

Facilitating Change: How reintegration programs in Northern Uganda address the shifting identities of former child soldiers from the Lords Resistance Army (LRA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses the issue of child soldier reintegration, looking at how fundamental changes in children's identities can be facilitated by reintegration centers and other organizations who work with these children and youth long term. The purpose of this study is to discover how identity concerns are being addressed in the reintegration programs for former child soldiers from the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda, in order to make recommendations on how this process can be improved. The guiding research question for this study asks, to what extent do disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs help shift the identities of former child soldiers back from the rebel group, and how can reintegration centers improve the ways they incorporate identity concerns into their programs?

This research has been prepared for Children of Peace Uganda, a non-profit organization in Lira, Uganda that works with former LRA child soldiers, children born in captivity and child mothers. Although Children of Peace is not a reintegration center, they are involved in the long-term reintegration process of former child soldiers. This research is important for organizations such as Children of Peace, because it indicates how changes in child soldier identity may influence the reintegration process, and how centers who work with these children can help them transition to a community identity faster. The final deliverable that has been designed for Children of Peace is a pamphlet that outlines eight recommendations on the ways the center can incorporate identity concerns into their work. This pamphlet will not only be used by Children of Peace, but will also be shared with their affiliated organizations such as schools, reintegration centers and other agencies that deal with reintegration.

The components of this study include a literature review and document analysis, which provide the necessary background and theoretical lens for understanding how the theory of identity salience may be applied to the reintegration process. Identity salience theory is the idea that within each individual there exist multiple facets of their identity that become stronger in specific situations and form a hierarchy. The position of a specific identity on the hierarchy will determine how difficult it is to move away from that identity, and for another shared identity or sense of belonging to be promoted. For former child soldiers who strongly identify with the LRA upon return from captivity, facilitating into a community, student or family identity will likely be more difficult. Using the theory of identity salience, this research posits that if certain identity concerns are taken into account by reintegration centers, this can help children to move away from their LRA identity into one conducive to peace.

The literature on identity salience theory is first explained in the background, and then it is analyzed within a reintegration context in the document analysis. This analysis also outlines several reintegration programs and approaches used for child soldier reintegration, and discusses how identity concerns are currently being addressed in this work. The document analysis concludes with a section on the reintegration experiences of former child soldiers, taken from various NGO and government reports. This section outlines the difficulties for former child soldiers upon return to their communities, and discusses how they undergo fundamental changes in their identity.

To situate this research in a real world setting, and make it applicable to Children of Peace, one reintegration center in Lira, Uganda has been studied. The Rachele Rehabilitation Center, which operated between 2003-2006, has helped over 2000 former child soldiers return to their communities. In order to find out the details of this program, and the extent to which they incorporated identity concerns into their work, eight former staff member were interviewed. These staff members, who ranged in positions from management to support staff, provided their insight and perspectives on how their center's activities have helped former child soldiers change identities during reintegration.

The conclusions from these interviews demonstrated that community rejection, stigma, lack of education, time spent and position in the bush all seem to impede successful identity changes. On the other hand, acceptance, access to education, meaningful employment and developing connections with others, may all help to make a new identity salient. Findings from all of the components demonstrate the importance of identity during the reintegration process, and highlight the need for reintegration programs to facilitate identity changes within the children they work with. Finally, the discussion section at the end of the report answers the research question and discusses the implications that this work has for reintegration centers and other related organizations. Concluding with the list of recommendations to these centers, including Children of Peace, the results of this work will hopefully aid in creating more successful reintegration experiences for these children and youth.

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INTRODUCTION

In one of Uganda's most longstanding conflicts, the Lord's Resistant Army (LRA) continues to this day to commit some of the worst atrocities the international community has ever witnessed. The LRA, headed by Joseph Kony has committed murder, rape, forcible displacement of whole villages, and the abduction and recruitment of more than 60,000 children and youth into their militias since 1986 (Annan, Brier, & Areymo, 2009; World Bank, 2007). In Northern Uganda, the birthplace of the LRA, many of these children have now returned to their communities by being rescued by the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces, United Nations (UN) forces or by escaping the LRA on their own accord (Annan et al., 2009; Dowdney, 2008). However during the reintegration process sometimes communities and families are not willing to accept these children back after the horrific crimes that they have been forced to commit, many times to their own family members (Angucia, Zeelen, & De Jong, 2010). These children and youth are then alienated and stigmatized by the community, who have little sympathy or understanding of the complex processes these children have experienced (Angucia et al., 2010).

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs have the mandate to help former child soldiers reintegrate back into their communities and provide the necessary psychosocial and economic support they require (United Nations, 2006). However as of 2008, Child Soldiers International (formerly the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), a U.K. NGO, reported that Northern Uganda had no official DDR program in place. In the absence of an official program, in the 1990's various NGOs and other agencies established DDR centers in order to respond to the needs of these returning children. Centers in Northern Uganda included ones operated by World Vision, Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) in Gulu, and the Rachele Rehabilitation Center in Lira (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). These programs have helped around 20,000 returning children and youth from the LRA (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008) and have provided necessary services to combat the effects of armed conflict, and facilitate successful reintegration back into society.

Of all the steps in the DDR process, long term reintegration and rehabilitation are the most difficult and complex (Betancourt et al., 2009). The factors that predict successful long-term reintegration include "family and community acceptance, access to educational and training opportunities to help war-affected youth achieve self-sufficiency and maintain productive roles in the community as well as the behaviour of the youth themselves" (Betancourt et al., 2009, p. 18). A central component of these factors as well as successful reintegration, is the concept of identity and the important identity transformations that these children must go through in order to resume life within the community (Denov & Maclure, 2007; Williamson, 2006).

Identity can be understood as the ability to distinguish oneself from those perceived as being different, along with the process of making group judgments (Ross, 2001). Identities are negotiable, relational, and situationally specific, with the meaning of various identities changing over time and space (Gerson, 2001). Research in social psychology has demonstrated that people carry multiple identities and depending on the situation the salient identity affects emotion, cognition and behavior (Cohen et. al, 2007). A useful theoretical framework for understanding

how the identities of former child soldiers may be shifted during the reintegration process is the concept of identity salience.

According to Stryker and Serpe (1994) identity salience can be defined as “a readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity's properties as a cognitive structure or schema” (p. 17). Therefore, the group that an individual is attached to impacts their identity salience, and helps them develop a sense of who they are in the world around them. For former child soldiers of the LRA, their identity begins to center around a violent rebel group, who have forced and brainwashed them to commit horrible acts. Many children who have been abducted and indoctrinated into violence begin to identify with that group, and become convinced that they can never return home (Williamson, 2006). In order for successful reintegration to occur, these children “required a transformation of their identity from being a child soldier into being an acceptable member of a community. They had to come to see themselves differently” (Williamson, 2006, p. 202). This is why reintegration programs have such an important role to play in helping children adopt a new identity as a student, community or family member.

Purpose and objectives. This project investigates how DDR and reintegration programs in Northern Uganda and elsewhere, address and facilitate former child soldiers’ shifting identities during the reintegration process.¹ By applying the theory of identity salience to the literature on DDR programs for former child soldiers in Northern Uganda, identity concerns can be explored through this theoretical lens. Further, through the use of secondary research studies of former child soldiers and reintegration approaches, this document analysis demonstrates how identity concerns may be incorporated into future reintegration programs. Interviews with staff of one reintegration center in Northern Uganda have also been conducted to provide an in-depth example of how one reintegration center approached and incorporated identity concerns. These interviews explore staff members’ experiences and stories about the children they have worked with, what role they believe identity plays in the DDR process, as well as how this program has addressed the shifting identities of former child soldiers.

The purpose of this study is to discover how identity concerns are being addressed in the reintegration programs for former child soldiers from the LRA in Northern Uganda, in order to make recommendations on how this process can be improved. Reintegration programs and staff members play a central role in helping facilitate the fundamental identity changes within former child soldiers that bring about lasting change, and successful reintegration into the community. Organizations who work with former child soldiers long term thus require a greater understanding of how identity concerns impact the reintegration process. The results of this research will be applied to one of these organizations, Children of Peace Uganda.

¹ Within reintegration programs it is unlikely that staff members conceptualize the shifting identities of children as a process termed identity salience, and even the term identity is not necessarily used among reintegration centers. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind what is meant by a shift in identity, for the purposes of this report and in practice. Within this context, the concept of shifting identities can be understood as a change in a child’s self-concept, or the group that a child feels the greatest sense of belonging or attachment to. Shifting identities can also be understood in practice by the outward behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that children demonstrate during the reintegration process. While it may be impossible to understand the exact process of how identities shift within individual children, especially without extensive first hand accounts, it is possible to see how current reintegration programs understand and incorporate identity concerns into their work.

Client

This research has been conducted for the organization Children of Peace Uganda, who has served as the client for this work. Children of Peace is an organization that works in Lira, Uganda, with children and youth who have returned from LRA captivity. Children of Peace seeks to help these children and youth rebuild their lives through ongoing trauma therapy, education support, livelihood and advocacy efforts. These efforts help to enhance the self-reliance and self-esteem of former child soldiers, child mothers and children born in captivity.

After emerging from a reintegration center such as GUSCO or the Rachele Rehabilitation Center, many children are still in need of educational, psychosocial and financial support. Organizations such as Children of Peace thus provide an important ongoing support system to ensure that these children and youth continue their reintegration and healing journey. Understanding the important identity transformations that these children undergo throughout their reintegration experience will undoubtedly help Children of Peace in their work. This research is intended to be a source of information on how the identities of former child soldiers may shift during the reintegration process, and will help inform the trauma therapy and advocacy work that Children of Peace is involved with.

The results of this research will be given to Children of Peace, in the form of a pamphlet or brochure. This short, visually appealing brochure will highlight the main findings of this research, and provide a list of suggested ways that centers such as Children of Peace can incorporate identity concerns into their work, in order to help former child soldiers continue to shift their identity. This study may also be useful for schools in the area, such as the Rachele Comprehensive Secondary School and Almond College, because of the ongoing role that schools play in the lives of former child soldiers. The education support that Children of Peace offers to children and youth provides the ideal opportunity for this information to get into the hands of educators.

Research Question

Through a document analysis, expert interviews and in-depth interviews with former staff of one reintegration center, this qualitative study answers one main research question; To what extent do DDR and reintegration programs help shift the identities of former child soldiers from the LRA back from the rebel group, and how can DDR and reintegration programs improve the ways they incorporate identity concerns, as to create more effective transitions to the community? To answer the first part of this question, reintegration programs and approaches in Uganda and elsewhere are analyzed, as well as the secondary experiences of former child soldiers, experts working in the field and former staff.

The second half of this question involves learning from the past work in this field, and applying a new way of looking at reintegration. Through the use of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), which posits that attachment and commitment to an in-group facilitates increased identification with that group, the reintegration process can be viewed by looking at intergroup dynamics. Further, the main theoretical component of this study is the idea of identity salience or hierarchy of identities (Stryker, 1969), which may be addressed by reintegration program staff when attempting to help former child soldiers reintegrate. Both theories provide an interesting and important contribution to understanding how reintegration programs and staff can help change a child or youth's military identity back into their family or community group.

Contribution to Dispute Resolution

In addition to the impact that this project has for organizations working in the field, the information generated from this research also contributes to the work on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Conflict transformation is the process of transforming human relationships, interests and structures that contribute to the continuation of violent conflict (Miall, 2001). Lederach's (2005) work on conflict transformation seeks to explain the profound, long-term transformations that enable a conflict to change course. In conjunction with the goals and purpose of this project, conflict transformation is about improving social relationships, which can only be done if people come to see themselves in relation to the other (Lederach, 2005). This strengthened relationship will then help to transform the context in which conflict parties discuss the issues and develop strategies for change. For former child soldiers trying to reintegrate back into their communities, developing these relationships and strategies is fundamental for long-term stability.

In his forward to the UN Integrated DDR Standards (2006) Kofi Annan stresses the importance of this document by stating, "The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants and those associated with armed groups is a prerequisite for post-conflict stability and recovery" (p. ii). The DDR process for ex-child soldiers is especially important for peacebuilding, as it serves as a 'transitional safety net' and ensures that these children do not become idle and resort back to conflict (Awodala, 2012; Mutisi, 2010). While the demobilization and disarmament of former child soldiers will aid in the social reconstruction of Uganda, the long-term reconciliation processes that are designed to repair relationships between these children and their communities can only be brought about by successful reintegration (Williamson, 2006). These reconstruction and reconciliation processes are part of the postwar activities that communities all over Uganda are currently participating in, which will hopefully be aided by the work done in this project.

Another important aspect of this project is the incorporation of traditional and cultural African/Ugandan approaches to conflict resolution. Several authors (e.g. Turay, 2000; Velthuisen, 2011; Wamba, 2004) have discussed the importance of using African traditional understandings of conflict, peace and conflict resolution when making decisions on the proper course of action in African disputes. These authors also stress the importance of not assuming that Western or European understandings of conflict resolution are necessarily better suited to handling the often violent, regional conflicts that occur all over Africa. As Wamba (2004) states about child soldiers in Mozambique, "We cannot come in from the outside thinking that our processes are necessarily better... We should not, then, look at traditionalism as inferior, but should instead look to create partnerships within the community" (p. 17). Creating these partnerships and placing value on the traditional and cultural practices of the region is key in creating effective reintegration practices. Without these partnerships, and the blending of various forms of knowledge, researchers from the West may be inadvertently placing their own value systems on a culture they may not fully understand. In order for this work to be completed in a respectful and responsible manner, every effort has been made to ensure that African and Ugandan traditional and cultural understandings of conflict and reintegration have been included in this research.

The value of incorporating African knowledge into conflict resolution management, decisions, and the approaches used to build relationships and deal with conflict, have been discussed by

several authors (e.g. Kouassi, 2008; Velthuisen, 2011). Integrating the perspectives of local communities and indigenous knowledge systems, along with using proverbs, oaths and other traditional methods of conflict resolution are some ways that this knowledge can be utilized (Kouassi, 2008; Velthuisen, 2011). Various forms of indigenous knowledge that could inform a conflict management approach in Uganda may include: African traditional knowledge, collective knowledge that combines approaches, and social capital knowledge that exists between organizations and individuals working in the region (Velthuisen, 2011). A combination of these approaches is important when developing a successful reintegration strategy for Northern Uganda, as without this common ground between various organizations, peacebuilding efforts are likely to fail (Velthuisen, 2011).

However, it is also important to consider that conflicts in Africa must be addressed through an African-centered perspective with ideas being generated by Africans themselves (Turay, 2000). Building upon their cultural and traditional approaches to conflict, “Africans must play a central role in identifying and solving their own problems” (Turay, 2000, p. 253.). This is not to say that Western researchers cannot be part of the solution, only that the solutions must be informed and driven by African knowledge if a lasting peace is to occur. Thus, during this research process, special emphasis has been placed on the traditional knowledge and approaches to conflict resolution and reintegration of the Acholi, Langi and other Indigenous groups in Northern Uganda.

Key Terms

There are several key terms that must be defined for the purposes of this project. The term *child soldier* is perhaps one of the most fundamental, and yet contested terms for the purposes of this project. According to the Cape Town Principles and Best Practices (1997), which was an NGO Working Group on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and UNICEF, a child soldier is defined as

Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity... The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms. (p. 12)

It should also be noted that many authors and organizations such as the UN, use the term “Child associated with fighting forces/armed conflict/armed groups/armed forces” (United Nations, 2006, p. 17) as synonymous to the term child soldier. For the purposes of this project, the most common term used is former child soldier, however the terms formerly abducted and war affected child are also be used to refer to same concept. Although not all child soldiers were formerly abducted children, in the case of Northern Uganda this has almost always been the case. Thus, throughout this project both terms are used interchangeably to refer to the United Nations definition above.²

² For further explanation of the terms *disarmament*, *demobilization* and *reintegration* please see Appendix

BACKGROUND

Uganda and the LRA

Violence in Uganda can be traced back before the 14th or 15th century when the previously unified state was fragmented into four distinct kingdoms by an invasion from the North (Traylor, 2009). As a result of this invasion, violence would become the norm and a protracted state of war would define the region for several centuries (Traylor, 2009). However, when the Europeans came in 1860 the British colonial state furthered north-south divisions (Noll, 2009) by causing an economic imbalance in the country. While the North was mainly used as a labor reserve to recruit men into the army, the British deliberately introduced industry and cash crops in the South (Apuuli, 2004). This tension has had long-term effects on the Northern Ugandan people, and has also led to the animosity between Uganda and Sudan, both of whom traditionally supported various rebel groups within each other's territory (Apuuli, 2004).

Following independence in 1962, two tyrannical leaders, Milton Obote and Idi Amin, governed Uganda, contributing to the ongoing north-south tensions and the death of hundreds of thousands of people (Traylor, 2009). After Obote's violent first term in office, Amin seized power in 1971 and began a reign of terror by systematically murdering and torturing Obote's supporters (Quinn, 2009). It has been estimated that throughout Amin's reign, between 300,000 and 500,000 Ugandans were killed, earning Amin the nickname 'the butcher' (Quinn, 2009). Although it seemed as though the amount of violence in the country could not get any worse, when Obote returned to power in 1980 he was ready for revenge. Obote directed his rage towards the people of the South and those who supported Amin, by resorting to rape, torture, looting and the destruction of property (Apuuli, 2004; Quinn, 2009).

Then in 1985, Acholi tribe leader General Tito Okello would overthrow Obote, only to be overthrown in the following year by the National Resistance Army headed by Yoweri Museveni from the South. (Clark, 2010; Traylor, 2009). Enraged and in power, Museveni's men immediately began seeking revenge by committing attacks and massacres against those of the North, causing many Acholi people to seek refuge in Sudan (Clark, 2010). As a result of this event, "all the insurgencies in northern Uganda, including that of the LRA, can be explained as an attempt by the people of that region to regain the power that they lost in January 1986" (Apuuli, 2004, p. 392). This is due to the number of grievances that the Acholi people felt as a result of Museveni's rise to power in 1986, including a strong opposition to the south, shame of being defeated, and deeply held feelings of fear and insecurity (Beven, 2006). Out of this atmosphere of revenge, distrust and violence the Holy Spirit Movement headed by Alice Auma Lakwena was born, which led to the involvement and rise of Joseph Kony and the LRA (see Appendix B for more information).

Kony, who is himself Acholi, began fighting against his own people in the Acholi region (made up of Gulu, Pader and Kitgum districts) of Northern Uganda throughout the 90's and early 2000's (Clark, 2010; De Temmerman, 2001). Despite the LRA's vicious attacks, they were allegedly fighting on behalf of the Acholi people who had only been targeted because of their lack of support. As a result of pressure from the Ugandan Peoples Defense Force (UPDF) and local resistance, the LRA did not get the public support that Kony desired, interpreting this action as evidence of betrayal (Apuuli, 2004; Clark, 2010). As a result of this perception, Kony has terrorized the Acholi people forcing up to 90 percent of the Acholi population to live in

internationally displaced persons (IDP) camps and causing high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (Pham, Vinck, & Stover, 2008). Conditions of the IDP camps were deplorable, and the sheer amount of people who were forced to endure their conditions is astonishing. In 2004 World Vision estimated that 1.8 million people within the region were living in IDP camps, and in many instances were forced to move there by the Ugandan government.

After failed attempts to gain the support of the Acholi people, Kony moved the LRA to southern Sudan where he found fertile ground to operate, as a result of the recent war between the government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) (Apuuli, 2004). Aided in part by the historical tensions that existed between Uganda and Sudan, the Sudanese government supported the LRA as a direct consequence of Uganda's open support of the SPLA. Because of this support, Kony was able to get access to supplies, weapons and children to continue their fight against the Ugandan government (Apuuli, 2004). According to Amnesty International (1997), the Sudanese government had the power to help free abducted children in the country, however they chose to actively assist the LRA in maintaining recruits and acquiring weapons in order to further their goals.

Throughout the late 90's multiple attempts were made to bring the LRA conflict to a halt, however all failed to materialize into sustainable peace. In 1999, talks between Sudan and Uganda offered hope that the government of Sudan would stop supporting the rebels, and the Amnesty Bill was passed granting full immunity to any rebel who ceased fighting (De Temmerman, 2001). However, these efforts had little effect on Kony, who rejected the offer of amnesty and promised to keep fighting until he gained control of Uganda (De Temmerman, 2001). As international criticism mounted towards the LRA and Sudan, various initiatives were established such as the signing of cease fire agreements, resolutions and proposals. This international pressure seemed to have some effect, when in 2001 the Sudanese government in Khartoum declared that all material and military support to the LRA had stopped (De Temmerman, 2001).

In 2002, 'Operation Iron First' began, with the goal of militarily dismantling the LRA by invading their camps in Sudan, gaining control of their supplies and rescuing all of the abducted children (Appuli, 2004; Clark, 2010; De Temmerman, 2001). Anticipating the attacks, Kony found refuge in a remote mountain range in Sudan, and continued to commit reprisal attacks on the civilian population. After further peace talks failed, and the LRA used the ceasefire zones to commit further atrocities, the Sudan government continued to supply Kony with arms, ammunition and information (Appuli, 2004; De Temmerman, 2001). As a result of this replenishment of supplies, the LRA was able to expand their operations back into Uganda, heading into the Lango, Teso, and West Nile regions (Appuli, 2004; De Temmerman, 2001). This expansion had devastating effects on civilians, who were now forced into IDP camps by the government. Further, reaction of 'Operation Iron Fist' resulted in an upsurge in LRA activity meaning massive abductions, murders and some of the most horrific crimes in the LRA's history (De Temmerman, 2001; Ssenyonjo, 2007).

For the next few years, peace talks would continue and multiple attempts would be made by the Ugandan government, the former Minister of the North Betty Bigombe, the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, to cease hostilities in the region (Appuli, 2004; De Temmerman, 2010). However, none of these attempts succeeded, allowing Kony to enter the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic in recent years (Traylor, 2009). Although efforts continue until this day by the African Union, the Ugandan government and other regional powers to bring Kony to justice, the LRA continues to abduct and attack civilians in the DRC and CAR (African Research Bulletin, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2012). In the first three months of 2012 there has been an increase in violence, with at least 52 new attacks in DRC and CAR, resulting in the abduction of 90 civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Many people live in fear of LRA attacks, and already in 2012 at least 2,000 people have been displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2012). While the LRA does not have the capacity that it once did to commit atrocities and large-scale abductions, their recent attacks demonstrate their dedication and willingness to keep fighting.

In addition to the inability of any process, government or organization to bring the LRA to justice, another reason for the continuation of the movement is the strong, cult like ideology that Kony exhibits and passes down to his followers. Kony asserts to his followers that he receives direct operational and strategic guidance from spirits, and thus they believe that these spirits allow Kony to watch over LRA members and predict the future (Traylor, 2009). Like many cult leaders, Kony is effective in isolating himself from criticism and questioning by instilling fear and respect for authority in his members (Appui, 2004; Traylor, 2009). In battle, children are ordered to the front lines and if they run for cover they are viewed as questioning Kony's divinity and are often punished by death (Traylor, 2009). These behaviours and beliefs allow Kony to remain in power and justify his brutal actions for religious purposes (Jackson, 2009). Furthermore, the "LRA's selective way of reading and interpreting the bible has the aim of terrifying and indoctrinating abducted children," (Okello, 2012, p. 82), and must be understood if reintegration efforts are to be successful. Understanding how Kony continues his movement is important for understanding how the identities of abducted children are molded to accept these religious and spiritual justifications of violence, and thus how reintegration programs may address this.

Before moving on, it is important to highlight the differences between the Acholi region/population and the other regions in the North. As previously mentioned, there are historic tensions that exist between the North and the South, but also between the Acholi and Lango districts in the North. As Kony is Acholi and was only initially fighting in the Acholi region, when the LRA violence spread to Lango region these ethnic divisions became magnified. This highlighted some of the underlying tensions between these two tribes, who although have a shared history and similar language, began to focus on their different ethnic groups. A march that took place around Lira in 2004, where over 10,000 people took to the streets looking for revenge on any Acholi person they could find, highlights the tragic results of these differences (BBC, 2004). The role of identity in this conflict is thus very important, as reconciliation efforts will need to contain some sort of bridging between these two ethnic groups.

Identity Salience Theory

Looking at the dynamics of identity salience or identity theory may help to explain how children's identities may be organized and/or shifted during reintegration. This information provides an important theoretical framework for determining how reintegration programs may address and facilitate identity changes within the children they serve.

Despite its focus on structures in the social environment, the theory of identity salience is essentially a cognitive theory (Stryker, 2004). Stryker (1968) explains the idea of identity salience, which is rooted in the belief that within each person's concept of 'self' there are multiple identities that are hierarchically organized. Identity salience, therefore, is the process that organizes these identities and creates the hierarchy, and can be defined "as a readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity's properties as a cognitive structure or schema" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). These identities are internalized meanings that are associated with different roles and role relationships, with the commitment to those roles impacting the level of salience (Stryker, 1968, 2004). Various identities, Stryker and Serpe (1994) explain, are made more important (or advanced in the hierarchy) by the being invoked or strengthened in a given situation or series of situations.

Furthermore, identity theory is based on a set of premises that help explain how various identities are formed and shifted over time (Stryker, 1968). These premises state that,

- (1) persons seek to create and maintain stable coherent identities;
- (2) persons prefer to evaluate their identities positively;
- (3) identities serve to motivate behaviour;
- (4) identities develop in the process of social interaction;
- (5) behaviour is a function of role-making processes; and
- (6) identities are stabilized by commitments. (Stryker 1964, 1968 as cited in Schwartz & Stryker, 1970, p. 2)

These premises demonstrate the basis of identity theory and identity salience, in showing the fundamental processes that form the identity hierarchy.

Much of the research on identity salience that has come out of Stryker's (1968) initial work on the topic centers around the specific factors or influences that determine which identities are invoked in certain situations. Identity salience can be influenced by "such factors as permeable/impermeable group boundaries, positive or negative intergroup comparisons, identity distinctiveness issues, and socialization processes" (Korostelina, 2006, p. 225). Furthermore, research on identity salience has shown that salient identity also provokes negative actions from out-groups and contributes to the outbreak of conflict (Korostelina, 2006, 2007).

The level of commitment to a specific identity can also determine which identity becomes the most salient (Stryker, 1968). Commitment is defined as the degree to which "one's relationship to specific other depends on one being a particular kind of person... In this sense commitment is measured by the 'costs' of giving up meaningful relationships" (Stryker, 1968, p. 560), which demonstrates the importance of relationships between individuals in their social networks (Hoelter, 1982). The strength of these relationships, the ways in which individuals act out or perform their roles (i.e. well or poor) and the methods they use to interpret their own behaviour also influence the level of identification and hierarchy of identities (Hoelter, 1982; Stryker, 1968). For example, a student who receives high grades at school may be more likely to identify with being a member of that school or class, than a student who is failing (Hoelter, 1982). This finding is important because for former child soldiers, their identity is likely impacted by how they perform their roles, which change over time and "evolve in accordance with youth soldiers' experience, level of competence, and trust of their commanders and peers" (Wessles & Kostelny, 2009).

The level of commitment also impacts the strength of that identity and/or the strength of an individual's ties to a particular group (Doosje, Ellemers & Spears, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, &

Doosje, 2002). Ellemers et al. (2002) argue that the level of commitment to a particular group or identity determines how group norms and characteristics influence the perceptions and behaviors of an individual within that group. In other words, the more strongly committed an individual is to a specific identity, the more likely they are to act and think in accordance with the group. This is something to keep in mind when discussing how identity concerns should be addressed in reintegration programs, as some children may have a stronger commitment to the LRA. While some children escape from the LRA on their own, possibly indicating less commitment to the group, others who are rescued by NGOs or UN missions may have stronger pre-existing ties.

Also influencing identity salience is the level of threat directed towards the in-group, which provokes group members to behave negatively towards other groups and eventually leads to conflict (Korostelina, 2007). Group cohesion is a necessary precondition for an individual to adopt a strong group identity (Huddy, 2003) and is influenced by out-group threats towards the in-group (McCauley et al., 2004). Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (2002) make a distinction between reactions to threat of those individuals who identify strongly with the group and those who weakly identify with the group. When a threat to the group is initiated, those members who weakly identify with the group tend to reduce in-group identification, negatively appraise the group and will often leave the group all together (Ellemers et al., 2002).

Stryker (1968) also notes that if a salient identity is held over long periods of time it will become a central identity, and will to a large extent, influence behavior. This is important to consider when determining how identity concerns should be addressed in reintegration programs, as the longer a child has been abducted the longer it may take to shift their identity back to their ethnic, family or community group. As the average length of stay with the LRA for formerly abducted children is around 38 months, the time it takes to shift this identity back to the home group may be substantial (Bayer, Klasen, & Adam, 2007).

The status of an individual member within the in-group also dictates how salient an identity becomes, through enhancing group cohesion and identification (Ellemers et al., 2004). This individual position within the group is affected by several factors, one of which is the degree of respect and belongingness that a member receives from the group. Ellemers et al. looked at how in-group respect by peers, defined by positive social appraisals, impacts an individual's sense of collective self-esteem and identification. The authors also found that identification and collective self-esteem were improved by a positive in-group evaluation, which is more pronounced than when an out-group member makes an identical evaluation (Ellemers et al., 2004). In-group respect gives members a sense of secure group membership, which also affects how other group members perceive them (Ellemers et al., 2004). This is important for the individual because this respect allows them to justify their collective actions and permits identity salience to shift to the group identity.

Especially when in-group respect was low, high respect from out-group members undermined the collective self-esteem of individuals to the in-group (Ellemers et al., 2004). This finding demonstrates that in order to enhance identification and identity salience, members of the in-group must be well liked and respected by other members. In relation to former child soldiers, those who had previously been well liked within the group may strongly identify with the LRA thus making it harder for reintegration back to the community. As Peters (2005) notes "Some children - especially those who have had positions of responsibility in the fighting forces - may

have particular difficulty in adjusting themselves to civilian life where their status is no longer recognized” (p. 44). Understanding the effects of in-group status and the level of respect on the strength of the identity and identity salience is key to the proposed work. The results demonstrated in Ellemers et al.’s study may be one reason why it is difficult to change the identities of former child soldiers back to the community.

The literature outlined on identity salience (Stryker, 1968) will provide the necessary framework to explain how the identities of former child soldiers may be shifting during the reintegration process, and how reintegration programs can address these identity concerns through specific interventions or activities. Furthermore, research on the application of identity salience and various factors that effect it, such as the commitment to the identity (Ellemers et al., 2002; Stryker, 1968), the effects of in-group status (Ellemers et al., 2004), threat (Huddy, 2003; Nadler et al., 2009; Spears & Doosje, 2002), and the perceptions and actions of other groups (Korostelina, 2007), will lead to the identification and suggestions of specific identity based DDR activities.

An extensive literature review has been prepared on the most up to date literature regarding social identity theory, former child soldiers, DDR and reintegration programs³. The literature on former child soldiers includes descriptive accounts of former child soldiers, as well as the range of issues and problems that they encounter as a result of the trauma they have experienced (i.e. PTSD). Furthermore, these articles look at the portrayals and discourses of child soldiers in the media and literature, while addressing the problems associated with viewing children in polarized ways. Finally, the literature on the long-term psychological, vocational and educational effects on former child soldiers (i.e. stigma) also helps to explain how these children cope with the effects of war.

The literature on DDR and reintegration programs includes articles that help to explain the current DDR and reintegration programs and approaches for child soldiers in Africa. Many of these articles discuss the impact of these programs on former child soldiers and the various issues that child soldiers encounter during the reintegration process. Further, several articles are critical about the current reintegration and DDR approaches being used across Africa and Uganda specifically. They go on to advocate for transitional justice, the incorporation of local and cultural practices, the inclusion of child soldiers and the community during the design and implementation of reintegration programs. Further, the experience of girl child soldiers has been given special consideration in the research, due to the increased stigma and difficulties girls face when attempting to reintegrate. Lastly, several traditional and cultural approaches to reintegration are discussed in the context of Northern Uganda specifically, and Africa more generally.

³ Please see Appendix for full literature review

MEHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative research methodology, this project explores how identity concerns are currently being addressed in reintegration programs in Northern Uganda, and how reintegration centers may improve their efforts to address the shifting identities of former child soldiers. The methods employed for this project include a document analysis that looks at secondary research on child soldiers' experiences, reintegration programs and identity salience. This analysis incorporates peer-reviewed academic literature from experts in the field, such as Myriam Denov, Neil Boothby and Richard Maclure, as well as more practical information contained in NGO (i.e. Save the Children) and government (i.e. CIDA) documents. This document analysis provides a framework for understanding how reintegration programs are currently addressing identity concerns, how children's shifting identities may impact the reintegration process and how the literature on identity salience can be applied to reintegration programs.

The second method employed in this qualitative study is a series of in-depth interviews conducted with staff members working at one reintegration center. In order to draw conclusions regarding how reintegration centers are currently incorporating identity concerns, it was necessary to talk directly with individuals who have worked in this setting. These staff interviews provided first-hand accounts of how staff members perceive the shifting identities of children in their program and how one center, the Rachele Rehabilitation Center, has facilitated this shift.

Deliverable

The final product that has been prepared for the client, Children of Peace, is a short, two-sided pamphlet/brochure (Appendix A). This pamphlet summarizes the results of this research, and provides a series of recommendations on how organizations that work with former child soldiers can better incorporate identity concerns into their work. These recommendations are meant to be fairly broad, so that Children of Peace can distribute the pamphlet to other organizations they are connected with (i.e. schools, reintegration centers). However the recommendations are also meant to be practical and specific enough that staff members can implement targeted strategies to help former child soldiers, and children born in captivity, continue to transition into a community identity and role.

Research Paradigm and Methodology

When planning a study and research design, it is important to consider the philosophical worldview through which assumptions will be made and knowledge will be generated (Creswell, 2009). Within this qualitative study, an interpretive paradigm informs this worldview, where the focus is on understanding and interpreting "how people create and maintain their social worlds" (Neuman, 1997, p. 68). An interpretive paradigm assumes that each individual has their own subjective experiences, and thus research in this paradigm seeks to understand these different realities (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The realities of each reintegration center are unique, as are the nuances and dynamics of each conflict from which child soldiers emerge. This project considers these differences, and attempts to understand the realities of reintegration center staff in Northern Uganda, learning from their experiences and suggestions

This research employs a qualitative research methodology, which is a way to explore and understand how individuals or groups attribute meaning to their social realities and problems

(Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is also concerned with how social and cultural phenomenon is uniquely experienced by individuals and groups, with cultural experiences and understandings being a central component of inquiry (Toloie-Eshlaghy, Chitsaz, Karimian, & Charkhchi, 2011; Quimby, 2012). This cultural component is very important for the context of this research, as the interviews with staff have been conducted in a specific cultural context where historical and social factors play a role in the reintegration process.

Another important aspect of a qualitative research methodology is that it is “especially useful for the discovery and explanation of a phenomena” (Shuval et al., 2011, p. 1), because it explores participants realities and interpretations (Quimby, 2012). Exploring how reintegration programs address and incorporate the phenomenon of children’s shifting identities, through individual’s perceptions and experiences, is exactly what this project does. Further, the subjective perspectives of participants regarding how children’s identities shift inform how they deliver their programs, effectively translating these meanings and perspectives into practice (Flick, 2006).

Conducting research within this methodology involves employing strategies that respect “an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (Crestwell, 2009, p. 4). In this project, patterns of behaviour within reintegration programs are explored, and conclusions are drawn regarding the role that reintegration centers play in shifting children’s identities or self-concepts. Another important aspect of this study is the use of theory in a qualitative context, which similar to qualitative research may be used to understand how individuals behave and think in a specific context (Creswell, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the use of identity salience theory plays an important role in providing a theoretical lens or perspective to the shifting identities of former child soldiers during the reintegration process (Creswell, 2009). In keeping with a qualitative approach, two qualitative methods as well as two types of qualitative analysis are employed for this study.

Methods

The two qualitative methods employed for this study, include a document analysis made up of academic literature, NGO and government documents, as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with staff working in the field of child soldiers. Both of these methods can be included in the three major forms of data elicitation, including direct observation, self reports and archival data (Breakwell, Hammon, Schaw, & Smith, 2006). Through the document analysis, archival data is presented to provide a framework for understanding how the shifting identities of former child soldiers may influence and be incorporated into current reintegration programs. The self-report data from in-depth interviews with staff highlight how identity concerns may influence the reintegration process, and how these concerns have been addressed in one reintegration program. These methods allow for the different perspectives in this field to be revealed, explaining the multiple and varied sets of experiences.

Documents and literature. Data sources were gathered through online searches of academic and grey literature, as well as several published books and research reports. Most of the articles found came from various journals in the fields of psychology, peace and conflict studies, human rights, African studies, child and youth studies, political science and law. Other than the academic searches performed, the grey literature from NGOs, governments and international organizations was found online. In almost all cases, these reports came directly from the host organization’s

website. In one case, the Rachele Rehabilitation Center Final Report, was obtained through a third party website. This report was initially written specifically for the Belgian government and other private donors; however it has been subsequently scanned and posted online by an affiliated independent researcher.

Data sources also include some academic literature on identity salience, reintegration, DDR approaches/programs and child soldiers. Also, government reports from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and international organizations (e.g. United Nations, World Bank) are used. DDR program information, approaches and policies are also used as data sources, including reports by UNICEF, Save the Children, Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) and studies from independent researchers. Thus there are two distinct categories of information that are analyzed in the document analysis, academic literature that is peer reviewed and published, and formal reports, guides or research reports from NGOs and other organizations. Around five reports or studies were chosen for each section of the document analysis in order to contain this information into a manageable but representative sample. All reports are in English and were focused on an African conflict, with priority given to those reports specifically on Uganda. All together these reports represent the findings from over 400 interviews with children and youth in various African conflicts, including Uganda and the LRA (more information about the specific documents chosen for the document analysis can be found in the Appendix D).

In-depth interviews. In-depth semi structured interviews were designed to allow the respondents the freedom to discuss the issues and experiences that are most interesting to them regarding reintegration, child soldiers and identity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011a). The interviews were designed to be semi-structured to allow for a 'give and take' between the researcher and participant, to elicit as much rich material as possible (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006). In keeping with a qualitative research methodology, questions to all participants were open ended and interviews resembled a conversation, allowing participants to reflect on their experiences and provide addition detail to questions (Babbie, 2008). Further, questions to participants were open ended and broad, as to ensure that the researcher did not impose their own ideas on the participant's responses (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). The goals of these interviews were to determine how participants understood identity transitions during reintegration, how they believed reintegration centers are and should address former child soldier shifting identities, and provide the opportunity to offer suggestions for improvement to future centers (either regarding identity or not).

Eight former center staff members of the Rachele Rehabilitation Center in Northern Uganda were interviewed for this research. The questions directed towards staff asked about their experiences at the center, how the reintegration program addresses identity concerns and their experiences with rehabilitating and reintegrating former child soldiers. Further, the challenges of successful reintegration, the importance the shifting identities of former child soldiers and suggestions for future centers were discussed (See Appendix E for the list of interview questions). Efforts were made to gather as much detail as possible from the participants' descriptions throughout the limited time available. Half of the participants were introduced to the researcher prior to being interviewed, which allowed for some familiarity before the interviews commenced.

The Rachele Rehabilitation Center was located in Lira, Uganda and operated until 2006, at which point it fully transitioned into a secondary school. All of the participants were former staff members at the center, while some participants currently still work at the Rachele Comprehensive Secondary School. Thus, throughout this report the staff are known as former staff of the center, with four being current staff of the school. Questions to the participants asked about their experiences in the Rachele center before it completely transitioned into a school setting (2003-2006). Participants were chosen by using a purposeful sampling strategy, defined by Patton (1990) as “selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169). The Rachele Secondary School was identified as being an ideal place to obtain participants, due to their work reintegrating former child soldiers from the LRA in Uganda. Although the Deputy Head Master of Rachele identified several potential participants as meeting the inclusion criteria for being interviewed (i.e. they were former center staff), only eight of those individuals came forward. Those who were willing to share their experiences were asked to arrange an interview time.

The eight participants interviewed from Rachele included four males and four females, who held various positions during their time at the center, including three social workers, two teachers, one nurse, one driver, and two senior management staff, one of which was also a social worker (see Appendix F for list of pseudonyms, positions and responsibilities). The names of participants have been changed to ensure confidentiality, as well as the broadening of some positions (i.e. senior management). Only first names are used when referring to staff members in this project, because this was the most common way that individuals addressed each other and the interviewer in Uganda (for further information about the location of the interviews and details about the participants see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Document analysis. Documents and literature were analyzed inductively, using a qualitative analysis to describe what is currently being done in reintegration centers for former child soldiers, in Uganda and elsewhere. This analysis also indicates how much identity concerns are being addressed in reintegration and DDR programs and approaches, as well as children’s experiences with reintegration. As Dey (1993) notes “The core of qualitative analysis lies in these related processes of describing phenomena, classifying it, and seeing how our concepts interconnect” (p. 31). So in keeping with this approach, the document analysis classifies the information into smaller components that facilitate a framework for answering the research question. This framework consists of three sections 1) the application of identity salience literature and theory to reintegration programs for former child soldiers, 2) current DDR and reintegration approaches and programs, and 3) the perspectives of child soldiers themselves through primary research studies.

The first section of the document analysis looks at how the literature and theory of identity salience can be applied to the field of DDR programs for former child soldiers. Understanding the various factors that may shift identity salience and applying them to the reintegration process, leads to suggestions on how organizations can better incorporate identity concerns. The second section of the document analysis contains information about current DDR programs and approaches by summarizing and analyzing the current approaches employed in Northern Uganda and other African countries. This section looks at how these programs are currently addressing

identity concerns, what is currently missing in these activities/programs, and what aspects could be improved in order to create more successful long-term outcomes. The last section of the document analysis looks at studies of former child soldiers in order to explain their perspectives during reintegration, and highlight their experiences as child soldiers, both during and after the conflict. These articles are analyzed to highlight the main themes regarding the challenges and experiences of child soldiers that relate to identity and their suggestions for reintegration center improvements.

The information collected for this document analysis was qualitatively analyzed by creating charts in each of the three sections to classify the information into sub-sections and then identify the main themes. Themes were identified in each section based on a preliminary review of the material, which helped to highlight the similarities and differences between sources. While some of the sources were rich in material (i.e. children's challenges during reintegration) and thus could elicit very specific themes, other sections lacked sufficient examples (i.e. children's suggestions for improvement) making the themes much more general. The analysis is further explained in both the document analysis section and Appendix D, with an example of one document analysis chart in Appendix G.

Interview analysis. All interviews with staff at Rachele were thematically analyzed in order to classify the most important information and apply it to the overall research and recommendations. Thematic analysis entails "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6), which is used to answer the research question at hand. Drawing on the themes indicated in the literature review and document analysis, the information provided by the staff interviews establishes another layer of understanding on how identity concerns are being addressed in reintegration programs. The purpose of this analysis is to create knowledge (Kirby et al., 2006) and better situate this research in a real world context. In keeping with a qualitative approach, the personal experiences and voices of those individuals who have worked directly with reintegrating child soldiers form the basis of this analysis. The thematic analysis of these stories allows for a more comprehensive and practical set of recommendations that are informed by individuals who work in this field.

The thematic analysis was completed by first reviewing all of the interview notes, in order to determine the similar themes and topics that were discussed. After reviewing, general themes were noted down, and codes were identified to indicate each theme. For example, if the theme was acceptance, words such as 'stigma' 'rejection' and 'isolation' were used as code words. Going through the interview notes once again, each code word was circled and tallied to determine the most important themes. These themes are discussed at the beginning of the in-depth interview analysis, and inform the way that section is structured. The audio information was then reviewed to obtain direct quotes and to ensure the accuracy of the interview notes. Together, the interview notes and the audio data were used for the thematic analysis and in drawing conclusions regarding the role of identity during reintegration.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research that are important to mention before moving on. First, a central aspect of this project is the exploration of how an identity salience framework can be applied to the reintegration field and incorporated into reintegration programs. However, a discussion of the shifting identities of children and the proposals made regarding how identity

may impact the reintegration process can only be hypothesized without obtaining the validation of these assumptions by children themselves. Without asking former child soldiers about their identity changes we cannot know for sure if this process is operating as identity salience theory outlines. What is important for the purposes of this project, is a discussion of how reintegration programs address the shifting identities of former child soldiers, despite the exact process by which they change.

Another related limitation discovered throughout this research process is that the term identity can mean different things to different people, and is closely related to other concepts (i.e. behaviour, attitudes). This means that during the interviews when asking about identity transformations and identity shifts, many people did not immediately know what that meant. In order to describe the concept of shifting identities, phrases such as “how do you change the child from...?” or “how do they start behaving more like their peers?” were used. Identity is so interconnected with behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, that it was impossible to separate these concepts. Further, all of these concepts (i.e. behaviour, attitudes) are externalizing signs that are being measured and assessed by the staff who work with these children. While a staff member may be interpreting changes in behaviour as a sign that children are changing their connection with the LRA, internally there could be other things going on. Perhaps there are internal identity processes that outsiders simply cannot witness and/or judge. This is why it is important to distinguish between how staff perceive internal identity changes, and what is actually going on inside an individual child.

Other limitations included the fact that identity or level of identity cannot be objectively measured, staff have multiple ways of defining successful reintegration, limited sampling of one center in Northern Uganda may limit the application of the findings, staff members may lack a critical lens when evaluating their program and the bias of individuals or organizations when writing about reintegration programs. While these limitations have been difficult to address, many of these concerns are part of the nature of reintegration work. Thus, the findings of this report have been made with these limitations in mind, and are discussed further in the last section. More information about these limitations and how they have been addressed or mitigated can be found in Appendix D.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Employing a qualitative analysis, this section is broken down into three components (a) the application of identity salience literature and theory to DDR, (b) current DDR and reintegration approaches and programs, and (c) secondary accounts of former child soldiers who have experienced reintegration. The sections of this document analysis are organized as such to first provide an understanding of how reintegration centers may address and incorporate identity concerns during the reintegration process. This first section outlines how the theory of identity salience can be understood in a reintegration context. Secondly to answer the research question at hand, the second section specifically looks at five reintegration approaches/programs to determine how identity is currently being addressed.

Lastly, accounts from over 400 former child soldiers through primary research studies explain, often in their own words, the identity challenges they have experienced and the ways in which they would like to see reintegration efforts improved. Each component emphasizes different perspectives of reintegration, in order to derive representative and accurate conclusions. The purpose of this document analysis is to provide a framework for answering the research question, and understand how reintegration programs may address the shifting identities of former child soldiers during the reintegration process.

Identity Salience in DDR/Reintegration Processes.

This section explores how the theory of identity salience may be applied to the reintegration process and help explain children's shifting identities, especially in relation to reintegration programs. This section brings together studies on former child soldiers that specifically discuss changes in their identity, while going in and coming out of conflict, through the perspectives of individuals who have worked with these children post conflict. With an understanding of how identity concerns may influence the reintegration process, the factors that influence the identity hierarchy are then discussed. Overall, this section demonstrates the significance of addressing identity within reintegration programs and provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding how identity shifts within former child soldiers may occur.

Analysis. This section of the document analysis was qualitatively analyzed by breaking it down into two main sections: proposed identity transformations during the reintegration process, and the factors that may influence identity salience formation during reintegration, as shown by the literature on identity salience theory. These identity transformations, as well as the factors that influence children's shifting identities have been understood through the researchers' and authors own perspectives. Without the necessary information from former child soldiers, it is difficult to validate these assumptions in a real world context. However, this analysis does provide a useful framework for understanding how identity formation can be understood through the perspectives of staff and reintegration workers. Understanding the possible identity transitions that children may undergo while entering the group, and when sustained contact has been made, may play an important role during reintegration. Thus, it is important for reintegration programs to consider this information and incorporate it into various reintegration efforts. For example, if identification is strengthened and salient during time with the rebel group, it will likely be more difficult for programs and staff to promote an identity away from being a soldier (for more about the analysis of this section see Appendix H).

Findings: Identity transformation. Identity formation while going into the rebel group may be especially important for adolescences who are in the process of actively constructing their identity (Denov & Maclure, 2005; Verhey, 2001). Instead of the normal process of acquiring similar cultural, moral and social values from their home community, children and young people participate in a process of *asocialization* whereby they adopt the behaviours and norms of the rebel group (Denov & Maclure, 2007; Verhey, 2001). This process is enhanced through indoctrination that many rebel groups, such as the LRA, subject their recruits to (Denov & Maclure, 2005). For example in the LRA, children are told that if they return to their communities their families and community members will kill them or poison them upon return, so they should come to view the Acholi community as the enemy (Veale and Stavrou, 2007).

Further, the military uniform and the child's participation in heinous acts helps to secure their new identity with this social group, as violent behaviours are rewarded and children begin to feel a sense of attachment their fellow members (Veale & Stavrou, 2007). However, some children may attempt to resist this new identity by 'pretending' to be like 'them', while still remaining true to their home values (Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Although this may help them to survive, it is likely that through increased isolation and then witnessing and participation in violent acts, the child's home identity may be slowly eroded through the cult like practices of the group (Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Thus in terms of shifting their identity, it appears that while some children still hold their home identity as being important, over time this can be broken down and a new salient identity may emerge.

Upon return from the rebel group, some children may have difficulties with leaving their former 'families' and friends, only to come back to a world of isolation and rejection (Denov & Maclure, 2007). The process of undoing the military identity that children have adopted while in the bush, is a very difficult transition for many children who are now required to adopt a new set of values and behaviours (Denov & Maclure, 2007; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Building these new identities requires that children cannot rely on the use of military might and courage in battle, but have to negotiate the difficulties of acquiring access to education, vocational skills and most of all community acceptance (Denov & Maclure, 2007). What is interesting to note is the active process that children themselves play in deciding what identity will become the most salient in a situation. Some children explain how they hold multiple identities at the same time, being a son, survivor and/or rebel, which shift depending on the context (Veale & Stavrou, 2007).

In addition to outsiders playing a key role in their appraisal and identification of the children, youth may also play into certain identities depending on the context (Shepler, 2005). For example, among friends and other ex-combatants children may play up the power and status that they received in the group, while with NGOs they may adopt a more innocent, traumatized identity. In the community and in school on the other hand, children may try to avoid discussions of their past and attempt to be like everyone else (Shepler, 2005). These changes highlight the ways that youth and children are active players in the process of identity formation, which is both influenced by internal and external factors. Understanding how children actively negotiate new identities and adopt various personas depending on the context is especially important for reintegration centers and staff. Programs and interventions directed towards youth who are demonstrating certain behaviours may not be effective if these behaviours do not accurately represent the identity and internal processes of that youth.

Factors that influence identity salience. Through the literature review and subsequent readings, several factors have been identified as influencing the formation of identity salience, albeit in different situations. As the application of identity salience to the reintegration process for former child soldiers has not yet been done, many of the studies on identity salience come from various subfields in psychology, usually studying intergroup behaviour in some respect. Although these experiments demonstrate the phenomenon of identity salience in different experimental designs or with various dependent variables (i.e. American national identity), the process is likely very similar across situations. This is why the theoretical lens of identity salience is applied to the reintegration context in helping to explain how children's identities may be shifted. Articles discussing the key factors that have been shown or hypothesized to influence identity salience in general are analyzed in this context, with supporting evidence from the DDR and reintegration literature.

One key proposal in identity salience theory is that when an identity is held over long periods of time, it will begin to influence behaviour and become a central identity (Stryker, 1968). While the term 'long periods of time' can be left up to interpretation, it is clear that according to Stryker (1968) the length of time spent identifying with a group will be a factor in determining the salience or importance of that group identity. Based on the research with former child soldiers, and according to reintegration staff it does appear that longer time spent with the LRA, including the participation in major human rights violations, puts these children at a higher risk of community rejection upon return (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005; GUSCO, 2010; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). This may be because the longer a child is in the bush the harder it is to break with that lifestyle, indicating that more reintegration supports are needed (Lorey, 2001). While the time spent with the rebel group has an important impact for reintegration outcomes, reintegration programs and centers can introduce mechanisms to address this (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Ozerdem et al., 2010; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Understanding the reality of child soldiers who have been in the bush for long periods of time, programs such as GUSCO and Save the Children already incorporate this into their programming. Similarly, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008) notes that the length of time spent with the LRA seems to impact the level of identification with the group, creating strong bonds among members. Evidently based on the experiences of reintegration programs, time does seem to be a factor in the ability of children to successfully transition to community life, perhaps due to the impact this has on their identities.

Identity salience theory also asserts and experimental research demonstrates, that the level of commitment to a specific group enhances the strength and salience of that group identity (Doosje et al., 1999; Ellemers et al., 2002; Stryker, 1968; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Further, individuals who are more strongly committed to the group are more likely to think and behave like in-group members (Stryker, 1968; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The level of commitment to the LRA and other rebel groups may be hard to determine for former child soldiers, due to the fact that their behaviours may not necessarily reflect their commitment to the group. However, it is likely that over time, through a process of breaking down ties to the community, children are easily manipulated into accepting their roles and committing to their new 'families' (Denov & Maclure, 2007). During this process, "Individual and group identities were fused, and perceptions of group success or failure became personalized. Likewise, pride and shame were expressed as group sentiments, not individual feelings or experiences" (Denov & Maclure, 2007, p. 256). This dynamic of feeling and thinking as a group instead of an individual,

demonstrates the strong connection between group members. One boy from Sierra Leone explains how this connection continues after returning home,

I have to make new friends and adapt to new ways . . . but I would like to see the boys who were under my command, just to know if they are okay. [And] I would really like to see my former commander. (Denov & Maclure, 2007, p. 254)

Despite the unique circumstances of each child's recruitment and participation in armed conflict, it is likely that many children will develop a close connection to other group members through the indoctrination and *asocialization* process. The level of commitment that children feel towards their former rebel group should therefore be a factor in determining the most appropriate methods in helping them to reintegrate. While reintegration staff may not fully understand the level of commitment children experience, attempts could be made to determine the strength of these ties and help them to form new positive relationships. An understanding of this commitment could provide insight to the staff member.

An individual member's status within the in-group also dictates how salient an identity becomes, through enhancing group cohesion and identification (Ellemers et al., 2004; Tajfel, 1982). Further, this status is influenced by the levels of respect and belongingness that a member feels, and serves to heighten their commitment to the group (Ellemers et al., 2004). In-group respect gives members a sense of secure group membership, which also affects how other group members perceive them (Ellemers et al., 2004). This is important for the individual because this respect allows them to justify their collective actions and permits identity salience to shift to the group identity. Therefore, the status, likeability and respect given to former child soldiers in their rebel group may influence their ability to successfully reintegrate by making the rebel group (i.e. LRA) identity salient. Being a commander or leader within the group has been noted by several authors as eliciting a sense of pride within children due to their status and level of respect received by the group (Denov & Maclure, 2007; Veale & Stavrou, 2007; Verhey, 2001).

Discussing the stories of two former child soldiers, Denov and Maclure (2007) simply state, "In their different ways, both Isata and Mohamed were able to accrue personal rewards and attain social prestige and power, all of which helped to bind them and their compatriots together" (p. 256). The differences between children who held high ranks in the LRA and those who had less status have implications for reintegration centers due to the authoritative behaviour that these children may demonstrate (GUSCO, 2010). GUSCO has realized the effect that status has on reintegration and has thus made this an important factor to consider when designing reintegration services for individual children. UNICEF (2007) has also noted that some children may not want to give up their power, increased status and respect upon return to their communities. Respect from peers seems to be especially powerful, which is an important facet to consider when returning senior leaders and commanders are coming out of the bush (UNICEF, 2007).

Associated with the level of respect and status within the group, is the ability of a child soldier to perform their role well, usually meaning that they inflict a high level of destruction on other children (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). Soldiers who commit acts of violence and brutality are said to be 'good soldiers' effectively performing their roles and being rewarded with material and social gains (Wessells & Kostelny, 2009). The ways in which individuals act out their roles (i.e. well or poorly), and how they perceive their performance in those roles

determines the hierarchy of identities (Hoelter, 1982; Stryker, 1968). This has important implications for the reintegration process, as children who have performed their roles well may have a harder time accepting a new way of life. This is because not only does role performance in this case indicate higher levels of violence committed, which impacts trauma and psychological problems, but also it may have influenced the level of status an individual achieved, effectively increasing commitment to the rebel group. This cycle of role performance, status and commitment is demonstrated by a boy from Sierra Leone,

All my friends admired my skills . . . [When] I was appointed as the commander of a group [of small boys] I felt very proud of that . . . If the boys in my unit didn't carry out my command, I would beat them . . . When I would beat them they would listen to me. I miss the power I had during the war. (Denov & Maclure, 2007, p. 253)

Not only is the performance of an individual child key in enhancing their identity, but the perception or evaluation of that role also impacts identity salience (Hoelter, 1982). Thus, as this boy and many other children have indicated (Akello et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005), successful role performance in the bush is looked upon positively, eliciting a sense of pride and accomplishment. This effectively helps to shift identity salience, as the child is defined by their group membership and their behaviours within the group.

One promising factor in influencing identity salience and thus the reintegration process is the presence and/or promotion of a subordinate identity. A subordinate identity is one that is shared among members of various sub-groups (Transue, 2007). For example, a national identity or religious identity is shared between various ethnic, social and/or economic groups within a country. Attachment to a subordinate identity or broader shared identities, reduces intergroup bias and improves intergroup relations (Transue, 2007). This finding is important because for former child soldiers who highly identify with their former rebel group, reintegration centers who promote a shared identity between them and other members (i.e. community) can help to shift their identity salience to the community. However, it is important to note that in this study both strength and salience of an identity had to be present to influence the resulting behaviour (Transue, 2007). In this context, this means that the community identity must be strong and salient within the child, in order to influence their willingness and ability to live within society. This demonstrates the connection between the child's ability to change identities, and the community and families ability to accept them back and not view them as rebels. If reintegration programs are able to take this information into consideration, and work with the community in accepting children back it is possible that reintegration efforts will succeed.

DDR and Reintegration Programs and Approaches

Analysis. The qualitative analysis of DDR programs and approaches separated this information into three broad categories, an overview of the various approaches, specific reintegration activities, and aspects of identity that have been incorporated into these programs (see Methodology for a full description of these approaches). Again, a chart was created to determine the main themes, commonalities and distinctions between the various approaches and programs. The first section provided an overview of the field of DDR and reintegration, focusing on the principles, processes, definitions, objectives and goals of each of the programs or organizations analyzed. The second section of this document analysis involved looking at the different reintegration activities that each program/approach employed both within and outside the center.

Findings. The experiences of children and youth who have gone through the reintegration process, either by going through a reintegration center or by spontaneously demobilizing, can vary widely. While some countries have a national DDR process or structure (i.e. Columbia, Liberia), others depend on the work of regional or local NGOs to deliver, sometimes very distinct programs (i.e. Uganda). This section of the document analysis discusses five different DDR and reintegration approaches or programs, focusing on the structure of each approach and how they incorporate the concept of identity transformation or shifting identities into the program. Due to the large amount of DDR efforts worldwide, again the scope of this analysis focuses on Africa (especially Uganda), keeping in mind that certain agencies (i.e. UNICEF) work across national borders. Each organization can be said to employ either a center based approach to reintegration (i.e. GUSCO), a community based approach (i.e. UNICEF), or a combination of the two. For a further discussion on the differences between these approaches, see the Appendix H section of this report.

Another important distinction is what is meant between an approach and a program, in the context of this analysis. Here an approach to DDR and reintegration is the set of principles, intended method, delivery and activities for demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers. These approaches are designed and advocated usually by larger international organizations (i.e. UN), NGOs (i.e. Save the Children) and/or government bodies. A program on the other hand, is the actual implementation of a DDR or reintegration approach. Although more difficult to find, program data was important to ascertain due to the practical aspects of this research, as opposed to speaking of the DDR process in a hypothetical sense. Both programs and approaches act as a guide for understanding how identity concerns are addressed during reintegration, by specific programs and larger governing bodies.

Reintegration activities and services. The overarching objective of reintegration in all of these organizations is to facilitate the effective return and integration of war affected children into the community. The ability of former child soldiers to adapt to civilian roles, play a meaningful role in society, and build positive relationships with those around them are also important markers of a successful process (Awodola, 2009; Gleichmann et al., 2004; UNICEF, 2007). The community based approach versus the center based approach to reintegration is apparent in most cases, where the organization has specifically laid out who should provide a specific service (i.e. psychosocial counseling). These services, independent of who provides them, include: family tracing, psychosocial support and counseling, health support and treatment, recreation activities (i.e. games, sports, art, drama, dance), access to education, financial support, vocational and skills training, community outreach and advocacy, and participation in traditional ceremonies.

A typical journey through the DDR process includes first going to a reception or demobilization site for a brief period of time (<48 hours), where children are registered, disarmed and provided immediate medical and material assistance. After this, some children are transported to an interim care center where they participate in many of the activities listed above. In addition, the centers are usually meant to mimic community life by providing routines and discipline, in a supportive and caring environment. During their stay in the facility, children's families are located and contacted, and the process of reinsertion can happen almost immediately or within a couple weeks or months. This is where the main difference between approaches lies, as the length of stay and range of activities provided in the center vs. the community differ. In the case of GUSCO,

the center provides family tracing services, psychosocial counseling, health support, recreation activities, skills training and access to education all within the boundaries of the center. Although in recent years there has been a focus in GUSCO on providing more, “community-focused approaches based on a broader reintegration concept” (p. 30), they can still be considered a center based approach.

Save the Children and UNICEF take somewhat of a mixed approach regarding interim care, noting that while children should be reunited with their families as soon as possible, at least some time spent in a center is important for preparing the child and the community (Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). Save the Children explain that “The challenge is to find a balance: reunifying children with their communities as soon as possible but not sooner than the children or communities can handle” (p. 31). This is up for interpretation, as individual social workers or program managers may have different opinions on how much time is necessary in a facility. UNICEF also advocates for handling the need for interim care on a case-by-case basis, noting that if interim care is necessary it must be part of a community based approach. All of these approaches however, stress the importance of including the community in center based activities. Children should be encouraged to take part in sports, cultural events and discussions in the community, in order to facilitate as much integration as possible before they leave the center (GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). The long-term focus of reintegration is also mentioned in most of these documents, as being an important principle to consider when developing a reintegration strategy.

Family tracing is perhaps the most clearly articulated and straightforward activity that all of the programs/approaches mention as being important for reintegration. This is done differently in each case, with some programs completing it themselves in reception centers, interim care centers (UNICEF, 2007) or reintegration centers (GUSCO, 2010), and others working with different organizations who specialize in family tracing (Awodola, 2012). Also the provision of psychosocial support can be provided in the center (GUSCO, 2010) or children can be linked to community support groups or NGOs to provide these services (UNICEF, 2007). The goal of psychosocial support is to help children deal with the trauma they have experienced (Gleichmann et al., 2001), develop and build their strengths and resilience (UNICEF, 2007), and learn successful ways of interacting and living in the community (Awodola, 2012). All of these approaches agree that the provision of psychosocial support is of upmost important to reintegration, especially in the long term.

Education, vocational and skills training were also mentioned by all of the organizations as being important supports in achieving successful reintegration. Some centers provide literacy or catch up classes in order to help former child soldiers make up for lost time, and learn how to read and write (Awodola, 2012; GUSCO, 2010). UNICEF and Save the Children both stress the importance of providing these services to enhance children’s self-worth and strengthen resilience, but it is not always clear who is supposed to provide them. Vocational training or entrepreneurships are also useful in helping children to learn marketable skills, and provide hope for a meaningful future. In GUSCO, income generating activities are taught onsite, whereas with UNICEF the suggestion is that appropriate vocational or skills training should be made available, without specific mention of who will provide them. Nevertheless, it is agreed that education and vocational activities are key in helping to create a new social identity in the community, that can garnish respect and acceptance with other community members (Awodola, 2012).

The incorporation of traditional ceremonies has also been noted by several approaches/programs as being key for reintegration success (Awodola, 2012; GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). Although mentioned as being an important aspect in many approaches, it is unclear how often traditional rituals are actually being implemented in practice. In GUSCO, traditional cleansing ceremonies have been included as a very important aspect of reuniting children with their families and communities, however in Liberia it does not seem to have played a large role in the reintegration process (Awodola, 2012). Recreation activities, such as dance, art, drama, sports and games, have also been noted as helping to improve social relationships and provide a system of peer support (Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). However, if these services are not provided in a center and it is left up to individual families to facilitate these activities, it may be unlikely that most children will be in the position to participate.

Perhaps the most important reintegration activities that NGOs can facilitate are community dialogue, outreach and sensitization campaigns. These help to strengthen community ties, work out potential problems with the return of children (i.e. violent behaviour), discuss fears and perceptions, decrease stigmatizing behaviours and increase the chances that the children will be received positively (GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). Broadcasting messages over radio, print ads, posters and dramas have been noted as ways of sensitizing communities to the plight of child soldiers (Awodola, 2012; Lorey, 2001). Preparing communities for the return of these children, then providing mediation services and long term follow up support are also essential activities (UNICEF, 2007). When the community is willing to work with former child soldiers, the necessary social capital that returnees require can be rebuilt and established (Awodola, 2012; Gleichmann et al., 2004; GUSCO, 2012; UNICEF, 2007).

One important caveat of all of these programs is the separation or marginalization of former child soldiers or formerly abducted children from their communities. All of the documents studied stressed the potential for specialized programs for child soldiers to create tensions in the community, and among other war affected children who do not have access to these supports. As the GUSCO document points out “Reintegration approaches that exclusively target returnees with only passive involvement of other vulnerable members of the community are seen by many as segregative and insensitive to the cohesive nature of Acholi society” (p. 29). NGOs are advised to include a wider range of community members in their activities, so child soldiers are not isolated and marginalized due to their access to services. Also, it is important for centers and organizations to link with communities as soon as possible, in order to start building community supports for all vulnerable children (Lorey, 2001). Overall UNICEF notes, it is important to understand and provide for the unique needs of special groups such as refugees, orphans, girls, child mothers and children with disabilities who may need access to specialized services as well. However, this must be done in a way that does not isolate these children and create jealousy or resentment in their communities.

Aspects of identity. The main research question for this project asks, to what extent do current DDR and reintegration programs incorporate and address the shifting identities of former child soldiers into their program or approach? Each of the programs/approaches analyzed for this section mention the process of shifting or transforming identities of former child soldiers into civilian members. While not always specifically referring to a shift in identity, many of the organizations recognize that changes in behaviour, ideas, and ways of relating to community

members are necessary for successful reintegration. Further, several approaches/ programs discuss how former child soldiers must change their roles in society, indicating the importance of a shift in identification (Gleichmann et al., 2004; UNICEF, 2007). This process may be especially difficult for girls who while in the bush have gained status and power, and then when attempting to return home do not conform to traditional gender roles (Gleichmann et al., 2004).

Individual status and rank within the armed force can also impact children's and youth's ability to reintegrate and thus should be given special focus within reintegration activities (Gleichmann et al., 2004; GUSCO, 2010). GUSCO has taken this into consideration as they have become aware that greater recognition and ranks established during time with the LRA forces, have an implication for children's social reintegration. Some children may continue to display authoritative behaviours and attitudes that "correspond with their hierarchy and status in the bush" (p. 21). This behaviour is very closely linked to literature of identity salience formation, indicating that commanders and high level officers more strongly identify with the rebel group upon return, and are therefore harder to reintegrate. While GUSCO does not state this in terms of identity transformation, it is nevertheless what is happening when a child is trying to break ties to the old group and learn how to integrate into the new group. UNICEF (2007) also acknowledges that some children experience positive aspects of being associated with an armed group. These include increased power, status and respect (especially from their peers), and having a productive role within the group. UNICEF asserts that programs must recognize these aspects in children to ensure that their skills are not channeled into inappropriate avenues.

Other aspects of identity transformation or level of identification that are mentioned in these approaches/ programs include the time spent with the rebel group. As Save the Children reflects, "Experience has indicated that the longer a child is in an armed group, the harder it is to break with that lifestyle, requiring more assistance and support" (p. 27). Again, while not specifically mentioning identity, the process of breaking with the lifestyle implies a process of undoing their former soldier identity, into one that can live within the community. GUSCO also incorporates the length of time spent in captivity when determining the level of support that a child will need, stating that there is a strong correlation between time spent in the bush and ease of reintegration. Further, through their research study looking at outcomes of their program GUSCO has found "The longer the time period spent in the bush by a returnee/ ex-combatant, the longer it also takes for his/her successful reintegration. About 68% of FAC facing severe reintegration constraints have spent at least 5 years with the rebels" (p. 20). The reason for these difficulties lies primarily in their inability to resettle into the community (GUSCO, 2010), indicating that they have been unable to successfully shift their identities back to the community group.

The role that education and employment play in shifting the identities of former child soldiers has also been mentioned by several reports (Awodola, 2012; Gleichmann et al., 2004; GUSCO, 2010). In Liberia, "Educational support for ex-soldiers, it was hoped would transform their sense of self-identity, and make them more amenable to positive social behaviours" (Awodola, 2012, p. 35). This is because in addition to giving children hope for a better future, education also provides an opportunity to learn how to interact with other children (not always other former child soldiers), while being encouraged and supported by positive adult role models (UNICEF, 2007). In the same way that education helps form a new social identity, skills training is also important for establishing a new identity; though engaging in productive activities and contributing to the community, a former child soldier has an easier time leaving their past

behaviours and identity behind (Awodola, 2001). A report by the World Bank reiterates this point by noting that education and vocation training are connected “to the psychosocial component because establishing a new identity for the child soldier will depend on productive activities and new learning. Identity and positive meaning in their civilian life is gained through appropriate, contributive roles in their families and communities” (Verhey, 2001, p. 18). Programs perhaps realize the impact that education and vocation training have on former child soldiers, as all of the organizations/programs discussed here advocate for these aspects of reintegration.

Lastly, it is important to consider the role that reconciliation has in the identity transformation process of former child soldiers, especially when looking at long-term changes. While most programs do not attempt to set up formal reconciliation processes (i.e. truth commissions, war tribunals), many are informally involved by facilitating traditional healing ceremonies, dialogue and discussions with community members (GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001). Through the refiguring of attitudes, behaviours and ultimately selves, communities can transform and begin to support the reintegration process (Shepler, 2005). While the process of identity transformation takes time, and many aspects need to be considered for successful reintegration to occur, the success of this process is essential to the sustainable peacebuilding that war torn nations require (Denov & Maclure, 2007).

The information provided on DDR programs and approaches has highlighted how current reintegration activities are addressing identity transitions and concerns. While each of these programs is different in the way they offer services, they all essentially have the same goal. The effective integration of former child soldiers into their communities is the overarching goal within each of these DDR approaches/programs. Through the provision of family tracing services, psychosocial support, vocation and education support, community outreach and advocacy, all of these programs help to shift the identities of former child soldiers back to the community.

Children’s Accounts

Although this project is about how reintegration programs address children’s shifting identities, it is still important to consider the stories and experiences of children who have gone through these centers. While it was not feasible to speak with former child soldiers directly, this last section of the document analysis brings in five primary research studies in order to describe the reintegration experiences of children in regards to identity. The articles analyzed for this section are based on interviews from over 400 former child soldiers, both boys and girls, from various African countries. While this information on its own is not enough to explain how children shift their identities during reintegration, it highlights how various children experience identity changes during their time as child soldiers, and their difficulties during reintegration. These perspectives are essential when drawing conclusions regarding reintegration center activities, as these young people are at the center of these interventions and should be guiding any activities aimed to help them.

Analysis. The experiences of former child soldiers through primary research studies were qualitatively analyzed in this section of the document analysis using five articles and reports from various authors and organizations (see Methodology for further explanation). A chart was created that divided this information into three sections: children’s experiences and challenges upon return (related to identity), children’s views of reception centers and suggestions for

improvement, and the process of identity transformation into and out of the bush. Within each of these sections, various themes emerged and highlighted the common aspects between each of the documents reviewed. Each of these themes has demonstrated the journey that former child soldiers go through upon return from captivity, and will help create a better understanding of their perspectives. For more information regarding this analysis and the themes that emerged within each section see Appendix H.

Findings. Perhaps the most recurring theme throughout these documents, as well as in the literature, is that of acceptance. Acceptance by the family and community upon return, the process of acceptance that takes place over time, and the self-acceptance that may or may not occur within the individual are all various forms of acceptance discussed in these articles. Most former child soldiers do not experience rejection from their immediate families upon return (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008), with one study reporting that 90% of children had no issues with their family accepting them back (Annan et al., 2009). A boy from Mozambique explains his experience, *“I was well received by my family, they made me part of the family and they shared their food with me”*⁵ (Boothby et al., 2006, p. 95). However when it came to community acceptance, more children and youth reported issues of being rejected by their communities, especially girls who were child mothers and older boys who were viewed as being more culpable for their actions (Akello et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005).

What was interesting is the varied experiences that children had in relation to their communities, with some experiencing little to no community harassment in Mozambique (Boothby et al., 2006) to continued name calling and stigmatization from a community in Northern Uganda (Akello et al., 2006). This seems to indicate the large role that geographic location and unique cultures or traditions have on the ability of the community to accept children back after they have been involved in violence. Also, time seems to be a factor in influencing the level of rejection that community members outwardly display. Many children reported that the intensity and frequency of harassment by community members seemed to improve over time (Annan et al., 2009; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Some children noted the importance of peer relationships in feeling accepted in the community, and the issues that they faced with non-formerly abducted children (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). As one girl from Uganda notes, *“I feel easy with other formerly abducted, nobody insults me and we have all gone through the same trouble”* (Girl, 17, Chrobok & Akutu, 2008, p.16). Being able to relate better to those who have experienced similar traumas may indicate that some part of their identity is still attached to the rebel group.

The desire for many children to be accepted by their communities and not be seen as a ‘rebel’ also indicates their attempts at trying to renegotiate their identities. A quote from one girl in Sierra Leone illustrates this challenge, *“They always remind me of joining the rebels. I want them to accept me, to forgive me and allow me to be part of the community”* (Denov & Maclure, 2005 cited in Denov, 2005, p. 22). The inability of the community to accept former child soldiers back, due to resentment, hatred and desire for retribution is an immense barrier to former child soldier’s long term successful reintegration.

⁵ Quotations of children and youth throughout this section have been italicized for emphasis

However, there do seem to be certain activities that enhance the ability of the community to at least live amongst former child soldiers and eventually accept them back. In all five articles, the role and importance of traditional cleansing or purification rituals/ceremonies was mentioned as facilitating community reintegration. There are many reasons for this, including the significant role that spirituality and religious beliefs play in traditional societies such as Uganda, Mozambique and Sierra Leone (Denov, 2005). For example, the role of *cen* in Acholiland in Northern Uganda is a very powerful concept for returning children (Akello et al., 2006). If a child is said to have *cen*, the community cannot come close to the child for fear of catching the bad spirits (Akello et al., 2006). That is why a cleansing ceremony is so powerful in this region of the country, because without it the child can never reconnect with their community or come to terms with their guilt (Akello et al., 2006). Rituals can provide an important role in reducing shame, promoting healing, reconnecting the child to the community and promoting the self-acceptance necessary for successful long term reintegration (Akello et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005).

Further, these rituals help to reestablish trust and social cohesion among community members, enhancing the sense of acceptance and importance of the formerly abducted child by the community (Boothby et al., 2006; Denov, 2005). However, as the role of traditional ceremonies in the reintegration process varies within each culture, it is not surprising that the children who go through these ceremonies report mixed perspectives. While the majority of children report positive personal experiences and benefits from these rituals (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006; Denov & Maclure, 2005 cited in Denov, 2005), others note that they did not help them to 'forget' about their past as much as going to church (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Further, some girls had been excluded from these ceremonies all together (Stavrou, 2004 cited in Denov, 2005). Nevertheless, it does appear that those who go through a traditional or ritual cleansing ceremony do experience benefits within the community in regards to acceptance. This in turn will determine their ability to successfully transition from a 'rebel' identity, into one of the community and family.

Another common issue for former child soldiers is fear, both commonly cited while in captivity and upon return. While in the bush, several former child soldiers spoke about the fear that they initially felt over killing someone or being killed, and how it dissipated over time and eventually became routine. As one girl from Northern Uganda states, "*Often times, we enjoyed killing them ourselves. After some time in bush, you can do certain things without fear.*" (Akello et al., 2006, p. 236). The instillation of fear into the hearts and minds of these children, along with the process of turning their fear of killing into a routine, was part of the indoctrination process that helped to transform the identities of these children into soldiers (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). However, the fear that these children experienced when they returned to their communities, fear of attacks, fears of being poisoned, fears of being rejected, all thwarted their ability to reintegrate. The fear that the community expressed towards these children was also a barrier to reintegration, as many children were keenly aware of the negative attitudes directed towards them (Akello et al., 2005; Annan et al., 2009; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). The role of fear in stalling the reintegration process is evident within these articles, and is an issue that must be resolved if children are to be successfully accepted back to their community.

Some of this fear stems from the belief that former child soldiers are destined to become aggressive perpetrators of violence within their communities, and will at any point be subjected

to outbursts of violence (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). While some of the children in these studies do seem to demonstrate aggressive behaviour (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005), others appear to have a passive response to violence and an ability to use positive coping mechanisms to avoid conflict (Annan et al., 2009). Girls in particular had the potential to show aggressive behaviour, due to their increased frustration of being stigmatized and berated (Denov, 2005). What is perhaps more troubling is that this aggression appears, in one study at least, to persist over time (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). This may suggest that for some children continued conflict resolution skills building or therapy is needed to ensure long term successful outcomes.

On the other hand, some youth showed no aggressive behaviours both immediately returning from the bush and 15 years later (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006). These different behavioral reactions seem to demonstrate the large variability in child soldier's experiences and ability to cope with frustration and anger. This behaviour (i.e. aggression) has a direct affect on identity, because of the way the community perceives the former child soldier and interacts with them. As Annan et al. remark regarding these community perceptions, "The ability to break with past identity was important because one's reintegration experience depended in part on whether one was seen as a rebel or as an abducted child/youth" (p. 654). If the child is not able to transition from a soldier identity to one that can be accepted, respected and/or viewed positively by those around them, they will constantly struggle with being rejected and thus be prevented from long term reintegration.

The unique experiences and challenges that girls face upon return home is another common theme in the literature. Problems that girls face during reintegration include pregnancy, STDs, and the risk of HIV/AIDS further stigmatizes them within the community (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). Girls who have experienced rape and other forms of sexual abuse are seen as 'spoilt' and no longer marriageable (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). They face increased community rejection, which is compounded by the other psychological effects of rape (i.e. trauma, depression, guilt) and results in increased difficulty when attempting to reintegrate (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Further, some authors note that girls have been traditionally left out of the DDR process and are not given consideration when designing programs (McKay & Mazurana, 2004; Denov & Maclure, 2005 both cited in Denov, 2005). Denov notes "In all of the above-noted contexts, given that girls' salient roles within armed groups were not formally acknowledged or recognized, the vast majority of girls in fighting forces in the three studies were excluded from DDR" (Denov, 2005, p. 19). As a result, many girls from across Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Northern Uganda have returned to their homes spontaneously without the assistance or care of a rehabilitation or reintegration center (Denov, 2005). Of this group, the ones that appear to have the most difficulties with reintegration are the child mothers (Akello et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). By being perceived as having direct links with those who committed the atrocities, and with the social identity of many children being linked to their father, it is clear why these girls have such a difficult time being accepted (Akello et al., 2006; Denov, 2005).

There was some material found for children and youth's views and suggestions of reintegration/reception centers, however this material was more limited and is thus contained within Appendix H. Overall, children and youth had positive experiences with reception and reintegration centers, recommending at least some time within these centers is beneficial. Most children and youth who commented on the optimal length of time spent within these centers, said between 2-4

months was ideal. The suggestions made for future reintegration centers were based on the child/youth's own experience, and included the provision of counseling services, family tracing, vocational and medical support and the equal provision of material supplies to all children in need.

Identity transformation. The process of identity transformation, both when going into the bush and coming out, is something that former child soldiers and researchers have discussed. While not always stating things in terms of identity, the process of indoctrination, improvements in in-group status and length of time spent in the bush all help to enhance identification with the group (Denov, 2005). The process of indoctrination, especially with the LRA, is an essential component to transforming innocent children into soldiers and eventually killers. Indoctrination with the group involved the continued use of fear, especially fear of death or beatings if the children tried to escape, the use of drugs, forcing children to kill their family members so they would believe that they could never return home, and the continued use of humiliation to demoralize them (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). These messages of fear helped to sever ties with the community, so even if the children managed to escape they believed that the community would harm them upon return (Annan et al., 2009). Further, the use of rituals as an indoctrination technique such as rites of passage and other traditional ceremonies mimicked what the children experienced in their home cultures and helped to increase adherence to the group (Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). The use of drugs was another common indoctrination technique used, which helped to increase ties to group members (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005).

The status of group members, or rather the improvements in status within the group has also been noted as influencing children's identification within that in-group (Denov, 2005). Those children who were promoted into commanders would recollect these experiences with pride, demonstrating the power that they had among their comrades (Denov & Maclure, 2005 cited in Denov, 2005). Girls who demonstrated the ability to commit violent acts were rewarded, as expressions of violence were synonymous with the group's collective identity (Denov & Maclure, 2005 cited in Denov, 2005). Of the three boys who participated in Boothby et al.'s (2006) study that were experiencing the most difficulties with reintegration 15 years after being in the bush, two of them had held youth leadership positions in the rebel group. The in-group status of returning children, although not fully discussed by all of the children in these articles, does seem to have an impact on their level of identification as a soldier. As the CIDA report notes in each of the three studies, those children who had been commanders or held positions of power increased their commitment to the cause (Denov, 2005).

The length of time spent in the bush was also noted as influencing children's ability to reintegrate; however the exact relationship of time to reintegration success is not clear. Some children commented on their reintegration difficulties stemming from the lack of educational or vocational opportunities, due to time spent in the bush (Boothby et al., 2006). While others talked about their experiences in the bush as being factors in their reintegration failure, with more time spent usually meaning more time to witness and commit atrocities (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Further, the longer the children remained in the bush, the more time they had to become adapted to routine violence and ways of doing things (Denov, 2005). While time spent with the rebel group may not necessarily predict their ability to successfully reintegrate, it does seem to be a factor in the majority of cases. This is perhaps due to the strong identities of these children, who

after years of being with the rebel group have started to adopt their ideas, attitudes and behaviours. As Chrobok & Akutu note, "... when children remain with an armed group such as the LRA for very long periods and grow up within that group, with some even assuming leadership positions, their identification with the group can become strong." (p. 28).

As previously discussed, the process of identity transformation takes place while going into the rebel group and when coming home and attempting to reintegrate. The themes that children discussed in relation to their identity transformation when coming back included, 'forgetting' the past, the role of education and economics. The resiliency that children have demonstrated through their life stories is also a compelling factor in their ability to transform identities and become community members. Learning how to forget the past was a common theme in all five reports, with children explaining how they struggled with recurring thoughts, nightmares and flashbacks that interfered with their life (Akello et al., 2006; Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). The attempts that these children made to successfully forget their traumatic experiences varied, with some children finding relief in traditional cleansing ceremonies (Akello et al., 2006; Boothby et al., 2006) and others gaining support from friends (Annan et al., 2009).

In all cases there seems to be the intention of breaking with the past, and being able to move on and think about the future. However this struggle to leave the past behind is not an easy process, as certain locations, smells or sounds may trigger painful memories (Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006). Further, it is unlikely that children will ever completely forget what happened to them as the intensity and duration of their experiences make this impossible. What is likely happening is what one boy from Northern Uganda so succinctly explains of the Acholi word to forget (*Wilo wic*), "*It is not forgetting exactly. It means that the kind of memory is reduced . . . Even if you are thinking of something, you try to suppress it, the burning thought. You try to think of something else*" (Annan et al., 2009, p. 659). This demonstrates the active process that children are involved with when it comes to forming a new identity and pushing their old memories and selves aside.

Children explain that their educational and economic challenges interfere with their ability to live successfully and integrate into their communities (Annan et al., 2009; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). While many children place a high value on school, the challenges they face after coming out of the bush, including their inability to pay for fees, pregnancy and health problems, make it even more difficult to continue their education (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Educational and vocational opportunities are important for children's reintegration because they provide a distraction from painful, intrusive memories, as well as providing a meaningful identity other than that of a former rebel (Annan et al., 2009). While opportunities are limited, many children somehow find a way of attending school and becoming employed. In one study 79% of the youth were in school full time after going through a reintegration center (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008), while in another study 100% of the youth were employed after 15 years of returning from captivity (Boothby et al., 2006). The role of education and employment seems to be fundamental in providing a secure and productive future for these children/youth, which may be instrumental in shifting their identities.

Finally, throughout each of these research studies is the theme of resilience, which while not reported by the children, is demonstrated by their behaviours and ability to overcome their

obstacles. The resiliency shown by children through attending school (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008), finding meaningful roles in society despite the limitations (Annan et al., 2006) and becoming loving husbands and fathers regardless of their violent past (Boothby et al., 2006) are a testament to their strength and courage. Further, girls in captivity have demonstrated their resiliency by using their agency in extreme situations to ensure their safety (Denov, 2005). Throughout the stories of these children, it is clear that despite experiencing the most horrific acts of violence, many are able to come home and over time learn how to leave that identity behind and rejoin their communities.

The perspectives of children and youth who have gone through the reintegration process are very important to consider for this study. Accounts of these children demonstrate the challenges upon return from captivity, including being rejected, stigmatized, the lack of education and employment, continued aggression and the difficulty of transitioning from being a soldier into being a community member. Also, through an analysis of their difficult identity transitions upon return home, and the factors that seem to hinder this process (i.e. time, position, gender), more information is known regarding how identity concerns may impact reintegration programs. This information is considered in the final conclusions and recommendations, to ensure that the perspectives of children and youth are understood and valued.

Conclusion

Through this document analysis the possible role that identity salience plays for former child soldiers' shifting identities has been discussed, and the importance of this phenomenon for reintegration center staff has been shown. Through this lens, the factors that may influence the hierarchy of identities or what identity becomes the most salient at any given time have been discussed in this context. It appears from a review and analysis of reintegration workers' and children's experiences, as well as DDR/ reintegration program information that some of these factors are already being incorporated into reintegration programs. The identity factors that are not currently being addressed in reintegration programs (i.e. level of threat) may prove to be useful aspects to consider when determining the most appropriate and useful interventions regarding identity.

The various approaches and programs that exist for former child soldier reintegration have been outlined, along with the multiple program aspects that help shift their identities. Within secondary studies, children have discussed the role that fear, acceptance, stigma, reintegration programs and positive role models can play in the reintegration process. The experiences and perspectives of these children, combined with the DDR program/approach information and the literature on identity salience, demonstrate what can be gained in this field by incorporating identity concerns into the reintegration efforts. However, what is also important to consider before making conclusions about the research question is the perspectives of individuals who work with child soldiers in a reintegration setting.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Understanding how reintegration programs currently address the changing identities of the children they work with, as well as concluding how these efforts may be improved, requires an in depth look at the perspectives of individuals working in this field. Eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with former staff of one reintegration center in Lira, Northern Uganda. These interviews provided first-hand accounts of reintegration successes and difficulties, while creating suggestions for future centers. Taken together, these interviews highlight the importance of addressing identity concerns during reintegration and help to answer the research question.

Background⁷

The Rachele Rehabilitation Center opened in October 2003 in Lira, Lango District, Uganda. Through funding by the Belgian Government and led by the efforts of Belgian journalist Els de Temmerman, the rehabilitation project began with three aspects: the Rachele Rehabilitation Center, Community Follow Up Program and an Advocacy Program. In the three years that Rachele operated as a rehabilitation center (2003-2006), 2552 children were received at the center. The numbers of children being received slowly declined until 2006, at which time it was determined that the need to rehabilitate former child soldiers in the region was no longer present, and the facilities would be transitioned into a boarding school. The last former child soldier arrived at the center on September 12, 2006, however the Rachele Comprehensive Secondary School opened its doors in 2005 to begin the transition of services.

While Rachele operated as a rehabilitation center, the program consisted of activities intended to help the children deal with the trauma they experienced in captivity, as well as learn how to eventually integrate into their communities. Before any programs or activities were delivered, all children had their basic needs met, which included food, health, clothes and a feeling of security. Social workers told the children, that while they disapproved of what they did in the bush, they forgave them because they knew they had been abducted and forced. Further, staff told them that the stay at the center would be brief in order to trace their families and allow them time to recover. Most children stayed at Rachele for one to two months, though children who were seriously sick or wounded, and/or child mothers who needed to give birth, would stay longer. Children went home when they “showed no more signs of trauma, had started to build relationships with other children at the centre, were physically healthy and were making plans for the future” (Rachele Report, 2006, p. 44).

Once their basic needs were met, and the children had settled into the center, individual trauma counseling began. Group counseling sessions also helped children to develop life skills, focus on ways to live amongst the community, and deal with any challenges that arose. Through debate, drawing, role-playing and news analysis, children were taught interpersonal and practical skills and learned how to interact with others. Children had to contribute to all communal activities, including cooking and cleaning, which helped to establish and mimic their normal routines at

⁷All of the information contained in this section was obtained from the Rachele Rehabilitation Center Final Report (2006), published by Sponsoring Children Uganda and funded by the Belgian Government. The documentary “Children of War” directed by Bryan Single (2010) also helped to illuminate the work done at the Rachele Rehabilitation Center, and thus helped to inform this section of the report.

home. Education was an important aspect of the center, and included catch up classes, vocational training and health education. Vocational classes (i.e. hairdressing, carpentry) were offered for those children who were unlikely to go into the formal school system (i.e. older youth, child mothers). Sports such as football (soccer), badminton and netball were organized, which helped to integrate the children and break the stigma from the community. Music and dance, which are both embedded in the Ugandan culture, also help to foster a sense of togetherness among the students.

Community follow up consisted of education, skills training and income generating activities offered through the center, which allowed children the opportunity to earn an income. The income generating program was set up in the community, and involved children and youth from other centers as well as Rachele. The materials provided included goods to set up a small shop (i.e. salt, sugar), charcoal, bicycles, sewing machines, baking and carpentry kits and other assorted goods. Training workshops in business were provided at the Rachele center, however implementation of the income generating activity was conducted in the IDP camp or village where the children returned to. The sponsorship program operated by Sponsoring Children Uganda was another aspect of the community follow up portion at Rachele. School fees were paid directly to schools, while children were given a scholastic package (i.e. uniform, school supplies) to help them through the term.

The advocacy program at Rachele was intended to sensitize the community to the plight of child soldiers, urge them to accept their children back, and allow for forgiveness and reconciliation. The radio station Radio Wa, broadcast the program 'Karibu' (Swahili for welcome) to listeners all over Northern Uganda beginning in 2004. Children from Rachele went on the program to discuss their experiences, with the hope that it would sensitize the community by calming tensions and increasing compassion. In addition to the radio program, a drama (play) was created to show IDP camps and villages the experiences of children in captivity, and their subsequent challenges upon return. This was also meant to sensitize the community, and address the many challenges of stigma and rejection shown by community members. The information contained in this section demonstrates how the Rachele Rehabilitation Center operated and what components or activities made up the program. The interviews that follow also now have a context, so the insights and perspectives of staff members on these activities make sense.

In-depth Interviews

In order to capture the unique experiences of individuals who work in the field of child soldier reintegration, an exploration of the Rachele Rehabilitation Center in Lira, Uganda has been developed. The reintegration program at Rachele is discussed and highlights the various program aspects that help to address the shifting identities of the children and youth who go through the center. Through in-depth interviews with eight former staff members of Rachele (see Appendix F for staff information), this section analyzes how the shifting identities of former child soldiers are addressed during the reintegration program at Rachele. Further, the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and suggestions for future reintegration centers is discussed. Taken together with the literature review, document analysis and expert interviews, these staff interviews provide a first-hand account of what is happening on the ground and will lead to more comprehensive recommendations.

Interview analysis. The thematic analysis completed for the staff interviews was broken down into several sections, including staff perspectives on reintegration, factors that may make identity transition difficult, factors that may facilitate successful identity transitions, the Rachele program and needed program changes or recommendations. Staff perspectives on reintegration included discussions of the importance and role of identity during reintegration, along with the role that they thought reintegration centers should play in shifting the identities of former child soldiers. Almost all of the participants noted that changing the identities of former child soldiers was an important and needed aspect of reintegration and program activities. Many discussed the role of center staff in helping children forget their past, and looking ahead to future activities and new roles. In discussing the factors that may prohibit the transition to new identities, staff mentioned time spent in the bush (seven⁸), position held (five), lack of education (three), being female and especially a child mother (seven), difficulties changing (five) and rejection and stigma (eight), as being the most important factors. On the other hand, when discussing the possible factors needed to facilitate more successful identity changes, themes included: education (four), meaningful employment/jobs (seven), acceptance (eight) and positive connections/relationships with others (eight).

Speaking about the Rachele program in particular, staff discussed those activities that addressed identity concerns along with the most successful program activities. Overwhelmingly, staff had positive views of the center, with the provision of counseling, debate, health supports, education and vocational training, being noted as the most successful program aspects, and ones that helped facilitate a new identity. Having had the chance to make recommendations and/or suggestions to future centers who could learn from the Rachele program, staff mentioned the need for monitoring and follow up (eight), education support (six), long term support (six), enhancing community involvement and connection (eight), and creating connections with other organizations (five). Overall, this analysis provides a real world context for the reintegration of former child soldiers, and helps to demonstrate how children's shifting identities are being addressed during the reintegration process through the perspectives of center staff.

Interview findings. When asked about the importance of shifting or changing children's identities during the reintegration process, most participants felt that this was an important aspect of long-term reintegration. Participants discussed the importance of 'changing', usually from the bush behaviour to normal civilian behaviour and customs. A process that entailed leaving the past behind and accepting their current life (Nancy interview, 2012), or one where children had to make a conscious effort to shift their behaviours (Charles interview, 2012) was explained. Further, some discussed this process as one that required patience (Sarah interview, 2012) and took time (Andrew, Michael interviews, 2012). Andrew noted the importance of counseling stating, "*when they are being talked to for a long time, they can change*". However, despite the belief that former child soldiers can change and rehabilitation staff should be there to help them change, several participants noted that these children will never completely forget what happened to them.

Reflecting on her personal experience of spending years in captivity as a wife of a high-ranking commander, Brenda noted that many things can remind you of being in the bush. Smells, sounds, locations and even specific colors of clothing serve as important reminders of their life in

⁸ Numbers refer to how many staff, out of eight, mentioned the specific theme.

captivity. Brenda explained, *“even if I grow older I will not forget”*, however she did mention that improvements are possible. These improvements are perhaps due to the identities that many former child soldiers transition into, something beyond reinsertion that provides hope for a new identity (Michael interview, 2012). Hopefully, as some participants noted, that old rebel identity will eventually fade and make way for something better.

In discussing the role that reintegration and rehabilitation centers can play in helping children shift their identities to the community, almost all of the participants discussed the importance of the center as a first step in this process. After explaining to children that what happened to them was not their fault, and in fact the adults had failed to protect them, Sarah explains that *“we tried to undo that from them completely”*, noting the importance of changing the child’s bush identity. The center also focused on treating everyone the same, which also helped them to learn positive ways of interacting. Paul explains that they would tell children *“here we are all the same”* and *“now we are going to be students”*. This emphasizes the importance of the messages that the children received from the staff, in helping them build confidence in themselves and each other. Most participants noted the positive impact that center activities and staff had on the children’s recovery, including helping them regain trust (Paul interview, 2012), developing new behaviours (Andrew interview, 2012) and learning how to socialize with others without the use of violence (Charles interview, 2012). Nancy affirms the centers positive impact, *“I appreciate what this center has done for these young children, it has given them an opportunity in life”*.

All of the staff explained the necessity of changing from a rebel or bush identity, into a community, student and family identity, albeit not always using the term ‘identity’. Referring to the behaviours, ideas and routines of former child soldiers, all staff discussed the ways that the center can help these aspects change. Further, many staff have noted that although these identities can change, children will never really forget what has happened to them. This is an important point, as forgetting and remembering may have a direct link to the level of identification that a child feel towards a group. If a child never really forgets about their past experience, and in many cases still feels some attachment or connection with other formerly abducted (Michael, Nancy interviews, 2012), this may indicate that some part of their rebel or bush identity remains. This identity, although still present, may not become salient in most situations if the child is able to successfully change and reintegrate. However, as will be seen later on when children are called rebels, this identity can become invoked thereby influencing their behaviour.

Factors that make identity change difficult. The factors that staff felt made it difficult for former child soldiers to change their identities (i.e. attitudes, behaviours) include time spent in the bush, position held in the group, lack of education, being a girl (especially a child mother) and community rejection and stigma. Several of the participants noted that children who had been in captivity for a long time, usually 2+ years, had one of the most difficult times reintegrating and changing their behaviours. Some noted that these children required more counseling, took longer to rehabilitate and were placed in a higher risk category (Brenda, Paul, Sarah interviews, 2012). The ages of the children were also noted as being an important factor for reintegration as *“some of them because they were so young, so innocent, they have learned so much from the bush, that they don’t want to detach themselves from those things they learned”* (Nancy interview, 2012).

Also, some individuals mentioned that more time in the bush meant that they were likely exposed to more traumatic events (Andrew, Samuel interviews, 2012). These individuals required serious

counseling to deal with their painful emotional memories, and some may have likely experienced increased problems upon return home (Andrew, Samuel interviews, 2012). Staff explained that continued problems are likely the result of being “*socialized into violence*” (Michael interview, 2012), where “*beating and killing is what has remained in their mind*” (Andrew interview, 2012). Children who were born in captivity were also mentioned as a specific group of children that experience identity problems during reintegration, as the LRA is the only family they have ever known.

The position held in the bush, usually that of commanders and/or senior leaders, also seemed to impact the difficulty of changing children’s behaviours and the groups that they saw themselves as belonging to. Half of the participants noted the difficulty in reintegrating commanders, as they are resistant to authority and used to getting what they want through force (Michael, Nancy interviews, 2012). While not always displaying outwardly aggressive behaviour, Andrew commented that when provoked ex-commanders can ‘*go wild*’. Nancy also mentioned that these children can have a hard time adapting to a structured environment such as school, and thus may act out in the community. This then reinforces the community stigma against them, which makes acceptance more difficult. What is interesting is that some participants noted that there were individual differences in the way that certain children coped and dealt with their experiences, that did not have to do with their position, time spent or what they had experienced (Michael interview, 2012). Samuel commented that some children feel as though they are being punished when they are asked to change their attitudes and behaviours, noting that hygiene was especially difficult. Michael also stated that some children have different coping abilities and react very different to the exact same situation.

The lack of education that many children experience upon return home was also seen as a barrier to effectively shifting children’s identities. As some children who want to go to school do not have the means or opportunity to do so, this can impact their ability to reintegrate (Sarah interview, 2012). Further, children who do not do well in school and end up dropping out also seem to experience difficulties in the community (Andrew, Nancy interviews, 2012). This is why Andrew asserts, education either formal or vocational is essential for successful reintegration.

Another group that has been constantly reported as having the most difficult time shifting their identity and successfully reintegrating, is girls and especially child mothers. Child mothers seem to experience the largest amount of social rejection and stigmatization from the community among former child soldiers, and many times they are not accepted back at all (Charles, Nancy, Sarah interviews, 2012). Child mothers may have the hardest time changing their identities because their child is a constant reminder and symbol of their former life (Charles, Paul interviews, 2012). Further, many times the community and extended family does not want to accept a ‘rebel’ child back, which complicates the relationship between the daughter and her family (Andrew, Nancy interviews, 2012). Even if they are accepted, “*these children also have identity problems*” (Michael interview, 2012) because their extended family support system has been weakened. In Uganda, land and other social privileges are handed down through the father’s lineage, so those who have no connections with their fathers end up being ostracized for life and have no access to land (Sarah interview, 2012). Boys born in captivity seem to also have an especially difficult time during reintegration, being labeled a rebel for much of their lives (Sarah interview, 2012). This is perhaps one reason why many girls end up going back to their

'husbands' after they come out of the bush. Some girls may still identify with their husbands, and seek the security and connection they can provide (Michael, Samuel interviews, 2012).

The last factor that may make reintegration and identity change difficult is community rejection and stigmatization. All of the participants agreed that when children return to their community and they experience rejection by being called a 'rebel' along with fear from community members, this impedes their ability to change identities. Especially those children who committed violent acts against their village or family, community rejection is high (Brenda interview, 2012). The fear experienced by the community, peers and family members towards these children was one of the biggest challenges upon return (Charles interview, 2012). After being told lies by the LRA that they would be killed or poisoned by their own communities upon return, the outward fear and stigma that the community showed towards these children helped to reinforce these ideas. Thus, many children came back home with a lot of suspicion and fear towards the community, which was heightened by the name calling and the lack of compassion shown by community members (Nancy, Samuel interviews, 2012). Several participants also noted that when the children are branded a rebel, this not only serves to remind them of that life, but they may also start acting more like rebels. Paul discussed how when the community insists on calling a child a rebel, the child may begin to act out that persona, striking fear into the minds of the community. This behaviour he notes, "*was like an escape from the stigma*" (Paul interview, 2012).

Another source of stigma from the community came as a result of being labeled traumatized, which in the local language (Luo) does not have a direct translation (Michael interview, 2012). Thus when the children returned home to their communities, "*their identity is that they are traumatized, that became a source of stigma*" (Michael interview, 2012). This is because in Luo the closest word to traumatized is 'mad', which meant that the community "*branded them the mad*" (Brenda interview, 2012). Because the community did not understand trauma, they had a very difficult time accepting these children back and took a lot of time to develop trust (Michael, Samuel interviews, 2012). To develop this trust, the Rachele center put a lot of effort in sensitizing the community through dramas, outreach and dialogue (Andrew, Samuel interviews, 2012).

The factors may that inhibit former child soldiers to change their identities from the bush, into the community or family, also seem to make it more difficult to successfully reintegrate. These factors include the time spent in the bush, position held in the bush, lack of education, being a girl and experiencing stigma and rejection from the community. All of these factors are in some way linked to identity, and demonstrate that children must change their attachment from one group to another. Therefore, the relationships that have been formed within the LRA and upon subsequent return to the community are perhaps essential components when discussing children's ability to reintegrate. Both time spent and position in the group, were also indicated in the document analysis as being potential factors in shifting identity salience. Again here, through the perspectives of staff, both of these factors appear relevant in this case as children who spent a long time in captivity and who were commanders had an especially difficult time 'changing'.

According to the accounts of staff, child mothers, children born in captivity and children who experienced community rejection also struggled with finding a new identity outside of the bush. Acceptance and a sense of belonging seem to have such an important role in successful reintegration that those who cannot obtain these things may remain with their 'rebel' identity for

much longer. What is important to take away from this information is that children need a group that can accept them. Not only is it important for children to change their identification with their old group, but the communities around them must be willing to *let* them identify with their new community or family. Thus, identification must go both ways, as shifting the identities of children seems to be an active process that all community members must be involved in.

Rachele program/activities. Participants discussed the activities within the Rachele center and gave their perspectives on the best and most effective program aspects, as well as those that impacted identity. Many of the activities discussed were mentioned as being both the best activities and the ones that addressed identity. Therefore, all of the activities discussed by participants are pulled together in this section, with specific mentions of identity were applicable. Several participants mentioned that the Rachele program overall was important for changing the identities of children and helping them adjust to a new life (Brenda, Charles, Nancy, Samuel interviews, 2012). Having an open, supportive environment where children could freely talk with staff members was important in building trust and changing their identities (Brenda, Nancy interviews, 2012). This connection with staff further helped them to realize that there were people they could trust and open up to (Andrew interview, 2012). Especially when the center opened as a school, Nancy noted that it was good for the students to be mixed together and relate to each other, which helped them change their identity.

Almost all of the participants discussed the role of counseling in successfully changing the children's behaviours and ideas. Through simple talking and helping skills, social workers would take away the child's emotional attachment with their past identity (Michael interview, 2012) and help them "*redefine their identity as children in the home and community*" (Sarah interview, 2012). Counseling also helped them to open up, and diminish their fear and distrust (Samuel interview, 2012) by forming a personal connection with their counselor (Nancy interview, 2012). Both individual and group counseling were noted as being important for changing children's identities. Group activities prepared them to go home, taught them to be free and no longer fear the community or be aggressive (Andrew interview, 2012). Individual counseling was also "*very effective because it helps you to get into the heart of the person*" (Sarah interview, 2012).

Debate was mentioned several times as being an effective activity for helping the children relate to each other, understanding underlying ideas and motivating positive behaviour (Andrew, Brenda, Samuel, Sarah interviews, 2012). Andrew notes that debate helped children to recover, because it showed them the value of education and showed them a future. Literacy classes, vocational training, praying, storytelling and drawing were also noted as being effective program aspects. Further, traditional creative expressions such as drama, singing and dancing helped to refresh children's minds and make them happy (Brenda, Samuel interviews, 2012). Music and dance also helped children to relax and provided release in an environment where everyone was sharing in a collective activity (Nancy interview, 2012). Further, "*music and dance have been very powerful*" (Michael interview, 2012) because children can see their talent, which restores their self-esteem. Sports and games were also mentioned several times as being an important activity for connecting children together, as well as burning energy and helping them to forget about their past (Brenda, Charles, Nancy, Samuel interviews, 2012).

Community outreach and mobilization were also very effective in preparing community members for the return of former child soldiers, assisting in successful reintegration (Brenda, Samuel

interviews, 2012). Staff from the center would go into the villages and talk to community members about accepting and forgiving their children, while also providing workshops in the community on various topics (Brenda interview, 2012). The radio program was also noted as being very successful, allowing children to connect to their families and facilitating follow up with the center (Andrew, Sarah interviews, 2012). Community involvement within the center, including guests and visitors, was also highlighted as being very important in increasing the connection to the community (Charles, Paul, Sarah interviews, 2012). Further, having religious leaders and family members come in and talk to the children assured them that they would be welcomed back to the community and helped reduce fear and apprehension (Charles, Nancy, Sarah interviews, 2012).

Taken together many of the center's activities facilitated children's shifting identities by effectively changing the way that children saw themselves, moving from a member of the LRA back to a community member, student, family member or friend. The role of counseling, music and dance, and community involvement, were especially important in facilitating these changes. Overall, the participants felt that many of these activities helped to increase the resiliency of the children and helped them to develop positive skills and coping mechanisms. As Michael summarized of the center's activities, *"These are the ways we are trying to promote compassionate identities in the children, and build resiliency in them. How they can effectively use their will and motivation to succeed, despite what they have been through"*. Many of the activities mentioned to be successful and help the children change, centered around connecting with other people, moving past their trauma and keeping their minds busy. All of these factors seem to indicate that children must push away their old behaviours, attitudes and ways of relating, in favor of new ones. While not calling this a shift of identity in the Rachele program, this is effectively what they were doing in the center. Despite the challenges that the center experienced (i.e. financial), most staff members were satisfied with what the center offered to children, and had witnessed the positive effects first hand.

Factors for successful reintegration. It became increasingly clear when interviewing staff that the factors that help children shift their identity are the same things needed for successful reintegration. When asking about identity transitions and successful reintegration, both concepts appeared inextricably linked together indicating that one could not occur without the other. The various factors that staff believed were the most important for successful identity change were education, meaningful employment or vocational skills, acceptance and positive connections and relationships with others.

Education, both formal and vocational was mentioned by several people as being one of the most important factors in facilitating successful reintegration (Andrew, Charles, Michael, Sarah interviews, 2012). As Sarah explained, *"those who have the opportunity to go to school, recover and reintegrate faster"* because they have hope for a better future. Going to school also helps children forget about their past, and mix with other students (Andrew interview, 2012). Andrew explained the value of school noting, *"when a person is willing to be educated it changes their character"*. When children have been in captivity for a long time, they have lost opportunities; going to school gives them hope and raises their self-esteem (Michael interview, 2012). Further, education helps to normalize the children by providing a supportive environment and a connection with their peers that *"help them to identify themselves with a new kind of values"* (Michael interview, 2012).

For those children who are unable or do not wish to attend formal education, vocational skills training provides them with a new way of living where they can be self-sufficient and lead a productive life (Charles, Michael interviews, 2012). Almost all of the participants noted the importance of vocational skills training (i.e. carpentry, tailoring) and income generating activities, in helping former child soldiers to create a positive future. As poverty and lack of employment may lead to crime and the use of other survival skills (Andrew, Charles interviews, 2012), it is very important that children are able to earn income and provide for their living expenses. Michael stressed that the key to successful reintegration is that former child soldiers “*need to lead a productive life*”, which is brought about through education or vocational success. Nancy, Brenda and Samuel all mentioned the income generating activities as being especially important for girls and child mothers, who were given sewing machines and startup money to maintain a business. However, both Brenda and Samuel stressed that follow up for the income generating activities should be provided at 2-3 months to ensure things were going well.

All of the participants discussed that community and self-acceptance were needed in order to successfully reintegrate and shift to a community identity. Samuel commented on how the trust between the children and their community is the most important challenge in acceptance, while Charles stated that parental acceptance was crucial for reintegration. The stigma experienced by children upon return, by being called ‘rebels’ and ‘Kony’, act as barriers to community and self-acceptance (Brenda, Paul, Samuel interviews, 2012). Teachers, peers and even family members who insist on branding these children, serve as a constant reminder of what they were forced to do in the bush (Paul, Samuel interviews, 2012). Most children who are unsuccessful at reintegrating are those who experience community or family rejection, although clan elders and center staff can play a large role in helping the community to accept these children back (Andrew, Nancy, Samuel interviews, 2012).

Closely related to acceptance, are the close connections and positive relationships between formerly abducted children and those around them. This was another major theme throughout the interviews, as those children who were said to be doing well were all able to develop strong friendships and relationships. Many participants commented that because the center mixed the students (both formerly abducted and regular children), and they were encouraged to freely associate with each other, this helped them to change (Andrew, Brenda, Charles, Nancy interviews, 2012). Andrew explained, “*as they are mixed up with other people who were not abducted, they will continue changing*”. The role of sports, specifically football, in bringing children together and helping them to connect and make friendships was also emphasized (Brenda, Charles, Nancy interviews, 2012). Overall, most of the participants discussed the need for children to act like everyone else, and be able to open up to others, not only other former child soldiers. Michael asserted that the center staff “*must promote a compassionate identity*” within the children, that will ultimately help them to relate well with others.

The aspects staff mentioned as being associated with successful reintegration, also appear to contribute to shifting the child’s identity away from the LRA. Having hope for a better future, through education or vocational skills training, allows children to shift their identity into something more positive. From the perspectives of staff, this a very important aspect of shifting identity because if there is nothing there, no hope for a better identity than the one they had in the bush, children may be likely to go back to those behaviours. Family and community acceptance,

along with the development of positive relationships also seem to be fundamental in facilitating an effective identity shift. Not only does a child need hope for a better future, but they also need a new group to associate with. While the new group may not always be the one they left behind (i.e. displacement, refugees, orphans), it is essential that former child soldiers find a way to connect and attach to other human beings. Especially because of the fear and isolation they have experienced in captivity and upon their subsequent return, the need to belong is likely very strong within these children. This is why it is imperative that reintegration centers, NGOs, clan, religious and other community leaders band together to help facilitate the effective reintegration of formerly abducted children. With a greater support network it will be more likely that if children do experience problems during reintegration, there will be someone there to help them.

Program and center improvements. Through their experiences as staff members of the Rachele Rehabilitation Center, all of the participants have had a chance to witness the effects and outcomes of the program that they have delivered. Asked about the changes they would make to future programs or recommendations for other centers, staff members highlighted the need for follow up, education support, long term support, community involvement/outreach, and connections with other organizations. Perhaps the biggest suggestion for future centers was the need for continued follow up, both in the community, individual homes and with the income generating activity program. All but one participant mentioned the need for center staff to check up on the children in their communities, to make sure that they are doing well and have not fallen backwards. Charles suggested that staff should conduct constant follow up meetings to ensure that children are not experiencing problems in the community, such as committing violence. And if there are issues, the community or family should be able to bring the child back for support. Constant follow up in the villages is necessary to also ensure that children are not still being stigmatized, and can help identify if the community needs any further support (Andrew, Samuel interviews, 2012). However, several barriers exist when providing follow up, including transportation issues, geography (i.e. villages are far away) and lack of funding (Charles, Paul interviews, 2012). Several individuals also mentioned the need for constant monitoring and follow up with the income generating activities and vocational training recipients, to make sure children are utilizing the skills and materials they received (Andrew, Brenda, Michael, Samuel interviews, 2012). Both Michael and Andrew commented that many of the children who received the income generating activities were not doing well, resulting from inadequate training and a lack of close follow up.

Regarding concrete and specific strategies that centers could employ to improve follow up, both Andrew and Nancy provided suggestions. Andrew suggested that follow-up should be organized in centers by sub-county, with an individual in the village monitoring the formerly abducted children, and reporting to a sub-county office if problems are occurring. This individual could then communicate with the reintegration center, and a social worker could be sent if there are issues that cannot be resolved at the local or sub-county level. This relationship between different levels of society (i.e. local, regional) could alleviate some of the issues of transportation and geography, and ensure continuous monitoring and reporting. Nancy on the other hand, suggested that children be brought back to the center after 2-3 years after completing the program. These children could inform the staff about their experiences, comment on any needed changes to the program and serve as mentors to children who are still in the center. Both of these ideas are very creative, and represent what is possible when you ask staff themselves about what improvements could benefit the program.

Again, the necessity of providing education support was suggested by most participants as being key for successful reintegration programs. Providing school fees and access to education and/or vocational training is key for children to put the past behind them keep them engaged (Brenda, Charles, Michael, Samuel, Sarah interviews, 2012). Education support will also facilitate *“lifetime empowerment that will help them be self-reliant”* (Sarah interview, 2012) and *“will make their heart to be happy”* (Brenda interview, 2012). Michael also emphasized the importance of going to school for successful reintegration, noting that children had to *“be empowered to lead a productive life”*. Long-term access to psychosocial support was also suggested as being a needed improvement to the center. Some participants complained that the program was too short (Charles interview, 2012), insisting that the continued trauma and pain that some children experience requires continuous counseling (Andrew, Charles, Sarah interview, 2012). Further, a long-term perspective to reintegration is necessary to ensure that the process is not left unfinished (Charles, Michael interviews, 2012).

Involving the community in reintegration efforts, by providing outreach, services and facilitating visits to the center, were suggestions made by almost all participants. Most participants stressed the need to create strong linkages with the community, noting the importance of facilitating dialogue and involving community leaders in center activities (Brenda, Michael, Paul, Sarah interviews, 2012). Having local councilors involved in center activities is especially important, as these individuals go back to their communities and inform them of the children’s progress (Brenda, Paul interviews, 2012). The radio program was mentioned as being very effective for community sensitization and also mobilizing community leaders (Charles, Paul, Sarah interviews, 2012). Not only do these activities help to sensitize the community, but they also help reinforce the community bond between the children and their families.

Both Charles and Nancy mentioned the need to take children out of the center for study tours, or community visits, both to sensitize the community and to encourage these connections. An important caveat Andrew commented, was the fact that many people within the community are dealing with collective trauma and also require community counseling. Due to the ongoing conflict and violence and then the subsequent uprooting into IDP camps, *“the LRA is deep in people’s minds”* (Andrew interview, 2012). Further, when children go back to their homes and find that most people are suffering in silence while they receive multiple benefits from the center, this creates further separation and stigma (Andrew interview, 2012). If centers could work with families, provide school fees for children and provide counseling to the community this would facilitate greater acceptance and empathy for the children (Andrew, Charles, Michael interviews, 2012).

What was interesting during the interviews is that only one individual discussed traditional healing or cleansing ceremonies during the reintegration process. This is perhaps because in Lango district (where Rachele is located) most people are Christian, and may not share the same traditional or spiritual beliefs that are common in other regions (Andrew, Michael interviews, 2012). Being from Acholi district, Michael mentioned the importance in that region to perform traditional cleansing ceremonies and have clan elders involved in the reintegration process. However, in the Rachele center this did not come into play as much because most of the children were from Lango and Teso regions. Several participants noted the importance of religion in the reintegration process at Rachele, both in terms of religious education and having priests and

community members coming into the center to pray with the children. Thus, it is clear from the interviews that incorporating local traditions and beliefs, whatever they may be, are important aspects of reintegration success.

Lastly, the necessity to work with other local, national and international organizations was discussed by several participants as being a key recommendation. Working with schools by providing teacher training on how to handle war affected children, may be very important for children returning to a school setting (Brenda, Charles, Michael, Samuel, Sarah interviews, 2012). Further, reintegration centers should coordinate with churches, local councilors, community groups, government leaders and other officials to enhance connections for advocacy and outreach (Paul interview, 2012). Linking to existing community supports, including the Center for Children in Vulnerable Situations, Concerned Parents Association, Unity Project, Zest for Kids and other NGOs, would allow the center to mobilize resources around the children (Andrew, Charles, Michael interviews, 2012).

The suggested improvements provided by staff members have been born out of experience, including the failures of past reintegration efforts. When asked about children who did not successfully reintegrate, most staff had multiple examples of children who the system had failed. These stories prompted their suggestions and recommendations of where future programs could improve. Providing access to education, long term support and follow up, community involvement and connections with other organizations were all highlighted as necessary improvements for reintegration centers. Not only is this information important for other reintegration centers in Uganda, but also for the Great Lakes region as a whole (i.e. where the LRA has been active) and for other regions that employ child soldiers. If as these staff proposed, centers can connect with other organizations and international and national bodies can work together, perhaps new reintegration centers can learn from Uganda's experience.

Conclusion. The information presented on the Rachele Rehabilitation Center has provided one example of a reintegration program, demonstrating how the center's activities have addressed the shifting identities of former child soldiers. Through eight in-depth interviews with former staff, the factors that staff believe inhibit and promote the formation of new identities within former child soldiers have also been discussed. Community rejection, stigma, lack of education, time spent and position in the bush all seem to impede successful identity changes. On the other hand, acceptance, access to education, meaningful employment and developing connections with others, may all help to make a new identity salient. Along with the Rachele program information and the suggestions made by staff, the information on these factors can be used to answer the research question and make the recommendations.

DISCUSSION

This research has looked at the reintegration process in Northern Uganda, and discussed the role that reintegration centers/programs play in helping to facilitate the shifting identities of former child soldiers. For children who once identified with the LRA and other ‘rebels’, upon return they are faced with the difficult challenge of shifting their attachment and sense of belonging back to their families and communities. Despite the inability of program and center staff to fully understand how this shift occurs, they undoubtedly have an important role to play in this process. Through the literature review, document analysis and in-depth interviews with experts and staff, this project has demonstrated the highly important role that identity plays in the reintegration process. Further, this research has also brought to light the impact that reintegration or rehabilitation centers/programs may have on this process, and the benefits that can arise through reintegration center staff addressing identity concerns.

Research Question

The main research question for this study asks, to what extent do disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs help shift the identities of former LRA child soldiers back from the rebel group, and how can reintegration centers improve the ways they incorporate identity concerns into their programs? Before directly answering this question, it is first important to draw attention to several nuances that have been brought about by this study. In order to discuss how reintegration programs address children’s shifting identities, it is also important to consider how they collectively interpret and perceive this internal phenomenon. Staff members’ perspectives on the significance and process of this identity shift will influence how they approach identity concerns in their work and the extent to which they try and facilitate change. For example, if staff believed that the identities of individual children were mainly fixed and impossible to change, the methods used to reintegrate them would look very different. This is why before going into how reintegration programs address children’s shifting identities, it is first important to consider how reintegration program staff understand this phenomenon.

Fundamental role. It seems from a review of DDR programs and approaches, along with the staff interviews, that most program staff understand that identity plays a fundamental role during the reintegration process. In many of the DDR programs, including GUSCO and Rachele, the main goal of reintegration is to facilitate an effective transition to the community. This goal in itself implies that something is changing during this process, be it behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, ideas or identities. Through the interviews, staff highlighted the importance of children ‘changing’, emphasizing that successful reintegration has occurred when a child demonstrates similar behaviours and attitudes to the larger community. While not calling this shifting identities or identity salience, it seems that programs and staff understand the relevance of helping children adopt a new identity.

Defining new roles and commitments. An important aspect that reintegration staff see as influencing the adoption of a new identity relate to defining new roles and commitments. Within reintegration programs, it appears that a main concern regarding long-term reintegration is providing hope and the opportunity for a productive and meaningful life after the center. Staff, DDR approaches/programs and reports from children have all discussed the importance of having access to education, vocational skills training and income generating activities. All of these activities serve to create a platform for the child or youth in moving forward and positively

contributing to their communities. Reintegration centers can help to promote these new roles, as students, carpenters, tailors, cooks etc., which may all help to shift children's identity away from the rebel group into the larger community.

Interconnected issues. Through the interviews, it was also made clear that reintegration centers such as Rachele, understand the interconnected issues that impact a child's ability to reintegrate and change identities. Through the stories from staff members and DDR program information, the ability to shift identities in this context is understood as both an internal (i.e. psychological and emotional) and external (i.e. behavioral) process, influenced by the child and the community around them. Staff commented that even if attention was paid to helping children in one area (i.e. education), something else could complicate the reintegration process and pull them back to their rebel behaviour (i.e. names, stigma). Staff also noted that even if children are incredibly resilient and have the desire to detach from the LRA and attach to the community group, the community plays a fundamental role in allowing this to happen. This understanding perhaps draws attention to program staff's fundamental beliefs about reintegration and identity transitions, as programs direct their efforts to community outreach and advocacy campaigns. The themes of stigma, community rejection and acceptance have been woven throughout the information presented here, and thus provide important considerations when discussing the role that reintegration programs can play in facilitating greater attachment to community groups.

Individual differences. Another belief that staff and reintegration centers seem to hold is that the individual identity changes and reintegration journey is not the same for every child that is reintegrated. During the interviews it became clear that while there were factors that appeared to influence the difficulty of changing identities (i.e. time spent, position, girls), there were still many individual differences that existed. During the document analysis it was also evident that in some situations, even with similar reintegration experiences, some children were able to successfully transition to the community while others became stuck and were not doing well. The individual personalities, past experiences and challenges, and the level of resiliency that each former child soldier has within them, will undoubtedly influence their ability to successfully change identities and reintegrate. This makes it difficult when designing reintegration programs, as these individual nuances cannot be understood until the child comes into the center. For this reason, reintegration programs and staff must be flexible when deciding how they will approach identity concerns and implement the most appropriate interventions.

Never forget. The last important distinction to make regarding staff members' underlying beliefs and perceptions about children's shifting identities, is the belief that the identity of being a rebel or being in the bush will likely never go away. All of the interview participants noted, and the secondary stories of former child soldiers concur, that children will never really forget about their past. Certain smells, sounds, voices and places can trigger painful memories to come flooding back, and reunite them with that past identity. Many reintegration programs place a special emphasis on girls who have given birth to a 'rebel' child, and who are more at risk of maintaining their past identity due to the constant reminder of that life. However, it seems that staff and reintegration programs as a whole try to ensure that the past identity does not become more important than the current one, directing their efforts towards promoting a new way of life. This is where school, work, community connections and positive relationships come into play, as reintegration programs attempt to provide children/youth with a new identity and future.

The above information has helped to highlight some of the underlying beliefs, perspectives and assumptions that appear to be common among reintegration programs and their staff. These nuances are important to highlight because they influence how reintegration programs operate, and how they design and deliver their interventions. To answering the research question directly, it will be broken down into the first and second half, with the second half (i.e. the ways in which programs can improve the ways they address identity) being addressed in the recommendations. The first half of the question asks, to what extent do DDR and reintegration programs help shift the identities of these former child soldiers back from the rebel group? In short, reintegration programs play a very large role in helping to shift the identities of former child soldiers from the rebel group to the community.

Facilitating change through the center. Although there are different perspectives on exactly how reintegration programs should help children change identities (i.e. center vs. community based approaches) it is widely accepted throughout the literature that this transition must occur. Reception centers, interim care centers and reintegration/rehabilitation centers all play a fundamental role in facilitating this change within former child soldiers. In the document analysis, especially the section of children's experiences, reintegration centers were shown to be helpful in providing a period of interim care when returning from captivity. Staff also emphasize the important role that reintegration centers play in helping children change identities, and establish a new life.

Within these centers children adjust to normal life through a scheduled routine that mimics their daily activities, while participating in psychosocial support, games, sports, music and dance. These activities help the children to interact, while creating the positive relationships and connections that are necessary for reintegration. Further, centers that create a supportive environment and provide role models to demonstrate pro-social behaviour, help the children learn how to behave and interact upon reinsertion. Centers also help shift identity through giving children access to education, vocational skills training and income generating activities. All of these activities help to give them hope for a better future and a more positive identity and persona to embody. While reintegration centers must be careful to not provide benefits for some children, while leaving out other vulnerable or war affected children/community members, the opportunities they create for former child soldiers are tremendous.

Outreach and sensitization. Another important aspect of reintegration centers that helps to shift the identities of former child soldiers is the outreach and sensitization to the community. This theme has arisen throughout this research and was highlighted as being a central aspect of increasing acceptance and forgiveness among community members, in Lira and in other communities (i.e. in the document analysis, expert interviews). While most reintegration staff or programs do not discuss these activities in terms of supporting and facilitating a subordinate identity, this is effectively what they are doing. In the document analysis, one factor that has been shown to influence identity salience is the promotion of the subordinate or shared identity. The subordinate identity is a common identity that is shared among various subgroups, and in this context could take the form of a community or religious identity. When reintegration programs advocate and sensitize the community, they may also be inadvertently promoting a shared identity between former child soldiers and their fellow community members.

Incorporating identity. In Northern Uganda specifically two reintegration programs, GUSCO and Rachele, both incorporate aspects of identity into their work and understand the importance of helping children change. In the document analysis, it was revealed that time, commitment and role performance are all identity salience factors that GUSCO and other programs are already considering within reintegration activities. Further, the accounts of children within the document analysis also confirms that the time spent in captivity and the individual member status within the group impact the ability of a child to reintegrate. In Rachele, children were placed in a high risk category if they spent longer time in captivity, perhaps indicating that program staff understand the deep identity issues that are involved with trying to break strong attachments. Both GUSCO and Rachele also consider the rank or position of an individual child when returning home from the bush, noting that commanders may have a harder time adjusting to life outside of the LRA. Both the time spent and position in the LRA were noted by staff in both programs as being important indicators of reintegration success. These results demonstrate that although reintegration programs may not be calling it shifting identities or identity salience, they are effectively addressing the factors that influence the identity hierarchy.

Links to Dispute Resolution

There are direct links of the reintegration of child soldiers to the long-term stability and peacebuilding efforts within a society. Coming out of the aftermath of LRA violence, and then being forced into IDP camps, many communities throughout Northern Uganda have experienced, and may still be experiencing, collective trauma. Former child soldiers, many of whom have perpetrated acts of violence against their own communities, have now returned home and asked for forgiveness and opportunities to succeed. Without the added factor of child soldiers, rebuilding war-torn societies is a difficult challenge and one that may take decades to fully complete. The challenge for child soldier reintegration is that communities must be willing to put aside their anger and grief, and accept these children back home. Possibilities of future conflict exist as a result of revenge by community members, tension between those who receive services and those who do not, outbursts by the children due to stigmatization and/or increased crime. Successful peacebuilding in communities where child soldiering exists will almost certainly involve the successful reintegration of those children. Ensuring that children do not continue their aggressive behaviour when returning home is one immediate peacebuilding activity. However, the long-term processes of reconciliation and forgiveness are much more difficult to take on, though perhaps more fundamental for continued stability of the country as a whole.

This is why peacebuilding efforts must include looking at the identities of former child soldiers during reintegration. How these children function and relate to those around them will influence how successful they are at reintegrating and will impact how the community transforms as a whole. In the years to come, countries such as Columbia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi will face these difficult challenges. How they respond to the issue of child soldier reintegration will influence their ability to achieve long-term peace and stability. Hopefully, the work conducted here can positively contribute to this knowledge base, and help improve reintegration and peacebuilding efforts worldwide.

For suggestions on further research regarding the role of identity during reintegration, and the need for longitudinal studies see Appendix I.

RECCOMENDATIONS

These recommendations are meant to be a practical aspect of this research, building on the experiences of the Rachele Rehabilitation Center and influenced by the literature, former child soldiers' experiences as reported in the literature and NGO reports, and experts working in this field. These recommendations describe ways that organizations who work with former child soldiers can better incorporate identity concerns into their work and produce more successful reintegration experiences. These recommendations are meant to be broad enough concepts that can be translated into various reintegration settings, though they also provide specific examples of strategies that can be employed on the ground and within Children of Peace.

1. ***Involve the community in all center activities.*** From the beginning of the reintegration process, all community members must be intricately involved in center activities and approaches to reintegration. This can begin with outreach and sensitization campaigns, but then it must transition into closer linkages between former child soldiers and their families/communities. By creating positive connections with other children and adults in their communities, former child soldiers can begin to foster a new sense of identity and belonging. Having clan leaders and community members come into the center, taking the children on visits in the community and having activities (i.e. sports) that involve the whole village/ town are important activities for effective identity transitions.
2. ***Help former child soldiers change their behaviours, attitudes and identity.*** After going through the traumatic experience of abduction and war, most children will never forget these experiences. However, with the help of center staff these children should be encouraged to adopt a new, more positive identity with their family, community or other social group. Through the use of center activities such as vocational classes, counseling, games and sports, staff can encourage children to begin seeing themselves as community members, not soldiers. Fostering the sense of being a child, student, brother and sister, son or daughter can be the first step in facilitating an identity away from the rebel group. Further, providing hope for a better future through education, vocations and other income generating activities is the next essential step for creating a new community identity. When children are able to live a productive life, gain respect from their communities and form positive, healthy relationships with those around them, they will truly experience reintegration success.
3. ***Provide opportunities to former child soldiers, and the community as a whole.*** Access to education, vocational training and psychosocial support are essential for long-term reintegration and successful identity transformation of former child soldiers. However, providing these opportunities to children who have come back from war can create stigma and separation from those individuals who do not receive these benefits. In order to ensure community acceptance and successful transition of the child's identity to the community, all community members must be treated equally. In practice, this could mean that while former child soldiers are going into the center for long term counseling, group counseling sessions are being offered in community centers in the child's village. All efforts must be taken to balance the needs of former child soldiers with those of the community around them.
4. ***Consider factors that strengthen identification.*** When children come back from captivity, their degree of attachment to the group may influence how difficult it is to change their behaviours and ideas. Considering the length of time spent in captivity, the position held in the group (i.e. leader, commander, wife), their role performance (i.e. well, poorly) and their overall commitment to the group are important factors when determining the most appropriate

interventions. While individual differences in coping abilities and levels of resilience will impact children's ability to change, these factors may also influence the speed and ease of shifting their identity. Making note of these factors on intake to the center, can initiate discussions among social workers and councilors about which methods may work best. Girls and child mothers especially have an increasingly difficult time with transitioning to a new identity. Their roles as a wife and mother may conflict with their new place in society, and they are likely to experience increased community rejection and stigma. Enhanced efforts to shift the identity of these girls are needed (i.e. through promoting community acceptance, vocational training) to ensure they are able to find a place to belong.

5. ***Ensure monitoring, evaluation and follow up.*** Reintegration programs and other centers must be assured that the interventions they are providing are ultimately successful after the child leaves the center. In order to determine if children have been accepted by their families and community, and have effectively shifted their identity, community follow up is necessary. Follow up with families in remote villages and rural locations is difficult, however this can be mitigated by the co-operation of village and sub-county representatives who communicate with center social workers. Follow up for vocational training and income generating activities will also ensure that children are experiencing success in their new role and the minimize problems. Adequate training and monitoring of these activities is also required, as children must understand how to run a business and deal with day-to-day difficulties. Conducting follow up will ensure that children have effectively shifted their identity into the community, vocations and families they have gone back to. For those children who have not been successful, reintegration centers can begin work with other community organizations in helping these children access the supports they require.
6. ***Understand and incorporate local traditional beliefs.*** As the goal of reintegration is the successful transition of the child into their community, incorporating the local traditions and beliefs is key to this process. In many African nations, traditional spiritual beliefs are a central component of people's lives. Understanding the various cultural practices and traditions that communities use for forgiveness, reconciliation and reintegration are fundamental when helping children shift their identity back to the community group. It should be noted however that these local customs will differ depending on the location, and it cannot be assumed that the traditions of one community are the same as another. Even within the same region, such as Northern Uganda, local practices can vary considerably between sub-counties, districts and communities. What is constant is the importance of incorporating the local beliefs and practices into reintegration efforts, in an attempt to foster greater community acceptance and identity transition.
7. ***Create a reflective, malleable process.*** The transition back to a community or family identity will not be the same for each child coming out of a conflict zone. As individual children vary, so should the reintegration efforts designed to help them. While some children may require one month of counseling, others may need one year or more to fully deal with the pain and trauma they have gone through. Having a reintegration process that can be flexible and adapt to the specific needs of the children it serves, will meet them where they are at in the process of changing their self-concept. During this process of shifting their identity, children should also play an active role in reintegration programs and be motivated to contribute to center activities and their own recovery.

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APPENDIX A: Brochure for Children of Peace

Side 1

Defining new roles...

This brochure is designed for organizations working with former child soldiers or war affected children during the reintegration process. An important aspect of successful reintegration is the transformation of former child soldier's identities, from an identity based around conflict and membership in a rebel group, back to one within the community.

An important aspect of adopting a new identity involves the child or youth defining new roles and commitments. Long-term successful reintegration requires providing hope and the opportunity for a productive and meaningful life after children leave the reintegration center or program. Having access to education, vocational skills training and income generating activities all serve to create a platform for the child or youth in moving forward and positively contributing to their communities.



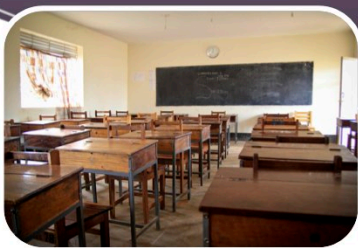
About us

Children of Peace is an organization that works in Lira, Uganda, with children and youth who have returned from LRA captivity.

Children of Peace seeks to help these children and youth rebuild their lives through ongoing trauma therapy, education support, livelihood and advocacy efforts. These efforts help to enhance the self-reliance and self-esteem of former child soldiers, child mothers and children born in captivity.



Strategies for Helping Former Child Soldiers Shift Their Identities



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Above Photo: Children born in captivity, courtesy of Children of Peace Uganda.

Side 2



Strategies for helping them change

These recommendations build on the experiences of the Rachele Rehabilitation Center in Lira, Uganda and are influenced by the literature, government documents and NGO reports. These recommendations describe ways that organizations who work with former child soldiers can better incorporate identity concerns into their work and produce more successful reintegration experiences. These strategies are broad concepts that can be translated into various reintegration settings, though they also provide specific methods that can be employed on the ground.

“Going to school allows children to be empowered to lead a productive life”

- Reintegration center staff member



Involve the community in all center activities. Community members must be intricately involved in all center activities. By creating positive connections with other children and adults in their communities, former child soldiers can begin to foster a new sense of identity and belonging. Having clan leaders and community members come into the center, taking the children on visits in the community and having activities (i.e. sports) that involve the whole village/ town are important activities for effective identity transitions.

Help former child soldiers adopt a new identity. Children should be encouraged to adopt a new, more positive identity with their family, community or other social group. Through activities such as vocational classes, counseling, games and sports, staff can encourage children to begin seeing themselves as community members, not soldiers. Fostering the sense of being a child, student, brother and sister, son or daughter can be the first step in facilitating an identity away from the rebel group. Further, providing hope for a better future through education, vocations and other income generating activities is the next essential step.

Provide opportunities to former child soldiers, and the community as a whole. Providing opportunities for certain children can create stigma and separation from those who do not receive these benefits. In order to ensure community acceptance and successful transition of the child's identity to the community, all community members must be treated equally. Perhaps while former child soldiers are attending the center for long term counseling, group counseling sessions may be offered in community centers within the child's village. All efforts must be taken to balance the needs of former child soldiers with those of the community around them.

Consider factors that strengthen identification. When children come back from captivity, their degree of attachment to the group may influence how difficult it is to change their behaviours and ideas. Considering the length of time spent in captivity, the position held in the group (i.e. leader, commander, wife), the role performance (i.e. well, poorly) and the overall commitment to the group are important factors when determining the most appropriate interventions. Girls and child mothers especially have an increasingly difficult time with transitioning to a new identity. Enhanced efforts to shift the identity of these girls are needed (i.e. through promoting community acceptance, vocational training) to ensure they are able to find a place to belong.

Ensure monitoring, evaluation and follow up. All centers and programs involved in reintegration must be assured that the interventions they are providing are ultimately successful after the child leaves the center. In order to determine if children have been accepted by their families and community, and have effectively shifted their identity, community follow up is necessary. Follow up with families in remote villages and rural locations is difficult, however this can be mitigated by the co-operation of village and sub-county representatives who communicate with center social workers. Follow up and

monitoring for vocational training and income generating activities will also ensure that children are experiencing success in their new roles.

Understand and incorporate local traditional beliefs. As the goal of reintegration is the successful transition of the child into their community, incorporating the local traditions and beliefs is key to this process. Understanding the various cultural practices and traditions that communities use for forgiveness, reconciliation and reintegration are fundamental when helping children shift their identity back to the community group.

Create a reflective, malleable process. The transition back to a community or family identity, will not be the same for each child coming out of a conflict zone. As individual children vary, so should the reintegration efforts designed to help them. While some children may require one month of counseling, others may need one year or more to fully deal with the pain and trauma they have gone through. Having a reintegration process that can be flexible and adapt to the specific needs of the children it serves will be most successful. Children should also be encouraged to play an active role in reintegration programs and be motivated to contribute to center activities and their own recovery.

APPENDIX B: Introduction and Background Further Information

Key Terms. The concept of *disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)* must also be explained. Understanding the components of this term, most importantly the reintegration phase, is essential for making informed recommendations. The objective of DDR, as defined by the UN Integrated DDR Standards is to “contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin” (p. 9). This process consists of three phases, beginning first with *disarmament*, which can be understood as “the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population” (United Nations, 2006, p. 10). Once the weapons are removed, controlled and managed, the process then moves to demobilization.

Demobilization is “the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups” (United Nations, 2006, p. 10). This phase consists of two stages: first ex-combatants are sent to temporary centers, and then reinsertion efforts begin to provide immediate material and financial supports in assisting ex-combatants and their families to meet their short term needs (United Nations, 2006). Finally, the last phase of the DDR process is *reintegration*, which is the most long term and continuous process. Reintegration can be defined as “the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level” (United Nations, 2006, p. 10). While reintegration efforts are occurring all over the world, because this process can take years and the contextual factors of each conflict situation are so different, this phase is perhaps the most difficult part of the DDR process. Although the definition and process of DDR as outlined by the UN is the international standard for the field, reintegration programs for children specifically take on a slightly different approach. During the document analysis, these approaches are more fully discussed, however for now it is important to note that the principles and goals of DDR are essentially the same for children and adults.

History and Background. In late 1986 a movement had begun, centered around a woman named Alice Auma who had been reportedly possessed by the Holy Spirit Lakwena (Beven, 2006; Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). From that point on Alice Auma became Alice Lakwena, a medium to the spirit of an Italian man who died in WWI, and began her Holy Spirit Movement that offered “salvation through purification” (Beven, 2006, p. 2). Playing on the insecurities and spirituality of the Acholi people, Alice Lakwena offered hope to individuals for redemption in this life and in the afterlife by joining her movement (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). Initiation into the Holy Spirit Movement included the adoption of a new moral code, which guaranteed Alice’s unquestioned leadership, provided a strong solidarity between in-group members and granted powerful forces and abilities to new recruits (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). Rituals included being smeared with Shea butter and sprinkled with holy water, which both helped fighters become invincible in battle (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). While the Holy Spirit Movement did have some initial victories in the beginning, which served to fuse members adherence to the cause, by the end of 1987 government forces were able to win several battles and eventually defeat the group (Beven, 2006; Jackson, 2009). The influence of the Holy Spirit Movement and Alice Lakwena specifically is fundamental in explaining the course of the LRA conflict and the tactics used by Kony and his followers.

Alice Lakwena, and later her nephew Joseph Kony, attributed the Acholi peoples misfortunes and grievances on their own sins, offering them redemption through a new found spirituality based on traditional Acholi beliefs and biblical elements (Jackson, 2009; Van Aker, 2004). The pre-colonial Acholi social belief system, centered on cheifdoms and spirits, along with the syncretism of Christianity and Acholi cosmetology, laid the foundation for the acceptance and justification of both movements (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999; Van Aker, 2004). Kony was heavily influenced by this spiritual and religious ideology, emerging out of the shadow of the Holy Spirit Movement around 1987 as a spirit medium (Beven, 2006; Jackson, 2009). Kony proclaimed himself a messianic prophet and sought to rule Uganda in accordance with the Biblical Ten Commandments (Clark, 2010; Quinn, 2009; Traylor, 2009). The Holy Spirit Movement has heavily influenced the religious justifications for violence that Kony has been known for employing, and also contributed to the betrayal narrative that has underscored many of Kony's actions (Apuuli, 2004; Jackson, 2009). Further, similar to Alice, Kony has created his own set of rituals and beliefs for the LRA that have led to the destruction and torment of the Acholi people as well as Kony's unquestioned authority (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999). These strong religious undertones, along with the LRA's prolific use of violence to gain material goods, have also produced united, dedicated groups of soldiers able to cross large geographic areas (Beven 2006).

APPENDIX C: Literature Review

The overarching research question at hand, how do reintegration and DDR programs address the shifting identities of former child soldiers? has not yet been asked within the literature. Although there is much research on child soldiers, as the use of children in war is a widespread and historical problem, there is little research on the role of reintegration programs in facilitating identity changes. Similarly, the research on DDR and reintegration approaches and programs is emerging, with several articles specifically looking at how this process affects children. However, most of this literature looks at the effects of the DDR process on psychological or vocational outcomes, and fails to specifically break down how aspects of DDR programs/centers address different internal variables (such as their shifting identities).

This literature review outlines the various components of the research question, namely the research on identity salience and social identity theory, child soldiers, and DDR and reintegration programs/approaches. The literature on identity salience provides an important theoretical lens for discussing how reintegration programs may facilitate identity changes within the children they work with. While not fully explaining how the identities of former child soldiers are shifted, this theory does provide a theoretical hypothesis of what may be going with children's identities during the reintegration process. This will provide the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the role of reintegration centers and staff in helping children change their identities and sense of belonging. Further, this literature review highlights the paucity of research in this specific area and reinforces the idea that reintegration programs and staff must fully understand and incorporate identity concerns into their work if successful reintegration of former child soldiers is to occur.

The Role of Identity: Identity Salience and Social Identity Theory

Identity based conflicts in Africa have become commonplace over the last 20 years (Hayes, 2007; Korostelina, 2007). Due to the various racial, ethnic and religious tensions that exist in several regions, these differences have resulted in many intergroup conflicts, some continuing until today. The case of Northern Uganda is not unlike many other African countries in this regard, due to the ethnic and religious differences between the Nilotic speakers in the North and the Bantu speakers in the South. The economic divisions and history of marginalization of several Northern regions by the traditionally powerful South has resulted in distinct North/South tensions (Alfred interview, 2012; Hayes, 2007). President Museveni has even attempted to strengthen the national identity, to try and calm some of the tribal, ethnic and religious tensions that have existed for many years (Johnson et al., 2011).

These underlying ethnic and religious tensions are reflected in the LRA movement, along with the historical tensions that have arisen as a result of Uganda's turbulent past (i.e. Idi Amin's violent dictatorship) (Hayes, 2007). Together, these factors help to shape the current structure and identities of LRA members, who rely on spiritual and religious justifications for their violent tactics (Jackson, 2009). While not an ethnic conflict per se, the dynamics of the LRA conflict do have similar features of an ethnic conflict in that they are identity based and driven by an "us" vs. "them" mentality (Kriesburg, 2003). This dynamic, fueled by the embedded historical and religious tensions, are what make social identity theory and identity salience important theories in explaining why addressing children's shifting identities during reintegration is important. The literature on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1982) and identity salience (Stryker, 1968;

Stryker & Serpe, 1994) provides a basis for understanding how DDR and reintegration programs can address identity concerns and facilitate a shift in identity within the children they work with.

Social identity theory. One theory that is useful in explaining how identity salience operates in conjunction with group dynamics is social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982). Social identity theory was strongly influenced by the finding in social psychology that even with minimal and arbitrary information (i.e. being given a name tag of a specific color) people can begin to see themselves as member of a group, and view other people outside of their group as members of another group (Smyth, 2002). As a result of Rabbie and Horowitz's (1969) findings of the minimal group paradigm, Tajfel in 1978 developed social identity theory to explain group member's behaviour. Tajfel's work consisted mainly of intergroup dynamics and the social categorization that individuals in these groups use to structure and classify their social environments. Social identity theory is based on the idea that human beings make sense of their social world by the forming patterns to classify objects, ideas and people (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011). This categorization also provides a system of self-reference in which individuals can place themselves within this social environment to compare themselves with others (Tajfel, 1974).

Out of this line of thinking, Tajfel coined the term social identity to refer to those aspects of an individual's self-image that arise from the inclusion of their perceived social category. This theory suggests that the personal and social identity of an individual lie at opposite ends of a continuum, and most of the time behaviour can be explained by a mixture of both identities (Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1974). However, in an emotionally charged situation (i.e. during a violent attack on civilians), it may be extremely challenging to shift to the individual end of the spectrum and act in accordance with one's own individual beliefs (Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1974). This is important because for child soldiers who have both a personal and social identity, the emotional hardship caused from raids and being forced to kill family and community members, it becomes harder to relate to people on a personal basis.

The process of social identity creation can be explained by the impacts of society, or in this case the influence of the LRA and social context of the conflict (Berger, 1966). Berger (1966) states "Society not only defines but creates psychological reality. The individual realises himself in society -that is, he recognizes his identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as he lives in society" (p. 107). The two factors necessary for group identification include a cognitive component (i.e. sense of awareness of membership) and an evaluative component (i.e. associates this membership with some value), which only work if there is an outside acknowledgement that the group exists (Tajfel, 1982). When group identification and social categorization are demonstrated, this forms the basis of intergroup behaviour, stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes toward the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Two characteristics of intergroup behaviour include the transition of in-group members towards uniformity in behaviour, attitudes and beliefs; and the increased perception that members of the out-group are also less variable in their characteristics (Tajfel, 1982). The "depersonalization, dehumanization, and social stereotyping which tend to increase in scope as and when intergroup relations deteriorate" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 13), may help to explain why child soldiers can commit atrocities against their former in-group members.

Social identity theory postulates that individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity; positive appraisal depends on the comparison between ones perceived group and the out-group,

and when one's social identity is unacceptable they will either move to a more positive social identity or strive to make their existing identity more positive (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Thus group membership alone is not enough for inter-group conflict to develop, but the desire to uphold a certain level of self and group esteem is a precursor for bias out-group comparisons and the onset of inter-group conflict (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For children abducted into the LRA who are unable to leave the group, their ability to continue their positive social identity may therefore be contingent on their ability to perceive the LRA's behaviours and beliefs in a more positive light. This theory may help to explain how the process of identity formation with the LRA took place, and therefore how it may be reconstructed back to the home community and culture.

The central findings of social identity theory and the issues discussed, such as "the conformity to group norms, the effects of low group status and the conditions under which it generates collective action, and the factors that promote the categorization of oneself and others into groups" (Huddy, 2001, p. 128), are key to understand how children's identities can be transformed back from a social identity with the LRA. While social identity theory is useful in explaining how the identities of former child soldiers can be shifted to the rebel group and the various social factors that may contribute to this process, it is important to note that this theory does not completely capture the essence of the conflict. Social identity theory may not capture the identity dynamics of this conflict because much of the LRA violence was perpetuated by the Acholi people against the Acholi people (Veale & Stavrou, 2007). While social identity theory discusses the role that ethnicity plays in polarizing groups and contributing to conflict (Ting-Toomy et al., 2000), ethnic identity clashes are likely not a central issue in this situation. On the other hand, although many communities and former child soldiers may have the same ethnic identity, the potential for other social identities to be formed over time with the LRA still exists. A child that was once a son, brother and student, will likely have to renegotiate their social identities in light of their new roles as a fighter, comrade and/or leader. Further, as LRA violence has spread into the Lango and Teso regions of Northern Uganda, the ethnic differences between these groups has been made salient.

The element of choice and subjective understandings of identity are also important factors in determining the level of group identification, as well as the identity salience of group members (Huddy, 2001). While social identity theory assumes that group members act in accordance with certain principles, it does not consider how each group member decides if they want to identify with the group and how they may actively resist it (Huddy, 2001). This is important to consider for this research, as it has been noted in several papers that many child soldiers make attempts to distance themselves from other LRA members (Denov, 2005; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). As Wessells and Kostelny (2009) explain these "choices may reflect long-standing values and help them resist complete identification with their captors and full integration into a system of violence" (p. 114). While it is clear that each child will have varying levels of identification with the LRA, it remains unclear how much choice is involved in this identification. Although many children may resist the attempts at indoctrination and identification with the rebel group, many of these attempts will likely succumb to group pressure after months and years spent with the LRA. Thus, social identity theory may not fully explain all of the identity dynamics of LRA conflict, however it does provide a solid foundation for understanding how identities are shifted in the face of social pressures.

Identity Salience. Please see the body of the report for the literature on identity salience theory. The literature outlined on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1982) and identity salience (Stryker, 1968) will provide the necessary framework to explain how the identities of former child soldiers may be shifting during the reintegration process, and how reintegration programs can address these identity concerns through specific interventions or activities. Furthermore, research on the application of identity salience and various factors that effect it, such as the commitment to the identity (Ellemers et al., 2002; Stryker, 1968), the effects of in-group status (Ellemers et al., 2004), threat (Huddy, 2003; Nadler et al., 2009; Spears & Doosje, 2002), and the perceptions and actions of other groups (Korostelina, 2007), will lead to the identification and suggestions of specific identity based DDR activities.

Child Soldiers, PTSD and Effects of Conflict

The literature on child soldiers is not completely new, however several recent African civil conflicts that employ child soldiers have led to a surge of research studies in these regions. Specifically, articles surrounding the use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Mozambique, and Uganda have brought to light many of the issues that child soldiers face when attempting to return to civilian life. Several articles provide descriptive accounts of former child soldiers, as well as the range of issues and problems that they encounter as a result of the trauma they have experienced (i.e. PTSD). Furthermore, these articles look at the portrayals and discourses of child soldiers in the media and literature, while addressing the problems associated with viewing children in polarized ways. Finally, the literature on the long-term psychological, vocational and educational effects on former child soldiers (i.e. stigma) also helps to explain how these children cope with the effects of war.

Definitions of child soldiers. Some authors argue for using the term ‘war effected children’ instead of child soldiers, due to the assumptions made surrounding the term soldier and the increased stigma that this term creates (e.g. Angucia, 2009; Cheney, 2005). Furthermore, a discussion of childhood and what it means to be considered a child in different cultures has been explored by several authors (e.g. Angucia, 2009; Cheney, 2005; Honwana, 2006). As Cheney (2005) asserts, “Understandings of childhood must therefore be historically, culturally, and geographically situated” (p. 24), as these discourses affect the ability of children to participate in their reintegration and rehabilitation processes. Similarly, the narratives of child soldiers within both the literature and works of fiction have also been discussed, specifically surrounding the notion of the victim vs. perpetrator identity (Coundouriotis, 2010; Honwana, 2006; Wessells, 2006). Many articles discuss children’s autobiographical stories in ways that paint them as victims, either attributing their atrocities to child abuse or the result of drug addiction (Coundouriotis, 2010). This recovery narrative serves to help shift the focus on the recovery process and aid in reintegration, as well as helping some children to reclaim their lost childhoods (Coundouriotis, 2010).

However, there are issues with the adoption of a victim identity, which replaces the perpetrator identity both within the child soldier’s understanding of themselves and their subsequent stories of what happened to them. The complexity of the child soldier’s identity is then oversimplified, and leaves out key social and historical facets of their identity (Coundouriotis, 2010). Discussing child soldiers in a polarized way “does not fully represent the complex, intertwined and mutually reinforcing acts of violence of which they were both victims and perpetrators” (Honwana, 2006, p. 73). Through committing acts of violence against other children they identified with, a child

soldier is victimized, but they also become more connected to the identity of a soldier (Honwana, 2006). Many children recount their identities as both victims and perpetrators of violence, even though the majority of those children have been abducted and forced into those roles (Denov, 2010b). In Sierra Leon for example, as time went on with the RUF, children explain that the level of violence increased and they became more habituated to the acts that they were forced to witness and commit (Denov, 2010b).

Becoming a child soldier involves a *process of resocialization* by an armed group to transform the former child into a soldier (Wessells, 2006). This *resocialization* helps to shift the child's values, roles and identities, and involves "both taking apart and remaking the child" (Wessells, 2006, p. 57). Starting with indoctrination, then training and participating in violence, children are many times forced to kill family and community members in an attempt to reshape their identity (Wessells, 2006). This process of militarization and socialization into violence is important for the purposes of this thesis, as it contributes to the process of identity restructuring during reintegration.

Several authors are critical of the human and child rights discourse surrounding the use of child soldiers, which fail to place these children in a larger system of war and often paints them as victims (Coundouriotis, 2010; Moynagh, 2011; Shepler, 2005; Wessells, 2006). The human rights discourse contrasts the 'politics of life' of humanitarian work and peace, with the 'politics of death' characteristic of war (Moynagh, 2011). This creates a dilemma for human rights advocates who value human life, but whose discourse also contributes to the subjugation of Africa as a 'place of violence' (Moynagh, 2011). Childs rights discourse, promoted by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments also define how reintegration efforts are delivered, and perpetuate the idea of child soldiers as innocent and vulnerable (McMullin, 2011; Shepler, 2005). However, many times communities take issue with the idea that their children are completely innocent; organizations that reinforce the idea that children are not responsible for their actions only hurt the community reintegration process (Akello et al., 2006). Further, the tendency to use the UN Convention as a policy and programming tool undermines other child rights approaches and local practices (Cohn, 2004). While the UN Convention is important for informing the work in DDR and reintegration programs, being critical of its implementation into practice is also required.

Framing children as traumatized victims may facilitate greater community acceptance and forgiveness, however it may also remove the agency of children to participate in their own recovery (McMullin, 2011; Shepler, 2005). With the image of a vulnerable, innocent and traumatized child, many DDR programs take away the ability of youth to become empowered in the reintegration process (McMullin, 2011). Further, the tendency of reintegration programs to strengthen the norms regarding child rights and protection are often at odds with the humanitarian efforts to address the realities of war (Cohn, 2004). Within this context, the social aspects that children employ during reintegration may not be clear, as children actively shift their identities from ones of innocent victims with NGO and reintegration staff, to maintaining their status with friends and fellow soldiers (Shepler, 2005). Clearly, there are differences between how child rights informed NGOs conceptualize child soldiers, and how the communities and the children themselves view their identities (Shepler, 2005). The ways in which child soldiers are discussed is important for considering the appropriate methods for reintegrating these children, as well as the underlying assumptions regarding their identity.

Looking at the characterization and representation of militarized children in the 21st century is also important when discussing the use of children in war (Lee-Koo, 2011). The picture of a lone, unsmiling, African boy holding an AK-47 on the cover of an NGO publication, is the common iconic image of a typical child soldier. However, this depiction is not representative of many militarized children, and oversimplifies the issue (Lee-Koo, 2011). While the global South depicts militarized children as experiencing a loss of innocence and empowerment, the global North frames military participation as a way of empowerment (Lee-Koo, 2011). These two conflicting narratives contribute to the current understandings and knowledge of child soldiers, and the methods and research employed to address this issue (i.e. humanitarian efforts) (Lee-Koo, 2011).

Incorporating children and communities into the reintegration process, is also an important aspect of creating successful reintegration programs (Cheney, 2005; Cohn, 2004; Shepler, 2005). Often times, advocacy and humanitarian programming (such as the development of DDR programs) are completed without considering the cultural, economic and social dynamics that contributed to the conflict (Cohn, 2004). Therefore, the historical and cultural traditions that led to the outbreak of violence must be incorporated into the potential solutions for successful reintegration programs (Cheney, 2005). In the case of Uganda, the generational violence that has characterized much of Uganda's history, as well as the local social structure (that normalizes corporal punishment) may be some of the contributing factors of the structure and practices of the LRA (Cheney, 2005). Traditionally, reintegration efforts in Sierra Leone consisted of NGO staff going to communities to provide a top-down lesson on children's rights, without much concern for local practices (Shepler, 2005). However, if reintegration activities are to be successful, youth and communities need to be involved in this process and work together to solve locally defined problems (Cheney, 2005; Shepler, 2005).

Trauma, PTSD and other psychological impacts. The second group of articles discussing child soldiers relate to the traumatic events they have experienced, and the effects that these experiences have on their psychological and physical health. The trauma that has been caused to communities and children in Uganda particularly is an issue that must be addressed by both national and international efforts (Angucia, 2009).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one psychological disorder that has been found in many children who have participated in conflict (Bayer et al., 2007; Derluyn, Broekaert, Schuyten, & De Temmerman, 2004; Pham et al., 2009). As a result, several articles discuss the prevalence and impact of PTSD on reintegration, for former child soldiers in Uganda and elsewhere. High rates of PTSD among former child soldiers from the LRA have been shown, due to the breadth of violent wartime experiences (Derluyn et al., 2004; Pham et al., 2009). In one study with 301 children, 77% saw someone being killed and 39% were forced to kill someone themselves (Derluyn et al., 2004). In another study of 2, 875 former child soldiers in Northern Uganda, of the one third of respondents who were abducted by the LRA, over two thirds of those individuals met the criteria for symptoms of PTSD (Pham et al., 2009). The death of a parent may produce significantly higher PTSD symptoms, indicating that having the support of a parent, and a mother specifically, may help to provide a protective barrier against developing PTSD (Derluyn et al., 2004).

While some studies demonstrate that the amount and type of traumatic experience seems to have little effect on the levels of PTSD symptoms (Derluyn et al., 2004), other studies show that participating or witnessing several traumatic events (i.e. being beaten, forced to kill) is a risk factor for PTSD (Pham et al., 2009). Other risk factors for developing PTSD symptoms include, gender (girls were more likely than boys), being Acholi, spending more time in captivity and experiencing difficulties during the reintegration process (Pham et al., 2009). These differences may suggest the profound role of environment on the children's mental health and also the various subjective reactions to the atrocities committed and witnessed during war (Derluyn et al., 2004). Further, the development of PTSD and other psychological disorders impact the reintegration process by influencing the success or failure of reintegration activities. While it is difficult to determine if symptoms of PTSD/depression lead to problems when returning to the community, or if reintegration problems cause PTSD/depression symptoms, the link between the two is clearly evident (Pham et al., 2009).

The association between trauma and PTSD symptoms on children's openness to reconciliation and feelings of revenge is another important aspect for reintegration success (Bayer et al., 2007). In a field study of 169 former child soldiers from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the prevalence of certain traumatic experiences such as witnessing someone being shot or wounded, and/or being beaten were measured (Bayer et al., 2007). Findings of the study indicate that among these former child soldiers, PTSD symptoms were associated with less openness to reconciliation and increased feelings of revenge (Bayer et al., 2007). This is important for reintegration because children's attitudes towards reconciliation could provide a barrier to reintegration efforts and thus must be addressed by psychological recovery programs (Bayer et al., 2007).

Depression is also another common psychological disorder that many former child soldiers experience (Bhutta et al., 2010; Pham et al., 2009). Prevalence rates of depression among child soldiers is high, with risk factors including: age at time of abduction (older males were highest), less social relationships, large numbers of traumatic experiences (including specifically being forced to commit violence), and problems during reintegration (Pham et al., 2009). Further, children who participate most in violent acts during their time as soldiers are more likely to experience hostile behaviour post-conflict, while those abducted at a younger age have more rates of depression (Betancourt et al., 2010). Problems during reintegration can also be caused by the physical damage done after a child soldier emerges from war, including permanent injuries and disabilities (DeSilva, Hobbs, & Hanks, 2001). In one study, while many former child soldiers experience physical injuries, with the most common being from a firearm, all of the children experienced adverse emotional effects such as anxiety, sad moods and flashbacks (DeSilva et al., 2001). The psychological and physical wounds that former child soldiers develop as a result of their past experiences have long lasting effects on their well-being (Denov, 2010b; DeSilva et al., 2001). This is why reintegration and rehabilitation programs must continue their work to try and help these children integrate back into their communities and live successful lives despite what they have gone through.

The programs designed to help former child soldiers must emphasize family and community support, be based within the community and provide skills training to youth during reintegration (Pham et al., 2009). Life-skills training that ensures access to education and employment is also a fundamental aspect of successful reintegration programming (Pham et al., 2009). Further,

preventative, early intervention, directed psychosocial support and long-term strategies (i.e. education, upholding human rights) help offset the potentially devastating effects of armed conflict on children and families (Bhutta et al., 2010). However, many current reintegration efforts are short-term, and do not implement the necessary long term, community based practices that incorporate local philosophies and cultures (Angucia, 2009). This is why it is important to learn from past mistakes in reintegration, and move forward with a more culturally informed, long term approach (Angucia, 2009; Bhutta et al., 2010; Pham et al., 2009; Shepler, 2005; Wessells, 2006).

This section has discussed the psychological and physical impacts that former child soldiers must learn to cope with, however it should be noted that there have been criticisms to this approach. Wessells (2004) states, “Although trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder are important, they are not universal, and they do not serve as a useful starting point for analyzing the full range of emotional and social effects on child soldiers” (p. 516). The good intentions of these researchers should not go in vain, however it needs to be understood that many central tenants of Western psychology may not be appropriate in other cultures. For example, while a former child soldier suffering from nightmares might elicit the diagnosis of PTSD from a psychologist in an interim care center, the cause of these symptoms may be quite distinct. The idea of being haunted by your victims is common in Northern Uganda, and the only way to rid the spirit is to be cleansed, which would negate the impacts of talk-therapy (Wessells, 2004). While it is important to understand the psychosocial traumas that child soldiers have experienced, perhaps staff of these centers should think twice before allowing this aspect to become the central focus of reintegration activities.

Long-term coping and reintegration. Several studies focus on the difficulties that former child soldiers experience during the reintegration process in coping with the aftermath of conflict and trauma. In order to effectively understand the impacts of conflict on child soldiers, “one must take a holistic approach that is temporally extended and grounded in local culture and the understandings of youth themselves” (Wessells & Kostelny, 2009). This holistic approach will lead to a greater understanding of how former child soldiers view the reintegration process, and the programs designed to help them.

Former child soldiers experience countless physical and psychological wounds including gunshot wounds, scars, loss of family, guilt and shame, memories of violence, stigma and rejection, and economic and educational marginalization (Denov, 2010b). As a result, and due to the fact that many children are marginalized as villains after returning from the war, they have to adopt specific ways of coping with this re-victimization (Denov, 2010b). These coping mechanisms include, creating networks of peer support, concealment and selective disclosure of former acts and identities, and participating in community rituals and prayer (Denov, 2010b). Using adaptive behaviours seems to help with reintegration by reducing the stigma attached to being a former soldier, and also demonstrating their “self-efficacy, resourcefulness, skills, and resilience” (Denov, 2010b, p. 803). Despite these coping mechanisms, some communities insist on stigmatizing former child soldiers, which plays an important role in shaping their long-term psychological adjustment (Betancourt, Agnew-Blais, Gilman, Williams, & Ellis, 2009).

Stigma can be characterized by the outward and subtle forms of discrimination that former child soldiers experience, as well as lower levels of family and community acceptance (Betancourt et

al., 2009). Findings from 260 former RUF child soldiers indicated that higher levels of discrimination were related to lower levels of family and community acceptance; while higher levels of family and community acceptance were associated with more positive attitudes, adaptive behaviours, and reduced hostility (Betancourt et al., 2009). Post-conflict reintegration efforts are especially important for the psychological well-being of former child soldiers, and must address stigma in their activities (Betancourt et al., 2009). Reintegration programs should also understand the risk (i.e. hostility, depression) and protective (i.e. community acceptance) factors of successful reintegration, while addressing the dynamic and complex process of psychosocial adjustment (Betancourt et al., 2009). Factors shown to provide a buffer against experiencing stigma, and to facilitate more successful social adjustment include community acceptance and continued education (Betancourt et al., 2010). While community acceptance increases the pro-social attitudes and confidence of youth and results in lower levels of depression; staying in school also increases pro-social attitudes and the ability to successfully adjust to life post-conflict (Betancourt et al., 2010).

The information gathered in these studies on child soldiers is important for the work on DDR and reintegration programs/approaches, both in Uganda and elsewhere. The impact of war on children is extensive, and must be understood if reintegration programs are to be successful. This review now turns to the largest section of literature related to the nature of this research, namely the literature on DDR approaches and reintegration programs, with a focus on how these structures influence identity.

Reintegration, DDR Approaches and Programs

The largest section of this literature review is dedicated to those articles that help to explain the current DDR and reintegration programs and approaches for child soldiers in Africa. Many of these articles discuss the impact of these programs on former child soldiers and the various issues that child soldiers encounter during the reintegration process. Further, several articles are critical about the current reintegration and DDR approaches being used across Africa and Uganda specifically. They go on to advocate for transitional justice, the incorporation of local and cultural practices, the inclusion of child soldiers and the community during the design and implementation of reintegration programs. Further, the experience of girl child soldiers has been given special consideration in the research, due to the increased stigma and difficulties girls face when attempting to reintegrate. Lastly, several traditional and cultural approaches to reintegration are discussed in the context of Northern Uganda specifically, and Africa more generally.

Overview. The comprehensive United Nations (UN) Integrated Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Standards (2006) document, while not specifically for child soldiers, sets the international standard of what DDR programs should look like. This document provides guidelines and standards for developing a DDR program, the steps needed for follow up and monitoring of DDR programs, as well the evaluation of outcomes (UN, 2006). Although the UN Integrated DDR Standards (2006) provides a comprehensive framework for developing and planning a DDR program, more research is needed to determine if this is actually being implemented on the ground.

As previously mentioned Uganda has no official DDR process in place, so former child soldiers must depend on local and international NGOs and reception centers to help facilitate their return home (Wessells, 2004). However, many children also undergo ‘spontaneous demobilization’,

meaning that they return home by themselves, and never enter into any reintegration program (Wessells, 2004). In theory, a special DDR process should be planned specifically for children that takes child protection issues into consideration to ensure that they are not subject to abuse, exploitation or re-recruitment by government forces (Wessells, 2004). Suggestions for improving DDR programming for former child soldiers include providing long-term support, follow up, and incorporating cultural practices into reintegration activities (Awodola, 2012; Peters, 2005; Wessells, 2004). Reintegration begins as a long-term process that involves extensive dialogue between children and the community, and is focused on reconciliation and tolerance (Wessells, 2004). This is where the cultural and traditional practices become so important, as they help both former child soldiers begin to heal, and help the community to accept their children back home (Wessells, 2004). Promoting community engagement and involvement in the reintegration process are thus key principles and needed improvements in reintegration programs (Angucia, Zealen, & De Jong, 2010).

Providing economic assistance to families and communities, while including them in the reintegration process has been noted as a needed improvement (Awodola, 2012). However, before distributing any material benefits to former child soldiers it is important to consider the potential for jealousy and envy within the community (Awodola, 2012; Wessells, 2004). Providing vocational skills training may not only introduce the unrealistic expectation of jobs, it can create unfair opportunities to other marginalized groups of children within the community (i.e. orphans, impoverished children) (Wessells, 2004). Thus, adequate funding for all children in the community to access educational and vocational supports is key for successful reintegration (Awodola, 2012). Clearly, if community reintegration is to work, efforts must be made to ensure that equity and fairness among all community members are upheld during the reintegration process.

Planning and implementing culturally appropriate interventions that incorporate local and traditional approaches has been discussed by several authors as being key to community involvement in the reintegration process (Angucia et al., 2010; Betancourt, 2008; Peters, 2006; Wessells, 2004, 2006). The process of community involvement in the DDR process can be understood in three phases: sensitization- including educating and raising awareness in the community about child soldiers, articulation and reflection- dialogue with community members to help them understand the process of militarization, and mobilization of resources- both human resources and material resources to aid in DDR programs (Peters, 2005). The challenges faced by reintegration programs can be partly offset if the community is involved in running and managing DDR activities (Peters, 2005). However, it should be understood that community involvement alone does not equate to successful social reintegration as the dialogue and understanding needed from families and community members takes time, and will only develop if all parties are committed to the cause (Peters, 2005). Over time the emotional and social bonds that were previously broken in these communities can begin to be re-established, facilitating trust, attachment, self-esteem, self-control and the re-establishment of identity (Peters, 2005).

This is important as Peters notes

The concept of identity is connected to one's self-perception: the knowledge of who one is and how one experiences and defines oneself in a cultural, social, historical

and spiritual sense. Included in our sense of identity is our set of values, skills, beliefs, and our role in the family. (p. 51)

T

aken together, these aspects serve to strengthen former child soldiers' roles within the community, thus shifting their identification back to the community.

Successful reintegration. Activities that have been shown to enhance successful reintegration include, community sensitization, formal disarmament and demobilization, a period of transition in an interim care centre, tracing and family mediation, family reunification, traditional cleansing/healing ceremonies and religious support, school or skills training, ongoing access to health care for those in school or training, and individual supportive counseling (Williamson, 2006). Participation in training or education programs is specifically important to the process of identity transformation, which is fundamental for successful reintegration (Williamson, 2006). Understanding the role that these interventions have played in the DDR programs in Sierra Leone will be helpful in making connections to Uganda, and understanding how identity transformation activities can be incorporated.

Long-term indicators of former child soldier's well-being, including economic, social and psychological factors (i.e. employment, marriage, successful relationships), demonstrate the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration activities (Boothby et al., 2006). The most effective rehabilitation interventions involve strengthening individuals coping skills, encouraging a sense of social responsibility and promoting self-regulation and security seeking behaviour (as opposed to survival mentality) (Boothby et al., 2006). DDR activities that produce the most long-term benefits (i.e. ability to be self-sufficient) involve community acceptance and forgiveness, traditional cleansing and healing methods, and participation in apprenticeships (Boothby et al., 2006). As traditional beliefs play a large role in many African nations, spiritual cleansing and rituals are often the first step for former child soldier's psychological recovery, returning to the community and moving on with their lives (Boothby et al., 2006, p. 96).

Challenges for former child soldiers during reintegration. Several salient issues exist during reintegration that make it more difficult for youth to effectively reintegrate into their communities. A lack of education and economic opportunities, acceptance by family and community, a passive response to conflict, the continuation of a sense of fear and 'forgetting' the past, have been discussed as major reintegration issues (Annan, Brier, & Aryemo, 2009). These children must go through a difficult process where "they negotiated the transition from being a 'LRA rebel' to a 'formerly abducted child' and a member of their family and community" (Annan et al., 2009, p. 645). This process is dynamic and fluid, operating within and between individuals, families and communities (Annan et al., 2009). This is why many children consider the support of their families and community members, including the need to reconnect with their culture, to be so central in their reintegration success (Corbin, 2008). If youth experience a lack of support by community members, with continued harassment and name calling, they are less likely to reintegrate successfully (Corbin, 2008).

In order to combat these challenges, reintegration programs must consider the cultural and sociopolitical context in which a reintegration program operates (Annan et al., 2009). Further, more training and support should be given to families in order help their children cope with returning to a community setting, with community members also being trained and educated on

how these children were forced to commit violent acts (Corbin, 2008). Lastly, reintegration programs should consider the process of militarization for former child soldiers, including the role of turnings, adaptations and epiphanies (Denov & Maclure, 2007). By understanding this process of identity transformation, reintegration programs could effectively help to shift former child soldier's sense of identity away from the rebel group, back to the community (Denov & Maclure, 2007).

Girls and child mothers: the impact of gender. While both boy and girl child soldiers experience equally outrageous levels of violence (i.e. forced killing, threats, forced drug taking, and being physically attacked), girls experience significantly more sexual exploitation than boys (Annan et al., 2011; Betancourt, 2008). This reality has immense implications on the ability of families and communities to accept these girls back in their homes, as well as the long term outcomes that indicate successful reintegration (Betancourt, 2008; McKay, 2004). For example, in Sierra Leone former boy child soldiers are significantly more likely to report school enrollment than girls following reintegration. Girls who have been raped or sexually abused often face negative community perceptions of them, which are even more complicated by the fact that many of these girls go on to become young mothers to their captor's children (Betancourt, 2008). Although the issues these mothers face during reintegration, such as stigma and social isolation, have been emphasized (McKay, Weale, Worthen, & Wessells, 2011), some research indicates that support from families is the norm and most women are socially stable after reintegration (Annan et al., 2011).

It has been well documented that many girls returning from war are faced with increased stigmatization from the community and social rejection, which contributes to their high levels of psychological distress (Denov, 2008; McKay, 2004; McKay et al., 2011; Wessells, 2006). Furthermore, as many of these girls go on to become young mothers they are further marginalized within the community, with their children facing multiple child protection issues (i.e. neglect, abuse). In order to address these issues, a community based participatory action research program was established in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda from 2006-2009 (McKay et al., 2011). At each participatory site, young mothers organized together to gather data, identify collective problems and develop ideas to address and change their social situations (McKay et al., 2011). With the participation and input from community members, this program helped these women to successfully socially reintegrate. Specific facilitators of this process included the positive peer support received by the young mothers and the effective coping and conflict management skills they learned, both of which led to the improved well-being of their children (McKay et al., 2011). Despite the challenges faced by young mothers who were former child soldiers, the self-efficacy and empowerment shown by these women can have a lasting effect on their children and their own social reintegration.

Many DDR programs have been overwhelmingly aimed at boys, and often fail to recognize the unique needs that former girl child soldiers face (Ager, Stark, Olsen, Wessells, & Boothby, 2010; Denov, 2005; Denov, 2010a; McKay, 2004; Peters, 2005; Wessells, 2004). However specialized reintegration assistance may be needed for girls, who experience greater levels of stigma and are more frequently ostracized than their male counterparts (Corbin, 2008; Wessells, 2004). Within these specialized programs, factors such as “whether they entered a force voluntarily or were abducted, how long they participated, the military roles they played, and the manner of their return” (McKay, 2004, p. 23), all contribute to the success of girls' reintegration.

Further, many of these girls return back to their communities without any formal assistance, and may be at a higher risk for further victimization from other males in the community who target them for sexual assault (McKay, 2004; McKay & Mazurna, 2004). Families may too have a difficult time with these girls' return, with parents being scared of their children and unwilling to discuss the difficult issues they are dealing with (McKay, 2004). The lack of education and healthcare, extreme poverty and emotional effects that many girls face after emerging from war, further complicate these challenges. However, promoting ritual welcome ceremonies, increasing the agency of girls, ensuring access to healthcare, addressing the realities of gender specific violence and including older women as role models, can help to facilitate more effective reintegration for girls (Ager et al., 2010, McKay, 2004).

Although many former female child soldiers face difficulties during reintegration, after time in reintegration programs, some women and girls actually do quite well (Annan, Blattman, Mazurana, & Carlson, 2011). After spending time in a reintegration center, some former girl child soldiers, including those who were forcibly married, became mothers and/or were held for long periods of time, demonstrate high levels of social acceptance (Annan et al., 2011). Further, many women show high levels of psychological resiliency and low levels of violence and aggression (Annan et al., 2011). While the evidence confirms that women who have experienced and committed violence do have social problems and emotional distress, only a minority of these women experience serious distress and acceptance problems (Annan et al., 2011). Reintegration programs directed towards girls, that include activities such as traditional cleansing, medical treatment, skills training and awareness raising activities conducted within the community, help others understand the situation of these girls and aid in successful reintegration (Ager et al., 2010). These activities are also associated with improved mental health outcomes (i.e. less anxiety and stress) and community acceptance of young women (Ager et al., 2010). Further, compared to girls who do not receive reintegration support, those who participate in a structured reintegration program have significantly improved mental health and marriage satisfaction (Ager et al., 2010). Perhaps different regional and cultural contexts are factors in why women and girls experience varied levels of success during reintegration.

Although some programs have shows success in reintegrating former girl child soldiers (Ager et al., 2010; Annan et al., 2011; McKay et al., 2011), criticisms still exist on the modern DDR approaches for child mothers (Ochen, Jones, & McAuley, 2012). One issue is the creation of competing structures of community-based reintegration, by different NGOs and international organizations (i.e. UNICEF) in the area (Ochen, Jones, & McAuley, 2012). These structures give mixed messages to the women they serve, and are ill-equipped to handle to psychosocial or child protection needs of their clients (Ochen et al., 2012). Furthermore, these structures are neither owned nor operated by community members, nor supported by local government (Ochen et al., 2012). Limited outreach to formerly abducted mothers outside the existing structure also limits the impact of these programs, as does their inability to incorporate indigenous structures and community members (Ochen et al., 2012). These issues highlight the importance of international NGOs delivering informed and culturally appropriate programs to former girl child soldiers and child mothers.

Criticisms with DDR and reintegration programs. Several criticisms to DDR approaches for former child soldiers exist, including the exclusion of children in the DDR process, the neglect of

child protection efforts, the wide separation between demobilization and reintegration (which should be more connected), the excessive support aimed at child soldiers, the lack of long term funding, and the lack of preparedness for reintegration on all levels (i.e. community, government) (Wessells, 2004). There is also too much focus on the individual during reintegration, with a lack of understanding of how the collective plays a role in this process (McMullin, 2011). Thus, “D.D.R. programs must strike a balance between supporting highly vulnerable individuals and supporting the wider community” (Wessells, 2004, p. 524), with a larger focus on extensive long-term follow up. Overriding all of these concerns, is the fact that many times children are not involved in the designing of DDR approaches and programs that are supposed to help them. The full participation of children and youth is a necessary change that must be included if future DDR programs are to be successful (Akello et al., 2006; McMullin, 2011; Peters, 2005; Wessells, 2004). Having children at the center of DDR activities allows them to take responsibility for their actions, and take an active role in shaping their future development (Peters, 2005).

Another common criticism that has been noted in the literature is the tendency for reintegration and rehabilitation centers, especially those of international NGOs, to employ a Western idea of trauma and healing (Boothby et al., 2006; Peters, 2005; Zack-Williams, 2006). Projects funded and run by UNICEF in Sierra Leone, focus on reunification with families, counseling, vocational training and recreation (Zack-Williams, 2006). However, this approach to reintegration has been criticized for being Eurocentric and not culturally appropriate in an African society, which places higher value on spirituality and belief (Zack-Williams, 2006). As Gbla (2003 cited in Zack-Williams, 2006) argues

In these parts of the world, the definition and understanding of distress and trauma, its diagnosis and healing processes are totally different from those in Africa ... Western psychological healing methods locate the causes of psychological distress within the individual, and therefore devise responses, which are primarily based on individual therapy... (Gbla, 2003, pp. 185–186 in Zack-Williams, 2006).

Most importantly, the role that the dead play in affecting the lives of the living (i.e. curses, haunting, avenging transgressions) is something that must be incorporated into reintegration programs if they are to be effective and culturally appropriate (Akello et al., 2006; Wessells, 2004; Zack-Williams, 2006).

In Uganda, World Vision operates a reintegration center that is meant to instill Christian values in former child soldiers, in an attempt to help them reintegrate back into the community (Akello et al., 2006). The fundamental assumptions that this organization carries include the idea that successful reintegration depends on the ability of children to repent their actions and be forgiven by the community, and that children are essentially innocent of any wrongdoings (Akello et al., 2006). However, this approach does not take into account the cultural and local practices and beliefs, nor does it facilitate successful long term reintegration (Akello et al., 2006). Stigmatization occurs as a result of former child soldiers being labeled traumatized and being possessed by evil spirits (*cen*) (Akello et al., 2006). Therefore, a multifaceted approach should take into account the problem of *cen*, the idea “a child is abducted, but a rebel returns” (p. 241), limited community support and the level of poverty the children are returning to (Akello et al., 2006; McMullin, 2011).

Training former child soldiers for their post-war role in society has been noted as an important aspect of successful DDR and reintegration programs (McMullin, 2011; Peters, 2007). However, this training must be realistic and fit within the current societal structure. For example, in the predominantly agricultural society of Sierra Leone, training for vocations such as tailoring and carpentry are the norm, despite the lack of jobs in these areas (Peters, 2007). While these programs may look good on paper, only 15% of youth being trained in agriculture, in a society with 70% of the population contributing to subsistence farming (Peters, 2007). Further, the follow through of these programs is weak and many ex-combatants are left without support or employment months and years later (Peters, 2007). This is why adequate training, follow up and monitoring are necessary for any vocational skills training projects, if youth and their communities are to benefit from reintegration activities.

Traditional and cultural approaches to reintegration. Incorporating traditional and cultural African/Ugandan approaches to conflict resolution, DDR and reintegration is essential for this research. In Northern Uganda, Acholi practices of restorative justice, forgiveness and peace building are some traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that inform the reintegration of former child soldiers (Anyeko et al., 2012; Bains, 2010; Murithi, 2002). These approaches to reconciliation are key to the communal living that is characteristic of the Acholi people, and also in rebuilding the loss of social trust that is experienced when children are reintegrating back into society from participating in armed conflict (Murithi, 2002).

As the Acholi peoples place a high value on forgiveness (Murithi, 2002), reintegration and DDR centers in the region would be wise to incorporate these ideas. However, as Veale and Stavrou (2007) point out “ Reintegration based solely on discourses of peace and forgiveness, without a mechanism for acknowledging identity transitions of returnees, especially for those who were members of the LRA for a long time, may leave them vulnerable to rejection and rerecruitment” (p. 288). Thus the need to incorporate identity concerns as well as traditional/cultural practices of local groups, be they Acholi in Northern Uganda or other tribes elsewhere, is evident.

However, the translation of these principles of forgiveness and reconciliation into practice does not always occur (Stovel, 2008). In Sierra Leone, the saying ‘there is no bad bush to throw away a bad child’ is often said to mean that no matter what a child has done, there will always be a place for them in the community (Stovel, 2008). Although this proverb may promote a form of reconciliation that is required to live peacefully together, it also “lacks the elements of justice required for deep reconciliation to occur” (Stovel, 2008, p. 305). While many community members value forgiveness and reconciliation, these concepts seem to be more about societal pressure to uphold cultural norms, as opposed to a heartfelt, emotional process (Stovel, 2008). In Northern Uganda, forgiveness is also characteristic in the Acholi culture, where social mechanisms help to strengthen the concept (Finnegan, 2010). A communal sense of war fatigue, caused by decades of violent conflict against their people, along with a strong collective sense of identity, may be two factors that have contributed to the promotion of forgiveness within the culture (Finnegan, 2010). This discourse of forgiveness may help the community to focus on the future instead of the painful past, thereby “shifting communities from war to peace” (Finnegan, 2010, p. 426).

Within the Acholi approaches to restorative justice and dispute resolution, is the practice of *matoput*, which seeks to restore the relationships between tribes after an unintentional murder has

occurred (Anyenko et al., 2012). This traditional practice is centered on the idea of truth telling, where individuals confess their wrongdoings and establish the truth to the community. This process helps the victims identify their interests, and aids in reconciliation efforts (Rose, 2008). After material compensation is given to the victim's clan, a ceremony in which the offender drinks a mixture of sheep's blood and roots from the bitter oput plant occurs (Anyenko et al., 2012). Some organizations in Uganda and civil society leaders in particular, have pointed to this process of truth telling as a way of rebuilding relationships with victims and offenders, and could be used in conjunction with other conflict resolution mechanisms (Anyenko et al., 2012). While justice and reconciliation approaches, such as amnesty and the use of traditional mechanisms, help to promote accountability and reintegration respectively, creating a blend of approaches would perhaps better suit the complex nature of this conflict (Rose, 2008)

In Uganda, while most Acholi community members (who have been victims of violence) are in favor of the truth telling aspect of *mato oput*, they also agree that other peacebuilding initiatives are needed (Anyenko et al., 2012). Thus traditional approaches to conflict resolution must be incorporated into any national strategy in dealing with LRA violence, and the social reconstruction of the community (Anyenko et al., 2012). One strategy that is common in Sierra Leone as a part of the forgiveness and reconciliation process is the cleansing of evil spirits from the former child soldiers, including asking for forgiveness from the dead and the living (Zack-Williams, 2006). Upon return home a child would be taken to a 'sacred bush', remove the clothes that represent their former identities and set them on fire. This ritual represents the transition from their former life, into their new one, and may be the starting point in successfully going back to their community (Zack-Williams, 2006). This local traditional practice of ritual cleansing is also common in Northern Uganda, and should be considered when designing conflict resolution and peacebuilding approaches.

During the reintegration process, some former child soldiers remain haunted by the ghosts of their victims, while at the same time attempting to live amongst the families of these fallen children (Bains, 2010). In order to reconcile these wrongdoings and rebuild the social trust within the community, some individuals invoke the spirit world by participating in ritual cleansing ceremonies. Former child soldiers who are thought to be possessed with a vengeful spirit (*cen*) are often ostracized and socially excluded, as other members of the community fear catching the misfortune (Bains, 2010). However, what is interesting is that many former child soldiers never had a problem with *cen* while they were in captivity, and only experienced the phenomenon when faced with a lack of acceptance from the community upon return (Akello et al., 2006). Thus the act of spiritually cleansing those with *cen* is one way that those individuals are able to effectively return to the community and rebuild relationships. However, for former girl child soldiers, these traditional cleansing ceremonies do not seem to be as effective as they are for boys, which may be a result of the traditional gender/power hierarchy within society (Maina, 2011). Despite this difference, being aware of the central role that religion and spirituality play in each culture is an important factor in creating successful reintegration and DDR programs.

Various strategies exist in helping communities achieve transitional justice, and repair their social relationships that have suffered as a result of war (Bains & Stewart, 2011; Park, 2012). One method is incorporating community-based restorative transitional justice in DDR programs, in order to facilitate reconciliation (Park, 2012). Community-based restorative transitional justice is a community directed set of "restorative practices employed following periods marked by

massive human rights violations” (Park, 2010, p. 96) that help repair relationships with families and communities. Although several gaps exist in transitional justice that community based restorative strategies could fill, it is important not to become uncritical of these practices (Park, 2010). As Peters (2010) argues, “The uncritical embrace of ‘the local’ or ‘the traditional’ is as undesirable as the uncritical imposition of western norms and practices if local or traditional practices entrench inequalities or reinscribe injustices” (p. 115). While upholding local and traditional practices is imperative for the success of reintegration programs, there should still be a level of accountability for DDR centers in ensuring these practices are fair and facilitate positive outcomes.

Another approach to achieving transitional justice is the process of storytelling, and conducting formal storytelling sessions. These stories are both told to impart knowledge, and heal from the atrocities that individuals have witnessed, experienced and perpetrated (Bains & Stewart, 2011). Specifically for reintegration, storytelling is valuable in community settings as a way to work through a violent past and restore relationships between families and community members (Bains & Stewart, 2011). As Bains and Stewart (2011) conclude “Communities search not only for truth (the facts of what happened) but also for ‘truthfulness’ (what these events mean) at times only stories can provide that meaning” (p. 16). Storytelling thus becomes one method that DDR and reintegration programs can employ to connect people together in narrative, and help both victims and perpetrators come to terms with the past.

This literature review has provided a brief overview of the existing literature on social identity theory, identity salience, child soldiers and various DDR approaches, including traditional African and Acholi views of reintegration. This chapter has highlighted much of the research in this area, and has demonstrated the need to look more fully at identity concerns during reintegration. Of all the articles researched for this thesis, very few focus on the role of identity during reintegration, and not one looked at the role of reintegration programs in addressing former child soldiers’ shifting identities or identity salience. It is interesting that while many authors have pointed to the importance of identity changes during reintegration, no article has focused solely on this topic. This gap in the literature reinforces the need to look at the role of reintegration programs in facilitating identity changes within former child soldiers. It should also be noted that this literature review represents only a fraction of the available articles, books and literature on child soldiers worldwide. The literature reviewed here is however representative of the field overall, and is therefore useful in providing an overview of the key issues when reintegrating former child soldiers.⁹

⁹ Suggestions for further readings on child soldiers and reintegration include: *Aboke Girls* by Els De Temmerman, *The Night Wanderers: Uganda’s Children and the Lord’s Resistance Army* by Wojciech Jagielske, *First Kill Your Family: Child Soldiers of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army* by Peter Eichstaedt, and *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children: The Global Quest to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers* by Romeo Dallaire.

APPENDIX D: Methodology Further Information

Document analysis. Documents in the first section of the document analysis include the literature specifically pertaining to the child soldier identity along with the literature and theory on identity salience. Two articles that most closely articulate the process of identity transformation for former child soldiers are analyzed in this section. Veal and Stavrou's (2007) article was chosen because they look at former child soldiers in Uganda, and discuss how changes in their identities can be explained through relational or positional identities. Denov and Maclure's (2007) article was also chosen, because they look at how changes in roles and personal status alter a child's relationships and understanding of self. These two articles as well as three others that look at the role of identity during reintegration have been contrasted to the literature on identity salience in order to demonstrate the application of this theory. Further, within this section the specific factors that have been proposed to impact the formation of the identity hierarchy (i.e. level of commitment or threat) are identified and compared to the information on child soldier reintegration. This information, as outlined in the literature review, is brought into the document analysis to apply it to the context of child soldier reintegration.

Five reintegration approaches and/or programs are discussed in the second section of the document analysis to highlight how current programs are addressing identity concerns. The approaches studied include UNICEF's Paris Principles (2007), which is a document designed to guide programs and policies for the protection, release and reintegration of children affected by war; Save the Children's Field Guide to the Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies (2001), which outlines a framework for developing child soldier programming; and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practical Field and Classroom Guide (Gleichmann, Odenwald, Steenken, & Wilkinson, 2004), which outlines the steps and considerations in the DDR process. The DDR Field and Classroom Guide (herein referred to as the DDR guide) was designed and written by individuals who have extensive experience with the DDR process, and is designed for senior level management who are developing or working in a DDR program. This document is written in collaboration with the Swedish National Defence College (SNDC), the Norwegian Defence International Centre (FOKIV), the Canadian Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC) and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ).

These three documents were chosen to provide an overview of the field of DDR, with the first two focusing specifically on children in armed conflict. The latter DDR workbook was also chosen because it follows the UN approach to DDR, which has set the international standard in this field. Further, each of these documents is very practical in nature, discussing the challenges, considerations and practical aspects of implementing DDR programs. The programs included in this section include the Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) that operates out of Gulu, Northern Uganda and the programs in Liberia for child soldiers that were employed in the reintegration process after 2003, as recorded by one independent researcher (Awodola, 2009, 2012). While Uganda has no official DDR program or approach, GUSCO represents one of the local approaches to reintegration in the North. Liberia on the other hand does have a national DDR framework, which means that DDR programming is implemented and overseen by similar agencies across the country (Awodola, 2009, 2012).

Documents in the third section of the document analysis contain the perspectives and experiences of over 400 former child soldiers who have gone through the reintegration process by looking at

five primary research studies. As this research is based on the idea that reintegration programs can promote more successful reintegration experiences by addressing the shifting identities of the children they work with, understanding the perspectives of these children is very important. This section brings these children's unique experiences to light and explores reintegration/identity challenges through their eyes. By focusing on papers that have a large section dedicated to the stories and experiences of former child soldiers, this section analyzes the main themes discussed regarding reintegration, identity transformation and DDR programs/centers.

These research reports include one by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2008) on the experiences and perspectives of former child soldiers from the Teso region in Eastern Uganda; a research report by a well-known author in the field of child soldiers, Myriam Denov, which was commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (2005) and made up of three smaller reports also commissioned by CIDA. Three journal articles are also analyzed, which have conducted first hand research on child soldiers and therein discuss their perspectives and experiences (Akello et al., 2006; Annan et al., 2009; Boothby et al., 2006). All of these reports/articles were purposefully chosen due to their content, geographic location of study and their authors. Akello et al.'s (2006) study was specifically chosen because in addition to meeting the other requirements (i.e. large portion dedicated to children's voices) it was written by someone who comes from Northern Uganda.

In-depth interviews. All of the interviews took place at the Rachele school in an empty office, regardless of whether the individual was still currently employed there. This location was chosen because it was familiar to all of the employees, and was easily accessible. Interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience, and all participants were given a thank you card and a nominal amount of reimbursement for their time and any inconvenience caused. Further, before the interviews commenced participants were offered either a soda or tea in order to help them feel comfortable and relaxed. All interviews lasted around one hour and a half, and were recorded with a digital audio recorder. Interview notes were also made throughout each interview, which served as the basis for the data analysis. Although the interview notes were important in summarizing the interview data, the audio recording was useful for capturing quotes and clarifying any information that was difficult to understand (i.e. due to accent differences). Both of these data sources were important for the analysis and the subsequent conclusions.

Most of the participants resided in Lira at the time of the interview, however one had just returned back to the city for a two week period in order to conduct follow up at the school. All of the participants were adults between the ages of around 27-65 years. The ethnic groups of the participants were not explicitly asked, however it is likely that most participants are of Langi descent as Lira is in Lango sub-county. One of the individuals was originally from Gulu, Acholi District, so it is likely they are from a different ethnic group. All of the individuals spoke English as a second language, with their first language being Luo. Although none of the individuals had difficulties understanding the questions being asked, the researcher had to speak slowly, provide examples and re-word certain phrases to facilitate comprehension.

Considerations and Limitations

Outside Status. One issue that was identified prior to the interviews was the outside status (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) of the researcher. Being an outsider in this case means that I am of

a different nationality, race, culture, and ethnic group than the respondents. I thought beforehand that this limitation may have the potential to influence the tone, responses and information gathered from the interviews. However, several times during the interviews the participants noted the importance of being ‘free’ with each other when talking. This is a common term used in the region, meaning that one should be comfortable and relaxed when talking and interacting. It soon became clear that most of the participants appeared to be comfortable talking to an outsider about their experiences. This perhaps reflected their past experiences with European researchers (a Belgian woman founded the center), or could have also been influenced by a culture that values the ability to be ‘free’.

The comfort and ease at which people discussed their experiences seemed to demonstrate that the outsider status of the researcher was not a barrier for the successful completion of the field research. On the other hand, participants could have been acting in a socially acceptable manner, which they thought was necessary in the situation. As an outsider, it is difficult to understand the exact nature of individuals’ perceptions of a Canadian researcher who is investigating a topic so close to their hearts. Although the impact of being an outsider may have influenced the results, every effort was taken to be culturally appropriate, respectful and non-judgmental.

Measuring identity. Another limitation regarding identity is that we cannot objectively measure identity or the level of identification. In order to assess children’s identity with the LRA, we can only infer this through observations of their opinions and behaviours or rely on their self-reports. However, both of these methods are not a very reliable way of measuring identity as interpreter bias, either from the child or the staff, may play a role in influencing the results. This means that even if individual children were asked about the process of shifting identities within themselves, the true phenomenon may still not be fully explained. However, despite these limitations, identity as a concept is still a very important aspect of the reintegration process. Thus it is necessary to work within the psychological boundaries that this concept presents, and trust that self-reports and observations from staff have some level of reliability with the internal processes occurring within children.

Limited sample. A further limitation to this research is that the interviews conducted with staff from one reintegration center in Northern Uganda, represent a limited sample of individuals working in this field. Eight individuals have provided their perspectives, however there are likely tens of thousands of other individuals who may differ in their reintegration experiences. Through the interviews, it was found that local practices have a large role in community acceptance, however these differ depending on the community. Thus, while one center in Acholi district in Northern Uganda may discuss the importance of traditional healing techniques, a district in Lango may incorporate the church and Christian beliefs. This is why interviewing one center is a limitation, because these local practices differ between and within countries. What works for one community, may not work for another.

Defining success. Further, individual perspectives of what constitutes ‘successful reintegration’ may also vary. Several times during the interviews, people mentioned ‘this person was successfully reintegrated’, however simply completing the program does not mean they were successful. Individual differences of definitions, perspectives and even memories may impact the information gained from a small sample of people. While it would have increased the validity to interview a variety of people from different reintegration centers around Uganda and Africa, the

limited time and resources of conducting this study at a Master's level meant that a larger sample was not feasible. Instead, the document analysis provided some level of comparison, as different published reintegration experiences were gathered from children, staff and researchers. Further, upholding a qualitative approach, a smaller more in-depth analysis of interview data is preferred to a larger, shallower analysis of cases. This allows for a more rich discussion of how reintegration programs address former child soldiers' shifting identities, and highlights the importance of the participants' experiences.

Using a critical lens. Another limitation realized after the interviews took place, is that being critical of the reintegration program does not appear to be part of the organizational culture. During the interviews several people remarked that they had not had a chance, even years after the center had closed, to really sit down and think about why or how the program was operating. While working at the center staff also commented that they were never asked about what was working, or what needed to be improved. This is important to note because it could influence how the staff view the program, and in turn influence the results. Without looking at the Rachele program with a critical lens, staff could have an overly optimistic view about the program's effectiveness.

Researcher bias. Regarding the document analysis in particular, the bias of authors in reporting on DDR and reintegration programs is another limitation. When writing about the successes and failures of a specific intervention, it is likely that the authors, either an NGO or individual researcher, may view their program with a specific eye. Thus when GUSCO or Rachele explains their programs, they are likely to view the work they have done positively, and thus report out on results in a positive light. Further, the NGOs that employ both a center based or community based approach, both state that their program is the best approach sometimes mentioning that 'experience shows us' that their way is most effective. However, as a researcher it is important to look at this information as objectively as possible and understand that each document or article will be influenced by the author's own bias. Even if I had the chance to witness a reintegration program in person while it was going on, it would still be subject to my own personal bias of what was happening. This limitation is very difficult to get around, although throughout this research process keeping the potential for bias in mind has helped the work to be more balanced.

APPENDIX E: Staff Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about the work that you currently do here at the Rachele Secondary School and how you are involved in this work.
2. Please tell me about the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts that you have been involved in at Rachele during the time that it operated as a reintegration center up until the present time.
3. What did the reintegration program entail in Rachele, or in other words, what reintegration activities made up the program?
4. How important is it during the reintegration process to address and shift the children's identity from the rebel group, back to the community or family?
5. How did the reintegration program here at Rachele address the identities of former child soldier/war affected children? Are there specific activities that address identity concerns
6. What do you think about the reintegration program at Rachele was it helpful? What were the strengths and weaknesses?
7. What is the biggest issue regarding reintegrating former child soldiers back into the community?
8. What are some ways that we can improve these efforts?
9. Please tell me about any stories of children you have worked with that went through this program, were they able to successfully reintegrate, if so why? If not, why not?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX F: Information of Former Center Staff

<i>Pseudonym Name</i> *	<i>Position</i>	<i>Main responsibilities</i>
Sarah	Social Worker	Intake, counseling, psychosocial rehabilitation
Nancy	Teacher	Coordinated activities between school and center
Paul	Social Worker and Senior Management**	Counseling, oversaw center activities
Brenda	Nurse	Treated children's illness', wounds
Andrew	Driver	Collected children from UPDF barracks, returned children to villages
Samuel	Social Worker	Intake, counseling
Michael	Senior Management**	Oversaw center activities
Charles	Vocational Skills Teacher	Taught agriculture classes

* Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

** Positions of some participants have been broadened to ensure anonymity.

APPENDIX G: Example of Document Analysis Chart

Section and Theme	Verhey, 2001	Veale and Stavrou, 2007	Denov and Maclure, 2007	Ozerdem et al., 2010	Shepler, 2005
<u>Process of identity transformation:</u> Into the group	-Asocialization, loss of identity -isolation -actively construct their own identity	-systematic breaking down of community identity, us vs. them, -experience of initiation rituals. -military uniform, becoming a soldier	-child soldiers undergo fundamental changes in their identities -children negotiate transitions these worlds -transformative processes		
Coming out of the group	Adolescence is a time of establishing identity, and the child soldier may resist changing this identity from soldier to civilian. P. 17	-renegotiating identity with respect to each other at the point of return	-adolescence is a time for identity formation - incorporate personal events into social identity -unmaking -loss of his RUF 'family'		
During reintegration	transition from military identity into civilian life. -center should help develop a new identity	- occupied multiple social positions in the community, as alternatively son or daughter, survivor, and rebel. -identities change moment to moment	-difficulty changing identity -need to reconstruct new personal identities	-ready to leave the MILF if meaningful employment or livelihood opportunity for them.	-try to maintain status "reintegration" is achieved ...strategically adopted identities"
Community identity transformation		-community perceptions, identity changes, transformations	-peacebuilding, constructing a new identity, community and children		-Community identity transformation
<u>Factors in shifting identity salience:</u> Length of time		-length and higher risk of rejection on return. -identity transitions and address the reintegration needs of those who spent a long time		-time spent impacts reintegration	
Status, close connections		-perceived status, rank, power	-military identity -source of power, privilege, and pride. -roles, power, rewards -close social bonds -love, attachment		
Threat	-constantly attuned to the threat of attack -threats to their survival were thus seen as group threats				

APPENDIX H: Document Analysis Extra Material

Section 1: Identity Salience in the Reintegration Process

Analysis. For this section there were two charts designed, one highlighting the main identity changes that may occur during the reintegration process (see Appendix G for an example) and another to focus on the potential factors influencing identity salience, as outlined in the literature, along with the corresponding child soldier/reintegration literature. Identity transformation was discussed in terms of going into the group, coming out of the group, during reintegration, and taking place within the communities that surround the child. While three researchers discussed identity transitions going into and coming out of combat, identity changes during reintegration were discussed in all of the articles analyzed. The community identity transformation that takes place after the conflict was also highlighted in three out of five articles.

The factors that may help to shift former child soldiers' identities were pulled from the identity salience literature and contrasted to the articles analyzed in this section. The level of commitment to the group, time, threat, role performance, status and the development of a superordinate identity were all discussed in the context of reintegrating former child soldiers. The impact of time spent with the rebel group, the position or rank held in the group as well as the role performance of individual child soldiers were highlighted in multiple reports as being important indicators of reintegration success (between 3-6 articles). The level of commitment, while only being specifically discussed in one article, is a broader theme in the reintegration literature and has overarching significance for other themes discussed. For example, the rank and role performance of a child soldier may influence their level of identification, which could increase their commitment to the group. While not being explicitly discussed in terms of commitment to the group, the information found in this document analysis points to the importance of reintegration programs looking at the level of commitment experienced by former child soldiers. The information analyzed in this section has essentially demonstrated that looking at a shift in identity through an identity salience framework, is an important aspect to consider for successful reintegration programs.

Section 2: DDR Programs and Approaches

Analysis. The themes gathered for this section included, family tracing or reunification, community outreach and sensitization, counseling or psychosocial support, education and vocational support, all of which were discussed in all of the reports. Providing health support, financial support, sports and games, dance, music and drama were other activities that were mentioned to a lesser extent in between two and four articles. The importance of traditional rituals was highlighted in four reports as being central to effective reintegration. In the last section, certain special considerations pertaining to identity were discussed, including looking at the role, rank or position of the child within the group, and specific mentions of identity. The position or rank of individual soldiers was discussed in two reports as being important for reintegration, whereas discussions of identity transformations or the development of new identities were found in each of the reports analyzed. Overall, this information demonstrated that current DDR programs are considering the role that identity plays during reintegration, although efforts to this effect could be improved.

Considerations. Before these various approaches/programs are discussed, it is first essential to highlight some important distinctions between concepts. First, there is considerable debate over a

center based approach to the reintegration of former child soldiers, and a community based approach (Verhey, 2001). Some organizations such as Save the Children and UNICEF advocate for a community based approach where children are placed with their families immediately following release from the armed forces, and interim care centers or reintegration centers are used as a last resort (Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). The arguments in favor of this approach contend that most children do not require care in special facilities, which only serve to ‘ghettoize’ and isolate these children from the wider community (Verhey, 2001).

Further, opponents to a center based approach argue that the most important first step in successful reintegration is the insertion of children into their communities and families, where they can begin the transition from a military identity into a civilian and community member (UNICEF, 2007; Verhey, 2001). On the other hand, a center based approach is based on the idea that most children require at least a short term stay in an interim care, reception or rehabilitation center, in order to have their medical, psychological, economic and social needs met (GUSCO, 2010; Rachele, 2006; Verhey, 2001). Proponents of this approach maintain that it is important to have a transitional period of care from being demobilized from the armed group and being reinserted into the family and community (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; GUSCO, 2010). While both approaches maintain that taking the ‘best interests of the child’ is of utmost importance, they disagree on how that is determined and what course of action works best (UNICEF, 2007; Verhey, 2001).

As Verhey (2001) points out “Experience shows that effective reintegration depends most on family reunification, an emphasis on psychosocial supports and community rebuilding, and access to skill-building activities” (p. 13). Thus, the reintegration activities that both approaches recommend (i.e. psychosocial rehabilitation, skills training, education) are identical in many ways, however the method of delivery is distinct, either being delivered in the community or primarily within one center. This distinction between approaches is glossed over in many of the articles and research reports reviewed for this thesis, demonstrating the complex nature of this process. While some countries/regions may employ a primarily center or community based approach, many will undoubtedly use a combination of these approaches. For the purposes of this research, both organizations that use and/or advocate for each approach are analyzed in order to provide a representative overview of the field. However, it should be noted that within the context of Northern Uganda, a center based approach is the predominant method of reintegrating former child soldiers (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Verhey, 2001).

Overview of DDR programming and approaches. As mentioned in the Methodology, the five programs and approaches used in this section include: UNICEF’s Paris Principles (2007) approach, Save the Children’s (Lorey, 2001) approach, Gulu Support the Children Organization’s (GUSCO, 2010) program, the programs in Liberia (Awodola 2009, 2012) and the DDR Guide’s (Gleichmann et al., 2004) approach, which closely resembles the UN IDDRS (2006) framework. The way that each of these organizations apply and structure the reintegration and DDR process overall is similar in many ways and yet distinct in others. Save the Children (2001) views the DDR process in three stages: Prevention of Recruitment, Demobilization and Reintegration. The role that Save the Children plays in this process is to “ensure that children are included in the programs, to expand coverage for all child soldiers, and to facilitate reintegration by providing psychosocial support as well as follow up activities with the child’s community and family” (p. 15). As previously mentioned, Save the Children incorporates a community based approach to

reintegration, as seen in its focus on providing services in the community as opposed to a center. UNICEF (2007) is similar, in that it also promotes an inclusive community based approach to reintegration, and structures the DDR process by the prevention, release and reintegration of children in armed conflict. The DDR guide takes a slightly different approach to DDR because its main focus is on adults, with only a small mention of children.

GUSO's mandate consists of providing center based support "meant to rehabilitate and calm the returnee children while helping to create supportive condition for ensuring successful re-union with their families and ultimate reintegration within their communities" (p. 7). What is interesting is that all of the organizations stress the importance and objective of successfully reintegrating children back into their communities, despite their various approaches of doing so. For example, Save the Children's stated aim of reintegration is simply to facilitate the effective social reintegration of child soldiers, which closely resembles that of GUSCO. The DDRR (the extra R is for rehabilitation) process in Liberia also had the aim of helping former child soldiers return to their old lives or build new ones (Awodola, 2012). This similarity in stated objectives of DDR and reintegration reflects the knowledge gained in this field over the past several years, indicating that positive family and community relationships are the biggest predictor of reintegration success (UNICEF, 2007; Verhey, 2001).

Another similarity is the emphasis that most of these program/approaches make in connecting and building relationships with other organizations (Awodola, 2012; Gleichmann et al., 2004; GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). The need to share resources or use the existing formal and informal networks of the local community, are highlighted as being important to a comprehensive DDR approach (Gleichmann et al., 2004, Lorey, 2001). Further, most of these approaches/programs also emphasize the importance of advocacy both at the local level, involving community leaders and organizations, and at the policy level, both nationally and internationally (Gleichmann et al., 2004; GUSCO, 2010; Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). Advocacy is needed in order to ensure children are released from the armed forces, protected from being recruited, successfully accepted back into the community and to ensure that international aid/programs can be directed to communities where former child soldiers are being reintegrated (Lorey, 2001; UNICEF, 2007). Clearly there are several principles and ways of working that all of these programs have in common, despite their differences in mode of delivery. Perhaps it is beneficial to have multiple organizations with different methods that can work together, in order to provide a range of services to the community.

Section 3: Children's Accounts

Analysis. In children's experiences and challenges during reintegration, themes included acceptance, fear, aggression, the special challenges of girls and traditional healing rituals. In all of the articles the theme of acceptance was mentioned as being a barrier and facilitator of successful reintegration. Traditional healing was also mentioned in all of the articles, although the perspectives and efficacy of this practice varied. The theme of fear was also common among all of the articles reviewed, demonstrating the intense emotions occurring during the reintegration process. While aggression came up in four of the articles reviewed, the experiences of children were mixed. Finally, the special challenges for girls during reintegration were discussed in only three articles, as the other articles only involved male participants.

The second section was dedicated to explaining the experiences of children and youth during the reintegration process. Not all of the articles dedicated large sections to youth and children's own reintegration experiences, and thus the themes in this section were much more general. The themes of this section were broken down into the views of reception centers overall, the specific program aspects that youth found helpful and the various suggestions or recommendations that youth had for other centers. In three articles, youth or children's opinions of reintegration centers overall and specific program aspects were documented. When it came to suggestions, children in four studies provided their recommendations for future centers, mainly based on their own reintegration journeys. In the last section, identity transformation, themes highlighted the various aspects that helped to shift identity into or out of the rebel group. Although not all of these aspects take place during reintegration, they all speak to the ability of children to successfully reintegrate due to increasing the level of identification that children may experience towards their in-group.

Indoctrination, status, education, work and employment, resilience, time, community involvement and forgetting/memories were all themes that emerged in this section. The process of indoctrination and status of the individual children were both mentioned in three and four articles respectively, as being important for increasing the level of identification that children experienced with their group. Further, the time spent in captivity were mentioned twice as impacting the ability of children to reintegrate. Education and employment were both mentioned in four articles as being essential aspects of successful reintegration programs that helped to change identity. Community involvement in reintegration and the ability of children to forget about their past, were both highlighted as being essential steps of reintegration in four articles. Lastly, four of the articles commented on the amount of resiliency that these children display, despite the horrific events they have experienced.

Views and suggestions of reintegration/reception centers. Overall, it seems that former child soldiers view reception and reintegration centers positively, acknowledging that having an interim care facility in between being in the bush and returning home is an important step (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Boothby et al., 2006). Those that did not attend a reception/reintegration center acknowledged that having a space such as this would have helped them as they had "*nobody to give them advice and talk to them, and there was no money for treatment*" (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008, p. 23). However in one study, children who went through a Christian led reception center had a more difficult time when transitioning into the community after a period of care (Akello et al., 2006). These differences may stem from the fact that even within one country, such as Uganda, the programs and approaches to rehabilitation and reintegration differ widely. Within the same region, the World Vision center places a large emphasis on being able to admit your sins and repent them, while GUSCO takes a more traditional approach and allows for ritual cleansings to take place (Akello et al., 2006).

The different programs and approaches that children experience in various centers seem to impact their ability to successfully reintegrate (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). However it has been noted in several studies, that children who are given reintegration 'kits' or monetary packages may be viewed negatively by the community for the apparent favoritism shown to them (Akello et al., 2006; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008; Denov, 2005). The unequal provision of goods by well-intentioned NGOs can cause tensions in the community by putting certain

children's needs above others (Boothby et al., 2006; Denov, 2005). One girl in Northern Uganda explains the reaction of people in her IDP camp to her receipt of 300,000 shillings (\$120 CND),

As long as the money is still there and you are lending it to people around, they pretend to be your friend. When the money we were given is finally over, everyone in the camp changes. Even those who borrowed the money from you become so cruel; you do not know where to begin to ask for your money back. (Akello et al., 2006, p. 234)

Further, this uneven distribution of goods and services may leave some children feeling bitter and envious of the support that other children receive, doing nothing for the social cohesion that should be taking place among community members (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). While many children explain that the social and vocational support that they received within the reintegration center was fundamental in their successful reintegration (Boothby et al., 2006), it is important that centers strive for equal allocation of resources to all war affected or marginalized youth (Denov, 2005).

The counseling sessions within the centers were also pointed to as helping the children adjust to life outside the bush, especially those that provided strong role models who took an interest in the child (Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). As one child from Northern Uganda states, *"When I came home from the bush I wasn't OK mentally, but the center helped me to recover"* (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008, p. 24). In addition to counseling, the receipt of medical services and vocational training were very important, as well as family tracing services (Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Pertaining to family tracing, children in two studies commented on how important this step was, as seeing their family members upon return and reinsertion was essential for successful reintegration (Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). One recommendation is that this step takes place even sooner in the reintegration process so the social networks of community members, who are eager and motivated to connect with their children, can be utilized (Boothby et al., 2006).

Many of the recommendations that children and youth express are informed by their own struggles and experiences upon return home. Some children recommended the provision of psychosocial services such as counseling, to teach them how to deal with interpersonal conflicts and stressful situations (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Further, helping them to forget about their experiences, encouraging them to express their own views and feelings and giving them advice on how to *"mix freely with other community members"* (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008, p. 26) were mentioned as positive aspects of counseling. Providing support, both social and psychological, was mentioned by children in three studies as being an important aspect of reintegration (Akello et al., 2006; Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). Some children noted that they needed support by center staff and community members to give them advice and tell them that what they did was not their fault (Akello et al., 2006; Boothby et al., 2006). Further, medical support was highly valued by the children in the centers and thus recommended by several children and youth (Chrobok & Akutu, 2008).

The length of time that children suggested staying in a reception center varied, although most agreed that two to four months was an optimal amount of time to reflect on their experiences, distance themselves from their past and prepare them for life in the community (Chrobok &

Akutu, 2008). Children and girls' active participation in the design and delivery of DDR and reintegration programs was also another recommendation from some young people (Denov, 2005). The ability to acquire professional skills that will allow youth to productively contribute to their local economy was also seen as an important aspect of reintegration centers (Boothby et al., 2006; Chrobok & Akutu, 2008). All of these recommendations, while stemming from the children and youth's own experience, demonstrate the need for programs and services to help former child soldiers adjust and integrate into society. These aspects have clear links with identity, as the ability to overcome behaviours learned in the bush and transition into a community member is a central aspect of shifting former child soldiers' identities.

APPENDIX I: Suggestions for Future Research

The field of reintegrating former child soldiers is abundant with researchers who are keen on studying this fascinating field, and hearing children's stories of pain, courage and resilience. Perhaps hundreds of articles, books and reports have been written on the plight of child soldiers and their experiences upon return home. However, what are missing in this field are longitudinal studies demonstrating the impact that reintegration programs have on former child soldiers' long-term well-being. Within all of the research surveyed for this thesis, only one was a longitudinal study. In the field, staff of reintegration centers are in desperate need of this work to indicate if their programs and approaches are effective. Without this information, centers and researchers alike are left to wonder how these interventions play out over time, and can only make assumptions about the children's long-term success. Further, it is impossible to suggest a model for best practices in the field without comprehensive and long-term assessments. Not only is this the job of each reintegration center to perform assessments of their programs, but also international and national NGOs should be constantly monitoring and reporting on successes gained in the medium and long term.

Secondly, as evidenced by the literature review there are no present research studies that look at the shifting identities of former child soldiers during the reintegration process and upon subsequent return to their communities. Nor are there any studies that explore the role that reintegration centers play in addressing or facilitating a shift in identity within former child soldiers. The information gathered for this research used a collection of studies from various fields (i.e. psychology, child studies, human rights, conflict resolution) to explain how reintegration programs address the shifting identities of children during reintegration. Although this work is preliminary, it does highlight the importance of looking at identity during the reintegration process and the important role that reintegration centers and programs can play. More attention to the role of identity salience in this process is needed, as this will help future researchers and practitioners understand what is happening, internally and externally, during reintegration.

Lastly, more in-depth studies that describe exactly how identities of individual children are transformed into becoming a soldier, could lead to a better understanding of how to undo these changes upon return. Understanding how specific acts of violence, pre-conflict living situation, personality, level of education and other factors, determine the strength and salience of the rebel identity would have enriched this research. Through the literature review it was hypothesized that social identity theory is useful in describing the socialization process of becoming a child soldier. Because social identity theory is more about in-group vs. out-group stereotyping and making group judgments, this theory is more relevant for identity changes going into the group. Hopefully in the future, other researchers will begin to focus on the process of shifting identities and identity salience during the entire process of child soldiering so more will be known about what can be done upon return.

APPENDIX J: Ethics Approval



Human Research Ethics Board
 Office of Research Services
 Administrative Services Building
 PO Box 1700 STN CSC
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Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	Rebecca Phillips	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER	12-218
UVic STATUS:	Master's Student	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:	29-May-12
UVic DEPARTMENT:	MADR	APPROVED ON:	29-May-12
SUPERVISOR:	Dr. Budd Hall	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:	28-May-13

PROJECT TITLE: **Reconstructing Identity: How reintegration programs in Northern Uganda address the shifting identities of former child soldiers from the Lords Resistance Army (LRA)**

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: None

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: **Travel Grant from Graduate Studies**

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Modifications

To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures

When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.



Dr. Rachael Scarth
 Associate Vice-President, Research

Certificate Issued On: 29-May-12

12-218
 Phillips, Rebecca