GENDER CONSTRUCTION AND TRAUMATIC RUPTURE IN NORTHERN UGANDA: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO SUBVERTING PATRIARCHY AND PROMOTING GENDER-INFORMED TRAUMA HEALING

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

by

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1.1 Introduction

Gender and trauma studies have become accepted components of the peacebuilding field. Gender identities and norms, as well as the institutions and structures that support them, are critical to understanding conflict dynamics and responses (Theidon et al., 2011). At the same time, trauma healing has increasingly been recognized as an integral part of the overall enterprise of establishing sustainable peace (Hart, 2008). Trauma healing is connected to reconciliation, reconstruction, and both societal and individual transformative change (Lederach, 2003). Yet the complex relationship between gender, trauma healing, and conflict challenges peacebuilding practice and theory by providing new insights into the way violent conflict effects individuals and the options for healing.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the significance of engaging gender and trauma theory when analyzing conflict and generating peacebuilding responses. The central argument of this paper is that gender and trauma theory together provide important analytic lenses through which to better view and understand conflict and peacebuilding. Specifically, I argue that when peacebuilders apply a gender lens to conflict, they see that gender construction is replicated and disrupted through the trauma
of violent conflict. Concurrently when peacebuilders apply a trauma lens to conflict they see the potential to subvert the dominant gender constructions of patriarchy.

It is at this site of overlap between trauma and gender theory that peacebuilders need to pay the greatest attention particularly in post-conflict reconstruction. Using Northern Uganda as a case study, I examine how gender construction is replicated and disrupted through traumatic conflict. The trauma of warfare arguably brings to light a space for understanding the gendered construction of identity and also the fragility of the social structures that serve as mechanisms of construction. As such, peacebuilders need to engage trauma healing with an awareness of gender dynamics in order to build sustainable and equitable peace.

1.2 Research Questions

Trauma theorists describe the self as a socially constructed entity (e.g. Herman, 1997 and Scarry 1987). Traumatic events disrupt this “normal” construction of the self, and thus cause a deconstruction of self, and of individual and collective agency (Herman, 1997).

Feminist construction theorists similarly propose that the self is socially constructed, and that the notion of self and agency are always gendered (e.g. Butler, 1990 Rubin, 1975). In other words, one’s power to act is framed and constrained by one’s gender. Applied to trauma theory, we then understand that both the destruction of agency through traumatic events, as well as the construction of agency through trauma healing are gendered processes (e.g. Butler, 1990, Herman, 1997). This theoretical overlap is
important because it also highlights the gaps between these two theories. Gender theory has yet to sufficiently address what happens when a traumatic rupture disrupts the construction of gender. And trauma theory does not yet have an adequate conception of gender. This study addresses these gaps and highlights the necessity of considering these two theories in relation to each other during peacebuilding. In light of the many conflicts around the world, the question then becomes, what happens with these constructions in the midst of war? The two main research questions for this paper are: 1) what happens to gender construction during traumatic interruption or conflict? Or, how is the “normal” construction of gender identity disrupted during conflict? and 2) what are the implications of gendered re-construction after conflict?

1.3 Methodology

For this paper, I use both literature review and semi-structured interviews with trauma counseling professionals in Northern Uganda. In regards to the literature review, I draw from feminist scholars Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler. I also apply Judith Herman and Shelly Rambo’s work in trauma healing. After providing a theoretical foundation for gender and trauma studies, I apply the theories, in conjunction, to the context in Northern Uganda.

For this research project, I interviewed 15 practitioners from 13 organizations in Uganda during the months of June and July, 2011. The majority of these organizations were located in Gulu, Kitgum, and Lira in Northern Uganda. All the interviewed
professionals had various forms of training in trauma counseling that ranged from
certificates in trauma healing to master’s degrees in psychology.

The goal of this research was to understand how trauma counseling developed in
the specific context of Northern Uganda. The specific objectives for this research were
1. To compare program design and methods that are being used by grassroots trauma
healing organizations in Uganda; 2. To gather information to track how broader
movements for peace and gender equity influence practitioners who work with
traumatized members of society; 3. To observe how cultural factors, including traditional
modes of healing and gender roles, influence the work of practitioners; 4. To gather
information on the training in trauma healing that practitioners in Uganda have received;
5. To create an empirical foundation to promote culturally and gender sensitive
programming for trauma healing in both countries.

This data from this research provides a thick description of current trauma
counseling in Northern Uganda. The interview questions focused on trauma counseling
methodology and local conceptions of trauma and healing. The interviewers do not
directly address the gender dynamics in Northern Uganda but rather provide a first-hand
account of trauma healing in Northern Uganda. The data from the interviews appear in
the second half of this thesis which addresses trauma and trauma healing in detail.¹

Within this thesis I examine what I call three “moments” of interaction between
gender production and trauma in Northern Uganda: 1) Pre-conflict (Before 1986) 2)

¹ Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded and analyzed. Both general themes and
direct quotes appear in this paper. All interviewees remain anonymous.
Conflict (1986-2006) and 3) Reintegration (2006-Present). In the first moment I provide an analysis of the social construction of gender before the violent conflict erupted. In the second moment, I describe how violent conflict caused a simultaneous disruption and repetition of gender construction in Northern Uganda. In the third moment, I explore how gender constructions. In the third moment, I explore the realities of reentry in light of the new gender constructions which resulted through the violent conflict in Northern Uganda. I conclude by discussing how the moment of reintegration is actually a moment for healing and by synthesizing the theories in light of Northern Uganda.

1.4 Northern Uganda Case Study: Rationale

There are many reasons why Northern Uganda provides an interesting case study for this research. First, the conflict in Northern Uganda is tragic, in part, because of the Lord Resistance Army’s (LRA) use of child-soldiers. Strikingly 20-30% of these child soldiers in the LRA were female (Annan et al., 2008a). Unfortunately, the notion of child abduction and forced recruitment into war is not a new concept around the world. Child-soldiers are used in over 50 countries worldwide (McKay, 1998). Many depictions of child-soldiers around the world focus on childhood combat, yet this narrow focus fails to address the complex and often gendered roles that young people play in particular contexts of conflict. Northern Uganda offers an interesting context to explore the complex gender roles child-soldiers play in conflict.

Additionally, it is necessary to analyze the wide-spread use of gender-based violence (GBV) in this conflict. Although, vastly underreported, violence against women
is thought to be “one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world” (Stark et al. 2010, 1057). According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the term gender-based violence:

Distinguishes violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender from other forms of violence. It includes any act which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm. Gender-based violence includes violent acts such as rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, forced impregnation and murder. It also defines threats of these acts as a form of violence.

Covering community, family, and state violence, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) provides a more comprehensive framework on violence against women.

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women (or based on gender), including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (1995).

Gender-based violence continues to be a widespread and recurring problem in Northern Uganda, and the protracted nature of the conflict has increased the use of GBV. Both the Ugandan People’s Defense Force (UPDF) and Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) have been responsible for violence against women in Northern Uganda (Amnesty, 2010). GBV was also strongly exacerbated in Internally Displaced Person’s (IDP) camps in the north. Initially developed to “protect” the people of Northern Uganda against the LRA, the IDP camps themselves proved to be very violent places particularly for women and girls (Okello and Hovil, 2007). Unfortunately for many women in Northern Uganda the
IDP camps afforded no greater security from gender-based violence, and in fact, women faced an increased risk of gender-based violence in IDP settings (Orach, 2009).

Although GBV is a major part of the conflict in Northern Uganda, its use has largely been misinterpreted by scholars and the media. The abduction and forced marriage of young girls by the LRA has commonly been labeled “sexual slavery,” (e.g. Judah 2004, Westcott 2003) but this definition fails to recognize forced marriage as a unique and complex category of GBV. As such, this paper works to uncover some of the hidden complexities within gender and violence in Northern Uganda. The international community has mislabeled women and girls’ experience within the LRA, describing it as “sexual slavery,” (HRW, 2003). Although this description contains elements of truth, it is limited because it excludes the very social nature of the violence in Northern Uganda.

GBV within the LRA is more complex than the term “sexual slavery” implies. The LRA could have chosen to primarily rape and kill their victims, but notably they did not. Together they chose to forcibly marry many of the young girls they abducted. This choice appears strange at first, and the question is why? Why marry these girls instead of simply raping and killing them? These questions emphasize the need to apply a feminist constructionist analysis to this conflict and to the post-conflict reconstruction. Understanding gender as a social construction will shed light on the methods utilized by the LRA. The next sections move into a description of Uganda as a country and the history of armed conflict.
1.5 Introduction to Uganda and to the Acholi People

Uganda is a beautiful, landlocked country that is found in East Africa. It is surrounded by Kenya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania. Uganda is a diverse place with over 50 different ethnic groups that have multiple clans within each tribe (Carlson, 2008). 49 percent of the population is under 14 years old and life expectancy is 45.7 years (UNDP, 2009). The Acholi people live predominantly in the northern region of Acholiland which is comprised of Kitgum, Pader, Amuru, and Gulu districts (Finnström, 2008). Totaling about 1.2 million people, the population of Acholiland makes up about 5 percent of Uganda’s total population (Uganda National Census, 2002).²

Historically the Acholi people are not organized hierarchically but along patrilineal lines with decentralized lineages or clans (Southhall, 1963). Yet these lineages also have a strong matriarchal focus (Finnström, 2008). “In a sense, all kinship is through the mother, even kinship with the mother and hence paternal kin” (Evans Pritchard 1951, 156). In other words, the mother and motherhood play an important role in Acholi societies. Although women join their husband’s clan, there are strong ties to the women’s lineage. Also, the Acholi people have an elected elder or chief who serve an important role especially during conflict (Carlson, 2008). Unfortunately, some of the Acholi cultural identity in Northern Uganda has been eroded by the violent conflict in

² It should be noted that although Northern Uganda is a diverse area with many people groups, the war has primarily affected the Acholi people. The LRA is an outgrowth of Acholi nationalism and as such, this paper primarily refers to the customs, traditions, and experiences of the Acholi people group.
recent years (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). This is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

1.6 Background to Armed Conflict in Northern Uganda

The recent conflict in Northern Uganda began in the 1980’s (Allen, 1991). It has been waged primarily between the Ugandan armed forces and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) (El-Bushra, 2003). Both parties have been accused of vast human rights abuses, but the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has tormented the people of Northern Uganda with extreme violence for over two decades (Howden, 2011). Even before the conflict in the Acholiland, Uganda has had a long history of conflict, much of which has divided the northern and southern parts of the country. Since gaining independence in 1962, Ugandans have suffered under the rule of dictators including: Milton Obote (1980-85) whose regime claimed 100,000 lives and Idi Amin (1971-1979) whose regime claimed 300,000 lives (Roco Wat, 2005). Thus the abuse of power and consequences of conflict are not a new story for Ugandans.

The most recent conflict has largely taken place in Northern Uganda (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). This conflict has essentially been about the separation and marginalization of the war-torn north from the rest of the country (Finnström, 2008). Notably, 46 percent of the Northern population live below the poverty line, which is higher than any other region in the country (Baguma, 2010), but even more importantly, the people in Northern Uganda have felt isolated and separated from the rest of the country (Finnström, 2008).
It is helpful to view the history of conflict in Uganda in part through the north-south divide. Although ethnic divisions existed before British colonialism, the British regime exacerbated these divides for political purposes (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). The British regime split the country into functional regions in order to secure political control against other imperial competitors and to maximize economic profitability of the country (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). The Baganda of the south were rewarded for their collaboration with the British Empire while the northerners were viewed as resistant to British rule (Hovil and Lomo, 2004).

These regional divisions were heightened in the successive governments after independence. Before the current president and leader of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Yoweri Museveni came to power, the leadership was mainly from the North. Milton Obote was from Lango and Idi Amin was from the West Nile region of Uganda, which are both northern areas of Uganda (Hovil and Lomo 2004). Both of these dictators’ atrocities further entrenched the north-south divide. When Museveni gained power in 1986, he violated the 1985 Nairobi Peace Accord, which was a power sharing agreement that he had signed with General Tito Okello, a northerner who had led an interim government from 1985-1986 (Allen, 2010). Museveni violated this agreement when he took control of the city capital, Kampala. Fearing repression, many northerners in Kampala fled back to the North (IDMC, 2010). Since Museveni gained power, at least 22 rebel groups have taken up arms against the Ugandan government. The most significant and devastating of these was the Lord’s Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony.
(Allen, 1991). These few examples highlight the historical divide between the North and South that has led to the conflict with the LRA.

The conflict in Northern Uganda was termed the “forgotten war,” by Jan Egeland in 2003, who was the United Nations Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (Egeland, 2004). Since then, the conflict in Northern Uganda has gained international exposure due to its significant brutality and the use and abuse of child soldiers. There are many causes of this conflict. Refugee Law Project suggests two root causes that continue to fuel the ongoing conflict. First, Uganda’s history of violent power struggles has left a legacy of domination, brutal politics, and militarism. Second, various leaders have accentuated, if not encouraged, the entrenched partition between the north and the south which has been a key issue for many Ugandans (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). It can be traced to regional violence, marginalized minority groups, and inequality in the social, economic, and development between the different regions (Hovil and Lomo, 2004).

Initially rooted in a popular rebellion against President Yoweri Museveni’s National Resistance Movement Army (NRM), the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) transformed the conflict into a brutally violent war that has largely impacted the civilian population (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). The numbers are unreliable, but following the 2006 Juba Peace Talks, it was estimated that the LRA consisted of several hundred to 10,000 rebel soldiers (Schomerus, 2007). The LRA has employed guerrilla tactics to rape, pillage, and torment the Acholi people, and this conflict has had devastating results for Northern Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 1997).
Civilians in Northern Uganda have been the principal victims in this war. Their land has been ravaged, infrastructure largely destroyed, and people physically and psychologically wounded (Vinick, 2009). It is estimated that up to 66,000 people including 30,000-45,000 children have been “abducted and conscripted as child soldiers or rebel ‘wives’” (Annan et al., 2008b). Another 40,000 children were forced to commute at night between their villages and town centers in order to avoid abduction by the LRA (Latigo, 2008). Tens of thousands have been killed, raped or abducted through this conflict (Hopwood, 2008). The perpetrators themselves are often also victims in the conflict- having been abducted and forced to fight by the LRA. Thus there are complicating factors in the question of how to address both peace and justice, and how to reintegrate such individuals into community life (e.g. Vinck 2009, Moser et al. 2001, Pham 2005).

At the height of the conflict it was estimated that nearly two million people were internally displaced in Northern Uganda (Annan et al., 2010b). In some locations, people were forcibly displaced if they refused to move from their land. The internally displaced person’s (IDP) camps offered deplorable conditions for their inhabitants. People were forced to survive on relief aid, and hundreds died each week due to the below standard conditions (Branch, 2011). The Civil Society Organization for Peace in Northern Uganda claims that over 95% of those displaced lived in absolute poverty (CSOPNU, 2004). Combing the above realities, it becomes clear that the civilian population in Northern Uganda has encountered immense suffering as a result of this conflict.
Although blanket amnesty was guaranteed for ex-combatants through the 2000 Amnesty Act, the path to peace in Northern Uganda has been unsteady at best (Schomerus, 2007). Multiple efforts at negotiating peace have failed, including the recent Juba in 2006 after Joseph Kony refused to sign the final agreement unless the International Criminal Court reversed their indictments of the top rebel commanders (e.g. Apuuli 2004 and JRP 2006). In 2008, the United States backed an offensive military campaign against the LRA called Operation Lightening Thunder, in conjunction with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Uganda. The LRA responded with massive slaughter in 2008 and 2009 (Schomerus 2007, and Human Rights Watch 2009). The LRA has since moved to Sudan, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and are currently inactive in Uganda (OCHA, 2011). With the decrease in violence, over 90 percent of displaced population in Northern Uganda has returned home from IDP camps (IDMC, 2010). The Ugandan government also launched the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan to focus its efforts on post-conflict reconstruction in the North (PRDN, 2007).

The Acholi people were particularly victimized in this conflict, in part because of the North/South divide and in part because they formed a popular rebellion against the government. Therefore I choose to focus primarily on the Acholi people in this paper. The next section clarifies the Acholi role in the conflict through Joseph Kony’s leadership.
1.7 Joseph Kony’s New Society

As is described above, this conflict is tied to the regional divisions in Uganda. Connected to this cause, the conflict is also about Joseph Kony’s desire to create a new Acholi society. Because it is essentially for understanding this conflict, and for understand the methods utilized by the LRA, I expound upon this idea in greater detail.

The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) emerged out of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), formed in 1986, by an Acholi woman named Alice Auma or Alice Lakwena (IRIN 2004, Baines 2007). Lakwena had mobilized a movement against Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA) which later formed the Ugandan People’s Defense Force (UPDF). Alice Lakwena has been described in many ways including a “prophetess, a witch, and a millennial leader” (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 20), but it is clear that she represented something new and hopeful for the Acholi people who feared extinction because of Museveni’s national power. Lakwena used religion to manipulate the Acholi people into a rebellion. As Doom and Vlassenroot put it, “Bringing elements from the dynamics of tradition, Alice found the ultimate salvation against modern evil in a new ritualized, supernatural Acholi force” (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, 19). Using this “Acholi force,” Lakwena initiated an Acholi community that was united against the government.

Lakwena’s HSM was soundly defeated by the NRM in 1987, and Lakwena’s father Severino Lukoya took over her efforts. He was also defeated, leaving a power vacuum in the northern part of Uganda. As such, Joseph Kony took control of the rebel movements and formed the Lord’s Resistance Army. Although he acquired many of her
followers, Kony had been forming his own resistance group that paralleled Lakwena’s cause (Dunn, 2004).

Following Alice Lakwena, Joseph Kony made it clear that one of his intentions was to overthrow Museveni’s government and to cleanse the Acholi people from within the community (e.g. Human Rights Watch 1997, Finnström, 2006). Kony essentially presented himself as an apocalyptic prophet of the impending demise of Acholi society (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). In other words, Kony claimed that the Acholi people were impure and in need of revision, and therefore his intention was to create his own version of a new Acholi society (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). He continued to espouse Lakwena’s mantra that Acholi genocide was on the horizon (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). In Kony’s perspective only a “purified Acholi people, with a renewed identity, would be able to fight victoriously against the army of Museveni and regain an autonomous political identity” (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, 20). He therefore took it upon himself to transform the current Acholi society into a “new and pure” replica of the Acholi people (Finnström, 2006). With this in mind, it becomes clear that Kony abducted children into the LRA as part of his original intention to build a new Acholi society (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999).

Kony’s intention to create a new Acholi society is important to remember when analyzing the actions of the LRA specifically through a gender lens. The LRA used abductions and forced marriage in part to create this new Acholi society. Through the theoretical analysis of this paper, I ask and begin to answer the questions, why did Kony abduct children from the communities he was supposedly fighting for? Why did the LRA
forcibly marry their female soldiers, rather than just raping and killing them? These questions lend insight into the constructed nature of gender through the traumatic conflict in Northern Uganda. In the next chapter, I describe in detail the gender and trauma theory that forms the foundation for this engaging these questions.
CHAPTER 2:
GENDER AND TRAUMA THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Chapter Introduction

Feminist theory asserts that social arrangements and norms produce gendered subjects. The first assertion of this paper applies the work of Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler to argue that the norms of marriage and social sexuality in Northern Uganda function to produce gendered subjects, and that the behavior of these subjects is also shaped by the social structures in which they live.

At the same time, trauma theory asserts that traumatic events cause a deconstruction of identity. The second contention of this paper applies the theory of Judith Herman and Shelly Rambo to argue that traumatic events, such as war, cause a deconstruction of identity. Therefore, the question this paper considers is what happens to gender constructions during trauma and re-construction? In this chapter, I provide a feminist and trauma theoretical foundation for answering this question in the context of Northern Uganda. This chapter ends with a synthesis of these complex theories.

The feminist framework for understanding gendered production in Northern Uganda is presented through the work of Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, two important and relevant feminist theorists. Gayle Rubin contributes the notion of a sex/gender system, and division of labor as a gendered system. I apply Rubin’s theory of a
sex/gender system in Northern Uganda. Judith Butler builds upon and expands Rubin’s work through her notions of performativity, repetition, and subversion through repetition. I apply these three components of Butler’s theory to demonstrate how gender is replicated during the conflict in Northern Uganda. She also proposes the potential to subvert the normal construction of gender. I argue later that that “potential subversion” can be located in the process of trauma healing, which can also be understood as the reconstruction of self.

The trauma framework for this paper is primarily based on the work of Judith Herman and Shelly Rambo. Herman provides a helpful description of trauma along with a three-stop process for trauma healing (safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection). In subsequent chapters, I use Herman’s theory in conjunction with first-hand accounts from trauma healing professionals to explain the effects of trauma in Northern Uganda and the importance of trauma healing. I use this trauma theory because it reveals how gender is disrupted through the conflict in Northern Uganda, and how trauma healing provides a method for reconstructing gendered identity. Shelly Rambo’s theory adds trauma healing notion of *witness* to the discussion. These theories are foundational to understanding not only gender and trauma in Northern Uganda, but also a new nuanced approach to peacebuilding through trauma healing in Northern Uganda.

Judith Butler’s work is also critical because she wonders if women should be the subject of feminism (Butler, 1990). This question arose out of queer and minority critiques about the limits of the category of “woman” as the feminist subject. The notion of “woman” left out a number of identities that feminism claimed to support. Butler was
also influenced by French poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories that raised questions about identity, representation, and politics (Butler, 1990). The debate hinged between those who saw the new construction of a subject as potential towards a new understanding and response to the oppression of women, while others felt threatened by her lack of subject (Butler, 1990). Through this debate, Butler instigated an important shift in feminist theory. Rather than defining distinct “truths” within gender, Butler brought the discussion into a new thought-process or mode of questioning which asks how gender identity can be subverted through repetition (Armour et al., 2006). This paper relies heavily on Butler’s new mode of questioning to analyze the gender arrangements in Northern Uganda.

2.2 Sex/Gender System

“What is a woman?” Simon de Beauvoir’s analysis of the “women’s situation,” is that, “one is not born a woman but rather becomes one” (de Beauvoir 1952, 301). This idea suggests that humans are not born a particular gender but rather that they are constructed to become a particular gender through various societal mechanisms. According to constructionist feminist theory, a woman only becomes a wife, domestic, etc. within certain relations, but the question is when and how does that becoming take place? Rubin argues that there is a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and makes women into domestic products. This apparatus is known as the sex/gender system (Rubin, 1975). The sex/gender system refers to the “arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in
which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (Rubin, 1975, 32). In other words, gender is constructed through the sex/gender system that is made up of societal norms, practices and tradition such as division of labor and marriage.

Notably, this production of human sexuality parallels Marxian class theory. One can locate the oppression of women in capitalism by pointing to the relationship between housework and reproduction of labor. Capitalism produces capital in the form of social relations that takes money, things, and people to create capital, and the highest value in capitalism is placed in the reproduction process. Rubin explains that housework is the key place where women are useful to capitalism. A simple arithmetic equation helps clarify this notion: surplus value = the production of labor class - the maintenance of labor class (which is where cooking, cleaning, housework fall). So it is in the reproduction of labor that women are articulated into the surplus value of capitalism, and because no money is exchanged for women’s labor, housework contributes to the end quantitative of surplus value (Rubin, 1975). The oppression of women is clearly present within this framework. As Marx says in the Communist Manifesto,

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that [under communism] the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at [by communists] is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production (Marx and Engels 1964, 13).

Yet, it is at this point where Marxian theory fails to explain gender oppression, because it does not answer the question, why women? Biological needs, physical conditions, and cultural traditions are all necessary to reproduce a worker through
Marxian theory, but it is within the historical and moral aspects that gender arises. This is the place where the subject, “wife,” is determined to be needed by the worker and the entire domain of sex oppression subsumed (Rubin, 1975).

Rubin also reinterprets Friedrich Engels’ kinship theory in an attempt to advance Marx’s theory of capitalism from a feminist perspective. Expanding on Engels’ kinship theory, she suggests that every society has a sex/gender system, or a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human and social intervention. Therefore in many ways sex is a social product. The sex/gender system refers to the domain of sex, but female oppression is not necessarily an inevitable byproduct of this system. Rubin stresses that it is important to develop concepts that adequately describe the social organization of sexuality and the reproduction of the conventions of sex and gender. She places the subordination of women in development with the mode of production specifically through kinship.

2.3 Kinship Systems

Kinship systems are observable forms of the sex/gender system. Kinship systems also construe gender construction in Northern Uganda. Kinship systems, which are well-developed and studied sociological organizations, are essentially made up of and reproduce concrete forms of socially organized sexuality. They vary between cultures and are often internally complex (Rubin, 1975). They also include social interaction that organizes the economic, political, ceremonial as well as sexual activity of a society. The duties and responsibilities of social members are defined in terms of kinship (Levi-
Strauss, 1969). Levi-Strauss conceives of kinship as an “imposition of cultural organization upon the facts of biological procreation” (Levi-Strauss 1969, 35). Kinship systems are ultimately aware of the sexual importance in society, as such, the essence of kinship systems is in the exchange of women, by men, through marriage. Marriage and bride-price in Acholi society of Northern Uganda are forms of kinship structures that demonstrate this exchange and cultural imposition.

In his important work, *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Levi-Strauss considers two ideas that debate the origin and nature of human society: the exchange of women as a “gift,” and the incest taboo, which will be discussed in the next section (Levi-Strauss, 1969). According to Rubin and Butler, social intercourse is dominated by giving, receiving, and reciprocating gifts. Rubin argues that this exchange is not really about gaining anything but rather it expresses, affirms, or creates a social link between the partners of exchange. It essentially creates a special relationship of trust and mutual aid between the exchangers. In societies that had no overarching governance, giving made up the, “threads of social discourse” (Rubin 1975, 37). Therefore, it can be argued that women are the most precious forms of gifts and that marriage is the most basic form of gift exchange. This is due to the fact that the result of marriage is not just reciprocity but ultimately descendents who are related by blood. Rubin suggests that all other levels of societal exchange are framed by this one.

Because women are the gifts, a distinction between the gift and giver is implied. If women are the gifts it makes men the exchangers, and ultimate beneficiaries of the exchange. Furthermore, if women are the gifts, they are obviously not able to exchange
themselves which places emphasis on binary gender identities. This exchange of women places the oppression of women in a social context rather than biological one. Rubin aptly says that the “ultimate locus of female oppression is found within the traffic in women rather than merchandise, and that this exchange makes up the foundation for social organization” (Rubin 1975, 38). This is the form of production in the truest sense. It is essentially a molding or transformation of objects for a subjective purpose. People make up the set of relations for production, exchange, distribution. “Marriage transactions, the gifts and material which circulate in the ceremonies marking a marriage, are a rich source of data for determining exactly who has which rights in whom. It is not difficult to deduce from such transactions that in most cases women’s rights are considerably more residual than those of men” (Rubin 1975, 38). In other words, women are products of and produced by marriage. Because women are exchanged as symbolic gifts during the marriage ceremony, they do not have the same rights or power awarded them as the giver or husband does. Marriage is an important societal foundation that can reinforce gender binaries and oppress women.

If the exchange of women is fundamental to kinship, the subordination of women can be seen as a product of the relationships by which sex and gender are organized and produced. A woman is the object of exchange that both consolidates and differentiates kinship relations. The bride gift is exchanged as a “sign and a value” that serves both a functional and symbolic or ritual purpose of trade and consolidating collective identity between the clans. In other words, the bride is without identity. She serves as a relational term between men and she “reflects masculine identity precisely by being the
site of its absence” (Rubin 1975, 50). The woman in marriage “qualifies not as an identity but only as a relational term that both distinguishes and binds the various clans to a common but internally differentiated patrilineal identity” (Butler 1990, 40). When women are exchanged, the marital debt is “taken from the female flesh” (Rubin 1975, 37). The preferred system would be one where the female had little idea of her own desires and thus succumbs to desires of others, particularly those of men.

Although the primary exchange is witnessed through women, kinship systems also exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names, ancestors, rights and people in concrete systems of social relationships. These exchanges delineate different rights for men and women and ultimately deduce that women do not have full rights to themselves. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, but Ugandan bride-price in marriage fits into Rubin’s category of exchange. Rubin also questions, “What preconditions are necessary for marriage systems?” (Rubin 1975, 39) leading us to the next topic.

2.4 Division of Labor

Division of labor is clearly observed in societies throughout the world. Although a division of labor is common, it differs from society to society. Rubin argues that division of labor is not based upon biological specialization but rather it ensures a union is between men and women by “making sure the smallest viable economic unit contains at least one man and one woman” (Rubin 1975, 35). Therefore division of labor is a precondition that is necessary for marriage systems.
A division of labor creates gender identities by making “taboo” the sameness of men and women. It divides the sexes into mutually exclusive categories and exacerbates their biological differences. Although all forms of sex and gender are constituted by the imperatives of social systems; the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality and constraint of female sexuality. Thus, gender is a socially imposed division of sexes and thus a product of social relationships. Yet as Rubin expresses well, kinship systems rest upon marriage and require a difference between men and women. Explaining this Rubin says, “Far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identities are the suppression of natural similarities. Heterosexuality requires repression” (Rubin 1975, 44). Therefore, to ensure the dominant gender hierarchy constructed through marriage, individuals are engendered and sexually divided into roles that create male and females. The division of labor constrains both male and female behavior and personality, but arguably more constraint is applied to the female in kinship. Females are more constrained by their constructed roles as mother and wife than males are by their roles as father and husband.

2.5 Extending the Theory: Judith Butler

Judith Butler extends Rubin’s ideas on the subjectivity of gendered agents. She takes the dominant feminist discourse on identity politics to a new level. Butler responds to the feminist notion of subjectivity by deconstructing it to the point where she argues that there is no actual subject. In other words, sex is just as constructed as gender according to Butler. Butler traces how gender produces sex rather than the more
commonly held understanding of sex producing gender. In other words, “masculinity and femininity are bodily performances, based on the demands of our heterosexual and phallocentric economy, and not expressions of the body’s inner nature” (Butler 1990, VIII). In simple terms, gender is constructed through society, and not as a result of nature. Her important work is central to understanding gender identity and subjectivity in Northern Uganda, because although different genders are recognized in Northern Uganda, Butler’s theory suggests that these differences are constructed and not natural.

2.5.1 Revision of the Sex/Gender System

Perhaps Judith Butler’s most important focus is her revision of the sex/gender debate which was central to the second wave feminists. The sex/gender system distinguishes between sex (male and female) and gender (masculine and feminine). While biological determinism suggests that gendered social roles and behavior follow the natural consequences of biological differences between male and female bodies, the sex and gender systems countered this assertion of roles as socially constructed rather than biologically determined. According to Butler, there is “no gender identity behind the expressions of gender. That "identity is performatively constituted by the very structures that are said to be its results” (Butler 1990, 33). Hence Butler deconstructs the agent or subject of gender.

Importantly, once the sex/ gender system is revealed, it opens the space for revision. This space is also opened in Northern Uganda through gender repetitions. Social expectations for behavior and roles appropriated to the genders can change and shift in multiple directions. Biological males could take on feminine roles and vice versa,
“bodies need not dictate or limit what is possible” (Butler 1990, 2). This changing dynamic of feminine and masculine roles calls into question the nature of sex itself. The natural world is always interpreted and sex manipulated in order to serve a specific purpose that is weighed down by history. Gender is not constructed on a stable foundation of sex, but rather a dynamic setting that is itself constructed in different cultural contexts. Therefore if gender is constructed in dynamic settings, it is important to analyze gender in the specific context of Northern Uganda through the trauma of war.

For those who accept the constructed nature of the sex/gender paradigm, the question becomes how to think about construction. Societal norms both establish the contours of gender/sex identities and promote the process by which individuals take up these identities. While at the same time, “feminist’s political goal of challenging normative constraints requires an agent of resistance” (Armour et al. 2006, 3). So Butler developed a theory that encapsulated both (Butler 1990, 3). Her notions of normative constraints and agency in construction are imperative to understanding her theory.

While Butler agrees with Rubin that the sex/gender system, or “the regulated cultural mechanism of transforming biological males and females into discrete and hierarchies genders,” (Rubin 1975, 32) is at once mandated by cultural institutions (family, exchange of women, heterosexuality) and inculcated through laws which structure and propel individual psychic development, she also questions this understanding of gender construction. According to Butler, a child contains the potential to express his/her sexuality in any way before transforming into a gendered man or woman. Rubin assumes “sex” that is transformed into gender and subsequently envisions
the overthrow of gender by the eradication of exchange of women which “sanction and construct gender and sexuality in heterosexual terms (Butler 1990, 5). But Butler questions whether sex is really before the law, as Rubin suggests. Butler suggests that we are able to trace the transformation of sex into gender by locating that stable mechanism of cultures, the exchange of rules of kinships which effect the transformation. This is exactly what this study attempts to do in Northern Uganda, to trace the stable mechanisms of gender construction. For Butler, this transformation happens through performative language. Performative language is also key to this study because marriage, which is enacted through performative language, is central to gender dynamics in Northern Uganda.

2.5.2 Performativity

Performative language is the model that constructs sex according to Butler. For Butler, language is important because it is the realm of social norms, and so she speaks of the social world through language theory. Performative language is, “technically language that does what it says” or produces the reality it proclaims. For example the statement, “I now pronounce you man and wife,” transports two people into the state of marriage. The power is located in the words that are chosen. In other words, the statement, “invokes and reiterates a norm, and is the action itself, the citation of the convention or norm that is the center of power” (Butler 1990, 4). In contrast, descriptive language only illustrates or expresses something. There is no active power within the phrase “you have brown hair.” The phrase does not make the subject have brown hair, it
merely describes the subject. The difference between performative and descriptive language is that performative language possesses an action within the words.

Societal reiteration is central to the theory of performativity, because when actions or words are reiterated they become ritualized and accepted in society. For example, the marriage pronouncement has significance because it is an accepted ritual. With each reiteration the force of the norm is condensed, but without reiteration the statement has no power. Norms gain power through their (re)citation, but Butler also argues that the process of citation disguises that norms are actually dependent on reiteration. Norms may appear to be cemented or fixed through their reiteration, although they are actually fluid and open to change. Thus, it becomes unthinkable and undesirable to question accepted norms. Societies accept performative language on the basis of their ritual and tradition. It is through their repetition that society accepts the act (or identity or position) and it therefore succeeds in constructing both sex and gender within a social context. Yet a central question to this work is what has the potential to reveal the disguised citations that construct gender? I argue that a traumatic rupture, such as the gendered violent conflict in Northern Uganda reveals the citations that construct gender. This idea is explored more in the following chapters.

Butler’s theory moves into an understanding of the construction of sex/gender subject as performative. She argues that rather than being an expression of sex, gender produces sex. “Masculinity and femininity are learned bodily performances that masquerade as natural by invoking bodily markers (primary and secondary sex characteristics) as their signature and guarantee. Our binary sex/gender system arises not
from nature but from a social system of compulsory heterosexuality that requires desire to channel itself via these subjectivities” (Butler 1990, 170). Butler follows Foucault’s work that reveals biological sex as ambiguous at all levels (genetic, genital and morphological) but is controlled through physical and emotional disciplines that render life outside of the norm impossible. Feminism, Butler argues needs to take this reality into account through the analysis of the subject.

Butler also argues that the performative process is prohibiting. Social norms define what is acceptable and what is unacceptable essentially creating those who do not appropriately fit into the social norms, or the abject. These may include those who are neither male nor female nor heterosexual. The abject is a paradoxical state. Although not accepted or even acknowledged, these “deviants” are socially necessary to provide the boundaries outside that which defines the accepted subject. She argues that the abject is necessary to create the boundaries of what is “normal.” In other words, we can only identify something by demonstrating what it is not. As soon as norms are articulated, we identify and create that which is outside of these norms. For example heterosexuality requires an intelligible conception of homosexuality to set the boundaries and are reinforced through the rejection of homosexuality. In the final chapter of this thesis I discuss whether former forced wives are the abject in Northern Uganda. According to Butler, gender is a strategy under duress where gender performance must occur, but this performance necessitates a repetition within society. “This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimization” (Butler, 1990, 178). Gender is
not a stable identity nor locus of agency for normalized acts but rather an identity that is “tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 1990, 179). In other words, gender is constructed in a particular time and place, such as Northern Uganda, through recurring and accepted rituals such as marriage and division of labor. These rituals are both performative and repetitive, and thus open to mutation and reinterpretation. Importantly, gender is potentially transformative through the arbitrary acts of repetition, specifically through the relation between such acts in the “possibility of failure to repeat…that exposes the effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (Butler 1990, 179). Stated differently, there is a potential for political subversion through the repetitions and mutations of gender-constructing rituals.

2.5.3 Subversion Through Repetition

“If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges; what kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?” (Butler 1990, 42). As is made clear above, “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Butler 1990, xv). The question then moves into how to change the sex/gender system. It is first important to note that the system is cultural and discursive in all its elements. In other words, the relationship between bodies and identities that has surfaced are contingent and unnecessary. “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of
being” (Butler1990, 44). Furthermore, the production of sex/gender identities is dynamic and not static. Performance may be to “re-cite, but to recite is not necessarily to repeat” (Armour et al. 2006, 7). Because no repetition is exactly the same, there is a subversive potential in the spaces between each repetition. For example, although marriage is an accepted ritual in most societies, no two marriages are exactly the same. The potential for resistance exists between each act of marriage. To extend this theory further, there is potential to resist gender construction between each act of marriage in Northern Uganda.

The way to disrupt performative language is through the abject, or people that do not fit into social norms. According to Butler, language is never clear and holds multiple shades of meaning. It is in the act of communication that the subject positions form, or in other words the subject emerges out of communication. This is not a stable process but is constantly remade by interactions. Ultimately the interaction is what causes the subjects, not the subjects that cause the interaction. This process depends upon reproduction in order to see its meaning. Therefore through the reiteration or restatement, the process becomes what is considered “natural.” According to Butler, although the natural does exist, we actually have no access to that which is natural. All that is experienced is socialized.

Butler gives the example of drag performances as gender gone astray. These performances subvert the gender/sex system by exposing the relationship between the two. The fact that men can act feminine reveals the system’s power to compel normative repetitions. Butler’s theory recognizes the interplay between self and society and explains the staying power of gender roles, while at the same time reveals an opening for
political change. Perhaps the most powerful element of her theory is the power of performativity to both construct gender/sex identity and as a potential agent for change. As gender is constructed, so can it be undone.

Repetition is imperative to the rules that govern and restrict identity. “The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all significance takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; “agency” then is to be located within the possibility of a variation of that repetition” (Butler 1990, 185).

Subversion of identity becomes possibly only within the practices of repetition (Butler 1990, 186). Just as the body is enacted as natural so can it become the “site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself” (Butler 1990, 186). It is here that the gendered nature of the violence in Northern Uganda becomes interesting. The traumatic conflict has the potential to reveal the performative status of gender in Northern Uganda because trauma disrupts the ‘normal’ repetitions of gender and exposes the potential for change. I explore this more in the final chapter.

To re-conceptualize gender as an “effect” that is “produced” creates new possibilities for agency and subversion of this identity. To reposition gender as an “effect” is also to suggest that it is neither fully artificial nor fatally resolute. In other words gender can change. “Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally
intelligible” (Butler 1990, 187). Therefore the critical task of feminism is subversive repetition. It is possible to locate strategies of repetition that are enabled by gender constructions and to participate in these repetitions with the goal of contesting them.

“The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself” (Butler 1990, 187). This theory is central to this study because I argue in my conclusion that trauma healing in Northern Uganda provides a site for subversive repetition that redefines and replaces current gender constructions.

2.5.4 Politics of Performativity

With this new understanding of gender, we are now able to ask, “What political possibilities are the consequences of a radical critique of the categories of identity. What new shape of politics emerges when identity as a common ground no longer constrains the discourse on feminist politics?” (Butler 1990, xxix)

Critics of Butler ask the question, how we can have a political movement without a common subject, or any subject at all? Butler argues in her later work that one can still have politics without a subject (Butler, 2004). She suggests that moments of grief reveal the importance of relationships and common humanity. For example, when you lose someone you love, you lose a part of yourself. So rather than having a common subject, we have a common human experience from which to develop a political movement. This common humanity will promote a political movement with a tone of shared vulnerability. Butler argues that when we recognize “the other” through traumatic loss, we also recognize our own power relationship and thus have the potential to transform cultural
norms (Butler, 2004). Trauma, and trauma theory, then relate to gender construction and provide a vehicle and site for Butler’s “common humanity” and political movement.

2.6 Trauma Theory

Judith Butler’s deconstruction of a common subject in her feminist theory left us with the notion of a common human experience of suffering. In the case of Northern Uganda, trauma of conflict is the common human experience that unites humanity. The next sections describe the notion of trauma and trauma healing.

2.6.1 Trauma Descriptions

Trauma is incredibly complex, and because it manifests itself differently within each traumatized individual, it can be a difficult concept to define. The word trauma originates from the Greek term meaning “a wound,” “damage,” or “defeat” (McDonald, 2010). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders defines trauma as “the direct personal experience of an event that threatens one’s physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to their physical integrity of another person…” (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). The person’s response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (Briere, 2006). According to Judith Herman, trauma is an event(s) that causes terror, disconnection and either a physical or psychological fear for the loss of self. Trauma enacts the unspeakable, thus language often fails to promote healing and recovery for trauma survivors (Caruth, 1996). Responses to trauma can include mental health disorders, and physical pain, social and emotional isolation, and spiritual confusion. It also often causes nightmares, flashbacks, depression, and numbing
amongst other conditions (Herman, 1997). Responses can look very different for various individuals, but the concept remains consistent across different communities and cultures.

Trauma is an event or experience, that may be ongoing, that renders the individual powerless. The event of trauma overwhelms the normal psychological processing that gives one a sense of “control, connection, and meaning” (Herman 1997, 34). It also causes intense feelings of fear and helplessness. The abduction, torture, violence, and captivity experienced in the LRA all fall under the category of trauma. Perhaps the most pertinent characteristic of trauma for this study is the fact that trauma causes a kind of psychological fragmentation because it causes a traumatized individual to break from the normal functioning of self-protection and identity (Herman, 1997). Traumatized individuals often report feeling like a part of them or their sense of self, has died as a result of their traumatic experiences. Trauma also causes a sense of alienation or isolation and as such traumatized individuals find it difficult to connect with people after their trauma. Human meaning and significance is embedded in human relationships. Thus trauma is about the disruption of meaning (Scarry, 1987). Relationships are destroyed through trauma and the traumatized person effectively loses their meaning in life (Herman, 1997).

What Herman refers to as “prolonged captivity” produces an even more profound loss of identity for the traumatized individual (Herman 1997, 93). The forced abduction and captivity of many children in Northern Uganda is a form of “prolonged captivity,” in that the abductees encountered chronic traumatic events. The psychological toll that prolonged captivity takes on the individual effectively breaks down the psychological
structures that develop the individual’s- sense of self, identity, relation to others- all of which are related to the sense of meaning and purpose in life (Herman, 1997). In sum, trauma is an event or experience that causes a deep loss of self and of meaning.

2.6.2 Trauma and What Remains in the Aftermath

Trauma is often described as a wound; as the suffering that refuses to depart long after the traumatic event. It represents what remains after the life-altering experience of loss. Trauma reconfigures the essential questions of life and death and in doing so redefines what it means to heal. The persistence of trauma moves us beyond that which we are able to fully know in the world and that which is possible to respond to. Trauma is also defined by a person’s inability to adequately respond to their own experience. It completely alters one’s understanding of themselves, their ability to connect with another human and the hope of emerging from their pain. The insufficient answer to the prevailing question, what remains after a traumatizing experience, is violence, brokenness, pain, and fragments (Rambo, 2010). What remains for a trauma survivor are alterations in time, body, and language (Rambo, 2010).

Within trauma, the idea that time heals all wounds is inadequate. It is the wandering nature of suffering that pains the traumatized person the most. The survivor finds it difficult to identify her pain. The temporal alteration caused by trauma provides that the past will not stay located in the past but rather continues to haunt the individual. Thus, it is difficult for the survivor to locate their suffering in one place or time. Freud theorized about this “double structure of trauma,” where traumatized individuals
experience symptoms of a past experience but simultaneously the return of the past produces intense suffering. Their suffering not only lies in the past, or even in the present impact of the past, but in the ways in which the occurrence was never fully, temporally understood. In other words, the trauma survivors in Northern Uganda continue to experience their trauma.

Trauma also causes a suffering that remains which modifies both the body and language. The body experiences trauma in ways that escape cognitive awareness. Part of the bodily experience of trauma on the brain is tied to the alteration of language. The ability of the survivor to fully express, describe, and comprehend their experience is altered through the trauma. And language itself is somehow altered, in that there are no words that capture suffering and provide a mode of healing. Language also limits the trauma healer in their ability to provide a sufficient response to the survivor’s pain. Language falls short of its purpose in making meaning and connecting people.

For trauma theorists, there are also patterns of traumatic repetition (e.g. Caruth 1996, Kolssa 2010, Klasen 2010, Kienzler 2008). The traumatic event occurs, is repressed and often cannot be processed by the individual, and it returns through flashbacks and nightmares (Caruth, 1996). Traumatized individuals can re-experience the trauma of their event and their moments of loss time and time again. Eventually the traumatic event must be dealt with (VanderKolk, 1996). Yet even as they attempt to make sense of their loss, they realize that it is impossible to find meaning in their loss. Trauma also causes a greater sense of awareness for the fragility of life. The traumatized individual moves from trying to make sense of what happened through trauma to trying
to find meaning after the traumatic event. In this sense, trauma is an awakening into life (Caruth, 1996). It is a rupture from one state into another state, where one gains a greater sense for the fragility of life that is highlighted through trauma. Trauma makes clear the illusion of control over our own lives.

2.7 Trauma Healing

If trauma is essentially the loss of life through a loss of self, trauma healing is about redeeming and restoring life. Trauma healing practitioners seek to create a healing space for traumatized individuals to recover from the disturbing experiences of war (Green, 2003). Because trauma causes a complex set of conditions and reactions, trauma healing must comprehensively treat the traumatized individual. Trauma healing is often a nonlinear, gradual progression towards empowerment and reconnection for the trauma survivor (Herman, 1997). Trauma healing seeks to engage the traumatized individual where the trauma causes problems in their life.

There are three stages of recovery according to Judith Herman. First, the trauma healer must create a sense of safety for the traumatized individual. Because the trauma causes a deep sense of fear and vulnerability, trauma healing must restore a sense of security for the traumatized individual. The second step is remembrance and mourning of the traumatic event(s). Trauma healing must recognize that the traumatized person’s sense of self has been damaged and it attempts to rebuild that identity through remembrance and mourning of the traumatic events. Through this step, the traumatized individual is able to grieve the loss of their former life and to acknowledge how trauma
impacts their life moving forward. Lastly, because trauma shatters connections with others, trauma healing guides the traumatized individual towards restored relationships. This stage of reconnection is essential for traumatized individuals because it is about rebuilding a new life while at the same time recognizing the loss of their former life (Herman, 1997).

2.7.1 Witness

The theory behind trauma and what remains has challenged the basic assumption of human relationship to the world and the ongoing realities of violence. Trauma essentially shatters the lens from which the world is understood. The traumatized individual is forced into a much more fragile understanding of truth, knowledge and experience of the world. Thus part of what remains includes a necessary deconstruction of that experience. But traumatic deconstruction leads not to ethical paralysis but to an awakening to witness (Caruth 1996 and Rambo 2010). Trauma theory leads to the practice of greater listening, hearing of words that underlie words, and openness to witness and testimony.

Although Judith Herman’s suggestions for trauma healing are relevant and important, the question of what remains after trauma implies the need for more. There is a potential and need to witness to the suffering that remains for a traumatized individual. Yet our understanding of experience and consequently what it means to witness that experience is challenged by what remains after trauma. Dori Laub offers three understandings of witness as (1) the survivor witnesses her own experience of survival, (2) the one who listens to the survivor as a witness, and (3) the “witnessing of itself being
“witnessed.” (Laub, 1992) Just as trauma alters language the act of witnessing embodies a new relationship to language. Part of the new embodiment of language is how witness becomes a tool to prevent future violence. Yet language fails the witness in trying to understand the unspeakable events of trauma (Scarry, 1987). The witness is drawn with the survivor into a new realm of unknowing, in which both experience the profound deconstruction of certainty and direct communication. In other words, we need to struggle with the vast impact of suffering on people, and begin to envision new realities which fall outside of what is currently imaginable (Rambo, 2010). These significant traumatic events in Northern Uganda have forced us to consider healing in a place that lacks clarity and where evidence of the event is not fully accessible.

Because trauma destroys much of what is understood to compose life, life’s very definition is called into question when witnessing. It is necessary to understand life through the encounter with death. This again speaks to the new fragility that a trauma survivor experiences. Even though survivors do not experience death as a bodily reality, the traumatic events are understood as a conclusion—death. “Surviving is not a state in which one gets beyond death; instead, death remains in the experience of survival and life is reshaped in light of death—not in light of its finality but its persistence.” (Rambo 2010, 25). People who experience trauma essentially live in the middle space between life and death, and witness refers to the complex relationship that is left between the survivor and what remains after suffering. It is a term that stands close to the notion of remaining—a way of listening to and almost embodying the suffering that remains.
2.7.2 Critiques of Trauma Healing

There are a number of critiques for using Western psychological methods in cross-cultural settings. One critique suggests that certain methods of Western psychotherapy are inadequate because they utilize language as the primary method for healing. But trauma causes the “unspeakable” (Scarry, 1987). How does one use language to capture that which is unspeakable? Trauma theorists suggest that the act of putting trauma into language is an act of hope that the loss will be acknowledged and picked up by someone else (Caruth, 1996). The trauma healer will never completely understand the individual’s traumatic experience and loss, but there is something powerful in the act of remaining with the person through their pain (Das, 2003). It is also important for the trauma survivor to put their trauma into language because it allows them to reconstruct their narrative to incorporate their changed identity without letting the trauma define them. Trauma healers can also transcend this critique by utilizing witness as form of healing. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I propose the use witness as a way to reconstruct gendered identity in light of the traumatic events in Northern Uganda.

Another critique of Western psychological methods is that they cannot and should not be applied across all cultures (Bass 2008 and Betancourt 2009a). Because the notion of self is not cross-culturally universal, critics argue that it is not effective to transplant Western methods to non-Western traumatized areas (e.g. Betancourt, 2009b, de Jong 2005). While this is a valid concern, there are elements of psychological methods, that, when combined with local conceptions of the self and of healing, can be very effective. These are also described in greater detail in the last chapter of this thesis.
2.8 Synthesis and Conclusions

There are a number of synthesizing themes between trauma and gender theory that are important for this paper. First both theories assume a constructed identity. For feminist theorists it is a construction of gendered identity through the sex/gender system, and for trauma theory it is a construction of the self through human relationships. This overlap is important because it implies that there is the potential for deconstruction and that both gender and trauma are important elements of reconstruction after conflict. Both theories also include patterns that help us understand the construction and reconstruction of gender and trauma. For gender theorists, there are patterns of gendered construction through performativity and repetition of gendered subjects. Again, there is hope for change in these constructions within the spaces between repetitions (Butler, 1990).

In this chapter I describe the gender and trauma theory that are important for the overall argument of this thesis, and I consider the overlap between these theories. Gendered identity is constructed through social arrangements, but what is less clear (and is the topic of this thesis) is what happens when a traumatic event disrupts the social norms and arrangements that are producing gendered beings. An individual is simultaneously constructed into gendered subjects as they are deconstructed by the traumatic events of war and captivity. Through the remainder of this paper, I look at the three moments of gender and trauma construction in order to apply the gender and trauma theory proposed in this section by looking specifically at the mechanisms that construct gender in Northern Uganda. I then further apply and synthesize the theory summarized here to examine the relationship and potential for subversion in the traumatic rupture of
these constructions before, during, and after the conflict in Northern Uganda with the LRA. In the following chapter, I consider the moment of gender construction in Northern Uganda before the conflict.
CHAPTER 3:
MOMENT ONE: PRODUCTION OF GENDERED SUBJECTS IN PRE-WAR NORTHERN UGANDA (PRE-1986)

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Before violent conflict in Northern Uganda, gender was a product of social norms, arrangements and kinship structures. Men and women were constrained to a certain set of gender arrangements that essentially produced sex/gender subjects. Following Gayle Rubin’s (1975) theory on how social arrangements produce gendered subjects described in the previous chapter, this chapter considers the production of gendered subjects in Northern Uganda before the eruption of violent conflict in 1986. The purpose of this chapter is to locate certain key social mechanisms within Acholi society that produced and maintained the conventions of sexuality and gender. These mechanisms included division of labor, customary marriage and bride price, and children. I analyze these mechanisms to demonstrate how social arrangements both demonstrate and replicate constructed sex/gender subjects in Acholi culture. Deeper analysis of these mechanisms reveals Simon de Beauvoir’s question of how women “become” or were constructed in Acholi society before the violent conflict.
3.2 Division of Labor

The division of labor in Northern Uganda was a distinct social apparatus that took up females as raw materials and constructed domestic women (Rubin, 1975). Division of labor exacerbated biological differences between men and women in Northern Uganda and succeeded in solidifying the need for a sex/gender system (Rubin, 1975). It also effectively embedded the difference of men and women in Acholi society by making “taboo” the similarities between men and women. The following discussion unveils this mechanism in Acholi pre-violent conflict society.

Gendered division of roles has been documented in nearly every corner of the world, including Northern Uganda. Traditionally, men and women had strictly defined gender roles in Uganda (Quinn, 2010). As with many agricultural societies where there is no distinct split between the workplace and home, men and women often fulfilled different societal roles both within the community and home. Importantly, this role differentiation often started from childhood (Annan et. al, 2008b). Boys and girls were taught their specific societal roles starting from a very young age. Although this is changing, young girls were rarely educated but rather expected to stay home and learn their role as future wives (Hovil and Lomo, 2007). One in five female youth received no education at all in Northern Uganda; only one in three were “functionally literate” before the conflict (Annan et. al, 2008b).

Women in Acholi culture were often relegated to duties that centered on the home and family. They were responsible for making the household function and for rearing their children (Annan et. al, 2008b). Household duties may have included: gathering
firewood, collecting wild fruits and vegetables, hauling water, cooking meals, cleaning the home, caring for the smaller domestic animals, and washing laundry (Harlacher et al., 2006).

While women were primarily responsible for household duties, both men and women shared agricultural responsibilities. In fact, 90% of women in rural Uganda worked in agriculture while only 53% of men did (IFAD, 2000). Women usually undertook the majority of sowing, harvesting, crop-drying, planting, weeding, land preparation, and food processing. Men tended to contribute by caring for the cash crops, weeding, and crop-storage. Women also typically carried and sold extra produce at the market. However men usually made the decisions about what to sell at the market (IFAD, 2000). Men often cared for the larger domestic animals such as cattle while women were responsible for the milking of cattle. Men were also responsible for hunting, physical protection and warfare (Harlacher et al., 2006).

Patriarchy was the dominant manifestation of gender roles and identities in Acholi culture (Dolan, 2003). Therefore, it is not shocking that gender roles in Uganda often benefitted men in society. Although women were responsible for caring for the family, men ultimately governed family life and were considered the leaders of the home. Women were required to show a high level of respect for men. For example, it was traditional for women to wait until the men had completed their meal before they ate (Harlacher et. al, 2006). Women and girls were also expected to kneel to the ground when greeting their husbands or male visitors (Harlacher et. al, 2006).
These descriptions of Acholi division of labor reveal how women were taken up as raw materials and made into domestic products. As discussed in the previous chapter, Marxian production of labor is related to gender division of roles because the labor that women produce is not taken from the surplus capital. The Ugandan division of roles also falls under this category, and this notion is valuable to understanding oppression and production of women before the conflict in 1986. This theory fails to explain, however, why women are the subject of oppression and leads us into a discussion of marriage and bride price in pre-war Uganda. The practice of marriage and bride-price in pre-war Acholi society reveal why women are the subject of oppression.

3.3 Marriage

Marriage in pre-war Acholi society formed a part of the kinship system in Acholi society that Rubin (1975) argues is another example of how gender is produced. Although kinship systems vary between cultures and are internally complex, they tend to include all social interactions and they organize economic, political, ceremonial as well as sexual activity within a society (Porter, 2004). The duties and responsibility of social members are defined through kinship such as customary marriage. Rubin further defines Strauss’ idea of kinship as an “imposition of cultural organization upon the facts of biological procreation” (Rubin 1975, 92). As described in the previous chapter, marriage, as well as the division of labor, falls under the category of kinship systems. The role of customary marriage and bride-price before the war in Acholi society is explained in detail below.
3.3.1 Customary Marriage

Customary marriage was an important social arrangement that constructed gendered identities in pre-war Uganda. Customary marriage in Acholi culture followed a set of rules and structures. Men in Acholi culture had a dominant say in the choice of their future wife (Dolan, 2003). However, clan leaders and parents were also heavily involved in choosing partners (Bailey, 2009). When a man found a woman that he would like to marry, tradition held that he shared this desire with an aunt. The aunt then invited the prospective wife to the man’s home where she met his clan and family. If a family had no initial objections, this meeting marked the beginning of a “probationary period” where the woman stayed with the man’s family. During this time she was observed in her daily habits to determine if she was a suitable mate. Also during this time, the man’s clan observed the woman’s clan to ensure that she came from a suitable environment. This investigation included visiting the woman’s home, and taking account of her family’s wealth in livestock and granaries. Following the probationary period the two families officially met. Negotiations for marriage and bride price would begin at this point if both families are satisfied during the probationary period (Bailey, 2009).

3.3.2 Bride-Price

Certain requirements must be met in Acholi culture in order to legitimate marriage. Although parents or clan leaders could chose the couple, consent by both the bride and bridegroom and their families was necessary for the marriage to be valid (Carlson, 2008). Although the bride was given the opportunity to turn down the marriage, her actual agency within this process should be questioned. Because marriage
was so important in Acholi society (discussed in the next section), a woman may have declined a suitor, but she eventually was expected to marry. Her choice was located only in whom she chose to marry, not in whether she married at all. That said, once consent was achieved, the families negotiated a bride-price (Bailey, 2009). In order to commence the ceremony each partner would be asked if they wished to marry. If the answer was yes, the ceremony proceeded (Bailey, 2009). The actual wedding ceremony was largely comprised of the bride-price exchange.

The exchange of bride-price was a fundamental component and an important ritual in Acholi customary marriage. It is also fundamental to understanding gender construction in Northern Uganda. Bride-price refers to the process where the groom’s family exchanged goods or money for the bride. As may be expected, the negotiation of bride-price was a complicated and difficult process (Finnström, 2008). The process started with a letter from the man’s family asking the bride’s family for an estimated price. The price was agreed upon by the parents and bride’s brothers. The bride had little agency within this process, as she had little or no say in her own price. The bride’s family then sent a response letter to the groom’s family. The exchange of letters continued until a bride price had been agreed upon (Bailey, 2009).

The actual bride-price exchange was an important Acholi ritual. Some argue that this exchange was crucial to the success of Acholi marriages. In fact, the marriage was not considered legitimate until the exchange occurred (Carlson, 2008). The gifts exchanged were representative of a wedding story in Acholi culture. They may include small items such as a pair of shoes, chickens, clothing, a spear, gasoline. But they may
also include larger items such as cattle or even cash that was referred to as “heads of cattle” (Finnström, 2008). An appropriate bride-price that followed Acholi protocol sent the message to the wife’s family that she would be cared for and respected. If satisfied with the bride-price, the bride’s father responded by allowing the marriage to proceed (Bailey, 2009).

The marriage was completed and official when the bride-price negotiations were complete. Actual exchange of bride-price may have continued after the marriage ceremony. But importantly, because the bride-price was essentially the family’s endorsement of the marriage, the bridegroom’s father, and often his whole clan, was responsible for providing a bride-price to the bride’s father (Finnström, 2008). As it often took the groom’s whole family collaborating to provide an adequate bride-price, the process actually united the family as they prepared for the couples union. This reality reveals how it was not only women that were exchanged in marriage but also “sexual access, genealogy, lineage names, and clans” (Rubin, 1975) and adds to the importance of this social structure within Acholi culture. In other words, women were produced through the act of exchanging bride-price.

The significance of bride-price was found in the symbolic exchange of goods, (which included the wife) between the families. Men essentially exchanged women in the bride-price. Rubin argues that the “marital debt is essentially taken from female flesh” (1975, 95). In fact, the money a family received in a bride-price was not for their use but for their sons’ future engagements. The sons used their sisters’ bride-prices to pay for their own wives. In that sense, bride-price was a self-fueling cycle (Bailey,
Bride-price arguably solidified the marriage as the man had literally “invested in the woman” (Rubin, 1975). This made it unlikely that he would divorce or leave her. If a bride requested a divorce, the bride price was expected to be returned, even though it was technically illegal to request the return of bride-price in Uganda (Bailey, 2009).

The exchange of bride price or women to be more precise, in pre-war Acholi society exemplifies Rubin’s theoretical argument. Because women were the gifts, bride-price implied a difference between the gift and the giver in Acholi society. It also implied that women had little ability to resist. Therefore, the oppression of women was placed squarely in a social context rather than a biological one. Customary marriage and bride-price were the mechanisms embedded in kinship systems that created gendered subjects in Acholi society.

Customary marriage and bride price reveal the productive nature of gendered subjects in pre-war Acholi culture. The above descriptions expose how kinship structures in Acholi society created gendered identities and supported gendered roles in Northern Uganda. In other words, this separation of gendered identities was favorable to male dominated hegemonies. This description also reveals how the exchange of women and customary marriage in general were important foundations for social organization in Acholi society. Lastly, it also suggests the commodification of women through the exchange of bride-price which further entrenched gender binary identities.

3.3.3 Significance of Marriage

You might be a giant
Of a man,
You may begin to grow grey hair
You may be bold
And toothless with age,
But if you are unmarried
You are nothing.

(From Song of Lawino; Okot p’ Bitek, 1966)

Marriage and family were important concepts and societal rituals in pre-war Acholi culture. The importance of marriage in Acholi culture lends insight into the nature of gender construction. Marriage had traditionally been an important element in unifying clans especially through bride-price (Bailey, 2009). In fact for the Acholi, marriage was far more than the union of two people. It was the combining of families, perhaps clans, and even regions in Northern Uganda (p’ Bitek, 1964). Therefore, historically every member in Acholi society was expected to marry.

Marriage was traditionally very important for both men and women in Acholi society. As p’ Bitek notes, there was no place for bachelors and spinsters in traditional Acholi culture (1964). If a man remained a bachelor he had very little place or security within the clan. “It did not matter how old, or how huge you were in the battlefront, however much food you produced, you had no social standing. You were not consulted by the clan nor invited to meetings as a bachelor. Only men that married were counted as men” (Anywar 1954, 64).
A spinster in Acholi society fared similarly to, if not worse, than a bachelor. She also had no place in society nor did she really belong. Unmarried daughters were invisible with the traditional division of labor in the Acholi homestead, and therefore a spinster had no social role to play. Thus there was a great social urgency to marry in Acholi society (p’Bitek, 1964). Marriage was especially important to Acholi women because it offered the women social respect and mobility. With marriage, a woman gained freedom to function as an active member of Acholi society. Without marriage, a woman received little respect and no social standing (Bailey, 2009).

The respect a woman received through marriage was gained through a social process. Women married into the husband’s clan as an outsider (Allen, 2006). In fact, she did not socially belong to the clan until she produced offspring. Once she bore a child, she then became “kaka,” and her position as an outsider was fully changed to that of an insider in her husband’s lineage (Allen, 2006). However, as indicated above, this process of being “kaka” did not occur until bride price was exchanged and children were born. Until bride-price was exchanged, the woman’s loyalties remained uncertain, and the husband would have neither legal right to nor responsibility to care for her children (Finnström, 2008). Therefore, a woman did not feel protected until she received the status of “kaka.”

Once she received “kaka”, a married woman had specific responsibilities within her new clan. She was responsible for taking part in a variety of rituals including helping with childbirth and pre and post-birth rituals. Married women also expressed their opinion about the propriety of other marriage proposals in the clan. If married women
disapproved of pending unions, it was unlikely that these marriages happened. Lastly, the married women in the clan were responsible for funerals and death rituals. They prepared the body, made food, invited the guests, and performed mourning rituals (Bailey, 2009). These rituals highlight Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. They served to further embed gendered identities through the repetitive performance of specific rituals that women participated in as a result of receiving “kaka.”

The importance of marriage in pre-war Acholi society further highlights the embedded social norms that created gendered subjects in Uganda. The unique place married women had in Acholi society reinforced the importance of marriage. Again women were not considered official members of Acholi society, until “kaka” has been attained, which limited any potential for resistance to these structures. Anyone who chose to object to these social norms was outcast and literally had no place of belonging within Acholi culture. This reinforcement of social norms and fear for being placed outside of these norms, further entrenched the production of gendered subjects in pre-war Acholi society.

3.4 Children

Children were the critical element of Acholi marriage and the ultimate goal. In order for a marriage to be considered legitimate, children had to be produced. Furthermore, women gained significant social standing when they produced children (p’Bitek 1964 and Finnström 2008). Children were the fulfillment of marriage as well as an important part of Acholi religious beliefs. Children were so important in Acholi
marriage that Okot p’Bitek suggests it was a common practice to determine “right from the start who might be the sterile party” (p’Bitek 1964, 186). In other words, although not overtly socially accepted, the couple may have tried to get pregnant before the marriage ceremony to ensure their mutual ability to conceive. If married couples could not produce children they often got divorced or separated. Furthermore, barrenness and impotency were often considered curses in Acholi religion (Bailey, 2009). Therefore, if a couple was unable to bear children, a man was allowed to take a second wife. Because higher numbers of children symbolized wealth, men often took a number of wives to increase their number of children (Bailey, 2009). This practice ultimately served to construct a gendered identity for women focus on value-through-production, following a Marxian subordination of women as units of production for men. If one “unit of production” was not efficient, a man was allowed to acquire an additional unit/woman to maintain expected production.

Not only were children essential for marriage, they were a valued part of Acholi society. Customary Acholi law and practice asserts that children born out of wedlock, including through LRA forced marriages, belonged to the mother’s clan (Carlson, 2008). When a woman getting married had children from another man, traditionally the children were not welcomed into the new husband’s home. The husband from the previous marriage had legal right over the children. But if there was no legitimate husband, the children belong to the mother’s clan. Also under customary law, the illegitimate husband could pay the mother’s clan or family compensation for raising the child (Carlson, 2008).
Customary law also protected women from sexual exploitation (Carlson, 2008). Although often practiced, it was an offense to engage in sexual relations before marriage. In fact, the man had to pay a fine to the woman’s father if he got her pregnant before marriage. These fines were subject to a number of variables including education. The more highly educated a girl, the greater the fine to the man (Carlson, 2008). These traditions in pre-conflict Acholi society have important applications to females returning from the LRA and this is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The importance of children within Acholi marriage further embedded gendered subjects in the social apparatus that constructed them. Once their duties to have children were fulfilled, Acholi women were confined to a life of caring for their children. Their daughters were confined to the same life. Few chose to rebel against these gender norms, because to do so would be to accept social ostracism.

3.5 Conclusions

The intention of this chapter is to reveal the sex/gender system that occurred in Northern Uganda before the onslaught of violent conflict in 1986. In tracing the sex/gender system including marriage, bride-price, division of labor, and children, this chapter supports Gayle Rubin’s theory by revealing how gender was constructed in pre-war Acholi society. Specifically, these structures produced and maintained gender hegemonies that oppressed women in pre-war Acholi society.

Yet it is also helpful to extend this analysis to Judith Butler’s theory. According to Butler, all gender is itself a performative action, including the structure described in
pre-war Acholi society. Marriage served to performatively embed and create binary genders in Acholi culture, and as such, it disguised the dynamic and malleable nature of these norms. Although the potential to subvert these gender constructions existed between each repetition, the marriage ritual, exchange of bride-price, division of labor, and childbirth, in Acholi society effectively masked any potential to subvert the dominant gender hegemonies. The onslaught of traumatic conflict in 1986 arguably disrupted these gender constructions to a point that unveils the space for change that exists between every repetition. This theory leads us to the next chapter which traces gender construction in the second moment or the moment of traumatic conflict in Northern Uganda.
CHAPTER 4:
MOMENT TWO: PRODUCTION OF GENDERED SUBJECTS THROUGH
VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NORTHERN UGANDA

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The almost three-decade long conflict in Northern Uganda has been well documented through the media, by academics and by non-governmental organizations. The violent experiences of women through this conflict have also been well-documented (e.g. Annan et al. 2008b; Henttonen 2008). Therefore, this chapter moves beyond simply re-describing the gendered experiences of conflict in Northern Uganda, and instead suggests that a theoretical analysis of gender and trauma in the conflict provides an insight that has thus far been overlooked. This chapter details the construction of gendered subjects through the conflict in Northern Uganda, specifically how the production of gendered subjects is essentially “repeated” through the use of forced marriage within the LRA. It also considers the repetition of Acholi norms through the division of labor and subsequent childbirth within the conflict.

The first goal of this chapter is to reveal how social norms were repeated and reproduced through the conflict, and to then highlight the disruptions in these repetitions. The second goal is of this chapter is to begin describing the particular effects of trauma through the conflict and how the trauma interacted with gender production in the LRA.
The main element that this chapter reveals is how the trauma of conflict actively disrupted the gender construction and arguably created the space to transform those gender arrangements.

Because Butler’s term “replication” can be confusing in this context, let me clarify the use of the word for the purposes of this paper. It becomes clear in the following analysis that the LRA created a new Acholi community with its own gender dynamics. Yet, many of the gender dynamics, including the use of forced marriage, family structures and certain gender roles look similar to the gender structures that existed outside of the violent conflict. As such, I determine that the LRA “copied” the gender norms and transformed them through the conflict. Of course, these norms are manipulated and changed through the conflict. Thus when I use the term “repetition” in this context, I refer to both the copied gender structures and the alterations in these gender structures. Gender is always dynamic, even within the boundaries of “normal” gender dynamics, no repetition is the same. The repetitions within the LRA are just more obviously changed than the repetitions that exist within our daily lives. The obvious alterations in gender repetitions are part of what makes this study so interesting.

4.2 The Trauma of Abduction

Gender played a key role in the forcible abduction and initiation into the LRA. The story of the Aboke girls describes one such experience of abduction. On the night of October 9, 1996 the LRA attacked St. Mary’s College which is a well known girl’s school in Aboke, Northern Uganda. Without the ability to defend themselves, one
hundred and thirty nine girls between the ages of 12 and 15 were abducted and forced into the LRA ranks (de Temmerman, 2001). Unfortunately their story is not uncommon in Northern Uganda.

They came to our school in the middle of the night. We were hiding under the beds but they banged on the doors and told us to come out. They tied us and led us out, and they tried to set the school building on fire. We walked and walked and they made us carry their property that they had looted.

- Stella, age fifteen (Human Rights Focus 2002, 17)

The LRA has developed a reputation for using extreme violence to instill fear in the communities they target (ISIS, 2000). The LRA perhaps used fear in part as a means of control and also to leverage their ideological demands. This fear was enforced through the brutal maiming of villagers including cutting off of body parts like ears, mouth, nose and lips (ISIS, 2000). This fear is further incited through the use of abductions. The LRA started abducting in the late 1980s as a way of increasing their ranks and intimidating the local population, and the scale of these abductions is immense (Hovil and Lomo, 2004). Estimates now show that LRA has abducted over 60,000 Ugandan youth and children (Carlson, 2008). In fact, children age fourteen and under comprise the majority of the LRA (Annan et al., 2008a). The majority of these abductions took place in the Acholi and Lango regions of Northern Uganda (ISIS, 2000).

Kony has relied on abducted children for a number of reasons. According to Hovil (2004), the LRA uses child soldiers because 1) they are malleable and quick to obey orders; 2) they are physically healthy and tire slowly and; 3) forcing children to kill
their families severs ties with home. It can also be deduced that creating family-like structures through forced marriage within the LRA strengthens loyalty to the cause.

The LRA abducted both boys and girls alike. A strikingly large amount of adolescent males and females report being abducted by the LRA. One study sites that nearly one in three adolescent males was abducted (Carlson 2008). Another study states that between one in five and one in six adolescent females in Northern Uganda was abducted by the LRA (Annan et al., 2008b). These numbers hint at the overwhelming impact that the abductions had on the Northern region of Uganda. Through their abductions, the LRA decimated the education, the infrastructure, and the family structure of the Acholi people.

The average age of females experiencing abduction is 16 while the average age of males is 15 years old (Annan et al., 2008b). Ugandan girls at times faced risked abduction because of their gender roles. Females are often required to travel away from their homestead in order to collect firewood, gather water or tend their gardens. As such many fell victim to gender-based violence on the road or were abducted by the LRA (ISIS, 2000).

I was abducted while my mother and I were going to the field… One of the other abducted girls tried to escape but she was caught. They made the new children kill her. They told us if we escaped they would kill our families.

-Sharon, thirteen, (Human Rights Watch, 2002)
This quote from Sharon highlights the fear of abduction that many young girls faced. The reality was that they risked their lives and increased their risk of abduction as they went about their normal gendered responsibilities, such as going to the field.

Abductees were often forced to commit brutal acts as initiation into the LRA ranks. Some were required to torture their family members or burn down their own homes. Others had to beat or even kill fellow fighters (Carlson, 2008). The LRA intentionally used these tactics to instill fear in the ranks and to eliminate the inductee’s need or desire to escape and return home (Annan et al., 2008b). These acts of initiation contributed to the psychological demise of the abductees as autonomous individuals separate from the LRA. It also increased the control that the LRA had over the abductees (ISIS, 2000). Abduction lengths varied widely from a few hours to over 12 years. SWAY reports that 39 percent of males and 40 percent of females were abducted for over two months or longer (Annan et al., 2008b). Those who are abducted faced a range of threats and roles that are outlined in the section below.

Part of intent of abduction was to sever the abductees from the old structures of Acholi society. In many cases, the LRA forced their abductees to kills their families and burn their home villages in part to break them from their past (Allen, 2010). The abductees literally and symbolically had nothing to which return. In this way, the LRA created a “clean slate” to starting their new Acholi society.

Once abducted, the children had to undergo rigorous training (Denov, 2008). McKay and Mazurana note that 72 percent of girls they interviewed had reported receiving weapons and military training which often began in Sudan (McKay, 2004a).
Women in traditional Acholi society rarely became warriors, thus the fact that they underwent rigorous weapons training that prepared them to become soldiers, placed them in a different gendered position than they traditionally experienced (Denov, 2008). In traditional Acholi society, men were the hunters and fighters, while women were the caretakers and gatherers (Finnström, 2006). As such, forcing women and girls to become soldiers automatically shattered the traditional gendered division of these roles. This is an example of how gender roles can be altered and as such it also highlights the how gender is produced.

Their very initiation created the foundation for a markedly different set of gender norms for the children abducted into the LRA ranks. Through their abduction, females were forced to let go of certain feminine gender expectations and take up other arguably masculine identities. The following discussion makes clear the LRA’s systematic intention to re-cite or repeat the gender norms in Acholi society. Yet even with this intentionality, the LRA inadvertently recreated gendered identities in a different manner than traditional Acholi ritual. Herein lays the potential for gender change. Thus, even within the abduction and initiation of females into their ranks, the space to subvert construction existed. The traumatic conflict altered the societal expectations for women and girls and thus highlighted the construction of gender. Once gender construction is revealed, the potential to overcome is also revealed. These gender variations in gender identity are described in greater detail in the next section.
4.3 Division of Labor

Northern Uganda provides an interesting case study in part because of the vast experiences and roles women and girls played in the conflict. Although they have been the targets and perpetrators of violent acts, they also participated in more nuanced ways that are detailed in this text.

The LRA built upon traditional Acholi division of roles within their ranks. At the same time as they reinforced a gendered division of roles, the LRA also required more overlap between the roles than men and women experience outside of the conflict. This dual reinforcement further supports the argument that social arrangements copied through conflict also cause the production of gendered subjects. It is helpful to parallel the division of roles within conflict to the division of roles within pre-conflict Uganda. This comparison offers insight into the repetitive nature of gender production with a noticeable difference within conflict.

Young girls and women played complex roles within fighting forces in Uganda. The specific roles are detailed below, but they can be placed into three overlapping categories: support, combat, and social roles (McKay and Mazurana, 2004). It is clear that fighting forces depended on girls to provide a variety of essential services. Young girls and women participated in numerous, complex roles that enabled the LRA to function as rebels. Division of roles within the LRA was often based on gender, age, strength, education, and length of captivity.

The majority of girls within the LRA report playing a support role similar to the role they play outside of the conflict. In one study, over 22 percent of women and girls
reported having a role as food producers, while 41 percent were porters (McKay and Mazurana, 2004). Within this function, women and girls carried out many of the same activities that are expected of girls outside of captivity. They were responsible for finding food, cooking meals, washing dishes, laundering, carrying water, collecting firewood. In addition, most young girls were forced to carry heavy loads of ammunition, food supplies, looted goods, and even young children over long distances (Carlson, 2008). Because the LRA was in constant movement, the loads carried by young girls were invaluable to the survival of the group (Denov, 2008). The LRA commanders often used the youngest of these girls as servants. Referred to as “ting ting” (servants) these girls were also forced to complete long hours of strenuous domestic activity every day (HRW, 2002).

The majority of girls also performed a social function within the LRA. Many young girls were forcibly given to commanders and male soldiers in order to play the role of wives and mothers (McKay and Mazurana 2004). These forced wives often produced children for whom they were required to care (Carlson, 2008). Forced marriage is a clear example of the LRA’s attempt to repeat gender arrangements, and is described in detail in the next section. These descriptions of support and social roles conducted are similar to the descriptions of roles that females played within traditional Acholi society. As such, they are examples of how gender roles and norms were repeated with the LRA.

It may be surprising though, that many girls also participated in front-line combat in Northern Uganda. Although this was often a male role, many females also participated in fighting roles within the LRA (Annan et al., 2008b). In fact, one study suggests that
one in every ten girls reported that fighting was their primary role (Annan et al., 2008b). Another study suggests that 49 percent of females interviewed reported serving as a fighter in a secondary role (ISIS, 2000). Within the combat roles, women and girls were given weapons training, carried small arms, acted as spies, directly fought, and acted as a soldier’s aid (McKay, 1998). This new social role for girls and women is another important site of gender difference. While the support and social roles are clearly reproductions of gender norms, the combat roles are a location of gendered divergence. Girls in traditional Acholi society rarely learned how to fight, but many girls within the LRA learned the traditionally masculine role of being a soldier. This difference points to the different constructions of gender through the violent conflict. It also supports my argument that the trauma of war disrupts the ‘normal’ constructions of gender and reveals a different construction. I discuss this extensively in the final chapter, but if gender can change through the conflict, it can also become more equitable for both genders.

This repetition of division of labor within the conflict largely served the same purpose as outside of the conflict, yet there are important differences. Gender identities were constructed through these divisions of roles in the same way as before abduction. Women and girls were subjected to role differentiation and kinship systems that arguably repeated the same oppression they experienced pre-conflict. Yet with the changing social circumstance found within the LRA, there are noticeable differences through this repetition. In other words the changing social circumstances require a changed in division of labor which resulted in a change of gender identities.
It is important to note that these roles were fluid and overlapping within the LRA. They therefore should not be viewed as exclusive categories but rather it should be noted that most girls simultaneously participated in a variety of ways (Denov, 2008). This is perhaps another important difference from pre-conflict Acholi norms. The fact that people can play different roles in conflict than they would within traditional settings highlights the dynamism of these gender roles. They can be changed.

The boundaries of gender roles within conflict are often blurred and overlapping. This is perhaps because the LRA required a more distorted boundary of role division in order to sustain them through the conflict. For example, there are four reported categories of "family" members within the LRA. "Siblings" include young children below the age of 13, newly abducted children who have not received military training are known as "recruits." Children who have received military training are "soldiers," and at the "head" of the family are "commanders", also known as "teachers" (Human Rights Watch, 1997). These categories are notable because they mix the terminology of kinship with the military terminology. Not only are the abductees members of a "family," they also play military roles. Yet importantly these description highlights the overlap between the normal and abnormal, the family and military, and between gender roles. These are important distinctions to note in order to better understand the mechanisms of gender production in Northern Uganda. In other words, gender is still being produced through the conflict, but in different ways than outside of conflict.
4.4 Marriage

4.4.1 Forced Marriage within the LRA

The LRA functions under a strictly hierarchical structure that is based upon the “re-ordering of experiences familiar to children” (Human Rights Watch, 1997). The foundation for this organization is described by the children as a “family” structure. This “family” structure relies on the abduction and forced marriage of females by the LRA. Without forced marriage these “family” structures would not exist. The hierarchical structure of the LRA also follows with the use of military language and structures that is described above.

Forced marriage is a term that is used to describe the gendered experience of being abducted into the LRA. It was a tool utilized by the LRA to subdue and control the sexuality of their female and male ranks. Forced marriage is also arguably connected to Kony’s initial purposes for the rebellion. As is stated in the introduction, Kony desired to create a new Acholi community through his rebellion (Finnström, 2005) and as such he required his ranks to marry and reproduce. He controlled this reproduction through a very systematic set of rules and regulations within the LRA (Carlson, 2008). For example, it is reported that the top commanders determined which soldiers would marry particular newly abducted females (Annan et al., 2008b). This purpose in part explains the use of forced marriage and forced kinship within the LRA ranks. This section will compare forced marriage with customary Acholi marriage and consider the implications for gendered construction in the conflict.
Forced marriages are defined as:

coercive relationships without valid consent of the female and her family. They have the traditional characteristics of shared domicile, bearing of children, domestic responsibilities, exclusivity and sex. The nature of these relationships forces women and girls to take on roles as sexual partners, mothers to the children born from these relationships, cooks, domestics, water collectors, porters, food producers, and gatherers. The relationships consist of a familial aspect where children are born and raised by abducted mothers and their captor husbands (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 41).

Many young female abductees report the horrors of being forced into marriage within the LRA.

There was no day when you would get up and smile to see the sun rise, because every day you would think, maybe today will be the end of me.

-A young woman abducted and given as a forced wife to an LRA commander at the age of 14 (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008)

Forced marriages within the LRA were largely coercive, exclusive, and characterized by shared domestic responsibilities and sex (Annan et al., 2010b). Recent studies reveal that one fourth of all girls abducted were forcibly married to members of the LRA, and half of those forcibly married gave birth to children from these forced marriages (Annan et al., 2008b). The average age of abducted girls who became forced wives was between 13 and 17 (Annan et al., 2008b). If in captivity for over two weeks, young girls who reached puberty were at a greater risk of forced marriage than pre-adolescent girls and those who had escaped the LRA before reaching two weeks (Carlson, 2008).

It is important to note the distinction between forced marriage and sexual slavery.

The experience of forced marriage is somewhat different than that of sexual slavery and
therefore the problems posed through forced marriage are also distinct. According to the Rome Statute, sexual enslavement refers to,

> the exercise of any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over a person and includes the exercise of such power in the course of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children” (Article 7(2c)).

Sexual slavery may include repeated sexual abuse or rape by the captor or forcing the victim to provide sexual services to others or both. The crime is a continuing offence. The Rome Statute's definition of sexual slavery includes situations where persons are forced into domestic servitude, marriage or any other forced labor that involves sexual activity, as well as the trafficking of persons for sexual purposes, frequently women and children. Yet the term sexual slavery suggests a relationship of a primarily coercive sexual nature.

Elements of forced marriage fall under the conception of sexual slavery, such as the repeated use of rape by a captor. At the same time, it is important to understand that forced marriage is also defined by the “forced imposition of the status of marriage,” and all the complex consequences of this on the young girls, their families, and communities (Carlson 2008, 15). Within the coercive nature of forced marriage in captivity, girls and women have to provide for themselves and their children by “satisfactorily performing domestically, military and sexually for their captor husbands” (Carlson 2008, 15).

Therefore sexual slavery and forced marriage are different entities that need to be considered separately. The misconception of abducted girls in the LRA as “sexual slaves” leads to inappropriate responses in addressing the realities of reintegration and
accountability for the violations that victims of forced marriage have endured. For example, addressing the trauma as “sexual slavery” alone would fail to recognize the unique needs and trauma that a forced wife encountered. She experienced a distinct trauma of being forced into a marriage, where she perhaps bore children, and has conflicting emotions from that forced marriage. As such, while both sexual slavery and forced marriage are traumatic, each must be considered unique in the ways we address them.

4.4.2 Forced Marriage as Systematic and Intentional:

No one was allowed to have free relationships there. If they caught a boy and a girl together they would shoot you in public. The only relationships they allowed were the ones that they forced.

-Susan, sixteen (Human Rights Watch, 2002)

Through a complex system of quotas, rules, and communication, the LRA intentionally manipulated the sexuality of young girls and boys as a strategy of war. “The LRA has been systematic in its abduction of tens of thousands of girls and keeps updated records on female abductees. When the numbers of female soldiers fall below required quotas, more abductions are organized to replenish the numbers lost through escapes or deaths” (Kinoti, 2008). Reports and first-hand accounts reveal that the LRA intentionally and systematically used gendered violence, and specifically forced marriage as a war tactic (Carlson 2008, Kinoti 2008).

For not long after their arrival her worst fears had come true. They were distributed as wives to the commanders. Those who had been brave on the battlefield were awarded an Aboke girl. Like
trophies… it was the most humiliating moment since abduction. She was given to Lakati, a man the age of her grandfather. She was his fifth wife (de Temmerman 2001, 69).

The systematic use of forced marriage within the LRA was likely intended as a method for sustaining the conflict as well as part of the overall mission for developing a “pure Acholi society.”

Although forced marriage was systematically used, women and girls were not always immediately distributed after abduction. Although newly abducted females were closely “guarded” for both “protection,” (perhaps from rape, in order to keep the girls sexually pure) and prevention of escape (Carlson 2008, 22). While some women reported immediate distribution, most reports suggest that upon arrival, women and girls were isolated, trained and distributed at a later period. During their isolation, some women underwent an initiation period where they were taken to specific locations to perform rituals for their “protection” (Carlson, 2008). Pre-pubescent girls were rarely expected to serve as wives immediately, but rather they served as domestic slaves for the “husbands” and were kept in the ranks with the specific purpose of fulfilling the role of wife when they reached puberty (McKay, 2004b). Pre-pubescent girls were forbidden to have sexual intercourse because they could not bear children and the commanders were concerned about harming their chances of doing so in the future. These young girls often were given to their future husbands and forced to refer to them as “father” until reaching adolescence (Carlson, 2008).

Once initiated, the LRA exercised strict control over their sexuality through severe hierarchical structures. Females were controlled through violence, discrimination,
and intimidation (Human Rights Watch, 1997). Strict rules about inter-personal conduct were enforced through a punishment and reward system. For example, some females were forced to beat or kill one another if they sexually rebelled (ISIS, 2000). Those who resisted the regulations were abused and sometime killed, while those who behaved favorably received rewards in the form of material goods (Carlson, 2008).

Abduction and distribution of girls was systematically controlled by top commanders in the LRA. Most abducted girls were given to high ranking fighters and commanders as opposed to lower ranking fighters (Carlson, 2008). Many reports suggest that the orders for distributing girls came straight from Kony and Otti (Carlson 2008, ISIS 2000). They would describe the type of girls they desired for themselves, noting their physical appearance, age and education (Amnesty, 1997). High ranking fighters would collect and distribute newly abducted girls to these men. The top commanders displayed certain preferences for their forced wives. They often favored girls who were considered physically attractive and intelligent (Carlson, 2008). Education was valued because literate girls could be useful to the LRA by recording information, numbers and locations (Carlson, 2008). At the same time, top commanders reportedly disposed of wives they no longer had use for, were suspected of planning escape, or who looked depressed (Carlson, 2008). It is reported that Kony himself had as many as 40 wives at any one time and fathered dozens of children through rape and forced marriage (Annan et. al, 2008b).

Some former forced wives described a “lottery system” where LRA commanders would collect articles of clothing from males and place them in a bag (Carlson, 2008).
Each female would then take a piece of clothing from the bag and whomever the clothing belonged to became her new “husband.” In some cases the females were then forced to wash the clothing she just obtained, (Carlson, 2008) thereby immediately relegating her to a position of forced labor and clearly defining her gender difference from the husband. The LRA’s purpose behind clearly defining gender difference was to support the gender norms outside of the conflict, where women are subordinate to men. Also, through gender difference, the LRA further controlled the sexuality of its ranks.

The LRA’s control of sexuality reached to both males and females in their forces. Some reports suggest that the LRA forced males to take wives against their will. Some male fighters wanted to refuse a wife because they had no means of providing for them or their future children (Carlson, 2008). Showcasing their extreme control of sexuality and gender, the LRA literally forced some of these individuals to produce children (Carlson, 2008).

Other rules governed the notion of forced marriage within the LRA. Females who had previously been forced wives but whose husbands were killed in battle were given the option to refuse another husband (Carlson, 2008). Although reports show that women rarely refused another husband because they found it nearly impossible to provide for themselves and their children based on the LRA policies of loot distribution (Carlson, 2008). Therefore they had to rely on their husbands for their basic needs. This was another way that the LRA controlled sexuality and reproduced gendered subjects within their ranks.
The clear intentionality of forced marriage within the LRA is important to note when applying feminist theory to this conflict. The LRA sought to control female (and male) sexuality through kinship structures, specifically forced marriage, which is arguably a direct mechanism for gender construction. They effectively sought to construct gendered subjects by highly regulating and controlling sex in their ranks.

What is specific to the LRA is the extent, nature, and function of violence against women, and the particularly brutal, hierarchical and institutionalized circumstances through which abuses of women's human rights are promoted. The ownership of women and girls resulting from abduction, forced conscription and forced marriage is part and parcel of the military strategy of the LRA and the social order devised by the leadership. It is both a reflection and the foundation of that social order. (Human Rights Watch, 1997).

In other words, the LRA was repeating many of the models that construct gender outside of conflict. Yet following Judith Butler's argument, the space for gendered change existed between these repetitions. The LRA initiated a traumatic rupture of gender production and in doing so highlighted this space for change. Forced Marriage and Violence

There is one other interesting component of gender manipulation within the LRA: the overlap between traditional gender roles and violent expressions within the LRA. Abducted females perpetrated violence at similar rates to abducted males in the LRA (Annan et al., 2008a; 2008b). Forced wives who did not have children were expected to fight. At times, even women with children were expected to fight. They often had to carry their children behind their backs so their hands were free to carry and fire weapons (Carlson, 2008). Females in the LRA also experienced high rates of violence committed
against them. Some forced wives in the LRA experienced more violent war-related events than other abductees, even those abducted for a similar amount of time (Annan et al., 2008a).

The LRA successfully reinforced and reinterpreted gender norms during the conflict. Women were forcibly married and required to perform roles that were similar to the kinships structures outside of the conflict. At the same time women experienced and participated in high levels of violence and trauma. This participation reveals a place where gender norms are disrupted through the conflict. The fact that women increasingly conducted violence during their experiences with the LRA reveals that gender identities were reconstructed differently through the conflict. Just as is described in the division of labor section of this chapter, females embodied certain masculine traits, such as participating in violent conflict, that were less common outside of the violence. It is important to understand that women were as capable as men to commit those violent acts, because this supports the notion that gender is constructed rather than inherent. At the same time, because this violence has been typically been understood as a masculine trait, it also shows that these gender identities can be clearly changed or constructed in a different manner.

4.5 Children

After the military training, I was given to a man called Otim. There were five women given to one man. The man I was given to was very rude to me: he thought I wanted to leave him and escape. He beat me many times with sticks. Now I am going to be a
mother soon. I don’t want to be a mother at this age. But it happened and I must accept this.

-Sarah, seventeen (Human Rights Watch 1992, 30)

Many women in forced marriages bore children in captivity. In fact, one in every ten girl abducted by the LRA between the ages of 12 and 18 conceived while in captivity (Annan et al., 2008a). Nearly 40 percent of forced wives had at least one child. Of those who bore children, one quarter were under the age of 18 (Annan et al., 2008a). This rate may have been higher if not complicated by a severe lack of medical resources during and after childbirth (SWAY, 2008).

Arguably related to Kony’s vision of a “new and pure” Acholi society, many reports suggest that the LRA forced its ranks to produce children (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Not only were females forcibly married, some reports suggest that pregnancy was also monitored by the LRA. Some former LRA fighters reported that their sex lives were monitored by the LRA (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Not all males wanted to have sex or conceive children but were directed by top commanders to do so. This complicated the female’s ability to resist rape, as most men felt compelled to comply with the commands in order to avoid punishment themselves. In other words, because the women knew the men were being coerced to have children, it was difficult to avoid getting pregnant.

Additionally, by threatening punishment for not engaging in sex with their forced wives, the LRA bolstered control of compliant captor husbands, manipulated males’ sense of masculinity within the group, and increased the occurrence of rape and pregnancy. By promoting pregnancy within the LRA and forcing females to bear
children, fighters became fathers and forced wives mothers, further hardening the dependency females had on captor husbands for support and protection (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 24). In fact, expectations for production of children was so high, some cases report that females unable or attempting to avoid conception were punished or killed (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). This expectation also served to replicate certain gender constructions (i.e. man’s duty to impregnate his wife), but in doing so changed them from their current understanding (i.e. man forced to impregnate wife). In this way both men and women’s gender constructions changed in the process of replication during conflict.

Given the emphasis on childbearing by Kony and his commanders, children were an important part of the family structure within the LRA. Once they had children, women took on a new role of “mother” within the family structure. Thus, they became both forced wives and forced mothers through this conflict. When women have children in Acholi society it gives them social legitimacy. It was arguably the same for women in the LRA. They received a new social standing once they had children. Also, children solidified the structure of the kinships roles with the LRA, and severed ties with the women’s social network at home. The woman was then “tied” to her captor husband and to the LRA making it more difficult to survive without them.

While forced pregnancy potentially carried beneficial effects for women in terms of a changed social status, it largely complicated the lives of females in the LRA. On the one hand, pregnancy could offer a measure of protection from captor-husbands and from gender based violence (McKay, 1998). On the other hand, pregnancy and child-birth had
complicating long-term effects for forced wives. Mothers were required to now care for their children and thus remain dependent on their captor husbands (and subsequently to the LRA for material and food support). They were much less likely to escape with a child than alone (Annan et al., 2008b). Forced wives and their children were considered property of the LRA commander or fighter they “belonged” to, and often found it more difficult to escape captivity (Annan et al., 2008b).

Compounding this situation, commanders within the LRA had an average of five wives at a time while fighters often had at least two (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Having multiple wives also meant having multiple children born from those wives. The additional children made it difficult for both the captor husbands and forced wives to provide for their large families (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008).

The status of marriage is reinforced by these dependencies of the child to the mother, wife to the captor-husband, and captor to the commander and LRA, making it especially difficult to break these cycles of dependency when a child was involved (Carlson 2008). With this in mind, the gender repetition through the LRA becomes clear. Kony desired to create a “new Acholi society,” (Finnström, 2008) where he controlled the sexuality of his ranks to the point of regulating and forcing childbirth. This regulated childbirth reinforced the particular gender construction within the LRA where females became mothers, and the children made them dependent upon their captor husbands and the LRA. At the same time, the conflict forces these repetitions changed and thus the construction of gender changed. Women became fighters as well as mothers.
4.6 Exiting the LRA

In the end, you too will submit to the will of the Lord’s Resistance Army, he predicted. “There is no other way.” He pointed at his wife. “Look at Ajok. Once she was cut off from the rest of us during a battle. She had the chance of a lifetime to escape. But she didn’t. She followed our trail and came back. You know why?” He paused to look at them, then burst into laughter, “because she couldn’t leave me.”

-An LRA fighter (de Temmerman 2001, 36).

For various reasons, many females found it very difficult to escape their captivity. Some girls were unable to escape because they were dependent upon their captor husbands and the LRA for their basic needs. Others likely faced psychological distress in escaping their captors and returning home to the uncertain responses from their communities (Ochieng, 2002). This is not to suggest that every abducted female found it difficult to leave the LRA, but rather to note the difficulty that some females, particularly forced wives, had leaving the LRA.

The UPDF was reportedly only responsible for freeing 1 in 20 females who left the LRA (Annan et al., 2008b). Notably, only 7 percent of forced wives were released by the LRA which is a significantly lower rate when compared to 27 percent of other abducted females in captivity (Annan et al., 2008b). Few individuals leaving the LRA passed through reception centers (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008), but notably over 50 percent of forced wives and 70 percent of females with children passed through reception centers (Annan et al., 2008b). Most former abductees integrated directly into IDP camps, villages, and urban centers, rather than passing through reception centers (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, Annan et al. 2010b, and McKay 2004b). This difference is likely a result
of the high needs that former forced wives have upon return from captivity. The next chapter discusses the realities of reentry into society.

4.7 Conclusions

Taking a closer look at gender arrangements and violence within the LRA, one begins to see the hidden complexities of this conflict. Why did the LRA regulate sexuality through forced marriage in their ranks? Arguably, the LRA transferred socialized gender norms that existed within normal Acholi life into a violent, conflict scenario. Their intent in doing so was to repeat the “normal” gender identities and essentially reproduce the norms that created gender/sex subjects in Northern Uganda. Yet importantly, while repeating the gender ritual of marriage within the LRA, the space for changing gendered identities also existed. It is important to note that the arrangements were not just about enforcing gender roles and identity in a new setting—they were also about surviving as a resistance army and populating a new society.

It is also important to note that although the LRA sought to recreate marriage within the conflict setting, forced marriage is not considered legitimate under customary Acholi law. The exchange of bride-price is similar to signing a marriage contract, if bride-price is not exchanged it is akin to abduction within Acholi societies. These descriptions of gender and customary marriage serve to delegitimize the shaky constructions of “marriage” within the LRA (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Therefore, there is little foundation for the forced marriage once LRA abductees return from captivity. This is important to note because it highlights the difference between gender
constructions. Within the repeated acts of gender construction, before the conflict and during the conflict, there is space for transformation. Although the space for transformation exists between any gendered repetitions, it was highlighted through the gendered trauma in the LRA. Therefore, even through the action of the LRA, there is a potential to disrupt the existing gender norms. This is the focus of the next chapter that discusses re-entry after the trauma of conflict, post-conflict gender realities and the potential for transformation.
5.1 Chapter Introduction

It is well understood that conflict can have long-lasting effects on both individuals and the society in which they live. In fact, conflict has the potential to impact a society’s norms, traditions and practices (Lederach, 2003). In the same vein, conflict and the trauma produced by conflict can also alter the life of an individual. Cynthia Enloe writes that the end of a war is “crowded with gendered decisions” (Enloe 2000, 261). Women and girls returning from forced captivity and marriage within the LRA face grave obstacles on the road to recovery. Girls are largely invisible in the post-conflict context; “in their exclusion from the DDR process, as well as marginalization within the health, social, educational, and economic realms” (Devon 2008, 823). Not only are gendered subjects created before and during war, they continue to be constructed after conflict. Yet this construction is complicated by the trauma of war.

The conflict in Northern Uganda can be described as a traumatic rupture. The processes of abduction, forced marriage, and captivity combine to create a traumatic experience where women and girls are forced to contend with their own identities, and their place in society. Upon return from captivity, former abductees face a traumatic reentry into a place that was once normal, but which, for many survivors, has become far
from normal. By “traumatic reentry”, I refer to the process where former forced wives return to the societies they were taken from and try to rebuild their former lives. This generates an essential question: given the way former forced wives were shaped in moment two (i.e. in the conflict), what are their options for moment three?

Following the method of the previous two chapters, this chapter focuses on gender in Northern Uganda following the traumatic experience of war. It consists of a series of interconnected discussions on the realities that women and girls face, specifically former forced wives, upon their return from captivity in Northern Uganda. The goal of this chapter is to discuss what the gendered challenges of reentering into a society after the traumatic events of war.

This chapter begins by looking at the economic, physical, and psycho-social realities former forced wives encounter upon reentry. It also looks at the specific social mechanisms for gender construction discussed in the previous chapters including: kinship structures such as marriage, childbirth and division of labor with specific attention paid to the ways in which these arrangements have been altered as a result of the trauma of war. Many descriptions are also taken from interviews with trauma counselors in Northern Uganda. These interviews are described in detail the methodology section of chapter one, but they focused on the local conceptions of trauma and healing as well as the methods that trauma healing professionals utilized to address the trauma.
5.2 Realities of Reentry: Economic and Health Consequences for Former Forced Wives

5.2.1 Economic Realities

Former forced wives often face significant economic and health challenges to recovery when they return from captivity. The scope of this paper does not allow for a complete analysis of these realities but a brief overview is helpful to understand the complexities of changing gender norms and traumatic reentry in Northern Uganda.

Poverty is a significant challenge to recovery in Northern Uganda. As one counselor puts it, “How do you conduct psychotherapy with a person who has no food, or no money for the school fees of their children? While they may improve somehow and feel empowered to look for different means, but which they look for in vain. This hopelessness may persist and cause depression” (I1). Instead of attending to their mental health, the traumatized person looks for something to eat. As another counselor puts it, “This is also a big challenge because during the war the structures were destroyed, the social fabrics, the livelihood of the Acholi people have been destroyed so they are now starting from the grassroots. So poverty also affects the (traumatic) response” (I9). In other words, former forced wives returning from captivity face a significant challenge to their own mental health, and that is economic deprivation. Rather than attending to their psychological needs, they must address their physical and economic demands first.

Many forced wives return from captivity with children. These children’s needs add to the women’s financial strain, especially for women who are not fully welcomed back into their families or communities (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Therefore, some returnees have to find the means to support themselves alone in post-captivity. This is
further complicated by the fact that many young girls’ education was disrupted when they were abducted by the LRA (Carlson and Mazurana 2008; Annan et al., 2008b). As such, they do not have the necessary skills, education or means to fully support themselves. The economic and social reality many former forced wives face, at times necessitates that they search for husbands to support them and their children.

The LRA targeted educated girls, and this reality provides insight into the overall challenges of reintegration and reconstruction efforts. Many young girls returning from captivity have found it difficult to continue with their education. Because many of the females who were in the process of being educated were abducted, there is a significant loss in the number of educated females in Northern Uganda (McKay, 2004b). The education system and overall growth of the region is also weakened because of this direct targeting of educated individuals (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008).

Although it is true that females find it difficult to support themselves and their children, it is important to note that this may not be directly related to their war experiences. This lack of upward mobility is also related to the fact that all females, not just formerly abducted wives, face similar challenges in Northern Uganda (Annan et al., 2008b). Even before the war, females were less likely to finish school and get employment than men (Annan et al., 2010b).

5.2.2 Health Realities

Not only do females returning from captivity face dire economic realities, they also encounter many health consequences (Jansen, 2006). Many experience serious physical and psychological problems brought on by the gendered use of forced marriage.
Physical problems related to their trauma can include: headaches, reproductive problems, malaria, tuberculosis, parasitic infections, malnutrition, and pain related to war trauma (Denov, 2008). Furthermore, girls often experience gender related problems because of war-time gender-based violence. Gynecological problems including genital injury and infections are common. The peril of giving birth in captivity also poses gynecological complications for many girls (Devon, 2008). Many returning females cannot have children or experience continual bleeding as a result of their trauma in captivity (I4).

Girls returning from the LRA are also at a high risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Forced marriages within the LRA brought about the significant threat of HIV/AIDS to many young girls and their children (McKay and Mazurana, 2004). Although the LRA systematically used forced marriage as a means of controlling their ranks and preventing sexually transmitted diseases (Annan et al., 2010b), it is clear that sexually transmitted diseases were still a huge problem. Reports suggest a high number, between 50 and close to 100 percent of children entering rehabilitation centers have sexually transmitted diseases (Leibig, 2005). Regardless of the exact numbers, STDs have been and continue to be a persistent problem for many former abductees returning from the conflict in Northern Uganda.

There are often devastating psychological effects caused by gendered violence in the LRA. Many girls report experiencing psychological anguish including: flashbacks, nightmares, fears, shame, numbness, difficulty re-establishing intimate relationships, or inability to experience normal sexual activity (Denov 2008, Bolton 2007, Bolton 2004). Despite all these problems, mental health and physical services are rarely available to
girls, or anyone, in Northern Uganda. There is a lack of health care facilities, especially outside of the city centers in Northern Uganda, and therefore, clients may have to travel long distances and pay costly fees to receive care (I6, I11).

There are also other medical challenges to recovering from war-time trauma. Medical facilities are very scarce; so people have to move very long distances without proper roads or means of transport to receive medical care. According to one trauma counselor in Gulu, the former forced wives, “may have to walk on foot for a very long distance to find a health center, where they will find only a nurse. And then they find only pain killers and a few antibiotics. So it is a lot of suffering even on a physical level” (I1). This statement gets at the larger problem of recovering from trauma; traumatized individuals must address their basic health and economic needs before and at the same time as they address the psychological problems that arise from forced marriage.

Moving from a discussion on the economic and health challenges to recovery, I discuss the changing elements of gender construction in Northern Uganda.

5.3 Division of Labor

The conflict in Northern Uganda also prompted significant changes for the division of labor in Acholi society. It is argued that women have suffered the impact of this conflict perhaps disproportionately (McKay, 2004b), which has led to a shift in gender paradigms in Northern Uganda. Although traditional gender roles in Uganda have not vanished, they have been revealed and disrupted. In many cases, women continue to perform their traditional roles while at the same time carry out tasks that were once
largely performed by men (I6). Todd Sanders aptly write about changing gender norms in Uganda; “There is no one gender system discussed in singular and monolithic terms, since no such “system” exists anymore” (Sanders 2000, 470). Although there is no single, monolithic gender system anywhere, this quote gets at the idea that the dominant gender system in Northern Uganda has changed.

The traditional division of labor in Northern Uganda has been impacted in part by the conflict, and in part because of globalization, changing clan dynamics, and education. Although it may be difficult to clearly see a change in the gender roles, some scholars suggest women have greater decision making power in the home (El-Bushra, 2003). Furthermore, local trauma counselors claim that gender attitudes may be changing in the region.

It (division of labor) is difficult because culture has much to do with it. The culture dictates the gender roles which cannot be changed. It may change, but it is a long process. Even right now if you stay in the community and see who does what, you would see women really buried in this domestic work. I have been training a lot on gender roles and helping one another carry the burden in the family. Many women do not believe in relieving themselves of this burden. But with training you make them know the shared responsibility they can have… the process of change is actually starting (I6).

In other words, the traditional division of labor that was prominent before the conflict has been altered in part because of the conflict. In some cases, former forced wives were born in captivity and have to learn the traditional gender roles outside of captivity that the community expects of them (McKay, 2004b). Therefore, although traditional gender
roles may look the same, they have been affected by the conflict. It is difficult to
determine the exact affects, but it is important to know that the change is occurring.

5.3.1 Gender Identities

Related to changing division of labor, the typical Acholi woman’s identity has
also been impacted by the conflict, in particular for those who were abducted and forced
into marriage. Many women spent a majority of their lives in captivity as forced wives,
mothers, and fighters. Some women are returning from captivity with traits that do not
embody traditional feminine characteristics in Uganda culture (I6). For example, women
may be especially aggressive, or have detailed knowledge and experience with weapons
(McKay 1998; I4). As a result, this new configuration of the Ugandan woman has
confused gender identities and norms in Northern Uganda.

The gender identities of men have also been challenged following the conflict in
Northern Uganda. To “be a man” in Uganda has historically been about control (Dolan,
2003, I2). With the changing gender climate brought on in part by the conflict, men now
strive to regain their control through sexual authority, which has led to a rise in sexual
promiscuity and domestic abuse (e.g. Annan et al., 2010a; Koenig 2003; Stark 2010).
Men may have numerous sexual partners over whom they exercise control; and it is
considered socially taboo for a woman to refuse sex from a man (Dolan, 2003).

These hierarchical gender patterns in Northern Uganda impact the whole society,
not just returnees. The gender inequity that is embedded in social norms continues to
ensure that women will be excluded from the public arena and marginalized in everyday
life (Quinn, 2010). Therefore, even with the changing dynamics of gender identities
through the violent conflict, a specific hierarchy is still the norm in Northern Uganda. Although certain political, legal, and economic advances have been made for women, the discourse on gender is relatively new (Pankhurst, 2002). It is important to continue this discussion in order to both understand the gendered complexities of war and to promote gender equity.

5.4 Marriage

5.4.1 The Pressure to Remarry

Some of them remarry… the fact that they were raped in the bush, many of them find it very difficult to remarry. The men fear them (because) they have been involved in rebel activities. If you marry any of these women, they can easily kill you at night when you are sleeping. They are afraid; many do not remarry, but a few who are lucky get married (I6).

The economic and social pressure placed on former forced wives often requires them to seek out a husband for support. Women returning from captivity may seek out their captor husbands or find new husbands for a number of reasons. First, the presence of children born in captivity increases the pressure to find a husband (ACORD, 2007). Traditionally in Acholi society, children are raised with both husbands and wives. Women rely on men to financially provide for their families, and thus if a former forced wife returns with children, she may find it economically difficult to raise a child alone. Furthermore, women traditionally cannot inherit land from their fathers, thus it is difficult for a single mother to acquire the land that is necessary to feed her children (ACORD,
Therefore, families often pressure women to find a husband to provide for their economic needs (Annan et al., 2010b).

There is at times, a pressure for former forced wives to reunite with their captor husbands. Certain local political, religious and community leaders endorse the idea of former forced wives returning to their captor husbands for marriage (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008, 16). They do so in part because the women can demand support from these “husbands.” Political leaders have said that female returnees with children who either refuse to marry or want to marry someone other than their captor husband have become a “social problem,” and thus the solution to this problem would be to remain with their captor husbands (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 28). Former forced wives may be considered a “social problem” because of the demands they place upon the community and because they have little social standing within the community. As is described in chapter three, marriage is very important in Acholi society and women only receives social standing once they are married and have children. Therefore, despite the fact that these marriages are not considered legitimate within Acholi society, (Annan et al., 2008b) the community at times supports or even encourages their continuance (ACORD, 2007). Margaret’s story below describes the internal turmoil former forced wives feel about remarriage.

After I left the rehabilitation center, I stayed with my brother, but things were not easy. I had to feed my children and pay for rent with the little money GUSCO gave me. So when my husband came back after six months, I just made up my mind to go and live with him. My mother consented because my father died while I was in captivity. My husband is still taking care of me and without his support I would not be looking good like this. Nevertheless, he
destroyed me. He destroyed my future and school career. I would have been a different person today (ACORD, 2007, 43).

Margaret’s obvious distress about her continued relationship with her former captor husband exemplifies the struggle many women face upon re-entry into their community.

Many of those who do return to their captor husbands report feeling that they had “no other option” (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 30). They may have been unable to marry outside of their captor relationships or had financial needs that were unmet elsewhere. At times captor husbands have sought to “reclaim” their forced wives outside captivity. Some husbands have reportedly threatened their forced wives that they would search for them if they ever tried to escape from captivity. Others have reportedly threatened physical abuse if their forced wives were discovered engaging in relationships with another man (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). These threats obviously instill fear in former forced wives and inhibit their ability to reengage with the community.

Regardless of their age, many former forced wives desire to be treated as adults. This is likely due to their “coming of age” experiences in captivity that includes: becoming “wives,” bearing children, and other social norms that push young females into adulthood (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). As a result of these experiences, many returning females request the Acholi tradition of “mon pe ribo ot” where women do not live in the same house together. In other words, rather than living together as a social group, female returnees find their own shelter for themselves and for their children (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 27). But this causes obvious difficulties for female returnees. As young, unmarried females, with children who are living alone, they may encounter additional economic difficulties and social isolation.
Yet, the reality is that most former forced wives do not choose or desire to live with their former captor husbands (Snowden, 2010). According to a few, local community leaders, by choosing not to return to the children’s father these former forced wives “make the situation of the rights of the father very serious” (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, 28). Because these women choose not to legally marry their former captors, it becomes difficult to determine what rights the father’s have to their children. Yet the fact that women choose not to return to their captor husbands is notable for a number of reasons. First they are resisting community pressure to follow traditional gender roles. Rather than agreeing to the local norms, these women choose to face community stigma in order to live alone and to make their own relationship choices. Second, these women make this decision even though they may receive less financial or material support from the community.

Because marriage is socially significant for women, women returning from captivity are particularly vulnerable to the changing structures of marriage. There is an interesting dynamic in the community concerning returning females and marriage. On the one hand the community wants them to remarry in part for social acceptance and in part for economic security. On the other hand, the community may socially ostracize these young girls because they have lost their “sexual purity.” Both are ways that the community wants the returning females to fit into the gendered social mode, either through marriage or through sexual purity. Because the returning females do not fit this social mode, they are outside of what is acceptable.
Some young women returning from captivity feel that marriage is their only answer to their significant social and economic problems (ACORD, 2007). On the other hand some former forced wives returning desire to marry yet they may encounter resistance from the community. Many fail to find husbands at all, or are forced to marry out of economic necessity rather than choice (ACORD, 2007). When these women do marry, many encounter challenges because of the abuse they suffered while in captivity. These marriages are often difficult because of complications surrounding the identity of the children, bride price, and the clan’s supporting relations (ACORD 2007, Bishai 2010).

Most women had very difficult times in captivity as “married women.” Therefore, upon their return, some chose not to marry at all (ACORD 2007, l6). In fact, anecdotal evidence suggests that only a few young girls return to their former captor husbands (Annan et al., 2008a). About one in four former forced wives have married other men since leaving the LRA (Annan et al., 2008b). As such, these unmarried women may be socially isolated having to live alone and support themselves.

It is important for the study of gender construction to note that many returning women choose not to remarry. This is important because it suggests that these women are actually resisting the structural forces of gender. Although the community would like them to remarry, returning females struggle to do so in part because of the difficulties they encountered within their former forced marriages. As such they have an increased awareness of the ways in which gender constructed them within the violent conflict. Therefore upon their return to Acholi society after the violent conflict, they are also
dissatisfied with the gender structures they encounter that are considered the norm. Although this awareness may take the form of a subconscious understanding, nevertheless, these women are making changes that affect the gender dynamics and norms of Acholi society. Their decisions reveal that life outside the gender norm is possible, and as such they reveal that it is possible to change the norm.

5.4.2 Changing Institution of Marriage

The institution of marriage in Northern Uganda has also been affected and changed by the conflict with the LRA (El-Bushra, 2003). The majority of individuals now at a marrying age have lived only in an environment of violent conflict, in the IDP camps, or within LRA captivity. The culture has been impacted by these realities that shed new light on marriage and other social structures. Women reentering from captivity encounter tensions between wanting/ Needing to find a husband and no longer desiring the traditional union (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008).

5.4.3 Disruption of the Clan

Although Acholi society continues to deeply respect traditional forms of marriage, the conflict has limited the ability for marriage to take place in all its traditional elements. The conflict has succeeded in disrupting many of the rituals of customary marriage even though the violence in Northern Uganda has largely subsided (ACORD, 2007). The breakdown of the clan is a primary factor affecting traditional marriages in Acholi society. The clan traditionally played a significant role in decisions making related to marriage and dowry (McKay, 1998). As such, the weakening of the clan has
largely impacted the foundational norms within Acholi customary marriage (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). The LRA has successfully damaged the clan’s legitimacy and presence through the protracted conflict, forced displacement, and acts of abduction (Bailey, 2009).

Forced marriage in captivity also arguably disrupted Acholi traditional notions of marriage governed by the clan. While marriage customs assert that both bride and groom must consent to the marriage, forced marriage within the LRA allowed for no such consent. Some women and girls were chosen based on their appearance, education, and skills, but some were also randomly given to male soldiers (Annan et al., 2008b). They did not have the ability to consent to marriage. Forced marriage within the LRA also violated Acholi customs because the parents of the couple were not present and involved in the selection process. Because no approval was granted from the families, no dowry was exchanged (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Therefore not only was forced marriage illegitimate, but it disrupted the social norms of Acholi marriage.

5.4.4 Disruption of the Bride-Price

The conflict also disrupted the traditional practice of bride-price exchange that was often regulated by the clan. There once existed a standard, minimum bride-price of one heifer and one bull in Acholi society at the onset of conflict in Northern Uganda (Bailey, 2009). Both the LRA and UPDF saw the raiding of cattle as a military strategy, but their raiding largely impacted the civilian population in the North (Finnström, 2008). This excessive raiding has devastated the Acholi in a number of ways. First, because cattle, as well as children, are the primary sources of wealth in Acholi culture, loosing
cattle subjected a large number of people to extreme poverty, and challenged the people’s ability to provide a bride-price. Furthermore, cattle were not only used as food sources but also to plow their fields; as such the Acholi found it very difficult to provide food for their people. Finally, because cattle were such a large part of Acholi marriage, the structures of traditional marriage were shaken by the raiding (Bailey, 2009). The LRA and UPDF raided so many cattle in Northern Uganda, that they complicated the matter of a standard bride-price in the North. It became difficult for the Acholi to come up with and exchange a standard bride-price (El-Bushra, 2003).

5.4.5 Increase in Domestic Abuse

As noted in the previous sections, there has also been a striking increase in cases of domestic violence in Northern Uganda. This increase can be directly correlated to the trauma of war (Hovil and Lomo, 2005). As one counselor said, “You find a lot of traumatic issues that are in the marriage leading to breakdown, domestic violence, sexual abuse and others. All were rooted to trauma” (I9). Trauma counselors suggest that poverty and trauma have exacerbated traditional gender divisions and caused an increase in familial conflict. As a result domestic violence has also increased dramatically (e.g. Orach 2009; Kinyanda 2010).

One of the many things I counsel people on is domestic violence. People are highly traumatized because of the home violence; and what cause the home violence are gender roles. They do not share the roles. Because the woman is supposed to provide the meal, the man is supposed to provide the food, but what is the woman to cook when he provides nothing? He comes home when he is still drunk and she has nothing to cook for the family. That is the source of violence. Domestic violence is fueled when the war is at
the highest peak. The different types of war go together—whether in the family or society or country. The members of the family are always affected (I6).

5.5 Children

Many former forced wives encounter psychological trauma when they bring their children home. Bringing a child home from captivity can be difficult for both the individual and community. One counselor relates her experience with a former forced wife who bore a child in captivity. “When the father is unknown, the mother bears the burden and it is an additional mouth to feed in a situation of poverty” (I7).

There are also devastating consequences of forced childbirth following the conflict. Women who bore children in captivity are much less likely to continue their education once returning from captivity (Carlson and Mazurana 2008, Annan et al., 2008b, Annan 2010b). In fact, they are three-times less likely to return to school than girls who were never abducted (Annan et al., 2010c). This is likely due to constraints associated with having children. In sum, females returning from captivity with children have to focus on livelihood, have an absence of child care and some schools may refuse to take unwed mothers (Annan et al., 2008b). Therefore, former forced wives find it very difficult to return to school.

Children also complicate the lives of former forced wives because former forced wives are easier recognized when they return with children. Men returning from captivity find it easier to move on, but women who return with children are recognized by the community (ISIS, 2000). Furthermore, the women have to explain their experiences to their children.
Children born in captivity face their own difficulties outside of the conflict as well. The children may find it difficult to recover from the traumatic experiences of captivity; and they may not have a place to belong upon their return. “In Africa everyone needs a place to belong. This is confusing for the children” (I4). The difference lies in the traditional notion that children belong to the father’s clan (I6). Often children born in captivity are not able to trace their family’s lineage on their father’s side. Many grow up without knowing their fathers, and thus they struggle with their own identity (JRP, 2006). They may also face severe community discrimination, and they may be taunted by their peers or community members (ACORD, 2007).

5.6 Community Responses

The community in Northern Uganda responds to former captive wives in often contradictory ways that can be both positive and negative for the traumatized individual’s recovery. Importantly, the potential for reintegration and traumatic recovery for former abductees is largely related to the ways that the community responds to the traumatized individuals (Herman 1997, and Annan et al. 2010b). Therefore it is important to understand the various community responses to former captives in order to assist with their healing and reentry process.

The community response in Northern Uganda is dependent on the “pattern of how she was taken into a fighting force, the military role she played and the way in which she returned” (McKay and Mazurana, 2004). For example, girls who were captured as a group and return as a group are viewed more favorably than girls who were individually
captured and return with children. Regardless of the specific patterns, many family and community members have a difficult time embracing former forced wives, while a smaller yet still significant number welcome those returning from captivity (e.g. ACCORD 2007; Annan 2010b, Annan 2008b and McKay 2004).

5.6.1 Negative Community Responses

Not only do young mothers who return from captivity face challenges in economic and health status, they may find little psychological or physical support from their communities (ACORD, 2007). Many former forced wives encounter stigma and discrimination when they return from captivity. In fact, the financial and psycho-social support that former forced wives receive at rehabilitation centers in Northern Uganda can lead to discrimination, as it automatically reveals their identity as former captives (ACORD, 2007). The additional support that child-mothers receive from rehabilitation centers can cause other former abductees and community members to feel overlooked (ACORD, 2007).

Often community members are not well prepared for those returning from captivity. Some continue to isolate these children, and it is worse for child mothers. They find it difficult to accept the “rebel children.” Some community members were saying they (the children born in captivity) are bewitched, totally mad, haunted by the spirits (I9). As another counselor puts it, “the community members saw them as rebels. They did not understand the traumatic symptoms, so they were believed to have “chen” or spirits attached to them. What we might see as PTSD is seen as acting rude, aggressively without any understanding to the experiences of these young people.
affecting them psychologically” (114). In other words, the community members were not prepared to recognize the signs of trauma, and so they thought that some of the children and women returning from captivity were mentally insane. As a result, they further ostracized them from community engagement.

Many of the parents of the girls do not help. They are already living in poverty and now they (former forced wives) are bringing back from captivity young babies to be brought to the home. We sensitize the community to know their roles towards the abducted children. Many would not want to receive them because they are the ones who abducted others… so when they returned home their parents rejected them. ‘You are the ones who have killed us, set our houses ablaze, so we don’t want you here.’ We have a big task in the community to make them aware that as much as these children did these things, they were always forced. They had no choice (I6).

This quote taken from an interview with a trauma counselor highlights another problem. Community members face the tension of wanting their family members to return home, but at the same time realizing that the former abductees committed violent acts. According to this interview, some community members do not realize that the children were forced by the LRA to commit these violet acts, and as such, they reject the former abductees.

Those who do face negative responses from the community may experience these ostracisms not only because of their role in the fighting forces, but also because of their loss of virginity (McKay 2004 and ACCORD, 2007). Sexual purity and marriage are highly valued in Acholi society (ACCORD, 2007). Even before the war, girls who got pregnant outside of marriage encountered community discrimination. They were considered to be, “bringers of bad luck and shame to the family, girls who lacked the
moral teaching that their mothers were expected to provide” (ACORD 2007, 45). Young girls who return from the bush with children or who report experiences of rape are often deemed “unmarriageable,” and may lose their status in society (Denov, 2008). This idea that former forced wives are “impure” points to broader gender issues within the society.

The power inherent in the ownership of the girl-child and women by male LRA soldiers is a twisted and extended form of that which exists in more familiar social settings. Government reports describe a broader patriarchal social context in Uganda in which women and girls have a lower status than males within the family, community, and society at large (Amnesty International, 1997).

Not only do the mother’s face stigma, the children who were born in captivity are often harassed and isolated from the community (Mckay, 1998). They also face serious obstacles to reintegration. They lack medical supplies and treatment, have little resources for their children, few means to attend school, and some, along with their children, are even abused by the community (McKay and Mazurana, 2004).

The behavior and personality that some females acquire through the conflict may at times hinder their reintegration into community. Some girls return from captivity as highly aggressive, using abusive or foul language being quarrelsome, using drugs, alcohol and smoking; and these behaviors arguably violate social gender norms. (McKay and Mazurana, 2004) Although ironically these same behaviors may have kept them alive while in captivity, girls displaying these behaviors upon return are often shunned from the community (McKay, 1998). Communities may find it difficult to respond positively to former captive females; they may respond with verbal and physical abuse (I9).
5.6.2 Positive Community Responses

On the other hand some individuals returning from captivity are welcomed back into their families. One study suggests that only a minority of women returning from combat have reintegration difficulties, and rather the majority is able to socially reintegrate (Annan et al., 2010b). The participants they interviewed were able to reintegrate successfully into their families and community. Although an accepting family is important for the psychological healing of these individuals, it does not completely alleviate the psychological repercussions of forced marriage. Yet those who successfully reintegrate into their families have more positive outlooks on their future (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). As one counselor said, “at times there are big changes in the lives of the community and their intentions. Somehow they become accepted, but it is a very long process (I11).

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter clearly describes the challenges of reentry for former forced wives. It also discusses changes in the social conventions that construct gendered identities including: marriage, division of labor and children. Uganda is now in a tenuous stage of post-conflict reconstruction. The Acholi people, specifically former forced wives, have survived two stages of traumatic rupture 1) of war and 2) of reentry into society. They are ready to heal from these traumatic experiences. The next and final chapter moves into a discussion on gendered healing and recovery from traumatic war experiences. It is
crucial for peacebuilders to critically engage trauma healing in order to accompany war trauma survivors into post-conflict reconstruction.
CHAPTER 6:

RECONSTRUCTING AGENCY IN NORTHERN UGANDA

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The present moment in Northern Uganda is one of healing and reconstruction. The gendered identities of individuals were damaged through the conflict and peacebuilders need to respond with a mode of healing. This study highlights that gender and trauma theories overlap, and their combination also provokes improved trauma healing and peacebuilding practice. The questions that remain are then, now that we understand the traumatic rupture as gendered, what are the options for healing? In other words, how do trauma healing professionals assist traumatized individuals in rebuilding their agency even as they contend with the gendered contours of the environment in which they reside? And how does the work of trauma healing relate to gender equity-building work?

These questions are essential to the peacebuilding process (Lederach, 2011). If we as peacebuilders fail to notice gender in conflict, we also fail to adequately address the issues of identity and healing that arise out of conflict. Therefore, trauma healers and peacebuilders must be attentive to gender and to the reconstruction of gender. At the same time, the traumatic events of war can reveal both gender constructions and the
potential that they wield to subvert gender construction. Therefore trauma healers and peacebuilders have the potential to promote gender equity through their work.

Peacebuilders are currently conducting trauma healing in a variety of ways in Northern Uganda. The first section of this chapter provides a sense of what else is necessary in this healing work by outlining current perspectives on healing as well as current trauma healing practices in Northern Uganda. The second section highlights the theoretical overlap between trauma and gender through a discussion of “middle space” the need for gendered witness, and the potential to subvert gender construction. I conclude with some practical implications of these theories.

6.2 Trauma Healing in Northern Uganda

“We should not read from books about healing but learn from the society and understand what trauma healing means in Acholi society” (I4). This counselor emphasizes the need to understand trauma healing in the local context.

6.2.1 Presence or “Remaining With”

Ugandan counselors describe the notion of healing in a variety of ways. As one counselor put it, “Trauma healing is about a relationship. It is about trying to understand the person and communicating back to him or her” (I7). In this way, the notion of presence is very important within trauma healing. Healing involves a sense of “remaining with” (Caruth, 1996) the person in their pain in order to eventually overcome that pain. This idea is also very pertinent to the Ugandan understanding of healing. As one Ugandan counselor said, “what is important is being in the present moment, and...
staying with the pain they have right now- learning to accept it (the pain)” (I2). Part of the healing process for the traumatized person is an acceptance of the suffering they experienced through the war. This acceptance can come as the trauma counselor remains with them in their pain. This idea can seem counterintuitive because it suggests that being present and remaining with the person in their suffering is more important than getting past the pain, but Judith Herman’s trauma theory described in chapter two supports this idea.

The notion of presence falls under Judith Herman’s first stage of trauma healing: safety. It encompasses her first stage of safety, in that the trauma counselors create a secure place for the trauma survivors to share. One counselor described her experience of creating a safe place.

Trauma healing is about helping the survivors to trust you. Because when you are traumatized you cannot open up to a person whose intention you don’t know…you have to be patient and build trust. So the first thing is connecting and getting to know each other. In the second session they may begin telling you some of the issues they experienced. Slowly they begin opening up and building trust and confidence (I6).

Another counselor said, “just sitting down to talk and to be with a person can change a lot of things. That has always been my joy, sitting beside them, making them feel I am around and available is very important” (I9). This counselor emphasized the importance of being present with trauma survivors to help them feel safe so that they can heal.
6.2.2 Restoring Relationships and Community

Trauma counselors in Northern Uganda also described the important role that the community plays in trauma healing. “Trauma healing does not take place in isolation. It must take place holistically. The whole community must play a big role in the healing. We have a lot of contact with the families of the traumatized person. We follow up with the community to make them know their own responsibility toward the traumatized persons” (14). Another counselor said that she works to “create network at all levels - at the family, school, and community level- so we collectively handle the people who are traumatized” (16). In creating networks, this counselor understands the significant role that community has in helping traumatized individuals heal. The counselors in Northern Uganda also thought that the value of community immensely helped the process of trauma healing. As one counselor said,

The cultural context here is very helpful. Every Acholi person has an obligation to see that their neighbor is well. Even if you have nothing to offer- just to say good morning- just a greeting. At least you must offer that. You find that people say, ‘I haven’t lived on my own up to this level. Somebody gave me a cup of beans, and I managed to survive for one week. Just sit there and talk with me or look at me’ (12).

This account reveals the importance of community and connection within the healing process in Northern Uganda. This counselor’s clients found it helpful to have a community member just sit with them through their pain. Another counselor told a powerful story of three former clients who were impacted by the community:

At one point they (each) thought of suicide, but a neighbor in some way stopped them. She stopped them not by telling them, ‘don’t do
it.’ They just came in to talk, and stayed longer, until this idea went away. They threw away the poison or the rope. This is very striking. Someone can just come in without anything to say, just to stay with you. I asked them if these people knew, or came to purposefully help them, but I found out that the neighbors just came in for their own support, and in some way they both supported each other and survived. So the culture has been very helpful…‘Together the life of the other is my responsibility to uphold. I must contribute to their wellbeing.’ To me in psychology that is a very big resource in the healing of the people (I1).

This story reveals the powerful impact that community can have on healing. For the clients described above, the fact that community members took the time to be present with them saved their lives. One last counselor described the importance of community in coping with the traumatic events of the conflict in Northern Uganda.

What makes them cope is their communal life. Those of the western world are more individualistic, but here we have a community system that keeps everyone together. That togetherness is a buffer that helps people to bounce back. We feel so much for one another. Before the war you found a homestead where every member of the clan stayed together to support one another. Even when they had conflict you sit down and solve together as a community. Everyone was around to support one another. So I say that it is our communal nature that gives social support and makes us resilient (I6).

6.3 The Resonant Middle Between Life and Death

Despite the excellent work of counselors in Northern Uganda, this study reveals the difficulty of guiding traumatized individuals towards healing after the gendered experiences of violence in Northern Uganda. Part of this difficulty lies in the deconstructed notions of life and death, which are also connected to the deconstructed identities of individuals after the violent conflict. In this section, trauma counselors in
Northern Uganda describe their clients’ struggles with understanding what remains between life and death. This provides an interesting entry point into discussing options for a nuanced addition to their current efforts at rebuilding agency. Shelly Rambo’s *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (2010) speaks to this experience, and to the healing reconstruction work taking place in Northern Uganda.

Traumatic events, like abduction and forced marriage, in Northern Uganda, challenge the traditional understanding of life and death and necessitate a middle space between the two. Trauma forces survivors into the middle space of unknowing because the normal notions of life and death are confused. The lens of trauma disputes the familiar notions of life, death, hope and healing and it creates a new, gray space where these concepts are recognized as complex and fragile. This is what Shelly Rambo refers to as the “middle space” (Rambo 2010, 18). One counselor in Northern Uganda described this “middle space for the survivors he worked with:

> There is a lot of pain in the life of the victim. There are so many losses. Loss of hope and other values like the value of human life itself. *Someone sees their life totally violated in a manner that they never imagined.* Usually there are so many losses at this level. Then especially Northern Uganda is a community that believes so much in the existence of God. Now we always talk about God as a protector, as provider. But then someone is tortured by another and God seems not to intervene. This is also a big loss of faith. They feel either, ‘I am banished by God or he seems to abandon me in this time of suffering’ (I1).

This counselor gets at the idea of the “middle space” as he describes the traumatic violation of life and the loss that remains. The person’s faith struggle also highlights the questioning of life and death. All that seemed certain is lost for the trauma survivor.
Through trauma, death and life are no longer understood as oppositional, but rather flow into a single expression of what it means to be human and to survive. Life is not a new beginning, nor is death the end of our understanding. Trauma causes us to meet death in the excess of life, and the unknowing nature of survival, that can only be comprehended as death (Rambo, 2010). In other words, trauma is a crisis involving both death and life. The traumatic experience with death continues, because survival involves the persistent haunting of death. But traumatic survival also includes the rewriting of life. This wavering between life and death creates a middle space from which death and life are perpetually entangled. More than creating the space, trauma demands both witness of the death experience and the possibility of life arising out of it. The middle ultimately connects the two and calls for a witness that does the same (Rambo, 2010).

In trauma healing, life emerges out of the place of death or death’s excess. Trauma theory reveals the need for witnessing from “the middle” and begs the question what happens between the life and death (Rambo, 2010)? In asking this question, the trauma healer remains with the survivor in the middle place of suffering. This place of remaining may speak to the experiences of trauma survivors in a way that other methods could not because it recognizes the new perspective that the trauma survivor has on life.

Trauma theory also points to a different creation of relationship at the site of trauma. Trauma essentially challenges what we currently understand to constitute human relationships. The reality that emerges from the middle space ultimately alters relationships and the contours of understanding around the meaning of life and death. Relationships are strongly impacted by the survivor’s inability to communicate their
experience. Language fails at this point. Out of the site of trauma, the ability to communicate is transformed into an ambiguous space where truth, produced out of the death experience, cannot be fully known or communicated (Ross, 2007). But the ability to witness to that which seems impossible does emerge out of the site of trauma. The witness has the potential to connect to the survivor through “listening through” the wound rather than “listening to” the wound (Rambo, 2010). The transmission that occurs between the survivor and witness is not an exchange of simple knowledge but rather a response to that which is mysterious and cannot be enclosed of the past. In other words, the transmission substitutes for what is typically understood as communication (Rambo, 2010).

As is becoming clear, the lens of trauma guides us to new territory- that of what remains between death and life- and how to re-envision witness in this middle space. It provides the space from which to grapple with the unknowable, move into the depths of the shattered remains, and to begin the work of remaking and reimagining from what is left. Traumatic experiences call for a witnessing from “the middle space” (Rambo, 2010). Within the “middle space,” the witness can respond to the survivor’s suffering. The witness is situated with respect to the suffering in such a way that they can see truths that escape the prevailing logic. The witness is also able to enter into the center of suffering despite the fact that they cannot have a complete sensory understanding of the person’s suffering. In this way, the trauma counselor meets the trauma survivor in their place of pain and remains with them in that pain until they are able to re-imagine life.
6.4 Gender Addition to the “Middle Space”

Gender theory adds another element to this middle space of unknowing. Just as the notions of life and death are called into question, so are the gendered notions of identity. Former forced wives in Northern Uganda contend with multiple ruptures of their gendered identity both through abduction and forcible marriage and then through reentry back into society. As one counselor said, “Trauma can disorganize us a lot. It would disorganize all spheres of life, spiritually, physically, psychologically, name it” (I5). This counselor’s thoughts follow the idea that life is deconstructed through trauma and that notions of gendered identity are disorganized and revealed through trauma.

Another counselor highlighted the impact that the trauma of war had on gender structures in Northern Uganda. “You find a lot of traumatic issues that are in the marriage leading to breakdown, domestic violence, sexual abuse and others, all were rooted to trauma” (I9). This counselor’s thought that the breakdown of social structures, such as marriage, was related to the trauma events of war. Another counselor describes the way that a former forced wife contends with her experience. Specifically, the counselor highlights the trauma that the girl experiences with her return from captivity:

It is very painful for a traumatized person to talk of themselves. The most painful part of all these experience that a client shares are things to do with rape, especially those who return with children…Every time the client sees the baby it is a clear reminder of the traumatic experience. As they see their babies they are in total dilemma. ‘Must I love my baby? Must I kill him? If I love him, it is like I appreciate all the bad things that happened to me that resulted in this baby. If I kill this baby, my own blood is shed through this baby’ (I6).
The young girl that this counselor describes is clearly struggling with her new identity, and struggling with the trauma she went through to obtain her new identity of mother.

Once the traditional understanding of gendered agency in life and death is deconstructed, a middle space can emerge where agency and the notion of self and be restored. They will be restored in a more fragile manner, but it is within this place that the traumatized person can find healing (Rambo, 2010). Likewise, it is within this place that the traumatized person can reconstruct their gendered identity.

Although the methods that trauma healers utilize in Northern Uganda are important, applying a gender lens to the conflict reveals the need for a nuanced addition. Building off of the previous section on the middle space between life and death, I suggest that the notion of gendered witness adds an important element to the trauma healing methods that are already practice on the ground. Trauma healing, specifically the practice of witness has greater potential if trauma healers and peacebuilders are attentive to gender. In this section, I show that the trauma healing practice of gendered witness has the potential to reconstruct gendered agency.

6.4.1 Gendered Witness

There is no perfect or even sufficient response to the trauma that occurred in Northern Uganda. Yet, peacebuilders have the potential to witness the suffering of those traumatized in Northern Uganda. Witness acts as a form of trauma healing that restores the agency and dignity that was stripped from the survivor through the traumatic experiences of war. It does so by being present with the survivor in a way of listening to, and almost embodying the suffering that remains (Rambo, 2010). Adding an awareness
of gender to this practice acknowledges the trauma as gendered. The notion of *gendered witness* contends with the unspeakable deconstruction that occurred through the trauma in Northern Uganda. Gendered witness is a method that recognizes the survivor’s loss, while at the same time reconstructs a new agency.

Reconstructing agency requires a certain reconstruction in context. The previous chapters discuss the distinctive social structures and the unique conflict in Northern Uganda, and thus the need to respond in an equally specialized way. The experience of forced marriage caused a unique disruption of identity for the former forced wives in Northern Uganda. Their identity was first disrupted through the trauma of abduction and captivity. Then it was disrupted through their reentry into a society that did not fully accept or understand them. As such, former forced wives deserve and need a particular witness to their complex trauma and their pain. Trauma healers need to recognize this gendered loss of identity, and that the loss of identity itself is gendered.

The practice of gendered witnessing also encompasses the Ugandan understanding of healing and moves the survivor into a place of renewed agency. The notion of witness is connected to what the Ugandan counselors described as “presence” or “remaining with.” Like the Ugandan notion of “presence,” (I3) gendered witness recognizes the traumatic events of the past without justifying or making sense of them. Ugandan counselors described the importance of “staying with” survivors in their pain; (I6) gendered witness is similar to this, except that it adds the notion of gender to the healing process. Within gendered witness, trauma healers “remain with” survivors and recognize their gendered suffering while they also recognize their potential to reconstruct
gendered identity. In this way, witness paves the way for a new future and life for the trauma survivors in Northern Uganda.

6.5 Final Synthesis: Trauma, Gender and the Space for Change

Beyond gendered witness, there is one additional synthesis that is important to this study. Traumatic events disrupt gender construction and in doing so highlight the space for change. That is, traumatic events present the potential to overcome the dominant gender hierarchy. As is described in chapter two, Judith Butler contends that the critical task of feminism is subversive repetition. It is possible to locate gender repetitions and to displace the very norms that enable gender construction (Butler, 1990). Yet gender repetitions are difficult to observe, because they are accepted as “normal” through societal ritual. The process of repetition disguises the reiteration of norms so that they appear to be cemented or fixed through their reiteration, although they are actually fluid and open to change. Thus, it is difficult to question the accepted norms. This study reveals that traumatic events have the potential to unveil and upset the hidden gender repetitions in society.

Traumatic events highlight the space for change that Judith Butler describes. The previous chapters reveal that trauma disrupts the normal social structures of life such as kinship, and marriage. This disruption bring to light the vulnerability of these structures, or in other words, that these structures can be altered. The previous section demonstrates how traumatic events cause individuals to question life and death and the structures that surround mortality. At the same time, traumatic events cause individuals to see the
gendered structures of life. What survivors once thought was certain - life, death, gendered identities - becomes transformed through the traumatic event. Certainty is changed into uncertainty.

Traumatic events, like those in Northern Uganda, bring survivors to a different conception of truth. They no longer know what is certain or true, but rather they define truths out of their experience with loss. Life, death, and the social structures that define us are seen as through the "middle space" that is described in the section above. Absolute truths are replaced with ambiguous truths about identity, life and death. Truth orients us not to clarity or what is fully known but to the need for witness of that which is shattered in the known world. This also applies to gender identities. Trauma reveals the truth about the shattered remains of gender construction and leads us to a place of rebuilding with a greater awareness for the fluidity of gender.

Trauma can cause one to question their gender construction. If the structures that construct gender are disrupted through a traumatic event, such as war, the traumatized individual has the opportunity to not only witness the fragility of life and death but also the fragility of the gender conventions in society and in their own life. The goal of trauma healing is to redeem the life that was lost and to move forward into a new constructed identity. Although trauma is tragic, there is a positive opportunity through traumatic events to deconstruct the social norms that create gender hierarchy. This is where the case study of Northern Uganda is so relevant and interesting. This conflict presents an opportunity for the survivors to recognize the fragility of gender construction and to subvert the dominant gender hierarchy.
6.6 Implications

As a conclusion, I highlight two important implications from this work. First, trauma healers need to incorporate gender into their practice of trauma healing. Second, peacebuilders and trauma healers have an opportunity to promote gender-equity after the traumatic events of war.

In regards to the first implication, trauma healers can incorporate the practice of *gendered witness* that I describe above. Although there are a variety of ways that gender can be incorporated into trauma healing, *gendered witness* presents a possible entry point into this work. Practically, this would entail training trauma healers to be aware of gender and reconstruction and to understand how traumatic violence is gendered. Trauma healers also need education and training on the practice of witness that pays close attention to gender. This idea can be extended to other trauma healing practices; trauma healers can devote a greater awareness to gender in all of their methods. There is potential for future research on the practice of *gendered witness* and other entry points for the practical application of this theory.

Second, the final synthesis reveals an opportunity after traumatic conflict to promote greater gender equity. The previous section shows how trauma reveals gender as constructed and it also reveals the potential to subvert the dominant gender constructions. Yet true subversion involves change at a systems level. So this task requires efforts from multiple actors to educate and bring about a wider awareness of gender construction so that it may be overthrown. In order to be effective, all these
efforts must happen in conjunction with other gender equity efforts such as political equity and economic development.

Peacebuilders, including trauma healers, play an important role in healing after a traumatic event. The peacebuilder needs to educate, train, and develop, but all these efforts will be strengthened if they are done in conjunction with gender. In the end, the practice of witness and trauma healing with a greater awareness of gender will allow the trauma survivors in Northern Uganda to move into a place of greater equity, dignity and hope.

6.7 Final Thought: Dignity and Hope for the Future

The people of Northern Uganda, specifically those who were abducted and forced into marriage, survived unspeakable traumatic events.

Overwhelmingly the counselors stated that healing meant a restoration of dignity for their traumatized clients. It also included a renewed sense of hope and meaning for the future. As one counselor said, “healing is when someone begins to realize meaning, dignity and hope in life” (I7). Another counselor described healing in similar way:

I noticed I was healing because I was getting happy with myself… your thinking changes. When you are in trauma you are entrapped. Your pain grows deep. When you are healed, you become more positive towards offers of life… not to destroy, but to build up, because you have become built up through this treatment…not condemning everyone but saying ‘well it happened, but I can go on. I can survive.’ When you are in trauma, life is meaningless. It could as well end. So in a sense healing means restoring meaning (I12).
May the trauma survivors in Northern Uganda, and throughout the world continue to find hope and meaning in life. My hope is that this study contributes to the practice of trauma healing and peacebuilding so that trauma survivors may continue to heal.


JRP, “Young Mothers, Marriage, and Reintegration in Northern Uganda: Considerations for the Juba Peace Talks” *Justice and Reconciliation Project* Liu Institute for Global Issues and the


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