



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

## **Advocates for change**

- A qualitative study about Rwandan social work students reflections about gender roles and gender equality

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# Preface

We want to thank all of our respondents for your participation in this study. Without your willingness to answer our questions this study never would have been. Thank you!

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Gothenburg, April 2020  
Emmy and Lova

# Abstract

Title: Advocates for change - A qualitative study about Rwandan social work students reflections about gender roles and gender equality.

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The aim of this study is to investigate Rwandan social work students reflections about gender roles and gender equality. This aim was achieved through qualitative, semi-structured, phone interviews with six Rwandan social work students. The interviews were later transcribed, and the data was analysed through a thematic analysis method. This method led to three main themes, Views on gender roles, Change of gender expectations, Responsibility and Obstacles for equality. The themes were analyzed using gender theory framework, focusing on parts of queer theory, gender performativity, gender order and heteronormativity. An intersectional perspective was also added in order to get closer to the core of the study's aim. The results of the research were that the students describe a traditional structure of gender roles in families and society. Expectations of a man and a woman varied based on gender. For example, women were expected to maintain the prime responsibility for household and children, while men were subjected to bring financial support. Secondly, the students all showed a will for, and positive attitude towards, change, in terms of gender equality and equal responsibilities within the home. They also pointed out that things like culture, family values, education and class affected the expectations on gender in the society. Finally, the students presented a broad overview with different understandings for what obstacles exist to achieve gender equality. Things like poor education and deeply rooted norms were highlighted. The results also showed that a lot of the responsibility for equality was placed on the women's table, with expectation to do career, promote equality in home, and at the same time live up to traditional expectations of being a woman, such as being a good wife and mother.

Key words: Gender, Gender equality, Reflections, Attitudes, Social work students, Rwanda, East Africa

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# 1 Introduction

In this section we will present the introduction of our thesis. We will describe the background, our aim, delimitations, justifications for social work and how we, the authors of this study, shared the work process in between us.

## 1.1 Thesis introduction

We, the authors of this study, are two bachelor students in the Department of Social Work at Gothenburg University, Sweden. In the fall of 2019, we participated in a field work course through an internship. Our placement was in Butare, Rwanda, where we worked alongside an NGO which took on sponsored projects such as malaria prevention, HIV prevention, hygiene projects etc. Through this internship we gained critical insights into how social work functions in Rwanda. It inspired us to further investigate certain aspects of the Rwandan society in relation to social work and gender.

So, why focus on gender? Well, Rwanda has experienced rapid growth within several fields, such as economic expansion and gender equality within political institutions (Debusscher & Ansom, 2013 p. 112). In the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, a political will of change was formed. That will is shown in the document *Vision for 2020* which was written to inspire and show direction. Vision 2020 had gender equality as an overarching goal to include gender equality in all developmental work to rebuild the country. We can see a result of this aim in several areas. These results show developmental work to empower women and education which benefits women, and by having the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world. Rwanda has been on the top ten list of Global gender gap index ranking for the past years, and are currently ranked as number nine (World economic forum, 2020) This has made the world picture Rwanda as a progressive country in aiming for gender equality.

However, Sida (2018) reports that the positive numbers hide the rooted traditional patriarchy pattern which exists throughout Rwandan society. We believe this gap requires a closer look . Our perception is that the young population in Rwanda is rooted in traditions and culture but seeks modern values and vision of a change in gender equality.

The social worker's role is, according to Kalinganire & Rutikanga (2015), to work with human rights and by that work move towards a gender equal society. We believe social work students are well aware of the current situation described in the county, and are good resources to reflect on this issue. This has resulted in the aim of our study.

## **1.2 Aim**

The aim of this study is to investigate Rwandan social work students' reasonings about gender roles and equality.

Our main research questions are:

1. How are Rwandan social work students reflecting on gender roles?
2. What factors are mentioned by the students as important for how gender is constructed in Rwanda?
3. How do the students reflect on the current development of gender roles and gender equality in Rwanda?

## **1.3 Delimitations**

We chose to limit our study to students and their reflections on gender. We limited our study to the social work students at one university in Rwanda, due to accessibility and that it is the main university for teaching social work. We have

chosen to only have an open conversation about gender. We wanted to let our respondents steer the conversation to topics they felt comfortable with. This is also why we chose to limit our interview guide to open questions about gender. We avoided topics that could have been hard for our respondents to answer on an ethical level such as questions about politics and questions about their personal gender identity or sexuality. We did this for many reasons: first and foremost to avoid the respondent feeling worried or unsafe, and because we have not seen a study made on this specific group and theme before. This made us believe that it is good to start with a general study that mainly lifts reflections. We understand that by limiting our study this way, we leave many questions unanswered, to be followed up by other researchers in the future.

#### **1.4 Justifications and relevance to social work**

Both social work and gender equality play an important role in the development of a country. There are many ongoing issues in Rwanda, connected to both of these fields. The importance of gender equality development highlights this study's relevance. Both to listen to the voice of the young population in a developing Rwanda, but also to see what gender attitudes are found among the future social workers in the nation. We see the importance of this study to build research material to further explain the effects of gender and gender roles on society through the reflections of the people.

#### **1.5 Work progress**

We have divided the work equally between us. We have both read and written parts of all the chapters, and we executed and transcribed three interviews each. We later listened to each other's interviews to hear if we have understood our respondents correctly and also to get a wider view of their answers, which could be hard with only the transcriptions, where tone in voice is missed. We have, throughout the process of the study, had an open discussion about its content and listened to each other's ideas and worked as a team even if we sometimes were



working with different parts and had not been working side by side the entire time. We wrote the analysis and discussion together in order to include all our reflection about the collected empiri.

## 2 Background

In this chapter we will present background information on Rwanda. We will present demographics, information of gender policies and social work in the nation. This is done in order to create a contextual base for this thesis.

### 2.1 Rwanda

Rwanda, also known as “the land of a thousand hills”, is a small country located in East Africa. It is one of the more densely populated countries in the world, with over 12 million inhabitants and with Christianity as the main religion (WHO, 2016; RDHS 2014-15). Rwanda’s population is young, with a median age of 20.3 (UN, 2020). Rwanda has a history of being colonized and facing injustice from its colonizers. This divided the people, which ultimately resulted to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi where a million people lost their life. As a post-genocide country, Rwanda has gone through many changes over the past 25 years. They have transitioned from a nation in ruins to a socially and economically progressive country. However, some major issues still exist in Rwanda today. Poverty is one of them, with 38.2% of the population are living below the national poverty rate (World bank, 2016). Teenage pregnancies have been increasing according to the 2015 DHS (NISR). Unemployment is high, with a rate of 16%, over 600 000 people (NISR, 2019).

## **2.2 Brief history of gender roles and aim for gender equality in Rwanda**

Before the genocide, women's roles were limited by the deeply entrenched patriarchal system, according to Brown (2015) The culture restricted women to traditional roles, such as housework. This was encouraged by the government through the Family Code of 1992, which legally recognized men as the head of the household. Furthermore, women's positions in the society became more and more marginalized alongside the rise of the Hutu power. After the genocide, the regime wanted to establish peace and democracy. It was important for women to take part in the reconstruction. Parliament did not want the population to return to pre-genocide gender structures, and began to emphasize equality in the development sphere (p.127-129).

In the past decade many changes happened in Rwanda, and the country is now recognized as a strong economy in Africa, and for working toward the unification of the Rwandan people. Politics have also changed for the benefit of women: Rwanda is the top country in the world when it comes to the percentage of women in the parliament, with its 61% (IPU, 2019). This shows a change of political will regarding gender equality. This paradigm shift in culture has increased women's role in decision-making processes, which implies that Rwanda is heading for more development in its gender equality work. However, traditional gender roles are still strong in Rwandan Society. Many still subscribe to traditional Rwandan cultural values, with men as the "head of the family", while women tend to the needs of children and the home. Contrastingly, women's position is being strengthened in Rwandan society, with the government, promoting education and equal work opportunities (Sida, 2015).

## **2.3 The role of social workers in Rwanda**

Social work is a rather young profession in Rwanda. It has developed mostly since the 1994 genocide. Before the profession was academically introduced in

1999, the role of social workers was called assistant social worker. This certificate was obtained through a secondary school diploma. The majority of social workers (trained and untrained) in Rwanda are women. Women are also a majority in the social work bachelor programme (Kalinganire & Rutikanga 2015, p. 35)

With higher education of social work being so newly introduced in Rwanda, trained social workers struggle with establishing the unique profession. Kalinganire and Rutikanga (2015) describes how the 1994 genocide brought a massive need for social work, with many people struggling with tremendous trauma and ruined lives. They continue to describe the importance of social workers, but highlight the lack of social workers in the field. Many executing social work have training in other fields, such as education, psychology, or economics (p. 36, 39). This has become a problem and social workers are trying to advocate for their profession's importance to society (p. 2). Spitzer (2019) presents a study on this issue that is spread throughout East Africa. He talks about the PROSOWO project, a research project with the goal of helping professionalize social work. He also raises the challenges of professionalizing social work in these areas. With the profession being so new to Rwanda, teaching in the country is based on literature and theories originating from a non-african contexts. Another challenge is that social workers are not established and many execute social work without being trained for it (p. 571).

With the challenges that social workers face in today's Rwanda, it is still clear that the profession is vital to the success of the country. Kalinganire and Rutikanga (2015) states that an establishment of the profession is important to be able to marry the educational advantages for social work execution. Social work is characterized by the increased well-being of the people being supported, with fitting methods, knowledge, and skills (p. 36). Since many practicing social workers do not have an educational background in the field, it is being practiced inconsistently. This causes social workers to struggle to promote a cohesive theoretical basis for practice (Spitzer 2009, p. 571).

### 3 Previous research

The aim of this study is to explore social work student reflections and attitudes towards gender roles in Rwanda. In this chapter, we present a small overview of previous research in this area that has inspired us in this topic. We discovered that the majority of articles about Rwanda concerns the development of the country in the aftermath of the genocide. While the genocide against the Tutsi is crucial in understanding present-day Rwanda, we have chosen to mainly focus our research on reflections that show gender *attitudes*. With this in mind we have used certain search words to find articles; *Gender, Gender Equality, Attitudes, East Africa, Rwanda, Social work students*. These were found through ProQuest and Google Scholars. Some articles were found with the help of our supervisor, and by using sources from recommended studies.

Our findings for covering knowledge in this area resulted in studies on *attitudes* and outcomes from various projects promoting *gender equality* in Rwanda. To further specify how *social work students' views* have been portrayed and discussed in former studies, we have also chosen to reference a study with social work student participants. Due to the shortage of Rwandan studies published about social work students, we searched for studies published outside of Rwanda to develop a basis of understanding for social work students. To get a broader perspective, we have also included a section connected to *values, norms and professionalism* in a Rwandan context. We will finish off with mentioning both an overview for the *process of change* in societal *norms*, and how this is applicable to Rwanda. We made sure to only use articles that were trustworthy by being peer-reviewed and referred to in other studies.

To deepen our knowledge for this thesis we chose to take part in many studies. For a wider insight of gender equality in the Rwandan society we have read Pâfs, et.al (2020), Debusscher & Ansoms (2013) and Sommers, (2012). To receive a

social work perspective we have read Carlson & Randell, (2013) and Keesler, (2019). Also we acknowledge that gender equality work was traditionally facing women and therefore we wanted to understand men's involvement by reading Slegh et. al (2015) Lastly to get a wider perspective on attitudes are formed we read Bicchieri & Mercier (2014).

### **3.1 Men's involvement and attitudes on gender equality**

In a study assessing men's attitudes on involvement in a women's empowerment program, Slegh et al. (2013) observed a wide variety of attitudes among the participants. The study focused on what eases women's empowerment and results of the study show that a positive effect of the empowerment were more likely to occur when men were directly involved in the equality work promoted by the program. For example, men and women shared more of the household tasks. Simultaneously, there was a decrease in gender-based violence (Slegh et. al 2013). Women expressed that they were more involved in decision-making and family economics. Even though there were mainly positive results for equality, the attitudes towards women's empowerment differed among the men. Some men were supportive of their wives. But the study also sheds light on how the empowerment groups challenged men's traditional role. Many male participants expressed that they had difficulty "stepping down" to do household work, which the empowerment of the women had made them do. They also reported a negative societal reaction to taking on traditionally female-associated activities. This resulted in a generally negative attitude toward women's empowerment. Some men reported keeping more of their own income for personal use (while women now paid for most of the expenses in the family), arguing that they were the boss of the family and women should obey them (Slegh et.al. 2013).

Similar findings were shown in another study concerning men's involvement by Carlson and Randell (2013). They articulate the value in having men participate in changing traditional gender dynamics within the home as a means to prevent violence against women. The study shows that gender equality promoting actions

directed towards men had a greater impact on shifting the dynamics to be more equal and non-violent. The study highlights the importance of promoting change in families, with families playing a significant role in contemporary Rwandan society.

### **3.2 Impact on attitudes**

Our focus being on gender attitudes, we wanted to investigate studies that had covered this area before. We saw that attitudes of the specific group, “Rwandan social work students” were not widely represented. We did not find any previous research on this specific group. We have taken part of articulated that concerns various social issue related topics in order to investigate attitudes impacts on these issues, such as abortion and disability.

One study, by Keesler (2018), concentrated on social work students, though the study was not Rwandan. Keesler's research showed how social work students' attitudes toward people with disabilities was shaped in the U.S. Three themes were presented as main factors for attitude formation; previous experience, knowledge and classroom environment. The more experience, knowledge, and openness in educational environments resulted in a more positive attitude toward people with disabilities. Keesler emphasized the importance of classroom activities that create space to discuss feelings and thoughts. An accepting classroom environment was shown to allow students to explore social issues and reflect on their feelings toward the topics discussed. It also had a learning effect, which helped them handle the clash between personal values and professionalism (Keesler, 2018).

To cover the gaps in research specific to Rwandan contexts, we directed our focus to other groups. Sommers (2012) presented in his study how young Rwandans in rural areas had attitudes towards gender that were strongly impacted by their living location and their economic and educational vulnerability. This tells us that things like class, age, geographic location and opportunity for political decision

making play a role in attitude formation, such as attitudes toward gender roles and equality (p. 72-94).

### **3.3 Norms, Values and Professionalism**

We can see similarities in the gender roles of men and women in a study done by Pâfs et.al (2020). This study highlights midwives' attitudes towards a liberalized abortion law. Pâfs et.al articulated the relationship between the governmental system and the population. One participant, a healthcare professional (HCP), found lack of trust in the legal system when describing that even if the laws surrounding abortion change, the process of such change took too long. The law stated that in order for a woman to obtain a legal, induced abortion, she would have to receive approval from the judicial court and two physicians. Another attitude addressed in the study is the difficulty, on the part of HCPs, of maintaining professionalism when their beliefs conflicted with government regulations. For many HCPs, abortion contradicts their religious convictions. The study makes clear the many professional and logistical concerns that continue to make abortions risky and challenging for women in Rwanda.

Another theme in Pâfs. et.al's findings was the discussion of Rwandan societal norms and how attitudes impact them. HCPs reported that these norms prevent abortion legalization. Further still, they claim that the proposed legislation focused on the wrong things. Those participants represented the many Rwandans who view societal norms as static and unchangeable. Those individuals believe changes should occur gradually. Alternatively, other HCPs celebrated abortion legalization and viewed it as a tool to change social norms that they did not believe in. Those individuals viewed culture as fluid and adaptable (Pâfs. et.al 2020).

### **3.4 The slow alteration of norms**

Bicchieri & Mercier (2014) discussed how changes of norms in a society occur. They describe that we are used to having a set of values and attitudes from our upbringing, and those values are questioned and re-evaluated when they meet resistance in a new context. Legalization can be a powerful impetus for attitude shifts, but it takes a long period for them to become rooted in the population. For example, after the legalization of abortion, many women reported changing their attitude about the issue but it was a slow process. In this way, the law acted as a catalyst for social change. That said, laws that align with public attitude are more easily adaptable (p.17-20).

To understand changing norms in a Rwandan context, we looked at Debusscher & Ansoms (2013)'s study which showed the obstacles for governmental policy implementation. The authors analysed policy implementation with a critical eye. They found the government's implementations to be doubtful both ineffective in promoting attitude change. The political will for gender equality is strong in Rwanda, and many changes have been promoted. However, findings within the study showed that the political changes toward gender equality seemed to be enacted for developmental advantages. It showed that economics, rather than public will, may be the driving factor in the promotion of gender equality. Furthermore, the political changes preserve existing power relations and ignore elements that would create meaningful progress toward gender equality. The author's speculated that gender equality work is used to create a positive image of Rwanda, to attract funding, and to secure the nation's economic growth.

Debusscher & Ansoms (2013) analysis of past research suggests that gender equality policies may be a way to promote Rwanda's global image. Underneath these hollow policies are deeply-rooted normative roles. The study argues that a people-centered, bottom-up approach is essential in creating meaningful cultural change. In terms of gender equality policy, Rwanda has yet to establish this foundation (Debusscher & Ansoms 2013).



## 4 Theoretical frameworks

We used a gender theory framework to conceptualize and analyze participant responses. The gender theory framework applies a broad approach that deals with several aspects of gender. The key concepts we focus on are the definition of gender and criticism towards that, gender performances, gender order, the heteronorm, and intersectional perspectives. We chose this framework in order to dive deep into our respondent reflections, and see how gender takes place and is being perceived by the Rwandan social work students.

### 4.1 Introduction to gender

Gender is commonly defined as the social construction of sex (Butler 1990, p. 8). We have applied another layer to this viewpoint, with parts of queer theory. The theoretical sections we raise from queer theory are based on Butler's explanation of everything as socially constructed. Butler articulates that gender, in the traditional definition, is separate from biological sex. Additionally, she argues that biological sex is also socially constructed, and therefore not separate from constructed gender. This viewpoint directs criticism to deeply rooted norms and power structures within society. In this framework gender and sex are inextricably linked to the social context they are constructed in (p. 9). For this study we have chosen to limit our application of gender theory to traditional male and female gender constructions. This choice was made due to the Rwandan context of this study, where only the female and male genders are commonly recognized and accepted. However, we want to acknowledge that other genders exist though they are not mentioned in our material.

Ambjörnsson (2016) borrows Martin's (1991) "*the sperm and the egg*" example to further specify how Butler's distinction of social impacts are important in analysing the construction of gender (and sex). Martin studied how textbooks

portrayed the reproduction process, and observed that sperm was described with words connected to activity; penetration, activation etc. Contrastingly, he noted that eggs were described as passive, much in similarity with typical descriptions of femininity. This was noteworthy because the egg could easily be described as active. With this study, Martin concludes that biological sex is always defined by its context (p. 93, 94.). There is a discussion in the gender theory regarding biological and social effects of the construction of gender. We have chosen to generally refer to gender as a social construction in the study, but raise a discussion of the biological perspective to deepen the understanding and gain another insight in some sections.

## **4.2 Gender Performativity**

Masculinity and femininity are reinforcing constructs. Family structures in which women are responsible for household tasks and men are subjected as breadwinners are examples of this. Connell (2015) conceptualizes these reproductions, with Butler's concept of gender performativity, as unaware acts that lead to the reproduction of gender roles (p. 15). In line with Simone de Beauvoir's (1946) famous quote "*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*" (p. 293), Connell also describes gender as something that does not come natural to humans, rather it is attached to one's identity and shaped by contextual expectations. However, Connell states that individuals are constantly constructing gender for themselves. This makes it possible to develop a unique gender identity (p. 15). Even if one has an openness to creating their own gender identity, societal expectations frequently cause individuals to behave in a manner aligned with their assigned gender. Women are expected to act feminine, and men to act masculine. Individuals who act outside these norms are often met with opposition for not complying with societal expectations. This is another factor that reinforces gender roles and are connected to the heteronorm (Ambjörnsson 2016, p. 105).

### **4.3 The heteronorm**

The heteronorm is strong in most global societies. It is expected for men to be attracted to women, and vice versa. Furthermore, members of society are expected to act in certain ways to attract the opposite gender: being in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship is seen as the “ultimate” way of living. Many historical factors have influenced this norm, such as biological reproduction and religious beliefs. With modern science creating more diverse options for reproduction, these factors linger through deeply rooted norms (Ambjörnsson 2016, p. 48).

Heteronormativity manifests in an expectation for men and women’s mutual attraction. It also mandates that the two genders must be distinct from each other as opposites. Thus, different expectations exist for each gender. In society there is a structure that rewards people who follow “the straight line”. This sentence has a double meaning, both for its heterosexual connotation and the expectation to follow a normative, straight way of living (Ahmed, 2006 in Ambjörnsson 2016, p. 72). For example, it is expected to marry at the “right” age, with the “right” person, have children after marriage, have economic stability at a certain time (Jönsson, 2015, in Ambjörnsson 2016, p. 72). These expectations are deeply rooted and impactful to everyday life.

Additionally, it is also important to mention the heterosexual matrix, another concept born out of heteronormativity. This concept explains how two opposite genders and their attraction to each other are crucial to maintaining the heteronorm. The matrix describes the reason why individuals need to categorize into normative opposites, male or female in this case. This is another reason why gender norms are reproduced (Ambjörnsson, 2016 p. 94).

### **4.4 Gender order**

Heteronormativity and the heterosexual matrix are not only explanations for the maintenance of societal structures. They are also a basis for explaining gender

order. With genders being distinct, opposite features are applied to them. Masculinity is frequently associated with active attributes, and femininity with passive ones. According to Connell (2015), there is a hierarchical gender order that places males over females. This inequality is evident through gender gaps in businesses, politics, science, education, health care and global capital wealth. There is a common and recurring, global trend in which men possess advantages within these areas. Despite an improvement in women's access to education, men still run the majority of businesses in the world. This shows that there is an invisible gender order which favors men over women (p. 70).

The gender order is historically explained through the economic roles men and women have been associated with. Stereotypically, women are to do unpaid household work, while men are the familial breadwinners. Notably, housework is not compensated monetarily whereas employment inherently implies paid work. In the absence of fiscal compensation, housework maintains a lower status (Connell 2015). However, the unpaid work undertaken by women in the household is extremely valuable according to Connell (p.74). In many instances, without a woman's contributions, her husband is not able to dedicate as much time to paid employment. Many feminist movements have empowered women by elevating household work to the same status as paid work. Holter (2005) according to Connell (2015), argues that expectations on gender roles are natural characteristics. Therefore, society tends to characterize men as the natural head of the family and financial provider, whereas women are portrayed as caregivers relegated to the household (p.74).

#### **4.5 Intersectional perspective on gender equality development**

With an intersectional view we incorporate a critical view on how gender interacts with other powerful structures in society. Ambjörnsson (2016) describes the intersectional perspective as a cross-sectional, comprehensive lens by which to

view power structures in society. This is because it takes into account many categories of oppression; gender, class, disability, race, age, etc. With this perspective we are able to ask questions such as; 'is there a correlation between high income and traditional gender roles?' or, 'is there a difference between women's and men's attitudes on gender roles?'. It contextualizes gender inequality alongside the myriad of other issues gender inequality interacts with. We will in this study use NEs definition when we talk about class, which describes as a division of citizens according to societal and economical resources (Nationalencyklopedin 2019). Ambjörnsson discuss that the intersectional view acknowledges that there is more than one way to experience gender discrimination. White women, black women, and black women with disabilities all experience gender inequality but they are all likely to experience it differently. These differences are taken into account when analyzing gender inequality with an intersectional perspective (Ambjörnsson 2016 p.176).

## 5. Methodology and research process

To answer our research questions, we chose a qualitative approach. We collected data through phone interviews that took place in March 2020. This chapter will further explain the approach used for this study. We will present the methods we used to collect and analyse data. We will also discuss ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the study.

### 5.1 Approach

Throughout our research we used an inductive approach to build our study; we have used this as a guiding principle for our theory and analysis. We used a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate an open conversation about gender.

With this guide, we were able to keep the interviews in line with the aim of our study. Our main goal with using semi-structured interviews was to obtain fruitful and articulated answers from our respondents. This approach was derived from Bryman's (2018) method of interviewing. In this method interviews begin structured, but are allowed to spin off in various directions depending upon the respondents' answers (p. 563, 564).

## **5.2 Our position**

We wanted to acknowledge our position as Swedish students doing research with respondents from another country. We have, throughout the study, constantly reflected on our own biases and preconceptions. To challenge these, we tried to have an ongoing discussion about our views, and the foundation for them. It was important for us to approach the research as objectively as possible. We did this by avoiding assumptions and keeping an open mind. Even though we have some understanding of Rwandan culture, we chose to acknowledge our own shortcomings in understanding Rwanda's cultural context. We opted to write this study in English to limit semantic attrition through translation. Additionally, we wanted our respondents to take part in the study's results. This approach affected our interview method, for example this understanding made us see the importance of using an inductive approach and semi-structured interviews. We have reflected on how we see gender inequality in a Swedish context and understand that this is the perspective we analyse the results from.

## **5.3 Sampling method and process**

As previously mentioned, we did our internship in Butare, Rwanda, and therefore we had already established contacts in Rwanda. We asked one of these contacts, a social work student, to help us find other students who would be interested in participating in a study about gender attitudes. This led to a snowball sampling process, something that Bryman (2018, p. 504) describes as a way to reach previously unknown possible participants. Bryman also references Coleman's

recommendation of a snowball sampling approach when there is a group of people that are interesting to interview (Bryman 2018, p. 504). We specifically asked our contact to try and find an equal number of male and female students, something we found important for a study of gender attitudes. We based this on Ambjörnssons (2016) descriptions, that gender seems to be a factor for how one understands gender. Having roughly equal participation from each gender is vital to our study's legitimacy (p.53).

Our contact provided us with six email addresses to students who had shown interest in participating. These students all got an email with an introduction letter (Appendix 1) where the study's aim and interview structure were articulated. This letter asked the students, if they were still interested, to contact us for the purpose of scheduling a date and time for a phone interview. All of the respondents were still willing to participate after receiving the introduction letter, and the interviews were scheduled to take place between the 17th and the 28th of March. These participants were the basis for data collection. The respondents will be introduced in the analysis chapter.

## **5.4 Interviews**

With the authors of this study being in Sweden, and the respondents in Rwanda, we needed to consider options for doing remote interviews. We learned from Bryman (2018) that phone interviews are not a common method for qualitative research due to its limitations in sound. Body language is an important indicator of how words should be interpreted (p. 582f). This led us to consider other options, such as video chat. Our conclusion was that, due to partly poor connection and the cost of internet usage, phone interviews would still be the best option. This way we would take the full cost of the call and the connection would be better throughout.

We were still met with some connectivity challenges and a language barrier during the interviews. Both interviewers and respondents participating in the

study were not using their native language. This factor heavily influenced question creation. We chose to use simple wording and avoid difficult terms. It was of great importance to repeat the respondents' answers back to them during the interview. This ensured that we fully understood the meaning of their statements. We further prepared for these challenges by sitting in a quiet environment, and asking our respondents to do the same.

Before starting each interview we repeated information we had earlier sent out in the information letter. We did this to follow the recommended informative criteria, (which we will describe further in section 5.6 "Ethical considerations") to confirm that our respondents were well informed about their participation in the study. This way the students got an overview of the context before starting the interview. The interviews lasted about thirty to forty minutes each and were recorded with the respondents' approval.

After conducting the first interview we quickly realized that broad general questions about gender were hard to answer. To tackle this problem, we changed our interview guide with our supervisor's permission. Our solution was to present a fictional example to easily start a conversation about gender roles. The case we presented was about how a sixteen year old unmarried pregnant woman would be received in the Rwandan society. We asked about the responsibilities, consequences, and possible outcomes for this young woman. Before the next interview, we did a test round with a Rwandan friend to further develop the guide. This way we made sure that the questions were easier to answer for our participants, and more fruitful for our study. Every interview gave us more information, and made it possible for us to reach the in-depth reflections that were crucial to the aim of this thesis.

## **5.5 Methods of analysis**

The study was conducted using an inductive approach, including the data analysis. When we started our interviews we saw our respondents' answers and started



highlighting interesting points that we further investigated during interview guide revisions. Throughout the entire process, our method and interview questions continuously evolved. This allowed us to adapt our thesis in a way that incorporated the reflections of our respondents.

We used different codes for topics that were repeated frequently or that we found especially interesting. We highlighted them, to later sort them into themes. This is known as a thematic approach and is common in qualitative research (Bryman 2018, p. 702). We read through our transcriptions thoroughly and marked out recurring themes, repetitions, relevant similarities and differences. These were further sorted into categories and codes. Kvale and Brinkman (2015) states that, in this method, you take empirical knowledge about the respondents' experiences and identify patterns (141-144). When we first drafted our thematic analysis we saw trends that led us to gender theory. With the help of this method of analysing we were able to see some prevalent gender attitudes among Rwandan social work students.

## **5.6 Ethical considerations and methodological dilemmas**

For every study there are ethical dilemmas that need to be taken into consideration. We have followed Vetenskapsrådet's (2002) ethical guidelines to make sure that we take our respondents' exposure in consideration.

Vetenskapsrådet's regulations point out four criteria to follow while doing research. In this section we will present these and describe how we followed them in order to fulfill the guidelines.

### *5.6.1 Information*

The first criteria is information. Vetenskapsrådet (2002) describes this as a requirement for the researcher to explain the purpose of the study. The participants should also get information on the respondent's right to end their

participation at any point, pass on any questions and anything that might be impacting their will to participate. To be able to ensure that our respondents felt comfortable with participating, we sent them an information letter (Appendix 1). The letter contained information about guaranteed anonymity, the right to participate at will, the option to pass on any questions, etc. Before starting the interview we repeated these points and asked the respondents for consent, both for participating and for being recorded. We wanted to make sure that the respondents were well-informed about the study's purpose, and encourage them to ask further questions to us or our supervisor at any time.

### *5.6.2 Consent*

Vetenskapsrådet's (2002) second criteria is consent: a requirement for researchers to make sure that the participants in the study have expressed that they are okay with participating. In order for the participant to make a well-informed decision, the information criteria must first be met. After this, the researcher needs to obtain written or oral consent from the participant.

In this study, the consent requirement was reached through us informing the participants at three occasions, while snowballing (sampling method), with the introduction letter, and later on by orally informing them about the study. This made it possible for the respondents to give consent or not give consent at any moment, and we also made sure that they knew what they gave consent to. Before starting the study, we asked if they wanted to participate, and then we asked if they consented to being audio recorded during the interview. This way, we ensured that we got their consent for the study. They were also made aware that they could revoke this consent and stop participating, without explanation, at any time.

### *5.6.3 Confidentiality*

Vetenskapsrådet (2002) describes the confidentiality requirement as a protection for the respondents, this demonstrates that they are guaranteed anonymity and their integrity is valued. The phone interview recordings were deleted after transliteration. We have also chosen to identify our respondents' answers only in regards to gender. This is to protect our respondents' identities. During the writing process we had them coded as R1-6 to make sure that all respondents' answers were recorded. Hence, to this end, we believe we have complied with confidentiality requirements. (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

### *5.6.4 Use of data*

Vetenskapsrådet's (2002) final criteria is the use of data. This means that the responses collected are only to be used for research purposes. We followed this guideline by only using the material for this study. This means that our audio records were deleted right after being transcribed, in order to prevent them being used in any other way. The transcriptions will only be kept for a limited time in order to confirm this study, but only open to examiners of the bachelor programme of Social Work at Gothenburg University. They will be kept in a safe way, without any personal data that could be connected to a specific person, such as name, age, or gender. In the transcriptions every respondent is identified as R1-R6.

### *5.6.5 Ethical dilemmas*

While constructing this thesis, we did have a understanding that we doing research within a society with post-colonial influences. We come from European context, the same continent that colonized Rwanda, which implies a power imbalance. We have to be clear with how this have affected our views and what we see in the data of the study. It is a ethical dilemma that we are analysing a Rwandan context with our 'Swedish gaze', and it is important to address that.

Lincoln & Guba (1989) describe that there are ethical aspects to consider doing a research (p.127). The dynamic between ‘Sweden’ as representors of the Westernized world, and ‘Rwanda’ as a post-colonial nation, impacted the relationship we had with the respondents. We have asked ourselves “will our respondents be able to answer with their own words, or do they feel they are representatives of modern Rwanda?”. Lincoln & Guba emphasize that all scientific research is inherently political . This means that we had to have this insight while doing the research, that a “normal” conversation about gender might have outside influences that need to be taken into consideration (p. 126-127).

#### *5.6.6 Phone interviews*

Our choice to do phone interviews brought some ethical dilemmas. We could not guarantee that the respondents felt safe to fully express their views during the interview. However, we asked them to be prepared and find a safe environment for the interview. On the other hand, even if we would have conducted the interviews on sight we would not have been able to guarantee that the respondents felt safe either, so phone interviews might have been an advantage because it gave the respondent some freedom to choose the setting.

#### *5.6.7 Participation pressure*

We used one of our student contacts to find additional respondents, through a ‘snowball sampling’ method. It is always a dilemma, especially for us wearing our Swedish cultural ‘glasses’, to in a respectful way meet the Rwandan culture and make sure that participants feel free of pressure when deciding whether to participate or not. Also, we do not fully know the power relation between Rwandan students, which might be a risk. Another aspect that could be a risk is that our contact was classmate with the respondents and this may have had an impact on how they answered. We came to the conclusion that snowball sampling was better than other methods, such as asking a teacher to find willing

respondents. Our contact was on the same level as our respondents. We saw this as an advantage.

## **5.7 Trustworthiness**

To ensure our study to be trustworthy we have tried to bring as much detail as possible to make sure that the context of the study is presented. In line with Bryman's (2018) description of trustworthiness and authenticity, we have tried to openly describe every step we took while writing this thesis, and collecting our research data (p. 467- 468). Brymans criteria of credibility is divided into four categories: credibility, transferability, reliability and ability to confirm the research.

### *5.7.1 Credibility*

In order to reach credibility it is important that the study shows accurate data. We have tried to follow Vetenskapsrådet's (2002) guidelines to ensure this. To further achieve this we have, throughout the interviews, asked for confirmation that we understood the respondents correctly. This confirmation was achieved through us summarizing what we understood and asking the respondent to confirm its accuracy. In some cases, we have contacted some of the respondents during the analysis process to confirm understandings of some quotes. We have simultaneously asked about their consent to highlight specific quotes that were especially unique.

### *5.7.2 Transferability*

This criteria highlights the importance of a study's generalizability. This can be hard when doing qualitative research. A challenge for our study was that we only had six participants. To achieve transferability we constructed a clear and comprehensive study description and presented detailed delimitations. We have

also tried to describe the context of the study well and to highlight the environment where this data was collected.

### *5.7.3 Dependability*

Bryman (2018) explains how dependability is reached through well-detailed study descriptions, and by showing a clearly presented “walk through” of the study and its methods (p.467). We have been transparent in our descriptions of method and ethical considerations throughout. Furthermore, we have been in constant contact with our supervisor for input. We also had other individuals edit and comment on points that may be unclear. Further on there was a discussion session where student peers discussed the study and pointed out valid parts that needed to be more structured in order for the study to reach its full potential. We also discussed the choice of methods and theory to validate our selections.

### *5.7.4 Confirmability*

Confirmability is important to a study’s validity. This is, according to Bryman (2018) hard to achieve in the social sciences (p. 467). Cultural objectivity is difficult for researchers to achieve when they are members of the culture they are studying. We have made some adaptations to be as objective as we can. We knew that we would have some preconceived biases while constructing this study, but throughout we have tried to stay as objective as possible by always discussing and criticising our process. We have tried to present all the data in a way that is open and easy to follow, in order to reach confirmability.

### *5.7.5 Authenticity*

We have asked ourselves, in considering Bryman's (2018) concept of authenticity, if this study is a fair representation of our respondents beliefs (p. 470). Are they talking from their own perspective, or from their role as a Rwandan, a student, and a future social worker? With this in mind, we have made sure to limit our

study to the students' reflections. The study meant to exclusively express the experiences of these specific respondents. However, since they are all Rwandan social work students, their answers still speak to Rwanda's relationship with gender equality.

We have continued to ask ourselves, in line with Bryman's (2018) concept of authenticity, if the study will bring value to the respondents (p.470) We think that it will, in the way that the study will bring attention to this group's views and reflections on gender equality. Fellow Rwandans might be able to identify with our respondents. Further still, our research may be able to inform future research in this area. This study lifts a will for change, but also raises obstacles that could impede this change. This will be of importance for further development within the topic. We always intended for this study to be useful. Therefore, it was vital that we present an objective perspective of our respondents. We found no prior research about social work students in Rwanda. This weighed heavily on us throughout the process. Our participants make important observations about gender equality in Rwanda and further studies should be conducted to understand the complex social politics that govern the post-genocidal nation. We sincerely hope further research of this nature will be conducted in the future.

## 6 Results and analysis

The main findings of this thesis will be presented in this chapter. Our main findings are categorized into four major themes. First to be presented is; *Views on gender roles*, where we will lift our respondents reflections around gender roles. Secondly we will talk about *Change of gender expectations*, with our respondents' sights on the presumed clash between "old views" and "new views". Finally we will bring forward our findings concerning the respondents views on *Responsibility for equality* and what *Obstacles* they meet connected in relation to gender and attitudes. The final two themes will be presented in the same section, due to their close connection to each other. We will present our analysis of each

theme linked to previous research and theory. Our final reflections will be presented in the discussion. To get a better understanding of the analysis we will start off with a short presentation of our respondents.

## **6.1 Presentation of respondents**

We collected data for this research from phone interviews with six Rwandan social work students. Three of the participants were male, and three were female. All of the participants were between year 2-4 in their education in their twenties. The respondents were currently living in a Rwandan city with a population of about 50.000 people. However, they were from rural and urban areas. Many had moved to the city for the purpose of studies.

## **6.2 Views on gender roles**

When starting a discussion on gender roles, we immediately noticed a pattern in the responses we received. All of our respondents described a traditional division in the roles of men and women. Women are expected to primarily take care of household tasks and care for children. Men have the role as the provider, are expected to build a house, pay school fees for the children and be the breadwinner of the family. The following quote shows how one respondent describes how household work is divided between men and women.

Most of the responsibility is with the wife, like cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water. The main house activities are based on the wife. The man is supposed to contribute economically. He has to have a job, he has to pay. He has those responsibilities. Yeah this is a good example of that, a normal family. Here in Rwanda, it is houseworkers, they can also help. Most of them are women which shows it's a female activity. - Male social work student.

A similar view is shown in this respondent's answer;



In our culture men are the head of the family, their role is to build the house, to pay school fees for their children. - Female social work student.

The respondents present narratives that gender is something that divides people into two groups, with clearly defined and separated characteristics. This is in line with Slegh et al's (2013) study, which show us that these are common roles for women and men to take on. With the respondents attitudes and Slegh et.al (2013) findings we can draw a connection to Ambjörnssons (2016) statement that these gender roles are implemented and developed through cultural and societal norms throughout history (p. 66- 67). Butler (1990) emphasized the importance of the biological aspect and explained that the man is historically described as the giver, provider and the woman as receiver and the caretaker (p. 9). These roles comes from the biological basis, which we can see explained in the next quote;

Women have to care. And men, they have to do that too, but our responsibility is defined by our strength. For example, if I'm a husband, I'm not able to calm down the children who are crying (...) If i have strength and she does not have strength, we do what i am able to do, and she what she is able to do. We have cooperation. - Male social work student

Traditional structures are being reproduced when our respondents are referring to biological differences while structuring gender roles (Butler 1990, p. 11). The respondent has a conviction that these roles are fixed and therefore it is not seen as an issue due to its biological explanation. This tells us that the attitudes for possible change is difficult though these roles are seen as static and based on biological differences and therefore unchangeable. When they talk about gender roles, they do not always state the traditional roles directly, but they refer to them continually. We can see through the lens of performativity that this is called unconscious acts. Like the quote above saying men can't calm down babies but

also in the classroom when the respondents explain that the boys always cut her talking;

It's so hard to make guy students to respect what you say, they cut you when you are talking- Female social work student

Their act can be seen as unconscious, though they have always cut women talking, which makes it normal and is therefore not reflected on and we reflect that it's harder to change this kind of behavior. Though performativity processes already strict gender roles are reproduced and we can see with our respondents' answers that with rooted biological explanation it becomes even harder to change (Connell 2015, p. 15). This makes us move onto the next part of this theme.

#### *6.2.1 Gender roles outside of the household sphere*

Our respondents reflected on these gender roles in other areas outside of family life as well. Some of the respondents described differences within the classroom. One of our respondents described it as follows;

Female lecturers have the personality of caring, while the men they do not care they do not care as female lecturers....I can not say that the female lecturers are weak. - Male social work student

This quote adds another perspective to how the gender roles are applied in other contexts outside of the home. The respondent connects the feminine attribute of “a caring personality” as a positive thing in contrast from the male lecturers. By stating that the female lecturers are not weak he is standing against this that is the normal in the context. What we can see from his way of defending the female lecturers role he is also assuming and showing that male is the norm and the presumably “best lecturers”. As Beauvoir (1946) stated in “The second sex”, females are seen as ‘the other gender’. Male is the norm, the starting position of being human. Females are to a greater extent being seen as a group rather than

individuals (Butler 1990, p. 13). The position and acts of a lecturer should not be affected by the person's gender, but here it is assumed that the biological and gender defined attributes are making a difference.

Women are also portrayed as being lower standing than men in the gender order, this is discovered both in the school and in the working life.

In our classroom, we actually have class representatives, we are supposed to have a male and a female representative. In our case, I am the class representative but I am called the vice (representative ) since I am the woman and the guy is called the class representative (...) I don't feel so bad about it because we share the responsibilities, but you know. Even when I call the teacher from the office to come and teach he say, where is the class representative, and then I am like I. I am here. - Female social work student.

This quote, together with similar statements from other respondents, tells us that the gender roles we can see in descriptions of family structures also exist in schools and work. There is a hierarchy between the genders which is being reinforced due to expectations to “act your gender”. In the quote it is visible that the respondent is not considered with the same value as the boy, and are referred to as the vice- class representative and expected to be inferior to her male classmate. The teacher takes part in reinforcing the female students' lower status, which may have an impact on the gender roles for both female and male students. Not only how they are received, but also how they learn to see themselves. This is an example of the gender order, which puts men as superior to women and cuts through all of society (Connell 2015, p. 74). This implies that women are considered lower socially ranked than men, and they are submitted to that role in more areas than only within families. We can connect this back to the former quote on page 32, that lifted biological differences as an explanation for traditional and fixed gender roles. Even if this is described as crucial for family

life, these roles are being reproduced outside of the homes and affecting women in other institutions such as at university or workplaces.

The gender order is based on the heteronorm expectations of men and women placed in the society and are reinforced through negative reactions from the society. Here we can see the societal pressure that according to Connell (2015) appears when you go against gender order and are for that reason challenging the role of a woman (p. 75);

I know some families where the woman has a higher educational position than the man, and I do think they get along well, but the society doesn't see it the same way. In the household there are no problems, but in society there are different opinions like; 'the woman has a high education, why? It is for men'

The respondent explain further how people react to this norm-breaking behavior within families as following;

'so the husband is busy following the woman around?', 'Why don't you stay at the place where the husband works from?' - Female social work student

We can see a similar situation raised by Slegh et. als` (2013) study where the husband is going out of the masculine expectation when he is doing household tasks, and receives a negative reaction from his neighbours. This also implies the gender order by the man expressing that he stands down doing the household work, which says the women's coded tasks are lower standing. Connell (2015) explains that the heteronorm is being challenged when individuals go outside of the expected attributes of their gender (p.74). These 'challenging' acts are explained with a heterosexual matrix, when the individual does not fulfill all of the expectation on her/him. When a person physically looks like his/her gender, are sexually attracted by the opposite sex but their action does not fit into being a

“real woman or man”. In the previous quote we can see an indicator of the heteronorm being challenged. The woman have taken on a high status education and job, which is considered to be the man's position and thereby act like a man in that sense. The man, on the other hand, is taken on a lower standing position, following his wife to where she gets a job opportunity. This is also criticised by their surroundings.

It is impossible according to the heterosexual matrix to exist in both the masculine and feminine sphere at the same time (Ambjörnsson 2016 p. 95). This is why the relatives in the quote, and neighbours in Slegh et als` (2013) study are reacting with negativity towards their norm breaking behaviour. They want them to change to become more “understandable” as individuals (Connell 2009; Ambjörnsson, 2016). We can see by this that the heteronorm limits both of the genders' possibilities to develop other characteristics about themselves than the ones which are expected, and are given to them by being assigned male or female. It is also an indicator of how the heterosexual norm is pushing people in ‘their place’ when the societal views display with resistance to certain gender role-breaking acts.

### **6.3 Change of gender expectations**

Our next main theme that was repeated in our respondents answers was different *change of gender expectations* in connection with attitudes towards gender. The most common attitude all of our respondents answers was *culture*. It was pictured two different kinds, ‘the old’ and ‘the new’. The old culture was described as something holding on to a more negative attitude towards gender equality change, while the new culture was engaged and hungry for decreasing gender related issues. This was also the one culture many of our respondents referred to themselves as a part of, while the older generation were ‘stuck in their views’, which they were problematizing as something holding back gender equality. For example;

The biggest challenge is that.. we still have people who are older who have been raised in a different culture than today and they still influence.- Male social work student

### 6.3.1 Religion

Religion was also something that was seen as a negative impact on gender equality. We want to emphasize that this was only brought up by one respondent, which we thought was odd with Christianity being a big part of the Rwandan society. We had a pre-understanding that religion would appear more in our respondents' answers. This student pictures religion as something which maintains gender roles and therefore makes a equality change harder. She explained the impact like this;

The religion has a way to shape the way you see things. Cause I think women who are more into religion and culture are housewives, they never go out. They feel like their place is at home with their children and their husband. The one who find job, they do the job but when they get pregnant, yeah.. they have a lot of children and some of them don't go back to work, they quit their job. - Female social work student

Religion is, according to Beauvoir (1946) a part of the historical explanation to womens undermining position, and why this has stayed in society through religious norms (p. 8). Needless to say, we expected more answers like this. It shows us a difference between the students' attitudes and thought of what has an impact on gender roles. One finding in Påfs. et. al (2020) article showed that religious beliefs have an impact on the acts on a professional level. But also on how professionals reflect on their work, or how it affects them. We found this quote as interesting in connection to previous findings and in contrast to other respondents' tendency to not mention religion as a factor at all.

### 6.3.2 Class and location

Further on, we saw that a majority of respondents viewed a different impact on how attitudes about gender equality differed based on location in the county. When they talked about urban areas as traditional and used words like, 'less developed', 'poverty', 'lower education and income', 'agriculture', 'being thrown out of your home if you become pregnant', 'incapacity of taking care of a child' and 'women's vulnerability'. While urban areas were pictured as modern and described as 'open to change', 'rich', 'having a housemaid'. We recognized the picture of the rural areas as less developed in the sense that many work with agriculture and the urban areas and the urban areas as the opposite, where the 'change' in the country happens. The respondents seemed to assemble urban with "modern" frases, while rural were described as having more traditional views. The following quotes both show indicators on this way of describing differences between urban and rural. Gender related issues, such as teenage pregnancies, is something the respondents view as a 'rural problem', such as shown in the following quote;

Due to the poverty, and lack of support, low education. The majority of those who are pregnant, those young women, are those from rural areas.  
- Male social work student

Following is another example, where gender inequality and strong traditional gender roles are connected to rural areas. The female respondent describes how her male peers behave, depending on where they grew up. In this case, the male peers she describes as 'open' are those who grew up in urban areas, while the one who are expecting to be taken care of by their female family members are from rural areas;

Depends on where they grew up. Some of them [male students] are open, like 'what's wrong with being a university student and woman'. But some are like; 'I can't do anything when my sisters are out [because they are

suppose to take care of me] and like even if I'm home my mom is gonna open the door for me, if they don't I'm gonna get mad for like a week' yeah, like that"- Female social work student

Another interesting aspect of this quote is the negative attitude towards having their sisters go to university, because then they will not be home to open the door for the man who is expecting this. The respondents' reflection says a lot about who is more valued in a traditional view, the man. The female respondent continued to show examples from urban lifestyle in Kigali (capital of Rwanda), compared to rural Rwanda, which further showed a difference in how she saw gender roles play out due to different living locations. This way of negative thinking about rural areas is recognized by Sommers (2012) to reproduce set gender roles, and leads to the rural population feeling left out in the work towards gender equality and therefore creating diversion. This can lead to gender equality work to be less likely to be implemented in these areas (p. 73-79, 94).

The respondents do not only raise geographical location as having an impact on gender roles. Class also seem to play an important part when it comes to how gender roles and gender equality are viewed. These two categories were often brought up in relation to each other, in the form of 'poverty in rural areas' and 'poor education in rural areas' and so on. The respondent in the following quote highlights economic stability as an important factor for the gender related issues that comes with teenage pregnancy. It is also clear that the pregnant woman and her family are the ones that are expected to stand responsible for the pregnancy and the baby;

The woman's family will take care [of the pregnancy]. Except if the young girl's family is poor. Many [poor pregnant young women] will cut school, don't come to school. Many of them don't come back to school, except if they come from a rich family. - Female social work student



To get a deeper view over the diversion of attitudes depending on class and location, an intersectional perspective is used for the following analysis. Ambjörnsson (2016) descriptions of intersectional power structures goes in line with the common attitude among the students, being that if you are wealthy it's easier to be progressive in your views than if you are from a poorer family as the cultural roles are stricter in poorer communities (p. 176). This might imply that gender equality is restricted to the wealthy part of the society and therefore becomes a luxury. Hence some saw this problem as injustice and wished for gender equality work to be more focused on the rural areas and low income families. This means that we can see power structures in society such as your given opportunities depend on your gender, location, economic situation and so on. The intersectional perspective is of importance here in order to see how many different areas blend together and affect one's views, or opportunity to discuss gender. This also includes one's opportunity to act for changing gender roles and equality. Equality seems to be related to financial status, educational opportunity and many other factors. For example, with 'housemaid' being brought up while discussing division of household tasks, it seemed as for the woman to be able to work, a maid needed to be hired, something which required some economic stability. One respondent said the following while discussing how couples would handle a situation when the wife would have a job, and the husband would not;

When the man stays home they have to hire a maid to take care of the babies and the children - Male social work student

It is shown that the seemingly biological expectation of men's weakness in caring for children is a big factor for why maids are hired only if both partners work or if the woman works. It is never mentioned in any of our respondents statements while talking of women being without a job and staying home. As mentioned in a quote on page 31, housemaids are mostly females which, quote, "shows that it is a female activity". We read into this that gender roles and a biological explanation for these roles as something strict and unchangeable are obstacles for reaching gender equality (Connell 2015, p. 74). For a female to be pushed into acting

appropriate for her expected role, at the same time as having the responsibility for change, which also promotes Rwanda's image. This lays a lot of work on the woman's table. Which leads us to reflect that class and economic stability is a gaining component to reach gender equality within families. In households where the domestic work is handled by a third part, women are able to conduct wage work. This might lead to a more gender equal household for the family. However, this is another way for reinforcing gender roles for those of a lower economic and social status, such as the housemaid who has less of an opportunity to break free from traditional gender roles. This goes in line with Ambjörnssons (2016) statement on how gender needs to be understand with other power structures, such as economical (p. 105, 176).

We will continue to raise class as an issue, because we found many indicators in our data that our respondent thought it was. The following quote will lift the young fathers position in a teenage pregnancy. The man is described as not expected to care for the child, if he is not reaching up to the expectation for the male gender role. For many young men, they are not able to fulfill the expectations like building a house and giving financial support, due to low income. These expectations fits with the picture of a heteronormative society (Ambjörnsson 2016, p. 48). It also points out his low economical position, and describes these as together gives him less opportunity to be engaged in parenting. The gender role is also brought up when he describes that he only will take responsibility for the child if it is proven to be his, and thereby confirms the women's role as the primer carer for the child.

Because poverty.. So I tell my role [man] is to stay away from that care.. I will say that it's not me.. until that baby is born and they take an DNA. -  
Male social work student

In this quote we see an attitude regarding class and the expectation of gender roles. The respondent expresses the societal expectation he feels to financially fulfill the role of being a father, but because of poverty he cant and therefore not

take part of the baby's life at all. We can see this through an intersectional lens that the gender and class are here in relation. The expectation of being the provider as a man from the heteronorm can not be fulfilled by his low class and this makes him 'fail' the role of the man. In other words his class and gender puts him in a position where he can't fulfill the expectations the society lay on him. We can reflect on that the low income can be the reason why he only wants to take responsibility for the child if it is proven to be his. This goes in line with Ambjörnssons (2016) discussion of power structures combined impact on the individual (p. 176).

### *6.3.3 Desire for Change*

Many of the respondents addressed a will for some sort of change in gender structures. They also expressed that they saw change currently happening. This change included gender equality, which was explained as assurance of women's rights to things like education and participation in decision making. They also mentioned a change for whom is responsible for household tasks, and attitudes towards women and men that falls outside the norm. One student described how traditional cultural views on unmarried women who got pregnant was shown:

I remember when i was a kid and in class, in Ikinyarwanda class they use to tell us stories of the past i Rwanda, how Rwandans reacted to girls who got pregnant before they got married, they would go and throw you at the river -Female social work student

We can see that these views have been infused in our respondents' lives from an early age. However, things are slowly changing in Rwanda, something that is recognizable when she continue to talk about how teenage girls who are pregnant are being treated today:

It has changed a lot, now you can see girls who have given birth at home, it is some changes (...) Maybe in my case if I was going to have that kid,

she would throw me out, she would get disappointed, very disappointed.  
But not on the level she would throw me out I think. - Female social work student

The respondent lifts an interesting thought about how the views on how to handle pregnant teenagers seems to have changed. This progress indicates that our respondents see a shift in the attitudes towards gender equality in Rwanda. This is verified in line with Bicchieri & Merciers (2014) study where change in societal norms is shown as something that slowly is happening over time. Our respondent might be the product of what her parents have seen. This way is how norms travel and slowly change throughout generations.

There is a general positive attitude towards gender equality among our respondents. They express that they are tired of the traditional views on women. When they describe their future partner they wish them to be equal standing in consideration to responsibilities in household tasks but also in work. An example of this attitude can we see here;

I think it should be balanced, not him over me or me over him. More like help each other. We should share the responsibilities. He can pay for somethings and I can pay for the other. - Female social work student.

There is also a structural perspective when some explain proudly that Rwanda has 61% women in the parliament and this is an inspiration for many young women. This came up in all of the interviews and we came to the understanding that this has made our respondent picture the nation as progressive with gender equality. We can see that this image seems to have an effect on the attitudes of the respondents. One explanation to our respondents' will to change is that they have been raised under the Vision 2020 (MFER, 2000) era, which states that gender equality will be promoted through all developmental work. We can connect this to Bicchieri & Mercier's (2014) explanation that a change of attitudes occurs slowly over time, with a discussion in the society. It appears that Vision 2020 has been a

catalyst for change. The changes promoted by this initiative have been a part of these students' upbringing and have therefore been an important influence to their attitudes.

At the same time, we could also see a sign of unwillingness in attitudes on change, when change was described as something demanding and something they have to do but didn't want to. For example, one respondent was asked what he would do if, in the future, his wife would have a job and he would not. Would he take on the household tasks?

If I was staying home doing nothing, I would - Male social work student

This quote can be seen in many ways. Both as a result of change, that the man is willing to take on household tasks if he is available, but it also indicates a difference between genders. For women, this would be expected by them, and it was shown as obvious in the female students' answers to do household work if they did not have employment. For this male student, it is said in a way that he is open to do household tasks, if he had nothing else to do at the time. This shows us a difference between female and male respondents' answers. Another interesting aspect with this was that talk about hiring a housemaid was only brought up while discussing that the wife in the family had a job, or both partners. This was never brought up in conversation when talking about the wife being without employment and staying at home. This way of observing the quote also questions the implementation of gender equality work and Vision 2020 and how this has affected attitudes. Debusscher & Ansoms (2013) argues with their article that Rwanda is not fully what the image tells us, and are directing a critical view to the governmental policies that are trying to implement gender equality. They state that there is an economical pushing factor for the government to promote itself with the "gender equality image", and that the actual willingness for gender equality work is doubtful according to Debusscher & Ansoms (2013). We see that the arguments in the article go in line with the quote, where a deeply rooted structure of gender roles is shown.

We can connect this to the heterosexual matrix, that our female respondents know what is expected of them and takes the bottom responsibility for that, while the men knows what's expected (and not expected) of them. Gender equality in the workfield is affecting the families economic situation and while women get to have an income they will take part in providing the family with something that was traditionally a man's responsibility. This means that they “help” the man with his responsibilities, but the push for the man to help with the woman's traditional responsibility is not as protruding. This will be further investigated in the next theme “*Obstacles and Responsibility*”.

A will for change is shown by all respondents. What will impact this change is pictured as following by one of the respondents;

The culture changes by different things.. one of them is through education, a lot of Rwanda's now are in schools, young children.. the knowledge of schools includes gender (...) after studies we go back home with different mindset - Male social work student

This student's reflection also shows an indicator for change in the society. Many pushes that equal right to go to school is a big change the past years, which has led to that girls and boys both can get an education. This is seen as a positive change, but there are reasons to investigate this change further due to findings where traditional gender roles seem to create inequality within classrooms. Still, education is mentioned as a main factor for positive change in direction to gender equality. This student says that education changes mindsets, something that in former studies has been mentioned as the biggest challenge for actual change. We can see that our respondents highlight that education is crucial in changing attitudes.

To summarize, we want to push that our findings show a wish for equality in many different areas in the respondents reflections. It is shown through hopes for

their own futures, through educational and political changes, but also through a composition of societal values connected to culture, family values and religious beliefs. This leads us on to what challenges our respondents pointed out while talking about changing attitudes and beliefs in society.

## **6.4 Obstacles and Responsibilities for achieving equality**

In this section we will present our final themes. To weave the study together, we will show findings where struggles, challenges and obstacles concerning gender related issues are shown in our respondents reflections. We will further on present findings of who is responsible for equality, and why. To start off we have quotes where our respondents ventilate their attitudes to how gender equality is reached, and what are challenging this process. One respondent states;

We are trained to get married and then have kids and live a family life and your husband can sit home and relax. - Female social work student

From this citation, as others similar we have seen, the heteronorm is implicitly where the respondents show frustration on the current state of gender structures. It seems like outside influences are pushing individuals to follow the “straight line”, as presented by Ahmed in Ambjörnsson (2016). According to the respondent, women are expected to be trained to be a wife, to attract a husband and have children. While our respondent answer shows a resistance to these traditional views with pushing that the woman does more work than the man, who is just expected to “sit and relax”. This quote is important for the next section of this theme, which is “*Responsibility for achieving equality*”. The pressure and expectation to be a good wife in the household is competing with the pressure to “fulfill” governmental equality goals, to have an education, to have a career and to be successful outside the household. We will dive deeper into the consequences of this in the discussion chapter.

This sort of reasoning is not the only thing that is brought up by our female respondents. With reference to biological “duties”, one respondent states the following;

..Being equal as a woman doesn't mean you are going to fight. Your husband is willing to cook this evening, no! Equality doesn't remove the little [duties] that one has. In the kitchen, I will clean up after my kids first of all and also I will be doing the activity of the government. - Female social work student

We see several internal obstacles for change in these two quotes, one regards if the work should be done on a structural level or on changing of attitudes in the household and the other woman's actual position to change set gender roles.

This quote above shows that the role of the women is going to be intact, even when political changes will promote women to also take on positions outside of the home. She will also care for her husband, as he cares for her by bringing financial support. She shows an attitude that gender equality is important, but the roles in the home should not need to change because of it. The other respondent says gender equality should challenge set gender roles and thereby include the household. The contrast between attitudes shows a difference in how these students look upon what is needed to reach gender equality. One means that current gender roles are an obstacle for gender equality, while the other means that gender equality implementations might be disturbing for the family life, and focuses should lie somewhere else. Similar attitudes can be found in Påfs et.al study (2020) where some HCPs state that laws can help the population to change attitudes, but others express the focus should lie to try to change attitudes first to later change the law for a better implementation result.

The attitude regarding that women should still have the same role in the household, can also be seen from another perspective. We want to lift the fact that Rwanda has a high rate of gender based violence (Slegh et. al 2015). We can



thereby understand that it is not easy for these women to challenge the set gender roles, and they have to live with 'double work' as a result if the gender equality work does not focus on changing men's attitudes. This quote show alongside with Sleggh et. al (2015) study that women meet obstable and gender equality change is more successful when including men. We see this as another factor for how gender is reproduced in Rwanda.

One male respondent brought up misunderstanding what gender equality is as an obstacle, a problem with the gender discussion. This statement goes in line with the previous quote. He stated that some of his classmates mixed gender equality with gender roles, and that this was a common misconception;

I think that gender roles and equality are somehow confused [by people]. People understand that women have a responsibility, and they understand that men have some things to do. This [confusion] is somehow disencouraging the gender role. - Male social work student

His words show a criticism of how the gender equality discussion is challenging gender roles. This builds another layer for differences, if gender roles are an obstacle to gender equality, or if it is something that just "is", and not supposed to be changed. This concludes that our findings are widely spread, and attitudes differ between students as seen in these quotes. The biggest difference that was noted between our male and female respondent in this question was that the females were describing obstacles in connection to roles in much more detail. Male students highlighted obstacles on a structural level, such as poverty and poor education in rural areas. Female students were also more likely to see a problem in the home. Our respondents' reflections around obstacles for change varied a lot, and it seemed that it was based in their own views on gender roles. There was a difference in what areas needed to be fixed by gender equality which affected what they saw as obstacles.

#### *6.4.1 Responsibility for achieving gender equality*

This section of the theme was unexpected, which also made it very interesting for analysis. While gender equality was said to be important among all respondents, statements showed a tendency to direct the responsibility towards women. This is an example of a attitude like that;

..they are not subjected to care for the children .. only.. but they are subjected to promote change”. - Male social work student

This student states that women, in line with the work for equality, are not obligated to adjust to traditional gender role norms and care for children. He does add “only” to the statement, which indicates that it is still a part of the female responsibility. He also points out that women have to promote change in society. They have the responsibility within both these tasks, which in some forms opposes each other. To promote change simultaneously to keep the important role as “caring mother”. Once again we can see a split between societal and political change, where women are welcome to take place, and to gender role change, which affects how women take space. While looking on this from a queer theory, with heteronormativity in mind, we see that women's gender role might put them in a position where their voices might not be as well heard as their male peers in workplaces. This is due to the heteronormative structures, where women are subjected to act with femininity and a passive approach in relation to men.

With this in mind, we can state that a change in gender roles might be crucial for other changes to actually have a real impact. For example, 60 % of women in parliament is maybe not important, if men are more listened to, or get more speaking time. To explore that would give more answers to if equality is being reached, because this way it will be visible to whom is getting an opportunity to talk, and whom is listened to. To connect back to our respondent (back in our first theme) who raised criticism to the structure in the classroom where the female class representative was seen as vice because of her gender. Her work was the

same, but she was still seen as inferior to her male peer. We see an importance in raising this. If women have the responsibility to educate, seize the opportunities that were non-existent some decades ago, to do careers and become future leaders, they have to do this simultaneously as they keep their traditional roles as women and wives. They will have to take on double responsibility in order to create the change that is expected by them to be responsible for. Especially if all work is laid on them, and if a critical perspective of gender roles is forgotten about.

One student put this into words by mentioning mothers as a pushing factor for change in family values. This quote highlights the change for how to handle teenage pregnancies, and how the mother of the teenage girl is the one who pushes the change in values;

..the mom helps the dad to understand and she can stay home, maybe not in good conditions, but they don't really throw you out nowadays.

- Female social work student

According to this respondent it seems to be women who take the responsibility of changing attitudes in the household. To not being thrown out is seen as a positive change, but it becomes clear that in this case the mothers are the parent who promotes this change. Maybe they are described like this because of what is expected of their gender, to be "caring". Or maybe they are caring in this act of empathy, because this is how they are expected to be. Following quotation is building on top of this, with showing the drive of women for an equal future;

...it's good because it has transformed from ..(mumbling).. we are planning on becoming future leaders.. - Female social work student

The quote is both empowering, but also implies that women are the actors in the field of equality. The quest for equality is pictured as a female issue, not a male issue. As women being historically oppressed, their way of 'winning equality' is through being empowered to take on 'male positions'. Gender equality is

promoted by the government, because it is proven to create a good economic growth, but also a positive image of Rwanda. To analyse this deeper we can see that through putting the responsibility on women, and for them to “go out and take place”, men are a new component in the quest for gender equality (Slegh et. al 2015). The traditional activities of men are supposed to be taken on by women as well, but traditional female work is still seen as of lower status. There seems, in our students' reflections, to be no indicator to talk about promoting men in the traditional female field. Quite contrary, many raise questions about bringing change to the home. When spoken about, other more gender traditional solutions are proposed, such as hiring someone to do the ‘lower status’ job in the household. This raises questions for us as researchers. While previous research studies made by Slegh (2013) and Carlson & Randell (2013) shows that men's involvement in equality, as helping out in the household, had great effects for the family. Still, no one of our social work students mentions this in their interviews. Involvement of men plays a big part in the developing process of a country, but is not being highlighted by these social work students. With social work being important in development, it is very telling that these social work students do not address this solution at all in relation to gender based issues.

With these final quotes of the study, we can see that most responsibility for change is put on women. This might be explained with how gender equality is seen as a female issue. The historical oppression of women might have an impact on why it is seemed as a female issue mostly, due to their inferior position in relation to men, which they are stuck to in forms of heteronormative societies. It seems like women are supposed to take on these high status roles, to create equality for themselves, while not letting go of traditional roles and duties. We see that men's roles are not problematized in connection to women's roles. Their role is only problematic when it comes to economical factors, no one mentions a missing parenting opportunity. We see this as something which brings an interesting aspect to this study, however, we acknowledged that this came to our attention because of our Swedish gaze. Women are supposed to reach high status roles to achieve gender equality, but the high status roles are not being

problematized or questioned. We believe that the low income families in the rural areas are vulnerable in society from this kind of view and it raises many reflections.

## 7 Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to investigate Rwandan social work students reasoning about gender roles and equality. We have focused our research around three main questions. They concern current attitudes, what impacts the respondents could see and how they look at development work and future regarding this issue. Our findings have been centered around four main themes. *Views on gender roles, Impacts on gender roles, Responsibilities for equality and Obstacles.*

### 1. How are Rwandan social work students reflecting on gender roles?

What stood out in this question was that traditional gender roles were eminent while the students explained gender structures in Rwanda. Our respondents referred to cultural norms where men were seen as the financial supporter, while women were carers for children and household. The reflections showed gender views in a direct way, where the students assigned women and men specific tasks based on gender. However, we also saw indirect indicators, where our respondents implied different responsibilities based on gender as a given, without the need to specifically address it, such as when talking about women's unpaid work. This underlines that these roles are taken for granted.

Our respondent lifts that women are seen as inferior to men in many instances of society which we connected to gender order theory. It further showed that while Rwanda is promoting a gender equal society, deeply-rooted traditional roles were described by our respondents. We saw this as an indicator of a heteronormative structure, where women and men need to fit into strictly set expectations. Our

respondent lifted that negative feedback was given from society while going outside of these norms. The respondents' reflections both showed how they viewed gender roles, but also how they viewed their own roles. Some respondents questioned the traditional views in relation to themselves, while others saw them as natural.

## 2. What factors are mentioned by the students as important for how gender is constructed in Rwanda?

Our second research question pushed us in a direction where we had to analyse what our respondent saw as had impacted the constructions of gender. They addressed culture, religion, education, class and location as influences on how gender was constructed inline with the heteronormative a traditional view on gender. The respondent lifted that people have different opportunities based on these categories. Traditional family views seem to be the main influence and called this the cultural norm of gender. Rural areas were assigned with traditional views while urban areas were described as more gender equal and modern by the participants. We also saw that our respondents assigned people with a high economical status a position where it's easier to change gender roles, while poor people were pictured as more bound to gender roles. We saw that class had a relation to gender and this had an impact on attitudes on gender roles. An example of this was that a respondent expressed that his low income could not fulfill the man's role of being the provider.

We further analyzed that an exclusion on the lower standing group, the population who live in an urban and low income setting, will reproduce the picture our respondent explained as more strict to traditional views and therefore harder to change.

## 3. How do the students reflect on the current development of gender roles and gender equality in Rwanda?

We have seen different attitudes towards the development of gender equality. The main finding is that the respondents show a positive view to change within this topic. Several respondents also saw a *need* for change. The common understanding was that women's position needed to be lifted in society to reach gender equality. However, attitudes varied in terms of execution. Some saw a need for changing gender roles within the family structure, to prevent double work for women, in forms of wage work combined with all of the household work. Others viewed gender equality policies as something that should not interfere with family life and gender roles. This way we saw a difference in views of gender equality development in relation to what the respondent saw as an issue. A few respondents addressed that a misunderstanding for the meaning of gender equality would result in women getting more power than men. This was raised as fear with today's gender equality work.

What became clear was that the main responsibility for achieving gender equality was put on women. This was prevalent in responses addressing gender inequality as a female issue. Women themselves have the responsibility to climb the gender order to achieve the same opportunities as men. This showed that women had to be empowered to reach the same opportunities as men. An interesting reflection was that the attitude of men stepping down in the gender hierarchy was not brought up at all. This might be a result of gender inequality being seen as a female issue.

Women's responsibilities for achieving gender equality were shown through reflections of family situations, where the mothers have the responsibility to change 'old values' and persuade the man to follow. It was said to be the responsibility of the wife to ensure equality within the home. Women are submitted to both keep old gender roles to fit within the traditional norms in society, while at the same time they are expected to promote change to reach gender equality. It is interesting that this comes up in the analysis, in connection to previous research that shows male participation as an efficient method to reach

equality. Our respondents, as social work students, show no reflection around this. Because they are social work students, they will play a part in the development of the country. This due to the profession's deep connection to social problems, including gender related issues. We see that they all have different perceptions of where the issue with gender lies, and we see their current reflections on development having an impact on future development. All the students had a positive view on change for gender equality and development. What differed was the way to reach it, at what was seen as the main source of gender related issues. Our main conclusion stands with change as viewed by students as a welcomed influence for gender equality. The question of "how" was what differed between students.

## 8 Discussion

In the final chapter of this thesis we will present a discussion about theory and method choice. Following, we will reflect on our findings and discuss suggestions for future research.

As usual for all studies, a different choice of theory would have resulted in a different result. In this study, we could see patterns in our data touching gender attitudes comparing rural and urban areas. Location seemed to have an impact on how gender roles were perceived. If we would have chosen a theory more focused on a country's urbanization process, we might have gained another perspective to the data. Further, we have reflected on what would happen if we instead would have lifted theories concerning class, development, education, etc. However we are pleased with our choice of theoretical framework, and believe we gained a deep and fruitful analysis focusing just on different gender aspects.

We can direct criticism to our own choice of method for this study, specifically our choice for analysis. While thematic analysis is very useful in many ways, what codes and themes are found might be affected by what one chooses to see, or



what you are set to react to due to pre-understanding for certain subjects. We have tried to tackle this issue as much as possible, however we still think it is important to mention the weaknesses of this method and to have this in mind while reading this study.

The respondents all wished for a change in society, and most viewed traditional gender roles with a critical eye. They hoped that a change would benefit women and decrease gender related issues. Still, none of the respondents mentioned men's involvement as a part of changing society. Quite contrary most responsibility for change was put on women. They are expected to educate, have a career, promote gender equality and simultaneously follow the traditional role as a woman, wife and mother. We find it interesting that women are seen as the ones responsible for equality. At the same time, we see a lot of requirements to be able to take part in gender equality development. But what happens to a woman without economic stability? What happens with a woman that is a victim of gender based violence? What happens when there are obstacles in between the woman and change? Is equality not in reach for them?

This made us reflect a lot on the challenges with gender equality development in society. There are no indicators of reflection of why women's traditional work is seen with a lower status than men, and no discussion about changing the attitudes concerning this rather than get women to enter the "world of men". We reflect on this and see that with this attitude it is harder for the man to 'lower' his status in the gender hierarchy, for example by doing unpaid household work.

With this in mind we believe it is important to involve men in the work of changing gender roles. This is because they are a part of the society as much as women, which maintain the ruling norms on expectations on the genders, and are therefore also in power to shift the norms. We also see that women should not be alone with the responsibility of promoting change.

## **8.1 Suggestions for further research**

We have reflected on what other studies could be constructed based on the findings of this thesis. For example, a study about differences between female and male respondents' answers would give valuable information on what impact the respondents' gender have in their reflections about gender. We saw some indicators in this study to how the answers differed depending on gender, and we think it could be a good idea to apply this perspective to get another depth in a similar research study. We want to encourage others to continue researching this, and add more deep aspects of gender, age, class, education and more. This way a broader understanding for views on gender equality and gender roles will emerge.

Another interesting aspect is the rapid development of Rwanda the past 20 years. With Vision 2020 being implemented while these students were children, it makes their perceptions extra interesting to analyze. We can add other perspectives such as globalization, technological development and generation differences. Is this group a product of Vision 2020's gender equality implementations?

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# Appendix 1

## Introduction letter

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### Attitudes to gender among social work students



Our names are Lova Nylén and Emmy Lund and we are students at Gothenburg University in Sweden where we study a bachelor degree in social work. We are doing a research with the aim to develop an understanding of social work students attitudes towards gender and gender roles. We want to ask you to participate in an interview for our study.

Our objectives are as following:

- Explore social work students attitudes towards gender and gender roles
- Understand the origin of the attitudes regarding gender and gender roles
- Understand the attitudes around gender roles in relation to the governmental gender development policies and implementations

To explore this topic in-depth we will be doing phone interviews between **16th** of march until **27th** of March. These interviews will take around 30-45 minutes each. Please inform us what day and time that fits you the best.

#### Information about the interview:

- You always have the option to cancel the interview without explanation
- You can pass to answer any questions
- All information regarding your identity will be anonymous. This includes your name, age, or any specific information that you share.
- With your consent we will like to record the phone interview. You can withdraw this consent at any time and we will stop the recording.

#### Preparation for phone interview:

We would like to ask you to sit in a quiet and private environment where you feel comfortable. This so we can hear each other well and so you feel safe to express your thoughts. If you are able to have internet connection, we would like to contact you through Whatsapp. Otherwise we will call you on the airline. If you prefer the interview to be held in any other way, please let us know and we will try to customize the setting for your comfort.

We thank you so much for your interest in participating in this study. We wish to schedule a time with you between the dates of **16th** and **27th** March. Please let us know what time works for you so we can schedule an appointment for the interview.

The finished study will be published by Gothenburg University in May 2020. If you have any questions or thoughts, feel free to contact us:

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If you have any other questions concerning the study you can also contact our supervisor  
Jessica Påfs: [jessica.pafs@socwork.gu.se](mailto:jessica.pafs@socwork.gu.se)

## Appendix 2

### Interview guide

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- Introduction for the interview: Hi welcome to the interview. Outlines of the interview.
- Short overview of our objectives- Attitudes towards gender roles among social work students
- Timeplan for how long the interview is. → 30 min
- Information: The right to discontinue the interview or pass on questions.
- Consent for recording, use of the material in the study, publication
- Structure, we will start to discuss openly about gender roles throughout a case. Then we will follow to discuss education and family.

#### Case

Fictional case: An 16 year old unmarried woman gets pregnant.

What do you think will happen in this situation if this would happen today? (Who will take care of the baby? What responsibilities are assigned to. The woman? The man? Relatives? Expectations of the man/woman?)

Do you think many people agree with this ? Do other people have different opinions on what would happen in this situation?

#### Education

How do you talk about gender and expectation on women and men during your social work education?

Is it too much, too little focus?

Do you think it is important in the social work program ? (Why?) Do you think it is too much focus or too little ? In what way do you think your education about gender will be used in your future work as a social worker? Will it be helpful? In what way?

#### Family

In the family, who is responsible for household tasks, for example economics, cooking, looking after the children. How do you wish it would be in your future family?

How do you think gender roles will be in Rwanda in ten years?

### **Equality**

How would you describe equality?

What is the most urgent issue/challenge