forcibly deposed). This man, too, had been imprisoned by Cain after the war. The friend was at a loss to explain why Cain had him imprisoned. The only reason he could come up with was that Cain had not liked how he had mediated the ongoing conflict between Cain and his (imprisoned) brother. Notably, neither his imprisoned friend nor imprisoned brother spoke of hatred or anger toward Cain; both were dismayed at his actions.

From multiple testimonies, I arrived at a picture of a man who, despite being a genocide survivor, had become one of the most notorious perpetrators in Ngali after the genocide. I asked people if they thought Cain was trying to exact revenge. All said no, that it was not revenge that motivated Cain, but greed. Cain, one survivor said, had worked closely with former *Interahamwe*[14] to kill and imprison all manner of people (Hutu and Tutsi), in order to seize their property and goods.

Cain's evasions hinted broadly at a story that he preferred be kept secret. Such stories, however, are rarely a secret in close-knit and close-quartered communities, such as Ngali. So while Cain refused to talk with us, many others were more than willing to talk about him and the nature of his activities following the war and genocide. While Cain's career as a perpetrator did not shed light on my research question about the genocide, it nonetheless shed light on the type of power relations that were in place following the genocide. As *conseiller*, Cain was able to wield an extraordinary amount of

[14] *Interahamwe* is a term that people used to refer to local bands of killers during the genocide.

power over the lives of local residents. People's fears of being falsely accused and imprisoned were thus extremely well founded. In other words, people did have reason to be scared of what others said about them, thought of them, or were capable of doing to them, for they had seen what power Cain wielded after the genocide.

What this example also reminded me was that "victim" and "perpetrator" were by no means mutually exclusive categories. Indeed, it was remarkable how quickly Cain had gone from victim to perpetrator. Cain's position of power and his use of violence as *conseiller* thus marked a continuity from the period of genocide; for it illustrated how closely tied power and violence were in Ngali.

### Silences

Like evasions, silences, too, can be polyvalent. Their meanings can be multiple and contradictory. They can both hide and reveal.

I had expected people to be silent on one subject:--sexual violence. I had read how widespread mass rape was during the genocide,[15] but did not expect anyone to talk about it. I also made a choice not to pose direct questions about this aspect of the genocide as I felt unprepared methodologically and theoretically to broach such a sensitive subject. Rather, I waited for informants to bring up the topic themselves. There were only three people who did so. One was a resident of Kimanzi, who told us:

> I remember almost everything [about the period of 1990-1994]. There was killing and searches by both sides, the RPF and ex-FAR [former Rwandan government army] because the ex-FAR were killing people when they said they were the spies of the RPF. They were committing sexual violence against the Tutsi women and girls…

The man learned of the rapes of Tutsi women and girls from friends who stopped by his house during the war, while he nursed a leg injury. He brought up the subject with no prompting.

[15] See, for example, Landesman (2002) and the Human Rights Watch report entitled *Shattered lives* (Nowrojee 1996).

The second reference to sexual violence came from a female genocide survivor who mentioned her own experience being threatened with rape. She was fleeing with her baby on her back and ran into two young *Interahamwe*. One ordered her to get on the ground so he could rape her. The other teased his friend for not having a younger girl to rape. The woman managed to flee the scene without being raped.

The third reference came from a prisoner who had been accused of killing his Tutsi mother, half-brother and half-brother's wife, along with their children. He denied any involvement in their murder and had not confessed to participating in the genocide (thereby relinquishing the possibility of a reduced sentence). This man gave the most detailed account of a rape. He was explaining how his cousin and an accomplice had killed multiple members of his family. The cousin's accomplice also raped a girl who had been hiding in the prisoner's mother's house. When asked what he was doing in the room where the girl was hiding, the accomplice said that he was going to pray with her before killing her. As the prisoner commented: "These were all lies…"

These cases were the exceptions. People were, for the most part, silent on this subject. That silence reflected not only the sensitivity of the topic, but a general disbelief that widespread sexual violence could occur in one's own community. One (male) Tutsi survivor insisted, for example, that there was no rape in Ngali because he had never heard anyone talk about it. When I asked him if a woman who had been raped would feel free to talk about it, he conceded that she would not.

People's silence about sexual violence also seemed to reflect a nearly universal shame about this form of violation. As a Croatian anthropologist points out, victims who talk about their rape generally bring more, not less, shame to themselves and their families. For this reason, they often choose to remain silent as a way to protect their families (Olujic 1995, 196).

In addition to silence on sexual violence, people were also largely silent on another subject—pillaging. This silence was quite unexpected, particularly since many people had already admitted to participating in mass murder. What was preventing them from admitting to a far less serious crime, I wondered. The first informant to volunteer that he had pillaged crops from his neighbor (who had gone into hiding) came toward the very end of my fieldwork; his admission was so unexpected it shocked me.

People's usual response to questions about pillaging activities during the genocide was to acknowledge that pillaging had occurred, but not to implicate themselves or any other specific people. For example, one prisoner described a mass murder he witnessed that had been organized and led by a military soldier. I asked the prisoner if this military soldier pillaged the victims' bodies after killing them. The prisoner replied that not only did the *militaire* not pillage, when he found any money on the bodies, he threw it back in the pit (where the victims had been killed). Some of the confessed killers I spoke with talked about pillaging as one of several tasks that local authorities ordered them to do. From this perspective, pillaging was just another part of their assigned duties before and during the genocide.

Finally, people were largely silent on the subject of atrocities committed during the genocide. As a result, I did not obtain many precise details about specific acts of violence. When people talked of killing, they did so with an economy of words: "We cut him" or "they killed him." I often inquired as to the instruments of death. The answers were consistent but perfunctory: hoes, clubs, axes, and machetes. People occasionally volunteered details about atrocities but it was rare. One Tutsi survivor, for example, described how the RPF dispensed with a particularly ruthless killer by splitting him in two, gesturing from the top of his head to the bottom of his torso. That people were largely silent on atrocities does not mean atrocities did not occur. What is more likely is that the particulars of specific acts did not readily enter into people's narratives of what

occurred. There are many possible reasons why not. People may not have witnessed any atrocities; what atrocities they did witness may have been too difficult to revisit or recount; or like rape, such talk may have simply been taboo.

Unlike talk of rape or sexual violence, however, silence on atrocities is not universal or common across cultures and societies. The Mayan widows that Linda Green, for example, interviewed readily described the atrocities committed against them and their families during *la violencia*. As Green (1999, 75) recounts: “The women, without prompting, took turns recounting their stories of horror. Using vivid detail, they would tell of the events surrounding the deaths or disappearances of their husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, as if they had happened the previous week or month, rather than six or eight years before.” In Rwanda, French journalist Jean Hatzfeld (2000) elicited similarly detailed accounts of the horrors and atrocities that his informants (all genocide survivors from the same region) lived through and witnessed. The question is why I was not able to elicit such details. Perhaps I did not ask the right questions or establish the requisite level of rapport with informants. I chose not to ask direct questions about the most intimate details of the violence, particularly atrocities, for various reasons. Asking about the details of atrocities that people witnessed or committed felt too pornographic. I also did not feel I had an obvious entry point for asking these questions, as I did with the subject of ethnicity. Perhaps it was my own norms that kept me from broaching this subject, despite being keenly interested in expressive forms of violence.

Silences can communicate many things. In the case of sexual violence, I interpreted the silence to mean this was a topic that should not be broached—by me or anyone else. On the subject of pillaging, I was at a loss so I consulted two Rwandan friends and colleagues. They provided different but equally compelling explanations. One reasoned that by admitting to pillaging, a person would become liable for paying restitution to the victim or the victim’s family. Paying restitution could constitute a major

burden for people. My other colleague conjectured that by admitting to pillaging, the person was also admitting to coveting what another had. Being covetous was shameful and embarrassing. Both explanations made sense to me. People might have feared both the financial consequences of admitting to pillaging as well as the social stigma attached to that particular act.

The example of pillaging shows clearly how conditions in the present shape testimonies of the past. Because pillagers remain liable for what they took from victims during the genocide, admissions of pillaging became rare in narratives of the genocide, even those by confessed killers.

Silences are not always at the communal level, however. Individuals can also be silent on specific subjects. Their silence does not necessarily mean these informants are less truthful or forthright than those who are more talkative. Thérèse said very little about the genocide during our many interviews, but she was quite open when talking about all other topics, including sensitive issues such as ethnicity and jealousy. Cain, by contrast, claimed to have seen everything but told us very little.

Silences can also be a collaborative effort between the researcher and informant. As Kay Warren (1998) points out, there are always “strategic ambiguities” that arise in narratives about war and violence. Often, such ambiguities are not invitations to probe more deeply, but rather subtle admonishments to the researcher to respect certain topics as “off limits.” As Liisa Malkki (citing Feldman 1991, 12; 1995, 51) remarks about her own fieldwork experience in the 1980s interviewing Burundi refugees living in Tanzania:

> …the success of the fieldwork hinged not so much on a determination to ferret out “the facts” as on a willingness to leave some stones unturned, to listen to what my informants deemed important, and to demonstrate my trustworthiness by not prying where I was not wanted. The difficult and politically charged nature of the fieldwork setting made such attempts at delicacy a simple necessity; like Feldman, I found that “in order to know, I had to become expert in demonstrating that there were things, places, and people I did not want to know.”

Like Warren, Malkki, and others who have studied war and violence up close, I, too, never pressed anyone to talk about anything he or she did not want to discuss. When I encountered hesitation or resistance, I used the opportunity to ask questions about entirely different topics to demonstrate my willingness to respect the informant's boundaries. "Not asking" was one way I could demonstrate my trustworthiness. Did this strategy pay off? Thérèse's willingness to talk with us openly about a wide range of topics indicated that the strategy had paid off. Moreover, at our last (and seventh) interview, she did finally speak about the genocide as she walked us to our car. It did not change my sense of what she knew or did during the genocide. It did not shed any new light on her husband's[16] behaviour. It did tell me, however, that Thérèse had trusted us not to ask. And by not asking, we found our answers.

## *Conclusion*

I have argued that meta-data are important guides for evaluating and interpreting narrative data collected in settings rent by violence. The silences, evasions, rumors, and denials that people engage in during interviews do not spell the difference between truth and lies or valid and invalid data. They are the frameworks that shape how people talk about the past and what they are willing to acknowledge in the present.

The biggest advantage of interviewing people multiple times over a several month period (rather than in a short time span or in a one-shot interview) was the opportunity to build a modicum of trust and rapport over time. Some scholars deny that trust and rapport automatically come with time. As Konstantin Belousov *et al*. (2007, 156) argue, for example, in "crisis-ridden research settings," rapport between researcher and researched can actually diminish over time. As Staffan Löfving (2005, 89), too, observes: "Lying, misinformation and direct silence adhere to the communicative tool kit

[16] Thérèse's husband had died in 1997. He was the person nearly every informant named as the leader of the genocide in Ngali.

of people in politically unstable circumstances." In other words, in politically sensitive settings where talking can be risky, people mitigate their risks by lying, evading, inventing, and prevaricating. It is people's comments on and edits of their own stories and narrations that can tell the researcher how much to trust the data and what questions to ask of the data. These meta-data thus form an important part of our datasets and should be treated as valuable and important components in their own right.

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