Writing the Small Narratives
of Child Soldiers
A field study from northern Uganda

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Abstracts

The purpose of this thesis is to question the dominating image of child soldiers and child soldiering according to the following questions at issue:

1. What is the dominating image of a child soldier?
   - How do child soldiers define themselves?
   - How do their definition differ from the dominating definition?

2. What is the dominating image of the surrounding environment where the child soldiering occurs?
   - How do people living in such a milieu themselves describe the surrounding environment?
   - How does this view differ from the dominating view?

The answers to these questions are in a broader concept affecting how we work to solve the problem of child soldiering. As in many other issues we tend to generalise and not questioning social problems. The relevance of this study is therefore to complicate the dominating view of child soldiers and child soldiering.

First, to try to find the dominating image of the phenomenon a discourse analysis has been made. The material used to find this general view was 14 articles from New York Times. Second, to questioning this view a field study was made in northern Uganda, where the integration of former abducted children has been a big issue the last years. The field study took place in one of Uganda’s most affected towns, Gulu, in two weeks co-operation with the domestic non-governmental organisation Concerned Parents Association. I was able to see the surrounding environment, where abductions of over 25 000 children have taken place during the last 20 years, and to interact with 10 former abducted children.

This thesis shows according to the field work and literatures firstly; that the concept of child differs in different societies and that this makes the conception of child soldier complicated. Secondly, it shows that the child soldier is not a new phenomenon; where there is a war there have also always been children participating in the war. Thirdly, it shows that it is not only cruel adults that force children to the armies; for some children it is another way of living.
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Preface

While riding on the post bus for 6 hours, leaving my Swedish friends in Uganda’s capital Kampala for Gulu in the northern parts of the country, there was some time over for thinking. From what I had heard and read, the northern parts of Uganda were not very safe. There were peace talks going on, but still the Ugandans did not and do not know how it all will end. For the first time in 20 years Uganda is standing closer than ever before in front of what might be the end of a war that have divided families, taken the lives of hundreds of thousands civilians and made people suffer from poverty, malnutrition and starvation. What I had in mind while sitting on the bus that day was very different from what I saw during my two weeks stay there in Gulu, in Acholiland.

Thinking back of Gulu now, my memory goes to all the strong, friendly and loveable people I met during my stay. I came as a total stranger and people welcomed me with open arms. I came with no intention or expectations to find anything, just to watch and to see the situation with my own eyes and I left with more than a lot, not only with a lot of more knowledge about the situation, but also with a lot friendship.

To take it from the start I first of all want to send thanks to my Ugandan friend Brian Katumba who lives in Sweden and who inspired me to go to Uganda in the first place, and helped me to find contacts there. After my stay in Uganda he has also been a great help for my understanding of the Ugandan society and with correction and discussions of my thesis.

One of the contacts Brian gave me was Omona Alfonse Degozone (Dego). He grew up in Kitgum in northern Uganda, but is now living in Kampala. Without Dego’s friendship, shared information and calmness while in Kampala I had not made it to the northern parts. Once arriving in Gulu I met Sylvia Olivia Opinia, the head officer of Concerned Parents Association (CPA) in Kampala, from whom I got a friendly welcome. She was also more than willing to introduce me to people working with community development in Gulu. From there I met Betty Wuzu from CPA in Kitgum district, who helped me with some first introduction of my topic child soldiering and most of all made me feel comfortable in Gulu town.

From Sylvia I also met all the friendly staffs of CPA in Gulu district, who let me stay with them and work with them for every day in two weeks. Among them I want to give a special
thanks to my friends Ouma Alex Okello and Oluk Patrick, who took me to the camps around Gulu, and taught me about the situations there, but also cared a lot about me, and shared a lot of thoughts with me. Most of all I want to thank the officer of child protection, Ocaya James Oballim. He took his time, not only to let me follow him to the camps each and every day and to show me the life people are living there, but he also organized interviews with former abducted children. Because of that I was able to base this paper upon what these former abducted children told me and it helped me to come to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon child soldiers and child soldiering.

I know this paper is not enough to thank all the people helping me during my stay in Uganda, but still it is directed to all those working with the issue and that make me believe in an end of the war, and especially to the 10 former abducted children that told me their stories about life in captivity, which often was very sensitive for them to talk about. For them and all other former abducted children, still abducted children and to every other child suffering from wars in the world, I have nothing but this simple paper, but also the knowledge that peace for my friends around the world are worth fighting for.

“After visiting the country in 1910, a young Winston Churchill called Uganda “the pearl of Africa” for its beauty and natural resources. But the true pearls of Uganda are the Ugandan people.”

\(^1\) Mc Donnell (2007), from Mc Donnell (2007) p. 25
1. Introduction

According to United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) there are today approximately 300,000 children around the globe under the age of 18 defined as child soldiers. This is a problem that causes large problems for the affected countries, aiming at limits in youth’s education and in labour force and especially the sorrow and lack that the family members must suffer. The awareness of the issue have grown in the western world the last decades, as television and newspapers shows small and barefooted kids wearing all to big guns. Our minds tell us, that something is wrong. In our minds children are innocent and need protection. Therefore children and big guns do not converge. As the awareness has grown human right organizations has pushed the question of how to stop the recruitment and abuse of children into armed forces.

In northern parts of Uganda the rebel movement Lord Resistance Army (LRA) during the last 20 years has recruited and abducted children to their forces. In the early years the LRA was said to be supported by the Acholi people living in the northern parts of the country, but in the last decade the rebels have used violence also to them, the once they call their own people. The conflict has until recently escalated, which means that the situation for people living in the northern parts has been critical and more and more children have been abducted from their homes. Over 25,000 children has been abducted in total, and it is said that 85-90 per cent of the LRA consists of children under the age of 18. The conflict between the rebel group and the ruling president Museveni is for long said to be forgotten, but these days Uganda is standing in front of peace negotiations that might be the end of the war and hopefully also the end of the abduction of Acholi children.

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4 Akhavan (2005) p. 407, from UNHR report of Uganda
1.1. Problem identification

The problem of child soldiering has since the phenomenon started to get attention been of high priority on the United Nations (UN’s) agenda. In 2002 the so called “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict”, entered into force. This is a special protocol relating to children in need of protection from war and aims to reduce the participation of children in armed conflicts, according to the following: ⁶

“**Article 1**

States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.” ⁷

The purpose is clear; in the long run no one under the age of 18 should need to take active part in armed forces. In a research made by David M. Rosen it is however claimed that child soldiers is not a recent phenomenon. The fact is, Rosen argues, that young people have always been in or close to the front lines. ⁸ With help from case studies in Palestine, Sierra Leone and experiences of the Jews during the Second World War he questions and complicates the picture of child soldiers. He shows that the picture we get from media is much more complicated than we think. The child we see is involved in a much bigger system and structures that we need to study deeper, to understand the phenomenon of child soldiering completely. ⁹

“The western view”, which the UN’s definition relies upon, makes the concept “child” very vulnerable; a child is someone who needs to be protected by adults. They are seen as easy victims to crimes and it seems as they are incapable to decide the best possibilities for their own lives. Child soldiers therefore must have been either forced to participate in wars or been manipulated. On the other hand some researches, for example Rosen, have shown that this view can be questioned and my aim in this paper is to put focus on those deeper underlying structures behind children in wars and the differences between them and a more common view.

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⁷ Ibid  
⁸ Rosen (2005) p.3  
⁹ Rosen (2005) chapter 1
1.1.1. Purpose and relevance

In social science it has become more and more common to question the existing dominating discourse and to look beyond the social structures, into how the structures are created. In a small study over the Zimbabwean conflict made last year I learned how different the view of a conflict can be depending on which newspaper you read. Newspapers are more or less always wearing a political representation and in many countries you are only allowed to write within especially official or unofficial laws. Reading the newspapers articles about conflicts, the people within it and their actions constructs pictures and thoughts in our minds about the things and the people described, whether we want it or not.\textsuperscript{10} It is against this background that I want to question the dominating discourse about child soldiers.

It is important to notice that the aim of the study is not to take away the innocence of the children, the right of the children or to say that the children have their own choices to make. Instead I want to focus on the way in which the view of the children maintains the structures behind child soldiering, by not taking other things into consideration. By describing the children as innocent and forced or manipulated to go to war, we make the problem simple and general; children need to be helped away from the adult’s wars. We do not take the environment in which the children live or the structures in which they grow up into consideration.

In UN’s article number 1\textsuperscript{11} mentioned before child soldiers are described as something that could be prohibited by states. At least in some cases it has been shown, (according to Rosen) that there are much deeper structures behind the phenomenon child soldiers\textsuperscript{12} that are not going to be solved by the states laws and prohibitions to recruit and/or abduct children under the age of 18 into armies.

\textsuperscript{10} Gunnarsson (2007)
\textsuperscript{11} See 1.1. Problem identification, p. 4
\textsuperscript{12} Rosen (2005) chapter 1
Against this background the purpose of the study is to try to question the common view of the phenomenon of child soldiers and child soldiering. I will do this through a case study from Gulu in northern Uganda. What is found might be relevant to get a better understanding of the impacts our conceptions and thoughts of child soldiers, such as it is described in for example UN’s “Convention of the Rights of the Child”, may have for further work and in trying to reduce the numbers of children in armed conflicts.

1.1.2. Questions at issues

According to try to find relevant information about the topic and to come to a deeper understanding of the issue I need to analyze the following questions:

1. What is the dominating image of a child soldier?
   - How do child soldiers define themselves?
   - How do there definition differ from the dominating definition?

2. What is the dominating image of the surrounding environment where the child soldiering occurs?
   - How do people living in such a milieu themselves describe the surrounding environment?
   - How does this view differ from the dominating view?
2. Methodology

To try to answer the research questions, I have used three different work methods; a discourse analysis, a literature study, and a field study. The first mentioned was an analysis over articles from New York Times aiming at conceptualising the dominating view of child soldiers and child soldiering. My second task was to find literature that goes against this common view, which I did with help of research in books written over case studies in the topic. Last but not least I had two weeks in field in Gulu in northern Uganda, where I co-operated with a nongovernmental organisation and was able to interview Former Abducted Children (FAC).

2.1. Discourse analysis

In the book "Writing the War on Terrorism", Jackson argues that the American administrations consciously propagated a political message in the years after the attack on World Trade Centre.\(^{13}\) Media was used to build up a vision over "the war on terrorism". Jackson means moreover that the language is never neutral\(^{14}\); words, sentences and emphasis together create what we think of ourselves and about others, they create therefore the environment and the social world in which we live. In this way the common view of a phenomenon, in this case the attack on the World Trade Centre, therefore created the people’s common views. This moreover allowed American soldiers to go to war against Afghanistan and Iraq and made it legal. This common idea, built upon what we view as legal, creates and establishes social norms called discourses. Once they are there it is hard to change the prevailing and general discourses.\(^{15}\)

Inspired by Jackson’s I have in accordance to his book done a discourse analysis. A discourse analysis is an analysis over the language and how the language is used to give a special view over a problem or a topic. In Jackson’s discourse analysis he finds that Taliban’s always are described with negative words, while the Americans are described with positive words. In this lies that every word has an underlying massage in combination with other words and/or as sentences. In my discourse analysis I have used the newspaper New York Times and their

\(^{13}\) Jackson (2005)
\(^{14}\) Jackson (2005) p. 21
\(^{15}\) Jackson (2005) p. 18-20
descriptions of child soldiers and child soldiering. I chose to limit my article search to child soldiers in Uganda or to articles related to Uganda. The articles are all published from the 1st of January in 2000 up to date. In New York Time’s archive I found 55 articles while using the keywords “child soldiers”, plus “Uganda”. Of these 55 some mentions child, soldiers and Uganda, but the words are not necessary related to each other. My second task was therefore to sort the articles by relevance. I did this to limit my study and to get the common picture over child soldier and child soldiering specifically in Uganda. I have been working according to inductive saturation, which means that when I found some patterns which were repeated I was saturated and able to try to come up with the common view over the phenomenon of child soldiers. In the end 14 of the 55 articles were used for the discourse analysis. In some cases it was not necessary to study more than 7 or 8 articles to find a common pattern, while other patterns were harder to find and where a more analytic level was needed.

2.2. Literature Study

Researches on child soldiers and child soldiering are not new and therefore it was quite easy to find literature on the topic. Searching for the topic in libraries and on websites give you a lot of hits, and also the UN and non-governmental organisations have a huge archive in the topic. My aim was however to find books that does not only give an overview of child soldiers, but also take a deeper look into the phenomenon and give a deeper view of structures and the surrounding environments. I cannot say that these books were hard to find, but it limited me to search most of all to case studies. Many books take up the Ugandan case, which witnesses on the challenges the country have faced the last decades with constant fear for the LRA and their tendency to kidnap children.

The literature functioned as an ongoing process throughout the study, meaning it started before the field study and continued as a necessity for my understanding after the field study. The idea to take a deeper look into structures behind child soldiers was also taking from such books and especially from my supervisor Anders Nilsson that has visit Uganda couple of times and in different ways has been connected to the development process there.
To summarise the literature study has both worked as a background and first introduction to my topic and as a source besides the interviews (better described in next section) to question the prevailing and common discourse about child soldiers and child soldiering.

2.3. Field study in Uganda

The third method was thus a field study in Uganda; a country which in recent years has been in war, and where a great number of children have participated in this war, in one or another way. The study in field had two purposes; on the one hand to get an overview of the environment where child soldiering takes place, and second to get contact with some of the so called former child soldiers themselves. The field part was as mentioned before made in the district around Gulu town\textsuperscript{16}, where I worked and cooperated with the nongovernmental organization Concerned Parent’s Association (CPA). CPA showed me the surrounding environment and took me to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps\textsuperscript{17}, where most of the former abducted children live. The study is therefore depending on my own observations from the fields, and also how I understood CPA’s view of child soldiering according to discussions and thoughts shared with the employers of CPA, most of all the field officer of child protection The visit at the organisation was an opportunity to get an overview of the issues and to see the environments in which the child soldiering is taking place.

This purpose was also satisfied by CPA’s commitments in introducing me to former abducted children (FAC). In this way I was able to meet 10 former abducted children and to interview them. The interviews were made in the local language Lwo with the help of a translator according to 25 qualitative questions.\textsuperscript{18} All of the people I interviewed had in one or another way been in captivity before they had reach the age of 18, some of them only for some weeks while others for years (1 week – 7 years), and were therefore classified as FAC by the CPA. Some of the interviewed were adults today and some of them were still young; their ages today varied between 13 to 25 years. The youngest was abducted already at an age of 7. With the help of the interviews I afterwards tried to figure out in what environment and structures the children did and do live, and also how these children look upon themselves.

\textsuperscript{16} See Appendix – Maps over Uganda p. 53-54
\textsuperscript{17} For more information see 4.1.2. Current situation p. 19-20
\textsuperscript{18} See Interview guide in Appendix p. 51-52
2.4. Limitations and validity

This study is only an introduction to the phenomenon of child soldiering and only some of the structures, in which these children are living, are introduced. What we should have in mind is that all studies are dependent on the author; that means that this paper rely very much on my starting points, my thoughts before the research was made and from what I saw and heard during my field study. A field study made somewhere else by another person, with different starting points could have given different results.

Researches always have limitations in their ways of dealing with issues. To start with I had found it difficult to limit my literature study and foremost the article research. It is impossible to include all different view from previously studies. I realised fast that only during the period I was working on my thesis, a few new publications on the topic was released, which could have changed or at least affected my understanding about the phenomenon. In the same way the use of New York Times for the discourse analysis might have affected the way in which I have described the general view of child soldiers. The use of another newspaper might have given other results. However I had to limit my article research and therefore I have chosen to use New York Times to get an overall general view. I did that choice on the ground that New York Times is a newspaper with high circulation of information in “west”, and moreover a brief look into other western newspaper gave almost the same view. Therefore I found New York Times one of the most valid newspaper to use as an overall source.

It was however the work in field which gave me most difficulties. I found most of all that the limitations of my field study were connected firstly to my personal background and secondly to structural issues. By the first mentioned I mean things such as my limited experiences form field work and from interview methods. It was only my second time visiting Africa and the first time was not comparable with this time, and moreover I had never been in connection to interview work before. My vision was to have close and deep discussions with the FAC’s, but after only some days spent in Gulu I understood that I should have needed a lot of more time in field then 2 weeks to start such conversations. Most of all this depend on language challenges, but also on structural challenges, such as me as a white female in an environment where “whites” have seldom visited. If the interviews were made in English it should have been easier for me to ask questions and to hold discussions. Now instead James from CPA...
held the conversation and he translated to me in the breaks. The positive side of having a translator is that he was a local, who had been in contact with the persons interviewed before. In that way they already trusted him as someone working for a local NGO, and who was there to help them. The language challenges can however also lead to misunderstandings and it can off course be difficult to express what a second source mean. Anyway I had the possibilities to ask over again when I did not understand and if there was any information that I did not understand fully, it is not used in this thesis.

Even though the last years war rebuilding has brought a lot of international people to Gulu, it seems as these are still connected to nongovernmental organisations work or international organisations work. This means that a white person and maybe even more a female in such environments (I mean in the IDP-camps) are foremost seen as an “aid worker” and this may also have had impacts on my interviews. The interviewed might have seen me as someone who was there to give them money support, which might have an impact on their answers.

However this small study has shown that there really are structures that we do not take into account when we are talking about child soldiers and child soldiering. There are also much more to be studied about this phenomenon and more interviews and deeper discussions could have led me to different results and other understandings. Despite of this, I feel that two weeks in the environment and 10 interviews together with literatures that question the common view was enough to understand that the phenomenon is not as simple as “we” think. As mentioned in the introduction the phenomenon cannot be understood deep enough and every case is specific. What makes the case of northern Uganda special is that most of the children are abducted or at least said to be abducted, and not recruited, and even though they are abducted I have heard stories that can question the common view of the phenomenon. It could therefore be interesting to and necessary for a deeper understanding, with more field studies in other countries.

My overall picture is however that my aim to question the common view of child soldiering and deepening my understanding of the phenomenon was possible to do, by only a first scratch in the topic and by some weeks stay in such environments.
3. Theoretical frameworks

My aim with this chapter is to present the basic theoretical frameworks which this thesis is built upon. The literature used has their basis in the postcolonial theory, and therefore I will give a brief introduction to this theory and its thoughts of how structures are created. After that I will present two frameworks which are built upon the postcolonial theory and which is the starting points for my thesis.

3.1. The postcolonial theory

The main pillar of the postcolonial theory is that colonialism not is something that belongs to the past and to the colonial historical epoch of slave trade and racism; it is still here in our everyday lives. We can among other things see it in the way we construct our identities, according to the differences between “us” and “them”. During the colonial epoch the colonizer did not only use physical violence; they also used psychological violence to justify the colonization, which means that a general accepted divergence between the colonizer and the colonized was created. Social structures were accordingly built up by those differences and it became generally accepted, not only by the colonizer but also by the colonized, that the colonizer were the governor and the colonized the subordinator. The post colonial theory says that this thread was not cut because of the decolonization. It is still here and can be seen in the way “we” (people in the west) look upon “the others” (people we regarding as different from us, for example the African or the Muslim) in comparison to us. We are for example the civilized - they are the uncivilized, and we are the modern – they are the traditional. By using words that are the opposite of each other we are each day still constructing the differences between “us” and “them”. 19

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19 Eriksson et.al. (1999) kap 1
3.1.1. The poststructuralist approach

The poststructuralist approach with its basis in the postcolonial theory argue that the differences we saw before are created by the language. The language thus creates homogenous ideas and discourses. Moreover the language tends to sound either positively or negatively. During the colonial epoch this was, as mentioned before to call the colonized and their societies undeveloped, uncivilized and without knowledge, while the colonizer and their societies were developed, civilized and knowledge rich. In this way the language are still today creating stereotyped ideas about “the other” and/or “the others”, between colonizers and colonized, between males and females and between blacks and whites. This is what creates the prevailing discourse that we all are a part of in our everyday lives.²⁰

3.2. The power of discourse and the discourse of power

In the article “Maktens Diskurs och Diskursens Makt” Björn Andersson describes how the dominating discourse affects the individual’s lives. This dominating discourse or “the grand narrative” he explains, is a general discourse which people are born into. The authority power in the society creates norms of how individuals are supposed to do, to act and how they (we) are supposed to think. His idea therefore converges with the poststructuralists’ approach about the power over language, and how the language creates norms in the society. He furthermore put one more thing into the discussion; the strength of power (maktens styrka), which is created by the language. In this discourse of power the norms of the small individuals are included. He is later on, with the help of a case study over different historical epochs, explaining how one epoch in history can change into another and continue with describing his view of the transformation to today’s prevailing epoch, what he calls the epoch of high modernity (“högmodernitetens epok”).

“The grand narrative”, he means, can be shown in the power relations and these can furthermore limit the individuals manoeuvre to form his/her own life. The point is that small individual narratives that diverge with “the grand narrative” tend to disappear and “the grand

²⁰ Eriksson et.al. (1999) p. 17-19
narrative” tends to be seen as the only truth. Therefore the small individual narratives have difficulties in penetrating; the grand narratives repress the small narratives, because the small narratives are not generally accepted.  

3.3. “The humanitarian case” of child soldiers

In the book “Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism” David Rosen questions the common approach of child soldiers. He explains that the western concept of children creates the way in which aid organisations work to prohibit children in armed forces. He argues that the general accepted approach of child soldiers rests upon a “humanitarian case” which includes three common conclusions of war:

“[..] modern warfare is aberrant and cruel, the worldwide glut of light-weight weapons makes it easier than in the past for children to wear arms, and vulnerable children became soldiers because they are manipulated by unscrupulous adults.”

Furthermore he says that the aid organisations in this way paint the picture of child soldiering as a new critical phenomenon; the children need to be saved. In his case studies he later complicate and question this view of the issue by saying that there have always been young soldiers and that the wars always has pushed children to participate in wars. There is no new phenomenon of child soldiers; we are rather painting the crisis of child soldiers according to our concepts of what a child is.

22 Rosen (2005) p. 1
23 Ibid
24 Rosen (2005) Chapter 1
4. Background - child soldiering in Uganda

The understanding of the situation and the environment where child soldiering takes place could never be deep enough. We could search for information from different views in different literature and sources from years back in history and never know enough about the topic. However, my aim here is not to do a deep historical analysis of Uganda. Instead I have focused on events in the history that help us to deepen our understandings of the livelihood for the people of northern Uganda, and have reinforce the conflict situation and to the fact that thousands of children in the north have been recruited or/and abducted to armed forces. More analyzed information from the interviews and discussions will later be incorporated in the analysis part.

History can never be told fair enough for all people; it is the winners that write the history. After a short conversation with Husseien B. Mudhir, Chief Executive Officer of The African Partnership Alliance for Citizens Transformation, (The African PACT), I understood that Uganda’s history is much more complicated and complex than what we find in the overall picture from western litterateur. That is what I want us to have in our minds while reading this part of the paper.25

4.1. Background to the conflict

First of all we have to understand the situation in Uganda during the colonial epoch before 1962. Before the Europeans arrived, the social system of Uganda consisted of many ethnic groups some of them are; the Baganda in the south which constitute the largest percentage of the population, Ankoleand Bakiga in the west Basoga and Iteso in the east, Langi and Acholi in the north, and Kwakwa in the north-west. All these ethnic groups belonged to different kingdoms for example the Baganda belonged to Buganda kingdom, the Acholi belonged to Acholi kingdom. Each kingdom had its own king and had to follow its own rules. This implies that the colonial boundaries to delimit Uganda grouped together a wide range of ethnic groups with different political systems and cultures.26

25 Personal communication 2 (2007)
26 Truedson (2007) p. 13-14
The British way of colonizing Uganda was characterized by using the country’s southern people as administrators and the country’s northern people as fighters. This meant that the Baganda in the southern parts became leaders in administrative and governmental skills while the Acholies and Langis in the north were chosen to the army to fight in wars. Acholiland in the north\textsuperscript{27} was primarily seen as a labor reserve; function as producers for the Baganda people. Because of the low earnings in the agriculture it was more profitable and also more prestigious to participate in armed forces. The country was because of this divided into two zones; the production zone in south and east and the non-production zone in north and east. The people in the north were unskilled and functioned as cheap labor to be employed in the south.\textsuperscript{28} Therefore, after the independence in 1962, administrative work and educations were more profitable to develop in south. This still marked the development of the south compared to north, with Acholiland appearing forgotten and excluded from economic development and since 1986 also excluded from the leaderships of the country.\textsuperscript{29}

At independence in 1962, Milton Obote, a Langi, was selected as prime minister by the British and Edward Mutesa II the Kabaka (King) of Buganda was selected as president. However Mutesa II served as a figure head president, but the constitution was based mainly on the British system, which meant that the political systems were taken away from the individual kingdoms which existed. In 1966 after deposing Mutesa II and storming his palace in a military coup, Obote declared himself as a president. After six years in power he was overthrown by his own army commander Idi Amin Dada, from the Kwakwa people in the west Nile region. Time during Amin, from 1971 until 1979, was a reign of terror for the Acholies and the Langis in the North.\textsuperscript{30} Amin was afraid of a possible revenge from the Acholie’s and Lango’s, who had strong military capacity. The fear of a new coup d’état lead Amin to brutally executed those Acholies and Langos who remained in his army and replace them with men from his own people. Amin also banished the Asians in the country, who were at that time running a large proportion of the economy and he nationalized the English companies. The two events were major reasons to the following economic collapse. The

\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix 2 – Maps over Uganda p. 59
\textsuperscript{28} Ward (2001) p. 191
\textsuperscript{29} De Temmerman (2001) p. vii, from the Economist
\textsuperscript{30} Ward (2001) p. 191
pressure on Amin grew from different parts of the word. In Tanzania, an armed force with the aim to overthrow Amin, “the Ugandan National Liberation Army” (UNLA), was organised. In 1987 Uganda was invaded by the UNLA together with “the Tanzanian army”. The result was that Obote could take back power.\(^{31}\)

In the beginning of the 80’s a third armed group had started to establish in southern parts of Uganda; it was the rebellions National Resistance Army (NRA), with the leadership of the current president Yoweri Museveni. The NRA had had a part in the overthrowing of Amin and where now struggling for the presidency power and turned therefore against Obote. This lead to what is called the Lowere Triangle in 1983, where Obote’s men, were trying to defeat their new enemies and killed approximately 300 000 people; both civilians and men belonging to the NRA.\(^{32}\)

Because of Obotes brutal way of ruling, he was on 27\(^{th}\) July 1985 removed by his own men, but still the Lowere Triangle is an event that the Acholis are accused for, and one of the reason for the continuing marginalization of people in north. Bazilio Olaro Okello and Tito Okello Lutwa, two Acholi generals, took power after Obote and started peace agreements with the NRA. These were however broken in 1986 by a new coup détat, where NRA and Museveni took over power on 26th January 1986 up to date.\(^{33}\)

Since Museveni came to power he has succeeded in stabilizing the country’s economy and Uganda has in recent years been one of the world’s fastest growing countries, with an economic growth rate at 7 % per year from 1990 to 1997, but the northern parts of the country has as a result of the war not been part of this progress.\(^{34}\) People there still feel the frustration and exclusion. For them the power of Museveni meant the first time to be completely excluded from the state power. What even seem to be the worse to the Acholi people was that Museveni’s men, who were ones rebellions, were now taking over the military power which for long had belonged to the Acholies.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) Temmerman, 2001, p. viii  
Ward (2001) p 192  
\(^{32}\) Doom, Vlassenroot (1999) p. 9  
\(^{33}\) Ward (2001) p. 192  
\(^{34}\) De Temmerman (2001) p. vii, from the Economist  
\(^{35}\) Doom, Vlassenroot, 1999, p 13
4.1.1. Lord Resistance Army

Obote’s army was, as mentioned before, standing accused for the event in Luwero and were therefore forced to flee. Museveni’s military was first limited in manpower and therefore the men of the former president could seek protection in Acholiland, where Museveni’s men had not yet reached. As Museveni’s army expanded the forces had to flee and were able to seek refuge in Southern Sudan. The government of Sudan saw the overthrowing of Obote and the Okellos as a threat to their control over “the restive non-Islamic, Non-Arab southern portion of their country”, and they started supporting the refugees both in capital and manpower. This helped a new movement to establish and to form an opposition against the Ugandan government. Their purpose was to overthrow Museveni and take back power.\(^{36}\)

A guerrilla war between Obote’s former men and the NRA broke out. In 1986, in the time of this war, an Acholi woman had a vision from the Holy Spirit Lakwana. The Holy Spirit told her to take back the Acholi army and instead build a strong movement from the ground and later begin a war against Evil. Alice, later called Alice Lakwana, moved thereafter between the towns of northern Uganda to unite the rebels into one movement. With 150 soldiers she started to rebuild the movement under the name, Holy Spirit Movement (HSM).\(^{37}\) After a fight against Museveni’s men, Alice was however forced to flee to Kenya, in 1987. The movement was nevertheless still active and now ruled by Lakwena’s father. Later the HSM changed name into Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and Joseph Kony took command over the group. He was a younger cousin to Lakwena and said to have the same spiritual qualities as her. Kony’s aim was to overthrow the ruling government, take over the leadership and to rule the country according to the Ten Commandments. When LRA started their actions against the ruling government many people in the north, we supported them, since they felt marginalized and forgotten. Even if LRA themselves still says that they are operating for the Acholi, they have treated the civilians in the north, with lots of violence, which have lead to declining support. In 1994 there were for the first time peace negotiations between LRA and Museveni. After the failure of these negotiations the situation grew worse for the people in the north, who were said to have betrayed the LRA.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{37}\) Behrend (1999) p. 25-26

\(^{38}\) Akhavan (2005) p. 406
4.1.2. The current situation

At the time when I stayed in Gulu in November 2007, the situation for the people in northern Uganda was safer than it has been in years. The peace talks had restarted in the beginning of the summer of 2006.

With start in the early 2000’s Museveni began his first real attempts to beat the LRA forces and in March 2002 “Operation Iron Fist”, a military action to stop the rebellions, began. The same year, an agreement between the Sudanese government and the Ugandan government made it possible to stop the money and manpower support to LRA from Sudan. In 2005, Sudan also started to support Museveni in his armed actions against the LRA bases in southern Sudan. Since 2004, Kony and four other commanders of LRA are standing accused in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Hague, aiming at pressure not only from inside the country but also from western countries. Kony’s manpower is said to have declined from 10 000 to about 3000 people, among them 800 fighters. The reason for the decline is probably the amnesty given to child soldiers by Museveni in 2005, which made it possible for some the children to leave the LRA.

Because of the peace negotiations people have now started to move back to their homes from the camps. The camps were a attempt by the government, starting in 1997, to place people in the north in safety in so called Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. Some people were forced and some were willing, to move from their homes and from their farms. The policy had put approximately 2 million people into the IDP-camps in 2005. At total approximately 80-90 % of the population in northern Uganda has been living in the camps, since the strategy began.

Since the LRA was going so hard at Acholiland; looting and burning down homes, killing and enslaving children, that people sometimes had no choice but to leave their homes. Even since life in the camp was said to be safer, people have faced other challenges. For example food production has been ineffective since the arable land is situated near the former homes and

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39 Economist (2005) p. 41-42
40 Jewell (2006) p. 25
41 Ward (2001) p.188
42 Economist (2005) p. 41
43 Nutt, Samantha (2004) p. 17
communities. From the current homes people now have to walk for hours to reach the production areas. This situation has lead both to starvation and deceases. Moreover even if the camps were established to protect people, there have been cases when LRA comes to the camps to abduct children. According to the UNICEF, LRA had in 2001 abducted 26 615 children in total. Different sources say that 85-90 per cent of LRA’s forces are younger than an age of 18.

Nowadays the soldiers of Kony are not seen in the streets of Gulu, but since there are not yet an implemented peace agreement people do not feel safe enough to go back to their homes and start their agricultural productions. We must also understand the complexities of the situation when some of the people I met in Gulu District now have lived in the IDP-camps since the government campaign first started 10 years ago. This means that after the war many people have no longer any homes to go back to.

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44 Akhavan (2005) p. 407, from UNHR report of Uganda
45 Akhavan (2005) p. 407
Jewell (2006) p. 25
4.2. Background to the Concerned Parent’s Association

To understand the environments in which I did my field study and to understand the struggles for the children’s rights in northern part of Uganda I will now make a brief presentation of the Concerned Parent’s Association (CPA). The background to and description of the organization is taken from brochures and papers that was given to me during my staying in Gulu and also from some books, papers and articles found back home in Sweden, but also from my understandings about what I saw from the work the organization did and my understanding from talking to the employees of the organization, during my stay with them.

4.2.1. The establishment of CPA

At night, on the 34th Ugandan Independence Day, between 9th and 10th of October in 1996, 139 girls from St Mary’s College in Aboke close to Lira were abducted, by the LRA. Thanks to the Italian nun, Sister Rachele Fassera who was one of the nuns running the school, this night was recognized by people all over Uganda, but also opened up the eyes of people in other parts of the world. Sister Rachele was together with one of the teachers John Busco following the rebels and the girls to the bush hoping to discuss an eventually release of the girls. After the negotiation Sister Rachele was able to take home 109 of the girls. Sister Rachele could not stand that some of the girls and other children were still left in the bush, so she never stopped searching for the children. Together with worried parents Sister Rachele established the Non Governmental Organization “Concerned Parents Association” (CPA).  

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46 See Appendix 2 – Map over Uganda, p. 59
47 De Temmerman (2001) chapter 1
4.2.2. CPA today

The CPA was first established in Lira in 1996, but since the girls were also from other district in northern Uganda there are nowadays operational branches also in Apac/Oyam, Gulu/Amuru, in Kitgum/Pader and a liaison office in Kampala.\(^{48}\)

The CPA’s working approach is to organise groups of grass root people in the communities and most of all in the IDP’s camps, around their district. The aim is to support people in reintegrating after the war. These groups can for example be either a Parents Support Groups (PSG) or a Youth Groups. Today there are more than 100 active youth groups and more than 500 active PSG’s. CPA has four activities that are of major priority. First it is “Psychosocial support” for former abducted children by implementation of action plans and follow ups. Second it is “child protection”, which includes creation and training of the child protection committees in the communities. The third one is “Livelihood support” which means support to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) that intend to do some kind of skills. The last one is training in “Peace Building and Reconciliation” for the Parents Support Groups and the Youth Groups in the communities.\(^ {49}\)

4.2.3. CPA in Gulu district

In the branch in Gulu District, with whom I was cooperating, CPA was established in 1999 by Ms Nora Pheobe Okello, the mother to one of the abducted girls from Gulu. In 5 years the organization in Gulu had grown from having 3 employed to having 20 employed. There are today two major activities; supporting child mothers and sponsoring children in school. The first one aims at support of young mothers, often under the age of 18, which including both those who came back from captivity with children born there (returning child mothers) and those who was not necessarily abducted when given birth to a child, but gave birth to children at a young age, often under 18. They have in common that they need some help to either look after their children to be able to begin their own skills or are in need of sponsorship to begin their skills in marketing. The second includes sponsorship to pupils in primary and sometimes

\(^{48}\) Personal communication 1 (2007)  
\(^{49}\) Ibid
secondary school that cannot afford their school fees, school uniforms or others things connected to education.\textsuperscript{50}

The groups are as we have seen not only directed at former child soldiers that my study is about. Instead the CPA organizes youth groups that are mixed and in these groups there are many former abducted children (FAC) and this groups goes all under the activity child protection, where the youth can get sponsorship to start agricultural or other income activities or to arrange events for example dramas, music concert and football tournaments.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Personal communication 1 (2007)
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid
5. The grand and small narratives of child soldiers

This chapter is divided into two parts; the first one describes the dominating view of child soldiers and child soldiering and the second is trying to complicate this dominating picture. The articles from New York Times are used to define how child soldiers and child soldiering are described in general. I have used Björn Andersson name “the grand narrative” for this common view.\(^{52}\) In the second part I have used literatures that diverge from the common picture, together with the interviews made during the field work, to question “the grand narrative” and to try to find the “the small narratives”. We will now continue and see how the two views are built up and how they diverge, and in last section we will try to connect and compare the two views.

5.1. Writing the “grand narrative of the child soldier”

After a look into the articles we find that there are foremost three ways in which the articles of New York Times support the things that Rosen connect with “the humanitarian case”\(^ {53}\) of child soldiers and child soldiering. First the articles describe the children as vulnerable and easily manipulated. That means they are victims, and need to be protected by adults. Second, to reinforce the picture of the children as victims, the rebels are either described as cruel people without sense or as spiritual madmen. This third way is that child soldiering is described as a new phenomenon that belongs to other parts of the world, and not to “us”.

In this part I will now present these common ways of describing the phenomenon and try to analyse how these views are built up with the help of language and how it creates “the grand narrative” about child soldiers.

\(^{52}\) See 3.2. The Power of discourse and the discourse of power, p. 13 -14

\(^{53}\) See 3.3. “The humanitarian case of child soldiers, p 14
5.1.1. Children as vulnerable and easily manipulated

The first thing you may notice by analysing the articles of New York Times is that the language used about child soldiers creates a view over children as vulnerable. It does so by directly connect the children with words like brainwashed, or by describing the hard life they are living. These patterns were among the ones that were easy to find. For me it was enough to read about 8 the articles to understand that this was among the most common patterns.

THE BRAINWASHED CHILDREN

The first pattern to find is that there are words used in direct connection to the children that make them seem vulnerable and to appear as victims. The first word to show up is “brainwashed”. Other words that are connected to “brainwashed” are “manipulated”, “abused” and “forced” or turned to become soldiers. Some examples of this are:

“Its ranks are filled with boys who have been brainwashed [54] to burn down huts and pound newborn babies to death in wooden mortars, as if they were grinding grain.”

Many were abducted from their villages in the middle of the night by the Lord’s Resistance Army, a rebel group that turned kidnapped boys as young as 5 into soldiers and girls into sexual slaves. Many were snatched in front of their parents, and some were forced at gunpoint to beat and kill family members and neighbors.

“Yes, we have been criticized,” Mrs. Bensouda said, “but we believe that the problem of child soldiers is very, very serious. Some are turned into killers, others are used as sex slaves. It is affecting a whole generation of children who are very difficult to reintegrate into society. Fighting is often all they know. It’s a problem in many places, and we want to highlight this here.”

“Abducted from their convent school when they were 14, 15 and 16, they were brutalized, brainwashed and forced to be “wives” to rebel commanders. They crossed this road on foot many times, hiding from the Ugandan Army while their commanders scouted for villages to raid.”

“Those teenagers suffered horrors. They were assigned as wives to rebel commanders. They were beaten, tortured and taught to kill. Through brainwashing and abuse, they were made to believe that the rebel leader, a charlatan named Joseph Kony, was a disciple of God who possessed supernatural powers.”

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54 This and all following underlines are made by author
55 Gettleman (2007) p. 2
56 Holden (2007) p. 2
57 Simons (2007) p. 3
58 Thernstrom (2005) p. 1
“Exactly what happened over the last eight years Ms. Awino largely glosses over. The rebels forced her, she has said, to stone another captive to death. She tells of a beating so severe, 200 lashes, that she lost consciousness. But it is a period that she clearly wishes to forget.”  

Mr. Oyet said he was snatched one night nine years ago from his hut near Gulu and forced to march miles into the bush. The boys whose feet swelled and could no longer walk were clubbed to death — by other boys. All new recruits had to help with the killing. It was called registration.

“The Lord’s Resistance Army, a messianic rebel group, was exploring a new dimension of violence by building an army of abducted children and forcing them to burn down huts, slice off lips and pound newborn babies to death in wooden mortars, as though they were grinding grain.”

THE LOW LIVING CONDITIONS IN CAPTIVITY

The articles furthermore use the bad conditions that the children have to face, which make the children even more vulnerable. Descriptions of life in captivity are often focusing on the terrible things that the children are forced or brainwashed to do as we saw in the first extract where the children were brainwashed to burn down huts and to pound newborn babies or forced to be wives to the rebels.

To reinforce the picture of the hard life in captivity this life is in some few cases compared to life before captivity. By doing that it seems as life before and/or in the communities is much better than it was in captivity, as the following examples show:

Ms. Atyam has become a doting grandmother, winning over her daughter's two young sons. She babys Ms. Awino, as well, trying to give her some of the love she was so long denied.

“The girls hugged their friends, exchanging shy smiles. The women admired Charlotte's rustling black dress and Grace's delicate sandals, revealing feet no longer cut by underbrush. None of them said much at the reunion: in captivity, they had not been allowed to talk to one another lest they conspire. But they all stood in the gold late-afternoon light reveling in the wonder of something they never expected: to meet together in freedom.

SUMMARY

From the first patterns in our grand narrative of child soldiers, we now see that since the children are forced from their safe home into the army and then brainwashed or manipulated, they are victims and cannot do much about their situation.

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60 Lacey (2004) Oct, p3
61 Gettlman (2006) Sep, p3
64 Thernstorm (2005) p. 3-4
5.1.2. Unscrupulous adult leaders

If someone is brainwashed or manipulated, there must be someone brainwashing or manipulating. The picture of the children as brainwashed and manipulated victims, are therefore reinforced by the way in which those “brainwashing” ones are described. The children are not in the army because of own will, they have been forced to be there and they are forced to do those bad things, someone else has turned them into killers and they are too small to refuse, even if they want to. These are the unscrupulous leaders, which are most common described as cruel or spiritually crazy.

THE CRUEL LEADERS

As in the examples we saw before the leaders are often described as very brutal. In one of them, they were described as being “scouted for villages to raid”. There are more examples over description of the rebels as brutal and with brutality as their only aim, according to the following:

“Because those new rebel movements are motivated and financed by crime, popular support becomes irrelevant. Those in control don’t care about hearts and minds. They see the local population as prey.”\textsuperscript{65}

“The rebels are the Lord's Resistance Army (L.R.A.), which massacres or mutilates villagers -- cutting off their noses, ears and genitals -- and kidnaps their children, turning them into killers who then become kidnappers themselves.”\textsuperscript{66}

“Over the past few weeks, as many as 30,000 villagers have been huddling together at night for protection on the sprawling grounds of the main hospital here. They have reason to be scared: the huts of thousands of people in and around Gulu have been destroyed in recent fighting between government soldiers and some of the world's most bizarre rebels -- the Lord's Resistance Army.”\textsuperscript{65}

“Few adults wanted to join his cultish, bloodthirsty movement, and soon the only recruits were children, most against their will.”\textsuperscript{68}

“'The rebels used the children to test whether the swollen river was passable, but the children were swept away and drowned,' Lt. Gen. Jeje Odongo said. The rebels have terrorized villages by abducting children for use as sex slaves and soldiers.”\textsuperscript{69}
Those quotations are many and there are even more to be found in the articles. Together it gives us a picture over the rebels as cruel and as one of the extras tells us word by word; they “do not even care about hearts and minds” and as other article tell us they force the kidnapped children to do terrible things, like cutting off noses and lips and pound newborn babies.

THE SPIRITUALLY LEADERS

In the articles there is a lack of historical background of the establishment of the movement LRA. The articles which mentioning the background is focusing on the religious background or the leader Joseph Kony’s religious belief:

“Gulu's miseries first started about a decade ago when the rebel group began its armed struggle against the government. A quasi-religious movement that mixes Christianity with its own brand of spiritualism, the group reinforces its ranks by snatching and terrorizing children.”70

“He stands accused of brainwashing countless children across northern Uganda, turning the girls into sex slaves and the boys into prepubescent killers. His so-called Christian movement, the Lord’s Resistance Army, has terrorized this corner of Africa for nearly 20 years, killing tens of thousands of people, burning down huts and hacking off lips. The fact that Mr. Kony, whose followers believe he is a prophet, rarely appears in public has only added to his brutal mystique.”71

“He never aspired to be a politician,” said Florence Adokorach, now in her early 20’s, who was kidnapped at age 14 and forced to be one of Mr. Kony’s brides. Instead, he told his young wife, he just wanted to return to spreading God’s word.72

From about 1988 on, the rebels terrorized their own people, raping, robbing and killing across Acholiland. According to former rebels, Mr. Kony communed with spirits and his rules became stranger by the minute — anyone caught bicycling had to have his feet chopped off; all white chickens were to be destroyed; no farming on Fridays.73

“Mr. Kony comes from a family drawn to spiritual movements. A cousin, Alice Lakwena, ran a fierce rebel group, the Holy Spirit Movement, that tormented the government in the late 1980’s. The government chased her to Kenya, where she lives in a United Nations refugee camp with a small number of followers. Ms. Lakwena’s father also runs a church in Gulu, in which he takes center stage as the Holy Father.74

Mr. Kony says he is fighting to impose the Ten Commandments on Uganda. His movement began as an outlet for the Acholi people, who believed that President Museveni’s government had overlooked the country's north. Still, those grievances have been largely overshadowed by the rebels' own atrocities.

[…]

72 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 4
73 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 3
“In many armed movements, children are taught that life and death depend on spirits, which are conjured up by their commanders and distilled in oils and amulets. Magic can spur children to do unspeakable things. It also bestows otherwise lackluster leaders with a veneer of supernatural respectability. “The commanders would wear certain pearls and said that guns wouldn’t hurt us,” Mr. Beah recalled. “And we believed it.” 75

After a week’s walking, they reached Kony’s base camp in southern Sudan. (The Sudanese government harbored and armed the L.R.A. in retaliation for Uganda’s support of the Sudanese rebels.) Raised by their traditional families to obey authority, particularly religious authority, the girls said they believed Kony’s claim that he was "the Messiah -- the true Jesus Christ," as Janet recalls. They described him as a “tall, handsome” man whom the rebels called father or Lakwena, the Acholi word for one who serves the holy spirit. Kony would chant for hours, at times waking them up in the middle of the night to lead them in prayers that interwove Christian, Muslim and tribal spiritual beliefs and superstitions. Lakwena was mercurial. One day, for example, he would direct everyone at camp to stand bare-chested in the rain for four minutes; on another, they could not have sex or cook with oil from the yao tree.

The girls came to believe that Kony was their protector in a cruel, strange world rather than the creator of that world. He prophesized in ways they still insist came true, like foretelling the outcome of a particular battle with the Ugandan Army, and he protected them, they told me, by executing girls and boys they believed were witches and wizards. 76

Enter Mr. Kony, a former Catholic altar boy revered in his village near Gulu as a prophet since he was 12. He smeared himself with shea butter, said his body and those of his Acholi followers were impervious to bullets and vowed to overthrow the government.

“We saw him as our savior,” said Mary Olanya, who knew Mr. Kony growing up.

Mr. Kony claimed to be guided by the Ten Commandments but soon his army was violating each and every one. 77

The following article does not talk about LRA specifically, but about rebels in general and it mentions LRA among them.

Renamo, the South African-backed rebel army that terrorized Mozambique in the 1980s as it tried to destabilize the Marxist government, was among the first to turn to magic; it carved out a special role for witch doctors, whom the Marxists had marginalized.” 78

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76 Therstrom (2005) p. 3
77 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 2
78 Gettleman, (2007) p. 3-4
SEXUAL CONNOTATION

The other way in which Kony is described is by mentioning him surrounded by a lot of wives or brides, in some articles even called “his harem”.

“Whether it lasts depends on whether Joseph Kony, the phantom rebel commander who is said to live deep in the jungle with 60 child brides, and his top deputies are given amnesty.”

Mr. Kony — and his bodyguards and harem — fled to Congo, where, according to Ugandan military sources, they set up a slave kingdom, living off the land and slaughtering wildlife. By then, the elusive rebel army had shrunk to a shadow of a shadow, with fewer than 2,000 fighters left.

The leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, is said to have 56 wives and more than 100 children: he aims, he professes, to repopulate his tribe, the Acholis.

SUMMARY

After the second patterns we now see that the children are not only brainwashed and manipulated, they are also victims to the adult’s crimes. The rebels who abduct them are cruel, have no political motive, are spiritually obsessed or sexually madmen. Our narrative of our child soldiers has been reinforced by descriptions of her/his commanders as cruel madmen who force him/her to do terrible things. The reason the commanders forces the innocent child is because they are cruel by nature and invaded by spirits. The LRA as a group do not have any political motive; they are just some men without heart, who are upset and therefore they abduct children that should act as their slaves, either in the forces or as wives. In this way of describing the rebels, our child soldier appears even more as a victim. The child is manipulated, and even if they were not, they are not able to do something about their situation. The words that describe the children in comparison to the rebels seem many times to be opposite to each other. By putting the children and their commanders in opposition, the feeling of the brutal way in which the children are treated, grows even stronger.

79 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 1
80 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 3
81 Thernstrom (2005)
5.1.3. The new kind of warfare in other parts of the world

By taking a look into how the articles describe the phenomenon child soldiering itself, we find two common views. The two views has to do with each other; the first one is to describe the phenomenon as something that only takes place in other parts of the world and the second is to describe it as a new kind of warfare.

A “WE AND THEM” PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD SOLDIERING

“I[n] the early 1980s, in the lowlands of Mozambique, a new technology of warfare emerged that would sweep across Africa and soon the rest of the world: the child soldier.”

According, to the previously note the so called new technology was established in Africa and it seems as it was first established in Mozambique and spread from there to the rest of the continent, and later to the rest of the world. According to how the article continues, the problem seems to be deeper in Africa than in the other places:

“Today, human rights groups say, there are 300,000 child soldiers worldwide. And experts say the problem is deepening as the nature of conflict itself changes — especially in Africa. “Here, in one country after another, conflicts have morphed from idea- or cause-driven struggles to warlord-led drives whose essential goal is plunder. Because those new rebel movements are motivated and financed by crime, popular support becomes irrelevant. Those in control don’t care about hearts and minds. They see the local population as prey.”

Later in the article the text deepening the problems of child soldiering in Africa, by comparing it with other wars like the Second World War and the Iran-Iraq war and by saying that the situation in Africa is worse.

“Africa didn’t invent the modern under-age soldier. The Nazis drafted adolescents when they got desperate. So did Iran, which gave boys 12 to 16 years old plastic keys to heaven to hang around their necks as they cleared minefields during the Iran-Iraq War. Young teenagers have fought in religion-driven or nationalistic fights in Kosovo, the Palestinian territories and Afghanistan. “

“But here, in Africa, armed movements that survive on children as young as 9 have acquired a special character, nourished by breakdowns of state power or ideology. Many of these movements are about raw greed, power and brutality, with no effort to make excuses for it.”

82 Gettleman (2007) p. 1
83 Gettleman (2007) p. 1
84 Gettleman (2007) p. 2
Another article means that:

“From Colombia and Chechnya to Congo and Sierra Leone, some 300,000 child soldiers -- some as young as 10 -- are killing, raping and maiming in today's conflict zones. Press-ganged or lured by the promise of booty or revenge, many of them orphans, some not much taller than their automatic rifles, children are among the most readily brutalized participants in modern warfare.”

If the first article points at the problem of child soldiering in Africa, the second note that it at least does not belong to us. This becomes even more obviously in this next statement made after the US was accused of having youth at an age of 17 years their armies:

"It's not a question of whether the age is 15 or 18," Michael Southwick, the State Department official who led the United States delegation here, said in an interview. "The real problem is the 9- and 10-year-olds in places like Northern Uganda," where a rebel movement is fighting the government. "There should be no forced recruitment under age 18. The problem here is that there are differences between the ages for recruitment and deployment. We believe there is nothing wrong with volunteering at age 17, and deployment is part of that volunteering."

If the child soldiering takes place in other parts of the world and not here it seems as they need help from “our” aid organizations. By the articles way of describing this, the “we and them” perspective is reinforced. In this first example it seems as the “west” should be the one to stop the war.

"The West mostly ignored this war, more focused on Rwanda, Somalia, and Darfur, Sudan. But in 2005, the Ugandan government persuaded the international court to issue arrest warrants against rebel leaders, despite pleas from Acholi elders."

In the next example the reporter from the western newspaper have talked to Kony and tried to tell him that the children and women should be released:

"But I did tell him that it would benefit his cause if he made some humanitarian gestures, like releasing the women and children," Mr. Egeland said.

Moreover UN is described as having the legitimacy to do something about the situation:

“Aside from the threat of prosecution at the International Criminal Court, there is another way we can act, closer to home, to bring an end to the use of child soldiers. […]

86 Olson (2000)
87 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 3
It's important to realize that we can do our own part against this heinous war crime, which is so removed from our everyday reality, by supporting such legislation as the Child Soldier Reduction Bill.\(^{89}\)

Early next month, Ms. Bellamy will be bringing the world home to New York when the United Nations holds a special General Assembly session on children, from May 6 to May 10, to which all world leaders have been invited. It will be almost 12 years since the first and last time the organization took stock of children at a world summit. That was before a decade of nasty civil wars created hundreds of thousands of child soldiers and the AIDS epidemic orphaned millions of African and Asian children.\(^{90}\)

"By the time groups in Congo took that technique to its lowest depths in the late 1990s — some child soldiers there were instructed that eating their victims made them stronger — the world started paying attention. Advocates succeeded in placing the child soldier issue on the United Nations agenda and passing protocols that called for the age of combatants to be at least 18 (the United States and the United Kingdom are among the countries that have refused to sign)."\(^{91}\)

A memorial to child soldiers killed, wounded, missing or taken prisoner of war on several continents was announced at Unicef, the United Nations children's fund. An aluminum slab inscribed with the names of scores of children, the memorial will travel around the United States to spread awareness of the more than 300,000 children thought to be fighting in wars in 30 countries. Many are forcibly conscripted or abducted by rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and several groups in Colombia.\(^{92}\)

CHILD SOLDIERING AS A NEW PHENOMENON

Another point which can be found in the previously articles is that the phenomenon is something new and unknown; it differs from previously wars. As we have seen it is for example described as a “new technology” and as “a problem that is deepening as the nature of the conflict itself changes”. The motive of the rebels is also described as different compared to before and their methods have changed in recent days; before they had a legitimate goal, but today they fight just for the fighting sake.

When the first article at last page continues it becomes even clearer; something new and very dangerous is happening. Another comparison is here taken, which makes today’s situations even worse than during the genocide in Rwanda. The article more or less says that the rebels during the genocides in Rwanda at least were fighting for politic reasons. Later the article argues that the movements before were liberation movements but now they seem to have no motive at all.

\(^{89}\) Janet (2006) p. 1  
\(^{90}\) Crossette (2002) p. 1  
\(^{91}\) Gettleman (2007) p. 4  
\(^{92}\) Crossette (2000) p. 2
“This is a sharp change from the liberation movements of the 1970s and 1980s and the cause-driven conflicts that followed — for example, those in Zimbabwe or Eritrea. Even Rwanda’s 1994 genocide followed some familiar patterns: It remained a contest, however gruesome, for political power between two ethnic groups. And children, by and large, were the victims of atrocities by adults, rather than the other way around.”

“William Reno, a political scientist at Northwestern University who studies armed movements, said: "If you look back 30 years at how wars were fought in Africa, they were liberation movements — freeing their countries from apartheid or colonial rule. They had to plug into Soviet aid or American aid, and the superpowers wanted to see a state, a vision of the future."

Also the “new phenomenon” is explained in another article. Here it is the LRA themselves that have constructed the armies of child soldiers; the phenomenon is new and it is constructed by a rebel group in Uganda that we have seen are cruel and have no political implication.

“The Lord’s Resistance Army, a messianic rebel group, was exploring a new dimension of violence by building an army of abducted children and forcing them to burn down huts, slice off lips and pound newborn babies to death in wooden mortars, as though they were grinding grain.”

What is also interesting is what is mentioned in the 14 articles twice, namely that US has considering the LRA as terrorists. Terrorism is according to other articles from the last years something that is new and very dangerous.

“The conflict had cooled in recent years, but now Gulu has begun feeling residual effects of Washington's efforts to fight terrorism.

In December, the Bush administration included the rebels on its list of terrorist groups. The classification, which would keep members of the group out of the United States, was mostly symbolic since the rebels live an isolated existence in the African bush.”

“The 1996 raid on St. Mary's briefly brought world attention to a vicious civil war that has played out in the remote reaches of northern Uganda since the mid-1980's. But the Lord's Resistance Army, the rebel movement responsible, has continued to abduct and kill -- at a rate that American officials say makes other terrorist groups across the world seem tame.”

We now paint our picture of the LRA according to what we have heard about terrorism over the last few years and everyone has heard about it in one way or another. The newspapers’ common picture over terrorists is that they are very dangerous and that it has been shown that they are not only dangerous in the parts were they are living; they have also been shown to be dangerous for the whole world. The first extract tells us that it is just symbolic because the

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93 Gettleman (2007) p. 3
94 Gettleman (2006) Sep, p. 1
rebels cannot come to our parts of the world since they are living isolated in the bush. Still the word terrorist is something that we have heard of in a much neglected way every day since September 11, 2001. By mark the LRA as terrorists the view of the group as having no motive is maintained.

SUMMARY

It is not possible to draw any obvious conclusions from only this few articles presented in previously part, but in an analysis over language it is not only what is said that is important, it is also important to mention what is left out. The only articles to take up the kind of warfare in which child soldiering takes place are the five presented above, and we therefore build our picture according to these articles. It seems as there is no need to argue about it in the others and it is just common sense that this does not take place where the articles are written, it takes place somewhere else, far away. The grand narrative about our child soldier is now built up by the way in which the articles describes the warfare and that this kind of warfare only takes place in other parts of the world. Our child soldier therefore have to participate in wars that are crueler than ever before, which “we” (in the western countries) cannot defined ourselves with; it seems dangerous and unknown. The warfare has change since the African movements have changed from being political liberation movements to movements with no political background. They are even terrorists. The terrorists are cruel people who do not take the children’s feelings into consideration, since they do not have any feelings themselves. There is nothing for the children to do; they must do all this brutal things their leaders ask them to. Therefore it also becomes important for “us” (people in the west) who “know” that the children are vulnerable to help them.

As I stated before it is not only the worlds that are told and their meaning that is important, the untold is also important. Things that are excluded are in this case, the background to the conflict which makes LRA seem like incompetent madmen, and the children as victims to their crimes. What also is excluded from the discussion is what a child soldier really is. It seems to be of common sense to know what it is and therefore it is not necessary to discuss it.

97 Jackson (2005)
5.2. “The small narratives of child soldiers”

What I have learned about child soldiers by communicating with them, the people working with them and searching in literatures, is that it is foremost an awful, unpleasant and unwished phenomenon. I heard stories from boys who were beaten badly in captivity, if they did not follow orders. Among them was a now grown up man who showed me his scars from the time he was abducted at an age of 15 years, and beaten by a large and heavy knife called panga (or machete). I heard stories from a girl who was only 7 when she was taken away from her family, and from a female who was taken as rebel wife when she was 15 years old. Another female looked traumatised when she talked about how she at an age of 14 sometimes was beaten until she vomited blood and once almost beaten to death, because of her strong will to go home.

Just because of these awful stories, it is important to study the phenomenon not only in accordance to the grand narrative on a macro level, but to also put a micro perspective into light. In the following part I will try to give the 10 former abducted children that I interviewed a greater part in the grand narrative, by complicating the general view of children as vulnerable and easily manipulated, the leaders as unscrupulous adults, and the warfare that the children take part in as new and different from “our” warfare. What I have found important for such discussion is first that the conception of “children” differ in different environments, second that motive for fighting might be more understandable the closer you are to the war or the more you know about the situation, and third that wars have always brought children into fights, in every part of the world.

98 Interview no 1
99 Interview no 5
100 Interview no 9
101 Interview no 8
5.2.1. Child soldiers and their surrounding environment

In the first part of last section we saw that the articles of New York Times often use words direct connected to the children, to describe them as vulnerable and as easily manipulated. By taking a deeper look into the phenomenon the picture may however become more complicated than that. That is not to say that the view we got from New York Times is wrong, but that there might be underlying reasons to why the children become soldiers or to why they fight. From my interviews I understand that by complicating the conception of age, to take a deeper look into the children’s position in captivity and to try to understand the surrounding environment outside captivity or in captivity, we can better understand the micro perspective of the phenomenon of child soldiering.

THE CONCEPTION OF A CHILD SOLDIER

Rosen argues that in the western societies it is obviously that a teenager becomes adults the day he/she has reached the age of 18. This is shown in Straight 18 position, which is built upon this idea of childhood; a child soldier is defined as any person under the age of 18, who is recruited or used by any army or armed group. That is one way of differing children from adults. In many western countries you therefore attain your majority at an age of 18 years. The concept of age becomes a way to categorise and define people. The definition can however differ in different environments and it can be of more or less importance. In many countries, young people become adults at a much earlier age. According to my interviews it seems as age does not matter to the extent that it does in the “western” societies. When I arrived back from Uganda and tried to analyze my interviews I noticed for example that the ages the interviewed had given me did not match with their years in captivity, in all cases.

Rosen argues that in western societies children are in general defined as someone between infancy and youth. Connected to this is also that these persons has not yet full physical, emotional and mental minds, they need someone else who has those qualities to look after them and they are not capable to make their own choices. In the word soldier we find other

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102 Rosen (2005) p. 3
diverged qualities, like strength, aggression and responsible maturity of adulthood. They are often males and more uncommon females who are skilled fighters who take part in wars. Because of these two diverged conceptions of what a child is and what a soldier is, the words put together confuse “us”. A child is innocent and needs protection and a soldier is strong and aggressive and fights in wars. Wars are evil and should be ended.

The diverged views of this became clear when my interviewed were asked what they knew about child soldiers/child soldiering. One of the first thing I came to understand about child soldiers of northern Uganda was thus that in their own environment, they are almost never called child soldiers or even former child soldiers. There they are former abducted children (FAC) and not former child soldiers. The word child soldiers were only used by the organizations working with them, not when they were talking to the FAC themselves, but sometimes when they talked to me. The word child soldier seemed to be a neglected word; to call someone a former child soldier was not seen as good behaviour.

Most of my interviewed had not heard the English version of the word which made the interview more complicated but also the answers more interesting. After my translator had explained the word to the interviewed they could connect it to words in their local language; Kagero – described as another word for child soldier, with the majority of them 14 years or below, Kurut – children in the army under the age of 18, Kadago – someone in the bush under the age of 18.

The former ex-combatant, now 25 years old, says that he did not know that he was a child soldier when he was in captivity. He was abducted when he was 15 years old, but came to know about child soldiering first after he had passed the age of 18. According to the translator he also tells me that he felt a strong responsibility as a leader, even if he was very young. For example he says that he never thought of escaping and that he did not escape because of his responsibility as a leader, but after being hurt in a fight he had to surrender. He also says that

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104 Honwana (2006) p. 3
105 Rosen (2005) p. 3
106 Rosen (2005) p. 1
107 Personal communication 1
108 Interview no 6
109 Interview no 8
110 Interview no 4
he was not afraid during time in captivity, if it was the will of God that he was there, he would go for it.  

Another boy told me that he did not know at all that he was a child soldier, since he was too young while in captivity (11-12 years old). Another now 14 years old boy, who stayed in captivity for one month in 2002, says that first time he heard about child soldiers was when my translator and I introduced it to him. A now 13-years old girl, who was with the rebels for only a week when she was 7 years old, says that she still does not know anything about child soldiers. The woman who was almost beaten to death in captivity says that she was not a child soldier, she was in captivity. Another woman was very confused of what a child soldier is, but after explaining the common picture, she says that children in captivity in the ages of 12 and 13 was seen as child soldiers, but there was not any differences between them and the adult fighters, they were all strong fighters.

Only one of the interviewed, a man now 24 years old, abducted when he was 13 years old, says that he knew what a child soldier was already in captivity. He says that he knew from his friends from the first day in the field that he himself was a child soldier. A child soldier for him is someone 12-15 years old carrying chairs for their commanders.

CHILDREN IN CAPTIVITY

My understanding was before, according to the information that is sent to us through media, that all boy child soldiers are forced to fight. The view that we get from the articles and pictures in New York Times is that all the boys defined as child soldiers wear weapons and therefore participating in armed conflicts and are forced to kill. My interviews told me something different. All children in the LRA do not wear guns and all children either they wear guns or not are not forced to fight. The children work sometimes as carrier of guns for their leaders and the fighters, but that does not necessarily means that they are fighting and killing.

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111 Interview no 1
112 Interview no 2
113 Interview no 3
114 Interview no 5
115 Interview no 8
116 Interview no 9
117 Interview no 10
Two of the persons I interviewed had participated in LRA’s forces as real soldiers at an age below 18. Both were boys. The girls all told me that they were not fighting, but one of them had seen that there were girls fighting. That means the 3 other boys had been in the bush for other reasons. One of them told me that he did wear a gun, but the gun was someone else’s, and therefore he was not fighting. The other two simply told me that they did not fight.

The reason to why these three boys had been taken by the LRA to the bush is not clear from my interviews, but it might be because that they were supposed to be raised to become fighters as adults. The conception adult does here not mean over 18, but when they are mature enough to fight. As all my interviewed told me; to become a leader you have to be brave and go to abduct many children and to loot.

LIFE BEFORE CAPTIVITY

In New York Times we saw that a few articles compared the hard life in captivity with the good life before captivity. I once again want to point at the fact that neither the grand narrative nor the small narratives could actually mean that life in captivity could be better than life before captivity. My interviews also reinforced the view of the hard life in captivity, but I also came to a deeper understanding of how life could look like for children in wars. As my interviews said, there was already war when the children were abducted and the war had caused many struggles for them already.

Some of interviewed were too small to remember how life was before they were abducted and some of them stayed for very little time, but those who could say something about life before told me that there was already war so life was not good or that they had lost one or two parents. The others told me that all they remembered was that they were in school. Of the two persons that had lost one or both parents one had lost his father in a military coup one year before abduction. The other person had lost both her parents, was the oldest among the brothers and sisters and therefore had to take care of the family. She could no longer go in

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118 Interview no 2
119 Interview no 3 and Interview no 4
120 Interview 1-10
121 Interview no 4
122 Interview no 1 and Interview no 8
123 Interview no 1
school; instead she had to earn some money for the younger and she had started some small farming, at the time of abduction.\textsuperscript{124} This is what war and poverty do to children and I could see with my own eyes that life after the war is not easy for people, just to imagine how life for the people was during the war. Still people in northern Uganda are struggling to get food and to be able to have their children in school.

One of the questions during the interviews was: what do you think is the causes of child recruitment? LRA has come to be known as abductors and not recruiters of children. Whether recruiters or not all the interviewed seem to have their understanding of the causes of recruitment of children; and all the answers were again connected to the war. The former combatant says that he things that poverty or mistreatment at home can be causes of child recruitment. Another factor, according to him, can be that friends have left for the army before or that children drop out of school and/or need to earn money.\textsuperscript{125} Many of my interviewed pointed at school drops,\textsuperscript{126} mistreatment at home or the disrespect of children’s rights by parents, which make children, want to go from home,\textsuperscript{127} and/or that their parents push them to go to earn money.\textsuperscript{128}

As we can see life in the communities during wartime is also very difficult for people and for children who might have lost their parents and/or are too poor to go to school. As Rosen argues; where there are wars, there are also most likely child soldiers. This is also well described by one of the interviewed who says that child soldiering is another way for children to survive.\textsuperscript{129}

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\textsuperscript{124} Interview no 8  \\
\textsuperscript{125} Interview no 1  \\
\textsuperscript{126} Interview no 6, Interview no 7  \\
\textsuperscript{127} Interview no 2, Interview no 7, Interview no 6  \\
\textsuperscript{128} Interview no 3, Interview no 7, Interview no 10  \\
\textsuperscript{129} Interview no 7
\end{flushleft}
SUMMARY

What I have learned is the importance of each case of child soldiering, that the phenomenon not only differs in every country, but also in every individual case; there is no single truth of children in captivity or their surrounding environment. “Childhood” as well as “youth” are concepts that might vary in different environments. It is often taken for granted in “western” societies that a young person becomes an adult at an age of 18. By putting our concept of children in an environment where age does not matters so much and where people sometimes does not knew their ages we miss underlying reasons to the causes of child soldiering. By complicating the conception of a child and furthermore a child soldier in a case study, the patterns from New York Times can also be challenged by the individual cases of child soldiers, where all children does not fight and kill and where we can get a explanations of the phenomenon of child soldiering by a search in the surrounding environment. In northern Uganda it should for example not be taken for granted that life before captivity is easy; life for children in wars cannot be easy either in the army or in the community.

5.2.2. The men of LRA

According to the newspapers the men of LRA seem to be very cruel, and force the children to do things they do not want to do. They are often described as the opposite to how we describe “ourselves”: they are irrational, uncivilized and brutal. From what we have seen in the New York Times the LRA have no hearts and no political motive. Nevertheless some of the interviews told me something else about this; all leaders are not always cruel in all cases, and there seem to be some kind of motive for fighting.
THE LEADERS

One boy told me that the rebels did not mistreated the young, another said that he was lucky, he was not mistreated, a third that he only had to carry heavy luggage. One of the women told me that women in captivity were not mistreated, but she had to carry heavy luggage. One of the girls, the now 15 years old said nothing about mistreatment, but that also she had to carry heavy luggage. This leads us to the question of what mistreatment really is. First, it might be true that these 4 people were not mistreated according to what they see as mistreatment. Second, we also know that books and the articles from New York Times tell us about how rebels are mistreating their abducted; men and women as well as children. Also the other 6 interviews told me that the LRA are mistreating their abducted both physical and mental; for example a boy beaten during abduction, the former combatant beaten with the panga, the women almost beaten to death, a girl beaten (not more than 7 years by then) and a now grown up female who also were beaten during abduction, all declare themselves as mistreated.

What we can find from this is that there are cases where children do not defined themselves as mistreated. “We” seem also to have a lower level of what mistreatment is. What I try to argue is that by saying that all the rebels are batterers without hearts, we make them inhuman and we cannot talk to them since they should never understand. One of the girls does even call one of the leaders a good leader, after he dropped her abounded along the road, since her legs were swollen. She is says that he could have killed her instead.
A MOTIVE FOR FIGHTING

When asking the FAC if they knew what they (themselves and/or LRA) were fighting for, all but one could tell me something. The ex-combatant for example told me that he was aware he was fighting in a war in an army for the rebels, and that he was against the ruling government (Museveni). A boy told me that even though he was not fighting, he knew they (the LRA) were fighting because they wanted the president to be an Acholi. A third boy said that he did not fight but he knew they were fighting for their land, they were afraid that people from the west were coming to take their land. They fought against the ruling government (Museveni) and for the Acholi people. One of the girls said that she was not sure but she thinks that they were struggling for power. Another female says that she does not know for sure but that she thinks they wanted to overthrow the government. A man says that they were fighting against the government and for Kony. A last female says that Kony himself taught them why to fight, when she was in captivity in southern Sudan. They had so called evening sits where Kony told them that they fought against the government and to take over power themselves. This is of course a sign of the manipulation that the articles of New York Times tell us about. The rebellions uses this evening sits to tell the children at an early age about what is wrong and right and it may seem natural that they describe their fighting motive positively. Moreover either the children being manipulated or not, there seem to be a motive for fighting. Accordingly, the ex-combatant seems to not feel as a victim, he knew his task as a leader and he took his responsibility as an adult. As one of the females says, the 12 and 13 years old were as strong fighters as the adults.

However there are also answers that reinforce the pictures of leaders cruel. A female for example says that she thinks they were fighting against the government and that even if they said they were fighting for civilians, they were killing innocent people.

140 Interview no 1
141 Interview no 2
142 Interview no 3
143 Interview no 7
144 Interview no 10
145 Interview no 9
146 Interview no 9
147 Interview no 8
SUMMARY

The common way found in the interviews can now be questioned. My interview answers complicate the common view of why the rebels are in the bush abducting children. It seems like the only reason is not because they are spiritual madmen with no political understandings. For most of “us” (e.g. people in the western societies) it is very uncommon to practice our religion in this way. Therefore we are reproducing a different view of what “they” do and what “they” are according to their religions. What also is interesting is that children in these societies are often raised with some kind of beliefs, but the children are not described by the newspapers according to their beliefs, but according to their vulnerability to it. That makes the rebels not only different from “us”, but also from the children they are manipulating. It also reinforces the view that the children need of protection from “us”.

The rebels’ religion is also said, according to the newspapers, to have no connection at all to politics, the rebels seem not to be the only ones, including religions into politics. Religion or at least beliefs are not two separated things in many societies around the world. The reason for the fighting that the FAC gives in the interviews sounds political, and not very different from the reasons of a freedom movement. That does not mean that neither the FAC nor me think the fighting is good, but it tells us that there are political motive or at least a motive for fighting, which is often forgotten in the western newspapers.

5.2.3. Conclusions – Children in wars

From what I have seen, heard and read I have understood that the phenomenon of child soldiering is much more complex and complicated than what a first scratch often gives. We are only able to put the phenomenon into our own context of what children are and what soldiers are. That means we most see the contexts in which the children are living their everyday life, in each and every case. 10 interviews seem to be enough to together with literatures that differ from the general view, questioning what we might think a child soldier is, and to complicate the general picture of child soldiering. Even if the interview questions asked did not touch the warfare topic specifically we can however also draw some conclusions in this topic from the interviews.
We have among other things seen that the former abducted children could see some motives for the LRA’s fighting. Even if we cannot understand LRA’s motive, there is a motive and this motive is understandable, true and important for them; they feel excluded and are struggling for power. Their motives thus seem to be similar to the motives of a former liberation movement. By instead focusing on LRA’s religion and their cruelty which might be true as well, we forget to listen to their true motives.

As we saw in the articles of New York Times the child soldiering is described as a new phenomenon. It seem like the “new wars” has created the child soldiers. The common view is according to Rosen that old wars called traditional wars were “self-limiting” and “rule-bund” and that new modern wars are “aimless, formless, and without real political purpose.”

Rosen goes against this view when he says that all wars either they are new or not, are messy. Honwana adds moreover that were there are child soldiers there are most likely a war. Together with Rosen’s theory that wars has always made children to participate in armed forces, we will find that the phenomenon is not very strange. As he says there have always been children in wars. Rosen’s case study of children participating in the Palestinian conflict has shown that children have for long participated in the front line because of political and organized reasons. If we put it in this way it seems more likely that the phenomenon of child soldiers has always been there, but has not been on the agenda before we created it, by our humanitarian view of what a child is.

Also from the interviews in Uganda we could conclude that life during wartime is hard for children whether they are in the armies or not. Wars make people unsecured and often poor; it leaves children out of education and with malnutrition. Participating in the armed forces (abducted or recruited) becomes another way to survive during wartime.

149 Rosen (2005) p. 11
150 Honwana (2006) Chapter 1
6. Discussion

This paper has made me to come to a deeper understanding of child soldiering and I have tried to show that the problem is much deeper than what we at a first glance think. From what I have seen there is a deeper meaning to the phenomenon which can be explained by the different surrounding environment; that means that what we hear and see in our everyday life create what we consider as normal. The aim of this chapter is first to get brief overview of what I have found in accordance to my questions at issue. I will try to connect them with the used literatures that have established my theoretical framework. The second part consists of a discussion of the relevance of such research, its limitations and what could be interesting and/or important for further studies.

6.1. The conception of child soldiers and child soldiering

This part is divided by the question at issue and I will therefore repeat the questions one by one and after that analyse what answers I might have found and discuss what issues this might lead to.

1. What is the dominating image of a child soldier?
   - How do child soldiers define themselves?
   - How do there definition differ from the dominating definition?

The common view or the grand narrative’s way of describing child soldiers is that they are children under the age of 18. In the newspaper they are often described as much younger, around 10 and they are all too young to make their own decisions. This leads us to think that they have been manipulated, brainwashed or forced to participate in the wars or to live in these bad conditions. The rebels, the LRA, have kidnapped the children; the boys to use them as fighters and the girls to use them as sex slaves. This view builds up “the grand narrative” about child soldier.

However, by the interviews made I have also found other narratives about child soldiers. These are in some ways not different from “the grand narratives”, but by trying to see each
case I found a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Among other things I have found that the conception of age is not as important in Uganda that it is here in “the western societies”; some of the Former Abducted Children (FAC) does not even know their ages and also it seems as they are seen as adult before they turn to 18. This all mean that the word child soldier becomes something different to what it is to us. At the age of 18 people become adult in our societies, but in Uganda people become adults earlier. That’s why the word “Kagero” (another word for child soldier in the local language Lou) is connected to children under the age of 14 and not under the age of 18 and also that the children in the age of 12 and 13, according to one of the interviewed, are seen as child soldiers. The children I interviewed have all been abducted, but nevertheless they all have a clue of why they were there in the bush and why the leaders were fighting. Moreover all boys were not fighting in the wars; it seemed like they had to be mature enough or that the leaders have to trust them enough, to let them fight. When they were not they could instead be used as for example carriers of guns. The point is that it (to fight or not) is not divided after age.

2. What is the dominating image of the surrounding environment where the child soldiering occurs?

- How do people living in such a milieu themselves describe the surrounding environment?

- How does this view differ from the dominating view?

It seems as the common view of children in captivity, is that it is much worse than at home and worse than life before captivity, and that the leaders very commonly uses violence on the children. The children do not want to participate in the spiritual rituals that the leaders practice. The leaders are not only spiritual possessed but also very cruel. They act even like “terrorists” and have no political motives and they do not care about anyone else.

However, the small narrative” in accordance to Rosen and Honwana tell us a deeper story; where there are wars there are also children fighting in these wars and that is how it always has been. The fighting gives the children another opportunity to the life in the communities. Since the children in of northern Uganda most likely are abducted they could not be compared to children who go for recruitments themselves for money. However, for children that grew up in northern parts of Uganda during the war there were (and still are today after the war)
difficulties to face: paying school fees, taking care of family members, and to stay in good health are only some of the struggles. In warfare child soldiering might become another way to live to survive, as one of the interview also argued.

Moreover, if we look at the background to the rebel group LRA we find that they are not only spiritual madmen without hearts and minds and without political motives. There was and is a reason for frustration from exclusion in the northern parts of Uganda. By only focusing on LRA’s meanness (which of course could not be left out) we tend to not see underlying reasons for fighting, which imply that the conflict cannot be solved. War must be a reason for the recruitment or abduction of children, which means that the issue of child soldiering will not be solved as long as there is a war.

The post structural approach, used by both Jackson and Andersson, of how the language constructs our societies, can be applied on child soldiering. Jackson’s discourse analysis have helped us to understand how the common pictures are built up by only writing about the most extreme cases and leave out background and other detailed information. In this way the articles seems to choose only the most extreme cases and therefore we do not come to a deeper understanding by only listening to “the grand narrative”.

According to Rosen’s humanitarian case, we have also seen that in the grand narrative children are described as vulnerable and that the unscrupulous adults manipulate them to become child soldiers and that the war they are participating in are different and worse than the wars before. We can in this way see that the grand narrative constructed in the western world overwhelms the small narratives told by people living in the societies were the phenomenon is taking place.
6.2. Relevance and further studies

In this part I will discuss if the study is relevant in another context and what more can be defined as important to study to better understand the phenomenon of child soldering. There are certain things that I have found important to discuss to try to come to a solution with children participating in wars.

The whole situation that the small narratives do not fit with the grand narrative leads us to a situation where UN convey one message of the phenomenon according to what “we” think a child is. Therefore UN writes that states should forbid children under the age of 18 to participating in armed conflicts. In the societies in which this later is applied it is not as simple as that; the child her/himself does not feel like a child and the persons surrounding him/her do not look upon him/her as a child. This is important because if the child is not as vulnerable as we think, he/she will not understand why he/she will not go to the armies where profits (like shelter, food and/or money) are offered.

Moreover, since the children are very vulnerable, according to our conceptions it make the abductor very cruel. If they have had a heart they should not have done this to the children. If we instead see the rebels as humans that are fighting for their rights that they have long been excluded from the view will be different. Even if they have hurt their own people more than helped them we must at least try to understand that they believe in what they do and that they do it because they think that it is the right way. If we had tried to understand their underlying reasons that would had made it easier to start a discussion with them.

Finally I would like to suggest that more research should be focused within this field area to both help the natives to give a nuanced picture of the situation, but also to let people in “west” to better understand the situation and the phenomenon.

Another theory that I have met with during my research is the rational choice theory, which is more applicable on recruited children than on abducted children. All the former abducted children in Uganda seemed however to know something about recruitment of children, according to my interviews. Before we start the discuss it is however necessary to mention that LRA is today known as abductors of children and not recruiters. There is thus an important difference between recruitment and abduction. In Uganda the government has
recruited children under the age of 18 until recently. Nowadays it is uncommon. Anyway it is the recruited children in Uganda and in other countries that need further discussions.

When asking the question of what the former abducted children think are causing child recruitment, all of them answered things that can be connected to poverty or war; children are living without their parents or relatives do not want them\textsuperscript{151}, because of too much war and lost of manpower in the armies,\textsuperscript{152} because parents want them to go and earn something for them,\textsuperscript{153} school drops,\textsuperscript{154} (children cannot pay their fees and uniforms) or that children do not have any income.\textsuperscript{155}

In Conteh-Morgan’s (2004) description of rational choice theory there is an analysis over a case study from children recruited to armies in Sierra Leone. He means that in the cases were the children are not threatening by their lives, we can relate child soldiering to the rational choice theory. First he argues, there are the cases in which children are raised to join the venture. For example, sometimes the first thing for the children to do is to kill their own families. In this way the children are growing with their task (and also of course they have nothing return to.) Second, they go because of the profit offered. They are promised something if they go, sometimes they get some earnings and sometimes they are just cheated. They also say that those economic factors is often socioeconomic, sometimes they go instead of stay hungry or starve, sometimes they go because their parents push them to go\textsuperscript{156} (as our interviewed also mentioned).

Accordingly this means that the children make a rational choice when they go for recruitment. The war is an everyday life for the children, either they are in the army or not. To choose between starvation and the army usually ends with the army. Therefore the parents sometimes support and even push their children to go. As Rosen mentions, the safest place in a war is often in the army.\textsuperscript{157} This study was not supposed to focus on the rational choice perspective on child soldiers, but it is however important to mention that studies have been made in the topic, and that it could be included in further studies.

\textsuperscript{151} Interview 2
\textsuperscript{152} Interview no 3, Interview no 4, interview no 7
\textsuperscript{153} Interview no 4, interview no 6, interview no 7, interview no 10
\textsuperscript{154} Interview no 6
\textsuperscript{155} Interview no 10
\textsuperscript{156} Coneth, Morgan (2004) p. 105-109
\textsuperscript{157} Rosen (2001) Chapter 1
To summarise, my study shows the importance of questioning common views over phenomenon that we can read about in our everyday lives in “west”. It shows how important it is to not only use the dominating view of a phenomenon such as child soldiering. If you want to understand it fully you need to look at it at a micro perspective and to have many angels in mind when analysing it. How you look upon it depends on your own experiences and background; for people that are not directly involved in the phenomenon it might look very different from the views people actually involved might have. In the work towards reduction of children in wars the micro perspective must be taken into consideration. It is not possible to understand a phenomenon, if you not let the small individual narratives told by the people that is direct involved, penetrate in the grand dominating narrative.
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Interviews

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158 FAC = former abducted child
159 CM = child mother, female given birth to a child before the age of 18
160 FCM = former child mother, female given birth to child while in captivity
161 FF = former fighter
Appendix 1 - Interview guide

The following questions were made to the ten former abducted children at their homes in the camps. They were told that they could feel free in their answers and to add and talk about what they felt important. The interviewing team consisted of me, and James the officer of child protection of CPA. The interviews were made in Lou and the answers were translated to me. The interview questions are not strict, which means that we tried to ask what was best in the different situations. The questions are in that way only a guide to the questions that I needed to find answer to, to be able to later make a deeper analysis.

How was your life before abduction?
How did you get abducted?
How old were you by then?
For how long did you stay in captivity?
How did the leaders treat you while in captivity?
Did you have many friends in captivity?
Were the leaders children or adults?
How did they become leaders?
Did you want to become a leader, yourself?
If fighting, did you know what you were fighting for?
What you were fighting against?
Who you were fighting for?
Did you know that you were fighting in a war?
What do you know about child soldiering/child soldiers?

Had you heard about it before?

Did you know that you were a child soldier yourself?

What do you think about it today?

What do you think is the causes of child recruitment?

How can these problems be solved?

How did you leave the rebels and when was it?

Did you wanted to escape before that?

Where you sure of where to go afterwards?

What is the attitude towards former abducted children in the community?

What are the problems/challengers that you are facing now?

What are you hoping to do in the future?
Appendix 2 - Maps over Uganda

Map over Uganda’s districts

From

Map over Acholiland

From

http://images.google.se/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6a/Acholiland_Uganda.png/487px-Acholiland_Uganda.png&imgrefurl=http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Acholiland_Uganda.png&h=600&w=487&sz=128&hl=sv&start=2&um=1&tbnid=4g4UY5zM3t_0M:&tbnh=135&tbnw=110&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dacholiland%2B%26svnum%3D10%26um%3D1%26hl%3Dsv%26sa%3DN

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