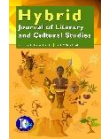




## Global Talk, Local Walk: Using Radio Drama *Ninde* for Reshaping Gender and Power Relations in Burundi



### Research Article

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#### Abstract

Gender is one of the global themes around which discourses are made, but various cultures address it in a local way. This paper aims at identifying the overarching vision of the radio drama *Ninde* in terms of gender and power relations as framed in selected *Ninde* and at examining how *Ninde* “authors” actualize that vision using the possibilities of the dramatic form. The empirical material on which the discourse is based is a sample of ten *Ninde* radio plays from Burundi. The paper attempts to answer this question: what do the particular *Ninde* narratives suggest as resolutions to the gender puzzle in the Burundian context of today? Goffman’s idea of framing and Butler’s concept of performativity are used together with the idea of change as envisioned in the proverb *Ivyari imagera vyarageruye* (Circumstances have changed) from two of the plays and also in the ideas of Connell (2009) to read how radio *Ninde* ‘visualizes’ the desired new gender identities and relations. The paper captures the vision of *Ninde* from the subjection of the woman, through the battle for self-assertion to the sense of gender consciousness within the modern Burundian family. It presents the denouement of *Ninde* plays, and denouement here is used as a discourse to display the different understandings of the proverb which proclaims instability and fluidity, and how *Ninde* reflects the home as a site to debate gender and reshape relations.

**Keywords:** discourse, family relations, gender, proverb, social change



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### Public Interest Statement

There are global issues and local solutions to address them. One of such issues is gender. This paper is a contribution to the discourse around gender, using radio drama *Ninde* from Burundi as a cultural indicator and enhancer of change in gender relations. By engaging with the framing of gender in Kirundi radio drama *Ninde*, this paper locates itself in the debate. It gives an example of a “local walk” to a “global talk” with regard to gender and family relations, or simply local solutions to a global issue.

### Introduction and Background

Across Africa, there have been numbers of initiatives and campaigns that capitalize on the use of television and radio to promote social change because it is believed that ‘edutainment’ or ‘entertainment-education’ programmes are efficacious in educating the public on a variety of social topics (Singhal & Rogers 1996). One such communication strategy is through the use of TV and radio dramas and soap operas (Ligaga 2008; Mbogo 2012, Tanganika 2012, Sambai 2014). The discourse in this paper is situated within those studies on the development of edutainment programmes in East Africa, and it focuses on the use of radio drama to reshape gender and power relations in Burundi.

This paper analyses the framing of the radio drama *Ninde* as an ‘edutainment’ genre, that is, an entertainment content that is designed to educate Burundians by embedding didactic lessons into some familiar form of entertainment. Entertainment-Education (E-E) is defined by Singhal and Rogers (1999, p. 5) as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour.” *Ninde* plays frame artistically a variety of societal issues and social situations prevailing at the time it is performed, and one of the societal issues it is used to shape are gender and power relations.

The overarching vision of *Ninde* in terms of the desired gender change is clearly framed in the proverb *Ivyari imagera vyarageruye* (Things are no longer the same way they were in the past or Circumstances have changed) which is used to back up the moral lesson in *Play10*. It is also used by Makurata in *Play8* to establish the authority of her statement during a conversation with her husband. What image does the proverb bring to the mind of the audience? The paper captures the vision of *Ninde* from the subjection of the woman, through the battle for self-assertion to the sense of gender consciousness within the modern Burundian family.

### Objective and Research Question

This paper aims at identifying the projected vision of gender and power relations in selected *Ninde* and how *Ninde* “authors” actualize that vision using the possibilities of the dramatic form. The researcher attempts to answer this question: what do the particular *Ninde* narratives suggest as resolutions to the gender puzzle in the Burundian context of today? The paper presents the denouement of *Ninde* narratives. Here denouement is used as a discourse to present the different understandings of the proverb *Ivyari imagera vyarageruye* (Things are no longer the same way they were in the past) and how it reflects the home as a site to debate gender and reshape relations.

### Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In order to answer to the research question, the proverb *Ivyari imagera vyarageruye* (Things are no longer the same way they were in the past or Circumstances have changed) is theorised and used as a tool for analysis of the episodes' vision of the desired gender change and this is the denouement. It is used as a mode of reading the texts. The aforementioned proverb defies the idea of fixity. It suggests that things/circumstances can indeed change. For instance, relationships, circumstances and feelings change within the plots of the radio drama *Ninde*. At the end of it all, the episodes seem to deconstruct received notions of dichotomic gender relations and in the process proclaim a different way of relating.

The idea of change or 'walk' as envisioned in the proverb and also in Connell's ideas (2009) is used, in addition to Goffman's idea of framing and Butler's concept of performativity, in the reading of how radio *Ninde* 'visualizes' the desired new gender identities. The plays present characters who act in a certain line and when it comes to a closure/the denouement of the play, the audience is 'shown' how the drama wants the problem to be solved. The proverb is deployed as a defining vision/ denouement of the episodes given that it proclaims instability, fluidity. In this paper, the researcher appropriates Goffman's (1974) concept of framing to refer to the main strategies that are used to package and communicate for social change in *Ninde* artistic productions. *Ninde* narratives are analysed taking into account how plays use language and characters to display changes in gender roles and relations, and to reflect power dynamics.

The proverb is unpacked to demonstrate how in radio *Ninde* "things are no longer the same way they were in the past" with regard to gender relations. The denouement of the chosen texts projects a vision of gender democratisation by demonstrating how women and men (re)construct their gender, even across the boundary between the strictly gender binary. In this study, gender democratisation means that men and women have free and equal rights to perform various forms of masculinity and femininity without limitation of one's sex. The frames set the same standards of judgments for both men and women in their performances of masculinity and femininity. The idea of democratisation of gender hints at the ideal of gender equity and the voicing of everyone in society, including the women, some of who had hitherto been devoiced. *Ninde* tries to defy the stereotype of traditional male tyranny model, and presents an alternative approach to interpret men's and women's relations.

In this paper, the researcher examines how the framing allows actualizing masculinity and femininity as flexible and subject to constant alterations through characterization, voice and sounds.

The data analysed are ten *Ninde* plays drawn from the data collected from *Radio Télévision Nationale du Burundi* (R.T.N.B) that is, the National Radio Television of Burundi. The ten plays are listed in the references section from number one to number ten and they are referred to within the paper according to the number of the play in references list.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### (i) Home as a Site to Debate Gender Politics in *Ninde*

All along the plots of the selected stories, *Ninde* interrogates and challenges the conventional patriarchal hegemony and gender relations and suggests a new way of perceiving gender relations in a contemporary world, through a recreation of masculinity and femininity. There are various strands of masculinity and femininity within dramatic discourse, rather than simply identifying patriarchal stereotypes. That idea agrees with Downing who thinks that “there is danger of over-simplifying, of taking masculinity as a generic metaphor for socially diffused power on a roughly Foucauldian sense and femininity as a metaphor for weakness, or likewise, simply identifying masculinity with violence” (in Mugambi and Allan, 2010, p.116). The radio dramas *Ninde* represent power play between masculinity and femininity. Politics of power and dominance is seen through language use and through the way the speech is given to males and females.

In different cultures around the world, they have their meaning of ‘man’ and ‘woman’. But what do these narratives tell us about what it means to be a man, or perhaps more accurately, to be ‘manly’ in the contemporary Burundian society? Masculinity is best understood in relation to femininity, its implied counterpart. Both are concerned with power relations that influence the share of labour between the sexes and the social construction of sexuality (Dominica Dipio in Mugambi & Allan, 2010). The selected *Ninde* plays emphasize the agency of women in the construction of masculinity. This implies that to be masculine in a nation where women are inclusive largely means to be flexible and accommodative of feminine performances. The narratives seem to reform gender relations and construct ideal men for the contemporary period. Through female and male characters, the radio *Ninde* demonstrates that gender roles can be reversed or shared and that masculinity and femininity can be performed by either males or females when the circumstances require it. The male power traditionally known as male assertion of dominance over a weak, compliant or rather unintelligent female now faces up to the counter-power of an empowered female with self-assertion and self-positive image. When the female is elevated, the man must necessarily be degraded lower to create space for the female, as it can be demonstrated in the frame of aggressive masculinity and self-assertive femininity in the analysed plays.

Patriarchy’s chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. So home is used in the selected *Ninde* plays as site to enact and rethink sexual politics. Millett (1977, p.23) defines the term “politics” as the “power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another.” According to Millett (1977), ‘sexual politics’ is the power that men have over women emanating from the penis. For the same author, “[t]he penis is the badge of the male superior status in both preliterate and civilized patriarchies and it is given the most crucial significance, the subject of both endless boasting and endless anxiety” (p.47). Kate’s view reproduces Freud’s dictum that ‘anatomy is destiny.’ However, from the chosen texts, it is evident that there are very few roles and responsibilities that require a penis or a vagina and those are not negotiated. All other roles and responsibilities are freely and equally made accessible to both men and women.

Traditionally, the collocation “women” and “power” had the capacity to confuse less than one because the proponents of sexual politics could ask “whether she has got that ‘superior

weapon' for her to acquire power". But doesn't she have other sources of power? Seeing that she cannot acquire the so called "weapon" that confers power on men according to the proponents of biological determinism (Sigmund Freud), what 'product' does she have to bargain power with men? A reading of *Ninde* narratives prove that women do not need to be the same as men in order to be equal to men but that women can be men's equals, provided society values the "feminine" as it does for the "masculine." This is because society in general and family in particular needs the two traits to survive. By analogy, 'gender politics' is thus the power that men have over women or women have over men depending on circumstances and is thus fluid.

The reading of *Ninde* shows how men depend on their wives. The place of the woman in the household makes that respect to her be a must. She is portrayed as having a counter-power to exercise, first as a mother and an educator of the younger, second as a cultural agent, third as a contributor to the well-being of the family thanks to her industriousness, and lastly as the driving force behind family economy; and a man cannot set up a home alone without her (Nibafasha, 2014, pp.141-2).

One aspect of performativity theory useful and insightful in analysing the gender politics in the selected *Ninde* is the casting of gender as performative. Judith Butler reasons that:

...gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it purported to be. In this sense, gender is always doing...There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results (Butler, 1999, p.33)

Nevertheless, because of the cyclic nature of the process, the argument here is that it is difficult to definitely say which comes first between gender identity and the performance of it, but the argument that gender is performative is quite believable. From Butler's point of view, it is the performance of a certain gender trait that leads to gender identity. However, identity is sometimes constituted in performance drawing from tradition.

Generally, human beings tend to assimilate or learn gender positioning by repeated acts right from childhood. And because men and women are restricted by culture in their exercise, the researcher opines that gender performativity has limits beyond which it cannot perform. It stands between two opposing extremes – 'absolute randomness or chaos' on one hand and 'complete absence of flexibility and inability to attain freedom' on the other hand. Between these two extremes is a theory that advocates for 'freedom with order' (Ngara, 1990, p.18). Indeed, human freedom has limits. The freedom to perform gender must respect order and the interests of the community are put before individual interests. What is good comes before what is right. This is consistent with the position of Goffman (1974, p.13) that he personally holds society to be the first in every way and any individual's current involvements to be second. The needs, the interests and the values of the society determine the fabrication of masculinity and femininity, and society's interests take precedence over individual's freedom because men and women are not free radicals. The denouement of *Ninde* narratives advocates for a symbiosis from the two perspectives. Men and women have to submit to tradition within realities of today, or to combine

loyalty to the past with sensibility to the present, that is, a symbiosis of tradition and innovation to remain recognizable to them.

An examination of the selected radio dramas attests to the fact that *Ninde* performances do not only reflect or portray the existing ‘compulsory’ heterosexuality and binary gender attributes reinforced by hegemonic discourse in society, but act as a site for the performance and (re)adaptation of those gender conceptions. To be told that Bihori (*Play10*) does not even buy salt for his wife is to project his failure as a man; and it is an insult to his culturally designated manhood. No man wants to be criticised for not being man enough, and throughout his life, he strains to perform the gender attributes assigned by hegemonic discourse to the masculine identity. The same projection of failure as a man applies to Rusimbi in *Play5* where he is heard plotting to disappoint his wife by selling her land where their homestead is located, planning to sell it and leave for other women with the money collected from selling his wife’s plot. After catching him, the wife Rozata exercises power and takes a decision to kick him out of the house, a decision that she announces to the family during a family gathering summoned for that purpose.

Through an excitable or sharp cutting speech in the radio plays, women ‘unman’/‘castrate’ their husbands when they are irresponsible with regards to family, sometimes publicly, by insulting them; by publicly denouncing their frailties, or ridiculing them. The performance does not stop at ridiculing ‘irresponsible masculinity’ but projects alternative ways of being a man in accordance with the expectations and the requirements of the moment.

The *Ninde* texts that are analysed in this paper do not perceive gender relations as rigid, stable and unchanging but as a fluid space constantly under construction and reconstruction. This echoes Butler’s (1999) view that “[g]ender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler’s emphasis; Butler, 1999, p.179). Radio *Ninde* is consistent with Butler’s opinion of destabilizing the traditional conventional notion of power in a traditional family setting whereby power is linked to men only. Performing a particular role does not shift the biological identity/sex of the doer as the sex of the doer should not be a limiting factor to performing various roles.

### (ii) Hybrid Gender Identities: Male Femininity and Female Masculinity

It is not strange to have hybrid gender identities in the framing of *Ninde* such as feminised men (male femininity) such as Severino in *Play8* and Majambere in *Play10* and masculinised women /female masculinity) such as Rozata in *Play5* and Helena in *Play10* in the contemporary days. This resonates with Connell’s (2005) view that women too can possess and demonstrate the features of masculinity, as men can demonstrate features of femininity. Masculinity and femininity are, thus, not a natural state but socially constructed, fluid, collective gender identities. Connell argues that those so-called ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities are human qualities and not specific to either men or women. Majambere who was ridiculed for performing femininity ends up being recognized as ‘real man’ in *Play10* as the following excerpt shows, because his new identity has allowed him to develop and is able to lend money to Masatura at a certain stage of the narrative:

**Masatura:** *Bwa bundi n'umuntu w'umugabo basha.*/ My goodness, he is a real man indeed!

**Ndinzemenshi:** *Ibi ni bitanu...bitanu...cumi...Ehee!*/This is five...five...ten thousands...Wow!

**Masatura:** *N'ukuri ngiye kumwubaha. Ewe naraju...narajujuse jewe ntajanye abana mw'ishure.Uuu!*/ Frankly speaking, I am going to owe him special respect. I was a fool...I was foolish not to take my children to school. Uuu!

Majambere is able to perform roles conventionally known as feminine but he is a man. The frame reflects a realisation of new identities that are performed. This concurs with Butler's (1999) view that since gender is performative it is possible to change the way we perform our gender – which offers a possibility for re-signification of some of the normative heterosexual notions of gender.

While sticking with the heterosexual notion, the sampled texts attempt to 'undo' and 'redo' the assignment of domestic roles with flexibility that permits the free movement across gender lines. They attempt to open gender boundaries in domestic roles. By insisting on helping each other between male/female or gender binary roles that are essential for the survival and continued existence of the family (and ultimately society), heterosexual complementarity is reinforced and performed in *Ninde* narratives to inspire the everyday practice. Through *Ninde* performance, the voice speaking as and for women seems to attain a sort of collective subversion and resistance to certain dominant patriarchal notions, running away, sometimes, from their culturally prescribed gender identity, but this within order.

Some feminists who ascribe to the performativity theory, like Monique Wittig (1981), have called for the subversion of the normative notion of gender. But why should we re-script all gender norms? Why denaturalise sex? A critical study of *Ninde* would seem to agree with the subversion of unnatural ideas about power and sexuality that seem to be natural but that are bad, while maintaining unnatural naturalised constructs that are not bad in the performance of gender. Benge (2012, p.126) raises a fundamental question in that regard. He asks: "As social beings who have to co-exist in a social situation, do we have to subvert the culturally assigned gender attributes and roles for the sake of it?" Gender performance is one of the means through which the social order and organisation in Burundian society is ensured. *Ninde* performance serves as one of the vital tools for ideological propagation and recreating the community, by extension, a means for social organisation. Apart from entertainment, *Ninde* performance is also didactic. It can partly be viewed as a form of social intervention in gender-related disputes. As a drama produced for the state broadcast, *Ninde* seems to be used to steer the gender order in the direction the state wants. So, in *Ninde* the liberation of women does not mean rejection of men and repudiation of a woman's role in the family.

Also in *Ninde*, sexual revolution struggles not toward the abolition of sex role and the complete economic independence of women or for women's isolation but toward a shared space and sexual equity through a single standard of morality where men and women are ready to work side by side. In the symbols of Severino (*Play8*) and Majambere (*Play10*), the home and family are women's and men's joint responsibility since the survival of the family depends on replacing competitive strategies with cooperative initiatives. From Butler's understanding, a man can have a masculine attribute or a feminine attribute. Butler's idea helps to read the *Play8* where we are presented with an example of the 'new man' through the character of Severino with his wife

Makurata. By intervening, Makurata is also highlighting the change that the narrative envisions. In their conversation, Severino and Makurata recall the unstable nature of things. The integration of the man in roles or matters traditionally known as feminine becomes one of the ways to pull up the feminine attribute.

Women in the *Ninde* narratives under study such as Ngendanganya in *Play1*, Rozata in *Play5*, Karorina in *Play7*, Njerina in *Play8* and Helena and Ndinzemenshi in *Play10* are not spiteful but seek to deal with the challenges that come their way. They are women who seek to uphold their rights without breaking down positive elements from the tradition. The narrative frames do not advocate either for an inversion or a subversion of gender roles for its own sake, but they are in the favour of challenge, alteration, and reconstruction of those that endanger women or are detrimental to women or society as a whole. The plays invite the listeners to challenge the embedded traditional masculinist and feminist assumptions that do not fit the epoch, such as overloading the woman while the husband is roaming in public places out there not only without providing to the family but also wasting the wealth of the family in these public places (in most of these narratives, men are likely to spend all their means and time in bars). Women have needs of their husband's cooperation, companionship and understanding as it is evidenced through a conversation between Ndinzemenshi and her husband Masatura in *Play10*, where the woman is claiming a hand of help from her husband and not a reversal of roles. There are symbols of men (Severino in *Play8* and Majambere in *Play10*) undertaking domestic work to lighten the burden of the woman in the fiction for men in the real world to emulate.

Similarly, Rozata in *Play5* does not reject the man Rusimbi in marriage, but she rejects what Rusimbi is in their marriage. Rozata's marriage ends not because she does not want to remain a wife (which she plays well when she serves delicious food to her husband) but because she feels that she does not have human relationship with her husband Rusimbi who cheats on her and who plans to 'eat' her plot of land. This is evidence that genders are performative because they can be interchanged the same way people put on a garment for a time and put it back to its place at another time (Butler, 1993).

Severino-like men try to move to a more respectful and gender-equal practice in their lives. All are married, with children. They are able to renegotiate the gender division of labour in their households, and adopt nonviolence. But they find it difficult to shift the meaning of masculinity away from being a head of household; in this gender regime, the authority dimension seems hardest to shift. And through Severino and his wife in *Play8*, the drama enables us to see hegemonic patriarchal males' prejudice resurfacing particularly with regard to women. In Severino's patriarchal thinking, women are physically weak – he thinks men are always superior and powerful and only able to perform worthy acts. The audience senses this in the way he insists on the fact that he is 'a man.'

Some issues that emerge from *Play10* include renouncement of all claims to speak of the 'superiority' of one sex over another, as if it could be compared as similar things. As Millett (1977) rightly puts it, "each has what the other has not; each completes the other. They are in nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give" (p. 93). They need each other. A human being is a social being (with emotional and spiritual needs) and more than just a biological substance. Jaggar argues



(1983) in favour of the idea of mutual need that “human biology and psychology dictate a set of basic human needs, and societies that treat these basic human needs as optional cannot expect to survive, let alone to thrive” (cited in Tong, 2009, p.39). Human beings are social beings that have to co-exist with others in a community; and to ensure harmony and order in this co-existence some regulatory frame is inevitable (be it philosophical or religious) – and often gender has been factored into the regulatory social framework (for better or for worse) (Benge, 2012). Though some gender practices/ performances are debilitating to the subject, (these are challenged in *Ninde* narratives whether they are feminine or masculine), others are essential for the harmonious and continued existence of society. Society cannot live without culture for its social organisation though certain elements of culture may be enemies to individual liberties. Fortunately, culture is itself dynamic and not static. On the one hand, as culture changes, so do people’s masculine and feminine constructs. On the other hand, people perform new forms of masculinity and femininity to influence cultural change. It is cyclic.

The researcher has been particularly interested in the way social practices and social structures of which gender is part are discursively shaped and enacted in the chosen ‘texts’. Still borrowing heavily from Butler’s notion, the ideas of performativity focus much on prominent and salient information visible in *Ninde* performances, which is an important social tool in influencing gender performance in Burundian society and this one is the integration of males in the domestic sphere, a sphere that is traditionally known to be a feminine private space associated with less power. In the traditional beliefs and perceptions, the concepts of power and authority were separated from the woman’s universe and from all what is associated with the woman or feminine, and *Ninde* narratives attempt to challenge this old-fashioned idea for positive change.

In the ten radio dramas analysed in this study, the family unit and home conventionally known as private and female space are presented as very important sites and spaces where different faces of masculinity are performed, and the home is seen as the archetype in terms of interrogating ordinary domestic life while at the same time reflecting upon broader issues within society. Power becomes masculine or feminine depending on circumstances. However, as a state broadcast, the freedom or liberty to perform masculinity or femininity in *Ninde* is democratized but regulated. The state’s role in the change is crucial to steer society and to provide the social values and norms. Human rights are not unlimited rights as if people were free to be and to do absolutely anything they like. Their rights are limited to what is compatible with being a social human being (Goffman, 1974).

The man enacting some aspects of conventional femininity has to carefully negotiate a uniquely masculine way of implementing his roles, accomplishing gender and headship credibility simultaneously. There are symbols of such men like Severino in *Play8* and Majambere in *Play10*. Similarly, the woman enacting roles of conventional masculinity, such as owning a plot or house, negotiates a uniquely feminine way of performing her role and therefore accomplishes gender and wifely credibility simultaneously. The framing of *Play5* presents Rozata as a woman who owns the plot and the house where the family lives but she is the one who cooks for her husband Rusimbi. The female character Rozata marries from her own plot and house, what is normally assumed to be predominantly masculine. But she cooks well and serves her husband Rusimbi. The power relation between men and women is such that even the empowered Rozata must still

accept certain patriarchal arrangements as “unmovable.” It gives a lot of satisfaction to Rusimbi to hear that she will always cook delicious food for him. But while Rozata is willing to submit to some traditional power arrangements, her empowerment firmly indicates that she will not accept the entire male-favouring menu in the traditional marital arrangement. After she catches her husband Rusimbi cheating on her in a bar, she organizes a family meeting during which she delivers a speech to inform relatives and neighbours that she officially kicks her husband Rusimbi out of the house.

In the characterization of Rozata, the drama highlights the independence of a woman in a patriarchal society and the instability of gender. Rozata appears to be an independent woman before entering into marriage life and keeps her independence even after marrying Rusimbi. As a single and independent woman, Rozata proves that women are not different from men in terms of owning property (house). She is witnessed cherishing her husband Rusimbi but when she discovers that he is dishonest, she threatens and punishes him. She exercises a certain power and authority over Rusimbi. She occupies a position traditionally known to be masculine.

The framing of the female character Rozata in *Play5* and the male character Majambere in *Play10* demonstrates that the contemporary challenges of the society have given women and men a new status and recognition, because they have to perform gender roles according to the circumstances. Women have to be arrogant and aggressive when the situation forces them to and retain their femininity when it is necessary to do so. This applies to men as well. They have to be gentle and soft when the circumstance requires it and retain their masculinity when needed. This portrayal affirms how gender roles have become more flexible.

The fight Rozata puts up is interesting and is largely attributable to the fact that she is significantly empowered. Through Rozata’s symbolic act, egocentric masculinity is ridiculed and challenged when Rozata exercises power. The character of Rozata would seem less credible in Burundian context: but she serves the purpose. It is a loud manifesto that once a woman is materially empowered, she can bargain power with a man. Through female characters such as Budodwa in *Play2* and Rozata in *Play5*, we realize that having income and exercising control over their economic lives are means by which women can empower themselves. Characters such as Rozata in *Play5* or Helena and Ndinzemeshi in *Play10* become strong women who stand for their rights.

In *Ninde* performances, the binary dichotomy of gender identity is not projected as a bargain in which the woman is a perennial loser. It is productively harnessed for the organisation of a humane society. For instance, in order to challenge male violence in a couple’s life, the discomfort caused by male aggressiveness is highlighted against the joy of being a cooperative male as expressed through progress and fullness of life that spouses enjoy in some sequences of the narratives such as the Severinos in *Play8* and the Majambere in *Play10*, something that abusive men cannot experience because of their negative behaviour. In *Play8* and *Play10*, there is harmony in the marriage between Majambere and his wife on the one hand and Severino and his wife Makurata on the other hand. Harmony is maintained because both partners know their responsibilities towards each other and fulfil them correctly. The new attributes that are projected in the construction of gender relations in family are reciprocity, equality of worth, freedom for

performing any roles which are not sex-linked, and mutual submission and respect between men and women within a spirit of partnership and not competition.

Though the narratives feature episodes that are domestic in their settings, they actually deal with questions of dynamics of power in the relationship between men and women. In *Play8*, the husband Muhindo and his wife Njerina are presented as struggling but they end up living happily because the character Muhindo has developed from bad to good character after being persuaded by Severino and the local male chief.

Through characterization, the drama enables the audience to interpret and understand the complexity of gender relations. One can be masculine at one point, and not in another instance or one can be feminine in one circumstance and not in another one.

### **(iii)The Relativity of Framing Strategies in Radio Ninde: Rethinking Power and Solidarity in Gender and Dominance at Home**

The framing approach of gender is combined with a new theoretical construct of power and solidarity to summarize the relationship among gender, power and the relationship between husbands and wives in the contemporary world. The paper interrogates about power and solidarity, that is, how 'status and connection' interact (Tannen, 1994). In the dramatic narratives, the husband (man) and wife (woman) have to balance the simultaneous but conflicting needs for status and connection. Power is associated with giving orders or resisting to existing gender norms while solidarity is associated with dialogue and reciprocity.

In the Burundian context, one of the most striking aspects of the family institution is the hierarchical nature of relations and solidarity between husband and wife. Despite changes, the traditional mentality of hierarchy on which is based the inferiority of the feminine gender in comparison to the masculine gender persists for fear of disturbing the family institution which is a cradle of social relationships that have existed in Burundian society for a long time. In *Play2*, Budodwa advises her husband to sell his plot so that they can go and leave in her own plot. The husband sells the plot and they settle in the woman's plot. His masculinity is here challenged. Mibare's acceptance to sell his plot on the advice of his wife Budodwa enhances his wife's masculinity because it reflects her power to influence his decisions. Mibare's dependency on the wife's plot now confirms that the woman is more powerful than him. Resonating with Butler's theory of performativity, *Ninde* does not perceive hegemonic patriarchy and gender relations as rigid, stable and unchanging but sees it as a fluid space constantly under construction and reconstruction.

*Ninde* analysed narratives echoe Butler's (1999) views by destabilizing the regular conventional notion of power in a traditional system whereby power is assumed to be the trait of men only. It frames both women and men exercising power and counter-power in the drama. Through characterisation of women and men, women are portrayed as self-assertive and powerful decision makers, a performance conventionally masculine.

However, the woman Budodwa shows her husband Mibare solidarity because she considers him as her husband, the head of the family. During their conversation, she reassures her husband that she owes him respect as husband; that she is not like those other women who

despise their husbands once they bring them to live at the women's home, as part of their dialogue below shows:

**Mibare (man):** *Sha nta jewe nikunda!* /Dear, I am not selfish!

**Budodwa (wife):** *None uranzaniye?* / So, have you brought something for me?

**Mibare:** *Raba ingene nagupesuye umubiri wose uyagayaga! Ufise ubwoba bw'iki?* / Look and see how much I beautified you and how your whole body shines! What are you afraid of?

**Budodwa:** *Turapesurana! Nukuri nanje ndagerageza.* / We beautify each other! Verily, I try to do the same for you.

**Mibare:** *Rema wewe nta ngorane mugore wanje.* / Take heart my dear wife. There is no problem.

**Budodwa:** *Wewe none uragenda kumesa iyo shati n'iyu patalo, si jewe ndabimesa n'ukuri?* / Have you ever gone to wash that shirt of yours or that pair of trousers? Honestly, ain't I the one who washes them?

**Mibare:** *Ee! Muga ntu...ntuzombwire ngo ndakumese...ngo ndakumesurire igipfu...ico gipfundo!* / Yes! But never... never tell me to wash... to wash your...that skirt of yours!

**Budodwa:** *Oya jewe ndi kurya...kury'aba kera, umugore yubaha umugabo wiwe!* / No. For me I act according to...to tradition from our ancestors: a woman who respects her man/husband.

**Mibare:** *Ee! Ba unyubaha. Ko jewe narinze nda...tubana jewe naragukunda.* / Yes, indeed. You should respect me. Since I accepted to ...to live with you, it is a sign that I loved you.

Having a plot and house put the woman Budodwa in position of power, but she puts herself in position of subordination to connect with her husband Mibare by offering him some services as a wife. She shows her husband solidarity and respect though he depends on her. This means that in the contemporary society, gender boundaries are more flexible than would be expected in a traditional setting.

The woman who has to stand for her rights and to be a wife at the same time, and the man who has to stand for his status of headship in the household and helpmate of the wife use different and sometimes contradictory gender identities. Sometimes, the demands of these identities conflict each other. For example, in the scene analysed in *Play8*, the man Severino balances two competing and conflicting interactive identities: within a "manhood frame," he exercises the headship according to a prescribed routine; within a "husband frame," he must cooperate with his wife. In the household, husband Severino and wife Makurata defer each other in seeking to fulfil each other's preferences, desires and aspirations. Neither spouse seeks to dominate the other but each acts as servant of the other, in humility considering the other as equally better. One can hear Severino convincing his wife Makurata who would like to go fetching water that he will go himself because he shows solidarity to his pregnant wife. Makurata appears feminine during her period of pregnancy as she lacks the dominant masculine qualities such as strength. In this context, the man complements what lacks in the woman and together, they achieve their goal. Severino is the one who carries the heavy tree for firewood when they come

from the field with his wife, and accepts to be teased by his friends Muhindo and Gasupari that he has turned into a 'woman'. He also accompanies his pregnant wife to the clinic for routine checks.

Characterization of Severino and Makurata therefore emphasizes that femininity and masculinity are complementary but independent of who performs what between the husband and the wife. By establishing their marriages on a partnership basis, Severino and Makurata (*Play8*), and Majambere and his wife (*Play10*) protect them from joining the tide of dead or broken marriages resulting from marital inequities like in case of Rusimbi and Rozata in *Play5* and Papa Fiston and Mama Fiston in *Play6*. In so doing, they model an example for other couples in quest of freedom and stand against patterns of domination and inequality sometimes imposed upon family by tradition and culture. This operating in non-patriarchal way in a patriarchal society counters arguments of radical feminists who think that no reform is possible within patriarchy. It is also important to note that although conferring privileges on men, the construction of masculinity simultaneously makes men carry enormous burdens insofar as it imposes constraining social responsibilities towards their wives, which turn out to be a privilege for women. Men's power is limited in such a case, and the liberation of women becomes a liberation of men, too.

It can be argued, based on the background information on gender performativity perspective, that *Ninde* framing strategies of masculinity and femininity is intended to call women and men to compete against one another for power or for solidarity (connection) or, compete against one another for both power and solidarity. Assuming that the family is an arena of an ongoing power struggle but also simultaneously of an ongoing struggle for connection, the chosen texts as such present the audience with a postmodern world view of gender relations with possibility of gender-switching.

*Ninde* narratives attempt to challenge negative practices of the traditions to build balanced gender relations. Through the characters Rozata and her husband in *Play5* on one hand and Bihori and his wife Helena in *Play10* on the other hand, it is evident that healthy relationships cannot be built on a fifty-fifty philosophy, especially in marriage. It is not possible to have total equality between man and wife and have a successful marriage. There must be one of the two who goes beyond the half way and this one must not be necessarily the woman. When Bihori rises up, Helena lowers herself to expand space for her husband; when Helena rises up, Bihori lowers himself to expand space for his wife.

Part of the argument between Helena and her husband Bihori (*Play10*) during their conflict around beans is reproduced below for the purpose of presenting the woman's linguistic creation of authority while seeking solidarity from her husband:

**Helena (wife):** *Ehe! Ehe! Igitoke...igitoke ukigurisha kikiri umusaranguro simenya iyo ujana. Ntanakunyu ungurira. Uduharage twanje natwo... Mukama, bino biharage, ndabiryamakooo, ndabipfirekooo. / Look! Look! Banana...you sell the banana before it matures and I don't know where you go with the money. You don't even buy little salt for me. And my beans... my Lord, these beans, I will stick to, I prefer to die if need be.*

**Bihori (husband):** *Ee! Ubuu ubure kuja hejuru! Nakuzanye kugira urime, nanje ngabe ivyo warimye. Ukorere urugo. Ugira nakuzanye... ugira nakuzanye gusasa gusa ngo ndyame [Utamfasha?], atakindi ukora? / Eh! What a desire to dominate, you woman! I brought you*

so that I keep control of what you have worked for. You should work for the household. Do you think I brought you... do you think I brought you for making my bed only [Without any help from you?], without doing anything else?

**Helena:** *Utamfasha? Wewe none uri uwo kurya gusa? / Without helping me? Are you supposed to eat only?*

**Bihori:** *Hogi sha twigire asigare arabika. / Let's go and leave her behind to crow!*

Women are expected to use “polite” language and/or less likely use linguistic strategies that would make their authority visible in a family conflict scenario (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003, p.600). However, in many scenes of the plays, women break the maxim of politeness in order to create counter-power against the power of their men. In another argument between Helena and her husband about their pregnant daughter, Helena uses a more confrontational speech and a tone that make authority more visible:

**Helena (wife):** *(Aca abanza kumukekeza) Yoooo! Mbe ico gihe aho narera nabi weho wari hehe? Wari he? Twaravyaranye! (She starts mocking him) / Yoooh! Where were you while I was bringing her up in bad manners? Where were you? We made children together!*

**Bihori (husband):** *Umwana w'umukobwa n'uwa nyina. / A girl child is under her mother's responsibility.*

**Helena:** *Umukobwa agukundiye ngw'aca... ngo...ngw' aca aba ngo...ngo wa se. Aho narera nabi wari hehe? Ntitwari kumwe? (Haca harenguka umugabo aza araramutsa avugira inyuma) / When a girl child complies with parents' guidance, she becomes... that...that she belongs to...to her father. Where were you while I was bringing her up in bad manners? Weren't we together? (A man shows up and comes closer calling for attention)*

Helena's contempt for the man Bihori is made public in order to hurt him. She publicly exposes her husband's weaknesses. Such a character is emasculated. Helena uses 'excitable' speech with the intention to pull down her man as she uplifts herself, that is, acquires a certain power. It is interesting to note that the man and the woman are motivated by the same thing, that is, solidarity but use different strategies, hence the struggle. Approaching gender differences in *Ninde* performance as “‘cultural' differences implies that men do not dominate women, but only misunderstand them” (Tannen, 1994, pp.7-8).

The analysis of the women's speech such as, Ngendanganya in *Play1*, Riyera in *Play3*, Rozata in *Play5*, Karorina in *Play7*, Njerina in *Play8* and Helena and Ndinzemenshi in *Play10* shows that they draw on language strategies they use as empowered women when they are speaking to their husbands and manage to create space for themselves closer to their men at the end of the storyline. In normal circumstances, they would be expected to use a different frame when talking to husbands. However, their speech enjoins the subject to reoccupy a subordinate social position. What is displayed in the speech of both the above women and men, as Tannen would put it, “is orientation to a particular set of values: for men the central one is status, for women it is connection or affiliation. These differing values arise out of the collective social experience of

living in a particular group which is to a considerable extent separate and distinct from others” (cited in Wodak, 2005, p.27).

The analysis demonstrates that a framing approach can contribute to a more complex understanding of the role a speech plays in the linguistic construction of social identity as a woman or man and relations as wife or husband. For the woman, it may be a way of saying, ‘Look, I don’t want to be equal to you but I need to be closer to you, I need your solidarity.’ In *Play10*, when Ndinzemenshi comes back from where the husband has sent her to borrow money, she uses an indirect way to comment on her husband’s weakness in order to exercise her power while remaining connected to him. She talks through the man Majambere she had been sent to.

Talking through the man is a framing strategy that presents the woman Ndinzemenshi less provocative before her husband and more connected. To sound less offensive, this woman Ndinzemenshi uses someone else’s words to criticize her husband Masatura. By involving a third party, her attempt to get her way (a control manoeuvre) becomes less directly confrontational (the power play is mitigated) and also entails aligning herself with Masatura (a connection manoeuvre). The wife Ndinzemenshi turns into a lecturer and the husband Masatura into a listener. The lecturer is framed as superior in status and expertise, cast in the role of teacher while the listener is cast in the role of student. The framing process results in Ndinzemenshi’s dominance without intending to dominate but seeking solidarity of the man Masatura.

A critical reading of these narratives shows that change towards closeness of women and men is possible. This idea is symbolized in the denouement of *Play1* and *Play8* when Nkinahoruri and his wife Ngendanganya (*Play1*) or when the man Muhindo and his wife Njerina (*Play8*) finally reconcile their differences. At the end of the narrative, the former aggressive Nkinahoruri is now transformed and very kind to his wife Ngendanganya. In the dialogue, the husband, who has now changed puts himself in position of humility, accepting the blame that he used to ill-treat his wife unjustly and therefore repenting. Now he is transformed and he is promising his wife cooperation. The same is replicated in *Play8* with the character Muhindo and his wife.

The discourse in gender within the context of family can be seen as a struggle for power, yes, but it is also - and equally - a struggle for connection (Homes Miriam, 2003). The audiences can still read either power or solidarity or both power and solidarity in these frames depending on what they have brought ‘aboard’ in the reading process.

#### **(iv) New Normality in Gender Relations and Power in the denouement of *Ninde* Plays**

In addition to deconstructing the patriarchal hegemony and (re)defining ‘man’ and ‘woman’, the framing of *Ninde* projects new gender relations where new principles in gender roles and responsibilities that suit the new world are set. Masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) are pictured as fluid and not static.

First of all, the traditional conception of male superiority since childhood without even knowing how useful he will be to the society is discarded through performances. Many of the envisioned changes are reflected in the speech of the Chief of District in *Play10* during a meeting as shown in part of it below:

**Chief of District:** *Karya kazi umuhungu ashoboye n'umwigeme aragashoboye (Baba babandanya bavuzza urwamo). Twumvikane. / The task that a boy can perform, even a girl can do the same. (They keep making noise). / Please listen!*

**Ndinzemushi:** *Ego./ Yes.*

**Chief of District:** *Twumvikane. Uwufise ijamba araja kurivuga. Bon ni nk'uko indero mu rugo ku bana yaba umuhugu cank' umwigeme, si iyo umugore gusa. N'umugabo arajewe iyo ndero. Arakeneye kurera neza umwigeme wiwe, umuhungu wiwe nk'uko narugo nyene bategerezwa gufashanya mu kurera abo bibarutse. Ntihagire umugabo azota ikosa ku mugore ngo umwana yatojwe indero mbi. Harya kuba ari ukwihenda kw'umugabo kuko umugabo n'umugore bategerezwa gufashanya. N'uko. (Haca hongera kuba uruyogoyogo kubera havutse impari mubari mw'ikoraniro) / Listen. Whoever wants to have a turn will have it. Well! Regarding the children's discipline, be it a boy child or girl child, it is not only the woman's duty. Even a man is responsible for his children's discipline. He needs to bring up well his daughter or his son, the same as the wife needs to do. They need to share the responsibility to bring up well their offspring. No man should pass the buck to his wife that a child is ill-mannered. That's a mistake for the husband because husband and wife must share the responsibility of bringing up well their sons and daughters. That's it. (There is noise again out of a misunderstanding among participants)*

One of the changes that the speech highlights is the need for sharing responsibility between husbands and wives in bringing up children, a task traditionally known to be for women only. Through the speech, the chief's message extends to the listeners who are made aware that the act of bringing up children must be a shared responsibility between husbands and wives. The speech also reinforces the idea that girls and boys are equal in worth and so must be treated equally. From characters' performances and the intervention in the meeting frameworks, masculinity and femininity are presented as interdependent concepts because they complement each other.

The other important information that the speech communicates is the involvement of men in the health of their babies since their conception. This is mainly the concern of *Play3* and *Play8*. In *Play3* for instance, we learn from the wife Riyera that her husband Banzubaze finally went to the clinic for a check after resisting for long.

The narratives advocate for equal opportunities and equal involvement in family matters for both males and females without limitation by one's sex. In his speech, the Chief of District calls men to get rid of their traditional mentalities and to accommodate new and fair gender ideas, convincing them that in this new way of building the nation, the welfare of the household is a shared responsibility between the husband and his wife, and telling them to put in their mind that circumstances have changed.

In the denouement of the selected *Ninde* narratives, definitions of masculinity and femininity are updated for the contemporary society because gender is not a static identity. They highlight the agency of women in the construction of masculinity and the importance of democratizing gender in their performance because circumstances have changed.



Another needed change as reflected in the Chief of District's speech is that in the building of the contemporary family, men must help women in domestic tasks. This is something new because the domestic sphere is traditionally known as feminine. The idea of men helping their women in domestic chores, especially when they are pregnant is also emphasised in the speech of the local chief in *Play8* during a meeting held by a male local chief with men of the locality:

**Local chief:** *Nabatummyeko muri abagabo gusa, muri abashingantahe gusa, kuko impanuro ndiko ndabaha... impanuro nateguye kubaha ni iziberekeye mwebwe gusa. Ntivyari bikenewe y'uko haba abakenyezi canke abapfasoni banyu baza ngaha. Ni izerekeye mwebwe gusa. Mbega murazi ikintu ngomba ko mwova ngaha mwumvise? Nagomba ndababwire y'uko... mukwiye kuza... murashigikira abakenyezi banyu igihe bibungenze, mukabafasha mu dukorwa dutandukanye (utwongoshwa twa Severino: Ko mutwenga? None sivyo?). Ikintu nyamukuru kandi, mukongera mukabaherekeza mu gihe baba bagiye gupimisha imbanyi kwa muganga. Kuko ndazi y'uko ivyo ari ibintu bigirwa n'abantu bake cane. Muri mwebwe hari umuntu abigira?/ I invited you men only, you gentlemen only because the advice that I am giving you... advice that I have planned to give you concerns you only. The presence of women in general or the presence of your wives was not necessary. That advice concerns you only. Do you know what I want you to understand well before you leave this meeting? I would like to tell you that you have to support your wives when they are pregnant, and assist them in various tasks (Severino whispering: Why are you laughing? Is it not true?). Another important point also is that you should accompany them at the clinic for routine checks of their pregnancy. I know for sure that very few men do those things.*

From the scene cited above, the local chief is advising men to get rid of certain traditional notions of masculinity in order to accommodate new ideas with regard to their relations with their wives. Another observation from the chiefs' intervention is that change requires the involvement of various stakeholders.

By framing male characters like Severino in *Play8* and Majambere in *Play10* and female characters like Rozata in *Play5* and Helena in *Play10*, the narratives demonstrate that males and females can freely and equally perform masculinity and femininity across the binary divide. Majambere in *Play10* is presented as a man who can play both male and female gender roles to express solidarity to his wife. He is a serious man who seeks understanding in the family and helps his wife in roles traditionally known as feminine. He lives with his wife in peace, understanding, fulfilment, cooperation and true love. The same applies to the man Severino (in *Play8*) who cooperates well with his wife Makurata. These cases illustrate that masculinity and femininity depend on each other and they are not static. They are constructed within specific socio-cultural circumstances and change accordingly. Severino's (*Play8*) and Majambere's (*Play10*) performance of femininity that was ridiculed before becomes now normalized. Their performance is given the most attention through the speeches of the chiefs (respectively the local chief in *Play8* and the Chief of District in *Play10*). Using the voice of chiefs at these stages of the narratives is a framing strategy to give much power to the information given to the audience. Through re-enactment in the radio drama, specific gender traits are passed on as natural and acceptable while others are

challenged because “circumstances have changed”. From that perspective, one understands how patriarchal hegemony is deconstructed and replaced with pragmatic gender relations in gender performance in radio *Ninde* to create a new normality.

By using various male characters, the myths around the male personae are demystified and he is presented as a human being just like the girl and the woman. What happens to women can also happen to men. Through the couple Matayo and Karorina in *Play7* for instance, the traditional stereotype of linking infertility with females is challenged and it is now the man Matayo who is proved infertile. This leads to his emasculation or impotence according to theories of masculinity because he cannot sire children. Using the male character Gihushi and the female character Sabokwigura in *Play4* and the male character Rusimbi in *Play5*, untamed virility is disapproved in males the same way prostitution is disapproved in females, while virility was a symbol of masculinity in the past. Because of changes of circumstances, virility must be tamed now. Through characterisation of the man Gihushi and the woman Sabokwigura, promiscuity is bad for women as well as for men. The two characters end in jeopardy because of their promiscuous behaviour. In *Play5*, promiscuity makes Rusimbi lose his marriage and resume street life. He loses delicious meals from his wife and goes to survive on discarded food waste from the dumping ground as he used to in the past before he married Rozata.

In the various female and male characters, there is a setting of equal ethical standards to regulate the life of both men and women. This implies that there is both freedom and regulation. Bad things from tradition are rejected while good practices from tradition are copied or adapted to the present in addition to innovation of new ideas. Negative gender performance is disapproved for both males and females. The social implication of this is that men and women have equal rights and same social obligations.

Another interesting change reflected in the selected *Ninde* plays is related to property ownership. Women own property or have right to property, something that was exclusively for men in the past. This gives power to women to perform beyond the conventional gender boundaries. Rozata in *Play5*, for instance, is portrayed as a woman who can play both female and male gender roles during the absence of her husband who is punished because of his bad manners. Helena in *Play10* is characterized as a woman who can perform femininity and masculinity depending on the circumstances. Male and female characters are represented with free and equal rights in the performance of gender and this gives results to various and sometimes contradictory gender identities. This framing resonates with Butler who believes that gender is not a fixed, homogenous and innate construct but is rather fluid, relational, and contextual, changing and constantly being negotiated. Power and resistance go hand in hand in the ‘gender war’.

The sampled radio *Ninde* plays advocate for gender democratisation because they set the same standards for men’s and women’s performance of femininity and masculinity by redefining them for a common ground. In this project of democratising gender, *Ninde* corroborates Connell (2009, p.146) who proposes this:

[t]he real alternative to de-gendering, it seems to me, is a strategy of gender democracy. This strategy seeks to equalize gender orders, rather than shrink them

to nothing. Conceptually, this assumes that gender does not, in itself, imply inequality. The fact that there are in the world gender orders with markedly different levels of inequality is some evidence in support. That democratisation is a possible strategy for a more just society is indicated by the many social struggles that have actually changed gender relations towards equality.

According to the quotation above, to think about abolition of gender would be utopian. By 'undoing' gender, we are 'redoing' gender. The best strategy as suggested by Connell is therefore to equalize gender orders by elevating feminine and masculine attributes to the same standards. For the sustainability of the family unit, there must be 'wifely' and 'husbandly' traits, 'motherly' and 'fatherly' attributes no matter who performs them between 'he' and 'she'. Indeed, it is this democratisation that allows fluidity that manifests a more dynamic notion of masculinity (ies) and femininity (ies) in the narratives. This gender-switching is part of the framing of *Ninde* narratives.

The framing reflects a possibility of 'gender-switching' where each actor of the gender binary within heterosexual relationships slides between roles which are not biologically-sex-linked to insist on pragmaticity and flexibility for a healthy gender co-existence since differences will always be there. 'Gender-switching' is a concept developed by Connell (2005, pp.58-59) and applied in homosexuality but it is used in this paper in the context of heterosexuality. Surrounded by environment of numerous needs, there is gender-switching within the context of heterosexuality symbolised by Rozata in *Play5*, Jozerine in *Play6* or Severino in *Play8* or Majambere or Helena in *Play10*.

In *Play6* for instance, we see Jozerine performing masculinity under the circumstance of a party. On the day of celebration of her Diploma, Jozerine delivers a speech of appreciation before an audience which includes her father and mother. To recall the story, Jozerine's father had chased her away because she had chosen to continue her studies instead of getting into a forced marriage. Fortunately, she got a kind parent who took her to his home and who paid school fees for the remaining three years of training. During the speech, she first thanks this parent and then her father. Now the father is no longer hard as he used to be. It can be sensed in the denouement of the play how he has changed from an authoritative patriarch to a common man, how he takes the low position even before his daughter. Nyirigo, Jozerine's father humbles himself even before his daughter.

The framing of the analysed *Ninde* plays opens gender boundaries rather than dismantling them. Though men and women are equal in worth, they are quite different in identity and this necessarily influence the doing of gender. For the same role, a man has his masculine way of performing it while a woman has a feminine way of performing. For instance, the female character Helena in *Play10* slides from femininity to female masculinity and goes back to femininity while the male character Majambere switches from masculinity to male femininity and goes back to masculinity, and so on. In the relations of these men and women, when the woman such as Helena performs femininity, her husband Bihori performs masculinity. When Helena switches to masculinity, her husband Bihori resigns and becomes feminine. It is these differences that bind solidarity between the two characters especially in marriage.

Through characterisation, the males such as Nkinahoruri in *Play1*, Banzubaze in *Play3*, Gihushi in *Play4*, Rusimbi in *Play5*, Nyirigo and Papa Fiston in *Play6*, Matayo in *Play7*, Muhindo in *Play8* and Bihori in *Play10* are castigated for not fulfilling their culturally assigned roles as ‘men’ or for abusing their authority. While acknowledging that men and women are different in identity, women demand for gender equality in dignity and worthy in *Ninde* performance. Unlike the traditional gender ideology which delineated different positions and roles for males and females in society as reflected in proverbs (Nibafasha, 2014), a critical reading of the selected *Ninde* narratives reveals that Burundian gender imagination is nowadays attempting to take paradigm shift in direction toward flexibility in gender roles.

The denouement of *Play2* is the restoration of Mibare’s recognition and dignity thanks to the intervention of his brother-in-law. Selling his land on advice of his wife implies the wife’s idea was better and this diminishes his masculinity because his respect and recognition in the society first drastically wanes, particularly when his wife dies. His two daughters chase him away plotting to monopolize the family property. Their uncle or Mibare’s brother-in-law threatens to chase them also in order to teach them a lesson. They ask for forgiveness from their father and confess that it is someone who led them to make that mistake. The narrative reflects a new order that is not common in a society that is patrilocal and patrilineal.

The plays present various faces of masculinity and femininity. Manhood and womanhood are constantly shifting social constructions. There are symbols of caring men such as Severino in *Play8* and Majambere in *Play10*. There is also development in characters such as Nkinahoruri in *Play1* and Muhindo in *Play8*. The progressive change in Nkinahoruri’s and Muhindo’s character emphasizes that masculinity should be considered an adjustable and fluid concept, as opposed to the more static disposition of biology. The trait of masculinity that *Ninde* frames in Severino is more pragmatic. The pragmatism of the emerging ‘new man’ with egalitarian masculinity is hampered by prevailing ideologies such as traditionalism.

The sampled radio narratives attempt to demystify conventional/traditional conceptions of masculinity and to define a hegemonic masculinity which is not fixed and with a positive force. This affirms Connell’s view that “[i]t is quite conceivable that a certain hegemony could be constructed for masculinities that are less toxic, more cooperative and peaceable than the current editions” (cited in Shira, 2008, p.11). At the end, Muhindo emulates Severino and turns into a very loving and caring husband. The denouement of *Play8* portrays a completely changed Muhindo who surprises Severino because of the care he gives his wife. While recalling the main theme of the drama, Muhindo takes the opportunity to apologize for having abused Severino. He tells him: *Uze umbabarire. Harya kwari...kwar’ukutamenya. / Please forgive me! What I did was because of... because of ignorance. / Erega Severino burya, nasanze imbanyi ari iya twese. / You know what Severino? I finally discovered that the pregnancy is for both of us.*

A reading of the narratives reveals that they seem to carry out the message that irresponsible, stupid and senseless masculinity does not have place in building the contemporary family and nation. Only forms of gender that are compatible with equality between men and women are approved while those which do not are challenged. Both men and women may need feminine or masculine characteristics depending on the circumstance. Both females and males need a flexible and skilled mind which decides quickly what attitude or behaviour to adopt before

a given situation. The overall message of the narratives is that it must be womanly as well as manly to own property, to go to school, to make decisions, to raise children, to do the washing, to fetch for water and firewood, to cook, to clean, and many other necessary roles for human welfare; in short to take care of oneself in everyday life. In terms of relations of power within home, the power 'arrow' can sway from the man to the woman and vice-versa. A male body can perform femininity while a female body can perform masculinity depending on circumstances. That is where the idea of 'gender democratisation' in this paper comes from.

### Conclusion

This paper has discussed how the selected *Ninde* narratives frame a global issue in a local way. It has identified the overarching vision of the radio drama *Ninde* in terms of gender and power relations and the way the vision is actualized using the possibilities of the dramatic form. The study observes that the sampled narratives project a vision of flexible and dynamic gender relations and power to replace the rigid gender binary divide. Roles that do not require male and female genitals are differentiated but not segregated, that is, they are reversed or shared when necessity demands it.

Analysing strategies of framing has enabled us to understand the connection between masculinity and femininity and how they complement each other in the project of building a modern family and nation. It is through the coming together of self-actualized males and self-actualized females that sustainable development can be achieved. The framing of these narratives displays a significant departure from the more traditional models of male and female roles and identities. This shift is done intentionally to suit the didactic component of the plays in order to promote change in the society. From the analysis, one can also observe that there is a pattern between people's development of mentalities and the way gender issues are framed. The contemporary gender structure, socio-economic situation and the empowerment of women, in short, the postmodernism environment of dismantled social structures increasingly inspire a kind of tragic-comic framing in which masculine power is challenged while feminine power is asserted. In nutshell, it is seen that the proverb *Ivyari imagera vyarageruye* (Circumstances have changed) recaptures the denouement of the narratives that have been discussed in this paper. And this is a moral lesson that gender is a social construct and as such is not deterministic. It can be done, undone and redone. The idea that is encapsulated in the proverb is that one cannot use old paradigm to understand the present relationship because 'Circumstances have changed'. The characterisation of masculinity and femininity in the framing of the plays defies the common assumptions of determinists such as Sigmund Freud. All *Ninde* narratives that have been analysed, in one way or the other, seem to seek equity, equality and flexibility with regard to the undying question of gender.

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