A Lost Generation?  Kony, Conflict, and the Cultural Impacts in Northern Uganda


by


David W. Westfall


M.A., Kansas State University, 2009


An Abstract of a Dissertation


Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree


Doctor of Philosophy


Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
College of Arts and Sciences


Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas


2017

# Abstract

For over two decades the people of northern Uganda endured horrific atrocities during Africa's forgotten war in the form of attacks and child abductions by the Lord's Resistance Army, animal rustling by neighboring ethnic groups, and internal displacement of an unimaginable 90 percent of the northern parts of the country.  With the majority of internally displaced persons spending over a decade in IDP camps, an entire generation of Acholi was socialized and acculturated in a non-traditional environment.  A decade after the last LRA attack, I ask, what are the cultural impacts of the conflict and how has the culture recovered from the trauma.  Using ethnographic analysis, this dissertation is rooted in over 150 interviews.  While it has been presented to the world at large that Joseph Kony's LRA is the one of the biggest problems facing the region, I found it is not the case.  Interviewees discussed serious inadequacies in education, land conflict, culture loss, climate change, drought, famine, a perceived generational divide, and a strong distrust of the Ugandan government.  Additionally this research examines the case of Uganda through the lens of, and attempts to build upon, Jeffrey Alexander's cultural trauma process.  I argue the increasing reach and instantaneous nature of social media can interact with, alter, and prolong the trauma process.  The externalization of defining a problem and solutions for that problem while the trauma process is occurring, or shortly after the trauma has subsided, can lead to retraumatization.

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For over two decades the people of northern Uganda endured horrific atrocities during Africa's forgotten war in the form of attacks and child abductions by the Lord's Resistance Army, animal rustling by neighboring ethnic groups, and internal displacement of an unimaginable 90 percent of the northern parts of the country. With the majority of internally displaced persons spending over a decade in IDP camps, an entire generation of Acholi was socialized and acculturated in a non-traditional environment. A decade after the last LRA attack, I ask, what are the cultural impacts of the conflict and how has the culture recovered from the trauma. Using ethnographic analysis, this dissertation is rooted in over 150 interviews. While it has been presented to the world at large that Joseph Kony's LRA is the one of the biggest problems facing the region, I found it is not the case. Interviewees discussed serious inadequacies in education, land conflict, culture loss, climate change, drought, famine, a perceived generational divide, and a strong distrust of the Ugandan government. Additionally this research examines the case of Uganda through the lens of, and attempts to build upon, Jeffrey Alexander's cultural trauma process. I argue the increasing reach and instantaneous nature of social media can interact with, alter, and prolong the trauma process. The externalization of defining a problem and solutions for that problem while the trauma process is occurring, or shortly after the trauma has subsided, can lead to retraumatization.

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# Acknowledgements

A very special thank you is in order for the amazing people who helped me every step of the way. From my dissertation chair and committee, who put up with me throughout the lengthy process, to everyone who helped on the ground in Uganda, this work could not have been done without you. It has been a long, challenging, and scenic road. I am forever grateful for all of time, effort, and patience.

# Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the amazing people of northern Uganda. The human spirit is an amazing thing. Apwoyo matek!

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

As the sun was setting, I noticed a cross alongside the red dirt road. I did not think anything about it; after all, I see roadside crosses all the time in the United States. Additionally, I had the bigger concern of not becoming one of those crosses. I was on the back of a boda boda (motorcycle taxi) finishing the final 30 km of travel from Kampala to Kitgum. On my back I had a 40-pound backpack, filled with enough clothes and supplies for several weeks of skipping from remote village to remote village in northern Uganda. In front of me sat my friend and translator, Charles. In front of him, our overzealous boda driver, who obviously knew the red dirt roads like the back of his hand and drove like they were pristine, concrete superhighways. Although it had not rained for days, the rainy season had taken its toll on the roads. Through the bumps, dust, and limited dusk light, I notice another roadside cross. As I held on as tightly as I could, trying to scan as far ahead as possible to allow myself time to prepare for the upcoming washouts and infamous Ugandan speed humps, I begin to think to myself, "This is how it is going to end for me…a dirt road, thousands of miles from my family." As we pass another roadside cross, Charles turns to me and tells me a name. I turn my attention away from the road long enough to speak into his ear, "there are quite a few accidents on this road." Charles turned to me and said, "those are not for accidents, they are memorials for people who were killed during LRA attacks." I have been to Uganda many times, witnessed the impacts of over 20 years of conflict, and visited with countless Ugandans, but in that moment the entirety of the situation became real for the first time. The final 30 kms were a blur of dust, passing lights, and introspection. How did I find myself here?

In the United States, crosses are found alongside the road when there is an accident and someone loses their life. Often, the families and friends, in remembrance of those who were lost, place the crosses. In Uganda, I assumed the 6 feet tall crosses were placed in similar fashion, as a cultural practice. What I learned was it is often missionaries, not families and friends, that place the crosses in remembrance. And, the reasons for their placements are not accidents, but instead larger atrocities. Traditionally, the Acholi have practices for remembrance. Traditionally, remembrance is paid only to the chiefs and not "common people" (as my friends told me). Traditionally when a chief passes, the body is buried ceremonially and a "Ketubah" tree is planted over the body. For generations, the giant tree twists and the roots and vines form an intricate web of beauty. The tree becomes the memorial, placed by man but illustrating a piece of nature. For my informants, the crosses placed by missionaries, while holding significance of the numerous lives lost in a specific incidence of horrific atrocity, do not hold the same meaning as the traditional practices. With that said, some communities are trying to place memorials, but are locked in a battle to find the funds to do so.

For 13 years one of the communities I spent considerable time in, a former Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, has been trying to build a memorial. They are trying to couple the new means of remembrance with a traditional "compensation and reconciliation." In 2002, the camp of over 27,000 people was raided. Numerous people were abducted to help carry the loot of the rebels. One of the young men abducted did not give the names of his family, instead giving the names of other community members. Many locals hold that he gave incorrect names in retaliation for a long-standing land dispute between two clans (Pajong and Pubec). The young man escaped, with a rebel gun. Upon returning to the camp he gathered his family and left. The rebels were not far behind. Upon learning they were given the wrong names (and that their gun

was missing), they proceeded to punish those who were present.  All told, fifty-six men, women, and children were killed that day.  Stories emerged that among the most atrocious of actions, at least two mothers were forced to beat their small children against trees, breaking bones and causing great pain before the children died.  My informants in Kitgum, over 30 kilometers away, referred to this day as their "9/11" (referring to the sense of loss and helplessness that was felt in the United States on that day).

The community has struggled with integrating the traditional Acholi practice of "forgiveness and reconciliation" and more "western" forms of justice.  They have struggled to regain their footing and move forward.  Traditionally, when a known member of a clan (a family group, led by elders) commits an egregious act, such as murder, it is handled at the clan level.  The clan of the offending party and the clan of the victim(s) meet.  Each clan has a set standard for what they are to give/receive for compensation to the families involved.  Negotiations are held until each side agrees.  In this case, the agreed upon *Kwor,* or death compensation, was sixteen cows and 3 goats for each life taken, or 200,000 Uganda Shillings (USh) for each cow and 150,000 USh for each goat.  This comes to a total of over 204 million USh (around $60,000).  This is a large sum for anyone, but for members of a highly impoverished community that has just faced two decades of conflict, this sum is unobtainable.  After compensation, the two clans perform a *Mato Oput* ceremony, during which both clans drink a liquid, made of *Oput*.  The root is very bitter.  Drinking it symbolizes the washing away of bitterness of the past and a promise to never taste the bitterness again in the future (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010).

I will discuss more in the coming chapters as to how traditional customs and practices have been greatly impacted by not only the conflict itself, but also by the influx of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the passage of time.  For now, it is important to

recognize that the memorials being placed are often not of the locals' own accord, evidencing the influence of outside factors. This influence was explained to me as altering burial practices as well. Traditionally, my informants told me, individuals were buried in a fetal position and covered directly with dirt. Now, the "western" practice of being buried flat in a coffin is taking hold. Additionally, when communities do wish to construct memorial sites, as is the case in the murder of 56 people in Mucwini, they are often met with the difficulty of finding funds to do so. In this case, they are asking the government for assistance, a government that has reportedly aided the perpetrator, but has yet to help the victims. It is a battle they have waged for over 13 years, and continues to this day. After visiting with the town council person for over two hours, he could have asked me for assistance for anything, including his burned thatch roof hut we conducted the interview near. However his first request was for assistance finding funds to construct a memorial.

I have been interested in Uganda since beginning graduate school in 2007. When Invisible Children, Inc. (IC) released an online video called, "Kony 2012" on March 5, 2012, I had already been studying Uganda for several years. The IC released the video in an attempt to draw attention to Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel group that has plagued Northern Uganda for over 20 years. In just a few days, millions of people around the world viewed the video 80 million times. The Internet was abuzz, college students began heeding the call to coordinate the April 20th "Cover the Night" campaign, and news regarding the movement appeared in national (U.S.) and international media. In a matter of days, IC accomplished their goal of "making Joseph Kony famous" (Invisible Children, 2012). They also reintroduced Uganda to the international spotlight.

Having visited and traveled around Uganda for several years, I was well aware of its tumultuous past.  I was also aware of the over simplified and essentialized portrayals of Uganda that were occurring in the media. However, what the newfound attention initially accomplished was fascinating to watch.  What social movement would not want to attract the attention of over 80 million views in such a short time period?  Through their use of new social media, the IC arguably generated an even larger social movement than the Iranian protestors who used Twitter in 2009 to create widespread 'disorganized organization.'  It is correct to argue that the Arab Spring began internally, while Kony 2012 began externally. It is also correct to question the intended audiences in each case. The internal versus external origins and intended audiences initially spurred the question, what is the relationship between global social movements organized through the Internet (via new social media) and local social change?  The prevailing attitude is that new social media is fundamentally changing the way the world acts and interacts. If this is the case, an important first step to understanding how that change is coming to fruition is to understand what it means to people locally. Although citizens of Uganda are not the intended audience for the IC video, they are the intended targets of change. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has victimized northern Ugandans for over 20 years. It is vitally important not to traumatize them again.  If we are to understand the impacts and relationship between new social media, global social movements, and local social change in the case of Uganda, the fundamental first step is to understand how the people of Uganda are being impacted.  This is the line of thought that drew me back to Uganda with tape recorders in hand. It is the line of thought that found me on the back of the boda, fearing for my safety.

What one learns relatively quickly after leaving Kampala, the capital of Uganda, is that new social media appear to have very little meaning.  On the surface, local social change is

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happening face-to-face.  How can it happen online when most people find themselves locked in a

daily battle to find the basics of life?  Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter would seem to have very

little meaning if you find yourself displaced from traditional family land, locked in famine,

facing changing weather patterns where rain does not come as it used to, and merely fighting to

pick up the pieces of a once proud cultural past.  One learns very quickly that survival trumps

social media.  Hope for the future entails finding food and water for today.  This does not mean

that groups in the north are not proud, loving people.  They just find themselves caught in an

intricate and entangled bird's nest of issues.  Unlike knotted string, which one can often find an

end and begin to pull, untangling the entire mess, pulling a loose string in Uganda often only

adds new knots, making solutions even harder to find.  This is not only true of the complicated

past, but is also true of the complicated present and the cultural battle that is taking place

between the younger and older generations of people.  While all of the above is true -- survival

trumps social media -- what this researcher has come to understand is new social media is having

important impacts.  They just are not the impacts I expected to find, going into this research.

Arguably, the most important impacts of new social media are not in the mobilization of a social

movement.  Instead, the videos created (by an organization that has now closed it's doors in part

because of intense criticism) external of Uganda, targeting an external audience, meant to help

the traumatized victims in northern Uganda may have actually prolonged the trauma process.

In post-independence Uganda, strife and conflict, to a certain extent, are normative.

Uganda has a history of heavy-handed imperialism, conflict, and armed resistance. From Idi

Amin's near-fascist rule, to a history of war and genocide within Uganda and in nearly every

surrounding country, stability is largely a façade.  An estimated 1.8 million people (90% of

northern Ugandans) were internally displaced, that is to say refugees in their own country.  After

years of trying to understand what is transpiring in and around Uganda, the only simple explanation is, the situation is infinitely complex. As Paul Feyerabend writes,

> History, belonging, and politics are all issues of contention. It is indeed difficult to write about and intellectualize bitter conflicts. The causes and consequences of the war in northern Uganda, the reasons for it, and facts about it – they all differ, depending on whom you are listening to. There is not one version that is fully agreed upon by all parties involved. Perhaps this is a truism to many readers, but it is still important to emphasize because contemporary conflict analyses often tend to emphasize single causes for war in ways that are reductionist (2008:8)

Although fighting continues today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Burundi (recent Presidential elections have spurred unrest), and Kony remains unwilling to sign a peace agreement (although the latest rumors are that Kony is in negotiations for surrender with the government of the Central African Republic), Kony and the LRA stopped launching attacks inside of Uganda after 2006. Nonetheless, and despite widespread accusations that the IC campaign glossed over historical context and arguably inappropriately framed the capture of Joseph Kony as the greatest hope for peace in the region, the IC Movement continued to gain international momentum. This was in part because the attention garnered by the IC video inherently framed the conflict perpetrated by the LRA as unique. The problems in Uganda run much deeper than Joseph Kony. Arguing in large part that his capture will bring peace and stability to the region is reductionist and ahistorical. As many scholars argue, it reduces the Lord's Resistance Army/Movement (LRA/M) to a terrorist organization and misses the political reasons for their existence (Finnstrom, 2010; Mamdani, 2012).

What follows is my enlightening, my attempt to make sense of an extraordinarily complex historical situation. What began as a three-month trip with a predetermined interview

schedule focusing on the importance of new social media has transformed into a ball of confusion. Scholarly work often begins with a central question. What is it that the author is trying to uncover? What drives the author's work? I believed that I had that question. But as sometimes happens, I learned that my question was untimely and unimportant in this context. What began as a brief qualitative research project designed to fulfill the requirements of a dissertation has evolved into much more. This work evolved into an exploratory quest to understand what transpired, what are the biggest issues facing northern Ugandans today, and what role has outside influence played in creating, solving, shaping, and framing what has happened and continues to happen. In short, what are the cultural impacts of over two decades of conflict? After conducting approximately 150 interviews in Acholiland in northern Uganda, I struggle with whether it is appropriate for a westerner to impose questions over their situation. Instead, what I have done is listen. I have asked for their stories, followed by questions that seemed pertinent in the context within which I found myself, and promised nothing more than to listen, help them make sense of the world, work towards comprehending how they understand the world, and tell the world of their troubles. As one of my very first informants told me (a former rebel who found himself homeless in Kampala), "If you want to see resilience, go to the northeast. Don't go to Gulu, go to Kitgum. Those people have been through so much and have been nearly forgotten. If you want to see human spirit, go to Kitgum."

Over the past several years, that is what I have done. I have ridden on the back of the boda many times, sat under hundreds of enormous mango trees, shared food and stories, and have spent more than my share of time ill. During this time I have observed, participated in daily life, and most importantly listened. If I were forced to pose central, guiding questions to this work, they would be more humanistic than academic. This does not mean that they are less

important.  It could be argued that they are actually more impactful. What are the challenges faced in northern Uganda?  What is life like?  What is important in daily life?  What does the future hold?  How is the past reconciled?  How have northern cultures been impacted?  How has decades of conflict impacted the construction of social life?  In short, how has their habitus been impacted ("the mental filter that structures an individual's perceptions, experiences, and practices such that the world takes on a taken-for-granted, common-sense appearance…through which the social world is apprehended and expressed") (Bourdieu, 1990:131)?  How does cultural trauma and decades of conflict mediate people's experience of social change?  And, how does all of this fit within the larger theoretical discourse on conflict and social change?

This dissertation is part of a larger research agenda centered on the IC, Uganda, new social media, global social change, the cultural trauma process, and the intricate relationships between all of these.  Having spent considerable time in Uganda, I hypothesize that the perceived uniqueness of the LRA conflict is primarily external to Uganda. That is to say, the LRA conflict is neither significantly different from the historical conflicts within Uganda and/or East Africa, nor is it the largest. The only reason this conflict is unique is that outside groups chose to draw attention towards it instead of other conflicts.  The LRA conflict is unique not because groups like IC chose to frame it as unique, but simply because they chose to frame it instead of any other conflict.  Child soldiers are and have been used in numerous other areas of the world.  I would argue that the Western framing of this conflict not only reduces the agency of actors therein (see also Finnström, 2008) but also almost completely eradicates any political motivation behind the movement and adds to the dominant discourse put forth by the Ugandan government (this will be discussed in the following chapter).  The question becomes, what are the impacts, if any, of this unique attention on the ground in Uganda? Based upon preliminary discussions with numerous

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"locals" in various parts of Uganda during past visits, most people see the IC video as something that is happening elsewhere and the LRA as something from their past. As an individual just outside of Kampala retorted when I asked him about the Kony 2012 video, "Kony? He's over there (pointing northwest). He has not caused trouble in years. Why is there a video now?" As a northern Ugandan responded (one who had relocated his family because of the LRA),

> "You do realize that we have had conflict every election since our independence, right? We are tired of fighting. How does this video portray us, as victims? We are strong and proud people. Why is this the case you (I presume he meant Americans) choose to turn into a video? Does the video talk about what the government has done?"

He, of course, is correct. Uganda has known conflict since long before its independence. During the Ugandan Bush War in the early to mid-1980s Amnesty International estimates nearly 300,000 people died and 750,000 people were displaced. Additionally, Yoweri Musevini used child soldiers (guerilla fighters) during the war and after when the National Resistance Army (the military wing of the National Resistance Movement) became the ruling army. The scale and demographic make up of the conflict does not account for the difference in widespread attention. So, what is the reason for the newfound attention? Why the enormous outpouring of social media support? What do Ugandans think of the "western world" defining both the problems and the solutions? And, what is the current state of affairs in Uganda? What follows is a brief explication of Ugandan history as is pertinent to this work. It is neither an all-inclusive examination of Uganda history, nor is it meant to be. I will attempt to draw upon numerous historical perspectives and weave together a basic understanding of what has transpired in Uganda for the reader. As with the history of any country, it is intricately complex. A review of relevant literature, the methodology employed, and an analysis of findings will follow.

While history, rationale for conflict, use of child soldiers, and numerous other aspects of our understanding of what has transpired in Uganda, are fodder for scholars, politicians, and those trying to help, the fact that tremendous atrocities have occurred is not debatable. Millions of people have been directly and indirectly impacted by decades of conflict. The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague wants Joseph Kony, the rebel leader of the Lord's Resistance Army/Movement (LRA/M) to stand trial for war crimes. Several thousand children have been abducted and forced to perform tremendous atrocities (see Amnesty International 1999; Human Rights Watch 2003). While being a conduit for the often-unheard voices of those directly impacted may be the most important contribution, it is also important for me to protect my informants. I regret that this is a necessity and that by changing names and locations, the amazing stories of my friends lose some of their authenticity and impact. More regrettably, the people themselves are reduced to an "anonymous" source. While I do not foresee uncovering new or vital information that may bring anyone into harms way, potentially risking the life of someone who has graciously taken me into their home, shared their history, stories, families, food, tears, and time, is something that I will simply not do. In future research, thanks to wonderful advice from my committee late in the writing process, I will work with interviewees and allow them to determine their own pseudonyms so that they can identify their individual contributions in the final work. Sadly I was unable to do that in this research.

Suffices to say, I have struggled not only with the role of the researcher, but have also experienced a bit of an existential crisis when it pertains to how my informants are portrayed. All too often in research, especially in the case of Uganda, the actors are abstracted. That is to say, the individual with whom one spends times, learning their story, hearing their words, sharing food, drink, tears, hugs, and smiles, all too often becomes an abstract "victim," or

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"rebel," in the final writing. This abstraction reifies the prevailing conflict frame. In the case of Uganda, this means the LRA/M are the "bad guys," a mystical group of terrorists and the government is "good guys," tracking down and eliminating the "bad guys." It is a frame that has been pushed ever further since the attacks in the United States on September 11th and the subsequent listing of Joseph Kony at the top of the International Criminal Court's list of most wanted. In addition to the prevailing frame being a complete oversimplification, and pushing the views of the group in power, it reduces the actors to "rebel" or helpless, hapless, voiceless, "victims" lacking in agency. The researcher has to walk a very narrow rope in complex situations like the one at hand. Highlighting the important stories shows how the actors are not helpless, hopeless, and voiceless people, but removing identifying information (to protect people involved) removes a bit of the power of their stories and risks furthering their status as "victim."

How does the researcher present findings about Uganda that are not a reification of political motivating factors behind the LRA/M, but also not dismissive and only painting them with a large brush of mysticism? How does the researcher portray the voices of those trapped in the middle of a decades long conflict, voices that sometimes support what the LRA/M purports to be fighting for, while also decrying the horrific methods of achieving their wants? How does the researcher portray the "victims" trapped in the middle of a fight, with nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, multiple groups attacking (while simultaneously purporting to be fighting for them)? There is a famous African proverb, "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." In Ugandan history, I learned it is a herd of elephants fighting. How does the researcher capture the perspective of the grass without supporting, denying, or giving too much credence to the elephants?

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The individuals and families that I have spent countless hours with are amazing people. Their suffering has been unimaginable to anyone who was not present during the conflict, and continues to this day, years post-conflict. The impacts will reverberate through this society for generations to come. I have worked tirelessly to not only understand the impacts, but also more importantly to understand the impacts from the perspective of the people who are living them. What I have learned is that in many ways traditional Acholi culture has not only been disrupted (like a rock in a river that water flows around and then quickly returns to flowing as normal), but has potentially been ruptured. I recognize at the end of the day, this dissertation is written by me, an outsider. The words, stories, accounts, and retellings are chosen by me, and regardless of how much I would want it to be otherwise or try to include "insiders" in my retellings, in the end it is this author and author's committee that decides what makes it into the final draft. That is to say, what is "deemed important." I have wrestled deeply with the internal crisis and am infinitely uncomfortable with this position. When dealing with cultures so rich that every song, every dance, every drumbeat, every saying, every ritual appears to have great depth and meaning, as an outsider who am I to write this story?

What follows is a story about Uganda. It is in no way "the" story of Uganda. The story is based upon over seven years of work, over four years of dedicated fieldwork, over 150 interviews and countless informal conversations. This dissertation has had many eyes reading it, not the least of which are those belonging to several of my Acholi friends. I gave them not only the opportunity to read drafts as writing progressed, but also a large role in voicing their opinions when they read something that I have mistakenly misinterpreted. While sociology generally focuses on the elephants, I am attempting to provide the perspective of the grass, while acknowledging the elephants. At the end of the day, maybe the most important development to

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come out of this work is an argument for a much more Africa-centric sociology. What follows is my journey through the research process as I search to find meaning and understanding of what transpired in northern Uganda.

# Chapter 2 - Literature and Historical Context

For this research I will draw upon and combine several fields of literature. To understand social movements and social change, I will draw from the expansive social movements literature. To understand the context of east African conflict, I will draw upon well-known and well-documented literature covering east African history, colonialism, development, and conflict (focusing on the Lord's Resistance Army). What follows is a brief discussion to introduce a portion of said literature.

Uganda is located on the equator, in the great lakes region of east Africa, along the central African Rift Valley. The Lake Victoria Basin provides for reliable rains and a steady climate favorable to fauna growth. Evidence suggests that human life has existed in the region that came to be known as Uganda for the past 50,000 to 100,000 years. Evidence suggests that early Uganda was covered in dense tropical rainforest that has since been largely destroyed, partially by centuries of cultivation and, in the past few decades, political leadership. Nearly 50 percent of Uganda's primary rainforests were lost during Idi Amin's rule (1971-1979). Although about 25 percent of Uganda is under environmental protection, the country continues to lose about 2.2 percent of its remaining forest each year (FAO, 2006). It is believed that Bantu-speaking groups, agriculturalists, were responsible for early cultivation and deforestation. It is believed that Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and Nilotic speaking pastoralists inhabited early Uganda. Near Lake Victoria, the central region of what is now called Uganda, the kingdom of Buganda arose. To the northwest, the kingdom of Bunyoro arose. Bunyoro consisted of a caste system while Buganda allowed all clans to participate. The kingdom of Toro separated from the

kingdom of Bunyoro in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This, coupled with the rise of Buganda, removed some of Bunyoro's power in the region.

During the "scramble for Africa" in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic, linguistic, and kingdom divisions were strategically used by the British to help control the region. Effectively, Uganda has a very strong north/south divide. This divide is largely in part to ethnolinguistic differences, with Nilotic language groups to the north of the Nile and Bantu language groups south of the Nile. While multiple other kingdoms arose, the largest and most powerful was the Bantu-speaking kingdom of Buganda in the south. The Baganda fought a brutal religious civil war while the British forcefully took control of Bunyoro, the Acholi, and other Nilotic-speaking groups in the north, northwest, and northeast. The chiefdoms of Busoga (centered around the source of the Nile on lake Victoria) and kingdom of Ankole (in the southwest) both signed treaties with the British. Britain negotiated a separate treaty with the Baganda giving them considerably more autonomy than other areas of the country, and shifted half of the Bunyoro kingdom (10 "lost counties") to the kingdom of Buganda.

Prior to independence, in large part due to World Wars I, II, and complicated by the Cold War (that was largely being waged in sub-Saharan Africa as the United States and Soviet Union fought an ideological war) Britain began to divest from its colonies. Andrew Cohen was sent to govern and prepare Uganda for independence. Given the history of conflict and Britain's propensity to use ethnic divisions to their advantage in controlling colonized peoples, and aware of events like the Mau Mau revolution (1952-1960) in neighboring Kenya, groups in Uganda began to prepare for elections. Cohen, thanks in part to Britain's previous decision that Buganda would be the economic hub, faced serious distrust in the country. The kingdom of Buganda wanted to keep a privileged position in the new government and it was reflected in the new

constitution. Groups that had been marginalized under colonial rule feared lack of representation in the newly forming government and began to organize. Groups like the Democratic Party (DP) (largely consisting of historically marginalized Catholic groups in Buganda) and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) (consisting of non-Baganda) coalesced with the UPC being led by Milton Obote.

Uganda gained its independence October 9th, 1962. The king of Buganda, Sir Edward Mutesa II (the thirty-fifth king of Buganda), was elected as the first president and ceremonial head of state, while Milton Obote (a Lango born in Apac, northern Uganda) was elected as the first prime minister. Obote's group, aligned with another monarchist Buganda separatist group, Kabaka Yekka ("King only") to oppose the DP and win 21 seats in the 1962 National Assembly elections.

In 1964, with the military revolting and wanting higher pay, Uganda narrowly avoided civil war. The British military failed to put down the revolt and the "lost counties" that were taken from the kingdom of Bunyoro were returned. Obote (UPC) had aligned himself with General Idi Amin Dada (Kakwa father and Lugbara mother, both Nilotic West Nile ethnic groups), and made a deal with the DP to return the counties. In retaliation for the uprising and returning the lost counties, Obote stripped the monarchs of each of Uganda's five kingdoms of power. Two years later Obote, caught in a gun smuggling scandal with Congo, waged a coup with Amin and seized powers of the presidency.

After several assassination attempts and the murder of senior military officers opposed to Amin, Obote found himself in the position of relying on Amin's control of the military while simultaneously suspecting Amin was trying to take power. Obote recruited Acholi and Langi soldiers while Amin increased military size via recruitment in the west Nile region. In 1971,

Obote ordered his military officers (Langi) to arrest Amin while Obote was out of the country. Amin learned of the order and waged a coup, overthrowing Obote and taking control of the country. By 1972 thousands of Acholi and Lango soldiers were killed or disappeared.

By 1978 exiled Ugandan soldiers, the Tanzania People's Defence Force, Kikosi Maalum led by Obote, the Front for National Salvation led by Yoweri Museveni (Ankole, a bantu ethnic group from the south), formed the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) and marched into Kampala. On April 11th, 1979 Amin fled into exile, dying in Saudi Arabia in 2003. Yusuf Lule (Muganda) was the leader of the UNLF and was subsequently installed as the president after Amin fled into exile.

Divisions in the UNLF led to a quick succession of leaders, Lule, Godfrey Binaisa (UPC), Paulo Muwanga (UPC) and finally back to Obote for a second reign. By 1980, Museveni merged his Popular Resistance Army (PRA) with Lule's Uganda Freedom Fighters to form the National Resistance Army (NRA). On February 6th, 1981 the NRA attacked in Mubende (central Uganda) and the brutal five-year Ugandan Bush war began. Much of the fighting between the NRA and Obote's (UNLF) government occurred in what is known as the Luwero Triangle (an area north of Kampala that comprises eight districts: Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Nakaseke, Wakiso, Mityana, Mubende, Luweero, and Nakasongola). Thousands of civilians were persecuted and/or killed (some estimates as high as 500,000 people dead). An Acholi-Langi alliance briefly placed an Acholi general (Tito Okello) into power, but peace between Okello and Museveni broke down. In 1986, the NRA mounted a final offensive on Kampala. By January, Museveni became president, where he has remained.

In 1987, Alice Lakwena (Acholi) declared that she was under orders of Christian spirits, created the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) and declared war against the government led by

Museveni. She led a group of recruits to Jinja and was defeated and fled into exile. In the vacuum, Joseph Kony (Acholi) recruited her remaining soldiers and formed the Uganda People's Democratic Christian Army (UPDCA), which later became the Lord's Resistance Army. Kony claims to fight for the rights of the Acholi, however his actions are brutal; murdering, and pillaging, mutilating, and abducting children to fight when the Acholi refused.

The brief history provided does not fully capture the immense complexities of what transpired in Uganda. However, it does give a glimpse into the cacophony of issues the people of Uganda faced. It also forces the researcher to question why much of the Western interest has been placed upon the LRA, to the neglect of what actually transpired. While the actions committed by Joseph Kony and the LRA are atrocious, they neither occurred in a vacuum (it was part of a much larger fight), nor were they unique (Museveni and others used child soldiers; Amin killed hundreds of thousands of people; hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced into Internally Displaced Persons camps). However, we can view them as a social movement of sorts (as many of the groups fighting for power could also be viewed).

### Social Movement Literature

Early in the research process I believed the most fruitful way to understand what transpired in Uganda was through a social movement lens. Given the numerous transitions of power early in Uganda's independent history, and the stories of Alice Lakwena's followers, examining what happened through a social movement perspective seemed to be a given.

When examining a phenomenon believed to be a movement, rebellion, or political resistance, context is important. While most social movement theories remain fairly general in their assumptions, to determine how a particular resistance would be viewed by each theory requires a considerable amount of historical knowledge and context construction. While it may

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be possible at a very general level to aggregate all, or most, instances of child soldiering together (i.e., they are rebels or they are militia groups), to truly understand how different social movement theories would view individual instances I must delve into specific cases. Is it constructive to link the use of child soldiering by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka (a rebel group labeled terrorist) with the use of child soldiering by the Communist Party of Nepal, the Serb militias in Bosnia and Croatia in the early 1990s, the Tatmadaw in Burma, and what is transpiring on the African continent with the use of child soldiers in the Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe? While on the surface they share some commonalities, each has arisen due to vastly different situational factors.

While current social movement theories can, and do, explain particular aspects of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), a northern rebel group led by Alice Lakwena, and the resultant Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) very well, they are in many cases inadequate. The HSM/LRA, while illustrating qualities of "social banditry," is most often considered a "millenarianist" movement, a group of "primitive rebels" as highlighted by Hobsbawm (1959).

The LRA emerged in northern Uganda in the late 1980s, concurrent with Yoweri Museveni's rise to power on the back of the National Resistance Movement. "During colonial and post-colonial times the ideas of progress, development, and salvation were brought to Africa […] the discourse of progress and development helped to impose Western hegemonies and left little room for strategies for the independent development of post-colonial states" (Behrend, 1993:245). As a result,

> "The outcome of colonial and post-colonial development policies was underdevelopment, resulting in the marginalization of societies, cultures, and human beings. Post-colonial African societies, rather than being one step in the imagined 'evolutionary process,'

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became the locus of paradoxes that radically called into question the moralities and implications of development […] one of these paradoxes of development is that, despite the attempts to impose Western rationality on Africa, we nowadays find a proliferation of various religious discourses, centering around spirits, spirit possession, and witchcraft" (Mudimbe, 1988: 2-5).

The ethnic divides preyed upon by colonialists, and expounded upon by imperialist Britain, coupled with serious internal strife (economic and military) during the Idi Amin rule, led to a somewhat traditionalist revolt.  In the Acholiland of northern Uganda "prophets" began to emerge and organize resistance against the National Resistance Army (NRA) and Yoweri Museveni.  From a Western perspective, history has shown Alice Lakwena to be the most famous of these "prophets."  The story goes that the Christian spirit, Lakwena, possessed Alice Lakwena.

> "In August 1986, in a situation of internal and external crisis, the spirit asked his spirit medium (Alice) to stop healing and instead organize the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) to wage war against the government, witches, and impure soldiers.  She recruited former soldiers from the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and the newly formed Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), another resistance movement which, like the HSMF, was fighting against the government.  After her first military successes against the NRA, other segments of the population joined her: peasants, pupils, students, teachers, businessmen, about a hundred women, from different ethnic groups, mainly Langi, Teso, and Jopadhola.  Under the leadership of various spirits, she marched with between 7,000 and 10,000 men and women towards Kampala.  Near Jinja, about 50 km from Kampala, she and her soldiers were defeated by the government troops.  Many of her soldiers died or were injured.  She crossed into Kenya, where she supposedly remained" (Behrend, 1993:246-47).

The fall of Alice Lakwena provided the opportunity for, the now infamous, Joseph Kony to seize control of the Holy Spirit Mobile Force (HSMF) in 1988, couple it with the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), form the LRA and adopt the guerrilla tactics and child soldiering that tormented the people of northern Uganda for over twenty years. There has been much debate over the relationship, if any, between Lakwena and Kony and the effectiveness of each to air legitimate grievances. While this may not be inconsequential, it does tend to mire the reader in minutia. What is important in this discussion is the larger rationale behind, and consequences and methods of, the violence that each wrought (although expressed in different outcomes).

In 1981 the Popular Resistance Army (PRA), led by now President Yoweri Musevini, merged with Yosef Lule's (a former President of Uganda) Uganda Freedom Fighters (UFF) to form the National Resistance Army (NRA). At the time, the NRA (now seen as legitimate) waged guerrilla war (the "Ugandan Bush War" or what has come to be known as the Luwero war) against the governments of Milton Obote and Tito Okello, in an attempt to capture power over the country. After rising to power, Musevini attempted to squash numerous insurgencies. Although it took a few years, most insurgencies were put down. One, the LRA/M has continued to fight on. The numerous different groups, and countless battles for control of the country, are illustrative of a larger issue at hand.

> After the NRA takeover in 1986, Acholi society was rent by two simultaneous, and related, political crises: an *internal* crisis stemming from the breakdown of authority within Acholi society, authority that had been legitimized through a discourse of Acholi ethnicity; and a *national* crisis brought about by the destruction of the political links that had tied Acholi in the district to the national state. Each post-1986 rebel movement in Acholiland – the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) and the LRA – were responding to both crises at once, as each attempted to

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impose internal order upon Acholi society by building a constituency against the National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) based on a particular conception of Acholi political identity. In short, each rebel group endeavored to resolve the internal crisis through the violent resolution of the national crisis, to create internal order through military struggle against a common enemy, all cast in ethnic terms" (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010:25).

Various social movement theories could be used to attempt to understand what has transpired in Uganda.

### Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization came to fruition in the 1970s as a break with traditional theories of social movements. Gurr (1970) argued that people rebel when they feel a sense of deprivation either in relation to each other or their expectations. The basic premise of resource mobilization theory, and a break from traditional theories, is that people always have grievances and movements occur when resources are mobilized. Resource mobilization can be traced by to Lipsky (1968) and Olson (1965). Lipsky (1968) brought forth three ideas: Movement leaders need to build and maintain stable organizations, they need to rationally decide on various strategies, and success depends upon sufficient resources. Olson (1965) discussed the "logic of collective action" and developed a rational choice model for movement participation. Resource mobilization has five issue areas: Individual motivation (Tilly, 1978; Olson, 1965; Ferree, 1992; McCarthy and Zald, 1977), the mobilization process, "the process by which a group acquires, accumulates, and organizes resources" (Tilly, 1978:7), resources (Jenkins, 1983; Cress and Snow, 1996), organization (see McCarthy and Zald, 1977 for discussion of social movement organizations, SMOs), and outcomes.

Examining the LRA through a resource mobilization lens can reveal some interesting things.  In the beginning it could easily be argued that individuals were motivated by the political unrest at the time.  Even today, with the stark north/south divide in the country, the Acholi in the north have been worse than forgotten, they have been pawns, treated worse than third-class peasants by not only British colonialism, but also the post-colonial regimes.  Amin's ordering of thousands of Acholi and Langi soldiers to be killed after deposing Obote and fearing lack of representation during Museveni's rule are prime examples.  It is easy to see potential motivation for participation; Acholi could either join the resistance or face more oppression.  Mobilization occurred partially through kinship ties by people who (while they may not term it this way) recognized a form of class-consciousness.  However, the movement entrepreneurs (Social Movement Organization (SMO) leaders) were questionable at best.  If they began with the above-mentioned grievances, the motivations of Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony would better align with resource mobilization.  The introduction of a religious "spirit" guiding the revolt leaves one a bit skeptical about how resource mobilization would view them.  Resources were simple, aggrieved impoverished peasants, until Alice's demise in Jinja.  Resources in the form of guns and funding were also being funneled in from the Sudanese government (Behrend, 1993).  The challenge for resource mobilization comes when trying to explain the abduction and inculcation of children and attacks shifting from the government to their own villages (largely Acholi) under Kony.  After Lakwena's death, the main organizing force was lost.  The disorganization in the newfound vacuum in almost no way mimicked better-organized movements, leaving a lot to be desired when trying to explain the LRA.  While numerous aspects can be made to fit the theory, the fit feels a bit disingenuous.

*Political Process*

　　The political process approach is an extension of resource mobilization. While resource mobilization largely focuses on a movement's ability to garner resources, build an organization, and expand, political process slightly shifts the focus away from outcomes and introduces the idea of political opportunity.

> "For resource mobilization social networks are a system of contacts that is an important resource to facilitate recruitment or activism in a movement. Political process networks are a web of social relationships in which people have mutual understandings and shared experiences. This web is critical to the process of converting mutual understandings of those involved in a movement's activity into feelings of solidarity with other movement adherents (Neuman, 2005:254)."

Three key concepts arose from political process theory, operational readiness (McAdam, 1982), cognitive liberation and political opportunity structure (Piven and Cloward, 1992). Organizational readiness is the accumulation of resources within a favorable political climate that improves a group's position (McAdam, 1982). In the case of the LRA/HSM this was not always voluntary,

> "The HSM was also an army of some 7,000 to 10,000 soldiers who had to have food and weapons. While the weapons were mainly taken from the NRA, the food supply had to be obtained from the local population. It does not seem appropriate to speak of the HSM as having a regional cultic mode of production. The HSM, like other guerrilla movements, was not able to produce the necessary food for its soldiers. Thus the HSM had a more or less predatory mode of production. While the UPDA, the UPA, and to some extent the NRA also used force to obtain food, the HSM succeeded at least in some regions in gaining the support of the rural population. It was the duty of the War Mobilizing Committee to organize supplies without using force, as Lakwena had ordered (Behrend, 1993:251)."

The HSM struggled not only with organizational readiness, but also with cognitive liberation. While many may have seen the opportunity to redefine the existing conditions, the "free rider" (McAdam, 1982) was certainly an obstacle to success:

> "They founded committees in various subcounties, established relationships with elders who agreed to sponsor them and organized rallies where Lakwena would first preach the message of love, unity, and repentance, after which gifts and loans were collected. For every gift an acknowledgement receipt was issued detailing the date, the name of the giver, and the character of the gift. The loans were to be repaid without interest. But the generous givers were promised that after the victory they would receive not only what they had donated but also in addition some development projects (Behrend, 1993:251)."

Probably the best fitting aspect of political process theory to the HSM is the introduction of political opportunity structures. "Political opportunity structures tend to emerge at junctures when larger societal changes generate political volatility and realignment and new political possibilities and disruptive protest itself makes an important contribution to elite fragmentation and electoral dealignment" (Piven and Cloward, 1992:321). With the world in a state of flux, the United States and Soviet Union locked in a battle over political spheres (Schaeffer, 1997), and turmoil occurring within Uganda itself, the "group-specific opportunity" (Tarrow, 1994) for change may have never been better. Idi Amin's policies alienated the West and aligned Uganda with the Russian sphere (Holger, 1998). Musevini and the NRA were attempting to realign Uganda with and accept the supranational organization policies of the West. If ever there were an opening in the political landscape, this was it. The question is, would they have known it at the time. As an aside, there is a research opportunity to examine the NRA as a social movement. If it has already been conducted, I am unaware of it.

*Framing*

Framing is part of the constructionist approach that came to fruition in the 1980s (Zald, 1996). The constructionist approach "holds that a movement's ability to alter perceptions of reality is often critical to its success" (Neuman, 2005:267). Snow and Benford (1992:136) argue that, "A movement must engage in production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers." One of the most influential ideas to come out of the constructionist theory is the idea of "movement frames" (McAdam, 1994; Benford and Snow, 2000; Gamson, 1992). "Frames are a way of organizing thinking about political issues. One should ask not whether they are true or false…but about their usefulness in increasing understanding and their economy and inclusiveness in providing a coherent explanation of a diverse set of facts" (Gamson, 1992:71).

The HSM was the only resistance movement in Uganda to use a religious and moral discourse (Behrend, 1993). In the "repertoire of tools" (Zald, 1996; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1994) the HSM relied upon a discourse substantially different than other resistance movements of the time.

> "At the very inception of the HSM, Alice invented a ritual of purification that cleansed her soldiers from witchcraft and the cen, the spirits of those who had been killed […] By issuing 20 Holy Spirit Safety Precautions, prohibitions against theft, plundering, lying killing, sleeping with women, etc., she tried to reconstruct the moral order and to control the soldiers. The HSM was not only a military organization, an army that waged war, but also a new regional cult which spread indigenized Christian messages as the army advanced. Not only the HSM soldiers but also the Civilians in the so-called 'liberated areas' became morally educated and rehabilitated" (Behrend, 1993:249-50).

By "strategically framing" (Zald, 1996) their movement as morally rehabilitated and rooting it in Christian values, the HSM appears to have sealed its own fate. It is easy to see how it failed at

the time, but it is difficult to understand how the transformation to the LRA has existed for an additional thirty years.

> "Despite widespread antipathy for Museveni, the LRA attracted limited support from other Acholi, and the poverty and unpopularity of the movement led to nearly complete reliance on forced recruitment. From its earliest days, the rebels looted homes and abducted youth to obtain supplies and recruits. In 1994, the Sudanese government began supplying the LRA with supplies, weapons, and territory on which to build bases" (Blattman, 2009:232)

The Sudanese assistance is believed to have ceased. The internal framing of the movement, which gave it a glimmer of hope at the time, has been unable to overcome the external frame that the rest of the world has placed upon the movement, a terrorist organization that abducted between 60,000 and 80,000 youth and was responsible for the displacement of nearly two million people in the area (Blattman, 2009).

New Social Movements theory, which relies on macro-historical theory, concentrates on personal identity formation, and is largely not concerned with traditional political movements (Buechler, 1995) does not really fit the discussion of the HSM/LRA.

While each of the social movement theories discussed can be made to fit particular aspects of the Holy Spirit Movement, and subsequent Lord's Resistance Army, they are each lacking in other areas. That is not to say that social movement theories always fit a movement exactly. However, there are enough gaps in understanding to garner an impression that they are inadequate in explaining the HSM. More so, the theories become even more inadequate when trying to explain the HSM after it shifted to the LRA/M. Does this mean that the HSM was not a social movement? Evidence exists to suggest that the HSM may not have been a social movement, but had the potential to become one. One must wonder how history would have come to view the HSM had the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (and partners) been successful in Jinja.

Would that success have allowed Alice to return to the north triumphantly?  Would that one

battle have garnered more support (resources)?  Would it have allowed her to return to Kampala

and experience even larger successes?  Would it have allowed Alice to refine her frame?  Would

it have further opened the political opportunities that were in place?  In any event, the battle was

lost, Alice allegedly fled, and the movement floundered until Joseph Kony stepped in as new

leadership.  After the transition to the LRA, contemporary social movement theories struggle to

explain much about the movement.  Was this one movement, or two separate events?  Since the

shift to the LRA, what has transpired could perhaps best be described as a Christian extremist

group (though even that does not capture the underlying political and non-religious undertones).

But, was it always such?

Perhaps the best explanation of what transpired in Uganda was written over ten years

before the advent of resource mobilization theory.  In 1959, Eric Hobsbawm wrote about

primitive rebels.  It could be argued that the HSM began by exhibiting qualities of "social

banditry" (Hobsbawm, 1959).  Much like Robin Hood, Alice Lakwena began as a myth.  She

arose to help the peasants of the north and provide spiritual guidance.  In her disappearance, the

legend was taken over by Joseph Kony who (initially) attempted to build upon it (it is argued that

he has since given up loyalty to the ideology).  Over a short period of time it began to exhibit

traits of a contemporary social movement, but at a key moment in its history suffered a defeat

that it could not overcome with new tactics.  Given the right circumstances, the HSM could have

potentially transitioned into a forceful movement that more closely represented modern social

movements.  However, it did not.  At the time of the defeat, that given point in history, the

HSM's chances at doing so died with the loss of Alice.  The transition to the LRA was not only a

transition in name, but also a transition to what Hobsbawm would call millenarianism.  "The

essence of millenarianism is the hope of a complete and radical change in the world which will

be reflected in the millennium, a world shorn of all its present deficiencies" (Hobsbawm,

1959:57). Hobsbawm argues that there are three distinguishing characteristics about millenarian

movements,

> "First, a profound and total rejection of the present, evil world, and a passionate longing
> for another and better one. Second, a fairly standardized 'ideology' of the chiliastic type
> [...] third, millenarian movements share a fundamental vagueness about the actual way in
> which the new society will be brought about" (Hobsbawm, 1959:57-58).

All of these characteristics have been exhibited not only by the HSM, but also the LRA.

Behrend argues,

> "The HSM was an anti-witchcraft movement and the New World it tried to establish was
> above all free of sin, that is, one free of witchcraft. Thus the HSM'S 'development'
> programme should be interpreted as a conscious counter-programme not only to the
> secularized NRA but also the official dominant programmes of the developed countries,
> which concentrate on material well-being and neglect the spiritual and moral aspects of
> life. It is not by chance that the predatory post-colonial states are challenged by
> movements which invent a religious discourse. Since politics, not only in Uganda, is
> mainly the politics of eating or politics of the full belly, people do not trust it any more, if
> they ever did" (Behrend, 1993:252).


To superficially label what has transpired in Uganda as armed militia, religious extremism, or

criminal gangs misses the complexities and context. Are most instances of child soldiering

similar in circumstance? What about in Africa? Is Museveni's use of child soldiers

fundamentally the same as the LRA's? It is not. While it is often fruitful to lump groups

together based upon a particular characteristic, or outcome, sometimes it is equally fruitful to

delve into the cases a bit further and ask what we can learn from each individual case.

*Critical Constructionism*

> The problem of Uganda has today gained worldwide attention.  But is has been personalized as the problem of Idi Amin, who is presented as some sort of anthropological oddity (Mamdani, 1976:vii).

Forty years later one only needs to change Amin to Kony and Mamdani's phrase still holds.  Perhaps the most fruitful way to understand what has transpired in Uganda is to step outside of the social movement lens.  Before and during Idi Amin's rule, in the midst of perhaps the most tumultuous time its history, Mahmood Mamdani famously examined Uganda through a Marxist, social class lens.

> I set forth the problem of Uganda as one of class oppression and attempt to analyze it in a historical and social perspective.  The principal forces shaping the destiny of Uganda have been the struggles of its working people, not the antics of its so-called leaders, even though these struggles have yet to assume an organizational expression independent of the petty bourgeoisie through whom imperialist exploitation has been mediated (Mamdani, 1976:vii).

Mamdani's work at the time was not only inspired, but has stood the test of time and provided the world with a complex understanding of Uganda's transition from colony to imperialist target.

> Today, as the Amin clique loses its social base within the emerging commercial bourgeoisie, it wields power through sheer force of arms.  But these sophisticated weapons of destruction are not a testimony to the development of national productive forces; they are a timely loan from its imperial watchdogs.  Thus comes to light the international dimension of the class struggle.  The struggle against class rule in Uganda is not simply a struggle against the Amin dictatorship; it is principally a struggle against imperialism (Mamdani, 1976:316).

In an attempt to build upon Mamdani's analysis, Robert Heiner's (2012) work in social problems might be an instructive place to look.  Heiner synthesizes conflict theory and social

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constructionism, calling it critical constructionism. Critical constructionism meshes the macro level of analysis of conflict theory, provided by Mamdani, with the individual level meaning construction of social constructionism. It is an approach that tries to grasp the umbrella of Marxian bourgeoisie and proletariat struggles, but also understand how individuals generate meaning and come to understand their surroundings underneath that umbrella. It is what Pierre Bourdieu (1990) calls habitus and the internalization of externalities. It is an approach that lends itself to this work, because of the complex history of Uganda when situated in historical context and the awareness of actors on the ground of what has transpired.

### *Cultural Trauma*

Late in the research process, I was introduced to the field of cultural trauma and Alexander's (2004) cultural trauma process. In chapter 6 I will unpack Alexander's trauma process as it applies to Uganda, and discuss how this research reveals new aspects that need to be considered. For now it is important to know that while the concept of trauma is not new, the introduction of cultural trauma is relatively recent.

If one wants to understand how trauma has been studied, they need not go much further than the front page of the American Psychological Association's website.

> Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these individuals find constructive ways with managing their emotions.

There is a small mountain of research over trauma, most of the research deals with the psychological components, child abuse and psychosis (Read, 1997), childhood sexual abuse

(Sparto, 2004; Mullen, 1993), bipolar and personality disorders (Hyun, 2000; Fergusson, 1996), substance abuse (Kendler, 2000), the impacts on mental health-care workers (Collins, 2003), PTSD (Agaibi, 2005; Bartone, 1990), war zone stress (Benotsch, 2000), loss and resilience (Bonnano, 2004), and far too many others to list. However, most of this research focuses on individual trauma. I in no way mean that this level of trauma is insignificant; it certainly is and has tremendous impacts on lived experiences. What Alexander (2004) discusses as cultural trauma is different. He builds upon Kai Erickson's work. Erickson (1976) began to conceptualize trauma differently, as collective trauma.

> By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively…by collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works it's way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with "trauma." But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared…"We" no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (Erickson, 1976:153).

Alexander (2004) argues,

> Individual security is anchored in structures of emotional and cultural expectations that provide a sense of security and capability. These…are rooted in the sturdiness of the collectivities of which individuals are a part. What is at stake is the collectivity's identity, its stability in terms of meaning. Identity involves cultural reference. Only if the patterned meanings of the collectivity are abruptly dislodged is traumatic stress attributed to the event. It is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events themselves. Whether or not the structures of meaning are destabilized and shocked is not the result of an event but the effect of a sociocultural process (10).

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Cultural trauma occurs not at the level of the individual, but at the level of the collectivity. And, as he argues, for trauma to arise at the level of the collectivity, a social crisis must become a cultural crisis. Cultural trauma is more than an event or series of events that impact individuals, it is "the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (Alexander, 2004:10).

This sense of identity, or crisis of identity, is something that revealed itself over and over during my time in Uganda. As I will further explicate in the findings chapters, there are numerous reasons and events that lead to the Acholi questioning their identity. As I learned, a feeling of identity loss plays a large role in the lives of the Acholi. After reporting many of the findings in chapters 4 and 5, I will build to a deeper analysis of cultural trauma and return to it in chapter 6.

In this chapter, I discussed a portion of Uganda's complex history. While in the beginning of this research I believed a social movement perspective would be the most fruitful way to analyze events in Uganda, I learned that it was not. However, discussing numerous social movement theories helped to highlight numerous aspects of Uganda's complex history. In the next chapter I will discuss the methods used to conduct this research and discuss the complicated aspects of locating the researcher in this type of research.

# Chapter 3 - Methodology

In this chapter I begin by explaining the methodology used. In the second half of the chapter I locate the researcher and discuss the difficulties faced in this type of research. My research addresses questions in a multi-faceted approach. I conduct document analysis, both in the United States and in Uganda to understand the historical framings from the perspective of the Ugandan people, the Ugandan government, the United States government, and from "western" activists (specifically Invisible Children). This allows the uncovering of the "official story," mainstream framing, alternate frames, and local frames of both the LRA period of conflict and how this period fits within Uganda's larger history of conflict. Additionally, I conducted approximately 150 semi-structured/semi-standardized interviews (Esterberg, 2002; Berg, 2007) in various regions of the country to understand the outcomes and impacts of historical conflicts, uncovering themes as to how individuals perceive the LRA conflict, how they have been impacted, how they perceive themselves, how they are moving forward, and what issues are emerging now. I have drawn upon numerous contacts to initiate a snowball sample of interviewees across various regions, ethnic groups, and areas of differential impact in Uganda. To be specific, based upon the feedback provided, I have spent most of my time in northeastern Acholiland; Pader, Kitgum, and Otuke districts. I have conducted interviews with council members in market centers, young and elderly Acholi at bicycle repair stands (usually found under large shade trees every few kilometers along the roadside), and, thanks to my amazing friend and translator who has the innate ability to initiate conversation with anyone, I have spent countless hours under enormous mango trees in or near former displacement camps sharing food,

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drink, and life stories.  Additionally, I had the good fortune to interview several former abductees and rebels themselves.

The conflict in and near Uganda has impacted millions of lives.  While there are better research methods to capture a much larger sample, my sample is purposive (Altheide, 1996), not random.  During previous trips key informants were identified.  These informants were used to assist in the initiation of a snowball sample.  During my time in Uganda, I conducted as many interviews as possible, balancing the need for depth of interview with the need for a larger sample size.  I tended to err on the side of interview length. During my time, I assisted with normal daily activities while learning their stories.  I always carried an audio recorder for poignant moments to capture specific quotes.  However, due to the amount of time I spent assisting, discussing, and observing each family, as well as a common distrust of the recording device, it was simply not feasible to record every moment.  This was actually beneficial as on two separate occasions I was "invited" by the local police to speak with their leader and had to explain how it violated ethical boundaries for me to play audio for them.  Thankfully, I was never actually arrested.  I drew predominately upon participant observation and field note techniques (Esterberg, 2002; Berg, 2007).  I always carried a small notepad to record pertinent events, quotes, and observations.  With this said, the researcher always needs to strike a balance between using the tools of the trade to help record, and not allowing these tools to get in the way. What I found was that often the most informative conversations were not the recorded interviews, but instead the moments spent gathering water, firewood, and working in the gardens.  For the Acholi, storytelling is a big part of their culture and tradition.  Oral history trumps written history.  Recording devices are foreign, and almost always drew looks of bewilderment as if they were thinking, "What is this muno (foreigner) doing?"  This of course

raises questions of accuracy. Is my telling of the story accurate? Are the memories of my informants accurate? What is accuracy? Does it matter? In the end, the socially constructed memories of my informants take on real meaning and have real consequences.

> "In everyday life people invoke meanings they find relevant, as they try to comprehend and live the wider, unbounded world they are caught up in. It is, however, a paradoxical situation. In the context of dirty war people can exercise little or no control over the wider surroundings or even their individual fates. Rumors are central to the propaganda machinery in all war settings, I believe" (Finnström, 2008; 167).

In the case of the Acholi, Finnström argues this manifests itself in "*radio kabi*, after the toy radios" that children make and play with. News, that is to say "rumors," was often disseminated at roadside bicycle repair stands, where people from all over would come and share what they have heard. These rumors, not substantiated in fact, have tremendous impacts in day-to-day life. As Finnström argues, if "rumors" indicate that Kony or the LRA/M were somewhere, people would choose to avoid these areas (real outcomes based upon rumors). "In Acholiland, there are also rumors of a more profound potency that find their way into the social memory of collective suffering. These rumors too, I suggest, mediate the existential uncertainty of quotidian life" (Finnström, 2008; 168).

Every night I wrote in-depth field notes, recording the events of the day. In addition, I conducted several group interviews, something that was not only difficult to avoid but was also very informative. In this way, I heard the individual stories and stories in a group format where individuals fed off of group dynamics. By building in some duplication, I hoped to capture the benefits of both techniques as well as enhance validity and reliability. Numerous sources of literature highlight the advantages and disadvantages of focus group interviewing (see: Berg, 2007; Edmund, 2000; Hagan, 2006; Esterberg, 2002).

"In terms of group composition, the literature is mixed with respect to opinions on ideal focus group size. Ultimately, there is no rule: different researchers have noted ranges in size from 4 (Krueger, 1994; Seggern and Young, 2003; Boddy, 2005), 5 (Morgan, 1988; Ruyter, 1996) or 6 (Prince and Davies, 2001) to 12 participants; from 6 to 8 participants (Leitao and Vergueiro, 2000, Evmorfopoulou, 2007); and from 7 (Marczak and Sewell, 2007) or 8 (Greenbaum, 2003) to 10 participants. According to Boddy, groups are most often composed of 8 respondents (Boddy, 2005), although focus groups have been conducted with 10 to 23 participants (Braithwaite *et al,* 2004), and as many as 31 in one focus group (Gloet, 2002). Eight to 12 participants is common practice in the USA (Falco *et al*, 1998 cited in Prince and Davies, 2001), while 5 or 6 is widely utilized in the UK and other countries (Marketing News, 1995 cited in Prince and Davies, 2001)."

In addition to allowing more community members the opportunity to participate, focus group interviews with groups sized between six and twelve people assisted with the generation of important insights that might otherwise have been missed. As a result, adjustments to the interview schedule were made, adding and altering questions to facilitate more enlightening answers. Often the interview schedule was discarded in favor of the more engaging natural conversations. Krueger and Casey (2000) raise concerns that significant disparities (wealth, power, sex/gender) between participants can hinder full engagement in group discussions. I rarely found this to be the case. Most informants openly participated, wanting their story to be heard. Additionally, I never found an instance where people of differential power positions were interviewed simultaneously. That is to say, council members were always found in the market centers, not the roadside bicycle repair stands, former abductees were often found alone in the bush, and I specifically requested that matriarchs were allowed to participate in group conversations if they wished, to which they appeared to participate openly and freely. On more

than one occasion it was the memory of a female member that spurred new lines of thought and storytelling.

Individual and focus group interviews as well as all field notes were transcribed and entered into the qualitative analysis program, *NVivo*. *NVivo* is designed to allow and assist the identification of emergent themes in the data. Interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and other content (i.e., documents, websites, etc.) was analyzed using an ethnographic content analysis approach (Altheide, 1987). ECA consists of reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation. The aim is to be systematic and analytic, but not rigid. Although categories and "variables" initially guide the study, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study (Altheide, 1987:68). Although addressing different mediums, both theoretical approaches are very similar in their goals, allowing constant discovery and constant comparison. While I begin from a historically, culturally, and theoretically informed position, I allowed conceptual developments to emerge from the data.

Interviewees were aware that they could remove themselves from the research at any time and were aware that they are not receiving a direct stipend for participating. While each family I stayed with was provided a small daily allowance for food, all lodging fees were placed in a community pool and redistributed equally to those who did and did not participate. In addition to assisting participants with their daily work, I spent time assisting other community members who were not participating. The hope was to become as much of a part of the community as possible during the stay (gathering water, collecting food, tending to their gardens, finding firewood, assisting with bead making, etc.) removing the pressure to participate. The positive benefit is that trust brings deeper, more impactful stories.

# Locating the Researcher

I worked very hard not to view myself as a neutral or disinterested observer, hovering above the subject of research. Instead, I have attempted to place myself in the shoes of the actors, tried to understand their views, interpretations, and understandings of the world. While I am not anti-positivistic, I tried to practice *Verstehen,*

> Associated with the writing of Max Weber (1864-1920), verstehen is now seen as a concept and a method central to a rejection of positivistic social science (although Weber appeared to think that the two could be united). Verstehen refers to understanding the meaning of action from the actor's point of view. It is entering into the shoes of the other, and adopting this research stance requires treating the actor as a subject, rather than an object of your observations. It also implies that unlike objects in the natural world human actors are not simply the product of the pulls and pushes of external forces. Individuals are seen to create the world by organizing their own understanding of it and giving it meaning. To do research on actors without taking into account the meanings they attribute to their actions or environment is to treat them like objects (Drislane, 2014).

It is important not to impose meaning, but instead to understand the culture of those being interviewed from their perspective, their understanding, and their interpretations. An example of this would be when I witnessed a traditional Acholi funeral dance (*Myel Awal).* The women formed a circle in the middle, dancing rhythmically, and wailing. The men, dressed in full regalia, holding shields and long spears, danced around the women. They repeatedly extended their shields and stabbed the spears towards the ground. The music and sounds were intense, their actions seemingly violent. As a naive outsider it appeared as if they were preparing for battle. Instead, as it was explained to me, they are mourning loss, celebrating life, and letting the ancestral spirits know that the person who passed on was a good person (s/he had to be, just look at the celebration) and to keep his/her spirit and not let it return to haunt them. Effectively they were reaffirming group identity, demonstrating group cohesion, and strengthening group

solidarity.  This example almost perfectly mirrors Merton's (1957) discussion of the manifest

and latent functions of a traditional rain dance.  As an outsider, it would be easy to impose

perspective and meaning from a "developed world" point of view.  However, this is not only

ethnocentric, but it also reduces the actors to subjects, devalues their understanding of the world,

and makes it impossible to truly understand their actions, interactions, interpretations, and

understanding of the world; basically, it makes it impossible to truly understand their lives.  The

complicated task is to simultaneously not impose meaning while also being able to recognize,

step back and provide an educated understanding of what transpired.  Using Merton's idea of

manifest and latent functions as an example, one must be able to become an insider to grasp the

manifest functions (dancing to mourn loss, bring rain, celebrate life, and ward off evil spirits),

but also be able to step back enough to recognize the latent functions (dancing enhances group

loyalty, reaffirms group identity, etc.).  But, one has to be able to recognize the latent functions

without imposing meaning.  This is a complicated task, to say the least.

I recognize that my presence alone, as a researcher, that is to say an outsider, brings

potential changes in day-to-day behavior (See: Hawthorne Effect; Landsberger, 1958).  I

witnessed this several times early in my research.  However, with time, the newness of the

"muno" appeared to wear off.  Returning year after year I differentiated myself from other

"munos" who would come once, and never be seen or heard from again.  Muno (and the Bantu

word Mzungu, used in Buganda and much of east Africa) is seen kind of as a sign of disrespect.

It is a term used to identify a visitor (usually White or European) in an abstract manner.  Over

time, I became "David," not muno.  Several times during the intermediary portions of my trips,

people would refer to me as muno, only to be quickly and sternly corrected by someone that I

was with, "He is not a muno, he is David!"  I have witnessed spousal disagreements and children

being punished for indiscretions, both of which are normally kept from view of an "outsider."

While I am also told that I am now an African, I know that I am not, and will never truly be, an "insider." Conversely, I am also not a pure outsider anymore. I find myself trapped somewhere between the two, hopefully achieving what Collins (1986) termed the "outsider within."

Perhaps ironically, I also find this research trapped between two different methodological approaches, naturalism and social constructionism. "The goal of naturalistic forms of inquiry is to present the lives and perspectives of those being studied as faithfully as possible" (Esterberg, 2002:13). It is usually conducted in a specific geographic region (Esterberg, 2002; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). "In naturalistic inquiry, the researcher attempts to observe as carefully and accurately as possible and to present stories of those being studied in their own voices" (Esterberg, 2002:13). As Denzin (1989) notes, "this research is grounded in behaviors, languages, definitions, attitudes, and feelings of those studied" (71). To accomplish this, the researcher has to develop significant social ties with the community being studied.

I recognize, as critics note about naturalism, that I hold a privileged position in the presentation of the story. I get to choose what to present and what to leave out (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Additionally, I understand that no matter how hard I try to remain objective, any and all accounts are filtered through my eyes; the story becomes my version of reality (Esterberg, 2002). At a fundamental level, critics also argue that naturalism assumes a "social world out there that can be faithfully studied and reproduced" (Esterberg, 2002:14). Social constructionists argue that all social reality is constructed. That is to say, there is not a social world "out there" without human actions, interactions, interpretations, and the meanings they attach (Esterberg, 2002; Blumer, 1969). Social constructionism is rooted in, and shares some of the basic premises of George Herbet Mead and Charles Horton Cooley's symbolic interactionism. "Humans act

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towards things based on the meanings those things have for them. […] These meanings arise out of social interaction. […] And meanings are created (and changed) through a process of interpretation" (Esterberg, 2002: 15). Mead, and later Erving Goffmann, argued that even the "self" is a social product. This can also be seen in Cooley's idea of the "Looking glass self."

An example from Acholi culture would be how meals are interpreted. From my culture I learned that meals usually only carry significant meaning a few times each year, typically on holidays when families get together. To refuse a meal by saying, "Thank you but I just ate. I am full" is not seen as a sign of disrespect. American culture has defined the meaning of a meal; it has been shaped, reshaped, created, and recreated based upon years of interaction. A meal is a two minute microwave TV dinner. A meal is a trip through the drive thru at a local fast food restaurant.

To refuse a meal in Acholi culture is not only a sign of disrespect, but as I was informed by Charles and numerous informants, "Friends share meals, enemies do not. How can we ever become friends if we do not share a meal?" My upbringing taught me it is respectful to decline, especially when in company of someone who has less than you (in this case, significantly less, as I had just spent hours sharing stories and hearing about drought, famine, and extraordinary poverty). But, to the Acholi, a meal carries great significance, even if all they have to offer is millet bread and water. To refuse is to disrespect, that is to say disregard, their cultural interpretations, their socially constructed reality, their process of knowing the world.

Social constructionism assumes that,

…researchers need to begin by examining the empirical world. That is, rather than begin with a theory or preconceived notion of the way the world works, researchers should begin by immersing themselves in the world inhabited by those they wish to study. This initial approach is similar to that of the naturalistic perspective. But instead of seeking to

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go 'inside the worlds of their subjects,' the researchers' emphasis is on understanding how individuals construct and interpret social reality. There is no social reality apart from how individuals construct it, and so the main research task is to interpret those constructions. The focus is on how given realities are produced (Esterberg, 2002:16).

I see my research as falling somewhere in between the two perspectives, presenting lives and understandings as faithfully as possible (in their own words where possible), but simultaneously trying to understand the cultural and historical constructions that guide behavior and understanding. Going back to the elephant parable, I attempt to provide the perspective of the grass, while acknowledging the existence of the elephants.

In the coming chapters I will lay out the most important findings of my work. While it is literally impossible to find someone who lives in northern Uganda who was not impacted by the two decades of conflict, having vivid memories of the atrocities that occurred, the findings will focus on how the northerners view the impacts of the conflict, and not on horrific personal stories. As I learned from many informants, too many people come, ask for the stories, and never return.

# Chapter 4 - "New Wine in an Old Bottle"

In the following chapters I will lay out the most important findings of the fieldwork.
Chapter 4 begins with a discussion of Joseph Kony, the LRA, and how the Acholi view both.
Next, I begin to discuss what my interviewees express as the most important difficulties they
currently face. I begin with the problem expressed by nearly every interviewee, education. Then
I transition to land conflict. The chapter ends with a discussion of the importance of land to
Acholi identity. This leads into chapter 5, which discusses the perceived loss of Acholi identity
and culture.

What follows is a conglomeration of the work of others and my own fieldwork. In some
cases, the "facts" may run counter to what my informants told me. That is to say, the reality of
recovery at the structural or institutional level may be very different than what people on the
ground perceive it to be. However, that should not result in the dismissal of lived experiences.
W.I. and Dorothy Thomas famously wrote, whatsoever situations are perceived as real, are real
in their consequences (Thomas, 1928:571-572). So, while lived experiences and perceptions
may run counter to "official" recovery data, they still carry importance. More importantly, a
lived experience, that is to say perceptions, has the added weight of very real consequences.

The literature about Uganda is chock full of horror stories, brutality at the hands of the
LRA/M and the Ugandan government, child abductions, murder, rape, pillaging, burning of
homes, and mutilations. It is not my intention to rehash these stories. It is next to impossible to
find a person in northern Uganda who was not directly or indirectly impacted by over two
decades of conflict. Everybody has a story, and those stories are horrific and nearly

unimaginable for someone who did not experience it.  Not many among us can fathom the story

of one of my younger informants who avoided eye contact while sharing the story of how he was

forced to kill his family, mutilate their bodies so that they would fit into a pot, and then cook

them.  While horrible, and important, these types of stories add to the mystification of the

conflict.  Additionally, many of the stories work to reify the spiritual, godlike, and fear inducing

rumors surrounding Joseph Kony.  Most of my informants expressed relief and gratitude when I

told them that I was not there to hear them rehash their painful stories for the hundredth time.

Many told me that most "munos" (foreigners) either come to hear their stories, then leave never

to return; come to "save them via religion," as more than one informant told me; or come as a

member of an aid organization, often perceived as less interested in their lived experiences,

acting as distanced outsiders viewing them as not much more than abstract "victims" in need of

assistance (see also Finnström, 2008).

Nor is it my intention to reify either a religious or political motivation of the LRA/M.

The fact is, to have one's message heard through the noise, the message must be simple and

succinct.  Too often, in the case of the LRA/M, that message centers around the abduction of

children; heinous acts against innocent victims; groups of "rebels" following a perversion of

religious doctrine; or a mystification of the leader Joseph Kony.  What it fails to discuss, often by

design, are the perceived and often legitimate grievances of not only Joseph Kony and the

LRA/M, but also the Acholi people against the Ugandan government, President, and military.

The aforementioned is in no way meant to be apologetic or dismissive of the tremendous

atrocities that have occurred in northern Uganda.  Nobody can deny what has occurred.

However, the official framing (Joseph Kony/LRA/M equals bad) subverts at least half of the

actual story.  When well-meaning groups, such as the Invisible Children, step in and state that

"the only feasible and proper way to stop Kony" is via the Ugandan military, they have chosen a

side in decades long conflict.

> None of the money donated through Invisible Children has ever gone to support the
> government of Uganda or any other government. Yet the only feasible and proper way to
> stop Kony and protect the civilians he targets is to improve the efforts of regional
> governments, which we are advocating for, not supporting monetarily. The Ugandan
> military (UPDF) is a necessary piece in counter-LRA activities. No other LRA-affected
> country has a military that is equipped and competent enough to engage with the LRA.
> The UPDF has a solid understanding of the LRA's tactics and methods of movement, and
> has developed working relationships with South Sudan and Central African Republic in
> combined efforts to stop LRA violence. The UPDF has reduced the size and strength of
> the LRA prodigiously. In May 2012 the UPDF apprehended Caesar Achellam, one of the
> top commanders in the LRA. In January 2013 another top commander, Vincent Binani,
> was killed in combat.
>
> Invisible Children does not defend any of the human rights abuses perpetrated by the
> Ugandan government or the Uganda military (UPDF) or any other regional military. Any
> international support to the UPDF should be conditioned on the UPDF improving its
> human rights record. International attention focused on the UPDF in its counter-LRA
> activities will be a step towards ensuring that human rights abuses are reported and the
> perpetrators held accountable. As it complements efforts to end LRA violence, we
> encourage the African Union to be diligent about training troops in professionalism
> (Invisible Children, Questions and Answers, 2014).

Invisible Children has faced much criticism (e.g. Mamdani, 2012; Cole, 2012).  I do not mean to

add to the criticism, but the quote above is illustrative of just how intricate and complex the

situation is in Uganda as a whole.  While it may be true that they do not monetarily support the

government, by expressing what they have expressed, in the eyes of my informants they have

chosen a side in the conflict.  It probably is true that outside of international military intervention

the best way to put an end to LRA/M violence is the UPDF. However, in the eyes of my informants, IC is expressing support of a military, of a government, that has also committed tremendous atrocities against them. While Joseph Kony and the LRA/M have committed horrific atrocities, they are seen as "Acholi" and have expressed a commitment to fighting for the Acholi and values that the Acholi hold dear - education, a representative government, peace. My informants see the UPDF as the people who forced them into camps, raped women, hid in the center of camps so they were the last to be attacked during raids, and allowed an estimated 1,000 people per day to die. As one informant put it, "We were rats trapped on a sinking ship. If we stay, we drown. If we run for life boats, we get shot." Under other circumstances, this would undoubtedly be considered genocide, but in part due to the "rebel activity" it was framed as assisting the "victims." Most Acholi I have talked to do not see the government as being on their side. They have been caught in the middle, and have been victimized by multiple participants. Taking the stance that the Invisible Children has taken is seen as choosing a side, and to be quite honest, in the eyes of nearly all of my informants, each side is bad. Some of the Invisible Children's phrases, "Don't study history, make history" and "jump first, fear later" are illustrative (ironically or not) of the IC's lack of historical understanding, or true appreciation of the complexities in Ugandan history.

Since colonialism the Acholi have been framed as "primitive" and "warlike." This expressed itself in the cooptation into the military and police forces by the south. And, due to this essentially forced conscription, a self-fulfilling prophecy came to fruition. My informants view the Ugandan government almost dismissively. As one informant put it, "What have they done for us? You have been to Kampala. It is developed. What have you seen since you crossed the river? The government keeps saying they are going to help us, but where is it?" His

sentiments were evidenced when I left after the visit. As I returned to the south a large lorry (truck) was buried up to the axles in the middle of what seemed to be a dry road. In an effort to help, two additional trucks became stuck. As people attempted to go around, at first via ditches then completely off road through the brush, they also became stuck. In what can only be seen as a comedy of errors, seven trucks and cars blocked a two-lane dirt road. This resulted in my transportation having to back track over an hour while the 19 people in my taxi licensed for 14 walked two kilometers and waited in the next market center for our ride to return. As we walked my informant asked, "See? This would not happen in Kampala. But, we are Acholi, so it is apparently ok." I asked him if a change of President would help. One of the most prevalent rumors is that Yoweri Musevini's son has been promoted through the military ranks to General very quickly and is being groomed to take command. My informant laughed and said, "That would just be new wine in an old bottle."

What I hope to accomplish in this work is to examine the "old bottle." Initially, I was interested in the LRA as a social movement. However, after a handful of interviews and developing a deeper understanding of Ugandan history fraught with conflict and the uprising of countless groups, rebel causes, coups, and military overthrows, and especially after hearing the tragic stories of those I was interviewing, it seemed more fruitful to understand the changes that are still occurring. During the course of interviewing I became most interested in what life is like now, several years post-conflict. What has improved? What has declined? What is life like now? How has decades of conflict and living in IDP camps impacted Acholi culture? What do the Acholi see as problems in their daily lives and what do they see as the solutions moving forward? In short, what is the role of the past conflict on shaping the current reality?

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Somewhere in the middle of my travels and listening to overwhelming personal tragedies, the thought of examining the transformation of the LRA/M as a social movement seemed inadequate. This does not mean that this type of analysis is meaningless. Social movement theorists, development theorists, and scholars like Mamdani have written prodigiously over the years. It seemed inadequate for a few reasons. First, while it does not typically deal with Africa, the field of social movements has been quite developed. Second, the question I was asked most often, "What do you know about our history?" was almost always followed with a series of additional questions. I was repeatedly asked, "What will the Acholi get out of this?" However, rarely was the question centered on what an individual would get (i.e. money, food, school fees for participation). It was almost always a bigger question about the Acholi or local community as a whole. I was asked repeatedly, "How is this different from the white cars that come to help? How is it different from the videos that have been made? We are strong, proud, Acholi. All we ask is that our story is shared…our voices heard." Third, I have always been more driven by helping others. One of Karl Marx's most famous quotes comes from "Theses on Feuerbach." "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

The more interviews I conducted, the more I found myself concerned with their daily lives. What was their story? How could I share their story? How could I be a conduit for their voices? In short, how could I change their world, even in the smallest of ways, while also interpreting it? The deeper I delved, the further away from social movements I found myself. Several themes arose during data analysis. These themes centered more on culture, history, and conflict. They centered more on the connection of what C. Wright Mills (2000) calls "personal troubles" and "public issues;" the promise of sociology.

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*Education*

Sitting under the magnificent mango tree, I pulled out my iPhone to check the time. I was going to be sick and I was hoping to make it back to my room in Lira before it happened. After a long day of interviewing in remote camps, and nearly three hours of conversation at my present residence, we had just finished a meal of cassava, bitter greens, and groundnut sauce. To top the meal, and the reason for my oncoming illness, the head of the house brought forth the sweetest passion fruit juice possible. The juice was quite literally half sugar, the remaining sugar that they had. It is custom in Acholi culture to give a gift when one has visitors. Despite drought and poor crops, it is important for the Acholi to share what they have. Most of the time, food is the gift. Protests to the contrary, arguing that it is not necessary to share food that they do not have, are always met with dismissal and often met with, "Family shares meals. Enemies do not. How can we be family if we do not eat together?" The problem, for me, was the water with which the juice was made. It was collected from a small, muddy stream about a half of a kilometer away. I was grateful for the juice, but knew that my time was limited. Upon glancing at my phone, the circle fell silent. "What is that?" I replied, and handed my phone over. After about 5 minutes of opening every application, I was asked, "In the U.S. can you access the internet on this?" I responded, "Yes, pretty much anywhere in the country." Silence. Then, the eldest in the group looked at me and said,

> "The gap between your children (children in the U.S.) and our children is very big. Your
> children have access to things like this. Your children can access all of the knowledge in
> the world, at any time. My children (as he pointed towards the thatch-roofed hut, a
> remnant of the IDP camp)...I can't afford to send my children to school. And, even if I

could, the school here is not good.  How are my children ever supposed to catch up with yours?"

While the lack of technology (computers, internet, reliable electricity) can obviously be seen as a problem in much of the developing world, my informants were conscious of the technological divide and the disadvantageous position is places their children in in the increasingly competitive world.  While this may not be unique in northern Uganda, the amplifying impact it has is unquestionable.

It was a good question and one that was posed to me in numerous different settings.  The Ugandan government, in 1997, instituted a Universal Primary Education (UPE) program.  UPE would provide free primary education to four children per family.  In theory the program was much needed.  In practice, at least in the beginning, the program was a success as the number of schools increased six-fold and the number of children in school nearly tripled in the first 3 years (Musevini, accessed 2014).  A UNESCO report from 2000 proudly exclaimed, "Uganda Hits Universal Primary Education Target" (UNESCO, 2000).  The report continues, "In some parts of the Central regions of Uganda, the response was so high that some classes had to be conducted under trees."  Sadly, while progress has certainly been made, this is still the case in many of the regions that I visited.  In Otuke district, I visited the "school," an open air building that consisted of little more than a roof and about one hundred blue, plastic chairs.  The building was also the community meeting place and church.  That is not to say that learning cannot take place under such conditions, it is merely a means of portraying the conditions often faced in northern Acholiland.  True or not, my informants perceive the conditions as a lack of support from the government.  They see what is happening as not only a sign of disrespect, but also as if the government is dismissive of them as a people.  As more than one informant told me, "They (the Musevini led government) don't care about us.  They see us as primitive, backwards, and violent.

They may not want us dead, but they would prefer it if we were. We are worse than forgotten." One astute, elderly informant continued, "They don't care about us, so why would they care about our children? They view us as primitive. One way to ensure that we remain so is to neglect our children. What does the future hold for us if our children are left behind?"

As a former rebel (whom I will call Moses) revealed, the problem is much more complex, "We have lost an entire generation. Our country is only 50 years old, but in the north we are already an entire generation behind the south." Moses was captured one evening while sleeping in a camp. The rebels came to loot, and he was forced to help carry supplies back to their camp in the bush. Moses was 14 and about halfway through primary school at the time of the abduction (though his schooling was held inside of the IDP camp and he reported that it was highly informal and inadequate). Moses is now in his early 30's (he escaped when he was 20). Charles and I found him living in an isolated hut, with his girlfriend and 2 children. His brother and sister were also abducted during the same raid; he said that he has not seen either since that evening. While his story was harrowing, during our 2-½ hour interview he kept talking to me about education.

> "What am I supposed to do? What are my children supposed to do? Yes, the government has supposedly opened up UPE for everyone, but I cannot afford the money needed for uniforms and supplies to send them to school." He continued, making a point that is often forgotten, "What about me? What about those like me, those of us who were abducted? I was 14. I never completed school. The only skills I have are those provided to me in the bush, skills I try to forget every day. I can barely read. Even if I could send my kids to school, I couldn't help them with homework when they return. What kind of father am I? There is an entire generation of children just like me. We are lost. An entire generation of Acholi lost. If we don't get educated, then two generations will be lost. What are we supposed to do? What does our future hold?"

Moses touched upon numerous issues concerning the past, education now, and what the future holds.  I will delve deeper into the ideas of culture loss and a "lost generation" a bit later.  For now, I will focus on what many have termed, and Moses put his finger on but did not label, as the hidden costs of UPE and Universal Secondary Education (USE, which was later instituted in 2007*).*  While it is true that great care and expense went into the implementation and continued operation of UPE, and the "education" is free, parents are required to provide funds for meals at school, uniforms, exercise books, pens, pencils, toilet paper, and the like.  While this, on the surface, sounds like a great deal, in actuality these small fees are not inconsequential for impoverished families, instead they are often roadblocks.  According to the 2010 Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) the Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) for children between the age of 6 -12 was 83% (UNHS, 2010).  Other measurement tools, such as the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, the National Service Delivery Survey, and Census all reveal a very similar NER.

Education for young girls is a huge determinant not only in their future success and life chances, but also is a boon for nationwide development.  As Tamusuza (2011) writes, and numerous other studies also reveal,

> Education for girls has been shown to have far-reaching benefits.  Hill and King (1995) estimate that a 10% increase in girls' primary enrollment would decrease infant mortality by 4.1 deaths per 1,000 live births.  They also demonstrate that a similar rise in girls' secondary enrollment leads to a further reduction of 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. Educated mothers are likely to have fewer children, healthier families, higher incomes, and are more likely to send their children to school. Education for girls also has a strong positive impact later, on the health outcomes of their children with respect to immunization rates and family nutrition (2011:117).

The sex of a child is only one determinant in education. Other barriers include, of course, infrastructure, cost, birth order, rurality of residence, and child labor (Tamusuza, 2011). Moses, Charles, and many other informants touched upon all of these factors. The "school" (school/church/community building) I mentioned before is the nearest school for Moses' children. Even if he could afford the hidden costs of education, it is about a 6 km trek each way on unpaved roads and beaten down footpaths. Without education, he is trapped. Without education, the future of his children remains uncertain.

But, what if Moses could be educated? What "grade" would he enroll in? Primary 4? Primary 5? As a 30 year old man? Over-age attendance is another complicated issue. Numerous informants have children who are much older than their educational level would suggest. Divan is 20 years old and in senior 4 (equivalent to a sophomore in high school in the U.S.). Probably the most extreme example that I found was of a young girl I will call Shillet. Shillet is an orphan. The community told me that she lost both parents, in quick succession, to Aids. Her grandmother's health is failing, so the clan decided she should live with her uncle. Highly impoverished, her uncle, who the clan revealed is an alcoholic and a polygamist, sexually abused her and attempted to sell her into marriage. The clan decided that it was in her best interest to reside in an orphanage in Kampala. Shillet is 14 years old and in primary 2 (the second grade). She struggles with basic English words (the language her classes are taught in) and speaks Luo in a city where most speak English and Luganda (including her teachers). And, many people view the Acholi as the persistent ethnic "frame" suggests (primitive, violent, and backwards). Struggling in the second grade as a 14 year old only fuels the self-fulfilling stereotypes. The question becomes, what is her outcome? Will she be 18 years old and in the 6th grade? Will she be 24 when she graduates high school? Or, will she most likely drop out and

almost certainly seal her fate as a young, highly impoverished, mother of several children?

Given the length of time it has taken to write this dissertation, her outcome is known. She indeed

did drop out. She is currently learning to plait hair but wants to learn tailoring. She now lives

with the families of three friends in a small two room "house" near Kampala. When I recently

asked her how she earns money for rent her response was, "I'm a girl," suggesting prostitution is

now part of her existence.

Esther is another example. Esther's family was killed in the conflict, leaving her

orphaned and in Kampala. At 15 years old she was in the third grade at a lower class school.

Without parents to look after her, she found herself in a home for children. In part due to her

ethnic group and Uganda's propensity towards corporal punishment, she was viewed negatively

and caned on several occasions. She deemed it better to leave, drop out of school, and begin

working in a beauty salon (plaiting hair), sealing her fate and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

> Tamusuza (2011) examines the phenomenon of over-age enrollment, "The key cause of
> over-age attendance is late enrollment in primary school. In Uganda, the recommended
> age for starting primary school is 6 years. However, there is evidence that most children
> enroll in primary school at a later age. For example, the results from the UDES survey
> show that 30% of children start school when they are older than 7 years. […] Only about
> half of children aged 6 attend primary school. The proportion of children in any grade
> increases from age 6 onward, and is highest at age 11, declining after that" (124).

Over-age enrollment was revealed in the 2009/2010 Uganda National Household Survey

(UNHS). Table 4.1 shows the official age (the age a child is supposed to be) of enrollment into

each year of schooling. The problems are revealed when comparing the mean and median ages

for each year with the official age. In primary 1 the mean age of enrollment is 1.4 years older

than the official age. By the time primary 7 is reached, it climbs to 2.9 years older than the

official age. In the simplest terms possible, the average age of children in primary 7 is nearly 15

when they should be 12. Late enrollment, stopping and starting schooling, missing terms due to

poverty, lack of food, child labor, distance, disability, repetition of a grade, school environment,

menstruation, becoming an orphan, or parental perception of education, leads to fairly severe problems later in the educational process.

**Table 4.1 Mean and median ages in primary school by class**

| Class | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Official age | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Mean age | 7.4 | 8.7 | 10.2 | 11.6 | 12.8 | 13.9 | 14.9 |
| Median age | 7 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |

**Sources: UNHS 2009/10**

The Gross Enrollment Ratio numbers are worst in northern Uganda (Acholiland).  Table 4.2 shows the estimated percentage of children enrolled in primary school for children between 6 and 12 years old.  The numbers fell in each region between 2005 and 2010, with northern Uganda (Acholiland) showing the worst enrollment rate at 76%.

**Table 4.2 Estimated Net Enrollment Rate for Children aged 6-12 (%)**

| Background characteristics | | 2005 UNHS | 2010 UNHS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Region | Central | 87 | 83 |
| | Eastern | 88 | 84 |
| | Northern | 78 | 76 |
| | Western | 84 | 78 |

**Sources: UNHS 2009/2010**

To further illustrate the complications of education within Uganda, UNICEF (2014) reported that the survival rate in primary in 2008 in Uganda was 32%.  The difference between survival rate (an odd term to use, especially when discussing a conflict affected region) and retention rate should be noted.  Retention rate is the percentage of first-year students who enroll in the second year of a program.  Survival rate is the percentage of first-year students who will complete an entire course of schooling.  In Uganda, this means enrolling in primary 1 and finishing primary 7, or enrolling in senior 1 and completing senior 6.  UNESCO (2011) reported that in Tanzania

the survival rate was 83% and in Kenya it was 72%. Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole in 2011 was 66.9% (Tamusuza, 126).

These numbers are further reflected when discussing the educational level of those over 15 years of age. Table 4.3 illustrates nationally that 51.4% of persons over 15 report having completed some primary school as their highest level of schooling. To highlight a few of the disparities, Kampala, the Capital city, has the highest levels of education. Nearly 22% of those surveyed reported having more education than secondary school. In Acholiland the number is 4.4%. At 18.2%, the north reports the lowest percentage of people having at least attended some secondary school.

**Table 4.3: Educational Status of persons aged 15 years and above by selected background characteristics (%)**

| Background | No formal schooling | Some or completed primary | Some or completed secondary | Above secondary |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Male | 9.8 | 53.8 | 29.1 | 7.3 |
| Female | 24.1 | 49.3 | 21.9 | 4.7 |
| **Residence** | | | | |
| Urban | 6.6 | 30.5 | 44.8 | 18.1 |
| Rural | 19.7 | 56 | 21.1 | 3.3 |
| **Region** | | | | |
| Kampala | 4.4 | 27.9 | 46 | 21.7 |
| Central | 10.3 | 47.1 | 33.4 | 9.1 |
| Eastern | 18.3 | 56.1 | 23.1 | 2.5 |
| Northern | 22.8 | 54.7 | 18.2 | 4.4 |
| Western | 21.9 | 54.1 | 20.4 | 3.7 |
| **Uganda** | **17.3** | **51.4** | **25.3** | **5.9** |
| | | | | |

**Sources: UNHS 2009/2010**

Failure to complete primary education is high in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is estimated at 67% (Fredriksen, 2005). Unfortunately, Uganda's completion ratio is far lower than this average, at about 33%. […] The Ministry of Education has made tremendous strides in addressing the supply side of the primary education system. There has been investment in teacher recruitment and training, textbook supplies, and school infrastructure. In its official documents the Ministry of Education and Sports identifies four pillars to enhance the quality of education: namely pupils, teachers, management, and the community. What this approach lacks though is a specific attention to the demand side of primary education. The Ministry recognizes that children start school over-age, and that the dropout rates are high. It also notes that the late starters are more likely to drop out because of peer pressure, while early starters tend to repeat classes because they may find the learning material too advanced for their age. The Ministry of Education has not taken any targeted action to encourage on-time school entry. Instead it has delegated (those responsibilities) to the local governments (Tamusuza, 2011:140).

As my informant handed my phone back he said, "Education is the key to my children's future. This (said while pointing at my phone)…technology…computers…is where jobs are going to be. My children have no chance. My children have no future. What are we to do?"

Outside of Uganda, the LRA conflict, child soldiering, and the atrocities committed by Joseph Kony are the main focus and viewed as the main problems. During my interviews Joseph Kony was rarely mentioned. When asked about the impacts of the conflict, education was almost always addressed and almost always one of the very first issues mentioned. While interviewees may not know that,

A policy brief issued by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA 2008), using cross-country economic growth data from over 100 countries, shows unambiguously that education is a fundamental determinant of a nation's health, demographic trends, personal income, and the country's overall level of economic growth. Education is also a necessary precondition for long-term economic growth. The

researchers also advise making universal secondary education a goal, to give poor countries human capital that is necessary to bring large segments of the population out of poverty (Tamusuza, 2011:117).

Or that research from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) show that small increases in primary school enrollment for girls leads to lower infant mortality rates (King, 1995), educated mothers have fewer children, wait until later in life to begin having them, have healthier families, higher incomes, better nutrition, are more likely to educate their own children, positive impacts on other MDGs such as land conservation, natural resource management, HIV/AIDS prevention, and many more (Tamusuza, 2001; UN Millennium Project, 2005), interviewees do grasp that education is vital. It is vital for keeping up with the rest of the world and providing their children a better future.

One of the dominant perspectives outside of Uganda is that Joseph Kony and the LRA are still seen as problems and are feared. It is telling that in nearly every single interview, when asked what is seen as the biggest issues facing Acholi culture, education was not only mentioned but was one of the very first issues mentioned. Education in Uganda, especially in the rural regions of the north, faces many challenges. The consciousness of my interviewees was awe-inspiring. If one of the biggest institutions that structures one's view of the world is education, one does not need to contemplate very long to understand an entire generation of Ugandans is facing some extreme problems. My interviewees, it could be argued, were correct in their assessment of education as one of the biggest issues they face.

# Land Conflict

*"Land is Life in Acholiland"*

"…From that tree…to that small tree…to that grass…to that rock (pointing towards a spot on the ground where a rock used to lay, but has since vanished)…that is where my husband told us that our land is.  But…he is dead now, he died in the camp.  Our neighbors argue that their ancestors told them that their land came to this small tree, but they are dead now.  We have respect for our ancestors and want to keep the land in our family.  So do our neighbors.  What are we to do?"

The IFPRI (2011) estimates that 80 to 93 percent of the land in Uganda is held under a customary tenure system.  That is to say,

"Landowners do not have deeds recognizing their ownership rights and land is run according to rules and practices generally accepted as legitimate and binding by a particular community.  […] Usually, the head of the clan or family, the 'custodian,' has the responsibility to look after each member's land rights.  Under this system, disputes are heard and settled by clan elders" (IDMC, 2012:28).

Customary land tenure is by far the most common system used for those who are returning from camps.

While the markers changed and the details were altered slightly, this was a story I heard from almost every single informant.  Some involved small sections of land.  Some involved the construction of a camp right on one's ancestral land itself, thousands of huts in one's back yard (and front and side yard for that matter), huts that are still inhabited by elderly, highly impoverished, and ill people who are unable (physically and/or monetarily) to return to their own ancestral land.  Some cannot return due to their own land conflicts, their ancestral land having been claimed by others.

At the height of displacement in northern Uganda, there were 2 million Internally Displaced Persons.  For the past 21 years, northern Uganda has been the scene of wars
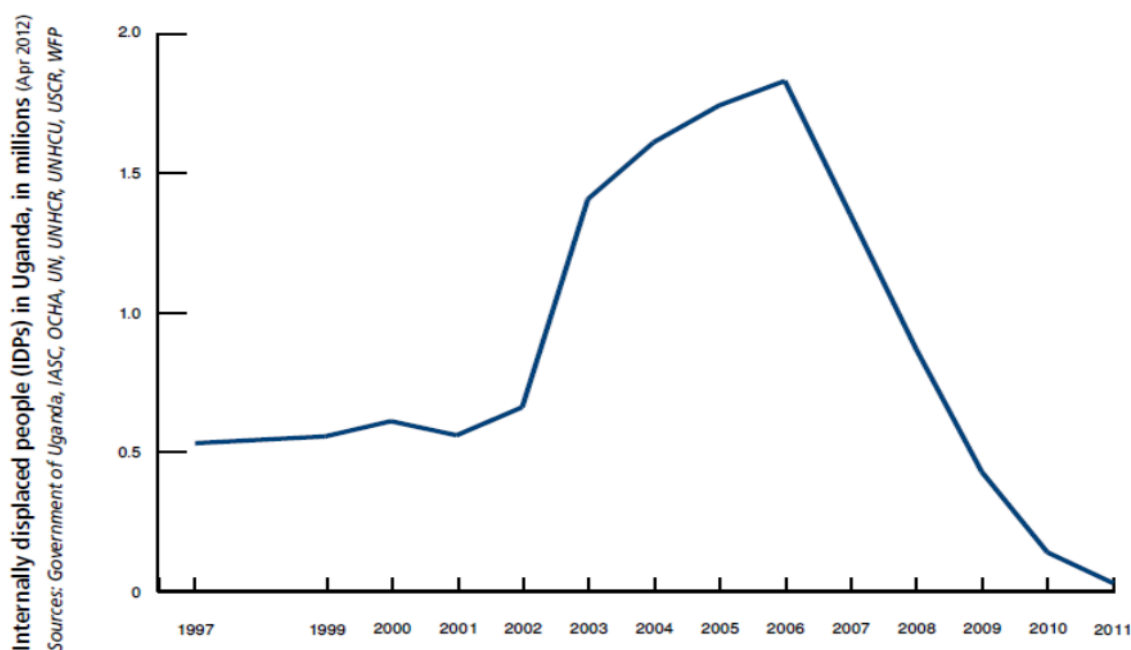
and insecurity, as a result of armed rebellions, particularly by the Lord's Resistance Army in Acholi land (Kitgum, Gulu, and Pader districts), Lango region (Apac and Lira districts), and Teso region (Kaberamaido, Katakwi, and Soroti districts), and by armed Karamajong cattle rustling in the Karamoja region (Kotido, Moroto, Nakapiripirit districts) leading to massive displacement into either camps or in locations generally at 3 to 10 km away from the original homes within the same districts (World Bank, 2008).

The World Bank's report in 2008 found that about 5% of the displaced population in Acholiland had yet to return to their original homes. They estimated that 55,000 of the original 1.1 million displaced persons were still displaced. By 2012, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reported that less than 30,000 displaced people remained in camps.

> "Today the majority of the 30,000 IDPs remaining in camps – most of which have been officially closed – either cannot manage the return process on their own (due to their age, illness, or disability) or have no land to go back to. Many widows and orphans are denied access to land of deceased husbands or fathers" (IDMC, 2012:8).

**Table 4.4: Internally Displaced People in Uganda by Year**

**Graph: Conflict- induced displacement in Uganda**



**Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2012:7**

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Mabikke (2011) found that about 65% of land disputes in northern Uganda occurred on land abandoned by internal refugees.

Most of my informants shared stories that confirm the above data. While most discussed concern about ancestral land of origin, almost everyone discussed the need for land for survival. The World Bank estimates that over 90% of Ugandans depend upon land to generate revenue for survival. This number, while high, only increases as one traverses the extremely rural regions of northern Uganda. As one informant bluntly put it, "Land is life in Acholiland." He not only discussed the need of land for crops, but also for livestock. Every single informant that I talked to mentioned the "past." More specifically, there was an almost nostalgic remembrance of "the way things used to be." The picture that was painted for me over and over was of a bountiful land where most people depended upon goats, cattle, and other livestock for consumption and revenue. As more than one informant told me, "I used to be able to sell goats. I used the money for school fees."

Maybe it is due to the time that has passed since the last LRA/M attacks in the region, but almost every informant (no matter how horrific their personal stories involving the LRA/M were) mentioned a greater concern about the Karamojong and cattle rustling. Karamoja is a very dry and poor region in northeastern Uganda. Karamoja is largely pastoralist and cattle are needed for food and milk. Historically in Uganda different ethnic groups view something as given to them by God either for protection or for their good past deeds. The Karamajong believe that God gave them cattle and thus the cattle of the world are rightfully theirs. Traditionally, grooms need cattle as an offer to potential brides (IMDC, 2012). Cattle rustling intensified and took on a different facet when guns were introduced to traditional Karamojong warriors.

Seasonal changes have also been known to have an impact, as between rainy seasons raids increased.

My original questions seem naïve in retrospect. Having been years since the last attack inside of the region, I asked if people still feared that Kony would return. As one informant put it, "Kony? He is Acholi. We cannot fear our brothers and sisters." Notably, this response was common. But, in almost every instance the informants would comment about it while looking at the ground. One could see the internal dilemma taking place. It was evident that there was some form of ethnic ties or regional loyalty but also an underlying understanding that the LRA/M was the reason they were where they were, the reason their sons and daughters, mothers and fathers were dead, missing, or traumatized. However, eye contact would return almost instantly when their story would shift to livestock rustling. It was almost as if the LRA/M took their land, but the Karamojong, by taking their animals, had taken their lifeblood. Additionally, the last attack by the LRA/M occurred years prior while Karamojong raids have occurred as late as 2011, according to the Daily Monitor (2011). The single most asked request of me during all of my time in northern Uganda further evidenced this, "Can you help me get a few animals?" "If I just had a few goats or cattle I would be ok."

With that said, to raise animals, land is a necessity. While much has been done to alleviate the land conflicts, more work is needed. As the 2012 IDMC report notes,

> Finding solutions to land disputes must involve returning IDPs. Their livelihoods depend on their ability to farm their land and sell their harvest, yet, increasingly, domestic and foreign investors are seeking to purchase arable land, a tendency spreading throughout Africa (IFPRI, November 2011). Thousands of people have been expelled as a result of transfer of land to investors reportedly in violation of legally-defined consultation and compensation mechanisms (Oxfam, September 2011). Many people are also reported to have lost plots of land and crops during preliminary tests to search for oil. Effective

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dispute resolutions have been hampered. Clan elders who generally decide on land disputes have been overloaded with cases. Increased land shortages strongly limit their traditional capacity to issue new plots of land to those in need. Displacement has weakened elders' authority: traditions and customs are less known and adhered to. In addition, the state court system intended to mediate disputes is underfunded and overwhelmed by a backlog of cases (UN Habitat, 2007). Many IDPs cannot afford the fees charged for official assistance in settling land disputes (Brookings/IDMC, 2011). Some of those returnees who have managed to regain their land have been secondarily displaced by incorporation of their land within national parks. This was the fate of returnees living in a village of Amuru District who were left with no choice other than to return to their former IDP camp (IRIN, 2012:9).

While it is true that much work has been done to alleviate internal displacement (as shown by the estimated number of people living in internally displaced peoples camps in Table 4.5 by the IDMC), as has been mentioned before it is also important to take internal perception into consideration. Most of my informants feel left behind, forgotten, disrespected, and left to fend for themselves. The official numbers indicate that tremendous strides have been made, nearly everyone has returned "home," but that "home" is a very different place than when they were forced to leave.

**Table 4.5: Estimated Number of People Living in IDP Camps**

| Year | IDP Estimate | Source |
|------|--------------|--------|
| **2011** | 29,776 | UNHCR, December 2011 |
| **2010** | 140,000 | UNHCR, November 2010 |
| **2009** | 428,589 | UNHCR, December 2009 |
| **2008** | 869,000 | IASC Working Group in Uganda, November 2008 |
| **2007** | 1.3 to 1.4 million | IASC Working Group in Uganda, May 2007 |

| 2006 | 1,830,000 | OCHA, November 2006 |
|------|-----------|---------------------|
| 2005 | 1,742,062 | OCHA, November 2005 |
| 2004 | 1,609,744 | WFP, April 2004 |
| 2003 | 1,405,976 | Government of Uganda, November 2003 |
| 2002 | 660,373 | OCHA, July 2002 |
| 2001 | 559,561 | OCHA, January 2002 |
| 2000 | 610,240 | UNHCU, December 2000 |
| 1999 | 555,668 | UNHCU, January 2000 |

**Source: IDMC, 2012:21**

For those who have remained behind, part of the disconnect between what the "data" say and what my informants express can be explained by the fact that my informants are astute to what is transpiring. Why would they not be; they are living it. The United Nations ended its assistance program in 2011, while nearly 30,000 people still remained in camps. The people left behind do not have adequate access to food and water (The Guardian, 2012). Simultaneously, in 2011 food prices increased

> "partly due to a prolonged dry season in most parts of the country which contributed to reduced agricultural outputs. Domestic commodity prices have also increased due to the depreciation of the national currency, the Ugandan Shilling, and the general increase of global commodity prices. This particularly impacted Ugandans under the poverty line who have to spend a large share of their income on food, including many of the returned IDPs" (IDMC, 2012:25).

In a 2009 World Food Programme report it was estimated that over one million northern Ugandans were highly food insecure (Famine Early Warning System Network, 2009). Data and lived realities sometimes paint very different pictures. It is true that camps have closed, people

are leaving, rebel-induced atrocities have ceased, and life is returning to a sense of "normalcy," but conflict continues, just in a different form.

"Land is life," as one of my interviewees told me.  As such, land conflicts may very well be the most significant conflict faced by those who were displaced.  The disputes often end in violence (Rugadya, 2009).  Disputes often arise between junior and senior family members; widows and the late husband's family; land grabbing neighbors; selling family land without permission; landowners and squatters; gifting and other transfers of ownership (MercyCorps, 2011).  One of my informants, an elderly and ailing woman, reported facing such,

> "My husband was killed.  When I returned to my land, my neighbor had started building on my property.  When I told him that he was building on my property he said, "you are just an old woman, there isn't anything you can do about it."  Thankfully my eldest daughter was able to complete University and has started working in a bank in the south.  She earns a little over 500,000 shillings per month (just less than $150).  It cost 500,000 shillings to get the title.  Praise God she sent her entire earnings and I got the title.  When I had the police come to remove him from my land, he was not happy."

I asked her if she fears retaliation.  She said "yes."  Since the dispute, the neighbor has since passed away.  If she had not been able to obtain the title before his passing, who knows how her story might have ended.  She was able to use the formal legal system to solve her dispute, but discrepancies in customary law and formal law are leading to serious challenges.

> Uganda's history, marked by several drastic changes in land policy, has created uncertainty about rights and ownership.  Since colonial times, each government has developed a new set of land policies without nullifying previous rights, such that today there is a confusing overlay of several different land rights systems.  British colonists in 1900 gave large tracts of freehold estates, called "mailo" land, to a few wealthy people (Green, 2005).  This destroyed the ownership rights of those that had already occupied the land.  All non-mailo land became public land.  In the 1920s, laws gave these

unwilling mailo tenants some rights, including eviction protection. Idi Amin's government nationalized all land in 1975. Though this had little impact at the time, it confused ownership claims. The 1998 Land Act changed legal rights yet again (Deininger, 2006). Today, the constitution recognizes at least four types of ownership, often over the same plot of land: customary, freehold private property, mailo rights, and leaseholds (Rugadya, 2009). In 2007, amendments to the current land law were introduced and are still being debated. At this time, it is unclear how the legal system will change in the near – to medium-term future (MercyCorps, 2011:6).

To complicate matters, formal statutes give rights to someone who has held a piece of land for more than twelve years (Hetz, 2007). This raises problems when someone was displaced twenty years ago due to conflict and a squatter has been farming their land in their absence (Rugadya, 2009).

At the start of almost every interview I conducted, after introducing myself and discussing why I was there, I was asked a singular question, "what do you know about our history?" In the beginning I believed this was asked so that the informants would not feel the need to retell history that I already know. However, I learned that this was not the case at all. What many of the informants were doing was trying to understand which side of the story I was familiar with, the history as understood by northerners, as told by the Ugandan government, or a westernized version. When I explained the history as I knew it I was often met with, "Ok. You know the truth. You are not from the government." It was obvious from the start, and continuously reaffirmed that there is a serious mistrust of the formal government. When discussing land conflicts, many people discussed some mistrust in local leaders ("ah, they are corrupt!") but the local leaders were almost always trusted more than the Ugandan government. The formal system and the customary system both face serious issues in isolation. When

coupled together, and mixed with a history of distrust, land conflict is rightfully one of the biggest concerns facing the Acholi.

To add one more layer of complexity to the situation, oil has been discovered in Acholiland (Nwoya, and Amuru district). This is sparking even more debate. Museveni has repeatedly called Acholi leaders reactionary and suffering from "megwa" thinking (the belief that the land is theirs). Museveni has pushed for more "progressive" thinking ("the land is all of Uganda's"). This is a difficult idea to sell to the Acholi, who have serious distrust of the government, especially after watching the south flourish while the north fails to develop. Discovering oil has of course increased land demand, prices, land grabs, oil companies paying multiple parties involved in dispute over single pieces of land, and is leading to accusations of corruption (i.e., shell corporations tied to Museveni buying large tracts of land, 40,000 hectares, for "sugar cane production").

> The conflicts around oil, like all other resources in Uganda, are fuelled by the lack of trust in government and its institutions (Mutaizibwe, 2012). The oil project has thus far been shrouded in secrecy. There is frustration amongst communities about their alleged exclusion from employment in the exploration activities taking place in their communities, which some community leaders claim is a deliberate strategy to keep operations hidden from local scrutiny (ACCS, 2012). Against the backdrop of mistrust already existing between northerners and government institutions, oil exploration has only worsened existing cleavages (ACCS, 2013:19).

The Acholi essentially lost everything during the LRA conflict. Nearly every interviewee discussed land issues when asked about cultural changes due to the conflict, and for good reason. As several stated, "How can we survive without our land?" Additionally, most did not place the blame solely on the conflict. Numerous informants discussed a much greater fear of raids by the gun toting Karamajong from the east. All throughout east Africa different ethnic groups believe

God (or their God) has blessed them with something. Traditionally, the Karamajong hold beliefs that God gave them cattle as a blessing and they are responsible for caring for all cattle. Anyone else owning cattle are viewed as being in the wrong. From losing their livestock raised for meat, milk, skins, dowries, school fees and the like, to losing their land, the Acholi have faced tremendous financial impacts. Perhaps the greater, and immeasurable losses, are not financial but cultural. Losing land for a group that is so closely tied to the land challenges their cultural identity. As an older male told me,

> "Who am I? Without land, who am I? I am Acholi. I am hardworking. My family showed me how to work the land, raise goats and cattle, grow crops, and praise our ancestors. Now I've lost that. How am I supposed to survive? How do I send my children to school? How am I supposed to pass on to my children what it means to be Acholi? There won't be anything here for them. They want us gone so they can have the land. They kept us in IDP camps so they could take our land. They take our livestock so we cannot survive. The rains no longer come. How am I supposed to survive? Who am I?"

What he is referring to is more than just a loss of life or wealth; it is a loss of life style. It is a loss of permanence. It is a loss of cultural tradition. It is a loss of identity. For the people I talked to, this is something feared far more than Joseph Kony's existence or return. The Western world has historically defined the problems and identified the solutions. This should come as no surprise as those with "power" often write the history books. Where the "White man" goes ("great" explorers like Livingstone and Speke, Columbus, Lewis and Clark) they are always the "first" person to see, climb, or traverse great obstacles (Lake Victoria, Lake George, Lake Edward, Mount Stanley, Margherita Peak, Mount Everest, etc.). It is as if locals do not exist, or exist only as part of great, wild lands that need to be conquered, controlled, and claimed. If this

occurs with great landmarks, it should come as no surprise that it happens with the problems of the people.

The great irony is, the problems locals faced before Westerners came have been intensified by outside influence.  Often, this occurs on purpose (colonizers drawing upon ethnic and cultural divides) and is used as a tool to conquer.  Now, as is the case in northern Uganda, not only was the purposeful tool of conquering used, but also the intense problems created are identified with and blamed upon locals.  And the solutions (capture Kony, use the Ugandan military) are also provided.  It really should come as no surprise that the locals, that is to say the people who have lived these experiences, understand and "know" the true problems faced, the causes, and the solutions.  It should also come as no surprise that the Western world is too often ignorant of or deaf to history.  It is a freedom, recognized or unrecognized privilege, granted to those with unequal access to power.  All too often "help" is not only unhelpful, but exacerbates problems.  The question becomes, what is happening to the Acholi culture?  Acholi identity?

# Chapter 5 – "Who am I?  What do I do now?"

In chapter 5 I build upon the Acholi connection to land and the culture loss and identity crisis faced.  Coupled with this identity loss, I begin to discuss the important component of outside influence.  Then I move into climate change, a shift in temperature and rain that impacts the ability to subsist.  Finally, this chapter discusses a perceived generational divide that my interviewees expressed and the impact of outside help influencing the younger generations of Acholi.

"I don't know what to do.  Two of my children are gone, my family's land is gone, my animals have been taken, the rain doesn't come like it used to, and the NGOs are leaving."  I heard these words in nearly every single interview in Acholiland.  They were often followed with questions of what I would do if I lived there.  It would be easy to dismiss these questions as rhetorical, but they were very serious in the quest for answers.  It was intriguing to hear discussions about culture loss and the impacts of outside cultural influences, followed closely by questions seeking outside input on "what they should do."  I believe it was one means of coping with two decades of atrocities.  I also believe it was symbolic of the dependency that was created in the IDP camps.  So, how do the victims of such horrible atrocities, food insecurity, water insecurity, the breakdown of traditional authority, economic and political marginalization, and physical insecurity cope with their past and present situation?  As one young woman asked me, "How do I end my mother's tears?"

### Culture Loss

"Our children were born in the camps.  They were raised in the camps.  They were schooled in the camps.  The entire time NGOs would come to hand out food.  Our

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children do not know hard work anymore.  All they have known is if they are hungry, a Muno comes with food.  They became dependent upon those who came to help.  Hard work is Acholi custom.  They don't know how to work the fields anymore.  We've lost our oxen.  We've lost our land.  What is most concerning is, we're losing our customs.  We're losing our traditions.  We're losing our culture."

It is a paradoxical situation.  In areas of great turmoil, when populations are being harmed or impacted, the initial response is one of help.  Humanity has shown the propensity to bring great harm to one another; however, humanity also has time and time again shown a human spirit of kindness and help.  What else is one supposed to do?  If people are injured, we provide medical attention.  If people are starving, the global community has the ability and resources to feed them, but at what cost?  I often challenge my students with a rhetorical question when discussing bystander apathy.  Who is worse, a person who committed a heinous act, or someone who knows about it and does nothing to help?  While usually torn, almost every class as a whole has agreed that knowing and doing nothing is worse.  The case in northern Uganda is an exemplar of the complexity that is international aid.  On the one hand, people are drawn to help.  On the other hand, those efforts often bring about unintended, harmful, and often unwanted changes, to markets, to customs, to the very cultures the efforts are intended to help.

Malkki (1996) writes that displaced people become "a singular category of humanity within the international order of things" and that life in camps becomes dehistoricized and depoliticized (378).  Allen (1996) adds, "Local people often ended up being perceived as amorphous recipients of things given out" (239).  The abstraction that relief recipients become (i.e. the generalized victim) is complicated by the relief workers.

"The staffs in charge are often from the Western world.  They usually work according to their personal preferences and past experiences of the best methods of relief distribution,

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and they work on time-limited contracts. Even if a particular officer has a great deal of knowledge regarding relief distribution, this knowledge is more often based on experiences from several different places around the globe than it is from long-term involvement in a particular area with its particular problems or political structures" (Finnström, 2008:149).

Aid workers as a whole can add to the abstraction. While it is of course impossible to know the intentions of each individual, as a whole they are often there to "help victims," not necessarily to make friends, or understand difficulties about the situation or, most especially, the historical or cultural context. On three occasions when I have returned to the United States I have sat near groups of people who travel to the most impacted regions of Uganda to spread the word of God. As we talked informally I asked, "How was your experience? What did you learn about the culture?" All three times I have asked I was greeted with the number of people they converted to Christianity, "It was a great trip, we had 500 converts." This can be dangerous.

Galtung (1969) writes,

"That structural violence often breeds structural violence, and personal violence often breed personal violence nobody would dispute – but the point here would be the cross-breeding between the two. In other words: pure cases are only pure as long as the prehistory of the case or even the structural context are conveniently forgotten" (178).

Finnström (2008) denotes numerous instances in his fieldwork where these abstractions complicated matters. My own fieldwork revealed similar complications. While my fieldwork largely occurred after the conflict had ended, several informants openly talked about how detached relief workers, trying to remain neutral in the conflict, were often seen by both sides (LRA/M and the government) as furthering the agenda of the other. When aid would be delivered, the LRA/M was often soon to follow, conducting raids, stealing supplies, and

abducting children. As more than one informant told me, "Seeing the relief trucks was like a

cursed blessing. We needed food and medicine, but we knew the rebels were soon to follow."

Turning down the aid was an unthinkable death sentence, seen as anti-government. Accepting

the aid meant furthering the heightened dependency and dealing with LRA raids that were soon

to follow. What is one supposed to do? Finnström's work highlights this phenomenon very

well. Since my work occurred post-conflict, I tended to focus on what was currently salient, how

the relief impacted the cultures.

Finnström writes,

"War realities are always global but still violently emplaced in local war zones, as is the
case in northern Uganda. Contemporary experiences meet and intermingle, locality
meets and fuses with translocality, the global is manifested in the local, exiles and
diaspora groups are involved for political and/or humanitarian reasons, as are Western
agents and foreign interest groups, and the character of particular conflicts constantly
evolve and change over time. As Nordstrom argues, the shadows are also a place of
power and sociopolitical transformation" (2008:152).

My informants, while not using academic jargon, were actively conscious of this in their

lived experiences. While it is pertinent to discuss the influx of aid, and how it impacted day-to-

day existence, most of my informants expressed their understanding of the impacts in terms of

"culture loss." With the aid workers came an added side effect, the influx of outside cultural

practices and beliefs. The same informant who earlier discussed the influx of technology, the

impacts it is having on education, and the gap that is being created between "his children" and

"western children," was also hyper aware of the cultural impacts.

"The children now…instead of knowing and learning traditional dances and
culture…they are now listening to hip-hop and rap. Western values are being imported.

When I was a child, I worked in the field. I valued our traditions. Now…children are listening to Beyoncé and Jay Z."

While part of this can obviously be attributed to a glorification of the past, the truth is that cultural influx is impacting Acholi tradition, and it is doing so in good and bad ways (it should be noted that the definitions of good and bad are also contextual and socially and culturally constructed). As Cagney (2012) writes,

The return to relative normalcy has opened up a space to redefine what it means to be Luo. There is a great deal of uncertainty and lack of guidance for the youth, whose lives seem to be defined by the conflict. This means that they are ignorant of many of their parents' traditions and have indulged in Western art forms, like rap or hip-hop, which they have discovered in the towns. Though adopting Western art forms is by no means negative in itself, some elders feel that these practices threaten the survival of traditional Acholi art forms. Additionally, globalization has introduced new concepts of human rights and a sense of being part of a global community, inspiring the intentional discontinuation of some practices. There are some changes that have occurred by means of removing or discontinuing a particular practice, whether intentionally or coincidentally. In some instances this means purposefully discontinuing practices that might be viewed as repressive, especially in the realms of women's and children's rights. On the other hand, there are changes that involve adding an element that did not previously exist. In these instances, cultural revival has opened up a space for overarching institutions and interventions to insert an ideal and call it "traditional" without too many people being aware of the "intrusion." […] It is difficult to distinguish between cultural changes that have occurred over time as opposed to changes that have occurred directly due to the conflict as everything seems to have changed simultaneously, and some changes may have occurred had the conflict never happened (2012:123).

The last part of the previous quote is important, it is difficult to know what change is a result of the conflict and what aspects of change are merely a result of time. While it is true that change is occurring is most of the global south, the LRA conflict appears to have amplified or

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sped up the effects in Uganda. If nothing else, the conflict made the changes highly visible to my interviewees. Most of the elderly interviewees did not concern themselves with the attribution of "what" was changing their culture, only that it was changing. That is to say, most did not specifically mention "Beyoncé" being introduced by relief workers, or the influx of "Western" values being a side effect of aid delivery. However, one informant, who is Muslim, was very quick to ascribe blame. It should be noted that the vast majority of my interviewees, and the Acholi, practice some form of Christianity. Ironically, while not attributed to relief workers, much of the influx of Evangelical, Born Again, Christianity can be attributed to Missionaries who overtly seek to alter cultural and social practices. The most salient example right now (and for the past few years) is the tremendous battle that is being waged over sexuality/sexual identity/sexual orientation. He told me, "Western secularism is influencing thought and altering cultural practices." Admittedly, I neither practice, nor completely understand most religions, including Islam. My naïveté led to an interesting (and admittedly frustrating) conversation about religion and the cultural impacts of Western secularist thinking.

> Interviewer (I): How is secularist thinking influencing cultural practices?
> Respondent (R): These people come. They come to help. But, when they come they are bringing their own beliefs with them and share them with our children and us.
> I: Are you not free to decide which of these ideas or beliefs to accept or reject?
> R: The Quran is the word of Allah and says that as the divine word, people who read it will come to recognize and accept its moral teachings. Secularist thinking is that religion should be removed and people define their own morals. That is wrong.
> I: But, were you not free to accept or reject that as the truth?
> R: No
> I: Did you always practice a Muslim faith?
> R: No, I was Christian. Then I was introduced to the Quran.
> I: So, you were free to make that choice. To convert.

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R: No.  The Quran teaches that those who read it will see it as the divine word.

I: Yes, but you were not born Muslim.  You were introduced to the text, then chose to convert.

R: Because the Quran says so.

I: Do you not see that as a choice?  You chose to read the Quran, you were not forced to read it, were you?

R: No

I:  So, how has it impacted the culture here?

R: When each person decides their own morals, that is wrong.  Western secularist thought removes divine guidance.  If people read the Quran, it says that it is the divine word and provides the way people should live their lives.

I: So, should people come to read it freely, by choice…or by force?  Secularist thinking, as you describe it, would believe that you choose freely to read and then follow your beliefs.  Secularist thinking, as you describe it, would say that because of this freedom, you found the "right way."  Would you not agree?

R: Mmmmm. (and a slight head nod.  This, I have found in most of Uganda to mean the person is listening…usually agreeing).

I: What are some specific examples of how secularist thought is changing the culture here?

R: Western morals teach that homosexuality is ok.  In Uganda, there have never been gay people.  It is only now that the West is coming in and teaching our children this abomination.  A man cannot reproduce with a man.  We must stop it.

I: The West is teaching children how to be gay?

R: Mmmmm.  It is wrong.  Secularist thought teaches that it is ok.

I:  Is there a difference between allowing people to be happy and finding their own way, such as you did with the Quran, and teaching someone "right or wrong" by force, such as imprisoning them for their sexual preference?

R: It is wrong.  If you read the Quran, you'd know it was wrong.

I: Where were you introduced to Islam?

R: I was in (IDP) camp.

I: Was there only one religion in the camp?

R: No. People came all the time with Bibles.

I: Do you see outside religious influence as changing culture in the same way as secularist thought?

R: I don't understand.

I: In the camps, many people were introduced to different religions…from outsiders. These different religions have various teachings. The Quran says something about morality. The Bible says something about morality. They each teach the reader. You have said that secularist thinking is changing your culture…do you see the influx of religion as having any impact on your culture? Is it teaching you "morality" in the same way that secularism is?

R: No. Anyone who reads the Quran learns that it is divine. If you read it, you will see.

While I had numerous other questions, I did not want to push. I struggled with the boundary of trying to understand, but not upsetting. It was apparent that I was asking him to think about things that he might not have thought about before. Additionally, as I found in numerous interviews, when people do not have an answer, they turn to what they do know, God/Allah/Jesus/etc. is good, and he has the answers. When I would ask about why God would allow such horrific atrocities to take place, the response was almost always, "It is a punishment." When I would follow that up by asking what the young children did to deserve such a punishment, I was almost always told, "That wasn't God, that was the work of the devil."

Other interviews revealed an answer to the questions being asked about "western" religious thought/practices being introduced to Acholi culture. After several attempts at rephrasing questions, I finally began to get an answer, best illustrated by an elderly gentleman in Kitgum town.

R: I think I understand what you are asking. It is true that religious thought has impacted our morals and values as you say. For example, in the way we bury our dead. Also, my son is Born Again. Because of this, he no longer accepts many of the traditional values

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about compensation and reconciliation.  He no longer accepts many of the ideas the clan tells him.  He sees them as being part of false spirits.  Is this what you are asking?

I: Yes.  Many people have told me, especially the elders, that western values are imposing upon and changing their culture.  You have just provided a few examples of how religious values are also doing the same.  However, I haven't heard one person tell me that religious values, also largely brought by western missionaries, are changing their culture.  Why do you think the changes associated with religion are largely accepted and blame is placed on other aspects of western thought?

R: (Long pause) I haven't really thought about it before.  Thank you for asking a good question…(pause)

I: It is ok.  Take your time.

R: (Pause) I think it is because religious values often are very similar to traditional Acholi values.  I mean, Acholi believe certain things and the religions believe very similar things.

I:  Can you think of examples?

R:  The Acholi believe you should be good to people, help your neighbor, treat people kindly…things like that.  Religion holds the same values.  Things like homosexuality are seen as an abomination by both.  I think that is why the values are not seen as being imposed.  I don't think we notice them.  I didn't even think about it before.


While this interviewee began to clarify the impacts of outside cultures on Acholi culture, he also revealed how he was impacted individually when he said "things like homosexuality are seen as an abomination by both."  Gay men and women are not a new phenomenon in Acholi culture.  Historically Acholi culture even has names for gay men (obedo dako dako) and lesbian women (obedo lacoo lacoo).  While Acholi culture, like others, may have forced gays and lesbians to conform, they have always been part of the society.  Some scholars argue that the term "homosexuality" itself is derived from colonialism (Tushabe, 2013).  Given the relative newness of the term "homosexual," and the recent connotations of it as an identity, it is quite

possible that if I had thought to ask, many Acholi would not have even heard of the term until they met Westerners in IDP camps, until 2009 when Scott Lively and other evangelical activists arrived in Uganda to denounce it, or until the influx of nongovernmental organizations arrived (NGOs).

I am not anti-religion.  I recognize the power that belief has for people.  Almost to a person, every one of my informants talked about religion.  While they never put it in these terms, it was obvious that religion was a means of coping with their losses over the previous two decades.  As an aside, it was always a bit disheartening to witness people who had just spent hours telling me about all of their troubles, go to worship and tithe every shilling that they had.  Then, in several cases (especially in and around Kampala in the south), I would meet with the pastor, who would take me to his or her house for a meal; their house almost always resembled an upper-middle class residence in the United States.  When asked about the discrepancies between what they have and what the people they deliver guidance to have the answer was almost always, "It is God's will.  It is by the grace of God that I am where I am."

Religious versus secular thought is only one way that Acholi culture is perceived to be changing, but the battle appears to have numerous consequences.  Though, I have to wonder how much of the change is due to religious/secular thought and how much can be attributed to the passage of time, what appears to be a natural affinity towards the past, and between conservative views on change in societal functions and enlightenment.  It is a question that even the Acholi cannot answer.  Society evolves and changes.  Views change.  It is tough to "change back" when it happens.  In the United States, post-World War, women, who had been in the workforce, no longer accepted the role of homemaker.  There is a famous poster of "Rosie the Riveter" that

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became the iconic image of that era. In Acholiland, there may not be an iconic image as of yet, but change is occurring.

> "As a foundational understanding, gender roles in Acholi society are what one would expect to find in most sub-Saharan African societies. Ideally, women take care of the children, household, and farming, while men mostly have responsibilities in the realms of hunting and construction. The men traditionally have held the role providing the primary source of income. Though it seems largely segregated with the weight of the work on women, work was traditionally divided equally. When the majority of people moved into camps, basically all economic activity ceased to exist. They were not allowed outside the camp to farm, which was a primary means of sustenance for most families. In addition, herds of cattle, a sign of wealth, had almost totally been looted by the government and neighboring Karamajong. They were men essentially disabled as 'breadwinners,' and the women no longer needed to rely on them. Procedures for food aid from international NGOs or cattle distribution from the government were delivered to the women of the household and not to the men, because women were presumably more trustworthy (Dolan, 2009). This essentially put women in charge of the economic activities of the household. Additionally, what little work could be done for small amounts of money in the camps was all designated as women's work. They could wash, iron, and cook for small sums of money, contributing to whatever little the family had. The most prosperous economic activity in the camps was the brewing of local beer, which was also a woman's activity. Unfortunately, a good deal of this money would be spent by the husbands on local beer itself, contributing to the rampant alcoholism in the camps. With seemingly little to do or contribute to the family, husbands began to feel useless, leading many men to become idle and depressed. In this atmosphere and state of mind, it is no wonder that many men (and women, too) turned to heavy drinking to pass the time. This habit has had serious social ramifications, contributing to an increased rate of divorce and domestic violence, making elders incapable of taking up leadership positions in the community, as they have lost respect from other members. […] In some homes, men no longer want their wives taking a financial lead, and women are reluctant to give it up" (Cagney, 2012:129).

Additionally, many of the programs put into place during and post-conflict, center on women.

The Millennium Development Goals, agreed upon by the United Nations and 190 countries,

explicitly set several goals that deal with gender equality, women's rights, and the empowerment

of women.  Various NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and microeconomic

programs focus almost solely upon women, and the empowerment of women.

While it is a bit beyond the scope of my current research, and something that I did not

query interviewees about, I think it is important to recognize that there is vast literature covering

NGOs.  It is unquestionable that NGOs have played a significant role in Uganda since 1986

when the NRM came into power.

> The economic decline resulting mainly from the Amin era devastated the economy and
> left the ordinary people helpless. By 1986, inflation was more than 300%. Human needs
> such as salt, food, sugar, clothing, etc. could only be obtained through allocation by
> government officials. These extreme conditions of deprivation together with a relatively
> accommodative political situation set the space for creation of numerous NGOs' in the
> country. By December 1992, some 703 NGOs had applied and registered by the NGO
> Registration Board. The World Bank, in study found that two thirds of these NGOs' had
> registered as development focused organizations. None of those had registered as a
> politically oriented organization. The bulk of NGOs registering as development
> organizations I explained in part by the fact that donors were willing to channel
> development funding through the NGOs rather than governments. In more recent years,
> the NGOs' have been formed out of another necessity i.e. the effects of structural
> adjustment programmes (SAPS). These effects include; retrenchment of civil servants
> leading to unemployment of previous employed people, privatization of parastals leading
> to layoffs, demobilization of the army and police. Further more, according to Bazaara and
> Nyago (1999) the many university graduates, who are unemployed, have resorted to
> forming NGOs as an alternative form of employment. This implies that the formation of
> NGOs may not necessarily be out of voluntarism, but opportunism (Makara, 2003:4).

I cannot speak to how large or small the scale of involvement based upon opportunism is, other

to circumstantially say that my interpreter could not find employment after finishing his

University degree and found himself back in northern Uganda working for an international NGO.

Fisher's (1997) review of the literature covering development NGOs and Watkins'

(2012) subsequent analysis reveal that two main debates have emerged in this field of study.

> Before and since Fisher (1997), scholars of development aid have been engaged in two debates. One concerns the threats posed by NGOs to poor and often fragile nation-states of the developing world. Do NGOs diminish state legitimacy by providing services such as health and education that are seen as obligation of the state in richer countries? By circumventing the state, do NGOs weaken government accountability and institutions? Do they make states dependent on foreign aid, rather than developing their own resources (Callaghy, 1987; Bratton, 1989; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Manji and O'Coill, 2002, Leonard and Strauss, 2003; Brautigam and Knack, 2004; Brass 2012a)? This literature is oriented to policy and is largely the fiefdom of political scientists. The other debate, consisting largely of anthropologists' vivid case studies of development aid practices on the ground, asks whether or not NGOs have fulfilled their promises to empower communities and transform the lives of individuals. It usually concludes that they have not [Campbell's 2003 *Letting Them Die* is the classic treatment; excellent collections are Igoe and Kelsall (2005), Mosse and Lewis (2005); for well informed analytic overviews, see Mansuri and Rao (2004), Prichett and Woolcock (2004)]. Sociologists are scarcely represented in the development aid literature, and NGOs are rarely the subject of articles in the top sociology journals, with the major exception of the literature on world society inspired by the intellectually innovative work of Meyer (2010) and his colleagues (Watkins, 2012).

There appears to be fruitful area of analysis on the cultural impacts of not just NGOs, but also

their workers. While it is important to ask about the impacts of NGOs on dependency, the nation

state, and whether or not a transformation of individual lives occurs, it is equally as important to

ask about the meso-level impacts. What are the cultural impacts of NGOs striving for gender

equality in highly patriarchal societies? What are the latent impacts of the life styles of aid

workers (their language/word usage, technology and pop culture choices, etc.)? These are the

types of questions I hope to answer in future research. For now, it is important to recognize that

there are unintended consequences for recipient cultures.

While, in the grand vision to reduce global poverty and the tremendous impacts that

come with it, it makes complete sense for the MDGs, NGOs, and CBOs to focus on improving

the lives of women, this focus is bringing about other cultural challenges. Years and years of

research indicates that improving the lives of women, improves the long-term viability of a society and the life chances of individuals. However, one must be careful to understand the impacts these changes have upon a society's long-held cultural beliefs, customs, and traditions. El-Bushra (2003) discusses the role of 'ordinary' citizens as 'actors' responding to crisis and argues, "conflict has undoubtedly given women greater responsibilities, and with them the possibility of exerting greater leverage in decision-making processes and increasing their political participation."

My informants discussed numerous avenues of coping with the difficulties of daily life and cultural changes. First and foremost many discussed moving, and many have moved, relocating in the southern part of the country, notably the Acholi Quarters in Kampala. However, many people do not have the means of mobility. Those who have relocated often talk about the past and potentially returning "home." Mary, who now owns a small shop in Kampala selling traditional artifacts and trinkets, spoke at length about her desire to return home.

> "I ran ten years ago. My daughter was with my sister when the raid happened. I made my way to Kampala, I didn't know where else to go. I used what little bit that I had to start a small business; I had to do something to survive. Over the years I've bettered myself, to the shop that you see now. But, I haven't seen my family since that day. I've returned home, but nobody knows what happened to them (her family). I haven't seen my daughter in ten years. I came back to Kampala because this is where my life is now, but I want to return home one day. I miss home. I miss my family. I am alone here."

Mary is attempting to stay connected to her past, her heritage. By making and selling traditional crafts, she is holding on to her culture. She consciously chose the type of shop she started. Of all of the possible businesses she could have started, she wanted one that lets her share her past, her culture, and her heritage. In other words, who she is. "I couldn't sell vegetables. I couldn't

sell pineapples…they do not mean anything they are food.  When a muno walks into my shop and picks something up, I can explain what it means to my people.  I like that." Mary is simultaneously finding happiness in sharing her culture, and profound sadness in the constant remembrance of what transpired and her missing family.  At the most basic level, Mary and most of my informants are struggling with identity.  "Who am I?  What do I do now?"

> "The complex relationship between identity, ownership, and belonging (citizenship) continues to undermine the nation-building process in Uganda.  The country remains deeply divided along ethnic lines, reflecting perpetuation of colonial 'divide and rule' strategies by successive Ugandan governments.  Ethnic loyalty remains a predominant basis for political alliances in Uganda (for example, the Acholi Parliamentary Group, the Buganda Parliamentary Group and the Karamoja Parliamentary Association all formed to voice ethnic and geographical grievances born out of a sense of collective deprivation and to gain political recognition), as well as access to, retention and distribution of political power.  This polarizes society and feeds into growing secessionist tendencies by groups that perceive their communities to be excluded from the political process.  Under the current administration these divisions are being reinforced by a decentralization process perceived as 'ethnicised,' which in some cases has led to localized violence.  The link between identity and inclusion or exclusion from power and wealth has been openly articulated by community leaders in the North, and constitutes a powerful grievance.  There is a risk, as has been the pattern historically, that ethnic sentiments will be mobilized to challenge state authority through violence (ACCS, 2013:5).

For those who are fortunate enough to escape and acquire education, the answer still is not simple.  Unemployment and underemployment are rampant.  The latest report from data collected by the National Housing and Population Census was disheartening and shocking.  Over 90 percent of people over 25 years old are unemployed and over 62 percent of the unemployed are women (Walubri, 2016).  Perhaps the finest example I found was a 25 year old woman, Grace.  She was fortunate enough to find the funds to attend the oldest and most prestigious

university in all of East Africa, Makerere University.  After receiving her degree in development she struggled for nearly a year to find employment.  Finally, she found employment as a loan officer in a bank.  Nearly a year into her employment she has been transferred to two different districts, working with two different ethnic groups, is required to give so many loans each month (a near impossibility given that most of her clients are banana farmers and the region she works in has faced a multi year drought) and is paid less than USH 600,000 per month (less than $170/month).

She noticed and identified the problems facing her region and culture, attended University to learn more about those challenges so that she could help, and after a year of struggling finally found a job in a largely unrelated field.  The low pay, long hours, and unrelated profession has taken its toll on Grace.

> "I'm a strong woman!  I work like a dog.  I go to work early.  I stay and work long hours. I ride a boda to the field where I search all day for people (who speak a different language) to give loans to.  I come back dirty.  I come back exhausted.  And at the end of the month what do I have to show for it?  Nothing!  (At this point she completely breaks down into tears).  I did what I was supposed to.  My mother struggled for years to put me through school.  Good schools.  I attended University.  I earned the degree.  I work hard. My landlord wanted 4 months of rent or he was going to rent to someone else, so I gave him what little I had.  Now after 1 month and 2 days he wants me to move, but claims that since I've stayed for 2 days into the new month that he will only refund me for two months rent.  I found a new place, it is one room and the bathroom is outside.  I lost out on it.  He wanted USH 100,000 per month (about $28).  I only have USH 1,000 to my name.  I had USH 2,000 this morning, but I bought milk.  It is the only thing I will eat today.  My landlord wouldn't refund me so I couldn't move.  What am I supposed to do? My mother is sick.  My sister has abandoned her two children with my mother and she cannot afford to school them.  How am I supposed to take care of my mother when I

can't take care of myself?  How am I supposed to take care of myself?  I am a strong
woman!  But…what do I do?

Grace could barely speak through the tears.  It was one of the most intense interviews I've ever
been a part of.  While she has technically done everything she is supposed to, get educated, find
employment, and work hard, and is technically above the international poverty line of $2.50 per
day, her struggles are intense.  She literally discussed numerous strategies for coping such as
skipping meals, eating once per day (if at all), education, removing children from school, clear-
cutting the brush (so they could see LRA/M rebels, UPDF soldiers, and Karimojong rustlers
coming), finding some sort of routinization of daily life, and working hard, she finds herself
trapped.  All of these things, while helping to cope with the immediate milieu, arguably increase
future vulnerability.  While she is not dependent upon the land anymore, her struggle with
cultural and personal identity is very, very real.  What she knows is something very basic and
something she repeated numerous times, "I am a strong woman!"

Even those who left school echoed Grace's story repeatedly.  Ritah left school after
Senior 4 and currently works as a waitress.  Ritah works 12 – 18 hours per day, earns 5,000
shillings per day (about $1.40), and gets one day off per month.  She currently lives with two
roommates (also waitresses) in a one room "home" (about 8 feet by 10 feet) for 120,000 shillings
per month (about $33).  Monica also left school after Senior 4.  "What will two more years of
education get me?  I'm never going to University, so what is the point?"  Monica is trying to find
funds to learn how to make clothes.  Sylvia left school after Primary 7.  Now 17, she is trying to
find funds to learn hair plaiting.  She currently lives with three friends in a one room "home"
(about 10 feet by 10 feet) for 100,000 shillings per month (about $28).  When I asked her how
she earns money to survive she said, "I'm a woman," hinting at prostitution.

The stories are numerous.  One could argue that the women might be better off living "back in the village," terminology used to describe the rural areas from where people migrate. The Ugandan government often pushes for this approach as well, breaking buildings where people have started small businesses in the name of progress.  Trying to force people back to living off of the land may seem like a good idea, however even that has severe problems.

### *"The rains don't come"*

"It does not rain like it used to.  Sometimes the rains come; sometimes the rains do not come.  In the past, we knew when the rains would come.  Now, we don't know."  This sentiment was always expressed when speaking with male informants.  While I do not know much about topics like drought, food insecurity, and climate change and was unprepared to ask the appropriate follow up questions, it is not the least bit surprising that locals have a hyper awareness (consciousness) of their situation.  As someone who grew up in the plains in the United States, I am used to hearing "farmers" complain about the weather.  I am also used to hearing politicized debates about climate change.  What I was unprepared for were informants in remote and conflict-torn regions to use the words "climate change" repeatedly.

Of course they are correct in their observations.  Reports from the USGS, USAID, and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network show that over the past 25 years both rainy seasons in Uganda have decreased and temperatures have increased.

> Time series of air temperature indicate that the magnitude of recent warming is large and unprecedented within the past 110 years.  It is estimated that the 1975 to 2009 warming has been more than 0.8 degrees Celsius for Uganda during both the March-June and June-September rainy seasons.  Given that the standard deviation of annual air temperatures in these regions is low (approximately 0.3 degrees C), these increases represent a large change from the climactic norm.  Temperatures have increased by up to 1.5 degrees C across much of Uganda.  This transition to an even warmer climate is likely

to amplify the impact of decreasing rainfall and periodic droughts, and will likely reduce crop harvests and pasture availability. Because this area is characterized by repeated conflicts that reduce the overall availability of food, a decrease in locally produced food because of reduced crop harvests and pastures will have a significant impact on food security. […] Uganda is becoming drier and hotter, which is consistent with an increase in atmospheric circulation, bringing dry subsiding air during the March-June and June-September rainy seasons (USGS, 2012).

This is not just a problem for the Acholi, though the North/South divide has amplified it, decades of conflict, ongoing land conflicts/land grabs, poverty, loss of animals, and a perceived lack of government interest definitely play a role.

In 2011, Uganda's population was 30.6 million, with a rapid population growth rate of 3.6 percent (CIA, 2011). If sustained, this growth rate will result in a doubling of population every 20 years. According to Gridded Population of the World statistics (CIESIN, 2010), the population increased by 89 percent between 1990 and 2010, adding some 15 million people. Given that Uganda is landlocked country that depends on agricultural, agro-pastoral, and pastoral livelihoods, this population expansion will place increasing stress on limited natural resources. Crop statistics from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization indicate that per capita cereal production in Uganda is low (150 kilograms per person per year). While yields have been improving, the amount of farmland per person has been declining twice as fast. If these trends persist, then per capita cereal production could decline by 35 percent by 2025. This level of food production could leave hundreds of thousands more Ugandans exposed to hunger and undernourishment (USGS, 2012).

For the Acholi this is devastating. Not just because it is potentially life threatening, but because it also impacts "who" the Acholi are as an ethnic group. If your cultural existence is based upon the land, and the land is gone or unproductive it deeply impacts one's sense of identity. "Who am I? What do I do now?"

*Generational Divide*

In my travels there appeared to be a stark generational divide in how people deal with that question, "Who am I?" Many of the older Acholi reported attempting to reach back to the past.

R: How has the culture changed?

I: What do you mean?

R: Before you went to the IDP camp, what was life like?

I: We worked the land. We raised goats and cows. We worked our gardens. We would visit friends. The children would play.

R: How is it different now?

I: Um…in the camp we met many people. They were Acholi, but different. Now that we are home, the children are grown. They don't like the village, they want to go to the city. They don't like our traditions. We are Acholi. Acholi are proud, hard workers. The land is our life. Our ancestors are important. But our children have seen the rest of the world and they don't want here. How can I teach my children what an Acholi is if they want to go to Kampala?

R: They were in the camps…what do you mean they've seen the rest of the world?

I: Workers would come. The cars and trucks would come. Every time they would bring food or medicine. The children don't know what life was like before. All they know is that if you are hungry, a car will bring you food. If you are sick, someone will fix. They don't think they have to garden or raise goats.

R: So the aid workers are the rest of the world?

I: Yes.

R: How so?

I: Before, we knew Michael Jackson and music from there. In the camps, we could see the music (He meant the music videos. Now, instead of just hearing the music, videos like "Thriller" could be viewed).

R: How did that impact your culture?

I:  Um…our children don't like our music anymore.  Our dances.  Now, they want to be like there ("there" is a word used to describe anywhere that is not "here."  In this case, he meant the outside world…the West).

R:  How?

I:  Um…we have instruments like the adungu (A harp-like instrument made from a box wrapped in hide, with a long, bent stem…often eucalyptus…that strings are attached to).  My children don't like anymore.  They want to play guitar.

R:  So, how do you deal with this?  What do you do?

I:  What can we do?  I do what I know.  It is who we are.  We work the gardens.  We try to find food and charcoal and water.  We cook.  We clean the compound (A phrase used when they use a short hand broom to sweep the loose dirt from the top of the ground.  In addition to beautifying, it also keeps the dust down and helps with mud in case of rains).

The older generation, much the same as I would hear from my grandparents in the United States, reaches back to what they know, a glorified past when things were simpler and "better."  Maybe the best example of this can be viewed in the campaign slogans during the recent presidential elections in the United States, "Make America Great Again."  One of the coping techniques being used is a routinization of daily life, trying to return to the normal day-to-day routines (i.e. find water, find charcoal, work the garden, cook, clean, spend time with family).  While the older generation views the old life as the goal, the younger generation (those that I interviewed) appear to view it as constraining.  Visiting with a group of 18-22 year old males in Kitgum,

I:  What is life like?

Group:  It is difficult.  This is our home (one room, 10 feet by 10 feet square, with a rock floor about 2 feet higher than the ground outside…I assume to keep the house out of the mud when it rains, just outside of the trading center containing a worn out couch, chair, and mattresses against the wall.  There is no electricity in the house and it is about a quarter mile walk to find water).  Five of us live here.

I: What do you do to survive?  Do you work?

G: Do what?  There are no jobs here.  What are we supposed to do?

I: Why not go back to the village (A term used to refer to a family's land outside of the city/trading center)?

G: (Laughter by all) To do what?  Grow maize?  Have children?  That is the past, not the future.  There is nothing there for us.  Nothing.  No future.  Should we dig dirt and die?

I: So, what do you do?

G: We play music.  The local clubs pay to perform.

I: How often do you play?

G: Sometimes three times a week.  Sometimes one time a week.

I: You use the money to survive?

G: It isn't much but we get by.  When we can we save money.

I: For?

G: For competitions.  One day we'd like to go to Kampala.  There are many clubs there.

I: What type of music do you play?

G: Hip-hop.

I: Very cool.  I've interviewed many elders in my travels.  They've often discussed how the youth are turning away from traditional Acholi culture.  Do you think hip-hop is turning away from traditional culture?  Traditional music?  Traditional instruments?

G: Hahaha!  No.  You see, traditional culture is constraining.  Hip-hop allows us to expand.

I: What do you mean?

G: Traditional songs have meaning.  Some are about death, some about the growing season, some about disease or marriage.  But, they are very specific and talk about one thing…in a traditional way.  For example AIDS and don't have sex.  Hip-hop allows us to use the traditional instruments but also take it to the rest of the world.  We can talk about our past, pain, anger, and our fight for the future.  It gives us freedom.

I: So, you don't see it as leaving traditional culture?

G: No.  I think we kind of see it as remembering traditional culture, but also looking forward.  There is no future here.  There is no future in Acholiland.  The government

does not care about the Acholi.  If we wait for their help, we will die.  They want us dead.  We will not die.

When asked who their biggest hip-hop influence was, the answer was unanimous, Lumix Da Don.  Hip-hop is one of the fastest growing genres in Uganda, and Luo hip-hop (the Acholi speak Luo) is one of the fastest growing forms of hip-hop.  Lumix is viewed by many as the father of Luo hip-hop and Ugandan hip-hop as a whole, so it makes sense that he is who they see as their biggest influence.  I do not purport to be an expert in music, in fact I know very little about hip-hop.  When I returned home I started to listen to Lumix to see if what the young men told me bore fruit.  Given the theme I ran across in my interviews, "Who am I?" it is fitting that Lumix's 2005 album was titled *Inpe Ngeyo* (You don't know me).  His early music very clearly has an Acholi flair and feel to it, not only in sound but also in lyrics.  *Frontline* has a traditional Luo sound,

> "On the frontline, ain't got time for relaxing,
> Gotta keep my focus,
> I go lose my life,
> On the frontline.
> No time, no time.
> Gotta keep my focus to not lose my life.
> Man I'm living my life without no directions,
> I wonder where I'm gonna be ten years from now,
> I'm still thinking.
> Life ain't easy homies,
> You've got a lot of survival techniques from the basics,
> I was never brought up a preacher,
> Grew up fishing in shallow waters with real outdoors,
> Now you see me smiling you think its doing good,
> God damn I can fool you with just my mood.

But my hustle is tight, that's the reason your street cannot sleep in the night

But am still strong, still hard breaking the iron,

Still high, still blazing flame like a dragon, that's jargon

I live my life on a frontline,

I ain't got time for relaxing,

I gotta keep my focus or lose my life.

Valley Curve Records is not yet complete,

That's the reason I can't kick off my shoe and sit,

I'm a go getter, I'mma get what I'm going for,

But my struggle will never be seen, it's invisible,

You can't see or feel my pain,

You will never see my crying, am a grown up man

I live my life with no regrets,

Everything I've done I love,

I'm so proud of it, I don't believe in rumors

I'm so loud you see, I'm so clear

Speak my mind, I know I'm not perfect but at least I try,

I love my home boys that's the reason we still roll

If you ain't with me that means something was wrong with you

I live my life on a frontline,

I ain't got time for relaxing,

I gotta keep my focus or lose my life.

I live my life on the run,

I live my life under the sun,

But I've still got a lot of plans,

No options, so me I cannot fail,

You can never see me rising,

I'm hidden under the veil,

I make my moves in silence

Put you under surveillance

You will never pass me and try to leave me behind,

My focus is fast, you cannot rewind,

I'm living beyond your time,

I'm living ahead of your run,

Can't nothing stop my shine,

Cross my line,

Take my dime,

Stop my flow, NO

I'm ready, anything I need I will get it,

Any best I need to eat, I will set it

I live my life on a frontline,

I ain't got time for relaxing,

I gotta keep my focus or lose my life.


It is relatively easy to see Lumix's ties to Acholi history, from fishing in shallow waters, to living his life on the front line, to not being able to fail, to going unnoticed while putting others under surveillance, to keeping focus so he does not lose his life. The song is not "professionally" produced and sounds very different than his later works. *Try*, one of the final songs produced before his untimely death from liver disease, is much more professionally produced. While it does have a more "western" feel and "urban" theme, it still discusses things like voodoo, witchcraft, disease, and not knowing what you can achieve if you do not try.

It appears that one generation believes that the best road forward is to return to the cultural roots, as an elder male told me, "It is who we are." The younger generation appears to see the past as the past and offering no future, "what are we going to do, dig dirt and die?" The older generation appears to view the younger generation as turning away from traditional Acholi customs and traditions, while the younger generation expressed the constraints of traditional customs. The older generation's identity is tied to the past, to customs, to the land and it is all

being challenged.  The young adults appear to be searching for their own identity.  While it is tied to a tumultuous past, they appear to breaking away, trying to fit into the new, comparatively peaceful Uganda.

Perhaps the most striking omission from all of my interviews is the mention of Joseph Kony or the Lord's Resistance Army as a problem or a fear.  That does not mean that people feed off of outside assistance.  If an individual or group comes and offers aid in some form, I have witnessed a hundred people show up.  If some form of training is given and food is offered (a lunch), people come, enjoy the meal, agree with the message of the training, and then leave.  If an organization comes, says they are sorry about Kony and would like to help, poverty almost prevents an answer of "no thank you."  After all, if I cannot afford to school my child and an outsider wants to sponsor their school fees, it would be absurd to turn it down.  If it means I have to say, "yes, I am fearful of Kony," so be it.  It is something I have personally witnessed countless times in meetings, trainings, church settings, and orphanages over the past decade.  This not only continues to feed the Western world understanding of sub-Saharan Africans as helpless, hapless, hopeless, voiceless, and backwards peoples (i.e. For $0.58 per day you too can help feed little Timmy), but also continues to exacerbate the problems faced; problems largely created by outsiders who are now defining additional problems and solutions, that predominately only exacerbate lived realities.  Sadly, the answer to "Who am I?" Is one that I am not sure can be found in the short term.  It is certainly not going to be found because of outside help.

# Chapter 6 – "How will this help us?"

Chapter 6 continues the search for the most appropriate lens through which to examine what has transpired in Uganda. As discussed early in the dissertation, the exploratory research methodology allows themes to emerge, rather than imposing a theory on the data. In this chapter I discuss another traditional way of examining Uganda, through the lens of development. Finally, this chapter ends with what I find to be the best lens through which to view what has happened, the lens of "Cultural Trauma." Additionally, using the findings from this research, I suggest some additions to our current understanding of the cultural trauma process.

I began this dissertation having visited Uganda once. I started that trip with questions about Capitalism, poverty, and inequality. I returned with more questions that I left with, and a superficial understanding of a long conflict that had recently ended. Two years later, and six years after the conflict ended, the world was bombarded with a video urging everyone to "make Kony famous." After the better part of a decade, seven lengthy trips to Uganda, over 150 interviews, and the folding of the organization largely responsible for the genesis of this work, I am faced with impossible task of making sense of it all; most especially melding the anthropological with the sociological.

Initially I presumed the best analysis would come from a social movement perspective. Was the Holy Spirit Movement and the subsequent Lord's Resistance Army a social movement and does this case add to our understanding of social movement theory? As discussed in Chapter two, perhaps the best way to understand the HSM/LRA can be traced back to the beginning of our understanding of social movements. Hobsbawm would probably refer to them as primitive rebels. Could they have become a social movement as discussed by movement theories?

Perhaps, given the right circumstances.  However, I am reminded of what I was asked by the interviewees, "how will this help us?"

Given Uganda's history and my own history of studying development leading up to this work, the rational next line of inquiry would examine the development of Uganda from one of the main development perspectives.   Are the outcomes in Uganda, the impacts on the lived lives of the actors on the ground, a consequence of Uganda's development?  There are numerous theoretical approaches to understanding international development and social change in the social science fields, the main three being modernization theory, dependency theory, and world systems theory.  Proponents of the neoliberal, laissez-faire, liberal economic, market-driven school of thought argue that economic development occurs best when state owned properties are privatized and the markets are unfettered.  Milton Friedman and others from the Chicago School point to examples such as Chile and Hong Kong as real world success stories.  Critics such as Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein (2008) refer to these types of policies as "disaster capitalism" and argue that the Pinochet coup in Chile was non-democratic and repressive.  If recent history is an example, the free-market ideology may not be the best approach for economic development. The "shock therapy" that Klein (2008) discusses has largely failed to raise the standard of living in many of the areas it has been implemented.  Alejandro Portes also addresses the issue of successes and failures of neoliberal policies,

> "the signal failure of the new 'model' is arguably Mexico, where a policy of unilateral external opening and rapid privatizations under the Salinas administration culminated in an overvalued currency that sent the country spinning into depression 1997:239-240).

Mamdani (1984) has examined this in Uganda.  Post Idi Amin, Mamdani discusses how the incoming President, Museveni, actually accepted free-market stipulations attached to aid (see Mamdani's discussion about United States and Soviet Union aid at the height of the Cold War).

History has shown how aid attached to unrealistic stipulations has worked out for the poorest nations. One does not need to look any further than Millennium Development Goal Eight that deals with debt relief.

Tukahebwar (1993) argued that a "mushroom of public enterprises" occurred post-independence in Uganda. These public enterprises were created to provide goods and services. They could also be seen as an attempt to take over control of the economy and drive development. Most were in the agricultural sector (cotton, coffee), with some being created prior to independence in order to help facilitate the transfer and "facilitate the colonial government's monopoly in purchasing and marketing these crops, in order to restrict competition from other powers" (Tukahebwa, 1993:1). This can be seen as an attempt to, in a sense, retract the global market, internalize, and break ties with their metropolis. In the early 1970's Idi Amin declared economic war and expropriated foreign industries. The attempt to nationalize was a failure. As is often the case with public enterprises in developing countries, they became a drain on the economy. When the National Resistance Movement and Yoweri Museveni came to power in the 1980's there was a push to privatize the public enterprises, in response to the Structural Adjustment Program and neoliberal, free market ideology. Amin's attempt to internalize and nationalize failed (Twaddle, 1998). Privatization did not occur immediately. Museveni actually came to power as a staunch critic of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Twaddle, 1998). Upon taking control of the country Museveni attempted to freeze and try to raise the value of the Ugandan shilling (Twaddle, 1998). Economic collapse occurred within a couple months. Fighting the system failed. By the middle of the 1980's Uganda was faced with, as Twaddle puts it, "Only two realistic economic options at the governmental level: accepting the advice offered by the IMF, the World Bank, and the Paris

Club quickly, or accepting it less quickly" (Twaddle, 1998:7). Self-reliance is a difficult objective to achieve in a global economy full of sharks. The obstacle of colonialism (Frank, 1996) is a difficult hurdle to overcome. Attempts to internalize, determine one's own development and move towards self-reliance has been met with failures worldwide. It is a common experience. As McMichael puts it,

> "Colonial subjects powerfully appropriated European talk of the 'rights of man,' employing it as a mirror to their colonial masters and as a mobilizing tool for their independence struggle; But independence for what? In a postcolonial world, non-European cultures had been either destroyed or irrevocably changed through colonial histories. Newly independent states emerged, and political leaders had to operate in an international framework that was not of their own making, but through which they needed political legitimacy" (McMichael, 2000:7).

Peter Evans (1995) examines the role of state intervention. He argues that all states intervene in economies for various reasons, thus the "sterile debates about 'how much' states intervene have been replaced with arguments about different kinds of involvements and their effects" (Evans, 1995:10). For Evans, and others considering the developmental state (Amsden, 2003; Chibber, 2003; Paige, 1998; Babb, 2003), the question is not "if" or "how much" state involvement, but instead, "what kind" of involvement is necessary for development and what level of autonomy is held by the state (Evans, 1995; Zeitlin, 1984).

Others have focused attention on the actors instead of the state. The "basic building blocks" of development for Sen (1999), is individual freedoms.

> "It should be clear […] the view of freedom that is being taken here involves both the processes that allow freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances" (Sen, 1999:17).

Sen argues that development should be evaluated by its ability to expand personal agency and lead people to "live the kind of lives they have reason to value" (Sen, 1999:226). Due to the recognized differences in how women experience development differently than men, development scholars who focus on gender, at least on some level, include these types of discussion. Hodgson's (2000), edited book examines the role that gender plays in the "negotiation of development and modernity" in pastoralist Africa. The central question posed by Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006), is illustrative of the different theoretical perspectives. Instead of asking, "if, how much, or what kind" of state involvement is needed, Kyomuhendo et al. ask,

> "Is a good woman, one who fills the designated roles at home and acts properly toward her husband and/or male relatives, allowed to participate in the broader economy? What types of outside activity, if any, may she pursue and still be seen as respectable" (2006:11)?

Numerous other scholars have addressed these same types of issues/questions (see: Wolf, 1994; Collins, 2003; Eirenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Munoz, 2008).

One could certainly examine the aforementioned in relation to Uganda. The state has certainly intervened, several times, in Uganda. Perhaps the worst period in Ugandan history, post-independence, was during Idi Amin's rule. While it would be easy to make a statement about Amin's sanity, it is not helpful. Mamdani (1984) argues that Amin's policies of kicking groups out of the country, in some ways continuing the colonial practice of ethnic division, effectively allowing greater extraction of resources by colonial powers before attempting nationalistic isolation, can certainly be seen as state intervention. It would be easy to see Amin as a fascistic dictator (as much of history has viewed him), but in many ways he was a product of

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the social, cultural, and historical context and a continuation of colonialist thoughts and practices.

I could absolutely examine Uganda from the traditional development schools of thought (modernization, dependency, world system theory). The underlying assumptions of modernization theory are, societies move from primitive to advanced, movement is largely unidirectional and a given, and modernizing is seen as good because it "represents progress, humanity, and civilization" (So, 1990:19). Psychologically, "Westerners are possessed by a high need for achievement and rationality" (Chirot, 1982:82). However, even today the debate between definitional understandings of traditional and modern societies continues. Is Uganda traditional? Modern? Given the north/south divide discussed earlier in this work, there is an intricate argument that it is potentially both.

Is Uganda dependent? Andre Gunder Frank (1996) captures the perceived inadequacies of modernization theory,

> We cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for the majority of the world's population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how their past economic and social history gave rise to their present underdevelopment. Yet most historians study only the developed metropolitan countries and pay scant attention to the colonial and underdeveloped lands. For this reason most of our theoretical categories and guides to development policy have been distilled exclusively from the historical experience of the European and North American advanced capitalist nations (Frank, 1966:4).

Frank argues that modernization theory is deficient for numerous reasons. First, it focuses internally, often placing blame on the underdeveloped. In doing so, it assumes their "past and present resembles earlier stages of history of the now-developed countries." Coupling a view of the underdeveloped world from the perspective of the developed world with an often-

misunderstood assumption, linear development can lead to a blame placed approach. The underdeveloped are underdeveloped for internal reasons; their culture, overpopulation, no motivation, lack of investment, etc. (So, 1990). It is assumed that the underdeveloped are at the early stages of development (from Western experience) and to achieve development, the underdeveloped need to follow the same path. Frank argues that this is impossible, as the Third World countries have experienced colonialism where as the Western world has not. Uganda fits this billing perfectly. In fact, during the course of interviews I heard something that stuck with me and I did not truly appreciate until now, "We will get there (meaning developed). You have to remember that our country is only about 50 years old. What was the U.S. like when it was 50 years old?" By this theory, Uganda would be considered a satellite country.

Wallerstein (1979) argued that the bimodal system of dependency theory is too simplistic to capture the complexities of the world, so he introduced a trimodal system consisting of the core, periphery, and semi periphery. Where modernization theory focuses on a first world perspective, and dependency theory focuses on the perspective of the periphery, world system theory purports to focus on the core, periphery, semi periphery and world-economy as a whole. Trade is sought in both directions and countries can move in and out of each mode, it is not unidirectional (i.e. traditional to modern; undeveloped to developed). The main issue with this perspective is, it is very macro. At the end of a development analysis, I am still faced with the question posed by my interviewees, "How will this help us?"

I could certainly examine Kyomuhendo and McIntosh's question about gender equality as a symbol of development. Polygamy was very common among my interviewees. I can still recall the first time I experienced it. During my very first interview in Kitgum district I had just spent over an hour talking to a husband and wife. During the interview I noticed several other

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people cleaning, cooking, and of course children playing games (standing about 10 feet away from a tree and tossing Shea nuts towards a hole near the base of the tree. Closest to the hole won). As the interview was ending, the wife proceeded to leave. I learned that she was going to get the customary gift for a guest, food, which was prepared by another woman. Knowing that it is predominately the wife's job in this culture to cook, and having just listened to them discuss the extraordinary level of poverty they were in, I knew they could not afford a nanny. I asked who prepared the food and was met with, "my wife." As he called her over, I came to learn he had three wives and they took turn cleaning, cooking, and looking after the children. Women are subservient to men in this culture. Even in the capital city of Kampala, traces of this can still be seen as all too often when I visit orphanages and other organizations young girls attempt to kneel when introducing themselves. With all of that said, if equality were an indicator of "development," the U.S. still faces serious development issues, especially concerning race, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. One could certainly look at Uganda and mention topics like the recent "kill the gays" bill as an indication of lack of development. To do so, however, one would need to neglect the prime motivation for such bills, activists such as Scott Lively and the International House of Prayer (both centered in the U.S. and another exportation of values).

One could certainly examine the idea of development as social evolution (Esteva, 2007; Rist, 2011), individualism (Rist, 2011; Frank, 1996), economism (Rist, 2011; Crowley, 1998; McMichael, 2000; Sachs, 2005), or even post-economics (see United Nation's recent removal of "developed" and "developing" from usage). "The main issue is that there is just so much heterogeneity between Malawi and Malaysia for both to be classified in the same group – Malyasia is more like the U.S. than Malawi. When we lump disparate countries together in the same group, it isn't really useful" (World Bank, 2016).

At the end of all of this discussion, does it really matter to my interviewees if Uganda is labeled as developed or undeveloped, peripheral or semi peripheral, second or third world? While the exploration and explanation of the social, cultural and historical factors do provide an understanding of what transpired, and does generate knowledge about the world, how does it help lived experiences?  What, really, does a label attached by an outside force, written into a dissertation form, read and debated by a small handful of academics before being placed on a dusty shelf, mean to the elderly grandmother who lived alone with her two young grandchildren in a crumbling mud hut?  I remain haunted by the words, "How will this help us?"

## Cultural Trauma

Every step of this journey has been a learning process, including a late introduction to the field of literature covering cultural trauma.  Perhaps the most fruitful way to understand what has transpired in Uganda, and contribute to the field of sociology, is to tie the lessons of social movements and development theory together, unpack the concept of cultural trauma, and use the former to address and build upon the latter.  To do so, first we must understand the meaning of cultural trauma.  Snyder (2009) writes,

> "Identity has been a common consideration among sociologists who use trauma as a scientific concept.  Under the terms cultural trauma and collective trauma, for example, sociologists have studied the threats to collective identity (Alexander et al., 2004; Erickson, 1976, 1995; Eyerman, 2004; Neal, 2005; Olick, 1999; Saito, 2006; Schivelbusch, 2001).  Closely related to anomie (see Sztompka, 2004), collective trauma occurs when social solidarity and communality is abruptly wrenched apart.  Neil Smelser writes about collective traumas this way: 'It is possible to describe social dislocations and catastrophes as collective traumas if they massively disrupt social life' (2004:37).  Collective trauma is an objective process, while cultural trauma is a subjective process.  Cultural trauma refers to people claiming that a group is facing a social or cultural crisis.  Alexander writes of cultural trauma, 'Traumatic status is attributed to real or imagined
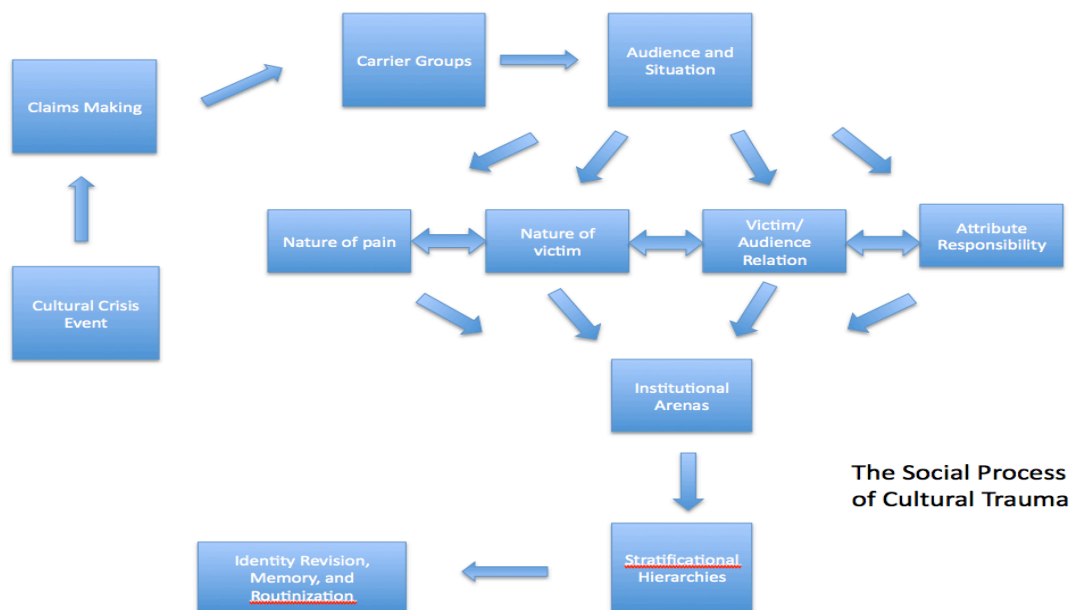
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phenomena, not because of their actual harmfulness or their objective abruptness, but because these phenomena are believed to have abruptly, and harmfully, affected collective identity…Events are one thing, representations of those events are quite another" (Snyder, 2009:15-16).

Jeffrey Alexander (2004), as seen in the Snyder quote, has contributed significantly to the understanding of cultural trauma. He writes,

> "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (2004:1).

This short definition describes what has transpired in Uganda, and specifically northern Uganda, perfectly. However, a further examination of Alexander's social process of cultural trauma reveals a few fundamental and important differences. I have taken Alexander's social process of cultural trauma in word form and transformed it into figure 6.1, as I understand it. What follows in a box-by-box explication, examination, and application to Uganda.

Figure 6.1: Social Process of Cultural Trauma

The cultural crisis event in the case of Uganda should be fairly obvious by now. One could argue that in the case of Uganda it was not just one event, but a series of intricately complex events that began prior to independence (and in the case of ethnic, clan, and linguistic differences, hundreds if not thousands of years before independence). These complex events were laid out in earlier chapters. Alexander discusses how massive disruptions can be felt at the structural level,

> "Institutions can fail to perform. Schools may fail to educate, failing miserably even to provide basic skills. Governments may be unable to secure basic protections and may undergo severe crises of delegitimation […] Trauma is not a result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity. Collective actors 'decide' to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go" (2004:10).

All of these have been evidenced in previous chapters. My interviewees were quick to highlight the failures of the education system, the feeling of disgust in the government, and of course the questioning of self-worth and identity. On one hand, it is easy to grasp Alexander's concept. There can be a disruption in the system and it not be viewed as a trauma. An economic downturn could be viewed as such. On the other hand, I am reminded of the horrific stories shared by my interviewees. While I specifically mentioned that I was not there to make them relive their horrific pasts, interviewees almost always shared their story. Okema is a perfect example. During the interview he shared how he was required to dismember family members and boil the body parts. This is certainly individual trauma, and something that Okema will always have to face. At what point does this become collective trauma? Cultural trauma? Does it require a small trading center to experience it? A district? A clan? An ethnic group? At the

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basic level, in this stage of the process, some event or series of events, real or imagined, occurs. Social movement theories would likely say this is the stage at which there is some form of group grievance.

### Claims Making

The next stage of the process is claims making. Alexander (2004) writes,

"The gap between event and representation can be conceived as the 'trauma process.' The persons who compose collectivities broadcast symbolic representations – characterizations – of ongoing social events, past, present, and future. They broadcast these representations as members of a social group. These group representations can be seen as 'claims' about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (2004:11).

While I agree with the premise, the case in Uganda illustrates that there is more to the process in this case. It is true that the actors on the ground, those with social power, were making claims about what was transpiring. Alice Lakwena certainly made claims about the Acholi being ostracized. Joseph Kony continued those claims even after the Acholi collectively tired of conflict. Idi Amin made claims about Ugandan nationalism. Museveni and his government made claims that often ran counter to Acholi claims. He used child soldiers to gain control of the country, yet the LRA are negatively labeled for these actions. The claims making process, it could be argued, began before independence as Buganda and Bunyoro struggled for dominance and ended in 2006 with the last LRA attack.

However, this dissertation really began to take on its current form in 2012 with the introduction of a viral video, made by three U.S. college students, six years after the last attack. In essence, the conflict had ended and half of a decade later the world was reintroduced to a highly oversimplified portrayal of events in Uganda. A substantial group of people called this group out for the oversimplified and misleading views of what transpired, and a little more than

two years after the video the organization closed their doors. However, the claims made had significant impacts. The impoverished, and Africa in general, are too often viewed as helpless, hopeless, and voiceless victims who need help. During my interviews this was revealed several times, "How does this video portray us?" Numerous public screenings of the video in northern Uganda ended with crowds angry at the inaccurate, oversimplified portrayal and the story being driven by a white westerner and his son. The historical actors on the ground in Uganda are not the only ones who lay claims. With the ever-growing advancement of technology, where one can instantaneously spread information all over the world, increasingly it could be argued that outside influence should be discussed more deeply. Even today, 5 years after the famous Kony 2012 video, incoming Freshman (who were 13-14 at the time) still recall the video. I guess I should say those who remember recall pieces of the video. "That is the video about the bad guy who abducts children?" The Save Darfur movement is another example of outsiders defining not only the problem (in an oversimplified form) but also the solutions (see: Mamdani, 2010). During the Arab Spring demonstrators used social media to illustrate to their reality to the world. In the most recent Ugandan election, the Museveni led government tried to shut down the Internet and silence Ugandan citizens, as votes were being cast and tallied. Illustrating the power of new technologies on the claims making process, Ugandan citizens circumvented Museveni via the use of virtual private networks (much the same as the techniques used in the Arab Spring) and Museveni's government also continued tweeting.

In short, in the case of Uganda claims making was not purely an internal process and did not end with the end of the LRA conflict. The claims making process still continues. This dissertation, itself, is part of the continued process.

For Alexander the messenger in the claims making process are carrier groups,

"Carrier groups are the collective agents of the trauma process. Carrier groups have both ideal and material interests, they are situated in particular places in the social structure, and the have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims – for what might be called meaning making – in the public sphere. Carrier groups may be elites, but they may also be denigrated and marginalized classes. They may be prestigious religious leaders or groups whom the majority has designated as spiritual pariahs. A carrier group can be generational, representing the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one" (2004, 11).

Several of the carrier groups were mentioned in the previous section. From Museveni and his NRM government, to the Local Council 1 (LC1) at the village level, claims making happens. Alica Lakwena is another example; her message reached thousands of people and encouraged them to fight. Carrier groups can also be marginalized classes. Maybe one of the most important groups was bicycle repair men. The use of bicycles in northern Uganda is important. Bicycles allow people to get crops to market, among other things. Every few kilometers along the dirt road one will see a group of men (now often joined by boda boda drivers) settled in the shade under a group of trees. These men work all day repairing bicycles that break down or get flat tires. These repairmen were vital carriers of information, collecting information about the latest attacks and the whereabouts of Kony's group, and passing it along to passersby.

As with the previous section, it feels as if there is also an external process of claims making that happens too. Travelers, missionaries, aid workers, and the like travel to Uganda and return home. Upon returning home they share the story of their experiences. These stories influence the beliefs of those who they are shared with; they are a carrier group. If the recipients never travel or donate, no good or harm comes from the shared information. However, if the

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recipient travels, the information they were given directly and indirectly impacts their

interactions with traumatized locals.  It could be something as simple as viewing traumatized

locals as victims in need of help (reifying the victim status and reinforcing the trauma process).

### *Audience and Situation*

Alexander states that the trauma process can be likened to a speech act, requiring a

speaker, audience, and situation.  "The goal of the speaker is persuasively to project the trauma

claim to the audience-public […] the speaker's audience must be members of the carrier group

itself" (2004:12).  During the conceptualization of the trauma, this is a fundamental piece.  This

component of the trauma process allows the audience to make the connections between

biography and history, thus allowing personal troubles to be viewed in the collective as public

issues (Mills, 2000); in this case trauma.

### *Cultural Classification: The Creation of Trauma as a New Master Narrative*

> "For the wider audience to become persuaded that they, too, have become traumatized by
> an experience or event, the carrier group needs to engage in successful meaning work"
> (Alexander, 2004:12).

Alexander argues that to successfully create meaning work, the carrier group needs to

address four questions.  What is the *Nature of the Pain?*  That is to say, what actually happened?

In northern Uganda, this is a complex answer that is decades in the making.  My interviewees

addressed numerous grievances, as discussed in earlier chapters.  My interviewees almost forced

me to address this question before interviews began, "What do you know about our history?"

Essentially I was being asked if I knew what really happened.

The second question asked in this part of the trauma process concerns the *Nature of the*

*Victim.*  The second question asks who was affected by the trauma?  In the case of Uganda,

effectively the entire northern part of the country was impacted.  This involves numerous ethnic and linguistic groups as well as numerous clans.  As discussed in an earlier chapter, the conflict in Uganda was intense and complicated.  Various other groups were also impacted, specifically during the Bush War, which stretched from east central to west central Uganda.

The third question addresses the *Relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience.* "To what extent do the members of the audience for trauma representations experience an identity with the immediately victimized group" (2004:14)?  Given the ethnic and clan differences in Uganda, this is relatively easy for a carrier group to address.  While every interviewee would personalize the troubles mentioned in previous chapters (i.e. education, land conflict, drought, etc.) almost every one would also would step back and talk about the Acholi as a whole.  This identification is powerful.  While I did not ask, I think most of my interviewees would identify themselves as Acholi first and Ugandan a distant second.

The forth question concerns the *attribution of responsibility.*  Who injured the victim? Who caused the trauma?  For the Acholi I interviewed this is simple.  First and foremost the Ugandan government is to blame.  It was the Ugandan government that forced them off of their land and into IDP camps.  It was Ugandan soldiers tasked with protecting these camps that created problems in the camps (i.e. staying in the center, rape, transmission of HIV, etc.). Second, for my interviewees, the Karamajong (the ethnic group to the east that view all cattle as belonging to them because God gave them as a gift) are responsible because of livestock rustling. Third for my interviewees was Kony.

It is interesting to look at these questions as part of the internal process of traumatization and compare it to an external process.  While what I have been discussing as far as external claims makers, external carrier groups, and the incorporation of technological connections does

not really fit into Alexander's original ideas of the traumatization process, it is interesting to note that many of the problems generated by external groups in the case of Uganda originate from these four questions. When discussing what actually happened, external groups are likely to misunderstand or misrepresent events and/or the complex socio-historical context. What group was affected? In our case, children are used as a tool to garner attention. External groups used decade old video footage highlighting children walking to the market center to sleep (where it was "safe"). The affected group can even be deduced from the name of the group, "Invisible Children." It was not "Invisible Acholi." And, who were they invisible to? By drawing upon children, groups were trying to connect to the wider audience. After all, we have children too. Children are innocent, young, blameless, faultless and the future. They must be saved. Last, attribution of responsibility is wildly misplaced. In the simplification process the answer becomes Kony. Kony is bad, children are being harmed (or, were 10 years ago) and these "invisible" (helpless, hopeless, voiceless) people need help. While the motivation behind getting involved may be laudable, getting involved without representing an accurate portrayal causes problems; it retraumatizes.

### Institutional Arenas

The next stage of the trauma process for Alexander involves institutional arenas, the "representational process (from the previous steps of the trauma process) creates a new master narrative of social suffering" (2004:15). The institutions mentioned include religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific, mass media, and state bureaucracy.

Religious connotations can certainly be seen in Alice Lakwena's and Joseph Kony's portrayal of events. I will not go too deep into this area as too many people already simplify the religious undertones and label the LRA as a Christian terrorist organization. While they do

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operate on a form of the Ten Commandments, reducing the LRA to a religious terrorist organization subsumes the historical rationale for their uprising.

"The mass media are significant, but not necessary, in the aesthetic arena" (2004:16). This is another area that I feel the cultural trauma process could be built upon. Alexander discusses how the media portrays trauma events. We can still see these types of events at the movie theater, every time a new film comes out about a historical event (i.e. Pearl Harbor, Iraq war, Benghazi, etc.). The media portray events in a particular way, thus building an aesthetic around the event. What Alexander does not touch upon is the instantaneous nature of media, and new social media. Now, we can witness events as they happen (or moments later). The refugee crisis in Syria is an example. The trauma events can be shared (edited by the carrier groups) instantly, thus influencing the outside audience. This outside influence can certainly have an impact on the internalization of the trauma process. As Syrians walk out of their bomb-riddled community, the wider audience begins to label (i.e. victims, Muslim, refugee, etc.) and these labels can have an impact on whether or not they are accepted as refugees. This can have direct and indirect impacts on their internalization of the trauma process. Maybe the closest Alexander comes to addressing the aforementioned in his process is in the brief discussion of mass media. He recognizes that because of the nature of mass media (i.e. readership, viewership, time constraints, etc.) it has a persuasive power and the inspiration to exaggerate and/or distort events. The "victims" become "traumatized" and the counterbalance is the perpetrator. Children are good; Kony is bad, stop Kony. However, he does not address how this contributes to the trauma process when this misrepresented information is acted upon.

### *Stratificational Hierarchies*

"The constraints imposed by institutional arenas are mediated by the uneven distribution of material resources and the social networks that provide differential access to them …

local, provincial, and national governments deploy significant power over the trauma process" (2004:21).

This is certainly the case in Uganda.  Government control runs far and wide in the news media, legal system, and educationally.  Most people in Uganda are highly impoverished and not only lack power, but also access to power.  Maybe the most telling sign of one's position, or acceptance/internalization of their position was a common response I heard in my interviews with elderly Acholi, "We are tired of fighting."

### *Identity Revision, Memory, and Routinization*

"'Experiencing trauma' can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences.  Insofar as traumas are so experienced, and thus imagined and represented, the collective identity will become significantly revised.  This identity revision means that there will be a searching re-remembering of the collective past, for memory is not only social and fluid but deeply connected to the contemporary sense of the self.  Identities are continuously constructed and secured not only by facing the present and future but also by reconstructing the collectivity's earlier life" (Alexander, 2004:22).

Throughout this dissertation I have touched upon the numerous ways that the Acholi have revised, remembered, coped with, and reconstructed their realities as they have come to terms with decades of trauma.  One can see the stark differences between the older and younger generations, as the youth who were raised in IDP camps look forward and the elderly strive to return to their cultural roots.  My interviewees often spoke of the "Acholi" and not just their selves.  This dissertation begins with questions about roadside crosses, memorials that objectify the traumatic past.  It is evident that the Acholi are attempting to reconstruct their identity and return to a sense of normalcy, routinization.  They have progressed through Alexander's trauma process and find themselves in the final stage.

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### *How will this help?*

This dissertation began in large part because of viral video that inaccurately portrayed what has transpired over the past few decades in Uganda. As I started the interview process, I truly believed that examining the events of the past 40 years, as a social movement would be the most fruitful way of contributing to our sociological understanding. The more interviews I analyzed, the more I realized it doing so would be a disservice to the amazing people who lived the tragedies that I was writing about. Not knowing where to go, I started to touch base with the development literature. As I thought through the contributions, I was haunted by a question I was asked repeatedly, "How will this help us?" The more I wrote and the more I analyzed what I was being told in interviews, the more I realized that while it might contribute to the sociological literature, it was effectively meaningless to those gracious enough to spend their time reliving their past and discussing their present issues.

During the course of interviewing I was fascinated by a disconnection between the external portrayal of events in Uganda and the lived realities. This disconnection leads to a fascinating situation where outsiders not only define the course of events, but also the solutions. It is a disconnect that can be traced back to the scramble for Africa when great explorers traveled the "wild" lands, tamed the uncivilized natives, and haphazardly drew lines on a map and claimed land as their own. The trauma experienced by Africa is not a couple of decades old, it has been happening for hundreds of years.

While the discussion of social movement and development theories seems fruitless, each contributed in their own way. I was able to take a small idea from each and apply it to cultural trauma theory. Social movement theories donated the idea of grievances and the resources necessary to air those grievances. Development theories donated the idea that the world is an interconnected system. In the second half of this chapter I have talked through Alexander's

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cultural trauma process. His process uncovers and explains much of what has transpired in Uganda. From the occurrence of the traumatic events to the current state of affairs on the ground in Uganda, example after example can be found to support his explanation of the trauma process. His process has a tremendous amount of explanatory power.

With that said, the case of Uganda reveals two areas where a little bit more could be added to the process, especially as we move through an era where the progression of technology increasingly shrinks the world through superconnectedness. First, as I worked through the trauma process I was consistently reminded of why I was interested in the case in the first place. An outside group created a viral video. This video oversimplified the events in Uganda, drew upon ten-year-old video of children suffering, and highlighted a false dichotomy to urge people to help. Acholi who have watched the video often express anger and disgust over the portrayal. Some screenings actually ended in riotous, rock throwing fashion. When my interviewees were told of the video they often asked, "How does it portray us? Does it show us as helpless?" This video, in some ways, contributed to the trauma process. This is in part evidenced by the simple question, "does it show us as helpless?" It is the type of question that reveals something prior. If they had not experienced being portrayed as "helpless" before, the question would stop with, "how does it portray us?"

The interconnected nature of the world now is fundamentally different than it was during the world wars. Three college students can set off on an adventure in a foreign land and with little explanation of historical events, connect with millions of people and contribute to the traumatization or retraumatization of those they are supposedly helping. The instantaneous and interconnected nature of new social media can contribute to the trauma process. That is not to say it does or will in every case. As this is being written, a million refugees from Sudan are

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flooding into Uganda, yet very little coverage is being given.  However, almost every stage of

Alexander's process can now possibly be influenced.  To further our understanding and the

explanatory power, some credence should be given to media connectedness.

Second, very tightly connected to the first point, external influence should be given more

credence.  When a situation is portrayed in a particular way, it can inspire people to take action.

Something as simple as spending a summer abroad "helping," influences the trauma process.

This can be seen in earlier chapters when interviewees discussed outside, Western values and

their influence on the local culture.  While the Acholi were progressing through the trauma

process, they were also being influenced by Western music and videos, but more importantly

also their morals, values, and beliefs.  At a different level, external influences also impact the

institutions.  External pressures can influence religion, family, media, legal systems, and state

bureaucracy (among many other institutions), thus impacting the trauma process.

Homosexuality is a prime example in Uganda.  While people are coming to terms with the

traumatic events that occurred, outsiders arrived denouncing homosexuality.  This happened in

the religious institution.  It also happened in the media, as newspapers actually printed the top

100 homosexuals in the country (inviting violence).  At the nation state and legal system level,

laws were written (largely by external forces) and were pushed through congress.  While this was

occurring, external forces were also denouncing Uganda for what they were doing.  Many

threatened to pull financial aid (some actually did).  In many ways Uganda was in a no-win

situation as people were influenced by external forces to believe homosexuality was bad, the

government was being pressured to do what their constituents asked and also pressured by the

global system not to.

In the end, I am still faced with the question, "How will this help us?"  Here is the simple explanation.  The externalities that have been discussed above also largely ignore proper portrayal of individuals.  What I mean is Ugandans and Africans in general are portrayed as helpless, hopeless, voiceless, and backwards.  I was asked by interviewees not to be their voice, but to share their voice.  In a sense, I should use my position to amplify their voice.  So, that is what I have tried to do.

The Acholi are not helpless or hopeless.  They are among the hardest working people you will ever meet.  The older generations want nothing more than to keep in touch with who they are…hard workers who rely upon the land (land they were removed from and are fighting to get back).  The younger generations were raised in IDP camps and socialized into a world of dependency.  However, they are returning to their cultural roots while simultaneously trying to fit into a technologically connected world their grandparents could not even imagine.  The Acholi are not backwards.  There is nothing backwards about valuing interpersonal connections over money.  There is nothing backwards about working hard, growing crops, raising livestock, and sharing the last bit of food that you have with a new friend.  That is called love.  It is called humanity.  The Acholi are not voiceless.  This dissertation is evidence of that.  The Acholi have a voice, but they lack the access to the tools and social power to amplify that voice for all to hear.  Sadly, until they have that access, their story will continue to be told by external forces.  And, history has evidenced the fact that when external forces tell the story, not only is much left to be desired, but also additional harm is likely to be done.

# Chapter 7 – "A Lost Generation"

I entered Uganda trying to understand 20 years of LRA conflict, I learned of decades more. I entered Uganda "knowing" that the Acholi still feared Joseph Kony; after all it is what we are told in the West. In over 150 interviews I learned this "fear" is far from the top of the list of things the Acholi are worried about. When I asked people what they fear, how culture has changed, and what they see for the future, the themes mentioned in previous chapters were continuously discussed. Education is poor at best and still unattainable for many. Two decades in IDP camps has taken its toll on traditional culture. Land conflicts abound. Land grabs and rustling are prevalent. Drought, climate change, and famine are a lived reality. Extreme poverty is devastating. A generational divide is occurring. The list goes on and on. However, two ideas revealed themselves more than any other.

First, if Kony and the LRA are still feared, my interviewees did not discuss it. It could be argued that they did not discuss it because of the horrific memories, but if that were the case one would think they would not discuss horrific events that they experienced. They did not have to. I was clear that I was not there to relive that aspect of their pasts. While eye contact was rare and voices often lowered during the telling of horrific stories, none of the interviewees hesitated to share. Sharing the stories of their past is clearly evidence that not only were they traumatized, but that they are still dealing with the traumatization process. Given the willingness and openness to share, especially about issues like government corruption, if there were fear of Kony it would have been revealed. That is not to say that if an LRA attack was reported nearby, people would not be afraid, it just means on the long list of problems the Acholi are facing, Kony is much nearer to the bottom of the list than the top. Undoubtedly the horrendous atrocities committed by Kony and the LRA should be punished. The world likely will be a better place the

day he is no longer free.  However, the focus on Kony and the LRA detracts from what the

Acholi currently face, and minimizes the reasons for the genesis of the LRA.

Second, almost every single interviewee discussed the future for the youth.  What does

the future hold?  How does an entire generation of IDP camp youth function in the world?

With a median age of about 15 years and about 70% of the population under the age of 24 (CIA),

Uganda is one of the youngest and fastest growing countries in the world.  The concerns of the

Acholi are real.  According to the Advisory Consortium on Conflict Sensitivity (ACCS),

> The increasing feelings of hopelessness amongst youth arising from poverty,
> unemployment, low educational attainment and poor governance constitute part of a
> global pattern in areas of armed conflict (Amarasuriya, 2009).  A Department for
> International Development (DFID) commissioned study found significant links between
> youth exclusion and violence in fragile states.  Most of the factors underlying youth
> exclusion in the study are found in Uganda, including "unemployment and lack of
> opportunities; unequal and inappropriate education; poor governance and weak political
> participation; gender inequalities and socialization; and a legacy of past violence"
> (Hilker, 2012).  The legacy of violence is particularly relevant in the North.  The study
> warns that "structural factors alone are insufficient to explain youth violence," and that
> other factors like recruitment, coercion and indoctrination, identity politics and ideology,
> leadership and organizational dynamics and trigger events" are also relevant.  Youth
> unemployment in Uganda is not a uniquely post-conflict phenomenon.  The 2009/2010
> Uganda National Household Survey revealed that the general proportion of youth
> unemployment rose from 44 percent to 48 percent.  Over 80 percent of youth in northern
> Uganda are unemployed or unemployable in the formal sector due to low qualification
> levels.  Many have military experience, having been either abducted by the LRA or
> recruited in local militias by the government.  Youth in the post-conflict environment of
> northern Uganda have very limited access to and control over key assets, including land
> and physical and human capital.  Many are poorly educated and depend for their
> livelihoods on low-productivity subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, where
> returns on labor and capital are generally low (ACCS, 2013:25-26).

The concerns of the Acholi are real and in my interviews I learned they are hyper aware. The media has called what is happening in Uganda a "lost generation." It is easy to see why. What happens when an entire generation of youth are raised in IDP camps, provided sub-par education, their existence dependent upon a government who views them as lesser, tribal, backwards, and dependent upon aid delivery workers for food, water, medicine, and protection? What happens when that protection ends and their cultural ties to the land are challenged, oil is discovered, they struggle to educate their children, and climate change impacts their ability to even raise food for survival?

Pierre Bourdieu famously discusses the concept of "habitus."

"The habitus is a mental filter that structures an individual's perceptions, experiences, and practices such that the world takes on a taken-for-granted, common-sense appearance. It refers to an individual's 'dispositions' or 'mental structures' through which the social world is apprehended and expressed through both verbal and bodily language (Bourdieu, 1990:131). As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the condition of its production. In short, it is through the habitus that one acquires a 'sense of one's place' in the world or a 'point of view' from which one is able to interpret one's own actions as well as the actions of others" (Bourdieu, 1990:55).

As can be seen in the quote, Bourdieu specifically discusses how dispositions are acquired, not created by individuals. He argues, "The habitus is not simply a mental or internal compass that shapes one's attitudes, perceptions, tastes, and inclinations, nor does it refer to one's will or undetermined consciousness; it is instead an *internalization of externality* (Bourdieu, 1990:55).

The externality is decades of conflict. The externality is decades of being thought of and treated as if they are backwards and lower than third class citizens. The Acholi have been

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removed from their land; faced repeated attacks; lost their animals to Karamajong raids; had their children abducted, brainwashed, and forced to fight for a rebel group that attacked their own families; were placed into IDP camps that were "protected" by soldiers who committed horrific atrocities representing a despised government; they have faced unimaginable trauma. And, all of this occurred after decades of northerners being co-opted into police and military forces (because of their height and stature) by their colonizer, and subsequent ruling parties after independence. The externality is chaos. If I heard anything in the interviews, I heard despair and fatigue. "What do we do?" "We are tired of fighting." Just as the north was coming to terms with the end of attacks, just as they were coming grips with the unimaginable trauma they had gone through, a video is released that brings tremendous attention to their trials and tribulations. Newfound attention from around the world is drawn towards Uganda.

I went into this research trying to understand the connections between new social media and social movements. What I found was something very different. Cultural trauma theory does an amazing job at understanding and explaining how people process trauma. However, as we move into a world that is becoming more connected than ever, it is important to assess how new social media can impact that process. As I stated very early in this dissertation, the video created by the IC did not target the Acholi. It was not created for the Acholi. Outsiders created it. Outsiders told the story and delineated the problems. Outsiders viewed the video. And outsiders proposed the solutions. This process, along with the instantaneous nature of new technologies contributes to the traumatization process. How are the Acholi viewed outside of Uganda? If I ask my students who the Acholi are, very few have any idea. If I mention the LRA, again many have no clue. If I mention the IC or Kony, students will begin to tell me the labels they know. The Acholi are victims. They are helpless victims who have had their children abducted. New

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media can reify beliefs. It does not only contribute to trauma, but it can also retraumatize. This was evidenced in almost every interview. "How does the video portray us? As helpless victims?" "Why is this video created now? Kony stopped attacking years ago?" Maybe most telling was one of the first questions I was asked in nearly every interview, "What do you know about our history?" Did I know the governmental story? Did I know the western story? Or did I know the story as they perceive it to be true. The ability to transmit information instantaneously around the world can be hugely beneficial, but it can also allow for oversimplifications. Indirectly this can reify the labels attached. But it can also directly impact the trauma process. In the case of Uganda, United States military forces were sent to assist Ugandan forces, largely because of the pressure created by the support generated by a video. It can also directly impact the trauma process when people begin to volunteer, travel, and assist without understanding the actual history of events. The acceptance of help does not necessarily indicate an acceptance of the background reasons for that assistance. When a group has been traumatized like northerners in Uganda, individuals will almost always accept the assistance. I have seen numerous instances of groups coming in to "save" a community. They arrive, often with teenagers in tow; to deliver something they have raised funds for (i.e. a new building, a bore hole). In exchange, while digging the borehole they will share the word of their God. When they leave, locals simply return to the way things were before their arrival. The aid deliverers return home triumphantly discussing and sharing photos about how they saved the locals, dug a borehole just in the nick of time, and converted numerous people to their religion. In short, the Acholi are internalizing an externality of trauma and dependency.

If culture is both objective and subjective, constructed and reconstructed through interaction daily while simultaneously being something that is real, objective and "there," one

must wonder what the impact of twenty years of conflict will have on the Acholi culture moving forward.  From the outside, it might be easy to see Kony as the problem.  From the inside, the world has been structured very differently.  How can Kony be the problem if he is Acholi?  How can he be the problem when the government is responsible for placing people in the IDP camps?  The government promised education, and is failing miserably.  The traditional authority and legal authority are at odds.  Land issues and climate change make it near impossible to go back to "the way things were."  Kampala is the place to be, but infrastructure expenses are being outpaced by population growth.  Kampala, currently at just over 1 million people, is predicted to be over 20 million by 2050.  When visiting with a group of students at a high school, we discussed population growth and family planning.  Several of the students reported, "Why are whites always pushing family planning and warning about population growth?  This is just a new form of colonialism."  I do not doubt this is a line obtained from one of their teachers, however, in some ways they are correct.

During the course of this research I have tried to understand what has transpired and what is transpiring with the Acholi culture; what are the impacts of multiple decades of conflict. Some could argue that the culture was, for lack of better terms, disrupted.  For two decades over 90% of northern Ugandans were displaced, many into camps.  During this displacement the culture was impacted and influenced not only by other Acholi clans and ethnic groups that were displaced, but also outsiders.  Currently Ugandans are also faced with the influx of over a million Sudanese refugees.  While the people tried to continue their cultural practices inside of the camps, large identifying pieces (who the Acholi really are) were subsumed or removed all together (i.e. Farming, raising animals).

In the beginning of this work I asked what are the challenges faced in northern Uganda? What is life like? What is important in daily life? What does the future hold? How is the past reconciled? How have northern cultures been impacted? How has decades of conflict impacted the construction of social life? In short, how has their habitus been impacted ("the mental filter that structures an individual's perceptions, experiences, and practices such that the world takes on a taken-for-granted, common-sense appearance…through which the social world is apprehended and expressed") (Bourdieu, 1990:131)? I originally began by trying to understand these within the scope of development and social change. As I progressed, so did the understanding behind what has transpired. Northerners have faced tremendous cultural trauma. While the attacks ended over a decade ago, the ramifications are still rippling through their society. Their habitus has been deeply impacted.

As I worked through this process, I did so in an exploratory manner. Instead of beginning with a theory, I tried to allow themes and ideas to emerge. The process then became one of trying to understand the best "lens" through which to view what has transpired in Uganda. In the end, what transpired was research that tried to examine how cultural trauma and conflict mediate people's experience of social change. As such, this research contributes to the larger discourse in three main ways. First, most research in northern Uganda examines the political nature of the conflict, anthropological understandings, or policy implications/effectiveness that often focus on long-term peace. This research attempts to bring these together. Second, I apply Alexander's (2004) cultural trauma process to Uganda. Most research on cultural trauma deals with psychological/mental health aspects, psychosocial components, anthropological understandings of community reformation, medicalization of trauma, or trauma aesthetics in films such as those released by the IC. Third, this research suggests the need for a tweaking of

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the trauma control process as presently understood.  The instantaneous nature of new social media now allows for external explanations for trauma and external solutions for trauma events to be put forth quickly enough and to a large enough audience that it can not only have substantial impacts on the trauma process, but can also retraumatize.  Exploratory research tends to generate hypotheses instead of beginning with them.  Perhaps the most counter-intuitive hypothesis that would come out of this research is this; I would hypothesize that Acholi who have had fewer interactions with outside aid organizations, NGOs or CBOs, are progressing through the trauma process more quickly than Acholi who have had more significant interactions.  Future research will address this hypothesis.

Cultural disruption insinuates that the culture will continue unimpeded, much like a river returns to a normal flow after passing by the impediment of a large stone.  That is to say, the Acholi customs and traditions, after being disrupted, will return to a sense of normalcy.  I fear this is not strong enough.  My research, interviews, and travels reveal something much greater. While I hesitate to use the term cultural rupture, it seems to be a better fit.  Like a balloon filled with water changes shape and expands when filled with more water, tossed around, or held differently in the hands, culture also changes shapes and forms.  It adjusts to the outside environment.  Molded by, but always remaining inside of the structure of the balloon.  It expands and contracts based upon the temperature of the environment.  However, when the balloon bursts, the water remains water but can no longer be placed back into the balloon.  Even if one were fortunate enough to capture all of the escaping water, and place it back into another balloon, it would be a different balloon.  Once the balloon ruptures, it will never be the same again.

Decades of conflict, and specifically twenty years of LRA conflict and internal displacement appear to have ruptured the Acholi culture. While many still try, most especially the older generations, to hold onto the traditional ways of the Acholi, it will never be the same. An entire generation born into the camps, schooled in the camps, neglected by the government, dependent upon outside organizations, have internalized a very different externality than their ancestors. Or than their ancestors intended to pass down. The written history, largely influenced by the west, and currently being written by the west (this dissertation included) struggles to capture lived realities. The oral history passed down to the youth has at best been trampled upon.

For students in the west the belief that sub-Saharan Africa is hot, dirty, helpless, hopeless, hapless, and backwards will continue to be shared. The beautiful, complex, and varied histories and traditions will continue to be simplified and reduced to the starving, fly riddled children who need help from the "white man," and the great explorers like Livingstone and Speke who "survived the cannibals and conquered, tamed, and civilized the wild bush people." College students will continue to travel, largely with an ahistorical view or understanding of where they are going, witness the next great atrocity, reduce it to a false dichotomy of black/white, good/evil, right/wrong, and share their experiences instantaneously globally. Acting before understanding. And in much the same way as the colonizers did during the "Scramble for Africa," give little thought to the people who actually live the experiences. If you have a problem, let us fix it for you without a true understanding of why the problem exists or what are the actual solutions. Additionally there is little understanding about how much damage the solution will actually cause. In the rush to help, harm can be caused. In the case of the Acholi it is a reification of labels. Worse, it continues to feed a culture of dependency. Worst of all, it

disrupts, delays, and adds to the difficulty of processing the tremendous trauma the culture has faced.

If the habitus is an internalization of externality, what is being internalized by the Acholi youth? For many Acholi youth all that is known is life in an IDP camp. When one is ill, an outsider will help. When one is hungry, the white car has food. Traditional Acholi culture is hardworking, self-reliance, yet for two decades it has been mixed with various other cultures in the camps. If the habitus is an internalization of externality, what is being internalized by youth in the west? Most especially concerning other regions of the world. Our nation, our culture, our worldview, our way of doing things is the best. "Others" need help, so we should help them. However, sometimes help is dangerous. Help without a true understanding is in many ways not helpful. Many students take a year off or study abroad. Some travel on summer trips. I have taken numerous groups abroad. Before each trip I ask the students why they are going. Some say that they are going to help, change, and teach others. Some say they are going to learn about themselves. The second response is very introspective, as almost every student (no matter the initial reason for going) comes back and tells me they thought they were going to assist others in some way, but actually learned much more about themselves. They spend time, money, and effort to learn about themselves under the guise of helping others. Would that money, time, and effort not be more effective it were donated to a group already assisting?

Many of my interviewees referred to being placed in IDP camps as genocide. While the Acholi may have survived the IDP camps, perhaps the real genocide (intended or not) continues; A complete cultural genocide. It is a culture that has faced tremendous trauma. It is a culture that is still, over a decade after the last attack, trying to come to terms with what happened. It is a culture that has been deeply impacted by outside groups and outside values. Sadly the roadside

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crosses I witnessed early in my travels, placed by outsiders, are almost emblematic of what has

happened to the Acholi culture.

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# Appendix

*Interview Schedule*

A. General questions
    a. Describe your daily life.
    b. How has your daily life changed over the years?
    c. How often do you access social media/the internet?  Tell me about your experiences on the internet.
    d. In the West, the LRA is reported to have had tremendous impacts on many families in Uganda, how has your family/friends been directly/indirectly impacted?
    e. What are your thoughts/views of the coverage of the LRA in the West?
    f. Have you seen the Kony 2012 video/are you familiar with the Invisible Children organization?  If so, what are your thoughts?
    g. (If no knowledge of IC, explain what has transpired/show video in focus groups).
    h. Do you fear Joseph Kony/the LRA?  (If not, what do you fear?)
    i. If you could tell the 100 million people who have watched the video anything, what would you tell them?
    j. If you could talk to the people who created the video, what would you say to them?  What questions would you ask them?
    k. How has your culture changed?
    l. In your opinion, how did the IDP camps impact your culture?
    m. Have you ever been outside of Uganda?  If so, where?  What was the experience like?
    n. Talk to me about Uganda.  If you could talk to the rest of the world about Uganda, what would you want them to know?
    o. Think for a moment about some of the interactions you have had with other people concerning Joseph Kony.  What has been your best or most encouraging experience?  What has been the most challenging experience?
    p. Respond to the following quote by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu - the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity.  We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."
B. Closing
    a. Are there any other issues that you would like to discuss?  Anything we have missed?
    b. I teach hundreds of students every year.  What would you like me to tell my students about you?  The Acholi?  Uganda?