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Youth Narratives of the Conflict in Northern Uganda

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SIT Study Abroad Post-Conflict Transformation
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Acronyms

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GoU – Government of Uganda

GSS – Gulu Secondary School

HSM – Holy Spirit Movement

IDP – Internally Displaced Person(s)

LRA – Lord's Resistance Army

NGO – Nongovernmental Organization

NRA/M – National Resistance Army/Movement

PRDP – Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan

SPLA – Sudanese People's Liberation Army

UPDF – United People's Defense Force

USE – Universal Secondary Education

Abstract

Narratives are an essential method of communication that create windows into human experiences. Narratives are also responsible for generating the societies in which they are told, or are shaped indelibly by the societies generated by more powerful narratives. In a post-conflict environment where society has been destroyed by decades of violence, the power of narratives to influence society is heightened. Such a post-conflict environment is that of northern Uganda, as it emerges from the violence of the war between the LRA and the UPDF. Due to the heightened powers of narratives, it is necessary to give attention to what those narratives portray, specifically the narratives of the youth who are in a position to shape their society around themselves. Examining the youth narratives of the war in northern Uganda allows for the extraction of major themes and issues that are present or will become present in northern Ugandan society.

This four-week long study seeks to extract key aspects within youth narratives of the war in northern Uganda in the form of narratives themes, perceptions of peace, and current issues with peace and politics dynamics in northern Uganda and Uganda as a whole. Data was collected through the process of interviewing and holding focus group discussions with the young generation in Gulu Municipality, Gulu District, Uganda. This report argues that the essential findings within youth narratives are a) the refusal of the youth to dismiss the war as senseless, b) the importance of the emphasis placed on fascination and reverence with Kony and his spiritual order, and c) the potential for perpetuated regional and ethnic tensions within Ugandan society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: General Introduction

Narratives have the dual capacity to both create and be created by the societies in which they are told. The question immediately follows: which narratives are the creators and which are the created? The importance of this question is vast and multifaceted. It brings an awareness to the power of narratives to create society and to create reality. When considering environments where societies have been broken down and are only now in the process of being rebuilt, this awareness becomes essential because the nonexistence of a social narrative leaves room for more indelible narrative influences to take hold. What those indelible influences are should be considered. Just such a society is that of northern Uganda as it emerges from decades of violence. The young people of the society, many too young to remember the direct violence inflicted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) or by the United People's Defense Force (UPDF), have the power to create their society around themselves; in addition, in a society that has lived entrenched in war for so long, the integration of conflict narratives into the society is unavoidable. Conflict narratives bring in new dimensions of trauma and resentment that have the potential to permanently affect the new society. As Sverker Finnström, expert on northern Ugandan issues, says, "Young people's stories, in public only too commonly sidestepped or reshaped, are comments on contemporary Ugandan society as such. Their stories can deepen the understanding of contemporary African societies in emerging global realities" (Finnström, 2008, p. 25). He points out the importance of listening to youth narratives, both because they help to make sense what

local experiences consist of, and because they are influential in the building of the new, post-conflict society.

This study seeks to uncover and make sense of the conflict narratives told by the youth[1] in northern Uganda. This paper is the result of a four-week study conducted in Gulu Municipality, Gulu District, Uganda. The data collected here is the product of independent study and data collection from interviews and focus group discussions with senior four students attending Gulu Secondary School (GSS) in Gulu town. Gulu town is located in Gulu District, Uganda. The language spoken is Acholi, part of the larger Luo language group. The Acholi population is the most directly affected by the war, having suffered from violence, abductions, displacement, and generally heightened levels of fear (Finnström, 2008). Gulu town was the epicenter of nongovernmental organization (NGO) and Government of Uganda (GoU) operations during the war as well as a relative safe haven from the violence. In addition, Gulu town has quickly become the fifth largest urban center in Uganda, with a population of 152, 264 (NPHC 2014). Gulu town, or more formally Gulu Municipality, is the commercial and administrative center of northern Uganda (Wandera 2015). During the war, many people moved into the municipality in order to benefit from the relative stability. The collection of different lives and experiences that Gulu town fosters makes it an ideal place to listen to narratives about the war. Further, GSS lies in the center of the municipality, so it draws students

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[1] In northern Uganda, society dictates that youths are anywhere between the ages of 0-30, as long as the child is unmarried. However, this study's definition of youth is from 0-20, because people over twenty are likely to have significant experience with and memory of the war. The age range for this study is from 16-18, and explanation for this range can be found in section 1.4.2.

from all around the area. For these reasons, the youth attending GSS were chosen to
be respondents in this study.

1.2: Statement of Objectives

1.2.1: Main Objective

- To examine the youth narratives of the conflict in northern Uganda

1.2.2: Specific Objectives

- To assess the youth narratives of the conflict in northern Uganda between
  the LRA and the GoU
- To understand the factors that influence youth narratives of the conflict in
  northern Uganda.
- To analyze youth comprehension of peace
- To understand youth perspectives on the current political dynamic in
  northern Uganda

1.3: Study Justification

In the words of Brady Wagoner, "Because of its symbolic, meaning-making, and
communicative properties, narrative functions as the water we swim in as cultural
beings, the collective coin, the vehicle of common sense" (Wagoner, 2008, p. 315). The
narratives told in northern Uganda create the fabric of identity for community members,
but because of the imperfect ability of narrative to communicate experiences, the
narratives told by older generations are doubtlessly different than the narratives told by
younger generations. Further, the narratives about the war in northern Uganda told by
the youth in northern Uganda are the vehicles that will shape the new generations.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the narratives of the youth in northern Uganda. These narratives expose the young generation's conceptions—or misconceptions—of the war, as well as current areas of concern specific to post-conflict northern Uganda. Further, the narratives told by youth in northern Uganda have the power to create the fabric of a new, post-conflict society. Being aware of central themes and dynamics in narratives told by the young generation of northern Uganda means being aware of latent resentments that could evolve into conflicts, and it means being aware of focus areas for improvement on a regional and on a national scale.

1.4: Methodology

Primary data collected from interviews and focus group discussions constitute the majority of findings presented in this study. Focus group discussions with the youth participants in this study served to build a baseline of youth perspectives on the war, while the interviews with individual students served to build a more comprehensive narrative pattern. Peripheral interviews were conducted with relevant parties such as GSS administration and staff. Students were a focus of this study due to the convenience of the sampling scope. The fact that the youth participants in this study are students is inessential to their identity as youths because a) universal secondary education (USE) provides that a majority of young people are in school, and b) the exclusion of discussion about the conflict in the national curriculum means that students are no more exposed to narratives of the war than young people not in school. Ethical concerns were placed mainly on the fact that half of the youth participants in this study are not of legal age in Uganda and therefore are part of a vulnerable population.

Methods such as gaining verbal and written consent, creating a safe and comfortable environment in which to tell their narratives, and insuring anonymity were used to make the research process ethical. GSS staff and administration gave written consent to divulge identities, but all of the student participants have been given a pseudonym to protect their identities. Below, the methodologies of this study are discussed further.

1.4.1: Interviews

The bulk of the data used in this study is gathered from interviews conducted primarily with senior four students at GSS, secondarily with teachers at GSS, thirdly with administration at GSS, and fourthly with the District Education Office for Gulu District. Eight GSS senior four students were interviewed at length for this study, while one of each of the following categories of respondents was also interviewed. The youth case studies in this report were participants in the focus group discussions who consented to be interview subjects for extracting in-depth youth narratives. Time constraints put on the study as well as a wish to focus as intensely as possible on the narratives of a select number of students in order to draw out a more comprehensive narrative from each of the students justifies the small study size of this report. Interviews were semi-structured to allow for the freedom of responses, as well as to allow respondents to carry their narratives where they felt comfortable. All interviews were formal, and written, informed consent was given by each of the participants of legal age. Guardians of students not of legal age gave written, informed consent on their behalf. The tertiary respondents in this study granted permission to disclose identities. The primary respondents, the students, were all given pseudonyms. All interviews were conducted in

English, because all respondents were fluent and meaning would doubtlessly have been lost in translation between English and Acholi.

1.4.2: Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with students from GSS. The FGDs were both held on the campus of GSS itself while the students were on break. The FGDs included the same ten participants from GSS senior four, aged sixteen to eighteen. The students were selected on a random basis from senior four students. Senior four students were chosen because they tend to fall into an age range that allows for a combination of personal experiences with the war and, more prominently, learned narratives of the war as told by their elders. The FGDs were essential to building rapport with the students and for constructing a baseline of perceptions and narratives about the war in northern Uganda upon which to build more detailed narratives during the interviews. The males present in the discussions unfortunately dominated the FGD responses, but the silence on the females' part was rectified during the interviewing process.

1.4.3: Secondary Sources

Though the majority of the information and data collected in this study came from the interviews and the focus group discussions, secondary sources were used to triangulate responses, as well as to find theoretical and academic explanations for perceptions held by the participants in this study, and to aid in the articulation of various concepts presented in this report.

1.5: Ethics and Limitations

Below, the ethical concerns and the limitations presented by the study are discussed, as well as how those concerns and limitations were addressed.

1.5.1: Ethics Statement

The primary ethical concern of this study was that some of the respondents were not of legal age and thus represented a vulnerable population. Further, all primary respondents within this study were considered children within their societal dynamic. Therefore, several techniques were used to guarantee the practice of ethical research and data collection. First, all vulnerable participants were verbally informed of the objectives and methods of this study, and each participant gave verbal consent. In addition, the participants of legal age gave written and informed consent. Guardians of the underage participants gave written and informed consent on their behalf. Second, the rapport-building process, mostly established during the focus group discussions, was essential to gaining the trust and confidence of the participants and to ensuring that they felt comfortable sharing their perspectives on the war in northern Uganda. Third, each of the student participants in this study was given a pseudonym to guarantee their anonymity.

1.5.2: Limitations

Though this study generally went without major limitations, the time constraints placed both on the researcher and on the students were the most significant deterrent. The four-week study coincided with the end of the students' first term, meaning the students were in exam period for two of the four weeks of the research period. The two

focus group discussions and preliminary research and interviews were completed in the first week of the research period, but at the request of the students, the in-depth interviews were postponed until after their exam period was over. Because the in-depth interviews were not conducted until the end of the research period, it was difficult to fill gaps in the interview process, leaving some perspectives less flushed out than would have been preferred. However, the students were eager and willing to share their narratives, and their enthusiasm led to a more comprehensive data collection process.

Chapter 2: Background

This chapter provides necessary background information for understanding the context of the narratives discussed in this study. The background consists of a timeline of relevant history, a summary of Acholi belief systems and LRA spiritual organizations, and a literature review that explains theoretical discussions about various relevant topics.

2.1: Timeline of Relevant Ugandan History

As with any historiography, it is difficult to know when to start the history of the war in northern Uganda. For the purposes of this study, though, the timeline will begin in 1980.

2.1.1: Regime Legacy Prior to Museveni

1980 marks the beginning of Milton Obote's second regime, referred to as Obote II in Uganda. With Obote's second regime came the expected uprising of various rebel groups, most notably what would become current president Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M). As Museveni waged his bush war, Obote

encountered further problems within his military ranks. Obote's army was populated primarily with Langi and Acholi people from northern Uganda (Finnström, 2008, p.65). Dissatisfied with Obote's management of the country, one of Obote's military commanders, Tito Lutwa Okello, an Acholi, succeeded in overthrowing Obote in a military coup in 1985. Museveni, still engaging in bush warfare in central Uganda, heightened attacks on the government, and eventually succeeded in overthrowing Okello's regime only six months after he had overthrown Obote.

2.1.2: Museveni's Regime and the Heightening of Regional Tensions

Museveni, from southwestern Uganda, broke the long chain of leaders from northern Uganda. Due to this long chain of northern leaders, who often exercised violence as a political tool, national resentment towards the regional North was heightened. Further, during Museveni's bush war, Obote's and Okello's armies were responsible for a devastating amount of violence and trauma on, particularly, the Buganda ethnic group in central Uganda. During his bush operations in Luwero, a region of central Uganda, Museveni built a strong rapport with the Bagandas that continues to today. This alliance of ethnic and regional groups has increased national tensions and has been influential in generating a highly unstable environment during Museveni's regime.[2] When Museveni took power in 1986, many rebel groups quickly arose to oppose his regime. Most notable of the groups is the LRA, a rebel group with roots in northern Uganda, specifically among the Acholi ethnic group. The origins of the LRA are rooted in speculation of familial ties between Alice Lakwena, the leader of the

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[2] This ethnic and regional divide will be discussed further in section 2.3.1.

Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), and Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA. The HSM quickly

gained regional support during the years of Museveni's government overtake. However,

Museveni, through military force, was able to quickly disband the HSM, but when the

HSM lost its power, the LRA took its place. The reasons for the particular prevalence of

armed rebel groups in northern Uganda are multifaceted, but may be linked to the

inability of northern groups to accept their regional loss of power, which had integrated

itself into the social structures in northern Uganda. Also, Museveni began to marginalize

the northern region, instead obviously favoring western and central Uganda. According

to one theorist, "To a greater extent, marginalization in Northern Uganda has caused

resentment and created a potential breeding ground for 'direct' violence; in itself it

constituted a form of violence – a violation of the humanity and dignity of those so

excluded and diminished" (Okello, 2007, p. 11). Indeed, the LRA would continue to

operate in northern Uganda for two decades, partially on the pretense of fighting

Museveni's current regime.

2.1.3: The LRA in northern Uganda and Military Operations

　　　　Over the course of its presence in northern Uganda, the LRA utilized guerilla

warfare and terror tactics against the government. The LRA also tormented the local

population, violently attacking villages and abducting thousands of women and children,

many of whom were incorporated into the armed ranks. Meanwhile, the government

troops, the UPDF, were deployed into northern Uganda. Museveni, who had been under

the impression that the LRA would be as easily squandered as the HSM, launched an

intensive military operation called Operation North in 1991 when other efforts were

unsuccessful in defeating the LRA (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 11). This operation

sparked an increase in violence from both sides, and the peace negotiations led by

Betty Bigombe, the Minister of State for the Pacification of Northern Uganda, failed due

in part to the ultimatum given by Museveni for the LRA to lay down arms and cease

rebel activities (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 11). With the rebel group still intact, LRA

violence came in waves, devastating the region and leaving its people traumatized. The

government initiated a policy of forced displacement, sometimes violently enforced, in

the late nineties and into the new decade. This forced displacement of a huge majority

of the Acholi population spawned mistrust and resentment towards Museveni's

government, as rumors arose that Museveni was removing people from the land in

order to use the land for himself (Finnström, 2008, pp. 178-9). The LRA began to move

between borders of surrounding countries, and Sudan began to support the LRA

through arming the group and giving military aid. In return the LRA began to fight the

Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels in southern Sudan[3] who were

rebelling against the Khartoum government in northern Sudan. Museveni, meanwhile,

supported the SPLA. In 2002, amnesty talks between Sudan and Uganda culminated in

Operation Iron Fist, which authorized UPDF troops to enter into southern Sudan in order

to attack LRA camps. Though the operation was largely unsuccessful, the LRA ranks

were beginning to fray. 2004 marks the last significant instance of LRA violence in

northern Uganda, when a group of women and children were violently murdered outside

Pagak, a parish in Amuru District, just west of Gulu (Allan and Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 15).

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[3] Now the independent state of South Sudan, as of 2011.

A second Iron Fist operation was more successful, and the LRA's operations in northern Uganda came to a relative end, aside from occasional instances of warfare. Peace talks were held in Juba, southern Sudan, between the GoU and the LRA in 2006; however, the peace treaty remains unsigned. A final military operation called Operation Lightning Thunder focused attacks on several LRA bases in Garamba, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in 2008 (Allen and Vlassenroot, 2010, p. 15). Though the LRA was able to escape the majority of the attacks, their ranks broke down further, and have since dispersed throughout Sudan, DRC, and Central African Republic, leaving northern Uganda in a state of relative peace.

2.2: Acholi Spirituality and LRA Spiritual Organization

Kony's legitimacy as a rebel leader is intimately tied to Christian and Acholi belief systems.[4] This serves as a brief explanation of Acholi belief systems in order to aid understanding of how Kony's legitimacy is so importantly linked to those beliefs, as well as a summary of LRA spiritual rhetoric and practice. Throughout Uganda, Christianity is the dominant religion, and the same holds true for northern Uganda. However, Christianity has had to make room in its doctrine for local Acholi beliefs. As Patrick Chabal points out, "established world religions and the more recent native churches have build upon, rather than displaced, what are called 'traditional' religious beliefs" (Chabal, 2009, p. 68). Such is the case in Uganda. The Christian church's presence in northern Uganda involves the syncretism of local Acholi beliefs and broader church doctrine, but Acholi beliefs still remained central to their social organization despite the

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[4] This will be discussed further in section 2.3.2.

presence of Christian doctrine. With the influence of Christianity, "new evil spirits appeared, *jogi setani*, or satanic spirits. Fortunately, also countervailing good spirits emerged among them, the *jok Jesus* and the *jok* of the Holy Spirit" (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 18). Central to Acholi belief systems are the powers of the spirits. These spirits have the power to possess people, to influence lives on a cosmic level, and to influence the land and weather. Because of the ultimate power of ancestral spirits, many ceremonies cater directly to communicating, appeasing, or expelling these spirits (Nziza and Niwampa, 1993). Further, medical or psychological issues are diagnosed as influences of these spirits and are treated as such. For example, "In the worldview of the Acholi, each and every disaster had its visual manifestation (for example, death from AIDS), and its hidden and profound cause (an evil spirit, or *cen*)" (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 17). It is important to understand the local belief system in order to understand the spirit order of the LRA, and to comprehend its power to legitimize the rebel group.

One significant aspect of spiritual rhetoric of the LRA is that Kony spoke about cleansing the Acholi people from corrupt Christian and Acholi doctrines. Kony claimed that priests were perverting Catholic doctrine and that Acholi beliefs were being corrupt by contemporary *ajwakas,* or Acholi witch doctors. An important mission of the LRA became cleansing these corruptors from the community, as well as the people who the corruption had affected (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). During the first few years of LRA action, Kony aligned himself as the spiritual leader of the LRA because of his ability to channel ancestral spirits and use them to perform magic, such as creating bodily

protection for his troops by rubbing a mixture and shea butter, water, and ceremonial foliage on their chests that prevented enemy bullets from harming the soldiers, and causing stones to turn into grenades when thrown at the enemy. The spirits Kony is possessed by "introduce the rules into the organization, which have to be strictly respected: if they are adhered to closely, the fighters are rendered immune on the battlefields; if not, the fighter will be punished (i.e. killed) on the battlefield" says Titeca (2010, p. 62). Kony's spiritual powers coupled with his integration of Acholi ceremonies into the practice of warfare allowed him to be incorporated into to cultural belief system of the Acholi people.

2.3: Literature Review

The literature discussed here will fall into three main categories. First, the academic discussions behind the historical and political context of the northern Ugandan conflict and of Uganda as a whole will be presented, focusing particularly on ethnic and regional contexts. Understanding these contexts in an academic manner is essential to building a backbone of knowledge regarding the politicizing and socializing nature of historical contexts with regards to conflict. Second, discussions on the rationality and legitimacy of the LRA will be delved into. The complexity of the LRA's presence in northern Uganda and surrounding areas requires a theoretical understanding of how, specifically, spiritualism factors into LRA organization. Finally, the theoretical arguments surrounding narratives, narrative creation, and memory will be looked at. As the inlet to understanding human experiences, narrative creation is a

complex theoretic issue that requires a broader understanding in order to aid the understanding of the narratives told in this study.

2.3.1: Historical Contexts of Regional and Ethnic Tensions in Uganda

In the African context, wars are often attributed to ethnic tensions. However, this attribution is mostly too narrow to explain many African wars. Though the war in northern Uganda roots itself in many more areas than simply ethnic tensions, those same tensions are still an important area of understanding. As is its general trend on the continent, the colonial power, in Uganda's case Great Britain, was influential in solidifying ethnic boundaries between formerly fluid social organizations. In the words of Sverker Finnström, a scholar with many years of experience in northern Uganda, "The colonial mapping, designation, and ruling of 'tribes' as well as formal education and missionary work, made ethnic and cultural boundaries more rigid in explicit and formalized contexts such as politics and education, or in writing and on maps" (Finnström, 2008, p. 46). Naturally the solidifying of these ethnic boundaries led to a creation of body geographies[5] for the various groups. In the case of the Acholi, the colonial powers created it to be an ethnic group made up of willing and competent soldiers who were tall, strong, and dark. This distinction emphasized the divide between Acholi and other ethnic groups in Uganda, particularly the Buganda, who were the colonizers' administrative selection. Again, Finnström comments, "As the irony of history had it, the colonized subjects, rather than the oppressive colonialists, were labeled as

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[5] Body geography is defined here as the group of stereotypes relating to bodies. Body geography is used to create distinctions between one group and another.

warlike" (Finnström, 2006, p. 204). Thus, the division and stereotyping of various ethnic groups in Uganda were established during colonial rule.

However, ethnic tension is not the main trigger for the conflict in northern Uganda. Africanist political scientist Patrick Chabal says, "Here, as almost everywhere else in Africa, the causality is the reverse of that suggested by the culturalist explanation: it is political manipulation of 'difference' in a context of socio-economic hardship that triggers ethnic conflict" (Chabal, 2009, p. 161). This hypothesis is backed up by a discussion of the regime changes preceding the conflict in northern Uganda. First, the second term of power for Milton Obote, a northerner, was influential in furthering the regional divide between the North and the South. To maintain his rule, Obote violently forced central and southern Ugandans into submission. "The consequences of Obote's strategy was to introduce a new regional north-south cleavage into national politics," says Adam Branch, a specialist in northern Ugandan issues (Branch, 2010, p. 29). This cleavage was the first significant step towards the politicization of ethnicity. The violence inflicted by Obote landed primary on the Buganda ethnic group in central Uganda. Because of Obote's northern roots, the violence he inflicted became associated with the North, and specifically with the Acholi, who made up a majority of Obote's army. Yoweri Museveni, a Munyankole, started a bush war with central Ugandans, which is majority Baganda, and "The NRA rebellion was the crucible in which the north-south divide was ethnicized and took a central place in national politics" (Branch, 2010, p. 30). When Museveni succeeded in grasping power, he proceeded to manipulate this new political-ethnic dynamic by calling up lingering

colonial conceptions. "The colonial stereotype of the Acholi as warriors was evoked in an effort to deepen fear and mistrust" (Finneström, 2008, p. 75).

With politicized ethnicity newly integrated into Uganda's political system, it was within Museveni's legitimacy to direct resources, investments, and construction, away from northern Uganda, the land of the Acholi. This marginalization "has caused resentment and created a potential breeding ground for 'direct' violence; in itself it constituted a form of violence – a violation of the humanity and dignity of those so excluded and diminished" (Okello, 2007, p. 11). Perhaps this marginalization can be categorized as the "violence of neglect" defined by Chabal to be the calculated failure of leadership to support a certain area or population in order to spawn instability (Chabal, 2009, p. 153). Though such actions seem like they would delegitimize Museveni as a leader, through the politicization of the regional and ethnic divide he is instead able to delegitimize the North while maintaining local legitimacy. "Or, to put it another way, there are two different types of legitimacy: the national and the local, each of which is governed by different rules. Even when politicians lose national legitimacy, they seek to retain local legitimacy. While their standing as national politicians depends intimately on combining the two types of legitimacy successfully, their political and even physical survival hinges their submitting to the rules of local reciprocity" (Chabal, 2009, p. 52). Therefore, the historically entrenched divide between northern Uganda and southern Uganda becomes a legitimizing force for Museveni and a source of resentment for northern Ugandans.

2.3.2: LRA Rationality

The simple route to explaining the LRA is to label it as an entirely irrational, violent entity that uses syncretic religious mysticism and brutal acts of terror to continuously traumatize the people of northern Uganda (Titeca, 2010). However, academic trends attempt to explain the rationality behind the LRA's various actions. In an attempt to understand the interplay between religion and conflict in the context of the LRA, it is important to understand the constructivist mode of interpreting conflicts. The constructivist mode of interpretation is defined by Tesemma as recognizing "that rather than being a natural outcome of religion, conflict is a social construct, for example, evolving from a competition for raw materials and other economic resources or for political power. Whatever the original cause of the conflict, religion serves as a fuel that sustains, prolongs, and often worsens a conflict's intensity" (Tesemma, 2013, p. 63). Kristof Titeca applies this mode to the LRA directly. "These often ethnocentric descriptions of religion and spirituality give exoticizing and isolated reports which do not take into account the wider political, social and economic context, representing the LRA's activities as radically irrational and as such neglecting, for example, how a spiritual discourse can act as a medium through which other grievances can be framed" (Titeca, 2010, p. 59). With this in mind, the LRA's use of Christian and Acholi belief systems becomes a highly rational method of maintaining legitimacy as an entity. As the northern region struggled to maintain some sense of livelihood in the face of systematic marginalization, Kony used these religious narratives to establish himself "In this dark hour of despair […] as a millenarian prophet, guided by the (Acholi) spirits, send by the

(Christian) God, and using purification as the only manner to save the Acholi" (James et al., 2007, p. 973).

Not only were these spiritual narratives essential for gaining external legitimacy, but they were highly integrated into the ranks of the LRA in order to ensure internal legitimacy. Those same Acholi "[…] beliefs are significant for the legitimacy, mobilization and discipline of the armed force, as well as intimidating the enemy and the civilian population" (Titeca, 2010, p. 60). The LRA's spiritualism that is reduced to an essentialist argument for the irrationality of LRA action is in fact one of the main factors establishing and maintaining LRA legitimacy, both externally and internally. When the LRA begins to lose its external legitimacy in northern Uganda, the "Violence embedded in local belief systems has added to the intimidating character of the LRA's actions: not only is the LRA violent and ruthless, but it also has spiritual powers that amplify its strength" (Titeca, 2010, p. 70). The fear of Kony's powers work to sustain the group. This dialogue works to prove Patrick Chabal's point that "the spiritual world in which people live and work shapes the way they understand, and participate in, politics" (Chabal, 2009, p. 77). When thinking about the LRA and its spiritualist rhetoric, it is essential to understand how the Acholi shape their perceptions of spiritualism and of the LRA. As Chabal says, "An attempt to understand this world ought to start from a consideration of what makes sense to people on the ground. This means keeping an open mind about that which constitutes a belief and making the effort of interpreting the political relevance of beliefs without resorting to the crippling analytical dichotomy of 'tradition' versus 'modernity'" (Chabal, 2009, p. 66). Therefore, as the LRA integrated

Acholi and Christian belief systems into its organization, it played into the perceptions of spiritualism of the people in northern Uganda, which resulted in the legitimization of the group.

2.3.3: Narrative Creation and Memory

When thinking about narrative creation, it is always important to remember the contexts of the storytelling. According to one scholar, "The lenses through which we see the world, and the minds with which we interpret it, are culturally formed and will colour and shape the way we perceive and think about anything" (Okello, 2007, p. 8). Narratives told are inseparable from the culture in which they are told. This is especially important to keep in mind when listening to narratives told in a culture of conflict and instability. As anthropologist Donald Brenneis says, "A first general point about conflict narrative is that it is difficult to sustain the premise that there can be narratives independent of the situations in which they are told" (1988, p. 280). When thinking about the context in which narratives are told in northern Uganda, it is important to realize that these narratives are coming from a place of historical trauma. The young generation in northern Uganda is the inheritor of a societal and historical trauma context that spans generations.

Recognizing that narratives in northern Uganda are told in a context of historical trauma brings in a new dynamic—that of lasting psychological traumas on the population. Theories relating to psychological traumas have been "increasingly deployed […] to discuss the legacy of the Holocaust and slavery, not just for those who directly experienced such events, nor just for the second-generation of survivors, but as

a kind of living 'racial' memory that spans across time and space and haunts

generations throughout the ages" (Flanagan, 2002, p. 390-1). Such theories arguably

apply to the situation in northern Uganda. Certainly, at least two generations have been

traumatized by the war, and a creation of a trans-generational memory seems only

necessary because ""Historical trauma […] does not so much follow neurobiological

path of instinctual processes as the *psychic* life of the individual presupposes the

existence of the historical trauma. Individual trauma thus follows the path of the

historical, not vice versa" (Flanagan, 2002, p. 394). In other words, the young

generation, though they may have some few memories regarding the war in northern

Uganda, they are more open to receiving and conforming to a collective memory that

feeds into a collective narrative.

It is important to keep this idea in mind when thinking about the importance of

narrative creation, especially when it is realized that "The meaning individuals make

through narrative is not simply personal or idiosyncratic but rather *political* in nature, for

it always possesses implications for a particular configuration of social categories and,

hence, social competition" (Hammock, 2011, p. 312). If the collective narrative contains

a social or political configuration that holds the potential to create or perpetuate a

harmful divide, e.g. regional or ethnic tensions in Uganda, then the individual narrative,

and thus the individual mindset, likewise perpetuates such ideas. "Recognizing that

narrative exists at both the personal and political levels of analysis requires a concern

not just with individual psychological processes but also the political, social, and

economic structure within which those processes occur, as well as an analysis of the

interests that particular configuration might serve" (Hammock, 2011, p. 313). This understood, the importance of listening to and documenting narratives of various different groups is vital, because as figurehead nonwestern theorist Edward Said says, "Narrative asserts the power of men to be born, develop, and die, the tendency of institutions and actualities to change […] above all, it asserts that the domination of reality by vision is no more than a will to power […] Narrative, in short, introduces an apposing point of view, perspective, consciousness, to the unitary web of vision" (Said, 1979, p. 240). Asserting and documenting narratives gives them a permanence that is essential to recognizing and understanding the most significant contexts at play within the group.

Chapter 3: Research Findings and Discussion

The study findings consist of assessments of the youth narratives told by the eight student case studies who participated in this study. The analyses of their narratives fall into four separate areas, which are as follows: themes of the youth narratives, facets of influence on youth narratives, youth comprehension of peace, and youth perspectives on current political dynamics in northern Uganda and Uganda as a whole.

3.1: Themes of the Youth Narratives

After analysis of focus group discussions and personal, semi-structured interviews with eight children aged sixteen to eighteen, five major themes were extracted from the narratives. The themes will be discussed in detail and are as follows:

dual causality for the war, ethnic and regional tensions, resentment towards Museveni and the UPDF, the normalization of violence, and a fascination with Joseph Kony.

3.1.5: Dual Causality

The causes of the conflict in northern Uganda as presented by the youth in this study are vague. Several students blatantly stated that the reasons for the war are unknowable. One student said of Kony, "The man also was so unique that no one can know what has caused the fighting" (Interview, William, April 25, 2015). However, despite the general confusion over the root causes of the war, two main causes emerged. The two main causes noted by the youth of this study are a) Kony's motivation to gain political power and b) the influences of the spirits on Kony. Of interest is the fact that the students gave not one or the other of the two causes but both. Five of the eight students directly mentioned both a) and b) as the causes for the war, while one other students referenced them both peripherally. As one student phrases the causes for the war, "the main cause of that war is that Kony wanted […] to get political power. […] Then there is the spiritual influence. […] Because that spirit was also among the things that made this man to what? To fight" (Interview, Brian, April 24, 2015). Another answer points out both the causes as well as the common story of Kony's acquisition of spiritual powers. It is as follows: "the war started when Kony got that magic from Odek. […] That's what made him to start that fight. […] And also, Kony wanted to gain power" (Interview, Patricia, April 25, 2015). The story of Kony gaining magical powers in Odek was mentioned by seven of the eight students. Though the details of the story vary slightly with each different telling, the main gist of the story is that Kony went to a place

called Odek, near a mountain. While there, Kony went to bathe, and he disappeared for three days. When Kony finally resurfaced on the third day, the spirits of the ancestors had entered him, and he was motivated by them to start the war. In several cases, also, the lineage between Alice Lakwena, leader of the HSM, and Kony were referenced. "There is a certain lady called Alice Lakwena. That is the sister to Kony. That woman […] was very powerful, and before she died she gave that power to Kony" (Interview, Grace, April 25, 2015). Though the origins of the Kony's spirits are presented in various ways, their influence over Kony to start the war was agreed upon.

Discussion about the causes leaned towards the spiritual influences on Kony, while Kony's motivation for political power was simply that Kony wanted to gain authority. The reason for this skew towards discussion of the spiritual is likely the fact that the youth in this study were overwhelmingly fascinated with these spiritual aspects.[6] The explanation for the vagueness of the discussion on causation is perhaps twofold. First, the war in northern Uganda is indeed an incredibly complicated matter that historians and academics are still in the process of documenting, so the youth do not have access to tangible explanations for the war. Second, it is easily understood that in the face of insecurity and violence, the people on the ground were less concerned with the convoluted rationale behind the war and more concerned with daily survival, so the youth's sources of information, their elders who lived through the war, are less concerned with divining the causes of the war and more concerned with telling stories of

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[6] See section 3.1.5 for further discussion.

personal experience and spiritual mysticism.[7] This focus on personal experiences can be clearly seen in the youth's discussion on causality.

3.1.2: Ethnic and Regional Tensions

Ethnic and regional tensions were mentioned generally as a historical buildup to the war. In Uganda, ethnic and regional tensions overlap due to the politicization of ethnicity discussed in section 2.3.1. The Acholi ethnic group has become nearly synonymous with northern Uganda, while Bagandas have become strictly aligned with central and southern Uganda. In the narratives of these youth the ethnic and regional tensions present themselves as both cause and effect of the war in northern Uganda. In the first case, the youth make reference to prior regimes as escalators of the tensions. Ugandan regimes and their notorious violence were the focus of some discussions on regional and ethnic tensions. For example, "Museveni and Amin, they led the people of Acholi to suffer a lot. They didn't favor Acholi, they favor only their tribes" (Interview, Bismark, April 25, 2015). Bismark explains the tensions as cause of the war when he references the historical background of northern marginalization and victimhood in Amin's and Museveni's regimes.

Other analyses of the youth narratives illuminate the idea that historical marginalization and victimization of northern Uganda increased ethnic and regional tensions and caused Kony to rebel against the current regime. This idea can be seen in the blurring of historical timelines. For example, William blurs the timeline of the war when he mentions Amin's violence towards the Acholis. "During that time there was a

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[7] This will be expanded on in section 3.2.

man called Amin. Yeah, the man started killing us Acholi," he says. He then directly

links Kony's motivation to rebel to the violence perpetrated during Amin's regime. "After

that he [Kony] started thinking that, hey, my people are suffering," so he decided to fight

(Interview, William, April 25, 2015). Because William mentions the violence of Amin's

regime in the same discussion of Kony's rebellion, it follows that the historical

victimization of northern Uganda is consciously integrated into the LRA rebellion. Grace

also brings up Amin's regime and violence as rationale for Kony's rebellion. This focus

on the historical background of northern marginalization emphasizes the tensions

between northern and central Uganda, and reference those tensions as cause of the

war.

In the second case, the ethnic and regional tensions are explained as an effect of

the war, or a continuation after the war. One student who plans to study in central

Uganda next year was particularly fixated on the continuation of these tensions.

"Buganda are not Acholi, and those tribes don't resonate. Some are enemy to us. Those

people [Bagandas] […] they ask you, 'what's your tribe?' You say, 'I'm an Acholi.' 'An

Acholi! Actually, you are all soldiers.' Because they thought […] that we are all soldiers

of Kony" (Interview, Malcolm, April 24, 2015). Malcolm references the tensions as effect

when he claims Bagandas hate Acholis because of the misconception that all Acholis

participated in the violence of the LRA.

Brian also referenced the continued tensions when he spoke about mounting

tensions over land in Amuru District, a district directly west of Gulu District. In Amuru

district, community members are resentful towards the government over the zoning of a

new district called Adjumani. Residents of Amuru district "are protesting the current location of the borderline saying government deliberately pushed the line from Adjumani into their 40 square Kilometer swathes of land in Amuru district to deny them ownership" (Athocon 2015). These protests stem directly from a deep mistrust of the government, initiated during the forced displacement of people into internally displaced person (IDP) camps. The forced displacement removed people from their ancestral land, to which they were deeply connected, and spawned the fear that the government was removing people from the land in order to use confiscate the land. This perpetuated fear of government land grabbing is evident in the Amuru protests. Therefore, events of the war have been incorporated into social trends that perpetuate ethnic and regional tensions. These indications of contemporary regional and ethnic tensions present a potential for young generations to maintain the resentments of their elders, thus creating an unstable environment in which conflict is quick to be initiated.

3.1.3: Resentment of Museveni and the UPDF

The discussions about Museveni and the UPDF generally fall into two different areas. First, the youth tell a story of a moralistically and militaristically weak UPDF. Grievances with the government troops, the UPDF, focused on the UPDF troops' tendencies to loot homes, fail to protect civilians from the LRA, and in some cases kill civilians. One student talks about the looting; "They [UPDF] will come and loot your properties, like if you are having a good thing in your house […] they will fight, and after […] they will take your properties" (Interview, Brian, April 24, 2015). Another student talks about the UPDF troops' tendencies to deceive the people in northern Uganda.

"[UPDF] say they are defending, but in a real sense they were not defending. […] Others went without putting on uniforms […] just kill. […] People will say that was Kony, while it is the UPDF" (Interview, Patricia, April 25, 2015). Overall, the UPDF was not seen favorably by the youth in this study.

Second, the youth paint a vindictive Museveni at the helm of UPDF violence. One student found it necessary to clarify that "The UPDF were actually Museveni's soldiers" (Interview, Malcolm, April 24, 2015). Another student mentions the rumors about UPDF soldiers going to villages without their uniforms in order to kill civilians in the name of the LRA. "This man [Museveni] even can send those UPDF soldiers, they will come and kill people around here" (Interview, Brian, April 24, 2015). And again, "That man [Museveni] also killed many people. […] He sends his troops to kill people" (Interview, William, April 25, 2015). William, in an attempt to weigh the scales evenly, also mentioned that Museveni has done some good, such as providing universal primary and secondary school. Overall, the narratives of the participants in this study paint Museveni and the UPDF in an unflattering light. Ranked on a scale, though, the crimes of the UPDF are lesser than the crimes of the LRA.

The distrust of Museveni and the UPDF stems from the regional and ethnic tensions discussed above. In their experience, and in the experiences of their elders, which they have doubtlessly been exposed to, the youth are made familiar with the systematic marginalization of northern Uganda. They are also aware of the preference towards central and western Uganda that Museveni does little to obscure. Museveni's patronage to those regions is mentioned by seven of eight students in this study as one

of the largest problems currently facing the state.[8] These aspects combine to make the youth hesitant to place trust with Museveni and the government army. The students are wise to acknowledge that during the war, neither of the parties—the LRA or the UPDF—was without blame. When creating a narrative, it is important to understand that no story is single-faceted, which the students acknowledge. Although they may not understand the rationale behind the North's marginalization, they understand its connection to Museveni's treatment of the war in northern Uganda. This knowledge presents an optimal foundation upon which to build a more comprehensive explanation for Museveni's treatment of the war and for his continued marginalization of the North. Therefore, though the youth's resentment towards Museveni and the UPDF may lead to perpetuated tensions, it also provides for potentially greater understanding of the war's dynamics.

3.1.4: Normalization of Violence

Five of the eight students brought up topics that relate to the normalization or rationalization of violence. [9] Most prominent is the normalization of violence as a political tool. Brian mentions that "the leaders were attaining their political power through fighting" (Interview, April 24, 2015). And again, "When you want to be in politics or to become a president, you must definitely kill people. […] Like, you have Amin who killed many thousands of people. And Obote, people may think Obote was good, but he killed

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[8] This is discussed further in section 3.4.1.
[9] Normalization of violence is defined here as the process of assimilating violence into a worldview due to historical experience and contemporary expectation. Violence becomes the expected outcome or the expected catalyst for societal or political transition.

many thousands in central" (Interview, William, April 25, 2015). Whenever any political

transition is mentioned, violence is directly linked to the conversation. "If Museveni fails,

there will be war," says Grace, while discussion the potential outcomes of the 2016

presidential elections in Uganda (Interview, April 25, 2015). In addition to violence as a

political tool, the violence Kony inflicted on northern Uganda was rationalized by William

when he said, "the man [Kony] cannot cross to fight in central, so he fought here so that

the man [Museveni] will get […] annoyed," meaning that Kony caused violent disruption

in northern Uganda in order to draw the attention and the troops of Museveni (Interview,

April 25, 2015). Instead of being a senseless group of deranged warriors, the LRA's

violence is strategic.

It is true that every regime in Uganda has been riddled with some sort of

violence, and each power transition has been accompanied with rebel insurrection or

contestation. With such a long history of violence as a means of achieving power, it is

no wonder that the youth so naturally incorporate violence into political discussions.

Perhaps the fact that Museveni ascended to power by means of a rebel insurgency and

still holds power now works to legitimize the violence further. This normalization of

violence as a political tool speaks volumes about the history of Uganda and about the

experiences of the youth in northern Uganda. Understanding the rational motivations

behind experienced violence is certainly good for making sense of the war in northern

Uganda. The question becomes, though, whether this normalization of violence is

beneficial or detrimental. On one hand, the normalization of the violence can help the

youth cope with what they have seen and with what they have been told by logically

incorporating the violence into their worldviews. However, it seems that the normalization of such violence makes it difficult to create change, especially regarding peace. If violence is the expectation, then peaceful transitions are naturally outliers.

3.1.5: Fascination with Joseph Kony

By far the most prominent theme throughout the youth narratives is the fascination with Joseph Kony. This fascination comes not from the violence inflicted by Kony as might be expected, but instead from the spiritual prowess Kony possesses. Just a few powers that Kony possesses are the ability to heal, the ability to move unnoticed, the ability to see the future, the ability to find lost properties, and the ability to predict the day of one's death. Kony's spiritual powers legitimize his actions. As one student notes, "He was acting as a prophet, like a man of God. He was helping people. […] He even cure people. People love him" (Interview, Nicole, April 25, 2015). As Nicole explains, Kony's spiritual rhetoric allowed him to build a following, thus legitimizing himself as a leader.

While the youth acknowledge that Kony is responsible for a vast amount of suffering, they still speak of him with a sense of awe. In their narratives, Kony is an untouchable, omnipotent, mythological anomaly of power. One student speaks about the events of the 2006 Juba Peace Talks. She mentions that the GoU was planning on capturing Kony at the treaty signing, but "Kony was not around. […] They wondered where the man is, because they start to gather nets, but he is nowhere. Kony can't be captured. Unless God maybe" (Interview, Grace, April 25, 2015). Only with divine intervention can Kony be goaded into capture. Brian also references Kony's nearly

insurmountable ability to evade capture. "This man is very difficult. Even those of the American, they tried. Because when you go to him, even if he is standing as this bicycle, you will find a big mountain separating him" (Interview, Brian, April 24, 2015). America is a world power, the epitome of power in the perception of these youths, but still its troops are unable to capture Kony. His spiritual prowess is too vast. The legacy of the war in northern Uganda, according to one student, is "that the most powerful man was Kony" (Interview, Nicole, April 25, 2015). Further, the violence inflicted by the LRA is often not attributed to Kony himself. Bismark says his grandparents told him that "Kony doesn't kill" (Interview, April 25, 2015). Another student says, "he [Kony] is a great killer, but he is not the one who is killing" (Interview, Nicole, April 25, 2015). The youth's focus on the powers of Kony is proof that Kony maintains legitimacy.

The LRA maintained internal and external cohesion through the use of spiritual narratives, and even though the LRA has been out of northern Uganda for many years and its ranks have become more and more dissolved, Kony still possesses the aura of supernatural power that allowed him control his army for so long. Further, the belief that Kony is not a perpetrator of violence in northern Uganda adds another interesting dimension to his legacy. The LRA is spoken about with an air of horror, but Kony is spoken about with an air of awe and, sometimes, respect, though it is still tinged with fear. This fascination with Kony is amplified by the fact that world powers, i.e. America, cannot manage to capture him. Further, Kony has become world-renown for his insurgency. The fascination with Kony is such a complicated issue that further scientific

exploration is essential to generating an accurate understanding of the fascination and the implications, and an ability to predict the outcomes of the fascination.

3.2: Facets of Influences on Youth Narratives

All students in this study acknowledged that they gained their knowledge about the war from their elders, sometimes parents but more often grandparents. School, media, and peers were mentioned several times, but with little emphasis. One student says, "I heard from my grandmother. […] If you ask, she will just tell us those stories. […] Because for us it is our tradition, they said it is very good to stay near those old people because they have that knowledge about the past" (Interview, Patricia, April 25, 2015). Another student says her primary source is her father, who had been abducted and had personal experience with Kony and with the LRA (Interview, Grace, April 25, 2015). In some of the interviews, it became clear that the elders who are passing on the information about the war are concerned more with telling the tales of violence or spiritualism than with speaking about the politics of the war. It is no wonder that the rational, historical causes for war are not focused on by the elders in the face of narratives about their personal traumas or spiritual beliefs. In her description of her knowledge about the war, one student says, "I heard about it, I guess, how he was maybe making people suffer," and proceeds to describe those notorious acts of violence perpetrated by the LRA, such as amputations and facial mutilations (Interview, Nicole, April 25, 2015). Another student says, "For us, we heard it from our grandparents," and once again immediately goes into a description of the violence of the LRA (Interview, Bismark, April 25, 2015). Because the stories told by the elders are about the violence

of the LRA or are about the spiritual powers of Kony, it follows that those are the main discussions incorporated into the youth narratives. Indeed, this study shows that the spiritual powers of Kony are the central focus in the narratives about the war.

Other sources of information also contain similar focuses. In a discussion with GSS history teacher Anywar Emmanuel, he spoke about how he would teach the war in his classroom. Regarding the causes of the war, he says, "The causes are really not very clear. Sometimes he [Kony] was talking that he wanted to fight the regime, this present regime. […] But what I would say is that it was just based on the evil things. […] I think it was motivated by the evil spirits" (Interview, Emmanuel, April 14, 2015). Emmanuel, too, speaks about the dual causality for the war. It becomes clear that the causes of the war are generally obscured in the narratives of the elders as well as in the narratives of the youth. The focus on the violence and the mystical power of the LRA and of Kony stems from the fact that "Violent and tragic and/or glorious struggles, watershed confrontations on the battlefield, military leaders whose heroic status transcends the battlefield and straddles eras of war and peace […] often form the core components of 'remembrance', whether oral or literate" (Reid, 2006, p. 89). When thinking about narrative construction, it is essential to look into the influences of such stories. This is essential because it shows where memories begin. In this case, perhaps "popular memory and written epic […] have been central to the creation of identity, with war so often the key element in the shaping of that identity" (Reid, 2006, p. 89). The identities shaped through the narratives told in this case begin with the elders. However, this does not mean that any processes of de-memorizing, whether such a process is

needed or not, likewise starts with the elders. Narrative creation for the youth begins with the elders, but it also has many other influences, such as teachers, peers, and the media. A heightened awareness should be given to all these facets of influence, especially in situations in which the narrative may require reworking or clarifying. For example, the youth narratives call for clarification regarding the causes of the war. This clarification will not likely originate from stories told by the elders. Therefore, other facets of influence should be utilized to provide the information needed.

3.3: Youth Comprehension of Peace

The ideas of peace presented by the students fall mostly into the categories of negative peace[10], although one student expressed a more sophisticated opinion of peace when he mentioned education as a key aspect of peace building (Interview, Bismark, April 25, 2015). Another student mentioned peace would be upheld with the creation of institutions to care for victims of the war in northern Uganda (Interview, William, April 25, 2015). However, most of the students referenced the silence of the guns as the signifier of peace. One student says, "We are somehow getting peace now. Not that there is security in the area […] there is not anymore gunshot. At least there is peace" (Interview, Nicole, April 25, 2015). For Nicole and for three other students, peace is the absence of violence and the environment of security. The absence of gunshots and the presence of security in the area are beneficial; however, it is important to take proactive steps, such as catering to the education system or supporting local

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[10] Negative peace is defined as the absence of active warfare. Negative peace does not take into account causes of the war and therefore does not consider lasting peacekeeping solutions.

infrastructure, in order to maintain any type of peace. As the generation shouldered with advocating for and generating peace in the post-conflict society, it would be wise to educate the youth in northern Uganda about the concepts of negative and positive peace[11] and their accompanying implications.

3.4: Youth Perspectives on Current Political Dynamics

Youth perspectives on the current political dynamics are twofold, but both aspects address the fact that the political dynamics affect peace dynamics in northern Uganda. With the violence in northern Uganda being linked to political dynamics, an understanding of contemporary political dynamics is essential to understanding peace dynamics in northern Uganda. The students first point out the issues currently facing the region and Uganda as a whole. Second, students gave several proposals for how they would achieve a more lasting peace in northern Uganda.

3.4.1: Issues with Current Political Dynamics

Students pointed out two main issues with current political dynamics, which are a) the fragility of the peace due to potential political unrest, and b) the fragility of the peace due to Museveni's patronage[12] towards central and southern Uganda. Three students brought up a) as a main concern with the current peace dynamic. "I am just worried of 2016 election. That's when Kony might have that mind of coming back," says one student (Interview, Patricia, April 25, 2015). This fear of political disturbance most

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[11] Positive peace is the creation of a peaceful society through the implementation of infrastructure, programs, and support that comes from a dialogue about the causes of conflict and discussion on how to fix those issues.

[12] Patronage is the practice of political leaders catering to a certain group of individuals through bribes, preferential treatment, etc., in order to secure their support, thus maintaining a protective cushion of guaranteed advocates.

likely stems from the normalization of violence exhibited by the students in their narratives. In their worldviews, political transition had become synonymous with violent political unrest. Because of this, violent transition has become the expectation, even when prefaced with an ideally democratic election. This expectation of violence means that should such violence occur, no significant outrage is likely to be felt. It follows that no efforts are likely to be made to change this expectation.

By far the most significant issue students emphasized is the patronage Museveni shows towards other regions in Uganda. Brian puts this issue very clearly. "Yes, because the main problem here is we don't have balanced development. And there are other government funds, which were supposed to be brought to northern Uganda here. They are diverted" (Interview, April 24, 2015). Indeed, there is a stark contrast in infrastructure between other regions of Uganda and northern Uganda, and the funds mentioned by Brian are most likely the intended funds for the government Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) for northern Uganda that were indeed bounced back to central Uganda. Ministry officials were charged with the diversion of the funds, amounting to around fourteen billion Ugandan shillings (Bath 2013). Some of the students expressed confusion over why Museveni is preferential to other regions in Uganda. "I don't know what is wrong. Maybe [Museveni does not] like this side," say one student (Interview, Patricia, April 25, 2015). However, one student directly referenced Museveni's patronage towards his roots when she says, "Like for us here in northern Uganda, we are not seeing any changes, but where Museveni came from, there are very many changes" (Interview, Grace, April 25, 2015). This issue with patronage was

brought up by six of the eight students in this study. Patronage is an issue that faces many contemporary African states. The fact that the young generation here in Uganda is aware and critical of such practices shows an optimistic trend that could begin to hold leaders accountable for the security of nations as a whole.

3.4.2: Proposed Solutions to Current Political Situations

Regarding potential solutions to the current issues in Uganda, the students in this study brought up two ideas, which are a) the creation of policies to curb patronage systems, and b) equal political representation for northern Uganda. Two students expressed a belief that policy creation and implementation would help to curb Museveni's patronage. "They have to make a policy. A kind of policy that favor all part of Uganda, not only their part," says one student (Interview, Bismark, April 25, 2015). Patricia supplements this idea of policy by saying, "Whenever you are caught doing any corruption, you should be taken to prison" (Interview, April 25, 2015). Though the number of students who focused on policy as a solution to the patronage system was small, their ideas were concise and well articulated; however, policy changes may not hold any sway within the current government due to the already deeply ingrained patronage system. In the event of a political transition, though, such policies may find their place.

More prominent, though, was the emphasis on the need for equal political representation for northern Uganda. One student phrases it like this: "actually northern Uganda need to have […] many political leaders […] under the current government" (Interview, Brian, April 24, 2015). Brian goes on to point out that currently political

representation in the current government is heavily skewed towards the other regions in Uganda. In an opinion editorial for one of the main print newspapers in Uganda, Daniel Omara Atubo points out that "Of the 77 ministerial positions, western region took 32, eastern 21, central 14 and northern a paltry 10," (Atubo 2015). As northern Uganda accounts for a significant amount of the population, ten regional representatives does seem to be a too small number (NPHC 2014).

Another focus that comes up in terms of political representation is the suggestion that the next president of Uganda should come from northern Uganda. "Maybe if a president of Uganda, one day, comes from this side," then northern Uganda will finally see development on the scale of other regions in Uganda (Interview, Malcolm, April 24, 2015). This emphasis on a need for a president from northern Uganda in order to see developmental changes in northern Uganda is a normalization of the patronage system. Political theorist Patrick Chabal explains this integration of the patronage system into political systems in Africa. "What accountability is, therefore, cannot be decreed *a priori,* according to some given political theory which may apply in the West. It needs to be uncovered in its local context, and that context is always one of reciprocity – which is, of course, what accountability means in the first place" (Chabal, 2009, p. 56). In other words, Chabal points out that the nature of responsibility and reciprocity to one's heritage, or to one's community, is important to maintaining legitimacy as a leader in many African societies. The youth's conclusion that only a president from northern Uganda will cater to the development of northern Uganda is proof that such systems of accountability hold true for their society. This shows that even though the youth

recognize the problematic nature of a leader practicing patronage, they also have incorporated it into their political worldview as an expectation of leadership. Due to the prevalence of patronage systems in Uganda and in many other African countries, changing the mentality of expectation is a difficult task. Leadership that actively criticizes and avoids patronage may have an influence in shifting this expectation of political leadership, and the young generation will be responsible for promoting and electing just such a leader. Therefore, young generations in Uganda should be encouraged to accept only leaders who operate on an equal national level as legitimate.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

4.1: Conclusions

The narratives told by the young generation in northern Uganda will become the dialogue of the society in a matter of years. As one student puts it, "If I suffered during the period of exam, I should tell my children studying is a very difficult thing, you must sweat a lot in order to succeed in your life, then I must also tell my children that, in the period of Kony, I really suffered, because I really run like nothing. I should be transparent to them about what happened during the period" (Interview, William, April 25, 2015). Talking about the war will be an essential part of talking about life for generations to come. The inevitable duration of the conflict narrative told in northern Uganda requires an understanding of that narrative and its implications. Studying youth narratives can lead to early identification of issues that have the potential to push northern Uganda out of peace.

This study allows for an extraction of several key findings regarding the northern Ugandan youth narratives about the war. The first key finding is that the influences on youth narratives, particularly the elders, focus on telling tales of person experience with violence or trauma, and on telling tales of mystical powers of Kony and the LRA. This leaves the youth without confident knowledge about the origins of the war. The youth, reluctant to accept the war as senseless and irrational, are left struggling to come up with concrete causes for the war in northern Uganda. This struggle to define the causes of the war calls for formal, unbiased education about the historical, political, and cultural reasons for the war. The second key finding is that the spiritual aspects of the conflict still remain at the forefront of narratives, and as such they will remain indelibly within the narratives. It is important to explain the rationality of this fixation without dismissing or trivializing the empirical belief system that legitimizes the organization. Further, it is essential to invest in further research in order to understand the lasting implications of the continued fascination with and reverence for Kony, as well as to predict outcomes of the fascination. The third key finding is that the youth narratives carry the strong potential to perpetuate regional and ethnic tensions between the Acholi North and what boils down to the Buganda Center and South. Unaddressed, the problems youth narratives bring up regarding these tensions will continue to integrate harmful resentments into the social identity of northern Ugandans. Emphasis should be placed on educating the youth about the historical and strategic reasons for the regional divide, as well as peaceful ways to go about addressing the nation problems without compromising social organizations and memories in northern Uganda. Likewise,

significant effort should be made on the part of the government to curb patronage and balance development through the nation. If the young generation is educated properly regarding historical background to the tensions, and regarding peaceful methods of righting the imbalance, then they have the potential to correct the divide as they come into power and influence.

Overall, comprehensive education about the war in northern Uganda seems like the logical step following the analyses presented here. Ideally, this education about the historical and rational processes of the war would be incorporated into peace education curriculums in order to expose causes and tensions while still promoting peaceful solutions to interpersonal resentments and, projected on a larger scale, regional and ethnic resentments on the national Ugandan level. With youth conflict narratives that incorporate the national tensions, such education programs are essential to creating lasting, positive peace.

4.2: Recommendations

Future Researchers	• Focus on further exploring the youth's fascination with Kony, considering implications and outcomes of that fascination.
	• Expand the study scope of youth in northern Uganda
	• Expand the study to youth throughout Uganda to document national youth narratives about the war in northern Uganda

Education Partners (cont.)	• Incorporate unbiased historical education about the war in northern Uganda into the national secondary school curriculum • Incorporate historical and political education into peace education programs within schools or through NGO youth programs • Initiate youth-based discussions about causes and effects of the war, simultaneously encouraging youth to propose solutions to issues presented from the war, especially perpetuated tensions
Historiographers	• Holistically document the war in northern Uganda, taking particular care to ethically document the spiritual aspects of the war with cultural sensitivity
Youths	• Encourage elders to enter into debates regarding the causes and effects of the war • Increase pressure on leadership to maintain balanced development • Continue to be willing to learn and shift opinions about the war

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