Including Her Story in History:
A study of how truth commissions best can incorporate women

Elvira Melin
Autumn term, 2016
Supervisor: Emma Elfversson
Peace and Conflict C
Department of Peace and Conflict Research,
Uppsala University, Sweden
# Table of contents:

1. Introduction 1

2. Theory 2
   
   2.1 Previous research and research gap 2
   
   2.2 Theoretical framework 4
   
   2.3 Causal mechanism 5
   
   2.4 Definitions 6

3. Research design 7
   
   3.1 Method of analysis 7
   
   3.2 Operationalisation 8
   
   3.3 Case selection strategy and control variables 9
   
   3.4 Cases 10
   
   3.4.1 Similarities 11
   
   3.5 Material and source criticism 14

4. Results and analysis 16
   
   4.1 Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 17
   
   4.2 South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 18
   
   4.3 Ghana National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) 19
   
   4.4 Nigeria’s Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) 20
   
   4.5 Comparative analysis 21

5. Summary and conclusions 24

List of references 27

List of figures and tables:

- Figure 1: Causal chain 6
- Table 1: Control variables 14
- Table 2: Summary of findings 22
1. Introduction

After violent conflict or periods of brutal politicised violence, a country is left with the decision of how to achieve justice, without disturbing the peace. Different transitional justice mechanisms are often implemented in such situations, and refers to the ways in which these countries can “address large scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice systems will not be able to provide an adequate response” (ICTJ, 2017). One core approach of transitional justice is the truth-seeking process, to investigate human rights violations through non-judicial truth commissions. Truth commissions are often established to deal with a varied number of factors such as formally acknowledging past abuses, addressing the needs of the victims, countering impunity, advancing individual accountability, recommending reforms and promoting reconciliation, and reducing conflict over what has happened. The main objective that all truth commissions share, however, is fact-finding: to establish an accurate record of a country’s past (Hayner, 2011, p.20). This aim is what this study will be concerned with. To ensure that the story of what has happened is correct, it is important that victims and perpetrators of all types of crimes are able and willing to speak up.

Kusafuka writes that men and women often have different experiences of conflict or oppression, as women are more often targeted through their femininity or sexuality (2009, p.50), which often leads to that women might be more hesitant to speak of their own experiences of abuse (ibid.). Many truth commissions have been criticised for missing the variation and complexity of the violence, failing to see the violence from a ‘gendered perspective’ (Hayner, 2011, pp.85-86). Therefore, they have failed women, as Nesiah et al. put it. The crimes suffered by women are underreported, their voices unheard, their portrayal in commission reports is one-dimensional and their needs and goals are not prioritised when it comes to recommendations, reparations, reform and prosecutions (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.41). If women’s stories are not included, the truth commissions are likely to misinterpret the past (Mandela-Routledge, 1997, p.63) and, therefore, more effort on making women talk of their experiences and to include their stories in the reports is arguably needed.

Some researchers have suggested how this could be done, but mainly through vague suggestions or non empirically-tested approaches. Nesiah et al. write that there are three broad approaches of how truth commissions have attempted to incorporate gender in the organisational structure: to mainstream gender through all of the truth commission’s work, to appoint a special unit to deal with gender issues, or to combine the two (Nesiah et al., 2006, pp.3-5). This framework is helpful to categorise how different truth commissions have
attempted to incorporate gender aspects, but due to the lack of empirical evaluation of the approaches, it is difficult to say which of the approaches is the best, or which aspect of them is the most important. To assert what approach incorporates women best is both relevant in terms of moving the research on gender and truth commissions forward and for policy makers in the process of designing new truth commissions’ structures.

This study thus seeks to fill this research gap by testing which of these three approaches is the most important when it comes to making women participate in truth commission activities, i.e. giving statements and witness at hearings. I argue that to have a gender unit is the most important factor since it will assure that at least some focus is put on gender whereas if it is mainstreamed, the lack of specific focus on it may lead to it being forgotten. The following research question will therefore be tested:

*What truth commission approach for incorporating gender related issues is most successful at making more women participate in its activities?*

This question will be tested through a qualitative study comparing four truth commissions: the ones in Liberia, South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria. The following section will be devoted to theory; previous research will be reviewed and the theoretical framework will be presented. The section following that will present the research design including method and cases. The fourth section is dedicated to the findings and an analysis of them, and the final section will summarise the study and conclude the findings and their implication for the field of research and policy.

2. **Theory**

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on Nesiah et al.’s categorisation of what ways truth commissions can include gender aspects and women into their work. The causal mechanism is related to theory about the correlation between gender and ethnicity, which will be explained in detail further on. The first section will however be a literature review of previous literature on gender or women and truth commissions, and the presentation of an identified research gap.

2.1 **Previous research and research gap**

There is a limited amount of research concerning the topic of gender and truth commissions. Hayner has found that in many truth commissions few women choose to speak about their
experiences of sexual abuse. When this is the case, she suggests that the commissions need to include these abuses in their reports anyway, to the extent they are known, to assure that they are included in the history. This to ensure that educational and reparatory measures may follow (Hayner, 2011, p.87). Some other specific measures that could be taken are to ensure a balance of women and men among commissioners and staff, appoint a senior gender expert on staff, offer specific training for statement-takers to handle reports of sexual abuse, work closely with women’s organisations and so on (ibid., p.89-90).

Brounéus writes about how testifying in commissions might not be as ‘healing’ as it often is viewed to be (2008, p.55). She interviewed women who testified in the truth commission in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994, to investigate whether they found the experiences healing or not (ibid.). Her findings were that this was not the case but that the experience of testifying lead to psychological ill-health and re-traumatisation and that the women often faced security issues in their communities for testifying. This was often due to that their perpetrators and their families were in the audience (ibid., p.66). Therefore, she emphasises the importance of security: without security reconciliation processes are likely to either lead to increased violence, or the withholding of truth (ibid., p.72). Scanlon and Muddell write about transitional justice in Africa and also conclude that women’s experiences of testifying can be traumatising (2009). They argue that truth commissions need to work with gender to ensure women’s safety, physical and psychological well-being, dignity and privacy during the process (Scanlon and Muddell, 2009, p.13).

Kusafuka (2009) has analysed the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its attempt of being more inclusive of women by organising special hearings for women. She writes that it shows a greater need for gender-sensitive legislation in the establishment of a truth commission, as well as that the commission should aim to have a proactive relationship with the broad community of women’s activists. This will help to better understand the structural, ideological and systemic background of gender based abuses which the South African TRC failed to do (Kusafuka, 2009, p.65). She argues that in the South African commission, gender and gendered experiences were filtered through a narrow view due to the mandate. The commission’s treatment of gender had shortcomings due to constrains of time and resources, the flaws of a systematic proactive gender strategy and a lack of involvement of women’s groups. Due to this, she concludes, gender was never incorporated well enough in the TRC’s work, and the true history of the gendered past of South Africa has not been recorded (ibid.).
As previously mentioned, Nesiah et al. write that there are three broad approaches that truth commissions have taken to ensure that gender is incorporated in the process. The first is to use the idea of gender mainstreaming, that gender should be included through all operations of the commission, from recruitment and training to the staff. The issue with this approach is that even though it is well-intended, often the focus on gender disappears after a few stages and is not so present during the rest of the process (Nesiah et al., 2006, pp.3-4). The second approach is to place a specific unit to deal with a focus on gender. The positive aspect of this approach is that it leads to a focus on stories of sexual violence, and that a chapter in the report will be devoted to gender issues. Also, it usually includes special hearings for women which might make them more willing to speak about their own experiences because of their separatist design. However, Nesiah et al. argue that it fails in putting gender focus on the rest of the report or truth commission’s work. Therefore, they emphasise a third approach: to both have gender as a mainstreaming theme of the whole truth commission and have a special unit to deal with gender (ibid.). This categorisation is useful in the way that it systematically compares truth commissions’ mandates and how they have attempted to include gender aspects. The issue is the lack of empirical evidence supporting the claim that both the idea of mainstreaming gender and having a special unit for gender is important. There is also no research on whether one of the first two approaches work better than the other and finally, what ‘incorporating gender’ in a better way means.

To my knowledge there are no comparative studies systematically and empirically testing how and with what success different truth commissions have incorporated gender. Hence, there is a clear research gap in the literature that, if filled, could lead to a better understanding of how truth commissions best can incorporate gender. That kind of research would not only be useful in terms of moving the research forward, but also for policy workers.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study will build on the theoretical framework by Nesiah et al. and test the effects of the three approaches truth commissions have taken to incorporate gender into its work. It will compare different commissions in terms of what approach, if any, they have taken and see whether that has an effect on how many women participate in the commission’s activities. It is here argued that the most important aspect for a truth commission that strives to have a high participation of women, is to have a special unit to deal with gender. If a commission does not have a special gender unit, women might not be specifically targeted or encouraged to participate, and therefore might not. The independent variable (IV) will thus be what
approach(es), if any, the commission has taken to incorporate gender in its work. The dependent variable (DV) will be defined as participation of women in the truth commission’s activities. I argue that if the truth commission has a gender unit, the percentage of women in its activities will be higher than if it does not. The hypothesis will therefore be:

\[ H: \text{If a truth commission has a special unit to deal with gender, more women are likely to participate in its activities than if it does not.} \]

2.3 The causal mechanism

As stated above, the reasons for why a special unit for gender-related issues is likely to be more effective than a gender mainstreaming approach is that it is likely that more structured and systematic focus will be put on women and encouraging them to participate. Nesiah et al. write that if gender is mainstreamed, gender usually becomes invisible in its work and ends up in ad hoc approaches such as some training sessions, a reference to gender, or sexual abuse, in the report or some attention to it in its earlier appointments (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.4).

Why women are likely to need the special attention and encouragement to participate can be related to cultural aspects of gender roles. It was mentioned in the introduction that women might be hesitant to speak of their own abuse due to the fear of public humiliation and stigma that particularly come from experiences of sexual abuse (Kusafuka, 2009, p.57). Handrahan writes that this is often the case in conflicts with ethnical dimensions (2004, p.437). Some feminist scholars argue that ethnicity is, in part, created and maintained through gender identities. Therefore, men often target women sexually during war as a way of “expanding the ethnic territory by the male conqueror” (ibid.). If women have experienced sexual violence, they are therefore never viewed as brave for having survived it but rather disgraced for having ‘submitted’ to contamination by an enemy male (ibid., p.435). Moreover, this is not limited to ‘enemy males’, but also includes women who conduct sexual relations with ‘other’ men, such as men from the international community (ibid., p.438). All women in the contexts examined are not likely to have experienced sexual abuse by an ‘enemy male’ and in all societies it is not likely to be as taboo. However, if a society has poor gender equality and strong ethnical tensions, it is argued that coming forward and sharing their experiences of any kind of violations by the enemy will be difficult for women.

Since the main role of a gender unit is to focus on gender related issues and attempting to incorporate women, it is likely that it will seek to understand cultural and patriarachal contexts and to work with it. It is believed that more effort will be put on reaching out to women and to
making them more comfortable participating, for example through special hearings for only women or the possibility of giving statements to female statement-takers. These are aspects that are believed to be forgotten if gender is mainstreamed and just expected to be included everywhere without a strictly defined plan or focus group set for making it happen. The expected causal chain is therefore expected to look like this:

A commission has a special unit to focus on gender → More efforts are put into encouraging women to participating and structure hearings in a gender-sensitive way → More women participate

*Figure 1: Causal Chain*

If a country does not have issues of ethnical structures and low levels of gender equality, to have specific focus on women and thus a gender unit, is not likely to be as important. Women might in these societies not find it as difficult to participate as they are less likely to be humiliated for crimes committed against them including those of sexual nature. Therefore, this study will be of cases with these cultural aspects to see what can most effectively be done where women’s participation is likely to be an issue.

2.4 Definitions

In this section some of the concepts will be briefly explained in their meaning as well as what they are referring to.

Firstly, it is important to understand what a truth commission is. Most of the truth commissions in this study have different names, depending on their mandate (some include reconciliation for example). ‘Commission’ or ‘truth commission is usually used, as seeking the truth is the mandate that all of the commissions share. According to Perry and Sayndee, components that most often define a truth commission are that it is an official investigative body, non-judicial, temporary, with the aim of documenting a pattern of past human rights abuses. It is thus not a court of law and does not determine or punish individual crimes (2015, pp.xiv-xv).
Secondly, it is important to understand the meaning of ‘gender’ and that ‘a gender focus’ roughly means more focus on women in this case. A definition of gender will be used that is usually used in UN documents, that is that ‘Gender’ refers to the socially constructed roles of, and differences between men and women and the unequal power relations that come as a result of them. It does not mean that gender differences are a product of the biological sex differences, nor that the gender or sex of a person have to be the same (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.3). Gender thus entails both men and women but the focus is usually, and in this text, on the unequal power relations and the fact that women are not always regarded as equal to men. A gender focus thus refers to the differences between men and women, their experiences and capabilities should be in focus; which usually means to put more focus on women. When I talk about gender issues or women’s issues I therefore refer to issues related to gender inequalities or women being neglected or unequally treated for being women.

3. Research design

The study in this paper will be a qualitative across case analysis of four cases, the truth commissions in Liberia, Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria. These cases have been found using the most-similar method as explained by Gerring (2006). The study will be done using the method structured, focused comparison (SFC) as described by George and Bennett. This section will explain these mythological aspects in detail.

3.1 Method of analysis

When studying these four cases, the method structured, focused comparison (SFC) will be used. This method, according to George and Bennett, is used to make sure that the cases are compared to each other in a structured way, only focusing on the most important aspects for the study (2005, p.67). ‘Structured’ specifically means that the researcher should ask a set of standardised, general questions to each case, making sure they reflect the research objective and theoretical focus of the study. This is done so that the data of the cases is comparable. By comparing different cases to each other, George and Bennett argue, the research can contribute to a cumulative development of knowledge and theory on the phenomena it is studying. ‘Focused’ refers to that the questions should relate to a specific research objective and a theoretical focus appropriate for that objective. George and Bennett write that if case studies lack a clearly defined focus they are not likely to contribute much to theory development (ibid., pp.69-79). The questions that will be used in making this study will be presented in the following section.
3.2 Operationalisation

The operationalisation of the variables will be done using a set of standardised questions, as explained in the section above. The independent variable that is defined as ‘what approach(es), if any, the commission has taken to incorporate gender in its work’, will simply be operationalised in terms of what approaches it has taken: gender unit approach; mainstreaming gender approach; both approaches; none of the approaches. Since all truth commissions have different structures and mandates, a ‘gender unit’ might not mean the same thing in all commissions and might also go by another name. What I focus on here is if a special group or task-force is mandated by the commission to make sure gender-related issues are included in its work. The main difference from ‘mainstreaming gender’ approach is that in that approach gender is not given a specific focus or task force as it is expected to be incorporated everywhere. What measures and strategies were taken by the commissions to incorporate gender will also be analysed, to see whether the ones with a gender unit actually took more measures.

The dependent variable is defined as ‘participation of women in the truth commission’s activities’ and will be operationalised depending on two factors. The first one is, ‘how many percent of the statements came from women?’ and the second one is, ‘how many percent of the witnesses testifying were women?’ Most truth commissions start the truth-seeking process by calling for statements about abuses that occurred during the period to be investigated. Statement taking usually occur at offices of the commission, or by statement-takers that go into the field. After this is done, the statements are reviewed and specific individuals are then summoned to come forward and testify, to clarify some aspects or investigate some abuses in-depth or detect patterns. Usually around 10 % or fewer of the individuals who provided statements are summoned to hearings (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.17). To measure both how many of the statements that came from women and how many of the testifiers that were women is important to understand the inclusion of women in both of these activities. The statements provide the basis for the statistics and larger picture of the abuses occurred, whereas the individual testimonies can help better understand the abuses in-depth and the patterns of abuse. To have a high participation of women in both these activities is thus crucial to get a good picture of women’s experiences of abuse. The importance here is whether the commissions that had a gender unit had a higher participation of women than those who did not, including those that had a gender mainstreaming approach. I will therefore compare the results to each other and see whether the commissions with a gender unit had a
higher participation of women than the other ones, rather than trying to beforehand define what is high or low participation and what they are expected to have.

This operationalisation is designed to assure high validity and reliability. The independent variable is measured as it is defined, and there is no room for personal interpretations. The dependent variable is defined as ‘participation of women in the truth commission’s activities’ and measured in percentage (to the extent information is found) of women participating in the two main activities for the public to participate in, giving statements and testifying. There is therefore not likely to be any systematic or unsystematic errors of measurements and, thus, high validity and reliability (Teorell and Svensson, 2007, pp.55-57).

3.3 Case selection strategy and control variables

For choosing the cases, the most-similar method, as explained by Gerring, will be used. The perfect selection of cases for this method, would be cases that are similar on all aspects, except for the variables of interest (2007, p.131). This study is hypothesis-testing, meaning there is already an idea of a causal relationship. The importance is to find cases that vary on one independent variable, and are similar on all others, to isolate the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Since it is impossible to control for all possible explanations, this study will focus on a few particularly prominent (Gerring, 2007, pp.131-133). The first step is therefore to find cases that vary on the independent variable; if the commissions took approaches to incorporate gender issues, if so which one(s). The following step will be to find cases that are similar on other aspects that could have an effect on the outcome. It needs to be pointed out that this method is used as a guideline for choosing cases. Perfect selections of cases are not very common in the social sciences and therefore the importance here is if the cases are similar enough and avoid that they vary on aspects that are very likely to have an effect on the outcome in the DV.

The first important aspect for the cases is the one related to the theory, the culture in which the truth commission is operating. In the theory section it is argued that women might specifically be hesitant to speak about their experiences in fear of social stigmatisation that comes from patriarchal ethnic dimensions. I have chosen to look at cases with patriarchal structures and ethnic tensions, as that is where a gender unit might be most important. I will therefore look for cases with both similar level of gender equality (measured as scores on the gender development index) at the time the commission operated, as a measure for patriarchal structures, and ethinical tensions in the country or conflict / period of politicised violence passed.
These factors can also be seen as alternative explanations. If a country has high levels of gender equality and insignificant ethnic tensions, it might not be as taboo for women to speak of their experiences of violations. More women might thus participate only due to the social structures in a society. Therefore, gender equality and ethnic tensions are also ‘control variables’ in the sense that it could be an alternative explanation for the number of female participants in truth commissions’ activities.

Many scholars, among them Hayner, focus on the importance of having a balance of female and male commissioners and staff. Hayner writes that every person approaching a truth commission should be able to choose a female or male statement-taker (2011, pp.89-90). This is important to make women feel as comfortable as men participating in the commissions activities and thus ensure that women’s stories and issues are understood. Since I want to rule out this explanation as likely to effect the DV, I will look for cases as similar as possible in the regard of female staff.

The final alternative explanation that needs to be controlled for is involvement of women’s organisations. Many scholars have argued that truth commissions need to work closely with civil society, or women’s groups specifically, to affect its mandate regarding issues such as rule of law, democracy or gender (Alidu and Ame, 2013, p.30; Kusafuka, 2009; Hayner, 2011). Most of these scholars are concerned with how civil society organisations can work with the commission in the drafting of the mandate to make sure their concerns are included in the structure. What is of interest in this study is whether women’s organisations worked alongside the commission and with engaging the public to participate in its work. If they did so it is likely they specifically encouraged women to participate which then could have contributed to more women doing just that.

3.4 Cases

To best understand what gender approach seemed to be most effective, it was deemed necessary to have cases with all possible variations in the independent variable, that is, one case with both a gender mainstreaming approach and a gender unit, one with only a gender unit, one with a gender mainstreaming approach, and one with no gender approach at all. Four cases were found: Liberia, South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria.

In Liberia, a Truth and Reconciliation commission (TRC) was set up between 2006 and 2009 to investigate violations during its fourteen year long civil war (Hayner, 2011, p.27). The TRC both set up a gender unit and attempted to mainstream women, their experiences and roles in all core functions of the commission (TRC, 2009, p.11-12).
The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) operated between 1995 and 2002 to investigate violations that occurred during the apartheid regime (Hayner, 2011, p.27). It had a small ‘gender and the TRC working group’ that discussed gender issues and strategised on how to better include gender (Kusafuka, 2009, pp. 50-51). The South African TRC thus had a special unit for gender related issues but did not attempt to mainstream gender into all of its work.

The Ghana National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) operated between 2002 and 2004 to investigate the period between 1957 and 1993 which included four coups d’état and periods of military rule (Hayner, 2011, pp.56). It appointed the ‘gender mainstreaming’ idea, its director stated that gender was incorporated into all aspects of the commissions work, through its hiring practices. The commission did however not appoint a special unit or staff group to incorporate gender (Nesiah, 2006, p.3).

The Nigerian Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC) was set up to investigate the fifteen years of military rule between 1984 and 1999 and operated between 1999 and 2002 (Hayner, 2011, pp.249-250). It did not have any specific mandate to deal with gender issues, nor did it set up a special unit for dealing with gender (HRVICa, 2005, p.1).

Regarding the dependent variable, the expected outcome is that the truth commissions with a specific unit set to incorporate gender (Liberia and South Africa), will have a higher participation of women than the other two (Ghana and Nigeria). The following section will compare these four cases in terms of the scope conditions and control variables.

3.4.1 Similarities

The first aspects to look at are whether the countries where the commissions operated appear to have ethnical tensions and patriarchal structures, which will be compared separately from each other. Ethnic dimensions during the periods of violence and periods after seem to exist in all the countries investigated. In Liberia, 95% of the population consists of indigenous tribes, 2.5 % of Americo-Liberians (former American slaves), and 2.5 percent Congo people (former Caribbean slaves). The period investigated by the commission had some ethnic dimensions, the first conflict erupted as Samuel K. Doe overthrow the previous president William Tolbert in 1979. Tolbert belonged to the Americo-Liberian minority and by that revolution the Americo-Liberian dominance ended and left a period of instability (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.1-2).

In South Africa, the period of instability and violence occurred due to tensions between the government lead by the white minority, and black resistance groups, mainly the African
National Congress (ANC) due to the apartheid system that discriminated non-white people. Demographically, 75% of the population is black, 14% white, 9% coloured and 2% Indian. It remains a deeply divided nation and distribution of wealth to some extent still goes along racial divisions (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.15-16).

Nigeria is also a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country, with over 250 indigenous groups. Ethnic, religious and social tensions has lead to violence and upheavals and thus made it difficult to establish a unified democracy. In 1966, thousands of people from the ethnic group Igbo were murdered in massacres. After that conflict erupted and Nigeria has continuously been unstable due to ethnic violence (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.51-52).

The period investigated by the Ghanaian commission experienced four coups d’états, but also a lot of political upheavals and ethnic conflict, leading to a lot of violence and inter-ethnic wars (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.41-42). As has been shown, all the commissions investigated times that to some extent were affected by ethnic dimensions.

‘Patriarchal structures’ is a bit difficult to measure and therefore ‘gender equality’ in the four countries the commissions operate in will be measured instead. For this the Gender Development Index (GDI) will be used. The GDI is a gender comparison of the Human Development Index (HDI), which consists of measures of health, knowledge and living standards. It compares the gender gap by measuring the female HDI as a percentage of the male HDI (UNDP, 2016). The countries were looked at during the first year of their commission (or the closest data found) and the results were mainly similar with an exception of South Africa that scored a bit better.

In 2002 Ghana scored 0.544 on the Gender-related development index, giving them the ranking 108 of the 146 countries where data was found (UNDP, 2002, p.224). For Liberia in 2006 the gender-related development index could not be calculated due to lack of data on the distribution of income between men and women, the other two measurements included in the GDI are longevity, where Liberia scored 0.3043 in 2005, and literacy where the score was 0.3543 (UNDP, 2006, p.38). Looking at the GDI these numbers are very low, but it is difficult to say too much since it is not the full score. No data was found on Nigeria for 1999, but in 1998 Nigeria ranked 124 out of 143 on the GDI with a value of 0.425 (UNDP, 2000, p.154). The GDI was established in 1995 and therefore there is no data that year, but in 1996 South Africa was ranked 74 out of 137 on the GDI, making it a ‘medium human development’ country (UNDP, 1996, p.33). Even though South Africa is a bit ahead of the others when it comes to the GDI which could say it is a bit more gender equal, the score is still not very high. This could imply that South Africa also has patriarchal or unequal structures just maybe
less than the other countries. Thus, these cases are both applicable to the theory of this paper as well as that gender equality is not likely to be a main factor contributing to women participating in the commissions’ activities.

As the percentage of female staff by some scholars is seen as a possible explanation to the number of female participants, the cases studied should be as similar as possible in this regard. Here the number of female commissioners have been checked for. In Liberia, 4/9 commissioners were women (Valji, 2012, p.10), in South Africa 7/17 (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.10), in Ghana 3/9 (Valji, 2012, p.10) and in Nigeria, 2/8 (USIP, 2016). Looking at the percentage, the variation goes 44%, 41%, 33% and 25%. There is a difference in the percentage, and Liberia and South Africa have more female commissioners than the later two, which could imply that the number of female commissioners might explain the outcome in the number of women participating. However, if Liberia’s 4/9 women is compared to Ghana’s 3/9, there is only one woman more in the case of Liberia which is arguably not likely to cause that much of a change. In conclusion, all of the four commissions had female commissioners, but in all of the cases (including South Africa and Liberia), there were less than 50% women.

The final alternative explanation to control for is whether women’s organisations worked with the population trying to engage women to participate in its activities. It was found that in Liberia, women’s organisations did cooperate with the gender committee and in organising activities for the population, specifically directed at reaching out to women. Some of these activities were town hall meetings, workshops and working with traditional women leaders and male partners to encourage women to participate in the TRC (TRC, 2009, p.12). In the other cases there were less clear information on women’s organisations’ involvement with the public. In South Africa, women’s organisations did work with the TRC in trying to make its legislation more gender inclusive, but from what has been found, not with the public attempting to engage them to participate (Kusafuka, 2009, pp.49-50). In Ghana, there was a large civil society coalition engaged in the transition process and NRC’s work, however, no identifiable women’s group was among them representing women’s interests (Alidu and Ame, 2013, p.28). In Nigeria, some civil society groups did consult the commission (Yusuf, 2007, p.283), however, none of the ones that were identified were women’s groups (HRVICb, 2005, 1, p.55) (HRVICc, 2005, pp. 332-335). Since in the case of the Liberian TRC active women’s groups was found to engage with the public, but not in the other cases, this variable has not been successfully held constant and in the analysis special attention should be put on this to see what the effect of this might have had on the participation of women in the Liberian TRC.
Below in Table 1 there is a summary of the results of the independent variable and control variables and the estimated outcome of the dependent variable.

**Table 1: Control variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRC of Liberia</th>
<th>South Africa TRC</th>
<th>Ghana NRC</th>
<th>Nigeria HRVIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV: Approach to incorporate gender</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Gender unit</td>
<td>Mainstreaming Gender</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV: Women’s participation</td>
<td>‘Higher’ (expected)</td>
<td>‘Higher’ (expected)</td>
<td>‘Lower’ (expected)</td>
<td>‘Lower’ (expected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic dimensions of period investigated</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality, ranking on GDI, in country</td>
<td>Low value</td>
<td>Medium ranking</td>
<td>Medium ranking</td>
<td>Low ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female commissioners</td>
<td>44% (4/9)</td>
<td>41,1% (7/17)</td>
<td>33% (3/9)</td>
<td>25% (2/8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s groups engaging with the public</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5 Material and source criticism

The material that will be used in this study will consist of first hand sources such as official reports and documents published by the truth commissions of analysis as well as secondary sources such as complementary reports and analyses by researchers or organisations in the field.

Relying on the official reports conducted by the commissions could have both positive and negative implications. The first and most obvious issue is that of bias. Höglund and Öberg provide two questions that can be asked to a source in attempting to see whether it might be biased, ‘does the source have incentives to misrepresent the information provided?’ and ‘is it likely that certain types of information are exaggerated or left out?’ (2011, p.188). To both of these questions the answer could be yes. Since the Liberian truth commission claims it has done a lot to incorporate women and their stories in its work, it may have incentives to exaggerate both what it has done and the success of it. The same could be assumed for the other commissions, that they might want to appear better before the international community and civil society. The percentages of women who testified or gave statements are however not likely to be wrongly reported; it is rather the argumentation around it that could be angled. This is why the reports are still viewed as reliable and useful.
material to measure the variables. The official reports are, on the other hand, believed to be proximate. That is, according to Höglund and Öberg, the proximity between the source and the fact, in terms of time, space and agency (ibid., pp.188-189). Since the official reports are written directly after, or during, the working time of a truth commission, it is viewed as being close in time. It is also close in space and agency as the reports are usually written in close collaboration with, or by, workers of the commission. Regarding the dependence, the reports are primary sources of the information they provide and therefore not dependent on other sources. This is good according to Höglund and Öberg, as sources usually become more selected and corrupted the more they travel to secondary, tertiary sources etc. (ibid).

Complementary to the reports published by the commissions, this study will rely on secondary sources published by other organisations and researchers. The report published by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) on Gender and transitional justice, and the report published by UN Women on the same topic. They are published by respected and well-known organisations and they are not believed to have incentives to provide false data. They are both written with the aim to better understand how transitional justice processes can incorporate women and their experiences and are therefore believed to want to report how this has been done or not done, in a neutral and analytical way. These two reports are however not believed to be as proximate as the official reports, being both further away in time, but specifically in space and agency. They are also more dependent than the official reports, probably to some extent based on them. They are however seen as complementary as they are regarded as less biased than the official reports and therefore might be more nuanced.

Finally, this study also uses academic articles, beginning with the one by Kusafuka (2009) about the TRC in South Africa. This source could both be biased, aiming to criticise the TRC for how it incorporated women in its process, and is definitely dependent on primary sources. It is, however believed to be proximate, not in terms of being near to the TRC process and report writing, but rather that the author seems to be in close proximity to the civil society and women’s organisation’s that were working with the TRC at the time of its work. This is believed to provide a new interesting perspective, as well as the aim of focusing solely on the aspects of gender in the TRC’s work. Another article written by Yusuf (2007) is used, which analyses the Nigerian HRVIC. It is expected to have the same qualities as Kusafuka’s article, possibly being biased and dependent, but proximate.
4. Results and Analysis

This section will entail the results of the independent and dependent variables of the four cases and a comparative analysis of how the results relate to the hypothesis. But first, I will look at the similarities of the four cases.

As presented in the case selection part, the countries in which the commissions operate all have aspects of ethnical tensions and patriarchal structures, making them valid and interesting cases to compare. The periods investigated by the commissions’ very in come regards, but have some similar aspects. In South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, the periods investigated were all authoritarian regimes, whereas in Liberia there was a civil war. However, in all these cases, the struggles and brutalities were due to conflict over government. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) rebelled against the government and the apartheid system, which lead to instability, deaths and many types of human rights abuses. Ghana and Nigeria both saw brutal military regimes and a numbers of coups d’état, also leading to large number of deaths and abuses. The fourteen years covered by the Liberian TRC included two civil wars over government and over 250,000 deaths as well as other abuses. Thus, even if the periods investigated were quite different, they all concerned conflict over government and lead to unstable societies.

Furthermore, the four countries the commissions operate in have, to some extent at least, similar histories. They are all situated in Africa and have had histories of colonial rule or similar. Nigeria was a British colony until 1960, Ghana also became independent from the British, but in 1957. South Africa was also a British colony that became independent in 1931, but the power remained among the white minority until the 90’s. Liberia is quite unique as it was never colonised by the Europeans. It was established in 1847 by former slaves from the US and Caribbean, with ancestry from Liberia and around. Liberia is though by some viewed as a colony of the US, since the minority of former slaves ruled the country without including the population that lived there when they arrived (Perry and Sayndee, 2015).

To conclude, in some regards, these four cases are different, but as pointed out by Gerring, perfect selections of cases are not very common in the social sciences and therefore the importance here is if these cases are similar enough and to avoid differences that could have an affect on the dependent variable. Their similar histories of elite rule, their periods of brutal violence over governance and their societal structures with ethnic tensions and patriarchal structures make these four countries’ commissions valid cases to compare.
4.1 Liberia’s Truth and reconciliation commission (TRC)

The Liberian TRC operated between 2006 and 2009 to “provide a forum that would address issues of impunity as well as an opportunity for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences” from the fourteen years of civil war (Hayner, 2011, p.66). The republic of Liberia was established in 1947 by Americo-Liberians and Congos that were former slaves in the Americas. They ruled until 1980, when a coup took them out of power. After that a period of instability and two civil wars followed, in which at last 250,000 people died. The first war was between the government and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) lead by Charles Taylor, which ended with torture and death of the president Doe and the election of Taylor as president in 1997. The peace was short-lived and two new militias started to fight the new government, Liberians united for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). In 2003, the leaders of these organisations, Taylor and representatives from civil society, including women’s organisations, met for peace talks in Accra, Ghana. The decision to establish the commission was included in the peace agreement that was an outcome of the negotiations that lasted for 76 days (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.1-3). The government, lead by newly elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf supported the commission financially, by providing a large part of the 7.5-million-dollar budget (Hayner, 2011, p.67). Now the results of the variables will be presented.

IV: Did the commission take any approach to deal with gender-related issues?

As already mentioned in the case-selection section, the Liberian TRC had both a mainstreaming gender approach and a gender unit approach. Women, their experiences and roles were to be mainstreamed in all the functions of the TRC. A gender unit was also set up to put specific focus on women, it organised special hearings for women (TRC, 2009, pp.11-12). Besides special hearings, the gender committee organised, through cooperation with women’s organisations, workshops to encourage women to participate, town hall meetings, a conference on women in the TRC, as well as follow up services such as psychological trauma counselling (TRC, 2009, p.12).

DV: How many percent of the statements came from women, and how many percent of the witnesses in the hearings were women?

Volume three in the Liberian TRC was devoted to women and the conflict, and data on women’s participation in the TRC activities was therefore easy to find. It was found that 47%
out of the 22,000 coded statements came from women, meaning about 9400 individuals. There were less exact numbers about how many women testified, out of the over 500 testifiers, over 200 were women, which gives a percentage of around 40 (TRC, 2009, pp. iv,14).

4.2 South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The South African TRC operated between 1995 and 2002 to investigate massacres, killings, torture, imprisonment of activists and severe discrimination against non-white people that occurred during the 40 years of apartheid including around 30 years of armed resistance against it (Hayner, 2011, p.27). Apartheid was implemented by the National Party of South Africa in 1948 and dictated where a person could live, work and to what degree of political involvement they could enjoy depending on what ‘race’ the person belonged to. Halfway through the apartheid regime, the African National Congress (ANC) led my Nelson Mandela, was created and become the most prominent resistance group, and in the following decades struggle and more violence occurred (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, p.16). The apartheid system fell in the early 90’s and in 1994 Mandela was elected president of the new government which in mid-1995 appointed the Truth and Reconciliation commission. The commission was the largest existing at its time, with a staff of three hundred and a budget of 18 million dollars a year during its first two years (Hayner, 2011, pp. 27-28). The size and budget of the South African TRC thus exceed that of the other three commissions analysed in this paper.

*Did the commission take any approach to deal with gender-related issues?*

As mentioned earlier, the South African TRC also had a gender unit in the shape of a small ‘gender and the TRC working group’ that discussed gender-related issues and strategised on how to better include them in the TRC’s work. Some of the measures it took was to create gender sensitive statement-taking protocols, conduct research on gender and devote one chapter in the final report on gender (Kusafuka, 2009, pp. 50-51). It also held special hearings for women where they could testify in the absence of men if they wanted (TRCa, 1998. P.285).

*How many percent of the statements came from women and how many percent of the witnesses in the hearings were women?*

In the South African TRC, 55.3 percent of the statements came from women. That is a total of 10,805 out of 19,524 were gender was coded (TRCb, 1998, pp.168-169). Regarding how
many women that testified, no exact numbers have been found. Out of the 2000 people that appeared in the hearings (Hayner, 2011, p. 29) the report stated that “more women came to the commission than men” (TRCb, 1998 p.168). Thus, the exact percentage of female testifiers is unknown, but is >50%. The largest group who testified were black women (ibid).

4.3 Ghana National Reconciliation Commission (NRC)

After Ghana reached independence in 1957 it went through four military coups in the following 35 years, causing significant human rights violations and periods of military rule. Two of the coups, and very abusive regimes, were caused by Jerry Rawlings. He was in power until 2000 after trying to gradually move towards democracy, and creating a new constitution in 1992 which included a broad amnesty for past crimes. In 2000 a new government was elected under the leadership of John Kufuor. The new government established the NRC to address the legacy of human right abuses. The NRC operated between 2002-2004 with the broad mandate to investigate violations from the period 1957 to 1993. It held public hearings that also were aired on television, with statements from mainly victims but also perpetrators. Former leader Rawlings testified but was asked very few and narrow questions by the commissioners. The Budget was first 5 million US Dollars but was later reduced to 3 million (Hayner, 2011, pp. 56).

IV: Did the commission take any approach to deal with gender-related issues?

The NRC did appoint the gender mainstreaming approach. Its executive secretary Dr. Ken Attafuah stated that gender was incorporated into all aspects of the commissions work through its hiring practices. Special training for dealing with gender related issues was also organised for the staff. The commission did however not appoint a special unit or staff group to incorporate gender, nor did it hold special hearings for women (Nesiah, 2006, pp. 3,12).

DV: How many percent of the statements came from women and how many percent of the witnesses in the hearings were women?

In total, 4240 statements were collected by the NRC, out of these, 3114 were coded (NRC, 2004, p.157). Out of these, 20% of statements came from women (Valji, 2012, p.11).

No data on the percentage of testifiers that were women has however been found. In total there were 1866 people testifying, where only 79 of them were perpetrators (Hayner, 2011. P. 56). What can be said is that the percentage of women among the witnesses is not likely to be
very high considering the low percentage among the statements. However, since this is not certain I will not speculate more on this.

4.4 Nigeria Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC)

The Nigerian commission operated between 1999 and 2002 with the mandate to establish the causes, nature and extent of gross violations of human rights that occurred during the time from 1984 to 1999 (Hayner, 2011, pp.249). Nigeria became independent in 1960 and since then experienced civil war, two military coups and 30 years of military rule under seven different military regimes. The HRVIC concluded that the period investigated included abuses of human dignity, human rights, and basic freedoms. The military regime, lead by General Sani Abacha from 1993, established the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 1996, which many was against since the military regime under his rule had been brutal. In 1998 Abacha died unexpectedly and in 1999 Nigeria returned to democratic rule. Olusegun Obasanjo was elected president in 1999 and set up a new commission (HRVIC) to investigate the violations that occurred during the fifteen years of military rule. It was criticised for not including the years before that period during which Obasanjo had been the military head of state. The commissioners were appointed by the president, including the famous Chukwudifu Oputa from which the commission often have been called the Oputa panel (Perry and Sayndee, 2015, pp.51-55). The panel received large support from the public and the hearings were closely watched both live and broadcasted on television. The panel’s work was seen as successful even though it had a very small budget of only 450,000 US dollars (Hayner, 2011, pp.249-250).

IV: Did the commission take any approach to deal with gender-related issues?

The Oputa panel did not have any specific mandate to deal with gender issues, neither through a special unit nor a mainstreaming approach. The only consideration it took to gender related issues was, as explained earlier, when conducting research to put some focus on and document women’s right violations to understand the gender dimensions of the conflict (HRVICa, 2005, p.1). Although no structural measures were taken to ensure gender sensitivity, in the Port Harcourt hearings for example, women were allowed to give testimony with their faces covered (Nesiah et al., 2006, p.30), thus some ad hoc approaches were taken.
**DV: How many percent of the statements came from women and how many percent of the witnesses in the hearings were women?**

In the official report of the HRVIC and the other sources found on the commission, no numbers were found on the gender division of the statements provided or the testifiers. To get some idea of the gender division, I have manually coded the witness list published by the commission (HRVICd, 2005). I marked the names in the list as male or female, and googled the names which I did not know the gender of. Websites used were for example onlinenigeria.com for Nigerian names, and behindthenames.com for all names. Many names could not be identified, were unisex or the first names were not written out, thus the analysis had a large fallout. Many witnesses could be identified through their titles. In some cases, Mr. or Mrs., but it was also found that if a woman had another title, such as Dr., it was written (Mrs) in brackets and therefore the restoring titles were assumed to be hold by males. Of the 340 witnesses, 31 (9%) witnesses’ gender remains unidentified, 177 (52%) were identified as male, 56 (16%) were identified as females and 60 (18%) are believed to be male due to their titles. These results imply that very few women compared to men testified. The minimum would be 16% and the maximum (if all the unidentified witnesses were women) would be 25%. The uncertainty of these numbers is acknowledged, however, it can be understood that the number of male witnesses is much higher than that of female. Also, the lack of data on the gender division also implies that the commission likely had a shortage of interest for it.

Regarding the around 10,000 statements provided to the commission, there is no way of knowing how high percentage that were women. It is however viewed likely that the majority of statements (and probably a large majority) came from men, looking at the low percentage of female testifiers.

**4.5 Comparative analysis**

The main findings are presented below in Table 2 and go in line with both the hypothesis and the theory. The hypothesis was that truth commissions with a special unit to deal with gender would have higher participation of women than the ones who does not. Liberia and South Africa both had a special unit to deal with gender, and had higher participation of women than Ghana and Nigeria who did not. In Liberia, 47% of the statements came from women and about 40% of the witnesses were women. In South Africa, 55.3 percent of the statements came from women and about 40% of the witnesses were women. In South Africa, 55.3 percent of the statements came from women and an uncertain amount, but over 50%, of the testifiers were women. In both Ghana and Nigeria, data was only found on one of the indicators each, meaning that these results are not as comprehensive as in the other two cases. If we compare Ghana’s 20
percent of statements from women, this is substantially less that the numbers 47% and 55.3% of Liberia and South Africa. That around 17-25% of the testifiers in Nigeria were women, is also much less than the 40% in Liberia and over 50% in South Africa. These results are thus in line with the hypothesis.

*Table 2: Summary of results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV: Approach to incorporate gender</th>
<th>TRC of Liberia</th>
<th>South Africa TRC</th>
<th>Ghana NRC</th>
<th>Nigeria HRVIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DV: Percentage of statements from women</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>55.3 %</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV: Percentage of female testifiers</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>&gt;50%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16-25 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, to have a gender mainstreaming approach was not found to be very important. The South African commission had a higher participation of women than Liberia, who had a gender mainstreaming approach. However, due to lack of data on the Ghanaian and Nigerian commissions we can not see whether there were more women participating in Ghana than Nigeria. Therefore, even though it has not been proven here, it is possible that a gender mainstreaming approach is better than to have no approach at all.

Since less data and material was found in the cases of Ghana and Nigeria, these results are less certain. But since the percentages of women testifying and sending in statements in both Liberia and South Africa were quite similar, they are not likely to vary much in the cases of Ghana and Nigeria. Thus, since the percentage of women testifying in Nigeria was not very high, it is less likely that a high percentage of the statements came from women. The same could go for Ghana, if only 20% of the statements came from women, the percentage of female testifiers is not likely to be very high. The low number of testifiers can however more directly be associated with a lack of effort from the commission to include women. The testifiers were summoned from the statements and thus, even though few women provided statements, the commission could still have summon more. Thus, even though the number of statements from women in Ghana is low, the commission could have invited an equal number of women to men. This is, however, not very likely due to the lack of information on women.
and women’s testimonies in the commission’s report. If Ghana would have had a high level of female testifiers it is likely that the commission would have been proud of it and shared these results. The lack of data is a pity and lowers the certainty of the results; however, it is not surprising and strengthens the argument that the two commissions (in Ghana and Nigeria) did not successfully include gender and women in their work.

Regarding the causal mechanism, that commissions with a specific unit to deal with gender-related issues would put more effort into encouraging women to participate, this also appears to have been the case. The Liberian and South African commissions both organised special hearings for women as well as took other measures including workshops encouraging women to participate, town hall meetings, as well as follow up services including trauma counselling (Liberia) and gender sensitive statement-taking protocols (South Africa). In Ghana and Nigeria less measures were taken. In Ghana, the only concrete thing found was that a special training was conducted for making the staff more gender-sensitive. In Nigeria, ad hoc approaches were taken in some parts. In the Port Harcourt hearings for example, women were allowed to give testimony with their faces covered.

From this we can conclude that the two commissions with a special gender unit put more effort into encouraging women to come forward and tell their stories, supporting the causal mechanism and theory of the paper.

Moreover, we should look at the aspect of ‘women’s groups engagement with the public’, which was not successfully controlled for in the case selection. It was found that in Liberia women’s groups engaged with the public attempting to encourage them to participate, which was not found in any of the other cases. There were however not more women participating in Liberia than all the other cases (South Africa had the highest percentage), and we can therefore not trace the affect of this. It is still possible that it had some affect on the women participating in Liberia, or that if this factor had existed in other countries, more women had participated there. Thus, ‘women’s groups engagement with the public’ is neither seen as an important explaining factor nor can it be fully disregarded.

And finally, it should be noted that South Africa was the country with the highest percentage of women, both among the testifiers and the statement providers, as well as the county that had the best ranking on the GDI at the time of its commission. This could imply that gender equality had an effect on women’s willingness to participate. However, it is not likely to have that large affect since Liberia had a very poor score of the GDI and Ghana had the next best ranking, which does not follow the turnouts of the DV.
5. Summary and conclusions

This paper has attempted to test which approaches to incorporate women in truth commissions that have worked the best, by answering the following research question: what truth commission approach for incorporating gender related issues is most successful at making more women participate in its activities? Which approaches lead to more women participating in the truth commission activities has been studied. The hypothesis was that if a truth commission has a special unit to deal with gender, more women are likely to participate in its activities than if it does not. The theory was that if a truth commission would have a special unit to deal with gender, more efforts would be put into encouraging women to participate and structure hearings in a gender-sensitive way. The need for this is regarded to be particularly important in cultures with strong ethnic and patriarchal structures where coming forward is extra difficult for women. Four commissions with these cultural aspects were analysed.

The findings were in line with the hypothesis and it appears as though the commissions with gender units had a higher participation of women. It was also found that these commissions took more measures to incorporate women, supporting the theory. Additionally, it was found that having a gender mainstreaming approach was not as important as having a gender unit. Liberia had both approaches but less women participating than South Africa, which only had a gender unit. Since not enough information was found on the commissions in Ghana and Nigeria, they cannot be properly compared and it is therefore uncertain whether having a gender mainstreaming idea might be better than no approach at all.

One weakness of this study is, which has been mentioned several times, the lack of material. Since this is a bachelor thesis, both time, space and geographical constrains have made it impossible to collect first-hand material or conduct interviews with people connected to the commissions’ work. I have had to rely on whatever data exists and the results are based on what data has been found. If more data and information had existed on the topic, it is likely this study would have given more exact and detailed results. Furthermore, even though the hypothesis received support from the study of these four cases, it is not sure that this will be true for all truth commissions. The four commissions compared operated in countries very similar to each other, but are not necessarily representative for all countries where commissions have or will operate. For commissions in other parts of the world other cultural or societal aspects might be crucial that were not acknowledged in this study. The generalisation possibilities of these findings are therefore quite limited.
Even though the results are convincing, there are some alternative explanations that need to be considered. It was brought up in the previous research section that Hayner argued gender balance of staff is important for how successfully a commission can include women. It was found that among the commissioners there was no substantial difference in the gender balance between the different commissions. However, due to time and poor information, I did not look at the gender balance among the regular staff, the statement-takers, researchers and other staff working for the commission. This could arguably also have an effect on the number of women participating in the activities, and could therefore be an alternative explanation. Also, even though neither the gender mainstreaming approach nor ‘women’s groups engagement with the public’ were factors that had an effect on the results, it is still possible that they affected women’s participation on lower scales. Gender equality, specifically the countries ranking on the GDI, was also found to possibly have an effect on women’s participation, at least in the South African case.

However, even though factors such as gender equality might have affected the participation of women, they are not likely to be as crucial as the gender unit approach. There was an observable difference between the commissions with a gender unit and the ones without, which was not found with the other factors. South Africa had the best ranking on the GDI and highest participation of women, but Ghana had the second highest ranking (also a ‘medium development ranking’) and was far behind when it comes to participation of women. Therefore, even though gender equality may have some effect on women’s participation in truth commission activities, it is not likely to be as important as having a gender unit is.

For policy makers, these results are quite straightforward; to better include women and their stories in their work, truth commissions should appoint a special unit to deal with gender-related issues. A key measure to take appears to be the special hearings for women, but other strategies such as gender-sensitive training and statement protocols also appear to be successful.

What was lacking in this study was more in-depth focus on exactly how it was for the women to participate in the activities and how much they talked about their own experiences. This study has attempted to answer how to best make women participate, and it is suggested that future research should continue by researching how to make women share more of their own experiences. Both Scanlon and Muddell, and Brounéus found that testifying could be traumatic and leading to psychological ill-health for women – future research needs to look into how this could be avoided. It was also mentioned in several texts that even if women did participate, they often shared stories and experiences of male relatives or others: pointing to
another gap in the research, how to best make women talk about themselves. These gaps in the research cannot be emphasised enough. This study has shown the importance of incorporating approaches to include women into truth commissions. If women’s stories of human rights abuses are not included or fully understood, important societal structures such as violence against women and other patterns of abuse are likely to be missing from history. Thus, we cannot ignore the importance of including her story, in history.
List of references:


*Word count: 11,745*