After Atrocity: Community Reconstruction in Northern Uganda

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This dissertation is dedicated, with deep admiration,
to communities around the world working for a peaceful future
after too much violence and war.

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the development of post-war social stability in northern Uganda. Relying on data from fieldwork and 91 in-depth interviews in three rural villages, I analyze what facilitates and what hinders the transitional process. I develop an analysis of how the war and displacement affected unity by bringing broad social changes and shifts to daily patterns of interactions. I consider how local catalysts of conflict emerge from the transitional period, potentially blocking the transition to stability and devolving communities into renewed cycles of violence and instability. I also analyze the role of formal transitional justice mechanisms in local communities, looking particularly at how social context affects the diffusion of global discourses of transitional justice to the local level. I develop a model of the post-war transition from fragile coexistence to social stability that integrates local informal processes, formal transitional justice mechanisms, and emergent conflicts.

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List of Abbreviations

CBO	Community-based organization
CVI	Child Voice International, an INGO based in Lukodi
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGO	Inter-governmental organization
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IPSS	Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies, Gulu University
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project, an INGO active in Lukodi
LC	Local Council, elected leaders at various levels (LC1 to LC5)
LC1	Local Council One, typically used to refer to the elected chairman of the Local Council
LDU	Local defense units
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRDP	Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan for Northern Uganda, the Government's plan for rebuilding the northern region
RA	Research assistant
UN	United Nations
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defense Force, the national army
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

List of Local Phrases, People, and Places

Acholi	Primary ethnic group in the region of data collection
aleya	A practice of communal digging, in small rotating groups
Anyadwe	Village in Gulu District, one of the research fieldsites, also known as Ajulu or Patiko
Awach	Village in Gulu District, one of the research fieldsites
awak	A practice of large-scale communal digging
atekere	Traditional clan leader in charge of cleansing rituals
bolicup	Savings and credit groups
cen	Bad spirit
cilil	Northern group who fought against the government in the 1980s
Coo Pe	IDP camp near Lukodi
Gulu	Main town in region
jirani	Neighbor
kalulu	Revolving savings groups
Ker Kwaro	Institution of Acholi cultural chiefs
Kony	Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA
Lukodi	Village in Gulu District, one of the research fieldsites
mato oput	Traditional Acholi reconciliation ritual
Museveni	Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda since 1986
rodi	Chiefs (sing. rwot)
rwot	Chief (pl. rodi)
rwot kweri	Local leader (man) in charge of farming issues
rwot okoro	Local leader (woman) in charge of women's farming issues
rwot moo	Hereditary traditional clan leader
tek kweri	Zones or sub-villages, each overseen by a rwot kweri and rwot okoro
wang oo	Customary practice of telling stories around a courtyard fire

Chapter One
Introduction

Before the war, people had everything, but today we are trying to recover.
A person recovering is not the same as a person who has never suffered.
(Stellah Acan, Interview #46)

• 2006 •

Joyce is 13 years old and living in the outskirts of Gulu town. Most of her life had been spent in Awach IDP camp, but after her father was killed in an ambush, she fled with her mother and sister to Gulu, so her mother could look for work. They also hope that in the larger town Joyce will be safer from the LRA, who has recently abducted several boys and girls around Joyce's age, her friends from the camp. Joyce hasn't been in school in years, with no money, but also no functioning school nearby. Her mother seems to be scraping by, though sometimes she doesn't come home all night long, and Joyce lies alone in the dark, listening intently for any sounds of alarm or attack.

Patrick is living in Ajulu-Patiko IDP camp, where his large tracts of land are, fortuitously, in the area immediately surrounding the camp. Throughout most of the period of displacement, Patrick's family has been able to cultivate their land, also frequently hiring other people for labor and renting out land to surrounding families who want to grow small vegetable gardens. Patrick's wife has been working with a European NGO that is mobilizing groups of women to save their money together. She has been able to save small amounts of money, and Patrick appreciates her contributions to helping pay their children's school fees, feeling fortunate for their ability to make do in these difficult times.

Okello is trying to keep his large family—his sons, their wives, their children—together in Coo Pe IDP camp. He was an elected leader in their village, but now there are appointed camp leaders, so his leadership responsibilities have diminished, though he

still does what he can to help organize life in the camp, despite chaotic and constantly changing conditions. His wife is known for her brew of the local alcohol, selling it to bring in some income, but recently has been taking too much herself. It was devastating to all of them when two of their children were abducted in 1999. Now, combined with the trauma of the massacre in their village camp two years ago, she seems to try anything to dull the pain. They survive day to day on food rations from the WFP, not having farmed their own land in years.

• 2011 •

At 18, Joyce still dreams of getting enough money to go back to school, but now she works at a bar in Awach, bringing beers and "sack-its" of grain alcohol to middle-aged men with blurry eyes and wandering hands. After her mother began staying with another man a few years ago, Joyce's life became difficult, as an outsider who didn't belong among the new man's children. She moved back to her father's home village, near Awach, but didn't find a place that felt like home. Her aunts were busy caring for their own children and Joyce didn't know any of the neighbors. In the trading centre, however, she found a job in the beer hall, and the woman who owns it lets her sleep in the back room. To Joyce, she belongs here as much as she belongs anywhere.

With his farming operations expanding, Patrick is regularly selling bulk products to markets in Gulu and Kampala. He has found he is also able to navigate the forms and handshakes necessary to access resources brought by rebuilding programs, receiving assistance to start a pig farming operation and a grinding mill. His wife has continued with the savings group, and their system of savings and loans is now a considerable resource. In an effort to help his extended family as well, he has gone into business with his brother, opening a convenience store in Anyadwe trading centre. Despite his successes, Patrick has been troubled by a dispute over the boundary of his land; he has been cultivating the land for well over a decade, but a family returned last year with claims the land belonged to their grandfather. As the case languishes in court, Patrick is becoming increasingly frustrated and agitated.

Back on the land of his father and grandfather in Lukodi, Okello has been busy reestablishing their long-ago destroyed farm lands and huts. Gone are the cattle, village celebrations, and easy life he remembers from before the war. Despite this, he is thankful to be home. He rejoiced the day one of his sons returned from the bush, after nearly 10 years, but worries at the storms that seem to brew in his eyes and the ways some of the neighbors look at him. Okello hopes to one day gather the resources to perform a cleansing of evil spirits. Today, one of Okello's grandchildren is sick and Okello's wife is frantic to find money for the doctor, pressuring Okello to ask for help from an American NGO worker he knows. Okello sometimes works with an NGO that is trying to promote reconciliation in Lukodi, though he often feels overwhelmed at the task, finding it difficult to even meet his own family's immediate needs.

In just five short years, life has changed dramatically for the people of northern Uganda. For over two decades, people lived in the crossfire of a brutal war, with their daily energies focused on survival and carving out creative strategies to exist in extremely difficult surroundings (Finnström 2008). When the violence subsided, long-displaced people returned to their home communities *en masse* to rebuild. While being at home is certainly a positive step, there is still a long road ahead, reconstructing not only infrastructure, but also social relationships, institutions, and practices.

Orienting Research Questions

Violence is often cyclical, with deep social roots. In the fragile context of a post-war society, preventing a return to violent conflict is of utmost concern. To safeguard the development of lasting peace, transitional societies need to develop deep social stability,

beginning at the local level. A central concern of this project—one shared with sociology as a discipline—was to understand what binds individuals together in community and what blocks unity, instead contributing to division and tension. Understanding the construction of solidarity and division is a tall order, but it is particularly imperative when considering a society in which people have experienced widespread violence and conflict. Such cultural trauma (Alexander et al. 2004) fundamentally damages the very foundation of social life, complicating the analysis of community and solidarity in the aftermath of war, displacement, and human rights violations.

The overarching question that motivated this research was: What facilitates and what hinders the transition from war to social stability? There are numerous institutional responses to this question, but I argue that beyond the formal mechanisms promoted by governments or organizations, the way survivors relate to one another every day in their own communities has a direct and lasting impact on if and how people deal with the legacy of violence and understand their collective future. Within this broad question, I addressed three interrelated lines of inquiry.

First, how do ordinary social interactions contribute to or detract from the transitional process? This first contribution is an analysis of 1) how every day interactions can facilitate the transition from war to deeper peace and stability, and 2) what daily barriers to unity develop in post-war communities. To do this, I looked carefully at the impact of the war and displacement on unity. In what ways are people in post-war communities united? How has the war impacted their social interactions and organization? After a prolonged period of war and displacement, what broad social

changes influence survivors' daily lives? In this new context, are people interacting with one another in ways that deepen unity and stability, or do they find that relationships are mired in tensions? I developed an analysis of how ordinary interactions contribute to and detract from unity in a post-war context.

Second, what major barriers to stability emerge from the particularities of the local social context? It is essential to understand which catalysts can spark renewed cycles of violence and instability, and how they operate. Continuing the focus on the role of daily interactions, I asked how local struggles over power and belonging contribute to these catalysts or barriers. Then, in the face of significant local challenges to the development of post-war stability, what methods or social institutions are available to address these conflicts? Are they effective in helping survivors overcome emergent barriers and conflicts, allowing communities to continue with a positive transition? I considered local catalysts that can spark violent conflict and how they are barriers to unity and stability.

Third, are transitional justice mechanisms resonate in local communities and do they make felt contributions to the transition? I considered if the global discourses that permeate transitional justice mechanisms are relevant in local communities. If they are not, why not? How does social context matter for the development of local discourses about the role of formal institutional mechanisms? I analyzed what blocks the translation of global discourses into local vernaculars (Levitt and Merry 2009). What happens when there are not effective local translators? How do transitional justice mechanisms fit into

local institutional arrangements? I analyzed the ways formal institutions—transitional justice mechanisms—are experienced by survivors in transitional contexts.

In order to more fully reveal the role of informal daily social interactions in a transition, I addressed these questions in multiple communities. From this comparison, I asked how the transitional process varies between post-war communities situated in the same macro context. How much do local specificities matter in shaping the transitional process? Even with similar transitional justice experiences, will some communities have more successful transitions than others?

My dissertation addressed all of these questions for the specific case of post-war and post-displacement northern Uganda. To take seriously the role of local social context in the transitional process, an in-depth case study was an appropriate method. I focused on one case, but argued throughout that there are elements or insights that are likely to operate similarly in other transitional societies, and I developed a model that can be applied more broadly.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the following section, I present my key findings, which will be developed and supported in detail in the remaining chapters. Chapter Two details my theoretical framework, Chapter Three provides key historical background to the study, and Chapter Four is a discussion of my methodology and data. Chapters Five through Seven present my findings. Finally, Chapter Eight is a concluding discussion.

In Chapter Two I review theories of the development of violence, socio-legal scholarship, transitional justice literature, interdisciplinary insights from post-conflict research, and sociology of culture and group interaction, and I introduce my model of the post-war transition from fragile coexistence to stability. I argue that the transition is both facilitated and hindered by the involvement of transitional justice mechanisms and more informal processes of daily social interactions in post-war communities. I conceptualize a stable society as one in which people value community, social justice, non-violence, and interdependence.

Chapter Three provides historical and contextual background specific to northern Uganda and the research fieldsites. My research analyzes the resettlement and reconstructive trajectories of three recently resettled neighboring villages. Chapter Four details the data and methodology. First, I discuss my positionality and its associated implications for fieldwork. The second half of Chapter Four outlines my methods of data collection, discussing the technical aspects of sampling, recruiting, and conducting interviews during my eleven months of field research. Chapter Four concludes with an overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of interview respondents, who were most commonly married or cohabitating Catholic farmers with low levels of formal education.

In Chapter Five, I analyze how the experiences of war and displacement affected unity in the three fieldsites, unpacking how ordinary social interactions contribute to and also detract from cohesion and solidarity. While there were a minority of respondents who perceived that the war actually improved trust and unity by forcing people to rely on

one another, for the majority of respondents, the war deeply undercut communal life. I argue that social life since resettlement has undergone a fundamental reorganization and, in many ways, it has been weakened. Most respondents reported low levels of trust among neighbors, saying they trusted only a select few, and that they are particularly hesitant to trust young people. Respondents talked of weak, fragmented, and insincere unity, of a substantively different type than unity before the war. They frequently described relationships characterized by greed, jealousy, struggles over resources, and conflicts. I argue that this challenge or barrier to deep unity has occurred because of three alterations to daily social interactions. First, the post-war period has seen shifts in historically important cultural customs, including a devaluing of traditional communal practices, a loss of local leaders' authority, and a decline in rituals that connect the spiritual and social worlds. Second, communal agricultural work is practiced less often, by fewer people, and in different forms than it was prior to displacement. Third, village life is increasingly organized on the basis of membership in small groups, rather than as members of the broader village community. Many such groups were formed to obtain resources from post-war NGO and government programs, and continue to operate as locations of unity and social support, thus introducing new dimensions of inclusion and exclusion to village life.

Throughout the chapter, I develop analyses of four broad social changes ushered in by the war and displacement, which help to explain the observed shifts in social interactions. First, there has been a crisis of leadership, as a generation of chiefs and elders passed away during the war and post-war leaders have not emerged with the same

degree of authority. Second, there was a gap in the socialization of a generation of youth, those that spent their formative years in camps, rather than in peaceful villages. Now, in many ways, this generation is not well-equipped for "normal" life. Third, the war ushered in new economic arrangements, deepened poverty, and increased inequality. While in the camps, with the influx of outside resources and the lack of agricultural activity, wage labor and non-agricultural businesses grew. People lost wealth and livelihoods because of the war, but some were better positioned to capitalize on the new economic realities. Finally, during and in the wake of displacement, NGO and government programs played a substantial role in the region, instituting a wide range of far-reaching programs with diverse consequences in residents' lives.

Chapter Six is an in-depth analysis of land conflict, which is one particularly formidable barrier to post-war unity and stability, emerging from within the local transitional context. I begin with a discussion of the centrality of land in northern Uganda, arguing that conflicts over land are so contentious because of the prominent role of land in making social identity. Not only is land essential for physical survival, but it is a marker of belonging in a community, a way of distinguishing the boundaries of who belongs and who does not. The post-war context adds additional complexity, as land is newly monetized and perceived as the only valuable asset remaining to help people rebuild their lives. Whereas land in the past was seen as being used (not owned) communally, there is a growing emphasis on individual ownership. Post-displacement land ownership and boundaries are difficult to determine, as people have been away for many years and elders with memories of boundaries and local histories are often not

present. Accounting for these elements of social context allows a rich analysis of why land conflict presents such a risk of violence and instability.

Disputes over land were extremely prevalent in all three fieldsites, with respondents commonly describing them as both the most common and the most serious types of conflicts in their communities. Some disputes emerged from the chaotic situation of such a massive and rapid resettlement. Others, however, more directly highlighted power inequalities and exploitation of vulnerable community members. According to many respondents, land conflicts make unity extremely difficult, if not impossible. Parties of a land dispute do not interact with one another, instead harboring deep bitterness. Even among those not active in a particular dispute, respondents explained that people look at one another with distrust because of tensions over land. Dispute resolution mechanisms are not well equipped to address this issue, both because of its magnitude and because it is a new form of social conflict emerging from the transition. Respondents strongly favored the local, community-based dispute resolution system, rather than the state-based courts, which are perceived as too far removed from local specificity and too vulnerable to manipulation by those with power. However, in practice, the local system faces substantial problems and has not been able to definitively address land conflict.

I conceptualize disputes over land as a type of emergent conflict that arises because of the broad social changes brought by the post-war transition (Miall 2007). I describe the transitional period as a time of dramatic social change, with new economic, social, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal arrangements. Emergent conflicts develop as a result of these changes, as a consequence of the transition, and have the potential to

block the transition to stability and devolve a society into renewed violence and instability. I argue that it imperative to develop the capacity of social institutions to meet the new demands of the emergent conflict and help communities accommodate or adapt to the social changes brought by the transition.

Chapter Seven discusses another barrier to post-war reconstruction: the ineffective translation of transitional justice mechanisms into locally relevant forms. I analyze how residents of northern Uganda encounter and evaluate the International Criminal Court (ICC), an international institution designed to promote justice and accountability in the aftermath of egregious human rights violations. The ICC represents the culmination of decades of work on the part of advocacy networks and international organizations to promote a particular global discourse and set of values: those of human rights, rule of law, democracy, accountability, and justice. For many, the ICC is a global agent that is able to transmit these universalized discourses and values to a variety of local contexts. For this to be done effectively, there needs to be a process of translation to make the global form and ideas locally relevant (Merry 2006). The ICC has an outreach unit that is tasked with—and claims to be effective at—communicating the principles and ideals of the Court to affected communities, resulting in both increased knowledge of and support for the ICC and its activities.

One of the three fieldsites in my research, Lukodi, had an exceptionally high level of exposure to the ICC and its outreach activities, and the ICC had explicitly claimed its efforts were successful in Lukodi. In comparing Lukodi to the other fieldsites, however, I found the story to be more complex. First, even after outreach activities, knowledge about

the ICC remained low and unevenly distributed throughout the population. Second, there was significant nuance in people's perceptions of the ICC's impact, with people most likely to describe "potential" benefits but to also have substantial critiques and report negative impacts. Finally, most importantly, I found that those with more knowledge of the ICC were more likely to be critical of the ICC and its involvement in Uganda. Even after concerted outreach initiatives, the community discourse about the ICC did not reflect the positive perceptions and harmony of interests the Court expects. Rather, local residents had significant critiques and did not perceive the ICC as resonate with their lived experiences, their attempts to deal with their collective past, or their efforts to imagine a peaceful future.

Previous work has developed cases of how global principles are successfully translated into local vernaculars. Using this case, however, I developed a model that identifies how local social context complicates the translation, or vernacularization, process. I argue that vernacularization has not happened effectively for four reasons: 1) a mismatch between the cultural schema of the ICC and that of the local population; 2) the people in Uganda classifying the situation more complexly than as a legal dispute; 3) diverse social locations making some segments of the population less likely or able to understand and support the ICC; and 4) the absence of key local elites to serve as translators or advocates for the ICC. Additionally, I see significant problems with the institutional fit of the ICC in northern Uganda. The ICC is poorly received because of: 1) a recent influx of post-war international organizations that people perceive as disconnected from local realities; 2) negative experiences with local courts and resultant

perceptions that courts are not effective means of dispute resolution; and 3) the contradiction between the ICC and the locally popular national legislation that grants amnesty to all returned combatants. Together, these problems with vernacularization and institutional fit led to a unique local discourse about the ICC that did not reflect the global discourse promoted by international actors.

Finally, Chapter Eight is a concluding discussion that unites the findings from the entire project and returns directly to the broad questions orienting this research. After deeply considering the answers to questions about what facilitates and what blocks the transitional process in post-war northern Uganda, in this chapter I discuss how findings from this case are relevant to other societies transitioning from war to peace. I discuss the academic contributions of this work, as well as some implications for those directly engaged in the process of building peace after violent conflict.

Chapter Two
Transitioning to Stability: A Theoretical Framework

Ojok kwe ciro ki cet iot pa maro
You will get it in a long way,
turning many corners before you arrive.

This dissertation was motivated by the overarching task of understanding how communities transition sustainably from a period of war and violence to a time of social stability. This chapter sets up the theoretical framework for the project. I situate my project at the intersection of multiple fields, particularly scholarship on transitional justice, post-conflict reconciliation, law, culture, international organizations, and social interaction. I examine insights from previous work on what contributes to unity and solidarity, as well as what blocks unity and leads to violent conflict. While this chapter sketches the basic framework and outlines conversations to which the dissertation contributes, the analyses in subsequent chapters also utilize scholarship directly relevant to each topic area.

The chapter opens with a discussion of how violence emerges, focusing particularly on scholarship about micro-level processes that lead to widespread conflict. Next, I discuss two legal challenges to conflict resolution that are salient in many post-colonial contexts: a legal pluralism that contributes to ambiguity and tensions in dispute resolution, and a form of legal consciousness in which people do not perceive law as a useful tool to resolve their problems. Next, I discuss transitional justice literature, which is the primary scholarship that addresses post-conflict transitions and how societies

rebuild after widespread violence. Most such work focuses on how institutional mechanisms facilitate the transition. Next, I discuss a small, emerging area that focuses on post-conflict social reconstruction at the community level. This recent work calls for increased analysis of how to move from fragile coexistence to a deeper peace, and also brings attention to the need for sociological contributions. In order to make such a contribution, I next turn to key sociological insights on what brings people together in community, contributing to unity and collective identity. In this section, I discuss sources of social solidarity, the formation and impact of boundaries, interactions that occur in social groups, and the construction of collective memory. The chapter closes with an introduction to my model of the post-war process of social reconstruction, with a focus on the mechanisms that help transition from fragility to stability.

Conflict and Violence

Although I primarily focused on what brings people together and furthers the development of unity, it was first helpful to understand what divides people and causes conflicts to escalate to violence. In the past century, traditional interstate warfare has decreased and intrastate conflicts have been on the rise, suggesting an increasing need for understanding the local roots of violence. These conflicts often involve groups competing for power or wealth, targeting civilian populations in the process, thus resulting in a massive breakdown in social structures (Fletcher and Weinstein 2002).

There are several key theories about the development of violence. Most such research focuses on state or macro- and societal-level causes of violence, conflict, and

war. Scholars most frequently study how violence is caused by the type and strength of the government (Harff 2003; Hironaka 2005; Mann 2005; Rummel 1996; Tilly 2006), colonial histories (Levene 2005; Mamdani 2001), ideologies promoted by elites or government leaders (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2009; Weitz 2009), and economic conditions (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009). For example, Tilly (2006) argued that the ways that groups express their collective claims—whether through collective violence, revolution, or social movements—depends on the interaction between the form of the state (its degree of democratization) and the capacities of the state (its ability to extract and use resources effectively). In this model, countries like Uganda—low capacity, democratic regimes—are most likely to experience collective violence and have zones of instability and lawlessness (Tilly 2006:210). Such macro considerations are certainly relevant, but I argue that it is also necessary to develop theories of micro processes that contribute to fueling large-scale violence.

Micro-Level Interactions with Macro Processes

There is some work on the development of violence that considers how macro processes interact with local-level social practices. For example, John Hagan and Wenona Rymond-Richmond (2008, 2009) developed a collective action theory to describe the development of genocidal violence in Sudan. At the macro-level, the Darfur region had intense competition for resources and the Government of Sudan promoted ideologies against black African people groups. These factors reified socially-constructed identities and created perceived distinctions between “us” and “them.” At the micro-level, this

translated into racial intent in the perpetration of individual acts of violence. The combination of these individual actions was the collective action of genocide in Darfur (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2008, 2009). Such work illustrates the valuable contributions that a sociological perspective can make to understanding mass violence.

Gregory Stanton (1998) developed a widely used model of eight stages of genocide. Although it is not explicitly articulated, each of these stages implies a dynamic interaction between macro processes or elite actions with micro-level social interactions. The first stage is classification, which involves developing categories of "us" and "them" that line up with elements of social difference. Second, symbolization is giving a name or symbol to line up with the classification system (such as the yellow star for Jews). Third, dehumanization is a process of denying the humanity of at least one of the groups. Fourth, organization begins to establish a system to perpetrate genocide. Fifth, polarization starts to separate the groups, silencing moderate views and amplifying extremists. Sixth, in the preparation stage, victims are identified and separated on the basis of their identity. In the seventh stage, extermination, genocide actually occurs. Finally, denial is a stage of genocide, as perpetrators cover their tracks and deny their crimes. Stanton is an anthropologist, and he developed this model in his work as the founder and president of Genocide Watch, so the model is understandably oriented towards policy and prevention. Social science is needed to understand why these stages occur, to determine if the stages are necessary for genocides to happen or merely descriptive of some genocides. Additionally, this model is specifying the development of

genocide, but the development of broader forms of conflict and mass violence are likely to unfold differently.

The interplay of macro and micro processes is also seen in some work on "ethnic," or *ethnicized*, conflict.[1] Andreas Wimmer (2008) and Mahmood Mamdani (1996, 2004) theorize about the social construction of ethnicity as a salient boundary distinguishing between groups, incorporating the micro-dynamics of group making, but also the role of ethnicity in political maneuvering and institutions. Mamdani theorizes about the formation of ethnic identities specifically in postcolonial Africa, seeing ethnicity as a political identity that was imposed by colonial administrations and legal structures. While there were precolonial culturally symbolic differences, Mamdani argues that ethnicity as a political identity was a colonial creation. After independence, ethnic divisions were reinforced by postcolonial law and the state, and ethnic categories continued to be used to promote policies of "divide and rule" (Mamdani 1996). Wimmer (2008) argues that ethnic groups are constructed by a dynamic interaction of actors' boundary making strategies, the situational constraints (such as those of institutions or networks), and the process of social negotiation about the boundary, such as whether the interaction surrounding the boundary is characterized by conflict, consensus, or compromise. These contributions highlight how macro and micro social processes interact in the social construction of ethnic identity and boundaries.

[1] Many of these conflicts are characterized as "ethnic conflicts," though there is debate about this characterization and this label is often applied inappropriately (Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Hironaka 2005). As Brubaker and Laitin explain, "Ethnicity is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict in such cases. Rather, conflicts driven by struggles for power between challengers and incumbents are newly ethnicized, newly framed in ethnic terms" (Brubaker and Laitin 1998:425). Thus, while the label "ethnic conflict" is often inappropriately used, many wars and violence, particularly in post-colonial Africa, are *ethnicized*.

Like much of Africa, Uganda had a system of indirect rule that influenced the regional ethnic identities underlying the contemporary northern conflict. While much violence in post-colonial Africa is described as rooted in "ancient tribal hatreds," recognizing the social construction of ethnicity illustrates the role of social processes in shaping group identities, relationships, and conflicts. It also suggests the importance of understanding the roots of boundary-making and group-creation. In post-war situations, particularly, reified divisions between groups are cause for concern.

Within a national context, there are certain systems of ethnic group relations that make violent conflict more likely. For example, Horowitz (1985) argues that in systems where the hierarchy of ethnic groups is not clearly known or enforced, relations are more volatile and, thus, ethnic conflict is more likely. Additionally, conflict is more likely when ethnic groups are large and centralized. In societies with unranked, centralized ethnic systems, conflict is likely to arise as groups try to affirm their worth compared to other groups and assert the legitimacy of their claims for political inclusion and power (particularly by groups that were disadvantaged by colonial administrations). This leads to a politics of ethnic entitlement that is a source of ethnicized conflict (Horowitz 1985). Wimmer, Cederman, and Min (2009) claim the breakout of civil violence is not related to the existence of ethnic groups, per say, but is affected by state-level ethnic politics. They find the likelihood of armed ethnic violence increases in states that have many ethnic divisions among elites in the central government and also in states where a greater proportion of the population does not have a representative of their ethnic group in a position of state power.

Other scholars unpack how interactions between the state and the international community affect ethnicized conflicts. Olzak (2006), for example, explains levels of ethnicized violence by looking at the core or periphery status of the state, its integration into a global culture that increasingly values human rights, and the degree to which the state is politically inclusive towards minority groups. Hironaka (2005) analyzes why civil wars—typically characterized as ethnic conflicts—have become both more common and longer lasting. For her, these conflicts are perpetuated by the international community supporting weak states, despite their inability to resolve political discontent or insurgencies. Ethnicity contributes to violent conflict because the weak state does not have strong political institutions, so people mobilize around other salient social identities (Hironaka 2005).

Local Development of Violence

While many theories of war and violence focus on how conflict develops at the national or regional level, a few theorists argue that the local level is equally—or more—important in understanding the development of violence. Stathis Kalyvas (2006) makes a key distinction between violence and war, unpacking the concept of how violence develops at the local level, aggregating and intensifying to war. He argues there is a logic to violence, and that this "selective violence" is produced not only by political actors, but also by individual citizens seizing opportunities they find in the midst of their difficult or chaotic situations; that is, the macro situation creates opportunities for some to accomplish their objectives through violence. Violence develops not haphazardly and not

only at the elite level, but it occurs in particular micro social situations for justifiable reasons, in pursuit of understandable goals, such as information or security. The micro-dynamics of violence contribute to the development of war at the macro-level. Specifically, in conflict environments, micro social antagonisms (such as disputes over land) contribute to the development of regional or national tensions.

Séverine Autesserre (2008, 2010) developed an in-depth case study of Uganda's neighbor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where violent conflict has been on-going for decades, despite intensive peace-building efforts. She argued that the international community has problematically focused on regional or national issues in their approaches, and that peace-building has not paid due attention to the root of the violence, which, she argues, is local disputes over power and land. When local problems are neglected, they worsen and deepen, fragmenting and decentralizing even further. Local tensions are not often given the attention they merit, but Autesserre argues that they are a critical source of instability. Local disputes—particularly over land—are not long confined to the local level, but dangerously fuel broader violence, conflicts, and war at the national and regional levels. My project contributes to this neglected area of scholarship, seeking to understand the social roots of violence and war, and the role of local-level individual agency in the development of conflicts.

Challenges to Dispute Resolution

While the emergence of conflicts or disputes is perhaps unavoidable in social life, effective dispute resolution mechanisms are necessary to prevent situations' escalation to

violence. Problematically, there are two important legal dimensions that specifically weaken dispute resolution in many post-colonial contexts: first, a system of legal pluralism that creates complications and tensions in dispute resolution, and second, a system in which law is not necessarily seen as an effective tool for dealing with complex situations. Both of these issues make legal systems less useful for people to resolve their disputes, thus increasing the likelihood of using alternative forms of dispute resolution, such as force or violence, and creating a potential barrier to peaceful resettlement after violence.

Post-Colonial Legal Pluralism

Legal pluralism is the coexistence of multiple legal orders in a particular social space. While pluralism is a phenomenon present in many different contexts, it is particularly prevalent in post-colonial nations. In the era of global conquest and imperialism, as empires constructed layers of sovereignty, they continually negotiated to what degree they would recognize the legal orders of conquered peoples (Benton 2012). In British African colonies (including Uganda), colonial authorities promoted "traditional" dispute resolution and legal authorities, but as subordinate to and subject to the rulings of colonial courts (Mamdani 1996). Law was used in the colonial system to impose and reify cultural differences, particularly through policies of indirect rule. Indirect rule meant that tribes (what we now call ethnic groups) all had separate legal systems, varied sets of "customary laws" that were administered by distinct "native authorities," while a modern state based on common law was set up to govern non-native races. Customary

law exaggerated and reinforced cultural differences that were presumed to be based on a pure, unchanging tradition, now legally enforced, with the colonial state privileging a single institution—the chiefship—as the customary authority (Mamdani 1996, 2004). During this period and beyond, as the obsession with defining "civilization" grew, legal pluralism came to be associated with states not as "advanced" in the development process; from this perspective, legal pluralism signified a nation-state that did not have complete control or authority over its territories (Benton 2012).

Legal pluralists look at how, in practical terms, certain legal orders assert authority over others and develop a hegemonic presence. For some, the dominant legal order is the state (Melissaris 2004; Tamanaha, Sage, and Woolcock 2012). For others, identifying a particular dominant authority is more complex. For example, Benjamin (2008) finds management of natural resources in Mali is balanced between the central government, the local governments, and community institutions. This arrangement, however, has resulted in modern legal institutions being superimposed on community institutions, both destabilizing local governments' authority and crippling the performance of customary institutions (Benjamin 2008). As this illustrates, there are often conflicts between the institutions and actors in the various layers of pluralistic systems. In northern Uganda, disputes involving physical violence are referred to the state-based courts, bypassing the community dispute resolution systems. For many residents, however, the formal court system actually builds resentment between disputing parties and is not able to determine acceptably nuanced judgments about guilt and responsibility. Despite the greater salience of community dispute resolution for local

residents, the state system is able to assert its greater authority in Uganda's pluralist system.

Although these power dynamics are essential to recognize, there also can be an interpenetration of legalities (Melissaris 2004). Boundaries between legal orders are porous and are open to "cross-fertilizations" or "cross-contaminations" (de Sousa Santos 2006); community courts or traditional authorities may adapt their practices to fit the context of state law, and state legal orders can be likewise modified to incorporate contributions from local-level courts and authorities. There is evidence of this occurring in northern Uganda, as in some cases the state-based courts refer cases back to the community level, citing their unwillingness to hear the case until they can incorporate local authorities' decision or perspective.

As legal actors, individuals have varying agency to navigate between multiple legal orders, employing strategies that utilize a hybrid of legal systems, ideally ultimately choosing the forum in which they perceive they have the greatest possibility of success (Benton 2012). In their lived experience, people constantly cross boundaries of legal systems, and the dichotomies set up by scholars often are less salient in people's lives (Kamau 2009). However, depending on social location, some people have a greater ability to navigate plural legal systems; for example, women experience legal pluralism differently than men, resulting in either greater opportunities or constraints (Kamau 2009; Manji 1999). Some social groups have greater agency to navigate a pluralistic system, setting up the potential for power discrepancies and dissatisfaction of certain groups. I found that economic resources, education, and language skills greatly impacted residents'

ability to successfully bring land cases to court, disproportionately privileging certain social groups in their ability to ultimately prevail in land disputes.

Legal Consciousness

The concept of legal consciousness is central to understanding the relationship between everyday interactions and the perpetuation of, resistance to, and utilization of legal norms and structures. My study contributes a not often studied perspective on legal consciousness in an African context, including how ordinary people utilize the law in resolving local disputes and how transitional justice mechanisms are actually experienced by individual survivors and their communities. Additionally, I contribute new understandings of how people experience international criminal law. Most studies of legal consciousness analyze how people interact with legal systems that are in greater proximity to their everyday lives, but I considered relationships to an international legal system, which is significantly farther removed from the local context, investigating if and how international law was seen as relevant, in need of modification, or resisted.

Studies of legal consciousness illuminate the presence of law in society, including the way people understand and use the law and what they see as the "normal" ways of doing things, revealing the deep social power of law to govern everyday lives (Silbey 2005). For the most part, law is hegemonic; it is taken for granted and virtually invisible. People do not see the influence of law because it is routinized and is part of taken for granted expectations of how society operates. In rural Uganda however, this is often not

the case, and in post-war contexts, particularly, the rule of law is constantly re-negotiated and contested.

Legal consciousness typically refers to a reciprocal process, a back and forth between meanings and social structures, as social structures shape everyday lives and human agents shape social structures. As people ascribe various meanings to law, these meanings become institutionalized and, in turn, shape the very systems that constrain future meaning-making (Silbey 2008). International legal institutions, however, are less adaptable and not likely to be shaped by non-elite, local-level agents; I map out the relationship between law and its local meanings in a situation where legal consciousness is not a reciprocal process.

Ewick and Silbey (1998) developed three distinct schemas of legal consciousness. First, "before the law" is when law is seen as separate and independent from society; here, people see themselves as supplicants before the law. Second, "with the law" is when law is seen as a game and people are players. Law is instrumental and people are able to put the law to use to help further their goals and resolve problems. Third, in "against the law," people see the law as arbitrary and constructed to advantage those in powerful positions. In this case, people see themselves as resisters to the law. In Uganda's post-colonial legal context, the "with the law" conception is not the dominant form, and, instead, "before the law" is much more powerful. Law is not viewed as particularly relevant to daily life, and is not commonly employed as a tool to resolve disputes. As I argue, this has significant implications for both how people experience international criminal justice and how they resolve local-level disputes.

Although there are particular sets of laws governing a society, groups of people may experience law in quite variable ways, and law in action may have unique consequences for different groups of people. Problematically, law (on the books and in its application) often serves to reproduce inequality and the ability of individuals to contest legal hegemony varies according to social position. Those with greater resources are able to contest the law more effectively, whereas those with fewer resources are more likely to defer or submit to legal rules and procedures (Ewick and Silbey 1998). Law may also be used to encode hierarchies and distinctions between groups of people, "insiders" and "outsiders" (for example, see Greenhouse, Yngvesson, and Engel 1994), particularly as certain social groups have the resources and social capital to navigate legal systems more easily than others. A central task of this scholarship is to explain why people continue to defer to a legal system that does not treat all equally, instead reproducing inequality.

In societies forced to rebuild from the ground up after violent conflict, how is law understood and utilized, and how does this vary depending on social location? Do people highly value legal structures in such a way that helps to re-establish the rule of law? Do they resist certain elements of law, such as amnesty laws that command perpetrators of atrocity be pardoned and welcomed back into society? How do they negotiate some of the more complex or ambiguous legal areas, such as resolving land disputes in areas where people are resettling? Which groups or individuals have more or less agency in negotiating (or forming) the newly re-established legal terrain?

Transitional Justice, International Law, and Human Rights

After considering the development of violence and challenges to dispute resolution in post-colonial contexts, I now turn to rebuilding after violent conflict. Transitional justice scholarship is the primary literature substantively addressing the unique social challenges facing post-conflict communities. In its narrowest sense, transitional justice refers to the legal strategies that a nation uses to move from an undemocratic regime to a democracy. There is also body of literature that addresses more broadly how a society comes to terms with a violent past and moves on to a peaceful future (Osiel 1997; Teitel 2000). In the recent history[2] of transitions to democracy beginning in the mid-1900s, a variety of mechanisms have been used, including criminal trials, truth commissions, amnesties, vetting or lustration, reparations, and memorialization. These different mechanisms further varied conceptions of justice in transitional periods, such as the promotion of criminal justice in trials, historical justice in truth-seeking, or administrative justice in vetting (Teitel 2000).

The Ugandan war and its aftermath are affected by the rising global concern with transitional justice and promotion of human rights. Legal structures have been developed to deal with violent conflict and restore peace around the world, and many studies have addressed their effectiveness. I briefly describe the strengths and weaknesses of the types of mechanisms used in the Ugandan context, then synthesize three relevant debates that characterize the transitional justice literature.

[2] In this section, I focus on transitional justice in the 20th century and beyond, while admittedly neglecting the history of transitional justice dating back to 5th century BCE Athens (Elster 2006).

Transitional Justice Mechanisms

First, trials are perhaps the most commonly used and most commonly debated transitional justice mechanism. In the transitional justice literature, this includes domestic (such as the Argentine trial of the juntas), foreign (the potential of which was famously illustrated by Pinochet's extradition to Spain), international (such as the ICC, ICTR, or ICTY), or hybrid (such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone) courts that try individuals for human rights violations. These different types of courts vary in proximity to and involvement of the affected population, but the underlying goal of all is to determine individual guilt for human rights abuses. Most human rights trials raise similar debates. For example, it is unclear to what extent human rights trials deter future abuses, if at all (Snyder and Vinjamuri 2003). Some argue trials do not effectively promote the development of democracy but Sikkink and Walling (2007) find, in Latin America at least, that domestic trials do not undermine democracy and usually improve human rights. Additionally, trying individuals under the contested notion of universal jurisdiction raises issues of balancing national sovereignty and respect for human rights. In the case of Uganda, the ICC has warrants for the arrests of top LRA commanders and there has been one attempt at a national war crimes trial.

Second, amnesties offer official immunity from prosecution for certain individuals or groups with the goal of promoting cessation of violence. Opponents caution that amnesty can contribute to impunity because it prevents persecutions and stops current investigations (Amnesty International 1995), and some argue this places amnesties in direct opposition to the anti-impunity norm promoted in the international

human rights community and pursued in trials (Pensky 2008). Despite these substantial critiques, arguments for amnesty include: (1) peace may not be achieved without amnesty because those in power will be unlikely to surrender without it; (2) rigorous punishment of all perpetrators may actually maintain the differences or divisions that led to the conflict initially; (3) promoting compromise and forgiveness can help quiet vengeance; and (4) courts have limited resources and, thus, should focus on the most egregious impunity (Mallinder 2007). Generally, scholars who favor amnesty (such as Snyder and Vinjamuri 2003) do not do so unconditionally, but advocate combining amnesties with alternative forms of justice, such as truth commissions or reparations (Mallinder 2007; Teitel 2000). Uganda passed a blanket Amnesty Act in 2000, allowing tens of thousands to return home free of prosecution.

Third, reparations refer to compensation offered to victims of abuse. Reparations can occur in a variety of forms, including material (cash, property, education, employment) or non-material (disclosing truth, publicly recognizing wrong, restoring reputations). The overall goal is to "compensate" for damage done, which of course raises the question of whether this is appropriate or even possible (Lutz 1995). Reparations privilege the victim's perspective, perhaps more so than the other mechanisms (Martin-Baro 1995). While there is general consensus in international law that victims ought to be compensated, there is little agreement on how to implement such programs (Lutz 1995). Survivors' groups and their associated NGOs in northern Uganda are advocating for reparation programs.

Fourth, memorialization initiatives include establishing sites or events dedicated to telling the story of what happened, acknowledging wrongs, and publicly remembering victims of violence or human rights abuses. Governments and NGOs both promote the development of museums, monuments, days of remembrance, or mass graves. Memorialization is an exercise in establishing a historical record, and so such efforts are often politicized and fraught with struggles over which versions of history will be memorialized as the "official" narrative. In some particularly divisive contexts, such as the former Yugoslavia, memorials stand incomplete as parties disagree on how to represent the history of the violence. Several NGOs in northern Uganda are pursuing memorialization initiatives, particularly in communities that experienced massacres.

Finally, there are two mechanisms that are common elsewhere, but are not being used in northern Uganda. First, truth commissions are tasked with investigating and acknowledging abuses. The benefits of truth commissions are numerous (Borer 2006; Hayner 2001), but Uganda does not currently have a trust commission for the contemporary LRA conflict. Second, vetting or "purging" a new government of those who collaborated with a past regime has commonly been used in former Communist states in Europe (Schwartz 1995). Despite alleged abuses committed by the Government of Uganda and its army, there is no proposed plan for vetting.

Central Debates in Transitional Justice

There are three key debates that emerge from the transitional justice literature and help guide my analysis of transitional justice—and particularly responses to the ICC—in northern Uganda.

First, truth and peace versus justice was the dominant debate characterizing transitional justice scholarship in the 1990s, roughly coinciding empirically with a debate between the effectiveness of truth commissions versus trials. Since its rise in the late 20th century, the human rights community has focused heavily on the fight against impunity, advocating trials for those accused of human rights violations (Kritz 1995; Teitel 2000). At the same time, there are those who question the appropriateness of applying systematic prosecutions in all cases, especially in particularly sensitive or complex situations, instead favoring amnesty or truth commissions.

This debate is on-going, though with an increasing recognition that it is not an either/or scenario, but an act of balancing and integrating truth/peace and justice, resulting in more varied combinations of mechanisms. There is recognition that these values do not line up neatly with particular mechanisms, but can actually be pursued simultaneously, particularly at the various levels of intervention—local, national, and international (Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena 2006)—allowing many nations to pursue both truth and justice simultaneously (Sikkink and Walling 2007). Scholars and practitioners increasingly call for consideration of the needs of the community affected by the violence in developing the most appropriate combination of truth and justice for each case (Minow 2008).

In Uganda, the involvement of the ICC was fraught with political controversy as the arrest warrants were released as promising peace negotiations were on-going. The tension between peace and justice is felt strongly by people in affected communities, and they particularly struggle to make sense of the direct contradiction between the ICC and the national amnesty.

The second key debate is between retributive and restorative approaches to transitional justice. Retributive justice is the ideal sought by the conventional Western-style criminal justice system, advocating punishment of perpetrators in proportion to the crimes committed. Restorative justice[3] refers to an ideological commitment to restoring the harm done to relationships between perpetrators, victims, and the larger community. For even the most staunch restorative justice advocates, there is debate about whether restorative techniques are best suited as a supplement to or replacement of a retributive model (Menkel-Meadow 2007).

Restorative justice scholarship emerged out of practice, when, starting in the 1970s, social workers, community activists, psychologists, and some legal professionals began implementing programs focused on victim-offender mediation. A newer, smaller body of work argues that restorative justice is relevant for war crimes, political crimes, and various other forms of international violence, too (Braithwaite 2002). Restorative justice typically underlies truth commissions (Avruch and Vejarano 2001; Hayner 2001; Llewellyn and Howse 1999; Minow 1998; Tutu 1999), but has also played a key role in traditional or indigenous practices adapted for use in post-conflict situations (Avruch and

[3] Restorative justice practices have a long history, dating back to ancient legal codes in many societies (Braithwaite 2002; Van Ness 1993); for the sake of brevity, I discuss more recent applications here.

Vejarano 2001; Bolocan 2004; Honeyman et al. 2004). Restorative justice may be particularly relevant for communities dealing with widespread violence because it is forward-looking, concerned with rebuilding relationships and empowering affected communities (Gibson 2004; Menkel-Meadow 2007), thus involving a range of people affected by the conflict. It is empowering in taking the power to control how conflict is addressed out of the hands of the state and giving it to those actually affected by the conflict (Christie 1977), but it does assume there is a coherent community that can be repaired, and there is a danger that it may empower unequally. Restorative justice puts faith in human capabilities to forgive and transform what was broken by the conflict, though critics claim that humans are not able to completely remove their vengeful motivations, and that requiring victims to be compassionate towards those who caused them harm is asking too much (Acorn 2004).

I found that the people of northern Uganda do have a broad conception of justice, seeing multiple layers and degrees of responsibility. They described a long narrative of collective victimization, for which it is not possible to adequately determine a few "most responsible." Furthermore, I found strong capacities and desires for reconciliation, as people in affected communities argued that justice can be "over-emphasized." This put them in direct contradiction with the discourse and practices of the ICC, and I analyzed the roots and consequences of this tension.

A third and final key debate is that of international mechanisms versus local mechanisms, based on traditions[4] unique to a particular society. Practices or mechanisms that have roots in the societies where the conflict or abuse occurred have been increasingly recognized as able to make valuable contributions to holistic transitional justice (Huyse and Salter 2008). International and local justice mechanisms may pursue the same objective, but employ different means. In recent years, there has been increased focus on both levels, with the formation of the ICC and the increasing utilization of tradition-based approaches in places like Rwanda and Uganda. International mechanisms are typically characterized as formal, rational-legalistic strategies initiated and controlled by state institutions or inter-governmental organizations (exemplified by the ICC), while local mechanisms are informal, ritualistic-communal strategies initiated and controlled by the community (Huyse 2008).

Traditional justice mechanisms often use a different type of rationality than the logic of a criminal law system. In a trial, for example, the verdict is either "guilty" or "not guilty," and there are clear rules established to reach this outcome. In violent conflicts, however, there are often more gray areas in which guilt and innocence are mixed in a broader social historical narrative (Huyse 2008; Jardim 2012; Pendas 2006). This is particularly the case in situations like northern Uganda, where abuses have been perpetuated by both sides of the conflict, where there is a long history of events leading

[4] Thinking critically about terminology is necessary here. Huyse (2008) notes that "traditional" has Eurocentric connotations, and implies practices embedded in static political, economic, and social circumstances. Non-European "traditional" institutions, like those in any other society, are dynamic and change in response to context; particularly, they have been shaped by experiences of colonialism, modernization, and civil wars, so how appropriate is the "traditional" label? We need to be sensitive to think about "traditional" practices in a non-ethnocentric way. Despite these challenges, it is difficult to determine an alternative, more appropriate term. At times, I use the term "local" to refer to these practices.

to the current conflict, and, especially, where many of the perpetrators have been victims of abuse themselves. Furthermore, the communal nature of traditional justice mechanisms allows for both guilt and victimhood to be seen as collective (Huyse 2008), an idea which is reflected in the Acholi culture of northern Uganda.

Local mechanisms are often equated with restorative justice in academic and NGO circles, while international mechanisms are seen as retributive. While local mechanisms are often concerned with restoring community relationships, there are also retributive elements in many local systems, without which a society may find it difficult to maintain public confidence in its social values. While retribution can be an important element in local justice, it is often different than the retribution found in a state courtroom. For example, judgments may be reached by a group of collaborating leaders, after extensive discussion, and the retribution is often linked to other social controls, such as compensation and reconciliation (Hovil and Quinn 2005). Retribution is also usually a final effort to resolve the conflict, after other methods (such as mediation) fail.

Human Rights and International Criminal Law

Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in the wake of the atrocities of World War II, the conception of "human rights" has continued to gain traction in international and domestic arenas. As corresponding developments, international criminal law and non-state advocacy actors (particularly INGOs) have developed to protect the new conception of human rights.

Human rights and transitional justice are comfortable bedfellows, with their goals, discourses, and institutions overlapping and mutually reinforcing. Transitional justice efforts are most often framed and evaluated in terms of their ability to promote and protect human rights. Both human rights and transitional justice heavily rely on legal discourses to justify and standardize their goals across multiple contexts, and legal institutions are often the tools used both by proponents of transitional justice and human rights advocates. The rise of international criminal courts or tribunals, such as the ICTY, ICTR, and the ICC, represent for many the culmination of both transitional justice and human rights efforts in the 20th century. Human rights discourse is used as justification for transitional justice, and gave rise to the development of transitional justice mechanisms.

The global emergence of human rights also is intimately related to the rise to prominence of INGOs. As relatively recent global actors, INGOs have developed in part to support the enforcement of international human rights norms and protect and advocate for the human rights of individuals and communities. INGOs have become influential, in part because of their effective networking abilities [see Keck and Sikkink's (1998) description of transnational advocacy networks (TANs)] and also because they are often seen as moral agents, driven by values (Clark 2001; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Willetts 1996), which increases their perceived legitimacy. The big INGOs now have influence in the U.N. system (Willetts 1996), in helping shape international law (Clark 2001), and in holding states accountable to human rights commitments and abuses (Cohen 2001; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998).

INGOs have become powerful actors in northern Uganda, both during the war and in the post-war period. In many ways, INGOs are more tangibly present in local communities than the Ugandan state, with programs addressing education, agricultural activities, gender-based violence, reintegration of amnesty recipients, infrastructure development, trauma counseling, and everything in between. Many of these programs explicitly or implicitly draw upon a human rights framework. Their interventions have significant consequences in the lives of residents, not only in terms of the intended results of their programs, but also in unintended consequences that shape local social relationships, institutions, and organization.

Human rights is a global discourse, often perceived as able to transcend variance in context and appeal broadly to the human experience. Somers and Roberts (2008) call for sociology to take human rights seriously, because "human rights have now become the lingua franca of global politics" (390) and human rights discourse is utilized extensively and effectively by poor and oppressed people in their struggle for justice (Freeman 2002). However, as human rights principles and related transitional justice mechanisms gain clout internationally, there is no guarantee that they will be translated into local contexts effectively (Merry 2006). Certainly, many critics have argued that human rights are essentially Western ideology, that do not account for the variance of beliefs, values, and practices of cultures around the world, with some claiming universal human rights are a guise for cultural imperialism (see discussion in Freeman 2002). Some argue that the overly legal approach of many human rights advocates can actually obscure an appreciation for unique ways of dealing with human rights abuses that emerge

from various cultural traditions, thus putting distance between human rights advocates in the global North and the very people they desire to help (Meyerstein 2007).

Merry (2006) offered one way forward. She argued that culture (not as immutable, but as a historical product of contestation and change) and political dynamics must be taken into account, but that the core principles of human rights law (such as individualism, autonomy, and equality) must survive the translation or "vernacularization" process. My research contributes a nuanced analysis of the process of translating the global human rights discourse—as promoted by the ICC—into a local discourse about justice and accountability.

Post-Conflict Community Reconciliation

This section discusses scholarship that is closely linked to transitional justice, but more consciously focused on social rebuilding processes in local communities. As transitional justice mechanisms are implemented to help deal with past atrocities, how do ordinary people begin to live beside one another again?

Although there is no widely accepted—or empirically validated (Biro et al. 2004)—definition of "reconciliation," there are a number of useful conceptualizations. Most importantly, that reconciliation is a process, rather than a static state, and that reconciliation includes a vision of a collective future. Daly and Sarkin-Hughes (2007) argue it is about figuring out a way to effectively deal with the past, which will be necessarily tailored to each case, taking into account the nature of the abuses, the transition, and the cultural particularities of the post-transition society. Reconciliation

uses a forward-looking orientation to deal with the past, in order to promote a new vision of life together. Longman et al. (2004) define reconciliation as a process of developing a shared vision of the future, establishing social ties, promoting rights, rule of law, and tolerance, and adopting non-violent conflict management.

Reconciliation involves deep processes that promote unity, beyond coexistence or cohabitation. Ingelaere (2008) describes a difference between thin and thick reconciliation. Whereas thin reconciliation refers to living beside one another out of necessity, thick reconciliation refers to interpersonal healing and meaningful social connections. Stover and Weinstein (2004) conceptualize "social reconstruction" or "reclamation" (as more broad than reconciliation) as a process that incorporates identity, culture, memory, and history, and that "reaffirms and develops a society and its institutions based on shared values and human rights" (Stover and Weinstein 2004:5). Building community after widespread societal violence is a complex social process of repair and there are middle stages in this process in which people are living together without violence, yet without a deeper peace and stability.

Two books were particularly useful in developing my thinking about post-conflict reconciliation. First, Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin-Hughes (2007) urge an analytical framework that considers: context (what is unique about Uganda?), multiple levels (what's happening at the interpersonal, community, national, and international levels?), process (how has this particular transition occurred?), agents and mechanisms of change (who or what brings stability?), conceptual relationships (how are truth, justice, and forgiveness related?), and social structure (how do the political and economic systems

matter?). A central dynamic, highlighted by Daly and Sarkin-Hughes and which motivated my research, is how to transfer the "peace" or fragile coexistence, often decided by elites, to the level of actual neighbors who must then live together and form community. Daly and Sarkin-Hughes suggest the importance of rituals, indirect reconciliation projects (such as building houses), more direct reconciliation efforts, dealing with perpetrators, responding to displaced people, demilitarization, reintegration, and creating a new history or meta-narrative.

Second, Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (2004) edited a volume of interdisciplinary studies about post-conflict social reconstruction "from the ground up" in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, with several particularly relevant findings. First, that post-war reconstruction involves a fundamental redefinition of both physical and social space. Corkalo et al. (2004) found that, rather than going back to "the way it was before," people formed a new "normal," with different customs, manners, livelihoods, cultural activities, language, social norms, and even different demographic structures to the community. Second, that daily social contact matters. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, Biro et al. (2004) found support for a contact hypothesis, that positive daily experiences and friendships with members of opposing groups are associated with survivors being ready and willing to reconcile. Finally, social identity formation is an essential process. Weinstein and Stover (2004) argue that an analysis of reconciliation needs to explore how individual identity is shaped by group processes, creating a sense of individual self in context. Identities that unify groups are based on a common view of history, a shared memory. In this way, identity and memory are reciprocal, each

influencing the other, and an analysis that accounts explicitly for both will go far in understanding reconciliation after violent conflict.

I conceptualized reconciliation as a forward-looking process of social reconstruction, with the process being generally "complete" when people exist with a sense of community, based on relationships of interdependence that cross social boundaries, in an environment where social justice is valued, and conflicts are resolved non-violently (Longman et al. 2004). This small area of scholarship made two contributions that were essential to my project. One, it emphasizes that the post-war reconstruction period is a transition, and there is a fragile and temporary middle stage where people live together but do not yet have a deeper sense of community. Second, it implicitly points to needed contributions from sociologists, who are equipped with tools to help understand processes of identity construction, group interactions, and the development of social solidarity. The next section considers these areas.

Unity and Collective Identity

After opening this chapter with explanations of the development of violence and a discussion of how violence can be addressed, I now turn to the contrasting processes of bringing people together in a community. Throughout, I am interested in cultural dynamics and explanations, taking seriously the task of understanding ways of life in post-war communities, including ways of thinking, acting, making meaning, and relating to the broader environment. After atrocity, people must engage in redefining the foundation of their communal life, and questions of solidarity become essential. What

will hold people together and help them develop a sense of belonging? What types of boundaries emerge to define the identity of the community? How do group interactions contribute to solidarity, and also to tensions? These are questions that sociology has been addressing since its inception as a discipline, and can be a real contribution from the discipline to the field of transitional justice. My research revealed responses to these questions. For example, I found that culture, as rooted in shared traditional practices, matters significantly for collective identity. Communal work was also essential in building trust and interdependence. I identify new types of boundaries arising in the post-war context, as newly formed small groups increase belonging, but also exclusion. People were also contesting the symbolic boundaries of their community in new ways, through disputes over land rights. This section introduces key concepts and theoretical frameworks on solidarity, boundaries, group interaction, and collective memory.

The Basis of Solidarity

Beginning with Durkheim and continuing through contemporary theory (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005), the primary distinction in types of social solidarity is between "thick" solidarity based on shared substantive values and "thin" solidarity based on shared rules or norms.

Thick, mechanical solidarity is rooted in similarity, shared substantive bonds, practices, and commitments. People are held together by moral ties, reinforced by shared values and understanding; these states of consciousness are sacred and deeply held. When the collective consciousness is injured, there are sanctions in place to re-assert that the

collective consciousness still exists (the government, then, becomes the protector of this collective consciousness). Durkheim was concerned that mechanical solidarity was declining under modernity, but there are also other challenges to collective consciousness. A period of mass violence and war is an assault to the collective consciousness, as deeply held shared values are violated and communal social practices are damaged; this is a key finding of my research, elaborated in Chapter Five.

Organic solidarity, on the other hand, is based on the interdependencies that arise from difference (for Durkheim, from the advanced division of labor). Organic solidarity depends upon individual consciousness and specialization. Durkheim argues that, with organic solidarity, the individual is not linked directly to society, but depends on society because s/he depends on its parts. Respecting the rights of others means that the individual may have to limit his or her own, which is only possible in a "spirit of understanding and harmony" (Durkheim 2008[1933]:76). With this type of "thin" solidarity, conflict and disputes actually contribute to solidarity. Conflicts create relationships, increase participation in society, and highlight the need for rules to govern social life (Osiel 1997; Simmel 1971). This type of solidarity allows individuals or groups to have different values or practices, as long as everyone is committed to cooperation and following the same rules and procedures.

After a society undergoes collective trauma, it is plausible to imagine either type (or both types) being the primary basis of solidarity. On one hand, substantive or mechanical solidarity seems more likely. States, communities, and other actors pursue actions explicitly designed to foster reconciliation and reconstruct a shared vision of the

future and sense of collective identity, and any cultivation of difference is often avoided (or forbidden, as in post-genocide Rwanda). This is often a goal of reconciliatory or restorative justice mechanisms. In this scenario, people are able to move beyond a painful past by re-affirming what holds them together at the deepest level. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that procedural or organic solidarity would be the primary form that emerges after widespread violence and abuse. Efforts to reinstate rule of law and promote strong institutions (legal, political, and others) to govern society peacefully are often a primary focus in times of transition. Perhaps in these cases, there is an even stronger recognition that differences do exist in society and, while it may not be possible or desirable to erase such divisions, it is essential to have commonly agreed upon ways to govern interactions and resolve disputes. Of course, it is also possible that post-conflict societies have both types of solidarity occurring simultaneously. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been this type of assessment conducted in post-conflict societies.

Defining Boundaries

In addition to thinking about the basis of cohesion in post-conflict societies, I also consider how boundaries define social groups. A primary distinction in this literature is between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions between groups, used to categorize and create a sense of "groupness." Social boundaries, on the other hand, are objectified social differences which lead to

discrepancies in who is able to access resources and opportunities. Symbolic boundaries may be used to create, enforce, or legitimate social boundaries, they can also be used to contest social boundaries, or they may even come to replace social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

Boundaries serve to enhance collective identity, but they can create or reinforce inequality at the same time (Bourdieu 1984). Symbolic boundaries become very important as groups work to define their social identity, in relation to other groups, and develop a conception of who "we" are, compared to who "they" are. While some elements of this social identity are clearly beneficial, it can be potentially harmful to other groups if who "we" are is in some way superior to "them," and this notion is reinforced by the groups' respective social positions. Additionally, internal boundaries may exist in communities that can create symbolic or real divisions between people (for examples, see Anderson 1999; Becker 1999; Erikson 1966).

In the post-conflict context, what types of boundaries are formed? How do the boundaries that existed prior to the conflict carry over or become modified in the post-conflict society? Does drawing boundaries provide a critical function of helping to develop a mindset of community? Or does it foster animosity between groups? I found there are new boundaries in resettled communities, as small groups now are a location of unity that did not exist before the war. I also found new boundaries between generations, in their value systems, skill sets, and conceptions of communal life. In a setting where violence may be re-ignited by sparks of tension, questions of group boundaries and relationships hold real urgency; they played a key role in my analysis.

Group Interaction

Sociologists are centrally concerned with how people interact with one another, contributing insights that aid in understanding the post-war context. Many of these interactions take place in social groups, which provide a key meso-level of analysis that can link individuals into broader social structures, and, reciprocally, help social structures influence individuals. Thus, groups are key sites for examining social interactions and developing a "local sociology," in which an analysis of local interactions leads to an understanding of interactions and meanings throughout society more broadly (Fine 2012).

There are several key components to social groups: collective identity, shared history and culture, common spaces, and ongoing social relationships (Fine 2012). The village fieldsites in this study constitute large social groups in that they have common experiences and occupy one particular physical space. As I show in the following chapters, their sense of collective identity, their culture, and their social interactions have been in a state of flux in the post-war period. Despite this, I argue that rural villages still represent a social group, albeit one that is in the process of redefinition and sometimes in crisis. Additionally, there are smaller groups in each community, such as members of churches, participants in farming projects, associations of business owners, members of savings and credit groups, and so on.

Groups are key to the development of individuals as social beings. Through group membership, individuals foster an identity beyond "me," instead incorporating "we," the collective identity of the group (Burke and Stets 2009). Individuals continually engage in

a process of comparing themselves to the others in their social group, and as they develop a willingness and desire to embrace the culture and commitments of the group, they begin to create a social identity in reference to their group membership (Hogg et al. 2004; Riley and Burke 1995). Groups also are a primary source of social capital for members, as the community of the group provides resources to help people achieve their goals and also provides a sense of attachment, fulfillment, and satisfaction (Brint 2001; Chaves 2009; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009; Lim and Putnam 2010; Putnam 2001).

Many of the processes discussed in the dissertation—creating group solidarity, defining social boundaries, constructing collective memory, post-conflict reconciliation—are based on the mobilization of culture in everyday interactions. Groups are a key mechanism in this process, as groups are not content-free forms (Fine 2012), but rather operate with a shared group culture and style (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Ignatow 2004) that creates boundaries of who is in and who is out of the group. Groups operate in the context of their collective histories and develop meanings and expectations based on members' shared experiences and ways of understanding the world (Fine 2010; Mechling 2004). The knowledge and histories shared by group members shapes their interactions, which in turn contribute to the continually evolving construction of group knowledge and history.

Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) provide a useful framework to think about what is shared by group members. First, members of a group make sense of their world using collective representations, which are Durkheim's concept of symbols that are based in the shared history and collective experiences of the group; through collective representations,

the group creates meanings that are shared by members. Second, groups develop a particular style, or tangible patterns of interactions that are acceptable to the group; Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003) argue that group style filters collective representations. Group style does not come from individual actors, but is a property of specific social settings and varies according to context. Group style is comprised of boundaries that provide a sense of identity and set it apart from other groups, bonds that form the basis of cohesion and establish obligations between members, and norms for members' speech and actions. The cultural symbols used to make meaning in society more broadly—the collective representations—are interpreted in the context of the particular group style. It is through the boundaries, bonds, and norms that are unique to each group that "the same widely shared symbols, stories, vocabularies, or codes make different meanings in different settings" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003:782). This conceptualization helped me to make sense of the variance in the rebuilding trajectories in three different villages.

Collective Memory

Collective memory is a shared and mutually recognized knowledge of the past that is reinforced by a social group, whether a micro, community level group, national, or global community (Savelsberg and King 2007). Collective memory is made up of the "stories a society tells about momentous events in its history" (Osiel 1997:18). Collective memory provides a conceptual link between law, culture and social solidarity, and collective trauma, each discussed below.

First, law and collective memory are reciprocally related (Savelsberg and King 2007). Law is able to powerfully create and transform collective memory. One way this is done directly is through transitional justice mechanisms discussed earlier, particularly through trials, as legal prosecutions act as dramatic stages for moral storytelling and public dialogue (Osiel 1997), or truth commissions, as the "truth" is sought in order to construct an official narrative of collective history (Savelsberg and King 2007). On the other hand, collective memories also shape the law. Savelsberg and King (2007) explain how this can occur through: 1) analogical narratives that interpret current social problems in light of past trauma, which then shapes legal institutions or action; 2) consciousness of historical events, using law as a tool to deal with the past; and 3) social actors—carriers of memory—who evoke collective memory to create discourse and legal change.

Second, constructing collective memory is a cultural and relational process that can contribute to social solidarity. Collective memory is actively produced in the present, for present purposes, in a way that fits together in a particular social structure or group, such as the family or religious system (Halbwachs 1992). Collective memories are dynamic in interaction with the surrounding context, changing or being reproduced because of their instrumental value to actors, their ability to fit into the culture, and the support (or lack of support) they receive from institutions (Olick 2007). The particular collective memory that is constructed leads then to the development of common values, or collective consciousness, which in turn shapes the form of social solidarity (Osiel 1997, 2009).

Third, although collective memory is a component of all social groups, it fills a unique role for groups that have experienced a collective trauma. Memory can fuel ongoing cycles of hatred when victims long for revenge, but is also essential to integrity and bearing witness to injustice (Rosenblum 2002). Because collective memory is created and fluid, post-trauma situations require a heightened awareness of its construction process, in order to strike a sensitive balance between too much remembering and too much forgetting. Longman and Rutagengwa's (2004) analysis of how the government-prescribed narrative of history, genocide, and reconciliation in Rwanda is repeated by survivors, but also is contested in the popular narrative, illustrating "the limits of a government's ability to shape the collective memory of its citizenry" (168). Martha Minow (1998) articulates the complexities of constructing a collective memory in a way that makes sense of a traumatic past, integrating it into a more hopeful picture of the future:

> What's needed, then is not memory but remembering, not retrieval of some intact picture but instead a dynamic process of both tying together and distinguishing fragments of past and present. What's needed, paradoxically, is a process for reinterpreting what cannot be made sensible, for assembling what cannot be put together, and for separating what cannot be severed from both present and future. (Minow 1998:120)

In the communities where I conducted research, residents were actively engaged in the construction of collective memory about the past violence. Through annual memorial services on anniversaries of massacre events, documentation projects through NGOs, and work with the national museum to develop memorial sites, community residents participate in projects to explicitly create particular versions of history. In their daily lives, they also do more indirect memory work, through the narratives they tell

about the past, which, as I show in Chapter Seven, differ considerably from the dominant global narrative of the conflict in Uganda. Finally, as analysis in Chapter Five reveals, there is a generational disconnect in memories of "normal" life before war and displacement, which has problematic implications for post-war unity and trust.

This project integrates insights from sociology about the formation of unity and collective identity into the fields of transitional justice and post-conflict reconciliation, which are rarely approached from a sociological perspective. These contributions allow me to parse the basis of solidarity in post-war communities, analyze the construction of boundaries that both divide and unite, and make sense of group formation and interactions.

Conceptual Model and Research Objectives

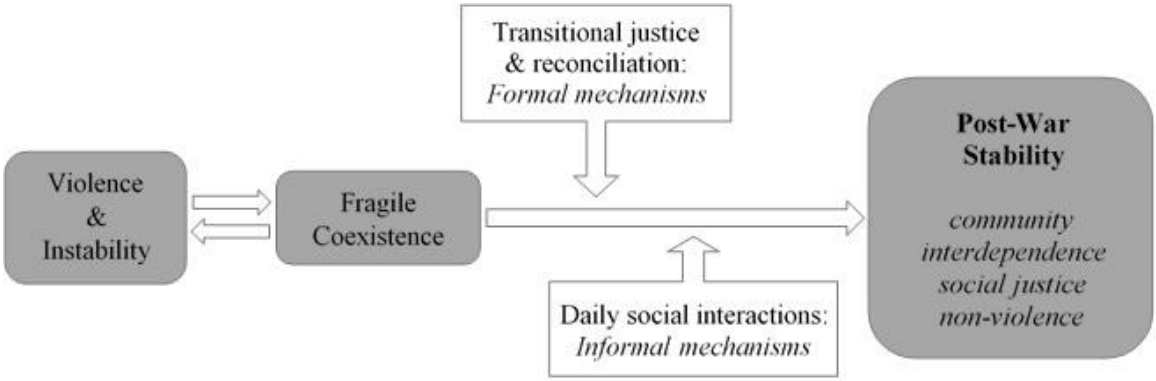
Stages of a Transition

Figure 2.1 presents my model of a post-war transition. I conceptualize three stages in a transition: violence and instability, then fragile coexistence, and finally a reconstructed post-war society, while recognizing that these stages are likely to blend into one another and are not likely to occur linearly. In this model, coexistence is a fragile or precarious temporary middle stage,[5] initiated by a tangible marker such as a ceasefire or widespread resettlement, from which the society may again devolve into renewed violence or instability. The positive alternative is for processes of social reconstruction to facilitate

[5] In some ways, coexistence may be seen as an end goal, in which people live together with tolerance, accepting differences between them. In this case, however, I am using coexistence to describe a middle stage, *en route* to a more substantive solidarity and cohesion. The key distinction here is that the middle stage is characterized by instability. People are living beside one another, but not with a deep tolerance and acceptance; instead, social relationships are fragile and precarious.

the transition from fragile coexistence to a stable reconstructed community. I have argued that much of northern Uganda is currently in the middle stage, making it particularly important to understand its future trajectory.

Figure 2.1. Model of Post-War Social Reconstruction



To operationalize social stability, I relied on measures developed by Longman, Pham, and Weinstein (2004:207) to analyze reconciliation[6] eight years after genocide in Rwanda. As described in greater detail in Chapter Four, I structured my interviews with community residents and leaders to measure these four characteristics:

Community	Do individuals, social groups, and institutions "develop a shared vision and sense of collective future"?
Interdependence	Do individuals, social groups, and institutions "establish mutual ties and obligations across lines of social demarcation"?
Social Justice	Do individuals, social groups, and institutions "accept and actively promote individual rights, rule of law, tolerance of social diversity, and equality of opportunity"?
Non-Violence	Do individuals, social groups, and institutions "adopt non-violent alternatives to conflict management"?

These four characteristics conceptualize the endpoint of the process; in a "reconstructed" stable society, I expect to find a sense of community, interdependence, social justice, and

[6] Although I used the broader term "reconstruction," many authors use the term "reconciliation."

non-violence. Where Longman, Pham, and Weinstein used close-ended survey questions to assess if these characteristics were present among residents in the villages they studied, I developed open-ended questions that allow analysis of the process, exploring how these elements of reconciliation develop, if at all. (See Appendix C for the complete interview guide.)

My research addressed how communities move from instability to stability. The process of bringing people back together after conflict begins with fragile coexistence, progressing through stages of rebuilding the structures or rules necessary to live together and then to substantive reconstruction. Such a progression may include being polite to neighbors, reconstructing economic relationships, working together, developing local democratic structures, dissolving negative stereotypes, forming friendships, building a conception of "we," re-valuing cultural norms, developing trust and empathy, and, finally, re-constructing a coherent community narrative with a shared vision for the future. These are among the indicators I used to track the reconstruction process.

The process of moving from instability and fragility to stability and solidarity can be facilitated—or hindered—by two unique but interrelated processes: transitional justice initiatives and daily social interactions. First, the process of transitional justice and reconciliation is facilitated by formal mechanisms explicitly designed to help societies transition from past abuse to future peace. Formal reconciliation mechanisms in Uganda include the ICC prosecutions, the amnesty extended since 2000 to members of combatant groups, memorialization programs, and traditional rituals or ceremonies designed to

address wrongs committed. The people of northern Uganda have had varied levels of exposure to and types of experiences with each of these mechanisms.

Second, daily social interactions among ordinary people in local communities can bring a region closer to stability or can exacerbate tensions. Daily interactions involve complex negotiations of relationships, which ideally can lead to a sense of unity and collective identity. This element of the transitional process is primarily facilitated by informal mechanisms or strategies. Informal mechanisms include the ways that people navigate their everyday lives, such as the attitude they take in interacting with neighbors, how they reestablish homesteads and agricultural lands, to what degree they participate in schools or churches, what value they ascribe to social gatherings, what subjects of conversation are common or off-limits, and so on. These strategies may be stated or unstated, but are not officially prescribed or enforced. My project identified and analyzed these informal mechanisms.

In addition to these formal and informal mechanisms, I also analyzed how other key elements of social context matter. For example, land ownership structures contributed to widespread negotiations and disputes, which significantly impacted unity. Demographic shifts were also important, particularly generational changes in leadership structures and socialization of youth. The structure of the local economy was another factor, as relationships between neighbors were affected by changes in the markets for agricultural products, the environment for small business development, and so on.

Research Objectives

Fragile coexistence, brought about by a ceasefire or resettlement, may be a first step toward rebuilding, but it is a temporary stage, not an endpoint. Anger and fear from historic abuses may trigger new outbursts of violence, or, on the other hand, living beside one another may lead to processes of social reconstruction and stability. A variety of formal mechanisms, including trials, amnesty, and ceremonies, facilitate the reconciliation process. While there is a rich body of research about the strengths and weaknesses of formal mechanisms, what is less often studied is how these mechanisms actually translate into the everyday experiences of conflict survivors. Furthermore, alongside formal mechanisms, informal mechanisms facilitate processes of building social solidarity and collective identity. If formal transitional justice mechanisms are not combined with or followed by the more informal processes of social reconstruction, a community may not make the transition into the more stable stage of social reconstruction. Therefore, informal mechanisms, and how they interact with the formal mechanisms, were a primary focus of my project.

The overarching question motivating my research was: How is peace possible after war? I analyzed northern Uganda as a case study to explore the lived experiences of individuals working to construct stable communities after violent conflict. Through pursuing three interrelated areas of research, described below, my objective was to further specify the model of post-war social reconstruction introduced in this chapter.

First, I investigated if and how everyday strategies that community members develop in order to coexist also contribute to deeper reconciliation, social solidarity, and

collective identity. I analyzed the local-level social changes brought about by the war, and their impact on social interactions. I identified what informal mechanisms in resettled communities have the capacity to further the transitional process and contribute to social stability. I asked what types of solidarity are emerging in local communities, how boundaries are drawn between residents, and what types of interactions are present within and between groups. Chapter Five specifies causal mechanisms through which the experience of war and displacement impact unity.

Second, I identified potential barriers to stability that can also emerge from daily interactions and the local social context. Additionally, I advanced a micro-level analysis of the development of conflict and violence, which is a needed contribution to the more macro-focused analyses dominating much of the literature. In the face of such barriers, I questioned whether and how the reconstruction process can continue, and addressed the possibility of deteriorating into renewed animosity or violent conflict. I discussed the particular legal context and the challenges to its effective utilization as a tool to help address barriers and resolve conflicts. Chapter Six addresses land conflict, a primary barrier to the reconstruction process.

Third, I determined what role, if any, formal justice and reconciliation mechanisms play in survivors' everyday lives. I also asked how informal and formal mechanisms interact to either further or hinder social reconstruction. In this, I advanced the literature on transitional justice, which is the primary arena in which scholars engage questions directly relevant to post-conflict societies. My focus was on the salience and translation of transitional justice and human rights discourses, and on the impact of

transitional justice and human rights actors, particularly INGOs. Chapter Seven focuses on the role of the ICC in local communities.

My project analyzed post-conflict reconstruction as an everyday process of building relationships in resettled villages. I argued that analysis must include how survivors of war and mass violence experience formal reconciliation mechanisms and must also account for the informal strategies that emerge from everyday interaction when displaced people return home. My research broadens understanding of how solidarity and collective identity is reconstructed after people experience severe and widespread trauma, by integrating theoretical insights from sociology with interdisciplinary and often practitioner-oriented scholarship on post-conflict community building. Halpern and Weinstein (2004) argue that researchers need to pay attention to everyday interactions in order to understand post-war social reconstruction:

> Most work on social reconstruction in post-war societies focuses on the rule of law, state-building, community development, and conflict resolution. Further, the study of collective memory, state myths and symbols, and conceptions of social identity offer important theoretical conceptions of the factors that contribute to the break-up of states and suggest issues that must be attended to in order to restore social stability in a post-war society. However, we would argue that social reconstruction must also attend to interactions between neighbors and friends; since interethnic violence is frequently intimate and relational, repair also must function on that level. Beyond the literature on forgiveness, psychosocial treatment and community development, few authors have addressed the critical dimension of what must happen between people to lead to genuine rehumanization. (Halpern and Weinstein 2004:305)

Combining this focus on community-level interactions with the literature discussed in this review results in a promising approach that has significant traction in analyzing northern Uganda, as well as relevance for other post-war societies.

Chapter Three
Conflict and Resettlement in Northern Uganda

Alunya loyo lakwong.
The follower is more severe than the first.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the historical context of the war and displacement in northern Uganda, considering the root conditions that contributed to conflict. Additionally, I discuss the impact of the war on individuals, utilizing population-based surveys, and describe the current situation in the region. Finally, I introduce each of the three specific communities where I conducted research, offering a preliminary discussion of their compositions, histories, residents, and lifestyles.

Historical Context: War and Displacement[7]

Since 1986, the people of northern Uganda have endured war between rebel forces, now the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, and the government's Uganda Peoples' Defense Force (UPDF). Much of the sustained conflict occurred in the north central region of the country, the land of the Acholi people. Over 1.9 million people were displaced as a result of the war (Human Rights Watch 2005:2). An estimated 54,000 to 75,000 people, primarily children and youth, were abducted, forced into labor, combat, or sexual slavery (Pham and Vinck 2010:22). Although exact figures are not available, an estimated 100,000 people died in the region as a result of the violence (United Nations Security Council 2006). The LRA has been known for its extreme brutality in waging

[7] I discuss a brief history of war in northern Uganda, for a more nuanced analysis, see Finnström (2008), Allen (2006), or Rodriguez Soto (2009).

war against the people of northern Uganda; despite this, the conflict received relatively little international attention for most of its duration.

Understanding the contemporary situation in northern Uganda requires knowledge of the historical development of violence over at least the past 50 years. The ethnic or regional tensions that resulted in the contemporary LRA conflict were created by colonial era practices and by the ensuing string of post-independence regimes and civil wars, resulting in present-day divisions that undergird the war in the North. Beyond this, there are varied motivations driving the LRA, including spiritual rationales and inspirations, protestation of the current government, frustration over past abuses, and the perceived cooperation of Acholi civilian communities with Museveni's government. Attributing accountability for harms that occurred during the war is also extremely complex because of the nature of the abuses: many of the LRA combatants are formerly abducted children, resulting in a blurry line between victim and perpetrator.

In this section I sketch with broad strokes the history of violence in northern Uganda, often as recounted by local residents. Much of this material complicates the often simplified and de-politicized version of a conflict between an irrational and violent rebel group and a government trying to protect the civilian population. Rather, when I talked to people about history of "the war," they had a much more complex picture of the violence they have experienced. The overarching point most frequently emphasized to me was that people have actually undergone a longer period of suffering than most historical accounts allow (there was not one clearly defined "war"), with many different, interrelated instances of violence and victimization. A leader in one community where I

conducted research had been working to write his own history of the community, because he said the elders were upset by the "shallow" accounts presented in a recent NGO documentation project, arguing that such historical accounts do not reflect the real suffering of people. Understanding these historical experiences is essential to make sense of how people situate their contemporary lives in a longer historical narrative of suffering.

In this section, I privilege local accounts of the violence and war. In some ways, this differs from other external accounts of the war, namely in the degree of blame placed on the Government and in seeing some root (though perhaps long-ago lost) justification for the LRA's emergence and actions. I recount this local telling of history because residents' view of history is what colors their present day interactions. Taking seriously local collective memory of violence as a series of multiple victimizations at the hands of multiple perpetrators helps develop an understanding of how people approach the transitional process and justice mechanisms like the ICC.

Early Years of the War: Domestic Battles

People described violence beginning in 1971 in the area where I conducted research. Idi Amin overthrew President Milton Obote and began a systematic purge of Obote's supporters. This period, I was told by older community members, was when "disorganization" began in their communities, as disappearances and political murders were common. In 1979, with the help of the Tanzanian army, Amin was overthrown and his army fled north to Sudan, using the Gulu-Patiko Road, which is the main road that

goes through two of the fieldsites. At this time, the area became quite dangerous and the population living along the roadsides fled inland.

Beginning in 1980, there was a war in the central region of the country (the Luwero Triangle) between a rebel group led by Yoweri Museveni and the government forces. In 1986, Uganda's then president Tito Okello was overthrown militarily by Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA).[8] Okello was from the northern Acholi ethnic group and his military was also primarily Acholi, so the Acholi people feared retribution when Museveni seized power. Okello's forces fled to Sudan, on the same route Amin's army had followed, again leaving civilian deaths in their wake. The NRA occupied the north, punishing the Acholi people collectively for the brutality of the Luwero war. People recounted to me how Museveni's forces came and demolished everything, burning homes, poisoning crops, and committing atrocities in the name of revenge.

In Sudan, Okello's soldiers and new recruits regrouped and formed the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), known locally as *Cilil*, meaning "go and report our presence." As they fought to overthrown Museveni's government, they also looted property, killed people accused of collaborating with the government, and forcefully recruited youth into their ranks. While they still did benefit from popular support, they met limited military success, and eventually signed a peace accord in 1988. People told me how, during this era, there were abuses committed against civilians by both sides, and

[8] Museveni's own book, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, presents a detailed account of the political history leading up to this event (Museveni 1997).

people actually had a hard time differentiating which group was harming them, so they began to fear all soldiers and adopt a mentality of running away from anyone.

This fear fed into popular insurgencies. Alice Lakwena, claiming to have received spiritual power, formed the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) to unite those opposing Museveni's LRA (Behrend 1999). While people still talk of the strong spiritual power of this movement, they struggled militarily, believing in spiritual protection during warfare. Alice was from the area where I conducted research, and nearly every day I traveled past the land where she is now buried. Joseph Kony succeeded Alice in 1987 as the leader of a new movement. Kony similarly claimed spiritual power, and some people told me that his movement was originally a group devoted to prayer and spirituality. I talked with people who were part of this original prayer movement. They told me that Museveni thought Kony's group was a rebel movement, so they began chasing them. People joined Kony, but were increasingly afraid. As they struggled with starvation, they resorted to stealing food, which increased fear of their group. Kony arranged peace talks at the home of a local resident, but Museveni's troops ambushed the gathering; this finally turned Kony to military action. People supported the rebel movement, now called the Lord's Resistance Army, because they were so fearful of the violence committed by the government soldiers.

The guerilla rebel group received at least passive support from the Acholi people because its primary tactic was to expose the new government's weakness and inability (or unwillingness) to protect or provide for the people in the North. Unfortunately, the way the LRA often revealed the government's weakness was to attack civilians and they

adopted increasingly violent tactics. Some people told me that the government troops would also commit atrocities, masquerading as rebels, to sway public opinion against the LRA. In 1991, there was a failed military operation in which the government armed the civilian population, which served to further anger and radicalize Kony. At this point, the general population began to distrust both the government and the LRA. In the mid-1990s, the government created and armed Local Defense Units (LDUs) to protect against Kony. Throughout the 1990s there were several peace process initiatives, some more promising than others, but all were ultimately undermined because of mistrust and strained relationships, such as ultimatums given by the government or allegations that the LRA was cooperating with Sudan (Rodriguez Soto 2009).

This longer history of the war is often over-simplified or omitted by the news media, NGOs, activists, or policymakers. A more complex historical narrative, however, provides greater context and introduces nuance in the origin story of the LRA war, which is often discussed without the perspective provided by these earlier events. Research participants, however, describe this period vividly and contribute unique insights and details, some of which have become deeply embedded in their collective memory of the war. Of course, it is important to bear in mind the constructed nature of collective memory and to recognize that it develops particularities that fit the time, place, and purposes of its creation.

Later Years: Transnational Conflict and International Attention

The international dimension of the conflict continued to increase in the late 1990s. The LRA developed bases in Sudan, with the knowledge of—and allegedly support from—the Sudanese government (this was perhaps in response to the supposed support from the Ugandan government to the Sudanese rebel group, the SPLA). As the LRA perceived the civilian population was cooperating with the Ugandan government, mutilations and abductions increased. With their ranks by then swollen with abducted children and youth, any government offensive against the LRA was increasingly seen as attacking victims. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, the Sudanese government began to back off, the border tensions eased somewhat, and each official government began decreasing proxy support to the other's rebel force. Some resettlement began.

In 2002, with Ugandan soldiers returning from the Second Congolese War, Museveni (whose army was by then called the Ugandan People's Defense Force [UPDF]) went on the offensive against the LRA with Operation Iron Fist. This again intensified LRA attacks in Uganda, this time spreading out past Acholi areas into other districts in the eastern part of the country. International attention to the conflict increased in 2003 with the involvement of the newly created International Criminal Court (ICC), which may have slowed LRA activity somewhat. In 2005, the LRA headed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By July 2006, peace talks commenced in Juba, mediated by Southern Sudan, resulting in a ceasefire declared in September. In 2007, displaced people began to transfer from IDP camps into "transit camps" and then to transition back to their villages.

The peace talks hit rough patches as the LRA demanded amnesty from ICC prosecutions, but resumed again with UN support in May 2007. In November of that year, the LRA even sent delegates to Kampala and expressed a commitment to establishing peace. LRA leaders, however, became increasingly reluctant to continue negotiations while facing the prospect of criminal prosecution in an international court. The Government of Uganda promised to pursue revocation of the ICC indictments after reaching a comprehensive peace agreement, but the LRA demanded stronger assurances. In June 2008, reports surfaced of the LRA obtaining weapons and soldiers. Uganda, Southern Sudan, and Congo agreed to band together and attack LRA bases in the Congo in December 2008, which again resulted in LRA reprisals. Not surprisingly, peace negotiations, at this point, were hampered. At the beginning of 2009, another military offensive (now U.S.-backed), Operation Lightning Thunder, against the LRA in the Congo again resulted in brutal reprisals against Congolese civilians.

Characteristics of the Conflict

A defining element of the war in northern Uganda was the use of the bodies of civilians as the battleground of the conflict. As international attention to the situation grew, news sources and NGOs published articles and reports with graphic pictures showing men, women, and children with lips, noses, arms, and legs chopped off. Mutilations were widespread. The LRA became infamous for its extreme brutality against residents of the region, as a key LRA tactic was to attack civilians to reveal the Museveni government's inability or unwillingness to protect the Acholi people.

Another key characteristic of this conflict is that human rights abuses against civilians were perpetrated by both sides. The LRA has often been vilified by international media, policy makers, NGOs, and publics to such an extent that the war appears as a rebellion by a vicious and senseless rogue militia (with most of the blame placed on one man, Kony), with the Government of Uganda trying their best to protect people from the rebel group. However, while the LRA has certainly been guilty of egregious violations of human rights, this war was not one-sided. Government troops, the UPDF, also committed atrocities, including indiscriminate killings, rapes, beatings, and torture (Human Rights Watch 2005). Research participants were quick to point this out, in addition to their suffering at the hand of the LRA.

Massive displacement of the population began around 1996 in Gulu District; by 2002, virtually all the rural population in Gulu, and surrounding areas of Lango and Teso, were displaced. Some argue that the displacement of the population was itself a violation of human rights perpetrated by the Government. Rather than a humanitarian necessity to protect the lives of residents or a voluntary movement of people seeking safety, the displacement was a forced, deliberate strategy of war, with some research respondents also perceiving it as a strategy for the government to take their land. With the rural areas emptied, the government would be able to more easily identify rebel combatants, and, thus, anyone who resisted leaving their land was labeled a collaborator and treated as such. The displacement was also designed to reduce the contact that abductees were able to maintain with their family members and to remove the livelihood support for the LRA, as they depended on food, water, and other supplies from rural homesteads. Residents

were not allowed to move outside of a carefully controlled area around the camps, under threat of violence from the Ugandan military (Nibbe 2012).

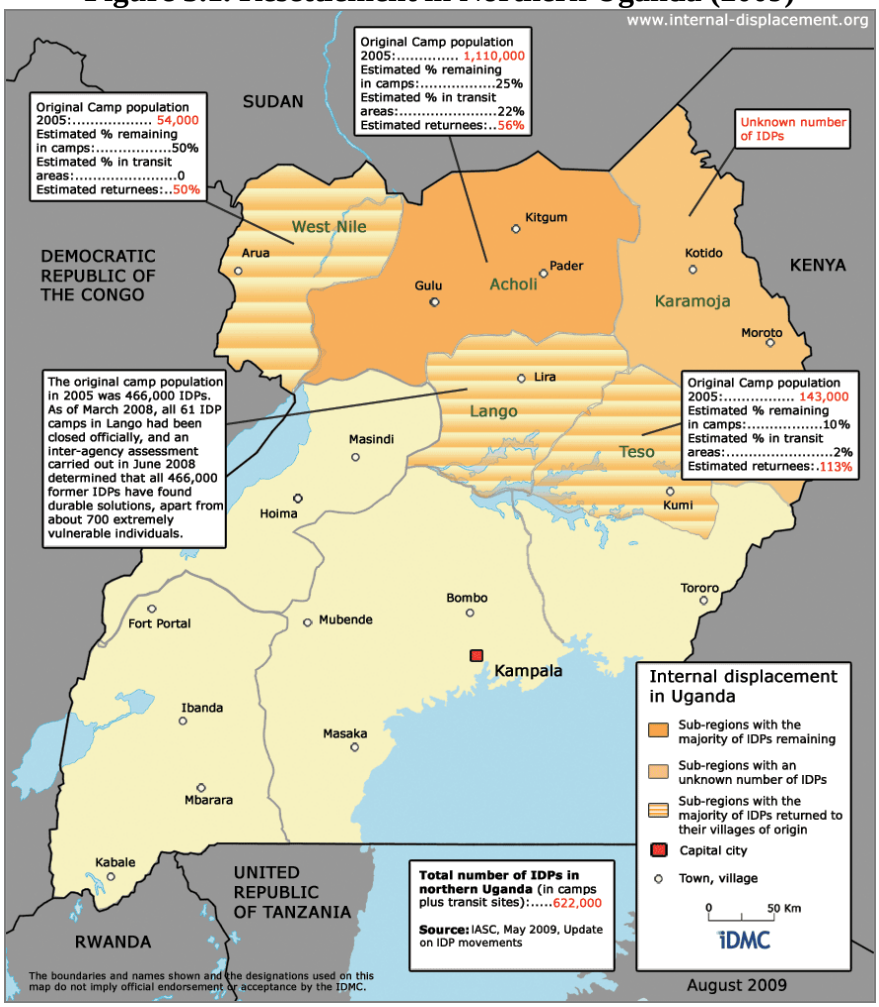
Additionally, rather than being places of protection, the "protected camps" were generally uncoordinated and lacked many basic amenities. The situation deteriorated over time, eventually resulting in a severe humanitarian emergency, in which more people died from the poor conditions in the camps (IRINnews 2005) than did from violent altercations with military forces. Security was also a major problem in camps, as UPDF troops perpetrated violence against residents, and also did not, in many cases, actually fulfill the role of "protector." Military barracks were located in the center of camps, with civilians' homes surrounding them (Nibbe 2012; OCHA 2004); in one of my fieldsites, when the camp was under attack by the LRA, the government soldiers fled, resulting in a massacre of over 70 people (Justice and Reconciliation Project 2011). Respondents described the period from 2000 to 2006 as extremely dangerous; in the areas where I conducted research, it generally was not possible to travel on the roads between villages during this time.

Resettlement in Northern Uganda

As discussed above, in the mid-2000s, the ICC arrest warrants, peace negotiations, and military offensives all contributed to pushing the LRA from northern Uganda. Around 2007, the first IDP camps began to close and some people started moving to smaller "transit camps" or "resettlement sites" closer to their original homelands. In the following years, people slowly began returning to their land. For most, this first involved staying in

the camps and commuting to their land to begin planting crops and rebuilding homes, then eventually moving back to their land. People told me that they returned home to find nothing, except for landmines and skeletons. In the area of Gulu District where I conducted research, many people finally moved back home in 2009 or 2010. As the map below illustrates, by 2009, about half of the displaced population in the Acholi region (which includes Gulu District) had returned to their home communities, while half remained displaced. By 2011, some people still were not back home yet, particularly people without the means to rebuild original homesteads, such as elderly people or physically disabled people. By the beginning of 2012, most of the population had returned and the UNHCR closed its Gulu office (UNHCR 2012). At the time of my research in 2011, resettlement was still a very recent (or even on-going) experience.

Figure 3.1. Resettlement in Northern Uganda (2009)



In the past 15 years or so, there has been a massive influx of INGOs to the region. In contrast to the early years of the conflict, when the situation in northern Uganda was not on the radar of much of the international community, later years of the conflict saw a rush of international organizations into the area. When people were forced into the camps beginning in the late 1990s, the population became dependent on humanitarian food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) and other relief agencies. In the post-conflict period, even more organizations flooded into the region with missions to help rebuild communities. There were organizations focused on physical rebuilding of infrastructure

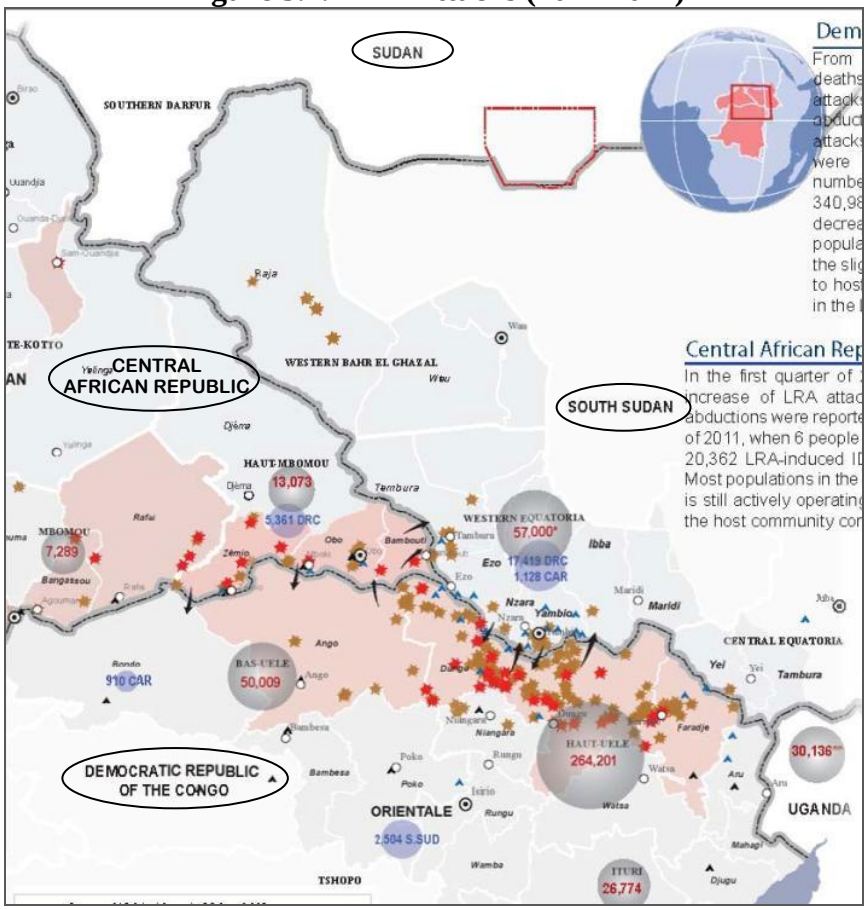
(schools, health centres, roads), individual psychosocial support (trauma counseling), reintegration of returnees, agricultural development (providing seeds and farming tools), and human rights programs (often, focused in gender-based violence and children's rights). Many of these programs were relatively short-lived, and by the time I was conducting research in 2011 and 2012, a significant subset of these organizations had closed their programs in northern Uganda and shifted their attention elsewhere. The government also launched the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) in 2008 (Republic of Uganda 2007). The PRDF is a framework to coordinate government programs and NGO activities towards the goals of consolidating state authority, rebuilding communities, revitalizing the regional economy, and promoting reconciliation (Beyond Juba 2008).

International and national actors have taken formal steps to facilitate justice and reconciliation, resulting in a unique combination of international, national, and local transitional justice mechanisms. As mentioned above, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for top LRA commanders, though all the indicted remain at large. There have also been recent attempts to bring some other top commanders before the national war crimes court. The government of Uganda has extended amnesty to combatants, in exchange for giving up arms and returning to their homes. There have also been significant efforts, promoted by INGOs and local cultural and religious leaders, to use ceremonies and rituals based in cultural traditions of the region to facilitate reconciliation, cleansing, and reintegration of ex-combatants back into communities. NGOs have also developed memorialization initiatives, such as museums or memorial

sites, memorial prayer days, and documentation projects. Some of these transitional justice mechanisms are discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

People in northern Uganda have returned to their homes and turned their attention to transitional justice and rebuilding, but the LRA continues to operate in neighboring countries. Since leaving Uganda, LRA activity has been focused along the border region of Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Central African Republic, contributing to ongoing long-term instability in the region. Figure 3.2 shows the location of LRA attacks in 2011 and the first months of 2012.[9]

Figure 3.2. LRA Attacks (2011-2012)



[9] This is a cropped version of a map created by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed 6 December 2012 at http://reliefweb.int/map/democratic-republic-congo/lra-regional-update-central-african-republic-dr-congo-and-south-sudan.

In 2010, President Obama signed the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act,[10] which called for aggressive and strategic U.S. support to apprehend the LRA, though it did not result in immediate action. In early 2012, international interest in apprehending Kony and bringing him before the ICC was revitalized with the internet video sensation "Kony 2012" released by Invisible Children,[11] the deployment of 100 U.S. forces to Uganda (BBC News 2011), and the creation of an African Union force of 5,000 troops on a mission to capture Kony (Kron 2012). As of the time of writing, these efforts have not resulted in locating Kony or stopping LRA activities. Because of this, many people in northern Uganda told me that they did not actually see the conflict as finished. Rather, they explained that historically there have always been cycles of instability and violence with periods of relative calm. Until Kony and the LRA are no longer fighting anywhere, many people in northern Uganda do not feel confident that the peace they are now experiencing will be long-lasting.

Until one or two years before my data collection, people were still in a period of flux and physical transition. Only recently had the majority of residents returned to their homes, which meant that relationships, interactions, and community organization were still being renegotiated on a daily basis. Additionally, conducting research in the immediate post-war period meant that NGOs, government agencies, and transitional justice initiatives were extremely active in the region. The timing of the resettlement in

[10] Full-text of S.1067 is available at http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-1067.
[11] Receiving well over a million views within a few days, the 30 minute "Kony 2012" video quickly sparked a heated debate about Invisible Children as an organization, the mobilization strategies they use, their engagement with Ugandan actors, and so on (Golden 2012). The primary strategy advocated in the video is the use of military force to apprehend Kony and bring him before the ICC.

northern Uganda provided a case in which I could explore both informal interactions and formal reconstruction efforts.

The Impact of War and Displacement

In 2005, 2007, and 2010, the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, spearheaded population-based surveys in northern Uganda. In 2005, the survey explored exposure to violence and attitudes about peace and justice in four districts (two Acholi and two non-Acholi) while the conflict was still on-going (Pham et al. 2005). In 2007, the study expanded to include eight districts (four Acholi and four non-Acholi), and surveyed residents in villages, towns, camps, and resettlement sites during the transition to peace (Pham et al. 2007). Finally, in 2010, the study focused on attitudes about justice and reconstruction in four Acholi districts (Pham and Vinck 2010). Each survey was representative of the adult population in the selected districts, and included 2,585, 2,875, and 2,498 respondents, respectively. Results from these surveys, highlighted below, illustrate the impact of the war and displacement.

The surveys found extraordinarily high levels of exposure to violence. According to the 2007 survey, in Acholi districts, 85 percent of respondents had a family member killed in the conflict. In 2005, in Gulu District specifically, over half (53 percent) of respondents reported being abducted by the LRA and 47 percent reported witnessing a family member being killed. Respondents also reported abuses specifically by the UPDF: in Acholi districts, 8 percent reported being beaten and 4 percent reported a family member killed by the UPDF. In 2010, 68 percent of respondents said that they had been

threatened with death during the conflict. In Gulu District in 2005, 10 percent of respondents reported being sexually violated. These rates are among the highest levels of exposure to violence ever formally reported in a population (Pham et al. 2005). Overall, 95 percent of respondents in 2007 self-identified as victims.

In the Acholi sub-region, 94 percent of respondents were displaced during the conflict (Pham et al. 2007). Of those living in an IDP camp at the time of the 2007 survey, only 38 percent said their quality of life in the camp was good. The war and displacement also resulted in destruction of the physical environment and residents' loss of their livelihoods. Respondents in Acholi districts in 2007 overwhelmingly reported that they had lost income (87 percent), their homes (93 percent), and productive assets (91 percent) because of the war. By the time of the 2010 survey, most respondents were in their home communities, and about 90 percent of respondents felt safe sleeping at night, going to work, and collecting water and firewood. Their biggest priorities in 2010 revolved around provision of basic needs, including food, agriculture, land, education, and healthcare. In 2010, just 44 percent of respondents thought that the peace they were experiencing was permanent.

This exposure to violence and physical destruction is important context for my research, which explores the less tangible effects of the war on social life and relationships among survivors. Understanding the history and local collective memory of the conflict also helps to contextualize respondents' present-day narratives about their communities. An overview of the last several decades reveals a long history of trauma and suffering, with many instances of violence and multiple layers of guilt, distrust, and

blame. These experiences are not, for most, distant memories, but a very real part of their lives and their interactions with people in their communities and beyond; as one man explained to me, this history reveals that the "trauma is still active" in people's daily lives. For most, this has developed into a narrative of both individual and collective victimization, as people see suffering inflicted in their lives from many fronts. Additionally, Acholi people generally and people in the particular area where I conducted research, specifically, do face collective blame and stigma for being perceived as the origin of much suffering for others in Uganda and neighboring countries. People were active participants in this history: they lost family members to violent deaths, they took up arms to join various resistance movements, they actively worked for peace negotiations, they joined the spiritual movements, and were involved in every other possible way. This history helps us make sense of the tensions and struggles of post-war social life.

Daily Life in the Villages

In this section, I introduce key elements of life at the present moment for people in rural Gulu District in Uganda, a topic that will be developed in greater detail in later chapters. As I discuss later, some of these elements of social life differ from how respondents describe life before the war; some of these cultural practices and elements of social organization are in a current state of change and redefinition.

For most people, daily life in the village revolves around working their farmland, or "digging the gardens." They wake early in the morning and go to the gardens before

the sun gets too hot. In the late morning, they come home for some tea or a small meal. Depending on the season, they may go back to the garden for a few hours. Some people dig collectively with their neighbors, others with their immediate family, and others dig alone. Other daily tasks include fetching water and transporting it back to the compound, cleaning the compound, gathering firewood, doing laundry, caring for animals, and cooking. Women do all the cooking, which is a labor-intensive process, often starting with grinding the raw food, such as millet, into flour to cook. In the afternoons, people often gather in the village trading centre, for the daily market, socializing, or drinking. The rhythms of life shift with the seasons, as the rainy season brings planting and more concerted work in the gardens. Children go to school during three terms, and stay home for month-long holidays in between each, helping their families in the gardens.

Most people earn their living by farming land and growing food to feed their family. Some grow enough to sell a small surplus locally in the village market. A few sell larger amounts outside of the village. Livestock also provides a valuable source of wealth, income, and food. Most families have chickens, some have goats, and a few have cows. As the animals reproduce, families are able to sell the offspring to cover expenses like school fees or clothing. Many families are also supported to some degree by family members who are in Gulu town or the capital city of Kampala and are able to send back small amounts of money from their work. In each village, there are also a few business people in the trading centres who run convenience shops, restaurants, mechanics shops, or drinking joints.

There are multiple layers of leadership at the village level, and two of the most central are the *rodi* and the local council (LC) system. *Rodi* (singular is *rwot*), meaning chiefs, lead various aspects of village life. At the most basic level are the *rodi kweri*, or chiefs of farming, who oversee all aspects of farming in a particular residential zone of a village. Since farming is the primary activity of life in the village, *rodi kweri* play a very influential role in everyday life. For each zone, there is also a woman designated as *rwot okoro* who assists the *rwot kweri* and is concerned especially with women's issues in farming. Governance throughout Uganda is arranged according to the LC system. The village is the lowest administrative unit, governed by a local council I (LCI). The LCI has a committee of members, but the most prominent is the LCI chairman. The LCI chairman (often just referred to as the "LC-one") is elected to five year terms, but many serve for long periods of time, recognized as important leaders in the village.

In the region where I conducted fieldwork, village residents are nearly all from the Luo ethnic group, which stretches across northern Uganda and in surrounding countries. People consider Acholi to be their tribe, and within that there are several sub-tribes in the region. At the village level, however, the greatest diversity comes from clan membership. Clan membership is determined by patrilineal descent. When a couple marries or decides to live together, the woman leaves her clan and goes to live with her husband's clan. Within a clan, all older male relatives are referred to as "father"; according to people I spoke to, this system brings relationships very close, making it impossible to ignore the issues of any family members.

Family members live together on a compound, which is a grouping of huts and gardens, set apart from neighboring compounds. The composition of a compound can vary, with some including just a husband, wife, and children, while others are much larger, including a grandfather, grandmother, their sons (with their wives), and grandchildren. A compound functions as a household unit, with family members working together to raise their children. Many families practice polygyny, with men typically having between two and five wives.

Two women sitting in a cluster of grass-thatched huts in a family compound, with a small food storage hut in the foreground.

There are clearly defined gender roles in villages, particularly in terms of daily household responsibilities. There are physical manifestations of gender differences, with women wearing only dresses or skirts, sitting on the ground while men sit on chairs, and kneeling down to greet men or serve food. There are also gender disparities in educational levels, with women disproportionately having not attended school, not being

able to read or write, and not speaking English. These gendered expectations in the village are somewhat easily transcended, however, by women who come as visitors, who have higher levels of education, or women who have leadership roles. There are increasing pushes by NGOs and the government for women's rights and girls' education, so gender roles are in a period of active flux in this region.

The features of daily life introduced here are discussed in greater depth in the following chapters. Particularly important is that daily life is oriented around agricultural activities, and thus these can be a source of unity and interdependence. On the other hand, inequality in terms of livestock, land, or other wealth has become a point of contention.

Three Communities

In this section, I discuss my selection of three communities as primary field sites for the research and introduce key distinguishing characteristics of each of the three communities.

Case Selection

After conducting informal interviews (described in Chapter Four) and consulting with research assistants and community leaders, I selected three primary field sites in which to carry out research: the villages of Lukodi, Awach, and Anyadwe (also called Ajulu or Patiko).[12] I selected Lukodi because it was the site of a well-known massacre and has

[12] I use the real names of these communities. At community gatherings where I discussed my research, I asked residents and leaders if they would like me to use the name of their village. Not only did they say, yes, I could use the name, but they felt strongly they *wanted* the name used so that people would know the stories of their specific community. Some ethnographers argue that using real names of people and places

attracted significant transitional justice attention; I selected Awach because it was particularly isolated during the conflict and has been said to have had a rocky return process; and I selected Anyadwe as what seemed to be the most "typical" experience of the war, displacement, and return.

The fieldsites are all modestly sized rural communities of a few thousand residents, located in Gulu District, within approximately 10 miles from one another (see Figure 3.3). Residents of this particular area experienced some of the most frequent and most severe violence during the conflict. All three communities were sites of IDP camps, in which displaced people congregated around the village trading centres. In each, the return process began around 2009 or 2010, and by the time of the research most people had returned to their original homesteads.

Lukodi was the site of a well-known massacre in 2004. Because of this and its proximity to Gulu, it has attracted significant attention from outside organizations and volunteers, with people in Lukodi now actively working on reconciliation and memorialization initiatives. Lukodi also has had an unusually high level of exposure to the ICC. I compared this relatively distinct case to communities with more typical experiences of the war, meaning that they experienced deaths, abductions, looting and destruction, and forced displacement, but not a single well-known event like a massacre. Anyadwe and Awach fit this description, and thus had not received the attention from transitional justice-oriented initiatives that communities such as Lukodi had received. From my conversations with research assistants and informal interviews, it seemed that

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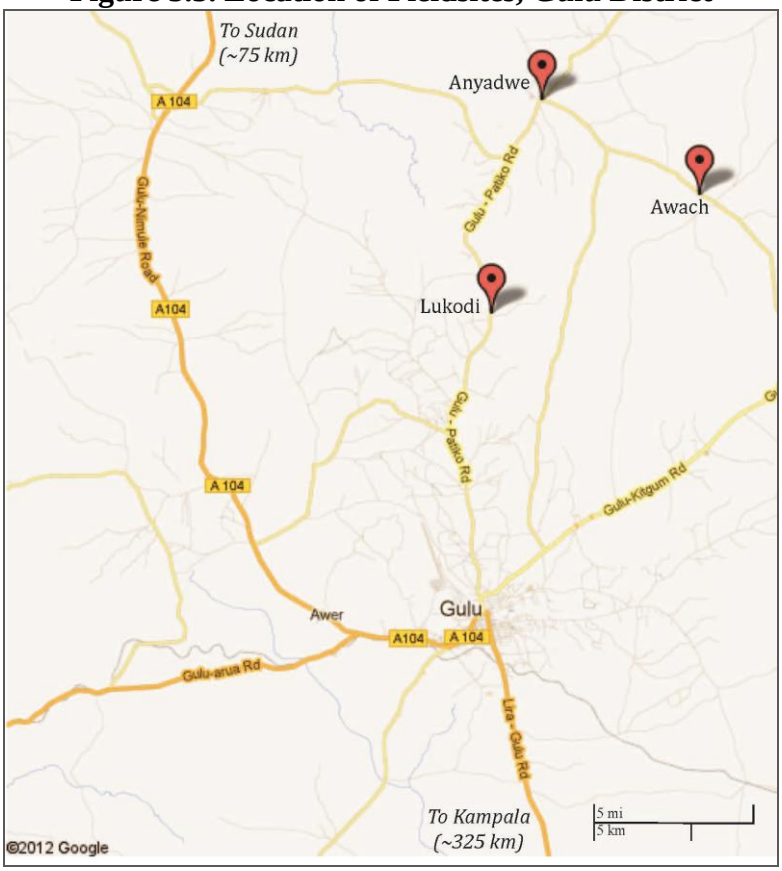
hold the researcher to higher standards of evidence and ethics (for example, Duneier 1999; Scheper-Hughes 2000)

Awach and Anyadwe represented two different types of experiences, however. During the war, Awach was effectively cut off from Gulu town and surrounding areas, and was known to be quite dangerous. That reputation continued throughout the return process, as several informants told me that people in Awach have had serious challenges and conflicts during resettlement. Anyadwe, on the other hand, was described as having had a more typical resettlement process, with fewer serious conflicts or challenges. For these reasons, I anticipated these three villages would be strong cases for comparison. [13]

[13] I did consider several other field sites. I planned to include a community called Atiak. Like Lukodi, Atiak experienced a well-known massacre in 1995, and there have been significant transitional justice initiatives (particularly memorialization efforts), but they were originally spearheaded from within the community. I attended some events in Atiak, but decided not to conduct interviews there because of logistical challenges. Atiak is located near the border of Sudan, requiring difficult and lengthy public transportation. I also considered Pabbo (a community located on the road to Sudan, south of Atiak), as an alternative to Awach, as both areas have had challenging or complicated return processes, often with conflict in the communities. Pabbo was the largest IDP camp and is still a large populated area, so narrowing down a "village" area would have been difficult. Ultimately, I decided to not include Pabbo because it is in a different district (Amuru District) from the other fieldsites, and I wanted consistency in terms of local government administration.

Figure 3.3. Location of Fieldsites, Gulu District



The three field sites, thus somewhat represent the range of experiences in the region. In subsequent chapters I develop the unique characteristics of each of these three transitional communities. The following section provides an introduction to basic distinguishing elements of Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach.

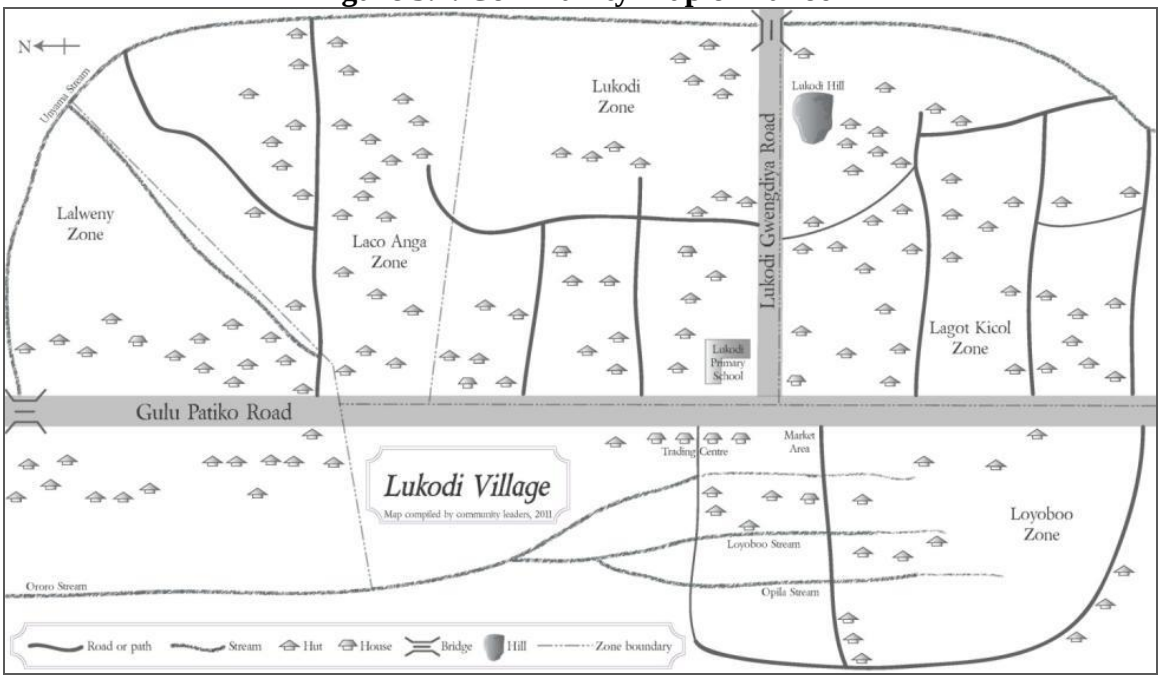
Lukodi

Lukodi is divided into five *tek kweri* (zones or sub-villages), each with between 19 to 39 compounds, for a total of 142 compounds in the village, all depicted on the map below.[14]

[14] I worked with community leaders to construct the village maps, as described in detail in the methodology discussion in Chapter Four.

During the war, Lukodi was a non-gazetted (or unrecognized) camp, which means the population received lesser protection and humanitarian aid than gazetted IDP camps (OCHA 2004). Today, Lukodi is the smallest of the three fieldsites, both in terms of the population and the size of the trading centre. The trading centre has just a few buildings hosting a handful of businesses, including two convenience stores, a drug shop, a bicycle repair shop, and a grinding mill. The daily market is held in an open area under the shade of a canopy of mango trees, with women spreading out their products on fabrics on the ground.

Figure 3.4. Community Map of Lukodi



There is one primary school in Lukodi's trading centre and a secondary school farther away on the road towards Gulu. A portion of the school grounds, separated from the community with a tall wire fence, is rented out to a Christian INGO, ChildVoice International (CVI). CVI works with "child mothers," and dozens of teenage girls live at

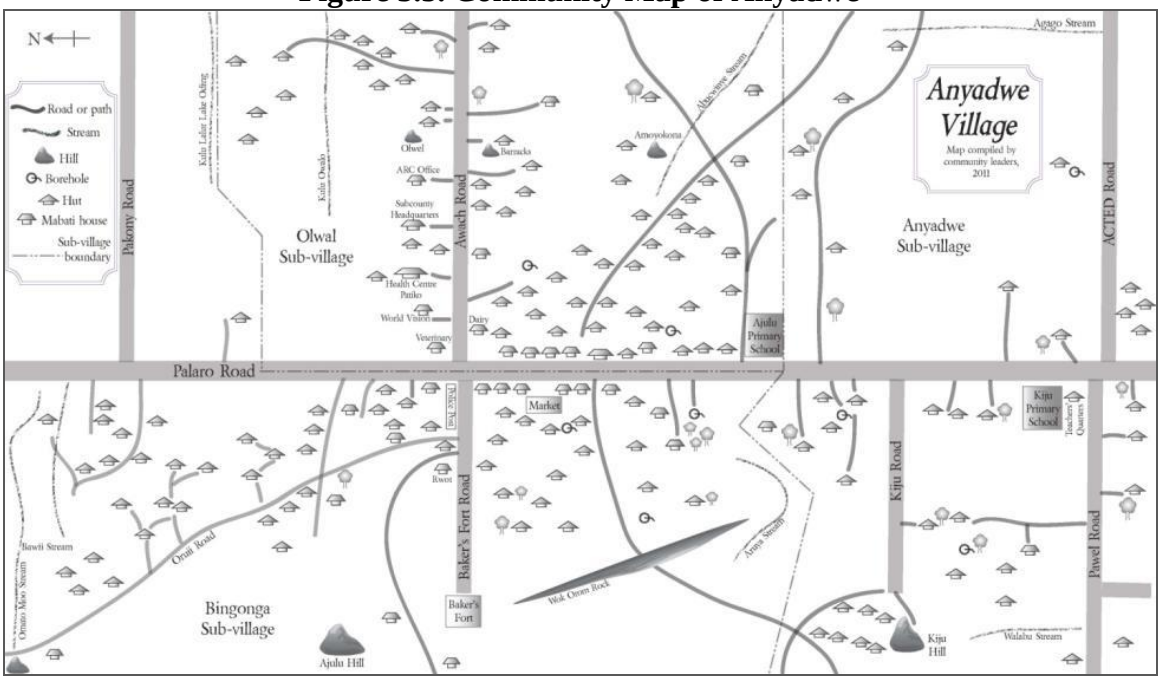
CVI in Lukodi, receiving education, counseling, and vocational training. In an open field near the trading centre, there is a memorial monument to the over 70 victims of the 2004 massacre. The field is usually overgrown with tall grasses, though some residents are actively trying to involve the community in its upkeep. Another INGO, Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), has been instrumental in promoting this type of community organizing in Lukodi. JRP has guided the development of a "Core Team," made up of community members who work for post-war reconciliation in Lukodi. Currently, they organize an annual memorial prayer day on the anniversary of the massacre and they are working with the national Uganda Museum to develop a memorial site in Lukodi. In addition to these reconciliation and memorialization initiatives, people in Lukodi have had a high level of exposure to the ICC, with an investigation into the massacre, visits from high-level ICC delegations, and community outreach efforts.

Lukodi Primary School, with a mural by World Vision, warning children not to touch explosives.

Anyadwe

Further north from Lukodi, about 35 kilometers from Gulu, the next major settlement is the village of Anyadwe, also known as Ajulu-Patiko. Anyadwe is divided into three *tek kweri*, with 164 total compounds. Anyadwe's trading centre is bigger than Lukodi, with about ten buildings containing various small businesses, including drug shops, a restaurant, a bar, and convenience stores. There are bicycle repairers and mechanics, a stand selling roasted pork, and a veterinarian. There are also a few offices for various government officials. The administrative headquarters for the sub-county are located in Anyadwe, temporarily housed in a building left vacant by World Vision. There is also a building left by the American Refugee Committee. There are two primary schools in Anyadwe, a market area with rows set for the sellers, and nearby police barracks. Additionally, there is a health centre in Anyadwe, with active outpatient treatments, a maternity ward, and community health outreach programs.

Figure 3.5. Community Map of Anyadwe



Anyadwe is known, historically, as an area rich in cattle and livestock, which indicates a relatively higher level of status and respect. All the clans in the surrounding area, including areas of Lukodi and Awach, are united into a tribe called Patiko. The chief of Patiko (the *rwot me Patiko*) is a highly revered and important leader in the region, and he is based in Anyadwe. In 2011, a new *rwot me Patiko* was anointed.

Anyadwe also is unique because of the presence of "Baker's Fort," which is a site with ruins of stone walls and buildings. The fort was built by Arab slave traders in the 1800s, who enslaved local residents. The British explorer Samuel Baker provided guns and assistance to the Acholi people against the Arabs, making him now the namesake for the fort. When local people gave me tours of the ruins, they described how the fort was the site of many Arab atrocities against the people of Patiko. The name "Anyadwe" means "daughter of the moon," and was the local name given to Samuel Baker's wife,

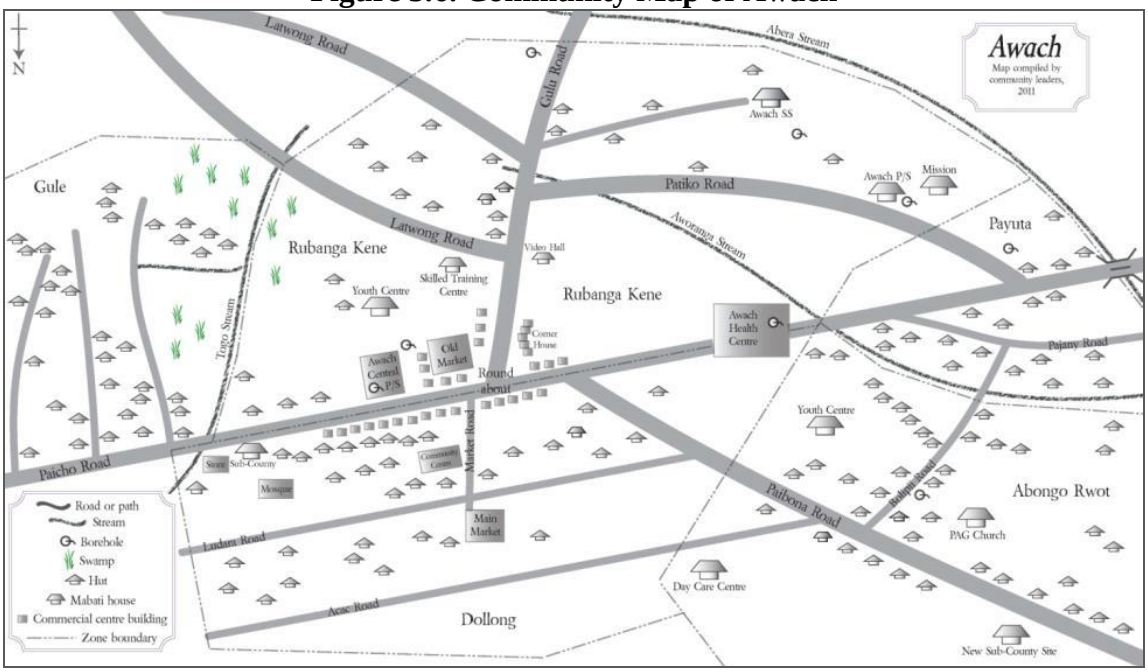
who frequently spent time at the Fort and was admired by the local community. People in Anyadwe are now very protective and proud of the Baker's Fort, which they are working to develop as a historical tourist site with the Uganda Museum.

The "palace" of the Rwot me Patiko in Anyadwe.

Awach

The Awach area is larger than the first two communities. There is a trading centre, surrounded by three dispersed villages, Payuta, Paromo, and Latwong. In order to select an area comparable to the area we included in Lukodi and Anyadwe, I included *tek kweri* from both Payuta and Paromo, which surround the Awach trading centre. In consultation with local leaders, I selected five *tek kweri* for the interview area, with a total of 153 compounds. With a large trading centre, Awach may transition from a village to a "town board" in the next few years.

Figure 3.6. Community Map of Awach



Like in the other two communities, there are a variety of shops in the trading centre. In Awach, however, there are also several restaurants, multiple bars, and a video hall. Even in the mornings, there are always men drinking and hanging around the trading centre; Awach is known for a high level of alcoholism and the accompanying fights or disputes that arise when people are drinking. There are more events organized around youth interests, such as video showings, dances, musicians, and football. Awach has a primary school and a secondary school. Like Anyadwe, the headquarters for the sub-county (a different sub-county) are in Awach. There is also a health centre, larger than the health centre in Anyadwe, which has a large gated compound near the trading centre. The market in Awach is housed in a permanent covered structure, not with people informally setting up their products on the ground. There is more diversity in Awach than the other two sites. There is a highly visible population of mentally ill individuals who often hang around the trading centre. There is also more variety of clans than in Anyadwe

or Lukodi. Finally, there is significant religious diversity; there is a prominent Catholic Mission in Awach, established in the 1970s, as well as a Protestant church and a mosque.

Part of the Awach trading centre, with men talking and drinking under a mango tree.

Awach was the site of the second largest IDP camp during the war. It was known as a particularly dangerous place, and for much of the conflict it was very isolated from Gulu town because the road to Awach was frequently used by the rebels. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Kony actually began his movement in Awach; I talked to older people who had attended his spiritual gatherings and were part of the early movement. Chiefs from the area around Awach were also involved in negotiating with Kony during the war and had frequent contact with the rebels. Additionally, Human Rights Watch (2005) documented particularly high levels of human rights abuses by the UPDF in Awach, including extrajudicial killings and regular practices of beatings and torture.

In this chapter, I provided historical and contextual background information specific to northern Uganda and the research fieldsites. To begin, I provided a history of the war and

displacement in the region, describing a long-term local narrative characterized by multiple victimizations and suffering, resulting in widespread exposure to violence, mistrust because of crimes perpetrated by multiple parties, and complete and prolonged forced displacement into IDP camps. Massive waves of resettlement occurred just a few years before data collection for this project. The post-war period has seen massive growth in INGOs and government rebuilding programs, in addition to a diverse array of formal transitional justice mechanisms. With this context in mind, I sketched the broad contours of contemporary daily life in rural northern Uganda. Life is governed by a multi-layered system of local leadership, with daily life centered around extended family residential compounds in a patrilocal and patrilineal system, focused on subsistence agricultural activities. Village communities are small and relatively self-contained, with closely intertwined histories and relationships among residents. My research analyzed the resettlement and reconstructive trajectories of three neighboring villages. These communities are similar in many respects, but differ in their exposure to transitional justice mechanisms, the depth of their involvement with INGO and government programs, and the relative smoothness of their post-war transitions.

Chapter Four
Data and Methodology

Ojuk kwe cero ki cet iot pa marone.
If you step in dung and go into your mother-in-law's house,
she may not let her daughter go with you.

In this chapter, I reflect on my position as a white, western, educated woman, as an "outsider" conducting research in rural Uganda. Next, I detail my methods, including gaining entrée, working with research assistants, translating interviews, recording observations, conducting informal interviews, sampling, and managing the formal interview process. I also describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the interview respondents.

This entire research process was fundamentally a group effort. I am deeply indebted to many individuals—research assistants, translators, community guides, residents, and leaders—who tirelessly helped me with this project. They patiently helped me understand the nuances of doing research (and living as a human being) in northern Uganda. I truly could not have completed this research without them.

Positionality in Fieldwork

In this section, I discuss how my intersectional identity as a white, western, educated woman affected my place in northern Uganda generally and in the research context specifically.

Outsider & "Adopted" Outsider

A classic sociological understanding of the different types of knowledge of "insiders" and "outsiders" (Merton 1972) has colored methodological debates about the relative merits of insider or outsider status of the researcher in doing fieldwork. In general, defining who is an insider and who is not falls to whether or not there are shared characteristics in terms of race, class, and gender. At times, this has become a heated conversation: Can an outsider ever *really know*? Can an insider ever be detached *enough*? In the postcolonial context, the debate becomes more politically and morally charged, with claims that outsiders studying communities in Africa (particularly) are necessarily neocolonial.

While in most ways I was definitely an outsider in rural Uganda, I also want to complicate the dichotomy a bit. Jennifer Pierce (1995) argues that there are not "true" insiders or outsiders, because sharing characteristics like race, class, or gender does not necessarily make someone an insider, and also someone who appears to be an outsider may actually be "adopted" in some ways. Similarly, after doing research among West Indian immigrant youth, Mary Waters (1999) concludes that people are about more than their race, class, or gender, and there are more diverse ways to form connections. Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) argues that the boundary between the self and the other really is less clear than it often seems, as our identities are, of course, social constructions and there are diverse forms of difference among people, frequently resulting in "split selves," or people who are insiders in some ways but not in others. Pierce goes on to discuss how researchers are often able to move back and forth between statuses, claiming that being an insider or outsider is not static, but there is interpretation,

negotiation, and shifting. Additionally, she argues that these are not dichotomous statuses, a claim that is salient to other conceptions of hybrid insider-outsider statuses, such as Hill Collins'(1986) outsider-within, Simmel's (1971) classic conception of the stranger, or Abu-Lughod's (1991) description of feminists and "halfies."

In interactions with people in rural villages, I was an outsider most notably in terms of race and nationality and in my socio-economic class and education. However, in many other interactions, such as with INGO workers in the region, these same characteristics marked me as very much an insider. As a woman, I was positioned to be able to talk and interact easily with women, but less so with men. However, the intersectionality of my identity affected both of these interactions. Women in the villages were a bit more distant from me because of my level of education, but also because of my nationality, or more specifically, my language, as rural women were substantially less likely to speak English confidently. On the other hand, my nationality and level of education and the distance that this afforded made me able to more easily transcend gender boundaries and speak more freely with men than a Ugandan woman may have been able to do.

Generally, my most obvious social characteristics marked me as an outsider. I did find, however, that as people learned more about me and as I spent more time in the villages, I did come to be "adopted" by some people. In time, I was treated as someone who belonged and whose presence was almost expected at community events. One potential reason for this was because I had had a longer engagement with Uganda than they expected of other outsiders, and people generally seemed to highly value the fact

that I had come back time and again and focused on building relationships in the country, even if I had not been to their specific communities before. The dominant religion in the region is Christian, and, having come from a Christian background myself, I was able to relate to their religious commitments.[15] Additionally, I think that my gender performance helped me to be "adopted." I always dressed in long skirts, like rural Ugandan women do, was comfortable sitting on mats on the ground with women, and was an enthusiastic helper in many kitchens. Time and again people would comment on this, telling me that I was not like other white women who would come to visit them, and that this showed I understood and respected their culture and values. I also think they began to perceive me as their ally and a potential long-term advocate, something I discuss below.

There are definitely challenges to conducting research as an outsider, even in the shifting and variable context I describe above. I constantly found myself questioning whether or not I was really getting close *enough* to people and their daily lives. I found myself engaged in an ongoing process of negotiating my presence, something that would not have been necessary as an insider. Being a racial outsider was probably the most difficult part during participant observation with people who did not already know me, such as attending events, schools or churches, or walking down a street. As a white person, there was no way to not stand out and attract immediate attention. As I came to know people, though, my race became less of a novelty. I also am sure that, as an outsider, people were more measured and careful in what they would tell me or show me. I was very often treated with high levels of respect as a guest, given preferential treatment

[15] Although I do think this shared religious background had some impact, it was definitely less central in northern Uganda than it had been during my previous stays in other regions of the country. In the post-war period, there seem to be fewer formal churches and less of a prominent social role of organized religion.

and hidden from the realities of how people lived when I was not there. I worked every day to try to minimize these limitations, but I have no doubt they are real.

At the same time, being an outsider comes with unique advantages as well. Namely, people may confide in an outsider more readily, as research subjects do not perceive the researcher to be embroiled in local tensions, have strong perspectives on contentious issues, or be strongly connected to other community members (Waters 1999). In the position of an outsider, the researcher may be more interesting and less threatening to respondents. I do think this was the case in my fieldwork, as people would share their opinions of particular local conflicts that I am not sure they would have shared so readily if I was from their community. This was also important in selecting local research assistants to do the village interviews. I had originally planned to hire individuals from within each village, but was advised early in the process that it would be best to hire interviewers who did not have connections in the villages, so that respondents would be able to speak more freely. Of course, the interviewers shared race and nationality with interview respondents, but the interviewers' outsider status was essential during the interview process.

Another advantage of being an outsider is that patterns may be more readily observable and unique perspectives can come from those marginalized from the inside group (Hill Collins 1986; Abu-Lughod 1991). I did find this to be beneficial, as I was able to question practices that research subjects took for granted as part of their daily lives, such as family structures, traditions, or styles of interpersonal interactions. While my outsider status helped me to observe patterns they may not have noticed, my status

was also beneficial in the opposite direction, as people assumed that I did not know anything about their lives. They took the time to explain things that they likely would not have discussed with somebody who grew up in the area, such what specific kinship obligations mean, why they value certain traditions, or how dispute resolution systems operate. People generally seemed to derive a great deal of satisfaction from explaining these things to me, and many elements of daily life were explained to me over and over, from multiple people on multiple occasions, which helped me to notice consistencies and variations in their explanations.

While I cannot realistically change certain elements of my status, I have tried to incorporate into my analysis the unique challenges and advantages afforded by my various outsider or "adopted" outsider statuses. Furthermore, I have tried to be cognizant of how my race, gender, class, nationality, and education contribute to what I saw and how I interpreted my findings. I recognize that there is necessarily some element of tension in my status as an outsider, but I have tried to highlight the unique ways of seeing that emerged from my particular position.

Building Rapport

Establishing rapport was a primary concern throughout my fieldwork and I used two main strategies. First, I adopted a persona of "positive naïveness" (Madison 2005). I consistently took on the role of one who does not know, and thus needed to humbly rely on those who *do* know in order to learn. In this, being a student was helpful, because that was a role that people easily understood. This made the people I was interacting with the

experts and my teachers, and I found people generally responded well to being in this position. Particularly in the beginning (or in meeting new people throughout the fieldwork), I would ask people to teach me Acholi vocabulary, how to cook, what crops they were farming, or about other very factual topics about their daily lives. These sorts of conversations and the activities that came from them (such as cooking or farming) were excellent ways to establish initial comfort with my presence and place people in a position of teaching me about their lives. I often received comments that they were not used to seeing white people trying to learn about such things, and people seemed genuinely pleased with the novelty of seeing me struggle to learn these practices. This attitude of a learner continued as relationships progressed to greater depth, and I could ask people to teach me about their families, their values, their spiritual beliefs, their plans for the future, or other deeper issues in their lives. I developed rapport by treating fieldwork as an ongoing process of conversational exchange, in which people in Uganda were my guides and I actively engaged by listening receptively. It was less about me gathering information for my own purposes, and more about me being open to learning what people in the villages wanted to teach me. I do think this went a long way in helping me develop rapport.

Second, I relied heavily on key contacts and cultural brokers. These individuals acted as a bridge, mediating between me and people I wanted to get to know. Key contacts played an essential role in initial networking and gaining entrée. For example, early in the fieldwork process, I asked contacts from previous visits to Uganda and connections from academic networks to put me in touch with people working on

resettlement issues in Gulu District. In most cases, it was these connections that linked me to research assistants, translators, key individuals in each community, and others who would eventually become close friends and valuable research informants. These people helped to "translate" much more than language. They helped me think carefully about practical issues like what gifts to bring when I visited homes or how to explain my research to people. They patiently helped me understand complex elements of social life that I struggled to grasp, such as kinship structures, land ownership systems, or Acholi proverbs. Perhaps most importantly, though, they facilitated countless opportunities for me to visit homes, attend events, and talk with a wide range of people. This was not merely a logistical contribution; in introducing me to their family and friends, these key contacts personally vouched for my presence, the integrity of my intentions, and the value of my project. This was absolutely fundamental to my acceptance in the communities and the eventual success of the project.

Even though I think these strategies allowed me to develop some degree of rapport in the communities where I conducted research, I would be remiss to make claims to have been fully accepted into peoples' lives and confidences in a period of a few months. In conducting research among street vendors in New York, Mitchell Duneier argued that "participant observers need not be fully trusted in order to have their presence at least accepted" (1999:338). He found that even if people did not fully trust him, they still had to continue going about their lives, and so by virtue of the fact that he was there, he was able to make observations and understand something about their lives. I think my case is similar. People allowed me to be present in their communities, and though they

perhaps were hesitant to intimately trust me, spending time consistently in the villages did allow me to be accepted to the degree necessary to complete this research.

Subjectivity

My goal has been to articulate my "self" in the research process, rather than making myself invisible in the following chapters (Pierce 1995). I recognize that objectivity is not necessarily possible, nor is it my goal, but rather I recognize that I have produced a "truth" that was filtered through my subjective experience (Scheper-Hughes 2000). My goal was to produce "a highly disciplined subjectivity" (Scheper-Hughes 2000:132). This admission of subjectivity does not mean, of course, that the claims I make are beyond critique and are instead personal opinion; actually, it is an invitation to the reader to be even more critical. I sought to be transparent about my subjectivity and recognize how my specific subjectivity reflects particular positions, choices, and effects (Madison 2005).

As Abu-Lughod says of positionality: "every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere" (1991:468). This calls us, as researchers, to recognize the situated nature of our knowledge, to be forthcoming about our own biases or partialities, and be sensitive to the idea that our own picture is incomplete. The best we can do is to be aware of how our subjectivity functions in our research and be clear about its effects (Duneier 1999). Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000) claims that because everything we know is filtered through our subjective experiences, there will be a clash between researchers and subjects, something she experienced

firsthand as the people she wrote about were deeply critical of the direction of her final analysis.

Because of my particular subjectivity, I was more likely to notice some elements of life in Uganda and less likely to notice (or be interested in) others. For example, as a critical scholar, I was particularly cognizant of issues of power, inequality, and exclusion. As a person from the global North, I was sensitive to the involvement of INGOs and attuned to potential negative implications of their work. As a sociologist, I was perhaps less aware of or less interested in the nuances of agricultural production, despite the centrality of this agriculture in the lives of many in northern Uganda. These examples illustrate how what I observed was necessarily shaped by my unique point of view.

Relationship to Others

Recognizing my own subjectivity is one element of positionality in fieldwork, but articulating my own position also requires being conscious of how my particular position places me in relationships others. As an outsider, I was not merely "outside," but I was standing in some definite relation to the other who is studied (Abu-Lughod 1991). I thought about this in two ways: first, the relationships between myself and research subjects because of historical and contemporary social context and, second, the relationship between us that emerged by virtue of the researcher and research subject dynamic. Both of these elements were infused with important dimensions of power.

My positionality forced me to acknowledge my own location in the power structures that affect the lives of research subjects (Davies 2008; Madison 2005). As a

U.S. citizen of European ancestry, I needed to be sensitive to my own historical and contemporary implication in forces of economic, political, and social exploitation in colonial and post-colonial Africa. More immediately in the lives of research participants, I was cognizant of my association with the post-war flood of international aid workers and researchers, many of whom have developed perhaps admirable programs, but have also been criticized for having a short-term mentality, being insensitive to local cultures and values, or introducing programs with unintended negative consequences.

I am sure that this had a significant impact on how many people perceived me and interacted with me. Before being fieldwork in the villages, I was warned by several academics and NGO workers that people in rural communities were tired of outsiders coming to take from them and then not seeing tangible improvements in their lives from the interaction. Indeed, I was met with wariness at times, or even hostility in a few cases, as people were not sure about my motives. On the other hand, many people were extremely pleased to welcome me, but often with the mistaken expectation that I was there to bring some type of development project to them or their community. This required me to carefully and immediately explain who I was and to try to set myself apart in some way from those who came before me; I emphasized that I was a student and that I was not bringing a development project, but that I would write a book about their communities and tell their stories. At the same time, I recognized that I was in many ways similar to those folks: I went to Uganda in order to help myself and other academics understand more about their lives; I went hoping that this interaction might also help

them improve their lives after war; and I was only there for a relatively short period of time.

The second type of relationship was between me as a researcher and the people in Uganda as research subjects. Unfortunately, this relationship is necessarily infused with power, despite the best efforts of cultural anthropologists or feminist ethnographers to give voice to research subjects and make them equal participants in the research process. Drawing from these traditions, throughout fieldwork I tried to see the research process as an ongoing dialogue between myself as the researcher and the people in the communities. Seeing it as a constantly changing reciprocal encounter, rather than a more bounded unidirectional exchange in which I asked for information and they gave it to me, allowed more freedom in our relationship, as I sought to become an "ethnographic *presence*" in their lives (Madison 2005). Even with research that takes this participatory approach, however, there is still inherent inequality between the researcher and research subjects (Duneier 1999; Abu-Lughod 1991; Pierce 1995).

These two elements of positionality have important implications for my research, namely in terms of pursuing critical ethnography and thinking seriously about representations, discussed below.

Critical Ethnography and Questions of Intervention

As a public sociologist, I have a sense of responsibility to address injustice and suffering in a particular lived domain, and to make at least some small contribution to changing unjust social conditions. On a daily basis during fieldwork, this led to practical questions

of how involved I ought to be in research participants' lives. When I am aware of—and committed to working against—structures of inequality and injustice, and then come into close personal contact with people living in poverty because of the inequality of this global system, it presents an ethical dilemma. Does the fight against structures of oppression require me to personally help the individuals harmed by the same system that afforded me such privilege? This is a dilemma ethnographers commonly wrestle to reconcile, especially when the research involves people who are particularly disadvantaged. Mary Waters (1999) calls this the "thorniest" question for researchers, one that often is only resolved through making "snap decisions" in the moment. In his fieldwork with unhoused poor urban black men who sold books and magazines on a New York City sidewalk, Mitchell Duneier (1999) was regularly presented with this dilemma directly, as people would ask him for money and other forms of assistance. Pragmatically, he realized he could not help everyone every day, so he eventually learned how to say no, but to at the same time express his anguish at having to do so. He decided that he would help people to the extent that others on the sidewalk would be willing to help. He also ultimately concluded that his real contribution was through conducting his research with integrity and respect for the research participants.

In many ways, I sought to mirror Duneier's approach. This dilemma was not one that was confined to my own internal moral struggle. On a regular basis people asked me for money, to help pay their children's school fees, to start a project for them, to buy them farming tools, to pay for their medical expenses, and nearly every other request imaginable. Some were quite easy to refuse *(Buy me alcohol? Find me a wife from*

America?), but most were very difficult. On the one hand, I did want to help people who were struggling or suffering. On the other, I knew that I could not single-handedly help everyone in northern Uganda, and I knew that if I helped one woman with her medical bill today, the home I visited tomorrow would have heard of it and would have their request ready for me. I knew that not only were was my pockets not deep enough to support these requests, but that it would ultimately be harmful to the longer term objectives of the research project. Furthermore, cognizant of my positionality in the era of white people coming with INGOs, I knew that fulfilling these requests would actually contribute to a problem in the area, of foreign money and well-meaningness coming in with short-term solutions. My research assistants and community guides were very much aware of this tension, and we discussed it frequently. They often served as "cultural brokers" to help me carefully respond to such requests, explaining that I was a student, so I was not able to help everyone, but I was trying to help through telling their stories. To the vast majority of requests for material support, I said no.

On the other hand, there were also cases where I did decide to offer help. In keeping with Duneier's guidelines, I restrained myself to offering help in line with what other community members would do, if they were able to help. These were also always situations where I had a relationship with the person, not people who asked me for help at our first meeting. Most often, this help came in the form of small loans, which were always paid back. I tried to help as a community member would do, such as picking up some ibuprofen for an elderly woman too weak to travel, typing and printing notes for

community meetings, contributing funds to help with funeral expenses, or providing food and drink for those who were helping me.

Near the end of fieldwork, when all the interviews were finished, I talked with the village guides and leaders about beginning community projects in each place. I explained that I wanted to try to give something back, as a way to thank them for all they had given me. Together, community leaders discussed needs in their villages and debated various projects they would like to implement. The agreement was that if they developed carefully conceived project proposals, I would return to the United States and try to raise funds to implement all three projects. Ultimately, together we were able to realize these projects. I returned about eight months later, bringing the modest funds to start a goat project in Lukodi, a grinding mill in Anyadwe, and a community bank in Awach. These projects were initiated and are operated by community members, who developed models of self-sustaining projects, with the understanding that the support would be a one-time donation.

While some in the more classic anthropological or ethnographic tradition may shy away from this level of intervention, I felt compelled to take an active role. From my first day in each community, I knew that my presence would affect people's lives in some way. I came to terms with this and adopted the mindset that I ought to be mindful and intentional about my unavoidable impact.

Representation

My role as a researcher, with its accompanying power over research participants, pushed me to think carefully about how I would represent them in my writing. As I have already discussed, my subjectivity led me to have one particular perspective or interpretation of life in northern Uganda. This was particularly important because my version of reality was not just an alternative version, but it would actually have some degree of authority. This is a fundamentally uncomfortable position for me, as I come to be regarded as an "expert," but the people I am writing about do not. There is always a risk that research participants will disagree with or be upset by my representation of them and their communities. Researchers approach this in various ways: seeing the risk of upsetting some people as justified because the research is working for positive social change (Pierce 1995); carefully reading each participant every passage of the final text that is about them and incorporating their feedback (Duneier 1999); or claiming that the standard should be to show people the same respect and empathy in writing as you would talking to them directly (Scheper-Hughes 2000). Even with these best laid plans, there are still troubling tales of how the communities we write about may feel deeply betrayed by the outcome of the research, such as communities in northern Ireland perceiving Scheper-Hughes (2000) as betraying their privacy and trust.

What is at stake here, though, goes deeper than hurt feelings or betrayed trust. Representing others always raises ethical questions, as representations have consequences and we, as researchers, should be accountable for these implications (Madison 2005). Michelle Fine (1994) argues that representing the voices of research participants is not

enough. Some researchers strive to let the voices of others speak for themselves, even taking particular care to represent counter-hegemonic voices. Still, she says, this minimizes the role of the researcher and our interpretation. Rather, we ought to be more explicitly participatory, intentionally positioning ourselves with a particular position (Fine 1994). This has come to be known as reflexive (or postcritical) ethnography. Reflexive ethnography is focused not only on the social change of critical ethnography, but also on positionality and how the researcher's representations themselves can be acts of domination (Davies 2008; Madison 2005; Noblit, Flores, and Murillo 2004).

Part of this is to recognize multiple layers of accountabilities to multiple audiences (Davies 2008; Abu-Lughod 1991). Not only am I accountable to academic colleagues, advisors, and the broader scientific community, but I also hold myself accountable to the people in northern Uganda whose lives I am writing about. My representations seek to do justice to the trust they placed in me to tell their stories, from my perspective. When I was back for the second, shorter period of fieldwork in 2012, I discussed my developing analysis with research assistants, community guides, and colleagues at Gulu University. During the process of revising the dissertation into a book manuscript, I plan to seek more specific and detailed feedback on the text. I admit that opening myself up to critiques from people in Uganda is intimidating. What if they fundamentally think I do not understand their lives? What if I made mistakes in representing their history or contemporary relationships? What if they are upset by my interpretations? However, I think making myself vulnerable in this way is essential because it flips the power dynamic. By committing to receiving feedback and actually

responding to the feedback by making changes to my analysis, I am giving them real power over me and the research. The very act of doing research made people in Uganda vulnerable to exploitation or misrepresentation by an outside researcher. Seeking real feedback on the product of the research makes me, the researcher, vulnerable to their perspectives as well.

Methodology

I spent a total of 11 months (January to September 2011 and April and May 2012) conducting fieldwork based in Gulu. The fieldwork involved a combination of informal interviews, participant observation, and formal in-depth interviews.

Gaining Entrée, Informal Interviews, & Participant Observation

I acquired several in-country affiliations and approvals. The project was approved by the Uganda National Council on Science and Technology (UNCST), the government agency responsible for overseeing research conducted in the country. I also obtained a letter of clearance from the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Gulu District, the local government executive. I officially affiliated with the Faculty of Social Sciences at Makerere University and with the Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS) at Gulu University. The affiliation with Gulu University was particularly useful in helping me develop networks with professionals and other researchers working in the area.

I conducted about twenty interviews with a variety of professionals who are experts on various issues facing resettled communities in the region. I interviewed NGO

workers, human rights advocates, government officials, service providers, religious leaders, and academic researchers. I conducted many of these interviews in the first few months of fieldwork, specifically to learn about potential communities to serve as field sites for data collection. I continued to conduct informal interviews sporadically throughout the fieldwork, in order to increase my understanding of the current situation in the region and to learn more about the role of NGOs in reconstruction processes. I took detailed notes throughout the interviews, but did not audio record these conversations. (See Appendix A for a list of organizations interviewed.)

After identifying potential fieldsites from these key informant interviews, I traveled to each site, introduced myself to community leaders, and asked for their permission to conduct my research. Next, I spent some time making informal visits to residents, either individually in their homes or in larger community gatherings. In Lukodi, this initial legwork lasted longer, because it was the first place I was visiting. Here I had a large community forum-type gathering where people told me about the issues they felt their community was facing. I also hosted a smaller meeting with key representatives to discuss and revise my interview questions. In each village, we had a community mapping meeting to start the official interview process (discussed below). During these meetings, I shared background information about myself and the study with community leaders. I addressed any questions that they had. At the end of the discussion, I asked their permission to participate in their community and conduct interviews.

Throughout my time in Uganda, I spent time as a participant observer in the three primary field sites, but also in other surrounding communities and in Gulu town. Most

often, I visited residents' homes, sharing meals and conversations. I also frequently attended events like markets, churches, community meetings, political events, and various other gatherings. During the 2011 and 2012 data collection, I produced approximately 425 pages of fieldnotes of my experiences and observations.

Research Assistants, Translators, & Community Guides

In preparation for beginning the formal, in-depth interviews, I hired four research assistants who had been recommended highly by colleagues at Gulu University: Susan Ajok, Nancy Lamunu, Kenneth Oyet, and Alfred Olegmungu. The research assistants all had bachelor's degrees and experience conducting a wide range of research projects. I spent about one week training them in the background of my study, goals and details of interview methods, and doing practice interviews with the actual interview questions. They are all in their late 20s to early 30s and represent a certain segment of the population in post-war Gulu—young professionals employed by post-war NGO, government, and research programs. These talented individuals served as valuable colleagues and an effective working group to advise me throughout fieldwork. They consistently offered valuable insight and advice on how to combine the objectives of research with the real life conditions or culture in the villages. (See Appendix B for further descriptions of research assistants.)

While English is the official language in Uganda and is the language of instruction in schools, there are also over 50 local languages. In Gulu District, Acholi is

the first language for most of the population.[16] In Gulu town, most of the population also can speak English. In the villages, anyone who has had at least some schooling knows basic English. There was definitely a segment of the population that did not know English, mostly women and older people, but there was usually someone around who could help translate. As soon as I arrived in Gulu, I began taking intensive private Acholi lessons and practicing Acholi on a daily basis. John Bosco Komakech worked as my Acholi language teacher and the translator for the project, translating nearly all of the interview recordings. In addition to his excellent work providing countless hours of translation, Bosco came to be a trusted advisor on the project, providing valuable insights, helping me puzzle through challenges, and answering my questions about Acholi culture, history, and tradition. I consistently worked to practice and improve my Acholi ability, which definitely helped establish rapport in the communities, as people enthusiastically appreciated my efforts and seemed to enjoy being my teachers.

In addition to working with the research assistants to conduct and translate the interviews, I worked with local guides, or residents from each village, who helped mobilize the community members, physically led me to each homestead, introduced me to residents, and served as community-specific informants. The guides were selected because of their thorough knowledge of the communities, their reputations as people of good character (thus making them well-respected throughout the village), and their English competency (thus allowing them to serve as translators during visits and events). All three were young men, in their 20s or 30s: Vincent Oyet in Lukodi, Alfred Kaloso in

[16] A segment of the population also speaks Swahili or Luganda (the local language of central Uganda) as a third language. I have a basic knowledge of Swahili and some background in Luganda.

Anyadwe, and Otto George in Awach. (See Appendix B for further descriptions of community guides.)

Although, for consistency and readability, I typically refer to myself in discussing activities of the project, in many ways this research was a group effort. I am indebted to this talented team of individuals who worked with me to complete this project, particularly throughout the interview process.

Interview Sampling & Recruiting

I followed the same sampling strategy in all three communities to construct systematic, geographically-based, gender-balanced samples of 20 residents in each village. I also selected purposive samples of about 10 leaders[17] in each village. In total, the interview sample includes 91 individual in-depth interviews in the three primary fieldsites.

Working with the community guides and LC1s in each community, I first organized a meeting of community leaders to draw a community map. The mapping group consisted of people[18] who were knowledgeable about the village, intentionally selected to have several representatives from each zone or *tek kweri*. I also participated in the meetings, as well as at least one project research assistant and the community guide for the fieldsite. The mapping was extremely participatory, with people organizing into groups by *tek kweri* and working together to sketch out all the compounds in their area, as

[17] In Anyadwe, we actually interviewed two women's leaders, making a total of 11 leader interviews. The first was to be a practice interview for a new interviewer, but he did a good job with it, so I did not exclude it from the sample for analysis.

[18] The community leaders included in the mapping process were typically the *rodi kweri*, *rodi okoro*, and LCIs. There were 16 people in Lukodi and 19 in both Anyadwe and Awach. The groups consisted of mostly men, but each did include a handful of women.

well as any landmarks they chose to include. Some groups were able to do the exercise easily, while a few struggled to put the layout of their community on paper. I left the directions open-ended, so they could include what they felt was important, simply emphasizing that they should not exclude any compounds.

The whole group then worked together to draw a large map that combined all of their smaller sketches.[19] There was a significant amount of on-going dialogue, debate, and discussion as the final maps were drafted. Group members discussed specific cases, determining where distinguishing lines ought to be drawn to determine separate compounds, rather than just indicating an entire clan on the map. In some cases, there was discussion because of compounds that were, in actuality, headed by women, but some group members felt that women could not be listed as head of household, so they would put a male's name or considered leaving off the female-headed compounds altogether.[20] We clarified this, however, and all such households were included on the maps. After several revisions and checks for accuracy,[21] the final maps included every compound in each village, the name of the head of the household, and landmarks such as paths, roads, streams, trading centres, schools, bridges, major hills, and drinking water sources. (See Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, in the previous chapter, for the final maps with names of residents removed.) Community leaders felt confident that all households in the community were accurately represented on the final maps.

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[19] In Lukodi, however, they ran out of time to complete this step, so Vincent Oyet compiled all the drawings onto one map.

[20] This came up briefly in Lukodi, where Vincent immediately told them to include these households; in Anyadwe, there was more discussion about it, but the RA and I instructed them to include female-headed compounds.

[21] After the group meetings, I had smaller meetings with the RAs and local guides to review and revise the maps as needed. After I constructed the digital copies of the maps, I brought copies to various community events and asked for any final revisions.

The maps were used to select the samples for resident interviews.[22] After selecting the compounds, I alternated man/woman designation to result in equal gender distribution.[23] In total, the sample includes about 14 percent of the population of compounds in Lukodi, about 12 percent in Anyadwe, and about 13 percent in Awach.

I selected the purposive sample of leaders in consultation with key informants and the guide in each community. I indicated that I would like to talk to people who provided leadership in a variety of capacities, and the guides in each community (independently from one another) generated a list of the areas of leadership that should be represented. We then discussed potential interviewees for each category. In all three communities, leader interviews include:

- A chief in charge of farming (*rwot kweri*)
- A women's chief in charge of farming (*rwot okoro*)
- A youth leader
- A school headmaster
- An elected local government leader
- A protestant religious leader
- One or two traditional elders (*atekere* or *rwot moo*)

In each community, there were a few leader selections that demonstrated unique characteristics of each village. In Lukodi, we interviewed the leader of the massacre survivors' group; in Anyadwe, we interviewed a leader from the health centre; in Awach, we interviewed a leader of disabled persons and a leader of peace and security. In both Anyadwe and Awach, with larger trading centres, we interviewed a business leader. Finally, in both Lukodi and Anyadwe, we interviewed women's leaders.

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[22] For Lukodi, I used the map to sample every 7th compound, working through each zone clockwise; in Anyadwe and Awach, I systematically selected every 8th compound.

[23] In a few cases, a compound did not have an adult of the selected gender, so we switched the man/woman designation with the next compound on the list.

The general recruiting process was to go to a compound with the local guide and at least one interviewer. In some cases, particularly if we were coming in the morning when people were typically in their gardens digging, the guide arranged our visit in advance or we would set up the next day's visits before leaving the field at the end of the day. We would enter a compound, greeting whomever was around, and somebody would immediately bring chairs or mats to sit in the shade of a tree. The community guide introduced us and the study, setting a relaxed mood, helping the potential respondents to trust us. Then the interviewer and I both talked, introducing ourselves, explaining the research, the selection process, and the interview. We asked if they had any questions and responded if they did. In compounds with more than one adult member of the selected gender, each man or woman picked a number to determine who would be invited to be interviewed. After identifying the potential respondent, we again asked if they had any questions and if they were interested in doing the interview. If and when they said yes, we arranged a day and time to do the interview. At the time of the interview, the potential respondent and the interviewer went through the formal consent process before beginning the interview.

Each respondent was given a "thank you" gift of a kilo of sugar, a bar of soap, and a bag of salt (around a $2-4 value). During the initial explanation of the interview process, respondents were not told about this gift, to prevent it from influencing their decision about whether or not to participate. During the formal consent process, the interviewer told the respondent about the gift. We achieved a 100 percent response rate, with every individual selected for an interview agreeing to participate. Physically, the

data collection was quite demanding. We travelled along footpaths, deep into the village, often returning several times in order to find the selected potential respondent at home and able to be interviewed. (See Appendix B for examples of challenges in locating some respondents.)

Conducting Interviews

The interview questions were based on the measures of social reconstruction developed by Longman, Phuong, and Weinstein (2004), as discussed in Chapter Two. Interview topic areas were: the sense of community between residents; how community members rely on one another; issues of social justice in the village; and conflict and its resolution in the community. Additionally, I developed a section to discuss the respondent's personal narrative of displacement and return and a section addressing the formal post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding initiatives in the community. For the interviews with community leaders, interview topics were similar to those for the residents, but the leaders were asked to comment on the community's experience as a whole, in addition to their own personal experience or perspective. The final interview guide is included in Appendix C, and reflects several rounds of revisions following pilot interviews and feedback from community leaders in Lukodi, research assistants, and colleagues at the University of Minnesota and IPSS at Gulu University. The project research assistants translated the consent form and contact script, then the translator back-translated and made revisions. The project translator translated the interview guide, and the research assistants provided feedback for revision.

Respondents selected the interview locations, which generally were in their homes.[24] The interviews were from 45 minutes to three hours long, with most around two hours long. The interviews were generally conducted in Acholi, by the research assistants. (See Appendix B for a discussion of gender of interviewers and respondents.) I personally conducted four interviews with community leaders who preferred to communicate in English.[25] The interviews were audio recorded after receiving verbal consent from each respondent.[26] The interviewers also took sparse notes, as possible, during the interview. Following the interview, they recorded fieldnotes about the context of the interview.

Respondent Characteristics

Table 4.1 below depicts demographic characteristics of the 91 respondents, broken down by community and leaders. Among residents, about four-fifths reported farming as their only occupation or economic activity, which is typical in northern Uganda, where the population depends predominantly on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood. Respondents range in age from 20 to 79 years old, and resident respondents in Awach

[24] Interviews were most often at the respondent's compound, either inside a house or seated outside in the shade of a tree. A smaller number of interviews, particularly with community leaders, were conducted around the trading centres. We did the interviews in as quiet an area as possible, making sure they were private so the respondent was free to express themselves. Sometimes the interviewer and respondent sat on wooden chairs or stools, or sometimes, with the women, they sat on a mat on the ground. I instructed the interviewers, even the men, to sit at the same level (on a chair or on the floor) as the respondent, to communicate equality of status and respect.

[25] There were about eight community leaders who seemed very comfortable communicating in English, so we gave them the option of interviewing in either language. Four of them said they would like to do the interview in English. There were also a handful of respondents fairly comfortable with English who conducted their interviews with the RAs in a mixture of English and Acholi.

[26] The interviewers were careful to explain the reasons for audio recordings because I had been told that some people might be hesitant about the recorders. The interviewers asked for the respondents' permission to record and everyone agreed.

were generally older than in the other two communities. Nineteen respondents had no formal education or very low levels (Primary 1 to Primary 3[27]); all but two of those with very low education were women, while men were disproportionately represented among those with higher education levels. A majority of residents reported they were Catholic; noticeably more resident respondents in Awach were Catholic, reflecting the presence of the well-established Catholic mission in the community. The purposive sample of leaders differed from residents in some significant ways. The leaders were more likely to be male, older, and Protestant. They were more likely to have an occupation other than, or in addition to, farming.

Table 4.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Interview Respondents

	Lukodi Residents ***n=20***	**Anyadwe Residents** ***n=20***	**Awach Residents** ***n=20***	**Leaders** ***n=31***
Male	50%	50%	50%	71%
Farming only	80%	84%	80%	45%
Age				
Mean	36 years	34 years	45 years	50 years
Elder (55+ years)	5%	10%	25%	32%
Education				
High (some secondary or higher)	32%	20%	35%	35%
Primary (completed P4 to P7)	42%	65%	30%	52%
Low/None (completed P3 or below)	26%	15%	35%	13%
Religion				
Catholic	65%	63%	80%	48%
Protestant/Anglican	20%	26%	15%	48%
Other[28]	15%	11%	5%	3%

Although not depicted in Table 4.1, most respondents had large households and were co-habitating with partners. Although it was difficult to measure consistently across

[27] In Uganda, there are seven years of primary school (P1-P7), four years of lower secondary (S1-S4), and two years of upper secondary (S5-S6).

[28] The most common other religious affiliation was "born again," which is also called "Savedee" in northern Uganda. Five respondents said they were born again, one respondent was Baha'i, one respondent claimed no religion, and there was one missing value for a resident of Anyadwe.

respondents,[29] the average number of children was about six and the average size of a respondent's compound was close to 12 people (with a range from 2 to 36 people). Most respondents claimed their current community to be their ancestral home or home by marriage, though a few of the leaders, such as in health care or education, were from elsewhere in the region. All respondents had been displaced by the conflict, fleeing either to displaced persons' camps or to the main town of Gulu. They began gradually returning home in 2009 and 2010. Appendix D includes a complete list of all interview respondents, their genders, ages, and levels of education, which can be used as a reference throughout the remaining chapters.

These figures are consistent with the socio-demographic characteristics in Gulu District as a whole. The 2010 survey conducted by UC-Berkeley's Human Rights Center (Pham and Vinck 2010; discussed above) was representative of the adult (over 18 years) population in Gulu District. The average age of their sample was 39 years old, which is consistent with what I found. About 68 percent had no education or incomplete primary, while about 12 percent finished primary school, 3 percent had vocational training, and about 17 percent had at least some secondary school. They found approximately 59 percent of respondents could read and write. They found about 69 percent were married, 11 percent were never married, 6 percent divorced, and 14 percent widowed. In 2010, the average weekly income in Gulu District was 23,157 shillings, or about $11.50. The

[29] This is difficult to compare between respondents. Most people were caring for a mixture of their biological children and children that they were responsible for because of the family structure in their clans. Additionally, while many respondents lived with a partner, their responses to whether or not they were married varied due to practices of cultural marriages and marriages in churches. Polygyny was also common, with many men having two to four wives.

income in most village areas is likely lower, particularly as most people have no means of income beyond their farming activities.

In this chapter, I discussed my positionality and its associated implications for fieldwork. My socio-demographic characteristics placed me most obviously as an outsider in rural Uganda, yet in some ways I was an "adopted outsider," and in some specific settings (such as with INGO workers) I was certainly an "insider." I developed rapport through adopting an attitude of "positive naïveness" and relying heavily on cultural brokers and key contacts. The chapter continued with a discussion of how my data collection and analysis were colored by my subjective experience. I discussed my relationships to research subjects, both in terms of our respective places in historical and contemporary global power systems and in terms of the power inequalities inherent in the researcher-subject relationship. Finally, I discussed questions of intervention and involvement, including how I represented myself and my objectives.

In the second half, I outlined my methods of data collection. During eleven months of fieldwork, I conducted expert interviews with a purposive sample, participant observation in three fieldsites, and 91 systematically selected in-depth interviews with village residents and leaders. To do so, I worked with a team of research assistants, translators, and community guides. I concluded with an overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of interview respondents.

Chapter Five
Social Unity: A Casualty of War?

Dako nywal kila wore.
A wife gives birth with a co-wife.

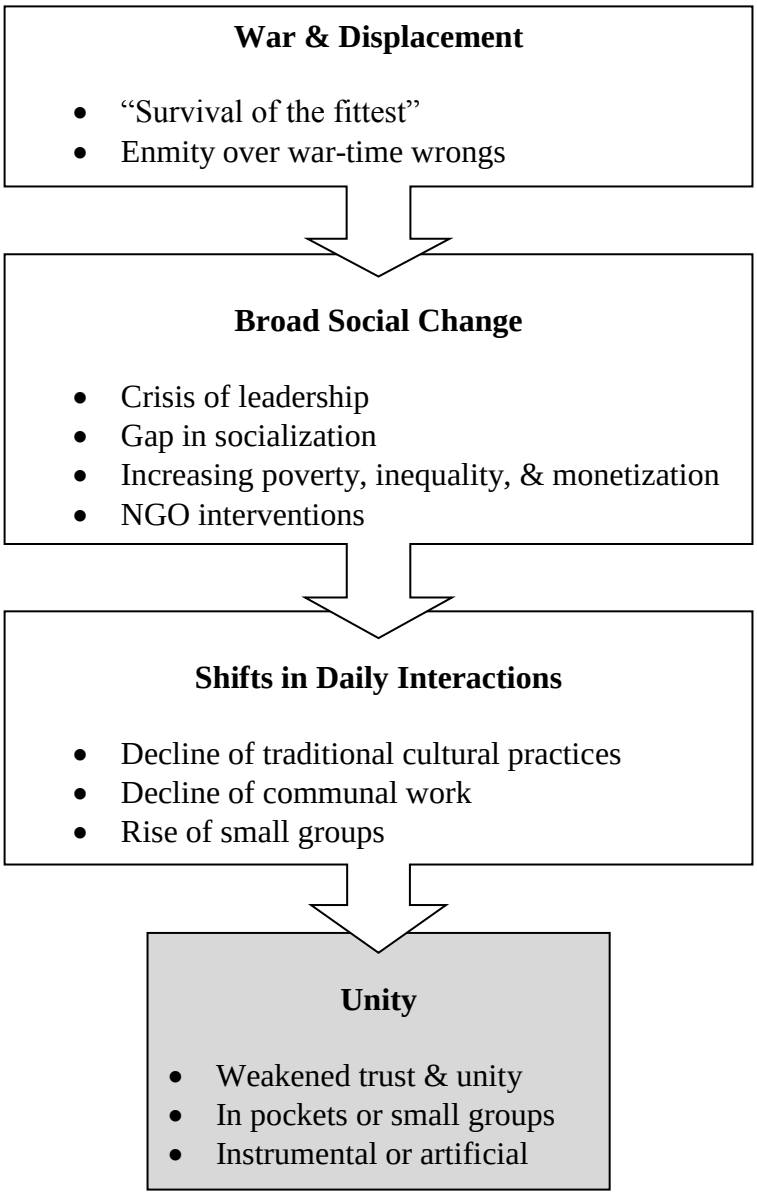
Lagada yilo ki luwotgi.
The elephant grass is more itchy with others.

This chapter examines how the war, displacement, and resettlement impacted unity and interdependence in Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach. I consider how people, relative to before the war, feel connected to one another and to what extent they feel they are a cohesive unit, with a collective vision of their past and future. First, I discuss trust among community members, or to what extent they have confidence that their neighbor will be there when they need them. Second, I present responses to questions asking whether or not they see their village as a united community. Next, I discuss the role of traditions in holding the community together. Next, I analyze interdependence and reliance, considering how residents actually practice their need for one another in daily life, particularly through the practice of communal farming activities. Finally, I turn to the emergence and proliferation of small groups, a new post-war phenomenon that has shifted the organization of village life.

Importantly, there is a minority of respondents who feel that the experience of war and displacement has actually improved trust and unity, who see communal work as actively occurring, and who appreciate the new form of unity that has come from the emergence of small groups. The majority of respondents, however, feel that the war deeply damaged the foundation of their social life; explaining how this happened is the

central task of this chapter. I argue that there has been a fundamental reorganization of social life in post-war communities, which may have problematic implications for their collective futures. In the following analysis, I develop how the war negatively affected unity through contributing to broad shifts or social change, which in turn created new patterns of daily social interactions, as depicted in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. War Negatively Affected Unity, Causal Mechanisms



I discuss perceptions of trust and unity, then the observable shifts in daily interactions, and interspersed throughout these discussions the four key social changes emerge as contributing to the decline in unity. First, a barrier to unity is the loss of leaders during the war. Without these leaders, there is no longer the attention to tradition, and community work also suffers. Second, the war created a gap in socialization so that young people are unable to carry on traditions. They often do not share older values and are not used to agricultural work. Third, poverty and inequality deepened during the war and this acts as another barrier to unity. And, finally, NGOs foster a particular type of unity but it is not all-encompassing and some see it as inauthentic.

Trust after War

In this section, I discuss respondents' perceptions of trust in their villages.[30] Before asking respondents to evaluate trust and how it may have changed, we first need to understand how they define trust. Most often, respondents describe trust as helping others in times of trouble or need. When a family loses a loved one, or in cases of accidents or sicknesses, respondents say they know they can trust their neighbors if they come to support the family with food, money, physical labor, or expressions of solidarity. Sarah Lamunu, in Lukodi, explained:

[30] Respondents often brought up trust and community cohesiveness when they were asked at the very beginning of the interview to generally compare the quality of life now to life before the war, indicating that this is an essential element in their experiences of life in their village. Later in the interview, they were also asked directly if they feel close to their neighbors, what makes a good neighbor, and if they trust their neighbors.

> *I: Can you give me an example of trust that you experience in this village?*
> R: Yes, an example of trust is that although we have minor frictions among us, if there is something serious that takes place, like for example I lost a dear child or someone in the family, all those people around in the community they will converge together to sympathize with me. So, that is it. They will also raise money, and they will do some collections…[and] present it to whoever is in need…and say, this is our contribution in order to support you in this difficult time. So, this is trust in practice. It was very good in the past, it was better than now, but it is still there, it is not completely faded…A person who is trusted, even if you have a problem will not shy away, will always come and say, I do not have anything to present but here I've come to express solidarity. (Interview #17)

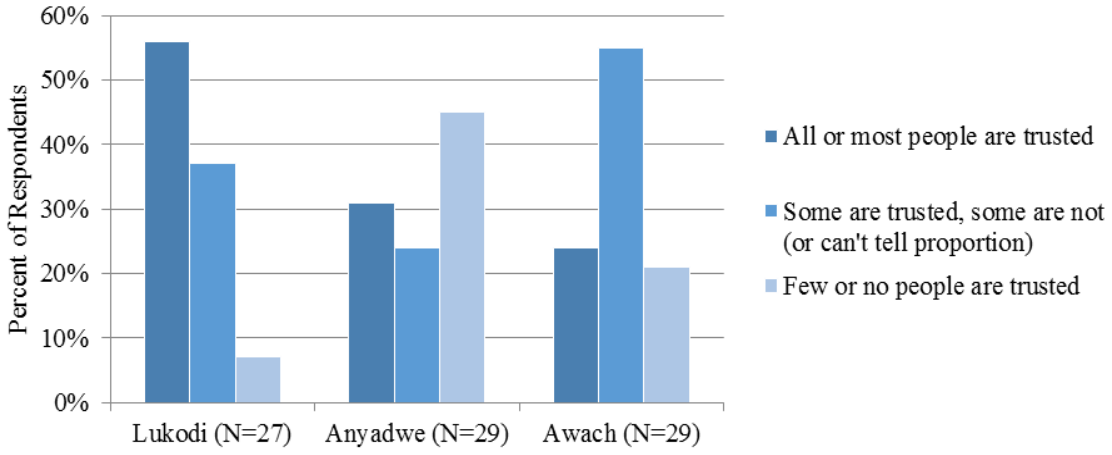
Trusted neighbors should be willing to offer loans for school fees, advice in cases of land disputes, transportation for a woman in labor, or other similar support in difficult situations. The second most common expression of trust to respondents is when people work together, such as digging together, participating in groups, and doing community service work. This type of communal work is discussed in a later section.

Varied Perceptions of Trust

Although they described their ideal picture of trust, not all respondents could describe specific examples of trust in action. Rather, respondents had a divergent range of views about whether or not people in their communities actually trust one another. As Figure 5.2 illustrates, perceived levels of trust vary significantly between the three villages. When asked, "*Do you think most people in your community can be trusted?*" respondents in Lukodi had the most favorable view of local trust. This can perhaps be attributed to the smaller, more homogeneous population in Lukodi or to the community building efforts launched by NGOs in the wake of the 2004 massacre. Additionally, just two people in Lukodi said they thought trust was very low in their community, compared to a much

higher proportion (45 percent) in Anyadwe. At the time of the interviews, Anyadwe had recently experienced divisive antagonisms over land conflict, which perhaps decreased perceptions of trust. I discuss land conflict in depth in the next chapter.

Figure 5.2. Levels of Trust Vary by Community



According to many, even those who thought trust is high, the level of trust has fallen since before the war. Wilson, a 42-year-old man in Awach, expressed a typical sentiment:

> *I: According to your observation do you think the people of this village are trusted?*
> R: The level of trust has fallen down…Only a few are trusted at the moment. As I said before, before the war broke out, people were living a sincere life, trust was there, the actual trust was there. When people returned from the camp they returned with a different attitude, the trust in them seriously deteriorated. It is now coming down lower and lower. People no longer trust one another.
> *I: So only a few are trusted?*
> R: Exactly that, only a few people are trusted at the moment…One can tell you something sincerely, but his innermost thought he will never disclose it to you. If he happens to know of something he will not tell you the exact version of what he heard. Trust has fallen deeply. (Interview #86)

Respondents described several types of people as untrustworthy or not trusted in their community. First, and perhaps most expectedly, many respondents do not trust people who drank, used drugs, stole, or were "evil" and practicing witchcraft.

Respondents also do not trust people who do not relate well to others, such as those who do not keep their promises, or who are dishonest, bitter, jealous, or greed. Finally, many respondents specify that they do not trust youth, meaning young people in their teens, twenties, and sometimes even thirties. Often, the negative behaviors described above are attributed to young people, particularly drinking, fighting, theft, greed, and laziness.

War, Poverty, & Weakening Trust

Some respondents made a direct, explicit connection between the lack of trust and the war and displacement. For example, they explained that the main problem with the youth is that they grew up in the camp, never knowing anything but war, so they are unaccustomed to living peacefully with neighbors, engaging in agricultural work, providing for themselves without handouts, and solving problems without violence. Otto James articulated this perspective:

> [The youth] are not trustworthy. If you recall, these are the bunch of children that were born in the camp, so it is that generation that grew within the war time. In the camp there was no order, there was only confusion and they grew in that environment of dishonesty and corruption and everything. They would see when food relief was brought, people would fight for food and the strongest would take a bigger portion while others would miss out. The children were seeing all that. So that gives them the impression that for survival you have to do anything—fight if it needs to fight, steal if you can steal it. And they have a new expression, they don't say "stealing" but they say "removing." "Removing" means to take it from one hand to another hand. Imagine—something evil is now painted with soft words: "Remove the article." It means steal it. As I said before, from the age of 13 to 18, these are a lost generation. At the back of their minds they just say, survival for the fittest. If you cannot use force [to get what you want], you use big cunning and remove it quietly. (Interview #60)

In addition to attributing the "lost generation" to the war, respondents also made other connections between the war and growing distrust. For example, a head teacher in Lukodi

explained that people cannot trust one another now because of the history of wrongs between them during the war. Another respondent, in Anyadwe, said that living in the camp made the community "complex," and there are now many types of people living together, so it is unrealistic to expect them all to trust one another.

From my observations, I learned that the war also indirectly contributed to the lack of trust in two ways: first, by igniting quarrels over land; and second, by increasing poverty and creating greater discrepancies between "rich" and poor. In responding to the trust interview question, nine respondents in Anyadwe, three in Awach, and one in Lukodi mentioned that land disputes lead to distrust in the community. Some explained that those involved in land disputes cannot trust one another, while others said more generally that they cannot trust people who are fighting over land or "grabbing" land. This is a major issue detracting from trust and unity in all three communities, one that is discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter.

Many respondents also explained that economic issues are at the center of distrust. Several respondents mentioned that trust is a unique challenge for people living in poverty. When you are poor, they explained, you do not have the luxury of trusting others to pay you when promised, you are struggling too much yourself to be able to help neighbors with their needs, and you may resort to less than admirable measures to make ends meet. Walter Ocira said, "When people are poor, they tend to do anything. Take for example a person who is starving. In order to get something, he can do anything or say anything" (Interview #30).

Several people also mentioned that they can only trust people who are at their same level of wealth, saying that the poor only trust the poor and the rich only trust the rich.[31] For example, Betty Labong, from Anyadwe, said:

> *I: Are the people within the community full of trust for one another?*
> R: Yes, there are some people who are really trusted, and people also trust them, but not everybody. The majority are not trusted.
> *I: Why is that so?*
> R: The problem is those who are already living an easy life, who seem to have most of the things they need, they feel that in bringing nearer to them the poor people, they will deplete their resources. So in order to keep them at bay, they are not to associate, not to give the impression that you love him or her, so that they are discouraged and they stay away from you. That is the mentality of most people here. If they are to socialize, they will do it at their level, with fellow rich fellows, but they cannot mix with less privileged people like us here. (Interview #44)

Ultimately, distrust between socio-economic groups means the rich and poor both see one another as fundamentally interested in the other's misfortune and unable to engage in social exchange without a question of exploitation and money. Frances, in Lukodi, explained how the rising importance of money is related to a concurrent decline in trust:

> R: People are money-minded. So when people can only exchange things it means trust is fading away. People should be able to help each other, even for free. It is now difficult to find people who can take something and give it off without requesting anything in return.
> *I: So it means a person who is not trusted cannot give things freely?*
> R: Yes, that person will not give anything to you freely. These days when you request something, the question will come back, "For how much?" So that question…means nothing is given freely. (Interview #19)

As Figure 5.2 indicated, there was a substantial minority of respondents, particularly in Lukodi, who did think that most people in their communities are trusted.

[31] The term "rich" needs to be understood in context, as very few (likely, none) members of these communities would be considered "rich" by external standards, but the better-off community members may have more permanent housing structures, livestock (particularly cattle), money for school fees, and access to larger-scale farming techniques, like ox-plows.

Unfortunately, however, there were many respondents who reported that most people cannot be trusted and they feel unsure about whether or not people in their community would really help them in times of need. As David, a religious leader in Anyadwe, explained, people who do not trust each other will not look out for their neighbor and their distrust can lead to fear, sabotage, and rejoicing in neighbors' misfortunes:

> *I: Are [people who cannot trust each other] in this community?*
> R: Yes, the moment a person comes to suspect even slightly that you can harm him, he will always live in doubt. He will always keep you in question mark. When I have any slight suspicion that you are against me, I will also fear you…when I know that you are against me, I will not trust you anymore, and that means I don't love you anymore. And if I hear anything that will harm you, I will just simply keep quiet, I will not alert you. Because to me, your downfall is even better; I will rejoice over your downfall. Sometimes such a person may even be the one now drawing some schemes to destroy you. Either he will keep you uninformed, or he may even actively take part in trapping you. (Interview #40)

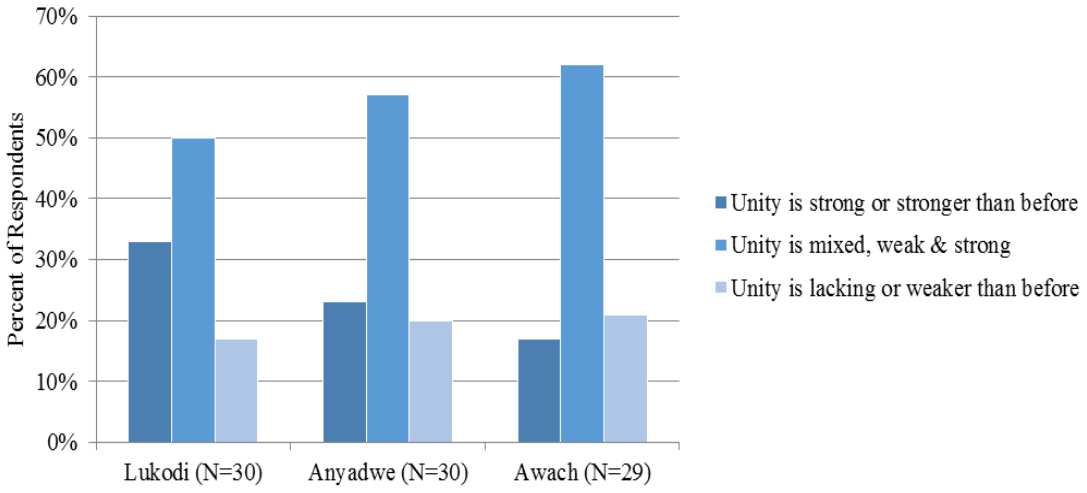
Ultimately, this environment of distrust seems to spring from the displacement period, in which people were pitted against one another in a struggle to survive and make ends meet. With the decline of agricultural activity in the camp, the influx of outside resources, and the rise of wage labor and small businesses, interactions now seem to be heavily focused around money, which people fault as giving rise to greed and jealousy. As many now live in situations of dire poverty, struggling to restart their productive agricultural activities after having lost essentially all their assets during the war, people seem reluctant to help their neighbors in need, even if some technically have the means to do so.

How War Can Help & Hurt Unity

Exploring trust and distrust is one way to understand social cohesion, but the interviews also asked respondents to comment more directly on unity. When asked "*Do you think the people of your village are united?*" and "*If you compare it to the time before the war, are people more or less united now?*" most respondents described a mixed picture of unity in their villages. Respondents were asked first to define a "united community," and they typically described positive characteristics, such as people working collectively in farm work, coming together to solve problems, celebrating together, helping out in times of troubles, and visiting one another regularly. They also described an absence of some behaviors, such as people not "backbiting" one another (talking behind someone's back), not quarreling, and not lying to one another. Some also described more intangible characteristics, such as people feeling close to one another and having "one mind" with their neighbors.

Three unique perspectives emerged, as Figure 5.3 shows. First, there are some respondents who viewed unity quite positively, and discussed how unity has improved since (or because of) the war. Second, there were a minority of respondents who spoke unequivocally about the lack of unity since the war. Most respondents, however, described a mixed picture of unity, praising some positive developments in post-war unity, but at the same time leveling serious critiques.

Figure 5.3. Respondents See Mixed Picture of Unity



Similarly to their positive views on trust, respondents in Lukodi were more likely than those in Anyadwe or Awach to see post-war unity as strong. As depicted in Figure 5.3, nearly a third of respondents in Lukodi said that their community was united or that their unity was stronger than it was before the war. Overwhelmingly, however, most respondents in all three communities described a mixed picture of unity, discussing some ways that unity is weak and some elements of strong unity. Unlike trust, views on unity were relatively consistent across communities. This perhaps suggests that asking about unity is a broader question, less affected by particularities of social relationships in specific villages. The trust question, however, is more specific and tangible, asking if respondents actually trust their neighbors. Together, these two measures provide a more nuanced picture of social relationships than either could separately.

"Unity That Came with the War"

Respondents who felt unity had actually improved since or *because of* the war cite several reasons. One explanation is that being displaced to the camps forced people into greater physical proximity to one another. Bosco, a business leader in Anyadwe, talked of how he now tries to maintain the relationships he formed while in the camp:

> I do not deny there was unity among people before the war, but I feel that the unity has grown…this unity involves people of the bigger community, and wherever you move you find—even in the remotest corner of the community—people know each other, and they are even interested in one another. So I think this unity is better. In a way, when we were pushed together to the camp, we started becoming acquainted with one another. We became close friends in the camp, and when the camp was dismantled and we were to leave and go to different directions, our link still remains. Even up to now when we are living kilometers apart, I will still take time and ride to my friend who is on the other end of the sub-county, and we feel still as close as before, despite the distance that has been created. So to me, that is a sign of unity that came with the war. (Interview #37)

Not only were people pushed together, but they found they needed to rely on one another to a greater extent than before the war. Juliano explained how people needed one another to survive:

> Before the war, people were carefree. In fact, they had everything so there was little need to unite, because you had almost everything you needed, all you wanted for your family. So before the war, people lived their own lives individually, not caring so much for their neighbors, because they actually did not need the help of their neighbors. But when the war broke out, people felt they needed one another. If you get a piece of news, you will run to share with you neighbor: "Remember this thing is happening like this, there." So people became united as a result of suffering. So I would say that the war somehow forced people to unite and the level of unity now is higher than that before the war. Yes, the level of unity has developed. (Interview #28)

Some emphasized the spread of poverty during the war, saying this actually improved unity by bringing people together and forcing them to rely on one another.

Additionally, some respondents see less inequality in the post-war period, which also strengthens unity, as everyone is now "at the same level." When Thomas, a middle-aged man in Awach, was asked to compare unity now to before the war, he talked about how poverty forces unity:

> When I look at it carefully, at that time there was peace, fine. But the unity that was there was not as clearly seen and felt as now. People had almost everything they wanted, therefore there was not much need to come together. People could afford anything without coming to a neighbor. Now when I see, after the war, I think it is poverty that is now pushing people to unite. So, there is higher level of unity today after the war than it was before the war. (Interview #84)

Thomas went on to say that NGOs and government programs played a role in teaching people how to come together to help support one another, saying "All this came about because the NGOs and the government organs I think trained the people to come closer to one another." This was an explanation offered by several respondents for improved unity. For example, a woman in Awach explained that unity is strong, and she attributes this to NGOs combating ignorance:

> R: Yes, [now] people just help you. When they understand your problem, they help you…when they understand the kind of help you need, they offer to help…
> *I: So I've gathered from you now that there is at least unity in this community…Am I right? What about in the past?*
> R: Maybe in the past it was ignorance. Although there was peace, the people were not so much united because of ignorance. But today people are all kinds of sensitized. These days we have so many people who are literate and informed. Now, these days we have a lot of NGOs. These NGOs, when they see where life is low and can be uplifted, they come in straight away. (Interview #74)

Similar responses emphasized the rise of education and information, saying that people are better informed about the benefits of working together, giving them a "deeper awareness" of unity. Felix Ojok, an elected leader in Lukodi, framed it explicitly in terms

of people knowing their rights because of NGO "sensitization." He said this is a positive result of the war:

> …if I compare the level of unity and the quality of unity I would say this unity will eventually be superior to the unity that I knew before the war. Because there have been more sensitization programs, people are very united. People know their rights and they know the rights of their neighbors, so this unity is an informed unity. Although war is generally very bad and we don't like it, but after having suffered this war, people have learned something new. They've learned to unite, they've learned to do things collectively. So this is something that might have not been learned quickly if there were no war. So I'm not encouraging war but I'm saying out of this war, something positive also came up. (Interview #9)

Relatedly, a few respondents emphasized that NGO and government programs helped to create small groups in the community, which increase unity among people. This is a phenomenon that will be addressed in greater detail later in the chapter.

It is important to emphasize that some survivors of war see the war and living in the camps as actually having improved unity. It is tempting to tell a monolithic, bleak narrative of how war destroys everything good in peoples' lives. In this case, however, some respondents not only see that unity survived the war, but also recognize some ways that the war may have unexpectedly helped.

"A Form of Unity Which is not Real"

However, as Figure 5.3 revealed, most respondents had a mixed perception of unity, describing both positive and negative aspects of post-war unity, seeing people as united in some ways, but also expressing concern that unity is in some ways inauthentic or incomplete. For example, when asked if they think their community is united, many respondents said it was, but when asked follow up questions (particularly asking them to

compare unity now to that of the past), they went on to reveal conflicted perceptions of unity. In this vein, Frank Acellam, a leader of a school in Anyadwe, said that people are united, but not to the level of before the war:

> …currently, people are united. Only that for us, who at least have knowledge about the past, we see that there is a difference. But if somebody never knew what was there, they see that people are united. And they are united. If you don't want to compare [to before the war]. That's it. (Interview #39)

Auma Christine explained that before the war, they did not use the term *jirani*, which means "neighbor." Rather, before the war, people saw one another as family, without the one step removal that seeing someone as a neighbor implies. She explained the rise of the concept of *jirani*:

> The unity of those days was good because of these reasons: those days we used not to have the issues of neighbors. You would term them as children in the homestead. But the word *jirani* just came because of the camp. [Before the war] there was unity within the homestead, and whenever you were not there, you would find that your home has been taken care of very well. That was the kind of unity that used to exist. But now days the unity is in halves—only with the neighbors that you cooperate with. (Interview #77)

Others similarly said that there is unity, but that it is lacking some way, such as: there are only "pockets" of unity; there is not "sincerity" in today's unity; people come together when they have to but not "spontaneously"; people only unite with those who are "cooperative"; and people unite only if there are serious problems, not in everyday situations. A man in Anyadwe said, "People are still living just their individual lives. If we meet, we meet just to sell and buy, like in the market, or to drink, but we don't call that one communal is stricter sense" (Interview #60). Some respondents said that unity now is fundamentally of a different type than the unity in the past, whereas others said that recreating unity is a process and they just are not yet to the "same level" or as "full-

fledged" as unity in the past. Respondents also explained that some people choose not to participate in unity, instead preferring to be isolated, or that people may appear united, but that may not really be their true feelings:

> There is unity in all these homes, but all are different. In Acholi, they say that a calabash is clean from outside, but dirty from inside, meaning that someone might welcome you outwardly, but you might not know what he or she has at heart. He might just say something with the mouth, but from the heart he will be saying, "I just talk to this person because I have to, but I don't like him totally and completely." He would be saying that, "I wish this person would just go to my hut; he wouldn't come out alive." (Interview #71)

Rather than joining together because of a desire to be with one another, several respondents said that people only "unite" in order to benefit in some way, creating an instrumental type of unity. Steven Okumu, a cultural leader in Lukodi, described this as an "artificial" unity:

> *I: If you compare the level of unity now and the level of unity before the war, are they the same?*
> R: Yes, there is a big difference; that unity was superb, it was a clear and sincere unity. This unity that people are trying now is conditional, you come together if you want to get something. It's not so much love and affection that binds you, but it is if you want to get something you have to come together. So, to me, this unity is not real, but it is a form of unity anyway…Today we are trying, but honestly it is not the level of unity that was experienced before the war…the kind of unity we have is a form of unity which is not real…the heart is externally showing unity, but secretly and deep down is full of a lot of questions. And that is the kind of unity we are living with. It is like, I would say, an artificial unity. (Interview #5)

Respondents described how people will come together when they think they are going to benefit, attend community meetings when they think they will be paid, and work together on projects that will directly help themselves. Their expectations are colored by their interactions with NGO and government programs during the war and resettlement, which would not only bring development projects to the villages, but would pay "sitting

allowances" to people who would come to meetings, participate in workshops, or receive training. A reverend in Lukodi, Evelyn Auma, explained how people begin attending church again when they hear rumors that a project may be starting:

> *I: In this village do you think people are united?*
> R: Well, it is difficult to measure the level of unity here. But one thing I can say with certainty is that when there is something interesting, something people know is good, then you can see the way people can come up fast. For example, if people come to know that there is help—like it happened here in Lukodi that the Church of Uganda came up with a project to support a certain category of people. On announcing that in the church, you can see the turn up, it means people turn up very fast when they know they're going to benefit. Even those who did not used to come for prayer, you will see the level how they pray now more regularly. (Interview #1)

In contrast to the respondents in the previous section who said that poverty since the war has improved unity, many others linked post-war economic shifts to decreased unity. These respondents said that *because* people are so poor, it makes unity impossible. People are focusing on their own lives and their own families' survival, so they are not left with the will, energy, or even the resources needed to cooperate with one another. Further, some said that in the post-war period, the rich and the poor are less united, as the rich scorn the poor and those who are particularly vulnerable are left to fend for themselves. As a village health leader explained:

> *I: …do you think this community is united?*
> R: They are not.
> *I: Okay. Can you tell me more?*
> R: Because in this community, the rich…don't mind about people. The poor, they are just left, they are suffering there. The handicapped, who cannot do anything, they are just left, they are suffering. Some of them are still in the camp. They have nowhere to go. I say they are not united at all. They don't care about people. They don't care about the old, they don't care about the people with AIDS. So they are not united really. (Interview #35)

Extending upon this, some said that the rise of money has led to jealousy and greed, which is incompatible with unity. People try to monopolize program resources for only their families, are jealous of others' successes, and think that money is the only way to solve their problems. George, a religious leader, said, "Nowadays, people unite because they want to benefit; it's full of greed…Nowadays you unite only for a short time and then people get divided. The love for money has grown" (Interview #68). Betty, a young woman in Awach, said that people unite to benefit personally, but they also actively try to keep their neighbors from benefiting, so they join groups with people not in their immediate areas:

> It is difficult to understand completely the mind of an individual what he or she thinks in his heart. Maybe there are some elements in the community that they are opposed to and they think that if they bring development here, their so-called enemy will become beneficiaries. It could be some selfish thought of this kind or that maybe the person is too hard-working that he will excel and become even better than me. When there is an opportunity for anything, instead of letting the people of his or her community understand it first, he will go and alert people in another community to take the chance to make use of such opportunity. (Interview #73)

Some respondents directly connected this rise of greed and selfishness to the war, such as Wilson in Awach:

> When the war came and now the war is gone, all of the unity among people has fallen miserably…These days people are money-minded, too much money minded. All because while in the camp the people suffered too much and they've come to believe more and more in the use of money. They think that it's only money that can get them out of problems. It has gone down in the belief of the people, people have got that conviction. People have left the camp and returned to their home, but their mentality has not changed. (Interview #86)

Additionally, as with trust, disputes over land use and ownership is directly connected to unity. Respondents talked both about how the emergence of land conflict is indicative of

fallen unity and, on the flip side, how land conflict divides people and destroys unity. This is a topic which is addressed in much greater detail in the next chapter.

While respondents discussed above noted key benefits to unity that may have come from the war, many other respondents linked the disintegration of unity to wartime experiences and life in the camps. First of all, the camps brought economic and lifestyle changes that exacerbated tensions and decreased unity. For example, one respondent spoke of how rich and poor had to live beside one another in the camps, and this brought tensions between them. Another told of how people from many areas were gathered together, all with distinct behaviors and practices, which caused strain in the community. Others talked of increasing laziness as people were not farming. Richard Oyat, the headmaster of a school, described how the camp cultivated a survival of the fittest mentality, which is still causing division because post-war program resources are not split equally among all residents:

> *I: Why do you think there is no unity now days?*
> R: The lifestyle. That is how I look at it. When people were in the camp it was a matter of being the strongest and who is fast, and that is what people think of. And if possible everything should be for free, according to them. This is the attitude in the community…They always want free things, and if it's there he should get more than the others. And that is what is causing division among people. There is no equal distribution…[Y]ou find that one will just pick the auntie's son [to receive benefits], and this is causing division to the society. And others just end up saying, no, this is for so and so's family…And yet there are others who are struggling on their own. Others are benefitting. (Interview #67)

In addition to these changes that occurred in the camps, according to respondents, unity has also been weakened because people have grievances over war-time abuses and accusations, resulting in continuing enmity. For example, some members of the community who were abducted in the course of the war committed abuses or killed others

in the community. Or, as Moro, a young man in Lukodi, described, there are cases where an individual abducted another person from the community, and then they eventually return, yet the one they abducted never came back:

> *I: Do you see any difference between this life and the life you lived here before the war, regarding unity?*
> R: Yes, there is a problem here. During the war some LRA, who happened to come from this village, came back and abducted yet other youth, and took those youth into the bush. Sometimes these youth they have taken did not come back, but they, instead, managed to come back. So people have got that grievance, that so-and-so abducted my son or my daughter, took him or her to the bush, and we don't know what has become of our children, but they somehow returned and they are so healthy. So that kind of pointing and accusing fingers, stigmatizing those people, is still there. People really look at them in silence, that, my daughter or my son did not return, but he came back, and yet he took them. But before the war, there were no grievances of that kind because nothing had happened among people, so there was no cause of enmity; but today is a different story.
> *I: So it means people are not united?*
> R: Yes, they are not so much united because, naturally, if people know that you took the son or the daughter of so-and-so…if you come back alive the way they will look at you is that deep down in their hearts they have maybe not forgiven you. (Interview #22)

In addition to such deep harbored feelings, according to Acholi culture, when there is such a conflict or wrong between two parties, their families are not to interact with one another until it is officially resolved. One respondent talked of how war breeds division, particularly along clan or family lines, as people are unable or unwilling to let go of what happened in the past:

> …For me, another cause of being a divided community is recalling things that might have happened in the past. You know our past contains both the good and the bad, but sometimes people are not willing to let the bad things of the past go. They are somehow still clinging to that and they continue telling the generations to come that, remember in the past so and so did us like this…When people have [this] already deep down in their heart, at the surface they may try to coat it with sweet words and smile, but the smiles are not even sincere, and deep down in their heart they are hating each other and that one is serious…I've already noticed that many times when people fight at the beer party, sometimes serious fights, it's

> not because they have picked a fight but it means they have kind of reopened the old wounds. The wounds are already there but it's a matter of just opening the cover and then the whole thing will explode. (Interview #49)

A few other respondents similarly talked of how people were traumatized during the war and in the camps, and this, understandably, made them less able to trust and feel less united with their neighbors. Although not all, or not even the majority, of respondents brought up such issues in discussing trust and unity, it is likely that this unspoken context of deep and recent trauma colors their perceptions of post-war social life.

This section has shown a complex picture of post-war unity. Some told the unexpected story of how the war helped strengthen unity, essentially forcing unity through camp proximity, poverty, and the struggle to survive—all facilitated by NGOs' "sensitization" about unity. Yet, most saw problems and challenges to post-war unity, speaking of the emergence of *jirani*, isolated pockets of unity, and insincere or instrumental unity. These challenges to unity emerge directly from the experience of war and displacement, particularly through the prevalence of a "survival of the fittest" mentality and lasting enmity over war-time wrongs. In the following sections, I turn to three additional causal mechanisms that help explain how the war affected unity: the loss of culture and traditions, the decline in communal work, and the emergence of small groups as the dominant form of social organization.

Destruction & Loss of Culture

Many interview respondents and other people in the course of fieldwork talked about culture as something that they used to have, but during the war it was destroyed or lost.

Some said that Acholi communities do not have culture anymore, while others talked about a process of rebuilding the culture that was damaged. Of course, it is not unusual to romanticize the past, even in the absence of a war, but people in northern Uganda expressed deep concern over how this affects their current lives and may affect their future; for this reason, I explore the source of their concern.

In post-war villages, many residents are distraught by the lack of solidarity. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are various types of unity or solidarity that can hold people together. In the course of my fieldwork, residents of northern Uganda expressed a longing for the substantive or mechanical solidarity of their past, when people felt united by shared values and understandings that they now lack. At the same time, there is not strong procedural or organic solidarity, either, because their social organization is not based upon difference or specialization. Most respondents, it seems, are left wondering what holds their communities together at all. For many, culture and tradition are the essential, substantive glue that are necessary to solidify bonds between people in their communities; without culture, they are not certain what can hold people together.

When talking about the "loss of culture," people typically spoke of culture as a fixed "thing," a conception that does not fit well with social scientists' perceptions of culture as ever-changing ways that people think and interact with others and the material world. Although people in Uganda use the word "culture" in this particular context, I suggest that they are referring to a set of phenomenon quite distinct from sociologists' perceptions and perhaps better akin to the concept of "traditions." Specifically, when people talked about the loss of culture, they most often referred to: 1) long-standing

communal practices; 2) leadership structures of elders and chiefs; and 3) rituals connecting the spiritual and physical worlds.

Many people in northern Uganda lament the decrease or disappearance of specific communal traditions. Particularly, many respondents talked about the lack of customary dances. In the past, people would come together to dance for a wide range of occasions, such as celebrations, events honoring leaders, and funeral dances. Particular dances were practiced by certain segments of the population, such as dances intended specifically for young people or women. Although there are some dance troupes still functioning, they tend to be relatively specialized, rather than involving large segments of the population in the ritual. Another practice that as often cited as disappeared is that of *wang oo*, which is when members of a household sit around a courtyard fire at night for the elders to tell stories to the children. Lapolo Gloria, a woman in Anyadwe, explained the practice:

> In the past, there was what we call *wang oo*, and in the evening children, women, men, youth, all gathered around the *wang oo*. They would sit there and narrate many things. Somebody can tell his story of the day, what happened, his plan for tomorrow. Others will also tell tales or stories with some meaning. Also that is the time to teach the children moral values, of how to live respectably in the community. So it was a meaningful time, but *wang oo* is gone with the war. Now we are trying to see if it can be revived. (Interview #45)

As this quote alludes, many respondents highly value leadership from elders, and thus see declines in traditional leadership structures as extremely problematic. Many of these leaders passed away while people were in the camps, and a new generation of leaders did not emerge during that chaotic time period. Additionally, several respondents described the elders and leaders now as weak, corrupt, or otherwise unable to perform the

tasks of leadership. Betty, a young woman in Awach quoted earlier, said that elders now are lost themselves, which makes them unable to lead the younger generations:

> *I: What caused people in the past to be more united and not so much now?*
> R: I think our culture was valued and it was cherished and it was taught by the elders to the younger generations. So, the elders were taking time to instruct the younger generation, a thing I don't see any more these days. Though I was still young, I am able to remember [before war] to compare with this life. And I confirmed from my parents. They say that life was very good. Even my parents, they say that this life now is a kind of degenerated life. The elders [have] lost direction themselves. I could even say that the brilliant elders that used to cherish the [younger] generation by instructing them are all gone. The elders we have today are indifferent elders…they themselves are already a lost case…so they are lost and the children [now] do whatever they like, without guidance. There is peace, but minus this good culture, our life is ruined. (Interview #73)

Adong Evelyn explained that elders were the "conscience of the community," and said there are no longer such elders around to safeguard unity:

> *I: Why do you say [before the war] was the best kind of unity?*
> R: Because people used to actually value unity very much, and they were speaking the truth, and that was it. Elders were there, and the elders were very concerned with the unity of the community members. They were like the conscience of the community. They would tell you, do this and don't do that. This one is bad. And people were very obedient to the elders. That forced unity very much before the war. Now, there are no elders; all those wonderful elders are gone now. What we have now are just an indifferent confused lot of elders. These present elders, they don't stand up as those elders used to do and speak with boldness, maybe discouraging some things or promoting something good. (Interview #78)

According to respondents, respect for elders and traditional leaders has declined because of this lack of leadership but also because the generation that grew up in the camps did not learn respect for leaders to the same extent that past generations had. As such, elders, clan leaders, and chiefs have seen a decline in their influence and respect in the community. The most important local level traditional leaders, the *rodi kweri*, have declined in importance; their role is to oversee communal life as it involves farming, but

there are increasing numbers of people not participating in communal work (as I address in the next section) or even farming at all.

Finally, people see a deep connection of the spirit world and the physical world, and traditional rituals are used to maintain positive relationships between the two. When there are bad spirits or unresolved spiritual issues, there are repercussions not only for physical health or well-being, but also on relationships between people in the community. There are bad spirits (*cen*) from things that happened in the war, but also between people in the resettlement period. Because people, particularly the young generation, are less aware or mindful of these issues (and what practices are needed to cleanse *cen*), many see the relationships between people as contaminated.

Lapolo Gloria, the young woman quoted above talking about *wang oo*, talked about how people are trying to reclaim these elements of their culture or traditions that bring people together:

> *I: If you compare the quality and the level of unity now to that level of unity that existed before the war, what comparison can you make?*
> R: I can say that people are just learning to live again as a community, because during the camp life, that was not a community life. People were like they were in prison. You don't call prisoners community, they are just forced to live together. But now people have come out of the prison—called camp—and they are now learning how to recapture the value of cultural heritage. It is still a process, and it is not perfect either. (Interview #45)

Some previous scholarship on post-conflict rebuilding suggests that communities must form a "new normal," rather than focusing too much energy on trying to recreate their previous life (Corkalo et al. 2004). In northern Uganda, however, I found a distinct desire to preserve or rebuild key elements from communal life before the war. The next section

turns to communal work in the villages, which is a highly valued element of culture that respondents nearly unanimously cited as essential to trust, unity, and cohesiveness.

Shifting Interdependence and Reliance

In order to transfer the "peace," decided by elites, from fragile coexistence to a deeper sense of community, daily social contact is essential, as it promotes "indirect" reconciliation (Biro et al. 2004; Daly and Sarkin-Hughes 2007).

Communal Work as an Expression of Unity

Respondents said that the practice of communal work is the primary way in which residents practice interdependence and reliance.[32] "Digging in the garden" is residents' predominant daily activity, with survival depending upon agricultural productivity. While this work is often done individually, there are also important systems of communal work. This section discusses communal work practices in the post-war period, arguing that there have been significant changes to such practices as a result of the war and displacement.

Although important, respondents were not only interested in communal work as a way to increase agricultural productivity; rather, they described communal digging as essential to community life, so they were very concerned about declines or changes in

[32] Respondents talked about communal work, interdependence, and reliance in response to several interview questions. When asked what makes a community united and if their village is united, many people talked about collective work. Respondents also talked about interdependence and reliance when they were asked to describe a recent project where people worked together for the good of the community, when they were asked to describe their daily activities and recent interactions, and when they were asked about the last time they needed to ask for help from someone.

these practices. In defining unity, many respondents said that they know a community is united if people are working collectively; therefore, respondents often idealized group digging because they saw it as intimately connected to unity. There are many positive social benefits to collective work, such as functioning as a time to share information and knowledge, teach young people, support vulnerable community members who need help, get to know each other, and socialize with neighbors. A woman in Anyadwe explained that working in groups shows that people are united:

> *I: When we say the people of Ajulu are united, what does it mean?*
> R: That is when you don't practice jealousy and enmity, when you live like children of one family and yet you are a big community. When we live in a group. Everything we do together, we maybe celebrate together, we have meetings together. In garden work, ranging from digging, going to weeding, going to harvest, going to thrashing and harvesting, we do it always in a group. Then you can say the community is united. People who come to visit will go back knowing that the people of this village are truly united. (Interview #50)

Nearly every respondent explained that digging collectively was a defining feature of lives in their villages before the war. Because of this, they usually explained, the unity of the past was stronger than it is now. Since returning home, however, communal work is less common and the type of group work has changed. Betty, a resident of Awach, talked of the value of communal work, and explained that it is no longer happening as it did in the past:

> *I: What is the difference, do you think people were more united in the past than now?*
> R: Yes, in the past people were practicing unity single-heartedly.
> *I: Can you give an example to show that people were more united in the past than now?*
> R: Even digging, people used to dig together. In this area here, everybody would just flock together. They say that today, we are going to dig the garden of so and so everybody will turn up there. You dig together and have social time together, social moments together. If somebody has encountered some hardship or has lost

> a dear one people will come to such a person. But these days things are different. Although people are enjoying peace, the unity is lacking. So, people in the past before the war were more united and now people after the war are severely divided. (Interview #73)

Communal Farming Practices

There are different systems of communal work, with varying expectations for rotation and for compensation. *Aleya* is the most common type of collective work now, and most respondents claimed that it is the only type of communal work that is still practiced. *Aleya* is a rotating system of collective digging, in which the group of usually not more than ten people digs in the field of one group member each day. Typically, they decide by lottery the order of the fields they will dig. There is no expectation for payment at all, and at the end of the day, the group members go to their respective homes, joining together again the next day to dig the next member's field. These rotating digging groups are often nearby neighbors and extended family members, and while some groups have both women and men, several respondents said that women are more likely to work collectively.

While *aleya* was happening in all three communities, it was most common in Lukodi; in contrast, several respondents in Anyadwe and Awach said that even *aleya* was not happening at all, clearly indicating that, at a minimum, some people are left out of communal work activities. Part of the explanation for this difference may lay in how much people trust their neighbors. To devote time and energy to working in neighbors' fields, it is necessary to trust that neighbors will also show up to help when it is time to dig your field. As noted previously, in Lukodi, 56 percent of respondents felt that they

could trust all (or almost everyone) in their community, and this trust likely influences the prevalence of rotating group work.

Although many respondents did say they dig in *aleya* groups, it is not practiced uniformly within communities. In Anyadwe, particularly, quite a few respondents say that no form of communal work, including *aleya*, is happening in their area at all, with a few saying that there had been efforts to start such work, but that it always seemed to fail. Similarly in Awach, several respondents said there was no collective work, as Adong Evelyn insisted, even after repeated questioning from the interviewer:

> *I: Can you recall a time when the people of Paduny here came together to work for the common good of the people?*
> R: No, nothing.
> *I: You mean the whole of Paduny Paromo here has never come up to do something in common, in a group?*
> R: Nothing. Under this *rwot kweri*, we have never come up to do something as a group.
> *I: How about in the whole of Paduny? Here in Paduny Paromo, when people came to do some communal work…?*
> R: Nothing, nothing, I have not seen anything. I haven't seen anything good that they have done.
> *I: Do you mean that you don't cooperate, you don't collaborate to do communal work?*
> R: No, we don't unite…as far as sharing work, a communal work, is concerned I have never seen any. That one I have never seen any.
> *I: It means you…don't collaborate to do any work for the good of the community?*
> R: No, nothing, nothing.
> *I: …Maybe on some days the leaders will say, "You people we want you to come together on such a day to do this kind of work"?*
> R: Well, I can say that before the war, the village chief would mobilize people to come and maybe take turns in digging the field of every community member…But that was before we went to the camp. Now that we have returned from the camp, nothing like that has happened, not even the *rwot okoro* or the *rwot kweri* has come up to mobilize people. Such things are not there anymore, so people are doing their individual work.
> *I: What about the leaders who sometimes mobilize people to come and do such work? …Is there anything besides digging that people come to do together?*

> R: Nothing. Nothing, up to now as I am speaking, there is nothing like that. Nothing is happening here. In other communities or other villages it may be a different story. Here, nothing completely. (Interview #78)

A few said that people would occasionally join together temporarily for a task, but disband after they accomplished it. Many respondents in these two communities agreed that while some people may participate in *aleya*, there are many others who do not, instead only working individually.

Even in Lukodi, where *aleya* was reported more commonly than in the other two communities, many respondents explained that the practice is not being done "to the same level" as it was in the past. For example, there may be internal dissention, conflict, and gossip in the group, as a woman in Lukodi explained:

> *I: Are [people in the village] united?*
> R: Yes, they are united although there is also some degree of weakness in that unity. For instance, they would start up a group for digging together called *aleya*. But after some time, there is a split again in that group and people pair in twos or sometimes a small band, so this kind of weakness. So, unity is there but unity with some deformity also…
> *I: …Can you explain a little more?*
> R: Yes, it's kind of weakness within the unity—I give an example that we accept to go and dig a field together of one of our neighbors and we all converge there and maybe I'm first in finishing my portion of digging very fast and leave others behind and I come home. But some people who may feel ill of me will begin to speak all kinds of things when I've gone home. So, this is the kind of weakness I see. It is weakness within the unity…
> *I: So after that now you will begin to live in tension and doubting one another.*
> R: Yeah, it sometimes deteriorates so badly that a member or some members will decide to leave the group because of things happening like that. (Interview #17)

Even where *aleya* is happening, respondents described the practice as more "selective," not "whole-hearted," or on a "smaller scale" than it was before the war.

While *aleya* is still happening, at least to some extent, other forms of collective work are not. Most commonly, respondents lamented the loss of a practice called *awak*.

For *awak*, people dig in a large group, usually mobilized by local leaders, and they are typically "compensated" at the end of the day in food and beer. A few people said that community members in the past would come for *awak* even if they were not going to receive food and drink, because they were responding to a need of someone in the village. Respondents described *awak* as a "special kind of unity" and as an important social event. A 58-year-old woman in Awach said:

> *I: If you are to compare on how people rely on each other now and how people relied on each other before the war, how is it?*
> R: There is a lot of difference, because those days there was a lot of reliance, but now days there is only little reliance…In those days there was a type of digging called *awak*, whereby people would come and dig—maybe the whole village would come together and dig. And then they would dig and drink alcohol and then eat food. They would sing and dance, and then there would be a competition among women that she should also host an *awak*. But now days it's no more…
> *I: What is the difference between awak and aleya?*
> R: *Awak* involves a lot of cooking…They only dig in *aleya* and people disperse, but in *awak* people come and sit together. They eat, they tell stories, they drink, and they dance. Other people get so drunk they dance and sing, and people are very happy. (Interview #80)

Awak was so important because it was a representation of large-scale unity of the whole village and was a time for the community to celebrate and enjoy being together. While a few respondents in Awach (not the other villages) said that this had happened since the war, most people said that *awak* was not happening at all.

Causes of the Decline in Communal Farming

The loss of *awak* is important to respondents not only as a representation of the loss of unity among neighbors, but also because it highlights two problematic elements of post-war life: 1) a decline in respect for previously important leadership structures; and 2) an

increase in inequality between the rich and the poor. Mobilizing the community for *awak* falls under the purview of the chiefs of farming, the *rodi kweri* and *rodi okoro*. Some leaders confided in the interview about how difficult they find it now to unite people, as a religious leader in Awach explained:

> But now days…if you say that people should go and do the work at once, the youth always divert. The older ones will always be complaining that they are unable…[People] always say that they have no reason to do the work because there is no money to do the work. This is causing a lot of pain to the leaders. It's getting so hard for the leaders to unite people, because people have so much greed for money. If you bring any good project for people to work on at once, people will always have differences and another will prefer maybe to do the work another time. Others will maybe also come up with a different way of wanting to do the thing, causing a lot of disagreement within people. There is also very little respect between the people. There is very little respect among the people. (Interview #68)

Residents were similarly disillusioned by the inability of these leaders—who played such a significant role in pre-war life—to bring people together. A few even said that there had been attempts to mobilize people for *awak*, but then nobody showed up for the work, resulting in wasted food that had been prepared:

> There was an attempt that the people were mobilized…The intention was to have a group for digging, but it never worked out; nobody turned up. So it remained just a wish. Imagine if you call people like that, they all promise they will come, and you prepare a big quantity of food, expecting them to come and eat it after duty, only to realize that no one turns up. That cooking is a waste; you have wasted a lot of food that could have lasted some days. (Interview #45)

Secondly, according to respondents, post-war collective work practices highlight inequality between those with some money and those who have none. Many said that people now will not help in someone else's field without expecting payment. What this means is that people with money (or "strength") can still mobilize large groups of people for communal work, for payment. A security and peace officer in Awach, Michael,

explained the value of money in communal work; in the quote below, he used the Acholi word *kero*, which literally means "strength," to refer to money:

> *I: If you are to compare the way people rely on each other now days and those days when there was no war, what is the difference?*
> R: In the past people used to stay with each other a lot, but now days I see people would prefer to do their things individually. In the past people used to mostly dig in groups, people used to mobilize and dig in groups, but now days it's very different because if someone has money [*kero*] he would just go ahead and call people to do his work…Now days people don't like relying on each other. If they have money [*kero*] to do something, they just go ahead and they do it without calling anyone to come and help [without pay]. (Interview #69)

Thus, those who do not have the means to provide food, drink, or payment are unable to mobilize the community members for collective work.

On the other hand, some saw a positive side to increasing income inequality. A few people talked about how now the poor are actually more united because in order to survive they must work together in a group. An elderly woman in Lukodi, where *aleya* is practiced most commonly, explained that while *awak* is problematic for people who are poor, *aleya* works well:

> R: *Awak* is not so much practiced but *aleya* [is]…some people…can mobilize people because they can prepare food and drink for people. When those who [have] less…invite them, they don't respond. So, it is like a competition between the well to do and those who are poor. So now, the practice that is now common and it can be done by any category of people is *aleya*…
> *I: If you compare the level of unity now and that which was practiced before the war, is there any difference?*
> R: Yes, there is a difference. The difference is that, this way of life concerning community work has made people more united than in the past. In the past some people were so well off that they didn't mind the rest. Even if nobody came to their home or to help them, they had everything. But today, in order to get the help of your neighbors, you have to join the group. So, I think this one is better because whether you like it or not, if you want to live together, you have to come to the group. So, if those who keep out there, they don't want to join the group, they consider themselves wealthy, eventually they will find themselves not even going well with the community. Those who consider themselves the poor, they

> say, ok, let the poor now gang together and form our community. But eventually they also move away from poverty, because as I said, unity is strength. (Interview #4)

Awak is not practiced because of the decline in traditional leadership structures and the increasing salience of money in the village, according to respondents. There are also several other reasons that communal work has declined more generally in the post-war period. First, they talked about how the war caused poverty, which forced people to focus on only their own lives, their own survival, their own work. People now expect payment for any work (as stated above) and they expect it immediately, because they are too poor and too regularly facing desperate situations to be able to trust that their neighbor will pay them later and they fear being neighbors taking advantage of them.

Second, relatedly, respondents talked about how disunity destroys collective work. Respondents discussed how difficult it is to get people to unite since the war, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, and they linked this directly to communal work. When there are disputes, lack of respect, lack of trust, jealousy, and division, people do not feel that they want to help their neighbors by working together. Okello, a *rwot kweri* in Awach, said:

> *I: But what is the difference in the level of reliance?*
> R: Those days people used to unite a lot more than these days. Now days, issues like land conflict and many other problems have poisoned peoples' minds. There is also jealousy. You might think, for example, that if I go to work in Lamunu's home, I'll make Lamunu rich, and if I go to work in Obur's home I will make him rich…and this is the bad part of unity now days. But those days people used to work together without minding anything. (Interview #70)

In the past there was unity and solidarity, but a few respondents additionally described how there was force behind collective work, with stronger community sanctions, such as

confiscating valuables if you did not show up, and stronger power of the elders to mobilize people.

Finally, there have been changes that present demographic or logistical challenges to collective work. Many young people since the war have been moving to town, instead of staying the village and farming. Perhaps the major contributing factor of this type, though, has been a lifestyle change that came about because of camp life. In the camp, very few people were able to farm. Instead, many sat idly with not much to occupy their time, often leading to drinking. Respondents said that this increase in alcoholism and lack of engagement in productive work for so many years led to the destruction of communal work in the post-war era. Otto James, a 45-year-old man in Anyadwe, said:

> *I: When did you last remember having come together to collaborate or to fulfill a task?*
> R: If you talk about the joint communal work the last time it was carried out, I don't recall…as far as I can remember, since the time that we were in the camp, that was already the end of the communal work. People were not doing communal work as such. And the worst came when people were already in the camp, around 1997 there when people were living in the camp, actually people were sitting from morning to sunset doing nothing. And that is how some people resorted to drinking. So since that time, people stayed in the camp doing no work, then having returned home people are doing their own individual work, so joint venture is something I've not heard for a long time. (Interview #60)

Particularly, respondents explained how men used to provide leadership in communal work practices, but now do not take a leadership role, and instead many men drink too much, are in prison, or spend their days sitting idly in the trading centres. All of these are factors that respondents described as contributing to the decline in communal work practices; taken together, they present a complex picture of how changes during the period of war and displacement led to the destruction of communal work.

Non-Farming Community Work Projects

There is also non-farming communal work in the villages, which is often initiated (or required) by NGOs or the government. This type of community work is categorically distinct from the communal farming described above. When asked to describe a time that people in the community had come together to work on a project that benefited others in the community or the village in general, people often struggled to think of an example. Many respondents described projects initiated by an NGO or the government, in which residents provided some labor or maintenance. For example, when programs provide wells or boreholes, residents are usually tasked with keeping the area around the water source clean. Similarly, when programs are constructing roads, they often enlist residents to help dig the road and pay them for their labor. There are also building projects, for example when NGOs finance the construction of school buildings (which respondents describe in both Lukodi and Anyadwe), and involve the community members in making bricks for the project. Residents are often paid for their involvement in such projects.

When redirected away from these types of projects by the interviewer and asked to think of a locally-initiated group effort, respondents generally had a hard time thinking of an example, with some saying that such work has not happened in their village. Most often, they described community maintenance work, such as slashing the weeds around paths or keeping areas around the market clean. Particularly in Anyadwe and Awach, residents emphasized that it is a rule that you must show up for such community work projects, or you will face a fine or have your property confiscated. However, some residents talked about how some people still refuse to participate in this work or show up

but do not actually work hard, both of which can bring disputes in the community. There was one particularly proactive example in Lukodi of the community gathering and deciding to "fight poverty" in their village by working together to build a house for a resident in need. There were a few respondents in Awach who talked about helping dig fields for disabled, vulnerable, or residents facing hardships. In general, however, these examples were the exceptions, not the rule. More commonly people did not mobilize to work on collective projects unless they were initiated and paid for by NGOs or the government or unless the threat of fines was strictly enforced by local leaders.

As we have seen, communal work practices have changed and, particularly in Anyadwe and Awach, declined, presenting a problem for the development of post-war unity and interdependence. Sarah Lamunu, a resident of Lukodi, summarized this perception, saying that in the past residents would mobilize to work in groups to help community members, particularly those in need:

> Before the war, people were more united. And there was sincerity among people. And the kind of unity was a perfect one, unlike this one. Now, today when we talk of unity, you find only a handful of people…ganging together to form a kind of group, but in the past, the whole village was united. And, they were living with one heart…Before the war, you would just announce that you have something you need and neighbors to come and help you. They would all come without hesitation. But today, if you say you need your neighbors to come, they would ask a lot of questions: why are you calling them, what are you going to give them, and so forth…But if you find a person who is without anything, like me here…they consider me my own problem. That is my fate, I have to shoulder it while they fare on…Before the war, you'd find that I may just make an announcement and more than twenty people converge in my field and work that same day and complete everything. But these days that cannot happen. (Interview #17)

In this quote, Sarah mentioned the existence of groups in her village, although she explained that she is left out of the groups. Despite the negative picture of communal

work in post-war villages that was presented in this section, there in fact are thriving groups where people *are* working together in farming and other projects. As I show in the next section, this type group formation is intimately linked to NGO and government policies during the displacement and post-war periods, and is contributing to growing isolation and inequality.

Emergence of Social Groups

Types and Characteristics of Groups

In these post-war communities, small groups have emerged as a powerful form of organizing social life.[33] People explained that this proliferation of small groups was not the way the community was organized before the war; it is a new feature of the post-war era. An Anyadwe resident who is active in multiple groups said:

> These groups were not there in the past. These are something new. If there were any groups then they were the groups without proper rules and guidelines to be followed. These days we have well-established groups with rules to be followed. So you know people have learned one thing—alone by yourself you can never achieve much, but with the rest you can achieve more than you expect. As the song says, united we stand and divided we fall. (Interview #57)

There were a range of groups described by the residents, with the most common being savings and credit groups called *bolicup*, which means "dropping the coin." *Bolicup* was a model introduced by NGOs during the war, though it was loosely based on an existing practice called *kalulu*, meaning "picking the chances." *Kalulu* groups are

[33] Interviews included a direct question in which the respondent described any groups he or she belongs to. Respondents sometimes mentioned groups in questions about unity, interdependence, rules in the community, or their typical social interactions. I also learned about groups from the interviews with leaders, particularly leaders of youth groups, women's groups, a survivors' group, business groups, and a disabled persons' group.

revolving savings groups, in which members bring small amounts of money to save, and each month one member gets a pay-out of their savings. *Bolicup* also has the element of savings, but adds loans (to be paid back with interest) and "welfare" (paid back without interest), meaning members can access funds as needed and in emergencies. *Bolicup* groups tend to be quite formalized, with closed membership of 20 to 30 people, usually more women than men. Some *bolicup* groups also engage in agricultural activities, such as rotating digging or managing communal fields or other projects. From both interviews and my observations, *bolicup* groups are extremely important to the daily lives of many residents and are becoming an increasingly significant social safety net for members.

In addition to the ubiquitous *bolicup* and digging groups, many respondents belonged to more specific types of groups. There are youth groups, groups that perform drama and cultural dances, agricultural groups (such as those raising poultry, pigs, or farming cash crops, like rice or cotton), and church groups. In Lukodi, there is a massacre survivors' group and a group to oversee the development of the memorial site. In Anyadwe and Awach, respondents described a few groups of vulnerable residents, such as a group to help the mentally ill and groups of "child mothers," disabled people, people living with HIV/AIDS, and former abductees. There are also groups of business owners, such as shop owners or motorcycle operators.

Groups are almost always headed by elected or appointed leaders, including a chairman, secretary, treasurer, and mobilizer (in charge of informing members about meetings and other news). They usually operate according to bylaws or other rules, written or spoken, such as requiring that members should not come to meetings late,

should not speak out of turn, should always show up for group work, and should always pay back loans in a timely manner. Such group rules are usually enforced by monetary fines or confiscation of belongings. Group members also described more general rules, such as that group members should not gossip about each other, should not lie, or should not start quarrels within the group. To belong to a group, a new member often pays a small membership fee and the group must approve their membership. Respondents described desirable characteristics of potential new members as someone of "good character," who works hard, who promotes unity, and does not drink.

Group members usually select a group name, almost always of a proverbial nature and illustrating something of the shared worldview of group members. In Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach, group names teach positive character traits (such as "Truthfulness is good" [*Ada ber*], "Knowledge doesn't come from talking" [*Tek dog aye pe ngec*]), and "Work for it with your hands" [*Tim ki cingi*]), offer sources of encouragement (such as "God is the one that provides" [*Rubanga ma miyo*] and "In a group I draw strength" [*Atek ki lwak*]), and often illustrate frustration with poverty (such as "A poor person must struggle" [*Lacan kwitte*], "Poverty is not a disease" [*Can pe two*], and "Poverty will make you wise" [*Can miyo ryeko*]).

A Shift Caused by NGO and Government Programs

Both NGO and government programs directly led to the formation of most of these small groups at the village level. People explained how, in order to access benefits offered by such programs, they were required to form groups. Resettlement programs generally did

not give assistance to individuals, instead offering material support—like money, seeds, a grinding mill, or animals—only to small groups. As a result, many are instrumentally-formed groups, gathering members with the explicit hope of attracting outside support. A traditional leader in Lukodi, who is part of forming a digging group, explained:

> *I: What was the purpose of forming such a group?*
> R: The whole idea was initiated by some NGOs because their policy was to help people in a group. So if you are by yourself they will say they will not help you. If you want help from them, you have to form a group, so that is how people I think borrowed the practice of always doing things in a group. Our people have been watching that these NGOs would take seriously a group that has been formed in a village. The NGOs would check on villages a number of times to ensure that that group does exist. So after they confirmed that the group really existed, they would then give the help. And people have been seeing that these people are serious. That's why we here also in our community of Lukodi we have decided to form a group so that we are also recognized. (Interview #5)

Many programs actively promoted and still promote group formation. In all three communities, people talk specifically about the National Agricultural Advisory Development Services (NAADS), which is a Government of Uganda program to promote agricultural development, and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF and NUSAFII), a regional development program funded by the World Bank. Residents also describe forming groups for support from INGOs, including Save the Children, CARE International, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), American Refugee Committee (ARC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI); local NGOs promote groups, as well, like the War Affected Children's Association (WACA), Grassroots Women Association for Development (GWAD), and Concerned Parents' Association (CPA). Particularly in

Lukodi, residents described support from such groups and discussed forming groups in hopes of attracting more support.

Betty, a young woman in Awach, has been part of a newly forming *bolicup* group, because people in her area were seeing other groups getting benefits from NGOs and government programs. She said they decided to gather together in order to also attract development support:

> So we thought that it will be good for us to form a group so that through our group we may also, you know, present ourselves out there to other organizations so that we are also known, because if we hide ourselves too long, no development would come our way. This village would be a forgotten village. If you go to the rest of the parts of Awach, people are benefitting in many ways…Most of those groups that are being helped started the way we have started here, through the simple village savings and credit schemes. That's why we have decided to form this group so that at least we do like others, because if development comes through unity, we also want our village to be developed. (Interview #73)

In contrast, a woman in a *bolicup* group in Anyadwe insisted that the first objective of such group is to promote unity. She goes on to say, however, that groups like hers form in order to be ready to attract donations from NGOs:

> *I: How did you come to form that group?*
> R: So it was a big meeting that all the people of Ajulu were mobilized in the center, and they said that it is time that everybody should belong to a group. And the first purpose was not saving, it was not money, so that the first purpose was building unity so that people at least learn to depend on each other and to love one another. That was the first purpose and that is why all these other smaller savings and credit schemes were founded around Anyadwe village here. So the second purpose was for the saving and credit to take place so that you as individual members may benefit through borrowing small loans and also at the end of it you will have accumulated some meaningful amount of money that can help you. Then thirdly, that if some NGOs will come by they will find that we are in groups so they would not just ask us again to form groups, we should now use the existing groups for any other help that may come from out there. (Interview #49)

Again and again, respondents talked of their hope that the group membership will yield tangible benefits that will support their agricultural work, pay their children's school fees, or create possibilities for generating income. Sarah in Lukodi told about a poultry project formed with support from an NGO (whose name she cannot even recall):

> *I: Do you think such program will change the life of the people here?*
> R: I think it will. It's beneficial to those who are in the group but for people who are outside like me, it may not be—I may not benefit directly. That is the advantage of being in a group. Because, once you have formed a group that is known, not only one NGO will come and help you; maybe after ACTED there will be another NGO coming. As long as that group is maintained, they will help the group. So it has become a policy now that in order to receive help and benefit you must belong to a group. (Interview #17)

A young woman in Awach expressed a similar point, but highlighted her frustration that her group has not received support, while other groups in the community have benefitted:

> R: People who form a group are easily recognized and they are supported. Those organizations that are helping people, they insist on helping people who have already formed groups, like those who have formed *bolicup* groups… But those individuals who are not willing to join a group are not considered. Just like last week, they brought some goats to one of the groups…and then this coming Thursday, I learned they are going to receive seeds…For us, we have been sending our requests, but they are always turned down…
> *I: What is your view about people that have formed groups receiving special help, more than those individuals?*
> R: My hope and view is that also in our small new group we should also be recognized and also helped like they are helping other groups. Why is it that other groups are being supported and our group is not, and yet we are within the same neighborhood? …in this place of Awach there are 20 different groups, but they are helping the same groups over and over. And that puzzles us. (Interview #72)

Community Groups and Unity in the Villages

As hinted in the quotes above, the emergence of small groups impacts unity in the villages, particularly as some residents are excluded from the groups and their associated

benefits. As discussed in a previous section, some respondents described unity before war as an overall unity, one that encompassed all members of the village, essentially in one big group; now, unity is on a smaller-scale or more isolated. Understanding the emergence of small groups helps to explain this new form of unity, which is based in group membership. As a religious leader in Anyadwe explained:

> *I: Can you compare and contrast the level of unity between people now and the level of unity that existed among people before the war?*
> R: Yes, there was unity [then], and there is unity now, but they are different types of unity. Before the war, people used to unite in large scale. That means the people within a given place, a community like Anyadwe, the whole of them will come together. That was the kind of unity that existed before the war. These days, people also practice unity, but in smaller units, in smaller groups. (Interview #40)

Many respondents talked very positively about how small groups promote unity, with some using the presence of small groups as a proxy indicator of the existence of unity. For example, a youth group leader explained, "When you see people in a particular village forming groups, that is one indication [of unity]. So the more groups you find in a village, the more signs of unity that it exhibits" (Interview #34). A *rwot okoro* in Lukodi talked at length about how groups are able to unite people from various areas of the community, bringing them together to work and make decisions collectively. She spoke of how the group helps to meet the needs of its members:

> I see that his unity that we are practicing now is involving a wider area including people that are far away. In the past, only a small part of the village would come together to do their own work. But these days, with all this savings and credit, people have been moved from far away corners to come together. So I see that this one involves more people than the kind of unity that was experienced in the past. These days we have to come together to open the ground, to plant the seeds, to weed, and also to harvest. So we do it as a group. Then later on when we sell, then we sit down to decide what to do with the money…some money can be given to the members to borrow and return to the treasury, some money can be put to generate further profit, and some money can also help to send children to

> school. In our community we have a majority of widows and also orphans. So, this project will cover them; they will not feel that they have been isolated. They will feel they are one in the community and the community will immediately respond upon realizing a need of such a member. In the past, such things were not there. Each homestead was managing its affairs. So when you were stuck, there was nowhere to go. But these days, when a family is stuck, there is the reference points is the group. So the group will sit and see what to do. (Interview #2)

While groups undoubtedly have positive effects for their members, I argue that, problematically, groups may increase inequality and exclusion in communal life. First, those who are not a part of groups may be excluded from the social support described in the above quote. Second, competition, jealousy, and rivalries can emerge between groups that are competing for resources.

Overall, about a third of the respondents did not belong to groups at the time of the interview: 41 percent in Lukodi, 29 percent in Anyadwe, and 43 percent in Awach.[34] There is not a strong pattern in terms of who belongs to groups and who does not, although it seems that men and those with higher education may be slightly less likely to be in groups. While those who are members of active groups often see unity and trust as strong in the village, those who are not involved in groups are often more isolated and do not perceive that the village is as united. As respondents described it, this type of isolation was much less prevalent before war, before the growth of small groups. Several respondents, such as Otto James, 45-year-old man who does not belong to any groups, talked about how the emergence of groups has weakened unity because people rely only on groups and cannot rely more broadly on their neighbors:

[34] These figures do not account for residents in digging groups, because of difficulty in determining whether digging groups are really more informal groups organized for communal work or if they are more formalized and interested in expanding their activities or attracting outside support.

> These days people do not rely on one another to the level that used to be before the war. They only rely on a few selected people, their circle of trust, and in that circle of helping one another. Instead in the past, the area for trust or reliance was wider so almost everybody was a possible person to rely on, but it's a different story today. In the past even the scope for coming together was bigger, coming together to dig was bigger, and there was also the belief that every child was my child…People valued human beings more than today. These days people do not value the gift of one another so much. So this trust is moving away from trusting the person to trusting a group, so this kind of thing is not what it used to be. And in that group, that is already the unit; you cannot trust any other group now, you have to belong to your group only, so in a way you are cut off already. (Interview #60)

Even those who generally support the idea of small groups recognized this problem:

> *I: Do you think those [NGO and government] programs are helpful to the community members?*
> R: Well, the weak point is that they do not sensitize people enough, and they insist that you should be in a group. That means there are certain people, for one reason of the other, cannot join that group. Such people are left out, and therefore we feel that those are loopholes, people that are now automatically neglected. They are left out, so they don't benefit. (Interview #41)

Several respondents problematized the explicit connection of group formation with seeking government and NGO resources. At the heart of their critique is the idea that groups are not really based on unity, but are based on material gain, resources, and money. A Protestant reverend, himself very active in promoting groups within the community, commented:

> The unity of those days [before war] was stronger compared to the unity of nowadays. Those days…everyone would unite and would really care about the other. But nowadays, people unite because they want to benefit; it's full of greed. They want to unite because they want to benefit. The unity of nowadays always lasts for a short time, but in those days it was stronger. Nowadays you unite only for a short time and then people get divided. The love for money has grown. (Interview #68)

The same man, Otto James, quoted above explained how this orientation leads to rivalries and power struggles within groups, so that trust and unity become impossible, even in the group:

> [Since the war,] you may see a few [groups] here and there, but this will not be a symbol of unity, it will be like an association maybe looking for some ways of raising funds…And even after that, those who participated together will again begin to rival over what was given. So when there is any kind of such group, many people will struggle to be the leader of such a group so that they can take the upper hand and they take the lion's share of whatever proceeds may be realized. So usually such groups also end up in chaos because where there is no trust there is no true unity. (Interview #60)

Oyet Richard, a 30-year-old man in Anyadwe, who belongs to a group of motorcycle drivers but no other community groups, similarly explained how groups destroy unity by cultivating jealousy. Groups do not receive equal resources from NGOs or government programs, but he does not fault the NGOs for this. Instead, he said that the problem is the selfishness in the community. Compounding the problem, he explained, is that many groups are based on family ties. Several respondents explained how many groups operate according to "WOL," which is a locally-used acronym referring to relatives (*wadi*), in-laws (*or*), and friends (*larem*). Some interview respondents described this as an "evil." As local leaders or groups access support provided by NGO or government programs, they distribute benefits according to WOL, leaving out other community members. Oyet Richard warned that the bad feelings that come from this are a very serious matter dividing people:

> R: What I don't appreciate very much is those distributions of certain items that they give only to some selected people, and the rest who are under the same problem miss out altogether. This, I think, is not good. It brings the spirit of sectarianism…In general, NGOs are…trying what they can, although it is overwhelming. The need is so great, the help is major. The problem is not with

> those who offer help like the NGOs; the problem is with us the community here, that some people are so greedy and selfish, hoarding all these things for their family…ignoring other people completely. This is the unfairness that I am talking about…The spirit of selfishness can be seen that they take everything—his wife is part of it, his child and everybody, but the rest of the neighbors go without. Only five of them will form a group, a group of people from the same family, and benefit from it.
> *I: So do you think that the projects are not worth it?*
> R: The project is worth it, except that he's celebrating, he has everything, and people like us have nothing completely. It's a saying that the puppy that has taken porridge is joyful, but the puppy that is starving is aggressive. So if the puppy that is satisfied tried to play with the starving one, definitely that one would become very rough because it is hungry. Similarly, those NGOs that have come and showered gifts or presents on one family at the expense of leaving out others completely, they are spreading nothing but jealousy. When my friend there [laughs], I will not join him in the laughter, I will just frown. In one party, some are frowning, some are laughing. You can imagine that there is something wrong. And people should not pretend that they are not aware of these grievances that are being felt in the community. (Interview #52)

The boundaries between groups are not symbolic, but they have actually emerged as social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Pachucki et al. 2007); groups have variable access to resources, and thus group boundaries can create and reinforce inequality. Most respondents are cognizant of the problems that can come from small groups, particularly as some individuals are excluded and jealousy can develop between groups. Some critiqued this new form of unity, lamenting the loss of a broader unity in which neighbors were connected to one another by virtue of belonging to the same village, rather than the same small group. Despite these critiques, however, many respondents are still ultimately supportive of the new group-based system, hoping that they too will realize some tangible benefits from group membership.

Discussion

As shown in this chapter, most people saw the war and displacement as harmful to social life, but there were also some who reported positive effects, essentially seeing the war as having forced unity by bringing people into close proximity, causing residents to depend on one another for survival, and increasing NGO "sensitization" programs. Most respondents, however, perceived that trust had fallen among their neighbors since the war, and said that now only a few people are trusted. Particularly, many did not trust young people, and saw them as ill-prepared for communal life in resettled villages. Trust was also weakened by wrongs committed during the war, land conflicts emerging during resettlement, and the increasing prevalence of monetary exchanges in rural villages. The majority of people also saw significant problems or complexities with post-war unity, saying it is weaker than it had been before war, that people now see one another only as neighbors (rather than family), that unity is only in pockets, that unity is now artificial or insincere, or that it is a substantively different type of unity now. Where some saw the war as helping people band together, many others saw it as contributing to greed and jealousy, an "eat or be eaten" mindset, struggles over limited resources, and conflicts that arise from close proximity. War and displacement significantly altered unity in post-war communities, and Figure 5.1 (at the beginning of the chapter) articulated this relationship by depicting a chain of causation.

There are three key interrelated changes in daily social interactions that directly influenced these shifts in unity. First, residents perceived a "loss of culture," seen in decreasing communal traditional practices, eroding leadership structures of chiefs and

other local leaders, and less attention given to previously highly regarded rituals connecting the spiritual and social worlds. These cultural practices are the lost substantive "glue," or the shared values and norms, which many residents yearn for in their post-war lives. Second, communal work practices, which are described as essential to village unity, have been in a state of flux and decline. Large scale communal work is not happening post-war, and even the smaller forms of group work are suffering because of declining respect for local leaders, poverty and inequality, jealousy, and lifestyles learned in the camps. This lack of daily social contact and interdependence is problematic for post-war reconstruction (Biro et al. 2004; Daly and Sarkin-Hughes 2007). Finally, the rise of small, formalized social groups is a new feature of post-war villages. Nearly always formed instrumentally to access resources of NGO and government programs, these groups are now the primary location of village unity. For members, groups can provide an important safety net, social capital, and sense of inclusion (Brint 2001; Lawler et al. 2009; Lim and Putnam 2010). For those not in groups, however, this presents a new element of exclusion. With the advent of groups, residents lament the loss of broader village unity in which people could rely on any of their neighbors for support.

The war directly led to four broad currents of social change, which contributed to the specific shifts in social interaction described above. First, there is a crisis of leadership. Strong local leaders are key figures in cultivating social solidarity, but during the war, the older generation of elders and chiefs passed away, and the post-war leaders do not seem to have the same level of authority, organization, and insight. Of course, there are still strong leaders, but their numbers are fewer, they have more narrow ranges

of authority, and respect for leaders among the population has dwindled. Without a strong local leadership system (not just a few isolated leaders), there is no longer the attention to tradition and cultural practices. Leaders play a key role in the organization of communal work, and this loss—as we have seen—is extremely detrimental to unity.

Secondly, the war and displacement was a period where young people were socialized quite differently than those who grew up in times of peace. For well over a decade, many young people did not learn agricultural skills, attend school, or have "normal" social interactions in their communities. Rather, their formative years were characterized by chaos, uncertainty, and instability, with many experiencing the loss of parents or other family members and a significant minority experiencing abduction and direct participation in hostilities. This gap in socialization means the current generation of young adults is less interested and less equipped to carry on traditions and participate in communal work. They often do not share older values, and generations raised before the war often view them as lazy, immoral, and troubled. Many young people do not see themselves as deeply connected to their neighbors via an intricate village social support network, and have instead adopted a more individualistic attitude with less investment in village life.

Third, the war resulted in deepening poverty and inequality and the creation of new economic arrangements, which present additional barriers to unity. During the camps, as agricultural activity drastically slowed or was halted completely, people relied on a variety of other methods to support their families, including wage labor, opening small businesses, informal vending, and, of course, reliance on resources and support

from aid programs. War also decreased wealth and increased poverty for most, as they lost livestock, belongings, and homestead buildings. Some, however, were better able to capitalize on the new economic arrangements, perhaps being particularly able to attract program resources, move their families to larger towns (or out of the region altogether), or form successful businesses. As many respondents discussed, poverty makes it difficult for people to trust one another, the rise of the monetary economic system fosters jealousy, and inequality seriously strains social relationships.

Finally, during the war and especially in the post-war period, NGOs and government agencies instituted programs designed to foster unity and social stability, and in the process directly contributed to the rise of small groups in the villages. The involvement of NGOs brought a particular type of unity—and some respondents indeed discuss how this has been a positive development, creating *stronger* unity post-war. However, this new unity is more localized, creating strong bonds within smaller groups, at the expense of greater exclusion of some residents and the rise of competition between groups. Additionally, some see it as instrumental or inauthentic, as people join together to access resources, rather than from a deeper commitment to helping one another. To create a collective social identity, there needs to be some conception of "we" (Burke and Stets 2009); in the post-war period, the "we" is no longer the entirety of the village, but that identity is found in the small group.

Some similarities and differences have emerged across communities, as shown in Table 5.1. In general, Lukodi respondents were more likely to have positive assessments of post-war social life. Respondents in Lukodi most often reported trusting all or most

people in the community and the *aleya* practice of communal digging is alive and well in Lukodi. While there were more similarities between communities in how they perceived village unity, Lukodi respondents still did stand out with the most positive views. Formalized small groups were widespread in all communities, though Anyadwe had the highest number of active participants and Lukodi showed greater evidence of direct and active NGO and government program involvement in groups.

Table 5.1. Key Differences in Unity between Fieldsites

	Lukodi	**Anyadwe**	**Awach**
Perceptions of trust	Highest level of trust	Lowest level of trust	Some people are trusted, some are not
Perceptions of unity	See unity as mixed; strongest perceptions of unity	See unity as mixed	See unity as mixed
Communal work	*Aleya* very common	Not practiced uniformly, or at all	Not practiced uniformly, or at all; some mentioned *awak* and helping vulnerable residents
Small groups	Widespread; most diversity in types of active groups; most direct connections with NGO/government programs	Widespread; highest proportion of respondents active in groups	Widespread

This variance suggests complexity in how the characteristics of communities may lead to unique post-war trajectories, even among neighboring villages where people largely experienced similar histories of war and displacement. Most notably, unity in Lukodi may be facilitated by the village's smaller size and its accompanying lower level of clan diversity, compared to Anyadwe and Awach. Lukodi also has a smaller trading centre, providing fewer opportunities for drinking, leisure activities (like pool halls, bars, or video halls), and less of an appealing gathering place for those uninterested in daily productive work in their homes. Additionally, the people of Lukodi experienced the

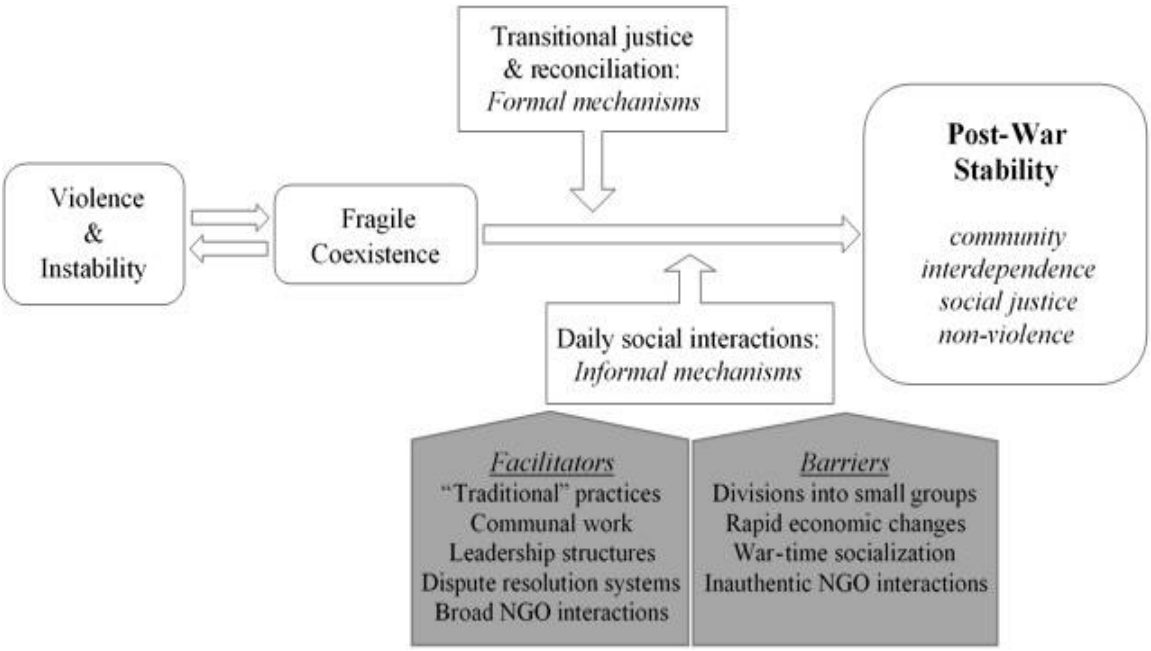
tragedy of the 2004 LRA massacre, which drew significant external attention and prompted a unique form of organizing. In Lukodi, there are active committees devoted to promoting reconciliation, supporting victims and survivors, establishing memorialization initiatives, and advocating for compensation or restitution. These committees center around a core group of individuals, many of whom have direct ties to supportive NGOs, but also extend to a broader base of community members who are regularly mobilized for a range of meetings, work on the memorial site, organizing the annual memorial prayer, and other tasks. This form of organizing is unique to Lukodi and is certainly not inconsequential in influencing residents' perceptions of village unity and cohesion.

In general, trauma from the past was not commonly discussed or explicitly a part of daily interactions. Perhaps because the violence occurred in the extremely recent past, there is not yet a readiness to determine how to incorporate it into present life, so people are left with individual memories, and not yet a strong sense of collective memory. Noticeably, however, Lukodi does have active memorialization, documentation, and reconciliation initiatives, which have involved a large group of community members. Previous scholarship demonstrates that constructing collective memory can promote solidarity (Osiel 1997, 2009), which is perhaps one way to explain the higher levels of trust and perceptions of unity in Lukodi.

Through these insights about what contributes to unity and also what barriers to unity have emerged in Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach, I further specify the model introduced in Chapter Two. In daily social interactions in resettled villages, informal

mechanisms both facilitate and hinder the post-war transitional process, as seen in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4. Informal Mechanisms Aid and Inhibit the Transition



Specifically, traditional practices (such as *wang oo* and customary dances), communal work arrangements, organized small groups, socialization of the war-time generation, local leadership structures, interactions with NGOs and other outside programs, local economic arrangements, and dispute resolution systems all are key influences in the transition to post-war stability. Many of these key informal, interactional mechanisms are likely to be salient in other post-war contexts, as well, but there are likely to be other mechanisms that would emerge as key to the transition in other specific times and places. Careful analysis of each post-war society is essential to understanding the key social resources or pressure points that can be utilized most effectively in the transitional period.

Chapter Six
Communities in Conflict: The Wars Within

Yito pe duny nono.
There is no smoke without fire.

The previous chapter discussed both facilitators of and barriers to unity and provided an analysis of the ways social ties have shifted in the post-war period. In this context, Chapter Six provides an in-depth case study of one particularly potent barrier to unity, focusing on a new form of conflict emerging in post-war villages. I argue that land conflict is a catalyst with the potential to spark deep divisions, animosity, and violence. The chapter also discusses dispute resolution mechanisms used to address land conflicts. In analyzing dispute resolution, I consider a plural legal system that allows for cases to be resolved in the local community or through the state-based court system. I argue that the dispute resolution systems are often not able to handle land conflicts successfully. Contentious interactions between resettled residents are problematic because the entire region is arguably in a period of strained and fragile coexistence, and negative interactions could easily devolve into renewed cycles of violence and instability. I found that land conflict is a strong divisive force that threatens unity and stability, yet is not an issue that has been adequately addressed by national or international actors involved in rebuilding efforts. I argue that concerted focus on land conflict is imperative to the peaceful future of the region.

Disputes over land are certainly not the only type of conflict troubling community residents. They also frequently deal with other types of disputes, such as domestic

violence, theft, animals destroying crops, corruption, fighting, political conflicts, and reintegration of former combatants. Much transitional justice literature would suggest that the most contentious of these would be reintegration of former soldiers under the Amnesty Act, but I found that people emphatically did not see reintegration as the major issue facing their communities.[35] Rather, I focus on land conflict because it was what respondents most often cited as the most common *and* the most serious type of disagreement in their villages. Additionally, land conflict reveals important elements of power and strained social relationships, so unpacking this issue helps to further an understanding of social reconstruction after war. Finally, I focused on land conflict because in many ways it is a social problem that has emerged *because* of the war and displacement, so it follows that rebuilding and reconstruction programs should address land issues.

Previous Scholarship

Transitional Justice

In the aftermath of violent conflict, national authorities, inter-governmental actors, NGOs, and local leaders all promote various mechanisms that are designed to help communities deal with the past and move on to a peaceful future. As discussed in Chapter Two, most research about rebuilding after violent conflict falls into the socio-legal field

[35] Although an in-depth analysis of perceptions of amnesty and reintegration is not developed in this dissertation, I did collect data on these subjects. I found respondents to be overwhelmingly supportive of amnesty. While they certainly did see challenges to the reintegration of people who return home with amnesty, they expressed a willingness and confidence in their ability to overcome such challenges, working to be supportive of returnees. A preliminary analysis of perceptions of amnesty is available, and I plan to expand an analysis of this topic in my future research.

of transitional justice. For example, many transitional societies authorize truth commissions to uncover details about what happened, criminal trials to hold individuals accountable, reparations to attempt "repair" damage, amnesties to pardon some of those responsible, or ceremonies and rituals based in the culture of survivors designed to bring reconciliation within communities. Transitional justice scholarship examines if and how these mechanisms contribute to a sense of justice, truth, accountability, reconciliation, and so on. A strong literature has developed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches (for examples, see Borer 2006; Hayner 2001; Kritz 1995; Mallinder 2007; Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena 2006; Teitel 2000).

In the case of transitional northern Uganda, there are several transitional justice initiatives designed to guide the region from war to peace. The ICC has issued arrest warrants for the top LRA commanders and there have been attempts to hold national war crimes trials of other leaders. National amnesty legislation has allowed the pardon and return of tens of thousands of ex-combatants. Culturally-based rituals have been used to reintegrate ex-combatants and try to bring reconciliation between community members. NGOs and other institutions, like museums, facilitate memorialization initiatives. Each of these mechanisms is oriented towards the past, wrestling with how to make sense of a history full of atrocities and violence. While these efforts are necessary, of course, this chapter contributes a context-sensitive analysis, considering what conflicts may actually be emerging *during* the "post-conflict" transitional period. I argue that land conflict—an emergent conflict in the region—is important to understand in its own right, but also because of its potential to undermine the effectiveness of transitional justice efforts.

Emergent Conflict

A theory of emergent conflict, advanced by political scientist Hugh Miall (2007), provides a useful framework for understanding post-war communities in Uganda. In this model, a society experiencing some type of social change will give rise to emergent conflicts, as people struggle to cope with the results of the change. These emergent conflicts are not necessarily problematic, and disputes can actually provide a space for necessary solidification of social norms, rules, and relationships (Osiel 1997; Simmel 1971). Rather, depending on the context and the strategies people use to deal with the emergent conflict, the situation will develop either into a peaceful accommodation of the social change or into an intensification of the conflict, leading to violence and potentially war. Thus, it is important to understand a society's capacity to deal with emergent conflict successfully.

In this analysis, I conceptualize the transition from a long period of war into a time of relative peace as a social change, one that requires communities and individuals to cope with the shifting nature of social relationships and redefine interactions among themselves. As established in the previous chapter, this period of social change shifts daily social interactions and affects perceptions of unity and trust. Particularly after a prolonged period of mass displacement from their home communities, this social change, I argue, also leads to an emergent conflict over land rights and boundaries during resettlement. Residents themselves saw land disputes as the most serious types of conflicts facing their communities. Because of its potential to set communities on a trajectory of either peaceful accommodation of change or violent conflict, it is important

to understand land conflict, as well as communities' capacities to address it. This requires starting at the earliest stages of the conflicts, considering disputes that arise between neighbors over land during the resettlement process.

Thus, I contribute to transitional justice literature by developing an understanding of emergent conflicts that arise during the transitional period. I question assumptions, inherent in some socio-legal transitional justice mechanisms, about what is happening in local communities during the transition from war to peace. Specifically, there seems to be merit to the sociological critique that there exists a pattern where legal mechanisms create formal rationality, but ignore on-the-ground, tangible issues, like distribution of and conflict over unequal resources.

The field of transitional justice—both scholarship and practice—is not really looking at land conflict. There has been a longstanding reluctance on the part of post-conflict operations of the UN and other organizations to engage in land issues (Leckie 2009), but there is a growing recognition that something needs to be done. There are reports and analyses of land disputes in post-conflict societies emerging from humanitarian and policy circles (Baranyi and Weitzner 2006; Huggins 2004; Leckie 2009; Pantuliano 2009). Unfortunately, scholars are strangely quiet on this issue, despite the potential of social scientists to make significant contributions to understanding the complexities of land conflict.

While land conflict is the big issue on the ground in post-war communities of northern Uganda—and likely in other transitional societies as well—problems such as land conflict are often individualized. Instead, the focus during the transitional period is

on memorialization, truth-telling, trials, and so on, without recognizing the role that land conflict may play in derailing such reconciliation efforts. While these transitional justice mechanisms are usually positive and necessary, it is important to devote greater attention to local issues in survivors' everyday lives as they struggle to adapt to the social change brought about by the transition. As political scientists argue, local disputes often have far-reaching consequences and are the root causes that can fuel broader regional or national conflicts (Autesserre 2009, 2010; Kalyvas 2006). Daily concerns include potentially divisive issues, such as land conflict, which I argue in this paper has significant potential to destabilize communities and the entire region, devolving communities back into renewed cycles of violence and instability.

Land Conflict

There is scholarship that considers the wave of land and agricultural reform efforts in post-colonial Africa, as nations attempted to reconcile colonial-era land administration systems with customary land tenure practices. There have been accompanying studies about how land reform can become a source of conflict in local communities or have other problematic implications (Boone 2007; Huggins 2004; Konings 2003). There have been very few studies, however, that consider how local-level land disputes may be linked to larger conflicts, wars, and violence (Autesserre 2008, 2009, 2010; Fearon 2004; Rustad and Binningsbø 2012).

There have been a few studies focused specifically on land conflict in northern Uganda, most notably a large scale effort conducted by the World Bank (Deininger and

Castagnini 2004; Rugadya 2008). The study finds that land conflicts are escalating, threatening post-conflict peace, and are not being adequately handled. I will return to specific findings from this work throughout the chapter. The study was designed to inform the Government of Uganda's PRDP programs, which focus on rebuilding northern Uganda after the conflict. The data collection, however, occurred before 2008, at which point only five percent of the population in Acholi districts had returned home (Rugadya 2008:6). A later study conducted in 2010 by Mercy Corps focused on the relationship between economic development and land conflict. The report explained that land conflict is brought about (in part) by poverty and poor economic development, and that land conflict, in turn, undermines economic development and investment, in addition to threatening peace (MercyCorps 2011). While these efforts contribute important descriptions of land conflict in Uganda and make policy-oriented recommendations, my study contributes a needed social science perspective on how land conflicts develop, their impact on unity and solidarity, how they can potentially escalate to violent conflict, and why current dispute resolution mechanisms are ineffective.

In this chapter, I analyze respondents' perspectives on land conflict in their communities. I find that land is central to their individual and communal lives, and therefore disputes over land ownership are hotly contested. Mass displacement and return to the land created social conditions ripe for the emergence of land conflict, as determining land ownership is a continual process of social interaction and, often, contention. Now, disputes are rampant and reflect power dynamics in the communities. I find that land conflicts significantly detract from unity, as well as frequently escalate to

violence, causing respondents to see land conflict as a new "war within the community." Unfortunately, dispute resolution systems do not demonstrate the capacity to resolve land conflicts peacefully, leading to significant concerns about future social stability in the region.

Data

The interview section on non-violence is particularly relevant to this analysis, because it focused specifically on how people in the community deal with conflict. The respondents were asked:

- What type of disagreements do you think are the most *common* in the village? Can you give me a recent example? What was done to resolve that disagreement?
- What conflicts are the most *serious* in this village? Can you give me a specific example? What was done to resolve that conflict?
- In general, do you think people here deal with conflict in a positive way or in a way that causes more harm? How is this different than it was before the war?

The interviewer was provided with probes to follow up with the respondent to fully understand their perspective and the example of conflict they described.

Later in the interview, respondents were asked to describe any NGO, community-based organizations, aid, or government programs that had been in the village since people returned from the camps, and they were also asked to comment on the impact they saw from these activities. These are the primary areas of the interview used in this analysis, though some respondents did mention land conflict in other areas of the interview. For example, when asked to compare the unity of the village before the war to now, when asked if they feel close to or trust their neighbors, or when asked about differences that exist between people in the community.

It is important to note that no component of the interview explicitly asked respondents about land conflict. Rather, this was a topic that respondents brought up themselves, in several areas of the interview. As the passages that follow indicate, respondents talked at length—unprompted—about land conflict in their lives and their communities.

Land in Northern Uganda

Centrality of Land

In rural northern Uganda, land is a crucial resource, as livelihoods and survival almost completely depend on having land to cultivate. For virtually everyone who is physically able to do so, daily activities revolve around caring for crops of peanuts, cassava, maize, sesame, and other staple foods. In addition to being essential for the daily survival of families, the local economy is based on buying, selling, or trading products of the land.

In the course of the war and displacement, many people lost everything they had, including livestock, building structures, and so on, but they counted on having land waiting for them when they returned home, planning to make a fresh start. Everything about the rebuilding process was contingent upon having land, which raised the stakes for protecting one's land. Although land is undeniably necessary for daily survival, many community residents also told me that in recent years, area Ministers of Parliament have been exacerbating the frenzy for land by telling their constituents that land is the only thing of value they have left, repeatedly emphasizing that in the post-war era, land is the only path to not only rebuilding, but to riches and wealth for survivors. This is another

element of reforming economic relationships in the post-war period, as discussed in the previous chapter, and monetizing areas of life that were previously governed by non-monetary social relationships.

In the interviews, respondents were asked to describe their vision of how their community would change in five years' time. Many respondents painted positive pictures, describing how people would have enough to eat and would be able to send their children to school. When asked what would be the agent to bring these positive changes, many people cited land as the key to their community's development. With land, they would be able to work hard, sell their harvests, and improve their lives. Understanding how very central land is in the lives of people in this region, it became quite clear that struggles for land are unlikely to be simple matters, easily resolved. Rather, disagreements about land ownership have the potential to bring deep tension and spark significant conflicts.

Ancestral Land

Beyond the significance of land for livelihood, owning land in a particular place is a powerful marker of belonging. In the research fieldsites, only people who are seen as truly "from" the village are permitted to own land. Residents described a clear delineation between someone from "outside" and someone who is from the community, meaning someone whose ancestors were from the community and who was personally born in the community as well. This sense of equating land ownership with community membership is so pervasive that it often is not explicitly stated. For example, a typical response when

asked if anyone is denied ownership of land in the village is exemplified by one man's response, "No, no one is denied having a piece of land. Provided he comes from here." (Interview #27) As this so concisely shows, owning land in the community is deeply symbolic, serving as a marker of identity and belonging. The quote also alludes to the fact that clan membership, and thus land, is typically given patrilineally,[36] with daughters (or even widows) not receiving land in the community where she was born. When she marries, it is expected she will go to her husband's home place, and will become a member of that community, thus her "real" land will be there. A women's leader explained, "The sort of land we have here is ancestral land…Therefore if a person is coming from out there who has no relation to this community, definitely such a person would not be welcome, will not be given land. That one is obvious." (Interview #2) Land disputes, then, have the potential to set up a debate over who belongs and who does not, labeling those who cannot or do not own land as outsiders, and then essentially denying such people from livelihoods in the village.

Respondents were asked if they consider the place where they now live to be their home. Almost all respondents said they did see their current place as their home. Their reasons for this were very often intimately linked to the land they live on. Opobo, a 40-year-old man, explained his connection to the land:

> This is my actual home because I was born here, I grew up here. My father was born here and grew up here and died here, this land has seen a generation of this lineage. Therefore I've already made a resolution never to move anywhere. If I

[36] I did not find cases where the male line was unable to carry on ownership of the land (whether because men died in the war or for other reasons). Rather, each man typically has many sons, often with multiple women. Even in the event that all the biological sons were deceased, clan membership sees the sons of a man's brother as his sons as well, so I never heard of a case in which there was no male to take the family land.

> die they will bury me here. My children will continue to live here, that's why I say with confidence, there is not any other place but here, this is my actual home. I cannot go elsewhere, this is the place I'll remain in for the rest of my life. (Interview #59)

Customary land tenure is the main system of land rights in northern Uganda, which means land is not registered with any governmental authority, but rather land rights are overseen by clan leaders (Tripp 2004). In practice, this means that determining the owner of a piece of land often comes down to weighing histories remembered by local leaders and elders. Potentially, any person could provide testimony about land demarcations and ownership. Additionally, customary land is typically not for sale. According to the institution of cultural chiefs, *Ker Kwaro Acholi*, it is not to be sold, but is to be carefully guarded against any loss.

In practice, however, there are exceptions, ambiguities, and complexities surrounding the land tenure system. A minority of respondents described situations in which land in the community may be purchased, though others strongly said this was not allowed. A few others conceded that exceptions are sometimes made to allow people who have stayed for a number of years or who are of good character to stay in the village, though they are not "from" the community and their "real" home is elsewhere. While there is a deep emphasis on ancestral land, Uganda's land policy holds that those who have lived undisputed on land for 12 years have a rightful claim to that land. These norms and policies, coupled with the mandatory displacement of community members during the time of war, made the situation ripe for the development of conflicts over land.

Communal to Individual Ownership

Some respondents talked about how social relationships surrounding land have shifted from how they were before the war. One leader in the Catholic Church explained that before the war, the concept of individual ownership of land was not dominant. He said that people understood land more communally, for example, that "we" stay here, not creating quarrels over individual ownership of specific pieces of land. Respondents explained that people shared land, worked the land cooperatively, and could move freely on the land. A woman in Awach said:

> In the past before the war, people were just living with one another causally and with open hearts. But these days, the issue of rivaling over land—"that is my ancestor's land," "this is the demarcation of that land"—is so serious. Even if you live with your neighbor, [there is a] secret feeling that this one is rivaling with me…Before, people were just digging land without even claiming that this is my piece, they will just share it like that and people were very happy sharing, digging together…In fact there was no saying like, this is my land. It was all our land…These days, even if you're from the same womb, that discontentment is there. So, these days now, people have to make very clear demarcation, it was not in the past. (Interview #79)

They thought of *using* the land collectively, rather than *owning* the land individually, as they now do. This change was likely because delineating ownership became more essential as people moved around more during the war.

Respondents went on to discuss the related rise in land conflicts, as people compete with one another for land. As village residents and leaders described it, before the war there were not land conflicts in their communities. Felix Ojok, a long-time elected community leader, in charge of resolving many disputes, recalled,

> [Before the war,] people were very united. They had peace with all their neighbors. But when this war broke out, really, all kind of suffering started cropping in. There was nothing like land wrangles, as I remember, although I was

> born here, I grew up here, nothing like that. There was no land dispute, people used land and they were not killing one another over land like now. People would build their homes together and enjoy communal life. (Interview #9)

As a catechist in Anyadwe explained,

> Before we left for the camp, people were living in peace, without any claim of land that, this is my land, that is your land—nothing like that was there. But now that we returned from the camp, the issue of land is now rampant and is the most common and the worst kind of conflict that is being felt in the community. (Interview #40)

Of course, there may be a tendency for people to idealize the past, yet I heard this over and over again, from residents, and also from well-respected leaders. For them, because of the war and displacement, there has been a fundamental change in the social relationships surrounding land use and land rights in their communities.

Types and Sources of Land Conflict

In this section, I first offer an overview of the frequency, seriousness, and types of land conflict in the three communities. Next, I discuss how land conflicts emerge as a result of the chaotic post-war context. Finally, I analyze how land conflicts are linked to power, inequality, and vulnerabilities.

Frequency, Seriousness, and Types

Respondents explained that land conflict now occurs quite frequently in the village, with some claiming such disputes are a daily occurrence. One older man explained, “This issue of land is so common that almost every day, or every other day, there is a case here and there. Between brothers, or between people of this village and that village, or

between this man and that woman—it is just an everyday happening." (Interview #30) As seen in Table 6.1, just over half of the respondents said land conflict was the most common type of disagreement in the community (even though they were not asked about land directly and not asked to rate it compared to other types of disagreements). Respondents described at least 80 unique cases and there were 35 instances in which respondents described a land conflict that they were (or are) involved in, which means that at least a third of the sample has personally dealt with land conflict in their own lives, not just in their broader community.

Table 6.1. Land Disputes by Fieldsite

	Lukodi	**Anyadwe**	**Awach**	**Total**
Land conflicts are *most common* type of disagreement	30%	55%	67%	51%
Land conflicts are the *most serious* type of conflict	33%	39%	43%	38%
Percentage of described examples[37] that had *escalated* [38]	15%	19%	18%	18%
Percentage of described examples that were *unresolved*	45%	58%	56%	53%
Percentage of described examples in which the parties were *relatives or family members*	38%	36%	23%	32%
Percentage of described examples that *involved the respondent*	50%	56%	30%	44%

[37] This table is describing key characteristics of the examples of land conflict described by respondents. Respondents described these examples in narrative form, with informal prompts from the interviewers. Because of this, for a small number of examples, some of these characteristics could not be determined. In those cases, the example was not included here; valid percentages are reported.
[38] Escalated to use of physical violence.

Respondents in Awach were most likely to say land conflict was the most common type of disagreement, and respondents in Lukodi were least likely to say the same. Beyond this, however, there are not consistent, clear differences between the three communities, which indicates that land conflict is an issue that transcends community-level variation. Emergent conflicts are likely to have significant effects in a wide range of communities, regardless of NGO involvement, size of the community, socio-demographic characteristics of residents, or other factors.

Because of the complexity of the customary tenure system and the frequency of land disputes, there is significant case-by-case variation in the causes of conflicts, who is involved,[39] and the level of seriousness of the dispute. By far, most of the situations described involved parties who were unrelated to one another, usually neighbors. Although this was most common, about a third of the cases were between extended relatives or close family members; these were often the conflicts that respondents seemed most concerned about, saying they struggled to understand how brothers and sisters could fight one another.

Land Conflict Arising from a Messy Situation

Respondents often attributed land disputes directly or indirectly to the war or resulting displacement. First, respondents described cases where the parties do not know the demarcations of their land. This may occur simply from being away from home for an

[39] In several parts of northern Uganda, major land conflicts are increasingly occurring because of governmental or commercial interests in the land, forcing local community residents to relocate. For example, see the 2011 report by Oxfam, available at: http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp151-land-power-rights-acquisitions-220911-en.pdf. In the three fieldsites, however, respondents did not describe these types of conflicts.

extended period of time, but most often a lack of clarity about boundaries is attributed to the fact that many members of the older generation died while people were in the camps. These elders were the ones who most clearly knew boundaries of land, and they have important roles to play in resolution of land disputes, as I will discuss later. A women's leader talked of problems determining demarcations during the resettlement process:

> The issue came because at first people ran in different directions for their dear lives…then after so many years now they come back and also the vegetation is changed. Some trees that were not there are now there, and it's a bit confusing…some would say no, the demarcation is here, others say no it is up to there, it is here. This kind of thing. And to make matters worse, the elders that knew the demarcations so well died while we were taking refuge. By the time we returned home, only the younger generation returned and they were not very conversant with the actual demarcation. (Interview #31)

Also, during the course of the war and the 10 to 15 year displacement period, as families tried to make ends meet year after year, land sometimes did change hands, despite the cultural prohibition on selling customary land. In the case of such sales, the demarcations were often not made or communicated precisely, resulting in disputes. Felix Ojok explained,

> The issue of land now came in because in our state of desperation and poverty, people said, let me sell a portion of my land and then maybe I get some food or send my child to school. So, the interest in land changed from the land we used to cultivate as a community to now, private ownership so that I sell off my portion and get what I want. The problem with such sale is that you can sell a portion of your land and not being very precise in the demarcation you'll find that at the end of it you've sold not only your portion but even the portion of a neighbor and that will ignite real chaos and problems. (Interview #9)

As the passage above indicates, the war pushed people into desperate situations, which caused them to behave in ways they may not have otherwise. He went on to say:

> When war broke out it first removed all the wealth the people had, all the livestock. And the second thing, people got scattered. That good peaceful life, the

> communal life was just shattered and people now tried to do everything they could now in different ways in order to earn their living. That means the unity was already broken…War brings poverty and in the state of poverty people can resolve to anything. (Interview #9)

He then said that this led to the rise of land disputes among neighbors. Particularly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, life in the camps brought out competitive or survival modes of interaction which then were transferred back to the village:

> A person with whom you have lived together before the war, and together you were sharing like brother, like sister, now coming back from the camp, that same person has changed completely. It is like a different person has entered the appearance of your neighbor and is now telling you, don't touch that piece of land any more. She will begin to put claim that, this was my land, and you have no land here. (Interview #32)

Some claimed that the war led to certain problems of livelihood or development, which then directly contributed to the rise of land conflicts. For example, the peace and security leader in Awach attributed land conflict to a lack of education for the generation raised during the war:

> People also got a lot of bad things from the camp, and that is, when people were living in the camp people gave birth to very many children. So when they went back home it caused a lot of land disputes, because the group of children or youth…that are there now did not have time to go to school. And you know once a person is not educated then they cannot think of developmental issues. (Interview #69)

A few respondents mentioned the population growth that occurred while people were displaced. During resettlement, then, they found it difficult to divide up the land to accommodate each person's growing family.

There were also disputes reported because of competing bases of claims to the land; one party may have an ancestral claim to the land, while the other party has been living on and cultivating the land for many years. In cases of competing claims to land,

people with more power and social capital are likely to prevail. A few respondents attributed culpability for such conflicts to the government, explaining that after the war, the government told people to go back to their "original" places, meaning their ancestral land. This caused a problem because many people were not actually living on their ancestral land before the war, so their return sparked conflicts with those who had been staying on that piece of land. For example, a person may return and claim that they have ancestral land in the area, though perhaps their family had been gone for generations. The people who had been living on and farming that piece of land for many years may then be forced to move off the land. In cases like this, Ugandan law, as mentioned above, is supposed to protect the rights of long-term tenants, but at the local level, conflict resolution is more ambiguous. The 1998 Land Act was an attempt to resolve conflicts between multiple types of land tenure,[40] but practical knowledge and application of land law remains extremely low.[41]

According to respondents, a related cause of post-war land conflict has been the revoking of past agreements regarding sharing land. There were many cases of residents revoking agreements previously made by their fathers or grandfathers, which had granted use of land to neighbors or friends. Kennedy Oluk described such a situation,

> That neighbor of mine that I am talking about, we had been living together very well until this time that we returned from the camp. That is when he started to say that that piece of land was donated to my father by his father, and that it is time he should now recover the land so that he can share it out to his sons. For that matter, my sons should now withdraw or stop cultivating that piece of land. Therefore,

[40] The 1998 Land Act delineates four types of land ownership: customary tenure, freehold tenure, *mailo* tenure, and leasehold tenure.
[41] The World Bank study found that 90 percent of people surveyed did not know the substantive contents of the Land Act (Rugadya 2008).

> we have now problems in sharing the little portion of land that I have. (Interview #61)

Lapolo Gloria explained that she is confused as to why, in communities where the previous generation used to share land easily, there are now such struggles arising between residents:

> Now that we have returned from the camp, I don't know what came into the minds of the people. Suddenly people who used to get along very well are now cross with each other, especially concerning land disputes. One strange thing is that people who used to live together in peace and share things, after returning from the camp, suddenly they turn against each other and say, you don't have a place here. My father gave your father that piece of land only on temporary basis, so now it is time you quit. All this kind of confusion; I don't know what is happening. (Interview #45)

In the wake of displacement that lasted well over a decade, massive waves of resettlement did not occur in a particularly coordinated or organized manner, resulting in significant disagreements and confusion over boundaries of homesteads and rights to land. As seen in this section, respondents described how this chaotic situation led to land disputes because: demarcations were unclear or unknown; a survival mentality decreased willingness to share land; poverty and population growth accelerated competition for land; and there are multiple, often competing, bases of claims to the same piece of land.

Land Conflict and Power

While the types of conflicts described in the above section can arguably be attributed to the social disorganization created by war and displacement, there were just as many (if not more) cases where respondents described intentional or malignant “land grabbing.” In these instances, people take advantage of the situation of ambiguity and disorganization.

Charles Ocen, a highly-respected cultural chief, explained people's new awareness of the monetary value of land in the post-war period:

> In the past actually people were just living in peace and not taking land as the most important asset they had. They were like somebody who is sitting on gold, but not knowing the value of gold thinks it's just one of those tools around. And the ignorance was shown by, instead of owning your land, some people were saying let us put all our fields together and we work together this year. Next year, we will go one place and dig together. All our fields will be aligned next to the other. These days, suddenly coming back from the camp, the eyes of people are opened and they say, now I want everything for myself. I want the demarcation to be very clear. (Interview #41)

Previous research in Uganda found competition over land increasing as rapid population growth couples with new non-agricultural demands for land (for a certain class of people), poverty and limited non-agricultural employment options (for most other people), and introductions of external market opportunities (Deininger and Castagnini 2004; MercyCorps 2011). Land conflict arises as groups compete for land as a newly monetized, highly valuable resource (Deininger and Castagnini 2004).

Owning land is also an indicator of power, prestige, and respect within the community. Many respondents talked about how the biggest difference among community members is between those who own big pieces of land and those who own smaller parcels. One local council chairman explained the high status of those with large amounts of land, and thus wealth, saying, "We have come back from the camp but the attitude of the people remains that they always respect the wealthy people, especially those who have got bigger pieces of land. They are looked at as like lords." (Interview #38) In this context, the quest for land becomes about more than ensuring the survival of

one's family, but it becomes a pathway to greater profits. In turn, this wealth also gives people power to acquire additional land, asserting the strength of their social position.

Some people do exploit the situation of general disarray in the region and use it as an opportunity to grab land or encroach on neighbor's demarcations. In many cases, respondents described land conflicts that seem to map on to other fault lines of difference and power in the community. For example, after elections, people belonging to the victorious party may chase people from the opposing party away from the land. Land conflict can be a way to force certain people out of the community. One woman told of being accused of being an evil person or a witch, then finding her land had been sold off as a way to try to force her to leave. While respondents most commonly expressed concern about land grabs from fellow community members, the World Bank land study found significant concern about broader threats. In their study, about half of respondents surveyed in Acholi districts felt their land was threatened by the government, the army or rich people (Rugadya 2008). These larger external threats are likely very real for residents, particularly as large-scale land grabbing is developing throughout the region, but people's more immediate struggles are with power dynamics in their own communities.

In a study of land tenure in post-conflict Rwanda, Rose (2003) found that the evolving chaotic land tenure system afforded women unique opportunities to have greater access and rights to land. I found, however, that in cases of land grabbing in the immediate aftermath of resettlement, people especially take advantage of vulnerable residents, such as women, poor people, or young people:

> It has come to our notice that some people who have money, they come and intimidate the poor ones. You know there are some homesteads here whose actual leaders have been killed by the rebels. Now you find only children who are still very young growing up and some people come and threaten them, or they confiscate the land that they are living on. (Interview #9)

One young woman whose parents died in the camps is now dealing with neighbors trying to take away the land her family had lived on; she described the distress she feels at the idea of moving:

> My father and mother are dead. They died during the war. But before the war we used to live here, and we knew that that was our home…all along we thought that was our home, that was our land. But when we returned from the camp, seeing that our parents are now dead, the neighbors started telling us that it is time we leave the land because our father was only given that land on temporal basis. So now you can see the dilemma, and we do not know any other place besides this, and such thought really upsets me. (Interview #45)

A leader of disabled people in one village talked about the lack of power for families who do not have money or an elder to lead them:

> They always say that in so and so's family they have a dead family. They say so if you don't have money. If you do not have money they say that you have a dead family. And the death of a family is in two aspects—especially when you don't have someone who should head people, or someone who should be there to guard the land. They will say you have a dead family. You will have not voice. You might have stayed in that land for many years but then they will come and tell you to move away, and the law will not support you. (Interview #66)

A later section returns to the issue of power inequality, exploring how power functions in dispute resolution, swaying the outcomes of the conflicts in favor of those who have money and authority.

Negative Social Effects of Land Conflict

While land conflicts arise for a variety of reasons, they are similar in their negative effects on the social life in resettled communities. Particularly, land disputes harm unity and trust in the villages, sowing divisions which can often escalate into violence, leading respondents to perceive land conflict as a war in their communities.

Land Conflict Detracting From Unity

Land conflicts disrupt daily social lives in the community, because instead of neighbors offering support to one another, many people find neighbors unwilling or unable to interact freely. Respondents described how, because of land conflicts, neighbors do not help one another with problems, they do not greet each other, and they do not eat together, all of which are significant problems in these small communities where people do feel like they need to depend on one another to get by in their daily lives. Lucy, a 28-year-old resident, explained how she sees land conflict negatively affecting daily interactions between neighbors:

> Now, if you are in loggerheads with a neighbor over land, even the ordinary daily life will not flourish well, you will not greet each other, you will not call a friend to come and share something, you will not go to such person when you are in need now. Each time you feel like going, you ask yourself, but am I going to begin, and yet we are also not getting along very well because of that. So it actually creates a lot of suspicion and divisions. (Interview #47)

Previous scholarship found problematic social implications of the land use system in Africa, arguing that what sometimes appears to be an adaptive and flexible system actually is one in which some win and some lose (Peters 2004). Land reform efforts often deepen inequality and increase competition over land (Peters and Kambewa 2007), giving

rise to land conflicts that increase exclusion, class formation, and social divisions (Peters 2004). Indeed, respondents in Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach frequently described how land conflicts contribute to a breakdown of trust and unity, creating tension, division, and enmity in the community instead. For example, Lapolo Gloria said, "I know my neighbors, but as to the closeness between us, that one is questionable. People are now divided. This issue of land has made people to not trust one another intimately. These neighbors are very selfish and they think only of their own." (Interview #45) A middle-aged woman explained that people cannot trust those who are involved in land disputes, as such situations make relationships between the parties impossible:

> Trust is there, although it is poor. What makes this trust rather poor is land disputes. It is a common issue in this village. So this has weakened the level of trust and confidence in one another in this village…[People who] are not trusted are these people who have a land dispute, who are rivaling over land. Such people cannot have anything to do with the person they are rivaling with. (Interview #48)

Even when relationships seem to be normal, tensions over land may be underlying. Otto James explained that, although his neighbors get along well on the surface, there are deeper feelings of discontent or mistrust that come from seeing one another as potential rivals over land:

> I have problems with my neighbors. From that time when we left the camp and returned here, immediately we started already pulling and claiming that land. Although we greet each other, but we know that deep down somebody is looking at one another as a rival. Although we are trying and trying to maybe recapture that kind of [united] life once again, but it is still a process. (Interview #60)

Joy, a 30-year-old woman who has been involved in a recent land conflict herself, concurred:

> *I: Do [land] conflicts always escalate?*
> *R:* No, not necessarily. Not all of them escalate up to a point of fight. But there is a silent tension that continues to linger in the mind of the people and the way you can see the way they look at each other, it is not comfortable at all. (Interview #48)

Even in cases where the conflict is technically resolved, respondents often described the tensions that remain. Jeffrey Omona explained his particular case:

> Just recently somebody came and claimed my land, part of my land, and we went up to the division headquarters. And from there, he lost the case, because all the evidence and all the community members were in my support. So although he lost the case, there is no good relationship between his family and my family. They are still convinced that that part of the land is theirs, but in truth it is ours. (Interview #29)

A community leader confirmed that this is a broader trend in the village, saying, "Even though someone is found guilty for taking another person's land, the other would always not allow that the other person won the court. They would always still continue fighting. Both of them would always claim that the court did not pass a proper judgment." (Interview #69) Such negative feelings sow division among community members that can lead to escalated conflict or violence.

Potential to Escalate

Some respondents described examples of conflicts that were relatively minor or were resolved amicably, with relationships restored between the involved parties. This type of conflict is perhaps expected or unavoidable (or even beneficial) in such a context. The reason to be concerned about land conflicts in these villages, however, is because of the potential escalation of such conflicts. Indeed, many respondents described conflicts that resulted in the loss of life, long-term imprisonments, or deep animosity, hatred, and

division. In fact, not only was land conflict cited by respondents as the most common type of disagreement in the villages, but it was the type of conflict most often labeled (by 35 people, or 38 percent of respondents) as the most *serious* conflict in their community. A few others said that land conflict had not escalated to a serious level in their area, but it has the potential to be quite serious, and it had intensified in neighboring areas. Respondents described over a dozen cases of recent land conflicts that had already escalated to physical violence, and many more that seem to have real potential to do so, as well.

For example, in one of the villages, many respondents described one particular case that had occurred recently and was still unresolved. Although there were significant discrepancies in recounting the events, the conflict ultimately resulted in the death of a young man. Both parties of the conflict were going out to the piece of land in question; some claimed they were going to look at the demarcations, others claimed one party went with a plan to ambush the other. One side brought police officers with them. There were conflicting accounts of what caused the death, with some claiming the victim was shot by stray bullets fired by police officers, others claiming he was stabbed by the opposing party, and others claiming he was killed by those of his side, in order to frame the other side as guilty. In any case, this is unfortunately not an uncommon example of a land dispute escalating to the point of loss of life and also to the point of causing serious divisions among people in the community.

Especially in such cases, where the conflict escalates to the point of causing death, the animosities created are long-lasting. Joy, quoted above, commented further:

> When a case is already so serious that one of the conflicting parties is killed, that one is not easy to resolve. It needs time and sincerity because the two families will always consider themselves enemies…There is a silent tension that continues to linger in the mind of the people and the way you can see the way they look at each other, it is not comfortable at all. (Interview #48)

In the example above, the families involved in the conflict had stopped all associations with one another. The individuals accused of killing the young man were being held in prison. Community leaders told me they do not expect the case will be resolved for several years. During that time, the two clans cannot interact with one another. When I asked if they were concerned about this and the potential for one side to seek their own justice or revenge during these years, an elderly cultural chief told me that there is nothing they can do to control the situation, rather they just hope for the best. When a situation has already escalated to violence, there is real concern that it will spark a continued cycle of violence among opposing sides.

Respondents explained that people are desperate for land, and so land conflicts involve extreme emotions, hatred, and aggression. Additionally, there are widely available would-be weapons, such as hoes, spears, and machetes. This creates a potentially explosive mix:

> When people are arguing about land, you can see sometimes they pick harmful things like spears, axes, and machetes. And they speak with emotion. As I said before, the most serious conflict here is something to do with land disputes, and when people always argue over land, they argue with a state of extreme emotions, and ready to pick up harmful things to fight - and even ready to kill, because I think the Acholi people are left after the war with only one valuable, and that is their land. They have lost everything, their cattle, their children, their homes. So land is the last thing; that is why I think they fight with madness and are ready to kill anybody over it. (Interview #54)

Richard Oyet described threats of violence over land as a regular occurrence:

> There are also violent threats; some people take a spear, they go to the field where somebody's working, saying I'm going to spear you to death. This is not your field; you better pick your hoe and go home, and if you come again you will be a dead person. Such threats are there and very rampant. Here, it has become just a something almost a daily activity. (Interview #52)

When land conflicts do escalate, they create deep divisions in the community, disrupting people's lives, causing suffering, and making people see one another as enemies in a community at war with itself.

Land Conflict as a War

People's social interactions are still colored by a mindset of war. For example, a young woman in Anyadwe described how greedy people may intimidate someone off a piece of land:

> They can even threaten him in many ways. They can say, we can even kill you and do away with you and do everything. So sometimes in this state of where people are shifted from the camp and are in mood of the war, they can do anything. Because although the war is gone, people are not recovered from the attitude of war. That is how many families lost their land to people who were greedy and full of threats. (Interview #49)

After describing struggles over land in the community, a woman in Awach, Adong Evelyn, explained how people see one another as enemies, tolerating one another because they have no other option, but how this can erupt into violence:

> *I: How are people surviving in the midst of all these differences [over land]?*
> R: Yeah, they live but they don't come very close to one another. They are actually looking at one another like enemies do to one another. They are not friendly anymore. They are just now tolerating one another, not because there is nothing wrong but because there is nowhere to go…So if it is something to do with land, when you see your rivals just by passing you say, look at that wicked man; he is just bent on my land, and so forth. So you will not have even peace at

> heart. If I had a spear in my hand at this time, I would have thrown the spear to him to finish him. (Interview #78)

Another man, Raphael Atoo, explained that during the war people had a common enemy, but now they have returned home and found that energy directed towards land conflicts with their neighbors:

> R: There is a lot of division among people these days. When we were running away from the rebels, we were just one people, but when we returned home, we returned a divided community. Coming back from the camp, there was no common enemy now, in the form of the rebels harming people. It was now actually a craze for land…I think that was not heard of before the war, but now it is a common thing, after this war. It makes this life more miserable. This means the war is not ended, but the fashion is changed.
> *I: I see what you mean, but can you explain? Why do you say that the war is not yet over?*
> R: I say the war is not ended because we are still turning against one another, continuing the war among ourselves. (Interview #58)

In general, respondents were extremely concerned about the negative effects of land conflicts in their villages. For example, Atim Joyce, a *rwot okoro* in Anyadwe, described land conflicts as making neighbors into strangers:

> All these things were not there before the war. Actually, people liked and trusted one another intimately. Has all that confidence and trust gone? It is not there anymore. What you see are just strangers. Before the war, they were brothers and friends, after the war they look at one another as strangers and opponents. The whole issue is just this land, land, land. So the issue of land has divided people miserably…That is why I said, after this war, trust among people has been severely wounded and weakened. (Interview #32)

Raphael Atoo said that, though people see the region as peaceful now, there is actually still a war taking place:

> Now, people are rivaling over land—brothers against brothers…You see, people are bitterly divided, and we are not enjoying this peace. From outside, people feel Acholi-land is peaceful, but when you come on the ground, Acholi-land has taken on another type of war, and they are fighting it among themselves. (Interview #58)

Lapolo Gloria, quoted earlier, whose family had been recently involved in a land dispute expressed the effect of such conflicts very poignantly:

> When I compare the life before the war and this life, then I say that this life is the most painful life I have ever experienced. While the war of the rebels, the rebels terrorizing the people, has ended, another war started up. That is the war within the community members. The war of rivals over land. (Interview #45)

This statement powerfully illustrates the potential of such conflicts to tear apart a community. To hear a resident who had just survived a long and brutal war now describe land conflict in her village as another war—the most painful—is extremely troubling.

Methods to Address Land Conflict

Because land conflict is such a pervasive and potentially explosive issue, it is essential that there are strong systems in place to deal with such disputes. Most respondents described multiple levels for resolving land conflicts, in which cases start at a very local level, moving to progressively higher and more formal levels if they are particularly serious, the parties are unwilling to negotiate, or if any party prefers to bypass the local levels. In addition, there is sometimes a bit of a back and forth process between higher courts and the local level. Respondents had critiques for all levels of the process, not finding any mechanism to be completely able to address the significant challenges land conflicts are bringing in their communities.

Layers of Dispute Resolution

Most attempts to resolve land disputes first occur at the local level. For example, the disputing parties may first meet at the piece of land in contention, joined by neighboring elders and the local chief (the *rwot kweri*) in charge of farming and land in their particular zone. If they are unable to resolve the dispute through mediation at this level, they can move up to the elected local leader (the LC-1) for their village, who can also collaborate with village elders in an attempt to resolve the dispute. The traditional cultural leadership institution, *Ker Kwaro Acholi*, is also supposed to play a significant role in resolving land disputes through investigating the history of the case and leading mediation efforts.

If the issue is still contested, it can move up to subsequently higher levels of elected officials, or either party may bring the issue before the formal court system. In cases where the dispute involves a death or other serious bodily harm, the police are supposed to be called, the parties suspected of wrongdoing will be taken into custody, and a court case will be opened. Even in cases involving the formal state-based court or justice system, however, there is still an expectation that there should be local justice (involving village leaders, mediation, often compensation, and reconciliation between parties) before the conflict can be fully resolved. In fact, several informants told me that even if a case is brought before the court, the judge will often ask if the local leaders (especially *Ker Kwaro*) have ruled on the case. If not, they will send the parties back to the local authorities. If they have already gone through the local system, the court will sometimes defer to whatever decision the local leaders reached. Additionally, in cases where there was bodily harm, destruction of property, or other offenses, there needs to be

reconciliation using traditional rituals (such as *mato oput*[42]) to restore the relationship between the parties, even after the party found guilty served his or her prison sentence.

Yet, despite these multiple layers of strategies available to address land conflicts, many remain unresolved. For example, in one case that resulted in death, the suspected killer was arrested by the police, but was eventually released. The case remained unresolved and the man was staying in the main town, as he had been advised it was not safe for him to come back to the village. Several cases cited by respondents are languishing in the court system. Even those handled at the village level by local leaders seem to take a long time to come to any conclusion, and many examples mentioned by respondents were on-going conflicts. As the earlier Table 6.1 showed, of the 80 specific cases respondents described, there were 39 which could be classified as unresolved, compared to only 34 resolved.

Critiquing Dispute Resolution Systems

Village residents typically strongly supported the handling of land conflicts at the local level, though they did express varying perceptions of how well the local dispute resolution was happening in practice. There are three main areas in which they saw the local level as more effective than the more formal court systems: 1) its emphasis on a restorative process; 2) the relatively less important role of money; and 3) its closeness to the community and its history.

[42] *Mato oput* is a practice involving truth-seeking, mediation, and compensation between two parties (usually two families), particularly used in cases of death. See, for example, Baines (2007) or Latigo (2008) for more information.

First, local dispute resolution is based in restorative justice (Braithwaite 2002; Menkel-Meadow 2007), aiming to bring the parties back together and repair the damaged relationship between them, rather than the retributive approach of the court system, which punishes the individuals determined to be at fault. Atim Joyce, who was involved in dispute resolution as *rwot okoro,* described her role, emphasizing mediation to reach a compromise:

> We go and mediate and talk peace among them, and if possible, we again renew the demarcation so that it is very clear and not very ambiguous. We mediate until both sides resolve and say, yes I think both sides are now contented and we can proceed. Until both of them reach a compromise. We always work so hard that most tensions and rivalries are settled before reaching the police. (Interview #32)

Another resident of Anyadwe carefully detailed the complex negative implications he sees when cases are brought to the police rather than handled locally:

> These days when a disagreement begins between two people or between clans, they rush immediately to the police…[When conflicts were] solved by the elders it was a better method, because they would advise both sides then set the ruling. They would not even imprison any, although you may pay a fine. So that leaves both of them without any bitterness. But now this one where people rush to the police, definitely the police would imprison one of them. And the one who suffered in the prison will find it hard in his heart to forgive the other one that took the matter to the police, that caused him his suffering…So it leaves a long bitterness in the heart of the people. And another thing that people have resorted to is, when you defeat me in the court of law I will make my underground arrangement to eliminate you, and this one is serious. Therefore I would emphasize very much that the first way should be revived, where the elders preside and warn the two conflicting parties. It's a better way of solving the conflict. (Interview #60)

Second, very many respondents were concerned about the role of money in the court system, demonstrating a tangible way in which money translates into power in land conflicts. Primarily, people with money are able to bribe leaders, court officials, the

police, and others. A 32-year-old man explained the pervasiveness of bribery and how it provokes more conflict:

> The problem with land issue now is that bribery is involved. So all the levels where the case should be channeled through, they will bribe all these officers, whether the LCs, going to the police, from the police to the magistrate, to the lawyers, they bribe all these; they pay money. So the case becomes complicated. Even if at the end of it the magistrate declares that this land belongs to so and so, such declaration will only provoke more anger in the heart of those who lost the case. Therefore the realistic courts are those in the village, but this [higher, formal] court that now is handled by the so-called learned, those are fake courts and they create actually more enmity between people. (Interview #53)

People with money are also able to hire lawyers, allowing them to navigate the complexities of the court system. Additionally, to the extent that money correlates with higher levels of education, they are able to speak with greater authority and confidence in the court, where the voices of those less confident in such an institution are silenced. An older woman explained:

> R: In the past, everything would be resolved amicably, locally by the *rwot kweri* or the village elders. These days, it is a different story. If a person has some money, he will go and buy a lawyer, and usually they get the upper hand of the case.
> *I: Why is that so?*
> R: Because of money. They buy their lawyer, and the lawyer is skillful in maneuvering all these things so that actually, the one who is not the owner will be looked at in the eyes of the law as the owner. And the actual owner will lose out altogether. It is tricky and funny. So most of these people who lose the case, or who are in prison, are the poor ones. (Interview #51)

While a few respondents do say that local leaders or elders are susceptible to bribes as well, this is much less common, with more people placing trust in local leaders to act at least somewhat fairly.

The third benefit of the local level compared to the higher levels is the degree of closeness to the land, the community members, and their shared history. Respondents

attributed problematic outcomes to the higher authorities attempts to deal with local issues. Felix Ojok, the elected leader in Lukodi, said:

> If it were possible, land cases should be processed within the community and not out there in the court hall, away in town. People who live within the community know very precisely that for so many years so and so was cultivating this piece of land…But a judge who comes from out there, who sits in the court hall who maybe has never stepped on that piece of land will never make good or the correct decisions…Sitting somewhere in town he has even no imagination of how that piece of land that they're discussing looks; he has never been there, but now passes judgment that the case is against so and so and so and so wins. It's a total fallacy. (Interview #9)

Respondents tended to describe local leaders as much better equipped to adjudicate land conflicts, because they are more intimately familiar with the land and the parties involved. He went on to say:

> [Local leaders] are the people who know the place, who can speak with certainty. Because when we sit in our council as village elders, we can point out that this person just wants to intimidate people. We say so and so, we know you, you were with us since this time, and you were cultivating this piece and not the other one. What made you to go up to there? We can then say, since we know the truth, we will not allow you to come and intimidate people here or this poor family just because you have money. We will not allow that. (Interview #9)

Local leaders may also be able to be flexible in their judgments, adjusting the general rules to account for context and to ensure all residents are cared for. As an elderly cultural elder explained, "If they discover that the man whom is being ordered out of the land had stayed for many years on the land, even if he's not original of the place, some consideration is done. A small portion is given him because to send him off completely is very inhuman." (Interview #10)

While most respondents seemed to laud the merits of the local system, there were also strong critiques of the current effectiveness of local dispute resolution systems.

Particularly, a significant problem is getting the needed leadership from elders, upon whom the whole local system depends. As we also saw in the previous chapter, the system of local leadership and elders has deteriorated for several reasons. Many of the elders who are needed to advise on the demarcations died during the course of the conflict. Several respondents were also concerned that people no longer respect the elders, as one older man lamented:

> The older generation passed away, and this new strange generation does not have the way of the people at heart. They have things at heart. My daughter, I would like to tell you: people have moved away from centering their lives around elders. They are now centering their lives around the police, around the law, around the court. Even for very slight misunderstandings, the police are called in, or somebody is arrested and taken for court prosecution. So it has upset everything. (Interview #61)

On the other hand, some respondents commented that the elders themselves are no longer very trustworthy, as one school leader said, "If the problem or the case is brought before somebody who is not honest, then it causes problem. It causes problem because there are some elders who are even not honest now. They are not trusted…At times they deceive the young ones, so it may bring more problems." (Interview #39) Finally, in some cases, perhaps qualified elders are available, but they are intimidated from speaking up, as expressed by a leader in Awach:

> In most cases, if there is a land wrangle, no elderly person would come out to…differentiate the boundary between the land. These elders always shy away because they fear the youth. If they talk, then the youth will start pointing at them that they are talking nonsense, and that they do not know anything about the land…The elders said they feared the youth because the youth would always penalize them for any judgment passed. If the elders speak out the truth about who should really take the land, they will just think the elder is siding with the other person, so the elders will always become the wrong people. That is why the elders always fear talking. (Interview #69)

Some respondents expressed frustration with the local system, explaining that land conflict is a new phenomenon and, thus, local structures are not able to deal with it. The local system depends on all parties being willing to negotiate and discuss, and in reality this sometimes is not the case in bitter land disputes. Additionally, local leaders are, by definition, embedded in the conflicts personally. Because of the complex network of interrelationships in these small communities, it is almost unavoidable for a leader to be related or connected in some way to at least one party involved in the dispute. Some respondents are concerned that those who come forward as witnesses or leaders in cases do not tell the truth, but are influenced by money instead.

These passages illustrated significant complexity in the post-war local dispute resolution system. Although most people still hold the local system as the more effective way to deal with land conflicts, there are definitely divisions, mistrust, and problems within this system as well. Without a solid mechanism that they can trust to resolve the conflicts in the community, many residents felt overwhelmed by the problems created by land disputes.

(Lack of) Attention to the Issue

Despite the significant potential of land conflicts to spark tensions and disunity, as well as the demonstrated difficulty in resolving post-war land issues, there has been shockingly little attention to this issue from NGOs or government initiatives. Their programs promote rebuilding and development efforts, usually centered around agricultural support, educational initiatives, or psycho-social programs for traumatized

individuals. Transitional justice efforts, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, tend to focus on truth-finding, reintegrating former abductees, trials, memorialization, and reconciliation rituals.

I did talk with several NGO representatives in Gulu who described their organizations' programs to address land conflict, particularly locally-based organizations, like Concerned Parents' Association, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, and Human Rights Focus. However, in the village interviews, respondents listed all the organizations that had been active in their communities since resettlement, and virtually nobody mentioned a program designed to help residents deal with land conflict. A handful of respondents (about five people) mentioned programs to help people learn to resolve conflicts non-violently in general. Similarly, although land conflict demonstrates clear potential to derail peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, transitional justice efforts (both in terms of programs on the ground and academic literature) are not attentive to the issue.

Perhaps this is an example of instrumental rationality at work, in which organizations and government agencies are more interested in demonstrating quantifiable "success" with more manageable programs, like rebuilding schools, opening water sources, or conducting workshops for local leaders, rather than tackling the extremely thorny issue of land disputes. Based on my observations and interviews, I argue that this is an area that necessitates more focused attention, because what happens in these social interactions will have significant repercussions for the future, either undermining or facilitating the transition to post-conflict stability. As this analysis of land conflict

suggests, it is dangerous to make assumptions about local social interactions in post-war communities. As the case of land conflict in northern Uganda demonstrates, such everyday interactions between survivors can very well develop into new battles, originating from within local communities, but with the capacity to ignite broader regional animosity, tensions, and violence (Autesserre 2010).

Discussion

This chapter presented one particularly potent barrier to unity in post-war communities. Land conflicts are divisive because of the centrality of land, not only for the physical survival of families in an agricultural society but also for their social identity. Ancestral land is a marker of belonging, a way of distinguishing outsiders, and is an essential symbolic element of identity. In the post-war context, however, complications have emerged. Land is newly monetized and heralded as the "only thing of value" remaining to help people rebuild. Land is a marker of power and high social position. Customary land tenure is increasingly difficult to determine, as it relies on elders' memories of local histories, and such leadership is facing significant challenges. Additionally, there has been a shift away from perceiving land as for communal use and declining practices of communal agricultural work, and instead an increasing concern with individual ownership. All of these factors converge to make disputes over land particularly meaningful and contested.

Respondents reported that land disputes are extremely common in their communities, with over a third describing cases that involved them personally. Over half

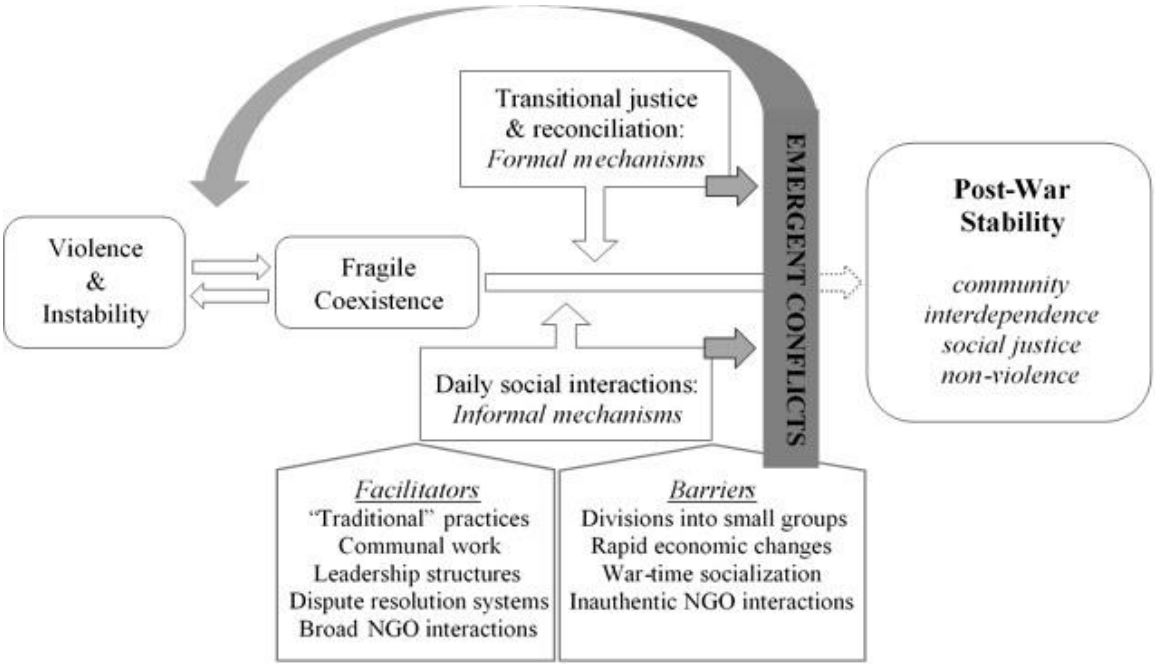
of the described cases were unresolved and close to 20 percent of the examples given were cases that had escalated to physical violence. This issue transcends community-level differences and is a significant challenge for residents of all three communities. Disputes over land arose from the chaos and complexity of the return process, particularly as people struggled to determine precise demarcations without strong leadership from elders. More troubling, however, is the emergence of unequal power dynamics as cases of "land grabbing" highlight intentions to exploit more vulnerable community residents, particularly the poor and young people. Respondents were extremely concerned about how land conflicts detract from unity, making people unwilling to support or even interact with one another. Even in relationships that seem relatively calm, there are underlying tensions. After conflicts ignite, amicable relationships between the parties become impossible, and they may escalate to violence and create long-term animosity and divisions. Ultimately, respondents described land conflicts as a type of war in the community, invoking deep emotions and perceptions of their neighbors as their enemies.

Unfortunately, there is no mechanism thoroughly equipped or trusted by respondents to address land conflicts. While a plural legal system may provide greater alternatives to negotiate dispute resolution, there is some evidence that plural legal systems can actually destabilize or weaken both levels (Benjamin 2008). In this case, respondents highly favored the local system, appreciating the emphasis on restorative processes (rather than retributive, right and wrong judgments of courts), the relatively smaller influence of money (rather than the power of bribes and hiring lawyers in the court system), and the closeness of the local resolution mechanisms to the people and

histories of the community. However, in practice, even the local system is struggling to address land conflict, as a new and particularly complex phenomenon that even a perfectly-functioning system would have difficulty handling.

Returning again to my model of the transition from fragile coexistence to stability (Figure 6.1), I insert emergent conflicts as a potential block of the transitional process. The transition from war to peace is a period of enormous social change, as people had adapted their relationships, daily routines, and social institutions to decades of living in displaced persons' camps, under threats of violence, and negotiating situations of insecurity (Finnström 2008). As discussed in the previous chapter, the post-war period left a crisis of leadership, a gap in the socialization of young adults, increasing inequality, monetization of the local economy, and an explosion of NGO interventions. Such changes contributed to the intensification of disagreements over land use and boundaries. In the case of northern Uganda, land conflict is the most serious emergent conflict, developing as communities cope with the shifting social conditions that come with these broad social changes.

Figure 6.1. Emergent Conflicts Can Block the Transition



Emergent conflicts have the power to disrupt the entire transition and cycle communities into renewed violence and instability. If social institutions do not develop the capacity to deal with this emergent conflict, the situation will continue to polarize and intensify, leading to violent conflict (Miall 2007). Instead, there needs to be concerted efforts to transform the conflict and accommodate the social changes, leading to peaceful adaptation to the new social context (Miall 2007). My findings are consistent with previous studies that suggest local land disputes may escalate into or contribute to widespread violence or war. For example, Autesserre (2009, 2010) argued that local disputes and power struggles over land have been the root of the decades-long conflict in the DRC. Rustad and Binningsbø (2012) found that conflicts motivated by concerns over natural resource distribution—such as land—are more likely to reoccur. And, in an

analysis of the factors that prolong civil wars, Fearon (2004) found that land conflict between groups played a key role.

In the case of Uganda, social capacity to address land conflict is currently very low. Despite land conflict emerging as a result of the war and displacement, transitional justice programs do not address the issue, likely seeing it as under the purview of development or rebuilding efforts. Development programs, whether from the government or NGOs, hesitate to address the complex issue. Some local CBOs claim to be addressing the issue, but I did not find evidence of their efforts in the local communities. Local dispute resolution systems are stunted by the war and ill-equipped to address this new problem. The court system is largely seen as irrelevant to local communities and too vulnerable to manipulation by powerful individuals.

What, then, can help communities adapt to social change constructively and address the real threat of land conflict? Certainly, CBO programs that teach people methods of solving disputes non-violently are an important first step, particularly in the post-war context where young people have been socialized to turn to violence to resolve problems and advance their interests. Decreasing the likelihood of people turning to violence as a viable alternative in their daily social interactions would be a valuable contribution to developing the social capacity to deal with land conflict. Of course, more structural capacity-building is necessary, as well. Particularly, local dispute resolution systems need to be supported and equipped to adapt to the unique challenges of land conflict. This is likely to be the area where transitional justice or development programs can leverage their resources most wisely. Local dispute resolution mechanisms have

significant credibility among the population, but need strengthening in the post-war context. Although respondents were quite critical and skeptical of the state-based court system to resolve land disputes, legal reforms and reforms to land administration agencies are warranted, specifically with the goal of making such systems less easily manipulated by people with power and more equitable in their protections of vulnerable individuals.

Additionally, this is an area ripe for more attention from social scientists and other scholars of conflict, peacebuilding, and transitional justice. Detailed analyses of changes in social leadership structures during and after war is essential, as my study was only able to touch on this important issue. The crisis of leadership in the post-war context has far reaching implications, as seen here and in the previous chapter. Additionally, an organizational analysis of how NGOs determine areas of focus and shape the content of their interventions would be illuminating and have powerful practical implications. Finally, most centrally, there is a dire need for work focused on the processes by which local level disputes escalate to violence and how these conflicts are the social roots of broader violence and warfare. In general, research about the development of regional and national conflict focuses on top-down explanations of political maneuvering, elite manipulation, media inciting violence, battles over large-scale natural resources, the dehumanization of entire ethnic groups, and so on. This chapter, however, suggests another element: a bottom-up story of micro-level tensions and power struggles over land (Autesserre 2010). This grassroots process of conflict development has rarely been

recognized and even more rarely studied systematically or deeply; while my study is one contribution to understanding this process, much more future research is needed.

Chapter Seven
Transitional Justice in Context: Perceptions of the ICC

Tong gweno pe kok doko loka.
A cock doesn't crow beyond its border.

This chapter contributes an understanding of how people in recently resettled post-war villages in northern Uganda encounter and respond to the International Criminal Court (ICC) as an international transitional justice mechanism. I discuss local knowledge about the ICC in the three fieldsites, including one that received significant attention from ICC outreach initiatives. This chapter explores survivors' knowledge of the ICC, how people in affected communities evaluate the work of the ICC, and what impact they think it has in their lives. Previous work on globalization and law suggests that the ICC, as an international institution, carries universalized global principles of justice, accountability, and human rights and that, under the right conditions, these will be incorporated into diverse local contexts. The ICC itself similarly expects that increased education about and knowledge of its work will lead to high levels of support and a harmony of interests between the ICC and local populations. On the contrary, I found that when people know more about the ICC, they are more likely to be critical and have negative perceptions of its impact. While previous work has focused on cases where global principles are successfully translated into a local vernacular, I identified how elements of social context can complicate the process of translating the ICC's global principles and discourse to the local level.

In this chapter, I first discuss the ICC's involvement in the Ugandan case and its outreach efforts in the region. Next, I situate my work within previous research on universalized discourses and institutional logics of courts. Next, I introduce variance in exposure to the ICC among the three fieldsites. I then explore the ICC's own claims about the success of its outreach efforts. In discussing findings from the interview data, I first present respondents' knowledge about the ICC. I complicate assumptions about how knowledge leads to increased support by introducing a model that accounts for how local social context affects ICC discourse. Next, I lay out how respondents perceive the impact of the ICC in their lives, discussing both positive and negative impacts and their connections to elements of the post-war context.

I found that knowledge about the ICC remains low, even after outreach activities, and that knowledge is not distributed evenly throughout the population. I also found that there is substantial nuance in how people understand the ICC's impact, and that outreach activities may prompt debate or deliberation that ultimately leads to negative perceptions of the ICC's role in Uganda. Particularly, respondents were critical of the ICC because they sensed its involvement had perpetuated the suffering of innocent people and because they perceived the ICC as incompatible with their deeply-held values of forgiveness and reconciliation. I found that, for most people, the ICC does not resonate with their lived experiences or their attempts to make sense of their collective lives after war.

The ICC in Northern Uganda

The International Criminal Court

For many, the International Criminal Court represents the culmination of decades of work to combat impunity for mass atrocities and human rights abuses. Building on the foundation laid by war crimes trials and international tribunals in the 20th century, the ICC is the first permanent, global criminal court with jurisdiction to prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. The ICC entered into force in 2002 and by 2013 had 122 states parties. "Situations" have been officially opened in eight countries, with 18 cases, and as the ICC celebrated its 10th anniversary, it reached its first verdict in the case of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, found guilty of war crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Beyond its significance in advancing international criminal accountability, the ICC is innovative for developing mechanisms that include the victims of the crimes in its activities. People who have been victims of crimes under the ICC's jurisdiction can request the opening of an investigation or testify as witnesses in proceedings (International Criminal Court 2009). Convicted persons can be ordered to pay individual or collective reparations, and the ICC also has established a Trust Fund for Victims, through which victims receive reparations or projects are initiated in victims' communities (International Criminal Court 2009). In addition to these ways victims can be involved, the ICC has outreach programs in at least five countries, all in Africa.

Outreach programs include a variety of initiatives, including outreach to affected communities, local schools and universities, legal professionals, and the media

(International Criminal Court 2010b). According to the webpage for the ICC's outreach program:

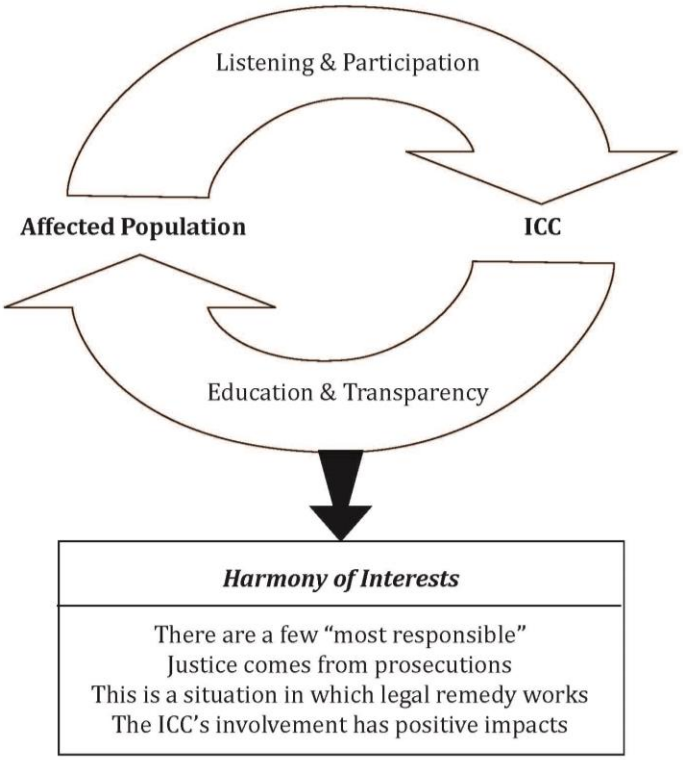
> Outreach is a process of establishing sustainable, *two-way communication* between the Court and communities affected by the situations that are subject to investigations or proceedings, and *to promote understanding and support* of the judicial process at various stages as well as the different roles of the organs of the ICC. Outreach aims to clarify misperceptions and misunderstandings and to enable affected communities to follow trials.[43] (*emphasis mine)*

The official objectives of the outreach program emphasize the reciprocal process of providing information to communities and at the same time responding to their concerns. One objective is specifically to increase understanding in affected communities in order to increase support: "To promote greater understanding of the Court's role…with a view to increasing support among the population…" (International Criminal Court 2006:5).

The central presupposition of ICC outreach is that by facilitating the flow of information both ways between the ICC and the affected population, support for the Court will increase among the local population. It assumes that if people knew more and the ICC was responsive to their concerns, then a harmony of interests around shared notions and practices of justice would emerge. I constructed Figure 7.1 to illustrate this, based on descriptions of outreach goals and objectives from the ICC's outreach website and reports.

[43] See http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/structure%20of%20the%20court/outreach/Pages/outreach.aspx, accessed February 13, 2013.

Figure 7.1. Presuppositions in the ICC Outreach Process



A staff member of the Outreach Unit explained to me that the main goal of the outreach is to "engage the affected communities," bringing the ICC "close" to people in Uganda and make the Court "relevant" to affected communities.[44] As the following analysis reveals, however, this model is not happening. Instead, Ugandans have thoughtful critiques about the involvement of the ICC in northern Uganda, which have resulted in a community-level discourse that in many ways contradicts the ICC's discourse about accountability and justice. My data reveal that the process of "translating" the global discourse of the ICC to the local level is not occurring effectively, and I introduce a model of how elements of the local social context interact with or complicate the ICC's model.

[44] ICC Outreach staff member, personal interview, December 12, 2012.

The ICC Involvement in Northern Uganda

In 2003, President Museveni referred the situation with the LRA in Uganda to the ICC and in 2004 the Chief Prosecutor opened an investigation. The following year, by the side of President Museveni, the Prosecutor unsealed the ICC's first-ever arrest warrants for crimes against humanity and war crimes against Joseph Kony and four other top LRA commanders. Then from 2006 to 2008, Southern Sudan mediated peace negotiations between the LRA and the government of Uganda in Juba. Although the negotiations seemed promising, even leading to the creation of a "Permanent Ceasefire" and an "Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation," Kony failed to sign the final agreement, demanding that the ICC warrants be lifted. Negotiations stalled indefinitely, giving way to military interventions against the LRA, tragically resulting in more loss of life. To date, there have been no arrests.

The involvement of the ICC in Uganda sparked substantial debate about the appropriateness of the intervention and its potential political consequences.[45] Some perceived the ICC as problematically siding with the government of Uganda, citing the joint appearances of President Museveni and the Chief Prosecutor, the fact that the ICC is not prosecuting abuses allegedly committed by the government's UPDF, and the Ugandan government's potential political gains from ICC involvement. The second major critique is that the ICC arrest warrants undermined the peace process and contradict the Amnesty Act, thus prolonging the conflict (Baines 2007; Clarke 2009). In

[45] This debate was particularly vibrant in the mid-2000s, as the arrest warrants were released and as the Juba peace talks were underway. For a few examples, see Allen (2006), or Branch (2007), Southwick (2005).

2012, international interest in apprehending Kony and bringing him before the ICC was revitalized with the internet video sensation 'Kony 2012' released by Invisible Children,[46] the deployment of 100 U.S. forces to Uganda (BBC News 2011), and the creation of an African Union force of 5,000 troops on a mission to capture Kony (Kron 2012).

The ICC has an Outreach Unit that has been active in Uganda since 2006, though its activities have dwindled in recent years and there is now only one staff person in the country. Its 2010 annual report described a wide array of activities, including large-scale community outreach. From 1 October 2009 to 1 October 2010, the Outreach Unit reported that 22,894 people had participated in 165 interactive sessions in Uganda; 60 of these were specifically village town-hall meetings (International Criminal Court 2010b). In addition to this direct community outreach, the ICC Outreach conducted interactive radio programs that were broadcast weekly on local stations, hosting debates and responding to questions. Radio is by far the most accessible media to rural residents (over newspaper, television, or internet) and the Outreach Unit estimated that these programs potentially reached 10 million people in northern Uganda in 2010 (International Criminal Court 2010b:16).

"Universalized" Discourses and Principles

World polity theory (Boli and Thomas 1997, 1999; Meyer et al. 1997) helps situate the ICC as an institution and make sense of its global significance. According to this

[46] The primary strategy promoted in the video and through its associated advocacy campaign is the use of military force to apprehend Kony and bring him to trial before the ICC.

perspective, since the mid-nineteenth century, there has been a rise of a world institutional and cultural order with universal models that shape states and individuals. World polity theory suggests that these universalized principles or global culture will come to be integrated into a wide range of social contexts and the global trend will lean towards similarity across nation states, as these principles become taken for granted. In this system, IGOs and INGOs are key carriers that promote universalized principles and discourses. The ICC is one such global actor advocating ideals that are increasingly seen as universal: principles of justice, human rights, individualism, progress, and so on. Clarke (2009) argues that the ICC is an agent that produces "justice talk," or the idea that the international order operates according to a superior set of external norms that will be spread to local contexts.

Some scholars, however, have problematized this process of the transmission of global culture to diverse local contexts. Boyle (2002) notes that principles institutionalized among global actors can sometimes run counter to local institutionalized practices. Although female genital cutting is uniformly opposed by global actors, for example, failure to circumcise a daughter was perceived as child neglect until recently in some communities (Boyle 2002). Merry (2006) highlights the need to translate the principles carried by global actors into an "everyday vernacular" that is meaningful in particular local contexts, a process Levitt and Merry term "vernacularization" (Levitt and Merry 2009). They argue that, to be effective, human rights law and other global ideals must be reframed in local terms by translators, such as local activists and elites. I argue that in the case of the ICC in Uganda there has not been effective vernacularization of the

global discourse to the local level. Unlike previous work which focuses on explaining the successful translation of global principles (Levitt and Merry 2009; Merry 2006), my task is to explain a process in which vernacularization or translation is absent or fails to impact local perceptions, particularly relying on insights from cultural sociology.

Not only is it necessary to translate international discourses to the local level, but to meet its outreach objectives the ICC also needs to translate the legal logic of the criminal court to the lifeworlds of people affected by the court. There is a body of work investigating the translation of the institutional logic of courts looking at the trials and tribunals of the post-World War II era. For example, Devin Pendas (2006) explores the limits or boundaries of the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, finding it was not able to adequately give an account of the Holocaust as a "total social event," instead focusing on "ordinary" crimes committed by individual perpetrators. For this reason, Pendas argues that the trial was an example of a legal narrative that "fails socially" because it did not organize the messiness of the situation into a coherent story. Similarly, Tomaz Jardim (2012), analyzing an American military trial at Dachau, shows how a trial (though effective at distributing punishment) can fail to contribute to establishing democracy or a sense of the historical context of the crimes. He argues that this disconnect between a trial and the broader population can actually shift people's view from seeing the accused as perpetrators to seeing them as victims of an unfair or vengeful system (Jardim 2012). Insights from such studies are helpful in understanding in what ways the logic of the ICC as a legal institution resonates with the population in northern Uganda, and in what ways it may be fundamentally disconnected.

Considering the case of ICC involvement in northern Uganda, this chapter addresses three interrelated questions. First, how successfully has knowledge about the ICC disseminated to the local level? Second, does increased knowledge translate into increased support? And, finally, what facilitates or hinders this process?

Comparing Communities: Data and Methods

In this section, I first discuss the interview items used in this analysis. Next, I discuss the rationale behind comparing the communities of Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach. I also present the ICC's claims about the success of outreach in the region, including specific success in the community of Lukodi.

Interview Questions

Within the interviews, a few specific questions were primarily used for this analysis. First, respondents were asked if they knew about the ICC. If they responded positively, they were asked additional questions: What is the ICC? Where have you gotten information about the ICC? What do you think is the impact of the ICC? Because the interview questions served as a flexible guide for a conversation between the interviewer and respondent, follow up or probing questions were typically asked, as well. For example, if a respondent indicated they knew nothing about the ICC or had not even heard of it, the interviewer would follow up to ensure they were certain about this. The interviewer often probed the respondent to consider the ICC's impact generally, as well

as in their particular village or their own life. Additionally, the interviewer sometimes asked respondents to consider both positive and negative effects of the ICC.

Field Sites

Lukodi stands out for its high level of contact with the ICC. In 2004, the LRA raided Lukodi and massacred over 60 people. In the wake of this tragedy, bodies were buried by community members. A day after the burial, forensic investigators and government representatives arrived to exhume and examine the bodies, as well as to take photographs and statements from survivors. Community residents assisted with the exhumation and reburial process, though they were not informed about the purpose of the investigation. On several occasions, investigators from the Office of the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC and from the Ugandan police came to Lukodi to gather information about the massacre, to build a case against the leaders of the LRA (Justice and Reconciliation Project 2011).

In addition, Lukodi has had significant interaction with ICC outreach activities, particularly in 2010, the year before I conducted interviews. Of the 21 towns and villages in the Acholi sub-region where the ICC reported carrying out Community Outreach Programme activities in 2010, four of them were located within Lukodi village (International Criminal Court 2010b:10).[47] In May 2010, a high level delegation from the ICC, including the ICC President, Judge Sang-Hyun Song, visited Lukodi for an interactive outreach session with over 670 local residents, including many women, youth, and local leaders (International Criminal Court 2010d). A few months later, in July 2010,

[47] The ICC reports outreach activities were carried out in Lukodi sub-ward, as well as Lalweny, Lagoticol [Lagot Kicol], and Loyobo, which are zones or *tek kweri* within Lukodi village.

the ICC held another event in Lukodi, in celebration of the Day of International Criminal Justice. This event included at least 180 community members, and again the ICC noted the particular participation of women. The event was interactive, including an ICC presentation, speeches, dance and play performances by community members, and a question and answer session. ICC reporting about the event notes that local authorities and leaders praised the ICC for coming closer to residents, appreciated that the ICC had not forgotten them and said the ICC's engagement had "made them understand the relevance of justice served for societies in transition" (International Criminal Court 2010c). Additionally, the area's secondary school was one of four schools in Gulu district where the ICC conducted an outreach session and radio talk show (International Criminal Court 2010a). According to the ICC Outreach Unit coordinator, Outreach personnel had gone to Lukodi more than 10 times, and they consider that the outreach work has been very successful in Lukodi.[48]

The other two field sites, Anyadwe and Awach, had exposure to the ICC that was more typical for the region. Radio is the major form of communication in the villages, and there are regular radio programs broadcast by and about the ICC, including call-in shows where listeners can ask questions about the Court and offer their perspectives. People also learn about the ICC from newspaper articles and television programs. According to my interview with the ICC outreach staff member, Outreach personnel had also gone to both Anyadwe and Awach about two times, but conducted smaller gatherings with only community leaders, rather than large community events.

[48] ICC Outreach staff member, personal interview, December 12, 2012.

Because of these differences, comparing how residents of Lukodi perceive the ICC to the perceptions of residents in otherwise quite similar neighboring communities is particularly fruitful. Lukodi is a place where the ICC Outreach Unit made a concerted effort to reach the local population and inform them about the ICC and its work. Because the orientation of such outreach is to increase residents' support for the ICC, I would expect not only the knowledge about the ICC but also support for the ICC to be higher in Lukodi than in the other two nearby villages. However, findings suggest a greater multiplicity of ideas about the ICC within the communities.

The ICC's Claims of Outreach Effectiveness

According to the ICC's 2010[49] outreach report, the outreach activities (which included those conducted in Lukodi) had been quite successful in implementing the model presented in the preceding pages. Through outreach, the ICC claims members of the affected communities have increased their knowledge about and support for the ICC. Figure 7.2, copied directly from the outreach report (International Criminal Court 2010b), depicts responses to questions asked of individuals who had directly participated in outreach programs in Uganda.[50] Particularly interesting is the finding that 98 percent of respondents were happy with the presence of the ICC in Uganda.

[49] The interviews for this project were conducted in 2011, so the 2010 outreach activities are most appropriate for this research. Additionally, 2009 and 2010 were the height of ICC outreach activities and the 2010 report is the most recent outreach report available online as of July 2013.
[50] Although the exact methods or number of respondents are not reported in the publication, it implies that at least 14,000 people responded to these questions after participating in outreach events.

Figure 7.2. Opinions about the ICC from 2010 ICC Outreach Report

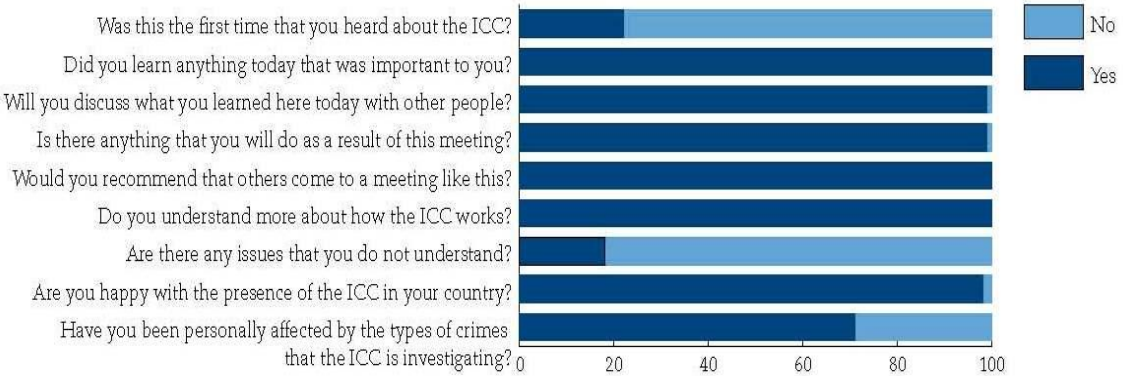


Table of Meetings and Individual Perceptions

Commenting specifically on an outreach event in Lukodi, the report says, "Local council authorities, women and youth leaders of Lukodi village highlighted the importance of the work done so far by the Court through outreach activities, as in their view, this constant engagement with affected communities has made them *understand the relevance* of justice served for societies in transition" (International Criminal Court 2010b, emphasis mine). According to the ICC materials, outreach activities have been successful in increasing knowledge about the Court, support for its work, and perceptions that it is meaningful and significant in people's lives. From this, I expected greater knowledge about the ICC among interview respondents to be associated with higher levels of support. One would also expect *both* knowledge and support to be noticeably higher in Lukodi, where the ICC had been more active in its outreach efforts.

While the ICC materials paint an optimistic picture of outreach, my data suggest the materials may be one-dimensional and there is likely more to the story. Indeed, I found that neither one of the directional arrows in the feedback loop, depicted in Figure 7.1, was working very well. As discussed below, there are significant pockets of the

population with no knowledge of the ICC, people do not really feel they are participants in the process, and the ICC does not really have a way to integrate feedback from the population. Furthermore, even in cases where people are well informed about the ICC and have participated in outreach events and workshops, the majority did not buy into the idea that justice comes from prosecutions or that the ICC is a good idea for their communities.

Clearly, there are significant discrepancies between the Court's findings and how I found respondents to perceive the ICC. Part of this, certainly, could be described by the nature of the data collection, using open-ended questions, a conversational interview style, developing rapport with the respondent, and conducting the interview in their home. Additionally, I observed many residents of the region to be quite deferential to the perceived authority of international organizations and their representatives, which perhaps affected responses to the ICC's evaluative questions. The ICC has done outreach in Lukodi, and made claims about the success of the model there, yet I found that community members did not display strong support for the ICC's approach. The central task of this analysis is to explore this issue, unpacking why familiarity did not breed a deeper perception of the Court as salient in respondents' lives.

Awareness and Knowledge about the ICC

There was considerable variation in respondents' knowledge about the ICC, ranging from those who had very little knowledge at all, those with vague knowledge, those with knowledge that is discordant with the ICC's understanding of its work, and those who

have knowledge that is consistent with the ICC's understanding of itself. As will be discussed in this section, there was some evidence of higher levels of knowledge about the ICC in Lukodi, although there were still large pockets of the population that were not knowledgeable about the Court.

Even after probing from the interviewer, nearly a quarter of respondents reported they knew nothing about the ICC, except having heard the acronym, which is the way the ICC is commonly referenced in the media and in the villages. They had heard people talk about the ICC, but were unable to explain what it was, at even a basic level. Several respondents asked the interviewer to explain the ICC to them. Such respondents had heard of the ICC, but their understanding of it was very vague, such as the case of this elected government leader in Anyadwe:

> I heard of ICC, but I am not very conversant with it; I am not very familiar. I am a leader of the people here, but they have not taken time to sensitize us…we just hear people mention it over the radio…Whatever it is for, whatever it does, what is the role of ICC, all those questions remain to me unanswered. (Interview #38)

Some respondents ventured ideas, but were not confident in their knowledge. For example, a young woman in Lukodi thought perhaps the ICC involved Uganda's political leaders: "Maybe it is something to do with Kizza [Besigye] and Museveni? Did I say it correctly? [laughs] I don't know. I'm not very sure what it is." (Interview #11)

In each village, particularly women and those with low education (which are overlapping categories) were not conversant with the ICC. In Lukodi, this included women who had attended the ICC outreach events and participated in the drama and singing for the events, but were not really sure what the event had been substantively

about. This is consistent with previous findings from Central African Republic that there are "information poor" pockets of the population without knowledge about the ICC, particularly among women and those with lower levels of education (Vinck and Pham 2010).

As Table 7.1 indicates, there were respondents with knowledge about the ICC that was incongruous or discordant with the ICC's claims. This incongruent knowledge ranged from seeing the ICC as connected to Uganda's Amnesty Act, involving Uganda's political leaders, working with local-level crimes or national court cases,[51] pardoning people, arresting people, helping those in need, offering counseling, or other functions. For example, a 35 year old man in Ajulu saw the ICC as connected to the national Amnesty Act:

> I heard about it [the ICC] at a time when some people who were abducted returned back and were pardoned. I was told that those who were in the bush were constantly being encouraged to come out from the bush and surrender to the government, but most of them could not believe the invitation, that it was a trick to lure them, a trap. ICC I think came in to declare with certainty, to declare that they would not be harmed. (Interview #55)

[51] For example, one respondent thought the national trial of LRA commander Thomas Kwoyelo was related to the ICC. Kwoyelo went before the International War Crimes Division of the Uganda High Court in 2011. Ultimately, he was found to be entitled to amnesty; Kwoyelo remains in detention (AllAfrica.com 2012).

Table 7.1. Respondents with Lower Knowledge of the ICC

	No knowledge	Discordant, incomplete, or vague knowledge	All categories of lower knowledge
Village Residents			
Lukodi	20%	45%	65%
Anyadwe	35%	50%	85%
Awach	30%	30%	60%
Village Leaders			
Lukodi	10%	20%	30%
Anyadwe	0%	45%	45%
Awach	20%	30%	50%
Gender			
Women	36%	44%	79%
Men	12%	35%	46%
Education			
Low	50%	30%	80%
Primary	17%	51%	68%
High	7%	28%	34%
Age			
Young	24%	35%	59%
Middle	21%	44%	64%
Elder	22%	33%	56%

As the table above shows, Lukodi and Awach showed similar levels of residents without much knowledge of the ICC or its role. Anyadwe stood out with a larger number of residents not knowing about the ICC. Leaders in Lukodi were more likely to be knowledgeable about the ICC, suggesting the outreach may have been successful in this regard. These examples demonstrate that even with concerted regional outreach efforts, many people in local villages did not feel they had a strong understanding of the ICC. This is true even in Lukodi, a community that has had an exceptionally high level of exposure to the ICC.

There were also, of course, many respondents who understood the ICC in a way that aligned more closely with the ICC's intentions or self-perceptions, with Lukodi not

differing substantially from the other two villages. There was variation among respondents in the level of detail they knew about the ICC, with Lukodi respondents among those with the most detailed knowledge.

The most basic point about the ICC understood by respondents was that the ICC is designed to prosecute particularly egregious or large-scale crimes. Orach, a 39 year old man in Awach, gave a typical response of this sort:

> R: I came to know that this court addresses only very serious crimes.
> *I: Can you give examples?*
> R: Something to do with killing people in big numbers, they address such people when the nation itself may fail, when a particular nation itself may not address such a case. Something to do with causing the loss of human life in big numbers and other form of abuses against humanity. (Interview #84)

Relatedly, most of these respondents explained that Kony (and other top LRA leaders) committed such crimes and the ICC wants to hold them responsible. Respondents often mentioned that the court is international in nature, though this point is not usually expanded upon in significant detail. Some respondents began to blend their descriptions into critique, such as describing the politics surround the ICC involvement in Uganda or expressing frustration with the fact that the ICC does not have its own force to arrest suspects.

We asked respondents where they had received information about the ICC and by far the most common response was that they had heard about it from the radio or other types of media, often citing specific radio programs. A few said they heard about the ICC from talking to other people in the community, such as at the market or trading center. A minority of respondents reported hearing about the ICC in workshops put on by people

who came from organizations outside their village.[52] In Lukodi, several respondents mentioned the ICC outreach activities, some vaguely, but some demonstrated that they really engaged with the event, such as a 21 year old man who said, "[The ICC President] came up to Lukodi here. He had a workshop for sensitization of the masses. I was also there, I participated. I was one of those who asked many, many questions." (Interview #23) Felix, the locally-elected government leader in Lukodi, also spoke of a more in-depth visit or investigation from the ICC:

> A representative of the ICC came here up to Lukodi village, the president of ICC himself came up to Lukodi…he came up to here and was briefing us…he sensitized us on the role of ICC and he said that's why they have come here, they've learned of the massacre that was committed in this village. He said they had come here to confirm the massacre that took place and he said their role is to prosecute a person who has conducted this massacre…So, he went on and gave detailed explanations about ICC and he also gave us at the end of it a time to ask questions. So, it was not a one day activity. They came here and spent some time. We would take them from one village to another, this village tomorrow that village the other day, the next village…and they were sensitizing people. They believe that when the audience was small they would assimilate better. (Interview #9)

In the other communities, a few people mentioned workshops held by other groups, such as Save the Children, Concerned Parents' Association, or religious organizations. In Awach, a protestant reverend explained:

> We were getting [knowledge of the ICC] as religious leaders from the diocese. They were sensitizing us, they were teaching us, training us, on ICC so that we come back and train the community on ICC…We were getting most of it from the diocese, but then also others from the NGOs who were moving, training people on ICC. And then, especially with religious leaders, they were telling us so that we go and we tell the people

[52] These respondents had received information about the ICC from workshops more often than other communities in Gulu District, due in large part to ICC events in Lukodi. In 2010, just 3 percent of the overall population in the Acholi sub-region had heard about the ICC from a workshop or meeting (Pham and Vinck 2010).

> within the community what ICC was and what it would do to those who committed big offenses. (Interview #68)

These responses show that, although the majority of the respondents reported learning about the ICC from the radio, there also have been significant efforts by the ICC and other groups to promote knowledge about the ICC in the region.

As this section illustrated, for many, the outreach process of disseminating information about the ICC was not successful. There still are significant pockets of the population without a thorough understanding of what the ICC is or what its role has been in Uganda. The remaining sections focus on respondents' assessments of the impact of the ICC in the region, their communities, and their own lives. Generally, respondents who reported no knowledge of the ICC did not offer comments on its perceived impacts, and their responses are not included in the following discussion. For respondents with partial knowledge of the ICC, most did share perceptions of its impact; these responses are included below, along with responses from those with more thorough understandings of the Court.

Positive Impacts of the ICC

Some respondents did describe positive consequences of the ICC's involvement in Uganda. I discuss these briefly before turning to the more common critiques of the ICC. When respondents mentioned positive aspects of the ICC, they generally had three main perceptions: 1) the ICC warrants drove Kony and the LRA into neighboring countries, which brought peace to northern Uganda, allowing people to return home; 2) the ICC brings needed punishment for crimes and justice for victims; and 3) the ICC can have a

deterrent effect, making those who are committing or would commit atrocities reconsider their actions because they fear prosecution.

First, some people perceived that pressure from the ICC was perhaps part of the reason Kony left Uganda. With the LRA no longer an immediate threat, residents were able to leave the IDP camps and return to their homes, which not surprisingly had a substantial positive impact in respondents' daily lives. Surprisingly, however, this perspective was expressed only infrequently. Perhaps this was due to a recognition that just because Kony left Uganda, the suffering he causes has not come to an end, as expressed by the security officer in Awach, who said, "To me, I find that ICC has helped because it made Kony to run away. He ran away and hid because he knew that he would be arrested. Because he ran away, although he transferred his problems to other people, I am glad that he is not here anymore." (Interview #69)

Secondly, some respondents felt that the ICC could bring necessary punishment for horrendous crimes and justice for the victims of those crimes. George Okulu, the Awach religious leader who attended workshop trainings about the ICC, mentioned in the previous section, explained how the ICC provides a sense of justice for victims:

> The ICC helped because it gives the criminal fear. If a criminal is left unbothered, then the criminal will become big-headed because he will think that nothing can totally be done to him, even though he commits the biggest offenses. It also consoles people, that we have someone who can stand in for us. We have someone who is there to console us in case of problems; he always stands in for us in case there is a problem, so that the criminal does not go unpunished…They will appreciate that even though these people committed very bad crimes, there is someone who is there to punish them. This will also give happiness to people who underwent very big problems, because they get consoled that the criminals will be punished. (Interview #68)

Some of the respondents who spoke most at length on the benefits of punishment, accountability, and justice also seemed to be those who had participated in workshops or outreach events put on by the ICC or NGOs. For at least a few respondents, the ICC's outreach efforts seemed to have had the outcome the ICC had hoped to achieve.

The third theme, that the ICC has a deterrence effect and might prevent future crimes, was often discussed hand-in-hand with the idea that Kony and other alleged criminals ought to be punished. This was the most frequently discussed positive impact of the ICC, particularly in Ajulu and Awach. Omara Ernest, a 35 year old man in Ajulu, expressed this perspective:

> ICC is good in the sense that it can bring some kind of fear to people who could just take the law in their hands and terrorize people as far as they can. But this can, I think, bring some sense of fear that, should I do this I will not escape from the international court. They will bring me to book. If you know that the whole world is now targeting you then you will at least be humble. You would maybe not continue with violations of human rights. That is the advantage; it deters people who can exploit or dehumanize fellow human beings. (Interview #57)

Lack of Impact of the ICC

Although some respondents talked positively of the impact of the ICC, many of these discussions were couched in terms of the "potential" impact of the ICC. In reality, many respondents said that the ICC has not had any impact in the lives of the people of northern Uganda. Some expressed that they are still waiting to see if there will be an impact, but many were more disillusioned and said that they now see the ICC as ineffective and incapable of bringing positive effects. Charles Ocen, the cultural leader in Anyadwe, explained:

> Actually people still listen to ICC as something distant, something that is not practical. It is like a fairy tale because no leader has been tried in this country. So until it is done they will say it is like a beautiful story which can never become true. For example, Kony himself has committed numerous atrocities, but he is still a free man, so they sometimes doubt the competency of ICC. (Interview #41)

Several respondents similarly described the ICC as a "song," "fairytale," "dream," "beautiful story," or "wishful thinking," meaning that they see potential benefits, but have no confidence it will ever realize such benefits. Much of this critique stemmed from a frustration with the fact that the ICC has no power to arrest, leading to proclamations that the ICC is "useless," a "barking dog without teeth," or a "waste of time." Otto James explained that, this can make the ICC seem like a "joke" to people in Uganda:

> I have not seen anything. And people actually are still wondering how ICC can be of use. Is it really useful? So there is a song that has been composed about ICC that, how can ICC be useful and relevant? It can maybe charge you with an offense, but also will not be able to bring you to court and nothing is done, so it becomes like a joke…So to me, ICC is hopeless; it cannot do anything because it can say, we are going to arrest so and so, we are going to prosecute so and so, but they can never physically go there and arrest such a person. (Interview #60)

In Lukodi, particularly, a few residents took this perceived lack of implementation or results more personally, as their community had had direct engagement with the ICC. Geoffrey Omona expressed his frustration with the lack of follow through after ICC investigations:

> Well, since the time [ICC representatives] came and talked to us of what their role is, we have not yet seen, practically, what they do. That team of ICC, when they came, they actually interviewed us. They were making an investigation of what actually took place during the war. I can recall that they said that they had come to have firsthand information from the community. The case is already before them, and they are going to do something about it. They wanted to know those people who lost their lives, the properties damaged or spoiled or lost during the war, things like

> that. But that is so far what I know. They have not yet come back to do or express something tangible. (Interview #29)

Knowledge Leads to Support?

Beyond the perception that the ICC has no impact in survivors' lives, many respondents also discussed negative impacts of the ICC in northern Uganda. In a 2010 survey, Pham and Vinck (2010) found just 10 percent of respondents who had heard of the ICC thought the ICC had hindered the situation in northern Uganda (Pham and Vinck 2010:43). In my analysis, however, respondents discussed negative implications of the ICC much more commonly. Perhaps this was due to the open-ended and conversational nature of an in-depth interview, where respondents could more freely discuss a complex mix of positive and negative views of the Court.

As we have seen, some people certainly did have positive perceptions of the ICC's impact. However, when respondents talked about the impact of the ICC in their lives or in their communities, many displayed considerable depth, recognizing the complexity of the impact of this international institution in their lives. Most did not talk of it in entirely positive or negative terms, but rather discussed some combination of perspectives.

The expectation of the ICC outreach is that increasing the local population's knowledge of the ICC will lead to greater support for the Court. Contrary to this assumption, however, respondents with more knowledge of the ICC were not necessarily more supportive in their assessment. In actuality, a more in-depth understanding of the form and function of the Court was more often associated with a *more* critical perception

of the impact of the institution. Table 7.2 compares respondents with discordant, incomplete, or vague knowledge about the ICC to respondents who demonstrated more knowledge.[53] As shown below, about half of those with some knowledge of the ICC[54] mentioned at least one positive impact of the Court, while about 38 percent mentioned a negative impact, and 58 percent discussed how the ICC does not impact their lives. The point of interest here, however, was that those who know *more* about the ICC were more likely to see negative impacts of its involvement. About 56 percent of those who were knowledgeable about the ICC saw negative impacts, compared to just 20 percent of those who were less knowledgeable.

Table 7.2. Knowledge of the ICC Associated with Critical Perspectives

	Positive Impact *n=38*	**Negative Impact** *n=29*	**No Impact/Neutral** *n=44*
Discordant, incomplete, or vague knowledge of the ICC *n=35*	46%	20%	60%
Knowledgeable about the ICC *n=41*	51%	56%	56%

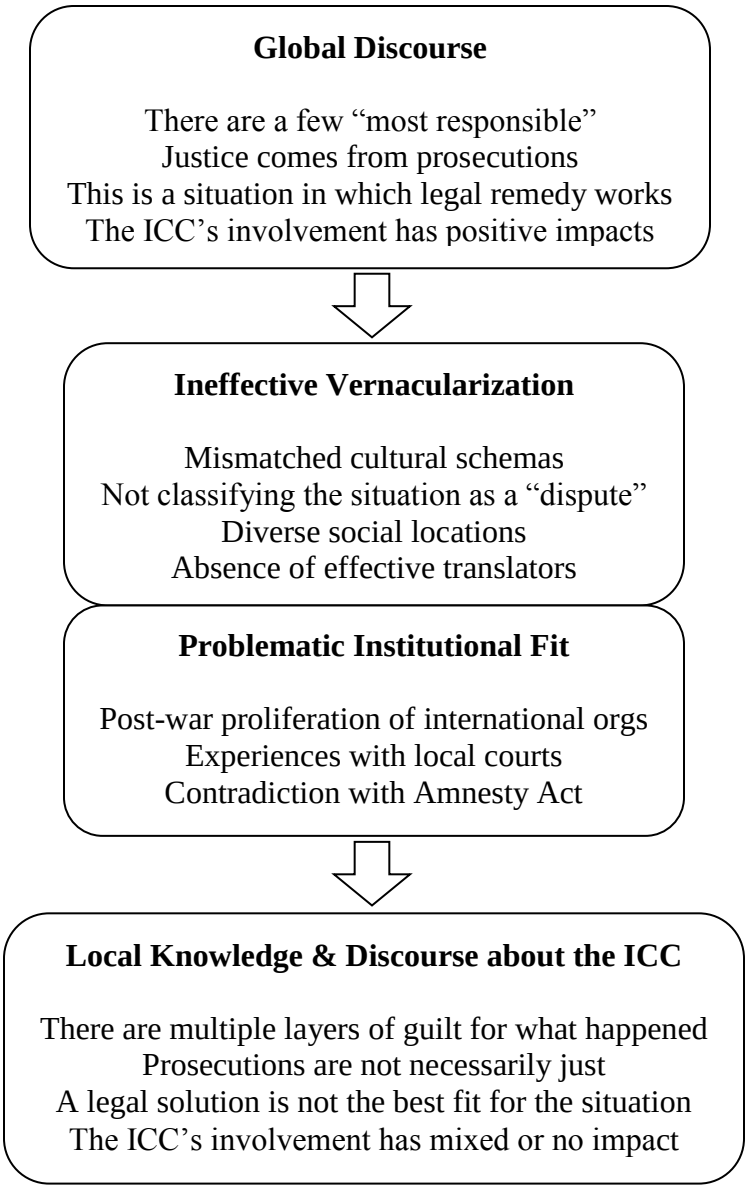
This suggests that although respondents were receiving information about the ICC, the resultant community discourse did not lead people to the conclusions that the ICC would have hoped. Even when people were well informed and had participated in outreach, they still did not necessarily find the ICC to be relevant to or helpful in their lives.

[53] The percentages in the rows of Table 7.2 do not add up to one hundred percent because some respondents discussed a mixture of impacts of the Court, some positive, some negative, and some neutral.
[54] Respondents with no reported knowledge of the ICC are not included in this table.

Integrating Social Context

I developed a model (Figure 7.3) that serves as a starting point to think about how discourse about the ICC (as presented by the ICC and its outreach initiatives) is filtered through the local social context before it emerges as community-level discourse. The model helps to organize respondents' critiques of the ICC and identify the sources of their skepticism; it serves as the organizing framework for the rest of the chapter.

Figure 7.3. Social Context Filters Universalized ICC Discourse to the Local Level



As discussed in the previous section, although there were pockets of the population without knowledge of the ICC, some people had received information from outreach initiatives in the region. However, respondents' and other key informants' descriptions of outreach events, as well as descriptions in ICC reports, paint outreach events as more "sensitization" efforts than interactive educational dialogues. This is a

broader trend, as NGO and government programs in the region often engaged in campaigns to "sensitize" the population, a term which, from my observations, implies a certain degree of powerlessness on the part of the people *being* sensitized, as objects of sensitization, rather than agents engaged in an educational or active learning process. Often this seemed to result in a more cursory acceptance of the material, rather than a deeper engagement or understanding. For example, in general people expressed frustration with their lack of understanding of *why* the ICC functioned as it did (even if they understood *what* it did). I did not find evidence of people feeling they had any agency in the communication process with the ICC or any ability to influence the course of the ICC actions. This suggests the feedback loop in the ICC outreach process (as shown earlier, in Figure 7.1) is more realistically a one-way street. To be fair, it seems unlikely that there would be a reasonable way for an international institution like the ICC to meaningfully integrate feedback about its operations from local communities around the world; however, this reciprocal process was specified in the objectives of the outreach program.

Rather than the harmony of interests that was the anticipated outcome in the earlier model of the ICC's presuppositions, this model (Figure 7.3) shows a more contradictory understanding emerging from local communities. I argue that this is a result of an ineffective process of vernacularization and the ICC's problematic institutional fit in this particular context. The remaining analysis unpacks respondents' major critiques of the Court and fits them into this new framework. My purpose throughout this analysis is to represent the range of perspectives of interview respondents and other fieldwork

informants as accurately as possible. Although I recognize that theirs is just one particular view of the ICC, I argue that local narratives about transitional justice are especially important because they emerge from people who experienced the violence personally and now are working for peace in their daily lives.

Challenges to Vernacularization

For global ideas, such as human rights or combating impunity, to gain traction and saliency in local contexts, they need to be modified to fit the ideological and social specificities of a particular place (Levitt and Merry 2009). The core of the ideas remains unchanged, but their form, organization, packaging, interpretation, or language shifts. In the case of the ICC in northern Uganda, this process has not happened effectively, resulting in poor resonance of the global discourse.

Lack of Translators

Translators are key actors in the vernacularization process, serving as essential links that connect the global sites (here, the ICC in The Hague) with the local sites (rural villages in Uganda). Their core task is to take the global package of ideas and their associated practices and to make them relevant, understandable, and acceptable to people in local communities (Levitt and Merry 2009). These actors are elites in the local context, often NGO workers, activists, or lawyers. Global values do not flow effortlessly to the local level; instead, the process is characterized by points of friction. Translators need to reframe human rights ideas in local terms, which often requires abandoning the particular

language and terms used in global discourses (Levitt and Merry 2009). In this case, there were a few local leaders in each community who were quite knowledgeable about the ICC and its work, whether from interactions with ICC outreach, INGO programs, or particularly active engagement with the media. In most of the cases, however, these individuals developed insightful critiques of the Court, rather than emerging as key advocates for the ICC, willing to invest personally in the translation or vernacularization process.

Although it is difficult to comment definitively on the *lack* of a particular phenomenon, I am not aware of key organizations or individuals acting as local translators of the ICC's discourse. The outreach program itself is one such effort, but their materials generally do not dramatically reframe their ideas and practices in local terms. Instead, they have a particular framework that is mobilized similarly in a wide range of local contexts. In the absence of a group of key locally-based but globally-connected elites who serve as both key translators and advocates, my analysis of interview and observational data reveals three issues that impede the local translation of the ICC's ideas and practices.

Diverse Social Locations

As discussed in an earlier section, certain types of respondents were much less likely to be conversant with issues surrounding the ICC. Particularly, women and those with lower levels of education reported less knowledge of the ICC and its work. Almost all respondents who reported having no formal education were women. Education is

extremely highly valued by most people in Uganda, representing a pathway out of "the village" and a way to secure the future of their families. Those who do not have formal education likely do not speak English and cannot read or write. For all of these reasons, there is often stigma associated with having no education, their voices may be taken less seriously in public gatherings, they are often afforded less respect, and, in turn, they are less confident to express their opinions or concerns. This presents considerable barriers to the reception of information about the ICC, particularly in the case of outreach events conducted as large community gatherings, the dissemination of information in the news media, and comprehension of terms typically communicated in English.

In the interview sample, local community leaders were more knowledgeable about the ICC. Leaders were substantially different from respondents in the resident sample in many ways, such as being more likely to be male, having higher levels of education, and having sources of income aside from their farming activities. Additionally, leaders often had higher levels of contact with NGO and government programs, serving as key liaisons between such organizations and local residents. As such, these leaders could potentially serve as second-string translators or advocates (Levitt and Merry 2009). They would be ideally equipped to translate ideas about the ICC to people in their community. However, in order to do so, they would need not only more in-depth participatory education about the ICC (especially as several leaders expressed frustration that they had not received more focused information), but also need a higher level of "buy in" to the ICC discourse. As the data reveal, those with the most knowledge about

the ICC—often, local leaders—are also often the most highly critical, indicating deeper barriers to vernacularization.

A Situation Not Seen as a Legal Dispute

In order for legal court proceedings to be seen as appropriate, people must come to understand particular social situations as "disputes" requiring legal remedy (Felstiner, Abel, and Sarat 1980). However, in the case of northern Uganda, victims do not necessarily see the situation as a dispute (particularly not going through the blaming and claiming stages of dispute emergence) and so the use of a litigious frame to deal with the situation does not really make sense to them. As the recounting of the local historical narrative in Chapter Three revealed, respondents tended to see the situation more broadly than as a legal dispute, and so a trial then is not a useful way to deal with the past, from their perspectives. This is similar to the findings of Jardim (2012) and Pendas (2006), discussed earlier, that post-WWII trials were not able to develop strong, coherent *social* narratives of the violent past, beyond a story of the individual guilt of particular leaders and sadistic individuals.

When people in northern Uganda described the conflict, they told a much more comprehensive and nuanced narrative than the politicized and decontextualized story of the Government of Uganda fighting to protect the country against the irrational and dangerous LRA. Rather, they placed the contemporary conflict in a long historical context of abuses and victimizations at the hand of many different groups and individuals. Although they recognized the significant wrongdoings of Kony and the LRA,

people often perceived them as emerging out of a troubled situation, in response to past abuses by the Government and others. Additionally, they placed some contemporary blame for their suffering on the Government and the army, as well as on the LRA. In general, the way they collectively remembered the war did not serve to reinforce the legitimacy of this particular legal response (Savelsberg and King 2007).

Mismatched Cultural Schemas

The most significant obstacle to vernacularization, however, was a fundamental mismatch in the cultural schemas used by the ICC and those of people in rural Uganda. Schemas are sets of informal and often subconscious rules that govern various aspects of social life (Sewell 1992). People use cultural schemas to make sense of or experience various aspects of their lives, including laws or legal institutions (Ewick and Silbey 1998; Silbey 2005). For example, the formal Western-style adversarial trial is the cultural schema used by the ICC, whereas for many respondents in northern Uganda, such trials are not a relevant or meaningful schema for dispute resolution. As cultural schemas are applied in specific situations, they are combined with resources, assets, or capacities, allowing people to either maintain stability or create social change. Within the formal court system, resources like education, money, articulateness, and experience with bureaucracy allow people to work effectively within the legal framework. Because most people in northern Uganda do not have the resources needed to accomplish their objectives through a court system, it is not a cultural schema that is pragmatically useful in their attempts to deal with the post-war situation either.

Extending this point, the second most common critique was that the ICC contradicts values of forgiveness and reconciliation, which respondents cited as central to Acholi culture and conflict resolution. This critique was particularly prevalent in Lukodi, and actually was not raised at all in Awach. Moro Cosmas, a 20 year old man in Lukodi, expressed his desire to reconcile and receive those indicted by the ICC back into the community:

> [If the LRA leaders are convicted], they may spend so many years in the prison that they will not find time to come and live normal life with the people here. Instead, if they were given a chance like the amnesty, they would come and we reconcile in the traditional way, they would be received back in the community. (Interview #22)

Particularly, respondents pointed out that the ICC goes against the principles of amnesty and mercy. Another young man in Lukodi, Oyet Kenneth, spoke in more detail about the cultural roots of the concept of forgiveness:

> You know in our culture here in Acholiland, we believe so much in forgiveness. That is why when the amnesty act was proposed it found ready ground among our people, what the amnesty commission was proposing was nothing new, it was only confirmation of what was already there, done for generations and generations. So what I am saying is that there is always room for forgiveness. But now, with this ICC, I have the impression that once a case is placed in their court, there is no going back on it…With ICC, once a case is already presented before them, like the case of Kony that has already been presented to them, even if the elders of Acholi and all those who Kony has wronged wanted very much that he should be forgiven and return home here, I was told that ICC would object and say no, we don't want impunity, so he cannot get away. For them, they emphasize justice. Overemphasis on justice does not give room to forgiveness and amnesty. So that is the part of ICC that I cannot understand. (Interview #23)

He brought up an important concept, the "overemphasis on justice," which seemed to be salient to respondents who may, ideally, like to see justice, but not at the expense of all

else. A few respondents even likened the ICC to revenge. Several respondents expressed frustration that once a case is before the ICC, it cannot be withdrawn, even if the victims request it be, which led to the critique that the ICC is distant and does not listen to people on the ground. In the words of a Lukodi man:

> Another bad thing with the ICC is that I have learned that once you already present a case before that court you can never withdraw it. If you say with somebody that now I want to come and resolve this thing locally, from home, the ICC will not allow. So this one is very strange…So if the one who has been wronged says no, we reconsider and want to solve this matter once and for all, and now, who is ICC to come and say, "No, no more going back." It is like a revenge, and it doesn't go well with our culture, which gives room for reconciliation. (Interview #21)

Another Lukodi man discussed how a murder would be resolved in the village, and claimed the ICC does not listen to the local conflict resolution style:

> To me, ICC doesn't listen. It's like somebody without an ear. He can say his mind but not listen to the views of the other. Because for us here the most important thing is forgiving the past and reconciling. And to me, on this issue, ICC doesn't understand anything. If I say my son killed the son of so and so but I do not want the son of so and so to be killed also…for us we see the other way of reversing the whole thing and making the person see his fault and ask for mercy and be reaccepted in the family. Very rarely does ICC give ear to the views of the elders. If the elders were to speak, they would demand one thing—that we want to reconcile and be reunited—while the ICC will emphasize that no one can do something and get away with it, so they call it impunity. But to us, we say reconciliation now makes sense. If the person who suffered at the hand of that person wants reconciliation, but you, the third party, you stand more firmly, are you helping this situation? (Interview #27)

From these respondents' descriptions, restorative and more participatory approaches to transitional justice (Avruch and Vejarano 2001; Braithwaite 2002; Gibson 2004; Honeyman et al. 2004; Menkel-Meadow 2007) are likely to resonate more deeply in this context. I provided several quotations to illustrate this point, because many respondents

seemed to have deeply thought about this issue and it was central to their critique of the ICC.

These issues present fundamental challenges to the vernacularization process of global ICC discourse in northern Uganda. Mismatched cultural schemas, combined with complexities of social locations and nuanced perceptions of guilt for the wrongs committed, creates a situation where effective agents of vernacularization would be most necessary. Although there are knowledgeable individuals who could serve as translators, these people have not become local advocates in support of the ICC. Without them, the ICC outreach efforts do not appear able to address these significant barriers to vernacularization.

Institutional Context of the ICC

In addition to an ineffective vernacularization process, the ICC is positioned in a challenging institutional context in northern Uganda. Because of its positioning relative to other post-war international organizations, the local court system, and the national Amnesty Act, respondents were hesitant to regard the ICC as making positive contributions in their lives.

Post-War Proliferation of IGOs and INGOs

In a region that has seen significant involvement of international organizations over the past 20 years, people have developed a cultural toolkit (Swidler 1986) in response to this unique context. They now use these habits, skills, and styles to make sense of

international organizations' involvement in their lives and shape how they interact with these outside forces. Respondents often placed the ICC in the same category as other INGOs and IGOs working in the region. Generally, they perceived such organizations as not really integrated meaningfully into their daily lives, but rather as faceless organizations with their own agendas that are difficult for people in the village to understand. They do not really see such organizations as able to change or flex to fit local situations, so the best option is to figure out how to access the tangible benefits an international organization can offer (as discussed in Chapter Five), without necessarily buying into an organization's deeper mission or objectives.

World polity theory might suggest that the presence of international organizations would increase support for the ICC, as people become introduced to discourses of human rights, justice, and individual accountability from multiple sources. In this case, however, there is an over-saturation of international organizations in the region, to the point that people cannot (or are not interested in) actually tune in to the messages or missions of each—or any—of the organizations. People widely perceive international organizations or institutions to be from "outside" and, thus, such organizations do not really understand how life is for people in the villages.

This is related to the most common critique respondents had of the ICC. They explained that the ICC involvement has kept Kony fighting, even making him more aggressive, and that has caused more suffering or has prolonged victims' suffering, also making people fear that the LRA will return to Uganda. A 36 year old man in Lukodi, Alfred, elaborated on these concerns:

> Yes, I heard of ICC and that their job is to arrest and prosecute criminals. But I wonder if doing things like that would upset again the peace that is already prevailing here. I hear they talk of arresting and prosecuting Kony along with all his officers but if, for example, Kony managed to avoid them and come back to Uganda after hearing that he's being threatened with prosecution, can he not turn his havoc, his anger on the innocent populace here? Naturally you can also imagine that you have already been condemned, you are already labeled somebody very bad, and when you meet people do you think you would still treat them humanely? Not so. Therefore, unless this ICC has got real control, they will only make Kony a more dangerous human being. I hear that this ICC, they are just judicial and they are not military, they don't have their armed forces, and who will first arrest Kony to take to them? I feel that the ICC sits out there, and they don't see the repercussions that can come up. (Interview #26)

This critique aligns with the transitional justice debate on peace or justice (Roht-Arriaza and Mariezcurrena 2006; Teitel 2000), and suggests that, if forced to choose, people in northern Uganda may favor the side of peace.

According to respondents, a related point was that the inability of the ICC to apprehend the indicted leaders and bring them to trial can actually embolden others to commit similar abuses, as they believe the ICC will not actually have power to hold them accountable. As Charles Ocen, the elderly cultural leader from Anyadwe, quoted earlier, explained:

> Kony makes the image of ICC to appear to be a weak institution. How can an international court involved with many nations not be able to arrest just one man with a few hundred soldiers around him? This one is unbelievable. Because if Kony can get away with it, other people may say, if Kony can do it and just continue to enjoy life, why not others? If this note would reach ICC, let this line be read by them: unless they begin to become practical on the ground, they would remain an irrelevant institution and not very helpful even to the people who suffer. Because if somebody can commit some harms against humanity and remain unpunished, others will become encouraged and say, I can also do it, so and so did it. Nothing was done to him; I can also do it and get away with it. (Interview #41)

In their views, the ICC is actually prolonging suffering and fear, but the institution—like many international organizations working in the region—is too far away to realize the unintended negative impact in people's lives or to recognize that they are not actually addressing the real needs of people in local communities.

Experiences with Local Courts

In these communities, as is hinted in several of the quotes above and described in Chapters Two and Six, a pluralistic legal system is used to resolve local conflicts. There is the formal state-based court and prison system and a community-based system of mediation and compensation, involving accounting for damage done and focusing on restoring relationships. Many people favor the local system (although, some elements of the system were damaged by the war and displacement) and have had negative experiences with the more formal court system.

As discussed in greater depth in the previous chapter, respondents saw the court system as out of touch with local situations and histories, inflexible in coming to creative solutions to disputes, inconsistent in judgments, slow and unresponsive, and (important here) favoring those with money, influence, and education. The framework of pursuing justice through a court did not resonate with most respondents' understandings of justice and accountability for wrongs (as discussed above) and they did not have many positive examples of local courts working well, so they in turn did not have much confidence in this type of social institution. For most people in these communities, they did not experience the formal state-based legal system as a useful tool to help resolve their

problems (Ewick and Silbey 1998). Furthermore, they often thought that involving the court actually made a situation worse and it was best to try to resolve conflicts through involving the community. I argue that these experiences with local courts shaped respondents' understandings and perceptions of the ICC. Respondents did not perceive that the ICC's conception of justice fit with their own understandings and they did not perceive it as an effective way to deal with the war's effects. Instead, many respondents expressed a preference for more restorative and community-based styles of justice (Huyse and Salter 2008).

Contradiction of the Amnesty Act

In 2000, national legislation put in place a blanket amnesty to pardon any combatants or other members of rebel forces who would give up their weapons and renounce their participation in such movements. This has been the primary transitional justice mechanism used to deal with the aftermath of the war in northern Uganda. Since 2000, over 26,000 people have been granted amnesty, including an estimated 13,000 LRA militants. After receiving amnesty, some people are recruited into the national army. Many, however, return to their home communities.

Transitional justice scholarship and common sense both suggest that this reintegration process would be contentious and likely to spark conflict within communities, particularly because a common tactic the LRA used to secure loyalty of abductees and diminish their desire to escape was to have abductees commit atrocities in their home communities. Despite this, I found extremely widespread and enthusiastic

support for amnesty among respondents, who talked supportively about "our children" coming home and explained that they are living normally in the community.[55] As Otto James in Anyadwe explained,

> So [amnesty] was between the rebels and the government, but for the people at home they had no problem with their children that were abducted. For them, returning home was what they expected…What the government called a rebel, the community calls our son or daughter. So we say it was the government that granted amnesty and not the community. The community had already granted their amnesty the same day the child was abducted. (Interview #60)

Nearly every respondent personally knew someone who had received amnesty, sometimes one of their family members or themselves, and they were able to comment on the specifics of those individuals' situations. They described how being officially pardoned diminished tensions that otherwise would have existed and how people take care not to remind returnees of what happened "in the bush." They also expressed a willingness to live beside even top LRA leaders, and accept them into the community. As described in an earlier section, many talked about amnesty's deep resonance with their understanding of their social and spiritual worlds. They described amnesty *as* justice, which is in direct contradiction to transitional justice scholarship that sees amnesty (most harshly) as the antithesis of justice, or (more pragmatically) at the center of a trade-off to achieve peace.

The ICC arrest warrants directly contradicted this locally salient transitional justice mechanism. Uganda's blanket amnesty included anyone willing to give up their

[55] This is not to say that people are not aware of some problems of reintegration, particularly as returnees struggle with trauma from their past experiences. They are generally accepted into the community, however, with all the challenges that living together brings. For example, many returnees spent their childhoods and formative years in an abnormal social environment, making them a part of the generation of youth that was not socialized into peaceful or "normal" village life. As discussed in Chapter Five, this is a significant long-term challenge in resettled communities. In this way, returnees face problems, but they are similar to those being experienced more broadly in the region.

arms, and the leaders wanted by the ICC were not an exception. As peace negotiations were on-going in 2006 and 2007, it was not clear or specified how this contradiction would be resolved. In 2013, however, the part of the legislation that extended the blanket pardon expired and was not renewed. To receive amnesty, an applicant now needs to undergo a judicial review, which in principle resolves the question of what would happen if an individual wanted by the ICC were apprehended.

At the time of the interviews for this project, however, the amnesty was still in full effect, causing substantial perplexity among respondents about the ICC involvement. A local government leader in Anyadwe emphatically discussed residents' confusion about how to integrate their understandings of amnesty and the ICC:

> Now listen. I would like you to listen to this one very well; it is very important. The people in the village feel that ICC is a contradiction of amnesty. Why? If amnesty is talking about forgiveness, let the past go, let the wrong done in the past not be remembered. ICC is just coming back to reverse the whole thing…on one hand you are talking of mercy, on the other hand you say justice. So that is why the people say, if you are going to confuse us, away with ICC. We don't want ICC, because it is like saying we pretend under the amnesty—we say we are very merciful, and then when we put the court of ICC we say no, justice must prevail. Now that is what we don't understand. So you understand now if we say that ICC should be abolished altogether and thrown away. What amnesty is doing is very good, that we talk. And we see the result of talk, when our elders…and cultural chiefs and…religious leaders and our politicians walked and talked with the rebels, there was some kind of peace. It is only through talk that peace can come. But when you insist on justice—arrest him, try him, do this—where are we going to end?s...[W]hen we go by ICC it means our suffering will not end. We are going to continue, because with ICC, an eye is for an eye, and we realize that that one will not take us anywhere. (Interview #38)

The concepts and values of amnesty fit well with the cultural schemas used by local residents, and the Amnesty Act was essentially a formal codification of their deeply held

beliefs about how to handle the situation in the region. Problematically, the ICC was inserted into this institutional context without resolving the contradiction it presented with amnesty.

Conclusion

With the 20th century rise of human rights as a global values package (Levitt and Merry 2009), the ICC represents a particular culmination of shared ideas about rule of law, democracy, accountability, and justice. For world polity theorists, the ICC is also a global agent through which universalized discourses, ideas, and practices may be diffused into local contexts. For this to be done effectively, however, a process of translation or vernacularization is necessary, to make the core values understandable and relevant to people far removed from the global center. The ICC's outreach program represents one such attempt. According to the outreach program, a two-way process of communication between affected communities and the ICC will result in not only increased knowledge, but also greater support for the ICC and its work.

I found, however, that outreach is not necessarily accomplishing either goal. Instead, it was essentially a one-way process of sensitization that still resulted in large pockets of information poor segments of the population. Additionally, respondents with more knowledge of the ICC were more likely to have critical perspectives of the institution and its involvement; even where respondents were well informed and had participated in outreach events, they still did not necessarily see the ICC positively. Even after concentrated outreach initiatives, the resultant community discourse about the ICC

did not represent a harmony of interests with the global discourse of the Court, but instead was characterized by significant critiques and negative perceptions.

Perhaps the outreach events created more community discussion about the ICC, so more people may have heard of it, but this discussion led to a variety of opinions, critiques, and more nuanced discourses. I found evidence of this happening. In Lukodi, for example, some people who knew more about the ICC or had had personal contact with ICC outreach spoke at greater length about the shortcomings of the ICC. In Awach, there were fewer people who spoke in-depth at all about ICC impacts, and instead were more likely to describe a one-dimensional picture of impacts as either positive or negative, rather than a complex mixture of both. These findings suggest that outreach events may have had the opposite effect than the ICC expected. The global discourse of the ICC, rather than diffusing successfully in this particular context, was transformed into a local discourse that is critical of the ICC and its ideals.

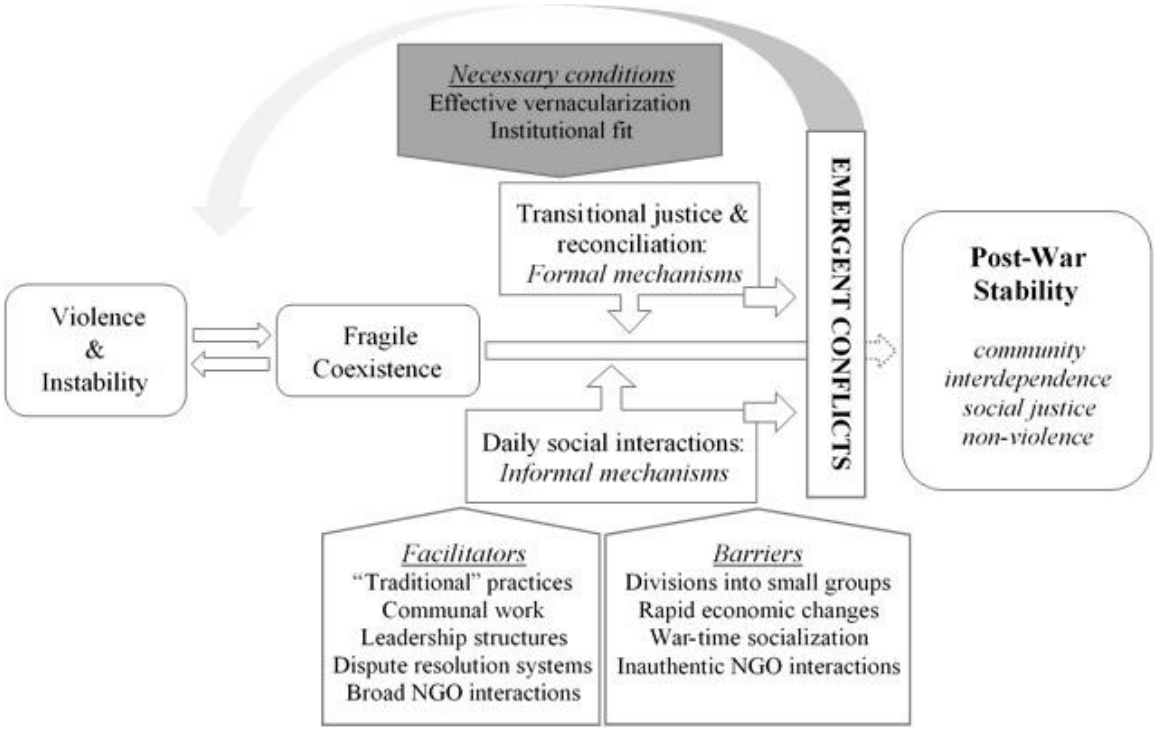
The model I developed (Figure 7.3) explained that one reason this occurred was because of an ineffective process of vernacularization. First, there was a noticeable absence of active and successful translators or advocates. Without such translators, it was extremely difficult to overcome the challenges presented to vernacularization. Significant segments of the population, particularly women and people without formal education, faced additional barriers to coming in contact with and understanding ICC discourse. People thought of the situation in the region more broadly than as a dispute or individual crimes that could be appropriately addressed in a court of law. Perhaps most importantly, however, there was a fundamental mismatch between the cultural schema relied on by the

ICC and that of people in rural Uganda, which emphasizes forgiveness, reconciliation, and the communal nature of guilt and victimhood. Taken together, particularly without engaged local advocates for the ICC, these factors contributed to an ineffective and incomplete process of translating the core ideas and values of the ICC.

Additionally, community discourse was not what the ICC wanted or expected because of poor institutional positioning. Even if global discourse is effectively vernacularized, it is unlikely to diffuse to the local level if it does not fit well within the institutional landscape. In the three fieldsites, the ICC was not well received because of people's previous institutional experiences with post-war international organizations disconnected from local realities, local courts unable to resolve community disputes fairly, and the Amnesty Act that stood in direct contradiction to the ICC. All of these factors together led to the emergence of a uniquely local community-level discourse about the ICC and its involvement in northern Uganda.

This chapter examined how ordinary people experienced a formal transitional justice mechanism. In addition to furthering an understanding of the perceived impact of the ICC in local communities, I developed a model to account for how the specific local context impacts the success of the transitional justice mechanism.

Figure 7.4. Transitional Justice Initiatives Adapt to Context



As seen in Figure 7.4, transitional justice is promoted by formal mechanisms, like the ICC. In order to be effective in furthering a sustainable transition from coexistence to a deeper peace and stability, however, such mechanisms need to undergo an effective process of vernacularization, as well as strategically negotiate their institutional position in the local context. This chapter illustrates that, even in the case of perhaps the most "removed" transitional justice mechanism, it is still necessary to adapt such mechanisms to fit the social, cultural, institutional, and political particularities of each post-war setting.

Chapter Eight
Conclusion

This concluding discussion proceeds in two parts. First, I focus on the case at hand, northern Uganda, developing a cohesive picture of how the diverse findings of this dissertation fit together. Second, I expand the scope and discuss the broader scholarly contributions of this work to other post-war contexts. Next, I discuss policy implications or recommendations that emerge from this project. I conclude with the key limitations of the research and ideas for future study.

Central Findings

Relying on data from 11 months of participant observation, 20 interviews with regional professionals and leaders, and 91 interviews with residents and local leaders in three resettled villages, I developed a deep and multi-dimensional picture of local-level social reconstruction in northern Uganda.

I argued that residents in the three fieldsites are facing a crisis of unity. Most respondents perceived that unity had been severely weakened, and I argued this is particularly because of the rise of a new type of "artificial" unity and shifting the location of unity to small groups. Three key social changes have shifted the types of interactions that occur in local communities. The first was a generational shift or disconnect, caused both by the declining authority of local leadership and the gap in socialization of a generation of young people raised in the camps. Second, economic arrangements shifted during the war, with a perceived rise in poverty and inequality, and with the increasing

monetization of daily life. Finally, NGOs have become new, powerful actors in post-war villages, introducing highly valued resources into the communities and thus having significant power to shape social relationships and behavior.

On a daily basis, people interact with one another in ways that are new to the post-war context. First, people were less frequently engaged in communal practices based on their cultural traditions, such as storytelling, dancing, or rituals to cleanse and reconcile past wrongs. Second, group work practices had shifted dramatically away from large-scale community events, and in many cases even smaller work groups were no longer functioning. Third, people relied heavily on their membership in formalized small groups, which provide a significant source of social support for members.

Importantly, people who were involved in these small groups were more frequently positive about unity and solidarity, while the third of residents who were not group members felt more isolated and unsupported. Compared to the other two communities, Lukodi stood out both for its high levels of trust and for residents' active engagement in small-scale communal work, suggesting a key link between working together on a daily basis and trust. Taken together, my findings illustrated how social life had been fundamentally reorganized in post-war communities. While informal social interactions have great potential to facilitate unity, interdependence, trust, and solidarity, the post-war social changes in local communities also present barriers to stability.

Not only are there barriers to unity in everyday life, but there are also key catalysts of conflict that present more severe challenges to stability. In northern Uganda, land conflict is an especially potent barrier to social reconstruction, one that emerged as

residents grappled with a period of massive social change. Land conflicts are not only about a struggle for a valuable and newly monetized resource, but are fundamentally about defining belonging in the community. During resettlement, the process of negotiating land boundaries was even more symbolically important, revealing a deep struggle to define community membership and relationships. In the post-war context, new vulnerabilities and inequalities developed, privileging some residents at the potential expense of others. Disputes over land can be resolved with local community mediation mechanisms or in the formal court system, though each layer is fraught with problems that limit effectiveness. Because land conflicts are so symbolically and materially important, but lack dependable methods of dispute resolution, animosity festers between disputing parties, often even after technical resolutions of the case at hand. Residents perceived land disputes as deep barriers to unity and claimed that they detract from trust and daily interactions. Most concerning, there were numerous recent examples of land disputes escalating to physical violence and creating deep divisions between families or clans. The abundance and seriousness of land conflict revealed the significant inability of social institutions to adapt to and accommodate the social changes facing resettled communities during the transitional period.

Finally, I found significant barriers to the diffusion of global transitional justice values and practices. Specifically, when there is ineffective vernacularization and poor institutional fit, the global discourse will not resonate at the local level, and instead results in a unique community discourse that can be quite critical of the global approach. The ICC is a global institution that acts as a carrier of global discourse and practice, and

its outreach program is an explicit effort to translate its discourse to affected communities, with a goal to increase both their understanding and their support for the Court. With an exceptionally high level of exposure to outreach activities, Lukodi provided a natural experiment of sorts to evaluate the translation process.

Knowledge about the ICC *was* higher in Lukodi, with several residents demonstrating a deep understanding of the ICC. However, across the fieldsites, I found that those with higher levels of knowledge were more critical of the ICC. The ICC promotes values of justice, accountability, human rights, and rule of law, leading to a discourse which sees: a few individuals can be held most responsible; justice comes from prosecutions; legal remedy is an effective solution; and the Court's involvement is a positive contribution to a transition. In direct contradiction, however, many survivors perceived multiple layers of guilt, prosecutions as incompatible with justice, legal solutions as inadequate, and complex problems with the ICC's involvement.

From my data, two primary reasons emerged to explain this case of blocked diffusion and clarify how social context filters the global discourse of the ICC. First, there had been an ineffective process of vernacularization. Perhaps most fundamentally, the discourse simply had not reached significant pockets of the population, particularly women and those with low levels of formal education. For those who had been exposed to the ideas and norms of the ICC, respondents often did not find them to be resonate because of fundamentally mismatched cultural schemas and their broader conceptions of the history of the conflict. These challenges could perhaps be overcome if there were

effective advocates at the local level, but I found that those who understood the ICC and could potentially fill this roll were critical of the Court and its involvement.

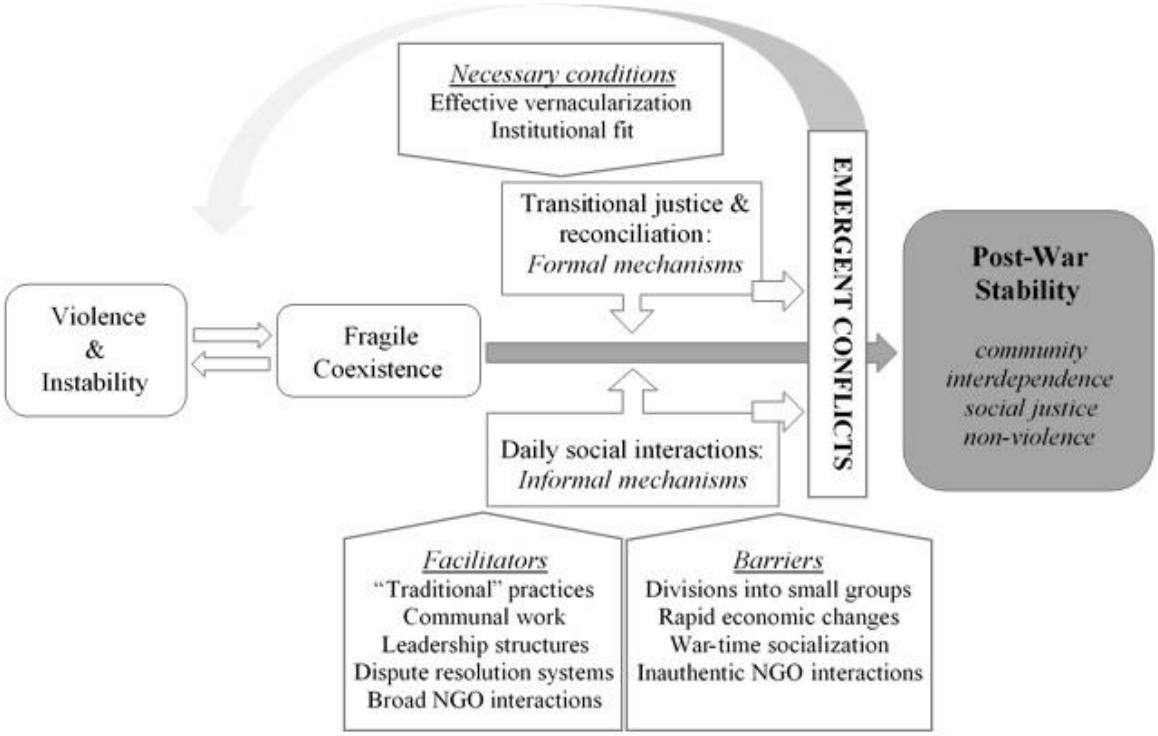
Secondly, the global discourse of the ICC had not diffused effectively to the local level because it did not fit will with the local institutional landscape. The ICC's involvement was in direct contradiction to the Amnesty Act, which was seen as deeply compatible with local understandings of justice and reconciliation. The post-war period had also seen an influx of international organizations, and responses to the ICC were colored by people's established ways of interacting with other international organizations, as far-removed from local realities and as instrumentally useful only as a means to access resources. Perceptions of the ICC were likewise affected by people's generally negative experiences with Ugandan courts. Locally, courts were not seen as an effective method to address grievances, with narrow conceptions of justice and vulnerabilities to manipulation by those with the greatest resources. For these reasons, I argued that the global discourse of the ICC had not been effectively adapted to the local context, and instead resulted in a local discourse that was discordant with that of the ICC.

Conceptualizing Post-War Reconstruction in Northern Uganda

Taken together, these findings helped map how the transitional process is occurring in northern Uganda. As expected, I found communities in northern Uganda to be somewhere between coexistence and social stability, not yet exhibiting the key characteristics of post-war stability: community, interdependence, social justice, and non-violence (Longman et al. 2004). First, a sense of community was not yet strongly

developed, but rather was seen in important ways as artificial or only occurring in smaller pockets of the population. Second, interdependence was generally low, with most people not actively relying on their neighbors in their everyday lives. Third, in contrast, social justice was quite strong, according to respondents. Although this element was not fully developed in this dissertation, residents of resettled communities described rules that are consistently enforced throughout the village and did not have a strong sense that anyone was receiving extra opportunities or unequally limited opportunities. Finally, perhaps the most concerning element was the propensity to solve problems with violence. Particularly as non-violent dispute resolution mechanisms were not highly functioning, in some cases residents turned to violence to accomplish their goals. The central task of this research was to explain what contributes to the positive development of these four characteristics and also what detracts from or blocks their realization.

Figure 8.1. Model of Post-War Social Reconstruction



My findings clarified how transitional justice institutions, such as the ICC, contribute to local-level social reconstruction. In order to realize their potential positive impacts on the development of future stability, they need to resonate with survivors' understandings of the world, the period of conflict or violence, and the appropriate ways to deal with the past. Specifically, local translators and advocates are necessary to guide the process of vernacularization. Beyond this process, however, the transitional justice mechanisms need to fit well in the institutional context of other organizations, justice systems, and legislation that also affect survivors' lives. As the case of Uganda illustrates, without effective vernacularization and institutional positioning, transitional justice mechanisms may remain largely irrelevant to local social reconstruction, and may actually be perceived as an impediment to the transition.

Beyond the reach of formal transitional justice mechanisms, however, this case has shown the importance of daily interactions in the transitional process. There is great potential for informal mechanisms to facilitate the development of social stability. Specifically, the intentional revival and valuation of practices based in the historical cultures of northern Uganda, the regular practice of communal agricultural work, and the active functioning of local leadership structures and dispute resolution systems can all promote a deep stability through daily interactions. At the same time, fragmentation of communities into rigidly defined small groups, rapid shifts in economic relationships, and gaps in socialization of young people are each barriers to stability that emerge from daily interactions. NGO programs play a special role in survivors' daily life, either contributing in a positive way, or exacerbating the local barriers and divisions.

Finally, I argued that during this period of massive social change, key conflicts emerge that have the power to completely block the transition and devolve communities into renewed cycles of violence and instability. In this case, land conflict was a major barrier. Serious disputes over land have developed as a product of the transition itself, but are not currently being addressed effectively by either formal transitional justice mechanisms or the more informal strategies available at the community-level.

Central Contributions

My research fleshes out the specific mechanisms of the post-war transition as it is occurring in northern Uganda. The general model, however, is applicable to a range of other transitional contexts and furthers academic knowledge about this important topic.

The Transitional Model

Although in some ways specific findings would likely be different, the transitional model applies to other post-war settings. As illustrated by the case of northern Uganda, communities do not move directly from war to deep peace, but rather there is a period of fragile coexistence, where survivors are renegotiating their communal life. From this fragile coexistence, violence may reemerge. The positive alternative is the development of lasting peace and social stability. I utilized the measures of stability developed by Longman et al. (2004), developing interview questions that effectively operationalized the measures, demonstrating the general applicability of these measures. Taken together, they provide a well-rounded way to conceptualize and measure the endpoint in the process. The specific ways these characteristics manifest will vary with context (for example, the type of interdependence will be different in an urban neighborhood than in a rural community, or the conceptions of social justice will vary according to culture), but these four attributes are a useful way to measure stability in any context.

The development of post-war social stability can be facilitated by transitional justice mechanisms, such as trials, memorialization, or amnesty. These institutional responses are designed to deal with the past and promote a peaceful future; to the extent they are resonate in a local context, they can be quite effective in promoting local stability. These formal mechanisms nearly always originate from outside the affected community, and so to be effective they must be both vernacularized to be deeply resonate with local experiences and they must be strategically positioned relative to other institutions. For any transitional justice initiative, I argue that these two characteristics are

necessary in order for the mechanism to make a meaningful contribution to the local transitional process. Much of the transitional justice literature focuses on the strengths and weaknesses associated with each specific mechanism, recognizing their complementarity. For example, trials provide a sense of justice, reparations can help to directly address past harms, memorializations offer acknowledgment and help develop collective memory, and reconciliation programs focus on diminishing divisions that can lead to conflict. By now, the contributions associated with each mechanism are well known. This model, however, integrates an explicit recognition that these are merely potential contributions, and transitional justice mechanisms will not necessarily be able to accomplish these objectives in each context. In every post-war setting, transitional justice mechanisms must have effective vernacularization and institutional positioning in order to make contributions of any value to the transition.

Beyond formal transitional justice mechanisms, the model accounts for local level processes and the potential of local interactions to contribute to the development of stability. In any transitional context, ordinary social relationships and interactions between survivors are an essential consideration. A key contribution of this research is to map out how daily interactions matter and take local agency during the transition seriously. In the case of northern Uganda, I identified specific informal mechanisms that contributed to the development of stability, as well as barriers to stability that emerged from daily interactions. For any transitional context, a similar model applies, providing a useful starting point to identify both mechanisms and barriers. Local specificities will matter, of course, and informal mechanisms will operate differently according to context,

but social groups, leadership structures, dispute resolution systems, economic relationships, and socialization patterns are the types of interactions that are likely to have substantial impacts. Additionally, not only do local interactions affect the transition in their own right, but they provide key context to understand the success, or lack thereof, of formal institutions. The ways people interact in their daily lives and the types of social relationships that are present in local communities can have a significant impact on transitional justice initiatives.

Finally, this model offers a new recognition of the role of emergent conflicts as catalysts that can spark renewed violence and instability. Transitional justice mechanisms and the informal mechanisms that arise from local interactions need to address emergent conflicts directly. Typically, transitional justice approaches address problems emerging from the period of war and violence. Emergent conflicts, on the other hand, develop as a result of the social changes brought by the transitional period itself, and, as such, may be overlooked in efforts to deal with the war-time issues and their direct consequences. In other transitional contexts, land conflict may not be as divisive as it is in northern Uganda, but perhaps there are other issues that become particularly salient in the transitional period. This model explicitly accounts for the potential of emergent conflicts to completely derail or block the development of long-term stability, and depicts the need for transitional mechanisms to address emergent conflicts.

For the case of northern Uganda, I illustrated how this model could be used as a tool to analyze the degree of social stability, the impactfulness of transitional justice institutions, the mechanisms and barriers that develop in local communities, and potential

blockages to the transitional process. Broad enough to be adapted to a wide range of social contexts and types of transitions, this model is a primary contribution of the research.

Integrating Conversations

Beyond developing a broadly applicable model of social reconstruction after violent conflict, this project also integrates previously separate lines of inquiry, providing new insights into the processes of social integration, the social roots of violence, and global diffusion. As a substantive area, post-conflict and peacebuilding research is often on the margins of sociology; when it is addressed at all, it is often from a development perspective or with a socio-legal approach. Most often, however, post-conflict scholarship comes from outside of sociology, such as psychological studies of post-war trauma, political scientists' development of macro-level explanatory factors, or studies produced by professionals working in post-conflict settings. Through this research, however, I demonstrated the value added by a sociological perspective. Sociology contributes the tools and insights to develop nuanced analyses of complex social processes and causality. Recognizing the constructed nature of social life, sociological theories and concepts help understand culture, inequality, power, identity, boundaries, and group interaction. Additionally, a sociological perspective illuminates nuance in the ways people experience the world, recognizing that perceptions become real in their consequences. This work blends these sociological contributions into the substantive field of peace and conflict studies.

This project analyzes the nuanced social effects of war, widespread violence, and displacement. Considering war and the post-war period as times of all-encompassing social change, I explain how such deep and long-term change dramatically shifts the nature of social relationships, integration, and interactions. There is an abundance of sociological work on types of social solidarity, what contributes to unity, and the development of collective identity. Sociologists study solidarity in the presence of social differences or divisions, but there is not a well-developed body of work about the construction of social solidarity after deep damage to the very foundation of community life. By considering processes of social reconstruction and integration after widespread violent conflict, I bring new insights to this field, such as how the development of unity can be seen as artificial or instrumental.

On the other hand, I also contribute a needed analysis of what contributes or leads to violence and war. Much research in this area takes a macro perspective, focusing on states or powerful institutions, considering how factors such as political maneuvering, international relationships, or regional resource flows can lead to widespread violence. Here, I consider the social roots of violence, as a complementary and necessary perspective. Particularly, local-level struggles over power, belonging, and resources are essential factors in understanding what leads to widespread violence and, potentially, war (Autesserre 2009, 2010; Wimmer et al. 2009; Wimmer 2008). Solidarity can also lead to intense conflict, and I contribute a case of how clan and ancestral ties can result in hostility to outsiders and act as precursors to violent conflict. Understanding these micro-

processes furthers an understanding similar processes at higher levels, such as how nationalism or ethnic group solidarity contributes to violent conflict.

Analyzing how post-war contexts can beget additional violence is also an essential contribution of this project. In a chaotic post-war setting, I have shown how individuals making pragmatic or reasonable decisions under the circumstances can actually lead to instability and conflict. This is particularly salient in cases in which people have had direct exposure to and participation in violence, with this proximity to violence also contributing to the social roots of future violence. Additionally, I offer an analysis of how local perceptions of past violence and war have significant consequences. The social and cultural processes of remembering and framing the past can have causal importance in determining the likelihood of violent solutions emerging for current and future disagreements.

Finally, in an era of rapid globalization and the rise of a world culture (Boli and Thomas 1999; Meyer et al. 1997), I provide an analysis of how and why the diffusion of global ideals does not happen in some local contexts. Past work has considered cases of successful diffusion, as global discourses are carried to new contexts by international organizations and then modified to fit the local context through processes and agents of vernacularization (Levitt and Merry 2009; Merry 2006). My project identifies how the vernacularization process can be blocked, particularly in the absence of translators and advocates. I make a new contribution, however, by explicitly integrating the role of the carrier organization's institutional fit in the local environment. Both vernacularization

and strategic institutional positioning, I argue, are necessary conditions for the effective local diffusion of global discourse.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

From this analysis, several key points of leverage or recommendations emerge as likely to aid the development of post-war stability.

First, NGOs and government agencies need to prioritize programs that address and mitigate the negative effects of the post-war social changes that lead to decreased unity. In Uganda, these changes are, specifically, the crisis of leadership, a gap in socialization, prevalent NGO interventions, and increasing poverty, inequality, and monetization. For example, youth-focused programs could assist with job creation, skills training, and support for farming, but also develop cultural or heritage programs designed to promote inter-generational dialogue and help fill the gap in the war-time generation's knowledge of traditional practices and skills. Programs to empower and support the most local-level leaders could also be particularly effective. The area *rodi*, the men and women elected by their neighbors to oversee farming operations, are responsible for guiding key aspects of social life and being the first level of defense in dispute resolution. As long-term members of the area they serve, they are elected on the basis of their character. Although they do not have official power in the political or economic system, their leadership has transformative potential, and programs to support these people in their (volunteer) service would likely have significant impacts. Programs should promote daily social interactions that contribute to unity, such as traditional cultural practices and

communal work in Uganda, which is nearly unanimously positively regarded and cited as the very definition of unity. While some programmatic strategies may look effective in theory, if they do not directly promote positive interactions every day in local communities, they are not likely to be effective in the long run. In fact, too often programs are implemented that actually have negative consequences (usually unintended) for daily interactions, such as increasing jealousy or competition. Overall, such interventions cannot be designed as one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather need to be developed after careful analysis of the particularities of local needs and in consultation with local experts and leaders.

Second, agencies, advocates, and other professionals involved in post-conflict rebuilding should be particularly sensitive to the development of exclusionary dynamics in transitional communities. In northern Uganda, as well as other post-war contexts, NGO and government programs give support to small groups, rather than to individuals. In theory, this is a positive and necessary development, as groups are better able to be held accountable and to guard against the misuse of resources. However, NGOs and government agencies should reconsider their policies of giving assistance and resources to small groups. They need to carefully analyze the consequences of such policies for village unity and division. It would be beneficial to explore alternative models of support, perhaps funneling programs through village leadership structures. However, caution here is also required, as, in the post-war context, local leaders are less trusted and also, in some cases, not particularly trustworthy. As above, consider supporting groups of elected leaders, such as the LCI, *rodi kweri*, and *rodi okoro*, who are then able to carefully

adjudicate the distribution of resources in a way that minimizes exclusionary dynamics and competition among groups. This also serves to reinforce the authority of local leaders. Additionally, mechanisms or systems of social support at the village level need to be strengthened. With the rise of small groups, the group has become the location of social support, meaning that those who are not members live more precariously without a reliable social safety net. Certainly, some small groups are effectively promoting a strong type of unity among members, which ought to prompt thinking about how the most positive social features of small groups could be expanded to the entire village, to provide a social support system for all residents.

Third, addressing economic or resource-based problems certainly needs to continue to be a top priority. Currently, many development programs, in post-war contexts and otherwise, focus on economic empowerment through skills training, support for agricultural activities, and microfinance. In implementing such programs, however, there needs to be greater sensitivity to the social dynamics as described above, being mindful of what contributes to long-term stability and what types of programs—even in their unintended consequences—may be detrimental. Specifically, such programs ought to not be focused single-mindedly on empowering individuals or families and helping them out of poverty. Instead, a broader conception of economic relationships in a community is necessary; as seen in this research, economic inequality can significantly strain social relationships, weaken trust, and decrease interdependence. Practitioners should also be sensitive to changes in the economic system—such as monetization of the local economy in northern Uganda—and how such changes can shift the nature of social

relationships and organization. Additionally, as an issue related to a (newly monetized) economic resource, addressing land conflict absolutely needs to be a top priority in northern Uganda and likely in other transitional contexts as well. To sustainably address land conflict, dispute resolution mechanisms must be supported and rebuilt in the post-war era. Recognizing that a massive resettlement creates a particularly contentious and unique situation, a task force or commission of experts focused solely on land issues is necessary, bringing together leaders from a variety of perspectives and institutions.

Finally, my findings about survivors' perspectives of the impact of the ICC lead to several critiques relevant for policy makers and practitioners engaged in transitional justice initiatives. The ICC has explicit objectives to increase understanding of the Court among local populations and to create a reciprocal exchange where the Court is able to respond to the concerns and expectations of local communities.[56] Evidence from these interviews suggests the ICC is not achieving these objectives in northern Uganda. Respondents have articulated a wide range of concerns about the ICC, which the ICC should take into account in its future actions in this region and in other cases. Particularly, the ICC should be extremely sensitive to the local and national context in deciding how to proceed with an investigation, being continually mindful of potential repercussions for affected communities. The Court should also seriously consider how to address concerns that the ICC contradicts culture, values, or other transitional justice mechanisms, wrestling with the real possibility that ICC prosecutions may not be what

[56] Some may argue about whether or not the goal of the ICC, or similar international institutions, is or should be to please local populations. In some ways, such institutions may ultimately be trying to create change at a different level (promoting international justice norms). In this case, however, the ICC unambiguously states objectives to engage in a reciprocal exchange with local populations (International Criminal Court 2006).

the victims of the crimes actually desire. Outreach cannot be a one-way street, with the ICC imparting knowledge to local communities, whose only function is to absorb and regurgitate information. Rather, it should be a reciprocal process of communication, with the ICC open to the possibility of critique from the population and with the ability to make real changes as a result of bottom-up feedback. If a primary purpose of such an institution is to seek justice for the victims of crimes, it is essential that the voices of such people are considered with great weight.

Limitations and Future Study

There are several key limitations to this research. First, and most noticeably, this project would likely have developed differently if conducted by a researcher who was not an "outsider" in Uganda. Particularly, if conducted by a researcher fluent in the local language and of the same race, the ethnographic component could have become more prominent in the data collection and final analysis. This would have allowed more nuanced direct observations of daily life and social interactions. Interviews, of course, produce an analysisof not what actually happens, but of what people report or perceive about their lives and their communities. To some degree, I was able to triangulate the interview data with my observations from spending time in the communities. I did not, however, live in the fieldsites and thus was not present for all aspects of village life. There were also some elements of life that were more difficult for me to directly observe, because of my socio-demographic characteristics and positionality. For example, although I spent a lot of time with women in the villages cooking, taking care of babies,

and so on, I was often limited in the depth of my conversations, as many women did not speak English well. In my perspective, this is likely the most significant limitation of this research. Along each step in the process, I attempted to remain cognizant of this challenge and mitigate its effects, such as by working with Ugandan research assistants to conduct the interviews. Certainly, however, this colored the types of questions I asked, my data collection methods, the ways people interacted with me, and the direction of my analysis.

A second primary limitation is that this research presents one snapshot in time. The questions I address are, fundamentally, about process, as a transition occurs throughout a long period of time, and social stability certainly does not develop in an instant. The ways that daily interactions facilitate or hinder the development of unity is likely to shift as the years pass and life in the camps is no longer a recent experience. People will develop new ways to memorialize what happened in the past. Perceptions of the ICC may change if and when a case is brought to trial. The government may develop a comprehensive program to address land conflict and dispute resolution. Perhaps a deeper stability does not develop until there has been a generational change, with children who have been once again raised in their home communities. Communal work and traditional leadership structures may fade even farther from prominence, or they may be recognized as valuable to communal life and become infused with new energy. NGOs will likely decrease in both number and import. Ultimately, the region may develop on a trajectory of long-term stability, or may experience a new outbreak of violence and conflict. As a picture of post-war village life in 2011 and 2012, my research cannot speak

with complete confidence to the future of the processes I describe. A longitudinal analysis would be a particularly promising direction of future research, revisiting Lukodi, Anyadwe, and Awach as residents continue to grapple year after year with social life in the wake of war.

There are also limitations that emerge from my case selection and suggest fruitful potential avenues for future research. For example, I specifically considered rural villages. Compared to larger urban areas, villages tend to be tighter knit, more isolated from surrounding communities, more highly dependent on agriculture, more homogeneous, and likely to have a shared history among residents. Looking at post-war rebuilding in urban locales would likely find relationships characterized by different types of unity, interdependence, and conflict. I also analyzed the ICC's resonance in a context where the Court has not been able to take legal action against accused perpetrators. It is important to develop cases of comparison, considering the diffusion process in countries where there have been trials and/or verdicts in cases. Another important type of comparison would be with countries that experienced different types of atrocities or trauma. In northern Uganda, people experienced an extremely extended period of war and internal displacement. The conflict also has not had a distinct endpoint, with the LRA still in operation and no regime change. The reconstruction process would likely progress differently in cases with different characteristics of the conflict, such as: shorter periods of violence, no displacement, resulting in regime change, with the government playing a more visible role in the violence, or between more clearly defined ethnic or religious groups in a heterogeneous society. Considering a particular case study

allows depth and nuance, but it necessarily involves choices about which case will be considered, and which will not. My research is limited by the unique characteristics of the conflict, region, and villages I selected, and suggests the need for future study of other types of situations.

There are certainly other significant limitations to this research, and I do not claim to render the authoritative or complete picture of the entirety of post-war social life. What I have done, however, is my best to portray the people of northern Uganda in a way that reflects their depth, grace, and resilience in the face of enormous obstacles.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Public Officials Interviews

I conducted approximately 20 interviews with various professionals working in and around Gulu District. The interviews did not have a set format, but varied according to the type of organization and what I was hoping to learn about. For most of the below organizations, I interviewed the director or the person directly responsible for administering programs in local communities. The NGOs listed include international organizations, locally-founded organizations (usually with foreign funding), and hybrid local-international collaborative organizations.

Sector	**Organization**
NGO	War Child Canada
NGO	American Refugee Committee (ARC)
NGO	Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), multiple interviews
NGO	Concerned Parents' Association (CPA)
NGO	Timo Kica, multiple interviews
NGO	Human Rights Focus (HURIFO)
Religious	Caritas, Gulu Archdiocese, multiple interviews
Religious	Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI)
Religious	Gulu Archdiocese, multiple interviews
Government	Uganda Museum
Government	Environmental Health Office
Government	Parish Chief
Academic	Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS), Gulu University, multiple interviews
IGO	Outreach Programme, International Criminal Court (ICC)
Traditional	Ker Kwaro Acholi, multiple interviews

Appendix B: Data and Methods Supplement

Descriptions of Research Assistants & Community Guides

Using recommendations from colleagues at Gulu University, I interviewed five potential researchers. I hired three people initially: Nancy Lamunu, Susan Ajok, and Kenneth Oyet. Mid-way through data collection, Kenneth was not able to continue and so I hired a fourth, Alfred Olegmungu. In the post-war context, these multilingual, educated individuals had found an abundance of highly paid work, but at the time of my data collection were finding fewer opportunities available as many programs were fading out. They were generally available to me throughout the duration of the interview process, although occasionally took other part time work, needed to devote time to their schooling, or were called away for family obligations.

Nancy Lamunu is outgoing, assertive, and effervescent. She has traveled within Africa and Europe, is active in the Catholic Church, and spent time in the U.S. in 2011-2012. She is definitely a "cultural broker," walking a line between western and Ugandan cultures. She has a post-graduate certificate from the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS) at Gulu University. Kenneth Oyet studied public administration, administrative law, and qualitative research at Gulu University and Makerere University. He is currently a student in conflict transformation at Gulu University. He has extensive connections within the LRA and is finishing his master's research on forgiveness, utilizing interviews with top LRA commanders. He has worked as a teacher, in community-based conflict rehabilitation, and as a community peace educator. Kenneth is thoughtful and insightful, easily launching into deep academic and philosophical discussions, speaking carefully and deliberately. Susan Ajok earned a bachelor's degree in social science from Makerere University in Kampala. She was a social worker in issues of gender-based violence and assisted with several large-scale research projects in the region. Susan is caring, wise, honest, generous, and positive. She works hard to care for her young daughter and to advance her career. In 2011, she started the master's program in conflict transformation at IPSS, where she is particularly interested in gender issues and HIV/AIDS. Alfred Olegmungu is a conscientious worker, always considerate and respectful, and an expert at "keeping time" (a rarity in Uganda). He has a real awareness of and passion for history and traditional culture. Alfred is from a neighboring area, so his dialect is slightly different. At first, I thought this may be a weakness to him as an interviewer, but his sensitivity, respectfulness, and grasp of the purpose of the interviews proved to outweigh this potential challenge.

The project translator, John Bosco Komakech, also conducted a few interviews during a scheduling crunch. John Bosco is an older man who lives in Gulu with his wife, children, and grandchildren. He is a catechist and leader in the Catholic Church, in addition to being an accomplished Acholi language teacher. Bosco is well known and highly respected in Gulu and in surrounding villages.

Vincent Oyet was my community guide in Lukodi. Vincent is extremely highly respected in Lukodi and people look to him as a leader and an excellent community mobilizer. He is in his early 30s and teaches at Lukodi Primary School. He also farms his land and cares for his wife and six children. He is intuitive, sensitive, intelligent,

thoughtful, and creative. He has had quite extensive exposure to NGOs and government programs, and he is often called to attend workshops or participate in programs as a community representative. Vincent served as one of my main informants throughout all elements of the project. Alfred Kaloso was my guide in Anyadwe. Alfred owns a drug shop or pharmacy in the trading centre and farms his land near the centre, living with his wife on his family's compound. He is around 30 years old and is well-liked among his peers. He has a quiet, thoughtful, and respectful demeanor, offering insightful suggestions throughout the project. Finally, George Otto was my guide in Awach. George is young (in his early 20s) and extremely energetic. He works in his brother's shop in the trading centre, farms his garden, organizes the village football team, and just is starting his studies in education at Gulu University on the weekends. George smiles and jokes easily, has a comfortable and respectful demeanor with all, and is excellent at creatively solving problems and mobilizing people.

Sampling Issues in Village Interviews

There were some challenges in locating respondents. We found some people at home and available for the interview on the first visit. For many, we came back once. For a few, we had to visit more than that to find them. Sometimes, we had to wait several days, for example, when residents were away at a funeral, in town, in the hospital, or working in gardens far away. A few leaders were particularly difficult to track down, with multiple failed scheduling attempts before finally managing to complete the interviews. There was one uncooperative potential respondent in Anyadwe, demanding alcohol if we wanted his cooperation; ultimately his son was selected (through the random selection process) for the interview. In Anyadwe, there were three compounds where we excluded an elderly person from the interview selection process because that the person was either too frail (not able to get out of bed) or not of sound mind, so they were not included in the selection. There was one compound where we were supposed to select a male respondent, but found that the only man was habitually drunk, not able to be interviewed, so we interviewed his wife. (Interestingly, when we first went to the compound, the woman told us that the man was busy digging in the field and would not be home until evening. This is unusual, as most people are home from the field much earlier. Later, my community guides told me that the man was always drunk, even in the morning.)

Gender of Interviewers

I originally thought it might be beneficial for the respondent and interviewer to be the same gender. However, the research assistants advised that this was unnecessary. After observing the interview process and reviewing transcripts, I agreed that the gender of the interviewer and respondent did not seem to impact the interview content. Rather, it seemed that a handful of women (and a few men) struggled to express themselves and respond to questions in-depth with any interviewer, not necessarily dependent on the interviewer's gender. This seemed to be related to low levels of education, self-confidence, or (for the women) a cultural norm that women not express themselves. In an effort to address this problem, we emphasized to respondents that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, but that the interview was more of a conversation about

what they had experienced or how they see things. We also made small talk before and during the interview, in an effort to relax the respondent and make them feel like it was an informal visit. The interviewer also used probes during the interview to try to elicit more complete responses. Even with these efforts, some respondents were simply more reserved than others in their responses.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

The following questions were used for the resident interviews. Interviews with community leaders followed the same format, but varied slightly in their wording, often asking leaders to comment more generally on life in the community, as opposed to the wording of the resident interview questions more focused on their individual experiences. The leader interviews also included two questions about their leadership capacity in the community:

- Can you tell me about [institution respondent is involved in] and what role it plays in the community? In what ways do you think it is important? How is its role different now than it was before the war?
- Do you personally consider yourself a leader in this community? In what ways? How did you come to be in this position? How is this different than it was before the war?

PART 1: Personal narrative and warm up questions

The first questions are about your background in [name of village].

1. Can you tell me about how long you and your family have lived here in [name of community]?
   - PROBES: Did you live here before the war? Did your family? Did you stay at an IDP camp or satellite camp? IF SO: Which one? When did you stay there? IF NOT: Where did you stay? When did you start moving back to this village? When did you start staying here full-time?
2. Do you personally remember life here (in this village) before the war?
3. Do you think that life here now is better, worse, or about the same as it was before the war? Why do you feel this way?

PART 2: Community

This section is about how close people here feel to one another.

1. How well do you know your neighbors? Do you feel close to your neighbors? What does it mean to be a good neighbor? Explain what you mean.
2. What does "trust" mean to you? In general, can most people in this village be trusted?
   - PROBES: Can you give me an example of trust in this village? What types of people or groups of people do not trust each other? What types of people do <u>you</u> think can't be trusted? Why?
3. Can you tell me about the last time residents here came together to work on a project that benefitted others in the village?
4. How long are you planning to stay in this village? Why?
5. Do you consider this village to be your "home"? Why?
6. What do you think it means for a community to be united? Do you think this village is a united community? How is this different than it was before the war?

PART 3: Interdependence
This section is about the interactions between people here.

1. Do you belong to any groups? Tell me about those groups. (Groups could be either formally organized groups, or just groups of people who get together regularly to do an activity or talk about things.)
    - PROBES: Why did the group form? Who is a part of the group? What brings the members together? What is exchanged? What are the goals? What personal characteristics are valued among members?
2. Can you describe your activities on a typical day?
3. Can you tell me about (all of) your social interactions in the past three days?
    - PROBES: Who have you interacted with? Why did you interact with them (for example, to buy food at the market)? Did you enjoy the interaction?
4. Tell me about the last time you needed someone to help you.
    - PROBES: Who helped you? Why do you think they helped you? What did they help you with?
5. Can you tell me about any types of people you don't feel comfortable interacting with?
    - PROBES: Why don't you like interacting with them? Do others in the community feel the same way? Who are the most isolated people in the community and why do you think they are?
6. How do you get information about what's happening in the village?
7. How do people in this village rely on one another? Do people rely on one another a lot or not very much? How is this different than it was before the war?

PART 4: Social justice
This section is about diversity and differences between people.

1. Can you tell me about some rules that are important for life here in the village? (Rules can be either official rules or just expected ways of doing things.) Which is the most important rule to follow? Why?
2. Is that rule always followed? What happens if it is not followed?
    - PROBES: Is there anyone in the village who doesn't have to follow this rule? Are there any situations where people don't have to follow the rule? Is this okay? Why?
3. Are there any types of people who are given extra or special opportunities here? What do you think about this?
4. Are there any types of people who are not given the same opportunities in the village as other people? What do you think about this?
    - PROBES: Are there some types of people who are not allowed to own land and build a home here? Are there some types of people who are not allowed to send their kids to school here? Are there some types of people who are not allowed to run for elected office, like LCI?

5. What type of person would you like your children to marry? Are there any types of people in the village that you would not want your children to marry? Why?
6. In every community, there are differences between people, in things like wealth (the assets they own, like land or a home), income, status, ancestry, religious beliefs, political beliefs, age, or gender. How much do these differences matter to people in [village name]? Which differences are the most important? How is this different than it was before the war?

- PROBES: Do these differences cause problems? How do people from these groups interact? Do you think everyone gets the same amount of respect or gets fair treatment in the village?

PART 5: Non-violence

This section is about how people here deal with conflict.

1. What type of disagreements do you think are the most common in the village? Can you give me a recent example? What was done to resolve that disagreement?

- PROBES: What was the disagreement about? Who was the disagreement between? What strategies were used to solve it? Who provided leadership? What usually works well? What doesn't work well?

2. What conflicts are the most serious in this village? Can you give me a specific example? What was done to resolve that conflict?

- PROBES: What was the conflict about? Who was the conflict between? What strategies were used to solve it? Who provided leadership? What usually works well? What doesn't work well?

3. In general, do you think people here deal with conflict in a positive way or in a way that causes more harm? How is this different than it was before the war?

PART 6: Formal justice and reconciliation mechanisms

This last section is about the impact of rebuilding efforts in this community.

1. Have you heard about healing, reconciliation, or cleansing ceremonies done in this area, related to the conflict? IF YES: Have you attended any? Can you tell me about them?
2. What do you think is the impact of these ceremonies?

- PROBES: What do you think is helpful? Do you think they have negative effects or need improvement? What effect do you think these ceremonies have on your life? On this village?

3. Have you heard about the Amnesty Act? IF YES: Do you know of anyone who has returned home and received amnesty, or have you yourself? Tell me about their/your situation.

- PROBES: What effect did receiving amnesty have on their/your relationships in the community?

4. What do you think is the impact of the Amnesty Act?

- PROBES: What do you think is helpful? Do you think they have negative effects or need improvement? What effect do you think the Amnesty Act has on your life? On this village?

5. Do you know about the International Criminal Court? IF YES: What is the ICC? Where have you gotten information about the ICC?
6. What do you think is the impact of the ICC?
   - PROBES: What do you think is helpful? Do you think it has negative effects or needs improvement? What effect do you think the ICC has on your life? On this village?
7. Can you tell me about any NGO, CBO, or aid programs there have been in the village since people returned from the camps?
8. What do you think is the impact of these programs?
   - PROBES: What do you think is helpful? Do you think they have negative effects or need improvement? What effect do you think these programs have on your life? On this village?
9. Can you tell me about any Government programs there have been in the village since people returned from the camps?
10. What do you think is the impact of these programs?
   - PROBES: What do you think is helpful? Do you think they have negative effects or need improvements? What effect do you think the Government programs have on your life? On this village?

PART 7: Wrap up and demographics

These are concluding questions.

1. How do you think the village will change in the next 5 years? What will cause these changes?
2. Gender (recorded by interviewer):
3. How old are you?
4. What work do you do? How is this different than before the war?
5. How would you describe your religious or spiritual beliefs? Do you attend a church or other place of worship? Which one? How often do you attend?
6. Are you married? How many children do you have?
7. How many people live with you in this compound? How do you know these people or how are you related?
8. What is your ethnic background? What languages do you speak?
9. What is your highest level of formal education? Do you have any other education or training?

Interview Fieldnotes

Interview date and time:
Respondent name:
Interviewer name:

Describe the process of recruiting, scheduling, and consent:
Describe the physical setting and any other people around (the compound, the interview space):
Describe the respondent's physical appearance:
Describe the respondent's mannerisms, actions, tone of voice, etc.:
Describe if you felt there was good rapport and the respondent was comfortable with the process:
Describe any interruptions to the interview:
Describe anything else you feel is important to understand this interview:

Appendix D: List of Respondents

Lukodi Respondents						
Sample		**#**	**Name**[57]	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education**[58]
Leader	Religious	**1**	Evelyn Auma	F	30	S4
	Rwot Okoro	**2**	Abalo Filda	F	52	P6
	Survivors	**3**	Alice Amoyo	F	60	none
	Women	**4**	Akello Rose	F	76	none
	Rwot Moo	**5**	Steven Okumu	M	31	P7
	Youth	**6**	Omara David	M	33	diploma
	Rwot Kweri	**7**	Dalton Peko	M	47	P7
	School	**8**	Joseph Akara	M	52	degree (MA)
	Elected gov't.	**9**	Felix Ojok	M	55	S2
	Atekere	**10**	Lapyem Paul	M	78	P6
Resident		**11**	Yolanda Laker	F	under 35	P2
		12	Atono Sharon	F	under 35	none
		13	Hannah Acii	F	under 35	none
		14	Grace Akoko	F	20	P2
		15	Acomo Melody	F	21	P6
		16	Mary Acam	F	23	diploma
		17	Sarah Lamumu	F	42	P3
		18	Juska Aciro	F	43	P6
		19	Francis Alur	F	49	P6
		20	Helen Atim	F	56	P7
		21	Martin Aboce	M	under 35	P7
		22	Moro Cosmas	M	20	S2
		23	Oyet Kenneth	M	21	S2
		24	Raymond Oyeta	M	28	P5
		25	Michael Okec	M	35	P6
		26	Alfred Kapere	M	36	P7
		27	Obur Franklin	M	37	?
		28	Juliano Komakech	M	42	S2
		29	Geoffrey Omona	M	43	S2
		30	Walter Ocira	M	52	S1

[57] The respondent names listed in the tables below and throughout the text are pseudonyms.
[58] In Uganda, there are seven years of primary school (P1-P7), four years of lower secondary school (S1-S4), and two years of upper secondary school (S5-S6). Generally, a certificate requires two years of schooling (this is common for primary teachers or technical schools), a diploma is higher than a certificate (generally 2-3 years of schooling), and a degree takes 3-5 years in a university. Some people pursue a certificate or diploma instead of secondary school.

Anyadwe Respondents						
Sample		**#**	**Name**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education**
Leader	Women	**31**	Mariam Lawino	F	32	S3
	Rwot Okoro	**32**	Atim Joyce	F	45	P3
	Rwot Okoro	**33**	Santa Jennifer	F	49	P7
	Youth	**34**	Daniel Lalobo	M	27	P7
	Health	**35**	Patrick Orach	M	29	S6
	Rwot Kweri	**36**	David Okech	M	45	P6
	Business	**37**	Bosco Kidega	M	46	P7
	Elected gov't.	**38**	Oyaka Peter	M	50	P7
	School	**39**	Frank Acellam	M	52	degree (BA)
	Religious	**40**	David Komakec	M	58	P7
	Rwot Moo	**41**	Charles Ocen	M	79	P3
Resident		**42**	Akello Lilly	F	22	S1
		43	Judith Akot	F	22	S3
		44	Betty Labong	F	24	P6
		45	Lapolo Gloria	F	25	S3
		46	Stellah Acan	F	27	P6
		47	Lucy Anena	F	28	none
		48	Lakop Joy	F	30	P5
		49	Akot Margaret	F	30	P6
		50	Susan Akello	F	32	P2
		51	Jennifer Abalo	F	56	P5
		52	Richard Oyet	M	30	P6
		53	John Gum	M	32	P7
		54	Edward Banya	M	32	P7
		55	Odiya George	M	35	P6
		56	Olweny Wilson	M	35	P7
		57	Omara Ernest	M	35	P6
		58	Raphael Atoo	M	36	P3
		59	Opobo Michael	M	40	P5
		60	Otto James	M	45	P7
		61	Kennedy Oluk	M	56	S6

Awach Respondents						
Sample		**#**	**Name**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Education**
Leader	Business	**62**	Milicent Lapobo	F	39	P7
	Rwot Okoro	**63**	Grace Atti	F	65	none
	Youth	**64**	Fredrick Odida	M	26	S6
	Elected gov't.	**65**	Odongo Kenneth	M	43	S3
	Disabled	**66**	Alex Ojara	M	48	P7
	School	**67**	Richard Oyat	M	51	degree
	Religious	**68**	George Okulu	M	52	P7
	Security	**69**	Michael Okot	M	57	S4
	Rwot Kweri	**70**	Okello Wilson	M	63	S4
	Atekere	**71**	Fredrick Olanya	M	70	P7
Resident		**72**	Lawino Ashley	F	21	P6
		73	Betty Akwero	F	24	P5
		74	Akec Nancy	F	32	P2
		75	Margaret Ajok	F	38	none
		76	Justine Lakop	F	40	P6
		77	Christine Auma	F	43	none
		78	Adong Evelyn	F	46	P2
		79	Rachel Ataro	F	48	none
		80	Helen Acan	F	58	certificate
		81	Adula Bethlehem	F	75	none
		82	Olobo George	M	24	S6
		83	Roland Kidega	M	31	S4
		84	Orach Thomas	M	39	P5
		85	Okeny Dan	M	42	none
		86	Wilson Olur	M	42	diploma
		87	Ocaya William	M	47	P6
		88	Charles Kilama	M	52	S1
		89	Edwin Opiro	M	60	certificate
		90	James Owino	M	65	diploma
		91	Otto Jeremy	M	76	P6