

Acholi Indigenous Methods for Healing and Re-integrating Survivors of Violent Conflict into the Community: A Case of Gulu and Kitgum, Northern Uganda

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A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College Campus, South Africa.

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Supervisor:

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DECLARATION

I, Josephine Adibo (Student Number: 211559854), do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree award in any other University. Where I have used the work, ideas and texts of others in support of my work, I have duly acknowledged them. I, solely therefore, remain responsible for the contents of this dissertation. The dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Psychology in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College Of Humanities, University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College Campus, South Africa.

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DEDICATION

To all the Acholi survivors of violent conflict.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AIDS	:Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
CBOs	:Community Based Organizations
HIV	:Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
HSMF	:Holy Spirit Mobile Forces
ICC	:International Criminal Court
Isis-WICCE	:Women International Cross Cultural Exchange
JRP	:Justice and Reconciliation Project
LRA	:Lord's Resistance Army
NRM	:National Resistance Movement
UNLA	:Uganda National Liberation Army

ABSTRACT

This study explored Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community in Gulu and Kitgum, Northern Uganda. The healing mechanisms of Acholi indigenous healing and reintegration methods have not previously been documented. This study sought to describe how survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda experienced these methods. The study also sought to identify the specific problems for which these methods were prescribed, the ritual processes as experienced by the participants, and their perceived healing mechanisms. A qualitative research paradigm was used. Fifty (50) participants were selected using purposive sampling. Male and female survivors of violent conflict comprised the sample. Elders, who officiated in these rituals, were also interviewed. Data, in the form of interview narratives, was analysed using Voice-Centered Relational (VCR) method. The findings indicated that the healing rituals were performed in various specific sequences dependent on the nature of the atrocities committed. The most commonly used rituals were *nyonotongweno*, *culukwor* and *matoput*, in that order. The rituals were performed for a range of reasons, incorporating cleansing and protection of the survivors, their families, as well as the communities into which they were returning, from the bad spirits of the deceased that were never appeased. The rituals healed through spirituality— an appeal to a force greater than humanity — the presence and participation of the community, compensation of the aggrieved clan, and open forgiveness. The place of healing, as well as the healing of the spaces where the violence took place, attest to the holistic, as opposed to the individualistic, orientation of western versus indigenous methods. The contaminating effects of the violence extend beyond individuals and the community to the environment itself, hence the need to heal spaces where violence occurred. Most participants perceived the rituals in positive terms. Influences of religion and globalisation were noted amongst those that perceived the rituals in negative terms. The fact that women who were sexually violated during the conflict were unable to resume a conjugal relationship with their spouses, even after the rituals, points to the profound influence of gender. This calls for further investigation into the effectiveness of healing rituals in cases where sexual violence against women is involved.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Psychology has long ignored culture as a source of influence on human behavior and still takes little account of theories or data from other than Euro-American cultures” (Spring,2001: 4).

This study sought to explore Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community in order to bring about individual and communal harmony. The study is located in Gulu and Kitgum districts of northern Uganda. The benefits of indigenous Acholi rehabilitation methods are explored from the perspectives of survivors of violent conflict who have participated in indigenous healing rituals, the elders who have performed the process of healing, and the local community members. It was envisaged that a thorough understanding of the survivors’ culture and the indigenous methods that underpin their existence, will provide social workers and psychological counselors in northern Uganda with a more holistic and contextual understanding of their clients. More importantly, it is anticipated that the study will benefit the community, the elders and the survivors of violent conflict for the continuity of Acholi culture.

This chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose, specific objectives and research questions, the justification of the study, and a synopsis of the methodology that was adopted. The study delimitations, definition of concepts and key terms and the outline of the thesis are also covered in this chapter.

1.1 Background to the Research

The Acholi people of Gulu and Kitgum districts in northern Uganda experienced armed conflict for more than two decades (Pakiam, 2004). According to Kibwanga (2009), this war against the National Resistance Movement (NRM) of President Museveni took place in three phases. The first phase, by the ousted Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), took place from 1986 to 1988. The second phase, by the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), spearheaded by Alice Lakwena, started in 1987 and lasted till 1991, while the third phase saw the formation of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) under the leadership of Joseph Kony that lasted from 1991 to 2006 (Kibwanga, 2009).

Throughout the above-mentioned periods, the local people were subjected to a great deal of suffering that included forceful conscription into the armed struggle, displacement from their homes and communities, torture and physical disfigurement, loss of relatives, cannibalism, and sexual abuse (Aduo & Omona, 2013; Dolan, 2005; Green, 2008; Finnstrom, 2008; Mazurana & Carlson, 2006; Tom, 2006). Other indignities included extreme humiliation especially for women and girls in the form of numerous marital break-ups, forced early marriages, multiple and homosexual rapes, unwanted pregnancies and infection with sexually-transmitted disease such as HIV/AIDS. Women household heads, particularly widows and single mothers, were most negatively affected by the war (Isis-WICCE, 2001). About 50% of the women who were forced into relationships with the combatants gave birth to children from these relationships (Annan, Blattman & Horton, 2006); nearly all formerly-forced wives are currently not living with their captor husbands and do not wish to be reunited with them (Ainebyona, 2011). Forced wives and forced mothers in the LRA report higher levels of distress than their abducted peers (Ainebyona, 2011; Annan et al., 2008). This has resulted in psychological and social problems such as trauma and hatred towards those who inflicted the suffering. Most of these women find themselves living a life of self-denial (Kibwanga, 2009; Mazurana & Carlson, 2006).

Among the psychological problems reported by the Acholi survivors that required healing were *two tam*, *kumu*, and *par* (local depression-like syndromes), *ma lwor* (an anxiety-like syndrome), and *kwomaraco* (a combination of socially unacceptable behaviors such as fighting, using bad language, being disrespectful, deceitful, rough and disobedient) (Bolton, Bass, Betancourt, Speelman, Onyango, Clougherty, Neugebauer, Murray & Verdeli, 2007). In many cultures, fighting or quarrelling is regarded as detrimental to the expected ritual conditions of the village. In other words, a social dispute is deemed dangerous because it threatens the social harmony of the group (Nolte-Schamm, 2006). The survivors also face social problems such as failure to reconcile with their ancestors and their communities (Kibwanga, 2009; Mazurana & Carlson, 2006; Mazurana & McKay, 2003; Vinck, Pham, Stover & Weinstein, 2007) and social isolation. The latter applies in particular to women who were raped and as a result are considered by the Acholi community to be ‘polluted’ and unfit for marriage. While displaced from their villages and living in the bush, most women were

subjected to multiple rapes by several soldiers who considered them to be sexually desirable since they were viewed as virgins (Ainebyona, 2011). Upon their return to their communities these women were considered by the Acholi community to be polluted (Ainebyona, 2011; JRP, 2012). The current study sought, amongst others, to document the lived experiences of these women and other abductees upon their return to the community, with particular reference to the use of Acholi indigenous practices to rehabilitate and reintegrate these survivors of violent conflict.

In an attempt to help people overcome their suffering, the government of Uganda, with the support of international non-governmental organisations, embarked on non-indigenous (non-local) counseling and reconciliation mechanisms with the aim of healing the war-affected people both psychologically and socially (Rose & Ssekandi, 2007; Pham, Vinck, Stover, Moss, Wierda & Bailey, 2007). Although both indigenous and non-indigenous counseling and reconciliation mechanisms were used, emphasis was placed on the non-indigenous (Western-based counseling) mechanisms because they had the wider financial and moral support of the international community (Phamet et al., 2007). However, these non-indigenous counseling and reconciliation methods have been criticised for being culturally alienating and failing to yield the desired transformative effect (Quinn, 2006a; Verdeli, Clougherty, Onyango, Lewandowski, Speelman, Betancourt, Neugebauer, Stein & Bolton, 2008). This is primarily due to the fact that non-indigenous counseling approaches focus heavily on the individual and self-orientation in isolation of the community (Earley & Gibson, 1998). This individual focus is contrary to the African view of justice, which is aimed at “the healing of breaches, redressing of imbalances, and restoration of broken relationships in the entire affected community” (Huyse, 2008: 5). Furthermore, certain organisations, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), approach justice in a retributive and punitive manner, focusing on the offender and leaving survivors peripheral to the process (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008). These short-comings of non-indigenous counseling and reconciliation mechanisms applied in northern Uganda appear to render the counseling and reconstruction process inadequate in addressing psychological and social issues that arise from conflict in localised non-Western settings.

In northern Uganda, primarily non-indigenous (Western) counseling and reconciliation mechanisms have been implemented to alleviate the survivors' psychological challenges without due consideration of the survivors' cultural beliefs (Pham, Vinck, Stover, Moss, Wierda & Bailey, 2007). Findings by Bilotta (2011) suggest that Western therapeutic practices such as Christian-based counselling and 'talk therapy' are given precedence over 'traditional' ways in which the Acholi culture has collectively 'healed' from war. What has been ignored in the process is that Western therapeutic practices are themselves culturally loaded and in most instances alien to the African indigenous population (Quinn, 2006a; Verdelli et al., 2008). This view is supported by Summerfield (2004, p. 4) who posits that "the very idea of Western talk therapy or counseling, with its focus on detached introspection, is alien in most non-Western cultures." In the Christian worldview, confession is one of the therapeutic processes available to traumatised survivors. For example, people who are psychologically disturbed will go to a priest/pastor and confess their sins and they will feel 'lighter' (McLeod, 2007).

Historically, the use of indigenous ritual practices has not been limited to African communities. In 18th Century Europe, such practices were employed with the psychologically sick/lunatics in asylums. Prince (1989) observed that 'primitive' cultures employ healing rituals, which rely on trance states or altered states of consciousness. The appearance of hypnosis in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and their transformation into psychotherapy represents an assimilation of a transitional cultural form into a modern scientific psychotherapy. This led to the use of the 'talking cure' by Sigmund Freud, who later developed it into psychoanalytic theory.

Bowman (1991) and Smith, Spillane & Annus (2008) point out in a research study among respondents of people of colour in America who are of African descent, that traditional Western researchers often do not acknowledge the community system; instead, they tend to focus on the individual in isolation from his or her context. The above-mentioned authors also highlight the role of racism and oppression in the study of the African population. Societal-wide factors such as racism and oppression are not taken into consideration in individualistic, insight-oriented psychotherapies. Oulanova and Moodley (2010) support this;

they posit that some indigenous students in Canada often face challenges in pursuing their counseling psychology degrees in a Western post-secondary setting, because of the dominance of Western theory in the counseling psychology curriculum. Indigenous communities often receive minimal support from the rest of the staff and the lack of cultural awareness propounds the problem. One of the participants in the study had the following to say about her training in psychology:

It was definitely lonely. There were a lot of times when I felt like just giving up and walking away because of the colonial mentality of counseling psychology and a lot of the lack of acceptance and racism that I experienced within post secondary education (Oulanova & Moodley, 2010, p. 353)

It is for reasons such as the above, namely training programmes that are at variance with the needs and experiences of their students, that indigenous knowledge systems and the 'communality' that underpins African people's existence, needs to be explored further. If survivors of violent conflict in these and similar areas are to be helped in culturally-congruent and meaningful ways, there must be a deliberate effort to document the therapeutic/healing mechanisms inherent in indigenous counseling and reintegration practices. According to According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010), the term 'indigenous' pertains to what naturally originates or occurs in a particular place. Hence, counselling methods that originated or occur in the West, that is, Europe and North America are indigenous to the West. Similarly, counselling practices that originated or occur in Africa are indigenous to the continent. Therefore, importing wholesale Euro- American counselling practices to be used in African settings, while ignoring healing/ counselling practices that originate from the continent, does not constitute holistic healing. Myers and Speight (2010) note that more work needs to be done to encourage cultural pluralism within higher education institutions, in order that scholars who are interested in pursuing African psychology are not met with resistance and marginalisation. Myers and Speight (2010) encourage African-centered psychologists to be fearless in their efforts to invent, revamp and revitalise in order to create new systems for the mental health needs of the people of African descent.

It is only then, once African-centered paradigms of healing have been fully articulated in terms of their philosophies and processes, that the relationship between indigenous African and Western counseling practices can be meaningfully considered (Tomoeda & Bayles,

2002). It is important that indigenous healing practices are visible in the academy and can be articulated with reference to their own philosophies. Oulanova and Moodley (2010) observe that even though a number of Canadian mental health professionals do routinely integrate Aboriginal healing practices into their counseling, their work has received little academic attention and their efforts have not been documented, apart from general recommendations in favour of such efforts. The same could be said of indigenous healing in the African context. It is thus imperative that Acholi methods for healing and reintegration are well-documented and a dedicated space sought for their utilisation. To this end there has been an attempt by certain non-governmental organisations to work with their clients in more contextualised ways to some extent. Among these are organisations such as Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO) and World Vision.

GUSCO and World Vision embrace an intervention model that provides culturally-sensitive, cross-cultural post conflict intervention called Culturally Aligned Mental Health Assistance Criteria Assessment (CAMHACA). CAMHACA is an evaluation system that incorporates a holistic, all-encompassing assessment of a formerly abducted youth, his/her surroundings, cultural beliefs and practices, religion, family, community, schooling, farming, and working milieu (Bilotta, 2011). By utilising CAMHACA, GUSCO and World Vision demonstrate an attempt to embrace traditional Acholi beliefs and values, while also acknowledging Western therapeutic interventions that often contradict Acholi culture (Bilotta, 2011). If CAMHACA can be used for abducted children, then it follows that a similar approach can be pursued to accommodate other categories of survivors of violent conflict.

Programs such as CAMHACA are imperative because unless the therapeutic and reconstructive values of indigenous healing and counseling practices are systematically documented, counselors in northern Uganda will continue to possess a limited understanding of the philosophical underpinnings that affirm the existence of their clients in context. Mbiti (1990) tried to help the world understand an African perspective toward personhood with his famous statement, “I belong, therefore I am”, meaning that from a traditional African point of view, there is no separation between the interpersonal, communal, social, spiritual and psychological realms; all these realms interact dynamically such that they mutually inform

and co-constitute each other in a complementary manner. The relationship between the individual and the community is thus not one of isolation; instead, there is a dance of harmony where everyone who belongs is continuously moving, adjusting to the rhythm of life within the community (Ogbonnaya, 1994). Human activities are always orientated toward the restoration of harmony or communal equilibrium where this has been thrown into an imbalance (Aapengnuo, 2009; Dickson, 1984; Nsamenang, 2007; Waldron, 2010). Likewise, from an African indigenous perspective, unless everything is moving peacefully together then there is a lack of balance, a disharmony, illness, disorder and lack of personal wholeness (Kamwaria& Katola, 2012). Thus, indigenous healing mechanisms are directed not only at the individual in isolation; they are also reparative in the sense that they are meant to restore harmony between individuals, the community, the land on which they stand, the ancestors and other higher realms of being, including God (Latigo, 2008; Nkosi, 2012; Onyango, 2011; Waldron, 2010). Any healing short of this is not holistic and therefore incomplete. It is therefore envisaged that this study will assist counselors of survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda, and indeed the counseling profession in general, to provide more holistic therapeutic interventions, keeping in mind the latter's philosophies and worldview. This is in line with Mpolo's (1965) recommendation, stated as follows:

When dealing with any pathology or fantasy imagination, delusion illness, the cultural dimensions influencing the individual's concept of illness and behavior responses to the crises, should be taken seriously so that sociological and cultural ideas which play a significant role in the development and interaction of the personality can become a part of the therapeutic process (Mpolo, 1965, p. 4).

According to Parker (1996) and Bilotta (2011), when psychological traumas associated with war and upheavals occur in either Western or non-Western parts of the world, aid agencies often send out counselors and other mental health professionals to assist with psychological challenges the traumatised people may be experiencing. However, many of these aid agencies may be unaware that a great deal of what people do and think about during and after the war is locally specific (Bilotta, 2011). "Behavior [of those from non-Western cultures] is profoundly influenced by conceptions of causality, pain, accountability, spirituality and morality which may be quite different from those in Europe and North America" (Parker, 1996, p. 77).

As mentioned above, indigenous healing and re-integration methods have received little scholarly attention (Oulanova & Moodley, 2010), and this is no different with regards to the use of indigenous healing methods in Uganda. In most such communities, the elders are the custodians of indigenous healing practices (Latigo, 2008). It was against this background that this study employed a qualitative approach that provides an extensive description of the lived experiences of the survivors of violent conflict among the Acholi in Uganda, as well as the indigenous methods for the re-integration of the survivors into the community. McLeod (2001) and Cresswell (2007, 2014) support the use of qualitative methodologies in studies of this nature. McLeod (ibid) states that “qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world” (p. 2).

1.2 Rationale for the Study

After two decades of war in Uganda, attempts were made to revamp indigenous Acholi healing practices in order to use them for the purpose of re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community (Baines, 2005; Harlacher et al., 2006). The current study strived to enhance these attempts by documenting and analysing the immense wealth of methods used by the Acholi to heal and reintegrate survivors of violent conflict back into their communities post war trauma. A number of factors justified this study. Amongst these are: the lack of documentation of indigenous healing and counseling methods used at the community level and an exploration into their effectiveness; the need for an evaluation of the pros and cons of relying on counseling methodologies informed by an individualistic, abstract notion of a person in a community that is largely communal and spiritual in orientation; and the ethical imperative to build on, rather than sideline, already-existing resources in the community in order to maximise care (Latigo, 2008).

Sue and Sue (2005) articulate three major therapeutic factors that might be helpful to Western-trained counselors in understanding African indigenous methods of healing. These are: (a) the whole community protects the disturbed individual in solving problems within the group context and thus reconnects individuals with their families; (b) the need for the counselor to observe spiritual and religious beliefs of that particular community during the healing process; and (c) the role played by the elders who are regarded as the custodians of

indigenous healing processes and must be considered because of their wisdom. It is in line with these recommendations that the current study was undertaken.

Thus, based on the above arguments, there were calls for the consideration of indigenous counseling practices to support non-indigenous counseling mechanisms (Abbot, 1998; Coyhis, 2000; Coyhis & White, 2002; JRP, 2007; JRP, 2012; Trujillo, 2008; White, 2000; Womak, 1996). The arguments given by proponents of indigenous approaches to healing are supported by African philosophies and worldview (Aapengnuo, 2009). The African-centered paradigm supports the use of indigenous healing methods. The Africentric paradigm emphasises interconnectedness and spirituality when helping individuals to overcome their problems. An Africentric worldview thus firstly assumes that human identity is collectivist in nature. Secondly, there is the notion that the spiritual/non-material component of a human being is as paramount and valid as the material component (Schiele, 1996). Several scholars (Baldwin, 1986; Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize 2004) have all referred to the African social and cultural experience as being defined by a distinctive worldview such as (a) interdependence between the community and the individual, (b) respect for tradition, (c) harmony with nature, (d) high level of spirituality and ethical concern, (e) sociality of selfhood, and (f) veneration of ancestors and unity of being (Bojuwoye, 2013; Edwards, 2011; Idemudia, 2009; Mkhize, 2004; Mpofu, 2011). It is not important to note that these worldview components do not singularly define people of African ancestry all the time nor are they immutable to changes over time. It is thus the task of an African-centered psychology to document what, if any, modifications or changes have occurred over time given the different experiential realities African people have undergone. Taking into consideration the above, this study sought to explore the African (Acholi) communitarian worldview as well as its bearing on the process for the re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Specific Acholi indigenous healing and reintegration mechanisms that focus on survivors of violent conflict, like many other indigenous counseling methods in use in local settings, have not been captured and communicated to the scientific community (Maiese, 2003; Zehr & Mika, 1998). Extant studies have focused primarily on retributive justice, targeting

offenders, and not restorative justice, which is also aimed at survivors (Zehr& Mika, 1998; Maiese, 2003; Suarez, 2008; Ogora, 2009; Robins, 2009; Turyagenda, 2009; Enomoto, 2011). Unless a detailed account of the healing elements of indigenous Acholi healing processes and their perceived effects are drawn from the perspective of the lived gendered experiences of survivors, the healing of survivors of violent trauma in northern Uganda is likely to remain culturally inappropriate and thus largely ineffective.

As a counseling psychologist trained in Western methodology and counseling approaches, the researcher has found herself at times challenged when working with the African local communities in her practice. In her work with trauma survivors, the researcher became aware that when she was about to terminate the sessions, clients would often talk about the cultural practice they believed they should go through in order to feel fully healed. Having practiced for a number of years in Africa, the researcher has witnessed many of her clients struggling to explain the nature of the rituals their communities expected them to undergo in order to help them heal completely. Moreover, the researcher has grappled with the disparities between her training and what she has witnessed in practice. Many questions have arisen within her that remain unanswered: “Are the Western methodologies that counselors are trained in generalisable to all populations? Was she handling the client in context? What makes these counseling methodologies that she has been taught unable to holistically heal clients in certain cultural contexts? What is the part within this client that these methodologies are not reaching? What makes some clients ways of seeing healing different from the methodologies counselors have been taught?”

In addition, the researcher has worked with survivors of violent conflict for some time now both in Gulu and Kitgum as well as more recently in Kenya. What she came to learn was that the mental health problems many survivors of violent conflict grapple with in their healing process, surface as a result of their direct involvement in these unfortunate violent traumatic atrocities and most especially because of the worldview they hold about such violent atrocities. Therefore, to be able to help the survivors of violent conflict to heal holistically from these traumatic experiences, the worldview they attach to these violent traumatic experiences needs to be taken into account. This is why it is imperative to bring to the awareness of peace personnel, social workers, mental health personnel, and security

personnel and indeed to every person working in a healing profession in any other culture different from their own, that peace building strategies must be implemented in a contextually appropriate manner if they are to be embraced meaningfully by the communities for whom the strategies are intended.

It is because of all the above puzzling, unanswered questions, that the researcher chose to understand the survivors of violent conflict from their own frame of reference. Thus, the study sought to investigate the commonly used Acholi indigenous methods of healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community, with reference to indigenous African philosophical frameworks, axiologies and assumptions about health and well-being. These include the role of the elders who perform these rituals, and the implications of these healing rituals for counseling, educational, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and health institutions and government bodies dealing with healing, peace and reconciliation in indigenous contexts. The current study could also serve as a guide for negotiating a middle path between Western counseling methodologies and holistic indigenous healing rituals for use in the holistic healing of survivors of violent conflict.

The continued relevance of indigenous healing practices is evident in some of the Acholi rituals such as: *Ker Kwaro Acholi* (appeasing the forefathers); *nyono tong gweno* (stepping on the egg/welcoming); *kweyocwiny* (cooling the heart or process of healing and reconciliation); *matooput* (reconciliation); *lwongotipu* (calling of the spirit to rest or a healing process); and *culukwor* (symbolic and material compensation), among others (JRP, 2007; JRP, 2012; Suarez, 2008). Through her counseling practice, the researcher became aware that unless there is an accommodative type of counseling process that encompasses the clients' cultural context, the client will not feel that the counseling process has been completed. Mkhize (2004) also questions the relevance of or singular reliance on individualistic counseling methods in a community that is largely communal and spiritual in its orientation to life. It is through experiences and questions such as the above that the researcher developed the interest and passion to understand the survivors through their own frames of reference. Hence the current study.

In summary, the use of non-indigenous counseling and reconciliation mechanisms to cater for survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda, without consideration of indigenous practices (Kibwanga, 2009; Pakiam, 2004; Pham et al., 2007; Rose & Ssekandi, 2007), has been criticised for its limited effectiveness. The punitive nature of such practices, in that they usually focus on the offender while ignoring the survivors, has also been questioned (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008; Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002; Quinn, 2006a; Verdeli et al., 2008). The alternative is to blend indigenous counseling practices, which are based on a restorative justice model and which focus on both the offenders and survivors including the participation of the community (Suarez, 2008), with non-indigenous (Western) counseling methods (Abbot, 1998; Coyhis, 2000; Coyhis & White, 2008; JRP, 2007; Tom, 2006; White, 2000; Womak, 1996). However, in order to successfully blend indigenous with non-indigenous counseling and reconciliation mechanisms, the specific indigenous counseling and reconciliation mechanism must be well documented, understood and adequately captured and communicated to the scientific community (Zehr & Mika, 1998). Currently this is not the case with many indigenous counseling approaches (Maiese, 2003). This is because most of them are still presented in a fragmented fashion (Verdeli et al., 2008). In view of the above, this study sought to document and describe the Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community, the healing mechanisms involved, as well as the personal experiences of the survivors of violent conflict.

1.4 Study Purpose

The primary purpose of the study was to document Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community, focusing on the Gulu and Kitgum districts of northern Uganda. The study further aimed to identify the specific problems for which these methods were prescribed, their processes, and their healing mechanisms.

1.5 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify Acholi indigenous healing practices for the psychological and social rehabilitation of survivors of violent conflict.

2. Establish the social challenges that indigenous Acholi survivors of conflict face during the re-integration process.
3. Establish the therapeutic (healing) elements present in the indigenous Acholi healing processes related to survivors of violent conflict.
4. Establish the perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices.
5. Establish how men and women benefit from indigenous healing practices upon their return from the war.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What indigenous Acholi healing/counseling practices are carried out for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community?
2. What social problems and issues are Acholi healing/counseling practices/methods prescribed for?
3. What are the healing/therapeutic elements evident in Acholi indigenous healing processes?
4. What perceptions do Acholi survivors of violent conflict, the community members and the indigenous healers' have of the indigenous healing practices?
5. How do men and women affected by the violent conflict benefit from indigenous healing practices?

1.7 Methodology: Synopsis

The study was qualitative in nature; it sought not only to describe and document Acholi methods for integrating survivors of violence into the community but also to understand the lived experiences of those who have partaken in the healing rituals. Primary data was obtained directly from the study participants by means of in-depth interviews. The secondary data was sourced from existing records such as reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) involved in indigenous healing/counseling, such as *Ker Kwaro Acholi* and World Vision.

The data collected by means of individual interviews was analysed using the voice-centered relational (VCR) method guidelines for reading interviews, pioneered by Gilligan and her colleagues (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertach, 2003) and extended by Mkhize (2005) and Mauthner and Doucet (1998). Secondary data was analysed using thematic content analysis (Aronson, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hancock, 2002; Roulston, 2001). The methodology is described at length in Chapter 4.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The participants of this study were survivors of violent conflict from the Acholi ethnic group who had undergone indigenous methods for healing and reintegration into the community. There were several other ethnic groups in the area who may have experienced the same violent conflict due to their geographical proximity to the Acholis. Although these groups drew from a common philosophical framework in order to understand themselves and their world, such as the idea of balance versus imbalance, communality and spirituality (cf. Queener & Martin, 2001; Krippner, 2000), the current study focused only on members of the Acholi community. It is thus possible that other ethnic groups had a different exposure to the conflict and that their take on the healing rituals may be different as well.

Furthermore, the study focused on adult survivors recollections of violent conflict and the findings were thus not applicable to children. This took cognisance of the fact that the adult survivors interviewed may have been children at the time when their abduction and victimisation took place. The qualitative nature of the study also meant that the study findings were not generalisable in a quantitative sense because people's personal experiences cannot be generalised. The study was not intended to arrive at population-wide generalisations but to understand the phenomenon of interest at a deeper level in order to develop a sense of the lived experiences of the healing rituals as well as their perceived benefits at the individual, community and spiritual levels.

1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

The key terms used in this study are defined below.

Indigenous healing methods

Healing methods that are rooted in the worldviews and philosophies of the indigenous population, which in the context of this study are the Acholi African population. The term “indigenous psychologies” is defined as the scientific study of human behavior that is native and not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people (Kim & Berry, 1993).

Non-indigenous counseling

Counseling methods that are imported primarily from Western Europe or the United States of America, into a non-indigenous context. In general, such approaches to counseling are premised on an individualistic view of the self.

The NTU – African notion of ... being

A central African Bantu concept that describes a universal, unifying life-force that is found in all things, including *mntu* (human beingness), *hantu* (spirit in time and place), *kintu* (spirit in things) and *kuntu* (spirit inmodality/expressiveness)(Washington, 2010).

Survivors of violent conflict

All the people/survivors, men and women some taken as adults, others as children but now adults who were abducted by the LRA and recruited into the LRA and have returned or been rescued from captivity of the LRA and have returned home.

Perpetrator

All the people who committed or were made to commit all kinds of atrocities by the LRA. This includes those who killed, maimed, raped, stole or committed other activities or crimes against their will or perhaps even knowingly.

Healing and reconciliation mechanisms

The healing approaches used either by the indigenous people themselves or by the non-indigenous (Western) people to help survivors recover from the wounds inflicted by the LRA war.

Counseling psychologist

A person trained in Western counseling methodologies to help people/clients heal from mental health issues.

Restorative justice

An approach to justice that seeks to reconcile (bring together) the offender and victim, including the community.

Retributive justice

A punitive kind of justice that seeks to ensure that the offender or perpetrator pays for his/her wrong-doing. It does not pay attention to reconciliation but to the legal procedures.

African culture

African culture refers to “the beliefs, values and morals of African people, along with their outward expression” (Karanja, 2008: 6).

Worldview

A worldview refers to “the way in which a people make sense of their surroundings; make sense of life and of the universe” (Karanja, 2008: 6).

Indigenous psychologies

Indigenous psychologies are concerned with the study of human psychological processes within their cultural context, with reference to the belief systems of the culture that is being studied. Kim and Berry (1993:2) state that “human experiences are studied and interpreted from local actors’ perspectives”. Indigenous psychology is different from indigenisation,

which is an attempt to adopt Western concepts and theories to local non-Western cultural contexts (Sinha, 1986, 1993, 2002).

Independent construal of self

The traditional Western understanding of the self as a bounded container, existing independently of other similar bounded selves. If one takes the independent self construal as the point of departure, the goal of socialisation becomes independence from others. This means that a person's behavior is organised from the person's internal thoughts, feelings and actions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is also known as self-contained individualism (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992). The independent construal of the self sees the self essentially "as a substantive inner agency capable of choosing its own values, charting its own directions and commenting on itself in the manner of a self-governor" (Nwoye, 2007: 119).

Interdependent construal of self

This is the view of the self that is found predominantly in non-Western cultures (Matsumoto, 1994). This view of the self emphasises interconnectedness among people. It is also referred to as the collectivist self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The goal of socialisation here is harmonise one's interests and goals with those of the group and not to separate oneself. Also known as the 'communal view of the self', the interdependent self-construal emphasises social solidarity and mutual interdependence. In an African context this also incorporates interdependence between the living and the deceased (the living-dead) (Nwoye, 2007).

Ritual

According to Rook (2004), a ritual is a series of actions or type of behavior regularly and invariably followed by someone — the prescribed order of performing a ceremony. The Acholi indigenous healing rituals are a set of beliefs and rites that relate humans (the Acholi) and all other living beings to the ultimate sources of life (the spiritual) in order to help a person or community to overcome life's problems.

Ancestors

These are the dead who lived their lives with moral exception while on earth and have joined the spiritual world. Africans traditionally believe that physical death is not the end of life and that there is continuity in the spiritual world after death (Berg, 2003).

UCA: Uganda Counselor's Code of Ethics

KCA: Kenya Counseling Association Code of Ethics.

1.10 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One has presented the background of the study which situates the problem in its context. The problem statement, purpose, specific objectives, research questions that guide this study, justification of the study, and a brief outline of the methodology synopsis, have been dealt with. Chapter Two presents the background to the conflict, how it affected the Acholi in various ways, the various responses to the conflict by the government/peace mission, and the Western counseling methods used to address them. Chapter Three presents the theoretical and philosophical framework. Chapter Four presents the methodology. Chapter Five presents the findings. Chapter Six discusses the study findings and incorporates recommendations and limitations.

CHAPTER TWO: THE BACKGROUND OF THE ACHOLI VIOLENT CONFLICT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the conflict in northern Uganda during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras, as well as the consequences of the war and its impact on men, women and children. It also highlights the government's response with regards to rehabilitating and re-integrating former abductees back into society. By giving this background, the author seeks to highlight the genesis of conflict in northern Uganda during the pre-colonial period and during the British rule and how it has continued in post-colonial Uganda.

2.2 Social Organisation, Conflict and Peace in Pre-Colonial Northern Uganda

According to a number of authors (Baines, 2011; Harlacher, 2009; Latigo, 2008, Refugee Law Project, 2004; Vaale & Stavrou 2003), there have been endless wars and incursions in northern Uganda. To a certain extent, these conflicts can be traced right from the myth regarding the conflict between two brothers. In one of the set books that is still in use for Primary Four pupils in Uganda, Nsubuga, Mujuni and Kabonge (2001) cite a myth of two brothers, Gipiir and Labong. The two brothers, believed to be the descendants of the Acholi and the Alur, parted ways because of a conflict over a spear and a bead. According to Angucia (2010), this myth is passed down orally by the elders from generation to generation and is deemed to be the genesis of conflict in northern Uganda. It would be naïve however to attribute conflict of the magnitude witnessed in Uganda in the previous decades to the myth *per se*. It is therefore important to look at other possible sources of the conflict, the impact it has had on the Acholi people, as well as the healing mechanisms they have developed over time in order to deal with conflict. While studies have detailed the atrocities experienced by the Acholi people, they do not explain how the wounded population was helped to deal with the psychological and physical suffering inflicted on them, using their own indigenous methods. Nor have these indigenous healing practices been systematically studied in order to present their processes and the mechanisms by which they heal (Angucia, 2010). The positive contribution of Acholi culture, in particular their indigenous methods for dealing

with trauma post-conflict, has not been documented. The primary objective of the current study is thus to bridge this gap in the literature as far as possible.

Prior to the renaming and reconfiguration of Uganda as a British territory, the country was characterised by an array of kingdoms (Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro) (Kibwanga, 2009). Communities situated in the Lango, Acholi, Madi, West Nile, Bukedi, Bugisu, Busoga, Teso, Karamoja, Sebei and Kigezi regions had developed rich customary practices as well as political and social compositions. Each kingdom and chieftainship had its own way of dealing with conflict and peace. Also, the communities had developed mechanisms for peace building. The Acholi and the Langi who neighbour each other had similar communal systems of conflict resolution, facilitated by the council of elders (Kanyeihamba, 2001).

In respect of the Acholi conflict resolution mechanisms, Latigo (2008) wrote:

In pre-colonial times, and before the people of Acholiland were forcibly split up and moved from their homesteads, practically all conflicts in Acholiland were settled amicably through a well developed mechanism for the prompt resolution of conflicts as soon as they arose. Prior to the formation of the state of Uganda which replaced the British colonial administration, the Acholi people maintained a traditional government that was rooted firmly in their religious beliefs, norms and customs, which demanded peace and stability in Acholiland at all times, based on their philosophy of life. This structure was maintained by the real anointed chiefs of the Acholi people, known as the rwodi moo(p. 102).

This is a clear indication that Acholi traditional and communal conflict resolution mechanisms in northern Uganda existed before the colonial conquest. Indigenous peace building mechanisms did not feature in the peace building processes post the recent conflict. This study seeks to document and describe this valuable tradition of wisdom.

2.3 Conflict in Northern Uganda during British Colonial Rule

Not only have the Acholi people of northern Uganda been oppressed because of tribal prejudices within the country (Eichstaedt, 2009); also, the British colonial 'divide and rule' policy favoured the southerners, mainly the Baganda and sidelined the northerners who are the Acholi of Luo origin (Latigo, 2008). The colonialists created a parallel administrative structure of mainly Baganda to run alternative, but influential, local governments alongside

the traditional leadership, which they retained throughout Uganda. The colonial administrative structure reported directly to the colonial masters, thus creating resentment within the traditional leadership systems. Often, this British-supported administrative structure used violence and coercion to control the other parts of the country, northern Uganda inclusive. As viewed by Allen (2006), International Crisis Group (2004) and Refugee Law Project (2004), this situation drove most of the Acholi to join the military in order to support themselves. This meant that the army was filled mainly with recruits from the north, who were predominantly seen to be uneducated (Marblestone, 2005; Stravrou, 2003). This kind of practice engendered conflicts that would eventually spill over into the present day in northern Uganda.

2.4 Post-Colonial Conflict in Northern Uganda

Conflicts in most African states have also been attributed to both the colonial legacy and post-colonial politics (Buckley-Zistel, 2008). Looking at post-colonial conflict in northern Uganda, what stands out is the British rule and the myth of the Acholi as a martial race, and the several coups that have been witnessed (Angucia, 2010). Colonial policies created significant discrepancies between northern and southern Uganda that have continued to fuel ethnic tensions (Buckley et al., 2008).

The fact that the first two presidents of Uganda, General Idi Amin and Milton Obote, both originated from northern Uganda, have left the people of northern Uganda with stigma as far as conflict is concerned (Allen, 2006). Obote took a significant number of young men from Acholi into the military to consolidate his government when he became the first president of Uganda (Kasozi, 1994). It is at this point that the myth about the Acholi being a martial race and war-like people developed. The martial race myth was, however, put to rest when the Bantu dominated military of Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, with their guerrilla tactics, fought and defeated them in the Luweero triangle war. It is not clear how many people died in the Luweero triangle war except that the killing went on until Museveni took over power (Allen, 2006). However, nothing is mentioned about how the survivors of this war either were helped to heal from the visible and invisible wounds inflicted on them; most of what is written is about the protagonists concerned and how the war took place. This study therefore intends to

fill this gap. Furthermore, the period from 1979-1986 was characterised by coups and counter coups, which saw several military battalions struggling to govern the country (Angucia, 2010). The last coup was by the National Resistance Movement Army (NRM/A) under the leadership of Kaguta Yoweri Museveni in 1986 (Kasozi, 1994; Museveni, 1997).

The civil strife trickled down to other parts of the country, northern Uganda inclusive. The rebel groups that were formed in northern Uganda include The Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) and lastly the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). With the emergence of these groups, war broke out in the northern part of Uganda (Latigo, 2008, Angucia, 2010). This all started earlier in December 1985, when Museveni disregarded the Nairobi Peace Agreement with President Tito Okello Lutwa. Despite having signed a peace deal with President Okello Lutwa, Museveni continued to fight (Finnstrom, 2003: 101). The Acholi, who dominated the national army before the coup by the NRM/A, felt betrayed (Allen, 2006; Dolan, 2005). As a result they fled homewards to the north.

The defeated UNLA organised themselves into a rebel group called the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Alice Lakwena turned to the fleeing Lutwa government soldiers who had returned home to mobilise a movement that came to be known as Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). This now became the mutating breeding ground for all rebellions in the north, combined mainly around the LRA's Joseph Kony (Eichstaedt, 2009; Allen, 2006; Finnstrom, 2003). At the same time the NRA became a national army, changing its name then to Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF). Allen (2006) cites that the UPDF were generally perceived as a disciplined force. However, most of the Acholi people were very bitter: when the NRA arrived in the north in 1987, they sexually molested both men and women, destroying foodstuffs and stealing their cattle (Finnstrom, 2003). The Acholi people saw all of this as a strategy by the NRA to control them (Angucia, 2010).

2.5 Consequences of Conflict in Northern Uganda

The three Acholi districts mostly affected by the violent conflict were Gulu, Kitgum and Pader. Mutambi, Hasunira and Oringa (2007) noted that by 2005 more than 90% of the population had been driven from their homes into Internally Displaced Camps (IDP). The war had the most disastrous impact in the northern part of Uganda (Omona & Aduo, 2013;

Baines, 2011; Baker, 2011; Cagney, 2012; Harlacher, 2009). Children caught in the midst of all this were vulnerable to sudden attack, violation of their basic rights, abuse and displacement. They witnessed massive killings and abductions of their own sisters, brothers, fathers and mothers (Dolan, 2005; JRP, 2012). The boy children would be made into child soldiers against their will and the girl children would be made into sex slaves for the army commanders. These girls not only risked being infected with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV; they sometimes ended up having unwanted pregnancies. The LRA targeted children rather than adults because the former were fearful and easier to indoctrinate. Children were also least likely to escape as they were not familiar with the geographical terrain of the land in the bush (Becker, 2012; de Silva, Hobbs, & Hanks, 2001).

It was estimated in the Survey of War Affected Youth (SWAY, 2006) that 71% of the youths in the community were taken from their homes. The number of youths under the age of 30 who were abducted is estimated between 25, 000 to as many as 66, 000 (SWAY, 2006; Ayet, Bongomin, Demba, Okot & Unkovic, 2008). The LRA style of initiation for those abducted was very brutal. Amongst the atrocities committed against them, they were made to carry heavy loads, walk long distances, and denied adequate food and water supplies. Their houses were burned down while their granaries were looted. Many were ambushed, raped, killed or made to witness brutal murder. Those who disobeyed were beaten routinely, or forced to beat or kill their fellow abductees (Williams, Aloyo & Annan, 2001).

As the peace initiative started in northern Uganda the majority of the combatant (perpetrator) soldiers started returning home at sites known as reception centers. Several others returned directly to their communities without passing through the reception centers. They were weak, malnourished, had physical injuries such as sore feet, bullet wounds and were haunted by nightmares due to the experiences and trauma they had undergone. They also experienced nightmares which, from the community's point of view, were connected to vengeful spirits (*cen*) of those they had killed (Finnstrom, 2003; JRP, 2012; Latigo, 2008). Against this worldview, physical healing is not adequate. Complete healing would require ritual cleansing in order to rid the returning soldiers of these vengeful spirits and facilitate their reintegration into the community.

2.6 The Impact of the Conflict on Men, Women and Children

In this conflict between the government forces and the LRA, the range of tactics applied by the rebels lacked any kind of war ethics. Some of these tactics affected victims of both sex the same way. According to Radoja (2007), the extent of violence in northern Uganda was massive and over 20, 000 Acholi male youth witnessed torture. Boys were trained to fight using an array of weapons (Dolan, 2005; Eichstaedt, 2009; Green, 2008). Strategic rape and the increase of HIV-prevalence connected to it was obviously a deliberate weapon of mass destruction (Ochola, 2006). “Soldiers who had tested HIV-positive were especially deployed to the north, with the mission to commit maximum havoc on the local girls and women” (Ochola, 2006:62). Rebels also applied mutilation, forced cannibalism (Mazurana & McKay, 2002), looting, burning down the houses and livelihoods causing famine. Civilians were displaced to IDPs (Internally Displaced People’s) camps. Protected areas in theory, in reality violence, HIV-AIDS and suicide rates were very high in these camps (Ochola, 2006).

Armed conflict changes the normal course of family life in a drastic manner. With the men recruited or killed, single mothers became family heads, and of course they mourned the loss of family members, victims of war (Kabaheshi, 2009). Children in the conflict zone were starved, deprived of education and health care, and often had to flee their homes (Annan et al., 2009). In addition they witnessed severe forms of violence. Abduction of children and youth was more than common since they were seen by Kony as easy targets to brainwash (Baker, 2011). They were made child soldiers or slaves, and as such experienced abuse in various ways. Abducted children were tied, beaten, and had to carry heavy loot and equipment. Deprived of education, they were taught and forced to kill, torture and loot civilians and burn their houses. Reluctance was punished (Dolan, 2005; Eichstaedt, 2009; Green, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2003). Actions like breaking rules, stealing food, refusing sex, failure to maintain the home, were punishable by beatings and imprisonment in the “military,” where they were placed into pits and tortured. Serious mistakes like speaking to men, having an affair or plotting to escape were punished by beatings which often led to death (Baines, 2011). About 25% of these abducted young people were forced to beat, cut or murder other abductees, civilians, or even family members in order to bind them to the group. The intention was to reduce their fear of killing and to discourage disobedience

(Annan et al., 2009). UNICEF estimates that 80% of the LRA are abducted adolescents who were forced to attack their own families, neighbours, and villages (Mazurana & McKay, 2003).

Abducted children who were given to commanders as house-maids or part of the security unit, were considered members of the commander's family and were called siblings, especially at a younger age. Therefore it is understandable that, despite their suffering, in their powerlessness they developed some attachments among themselves and towards their commanders (Angucia, 2010). The younger the age of abduction, the more bonds and loyalty toward LRA they had developed (Annan et al., 2009).

To a different degree, both male and female abductees' experienced sexual gender based violence with all its negative impacts on their psychological, physical and reproductive health (Annan et al., 2009; Baker, 2011; JRP, 2012; Omona & Aduo, 2013). Many of the abductees faced stigma and discrimination when they returned home (Baines, 2011; Cagney, 2012; Omona & Aduo, 2013). For instance, many families forbade formerly abducted men or women to marry into their families. Marriages of formerly abducted persons proved to be difficult and vulnerable; separations were common (Angucia, 2010). Adverse economic effects of war were common among the formerly abducted (Baker, 2011). Time in an armed group was time away from school and the accumulation of skills and capital. Unless association with a fighting force brings loot or relevant skills, it is safe to assume that ex-combatants were indeed uneducated and underemployed (Annan et al., 2009).

At times, female rebels in the villages attacked by the LRA raped men (Ochola, 2006). Although boys and men were twice more likely to be abducted than girls and women, the latter often spent a longer period in captivity (Annan et al., 2009). The youngest abducted boys were given to commanders as their security detail to protect them, and as such, they became members of the commander's 'family' (Angucia, 2010). It is estimated that about 20% of the abducted males never returned. Furthermore, Blattman and Annan (2010) found a considerable gap in human capital among males abducted into the LRA. Studies conducted in

European and US former soldiers show a lower lifetime income and overall health (Annan et al, 2009).

Girls were most vulnerable to victimisation accompanied by sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies and childbirth. Lack of medical treatment compounded the health risks (Baker, 2011; Knight & Özerdem, 2004; McKay, 2004; McCallin, 1998; McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Upon return, the girls reported shame and stigma in their communities associated with these experiences of sexual violation (Baker, 2011; JRP, 2012; Sideris, 2003). Women who were not abducted but who lost their husbands became the only breadwinners and heads of their families (Kabaheshi, 2009); roles for which they were hardly prepared in terms of their traditional, gender-based village upbringing. According to Annan et al. (2009), girls and women were abducted about half the rate as boys or men. It is estimated that about 4% of the abducted females never returned home (Annan et al., 2009). Rebels divided females into three groups: prepubescent girls, young adolescents, and those thought to be sexually active. Prepubescent girls were kept as house maids and babysitters and to be given later as ‘wives’ to soldiers and commanders (Annan et al., 2009), often as a reward for war feats. Although some reported domestic violence, as wives, they were treated relatively well. Their forced marriage and mothering constituted their sexual abuse (Annan et al., 2009). They were expected to become mothers by the LRA as this was considered a way of “populating the new Acholi nation” (Annan et al., 2009; Finnstrom, 2008). As soon as the girls became mothers, younger children took over their domestic chores and baby-sitting duties until they too were forcefully given as wives (Angucia, 2010).

Better educated women were often employed in medical care, nursing and midwifery, radio communication and record-keeping of key tactical information. They also provided logistical support and as a result were less likely to be released than the other female abductees were (Annan et al, 2009). As soldiers, women proved to be not less violent than men were. They perpetrated quite the like actions as their male peers, in the same number, too (Annan et al., 2009).

Mothering under stressful conditions, especially for child mothers, was surely a trying experience for many abducted women and girls (Angucia, 2010; JRP, 2012). Forced mothers faced more difficulties in reintegration in their families: they are less likely to marry and find livelihoods, face stigmatization along with their children, while many are forced to leave their communities (Annan et al., 2009; Baker, 2011). There are instances however where supportive welcome of former abductees, even if mothers, has been reported. In terms of educational opportunities, abducted women do not seem to differ from the non-abducted, simply because women usually have poor access to education in northern Uganda anyway (Annan et al., 2009).

Ainebyona (2011) studied the reintegration of female ex-abductees of the LRA of northern Uganda in Gulu District. He reported that continuous psychosocial support and follow-up of female ex-abductees in the communities of reintegration could rebuild confidence and provide comfort. Annan and Brier (2010) carried out a qualitative research study to explore family problems among females returning from the LRA in northern Uganda, with a focus on barriers to re-integration. Findings suggest that decreasing household violence depends on the strength of interventions to address all levels. The study also highlighted the structural factors that permit and sustain gender inequalities, such as corruption in the police system, and devastating poverty. Amnesty International (2004) and Johnson et al. (2008) posit that survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) show greater prevalence of mental health problems among combatants. The aforementioned add that since women are the primary targets of GBV, it is therefore also necessary to view war-affected people through a gender position so as to avoid the assumption that women and men are affected in the same manner. GBV has no place for cease-fires since in the camps for displaced people it can still happen (Wessels, 2008).

While the above-cited studies explored local Acholi indigenous systems of healing and reconciliation for the reintegration of formerly abducted girls and their children, they did not explore how survivors of sexual violence were helped to deal with the trauma they had gone through. Nor did they capture and document how the gender disparities were dealt with during the healing process. The current study seeks to fill in this gap by investigating and

documenting the specific Acholi healing rituals, including how the female ex-combatants or abductees experience these rituals. Moreover, studies have not built on the Acholi worldview to understand the healing process. The current study exploits indigenous understandings of the self-in-community, the idea of harmony and balance in particular, in order to analyze the potential usefulness of indigenous healing methods in the process to reintegrate former combatants —male and female— into the community. Indeed, studies have shown that war-affected adolescents may continue to suffer from significant psychological distress in the years following the cessation of conflict (McMullen et al., 2012).

We will now look at some of the attempts that the Government of Uganda attempted to use to stop the conflict and help the people heal from all the atrocities inflicted on them.

2.7 Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Former Abductees: The Government's Response

Uganda, with the support of international non-governmental organizations, embarked on non-indigenous approaches to peace building. Apprehensive that unhealed and non-reconciled people could pose a threat to the nation, the Government of Uganda “with the assistance of International agencies and friendly countries “designed a succession of major reconstruction programmes (Bigombe, 1993: 116). Latigo (2008) posited that the Ugandan Government at the start had approached its peace initiative with a carrot and stick policy. This was to be accomplished by an amalgamation of military means of pressuring the rebels, enforcement of the law, an amnesty law and propaganda. Nevertheless, the conflict raged on and extended, to reach such a scale that it became so destructive that disbelieving voices began to doubt the government's power to win the war and bring about peace on its own.

Because of these futile military episodes, the local Acholi leaders started to push the government to pass an Amnesty Act. The Acholi traditional leaders advocated for Amnesty because of two genuine concerns; first, they were worried of the trend the conflict was taking, with no apparent viable end in sight; and second, the moral urgency to give an outlet for the victims who were abducted against their will. It was as a result of these pressures from the traditional Acholi leaders, that the Uganda Parliament passed the Amnesty Act of

2000, and consequently establishing the Amnesty Commission to assist the return and reintegration of ex-combatants into the national army or civilian life.

This approach by the Government in itself was contradictory to the underlying principle by the traditional leaders, which had been to stem the prevalent fear of prosecution by the returnees, borrowing largely from traditional approaches that give emphasis to 'forgiveness'. It is not a surprise that the Amnesty was not successful to the magnitude it would have been. It is plausible that this was because the Government went against the philosophy of forgiveness and restorative justice preferred by the traditional leadership and more in sync with the community's worldview. The current study sought to document the Acholi indigenous wisdom to establish the restorative justice and peace and how such wisdom contributed to the reintegration of survivors of violent conflict into the community.

Recognising the above-mentioned efforts by the Government of Uganda, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), working in collaboration with other partners, joined the efforts to reduce regional conflict in order to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Through its Country Program Action Plan (CPAP), UNDP offered livelihood support to the returning populations through, among others, skills training and improving the aptitude of the community and households to use and administer natural resources. This support was intended at increasing household income and community self-reliance in Uganda (Bjørkhaug, Bøås, Hatløy & Jennings, 2007). However, while the UNDP approach was noble and helpful, there were problems in that it only collaborated with the Government of Uganda and sidelined the Acholi survivors and their community leaders in planning what really would have been helpful to them as a people. It is clear that the Acholi survivors had to work with the agenda of the Government and UNDP. This agenda was not of the survivors and their community but of the Government and its partners (UNDP). It is no wonder that it failed just like any other even though the thought behind it was good. Below, a number of further government initiatives to assist returnees are discussed. Their weaknesses are discussed in order to show the potential contribution of indigenous approaches to peace-building and support in the rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community.

2.7.1 Start up income for offenders

In order to assist the offenders to settle down and rebuild their lives, they were either given gifts, start-up income or incorporated into some projects (Baines, 2011). It could be argued from an African indigenous perspective that offering these incentives to offenders amounts to rewarding them for the atrocities committed while the victims/survivors are ignored, thus making healing meaningless (Maise, 2003). The focus on the offenders with relatively little focus on survivors could be seen as another form of injustice (Mutisi, 2009). The African indigenous view of justice is aimed at “the healing of breaches, redressing of imbalances, and restoration of broken relationships in the entire affected community” (Huyse, 2008: 5; Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002). It is therefore important to use African indigenous healing practices that include both the offenders and survivors in the healing and reintegration process for the survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda.

2.7.2 Pacification (1988)

In 1988, the Government attempted to come up with pacification policies with the aim of facilitating peace building in Uganda. These pacification policies were mainly done with the focus on conflict in Northern Uganda (O’Kadameri, 2002). One of the policies was to create a ministerial position for the pacification of northern Uganda. The minister who was placed in this position was Bigombe (Kibwanga, 2009; Latigo, 2008). She was tasked by the Government to come up with politically sound policies to bring the war to an end and start peace building in northern Uganda. By living in the midst of the people and listening to their grievances, Bigombe (1993) was of the view that this would enable her to help the local people understand the government’s position of interest. This pacification process was not successful. The pacification policies were imposed on the local people from outside (modern); these policies could not help much since the people did not own the process and the process was far removed from their culture and customs. The result therefore was that the policies were not taken seriously (Kibwanga, 2009). In the researcher’s opinion, pacification would have probably worked better if the local people on the ground had been roped in to participate.

2.7.3 Amnesty

In the year 2000, Amnesty was enacted by Uganda Parliament. Its designation was to reflect the spirit of northern Uganda's traditional practices of forgiveness. Latigo (2008) posits that the Amnesty was an integral part of conflict resolution mechanisms of the Acholi, Langi and the Iteso tribes who form the majority of the northern population; most of these tribes practice forgiveness. This was thought to be the best way out of the conflict by both parties, that is, the Government of Uganda and the Acholi which had serially been unsuccessful against the rebels by military means (Branch, 2005). The local tribal leaders greatly influenced the Amnesty Act and its process. LomoandHovil (2004, cited in Allen, 2005: 65) notes that amnesty was seen to be compatible with Acholi dispute resolution mechanisms: "Culturally, people's ideas of forgiveness are entrenched. Thus, there was a clear feeling that the amnesty was based on values that were compatible with the context in which it was being applied (Allen, 2005).

The Amnesty Act of 2000 was established which facilitated the return and reintegration of ex-combatants into the national army or back into civilian life by the Amnesty Commission (ULRC, 2000). However, the process ended up being politicised because the survivors as beneficiaries were expected to offer their political support to the government or else risk being tried for treason (ACORD, 2000; Latigo, 2008). This process was rather questionable as it lost track of its founding purpose. Therefore even if the Amnesty Commission was able to contribute to encouraging peaceful ending to the conflict by helping almost 23,000 rendered "rebels" reintegrate into their communities (Refugee Law Project, 2005) its process of effectiveness remained questionable.

Igreja and Dias-Lambranca (2008) assert that it did not measure up to the standards set elsewhere on the continent like South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Process and Mozambique after the end of the Mozambique civil war in 1992. The bottom line is that the approach in Uganda lacked political will and fairness as it was done in an atmosphere of coerciveness. Perhaps indigenous approaches led by the people themselves would have done it differently since they are public and have spirituality attached to them. It was the aim of

this study to explore and document the indigenous approaches in healing and reintegration of survivors of violent conflict.

2.7.4 Peace Talks

Attempts to use peace talks to resolve conflicts in Uganda appear to have paid dividends before. However, successful peace talks have been those initiated by affected communities rather than those initiated from outside like the 1985 Nairobi Peace Accord in which the peace pact was not adhered to by the rebels and the communities where they drew support. The reason the peace talks failed was that the signatories felt that they did not own the process (Museveni, 1997; Ojera-Latigo, 2007). The same kind of approach is said to have been used in Northern Uganda in the early 1990s. Where the representatives of international organizations, namely United States Aid for International Development, Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) attempted to broker a peace deal between the GoU and the LRA. The Sudan Tribune (1st June, 2006) reported that the attempt failed because the Government of Uganda and the LRA both seemed suspicious of the whole process. It is therefore imperative that the main focus remains on the local peace building practices and how they view and handle conflicts rather than on picking out what in the 'expert' opinion which may be considered harmful and repugnant (Kibwanga, 2009).

2.7.5 Juba Peace Talks (2006 - 2009)

The Juba Peace Talks were initiated by the Acholi community together with their traditional and religious leaders. They were negotiated between the LRA rebels of Northern Uganda and the Government of Uganda (Institute of Security Studies, 2009). Their efforts were on track to be successful, save for the peace building 'experts' in form of foreign governments and international organisations who started to pressure both sides to make peace. Then while they were still in the process, came the most negative influence of all; that was the untimely entry of the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Joseph Kony, the leader of LRA and his army. The ICC ideals did not match at all with those of the community on the ground. Indeed the evidence was there for the whole country to see when the Ugandan

newspaper, “New Vision of Monday, 8th November 2004”, ran the following headline: “*Acholi chief opposes Kony trial*”. In an interview (in English), the Rwot (chief) reiterated and elaborated his view in the following words below:

We the traditional leaders do not want to be seen to be blocking justice. We emphasize our justice system of reconciliation. I told the ICC Prosecutor when I met him in London that the timing is not right. Religious leaders are negotiating. Also we have a letter from rebel commanders saying that they want to talk.... It is a fluid situation. Confrontation is still going on and the LRA are in the bush. The Sudan Government has not signed the Rome Treaty. So how will they get the LRA? ... When someone kills we have a system to stop the killing. That is why we did not have death as a punishment. Nor did we have jail sentences. Rather we had reconciliation - matoopot.... Does the ICC not value community values of people? Does the ICC override all other systems? Even if Kony is taken to The Hague, that will not be a punishment. The prisons there are air-conditioned! Rather he should be in the community. He should see the suffering he has caused. Here people look in your eyes and say I forgive you. Then he will understand and recognize what he has done.... (Allen, 2005: 67 & 68).

The ICC wanted “justice before peace”, claiming it could bring an end to the conflict at the same time be able to build sustainable peace (Refugee Law Project, 2008). Again, this was an indication that the ICC and the community were not reading and interpreting peace and justice from the same script. This brings the point home of how important it is to pay attention to the people concerned on the ground other than imposing what may work elsewhere but may not be generalisable. The International Criminal Court (ICC) approaches justice in a retributive and punitive manner, focusing on the offender and leaving survivors peripheral to the process (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008). The worst came when the ICC gave an indictment of the rebel leaders; consequently collapsing the whole process (Glassborrow, 2008). This kind of approach of the ICC ushered in suspicion on the side of the LRA since the government seemed happy because they had pursued for the indictments (ICTJ, 2005). The result henceforth was that the hopes people had of a peaceful end to the war collapsed (IRIN, 2005).

To this point, it is very clear that introducing peace-building values that were not balanced resulted into most of the peace building processes in northern Uganda to fail. Kibwanga (2009) argues that external wisdom could do better in supporting traditionally-initiated peace

building wisdom rather than substituting it; because the traditional wisdom resonates with the community's needs as it benefits them directly.

2.7.6 Peace before Justice or Justice before Peace?

In northern Uganda, the different approaches to bring peace were riddled with a series of debates about which should come first. People wondered whether it should be justice before peace or peace before justice (Kibwanga, 2009; Latigo, 2008; Okello, 2007). Many research organisations such as the International Bar Association (IBA), International Criminal Court (ICC), Outreach Division, Refugee Law Project (RLP) and others have dwelt on this issue. Different researches have been done (e.g., RLP, 2006; ICC, 2005; IBA, 2007) in an attempt to establish what the beneficiaries really need as far as the issues of justice and peace were concerned. Badenoch and Peck (2006) got the point in their report on northern Uganda when they stated that:

We found very little support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants. The community had far more concern for reconciliation than for justice, and for peace rather than punishment. Many people in Northern Uganda say they are willing to forgive, but at the same time they want an acknowledgement of and accountability for what has been done by those who have inflicted pain and suffering on their communities. We all heard requests for a real and open dialogue with all people affected by the conflict, with input from traditional and religious leaders, as well as legal experts. Even the few supporters of the ICC warrants agreed that the communities would take a deep intake of breath and accept a full amnesty in order to gain a lasting peace. (Badenoch & Peck, 2006:1)

However, the discussion as to whether justice or peace should come first continues to rage on in northern Uganda and how the people of northern Uganda should be handled as far as peace building is concerned. The most likely fact here is the exposition of the weakness by different organisations in northern Uganda to comprehend the local needs of the people.

2.7.7 Use of 'expert' input in Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

According to Kibwanga (2009), civil society organisations have always incorporated peace building strategies in their projects. He notes however, that they have always used 'experts' in their design and implementation. This might have been done rightly with the best interest in mind as far as professionalism was concerned. In northern Uganda, some of these well-

intentioned interventions were the CARE International Peace building Project, the UNDP Peace Club Project and the Northern Uganda Peace Initiative (NUPI) programme. National and international organisations carried out these interventions. Ekohl (2007) posits that involving community-based organizations (CBOs) was a positive step because it was meant to develop home-grown solutions. However, a critical analysis of the programmes exposed that greater efforts were put on donor needs rather than those of the community. The struggle, it seemed, was between meeting the donor ‘expert’ requirements and at the same time trying to listen to the aspirations of the community they were supposed to be serving. As Quinn (2009) argues so rightfully given the glaring tension that this was reflected in most of their reports that both praised and ruled out traditional practices of peace building for being claimed wrongly that traditional mechanisms are not the best solutions.

Fisher and Zimina (2008) contend that peace building as it was conceptualized stood to benefit the technical staff at the expense of the beneficiaries; the focus was more on project bound locations and time scales than goals. They suggest that it is better that the communities, and not the funders of the government, should take responsibility for transformative peace to take place. As Lederach (1995) puts it, approaches that strengthen traditional peace building should have a transformative approach whereby the ‘experts’ should be turned into facilitators. The use of peace building ‘experts’ should not replace community peace building mechanisms but rather should enhance them. In line with this observation, the current study sought to document the peace building mechanisms of the Acholi people as well as the lived experiences of the community members that have partaken in these indigenous peace-building methods.

2.7.8 Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme

The first of the programs to be rolled out in 1992 was called Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme (NURP). The program essentially was an emergency operation aimed at restoring basic economic and social infrastructure as well as to revive economic activities in the northern region. It aimed to redress the imbalance in recovery assistance available to northern districts. Although NURP met its physical implementation and development objectives, the immediate needs of the people far exceeded its scope of

operation in the region. The projected needs of the people under NURPI excluding Karamoja region was originally estimated at US\$ 600 million. However, only US\$ 93.6 million was actually realized and utilized (OPM data).

The question here is: how was the community consulted in the planning of this program? This was done mainly through the redistribution of income in an effort to restore socio economic viability. Kibwanga (2009) noted that the programme failed miserably because the beneficiaries viewed it as an attempt to bribe them to support the government. The people in northern Uganda considered it a bribe aimed at assisting the government to bring the war to an end, which was a threat to its existence. It is not surprising that the program failed as it was planned and implemented by the Government without involving the community who know what could have been helpful for them. Secondly, distributing income seems to differ with the Acholi conceptions of peace/justice and healing amidst atrocities. The government and the Acholi community were not reading from the same script of what constitutes the reparation of damages caused by the pollution of war. Pollution that caused so much damage and loss of life was an abomination for the Acholi people because it tears the fabric of the inner person of an Acholi and stirs up anger of the ancestors with whom they would have to be reconciled. This incorporates reconciliation at the communal and spiritual realms. It is important therefore that healing should be holistic and encompass all those facets for the Acholi survivors and community. For perpetrators and survivors alike, cleansing rituals provide a mechanism to restore balance following the communal, social and spiritual disequilibrium created by the war (Allen, 2005; Ainebyona, 2011; Corbin, 2012; Harlacher, 2008; Kibwanga, 2009; Latigo, 2007). The government's failure therefore to enable the recipients to reconnect or build broken relationships in a range of areas such as the familial, communal and spiritual, thereby facilitating internal reconciliation with the self, may have contributed to the failure of the programme. Hence, the current study, which sought to document peace-building efforts with reference to the philosophies and worldviews of those that are most directly affected, the people on the ground.

2.7.9 Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF)

This was another Government of Uganda (GoU) programme. The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) is a government organisation in Uganda with \$100 million of funding from the World Bank. The goal of NUSAF is to help local communities in the 18 districts of northern Uganda that have been ravaged by conflict over the last 20 years. This money is given directly to members of the community so they can invest in infrastructure and training for long-term development.

Even though it failed to build durable peace, NUSAF's efforts to a certain extent promoted economic independence (Nyirikindi, 2007: 46). It also managed to distract the people of northern Uganda from discussing and thinking about the conflict only but also focus on running and managing projects. It however failed to establish a peaceful resolution to the crisis especially as most of the beneficiaries tended to view it as reparation by the government for the destruction of their livelihoods. Further, according to Onoria (2005), most of the officers associated with the programme had been indicted for corruption, mismanagement and related offences.

2.7.10 The Peace Recovery Development Programme (PRDP)

Rolled out in August 2008, this was one of the most comprehensive development programmes of northern Uganda, initiated by the Government of Uganda. Its influence was two-fold: on the one hand it acted as a coordination framework, along which all donor, government and other development activities in northern Uganda were to be harmonised and monitored. On the other hand, it represented a 3-year comprehensive development plan which was to mobilise and allocate additional resources to the region in order to ensure economic development among communities in the north. This was to bridge the gap between the north and the south in terms of economic development. Implementation of the PRDP started in 2009 and was set to finish in 2012, at which point its successor plan, PRDP 2, would come into play. The PRDP aimed at stabilising the northern regions in order to consolidate peace and thereby lay the foundations for recovery and development. This was supposed to alleviate the poverty of the populace of the north and improve their welfare. The

activities and implementation falling under the PRDP framework were monitored and coordinated at the central level by the Department of Pacification and Development in the Office of the Prime Minister.

The PRDP programme was amongst those that were indefinitely suspended by the Government of Uganda in March 2009 (Mugerwa, 2009). The PRDP was a glaring example of a top-down approach to peace building, as the ‘experts’ assumed that the beneficiaries wanted formal justice, policemen trained and prisons built (UPPC, 2007). Mugerwa (2009) however posits that the beneficiaries wanted reconciliation, peaceful resolution of the conflict and physical safety. It would appear that the ‘experts’ and the local affected communities were looking at issues using different lenses and hence the total failure of the project, leading to its indefinite suspension by the GoU.

The GoU had to reconsider a fresh plan that would have to put into place the views of the beneficiaries. Despite the PRDP’s good intentions, its peace building processes were not familiar to the Acholi people as they did not tally with the way the indigenous people deal with the issues of conflict. The current study explored initiatives that were based on peace-building initiatives as understood by the survivors and community members themselves, in order to ascertain the potential contribution of local wisdom in efforts to establish long-lasting peace. It was envisaged that lessons could be learned from such indigenous peace building efforts that may be of use to non-indigenous counselors and social workers that are involved in facilitating the healing process in Uganda.

2.7.11 Media Peace building

In Uganda, this is one of the modern approaches that have effectively been used in peace building. Nassanga (2008) posits that electronic media has been instrumental in blending traditional practices of peace building with modern ones. Radio stations have broadcasted dialogue organized in the form of traditional discussions, for example, *Wang-o*, which means fire place. In these discussion forums, the elders of communities discussed different issues, some of which included conflict management and peace building in meaningful ways. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) *Wang-o* programme on radio Mega FM in Gulu district

in northern Uganda was one of the good examples of the meaningful and careful use of the media where dialogue programmes for peace building were aired to the Acholi community (NRC, 2009). The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, humanitarian, non-profit, non-governmental organization which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. It is projects such as this one that try to be inclusive in their approach to peace building because they blend traditional and modern approaches that can bring about peace. Equal rights (2007) assert that *Wang - o* modern peace building practices have worked to support local initiatives to achieve durable peace. This is supported by Nassanga (2008) who posits that the media was one of those avenues that greatly contributed in encouraging the 2006 - 2008 peace building Talks in Juba between the LRA and the Government of Uganda.

Kibwanga (2009) however thinks differently on the role of the printed media especially the newspapers with their opposite/differing views dominating the market. He cited the *New Vision* newspaper, considered the Government of Uganda mouthpiece and the *Monitor*, which is equally influential but considered in Uganda as the opposition newspaper. The competition between these rival newspapers often polarized the public; people did not trust what they considered biased reporting, depending on their take on the position of the newspaper concerned. The bias expressed itself inter alia by means of parties that were seeking peace claiming that they were being quoted out of context by the media outlets. The printed media is quoted to a large extent as having contributed to the failures of the many peaceful settlements of the northern Uganda conflict (Kibwanga, 2009). The *New Vision* and *Monitor* newspapers, for example reported the ICC involvement in Uganda's peace process in an exaggerated manner, it has been claimed (Allio, 2006; Nyakairu, 2005). Hence, the media had a role in complicating the peace building process, somewhat contributing to its failure.

Traditionally, the most commonly known and used media amongst northern Ugandan tribes were village discussions and the sounding of drums. These were the methods through which war and peace were announced within communities. The Langi reserved drums for war and peace announcements and village gatherings for announcing weddings, communal work and

funerals. Similarly, the village crier was the medium by which death and accidents were announced (Kibwanga, 2009). However, combinations of these media were also used to announce sessions and processes of peace building. Like in the case of a big conflict, a village crier would call for a village gathering where peace building processes would be inaugurated. A good example for other media to emulate is the NRC which has done it with the *Wang-o*, blending traditional practices and the modern one in peace building processes (Kibwanga, 2009; Nassanga, 2008). The current study builds on these indigenous efforts by looking at the social and psychological benefits of the cleansing ceremonies, from the perspectives of those that have partaken in them, community leaders and members of the community at large.

2.7.12 Peace Education

Among the modern peace practices in northern Uganda, this is one of the projects that were cited as being successful. The mechanism was spearheaded by community service organisations (CSOs) with huge emphasis on community input. Some of these organisations are the UNDP-funded and Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) School Peace. They involved the indigenous leaders in partnering with schools to teach children the Acholi community indigenous values on peace building as a way of creating peace in the region. Different clubs were established to take peace education to primary and secondary schools, where the values of peace were taught. The project was successful because it took cognizance of the traditional approaches to peace-building, conveniently ignored by other projects. Traditional values such as children learning peaceful life skills from their family, community and community leaders were salient and maintained throughout the project (UHRC, 2006). People were helped in their context, in that way healing would no longer be elusive but meaningful and reachable. The current study sought to document this valuable wisdom by engaging with the lived experiences of those that have partaken in indigenous cleansing rituals, in order to establish the contribution of such practices in bringing about reconciliation at the level of self, family, community, and the spiritual realm.

2.8 Overview of Peace Research Initiatives

Different individuals and institutions in the northern Ugandan conflict have carried out different peace building studies for different reasons ranging from academic requirements of masters and doctoral dissertations and theses. Most of them were commissioned to justify peace-building interventions (UCICC, 2007; Byrne, 2007). A common thread through all these studies is their reluctance to explore the potential of traditional peace building and reintegration practices in building sustainable peace. Very few attempts have been made to explore and document indigenous peace building mechanisms for healing and reintegration of survivors of violent conflict into the community as compared to the non-indigenous approaches. Many researchers in Northern Uganda have focused primarily on ethnic differences as a cause of the war (Byrne, 2007; Quinn, 2009). Further, most studies tend to look at the Ugandan conflict from a political point of view (e.g. Allen, 2006). There is a paucity of studies examining how people's lives were affected by the conflict, psychologically and emotionally (Baines, 2011). The way the conflict affected the ordinary lives of the people has not been documented in a holistic manner, nor have the indigenous mechanisms used to heal the society torn apart by decades of conflict as well as the social challenges encountered in the reintegration and healing process. The current study sought to change this trend by giving voice to the Acholi survivors of violent conflict as well as their home grown indigenous approaches to peace-building, in an effort to arrive at a holistic understanding of the re-integration process.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the genesis of the conflict in northern Uganda right from the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial periods. In addition, the chapter highlighted the consequences of the conflict and its impact on the people living in northern Uganda. Lastly, the chapter discussed the government's attempts to stop the conflict and the rehabilitation and reintegration of the former abductees focusing on various efforts that were sought by the government, NGOs, religious leaders and local community leaders. The chapter has argued that for peace initiatives to succeed in any community its efforts should take into account the values and philosophies of the people on the ground, their understanding of what peace and

reconciliation entails. Community members must be given voice and power to reach out and implement approaches that are meaningful to them. It is difficult for the outsiders/non-indigenous personnel to come and claim to be the “experts” in other people’s lives because every culture is endowed with mechanisms of healing themselves, which must be respected and upheld. This is a clear example of how peace-building approaches in Africa have always struggled to be sustainable.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical and philosophical frameworks which inform the study. There are no people who are culturally neutral because every individual is socialised into the philosophy and worldview of their culture. The word ‘culture’ is all-encompassing; it embraces the religious, social, psychological, economic, linguistic, political and all other aspects that pertain to life. Culture is correlated to a worldview of a people. It is rooted in a person’s mind because it structures a person’s philosophy and outlook on the world, and inculcates values and ideals of how a person views and experiences life (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). There may be other cultures that come into a person’s life but this does not do away with the core of who the person is (Chepkwony, 2014). This may be difficult for people from Western cultures to understand, particularly in the area of mental health. Psychology as a discourse tends to believe that Western counselling methodologies are universal. Yet the way in which a person perceives culture and illness is very much embedded in the spirituality and worldview into which that person has been socialised. Thus, in order to heal such a person holistically, the mental health practitioner needs to use interventions that are contextually meaningful. Assuming the relationship between counselling and worldviews, it stands to reason that people are least likely to benefit from counselling methodologies that are alien to their philosophies and worldview. This may create tension, confusions and a void in the person, amongst other issues. For this reason, an examination of African spirituality and philosophical worldview is essential in order to understand and help African people, in this case the Acholi of northern Uganda.

This chapter is divided into seven major sections. The chapter begins with a critical examination of the relationship between culture, health and illness, followed by a discussion of indigenous psychologies, African philosophical worldview, and African spirituality. Having introduced the broader African philosophical framework, the Acholi belief system about life and death, traditional healing and the re-integration initiative, and Acholi indigenous healing methods for the re-integration of survivors of violent conflict, are in turn presented and discussed.

3.2 Culture, Health and Illness

Akpomuvie (2014) states that culture has an influence on the way people understand health and illness. “Different ethnic groups and cultures recognize different illnesses, symptoms and causes and have developed different health-care systems and treatment strategies” (Akpomuvie, 2014, p. 51). Porter (2009) cites Uganda as worth noting; he states that Uganda’s greatest strengths in trauma recovery are the social support mechanisms within the culture. He asserts that identification and encouragement of these cultural support systems is vital to trauma recovery (Porter, 2009). Culture could be described as those ways of life of a particular group of people that are used to express feelings and emotions, for example in their artifacts, idioms, language and vocabulary specificity, rituals, manner, habits and characteristics (Idemudia, 2009; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). This is not to propose that culture is static but that it unfolds and changes in a specific context, not in a universal context (Nsamenang, 2007; Onyango, 2011). Cultural differences surrounding conceptions of health and illness, including understandings of the causes and course of trauma, are thus to be expected (Nkosi, 2012; Waldron, 2010).

The Western biomedical model perceives disease as something physical that attacks the body, due to forces that may be observable and/or non-observable to the human eye (Akpomuvie, 2014; Onyango, 2011; Pearce, 1989). Disease or illness, according to the Western biomedical models, is seen to originate predominantly from genetic, biological or other internal sources. Scientific explanations of illness from a Western biomedical point of view are often not tied to personal or symbolic structures; they are universally applied under particular methodological conditions, regardless of the socio-cultural realities of individuals or the practitioner’s beliefs (Clement, 1982 as cited in Waldron, 2010). This is at odds with indigenous conceptions of illness, which consider factors external to the individual, such as punishment by an angry spirit, witch or ghost, to be contributing to the illness. In indigenous societies illness is seen as ‘culture- bound’ since the explanations given for various illnesses are more often than not based on personal understandings of health and illness that reflect the specific society, culture, local histories and environments from which a person originates (Waldron, 2010). Hence, focusing on Western perspectives alone for cases of illness in

indigenous societies may not serve to heal all people universally. Ignoring cultural conceptions of illness in dealing with trauma and other psychological conditions, and dealing with them in an individualised manner in a community that believes in spirituality and holism, could be problematic (Papadopoulos, 2007). Van Dijk (2006 as cited in Drozdek & Wilson, 2007) cautions that the impact of post-traumatic damage must not be individualised, medicalised and reified. Symbolically, a traumatised individual could be imagined as a spider anchored in a multifaceted and often invisible web. Mbiti's (1970, p. 141) dictum "I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am" captures this understanding of an individual that is anchored in a web of significant relations as well as the idea of the self that is immersed in community. In that context therefore the web must not be overlooked since it metaphorically represents the victim's context, for all those intrapsychic, interpersonal, and socio-political domains that define him or her (Van Dijk, 2006 as cited in Drozdek & Wilson, 2007).

The above-mentioned differences in cultural conceptions of illness require Western models of counselling to be extended to incorporate other cultural considerations of trauma and healing (Idemudia, 2009). From an African indigenous perspective, illness is considered a social phenomenon that affects not only the individual but the community and the social environment as well (Edwards et al, 2011; Essien, 2013; Wessells, 2008). It is a holistic and spiritual conception of illness, and is concerned with mending broken relationships between people, ancestral and spiritual realm (Akpomovie, 2014; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012; Matoane, 2012; Nsamenang, 2007; Nwoye, 2010; Tsala, 1997; Waldron, 2010).

It is in view of the above-noted cultural influences relating to the understanding of illness that the current chapter presents the idea of indigenous psychologies as well as the African philosophical framework and worldview that inform indigenous African approaches to peace building. The major tenets of this philosophical framework are discussed, including the idea of the self-in-community and the notion of balance and imbalance. The chapter then proceeds to discuss indigenous approaches to peace-building with reference to this African framework and worldview. An account of Acholi methods for healing and peace building follows. The

chapter concludes with a re-statement of the gap in research with reference to the literature discussed.

3.3 Indigenous Psychologies

The term ‘indigenous psychologies’ refers to the study of psychological processes in their cultural context, which includes a consideration of the meanings, belief systems, values and theories that are relevant to the indigenous people under study (Allwood, 2011; Jordan, 2011; Kim & Berry, 1993; Mukuka, 2013; Sue & Sue, 2005). This definition is closely related to the definition of African psychology by Kambon (as cited in Wilson & Williams, 2013), which states that indigenous psychology is a system of knowledge concerning the nature of the social universe from an indigenous worldview. This approach advocates for knowledge and skills to be understood in terms of people’s beliefs about who they are and their functioning in the family, culturally, socially and in their environmental context (Jordan, 2011; Kim & Berry, 1993; Uichol, Kuo-Shu & Kwang-Kuo, 2006; Yang, 2000). Indigenous psychology is not, however, about indigenisation or adaptation of Western psychologies so that they can be used in indigenous contexts (Allwood, 2011; Kim & Berry, 1993; Yang, 2000). Instead, the necessity of indigenous psychologies is to do with developing a psychology that is socially and culturally relevant to the culture/s under study, using local philosophies and worldview as the point of departure (Baloyi, 2008; Kim & Berry, 1993; Matoane, 2012).

Betancourt, Spelman, Onyango and Bolton (2009) note that multiple studies have found that war survivors from a variety of cultures are at increased risk for a range of psychosocial problems. To deal with these problems, it is of paramount importance that the causes of illness and disease are understood holistically without separating traditional norms, beliefs and values from this understanding (Matoane, 2012; Nkosi, 2012). However, most investigations into the treatment of psychosocial problems are based on Western concepts which take the local context for granted and ignore how affected communities, families and young people perceive these problems. Understanding local perceptions is essential in ensuring that local priorities are addressed in ways that are most likely to be acceptable and

effective. For this reason, amongst others, the development of indigenous psychologies is essential.

Noting the difficulties of applying Western psychological theories and methods in different cultural contexts, some indigenous, Western-trained psychologists have been vocal in criticising Western-based psychologies. Amongst these psychologists are Hiroshi Azuma in Japan, Sang-Chin Choi in Korea, Michael Durojaiye in Nigeria, Virgilio Enriquez and Alfred Lagmay in the Philippines, David Ho and Chung-Fang Yang in Hong Kong, BameNsamenang in Cameroon, José Miguel Salazar in Venezuela, DurganandSinha and Jai B. P. Sinha in India and Kuo-Shu Yang and Kwang-Kuo Hwang in Taiwan. These psychologists emphasise that each culture should be looked at keenly and understood from its own point of reference, which includes their religious, philosophical and ecological context (Durojaiye, 1993).

The study of human psychological processes from an indigenous perspective requires an examination of people's skills, beliefs, practices and knowledge with reference to theories and belief systems that are unique to the indigenous group under study. This is because human experiences only make sense when they are understood from the perspective of the people being studied (Aduo & Omona, 2013; Allwood, 2011; Baloyi, 2008; Ho, 1998; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012; Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006a; Matoane, 2012; Mukuka, 2013; Smith, Spillane & Annus, 2006). The use of non-indigenous approaches in indigenous settings has invariably been criticised for its medical and individual leaning and labelling of survivors (Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995). Further criticism of using non-indigenous approaches in indigenous contexts is related to the issue of inequitable cultural representation during the postcolonial era, which has perpetuated Western political and social authority in the modern world (Bhabha, 1994; Waldron, 2010). This is supported by several scholars who assert that in contemporary psychology practice there is a continuing pattern of injustice evident because indigenous systems of knowledge and practice are still being marginalised and belittled (Nkosi, 2012; Nsamenang, 2007; Onyango, 2011; Waldron, 2010; Wessells, 1992). This has been further aggravated by the marginalisation of African voices due to ascarcity of publication houses and the poor state and inadequate development of those that

do exist (Nsamenang, 2007). This is because such houses are often faced with serious difficulties related to the commercial value of production and distribution of the publications (Serpell, 1984). The result then is that African scholars have no choice other than to turn to external publication houses. The consequence of this is that they have to comply with the international market which favours western European or North-American theories and epistemologies. This results in African scholars being externally-oriented and not speaking to the concerns of their own people, their own issues, and in their own terms and language (Nsamenang, 2007). Another unfortunate consequence is that African scholars do not write in their own languages but in European languages which cannot accurately capture the exact meaning of, for example, African proverbs and idioms; thus their full meanings are distorted and watered down (Ojiaku, 1974 as cited in Nsamenang, 2007). This therefore means that the bulk of human experience and the 'truth' in the African world are "inaccessible to science" (MacGaffey, 1981, p. 229 as cited in Nsamenang, 2007, p. 46).

In addition, Waldron (2010), in his study on the production of knowledge in the health systems in Western and non-Western societies, argues that scientific knowledge in Western medicine serves to foster and sustain the marginalisation of 'African indigenous' health knowledge. Waldron (2010) studied conceptualisations of illness, symptom presentation and help-seeking among African peoples of the diaspora. He found that the epistemological terrain upon which both indigenous and Western health professionals traverse is not level, resulting in a hierarchy of knowledge, as well as superficial dichotomies between indigenous and Western health approaches that obscure opportunities for alliances at the epistemological crossroads.

Western psychological theory and practice in the African context often pays little attention to the experiences of people concerning communality and spirituality (McCormick, 2009; Poonwassie, 2006; Stewart, 2008; Trimble, 1981). As Dzokoto and Wen Lo (2005) state, there are differences between cultural norms and worldviews, depending on the culture in question. It is important that psychologists and social scientists in general strive to understand the philosophies and worldviews that inform interactions between people, as well as people's interactions within their communities and with the natural environment.

While several scholars, as discussed above, provide a convincing case for indigenous healing practices, it should be borne in mind that these approaches to healing do also have their shortcomings, which may militate against the healing of survivors of violence. For example, in some cultures, the weak members of the society may be subjected to abuse and marginalisation, forcing them to involuntarily accept any prescription of judgement passed by the custodians of indigenous practices, who are often elders and men. Gender and social status discrimination should thus not be ignored in the study of indigenous healing practices. McAuliffe (2013) refers to the often times narrow and patriarchal concerns relating to indigenous healing practices, where there is a tendency to reinforce power hierarchies and an inclination for frequent abuses of human rights to be committed. In most African situations, therefore, the women and child survivors of violent conflict may be discriminated against during the healing process in favour of males and elders (Gordon, 2009; McAuliffe, 2013; Waldron, 2010). It is thus important to study how both men and women are affected by indigenous healing practices following the cessation of hostilities.

The above-mentioned critique of indigenous healing practices notwithstanding, the researcher, in her capacity as a psychologist working with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, has come to question the universal applicability of general psychology that is informed by Western, individualistic philosophical and value orientations. Phillips (1990) enjoins psychology practitioners not only to have cultural awareness but also to be authentic in their practice. Cultural awareness refers to the ability to be aware of and accept one's culture as a psychological given. It is linked to an understanding of who one is (i.e. 'who am I?') as a practitioner. In most indigenous contexts this may entail moving away from thinking about oneself in individualistic and atomistic terms to seeing oneself as a member of a human community, with both visible and invisible elements. It is also important for psychology practitioners to be authentic (Phillips, 1990). According to the Africentric worldview, authenticity means 'realness' of a person. Phillips observed that:

As a community we ask that a person "Be for Real" and it is this authentic essence that becomes the basis for effective and satisfying relationships. It is the degree of realness expressed that influences the direction and depth of psychological movement. Authenticity is a state as well as a process (Phillips, 1990, p. 59).

Phillips (1990) adds that a mentally healthy person continuously grows closer in connectivity with his or her spiritual self. He reiterates the importance of nurturing this quality of authenticity in oneself and in the experience of it in others because the process of nurturing authenticity is itself an authentic act. To be authentic, according to Phillips (1990), means being spontaneous. Phillips (1990) observed that any person who is able to respond and interact with the environment in a natural and effortless manner is a mentally healthy person. He observed that:

By being spontaneous, we are being more trusting of ourselves and of our connection to others; because we are in harmony, then our intentions are trustworthy, and we can feel freer to respond naturally to our ongoing ever changing environment. When we are spontaneous, authentic, harmonious, then our natural healing and problem solving mechanisms are functioning properly. We are NTU (Phillips, 1990, p. 60).

With the above comments in mind, the researcher felt unreal and inauthentic in her attempt to assist survivors of violent conflict with reference to the use of imported theoretical frameworks and this cast doubt in her mind as to whether she was able to be helpful to the survivors. Kim et al. (2006, p. 4) have been equally critical of the wholesale application of Western-derived psychologies, arguing, “If general psychology is universal, then indigenous psychology would not be necessary”. It is on these grounds that the researcher turned to the study of indigenous approaches to healing survivors of violent conflict. It should be noted that the researcher’s argument does not amount to a wholesale rejection of Western-originated knowledge, nor does she seek to extol reified indigenous knowledge systems as a panacea for all local problems. All knowledge systems exist in communication with other knowledges. Like all knowledge traditions, indigenous knowledge systems have always been and continue to be in touch with other systems of knowledge (Mkhize, 2004). This is in line with the fluid, cyclical, open-ended and inclusive epistemology characteristic of indigenous African approaches towards life in general (Grills, 2002). Thus, indigenous ways of knowing eschew either-or explanations (Dixon, 1977) and in that sense they are much closer to the connected approaches to knowing as discussed by Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy and Belenky (1996) in their edited volume entitled *Knowledge, Difference and Power*. Consistent with the above, the researcher sought to explore the various ways in which indigenous and non-indigenous peace building approaches could possibly complement each other, while at the same time remaining cognisant of the inherent tensions and power dimensions between these

knowledge traditions. This requires that each tradition be given space to articulate itself and it is with this view in mind that the researcher seeks to give voice to marginalised, African indigenous methods for the rehabilitation of survivors of violent conflict (cf. Bing & Reid, 1996).

Gergen, Gulerce, Lock and Misra (1996) posit that there is certainly a need to develop context-sensitive theories. This necessitates, amongst other aspects, an understanding of how the self is formed and articulated in each cultural context. It is against the background considered above that African philosophical approaches and worldviews, including the idea of the self-in-community, are discussed in the sections that follow. An understanding of African worldviews, philosophies and views on selfhood not only enables an account of the shortcomings of non-indigenous rehabilitation methods to be developed but also assists in situating intervention methods in their social and cultural contexts.

3.4 African Philosophical Worldview: The Africentric¹ Paradigm

The main theoretical point of departure in this study is the Africentric paradigm. The Africentric viewpoint emerged in the 1960s from the thought of a group of African-American philosophers hailing from different universities but in solidarity in their quest to come up with new ways of analysing information. These authors placed emphasis on considering information from a ‘black perspective’ as opposed to the ‘white perspective’ which was the norm in American academy at the time. Hence, in the 1970s, thinkers such as Asante started voicing the need for an Afrocentric orientation to data (Asante, 2006). However, Afrocentrism as a philosophical and theoretical concept was only embraced later, during the 1980s, after the publication of major works by Asante namely: *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987); *Afrocentricity* (1988); and *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* (1990) (Mkabela, 2005).

As a theory of change, Afrocentricity is opposed to theories and ideologies that place Africans at the periphery of human thought and experience. Afrocentricity strives to reposition Africans back to who they are as a people, as subjects, from being objects in the

¹ ‘Afrocentricity’ and ‘Africentricity’ are used interchangeably in this study, though the recent trend is to lean towards the latter term.

Western project of domination (Asante, 2006) The theory objects to hierarchical philosophical views and puts forth the notion that all cultures should be respected on the same level (Asante, 2009). The aforementioned author further asserts that this is imperative because Africa's distancing from self, from history and from community—a product of Western domination— has been a long one.

Researchers contend that the Afrocentric theoretical paradigm deals with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people as centered, located, oriented and grounded (Asante, 1987, 2009 as cited in Mkabela, 2005). The paradigm assigns supreme worth to the importance of African ideals and values articulated in the highest forms of African culture, and purports that this awareness can be a useful characteristic of a radical approach to challenge an existing facts or situations, in this case the tendency to view information and situations from a 'white perspective'. This is grounded in the idea that African people need to reassert themselves urgently if they are to achieve sanity (Asante, 2009).

Afrocentrism is premised on collective identity; it emphasises interconnectedness and spirituality. The Africentric worldview assumes that human identity is collectivist in nature (Gade, 2012; Graham, 1999). Schiele (1996) reiterates the spiritual, non-material component of a human being as paramount and equally as valid as the material component. These key principles and values underpin the Afrocentric worldview. The Acholi people of northern Uganda practice the aforementioned principles of African belief systems. Several scholars (Baldwin, 1986; Baloyi, 2008; Bojuwoye, 2013; Holdstock, 2000; Mazama, 2001; Mkhize, 2005; Onyango, 2011; Wessells, 2008) have referred to the African social and cultural experience as being defined by a distinctive worldview which, amongst other aspects, incorporates the centrality of the community over the individual, respect for tradition, harmony with nature, a high level of spirituality and ethical concern, sociality of selfhood, veneration of ancestors and unity of being. As Baldwin (1986) notes, it is important to appraise the problems of people of African ancestry with reference to African philosophy and belief systems, and to document what, if any, modifications they may have undergone in the course of their encounter with other belief systems. Baldwin (1986) goes on to state that

African psychology is ingrained in the nature of black culture based on particular indigenous philosophical assumptions, originally indigenous to Africa. Taking into consideration the views discussed above, this study seeks to explore the African (Acholi) communitarian worldview as well as its bearing on the process of reintegrating survivors of violent conflict into the community.

African societies view life in an interdependent manner (Bojuwoye; 2005, 2013; Graham, 1999; Holdstock, 2000; Karanja, 2008; Mkhize, 2004; Mukuka, 2013; Myers & Speight, 2010; Nkosi; 2012; Nwoye; 2007; Wessells, 2008). It is for this reason that interventions put in place to deal with trauma healing need to have a holistic approach in addressing the general aspects of human life. Wessells and Monteiro (2006) reiterate that interventions need to address a range of issues including the person's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, such as personal relationships with family and community, and spiritual relationships with God and the ancestors. War and violence in general destabilise the equilibrium between people, leading to disarray within and among people, including all they may stand for and relate to as a people. As a result, an Africentric way of looking at social phenomena beckons as a better way of understanding African people in context, in this case the Acholi survivors of violent conflict, as this allows for the ability to help them more meaningfully and in a way that resonates with their worldview of life.

According to Phillips (1990) and Grills, Belgrave, Jones, Kennon, Gray and Phillips (1998), the core principles of the Africentric paradigm are best described by the NTU approach to healing. Jahn (1961) asserts that NTU is an African Bantu concept that describes a universal, unifying force which touches all parts of life. The approach uses the basic principles of *Nguzo Saba* as guidelines for harmonious living. *Nguzo saba* is a communitarian value system (Asante, 1987). The basic principles of NTU include harmony, balance, interconnectedness, cultural awareness, and authenticity. Phillips (1990) goes on to say that the NTU approach takes into cognisance the fact that the healing process is a natural process in which the healer assists the client to rediscover natural alignment. It is important to understand each of these principles in the context of this study as well as other critical components of an African philosophical worldview such as ritual cleansing, the holistic view

of life and the idea of the person-in community. The following section expands on the principles of the Africentric paradigm.

3.4.1 Harmony/Balance

Harmony, according to Phillips (1990), is a belief that there is a spiritual force to all life and that the spiritual dimension is a connective link to the mental and physical spheres of humankind. The overriding focus of life, in terms of the NTU point of view, is to be in harmony with the forces of life. Harmony or balance refers to life as a dynamic process of energy fields and forces; a person's task in life is to balance these seemingly competitive forces in a manner that brings about a unified whole. Obasi (2002) outlines four dimensions of order. First are the laws of nature, which allow nature to be predictable. Second, is the moral order among people, which produces value systems that support and enable them to live harmoniously with each other, with the universe and with the Supreme Being. Third, is the religious order in which the Supreme Being and other entities of the spiritual realm actively engage and influence world events; and fourth, is the mystic order in which traditional medicine and healing practices occur. These are the dimensions of order that work to maintain harmony and equilibrium (Obasi, 2002). For the Acholi community these dimensions were disturbed by the war in Gulu and Kitgum, creating as such a situation of imbalance. As alluded to above, this imbalance has necessitated the use of healing rituals to restore balance and harmony for the survivors of violent conflict and for the entire community. The current study sought to establish how Acholi methods of healing and re-integration could be used in restoring harmony in the community for the survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum, northern Uganda.

The idea of harmony and equilibrium forms an important aspect of an indigenous African philosophy towards life (Eagle, 2004). For example, in Zulu traditional cosmology the universe is understood as a system in which all of life is undivided and where plants, animals, humans, ancestors, earth, sky and the entire universe all co-exist in varying states of balance between order and disorder, harmony and chaos (Eagle, 2004). According to Baldwin (1986, p. 244), humanity forms an integral and inseparable part of nature, a "oneness of being". All aspects of nature, including consciousness, are interdependent and integral. In addition,

Baldwin (1986) states that together all these aspects of nature form one phenomenal reality – a communal phenomenology. Obasi (2002); and Obasi, E. M., & Leong, F. L (2009) support this view, arguing that it brings about order and interconnection. Thus, if the cosmic order is not disturbed, the universe will continue to operate in a harmonious, rhythmic and continuous manner.

The worldview presented above does not separate the living and non-living, the natural and supernatural, material and immaterial, conscious and unconscious, as Western approaches do. These sets of phenomena are viewed as unities in which the seen and the unseen exist in a dynamic interrelationship. The past, present and future harmoniously weave into one another (Holdstock, 2000). The idea of a connected, interdependent and harmoniously balanced universe is one of the lenses through which Africans or people of African ancestry, especially those who are still connected to their cultural roots such as the Acholi, view the world and their place in it. Applying the principle of harmony to the current study, it could be argued that in the Acholi community, these forces of life were interfered with as a result of the war, which has hence disrupted the harmony in the entire community and has created disequilibrium. Harmony and equilibrium are significant to the African (Phillips, 1990). Therefore, counsellors and social workers helping the Acholi survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum need to take this worldview into consideration in order to provide holistic healing.

Spiritual harmony is an essential aspect of the idea of balance or equilibrium. African indigenous systems place a high value on spirituality, family and community wellbeing. The notion that the universe is both visible and invisible (the two are interconnected) is grounded in the African belief system. Community is both a society and a unity, which is made up of the visible world of those who are living physically and the invisible world of the ancestors, divinities and the souls of children who are yet to be born into different individual kin-groups (Ejizu, n.d). African indigenous systems view spiritual harmony as a state where the living community practices traditions that revere and respect the ancestors who they believe protect them. Consequently, failure to honour traditions can result in the ancestors removing their protection and instances in which traditions are not honoured thus create fear and spiritual

discord among the living. In indigenous African epistemology, illness is a manifestation of discord or imbalance in the spiritual and other realms of life and healing requires the restoration of harmony or balance. Disturbances in the psycho-social realms have a spiritual dimension and should hence be addressed through culturally constructed spiritual practices, with properly qualified traditional healers playing a leading part in that process (Honwana, 1998; Wessells, 2006).

For traditional Africans, the community is fundamentally sacred, rather than secular, and is surrounded by a number of religious forms and symbols. Community comprises a societal unity of both the invisible and visible members, particularly ancestors and spiritual beings, powerful and by far superior to human beings (Bojuwoye, 2013; Ejizu, n.d). The invisible beings are embodied by special kinds of symbols like carved objects, shrines and sacred altars (Bojuwoye, 2013; Mukuka, 2013; Wessells, 2008; Wessells & Monteiro, 2006). They may perhaps be recalled in personal names given to children, especially in cases where particular spirit beings or ancestors are thought to have been reincarnated in individual children. Their reality and presence in the community are appropriately recognised and honoured among various traditional African groups. These ancestors in turn protect the living. Ancestors and spiritual beings, if angered, as in the event of family members living in discord or failing to offer libation rituals, can cause disharmony which may lead to several difficulties in a person's significant stages of development and passage through life. The difficulties may range from spiritual, social and physical issues to other misfortunes in life (Bojuwoye, 2013; Onyango, 2011). In African belief systems, disregarding the ancestors could result in disaster for human beings and the community and may disturb the harmony if the ancestors are not appeased. Appeasement and healing can be performed through healing rituals.

3.4.1.1 Harmony and Balance in the Context of Patriarchy

Despite what has been discussed above about harmony, it is questionable whether balance and harmony can possibly be maintained in situations in which certain members of the society may be abused and marginalised, such as in a patriarchal society. Healing practices that favour males and the more powerful members of a society may result in disharmony among the less powerful members of the society. Patriarchy as a notion was not a pervasive feature of indigenous African societies prior to the colonial invasion and the spread of colonial ideologies on the continent (Emecheta, 1982; Usman, 2012). Colonialism in Africa not only signified a forced new form of administration and/or government on indigenous peoples or societies, but was also a scheme of the ultimate reorganisation of African societal orders. Many cultures have been reshaped, sometimes repeatedly, because of colonial coercion (Usman, 2012). This has happened through the enforcement of rules and regulations and the alteration of social structures and people's responsibilities. These processes have resulted in new forms of economic interactions, gender relations and social norms, incorporating aspects from both the forced European and indigenous African ways of living. Thus, these changes of power have contributed to profound social changes, including the meanings associated with gender roles and their relative behaviours. As Matory (1994) asserts, the intrusive colonial systems shaped power around gender and sex systems. These new cross-social systems had and continue to have negative consequences chiefly for women because colonialism helped to reinforce indigenous patriarchy and introduced new forms of sexism (Emecheta, 1982). The beginning of colonial rule brought to Africa the European notion that women belonged in the home, nurturing their family (Isike, 2009).

Chinwezu (1987 as cited in Isike, 2009) states that the most damaging impact on Africa is not so much political or economic but rather the psychological colonisation of the mind from which Africa is yet to break free. Colonialism brought about the disruption of traditional systems of production in pre-colonial societies by introducing oppressive forms of social stratification through the instrumentation of the colonial state. In so doing, it reinforced the existing systems of social inequality which resulted in the loss of power on the part of women. Men have henceforth exploited women's lack of power in an attempt to maintain their privilege of dangerous masculinities, often justified by a misconception or

misrepresentation of African culture (Isike, 2009). In fact, prior to colonialism, African women held complementary rather than subordinate positions to men in the economies of their societies. Women were involved in farming, trade and craft production, roles which were not associated with women in America or Europe at the time (Terborg & Rushing, 1996 as cited in Isike, 2009). In addition, Isike (2009) points out that although men dominated in terms of political power in pre-colonial times, social power was based on seniority (age) rather than gender *per se*.

Examples from several African countries support the above-mentioned analysis of gender relations in Africa prior to colonialism. For example, in the Acholi society methods of economic output were complementary and based on gender relations (gender roles) related to how people worked in their farms with crops and livestock products (Hodgson, 2008; Korieh, 2007). In the case of the Yoruba culture, gender was not a defining concept; people were not divided by sex but rather by lineage (Oyëwùmí, 1997). It is important to note that the above analysis does not suggest that there was no marginalisation of women in pre-colonial Africa, nor is it an attempt to romanticise patriarchy or mask oppressive inequalities that existed during the period. For instance, in some early societies men controlled women's sexuality through means such as early marriage, widowhood inheritance and food taboos (Isike, 2009). The subordination of females in matrilineal societies such as the Baule in Ivory Coast, Ashante in Ghana and Luguru in Tanzania was reinforced through cultural practices, for instance long puberty rites, which kept women in seclusion from their first menstrual cycle to marriage (Aina, 2003 as cited in Isike, 2009). The thrust of the argument is that in Africa patriarchy was by no means a universal or taken-for-granted aspect of the relations between men and women. Pointing at the complexities of the roles played by men and women in pre-colonial Africa dispenses with the argument that patriarchy is and always has been an African cultural norm, which in turn aids in challenging male chauvinism in Africa today. It is important to highlight that gender remains one of the most important sources of imbalanced or disharmonious relationships in most African societies to date, and this is more so in the context of war or conflict. For example, during the conflict in northern Uganda, Acholi women were used as sex slaves of war by the LRA. It is thus important to study the

specific challenges experienced by women during the integration process and how they may have benefited from the healing rituals that have been performed.

McAuliffe (2013) is critical of the idea of consensus and harmony, asserting that it may result in an unhealthy constraining or oppressing of legitimate resentments, in the absence of review associated with indigenous method procedures. However, it is not quite true that the indigenous methods lack review and critique. The absence of critique and review of indigenous methods was imposed by colonial masters as a means of oppressing the locals, which was implemented through the authority of local chiefs (Ramosé, 1999). Among the Nguni and Sotho/Tswana people of South Africa, for example, there is a saying that *inkosi inkosi ngabantu/kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*, which means 'it is through the people that the king governs, that he becomes king'. This extols the king to always listen to the concerns of his subjects. Likewise, the tradition of dialogue is a feature of many indigenous African cultures, one such example being the necessity of the king or leader to engage with his subjects in *ibandla, legotla orimbizo*, a meeting called to discuss matters of mutual concern. Different views are sought, expressed, and listened to. The *legotla* or *baraza* (Kenya) is a palaver tradition, whereby people gather to discuss a matter until they find a common solution. It is through practices such as these that indigenous procedures find their renewal. Thus, the balance and harmony that is sought in indigenous practices does not suppress expression of different views; instead, it seeks to ensure that all views can be expressed and debated in order to find the best possible solution for the community as a whole (Derek & Veeda, 2013; Mangena, 2015). Different opinions and views are expressed, but with the sole purpose of bringing people, community and the ancestors together in balance and harmony, not creating anarchy and divisions which perpetuate imbalance and lack of harmony.

3.4.2 Interconnectedness

As indicated in the sections above, in African cultures it is believed that there is a cosmic universal energy or life force, NTU that forms a connective tissue or link between all phenomena. According to Phillips (1990, 1998), NTU unites the entire universe, and this incorporates an unbroken chain of communication between the living and the living-dead, the deities and the Supreme Being (Broodryk, 2006; Ntsoane, 2003). Violent acts such as war

disrupt the connection not only between community members but also between the living and the living-dead and the deities, as the latter abhor acts of violence. In the context of this study, therefore, it could be argued that the social and spiritual equilibrium of the Acholi community has been disturbed by the violent conflict in northern Uganda (Bird, Higgins & McKay, 2011; Blattman & Annan, 2008; Dolan, 2005; Finnstrom, 2003; Kustenbauder, 2010). From an African worldview, the community is the focal point of departure for individual diagnosis and treatment or healing. Interconnectedness can only be experienced through relationships of unity and oneness; for when people are interconnected, it brings about sensitivity to others and to the larger environment (Mangena, 2015; Phillips, 1990). Healing in an African worldview takes place within the realm of relationships (Baloyi, 2008; Bojuwoye, 2011; Essien, 2013; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012; Mangena, 2015; Mpofo, 2011).

The idea of interconnectedness is in line with the idea of the communal self, which is explored in depth in the section that follows. Nwoye (2007) refers to the relational and inclusive character of the African self, or the notion common in Africa of the self as a participant in the lives of others, because it puts emphasis on the phenomenon of social solidarity including the living and the living-dead (ancestors). The description above therefore implies that part of the gravity of the African self is a dialectic that connects him or her and members of his or her community (Tushini, 2011). However, if the person is cast away from the community for any particular reason, then part of the self is no longer there (Nwoye, 2007). For example, when death occurs and the person has died away from home or at war and is not given a proper burial for his or spirit to rest peacefully, the dead person's spirit becomes troublesome in the area where they died causing *umnyama* (Tushini, 2011). *Umnyama* literally means a cast of the shadow of darkness. This can bring about spiritual weakness and being prone to disease on the part of the community members until symbolic healing is performed (Ngubane, 1977). This is conceptualised as pollution, a marginal state believed to exist between life and death (Ngubane, 1977). It is seen as a spiritual force which weakens a person's resistance to diseases, paving the way for conditions of misfortune, disagreeableness and repulsiveness, therefore bringing about disequilibrium among the family members or the community (Tushini, 2011). This is because an indigenous African perspective attributes events in the visible world to events in the invisible world of the

ancestors (Wessells & Monteiro, 2006). This spiritual cosmology has a bearing on indigenous African perspectives towards trauma and its management (Tushini, 2011). For example, Wessells and Monteiro (2006) cite the case of a child soldier who was reported to be having problems with concentration and sleep. On further examination it was established that the child had killed a man during a fire fight and that the man's spirit was coming to him during the night and asking the child why he had done that to him. Purification rituals performed by indigenous healers to get rid of bad spirits are better designed to deal with problems of this nature (Wessells & Monteiro, 2006).

If problems such as the one mentioned above were approached from an individualistic point of view, the connectivity between the afflicted person and his wider social environs, including the spiritual domain, would remain unaddressed (Wessells & Monteiro, 2006). Honwana (2006) cites the case of Angola for where problems such as these are understood to be communal rather than individual. People believe that if a boy comes home from war, but has not completed the purification rituals, he will bring spiritual contamination back to his family members and to the community, which will cause misfortunes and bad health. The violent conflict among the Acholi people has created many misfortunes, disagreeableness and disequilibrium (disconnection) within the Acholi people and in the Acholi community. Thus, peace building at all levels necessitates the restoration of a connection between the world of the living and the invisible world of the ancestors, which can only be achieved through rituals to re-unite the living and the living-dead in community again.

Interconnectedness extends beyond people, their immediate environs and the ancestors; it also incorporates the connection between the living, the living-dead and the land. Hence, in African cultures any death that is caused on the land wounds not only human beings but the land as well. This differs from hegemonic Western understandings of healing, which centre on the biological, psychological, and physical realms of healing. Indigenous traditional healing takes cognisance of the connection between human beings, the land and the broader cosmos. The earth is not only a resource to be exploited; it is a living entity as well as a source of life that deserves respect. From an African indigenous viewpoint, the earth's health is very much connected to human health, and this connection is expressed through intricate

relationships to the land (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Hence, African indigenous worldviews also incorporate the ritual cleansing of the land which was violated by the spilling of blood. Individual trauma counselling within the confines of the counsellor's office is at variance with the complex understanding of connectivity and it is for this reason, amongst others, that indigenous counselling approaches to trauma ought to be given serious attention.

Further, Western-trained counsellors do not have the legitimacy to carry out rituals to reconnect people with the land; this responsibility falls on the elders who are the religious and spirituals leaders of the community. In practice, this means, in indigenous African epistemology, that both the ritual cleansing of the land as well as the actual place of healing (i.e. in a confined office space versus the community setting) are paramount. Western approaches to counselling do not take the above into consideration as they are mostly confined to resolving individual or intra-psychic traumas. Healing, in indigenous African thought, does not take place in isolation; it must take cognisance of the webs of relationships in which the person is immersed (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). The current study sought to address this disconnect between Western approaches to trauma healing and the experiential and spiritual realities of the Acholi of northern Uganda.

3.4.3 The Holistic View of Life

In indigenous African thought, life is understood holistically; it encompasses considerations of the mutual influences of religion, culture, traditional practices and rituals in the broader cosmic networks of relationships (Baloyi, 2008; Essien, 2013; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). Different interrelated aspects of the human being, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, can be addressed using indigenous traditional healing. Imbalances in a person may arise due to weaknesses in any of these areas (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). From an African point of view, life is not fragmented; people are to each other and the rest of the cosmos an intricate network of relations and interdependencies. Hence, a fragmented and individualised approach to healing, consistent with the dominant Western worldview, does not resonate with the African indigenous concept of healing. In traditional African thought, healing is a relational phenomenon. Healing of any kind be it emotional, physical, cognitive or behavioural, is at all times understood from the person's perspective and the influence of

higher cosmic forces. Traditional Africans perceive illness or spiritual disturbance of any kind as a representation of relationships in suffering and unpleasant human experiences (Baloyi, 2009; Washington, 2010). Bujo (2003, p. 19) states that an indigenous African epistemology does not conceive of reality in terms of “either/or” explanations but with reference to the logic of “both/and”, what Dixon (1977) calls diunital logic.

Mkhize (2004) supports the above-mentioned holistic and non-linear, indigenous epistemology. He states that, for the most part, indigenous societies do not view the world in a mechanical cause-effect manner; rather they subscribe to a holistic view of the world in which all the other life forces are mutually influenced by each system. In other words, God, human beings, ancestors and the cosmos all dance in harmony. As Baloyi (2008) asserts, the living-dead, the yet-to-be-born, and the Divine Spirit (God) constitute the African cosmic unity. As such, ideally communities are interconnected, interdependent and live in constant interaction and coherence with each other. Within this cosmic unity, notes Mkhize (2003, p. 70):

A dynamic interdependence exists between all elements within the system, which are capable of influencing and being influenced by others, depending on their life force. This dynamism means that reality can be understood by studying the system as whole, rather than isolated parts. Similarly, personhood cannot be conceived independently of the relationship between the individual and his or her community.

Hence, the African indigenous fabric of life cannot be compartmentalised but rather it should be taken as interdependent and holistic. It is with this view in mind that the researcher sought to explore the Acholi indigenous mechanisms for reintegrating survivors of violent conflict into the community. The prevailing understanding is that peace building needs to be undertaken holistically and with reference to the idea systems of the people involved, if it is to be successful (Quinn, 2006a; Somjee, 2000).

3.4.4 *UmntuNgumuntu Ngabantu: The Communal Nature of the Self*

In traditional African thought, a person, *umuntu* or *motho*, is a person-in-community. This view of life is characterised by communality, collectiveness and oneness, without which a person does not exist (what has been termed diunital logic by Dixon, 1977), cooperation, and sharing (Nefale & Van Dyk, 2003). This is evidenced in expressions such as the following in

various Southern African languages: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Nguni), which means “we are people because of other people” (Broodryk, 2006, p. 6); *motho ke motho ka batho* (Sotho/Tswana); and *muthu ubebelwa munwe* (Tshivenda) meaning a person is born for the other (Mkhize, 2004), all of which point the notion of human interdependence (Kamwangamalu, 1999). In particular, the above sayings highlight the view that it is in recognising the other and in being recognised by them, that people attain their humanity. Mbiti’s (1970) famous statement, “I belong, therefore I am”, captures the same sentiment.

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* undergirds traditional African approaches to peace building and healing (Mangena, 2015; Washington, 2010). Ramose (2002) defines *Ubuntu* in terms of how the being of personhood in indigenous African thought is anchored in the universe. Ramose (2002) argues that if ontology and epistemology are the main disciplines of philosophy, then it can be said that the genesis of African philosophy was established in and through *Ubuntu*. Variants of the word *Ubuntu* are found in most Bantu languages in Africa. The Kikuyu of central Kenya and Kimeru of the eastern regions in Kenya refer to *umunduan* and *umuntu* respectively. The Sukuma and the Hayas in Tanzania have a similar word, *bumuntu*, while the shiTsonga and shiTswa of Mozambique refer to *vumuntu*. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Bobangi talk about *bomoto* and the Kikongo and giKwese of the same country use *gimuntu*. Socio-linguistically, *Ubuntu* is a multidimensional concept that speaks of collective sharedness, caring, hospitality and communalism (Kamwangamalu, 1999; Washington, 2010). Thus, “A human becomes a person through others” (Edwards, 2001, p. 2). The human personality is believed to be shaped and developed in community with others. Human nature is viewed as an interdependent, inseparable whole (Nefale & Van Dyk, 2003). The group is seen as the embodiment of reality and the only framework in which individual self-actualisation can be realised (Moodley, 1999). This stance towards life, which is also captured in the idea of spirituality, namely the fact that spirit permeates all existence, ought to be taken into account in facilitating healing in indigenous African contexts.

At the broader level, the idea of *Ubuntu* finds a partial expression in what has been termed an interdependent construal of the self that is prevalent in non-Western cultures, mostly in

indigenous societies such as Asia and Africa (Matsumoto, 1994; Mwawenda, 1995 as cited in Mkhize, 2003; Myers, 2007). These cultures emphasise the primary connection among people. In these cultures, people are interdependent within their family groups (ethnic, nation and extended family). They have norms, priorities and goals within their groups, and this is what directs and communally shapes the way they behave. Wilson and Williams (2013) argue that it is by virtue of participation that we are able to live and fulfil the highest and truest expression of ourselves as human beings. Mwawenda (1999) emphasises the importance of the extended family and community in general in indigenous African thought systems. Life manifests itself within the context of the community based on a common purpose. While individuality is recognised, the community exists prior to the individual and it is by virtue of participation in a community that individuals realise their potential. Hence, there is a dynamic interdependence between the individual and society: individuals are nurtured by the community and in return they are expected to partake in the process aimed at taking the community to the next and higher level of functioning. Social responsibility towards others is regarded highly in indigenous African epistemology. The individual and the community are always in interaction (Rudowicz, 2003; Tshikuku, 2001), the primary aim of which is to bring harmony of one's personal interests and goals in line with that of other members of the group and not to stand as an individual (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Mbiti (1970) is among the first to have expressed the communality of the African view of life in a way that captured the attention of international scholarship, in his now well-known maxim, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am". Supporting Mbiti (1970), Wilson and Williams (2013, p. xx) also state that "one's humanity is made possible through the humanity of others". This communal, fluid and interdependent idea of the self is in sharp contrast to the dominant, Western individualistic conception of the self, which prioritises psychological abstraction and individual accomplishment, consistent with the motto, "to thine own self be true" (Myers, 2007, p. 28). The current study seeks to understand how returnees from the war in northern Uganda fulfilled their mandate to participate in their community following the atrocities they committed, or had committed against them, during the war. The main objective of the study is thus to understand how indigenous healing rituals facilitate the re-incorporation of the returnees into the community with other people, some of

whom were similarly affected by the war. Further, it is contended that healing among the Acholi needs to be understood with reference to the *Ubuntu* communal perspective that informs their worldview.

3.5 African Spirituality

African indigenous knowledge systems place a high value on spirituality, family and community wellbeing. Spirituality in this study is taken to include a person's relationship with the supernatural powers, their relationships with ancestral spirits and their own spirit in relation to others and the cosmos (Duran, 2006; McCabe, 2007; Stewart, 2008). African spirituality connects the physical with the metaphysical (being) (Garret & Wilbur, as cited in Beaulieu, 2011). It includes beliefs, practices and attitudes which ignite people's lives and provides people with mechanisms to understand the world in which they live, together with everyday events and occurrences, in terms of establishing right from wrong, good and appropriate from bad and inappropriate behaviour (Gumo, Gisege, Raballah & Ouma, 2012). This includes different interrelated levels of reference such as the level of lived experience, which refers to human attitudes and behaviours. These attitudes and behaviours are influenced by a person's ultimate values and communal level, where spirituality is the shared ultimate values and ideals of a particular group or tradition (Gumo, Gisege, Raballah & Ouma, 2012). Despite the intensity of the Christian missionary effort and the thousand years of Muslim proselytising which marked various parts of Africa, African religions continue to manifest vitality in all parts of the continent (Adamo, 2011). Africans view spiritual harmony as a state where the living community practices traditions that revere and respect the ancestors who they believe protect them. Consequently, if these traditions are not honoured this can result in the ancestors removing their protection, which creates fear and spiritual discord among the living. These traditions are more dynamic than non-indigenous people assume, as often they intermingle with formal religions which were brought about by colonialism. According to Baloyi (2008), there is no relational hierarchy in African traditional thought. Instead, life is continuous and un-interrupted and this means that human beings and all life, including the Divine Spirit, are continuous and implicated in each other.

Life for an African is a life immersed in a life force that permeates all phenomena: connections with the supernatural powers, spirits in the cosmos, ancestors and unity of being with other human beings (Baloyi, 2008). An African's life is a life woven in relationships; it is an interactive life (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). It is a life characterised by mutual interdependencies and influences. As Bujo (2003, p. 16) states, "according to the African people's belief, not only human beings can influence each other, but all forces pose a causal and ontological interdependence. Accordingly, natural forces can influence men and women ontologically and vice versa". This is what constitutes the cosmic unity referred to as *Moya*, which in the holistic conception refers to oneness with the body where the individual has connections with the spirit and others in the community, including the living dead (ancestors) (Baloyi, 2008). In the African healing sense, this means that a person's healing cannot only be achieved through an individual in isolation of others in the community, ancestral spirits and forces of nature (supernatural in the cosmos) (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). Baloyi (2008, p. 87) observed that, in African traditional thought, *Moya* can be defined as:

Ways in which people culturally define and interpret their existence and be-ing in relation to the others and the cosmos, using methods of communication and connections such as rituals and cultural rites of passage.

Moya is not separate or independent of the human body, except where it refers to wind. It cannot be translated simplistically as spirit or soul as the cultures that value independence would, because that would connote separateness which is not consonant with the African experience. *Moya* in the African sense is holistic, relational oneness with the body (Baloyi, 2008). Therefore, the African human experience of being cannot fit within the Western, individualistic, independent conception of spirit which is separate from the physical world (Baloyi, 2008). As Mkhize (2004, p. 47) asserts:

Traditional African societies hold the view that there should be harmony and interdependence between elements in the cosmos. From this perspective, immorality ensues from a disconnection between parts comprising the whole. Metaphysical systems thus provide a framework by means of which people make sense of themselves and the world.

In line with Phillips' (1990) call for cultural awareness and authenticity, it is important that psychologists and counsellors in general address psychosocial issues through culturally constructed spiritual and other practices (Honwana, 1998; Wessells, 2006; 2008). It is

therefore important to incorporate the idea of *Moya* or spirituality in understanding the healing process among the Acholi people of northern Uganda.

3.5.1 Ancestor Reverence and Religion

According to the African indigenous view, physical death is not the end of life (Berg, 2003). The understanding is that the dead who have lived their lives morally while on earth join the ancestors (*Kwari*) who have gone before them into the spiritual world, but not everyone who has died qualifies to be an ancestor. Rather, the position of ancestor is reserved for those people who were significant and highly respected in the clan (Harlacher, 2009). However, the deceased become ancestors only when their families perform integration rituals on their behalf. An integration ritual is a ceremony that is performed to re-unite a member of the family or community back with the society after a long period of absence from the people. Similar rituals are performed for the deceased in order to unite their spirits (*Moya*) with their families. The rituals are conducted, not only to ensure that the deceased spirit is at rest, but also to facilitate the spirit of the deceased's transitioning to the next world, that of the ancestors.

According to Harlacher (2009), the elders in traditional African societies enjoy the respect related to reverence for the ancestors because the elders are considered to be closest to them. The elders are also considered to be knowledgeable about the history of the clan and thus know best how their fore-bearers dealt with a range of issues that have a bearing on the social equilibrium of the community. The expertise of the elders is passed on from generation to generation, and the ancestors watch over them as spiritual guardians (Harlacher, 2009).

Ancestor reverence and Christianity for Africans can coexist; this is because, as far as indigenous Africans are concerned, God is worshipped and the ancestors are revered (Kamya, 1997). This is another lens through which indigenous Africans see the world, which unfortunately was misunderstood or misrepresented by the early missionaries. For them, ancestor worship amounted to "lapses into heathenism" (Callaway, 1913, p. 5). The nature of Acholi spiritual life is embedded in reverence and celebration of the ancestors. This means that even relatives who have died are still central to the living community, as well as to the

family's day-to-day life. However, those who die by violent means or far away from home without a proper burial are said to exact revenge on their living families through illness or misfortune (Behrend, 2001). It is important therefore to understand the value attached to ancestor reverence when the Acholi perform healing and re-integration rituals in their community.

Corbin (2012) asserts that in Acholi culture interconnectedness of life is indispensable in their understanding of health and illness. They believe in the power of the ancestors and spiritual forces that can affect their lives, be it positively or negatively. This view is supported by Harlacher, Okot, Obonyo, Balthazard and Atkinson (2006), who state that when any misfortune such as failure of crops, sickness or poor hunting affect the Acholi community, such events are interpreted to mean that the ancestors are dissatisfied. However, this can be mediated through traditional practice, prayers and cultural cleansing ceremonies. Most African cultures define health as a harmony of relationships between individuals and the spiritual world within the community (Honwana, 2006). Therefore, the health and wellbeing of the community is affected if individuals cannot relate well with each other. This concept includes an individual being socially and psychologically well. Hence, if an individual is disturbed psychologically, it is not just his or her own personal responsibility, as is the case in non-indigenous approaches. On the contrary, this also leads to disturbances at the communal level, as well as spiritual disturbance.

Ellis and Ter Harr (2007, Pg 387) assert that the features of African religion are embedded in the African belief in the spiritual world where "spirit idioms" do have identities that are specific and exercise power over events and phenomena in the world. The behaviour of an individual towards the community and spirituality shape practices like healing (Kielty, 2009). Honwana (2006), in her research on the rehabilitation of former abducted child soldiers in some countries in Africa, discovered that at the core of African traditional healing practices is religion. She stated that:

...The Cartesian dichotomy that separates body and mind in Western epistemology is not recognized in these cases ... Because their wrongdoings can affect their families and villages as well, the family members - including both the living and the dead - are directly involved in the cleansing and healing process. The ancestors are believed to

have a powerful role in protecting their relatives against evil and misfortune (Honwana, 2006, p. 117).

Kanya (1997, p. 4) emphasises this notion, saying: “For Africans, therefore, coping be it cognitive or social, emotional or physical is derived from the personal and collective understanding of the spiritual in peoples’ lives”. According to Honwana (2006), in rural African communities traditional ritual practices form an indispensable part of healing. In addition, she notes that the community’s wellbeing could be violated in the case of some types of death, which are not in line with their norms. Typical examples of such deaths are being killed in war or hanging oneself. In the event of death by unnatural causes such as war, specific rituals need to be conducted at the level of the family and/or community for the purposes of cleansing, protection, purification and restoration of harmony. The forced abduction of child soldiers as well as the war situation in northern Uganda, during which many people were killed and not afforded appropriate burials, calls for a similar intervention as far as the Acholi belief system is concerned. Having addressed the main components of an Africentric worldview, particularly as this relates to healing, the following sections present the ideas underpinning ritual cleansing as well as healing from an Acholi point of view.

3.6 Ritual Cleansing

Cleansing rituals are “practices designed to promote mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing based on beliefs which go back to the time before the spread of Western scientific biomedicine” (Robbins & Dewar, 2011, p.3). These rituals involve a wide range of ceremonies and materials, depending on the culture, and may be used to treat physical, mental or emotional problems. Several scholars (Honwana, 1998; 2006; Mkhize, 2004; Ngubane, 1977; Nolte-Schamm, 2006; Nwoye, 2006; Wessels & Monteiro, 2006) have researched and written on the importance of grounding healing in an African-centred epistemology and ontology.

Nolte-Schamm (2006), in her paper titled, “The African traditional ritual of cleansing the chest of grudges as a ritual of reconciliation”, emphasises the significance of traditional rituals as a means of therapeutic healing for survivors of violent conflict. In addition, she highlights the urgent need for innovative methods for social reconciliation and healing in communities. She argues that African tradition has a range of resources that can be used for

purposes of social re-integration (Nolte-Schamm, 2006). In addition, Solomon and Wane (2005, p. 55) state, “our ancestors have taught that if any of our actions result in disequilibrium; we have to find ways of healing and purifying the environment, our relations and ourselves”.

According to Nolte-Schamm (2006) and Kamwaria and Katola (2012), rituals remain the most important way of healing relationships in African indigenous societies. A social dispute is seen as dangerous because it threatens the delicate social harmony of the group (Kamwaria& Katola, 2012). Hence, rituals are employed to restore the social equilibrium when it has been altered or breached. In the case of healing rituals, the ceremony can be understood as a ritualised form of conflict resolution. It is a mechanism for reducing, excluding or resolving social conflicts in society (Nolte-Schamm, 2006). It could be argued that cleansing rituals are employed for the maintenance of the universe, for they establish and maintain the delicate social and political network of the community. The rituals create harmony where there has been rupture and balance the status quo where it has become unbalanced because of rivalry (Tushini, 2011). The social world of the participants in the ritual comes into attack because the evil of enmity and resentment has crept into the system and caused disarray. It is for this reason that it is imperative to maintain stability and restore harmony (Nolte-Schamm, 2006).

Public ritual practices make reality transparent enough to deal with and resolve. This involves the feuding persons publicly appearing before the gathered community and the elders, and –exposing, not only to themselves, but also to the whole community, the reality of enmity or hostility between them and those they represent. The feud between them is made transparent and obvious to the community, as is their intended reconciliation. Nolte-Schamm (2006) points out vividly that what might have been an intangible and somewhat obscure force in the community becomes overt and definable and therefore manageable through the ritual. She goes on to say that the body, and how it is used, is an indicator of society’s values and norms, and that if there is an argument the human body is always treated as an image of society. Tushini (2011) points out the humble and humiliating action of licking ash from the hand of another as having a special meaning among the Zulu of South Africa, known in the

Zulu culture as *ukukhumelana umlotha*. It signifies the willingness of both parties to show vulnerability and to be humbled before the other (Hay, 1998). This view finds support in Nolte-Schamm's (2006) study, wherein it is argued that the people concerned need to show through their bodily actions that they are prepared to surrender their pride and honour in order to restore good relations.

Mayanja (2004) posits that in African cultures, living in tune with the moral norms of society means participating in vital relationships because deviation from them denotes moving in the direction of death. He goes on to say that whenever evil is committed but is followed by the good will and freedom of the individual or individuals involved, there is a possibility of reparation. It is understood that making peace is important not only for the individual concerned but for the common interest of all who are in that community (Mayanja, 2004). Nolte-Schamm (2006) has shown the many aspects displayed by cleansing rituals and what they signify. Important to note is that independent, non-indigenous approaches are not designed to resolve problems having to do with spirituality, as well as with the restoration of the relationship between individuals, including the relationship between the individual and society. In indigenous approaches problems of this nature are addressed by means of cleansing or purification rituals facilitated by local healers (Honwana, 2006; Nolte-Schamm, 2006; Reynolds, 1990; Schmidt, 1997; Wessels & Monteiro, 2006). Western-based trauma approaches tend to view emotional problems in individualistic terms; hence treatment is individualised (Wessels & Monteiro, 2006). This does not tally with African indigenous epistemologies which prioritise an interdependent worldview. Nwoye (2007, p. 142) states:

The normal African self is disturbed by problems that are largely socially derived and culturally constructed. A huge portion of the African self is filled with narrative and proverbial texts consisting of injunctions, counsels, beliefs, assumptions, myths, fears and conditioned attitudes assimilated through cultural induction.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned worldview, the healing and re-integration of survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum in northern Uganda would need to include cultural and communal healing, given that the survivors of violent conflict are members of the whole community, including the ancestors (Corbin, 2008; 2012).

It is evident from the literature considered above that healing systems vary. This implies, therefore, that it is important to take cognisance of the relevant African healing methods in working with survivors of violent conflict in Uganda, particularly those prevalent in northern Uganda in the Gulu and Kitgum communities who have been involved in such a great level of violence. The following section expands the discussion of the worldview on which indigenous healing is based by exploring the Acholi belief system about life and death.

3.7 Acholi Belief Systems about Life and Death

Healing cannot be understood without reference to the African and Acholi beliefs about life and death. From an African perspective, death is usually viewed in two ways, namely *timely* and *untimely* death. Timely death means that the deceased has died in ripe old age, leaving behind several children and grandchildren. This means that the lineage will continue through the children (Berglund, 1976). Untimely death means life has abruptly ended before a person has reached a ripe old age and this is usually by violent means. While all death in African cultures requires cleansing due to its polluting effect, untimely death requires even more elaborate rituals not only to ritualistically cleanse the deceased's wounds but also in order to bring their wondering spirit back home in order to prepare it for the transition to the ancestral world (Ngubane, 1977; Tushini, 2011). The family and relatives also need to be cleansed from impurities associated with death (pollution). Rituals are performed after a predetermined time from the passing on of the deceased to separate the mourners from the spirit of the deceased, and to complete the purification of the deceased's spirit (Tushini, 2011). This facilitates the re-integration of the spirit of the deceased into the home of the ancestors so that his or her life cycle of union with the living and the dead is complete, and the mourners are re-integrated back into society (Ngubane, 1977).

The Acholi people share similar views about death. They believe in the continuation of life after death. For the Acholi, this means that life on earth is important; people should live well and at peace with others, without quarrelling, jealousy, anger, theft and hatred (Corbin, 2012). This then means that when a person dies she or he will die with peace in her or his heart, with a good and clear name and without any anger or debt owed to anyone left behind on earth. This is based on the Acholi belief that the way a person lives his or her life on earth

is what results in a person being either at peace or suffering in the next world (Corbin, 2012). Therefore, leaving a good name on earth is very important for an Acholi person, clan and family. The spirits of the dead are also not separated from the family because they continue to be members of the community. They continue to be present in all activities of the community. The spirits are approached and consulted and may speak through people who serve as mediums. If the people who are living become aware that the spirits are not happy and a state commonly diagnosed through sickness in the community, misfortunes, bad dreams and poor harvest, amongst others, arises, they provide the spirits with food and other forms of appeasement, depending on the nature of the diagnosis by the medium (Corbin, 2012). The spirits are also invited to give their blessings in ceremonies during prayers for the healing of the members of the community who are sick, cleansing those members who return from captivity (for instance from the LRA), and when funeral rites and healing practices are conducted (Corbin, 2012). This belief system points to the magnitude of what the Acholi must have suffered during the war, as it is evident that many of their ways of living were disrupted because of wrongful and untimely deaths, as well as other forms of violation. Their very sense of who they are, as a people, was violated during the conflict.

Similar beliefs about violent death are found in other African communities. Igreja (2003), Honwana (2006) and Kamwaria and Katola (2012) explain the philosophy behind traditional healing practices in the context of killings and different forms of violence. According to Kamwaria and Katola (2012), ancestors are believed to take interest in the day-to-day affairs of the community and have powers to influence the affairs of the living either for good or for worse. In Mozambique, for example, the spirits attack people to avenge the victims who were violently killed (Igreja, 2003). Honwana (2006) goes on to explain that, in indigenous Mozambican belief systems, the restless spirits of those killed during times of conflict are a threat to the people who were involved in combat. It is believed that the restless spirits of those who were not properly buried, called *Mpfhukwa*, can harm their killers including the killer's family and their kin and even those who pass through the places where they were killed (Honwana, 2006). These beliefs about the causes of illness are not confined to Africa alone. For example in Nepal it is believed that illnesses can be caused by spirits that are hungry. If nothing is done to appease them by giving them food offerings, they attack

humans and cause illness (Tol, Jordans, Regmi & Sharma, 2005). These traditional beliefs in Nepal and Mozambique bear a resemblance to the belief in spirit attacks called *cen* among the Acholi people in northern Uganda.

In African indigenous societies, the performance of rituals is a remedy for illnesses that are caused by spirits (Baines, 2005; Harlacher et al., 2006; Honwana, 2006; Igreja, 2003; Tol et al., 2005). In many cultures, it is important to take care of immediate healing and cleansing of the victims concerned to prevent the intergenerational transmission of spirit attacks. In Angola, for example, the ritual of stepping on an egg, performed by soldiers returning from war, is a symbolic break from the past (Honwana, 2006). Other rituals like *shamaniare* performed in Nepal to cure illnesses through spirit possession or trance (Tol et al., 2005). The beating of drums, singing, going into a trance and the use of herbs is an elaborate process performed in Mozambique, for example, either for the treatment of actual illnesses or as a preventative measure to protect future generations (Igreja, 2003). Trans-generational manifestation of the ritual *N'Fukua* and *Gamba* spirits on families in Mozambican indigenous cultures is an occurrence where victims experience extreme physical and psychological suffering (Igreja, 2003). The present study examines the use of traditional rituals by the Acholi in facilitating the healing of survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum in northern Uganda. The following section turns specifically to the Acholi beliefs about the causes of misfortune and the role of spirits.

3.7.1 Acholi Belief about Causes of Misfortune

In the Acholi worldview, as in other African communities, if the harmony and the moral codes of the community are broken by either individuals or the community, the spirits of the ancestors become angry and withdraw their support by sending misfortune, poor health and conflict, thus reminding the community that something has gone wrong (Baines, 2005; Behrend, 1999). Among the Acholi community the spirits, generally called *Joggi*, live in specific objects and places like rivers, rocks, forests and mountains. These abodes where the spirits reside are revered and respected (Behrend, 1999). Not only do the Acholi depend on *Joggi* for protection and guidance but they also depend on them for agricultural prosperity, success in hunting and victory during times of war. When the Acholi want to prevent

disasters and when they need favours, they make sacrifices to the ancestral spirits (Harlacher et al., 2006).

The Acholi do not only call upon the spirits for productive and life enhancing activities; the spirits also guide and maintain the social, moral and societal order and are responsible for correcting wrongs. This is depicted by the fact that should the moral or societal order of the community be disturbed, an individual or the family may be attacked by the spirits. These kinds of attacks will often become apparent as misfortunes or illnesses which the Acholi call *cen*. It is these *cen* that will enter the mind or body of the person who has done wrong and haunt him or her, manifesting as nightmares and visions which could easily turn into mental illness and sickness, until the wrong that the person may have done is put right. Consequently, *cen* can also send sickness and nightmares to other members of the family of the individual who did wrong, and in some instances their communities as well. This is the reason why the traditional cultural rituals of healing have to extend beyond the individual who did the harm, to their family and the larger community (Baines, 2005; Kamwaria& Katola, 2012).

Cen however comes forward for three main reasons. The first is when a member of the family dies as a result of neglect from the family or when a member of the family angrily leaves home. The person in the wrong will be haunted and afflicted by *cen* in an act of vengeance by the spirit of the dead person who may have died as a result of the above reasons. It is equally believed that *cen* will also afflict any person who comes across the body of a person who has been killed violently, or even passes through a place where a violent death took place. There is a strong belief that the dead person's spirit will avenge their death by haunting the area where their death took place (Baines, 2005; Harlacher et al., 2006).

The second reason for which *cen* will manifest is when a person intentionally commits murder and this murder is not atoned for. The affliction will not only come to the individual who committed the murder but to the members of the murderer's family as well because they have the duty to right the wrong. The third reason is that an individual can inherit *cen* because of the wrong deeds committed by his or her parents or even earlier generations of

their family members (Baines, 2005). It is also believed that *cen* may not even afflict the person who is currently in the wrong but may manifest in future in the second generation of his or her family lineage (Baines, 2005; Harlacher et al., 2006). It is believed that the afflictions of *cen* can endure for long periods, in the pursuit of the wrong that was committed to be made right by the people concerned or for a confession to be made.

3.7.2 Religion as a Way of Life

In Acholi tradition, participating in religious practices is not optional or negotiable. Rather, to be a human is to belong to the whole community, which entails participation in religious observances (Artkinson, 1994; Corbin, 2012; Kibwanga, 2009). In traditional Acholi culture, religion is infused in all aspects of life. This therefore means that there is no moment in a person's life when they are free from their *jok*. *Jok* is the spirit, power or force which can take possession of things, animals and people. It is found in the wilderness (*tim*) near the rivers, mountains and lakes. In the Acholi language, *tim* means what is outside the village, the village being the abode of human beings. According to the Acholi, *joggi* (spirits) can be inherited from others or may take possession of a person if it so wishes. A possessed person would only be free of *jok* by performing an exorcism or cleansing through rituals. However, in Acholi culture *jok* can also be tamed by an *ajwaka* (traditional healer) (Behrend, 2001).

This means that most of the Acholi person's life is faithfully spent in the presence of his or her *jok*. This begins from the rising of the sun to its setting each and every day of the person's life. The Acholi believe that *jok* is present in all their daily activities, for example, when they are in their gardens cultivating or hunting in the bush, and in their relationships with others, or eating, cooking, travelling and collecting water and firewood. These traditional religious beliefs are still practiced by many Acholi people concurrently with their Christian or Islamic religious practices (Corbin, 2012; Kibwanga, 2009). The Acholi's deeply embedded beliefs about the spiritual realm highlights the need to take the indigenous belief systems of the people into consideration in all healing or therapeutic work, including the efforts to re-integrate survivors of violent conflict into the community.

3.8 Traditional Healing and the Re-integration Initiative

Traditional healing is informed by a specific worldview, knowledge, skills and local resources (Angucia, 2010). Igreja (2003) and Honwana (2006) support the use of traditional healing practices in reintegrating survivors of violent conflict into the community. Igreja (2003, p. 461) states that “the availability, accessibility and quality of local resources play a vital role in the recovery process because they provide a rationale of suffering that fits with the explanatory models of the traumatized individuals and families”. Similarly, Honwana (2006) argues that the use of traditional healing rituals to re-integrate survivors of violent conflict into their communities provides an excellent example of how local resources and knowledge could be deployed to resolve local concerns. De Jong (2002) as well as Corbin (2008) argue that family support is an important community resource in the social re-integration of formerly abducted children, and the performance of traditional healing rituals thus ensures that mental health issues emanating from the war are addressed in their social and cultural contexts.

Traditional counselling practices and methods are prescribed for various types of problems and issues in different contexts. For example, internally displaced, war-affected people in Angola utilise a type of traditional psychological healing called *conselho*, which is based on “the general encouragement given to people to abandon the thoughts and memories of war and losses” (Eyber & Ager, 2002; Quinn, 2009). Holistic purification and cleansing rituals, attended by the family and broader community, are carried out in the welcoming of ex-combatant child soldiers back into the community in both Angola and Mozambique (Honwana, 2002). In the case of South Africa and Rwanda *inkundla* and *gacaca*, respectively, are a series of traditional small clan courts used as a form of traditional dispute resolution mediated by chiefs and tribal elders (Herndon, 2001; Quinn, 2009). In the case of Rwanda, *gacaca* has been re-vamped and formalised and successfully been used to deal with crimes of genocide (Harrell, 2003).

The use of alternative methods of conflict resolution by traditional societies of South Africa is also deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of the various tribes of the sub-continent (Choudree, 1996). These range from the processes of the Khoisan of the Northern Cape to

the traditional courts of the Zulu in KwaZulu-Natal. Mnnig 1967: 308 (as cited in Choudree, 1996) notes that Pedi tribal law emphasises group relationships and rights rather than those of the individual. Priority is placed on restoring relationships as well as the reconciliation of groups. Furthermore, the majority of disputes are resolved through the mediation process within or between family groups. In fact, the latter is the principal vehicle for settling disputes outside the official courts (Mnnig 1967: 314, as cited in Choudree, 1996). In western Kenya, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are used by the Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet tribes (Pkalya, Adan&Masinde, 2004). Ceremonies to “cool the heart[s]” of child ex-combatants upon their return to their home communities in Sierra Leone are carried out by the broader community (Shaw, 2005: 9).

According to Quinn (2006b), Africa provides a diverse range of such traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. For example, Uganda has a history of using traditional mechanisms, which are still practiced by many of the 56 different ethnic groups. The Baganda of Uganda use the traditional *Kitewuliza*, a juridical process with a strong element of reconciliation, to bring about justice (Quinn, 2009; Waliggo, 2003). The Lugbara, in the northwest of Uganda, maintain a system of elders for mediation in family, clan and inter-clan conflict (Ndrua, 1988). In 1985, an inter-tribal reconciliation ceremony, *gomo tong* (the bending of spears) was held to signify that “from that time there would be no war or fighting between Acholi and Madi, Kakwa, Lugbara or Alur of West Nile” (Quinn, 2007, p. 3). One of the ethnic communities, the Karamojong, has a council of elders (*akiriket*) which settles disputes in line with their traditional customs and teachings and in adherence to cultural norms in the performance of ritual cleansing ceremonies. Peace building through negotiation is thus a pervasive feature of African societies, based on traditional belief systems. These spiritual-based mechanisms have persisted despite the influence of Christianity and Islam (Kamya, 1997). For this reason, amongst others, the current study seeks to understand survivors’ lived experiences of the use of indigenous healing processes among the Acholi. This dovetails well with calls advocating for the exploration of indigenous counselling practices (Abdi in Maree & Westhuizen, 2011; Murithi, 2005; Savickas, 2006). The next section explores indigenous healing and re-integration rituals that are commonly practiced by the Acholi.

3.9 Acholi Indigenous Healing Methods for the Re-integration of Survivors of Violent Conflict

In this section the following Acholi rituals are discussed: *Nyono Tong Gweno* (welcoming a survivor who might have been contaminated with bad spirits); *Moyokum* (cleansing the body); *Matooput* (healing ceremony after a killing); *Gomo tong* (bending the spears, meaning no more war between two clans and no more going back to it); *Moyo piny* (cleansing of an area to appease the ancestors, and cleansing evil spirits, *cen*, from places of massacres); *kweyocwiny* (cooling the heart or process of healing), *lwongotipu* (calling of the spirit to rest or a healing process to help to bring harmony between the living and the living dead); and *culukwor* (symbolic and material compensation to appease the spirits of those who were killed to avoid revenge and more imbalance in the community) (Justice and Reconciliation Project, 2007; Suarez, 2008). While the rituals are specific to the Acholi, it is possible that neighbouring groups perform rituals of a similar nature.

3.9.1 Nyono Tong Gweno (The rite of “stepping on the egg”)

Nyono tong gweno is the best-known and most commonly practiced cleansing ritual used to welcome family members who have been away for a long time back home. The Acholi believe that when people are away from home for a long time, they may have contracted spirits, which would pollute or bring bad luck to the whole community if not cleansed (Harlacher, 2009). The ritual is not only for cleansing the returnees but is also used to resolve disputes or quarrels among clan members who might have left home and vowed not to return because of the quarrel. By performing this ritual, the returnee and the community show commitment to each other; the ritual is symbolic of their commitment to live in harmony again (Huyse& Salter, 2008).

The *Nyono tong gweno* ritual is strongly rooted in the well-founded Acholi belief of preserving the sacredness and social stability of their homesteads (Baines, 2007). The ceremony involves the elders facilitating the returnees by making them step on an egg, which is a symbol of purity and innocence. A soapy, slippery branch is given to the returnees for the cleansing of any external forces that may have influenced them while they were away, while

a stick with a fork carried by elders symbolises the family sharing food together (Baines, 2007; Latigo, 2008; Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum & Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2001). This is followed by a moment of confession of the crimes that may have been committed and acknowledgement of whom they were committed against. Pardon is then granted and the offender is welcomed back to the 'clean' side of the community. Compensation is charged for the entire clan of the offender and payments are made. It is evident that the traditional justice system cultivates the culture of dialogue and inclusiveness. This is a vital step towards a peaceful resolution (Latigo, 2008).

The ritual should be performed at the family or clan level for individual family members. However, there has been an instance when the ritual was organised by the Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA) on a larger scale, which involved returnees collectively stepping on eggs in a single ceremony (Latigo, 2008). Knowledgeable elders criticised this incidence because the ritual could only be significant and meaningful when applied for an individual at the respective family or clan level. Turyagenda (2009) is critical of traditional ceremonies officiated over by politically appointed chiefs. This kind of application of traditional justice deviates from the religious Acholi context where traditional leaders are anointed and not appointed, given that traditional leadership is imbued with a religious-spiritual dimension. Traditional leaders would therefore not endorse the practice of conducting traditional rituals intended for individual repentance on a larger group scale, as this would defeat the purpose of the ritual. *Nyono tong gweno* focuses on restoring peace and balance where imbalance has been felt. It is clan and community based. Western models of counselling generally focus on the individual in order to strengthen their autonomy and internal resilience. This dismisses the possibility of restoring the communal equilibrium that is so critical to the Acholi worldview. It is thus important for indigenous healing to be incorporated into the programmes for survivors of violent conflict, which calls for a holistic approach in which both the Western and the indigenous approaches can make a significant contribution.

3.9.2 Moyokum (cleansing the body)

Moyokum is a complex ritual performed to cleanse the bodies of persons returning from captivity. The ritual encompasses elders coming together to ask the ancestors to bless the returnee, chase away evil spirits and wash away the ill deeds that they may have committed. At times the ceremony involves the person who has returned replicating his lost life by acting out some parts of their life (Latigo, 2006). The process varies from clan to clan; an example of a procedure involved in the ritual is the spearing of goat and it then being dragged across the compound to do away with *cen* (the evil spirit hovering around). Two or three days after the returnee arrives, the parents procure a goat and invite the elders to oversee the ceremony. The goat is slaughtered, cooked and shared by all. Participants wash their hands and the water is collected in a container. The elders bless the water and sprinkle it on the returnee who faces a westerly direction saying, “*Marace wan gwang cen goter*” (let the sun set with all the bad fortunes or misfortunes). To conclude the ceremony, the elders cleanse their feet as they leave. This is referred to as “*bukutyenludito*”. A member of the returnee’s family takes a chicken of desired colour and nature, and swings it around the elders’ feet. The chicken flaps its wings and cries and is then set free. The returnee is similarly considered free (Corbin, 2012; Harlacher, 2009; Latigo, 2008).

This ritual also talks to the Acholi belief that those who have been away from home contract evil spirits that may contaminate the family and community upon their return; hence the ritual cleansing of the body (Latigo, 2008). Traditional justice in Acholi culture seeks to restore social harmony rather than to punish. Rituals are therefore restorative and not punitive (Baines, 2015; Baines, E., Stover, E., & Wierda, M. 2006). The Liu Institute for Global Issues, with the assistance of the Gulu District NGO Forum and the support of Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA) (2005), have carried out rituals of this nature with persons who were haunted by *cen* (spirits). The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of participants who have undergone these rituals in order to establish how these rituals have been experienced at the individual, family and community levels. Traditional psychology is not well-equipped to deal with the spiritual component inherent in such healing rituals and this constitutes a gap in the field. It is also important to study the experiences of the returnees and

the perceived social impact of the rituals well after the ritual ceremonies have been conducted (Blattman & Annan, 2008).

3.9.3 Matooput (Healing Ceremony after a Killing)

Matooput is a well-known ritual within Acholi culture and its environs. It essentially entails drinking a bitter herb prepared from the root of a tree known as *oput*. The ritual is usually performed during the peak of a conflict resolution process by a person/s of the community who has killed another. According to Latigo (2008), the ritual is practiced to suppress hate and resentment. Redemption is possible on the condition that there is a voluntary admission of wrongdoing, the acceptance of responsibility, and the seeking of forgiveness. Acholi society strictly forbids the killing of human beings because of the belief in the sanctity of human life, as dictated by their religion. *Matooput* is therefore performed to evade the anger of both the supreme deity known as *Nyarubanga* and the intermediary known as *jok-ker*. Killing another person, in the Acholi community, provokes the anger of the deities and ancestral spirits of the victim(s), leading to evil spirits invading the perpetrator's homesteads and causing harm to its inhabitants. Usually, as soon as the killing happens, the members of the two clans immediately stop relating with each other, as well as eating and drinking from the same vessel, until the killer is cleansed. This process involves making the clan of the killer pay blood money to the clan of the person killed. The blood money is given to the bereaved family to facilitate, for instance, marriage to another woman who will produce children to replace the deceased. Historically, compensation and rituals were largely employed to promote the restoration of cordial relations (Baines, 2005).

The *Matooput* ceremony takes place in an uncultivated field between the villages of the two clans, away from any footpath or any place commonly frequented by women and children. Women are involved only in instances when a conflict involving women or a 'woman's issue' arises. Senior women are limited to being witnesses to crimes committed, and women are never given the opportunity to preside over any open court (Baines, 2005; 2015; Baines, E., Stover, E., & Wierda, M. (2006). The killer provides a ram and a bull (*dyangmedog bur*), while the next of kin of the person killed provides a goat (Latigo, 2008). New vessels, symbolising new relationships, are used to serve a large quantity of beer in the ceremony. All

participants stand facing westwards in solemn silence. An invocation is then performed to sum up the entire spirit and intent of reconciliation. Extracts from the roots of the *oput* tree and an alcoholic drink are mixed in a new vessel. The killer and the next of kin of the deceased kneel down and begin to drink from the same vessel simultaneously as a sign of unity. Meanwhile, women from both clans make shrill cries and shout the war cries of the two clans. Members of the two families join in to drink from the same vessel for the first time, indicating that the social equilibrium between the families has been restored (Idemudia, 2009). The ritual mends the relationships that were put on hold by an accidental or premeditated killing in the community (Adeba, 2007; Harlacher, 2009). Healing processes of this nature are not possible within the individualistic confines of Western-based counselling.

3.9.4 Gomo Tong (Bending the Spears)

In the distant past, spears were used as tools of war in most African countries. In Acholi culture, the ritual of *gomotong* is performed to symbolise the end of a war or bloody conflict between two warring clans or chiefdoms. The ritual is a vow for both sides in the conflict to evoke the living- dead, promising each other that the killing will not be repeated again. It is a solemn vow never to shed blood again; a vow which therefore remains eternally binding. The significance of bending the spear is that if a person were to use a spear against another from the opposing clan without a good reason the spear would turn back on him or her and would incur negative consequences. This ritual can be used with or without the concurrent performance of *matooput*. If the ritual is performed in conjunction with *matooput*, this means that the conflict involving the two clans or chiefdoms was bloody. The people who are involved in the *gomotong* process are the chiefs and representatives from each clan. However, when conflict was experienced between the Acholi and their ethnic neighbours the *gomo tong* ritual was done without *matooput*. The process is handled by the elders representing the two communities, and involves the examination and consideration of what brought about and perpetuated the conflict. It is the responsibility of the chiefs and the elders to agree and warn their people to stop the killing after performing the ritual. Compliance, however, relies on the commitment, goodwill and character of the participants (Harlacher, 2009; Latigo 2008).

‘Bending the spear’ (*gomo tong*) is considered a highly sacred act as the vow invokes the ancestors. The vow puts an end to hostilities and implores that no further blood be shed between the two conflicting parties upon its completion (Latigo, 2006). In 1985, *gomo tong* was used in a ground-breaking effort to resolve severe tensions between the Acholi, on the one side, and the Madi, on the other side, who were killed on a large scale by Idi Amin and his henchmen during his dictatorial regime. Important to note is that ‘bending the spear’ would have been a suitable ceremony to address the apparent tensions between the Acholi and the neighbouring communities of Teso, Madi, Lango and southern Sudan, caused by the LRA’s incursions into those areas, if the LRA had been acting on behalf of the Acholi, which was clearly not the case (Latigo, 2006). Western-trained counsellors and social workers therefore need to have access to this knowledge in the process of attempting to heal their clients; otherwise, they may risk leaving clients hollow and yearning for more assistance that they may not be able to obtain from Western counselling approaches. For this reason, it is important to document the lived experiences of the participants in these rituals in order to establish whether their healing processes have been successful at the individual and communal level.

3.9.5 Moyo Piny (Cleansing of an Area)

The purpose of the *moyo piny* ritual is to appease the ancestors and cleanse evil spirits that are believed to reside in conflict or war-related areas where massacres have occurred, such as the sites of deadly ambushes, mass murder fields or compounds and battlefields. A goat is sacrificed to appease the ancestors and to cleanse the area of evil spirits, and to put the spirits to rest because their wandering may result in them being unsettled and unhappy. Research compiled by the Liu Institute for Research (2006) provides an account of reports by youngsters who were affected during the conflict in northern Uganda who had passed by dead bodies on their way to school. They had been instructed by their parents in cases such as these to place a leaf of the *olwedo* tree on the body as a gesture of respect, as well as a way of warding off *cen*. The Acholi believe that *cen* can gather in places in proximity to a dead body or bodies and can be transferred to passers-by. It is therefore important, according to the Acholi, to sacrifice a goat to appease the ancestors to cleanse the spirits and put them to rest (Latigo, 2008).

In some cases, some members of the community are reluctant to return to their homes in fear of prowling spirits, until the relevant ceremony is performed to appease the spirits (Baines, 2007; Latigo, 2006). From an indigenous African worldview, diseases and disharmony can be transmitted from one place and generation to another as long as the fault has not been resolved. Therefore, the objective of the *moyo piny* cleansing is to ensure that the area that has been deemed stained and distorted has been cleansed of all bad omens and curses, so as to allow people to freely return to their once sacred land (Idemudia, 2009). However, the question arises as to whether this kind of worldview can be utilised in a counselling session using Western counselling approaches. It is important to tread carefully in a new environment or context other than one's own in order to facilitate the appropriate methods for addressing 'the needs of people who require' counselling.

3.9.6 Lwongo Tipu (Calling of the Spirit to Rest)

Lwongo tipu (calling of the spirit) is a ritual which is performed for those people who have died violently or without respect. This ritual is an important ceremony because it is conducted to 'call a spirit to rest'. Any parent who becomes aware that their child has died or was killed in captivity would perform this ceremony. The Acholi believe that the person's spirit is still alive even though the person is dead. They believe in the cosmology of *jok* (spirit, force or power) and the central role that the ancestors play in their society. They believe that *jok* can be approached by community members in order to interpret problems, bring good luck to the community and provide affluence, thus calling the wandering spirit of a person home (Remigio, 2010). This is significant among the Acholi as it ensures that the cosmos is in harmony, since missing spirits are reunited with the spiritual realm where they belong and leave the living realm peacefully as they are laid to rest. Burying a person close to family and clan calls the lost spirit to rest at home and allows the person to continue being part of the community, which eventually provides closure to the families because the spirit of the dead will have moved on to another realm (Allen, 2006; Remigio, 2010). The ritual performed therefore brings the spirit of a deceased person back home to live with his or her people. The Acholi believe that the spirits (*cen*) of these people will not rest peacefully and will disturb the community until a specific action has been taken. Mbiti (1990) points out that

in the African belief system the living-dead (ancestors) dwell in the land of spirits where they continue to have a vested interest in the affairs of the living, with whom they remain wholly interdependent.

In addition, Opoku (1978) says that the dead are not entirely cut off from the living. They resurface in dreams, providing the living with information, instructions as well as warnings. They also possess the ability to summon the living to appear before them and listen to their misdeeds, if any have been committed. The spirits can also administer punishment. Those who have lived bad lives or died bad deaths are believed to become evil ghosts and not ancestors. The Acholi believe that the wrong or ghostly spirit (*cen*) will seek vengeance, bringing about death, sickness and misfortune for the clan of the perpetrator (Harlacher, 2009). It is this ghostly spirit (*cen*) that often compels wrongdoers to confess their crimes and leads them to ask whether the spirit (*cen*) can be conciliated with the clan of the victim. Traditional cultural cleansing rituals add an important perspective to how the Acholi people usually reconcile themselves with what has happened in their pasts (Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP), 2007). The matter to be dealt with here is whether Western models would allow for the comprehension of indigenous viewpoints and subsequent processes to occur in order to deal with this type of worldview in counselling processes. The above-mentioned worldview of the Acholi regarding the role played by the spirits in the affairs of the living is at variance with Western models of counselling which emphasise individuality and personal insight. The current study therefore seeks to fill this gap by documenting Acholi indigenous practices for healing and reintegrating survivors of violent conflict into the community.

3.9.7 *Culukwor* (Symbolic and Material Compensation)

Culukwor (symbolic and material compensation) is a ritual that is performed by the Acholi to appease the spirits of those who were mistreated in life and killed, or were not given a decent burial (JRP, 2007). In this ritual, the confession of the killer is listened to by their clan representative. This is followed by shouts of anger and cries from the clan of the victim. The elders of the clan then attempt to calm the mourners and to reassure the offenders of their

safety. The payments are then deliberated upon and later made at the rite of reconciliation known as '*mattoopwu*'.

This ritual is also performed when people make contact with the dead or the blood of the dead, which is believed to infect not only an individual but also the entire clan or neighbours, leading to social pollution. Therefore, these rituals are performed not only to cleanse an individual but also to restore social order. The Acholi perceive cleansing rituals as processes which are an important requirement for the protection of the whole community against pollution. Rituals comprise a vital element for social re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community (Honwana, 2002; JRP, 2007). Africans place high value on spirituality and the well-being of the community. Psychological counsellors and social workers thus need to take cognisance of this knowledge when counselling people of African ancestry. Regrettably, African indigenous perspectives do not form part of the training of professional counsellors in Africa. This is a major shortcoming for those who practice on the African continent.

Reviewing the literature on the indigenous healing processes prevalent in Africa brings home to the researcher the fact that there is something seriously amiss in the counselling psychology programmes taught in institutions of higher education. This study seeks to allow people of African ancestry a chance to reclaim their personhood and voice and to suggest ways in which counselling can be made more relevant and meaningful for all. A reciprocal relationship, whereby due cognisance is paid to indigenous perspectives, in the same way that African knowledge systems have been willing to listen and adapt to Western perspectives, confirms the inclusive epistemology and unity in diversity that are prized in indigenous African thought.

3.10 Conclusion

It can be argued that the marginalisation of African indigenous practices of conflict resolution, to some extent, is a contributing factor to the never-ending cycles of violence evident in Africa. More needs to be done to contextualise the process of healing into local

settings instead of relying on Western methods and practices (Osamba, 2001). The current study sought to fill this gap.

Chapter Three has consisted of a review of the literature related to African philosophical frameworks and worldview, which inform the indigenous healing process. Issues around ancestor reverence and religion, that underpin the African belief systems, and beliefs about death and religiosity of the Acholi have been explained in order to provide a better understanding of the Acholi survivors. Understandings of peace and peace building from an Acholi perspective have been discussed, as have the rituals that are conducted to facilitate this process. There is a paucity of literature examining the lived experiences of the participants who have undergone these healing rituals. Similarly, the views of the elders that perform the rituals have not been documented. In addition, the perspectives of the participants regarding the healing mechanisms of these rituals are not known or understood, nor has the gendered dimension of the returnees' experience and participation in the rituals been documented. This study therefore sought to address these issues in order to bring Acholi healing perspectives from the margins to the centre. It is envisaged that an understanding of this perspective towards healing would aid psychological counsellors and social workers that are working with war returnees in northern Uganda and other African states that share a similar worldview. Chapter Four to follow discusses the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used to gain information on the research problem. It includes the research design, study population, sample size, sampling techniques and data collection methods. It also describes the instruments used to collect data and data analysis, reliability and validity as well as the ethical considerations.

4.2 Research Design

The qualitative research paradigm was used as the study focused on the lived experiences of the participants. Qualitative research is a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is a systematic, subjective approach aimed at describing life experiences in order to give them meaning (Weirisma, 1995). A qualitative approach was appropriate given the study's objective which was to gain an in-depth, insider's view on the reintegration of survivors of violent conflict into their families and communities. The aim of the study was not to generalize to the larger population of survivors of violent conflict; rather, the primary objective was to understand social action in terms of its specific context, including the gendered dimension of the reintegration process (cf. Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

A qualitative research design was deemed suitable for the study as it facilitated the understanding of participants' real life experiences of re-integration rituals. Qualitative research is appropriate for the study of the lived experiences of the survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum districts in Northern Uganda. According to Babbie and Mouton (2005) and Cresswell (2007, 2014), qualitative research attempts to study human action from the perspective of the local actors themselves; its main focus is to describe and understand social action in context. The aim of this study was to gain insight and to explore the depth, richness, and complexity of experiences of survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum. The design was naturalistic in nature because it allowed the researcher to observe the participants' in their context and perspective. Schreiber (2000) describes studies of this

nature culture-centered in that they enable the researcher to generate explanations and interpretations that are situated and that take into account the participants' worldviews and explanatory models. This was important because understanding indigenous counseling and reconciliation practice requires use of an approach that provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand the meaning of an experience to the participant in a specific setting and how the components combine to form a whole (Thomas & Nelson, 1996).

Qualitative research was considered appropriate for this study because it demystifies the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production (Manji, 1996). It enables research to be a liberating experience as it enables the researcher and the researched to mutually enjoy the research process and share their experiences in a spontaneous manner. It is important that knowledge is liberating because it is only through that kind of approach that dialogue can emerge (Cresswell, 2004, 2007, 2014; Mies, 1983). The research becomes devoid of hierarchies (top down approach) where the researcher and the research participants are collaborators in pursuit of knowledge.

4.3 Design Coherence: Maxwell's Framework

This study incorporated Maxwell's (2005) 'systematic' model which seeks to establish coherence between various study components *inter alia* the goals, the study conceptual framework, research questions, research methods used and validity issues. The above-mentioned components form an integrated and interactive model linking the sections wholistically to each other. The goals of the study are concerned with what the research seeks to achieve, its objectives. The conceptual framework included extant literature, theories and the researcher's personal experiences prior to and during the conduct of the research. Research questions refer to what was expected to be learned from the study. The research methods are concerned with the techniques and approaches of collecting and analyzing data. Lastly, validity component addresses the methods that were used to strengthen the legitimacy of the results and conclusions drawn from the study (Maxwell, 2005). From the aforementioned the design of the study was elaborated as well as how the five components were interrelated. Figure 1 below illustrates how the study design was conceptualized with reference to the above-mentioned components.

Figure 1: The Study Design Framework

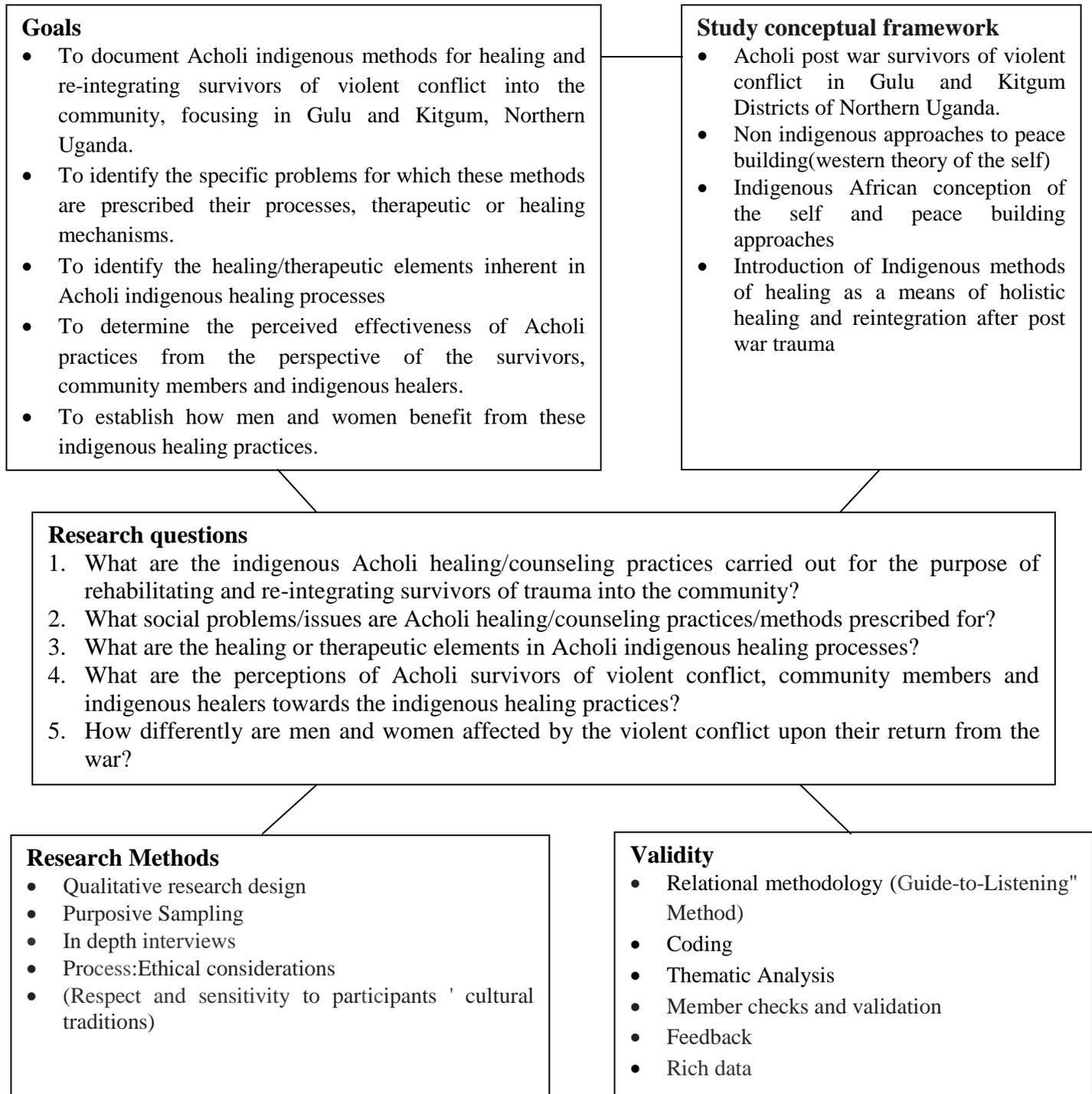


Diagram adapted and modified from Maxwell (2005)

Specifically, the study adopted a case study of two districts in northern Uganda: Gulu and Kitgum. Case studies involve a detailed investigation where data is collected over a period within its context. Its aim is to provide an analysis of the situation and processes that underpin the theoretical issues under study (Cresswell, 2007, 2014; Robson, 2002). The value of the case study relates to the in depth analysis of a single or small number of units (Hancock, 2002; Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999; Mutisi, 2009). The researcher observed and interacted directly with survivors of violent conflict in the two districts.

According to Yin (2003, 2005, 2009) a case study design should be used when the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions. Secondly, when the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; thirdly, when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions she/he believes are relevant to the phenomenon under study; and lastly, when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Cresswell, 2007, 2014; Yin, 2003, 2009). For instance, in this research study, it was not the researcher’s intention to manipulate any variables in order to influence the behavior of the survivors. The respondents shared some of the real life experiences they went through under the hands of the perpetrators. It was not possible for the researcher to have a picture of the survivors’ experiences and the process of indigenous healing procedures without considering the context within which these occurred (Babbie, 2010; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

4.4 Study Area and Sample

The study was conducted in the Acholi sub-region in northern Uganda, specifically in Gulu and Kitgum districts (see Figure 2). The participants were drawn from the two districts because they were the most affected by the violent conflict. Gulu is the largest town in the Acholi sub-region. It lies approximately 105 kilometres by road northeast of Kitgum. According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2011) the Gulu district population was estimated at 385, 600. Kitgum borders Acholibur to the south and in 2011 its estimated population was estimated at 238, 300 (Uganda Bureau of Statistic, 2011).

The Acholi sub-region is occupied by the Nilotic people of the Luo ethnic group known as the Acholi. Altogether, the population of Acholi sub region in 2002 was 1.2 million (Uganda

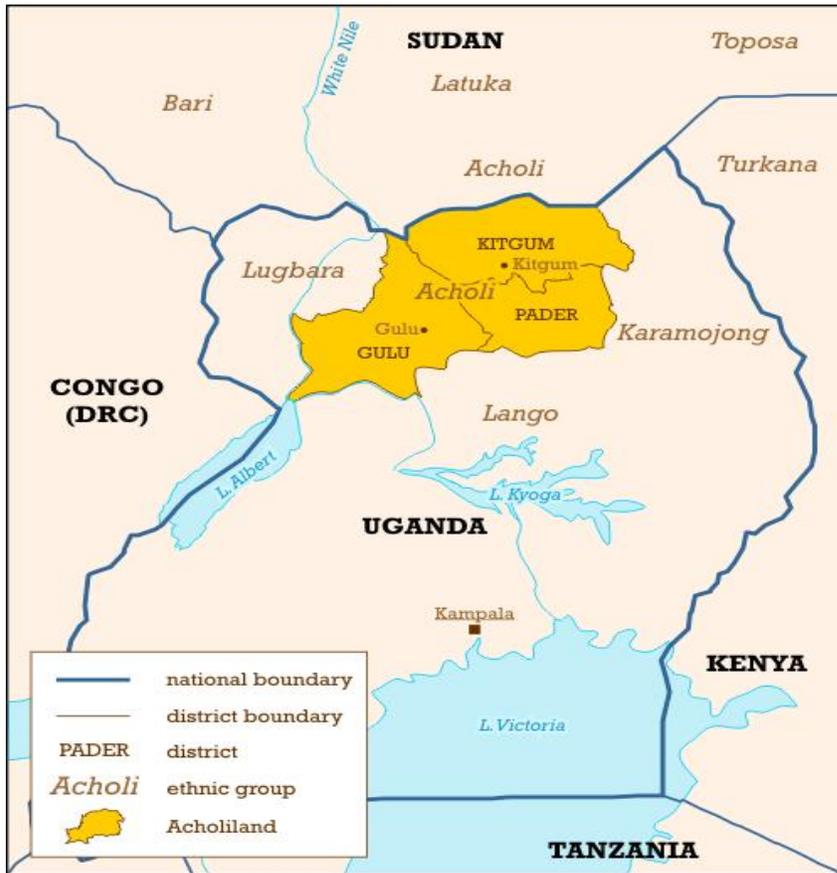
Bureau of Statistics, 2006a). Their local language is Luo; English is the official and national language of the country. They also speak Kiswahili, one of the languages spoken in East Africa. The literacy rate is 64 percent (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The major religion of the local people is Christianity with a minority practicing Islamic faith and the majority of the people practicing traditional Acholi religion alongside Christianity and Islam.

The Acholi social structure is based on the family unit. The family related houses form a village which then forms a sub-clan and sub-clans form a clan. The clans form the Acholi tribe (Pain, 1997). There were approximately 350 clans in the Acholi sub-region by the 19th century (Atkinson cited by Harlacher, Okot, Obonyo, Balthazard, & Atkinson, 2006).

The people are ruled by traditional chiefs whose roles were greatly affected by the LRA conflict because of mass displacement of the population, national politics, based on elected leadership versus traditional leadership and the breakdown of the social and cultural institutions. Their role now is that of performing traditional rites of reconciliation, facilitating the paying of compensation in cases of murder and rituals of cleansing those individuals of the community who have returned home from a forced armed conflict (Corbin, 2012).

The Acholi sub-region borders to the north South Sudan, to the East Karamoja sub-region, to the South Lango sub-region and West Nile sub-region to the West. The study targeted the local communities who had witnessed the counseling and reconciliation practices, the war survivors who had been taken through the counseling and reconciliation practices and elders or religious leaders who conducted the traditional counseling and reconciliation practices in the area.

Figure 2: The Areas of Study



Source: Acholi people - Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia

4.4.1 Sampling

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used (Cresswell, 2007; Maxwell, 1998; Patton, 1990). In purposive sampling; participants are chosen with reference to specific criteria and purposes in mind (Babbie, 2010; Trochim, 2006). Purposive sampling entails selecting participants who are perceived to have the rich and diversified information, opinions and views about the study phenomena that are then studied in-depth. The researcher used criterion sampling, a form of purposive sampling where individuals, groups or settings that meet criteria are selected (Cresswell, 2007). Thirty survivors of violent conflict from Gulu and Kitgum who had experienced and gone through indigenous healing processes were purposefully identified. These participants were identified because of the valuable

information they held of having gone through violent conflict, indigenous healing methods and reintegrating themselves into the community. Ten elders and religious leaders from both Gulu and Kitgum districts who were considered the custodians of indigenous knowledge systems were also interviewed. In addition, ten community members from Gulu and Kitgum who live with survivors on a day-to-day basis participated as well. Besides the criterion used to select the sample, heterogeneity of the population was also taken into consideration. To diversify the sample, respondents from various ages ranging from 18 years and above who could independently consent, were also sampled. Both genders (male and female) were interviewed from Gulu and Kitgum districts based on their various sub-counties. Richie, Lewis and Elam (2003) highlight various factors that can affect the sample size; these are heterogeneity, selection criteria, special group interest, multiple samples, data collection methods, budget and resources available. According to Patton (2002), the sample size in qualitative research cannot be determined by a specific rule. It is mostly dependant on the purpose of the study, available time and resources at hand. However, Pope, Van and Baker (2002) argue that the sample size of a qualitative inquiry should not exceed fifty (50) participants unless necessitated by the research question. In this study, seventy eight respondents participated in the study but because some interviews lacked depth, fifty participants who provided in-depth information capturing what omitted participants said were used. This was done to cater for the heterogeneous sample to include the survivors of violent conflict, the elders who administered the rituals and the community members who witnessed the healing ceremonies. The heterogenous sample enabled the researcher to obtain views from respondents from different walks of life, thus facilitating the depth of the data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998; P. 136) saturation is “a matter of degree”. The researcher halted at the 78th participant after realizing that the overall experiences had become redundant and that no new information was forthcoming. Since qualitative research focuses more on meaning rather than statements with a generalized hypothesis as suggested by Crouch & McKenzie (2006), the researcher opted not to compromise depth for breadth (Murphy, Ding wall, Great batch, Parker & Watson, 1998). The summary list of the selected 50 out of 78 participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary list of the participants

District	Population	Sample Group			Total
		Survivors	Elders and Religious Leaders	Community members/ Witnesses	
GULU	385,600	17	5	5	27
KITGUM	238,300	13	5	5	23
TOTAL	623,900	30	10	10	50

The sample comprised 33 males and 17 females. Table 2 presents the breakdown of the sample by gender, district and participant status.

Table 2: Gender of participants by district

Participants status	Kitgum		Gulu		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Elders	5	0	5	0	10
Witnesses	4	1	4	1	10
Survivors	8	5	7	10	30
Total	17	6	16	11	50

Table 3: Summary of participants

Number and percentage of participants

Participants	Male respondents		Female respondents		Total respondents	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Gulu survivors	7	21.2	10	58.8	17	34
Gulu witnesses	4	12.1	1	5.9	5	10
Gulu elders	5	15.2	0	0	5	10
Kitgum survivors	8	24.2	5	29.4	13	26
Kitgum witnesses	4	12.1	1	5.9	5	10
Kitgum elders	5	15.2	0	0	5	10
Total	33	100	17	100	50	100

Thus, in Kitgum and Gulu districts, more males participated in the study compared to the females. However, all elders were male participants while more male witnesses participated in the study. In Gulu more female survivors participated in the study.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. According to Sekaran (2004), primary data source is where the researcher obtains data directly from the field and secondary data source is where data is obtained from existing written documents. Secondary data was sourced from reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) such as Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) Gulu and World Vision (WV) involved in indigenous counseling. Written reports from Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative organization (ARLPI) and the National Documentation center Kitgum were also studied and formed part of the data.

4.5.1 Data Collection Instruments: In-depth Interviews

For the purpose of this study, in depth individual interviews were used to collect data. This enabled the researcher and the respondents to diverge in order to pursue an idea or a particular experience in more detail (Britten, 1999). The researcher used an in-depth interview schedule to explore participants' experiences and perceptions of indigenous healing methods that they had been part of. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviews should be used in place of focus groups if the potential participants may not be comfortable talking openly in a group. The process of indigenous healing for trauma survivors was likely to bring about painful memories. The researcher opted to use in depth interviews because some of the survivors would not want to re-live their experiences in a group setting. According to Kitzinger (1995), not all participants will experience the benefits of focus group discussion; it can be intimidating at times, especially for inarticulate or timid members. This shows that focus group discussions are not empowering for all participants and the researcher felt that in-depth interviews would offer more opportunities for the participants.

In-depth interviews provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Information is collected in a more relaxed atmosphere as respondents often feel more comfortable having a conversation with

the researcher about their experiences alone. Qualitative interviewing is an outstanding tool because it is able to capture the finer nuances of voice, including emotions, while people relate their experiences (Rabionet, 2011). This was useful for the purpose of this research study as the respondents were sharing sensitive and painful memories.

However, there are a few limitations namely: being prone to biasness, time consuming, not generalizable. The researcher made every effort to design a data collection tool, create instruments, and conduct interviews to allow for minimal bias. Interviews can be time consuming because of the time it takes to gather data, transcribe, and analyze the results. Each respondent was given at least one hour to share his/her experiences unconditionally in a private office within the counseling centers of World Vision, African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) and Gulu University where participants usually come for on-going counseling on a daily basis. Interviews also took place at the Ker Kwaro Acholi, Gulu and at the documentation center offices in Kitgum; including in the participants personal homes as they deemed appropriate. The researcher used semi-structured guide interviews because they allow for the development of questions in order to explore responses in depth. They also provide an opportunity for asking additional questions as well as a leeway to follow up on any interesting responses that might emerge in the interview (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Items were developed from personal exposure as a counselor working with the survivors. Different interview guides were used for the survivors, elders, religious leaders and community members (see Appendices 3, 4, & 5)..

4.6 Procedure

Participants were identified through the networks of the non-governmental organizations that were already working with the survivors namely: World Vision, Refugee Law Project, the African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), Acholi Religious Peace Initiative Office, Ker Kwaro and Gulu University counselling centers. These organizations were frequented by survivors of violent conflict. In addition, the researcher had to work in accordance to the preference of some participants who are interviewed in their homes either because they chose to or due to other various personal reasons. The researcher left her contact details with various authorities in the centers who then gave the contact of the

researcher to the respondents; who were willing to participate in the study to contact her directly. Many of the participants showed interest in the study and were contacted through telephone to schedule an appointment on when to meet at the counselling centers or places of their convenience for an interview. This helped minimize power differences between the researcher and the study participants. It also created possibilities for reflection into different perspectives which could have otherwise been difficult had the hierarchical position not been diffused between the researcher and the research participants (Lehtomaki, Janhonen-Abruquah, Tuomi, Okkolin, Posti-Ahokas, & Palojoki, 2013).

The researcher introduced the study to the respondents in order to make the respondent acquaint himself or herself with the study and share their lived experiences. Their lack of understanding of any question or explanation in regard to the study was addressed at this point. Furthermore, respondents' permission was sought for tape recording for accuracy of information. The researcher paid particular attention to language as well as extra-linguistic cues including body language, tone, speech, pitch and generally, how the respondent was talking about themselves and others. This helped get in-depth perceptions of respondents' lived experiences of the integration rituals and their experiences post integration into the community. In some cases there was evidence of re-traumatization which were dealt with by having standby voluntary counselors from various centers like ACTV (Appendix 6), Gulu University Counseling Center (Appendix 7). The researcher and her research assistant were well positioned to identify the participants who were distressed by the interviews, as they are both accredited counselors of the Uganda Professional Counselors Association.

Most interviews took 45 minutes to one hour while those with elders and religious leaders' respondents took longer because of cultural values of respect that prohibited the researcher from interfering with the long narrative style preferred by the elders. The researcher strived to write process notes every day after conducting interviews although this proved to be a challenge. Wherever possible the interviews were transcribed two days after data collection. A research assistant was engaged to translate the data from the Acholi language into English.

4.7 Data Analysis: The Voice-Centered Relational Method

This study utilized the Voice-centered Relational (VCR) method for data analysis. The method was originally developed by Gilligan and her colleagues (Brown & Gilligan; 1992; Gilligan, 1993) to study narratives of real life as opposed to hypothetical moral conflicts and choice. The method has since been extended by many others (e.g. Bryne et al, 2007; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Mkhize, 2005; Nagy & Leavy, 2006; Portman, Bartlett & Carlson, 2010) to emphasize the social, cultural and power dimensions involved in real life dilemmas, while retaining the focus on the study of real life phenomena or the participants' lived experiences. The method emphasizes the study of the self-in-relation, as opposed to an isolated, atomistic self (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). In using the Voice-Centered Relational Method, the researcher (listener) adopts a flexible stance in order to understand the narrative from different vantage positions (Gilligan, 2003).

According to Bryne, Canavan and Millar (2007, in Lehtomaki, Janhonen-Abreuquah, Tuomi, Okkolin, Posti-Ahokas, and Palojoki (2013), the method was developed as a listeners' guide. Central to the method is the issue of voice (versus voicelessness) or speaking in a voice that is not one's own, regurgitating others' ideas instead. The voice-centered relational method enabled the researcher to focus on the person speaking, namely the amalgam of voices that emerged in the reading of the individual's story (Gilligan, 1982; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). Gilligan (1982) posits that when people give a voice to their most natural and cultural expression, it avails us with a powerful psychological tool to understand the inner and outer worlds of the person. When we use this kind of understanding, then we are actually saying that the way people talk about their lives and experiences is important. The method recognizes that the language that people use and the connections they make disclose the world they see and in which they act (Gilligan, 1982).

According to Carmic, Rhodes and Yardley (2003) and Gilligan (1982), the method draws on voice and relationship as points of entry into the human psyche. It is designed to open a way to discover and to know the inner world of another person. They further explain that the collectivity of different voices comprised in the voice of any given person is always embodied in culture, and in relationship with oneself and with others (Camic, Rhodes &

Yardley, 2003). Consequently, there may be a resonance or tension in these voices between the self, voices of others with whom the person relates, and the cultural context in which the person lives. The relational methodology enables us to note and record the continuous changes in our own voice as a researcher and the researched (participant) voice; and trace what might constitute the changes and or the tensions (Nagy & Leavy, 2006). Therefore “each person’s voice is distinct bearing the marks of the body of that person’s history and culture in the form of language, and the numerous ways in which human society and history shape the voice of the human soul” (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley, 2003, p. 157).

Commensurate with the metaphor of voice, the method seeks to answer three interrelated questions: Who is speaking (the speaking subject)? Under what social and cultural circumstances? Who is listening? and what is the nature of relationship between the speaker and the listener? The listener (researcher) listens attentively to the narrator’s experiences, paying attention not only to their thoughts, emotions and actions but also to the social, cultural and gendered milieu in which the narrative unfolds. Hence relationships of power, or how the respondents are positioned in their social and cultural world, form an integral part of the relational method of analysis. The listener pays attention to not only the speaker but also to what is going on inside herself as a researcher, in an effort to break down the hierarchies, privileges and power relationships that could possibly impinge on the relationship (Bryne et al., 2007).

As the study was interested in the survivors’ lived experiences of the indigenous healing methods for self-rehabilitation and communal re-integration, the voice-centered, relational methodology developed by Gilligan and her colleagues was best suited for analyzing the findings (Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertach, 2003). In terms of application, the methodology involved the researcher reading the narrative four times, each reading engaging with the story from a different vantage point, in order to explore several positions from which the story can be told (Mkhize, 2005). The main purpose of doing this was to explore many positions from which the African healing and reintegration practices were perceived to be of value to the survivors of violent conflict. Portman, Bartlett, and Carlson (2010), like Gilligan et al. (2003) argue that relational theory and methodology are

appropriate for studying aspects of the self-in-relationships or connectivity, an essential element of this study. In the study, it was envisaged that narratives involving how the participants re-connect not only with various aspects of their multiple selves but their families and communities, would emerge. Further, the relational method was appropriate in that it incorporated reflexivity; it enabled the researcher to acknowledge her own salient experiences explicitly, not to eliminate bias but to discover potential ways of inquiry that could obscure out the experiences that participants described, so that such articulation could be avoided or ameliorated (Gilligan, 2003). The following sections describe the four readings that were employed in the current study.

4.7.1 The reading process of the voice-centered relational method

The voice-centered method in the current study comprised four readings that were adapted from the works of Mkhize (2003) and Mauthner and Doucet (1998, 2003). In the first reading the researcher builds a summary of the whole story capturing their own personal reactions assumptions, intellectual and emotional responses pertaining the story and on the people who are involved. The reader seeks to understand the overall plot, paying attention to the images that were used in the narrative. During the second reading, the researcher listened to how the research respondents speak about self. Tensions and contradictions in self-understanding were also explored. This part of the reading culminated with the construction of the I-poems, as suggested by Edwards & Weller (2012). The third reading drew on the nexus between the respondent-self in relation to the “others”. The idea was to identify significant others that were present in the respondent’s narratives and how they were positioned in relation to the storyteller. The fourth reading tries to put the narrative into the broader socio-cultural and structural perspectives. It incorporates the social and cultural constraints or enablements that might have a bearing on the respondents’ narratives. Religion/culture, gender and the concomitant, socially-sanctioned power relations thus constitute an indispensable part of this reading (Mkhize, 2005). It is customary to conclude the readings by drawing out the cross-cutting themes that emerge from them (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, 2003). Others consolidate the readings by constructing the I-poems for each narrative. The four readings and their application in the current study are described in detail below.

4.7.1.1 Reading One: The Overall Plot

This first reading is commonly used to interpret interview transcripts by considering the whole story (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). It is a summary of the entire story as told by the narrator. At this stage, I looked for images, words, metaphors, themes, and contradictions in the transcripts I was reading. I paid extra attention to the paralinguistic cues for example, pitch, tone and pauses, with a view to comprehending how the respondents experienced violent conflict and perceived indigenous healing practices (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Pinto, 2004). As I read the narratives of the respondents, I looked for my own “reader response” (Tushini, 2011). This kind of data analysis provided the researcher the possibility of acknowledging not just the person speaking but also the one who is listening - the researcher (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Taylor et al., 1995). This means that I had to place myself in the text and read for myself, placing my own background, history and experiences, in relation to the respondent I had interviewed. The assumption is that by trying to be in touch with and name how we are emotionally, socially and intellectually located in relation to our respondents, we can retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between their narratives and own interpretations of those narratives (Tushini, 2011).

As I pursued the first reading, I reflected on and recorded in a journal my feelings and thoughts about the respondents’ stories (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). My research assistant was also encouraged to do the same. We then discussed between the two of us what we thought about each of the respondents, how they each reacted to each story, and whether we identified with the respondents. In addition, we considered the emotions elicited by each of the stories. The researcher’s role in the social construction of the lived experiences of the returning survivors was made explicit (Hewitt, 2007), thus adding to the credibility of the research process. Thus, the use of the voice-centered relational method of data analysis enabled the researcher to bring her own assumptions and perceptions to bear on the study.

4.7.1.2 Reading Two: The Self

Brown and Gilligan (1992) assert that the researcher needs to pay attention and listen for indications of the sense of self of the participant, in order to gain a feeling for “the heart and mind of another body” (Brown and Gilligan, 1992: 21). In this reading, I listened to each respondent’s story in order to identify their emerging sense of self (i.e. Who they were), by paying attention to the way they used the personal pronouns “I”, “me,” “we” and “you” “signalling changes in how the respondent perceives and experiences herself” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 128, as cited in (Byrne, Canavan & Miller, 2009, page. 69). The main purpose was to see how each emerging “self” of the speaker related to others. The goal was to find out how the respondents spoke about themselves (‘I’) and the world they lived in (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This could be noted from the way the respondents shifted the focus from “I” or “me” to “you” or “them”. (Letvak, 2003; Mauthner, 2002). I keenly listened for traces of individualistic (primary focus on the “I”) versus the collectivist (primary focus on the group) understandings of the self. The shifts and tensions between different or opposing views on the self were noted (Mkhize, 2003). As I listened for the tensions between the independent and interdependent notions of the self, I noticed that as an African trained in western counseling psychology, these tensions were palpable in my own life and I had to deal with them in order to maintain objectivity. In addition, the researcher keenly tried to trace other voices that could have been acting on the respondent, be they dominant or non-dominant (i.e. *Who* is speaking?). The reading assisted the researcher to locate the respondents within the context of healing practices in Acholi community. Amongst others, this was done by establishing whether the respondents felt healed and their sense of integrity restored (e.g. a sense of self as worthy in the eyes of others) after the healing or if they felt accepted in their communities (i.e. a feeling of worthiness in the community).

As an extension of the second reading, I developed “I” poems as suggested by Edwards & Weller (2012) who observed that “I” poems are part of a specific method for analysing interviews developed by Carol Gilligan and colleagues. This step involved cutting and pasting italicised phrases out of the narratives in the exact sequence that they occurred originally in the interview, and placing them in separate lines, like the lines of a poem. The “I” poem were constructed into stanzas based on breaks in the topics and voices.

4.7.1.3 Reading Three: The Self-in-Relationship

In the third reading, I read the scripts listening for how the respondents spoke about their interpersonal relationships, with their relatives, children and broader social networks which include the living and the living-dead. The first step is to identify the significant others that are present in the respondent's narratives. I then paid attention to how the respondents' consciousness was influenced by these significant others in their lives, even if they were not physically present (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998: 16). This was important as the worldview of the Acholi comprises spiritual others who form a significant part of their lives, even though they are in the invisible spiritual realm. For example, a returnee who has received traditional western counselling may not feel completely healed if the ancestors have not been part of the healing process. Reading and highlighting the relevant segments of the text, I mapped the relationship between the narrators and the spiritual and other relationships in their lives, such as their husbands and family members. Reading 3 was an important area of data analysis because interconnectedness is a very important aspect among the African people from whom the research was drawn. Also, reading for relationships was important in bringing out the holistic theoretical framework which underlines healing in the indigenous Acholi community.

4.7.1.4 Reading Four: The Social Structures and Cultural Contexts

In the fourth reading, I placed the accounts of the respondents within religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, philosophical underpinnings, gender and other social structures and cultural contexts that underpinned their personal experiences of violence and indigenous healing and re-integration into the community. In Acholi tradition religious practices is a must since religion is infused in all aspects of life. To be human is to belong to the whole community (Corbin, 2012; Kibwanga, 2009). This therefore means that there is no moment in one's life when one is free from *jok* (spirit), power, force which can take possession of things, animals and people if they do not adhere to the values held within the communities. In this reading I was interested in gender and other social and cultural factors that had a bearing on how the

respondents experienced the healing rituals and the integration in general. For example, in a community such as the Acholi, in which chastity is held in high regard for women, it was particularly interesting to establish how men and women returning from the war were received and if the cleansing ritual had an equally beneficial effect on the intimate relationships they had prior to the war and abduction, or those they were to establish after returning from the war. In a nutshell, amongst the issues explored in the fourth reading was the gendered dimension of the integration rituals and community reception.

4.8 Emerging Themes

From the genesis of the study I had recorded the summary of contacts and field notes data sheets. This included the themes, hunches that had emerged during the course of my field work (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All these notes assisted me in analyzing the data. This writing of hunches and emerging issues continued throughout the reading process. The issues were increasingly becoming clearer for me to understand, articulate and write on paper, as I continued to read the transcripts. Where I was doubtful or uncertain, I went back several times and listened to the interviews, tracing for the recurring, conflicting and dominant narratives. I also consulted and counter checked with my supervisor on several occasions during the analysis phase. I also cross checked several times with my research assistant and a colleague at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa especially over the areas I felt doubtful about. Against their feedback, I was able to go back again to the transcripts and independently take up an assured position of my data.

The above-mentioned process of tracking the emerging themes, having mapped the relationships, was supplemented by the thematic analysis procedure as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The readings were organized in thematic headings to address the study objectives while taking cognizance of the emerging issues in relation to the research questions and literature (Burman, 1994). I keenly explored the interconnectedness of the emerging themes, without losing sight of the relational nature of the respondents' narratives, and the tensions embedded in the narratives as a result of culture, gender, and the positioning of the respondents in society in general. The reading of the texts consistently drew me into

understanding the tension between culture and religion. This tension is aptly illustrated in the findings and discussion chapters.

4.9 Reflexivity of the Reading Process

Reflexivity in this research helped the researcher to be able to understand her individual self as an African woman researcher and the deep values that are embedded within the African value of communitarianism. Reflexibility according to Tindall (1994, P. 151, in Zhuwau, 2011, p. 87) is:

Acknowledging the central position of the researcher in the construction of knowledge... that all findings are constructions, personal views of reality, open to change and reconstruction.

Therefore, in addition to being a religious woman researcher, I became aware of how my being a religious nun in front of the respondents sometimes influenced their responses. This was evident in the tensions I noticed between religion, rituals and witchcraft. Some Christian participants had a sense of guilt talking about healing rituals, which they confused with witchcraft. Thus, in the course of my research, I found myself sometimes struggling between my Africanness, my religion (a Christian nun) and the way I was positioned by the participants, who at times were confused that a nun was interested in ritual matters.

I saw a sense of pride and coming alive among the elders, as they spoke with a lot of warmth and emphasis about the rituals and the knowledge of their culture. They spoke from a position of authority and power. Consequently, I began to feel we had lost something of great value as an African people. I felt I needed to walk back into the history and wisdom of our culture which it seemed to me that the elders felt we have lost as the new generation. As an African woman I was particularly struck by the idea of collective guilt, collective responsibility and collective action. I remained inquisitive throughout, listening with empathy. I felt I had to keep on listening to the participants' narratives, and this may have influenced the number of people I ended up engaging with. I listened to their stories, keeping a diary on the way I was touched by the respondents' narratives of hardship, love, and survival under difficult circumstances.

4.10 Dependability and Validity of the Study

In qualitative research design, reliability is not about the test-retest reliability or the internal consistency of measures as measured by statistical methods. Rather, reliability is about the quality of craftsmanship, or the dependability of the data that has been collected (Patton, 1990). Miller and Dingwell (1997, p. 48) posit that, “validation techniques are not tests of validity but opportunities for reflexive elaboration”. The reliability and validity of this study was achieved by taking into account the full descriptions of the research site and subjects, data collection devices and procedures that were used. In this particular study, the researcher conducted individual interviews from Gulu and Kitgum districts. Researcher triangulation (Jick, 1979; Schreiber, 2000; Maxwell, 1998; Creswell, 1998, 2004) was also used where Acholi Religious Peace Initiative, Gulu University and Ker kwaro facilitators were consulted to cross check the data since they are familiar with the history, language philosophy of the people of Gulu and Kitgum (Schreiber, 2000). The researcher took elaborate notes during the study and the notes were consulted during the analysis phase. To achieve reliability and validity, member checks were used. Respondent validation refers to the systematic soliciting of the views from participants about the data (Maxwell, 1998). This technique included several mechanisms in that it permitted the respondent to judge the consistency of the research findings. The researcher did this by going back to one of the meetings and checking out with the participants if her research findings were explicit and whether they could recognize their own descriptions in the final report (Miller & Dingwall, 1997, p. 41). The researcher also sought the expertise of the supervisor throughout the process. A small sample of the analyzed data was presented before the elders who had participated, for their input. The same was done with the people working with survivors at Gulu University counseling center, Ker kwaro Acholi and Religious Peace Initiative leaders who were knowledgeable on the philosophy of the Acholi world view. Maxwell (1992) refers to this as an attempt to establish interpretive validity; checking out the consistency of the data received from informants and the analyzed data.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

The research proposal having been approved by the School of Applied Human Sciences' Higher Degrees Committee, ethical clearance was granted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix 1). Uganda National Council of Science and Technology also reviewed, cleared and approved the research study to proceed (Appendix 2). Permission to conduct the study was also sought from gatekeepers like the Ker Kwaro Acholi (leader of the cultural practices in Northern Uganda) who approved and wrote a consent letter of acceptance for the study to be carried out, pledging his support in helping the researcher in any way she may need (Appendix 5). Permission was also sought from the District resident officer who granted his permission in writing allowing the study to be carried out (Appendix 3).

On arrival in Gulu, the researcher met with the Leader of the Ker Kwaro Acholi to explain the objectives of her study and to get his guidance of how she could proceed with the study. He shared with the researcher that the main aim of Ker Kwaro Acholi was to promote and revamp Acholi culture and that my study from the way he had understood it when we applied for the gate keepers pass, would go a long way in doing that for him and his people. He requested to get a copy of my dissertation which I promised him. He then took the researcher to meet with some of the elders who are part of the team at the Ker Kwaro Acholi center. She briefly explained her objectives to them and they were happy to help the researcher with her study because they said it would revamp their traditions that had been affected by the war and modernity. They asked the researcher to come back after the work was finished to share with them her research findings since they were in the process of beginning seminars in the center based on Acholi traditions for school going children. I guess it might have also been a way of them checking out how I had faired in my assignment by the University; since most of them were elders and people of wisdom. In African culture they would naturally have needed to know how a younger person like me compared to them had faired in my work not necessarily because of the accuracy of information since that will be done to verify the findings earlier but in order to follow up and mentor the younger generation.

4.11.1 Ethical consideration - Respect for Persons: Informed Consent

The ethical consideration of interest, such as respect for the participants and confidentiality and informed consent were adhered to. The participants' consent was requested for formally and freely and they were free to engage in the study or not. First and foremost, the researcher left her contact at the centers with the counselors, where the participants often converged for their healing practices meetings (GUSCO, World Vision, Gulu University and Ker Kwaro Center). Prospective participants were free to call the researcher if they were willing to engage in the study. This ensured total respect of the client and left them free to choose whether to engage in the study without having to be coerced.

Those participants who voluntarily got in touch with the researcher and who offered to participate in the study received a phone call from the researcher thanking them. A meeting was then arranged in the place of their preference. Most of them preferred to be interviewed at the centers where they usually came because they said they had had other researchers before and they had always met there because it was quiet and confidential than their family homes. However, others preferred to be interviewed in the privacy of their homes.

According to Callahan and Hobbs (2010) full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks, benefits need to be given to the participants. Therefore, on the day of the interview, the researcher introduced herself and her research assistant and then proceeded to give a full disclosure of the nature of the study, the risks, benefits and alternatives, with an extended opportunity given to them to ask pertinent questions regarding the research. The researcher did this by explaining very clearly to the participants the purpose of the study and the procedures she was going to follow in interviewing. A potential harm inherent in a study of this nature might have been the possibility of secondary trauma. The study may lead to the participants being victimized by the perpetrators who may still be lingering in the community; for fear that they may be reported. A system of referral to trained counselors and psychologists was set up with World Vision, ACTV and Gulu University; who have years of experience working with the trauma survivors during the reintegration process. They were approached to avail counselors to voluntarily carry out counseling in case of secondary trauma of the survivors. Those who agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form

that was in vernacular (Appendix 12) and those who preferred to sign the English one (Appendix 11) were given the English one to sign. However, some of them refused to sign stating that they did not need to sign any form since they trusted the researcher. I think this may be because indigenous African people tend to rely more on trust than on legal documents, and relationships take an upper hand to being official and acting professional. It could also be because of the researcher is a religious nun and many people in the Northern part of Uganda are Christians. Gasa (1999) highlights the cultural differences that ought to be taken into account when obtaining informed consent from participants.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the researcher and her research assistant interviewed the participants individually. The research assistant holds a Masters degree in Counseling Psychology and is a member of the Uganda Counseling Association. He is conversant in the Luo language of the Acholi people, and is familiar with their customs as well. As a counsellor himself the research assistant was aware of the confidentiality requirements which were also discussed with him, prior to the research. Permission was sought from the participants to tape record the interviews. Only the researcher and research assistant who are trained counselors bound by confidentiality, had access to the survivors' experiences. The fact that the interviews took place individually minimized the risk of participants being identified and therefore victimized after the research. All the participants were 18 years or older and so did not need permission from anybody to take part in the study. In the data analysis phase, the researcher treated all information provided by the participants with maximum confidentiality by removing all personally identifying information that could lead to the participants being identified. Interview transcripts and recorded tapes were kept in a locked cabinet accessible to the researcher alone. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and her research assistant both of whom are professional counselors bound by confidentiality.

4.12 Study Benefits

All the participants at the end of the interviews were given money for transport back home; since the in depth interviews had taken a lot of their time more than usual. In some centres, it was a requirement that the participants are given money to transport them back home.

In addition, the findings of the study may enlighten education institutions of the gaps in the counseling programs or the capacity needs of counseling services required in northern Uganda and Uganda at large. War victims that had been left out in other counseling approaches will become the focus of counseling, as this approach will target them. This may help them deal with their situation and live normal lives again. Counselors currently working in northern Uganda will be introduced to other indigenous counseling activities that communities believe in to help them heal from their current psychological challenges. Involvement of the whole community in the counseling process may help the community to work together and promote further sustainable peace building in the region. Other aid agencies in the region will be introduced to locally acceptable reconciliation process and activities that they can incorporate in their own programmes to promote reconciliation and healing of the people in the area.

4.13 Dissemination of findings

The researcher went back to Gulu and Kitgum as she had agreed to share with the Ker Kwaro Acholi group about her findings and to leave a copy of the research findings for them. She will join them in their seminars and workshops and at this point, she will share the wealth of information from her research findings with them. She will also take a copy of the findings to GUSCO and World Vision to use as resource material for their work; not so as to carry out rituals since that belongs to the designated elders but so as to add to and enhance their understanding of their clients in context.

4.14 Conclusion

Chapter four presented the methodology of the research study. This included the research design, importance of a case study, sampling techniques and procedures, data collection methods and instruments, validity and reliability of the study and finally the methods by means of which the data were analyzed. Ethical considerations relevant to the study were also addressed.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter elaborates the findings of the study, taking into consideration the Voice-Centered Relational (VCR) method analysis of the personal narratives of participating survivors of violent conflict in relation to their experiences of cultural healing practices. The chapter refers also to the theory that underpinned the study and thereafter elucidates the findings.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What indigenous Acholi healing/counselling practices are carried out for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community?
2. What social problems and issues are Acholi healing/counselling practices/methods prescribed for?
3. What are the healing/therapeutic elements evident in Acholi indigenous healing processes?
4. What perceptions do Acholi survivors of violent conflict, the community members and the indigenous healers have of the indigenous healing practices?
5. How do men and women affected by the violent conflict benefit from indigenous healing practices?

In light of the aforementioned research questions, the salient dominant themes and sub-themes that emerged from the respondents' data were noted. These themes included, among others, the lived experiences of the survivors of violent conflict, the spirituality of community members and elders, healing through the rituals and community participation, the significance of the place of healing, reconciliation and forgiveness, and the Acholi belief system surrounding life and death (a holistic view of life).

The results presented in this chapter include selected extensive salient interview transcripts; however, this does not imply that the rest of the interview transcripts are not valuable. It simply means that the selected interview transcripts capture in a more precise and concise manner the interviewees' responses as narrated to me as the researcher. The selected extracts are supported by epitome examples from the rest of the narratives (Mauthner & Doucet,

2003; Mkhize, 2003). Ideally an in-depth analysis and report on each and every story should have been undertaken, however this was not possible due to the various constraints such as time, costs and data narrative saturation point issues; meaning that at a certain point of data analysis it became evident that the overall experiences had become redundant and that no new information was forthcoming (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Murphy, Ding wall, (Murphy, Dingwall, Greatbach, Parker & Watson, 1998). Thus, this necessitated a reading of the common themes, plots and sub-plots of each of the selected interview transcripts. The sections that follow present the findings in relation to each of the research questions.

5.2 Acholi rituals most commonly used for the rehabilitation of survivors of trauma and their re-integration into the community

The first research question asked was worded as such: “What are the indigenous Acholi healing/counselling practices carried out for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community and what is their personal and communal significance/meaning?” It was established that for the purposes of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the Acholi community, the rituals that the participating survivors of violent conflict most commonly underwent were *nyono tong gweno*, *culukwor*, *matoput*, *lwongo tipu*, *kwero merok*, *lwoko pi wang* and *moyokum*. However, the majority of the survivors of violent conflict did not go through all these rituals but many actively participated in the first three Acholi indigenous rituals.

Table 3 on the following page summarises the number of survivors who participated in the study and the rituals they were each involved in. These three rituals are then discussed in detail elaborating on the procedure as experienced by the participants and the elders. The discussion captures the places (spaces) where the rituals were performed, the time at which the rituals were performed as well as the processes that were followed and the audiences that were present. The narrators’ life-world experiences of the rituals are also referred to alongside the descriptions of the rituals.

Table 4: Table representation of the survivors and the rituals they participated

Resp.	Gulu district							Resp.	Kitgum district								
	Went through rituals						Did not go through rituals		Went through rituals						Did not go through rituals		
	Nyono tong gweno	Culukwor	Matoput	Lwongo Tipu	Kwero merok	Lwoko pi wang	Moyokum		Nyono tong gweno	Culukwor	Matoput	Lwongo Tipu	Kwero merok	Lwoko pi wang	Moyokum		
001	√							002								√	
002	√							003								√	
003							√	005								√	
004	√							006	√								
005	√							007	√								
006	√	√						008	√					√			
007	√							010	√								
009	√							012	√	√	√						
011	√							013	√			√					
012	√							014								√	
015	√						√	015	√								
016	√	√	√					016	√	√	√		√				
018							√	018	√								
019	√						√										
021							√										
022	√																
023	√	√	√														
Total	14	3	2	0	0	0	2	3	Total	9	2	2	1	1	1	0	4

Table 3 indicates that survivors participated primarily in the *nyono tong gweno*, *culukwor* and *matoput* rituals for their rehabilitation and community re-integration. Although some of the survivors interviewed went through all three rituals, greatest emphasis was placed on ensuring their participation in *nyono tong gweno*, the first cleansing ritual, as 23 (77%) of the 30 participants underwent this particular ritual. Thus the findings point to the fact that it is considered most important for survivors to undergo *nyono tong gweno* even if the rest of the rituals are not followed up. Thereafter, if it was established that the survivor had killed or been forced to kill, the healing process was to follow with the *culukwor* and *matoput* rituals respectively. The order and number of the rituals thus also hinges on the unique experiences of each survivor while they were in the war or conflict zone.

Interview findings provided in-depth accounts of participants' lived experiences of indigenous Acholi indigenous rituals that are meant to re-integrate survivors into the

community. For the purposes of presenting the study findings, transcription symbols as captured in Table 4 below have been used.

Table 5: Transcription symbols

Objectives	Symbol	Meaning
Objective one	([])	When the rituals were performed (timing).
	(...)	Rituals.
	[[...]]	Ritual processes.
	CAPITAL PHRASE/WORD	Places where rituals were conducted (physical spaces).
	<i>Italics phrase/word</i>	How the interviewees were situated in the various rituals performed.
	<u>Underlined phrase/word</u>	People interviewees related with when rituals were performed.
Objective two	Bold phrase/word	Social structures / cultural contexts in which rituals were performed.
	Phrase/word enclosed (...)	Social problems / issues for which rituals were prescribed.
	<i>Italics phrase/word</i>	How the interviewees were situated in the social problems/issues for which rituals were prescribed.
	<u>Underlined phrase/word</u>	People the interviewees related with during the social problems / issues for which rituals were prescribed.
Objective three	Bold phrase/word	Social structures / cultural contexts of the social problems / issues for which rituals were prescribed.
	Phrase/word enclosed (...)	Therapeutic elements evident in Acholi indigenous healing processes.
	<i>Italics phrase/word</i>	How the interviewees were situated in the healing and therapeutic elements in Acholi indigenous healing processes
	<u>Underlined phrase/word</u>	People the interviewees related with under the healing and therapeutic elements in Acholi indigenous healing processes
Objective four	Bold phrase/word	Social structures / cultural contexts of the healing and therapeutic elements in Acholi indigenous healing processes.
	Phrase/word enclosed (...)	Perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices.
	<i>Italics phrase/word</i>	How the interviewees were situated in their perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices.
	<u>Underlined phrase/word</u>	People the interviewees related with in their perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices.
Objective five	Bold phrase/word	Social structures / cultural contexts of the perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices.
	Phrase/word enclosed (...)	Various ways men and women were affected during the violent conflict and upon their return from the war.
	<i>Italics phrase/word</i>	How the interviewees were situated in the way the men and women were affected by the violent conflict upon their return from the war.
	<u>Underlined phrase/word</u>	People the interviewees related with in the way men and women were affected by the violent conflict upon their return from the war.
	Bold phrase/word	Social structures / cultural contexts of how the men and women were affected by the violent conflict upon return from war.

In the section that follows, the three most commonly performed Acholi rituals are presented and discussed.

5.2.1. *Nyono tong gweno*: Moving from the polluted (outside) to the unpolluted (inside) world

Most of the survivors of violent conflict interviewed went through the *nyono tong gweno* Acholi indigenous cleansing ritual. *Nyono tong gweno* is considered the first Acholi indigenous ceremony performed for the survivors of violent conflict. It is the best-known and most common cleansing ritual used to welcome family members, who have been away for a long time, back into the home. It is performed for a range of reasons, including quarrelling within the family unit or abduction. The Acholi believe that if someone has been away from the community for too long, they may have contracted bad spirits (*cen*) that could kill them and/or pollute the rest of the community if they are not cleansed (Harlacher, 2009). The ritual marks the re-entry into the home of someone that has been away from the family or homestead and for this reason the place where the ritual is performed is of significance. Therefore, it is important that they are cleansed as they enter the homestead, leaving all the bad spirits outside (behind). The following extracts highlight this:

Gulu Witness 001: *Nyono tong gweno* - is the first ceremony when the survivor has come back and it is performed at the entrance of the homestead before the survivor enters the compound of the home.

Kitgum Survivor 013: *Nyono tong gweno* was ([done on the day I arrived back home]). ... *Lwongo tipu* was ([after sometime]), since ([I had told my story of how I was captured])... It was because ([I kept screaming at night]), ([seeing my cousin calling for help in my dream]).

For the majority of study participants the only ritual that was performed for their healing and re-integration into the community was *nyono tong gweno*, as shown in the following excerpts:

Gulu Survivor 009: When I returned, the home people placed an egg in front of the house and asked me to step on it and then jump over the pobosticks and *layibi* stick. I think the ritual is called *nyono tong gweno*. That is the only one I went through.

Gulu Survivor 013: Not all of them were done for me but I know how *nyono tong gweno* was done to me. They made me stand at the entrance of the home, step on an egg, *Olwedo* and pobo sticks with *layibi*. Then they sprinkled water on me, even they poured water on the roof of the house when I was entering and it was falling on me. I do not know how others are done but I can ask my grandfather.

Survivor 013 went on to describe the process that was followed during *nyono tong gweno*. What stands out in the following excerpts are the demarcated spaces where the ritual is performed, symbolically marking the re-entry into the homestead of someone who has been exiled or out of contact with his or her community. Hence the symbolic depiction of movement from the outside to the inside to be united with the rest of the community, once the person has been cleansed, is paramount:

Kitgum Survivor 013: (Nyono tong gweno) ... (*Nyono tong gweno*) was ([done on the day I arrived back home]). I was [[made to step on an egg and step over the bok olwedo sticks]] AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE HOME. Then [[I entered the compound where the people were]]. Then [[they - people administering rituals - sprinkled water² on me]]. [[I was taken inside THE HOUSE and water was being sprinkled on me]]. Then [[I was brought outside]]. [[People there came to greet me]]...

The entire process, incorporating the symbolic movement from the outside (exiled from community) to the inside (re-union), is best captured in the following I-poem that was constructed from the narrative:

Kitgum Survivor 013: ... was done on the day I arrived back home
 I was made to step on an egg
 I entered the compound
 ... sprinkled water on me
 I was taken inside
 I was brought outside

Nyono tong gweno is performed as a gesture to welcome survivors. It marks a commitment on the part of both the community and the survivors to begin living together in harmony once they have been symbolically cleansed by means of the sprinkling of water (to symbolise cleanliness). Community participation in the rituals marks the restoration of the social equilibrium that was destabilised by the war, as explained by Gulu survivor 004:

The reason for it was mainly cleansing. To be forgiven by the community. To be reunited with the family and the community. Wars bring a lot of instability to the community. Rituals help to bring about balance and peace in the community. They help to bring people together. I could see this by the number of people who were there to welcome me back.

The preceding narrative excerpts highlight the fact that *nyono tong gweno* represents a gateway back into the community or homestead. It is a point at which the person to be

² Water-based ritual: Water is used to remove uncleanliness (contamination). One needs to be cleansed before joining the community and thus leaving the baggage of the past behind.

cleansed meets the community after being away for a long time. Thus, indigenous Acholi healing is not an individualised process performed in a remote office space away from the community. Rather, healing is witnessed by the community who are part of it; healing takes place ‘through others’. It is thus unfortunate that African indigenous perspectives do not form part of the training of professional counsellors in Africa. This creates a major shortcoming for those who practice on the African continent. This ‘healing through others’ is commensurate with the communal understanding of the self or *ubuntu* philosophy, while it is at variance with the autonomous understanding of self-hood that dominates major Western approaches to healing.

The findings of this study also point to Acholis’ belief in the sacredness and social stability of their homesteads (Baines, 2007). In the same way that individuals can be contaminated by bad spirits, so too can the homesteads. This finds resonance in the holistic Africentric Ubuntu philosophical framework (Edwards, 2001; Kamwangamalu, 1999), which does not draw a radical distinction between a person and his or her surroundings, meaning the self and the homestead comprise an indissoluble whole. Individual contamination extends to the contamination of the homestead. This understanding, that a human being is one with the other and the surrounding environment, is best captured in the Acholi view that killing a fellow human being is synonymous with the murder of the self. Elder 004 from Kitgum explained:

Killing another person is self-destruction – meaning that, whoever kills a human being, destroys his/her humanity. It is like killing yourself. Therefore, for the person to be healed and whole once again, he or she has to go through nyono tong gweno cleansing ritual.

The *nyono tong gweno* ritual locates the illness not within the person *per se*. The person/survivor who is to be healed is an embodiment of the whole community, which is also ill at ease with him or her (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). This tallies with African indigenous epistemologies, which prioritise an interdependence and being through participation, as opposed to separation and abstraction. The process frees the survivor and helps him or her to know that he is accepted, loved, needed and wanted by the community despite what may have happened. This is an awakening to the survivor that the community too has suffered because of his or her absence and that now they can all live in harmony again and the

community is regarded as being ‘whole’ once more (Huyse, 2008). This is summed up by Kitgum Elder 003:

Then also the survivor here represents a community/clan/family and healing is being done in the whole community. It is not only the survivor who is in pain here but the whole social fabric or community, therefore the reconciliation process is for the whole community.

This communal view of the self is in sharp contrast to the dominant, Western individualistic conception of the self, which prioritizes psychological abstraction and individual accomplishment, consistent with the motto, “To thine own self be true” (Myers, 2007, p. 28). For this reason, amongst others, healing approaches informed by Africentric theory need to be given space in the academy and counselling spaces in general (Graham, 1999; Gade, 2012). Indigenous Africentric theory incorporates the centrality of the interdependence between the community and the individual, respect for tradition, harmony with nature, high level of spirituality and ethical concern, sociality of selfhood, veneration of ancestors and unity of being (Baldwin, 1986; Bilotta, 2011; Baloyi, 2008; Bujuwoye, 2013; Holdstock, 2000; Mazama, 2001; Mkhize, 2005; Onyango, 2011; Wessels, 2008). Hence, the above-mentioned ritual that is the first to be performed—highlighting the movement from the outside (polluted) world back into the sacred (inside) world characterising the human community—vindicating the holistic and communal understanding of the self in indigenous African thought, as well as the sacred nature of the homestead inhabited by humans (Baloyi, 2008; Eagse, 2004; Gade, 2012; Graham, 1999; Huyse, 2008).

Non-indigenous counselling and reconciliation mechanisms that cater for survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda, without paying much attention to indigenous practices (Kibwanga, 2009; Pakiam, 2004; Pham et al., 2007; Rose & Ssekandi, 2007), have been criticised because of their limited effectiveness and punitive nature in that they focus on the offender while ignoring the survivors’ worldviews (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008; Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002; Quinn 2006a; Verdelli et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important that the healing process should take into account the holistic dynamism that is characteristic of the Africentric world-view.

Having performed the *nyono tong gweno*, the one ritual which is prescribed for all returnees, the next set of rituals are ear-marked for the specific circumstances of the survivors, taking

into account the nature of the violations they might have committed willingly or by force while in captivity. The sub-section which follows describes the *culukwor* (compensation) ritual.

5.2.2 *Culukwor*: The compensation ritual

According to the study findings, the second most common ritual used for the rehabilitation and re-integration of the Acholi survivors of trauma is the *culukwor* (compensation) ritual. The Acholi conduct this ritual to appease the spirits of those who were mistreated in life and killed or were not given a decent burial (JRP, 2007). In this ritual, the aggrieved clan listens to the confession of the killer through their clan representative. The participants described the process as follows:

Gulu Survivor 023: I went through *nyono tong gweno*. Then later *culukwor*. They slaughtered a goat. Then the water was sprinkled towards the sunset while the elders were saying “let all the bad spirits go with the sunset’ *gonoayoo*’.

Gulu Survivor 006: [[*My clan* also had to compensate another clan]] ([because we were made to kill neighbors]). *When I told the elders* this, they said then they need even to do (*culukwor*). (*Culukwor*) means compensation.

Kitgum Witness 004: [[*Culukwor*: *I have not seen it performed* in my village, but *what I know is* that - it is a compensation ritual]]. For the Acholi people ([when one confesses to a killing]), then [[there must be compensation and it is usually the elders between the two clans who negotiate that]].

Findings indicate this ritual was only significant to the Acholi survivors of trauma and the community when the survivor had caused the demise of another person. From an Africentric theoretical framework, the death creates an imbalance that requires restoration; otherwise, catastrophe will strike not only the individual who caused the imbalance but also the members of the community to which the individual belongs (Graham, 1999; Gade, 2012). It was established that to the Acholi survivors of trauma who were involved in killing a person and their community at large, the role of this ritual is to prevent further killings or revenge through payment of compensation to the victim’s family. The compensation is paid not just by the person who confessed to have killed another, but by his/her whole clan. Compensation is in the form of domestic animals, particularly cattle, if the murder was not deliberately committed. Unfortunately, most Acholi people lost their animals during war and thus many survivors had not performed the *culukwor* ritual by the time this study was conducted.

Hypothetically speaking therefore, at the time of this study most of the Acholi survivors of trauma who had killed a person were still suffering from fear of revenge that could be enacted upon them at any moment until such time as they were able to repay their debt in the form of compensation with cattle.

It further emerged from the interviews that in the distant past, the nature of the compensation to the wronged clan was dependent on whether the murder was intentional or not. If intentional, the offender's community was required to give one of their young daughters between the ages of 6 and 10 years, to the victim's community. By adoption, the young girl would become a daughter to the victim's community, as stated by Gulu Elder 010:

In the past it was bad...if you killed somebody, then your daughter or if it was his son who killed then his sister could be taken to the parents of the deceased so that when she grows she is married into that family and gives birth to another child that is named after the deceased; now gradually they changed it to cows only, you see that;so that also could stop you not to fight anyhow in the past.. (Short laughs) ..but now it is cow...normally they don't give a person as it used to be... eeh...you see.... They do this because the girl child is considered to be a carrier of life and a promoter of the family lineage. She can, when she grows up give birth to another child who can take on the deceased name; so it will be like he is still alive.

Giving another human being in the past (young girl) as a compensation for killing another human being as mentioned by Gulu Elder 010, is one of the areas in which Acholi indigenous healing rituals have been criticised because it is like *culukwor* (compensation) ritual is devoid of collective restoration but appears shifted in its emphasis from collective restoration to collective retribution. This is one of the arguments that has been forwarded in favour of the ICC approach, which is retributive (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008), while questioning that of the Acholi indigenous as not really being restorative (Allen, 2005). This kind of misunderstanding can occur when the concept of compensation is not well understood from the perspective of the Acholi people. The concept of compensation here is to restore complete unity between the two clans of the perpetrator and the offender in that this young girl now becomes the human bond that unites these two clans; for this reason they can no longer engage in fights with each other because they are now united by blood through this young girl. This type of finding seems to be contrary towards earlier views that indicated that the Acholi indigenous healing processes involve both aspects of retribution and restoration, which is in line with Enomoto's (2011) observation that compensation depends on the

circumstance and nature of the crime committed. In traditional Acholi culture, it is a requirement that the repentance is genuine and this is tested by the wrong-doer and community's readiness and willingness to pay compensation to the affected individual/community (Allen, 2008; JRP, 2012; Ogora, 2009; Huyse, 2008). Having performed the *culukwor* ritual, the returnees and their clans (if the compensation has been transacted) are now ready to move on to the next ritual, called *matoput*. Tradition dictates that if compensation has not been completed, the *matoput* ritual cannot be performed.

5.2.3 *Matoput*

The study revealed that *matoput* was the third most commonly used Acholi indigenous ritual for the rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of trauma into their community. *Matoput*, which means drinking a bitter herb prepared from the root of a tree known as *oput*, is a final sealing ceremony that is done after *culukwor* between the two clans who have been fighting each other; this is done when a person from one clan has intentionally or accidentally killed a person from another clan. In this study, it was established that violence for the Acholi is like an illness that affects everyone.

Kitgum Witness 004: (Matoput): is the final **ritual of reconciliation** in Acholi. It is where [[two clans come together; the one of the perpetrators and the survivor's elders negotiate this]]. They bring these **two clans** back together.

Gulu Witness 008: (Matoput) which is done in case someone has killed the person and the whole of his clan have to pay.....

Kitgum Witness 004: People were seated in the compound; **the family, clan and neighbours!** Then the elders went back inside the house with her **a goat had been slaughtered and cooked by the women.....** there were many people gathered there it is usually the elders between **the two clans** who negotiate that The only painful thing is that it is not only the person who has committed the killing who pays for 'culukwor but each and every member of his clan.It is where [[two clans come together; the one of the perpetrators and the survivor's elders negotiate this]].a representative of the dead person **[[drink oput tree³ with their hands behind their backs]]**.**the head of the perpetrator clan will be given to the survivor's clan to cook with their sheep and vice-versa.** Then all people who have come including the [[two clans eat together]].

The biomedical model conceives illnesses as a physical attack against the body due to forces that are observable and/or non-observable to the human eye (Papadopoulos, 2007). However

³ A representation of a bitter experience

biology alone does not explain disease causation and its course in Africentric thinking (Idemudia, 2000). Instead, disease is accounted for by personal, biological, social, environmental and spiritual factors. Illness is a social phenomenon and as such has significance for the whole ethnic group and immediate community members (Tsala, 1997). It is a common view that disease can be transmitted from one generation to the next as long as the stains of a fault have not been cleared. Many collective rites thus exist with the aim of preventing the transmission of certain diseases through the family line.

According to the findings, *matoput* cannot be performed before *culukwor*. Thus, only those who had the financial (livestock) means to perform *culukwor* had the opportunity to go ahead with *matoput*, the final healing ceremony. Documentary review reveals that there is customary law governing the handling of *culukwor* (Kwer Kwaro Acholi, 2001). The first step is that the elders of the two clans will talk about compensation and after this *matoput* is performed as a symbolic 'sealing of the deal' regarding the compensation discussion. As shown in the narratives of Kitgum Witness 004 and Gulu Witness 008, *matoput* involves drinking a bitter herb prepared from the root of a tree known as *oput* and its purpose is to prevent revenge from the affected clan in addition to bringing the two communities back together to live in harmony once again. The findings of this study concur with Latigo (2008) who opined that the ritual is practiced to suppress hate and resentment, as Baines (2005) similarly explained.

According to Tom (2006), the *matoput* process also involves one clan slaughtering a sheep (provided by the offender) and another clan slaughtering a goat (provided by the victim's relatives) to 'wash away' bitterness. The conflicting parties accept the bitterness of the past and promise never to taste such bitterness again. Acholi society strictly forbids the killing of human beings based on the sanctity of human life as dictated by their religion. Killing another person in Acholi community provokes the anger of the deities and ancestral spirits of the victim(s) leading to evil spirits invading the homesteads and causing harm to its inhabitants.

The context of the violence in the findings of this study was that it resulted in the killings of a person or people. This finding can be explained by the JRP (2012) observation regarding the Acholi Cosmology and belief systems surrounding spiritual interaction and death. Spirits are understood as dynamic and human-like entities with needs and desires that must be fulfilled by living humans (JRP, 2012). If these needs are not fulfilled, the spirits will react negatively and cause problems within the mortal realm. These spirits enforce moral norms that all Acholis are expected to follow, and spiritual retaliation is expected in response to violations of the moral code. As Acholi society is traditionally clan-based and collective, the whole clan may experience negative consequences from individual violations of the moral code. Thus, the clan traditionally takes collective responsibility for the amending of any violations (Liu Institute for Global Issues, 2006).

According to Gulu Elder 002 during the interview:

...inside the whole process underlies the divine aspect. The spirit of the dead is being atoned. The ancestral spirits too are evoked to intercede and protect the person who killed and the communities on both sides who were involved in the conflict.

However, if reconciliation does not take place, the spirits will haunt the people for not seeking to reconcile, as stated by Gulu Elder 002:

...if reconciliation is not done, mmh... then that spirit will also haunt his own people for not seeking to ...laughs...not to avenge ...but to make amends. So either way there is a problem. So his or our people cannot sit back, because...the spirit will come back and ask them to account...but the spirit will also haunt other people...so now that is why there is an underlying divine that helps to appease the spirit. So that is where it comes...But overall the Acholi also believe that we all protected by the spirits of our ancestors ...and that...above those sprits there is God. So the spirits are just intercessors...they help facilitate...but above them there is God. Acholi are deeply spiritual.

The significance of this ritual (as established in this study) is to reunite two communities who were previously estranged due to violent conflict (“*it is where the two clans come together*”). Once again, these findings concur with the Africentric theoretical framework upheld in this Acholi indigenous ritual, which is that the killing of another person in the Acholi community provokes the anger of the deities and ancestral spirits of the victim(s) leading to evil spirits invading the homesteads and causing harm to its inhabitants. As Gulu Elder 002 stated during the interview, “*inside the whole process underlies the divine aspect*”. The spirit of the

dead is being atoned. The ancestral spirits are evoked to intercede and protect the person who killed as well as the communities on both sides who were involved in the conflict. This spiritual aspect of healing is largely ignored by Western approaches to dealing with survivors of violent conflict.

Gulu Elder 002 further stated that “*many people took mato-oput - the final rites of reconciliation - as an instance but not as a process*”. According to this elder, “*in their interpretation, people miss the values and understandings of what the ritual process entails*”. He argued that some of the reasons that galvanise reconciliation are the elements of “*collective guilt, collective responsibility and collective action*”. This is further clarified by Africentric theory and the NTU approach to healing, which emphasises the interconnection of human beings from within and without and situates humanness as the foundation to all peace-building processes (Ntsoane, 2003). It is where “the African personality embraces humanism and the art of being a human person” (Broodryk, 2006, p. 24). It is through the vessels of healthy relationships that healing and interconnectedness are sustained in African indigenous systems. This is because relationships are the essence of African culture. Interconnectedness can only be experienced through relationships of unity and oneness; for when people are interconnected, it brings about sensitivity to others and to the larger environment (Phillips, 1990). It is because of this that healing in an African world-view takes place within the realm of relationships. This is where the African world-view differs from the Western world-views, which tends to separate the client from inter-personal relationships in decision making in therapy as the client is encouraged to pay attention to his/her autonomous inclinations that do not necessarily have to be influenced by community undertones. To this Gulu Elder 002 adds:

In Acholi if you kill, it is not an individual who has killed but the whole of your clan has killed. If you steal, it is your clan that has stolen; if you do all these things; if any of your clan members do something wrong, it is a reflection of what your clan is, it is collective guilt, collective responsibility, collective action. Therefore, every clan struggles to keep its individuals in check and takes responsibility of every individual's misbehavior. This therefore means that if an individual commits an offense of killing someone, the clan quickly comes in to start the process of reconciliation because by killing the other person you have separated and have lost the person you are. Therefore, you cannot eat their food, drink their water, walk on their path or do anything until the elders of the two clans start a mediation process.

Wasonga (2009) supports the above finding with the observation that the search for peace and reconciliation obligate the wrongdoer's community/family to accept collective responsibility in the event that a crime such as murder has been committed by an individual member. This is followed by collective repentance and remorse on the part of the wrongdoer's community. The author adds that at this stage, every member of the wrongdoer's community is vulnerable and bears the guilt of the murder and he argues that fellowship and communion are not possible until the process of reconciliation is complete. This finding lends weight to the acknowledgement that Western counselling approaches are by no means universally effective. As such, counsellors who practice in contexts other than their culture of origin should make an effort to understand the cultural outlook of the people they are working with. This is not about whether one culture's practices have more value than another but rather what is most meaningful and thus helpful to people from different cultural backgrounds. Unless counselling psychologists have the courage to recognise every culture, they risk being irrelevant or non-holistic in the handling of the people in their care (careful not to use the word client because there is no individual client; in African culture the whole community experiences the illness).

The analysis in the chapter thus far has centred on the Acholi indigenous rituals that survivors of violent conflict participated in for their rehabilitation and re-integration into their communities. The study findings have shown that despite literature indicating the importance of several different Acholi indigenous healing rituals, most survivors of violent conflict only participated in the three rituals discussed above. In the course of the interviews, the study established the reasons why survivors of violent conflict did not participate in all of the Acholi indigenous rituals and these findings are discussed in the following sub-section.

5.2.3.1 Economic hardship/lack of resources

This study established that not all the Acholi survivors of violent conflict interviewed participated in all of the ritual practices mentioned in the literature by Justice and Healing Project (2007) and Suarez (2008). For example, economic hardships and lack of means to meet requirements for the certain rituals made it impossible for some survivors of violent

conflict to participate in certain Acholi healing rituals. This was because many people lost their cattle during the war as indicated by Gulu Survivor 007 in the following excerpt:

They conducted for me nyono tong gweno before entering the compound. They are yet to do culukwor because the clan is still gathering cows for compensation since so many people had lost their property.

These sentiments were also shared by Gulu Survivor 022:

I actually went through some rituals which we do here in Acholi but I have not gone through the last one because we do not have the cows for compensation. The clan is still looking for them since they were stolen during the war.

5.2.3.2 Redundant rituals

Certain Acholi healing rituals such as *gomo tong* and *kweyo cwiny* are now considered largely redundant. Elders mentioned that these rituals were practised in the past but are no longer conducted:

Kitgum Elder 001: *There was also bending of the spear that was done long time ago. It was done between two tribes/ communities, not clans as in matoput. That is gomo tong. It is believed that gomo tong goes back to war times between the Acholi and other tribes. It brings about the spirits curse.*

Kitgum Witness 009: *Bending of spears was done long time ago between two tribes – They bend them as a sign of stopping the fighting.*

Based on the above extracts it was concluded that because the Acholi were not engaged in war with another tribe at the time of this study, these particular indigenous rituals (*gomo tong* and *kweyo cwiny*) were of no significance to the indigenous healing process for rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community. This reasoning concurs with Courtens (2008) who observed that problems can only be treated when and if they occur.

In conclusion, sub-section 5.2 has answered research question one about the indigenous Acholi healing/counselling practices carried out for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community. The next sub-section presents and discusses the social problems and issues for which the Acholi healing/counselling practices/methods are prescribed.

5.3 Social issues and problems for which Acholi healing/counselling practices/methods/ rituals are prescribed

The findings show that there are various reasons (social problems/issues) for which Acholi healing/counselling practices/methods are prescribed. In order to provide the context for these social problems it is important to quote at length from the extracts and the associated I-poems.

Gulu Survivor 007: To (*protect me from ‘cen’⁴ because those **bad spirits if they are not removed they will continue to attack you**; and not only you, even your family and clan in the future). The (**cleansing can only be done by using rituals**). In addition, the (community needs to know that I have been cleansed) so that I do not bring problems for them. To (**help me to fit in the family/community**) again otherwise I would still be an outsider without the rituals, because the Acholi believe that **once you have done bad things or even come across bad spirits, (you have to be cleansed)**, otherwise those **spirits also will affect the whole family lineage**. To also (**make the ancestors not to be angry with me and our clan**); you know the **ancestors are the ones who protect the family and the whole community**. (To cool my heart from all that had been happening to me), so that I can be at peace within myself. You know **everything that happened in Acholi created a lot of confusion and disturbed the balance of the community**. The rituals are a way of (*bringing peace and balance again to the family and community even to the person like for myself. I was so much in turmoil inside myself; I was not at peace at all. I had so many bad dreams, fears and anger. All these rituals helped (to put me at peace and at rest). Even though I experience them from time to time, I feel the community supports me. what we got from World Vision helped us to settle a bit, to feel safe, but it did not remove the internal torture, the bad spirits attacking me at night ... But after the rituals at home, I felt a lot more at peace, accepted and welcomed....**

Gulu Witness 006: *Nyono tong gweno* - to (**break away from the bad past and its spirits**) the survivor may have contracted while he was in the bush... To (cleanse the person) returning so that he does not for lack of it [cleansing] pollute and bring bad omen to **the family** and **the clan**. To (welcome the person back home). To (celebrate the return of the survivor in a **community**) Culukwor ‘compensation’ - to (avoid revenge and bitterness) on the part of **the other clan**. To (reconcile) the two **clans** so they can begin to (live in peace and harmony) once again. A ritual (calls for total forgiveness) on the part of **the community**.

Kitgum Elder 003: Each of these rituals done in Acholi have meanings, for example if death is involved there is “culu” and “matoput” because in Acholi when a person dies, it’s only the body but the soul lives on so that is when “culukwor” is done, (**the spirit will be happy**) that my clan cares for me because they have pursued compensation for me. This will (**appease the spirit**) of the dead and (prevent any other misfortune). Then for “*Nyono tong’ gweno*” it is done for (a person who has been away from home a long time). It is done (to wash away any evil) that he may have done or carried with him

⁴ Referring to bad spirits

wherever he was, so that when he re-enters the home he comes as a (pure man without any evil with him). Then other ritual like “culukwor” is also done as a (**warning to the offender and would be offenders**). Here in Acholi we did not have money, our wealth was in terms of livestock and crops. So in “culukwor” you are forced to pay large amounts of compensation so that you feel the pain and you do not forget it. The rituals are also done (to bring reconciliations).

The following I-poems illustrate how the interviewees related with others while explaining the problems/issues that the Acholi healing practices are prescribed for.

Gulu Survivor 007:

... to protect me from ‘cen’ - bad spirits -
if they are not removed they will continue to attack you
... community needs to know that I have been cleansed
To help me to fit in the family/community
I would still be an outsider without the rituals
once you have done bad things or even come across bad spirits
... you have to be cleansed
... make the ancestors not to be angry with me
To cool my heart from all that had been happening to me
Even though I experience them from time to time
I feel the community supports me
what we got from World Vision helped us to settle a bit, to feel
safe, but it did not remove the internal torture
I felt so afraid of what would happen to me
I felt empty many a time at World Vision
after the rituals at home, I felt a lot more at peace, accepted and
welcomed.

Gulu Witness 006

... to break away from the bad past and its spirits
... cleanse the person returning not to pollute the community
Welcome the person back
Celebrate the return of the survivor into the community
Avoid revenge and bitterness
Reconcile the two clans
Call for total forgiveness

Kitgum elder 003

... appease the spirits of the dead and prevent misfortune
... wash away any evil for survivor to enter home a pure person
... warning to the offenders or would be offenders
... bring reconciliation

It is evident from the above extracts and I-poems that Acholi indigenous rituals are prescribed for various illnesses and diseases caused by misfortunes in life. Amongst these are problems such as hearing voices and bad dreams, (in) fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one’s humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, individual and

collective guilt, and cleansing the environment from pollution. These issues are elaborated on below.

5.3.1 Hearing of voices and bad dreams (nightmares)

The *hearing of voices*, what would be termed “auditory hallucinations” in the standard psychiatric nomenclature, and *bad dreams*, were some of the common problems for which the rituals were performed. Respondents indicated that they continued to hear voices associated with their capture long after the standard counselling procedures had been completed. For example, when Survivor 022 from Gulu was asked how he was helped to heal on his return from the bush/captivity, he opined as follows:

Gulu Survivor: 022

When I returned I went through ... (name of the centre withheld by the researcher for ethical purposes) first. I was given some counselling and advice. I was there for three months. I felt a bit better but I continued hearing the voices in my head and seeing all the bad things I did. I would feel a bit better after talking with the people who were helping us there but at night cen [bad spirits] would attack me badly.

Probed further, Survivor 022 from Gulu continued to share his thoughts about the rituals as follows:

...the rituals for me worked because ever since that day, I was not hearing voices again. The bad spirits had stopped attacking me. The community accepts me, advices me to live my life anew again. I feel I have nothing to hide from the community. The community and my family accept me as I am. They have forgiven me. The only problem is that I have not finished one more ritual our clan is supposed to do. This is ‘matoput’ and culukwor. We do not have the cows. They are looking for a way to do it. However, I am okay now, I can do anything like digging. I have even married and have a child.

Survivor 007 from Gulu had this to say:

We were counselled, taught songs and prayers. We used to play games also together. It felt a bit better but the bad dreams; the horrible memories did not go away. All I remember in... (name of centre withheld) is that I really could not sleep and I did not even want to play games. I felt so bad about myself; and I was an old woman to be jumping and playing after all those years of fighting in the bush. My brother used to come to see me as my mother and father had already been killed by the rebels.

As the above extracts indicate, the rituals are prescribed for a range of personal psychological symptoms that are characteristic of what would be diagnosed as “post-traumatic stress

disorder” in psychological/psychiatric terminology. Symptoms of this disorder include the hearing of voices, bad dreams (re-experiencing of the traumatic event), as well as bad memories. It could thus be argued that the rituals enable the survivors to break away from the past and be at peace with themselves.

5.3.2 Ensuring fertility and continuation of family lineage

The rituals are also performed in order to ensure the fertility of those that have participated in violent conflict including murder (their pollution also extends to their lineage). This is in line with the holistic Acholi world-view. The power of the rituals to restore normal family life, fertility and continuation of the family lineage through marriage, is illustrated by the extract from Gulu Survivor 022 above, who opined as follows:

[Having completed the rituals]... I am okay now; I can do anything like digging. I have even married and have a child.

Witness 003 from Gulu was asked the question: "Who usually administers rituals?" He replied: "*Old men with good reputation in the community; but men with a family not barren and drunkards*". When probed further as to what he meant by "*not barren and drunkards*", he responded:

Hmm.... [laughs]..... you know aa.. the African people believe in their family lineage continuing. For the Acholi you can only be somebody if you are able to be productive in the clan in terms of perpetuating the family lineage by producing children who can carry the family [or] clan honour on. Without children, they consider that you must have been cursed or there is some bad spirit that is stopping you from getting children, something you or your clan may have done in the past.

The above extract indicates that the rituals are not only important for the psychological rehabilitation of the survivors; they are also critical to their whole well-being, in line with the Acholi holistic world-view, in which everything is considered interdependent. It can be surmised from the extracts above that failure to perform the rituals could lead to barrenness, which in turn poses a serious risk to the continuation of the family lineage due to inability to beget children. For this reason, it is important that the rituals are performed by married elders (men) who have attained a ‘complete life cycle’ (status), according to the Acholi viewpoint.

5.3.3 Restoration of one's humanity: Coming to life again

In the Acholi world-view, one's humanity is intricately interwoven with the humanity of others and one ceases to be fully human if one has taken someone else's life. The cleansing rituals are thus important to restore one's humanity, thus allowing the returnee to re-join the community of fully human selves. An extract from Gulu Elder 002 highlights this understanding that one's life is dynamically interwoven with the lives of others:

If you have been out there in the bush/war there are times when we go for war and then you kill - we call it keromerok...you kill an enemy or they shoot you....when you come home, you remain at the gate of the home, at the periphery of the home and go through a set of rituals to cleanse you from bad spirits of the dead because when you kill, you cease to be a human being – you are an animal. Therefore you need to be cleansed so that the bad spirits do not invade the homestead and harm the inhabitants. If you don't, first of all you will bring all the bad spirits back home, and two you will not be YOU, you will begin to behave like an animal. So you'll start killing people..., you start doing all sorts of things.

As Elder 002 indicates above, personal uncleanliness (pollution) risks destabilising the equilibrium of the community as a whole and it is therefore important that one is restored to the realm of humanity through the cleansing rituals, before one can have normal relations with the community. The following extract from Gulu Survivor 004 supports this claim:

The reason for nyono tong gweno was mainly cleansing. To be forgiven by the community. To be reunited with the family and the community. Wars bring a lot of instability to the community. Rituals help to bring about balance and peace in the community. They help to bring people together. I could see this by the number of people who were there to welcome me back.

Having participated in the rituals, one metaphorically rises from the 'dead' (i.e. from the loss of one's humanity) and comes to life again. This sentiment underscores the complex idea of life in indigenous African thought, namely that one does not become fully human by virtue of having a human form and possessing physical and psychological attributes. Rather, one becomes fully human by virtue of participation and preservation of the moral and ethical values of the community. Continuing the idea of personal resurrection from the dead (state of wrong-doing/pollution) to the world of the living (the ethical-moral community), Gulu Survivor 022 had the following to say about the rituals:

Rituals helped me to be accepted by the community without which I would still be an outcast. They helped to cast away 'cen' and free me from those nightmares. They

helped me to be re-united with the community. I feel like I am one with them again; my life is balanced in a good way; because before that, I felt like my life was going down the drain; but now I feel alive and one with my community, everything about my life is alive despite everything. I am come back to life from the dead. That the community can celebrate one's return despite everything we were made to do against the community.

Thus, from the excerpt above it is shown that some of the Acholi indigenous rituals are performed to help a person, such as a survivor of violent conflict, make the transition from the guilt of murder (equivalent to death), to the world of the living (re-joining the community). Having been disconnected from the community of the living by virtue of taking human life and performing other atrocities that are considered to be contrary to what defines a human being worthy of being a member of a community, the rituals free the person to be part of the community again. This line of reasoning concurs with Ejizu (n.d.) who observed that killings create a supernatural barrier between the person and the community, including the clan of the deceased person and the ancestors. This supernatural barrier is the imbalance related to the Africentric healing paradigm (Eagle, 2004). Rooted in the firm belief of preserving the sacredness and social stability of their homesteads, the Acholi cleansing ceremonies re-establish, repair and maintain the community's cosmic life.

5.3.4 Appeasement: Calling the wandering spirit to rest

Appeasement rituals, such as *lwongo tipu* and *moyo piny*, are performed to put the spirits of the dead to rest in a dignified manner (Allen, 2006; Baines, 2007; Latigo, 2008; Liu Institute for Research, 2005; Remigio, 2010; JRP, 2007). They are performed when someone has passed a place where a killing has happened in order to put to rest the spirit of the dead person or when someone has been killed and the body has not been brought home, with the aim of calling the wandering spirit of the dead person back home to rest. Failure to do so causes the spirit to bring about havoc in the communities living in the vicinity where the person was killed. This is depicted in the extracts below:

Kitgum Survivor 013:

... they organised a ceremony to go to the PLACE WHERE MY COUSIN WAS KILLED... In the BUSH - and he – Ajwaka (traditional healer) – kept calling the spirit of my cousin to come home and rest. I could not understand certain things he was doing... But what I remember is that we were told to walk back home without looking back.

Kitgum Survivor 005:

If somebody has died in the bush, they will kill the goat in the bush to bring cleansing and put the spirit of the person to rest. They organise this ceremony to take... the... spirit of that person... from [the bush to re-unite it with] the family.

Kitgum Elder 003:

Each of these rituals done in Acholi have meanings, for example if death is involved there is “culukwor” and “matoput” because in Acholi when a person dies, it is only the body but the soul lives on so that when “culukwor” is done, the spirit will be happy that my clan cares for me because they have pursued compensation for me.

Gulu Survivor 006:

They sprinkled me with water while the elders were speaking “let all the bad spirits go with the setting sun”.

When Elder 004 from Gulu was asked what *lwongo tipu* was, this was the response:

*It is to appease the spirit of the living dead and bring it back home to rest (Call it to rest). It is mainly for people who have died violently without a respectful burial. Like many of the families, Acholi had to do this ceremony once they knew that their person had been killed in captivity to avoid having his/her spirit wondering all over in anger and disrespect; the spirit is called back home to rest. *Lwongo* means come back. *Tipu* is home.*

When Elder 004 from Gulu was probed about what happens if a family does not perform this ritual, the elder responded:

(Emphasis) it is very dangerous because the spirit that feels neglected and not put to rest peacefully can actually disturb the rest of the family [and] community and cause even harm in form of death, sickness, illness etc. You know the Acholi believe in the living dead: and the living dead (ancestors) have to be in harmony with the living, otherwise, they can withdraw their protection from the community around them and do harm. The ancestors’ spirits also live here, they are all good spirits. But if somebody is killed in fighting, the spirit of that dead person becomes ‘lacen’ or vengeful spirit. ‘Lacen’ is very deadly. If you kill somebody innocently, that person does not go to ‘Abila (traditional shrine)’ that person becomes ‘lacen’ - a very deadly spirit who walks on the killers head.

The findings above show that rituals such as *lwongo tipu* are performed to prevent the spirit of the deceased from wandering aimlessly and causing havoc to those in its vicinity or those coming into contact with the area where the person was killed. The act of killing not only decimates the physical body; it separates the spirit of the deceased person from the body as well as from its kin (family), causing an imbalance (Baines, 2005; Behrend, 2001). This imbalance elicits anger on the part of the wandering spirit as it seeks to be reunited with its

kin. In anger the spirit unleashes havoc and misfortune to those crossing its path (the place of killing) in the vicinity. Although this is not explicit in the excerpts cited above, community members in the vicinity of the area where the killing took place often experience unease when they know that the spirit of the deceased has not been recalled home and atoned. As we learn from the sections below, appeasing the spirit (re-calling it) is not sufficient; the area of their abode (place where the violence act of killing took place) has to be appeased as it is understood that killing is an abomination against the land and the environment in general.

5.3.5 Individual/collective guilt and vulnerability

The holistic nature of the Acholi world-view means that an act of violence against someone cannot be hidden from the self as it also means that one has also violated oneself. Hence it becomes necessary for the perpetrator to come clean through an act of public confession (disclosure) in order to deal with the personal/collective guilt and vulnerability. The vulnerability extends to the collective (clan) because in the Acholi interdependent viewpoint, the person is defined with reference to their own community. Hence, the members of the clan work through their collective guilt, collective responsibility and collective action. This understanding of healing is different from Western therapeutic approaches where the disclosure takes place in a confined room between the client and the therapist. An elder 004 from Kitgum stated as follows:

That is why this person who did it secretly [the killing] is now becoming transparent. There is nobody in the world who is transparent, honest as an Acholi person. Because in the healing, you must be honest, transparent. Even those who are going to pay because you are in a state of guilt and vulnerability. It is not your power, not your strength, no it is the wrong thing that a member of your community has done. That is why you take full responsibility. Full! If they want a daughter from here you give without question, 20 heads of cattle, you give without question, 10 cattle, you give without question because this is life.

Elder 004 from Kitgum expressed the idea of collective guilt and responsibility as follows:

Because you are part of them. You know when somebody commits sin, it affects the entire community. If a member of a community kills and the community leaves the matter to him alone, then other members of the community will also be killed because nobody is taking responsibility. That is why in the reconciliation process, community stands as community in order to bring reconciliation process to fruitfulness otherwise as individual doing his own thing like in the Western world where what I do is up to

me to answer that question or go to jail or be killed. In Africa it is not the same; you must stand together as a community and solve the problem as a community.

Thus, in line with the collectivist African world-view, the Acholi rituals are prescribed to address individual and collective guilt and also to ensure that the community takes collective responsibility for the harms that were afflicted to members of other clans. This helps to normalise relations between the clans or community members; it also ensures that further atrocities emanating from the desire to exact revenge, are avoided. This enables people to resume their normal lives, such that they can live and eat together and the members of the affected families, communities and clans can inter-marry and live together in harmony (Baines, 2005; Idemudia, 2009; Justice and Healing Project, 2007; Latigo, 2006; 2008; Suarez, 2008). Reconciliation is at the community and not the individual level.

The above-mentioned findings have implications for working through the trauma experienced by people of African ancestry such as the Acholi. In the first instance the Acholi holistic world-view needs to be taken into consideration, especially the understanding that what happens to the individual also happens to the group, and vice versa, if healing is to be successful. Locating the counselling within the confines of the therapist's office and not involving the community, may be necessary pre-requisites of the Western biomedical model but it is evidently not sufficient for the holistic healing process in the African context. Dealing with the trauma in isolation and without community participation is not sufficient to re-establish community equilibrium (normal social relations) and cannot arrest the cycle of violence characterised by the desire to avenge the death of one's kin. Counselling and trauma approaches that are informed by the Western independent/autonomous theory of the self cannot meaningfully address social problems and issues that are informed by a communitarian approach towards life. Culture structures a person's philosophy and outlook on the world and inculcates values and ideals of how a person views and experiences life (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). Solomon and Wane (2005, p. 55) concur, "Our ancestors have taught that if any of our actions result in disequilibrium; we have to find ways of healing and purifying the environment, our relations and ourselves". Similarly, Eagle (1998, p. 273) asserts:

For psychotherapy to be successful there is a need to understand the worldview of the client, well enough to orient input appropriately. Ethnicity shapes how the patient perceives, understands, accepts and adapts to his or her traumatic stress pathology.

The study findings indicate that, in order to rehabilitate and re-integrate Acholi survivors of violent conflict into the community, it is important to take into account their viewpoints, including the relationship between the living and the living-dead (ancestral spirits), the community's fear of interacting with those who have not undergone the cleansing, as well as the possibility of revenge (cycle of violence) that may arise if the spirits of the deceased and their families are not atoned. Even if the survivors have undergone individual therapeutic counselling, their integration into the community will be hampered members will be concerned that their presence amongst them will pollute the community and the homestead, thus affecting the community's vitality, including productivity and lineage. Given the sacred, as opposed to the secular, understanding of the community in indigenous African thought (Bojuwoye, 2013; Ejizu, n.d.), it is important that interventions address a range of issues including the personal, interpersonal, familial, community and the spiritual (Wessels & Moteiro, 2006). The Africentric paradigm deals with the question of African identity from the perspective of African people as centered, located, oriented and grounded (Asante, 2009). It stands to reason, therefore, that healing must be grounded in the philosophical and existential realities of the people concerned, if it is to be meaningful and successful. Farwell and Cole (2002) support this. They caution that interventions that ignore the context of the community in which trauma and recovery should be handled, will end up not helping, or only partially helping those they intend to heal.

5.3.6. Healing (cleansing) the environment from pollution

In the Acholi interconnected world-view, violence or murder harms not only the people but the environment as well. Healing the environment, especially the place where the violent act of murder was committed, is crucial in indigenous traditional healing. Cleansing rituals such as *nyono tong gweno* and appeasement rituals like *lwongo tipu* incorporate this element. The following extracts from the interviews with the participants highlight the importance of cleansing the environment, as well as the negative consequences that may ensue, should the environment not be cleansed from pollution. Kitgum Survivor 013 had this to say:

...they organized a ceremony for us to go to the place where my cousin was killed. It was because I kept screaming at night, seeing my cousin calling for help in my dream; that I was taken back there and a ceremony was done. My uncle told me that – that ceremony is to put the spirit of my cousin to rest. It was done by a traditional healer.. They slaughtered a sheep in the bush – and he kept calling the name, spirit of my cousin to come home and rest. I could not understand certain things he was doing.. But what I remember is that we were told to walk back home without looking back.

Kitgum witness 002:

...the Acholi tribe believe that in captivity the survivor has seen a lot and even where they pass along the trees in the bush, they have contracted some bad spirits ‘cen’ the ritual helps to cleanse the survivor, and also the community who see it as a misfortune. They believe that if the survivor does not do that, the survivor will die and even also misfortunes will befall the community as a result of this.

Kitgum Elder 004 asserts:

Now in order for the survivors of violent conflict to be accepted in community they must go through the ritual of cleansing. First of all, to appease the small gods "joggi" in the wilderness who guard the environment. Raping women in the bush and killing people on the land is equal to raping the land/ environment which is the abode of the spirits. Now when the girls are raped during captivity in the bush, on their return, the community must do something to appease the gods who guard the environment, you know the big ‘Jok’ God seats on the top of the ecrone. (This means that at the top is the big Jok, but then you have the small jogi – gods, and then you have the living dead, then the yet unborn, then the living... All these are witnessing what is taking place). The smaller ‘jogi’ are scattered to protect the environment. Therefore when a person goes into the environment there and does something wrong then, either they curse that person or one dies, sometimes one never gets children. Small spirits guard the environment. The Luo say “you do not play sex in the bush” If nature calls, somebody wants to relieve herself, there is no problem. The jogi will understand that this is nature’s call, if you do something against culture that is when you receive punishment for example, a curse not to beget children or something like that.

Human health among African indigenous peoples is connected to the land (Onyango, 2011; Latigo, 2008; Nkosi, 2012; Waldron, 2010). Therefore, any death that is caused on the land does not only wound human beings but the land as well (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). This highlights one of the tenets of African philosophical world-view, namely interconnectedness, not only within the person (*Muntu*) and between people (*Buntu*), but even between the person and the environment of which the person is a part (Onyango, 2011; Latigo, 2008; Waldron, 2010). The findings of this study regarding healing the environment from pollution, lend

credence to the interdependent and holistic nature of the African indigenous understanding of health. This differs from Western understandings, which centre around the biological and physical realms of healing. African indigenous traditional healing also centres on the connection human beings have with the planet. Earth is not viewed only as a resource but as a source of life as well. In indigenous traditional healing, the earth's health is very much connected to human health; and this connection is expressed through intricate relationships to the land (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). The inability of Western counselling methodologies to embrace the healing of the environment causes a huge disconnect for indigenous African persons, for whom the earth and the environment in general are living entities in perpetual interaction with humans. Moreover, indigenous traditional healing does not occur in isolation (Ogbonnaya, 1994; Robbins & Dewar, 2011; Waldron, 2010). Western and African indigenous systems thus have different conceptions of what constitutes illness. Healing in the African indigenous sense includes not just the biological or physical realms; it extends to the environment as well as the spiritual world of the ancestors (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). It is for this reason, amongst others, that healing cannot be confined to the counsellor's or therapist's office, as it is predominantly the case in Western-based counselling approaches. Rather, the place of healing varies according to the healing issues at hand, including WHOM and WHAT is to be healed.

Further, in indigenous Acholi world-view, healing is demarcated by specific physical spaces and boundaries. These spaces mark the person's transition from pollution (outside the homestead, at the entrance) to the sacred, unpolluted space (inside the homestead). It is in these spaces - the boundaries - that the healing takes place and is witnessed by the public. This speaks to the Acholi holistic view of illness and healing as well as the need for the healer or counsellor to take this view into account, if they are to be successful (Daly, 2000; Suarez, 2008; Tomoeda & Bayles, 2002; Quinn 2006a; Verdeli et al., 2008).

This sub-section has addressed the social problems for which the Acholi healing practices are called for. The next sub-section presents and discusses findings regarding the healing elements of Acholi indigenous rituals.

5.4 Healing or therapeutic elements in Acholi indigenous healing processes

Having addressed the individual and social problems for which the Acholi cleansing rituals are prescribed, it is now appropriate to consider the healing mechanisms or elements of the rituals. How do the rituals bring about healing? In considering this question it is important to consider the Acholi world-view that healing extends beyond individuals to include the community, the homesteads and the environment in general. The study established that amongst the critical healing elements were the symbolism associated with the rituals, community participation and public confession, place of healing, and symbolic restoration through compensation and reconciliation. These are discussed in the sub-sections that follow.

5.4.1 Symbolism during the rituals

The healing rituals make use of a number of symbols that are meaningful to the Acholi. Among these is the act of stepping on an egg, a symbol of purity and innocence, stepping over the *obok olwedo*, a soapy, slippery branch symbolising the cleansing of external influences that attached to the returnees while they were away, the demarcated entry points in the homesteads marking the outside world (polluted) and the inside of the compound (clean), as well as the *layibi* sticks with a fork carried by elders symbolising the family sharing food together (Latigo 2008; Liu Institute et al. 2005; Baines, 2007), and the sprinkling with water. Once the survivor has confessed to the crime, pardon is granted and he/she is welcomed back to the clean side. The symbols are thus used to reinforce the break with a past that is characterised by violence and the beginning of a new era that is characterised by cleanliness (includes spiritual cleanliness) as well as a willingness to live in harmony with one's community. Redemption is possible on the condition that there is a voluntary admission of wrong-doing (complete disclosure witnessed by the public), the acceptance of responsibility, and the seeking of forgiveness.

The following I-poems illustrate the symbolism associated with the rituals. The boundaries marking pollution (outside), the act of jumping over an egg, moving over to the unpolluted (clean) side, as well as eating together, all stand out in the poems. The highly charged emotional atmosphere that prevails during the rituals, as the survivors talk openly about their transgression (confession), also contributes to healing.

Kitgum Survivor 013: *I was* *[[made to step on an egg and step over the bok olwedo sticks]]*
[[they sprinkled water⁵ on me]]
[[I was taken inside]]
[[I was brought outside]]
[[People there came to greet me]].
They [[slaughtered a sheep]]

Kitgum Witness 004: Then she *[[stepped on the egg]]*
[[jumped over the pobo and layibi to enter the compound]]
[[she came out of the house so that people now could greet her]].
Then *[[the elders went back inside the house with her - they were talking for a long time]]*
[[a goat had been slaughtered and cooked by the women and we all ate including her]]
[[the cows were for compensation]],
[[there must be compensation and it is usually the elders between the two clans who negotiate that]
[[two clans come together; the one of the perpetrators and the survivor's elders negotiate this]]
*[[**two sheep are slaughtered in a ritualistic way**]]*
[[two clans eat together]]

During the interviews, the survivors revealed personal memories of their first day returning home and the symbols that were used (for example, *obok olwedo* sticks and the *layibi* stick). The egg is used because of its closed shape depicting closed, painful memories that the survivors hold within. The act of stepping on the egg demonstrates the survivors opening up to speak about the experience so that they free themselves. Gulu Elder 010 articulated the reason for the closed egg clearly:

...so they step on the egg which is closed....so that anything involved in their heart should now be in the open; so that all other things involved... should now be forgotten...you seeeeeh.....and they should be free within and reconciled to the people at home.

According to Ross (2008), stepping on the raw egg symbolises innocence; something pure and untouched. The shell of the crushed egg represents how foreign elements crush the community's life. Foreign elements here are the atrocities of the war that have crushed the community's fabric, thus disrupting the community's equilibrium. The *Obok olwedo* tree

⁵ Water-based ritual means uncleanness (contamination) and the need to be cleansed before one joins the community and thus leaving the baggage of the past behind

symbolises cleansing because of its slippery sap and the *layibi* stick is used for opening the granary thereby denoting food. This means that the person can now eat again from where he has always eaten before (the return to normalcy after the equilibrium of the community was destabilised). The *nyono tong gweno* ritual removes the separation caused by the atrocities committed by either side, thus making room for those affected to resume communal eating, which is symbolic of peace and forgiveness.

In the case of returning children, the *nyono tong gweno* ceremony may be followed by a ceremony of “washing away the tears shed on the child”. The parents of the child slaughter a goat and pour water on the roof of the house where the child will be living (JRP, 2007). In Acholi, as in other indigenous cultures, water symbolises purification and healing. The following excerpt from Gulu 004 Elder lends credence to this view:

Water is used to free a person from bad spirits. The people who have killed are haunted with the spirits of the dead. Therefore, when they come back, water is sprinkled on them and certain words are recited to purify these people because if this is not done more problems can be experienced by the person and their community.

Water has a central place in Acholi practices and beliefs: it is used for cleansing and purification of impurities and pollutants such as evil and sickness. Water cleanses the bad omen from outside of the person and transforms the person from within (refreshing the person) to rediscover the natural alignment of inner goodness within them to connect with other people and the environment around them. Natural alignment refers to the balance that is highlighted in the Africentric paradigm within and between the person and their surroundings. It also alludes to the spiritual force that constitutes a connective link between all living and non-living phenomena (Phillips, 1990). Healing takes place through symbols and these symbols will mean different things to different people and cultures (Dow, 2015). Therefore water as a cleansing symbol for the healing process carries loaded meaning to the survivors of violent conflict.

According to Dow (2015), the first requirement for symbolic healing to be effective is that the culture establishes a general model of the mythical world believed in by healers and potential patients. For example, the Acholi people particularise the general cultural mythical world for the survivors of violent conflict. This mythical world involves the dynamic

relationship between the living and the living-dead and it is on this basis that they interpret their problem amongst them. Transactional symbols such as the egg and *layibi* stick are formed and have emotions attached to them. The egg and the *layibi* sticks provide a culturally-congruent vehicle for the pouring out of emotion, ultimately leading to healing.

Whereas both Acholi indigenous rituals and Western psychotherapy make use of symbolic healing, the manner in which the Acholi people utilise symbolic healing differs from these other therapeutic healing approaches. For example, psychoanalysis, one of the dominant therapies of Western origin, relies on presumed universally valid laws. Yet psychoanalytic theory cannot explain all the Acholi symbolic healing, which does not follow traditional psychoanalytical principles (Dow, 2015). For example, the Acholi use an egg, which has an enclosed shape, to depict painful memories that the survivor holds within their body, soul and mind. The act of the survivor stepping on the egg to break it open and symbolically release those painful memories is very different from the Western approach of a psychoanalyst passively listening to a patient recount his/her dreams. Thus the structure of Acholi symbolic healing is derived from Acholi culture whilst that of Western symbolic healing is derived from Western culture (Dow, 2015). The meanings and outlooks are culture specific; they facilitate healing differently depending on the meaning attached to the symbol.

The findings of this study show that the use of symbols helps to communicate an understanding between the survivor of violent conflict, the spiritual realm, the community and the environment; thereby holistically tackling the problems affecting the survivor. Restoration of health is achieved through an interactive life process rather than from a physical or psychological process only (Akpomovie, 2014; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012; Matoane, 2012; Waldron, 2010). The healing process of African societies is interactive: to be healthy, means being in a state of complete well-being; living, conducting and behaving well in relation with others (Baloyi, 2008; Essien, 2013; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012; Mkhize, 2004; Nwoye, 2010). It is a holistic, transformative process of giving due respect to the dignity of others and restoring troubled and broken peace between people, God, ancestors, community and environment (Essien, 2013; Kamwaria & Katola, 2012).

The findings indicate a clear disconnect between Acholi indigenous healing and Western psychological trauma theories, which privilege the individual at the expense of communality and spirituality (McCormick, 2009; Poonwassie, 2006; Stewart, 2008; Trimble, 1981). As Dzokoto and Wen Lo (2005) state, differences in cultural norms, world-views and philosophies require that healing should take into account the participants' life worlds. Paker states: "Behavior [of those from non-Western cultures] is profoundly influenced by conceptions of causality, pain, accountability, spirituality and morality which may be quite different from those in Europe and North America" (Parker, 1996, p. 77). Failure to do so creates disharmony or imbalance, whereby they feel that something is not whole and complete within. The survivor may feel that he has "ceased being himself, a being with a destiny, no matter how tragic" (Diop, 1991, p. 366). This brings to the fore the "importance of acknowledging, integrating, and balancing metaphysical and physical knowledge and being" (Martin, 2008, p. 210), which is in line with Africentric thinking. According to Phillips (1990), mental health involves the ability to interact with the environment in a natural, effortless manner:

By being spontaneous, we are being more trusting of ourselves and of our connection to others; because we are in harmony, then our intentions are trustworthy, and we can feel freer to respond naturally to our ongoing ever-changing environment. When we are spontaneous, authentic, harmonious, then our natural healing and problem solving mechanisms are functioning properly. We are NTU (Phillips, 1990, p. 60).

Spontaneity calls for humility and reverence for other cultures. Both the practitioner and person who is to be healed need to be authentic to be able to confront themselves when faced with a wisdom that challenges their own.

5.4.2 Community participation

Community presence and participation (here taken to refer to the survivor's family, relatives/clans and the local people living in the area where the victim originates from) is an indispensable aspect of the Acholi indigenous healing process. Not only is the healing public; it incorporates the participation of and interaction with the spiritual community as well. The following extracts and I-poems speak to this issue.

Kitgum Elder 003: ... most importantly what the **Acholi do is to (welcome you) at home** and show you love and make you feel welcome back home... (**the community** has accepted the person back in the community).

Kitgum Survivor 010: ... ***They - community - accepted me ... because they - community - believe that I am (cleansed) and I cannot bring harm to the community. I felt that when (people were celebrating and eating together).*** ...

Gulu Elder 010: (Reconciliation) ... when they - survivors - come to heal. It means if something happens, it affects **the community**, because you don't eat with the people if you killed. How will you go to ask for food from people like that ... you see...you need to be reconciled ... So as regards the war here, reconciliation is important.

Kitgum Survivor 016: ... *the day I came home and there were so (many people) waiting for me, rejoicing, all the elderly people of my clan and the village that I met there, I felt I had been forgiven ...*

Gulu Survivor 006: *They have helped me to be accepted and reconciled to (**the community**).* They have brought harmony in the two clans, my clan and the one - the other clan - where (compensation) was paid. You know if that was not done we would still be enemies.

Gulu Survivor 004: Yes they (rituals) have worked. The (presence of **the community** frees a person). *I felt freed even forgiven. Because if this could not have happened, 'bad spirits' 'cen' would still be attacking me.* You know I used to dream like these people whom we did bad things to even the dead bodies we met in the bush and they were many were coming to attack us. I was fearful.

The following I-poems have been constructed from the above narratives:

Gulu Survivor 004: *presence of **the community** frees a person...I felt freed even forgiven...
Because if this could not have happened, 'bad spirits' 'cen'
would still be attacking me*

Kitgum Survivor 010: ***community - accepted me***
... ***community - believe that I am (cleansed)***
I cannot bring harm to the community
I felt that when (people were celebrating and eating together)

Kitgum Survivor 016: ... the day I came home and there were so (**many people**)
waiting for me... I felt I had been forgiven ...

The healing power of the community's presence and participation to free a person from bad spirits is depicted in the I-poem for Gulu Survivor 004. Similarly, the I-poems for Kitgum Survivors 010 and 016 show that the presence of the community contributes to the survivor's sense of being healed. There were similar narrative extracts from other interviews with phrases such as "*the community has accepted the person back in the community*" and "*the presence of the community frees a person*", all indicating that the community is a vital cog in

the healing process. For the survivors, returning and being received by their families and their communities, in public ceremonies, communicates that they are forgiven and this frees them from the burden of guilt. The following I-poems emphasise this point:

Kitgum Survivor 007: I think I am an example for what I have shared and others -the community- may have witnessed.
I do not really think there is any other way a person can heal and fit in the community without publically having been received by the community!
Although not all of us understand their meaning, but the way I felt after them for sure they help to free the person. I felt free in the community after them.

Kitgum Survivor 008: It helped to re-unite me with the family and the community. For example, I felt welcomed and accepted. I felt protected from evil spirits.

Gulu Survivor 006: For example in my case, I felt loved, welcomed, accepted and protected from evil spirits that could otherwise have destroyed one.

From an Acholi indigenous point of view, healing is public:

Gulu Survivor 001: Individual counselling done in common without involving the cultural healing is being done. [The] SPIRITUAL aspect has to be settled. It has to be PUBLIC. Those who have gone through counselling have GONE BACK HOME and killed people because they believe real counselling has not been done in terms of rituals. The rituals are still very strong even those who are staying in cities – people still go to the cultural rituals.

The I-poems and interview extract above indicate that healing on a public scale begins when survivors return home and are received by their families and the people of the community. Celebrations and eating together with their families and the community creates a conducive atmosphere for the healing of the survivors. Healing in Acholi community is not an individualised affair; it has to be done in and through family and community. It is by confessing one's wrongs in the presence of the community and being forgiven by those one has offended, that healing takes place. As Gulu Survivor 004 stated: "The (presence of **the community**) frees a person. I felt freed even forgiven." Several scholars (McCabe, 2007; Simpson & Cargo, 2003; Obol, 2012; Wasonga, 2009) support the Acholi viewpoint that a person finds meaning in life by virtue of community participation and this has implications

for healing as well. Healing is a process by which the connections between the individual and society or between communities, that were severed during the violent conflict, are re-established and strengthened (Aapengnuo, 2009; Dickson, 1984; Nsamenang, 2007; Waldron, 2010). This allows community members to resume their normal day-to-day activities without fear of retribution.

Healing through the community is embedded in the indigenous African belief that nothing happens to the community for nothing; for example, misfortunes that strike like sickness; be that of individuals or groups, occur because something is not right with the whole community in terms of interrelationships. The Indigenous African philosophy defines disorder in terms of social relations in the community (Dow, 1986). Given that the whole corporate body of the community is affected by wrong-doing, it is imperative that the entire community participates in rituals in order to bring back balance and harmony into the community fabric (Phillips, 1990). Healing occurs through a set of social relationships, a system of systems, a set of patterns of being (Fu-Kiau, 2001). This is vastly different from the Western approach to healing which focuses on the individual alone who is considered sick. As Dow (2015) observes, in symbolic healing the presence of the community plays a critical role, as the problem (illness) is considered to have been caused by a disorder in social relations. The community is an indispensable aspect of the understanding of the self and it is almost inconceivable that a person can define themselves without reference to their surrounding environment. Thus, the individualised 'I' centred self in Western thought cannot find a place in an African 'familial and contextualized self' - the 'we' centered self; of which Acholi indigenous healing rituals are a part of (Vilakati, Shcurink & Viljoen, 2013).

Forgiveness and acceptance by the community is a critical element of the healing process (Williams, Guenther & Arnott, 2011), as it is in the community that a person finds his/her personhood (Juma, 2013; Mkhize, 2008). According to Williams, Guenther and Arnott (2011), forgiveness is equated to mercy extended to the offender who should have been condemned to death and thus it is a great relief and gives high hope for peace to the offender. Having been forgiven and accepted back into the community, the individual is at liberty to resume normal social relations with society, such as sharing meals and inter-marriage. That

is, the state of equilibrium, destabilised by the war, is re-established (Lane, Bopp, Bopp& Norris, 2002). Commensurate with the indigenous Acholi viewpoint, the community referred to herein extends beyond the living to incorporate the living-dead or the spiritual community comprising the ancestors. The following section presents results concerning how reconciliation with and participation of the living-dead in the ceremonies, enables healing.

5.4.3. Reconciliation with the community of the living-dead (spiritual realm)

It is not sufficient to reconcile with the community of the living in order to heal completely. Commensurate with the indigenous African world-view, which holds that violence is an abomination against the ancestors in the spiritual realm, healing requires reconciliation with the departed, the living-dead, who reside in the spiritual realm.

Kitgum Elder 004:

For example when you are having reconciliation, the jogi (spirits), the big jok (God), all come together to witness what people are doing. Even the ancestral spirits in “Abila” (ancestral traditional shrine) are there to witness. That is why reconciliation is very important because it is witnessed by the living, the living dead, the unborn, the jogi and the big jok’ “Lubang”. These are the ones who witness this ceremony to make sure; once you do this one you cannot revoke it. It is total commitment and it is witnessed by the jogi and the big Jok. And I have told you that the big Jok sits on the top of the encrones. On the top, is the big Jok, but then you have the small jogi also and then you have the living dead, then the yet unborn, then the living. All these are witnessing what is taking place here. So a reconciliation ceremony is not just an ordinary ceremony where the living are just drinking beer like that or doing something. It is highly, very spiritual. That is why it is very important for people to really understand.

To make sense of the above cited extract it is important to examine it with reference to African spirituality. While spirituality may refer to different things for various individuals, in this context it refers to one’s relationship with a supernatural power, relationships with ancestral spirits, as well as one’s own spiritness (as an individual that is endowed with a corporeal body as well as a spiritual or divine essence) (Garrett & Wilbur, 1999 as cited in Beaulieu, 2011). As Nobles (2006) argues, all creations (including humans and the living environment) are endowed with spirit (divine essence). Healing is therefore effective to the extent that this unseen dimension of life is taken into account. Mbiti refers to this as an African cosmology that includes ancestors (in the form of spirits as shown in this study),

humans, nature and God; it is a product of a holistic and anthropocentric ontology (Mbiti, 1990; Mbigi, 2005; Viljoen, 2003).

5.4.4 Place of healing as a therapeutic healing element

The findings of the study also indicate that the Acholi indigenous healing rituals are required to be conducted at specific places. These are the physical spaces where the acts of violence actually occurred. Possibly, this forces the person to come to terms with the trauma of the events, and it is likely to evoke the release of emotion; a necessary step in the healing process.

Kitgum Survivor 013: Nyono tong gweno was at the ENTRANCE TO THE HOME. Then I entered the compound where the people were. Then I was taken inside the HOUSE. (Lwongo tipu) ... they organised a ceremony to go to the PLACE WHERE MY COUSIN WAS KILLED... In the BUSH - and he – Ajwaka – kept calling the spirit of my cousin to come home and rest. I could not understand certain things he was doing... But what I remember is that we were told to walk back home without looking back.

Looking at some I-poems below, which have been extracted from the excerpts, the various places where the rituals were performed is evident.

Kitgum Survivor 013: at the ENTRANCE TO THE HOME
 inside the HOUSE ...
 ... they organised a ceremony to go to the PLACE WHERE
 MY COUSIN WAS KILLED
 In the BUSH

From the findings it is clear that these rituals were conducted at specified, chosen places - places such as at the entrance to the home or bush where someone was killed or a woman was raped. These places are embedded with meanings, memories, connections, emotions and values. In other words, the Acholi have affiliations with them. Therefore, the healing of an Acholi person, depending on what the illness is, cannot simply take place in a neutral office or clinic space, as it is the case in Western methodologies. For example, a ritual at the entrance to the home brings back memories of the past such as happy memories of belonging, the construction of the self that identifies with the family and the clan, and the feelings and emotions that are embedded within the self in reference to the home. Together these make this particular place of healing meaningful to the survivors of violent conflict. The rituals are

performed in places that have personal connection and meaning to the survivor and this is likely to be associated with emotional release. Such an identification with a place often involves emotional ties to the place but it may also involve a sense of shared interests and values. The place is an identity to memories (cognitions), or the action of knowing or consciousness as stated by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983, p. 59):

... the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being. At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the “environmental past” of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person’s biological, psychological, social and cultural needs.

The places where healing rituals are performed are profoundly and intimately constitutive of meaningful human experience (Gone, 2008). Therefore for the survivors of violent conflict and community members witnessing the healing, any healing which does not take into account this Africentric philosophy is questionable. This is because it has to be performed in different places embedded with meaning. It is only as such that holistic healing can come about; other than that, healing may not reach the space of holistic healing for the survivor and the community. It is argued in this study that these specific places where Acholi indigenous rituals are conducted have a function of "display" relevant for effective healing of the survivors of war conflict. Such “display” is used to communicate the qualities of the self (that is the survivors of violent conflict) to the self and others (such as the community of the survivors of violent conflict) (Williams, 2002). For example, conducting an Acholi indigenous ritual for the survivor of violent conflict for his/her healing at the entrance of the home or where the survivor of violent conflict committed a murder could be a way of communicating to the rest of the community in attendance as witnesses, that the quality of life of the survivor of violent conflict is impure and that something has gone wrong with the whole community fabric as a result. The entrance to the home and murder place signifies that the survivor of violent conflict is leaving the impure quality of life behind and symbolically moving towards a better life during the ritual. Thus, the Acholi indigenous rituals consider the place of healing as vital to assisting survivors of violent conflict in overcoming their trauma, an aspect which non-indigenous healing approaches tend to ignore. The findings of

this study emanating from an Acholi indigenous point of view have demonstrated the importance of environment – a place of healing - as a therapeutic element. Like all African indigenous systems the environmental context of the African indigenous psychology has been ensured (Kim& Berry, 1993; Yang, 2000; Allwood, 2011). Thus, from an Acholi indigenous perspective, healing is not complete unless it is holistic.

In addition, the findings highlight the significance of this spatial demarcation (inside is not contaminated while outside/bush is contaminated). Therefore, the rituals were performed in such a way as to leave the contamination behind (at the gate, in the bush) as indicated by the phrase “*do not look back after cleansing so that the bad spirits do not come back with you (Kitgum survivor 013)*”. Entering the homestead/compound symbolises the beginning of a new life, free from the ravages of war. This is contrary to individualised psychotherapy, which usually takes place within the confines of the therapist’s office. Having discussed the significance of the place of healing among the Acholi, the following sub-section moves on to describe the therapeutic value of symbolic restoration through compensation

5.4.5 Symbolic restoration through compensation

This study also established that symbolic restoration through compensation was one of the healing elements of the ritual process.

Gulu Survivor 006: The rituals have brought harmony in the two clans, my clan and the one - the other clan - where (compensation) was paid. You know if that was not done we would still be enemies.

Gulu Survivor 006 is of the view that if compensation was not transacted, the two clans would still be enemies. Symbolic restoration and reparation, by means of compensation, is a gateway to reconciliation. The compensation is an indication that the offending party is willing to sacrifice a critical aspect of their lives, in order to facilitate peace. According to the JRP (2012), the willingness and readiness of the offender’s community to compensate the victim’s community affirms the genuineness of their commitment to peace and co-existence. During the interviews Elder 004 from Kitgum made mention of the historical origins of compensation:

...they will ask for a girl child to be adopted by the victim community but the girl child must come from the perpetrator community to be adopted as their own, if it is a very serious one. This girl becomes what we call "child sacrifice".⁶ For the Luo, it is always the girl child who becomes a child sacrifice and that means that her presence on the other side gives you your security. Safety to move from here to there or from there to here. Intermarriage will now take place, they can inter marry because of the presence of this girl. Her presence becomes like a bridge between the two communities, also her presence safe guards the safety, security of the two communities. Although she is very young and innocent, she does not know anything but her presence is extremely important. It is not meant to replace the life of the person lost but it simply means to see the purity and sincerity of your heart. Are you really remorseful for what has been done? Is your heart pure? It is at that time that the perpetrator's community becomes very vulnerable and guilty. They are in a state of vulnerability and guilt. It is not that you say, it was so and so who did what... The entire community takes that responsibility. That was why the entire community of perpetrator community finds itself in the state of guilt and vulnerability.

The compensation to the victim's community becomes a "bridge of communication" to both communities who were formerly aggrieved and cut off from each other. According to the JRP (2012), compensation, known as *culukwor*, is a central feature of the Acholi indigenous healing process as it symbolises recognition of the victim's suffering by the perpetrator. In the case of compensation that involves inter-marriage, this deters the clans from attacking each other again in the future. The clans become united through the act of compensation.

Having dealt with the healing elements of Acholi indigenous rituals, the following subsections present findings regarding the various perceptions of those involved in the rituals:

5.5 Perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices

Most Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers had positive perceptions towards indigenous healing rituals. They believe that the rituals have a healing effect, that they calm survivors and bring the spirits of the deceased back home to rest. A few expressed negative perceptions based on lack of belief in the healing power of the rituals. Others expressed tension between their religious beliefs and traditional Acholi beliefs and argue that the rituals have a partial effect on survivors' healing and re-integration.

⁶Giving up what a person possesses and values most for the sake of one's wholeness.

5.5.1 Positive perceptions of the rituals

Most interviewees had positive perceptions towards the Acholi healing practices as shown in the following:

Gulu Survivor 001: It has [helped]; because when they are done, (people begin living properly). (It works). (It has very strong effect on people). (When they are not done people will not stay normally), e.g. (when unfortunate situations happen, people can say it is because the rituals were not done). ... **(They - the community/people - value it).** ...

Gulu survivor 003: Well, aaa just as I said, (It has helped them). ... *So to me (I feel it has helped them) because (after performing that type of ritual you can now see them living a normal life).* So to some extent I feel it is of help to them.

Gulu Survivor 005: Yes. Because they make the person returning feel part of the family, accepted and loved beyond faults. *I felt more uplifted by the rituals at home because people were not distanced from me. In Gusco I felt like I was the sick one 'a rebel'. I found them at home and our village more welcoming. I felt bonded to them.* In this way, they are helpful and **have a lot of positive effect in the community.**

Kitgum Survivor 006: Yes they do because really they have helped to bring people back together in harmony. *They have helped to bring calmness like in some of us who had come back violent back to the community ...* (There is a way honestly, these rituals help). You have been here these days you see people going to their garden businesses. *Without public healing and public acceptance, I do not think that that would be possible.* People would still fear each other.

After listening to the voices of the interviewees, the following I-poems were constructed from the narratives:

Gulu Survivor 003: So to me I feel it has helped them because after performing that type of ritual you can now see them living a normal life

Gulu Survivor 005: I felt more uplifted by the rituals at home because people were not distanced from me.
In Gusco I felt like I was the sick one 'a rebel'.
I found them at home and our village more welcoming.
I felt bonded to them.

Kitgum Survivor 006: They have helped to bring calmness like in some of us who had come back violent back to the community
Without public healing and public acceptance, I do not think that it would be possible.

The I-poems show that those who expressed positive feelings believe that their participation in the rituals leads to their forgiveness. The rituals also remove the bad spirits that haunt

survivors and cause physical symptoms, for example insomnia. When asked whether the rituals had helped, Gulu Survivor 009 responded:

Yes, very much so! (Excitement and conviction in tone). Because for me I used to have very bad dreams, even I would see those people who abducted me coming to beat me – and I would wake up in fright; thinking that I am being abducted again. But after the rituals now I am okay. I do not have those fears anymore. These days, I can sleep. I never used to be able to sleep at all! (High pitch – emphasis).

The positive perception of the rituals seems to emanate from the manner in which the ceremonies facilitate an individual's identification with and acceptance by the community. This holds true even for those who had undergone individual counselling at the centres prior to ritual participation, such as Gulu Survivor 005:

Yes. Because they make the person returning feel part of the family, accepted and loved beyond faults. I felt more uplifted by the rituals at home because people were not distanced from me. In Gusco [counselling centre] I felt like I was the sick one 'a rebel'. I found them at home and our village more welcoming. I felt bonded to them. In this way, they are helpful and have a lot of positive effect in the community.

One of the reasons for the positive perception is that the rituals aid the transition of the survivors to normal community life, which generates a sense of togetherness. The findings resonate with the idea of the communal/interdependent theory of the self, which assumes that human identity is collective in nature (Bojuwoye, 2005; Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize, 2004). This differs from the independent theory of the self, which sees the person as bounded. The positive perception of the rituals emanates from them being rooted in the community, where the returnees will ultimately live out their lives. This finds support in the following extract:

Gulu Survivor 011: ... *Actually, (there are many people who have been helped through the rituals). Counselling and singing alone that they were doing at World Vision cannot help alone. It has to be accompanied by the rituals. You know for one to feel that truly they are not alone; they are once again with the community. The only route to that is through rituals not talking alone with the counselor in World Vision; because by the end of the day you need your family, your community. You cannot stay in World Vision forever, and the way of the Acholi is through the rituals. That is the wisdom of our forefathers; you cannot leave it out.*

The rituals facilitate communal life, as opposed to individual counselling that takes place away from the community. For the Acholi, an individual who is suffering has to heal together with, and through his/her family and clan because they share in the suffering of the individual. These findings highlight the differences in how healing is understood in an

indigenous Acholi context versus a Western context. It is thus important for Western counselling practitioners to understand the uniqueness of indigenous healing practices because a lack of knowledge in this area may result in misdiagnosis and uncontextualised, ineffective treatment (Baloyi, 2008; Mkhize, 2003; Myers, 2007; Derek & Veeda, 2013; Carter as cited Waldron, 2010). The conventional (Western) perspective of healing is taken to mean “treatment” in the biomedical sense (Williams, Guenther & Arnott, 2011). This differs from the Acholi perspective of healing, which refers to a more holistic approach that encompasses spiritual and emotional issues in addition to mental and physical health. Contrary to individualistic, insight-oriented therapy, indigenous healing emphasises holism; the interdependence between individual and society (Chansonneuve, 2005; Moran & Fitzpatrick, 2008; Ross, 2008). To the extent that the rituals facilitate this process, they are perceived positively by those that partake in them.

5.5.2: Perceptions depend on individuals’ beliefs in the rituals

Some of the survivors interviewed claimed they did not believe the rituals had an effect in terms of healing people who had been affected by violence. These participants hold the view that the effectiveness of the rituals is dependent on the individual’s belief in Acholi traditions:

Gulu Survivor 002: ...it depends on the belief, some people believe that it is God’s making, for such prayer would be enough. For those who believe in tradition, the rituals are necessary.

Gulu Survivor 015: It depends on one’s belief, but generally, it helps.

Some were of the view that the effectiveness of the rituals is dependent on how they were performed - that is, if the rituals were conducted properly/correctly, according to tradition:

Gulu Survivor 021: If done properly, it is possible to integrate survivors but, the wounds may not heal completely especially if perpetrators inflicted or committed grave offences against his own people and if done purposely. I know many people who have run away and relocated themselves to a different area.

Then there were interviewees who were of the opinion that the Acholi rituals have a partial effect on the survivor’s healing and re-integration, as shown in the following extract:

Gulu Survivor 012:...they helped me partially but some people are completely okay as a result of going through them. May be it also depends on how much one believes in

them and whether the family and clan are in position to meet the requirements of the rituals.

The above-mentioned findings emphasise the importance of personal beliefs and world-views for the process of healing. Astin (as cited in Jamison, Breman, Measham et al., 2006), as well as Mander et al. (2007), all point to the notion that healing should resonate with an individual's beliefs, thought patterns and world-view, if they are to be successful.

5.5.3: Christianity and modernisation influences

Christianity also had an effect on how some participants viewed the rituals. Seven (7) out of 30 (constituting 19%) of survivors did not participate in any ritual because they considered them 'sinful'. As Christians, they felt it was not right to perform these rituals. This view is depicted in the following interview narrative and associated I-poem:

Gulu Survivor 003: Well, aaa just as I said, *I am not a believer in that kind of ritual ([I am a believer, I am a religious]), but to them because that is what they tell you that it works ...*

However, some Christians did choose to participate in the rituals:

Gulu Survivor 002: *I felt I was welcomed back home. Yes, it has helped me; I underwent a normal traditional sign of welcoming a person and a sign of connecting as part of the family. Even if I am a Christian, I see there is no other ritual in the church that helps to connect people in their family.*

Mukaria (2011) and Kazembe (2007, 2008) report an indifference in attitude amongst most Christians towards indigenous healing practices, some referring to them as 'witchcraft' or 'forces of evil.' This reflects the tensions between Christianity and indigenous African practices. Kazembe (2009) observes that early Christian missionaries tried to destroy African religion and medicine by portraying them as unscientific and against the Christian faith and morals. In a similar vein, Gort (2008) argues that from the earliest history, Christianity maintained a negative attitude toward other religious traditions such as African religion/rituals. The negative attitude towards the healing rituals that was observed in the narratives of some Christian survivors possibly emanates from the above-mentioned negative portrayal of indigenous African practices.

However, Adamo (2011) observes that since the 1930s, Christianity has become more open towards other religions. This may explain the participation of some Christian survivors in the healing rituals and the small percentage of those that object to them on religious grounds. With acculturation and the localisation of Christianity in African churches (Angucia, 2010), it is possible that some people are comfortable practicing the Christian faith in tandem with their African indigenous religions. Chepkwony (2014) highlights that people are capable of blending different religions and cultures. In her research in northern Uganda, Angucia (2010) found that people participated in their indigenous cleansing rituals and practiced Christianity, in the form of prayer, at the same time. This form of religious syncretism is commensurate with the inclusive, African indigenous epistemology that is open to new ideas and readily accommodates rival explanations, where it is deemed appropriate (Grills, 2002; 2004). The pigeon holing of people as either 'indigenous' or Christian exists only in the vocabulary and practices of professionals: it is not in the interest of those in need of help.

It was also established through the elders that some survivors of violent conflict did not participate in the Acholi indigenous rituals because of modernisation influences. This group of participants perceived the rituals as 'backward'. Gulu Elder 004 reflected as follows on the matter:

Through the rituals I have just explained to you, but of course other people think of these rituals as traditional and they go to all kinds of places to seek healing.

Possibly, attitudes of this nature arise from the many foreign influences that have led to the marginalisation and belittling of African indigenous knowledge systems (Nsamenang, 2007; Nkosi, 2012; Onyango, 2011; Waldron, 2010; Wessels, 1992). Angucia (2010) concurs that in theory there are many Acholi people who consider themselves to be modern and do not want to be associated with traditional rituals. Angucia (2010) reports however that during times of distress and instability, some Acholi who consider themselves to be modernised, resort to their cultural resources. Angucia (2010, p. 180) further contends that:

...if the reintegration of the formerly abducted children were to rely solely on modern secular solutions, the children would not feel at home, due to the isolating tendencies of modernity. Acholi culture, it was posited, has a way of accommodating most issues, including this 'new' societal problem of formerly abducted children.this is why traditional practices have overridden modernity and thus need to be taken into account.

There are clear tensions and power dimensions between Western and African indigenous traditions that require each to be given the space necessary to articulate itself; while remaining cognisant of the fact that no one knowledge system is self-sufficient; since there is much to learn from other knowledge systems. It is important that, before one can consider the integration of Western and African-based indigenous healing traditions, the latter needs to be afforded the space to articulate itself on its own terms (cf. Bing & Reid, 1996). The fact remains, however, that Christianity and modernising tendencies have a bearing on how indigenous healing rituals are perceived. Abdullahi (2011) explains how Western education, religion, globalisation and urbanisation in Africa have affected the use of indigenous healing practices. Gender is yet another area of tension between knowledge systems that is illuminated in the findings regarding how men and women are affected by war and healing rituals.

5.6 How men and women are affected by violent conflict upon their return from war

The study findings reveal that men and women are affected differently upon their return from war in that there is more mistreatment and segregation of women survivors in comparison to men. In most cases, even after completion of the rituals, women returnees remain unattractive to men as marriage partners. This means that whilst the rituals described above assist with the general re-introduction of the returnees to society and provide healing between the conflicting clans, the relationship between married couples is often not healed. The following are some of the narratives from interview responses related to research question five:

Kitgum Survivor 005: Most of the (women who produced [offspring] from the bush are suffering) because (it has become very difficult to find a man who can marry you). This is because most of them fear responsibility for many reasons.

Gulu Survivor 007: *The thing may be I find hard and painful in myself even after the rituals, is that (my husband from the time I returned home, does not want me as a wife anymore). (We sleep in different houses; he cannot touch me because he says I am polluted) - defiled by other sexual encounters and he cannot. Sometimes I get angry but sometimes I understand him. May be I am even sick. You know **in Acholi community you cannot relate with any other man except your husband** but you know in the bush most people were raped ...hmmmmmm...and I could not escape it either...[tears falling down her face]... anyway... [long silence]... Husbands should not treat wives who come back from captivity the way they do because *we did not choose what happened to us. Acholi community is a little bit too hard on the women than the men. They need to change that mentality because it is not fair.**

Gulu Survivor 009: In Acholi culture, rape is a very bad thing to happen to a woman.

These days my husband since I returned has given me a house of my own. He says (he cannot sleep with a woman who is polluted). *I find that a very difficult situation to have to deal with. I feel angry! –[Heightened pitch – tone] - because it was not my fault that I was abducted; so (I do not see why he has to blame me and judge me). I did not choose! –[anger...tears...Lowered eyes...avoiding eye contact] - . (These men are bad, they mistreat us!) How do you (make me suffer for a fault that was not my making) –[silence] - maybe he is scared that I might have contracted HIV/AIDS – [picks a handkerchief and blows her nose].* For the men who are raped in captivity, they are not seen as polluted; for them it is okay. They will continue with their wife, as you know women have no say like the husband.

Gulu Survivor 011: I have not forgiven anyone because of those who raped me at my age and caused so much pain to my life to the extent that (*I am looked at as polluted by the community*). Ok people are kind but ... [silence...heightened nerves in the side of he head]. *I still notice that the prospective boys who want to be my friend when I tell them about my life story before they discover it for themselves, shun me and they disappear silently ... [silence...avoidance of eye contact...tears...pain in the way of her cry].*

The narratives above indicate that while women may be accepted back into their communities after the war, it is a challenge for them to resume their normal romantic relationships and sex lives. This is more so if they have been raped and/or fallen pregnant in captivity. This is a major challenge given that rape, unwanted pregnancies and other forms of sexual exploitation were the order of the day for women in captivity in northern Uganda (Becker, 2012). The I-poems constructed below depict exactly how the women survivors are more adversely affected by the violent conflict upon their return from the war than men are:

Gulu Survivor 007: The thing may be I find hard and painful in myself even after the rituals
... my husband from the time I returned home, does not want me as a wife anymore.
We sleep in different houses
... he cannot touch me because he says I am polluted
Sometimes I get angry but sometimes I understand him
Maybe I am even sick
... we did not choose what happened to us.

Gulu Survivor 009: I find that a very difficult situation to have to deal with.
I feel angry! –[Heightened pitch– tone] - because it was not my fault that I was abducted
I do not see why he has to blame me and judge me.
I did not choose! –[anger...tears...Lowered eyes...avoiding eye contact]

These men are bad, they mistreat us!
How do you make me suffer for a fault that was not my making
-[silence]-
... maybe he is scared that I might have contracted HIV/AIDS –
[picks a handkerchief and blows her nose.]

Gulu Survivor 011:

I am looked at as polluted by the community.
I still notice that the prospective boys who want to be my
friend when I tell them about my life story...
... shun me and they disappear silently.

The Acholi culture considers some of the women survivors' experiences during the war, such as rape, as 'taboo' and thus unacceptable. In the face of these results, Elder 004 from Kitgum was approached for an explanation and had this to say about the girls who were made to 'play sex' in the bush, against their will:

...now for the case of LRA, let us talk about the LRA, they have done so many bad things like making the girl child like sex slaves. To make a girl child as a sex slave, this is tantamount to rape. There was no rape in Acholi land. So these girls play sex in the bush which is a taboo, a misfortune! Nobody is allowed to play sex in the bush but they have done it, what do you do when they come back? The parents say when they come back, so cool the environment. So if those children have to be accepted by the community, they must do appeasement to the 'jogi' in the area where those girls were forced to have sex in the bush. Another thing is that, once this is done then the children will be cleansed and they use the blood to smear their foreheads, their chests and legs and the back of their feet – to become normal people. Otherwise, it is very difficult for people still not to look at them as a taboo or misfortune if nothing has been done to cleanse them.

Probed further on how the rituals could possibly help the girls, Kitgum Elder 004 indicated that there might be specific cleansing rituals that need to be directed to girl/female returnees:

You know those girls who have come with children, they have nightmares, but in order to bring them, you must appease the area where these things happened. You must also cleanse the children, you must also give her the peace of mind. When you are connecting her now with the living dead, with the big Jok, the jogi who have got angry of her in the bush there, you are actually bringing the healing medicine to her. Extremely, extremely important for you to understand. These girls when they come, sometimes, they cannot conceive because they have that fear because they have killed and if nothing is done about it nothing conception cannot happen because of fear, because of what the woman is going through. So it is through the ritual that you will really heal the person to become normal. But the church may consider it satanic.....

In the context of the above and to further interrogate the role of gender in the entire healing process, a question was posed to some elders regarding whether men and women have equal right to officiate in the rituals. Elder 002 from Gulu responded hesitantly as follows:

Elder 002 Gulu: *Yah ...there are some who are women...there some who are women...yah and then there are men also...there are women.*

It is evident from the respondent's hesitation that this question was not expected. From my observation as researcher it sounded as though the elder was playing it safe by stating that women are included in the administration of rituals, when in reality there seems to be a common understanding that only men officiate as elders in the rituals, not women. This may be an area worth re-visiting with reference to the question of patriarchy in Acholi society.

From the narratives one can clearly see how the various women survivors were adversely affected after their return from war. In fact the gendered dimension of the re-integration rituals was one of the most important issues to emerge from the findings of this study. It is evident that while rituals may be helpful across the board as far as acceptance into society is concerned, when it comes to husband-wife relationships, there are challenges. The challenges are at the "intimacy level", where even after the rituals most husbands do not accept their wife/partner back due to the fact that she has been violated by other men during the war. Returnee men on the other hand do not seem to experience/report similar problems with initiating or resuming their intimate relationships provided they have undergone the rituals that afford them reacceptance into the community. This study, therefore, contributes towards elucidating and defining the scope of the success of the rituals. At a broader level it is clear that the rituals allow for social equilibrium to be re-established so that villages and families can resume their business and the possibility of revenge between the clans is minimised, and so forth. On the other hand, at a narrower level, intimacy remains a challenge for women as they are accepted into the homestead but the normal husband/wife relationship is not resumed. These findings reveal biased attitudes towards sex and gender in a patriarchal society. In the Acholi community, women are seen as carriers of the family honour because of their procreation potential; they are the perpetrators of the family lineage. This is tampered with when they are 'polluted' by sexual violation because the offspring thereof are considered to be 'polluted' as well and thus this curse is at risk of being transmitted through

the family lineage if these women are taken back by the husbands or married. The only puzzling issue here is that not even cleansing rituals can help them. Makumbi (2012) and Obel (2012) write that women war returnees with children born in captivity face many hostilities. Some are even denied access to family land because they have children born out of the family.

On the other hand, it was established that even those men who sexually violated women in the bush/captivity were able to resume their normal lives of marital conjugation or marry any woman of their choosing on their return. Despite the fact that it is the men who have 'polluted' their women victims, albeit that their captors sometimes forced them to perform these violent acts, they themselves are not seen as 'polluted'. This shows the voicelessness of the women as far as their relationships with their spouses are concerned. According to Obel (2012), there are cultural practices that have been adopted by Acholi customary law that affected women can seek help from in order to address their plight. None of the women in the current study had gone through any such practices, nor did any of them indicate their awareness of such.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results according to the research objectives. The study established that *nyono tong gwenois* a general and common ritual, which is performed to mark the returnee's movement from the outside contaminated world to the inside, sacred world of the homestead. Thereafter the rituals prescribed depend on the unique circumstances of the returnee. *Culukwor* is performed in cases where the returnee has killed; it is done to appease the spirit of the deceased and to afford it rest. *Matoput* is performed to bring about reconciliation between the families or clans of the killer and the deceased. The ritual process, as lived by the participants, was described. The rituals are prescribed for a range of reasons amongst which are psychosocial problems such as nightmares and bad dreams, ensuring fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one's humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, addressing collective guilt and responsibility, and healing the environment from pollution. Community participation is a major healing element of the rituals. In general, the attitude towards the rituals was positive. Gender is a major

determining factor for how the survivors of violent conflict are perceived. While the rituals appear to have been beneficial to the participants interviewed in enabling their re-integration into society in general, they were not deemed useful for restoring the normal husband/wife relationship. At the level of intimacy and perceptions of marriageability, Acholi women remain marginalised. Influences of Christianity and modernisation were noted. Some participants chose not to partake in the rituals, considering them 'primitive' and 'backward'. The results call for means to accommodate these two, seemingly divergent world-views, so as to serve the interest of the survivors, who ultimately must live their lives in communities.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The chapter presents the conclusions regarding the research questions, the unique contribution of the study, implications for policy, research and practice, implications for theory, the study limitations and suggestions for future research. It is divided into seven sections, beginning with an introduction that briefly summarises the entire study. This summary is then elucidated upon in the rest of the chapter.

6.1 Introduction

The research was aimed at exploring Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community, focusing on the lived experiences of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members who were witnesses and the elders who are the custodians and administrators of the rituals. The study described how survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda experienced these healing methods. The main aim of the study was to identify the specific problems for which these methods were prescribed, the ritual processes as experienced by the participants, and their perceived healing mechanisms for holistic healing. The aim of the study was not to discard Western counselling methods but rather, to enrich them; by developing an understanding of how the two paradigms with their differing world-views of the self, can assist each other in facilitating holistic healing for the survivors of violence in Gulu and Kitgum, northern Uganda.

To conclude, the findings have shown that the healing rituals were performed in sequence depending on the nature of the atrocities the survivor of violent conflict had committed or had been made to commit. The study established that the Acholi have several rituals but the most commonly used are *nyonotong gweno*, *culukwor* and *matoput*, in that order. The research established that the rituals are performed for several reasons such as the cleansing and protection of the survivors, their families, as well as the communities into which they were returning, from the bad spirits of the deceased that were never appeased. It has been established in this study that healing and survival for the Africans is deeply embedded within their worldview and this is done through rituals. The rituals heal through spirituality — an

appeal to a force greater than humanity — the presence and participation of the community, compensation of the aggrieved clan, and open forgiveness (holistic healing for Africans is not just biological as in the Western practices – but rather connects people, the land, and ancestors). The healing process includes the significance of the place where healing takes place, as well as healing of the spaces where the violence took place, as opposed to the individualistic orientation of Western methods. The study also established that healing for Africans extends beyond the contaminating effects of violence. It extends from the individuals who partook in the violence, into the community and the environment itself where the spirits that guard the communities abide, hence the need to heal spaces where violence occurred as well.

The study established that most participants perceived the rituals in positive terms. However influences of religion and globalisation were among those factors that caused some participants to perceive the rituals in negative terms. Furthermore, it appears that the rituals are limited in healing women who have been violated sexually in captivity. This is because even after going through the rituals, their husbands isolate them and cannot resume conjugal rites with them. Their male counterparts however, who were also violated sexually in captivity, can go on with their lives as normal after the rituals. According to the findings of the study therefore it can be summarily concluded that Acholi indigenous healing methods are primarily holistic in nature. Holistic healing incorporates the African belief of connectedness of life with everything; not just human beings but also the land and the ancestors. Therein lies the key to the success of the rituals in re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community. However, a point to note in this study is that the issue of patriarchy in Acholi indigenous practices needs further interrogation, due to the fact that women survivors of violent conflict are treated differently from their male counterparts.

6.2 Conclusions regarding the research questions

The primary objective of the study was to document Acholi indigenous methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community, focusing on Gulu and Kitgum districts of northern Uganda. The study further aimed to identify the specific problems for which these methods are prescribed, their processes and their therapeutic or healing mechanisms.

The study posed five research questions:

1. What are the indigenous Acholi healing/counselling practices that are carried out for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community?
2. What social problems and issues are Acholi healing/counselling practices/methods prescribed for?
3. What are the healing or therapeutic elements evident in Acholi indigenous healing processes?
4. What are the perceptions of Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers towards the indigenous healing practices?
5. How are men and women affected by the violent conflict upon returning from war and how do they benefit from indigenous healing practices?

This study established the existence of three frequently used Acholi healing/counselling practices that are actively performed for the purpose of rehabilitating and re-integrating survivors of trauma into the community. These include *nyono tong gweno* (cleansing ceremony), *culukwor* (symbolic and material compensation for welcoming a survivor who might have been contaminated with bad spirits, with the intention of bringing peace back to the person, family and community and freeing them of all the suffering and confusion they have experienced) and *matoput* (healing ceremony for reconciliation if someone has committed murder). Literature (Ojera, 2008; Christian, 2013) also supports the finding of this study as most authors associate these three rituals with the rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of trauma into the community. Some of these rituals, such as *nyono tong gweno*,

are similar to rituals performed in other parts of Africa, such as in Angola, where the ritual of stepping on an egg is used to help people break away from the past (Waldron, 2010).

Of the three rituals referred to, most survivors interviewed had participated in *nyono tong gweno* (cleansing ritual), but very few had performed *culukwor* and *matoput*. During this study, most of the interviewees/survivors stated that it was important to undergo this cleansing ritual as soon as possible, even if the rest of the rituals are only followed up on at a later stage *because it is the first step to healing since cleansing comes first before they enter the homestead, lest they pollute the homestead and consequently the community*. Thus, although many of the survivors interviewed had undergone all three rituals, emphasis was on ensuring that they all participated in *nyono tong gweno*, the first cleansing ritual. According to JRP (2012), this ritual does not require expensive and advanced planning, which means that families and clans can easily meet the requirements. On the other hand, the reason why most survivors could not participate in *culukwor* and *matoput* was because many communities could not afford the compensation attached to *culukwor*, which has to be performed before *matoput*. Sadly, many families lost their properties, including livestock, during the war. Bukuluki (2011) confirms that the Acholi people used to have many cattle prior to the war but lost them during the conflict. Baines (2015) also highlights the challenge that Acholi families/communities face in terms of meeting the compensation requirements of *culukwor*. Thus, until such time as the communities are able to raise the compensation and pay, these survivors will not be able to undergo *matoput*.

The Acholi healing/counselling practices that were cited by participants as not frequently practiced include *moyo kum* (cleansing the bodies of the returnees), *kweyo cwiny* (cooling the heart or process of healing and reconciliation), *lwongo tipu* (calling of the spirit to rest or a healing process to bring harmony between the living and the living dead), and *moyo piny* (cleansing of an area to appease the ancestors and removing evil spirits - *cen* - from places of massacres).

Various people are involved in the Acholi rituals for rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors into the community. These include family/relatives of the survivors, elders, local

community members, other clans and traditional healers/witch doctors. Each of them has a role to play. For example, the family/relatives including the local community members share the suffering of the survivors and therefore also have to undergo the process of reconciliation to support the survivors in their healing. As a matter of fact, they are the ones who bring the food for the ceremony of the healing rituals. Referring to the social re-integration of formerly abducted children in northern Uganda, Corbin (2008) established that the most important healing elements were support from the family and community acceptance of returnees. These are societal resources that are utilised in the rehabilitation and re-integration of abducted returnees.

Findings of this study revealed that Acholi healing/counselling practices are prescribed for various illnesses and diseases caused by misfortunes in life; such as hearing voices and bad dreams, (in) fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one's humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, individual and collective guilt, and cleansing/healing the environment from 'pollution'. These findings challenge the Western notion that all counselling methods can be practiced within a generic, neutral space; each illness calls for certain rituals to be performed in certain places that speak to the specific issues the individual and related family/community are dealing with. Acholi holistic healing thus extends beyond individual sharing with a therapist in a counselling room. These findings are also supported by Atkinson et al. (2006) who claim that such indigenous rituals can alleviate negative psychosocial effects such as the problems/issues cited by the participants in this study. Overall the study established that in the Africentric Acholi world-view, healing takes place within the realm of relationships and extends beyond individuals to include the participation of the community.

Community participation was emphasised as a key element of the healing rituals described in this study. Kamwaria and Katola (2012) purport that illness in Africa is not only located within the person/survivor who is to be healed *per se*; this person/survivor who is to be healed is first and foremost an embodiment of the whole community, which collectively also experiences the negative effects of the illness. Healing in this case is thus not an individualised process set in a remote office/space separated from the community as it is in

Western counselling. Rather, it is witnessed by the community who are part of it; it takes place ‘through others’ within the community itself. This is a very pertinent finding for professional counsellors practicing in Africa, in this case with the Acholi survivors of violent conflict. This is so because from an African outlook, the community is the focal point of departure for individual diagnosis and treatment/healing. Therefore, it is important for professional counsellors to understand how the African world-view of healing/counselling differs from Western world-views that tend to separate the client from interpersonal relationships in decision-making in therapy, as the client is encouraged to pay attention to his/her autonomous inclinations that do not necessarily have to be influenced by community undertones.

As an extension of the above finding regarding the central role of the community in African indigenous systems such as the Acholi rituals, healing has to do with inter-connectedness that extends beyond people to include their immediate environments and the ancestors; as such Africentric healing paradigms incorporate connections between the living, the living-dead, and the land. This is because indigenous African cultures believe that any death caused on the land wounds not only human beings but the land itself. Indigenous traditional healing methods thus take cognisance of the connections between human beings and the land and the broader cosmos. According to African indigenous systems, of which the Acholi practices are a part, the earth is viewed not just as a resource to be exploited; it also houses the homesteads and the environmental abodes where healing takes place. These findings are supported by Robbins and Dewar (2011) who state that the earth’s health is very much connected to human health; and this connection is expressed through intricate relationships to the land. It is because of these relationships that the Acholi perform ritual cleansing/healing of the earth/land violated by the spilling of blood during the violent conflict; and ritual cleansing is incorporated in the healing of the Acholi survivors of violent conflict because they had been made to kill by their captors or they had personally taken decisions to kill. Non-indigenous/Western counselling is at variance with this complex understanding of healing and connectivity in the African indigenous sense. It is for this reason, amongst others, that indigenous counselling approaches to trauma must be given the serious attention they deserve for holistic healing of Acholi survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum; and indeed, of

people of African ancestry as a whole. Failure to do this is likely to result in continued lack of holistic healing for survivors of violent conflict, as established by this study.

The study further revealed that this type of holistic healing as practiced by Acholi elders is not learnt in a classroom; it is learnt by being an Acholi and being socialised into their cultural traditions and beliefs. It is for this reason that non-indigenous counsellors need to collaborate with legitimate elders who are mandated to carry out these healing rituals, lest they leave a very large gap in the healing of survivors of violent conflict in the Acholi community. These findings challenge the non-indigenous/Western counselling practices that are currently provided to survivors of violent conflict by Western-trained counsellors in Gulu and Kitgum. Although highly skilled, as outsiders from foreign NGOs, these counsellors fall short of the cultural legitimacy necessary to reconnect with the people and the land; since this responsibility falls on the elders who are the religious and spiritual leaders of the community. This is an important finding and a challenge to Western professional counsellors practising in the Acholi region with survivors of violent conflict. It calls for counsellors to work hand-in-hand with elders to provide holistic healing to the survivors.

In addition, the fact that African indigenous healing practices are at variance with Western understandings of what constitutes health and illness is a challenge for healing people of African ancestry. Western healing practices center on the biological, psychological and physical realms of healing in a person; whereas indigenous healing practices center on the person who is part and parcel of their environment and their ancestors, all of which are part of the healing process and thus the person can only heal through the community and not in isolation. These two world-views do not conceptualise health and illness in the same way and this can lead to shortcomings in Western counselling methods if the African indigenous world-view is not taken into account. Moreover, Western counselling practices do not take cognisance of who can be a counsellor; since anyone who has studied counselling at tertiary level can ostensibly qualify as a counsellor. According to the findings of this study, this creates a significant gap in the way the Acholi view healing and who is legitimately allowed to perform healing rituals. It is for this reason that an African indigenous knowledge systems curriculum needs to be developed by universities in consultation with legitimate African

elders to be taught at tertiary level to inform and form counselling psychology students in their understanding of people of African ancestry, such as the Acholi survivors.

6.3 Unique contribution of the study

The study is the first to use the Voice Centered Relational (VCR) method for re-integrating survivors of violent conflict into the community in Gulu and Kitgum, northern Uganda. It is also the first study to establish the fact that not even indigenous healing rituals can enable a woman who has been raped to resume conjugal rites with her husband. There are many qualitative studies that have been undertaken with survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda; however, this study was the first to look at the Acholi healing methods from a narrative perspective using a VCR method of analysis. The VCR method allows the researcher to keenly listen to the tensions in the self as participants tell the stories of experiences of their lives; and thus gives the researcher the opportunity to locate where they stand in relation to their experiences. This also gives room for flexibility for rich data as both the participant and researcher are listening to what is going on within their inner selves in relation to the story. It highlights the fact that every person's experience and narrative emerges differently depending on where the person is positioned in their sense of self. The VCR method comes out strongly in voicing out the SELF in each person; and therefore gives room for rich experiences as people listen to themselves and to others in everyday interactions. It removes the monopoly of one voice over others; a case in point would be the manner in which Western counselling practices have been dominating other voices in the field of Psychology. Other voices such as the Asian and African voices need to be heard in order for holistic healing for all to take shape.

Uniquely, it is hoped that this study will contribute greatly in bringing awareness to Western trained counsellors that Western independent/individualised theories of therapy, effective as they may be in certain contexts, are not sufficient to be applied universally in non-Western/interdependent cultures such as with Acholi survivors of violent conflict. The counselling/healing methods applied by Western trained counsellors are based on an individualised process while that of indigenous people such as the Acholi is interdependent. According to the findings, this is because healing in Acholi community among survivors of

violent conflict is witnessed by the community who are part of it; it takes place “through others”. And this “healing through others” is equal with the communal understanding of the self or *ubuntu* philosophy which is dominant in people of African ancestry, of which the Acholi survivors of violent conflict are a part. It is an understanding of the self which is at variance with the autonomous understanding of selfhood that dominates major Western approaches to healing.

It is also anticipated that the study will contribute immensely to the fact that culture can no longer be denied as a healing factor by counselling psychologists. The fact that every culture has its own mechanisms for healing/counselling depending on its cultural world-views, in this case the culture of the Acholi survivors of violent conflict, can no longer be denied as an influential factor of healing in counselling psychology especially. The findings of this study have highlighted the difference between the way the egocentric/independent societies and the interdependent/communal societies, such as in the case of the Acholi, perceive health and illness. Forwhile the egocentric/independent societies view illness as based on the biological, psychological or physical realms, for interdependent/communal societies, health and illness extends beyond individuals; it includes the community, the homesteads and the natural environment as well as the spiritual world of the ancestors. It is for this reason that healing in an African sense cannot be confined to the counsellor’s or therapist’s office, as is the case in Western based counselling approaches. Rather, the place of healing varies according to the healing issues at hand, including WHO and WHAT is to be healed. This is why according to the findings of this study, the Acholi healing/counselling practices were prescribed for various illnesses and diseases caused by misfortunes in life; such as hearing voices and bad dreams, (in) fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one’s humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, individual and collective guilt, and cleansing the environment from pollution. Healing therefore is done through the critical healing symbolic elements associated with rituals, community participation and public confession, place of healing, and symbolic restoration through compensation and reconciliation. A major unique contribution of this study comes from the findings on gender. The fact that even after the rituals, the women were still marginalised and their husbands could not be sexually be intimate with them because they had been violated by other men in captivity. The dichotomy

however in this finding is that this was not the case with the male survivors who just continued normally with their lives but not the women. This needs to be investigated and interrogated further. Apart from this finding being a challenge to the Acholi community, it is also a challenge to the Western trained counsellors who do not have this knowledge at hand in practicing among the survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum since it seems like the women survivors in Acholi community cannot be forgiven where their sexual lives have been tampered with. The recommendation would be that they work hand-in hand-with Acholi traditional healers in order to fill up some of these gaps in Acholi indigenous systems of healing. The contribution of this study is that culture and the worldview of the clients cannot be ignored in counselling, it is a reality that non indigenous/Western trained counsellors should seriously pay heed to in practicing counselling in cultures not their own and vice versa. These findings would not have been possible without using the voice relational method. This is because it helped the participants to come out strong and clear pertaining to what was meaningful to them. The VCR method gave this study the depth it required by giving the participants their own voice to articulate at depth on what was meaningful to them.

The VCR method helped to provide the researcher with enriched information about the Acholi indigenous methods for rehabilitation and re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community. The analysis enabled the researcher to understand the survivors' experiences during the conducting of the Acholi indigenous healing rituals for their rehabilitation and re-integration into the community. It provided a deeper understanding of how the rituals were performed, how the survivors and others community members were involved and how the survivors benefited from the Acholi indigenous healing rituals including the challenges they encountered, especially for the women survivors who had returned from captivity.

6.4 Implications for policy

The study has highlighted the fact that even though the Government of Uganda is very supportive of psychological healing in Uganda and indeed for the people of northern Uganda, it can no longer just rely on Western counselling methodologies that are taken to be universal and yet rely mainly on an independent theory of the self which is opposed to the African

interdependent theory of the self. The study has established that healing needs to encompass the individual and his or her culture for holistic healing. It has clearly brought out the fact that Western counselling methodologies can no longer continue to dominate since there have been shortcomings encountered in applying Western counselling practices in the healing and re-integration of survivors of violent conflict into the community in Gulu and Kitgum. The counselling/healing applied by Western trained counsellors was based on an individualised process, in a remote office space away from the community as it is often done in Western counselling/healing practices. This created a problem because healing in Acholi community among survivors of violent conflict is witnessed by the community who are part of it; it takes place “through others”. However, it is regrettable that African indigenous perspectives do not form part of the training of professional counselors in Africa. This creates a major shortcoming for those who practice on the African continent. This is because this “healing through others” is equal with the communal understanding of the self or *ubuntu* philosophy which is dominant in people of African ancestry, of which the Acholi survivors of violent conflict are a part. It is an understanding of the self which is at variance with the autonomous understanding of selfhood that dominate major Western approaches to healing; that were also applied in non-indigenous practitioners’ counselling of Acholi survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum. It is therefore imperative that an African indigenous theory of the self; in this case the Acholi theory of the self, forms part of the curricula in universities and higher institutions of learning in training counsellors who practice in an African context. This will enable them in the future handle counselling/healing practice in context for holistic healing; especially for survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum.

In addition, this study established that Western and African indigenous systems have different views of what constitutes illness; it includes not just the biological, psychological or physical realms as the Western approaches tend to view them but extends to the environment as well as the spiritual world of the ancestors. It is for this reason that healing in an African sense cannot be confined to the counsellor’s or therapist’s office, as is the case in Western based counselling approaches that dominate mental health training institutions such as universities. Therefore, it is imperative that universities come up with policies in the training of counsellors. Their training should not just be slanted towards Western counselling

programmes but should introduce the spiritual dimensions of counselling into the curricula to address the needs of populations such as the Acholi. In addition, the universities need to introduce into the curricula the critical healing elements associated with healing in the Acholi community established in this study, such as the symbolism associated with the rituals, community participation and public confession, place of healing, and symbolic restoration through compensation. All these are very important because they differ from the Western perception of what constitutes healing. Failure to have curricula that are taught to students of psychology and counselling on these critical elements of healing will only leave them unable to holistically heal people like the Acholi survivors of violent conflict who are of African origin.

6.5 Research and practice

Akpomuvie (2014, p. 51) asserts that “Different ethnic groups and cultures recognize different illnesses, symptoms and causes and have developed different health-care systems and treatment strategies”. Therefore in order to foster holistic healing of any individual, health and illness has to be understood through the different cultures that influence the way health and illness is understood by the individuals in their context. Therefore there is need to study and do research on innovative treatments that have a broad spectrum in bringing about holistic healing that is enduring such as the rituals. This is especially where people are afraid that the spirits will continue to bring havoc to them and their communities for generations unless rituals of purification especially after killing another person have been appeased (Kamwaria & Katola, 2012). This calls for health workers and counselling psychologists who work with people of African ancestry to be acquainted with the different kinds of afflictions that affect them. It will help them to be more open and realistic in working towards holistic healing in the people they deal with.

Furthermore, research initiatives focusing on African indigenous knowledge systems need to be funded and published to the same tune as the Western research studies are (Nsamenang, 2007). This will enable data to be available across all cultures without sidelining some as inferior and others as superior; since this study has established that no culture is superior to another. It is only that culture makes different people see the world differently according to

what constitutes their world-view; and no world-view is inferior to another (Waldron, 2010). Therefore, the implication here is that universities need to come up with research repositories and finances for robust research in the areas of African indigenous systems; such as this one in Acholi indigenous systems. In addition, there should be appraisals for professors who are keen to make sure that students are adept with issues of the power culture holds in influencing the way people view the world and take decisions that not only affect them but other people as well; and indeed the world over.

In addition gender disparities in cultural healing practices like rituals that accrue in different situations need further research as established in this study. This is especially where healing practices for all such as healing rituals, are at times bent on gender imbalance where men are favoured over women. This is especially where the rituals are tailored to favour the holistic healing of men who have been sexually abused and yet blatantly block healing for the women even though they all went through the same traumatising experiences. Therefore, more study needs to be done to critically analyse and find solutions on how patriarchy still dominates over and above even in healing rituals in African communities like among the Acholi survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum, northern Uganda. This points to continued patriarchal bias of men over women in all aspects of life including healing which is supposed to be for all. It calls for strong policies that treat all people on the same footing as far as indigenous healing methods are concerned since they should be practices that heal all in all circumstances and not just a few.

Further research is needed on the voices, power and practice women hold in the administration of healing rituals. This kind of research could be helpful in designing healing practices that are inclusive of all since they will hold the same magnitude of voice and power over their lives; without for example, patriarchy being over domineering.

6.6 Implications for theory

The study has argued and established that Western counselling methodologies are not universally applicable for healing every people in every culture; in this case survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum, northern Uganda. This is why the Western methodologies were seen as limited in healing survivors of violent conflict because their world-view is based on the theory of the self of individualism, which is different from communitarian practices of healing.

Looking back at the gist of this study, perhaps the most important implication for theory is the fact that our Western counterparts, with all their good intentions, do not realise keenly enough that their Western independent theories of therapy are not universal and cannot be applied universally in non-Western/interdependent cultures due to the fact that the way the Africans construct meaning of their lives is interdependent not independent like the Western cultures do. Ignoring this self-conception of the Africans by the Western counsellors in their mental health practice and healing of the Africans is equally ignoring the person; almost “throwing the baby out with the bath water” so to speak. It is important for Western counsellors to understand that no person can operate or even heal for that matter from a realm they are not. It is imperative that psychology widens its space to include all the other psychologies that make meaning to every culture in context. At this point psychology is too Eurocentric to be meaningful to all other cultural experiences; in this case the Africentric world-view and conceptions of meaning in what shapes their life experience (Chukwuokolo, 2009). For psychology to be meaningful it needs to rigorously take up the Africentric world-views and philosophies including their use of language, healing therapeutic elements in defining their life experiences which are different from the way the Eurocentric approaches define them.

“Psychology has long ignored culture as a source of influence on human behaviour and still takes little account of theories or data from other than Euro-American cultures” (Spering,, 2001, p. 4). According to these findings, this kind of mentality is unfortunate as the Western theory of the self and African indigenous theory of the self are at variance with each other (Nwoye, 2007). Imposing the Western theories of healing on Acholi survivors of violent

conflict without considering their theory of the SELF only leaves the healing process wanting for Acholi survivors of violent conflict in northern Uganda; actually it is adding insult to injury since the situation they went through in the hands of their captors already did not respect their personhood, repeating that kind of mentality in their healing process sends across just the same message of disregarding their dignity and who they are; a visitor cannot come to your house and tell you who you are, that tantamounts to an insult irrespective of the goodwill which may have been embedded in the thought. The life experiences of Acholi survivors of violent conflict have brought out the importance of culture as a healing element in trauma in such a manner that the Western theory being independent leaves a hollow gap in them in the healing process unless the healing methodologies become inclusive to encompass the interdependent theory of the self where the Acholi survivors of conflict find themselves struggling to heal. This is supported by Nwoye (2013) who stated that “human beings are not passive agents in the affairs of their lives. They invest their life experiences with personal meaning and it is this personal meaning that people give to events in their lives that influences their response to whatever adversity comes their way” (Nwoye& Nwoye, 2012, p. 153).

The philosophy of *ubuntu* undergirds traditional African approaches to peace building and healing whereby a human becomes a person through others; developed and shaped in community with others” (Edwards, 2001, p. 2). Thus human nature is viewed as an interdependent, inseparable whole (Nefale & Van Dyk, 2003). The group seen as the only framework in which the individual degree of self-actualisation can be realised (Moodley, 1999a). This stance of life is imbued in an African spirituality as a people which ought to be understood in facilitating healing for them. This is because the whole existence of the Africans is tied on spirituality, balance, interconnectedness and self-awareness with and through community not as autonomous, independent individuals but interdependent. These are Ubuntu cultures which emphasise the primary connection among people in their healing processes. In these cultures, people are interdependent within their family groups (ethnic, nation and extended family). Theoretically; NTU Afrocentric worldview on which this study is premised assumes that human identity is collectivist in nature not independent/autonomous. NTU basic principles of approach include harmony, balance,

interconnectedness, cultural awareness, and authenticity. Phillips (1990) goes on to say that NTU psychotherapy approach takes into cognisance the fact that the healing process is a natural process in which the healer assists the client to rediscover natural alignment. It is important to understand each of these principles in the context of this study.

6.6.1 Beyond the confines of a counselling room: The cosmos healing theory; a suggestion:

The multifaceted world-view of African social and cultural experience that is shaped by a distinctive belief system which, amongst other aspects, incorporates the centrality of the community over the individual, respect for tradition, harmony with nature, a high level of spirituality and ethical concern, sociality of selfhood, veneration of ancestors and unity of being as stated by several scholars (Baldwin, 1986; Baloyi, 2008; Bojuwoye, 2013; Holdstock, 2000; Mazama, 2001; Mkhize, 2005; Onyango, 2011; Wessells, 2008) makes a strong argument for a proposed cosmos theory of understanding the African self, which needs to be understood for holistic healing to take place in different situations of trauma healing. This proposal is supported by Wessells and Monteiro (2006) who reiterate that in order to holistically heal an African, interventions need to address a range of issues including the person's interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, such as personal relationships with family and community, and spiritual relationships with God and the ancestors. This proposal goes beyond the confines of a counsellor's counselling room for healing of an African person; in this case the Acholi survivors of violent conflict because it is tied to the cosmos as well. It is not only physical but spiritual as well. It is because of these aspects that it can allow for divergent points of view which are conflicting with its theory of SELF in the same person. African SELF is not only spiritually connected but it is also knotted to the cosmos (Zhuwau, 2011). "The holistic and relational nature of self-understanding in African thought implies that we dare not separate it from its cosmic and ecological grounding" (Zhuwau, 2011, p. 136). The Western perspective of healing focuses on the biological, psychological, and physical realms of healing; whereas, indigenous traditional healing takes into account the connection between human beings, the land and the broader cosmos. For the African, the earth is not only a resource to be exploited; it is a living entity, a source of life that ought to be respected. From an African indigenous viewpoint, the earth's health is very much

connected to human health, and this connection is expressed through intricate relationships to the land (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Therefore the place of healing varies according to the healing issues the person is grappling with including WHO and WHAT is to be healed. This is why the Acholi healing/counselling practices were prescribed for various illnesses and diseases such as: misfortunes in life; hearing voices and bad dreams, (in) fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one's humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, individual and collective guilt, and cleansing the environment from pollution. Therefore healing is done through symbolic healing elements associated with rituals, such as community participation and public confession, the appropriate place where healing is to take place such as at the entrance to the homestead, for example in the land where the killing took place, outside the home in an open field; and then in symbolic restoration through compensation and reconciliation.

This means that the SELF in an African is not just what is within the person; it is embedded and located within the cosmos. It can only exist through others; it is communal. This communal, fluid idea of the self is at variance with the dominant, Western individualistic conception of the self, which prioritises psychological abstraction and individual accomplishment, consistent with the motto, "to thine own self be true" (Myers, 2007, p. 28). This communal SELF is what was described in Chapter 3 and 5 and it can be found in expressions such as the following in various Southern African languages: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Nguni), which means "we are people because of other people" (Broodryk, 2006, p.6); *motho ke motho ka batho* (Sotho/Tswana); and *muthu ubebelwa munwe* (Tshivenda) meaning a person is born for the other (Mkhize, 2004). All these point to the notion of human interdependence (Kamwangamalu, 1999). Ramose (2002) defines *Ubuntu* in terms of how the being of personhood in indigenous African thought is anchored in the universe. The above therefore means that healing for people of African ancestry such as the Acholi survivors of violent conflict are, cannot happen holistically unless the healing practices used encompass the African holistic relational nature of self which is not only intrinsic, but multifaceted in space and time and knotted within the cosmos.

6.7 Study limitations

The study limitations were many; first it was undertaken only in the Acholi region and therefore it cannot be generalised to other communities. Although other indigenous Ugandan tribes may share some of the Acholi indigenous healing rituals, at some point there will be divergences among the practices, which may make it difficult to apply the recommendations of this study that are based on the Acholi indigenous healing practices to other Ugandan indigenous healing practices.

The study was qualitative, aimed at focusing on depth of experience, rather than surface generalisability. Qualitative research is subjective (Weirisma, 1995) rather than objective in the way participants share about their life experiences. There is need to carry out mixed methods studies in the future that will use the information developed to implement quantitative community surveys to reach a broader spectrum of the population, as well as qualitative studies. As the study progressed from Gulu to Kitgum, there seemed to have been a slant in some of the therapeutic elements that were used for healing. Therefore, due to this, this might have been true as well in districts that were not reached by this research.

A further limitation was that although the interviews were conducted in both English and Acholi, the participants' responses had to be translated into English for the study to be written up for a South African readership. This may have resulted in the loss of the power of expression of some indigenous words with their loaded meaning. This is because there are some African indigenous words whose meaning cannot fit in their entirety into English. Even though the researcher tried to retain some of the words in vernacular, the majority had to be translated. Through loss in translation the researcher may not have been able to fully capture the weight of views expressed by participants in some narratives.

6.8 Possible future research

One of the key outstanding findings for future research emanating from this study is in the field of gender. This is because the rituals were more effective for male survivors of violent conflict than they were for female survivors. It is worth noting that when the women survivors returned, not even the rituals could cleanse and heal them to the point where they were considered eligible to be married or to return to have conjugal rites with their husbands. Their husbands refused to allow them back into their marital beds; and neither did other men want to marry them because they were considered to be polluted. The women survivors had been forced against their will by their captors to have sex when they were in captivity. However, the rituals were seen to work for their male counterpart survivors since for them they could continue to marry whomever they wished and have their normal conjugal rites with their wives; but this was not so for their female survivors. Therefore, there is need to conduct research on how Acholi women survivors of violent conflict have become victimised through flimsy excuses by a patriarchal society to come up with strategies that will enable the women settle into society just like their returnee male counterparts.

Findings of this study revealed instances where survivors reported that the Western approaches to their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities achieved little because these approaches ignored the contextual issues that Acholi indigenous approaches addressed. Thus, there is need to develop a clear African indigenous ethics program that the Western practicing counsellors can be taught in order to handle their clients in context for holistic healing.

There is also need to look at the progression of healing in the use of these rituals especially *culukwor* and *matoput* that are still pending for several people because they do not have the cattle necessary to carry out the rituals. It would be important to find out what the Acholi community does when such a scenario occurs to alleviate the fears that several people still hold because *culukwor* and *matoput* rituals are still pending due to their lack of cattle.

Finally, there is need to carry out a cross-sectional study covering a heterogeneous group of people including the youth to establish the robustness of these healing methods across

different ages, and what may need to be done as part of the restoration revival project to ensure the survival of this important African indigenous knowledge system.

6.9 Conclusion

The findings of this chapter have revealed that the Acholi healing/counselling practices are prescribed for various illnesses and diseases caused by misfortunes in life; such as hearing voices and bad dreams, (in) fertility and continuation of the family lineage, restoration of one's humanity, calling the wandering spirit to rest, individual and collective guilt, and cleansing/healing the environment from pollution. Healing extends beyond individuals to include participation of the community within the realm of relationships; it has to do with interconnectedness that extends beyond people and incorporates the living, the living-dead, and the land. This is because any death that is caused on the land wounds not only human beings but the land as well.

The study also established the critical elements that constitute healing in Acholi culture. Amongst these are the symbolism associated with the healing rituals such as the act of stepping on an egg, a symbol of purity and innocence, stepping over the *obok olwedo*, a soapy slippery branch symbolising the cleansing of external influences that attached to the returnees while they were away, the demarcated entry points in the homesteads, marking the outside world (polluted) and the inside of the compound (clean), and the *layibi* sticks with a fork carried by elders symbolising the family sharing food together. These symbolic acts are performed as part of the three specific rituals discussed, namely *nyono tong gweno*, *culukwor* and *matoput*. The aim of the rituals is to search for peace not just for the wrongdoer who committed the offence, but also for the wrongdoer's community, who by virtue of their cultural belief system have to accept collective guilt, collective responsibility and collective action, which is followed by collective repentance. Violence for the Acholi is like an illness that affects not just the individual but everyone in the community and therefore unlike with Western counselling methods, an individual cannot seek their own healing without involving the community. It is thus crucial that these concepts form part of the curriculum for training counsellors to work in Africa.

The study established that most Acholi survivors of violent conflict, community members and indigenous healers had positive perceptions towards indigenous healing rituals. They believed that the rituals had a healing effect in the sense that they felt they had been forgiven and the bad spirits that were haunting them and keeping them awake at night had been banished. Others perceived the rituals positively because of the fact that they had facilitated their identification and acceptance by the community. The negative beliefs were based on how the rituals were performed. Those with Christian influenced beliefs viewed the rituals as “sinful” and therefore inappropriate to participate in; while others referred to them as “witchcraft” or forces of evil; and foreign influence caused some to perceive the rituals as “backward”. The extent to which a survivor believed in the rituals had a direct effect on their healing. Consequently, from the findings of this study, one of the most challenging factors to emerge was the issue of gender; because of the observation that while rituals were generally helpful, they did not serve their purpose when it came to husband-wife intimate/marriageability relationships.

The unique contribution of the study was to alert Western trained counsellors to the limitations of individualised theories of therapy. The policies for practice and research were based on the finding that individualised counselling/healing processes used by Western trained counsellors, in a remote office space away from the community while ignoring the communal understanding of the self or *ubuntu* philosophy, which is dominant in the healing of people of African ancestry, of which the Acholi survivors of violent conflict are a part, is inadequate. This understanding of the self is at variance with the autonomous understanding of selfhood that dominates major Western approaches to healing. It was recommended that the Acholi world-view and communal theory of the self needs to form part of the curriculum that is taught in higher institutions of learning for students of Counselling Psychology; and that trained counsellors work hand-in-hand with traditional healers/elders. There is also a need for the Government of Uganda to establish training institutions that have a primary directive to sensitise the NGOS on the valuable wisdom of these healing rituals; so that they can at least have a glimpse of what they mean to the Acholi survivors of violent conflict; and to the Acholi community at large. Ethically, the study findings have brought out clearly that there is a difference between the way the egocentric/independent societies perceive health

and illness different from the interdependent/communal societies in this case the Acholi. Lack of this knowledge on the part of the Western counsellors practicing among the survivors of violent conflict in Gulu and Kitgum will only leave the survivors devoid of holistic healing. It is therefore recommended that counselling trainees complete modules based on indigenous African paradigms and spend a portion of their time of practicum in placement in a community based setting where they will see a percentage of people going through healing rituals for holistic practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Clearance



05 September 2014

Sr Josephine Adibo (211559854)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Howard College Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1050/014D

Project title: Acholi Indigenous Methods for healing and re-integrating survivors of conflict into the community: A case of Gulu and Kitgum, Northern Uganda

Dear Sr Adlbo,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 25 August 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Nhlanhla Mkhize
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
Cc School Administrator: Ms Ausie Luthuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4608 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymam@ukzn.ac.za / mohuno@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

1910 - 2010
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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Appendix 2: Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Research Permit



Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

15/10/2014

Our Ref: SS 3617

Sr. Adibo Josephine

Re: Research Approval: Acholi Indigenous Methods for Healing and Re-integrating Survivors of Conflict into the Community: A Case of Gulu and Kitgum, Northern Uganda

I am pleased to inform you that on 25/09/2014, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved the above referenced research project. The Approval of the research project is for the period of 25/09/2014 to 25/09/2015.

Your research registration number with the UNCST is **SS 3617**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above research project.

As Principal Investigator of the research project, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the research protocol or the consent form (where applicable) must be submitted to the designated local Institutional Review Committee (IRC) or Lead Agency for re-review and approval **prior** to the activation of the changes. UNCST must be notified of the approved changes within five working days.
3. For clinical trials, all serious adverse events must be reported promptly to the designated local IRC for review with copies to the National Drug Authority.
4. Unanticipated problems involving risks to research subjects/participants or other must be reported promptly to the UNCST. New information that becomes available which could change the risk/benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for UNCST review.
5. Only approved study procedures are to be implemented. The UNCST may conduct impromptu audits of all study records.
6. A progress report must be submitted electronically to UNCST within four weeks after every 12 months. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Below is a list of documents approved with this application:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1	Research proposal	English	N/A	N/A
2	Informed Consent	English, Acholi	N/A	N/A
3	Interview Guide	English, Acholi	N/A	N/A

Yours sincerely,


Winfred Badanga
for: Executive Secretary
UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

cc Chair, Lacor Hospital, Research Ethics Committee, Gulu

LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE

Plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda
P.O. Box 6884

COMMUNICATION

TEL: (256) 414 705500

Appendix 3: Office of the President, Resident District Commissioner Gulu District

Authorization Letter



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
THE RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER GULU DISTRICT
P.O BOX 511, GULU - UGANDA Tel. 0471432182/ 0772588642

Adm/10/013

14th Oct. 2013

The College of Humanities
Prof. Nhlanhla Mkhize, PhD
Dean & Head: School of Applied Human Science
University of Kwazulu – Natal

RE: SR. JOSEHPINE ADIBO'S APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

I am happy to confirm to you that the above named student is free to come and carry out her research in Gulu as indicated in the letter received.

Thank you.

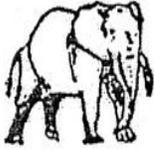
Yours in service,


Nabinson James Kidega
RESIDENT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, GULU
P.O. Box 511, G



C.C File

**Appendix 4: Gulu District Local Government Office of the Chief Administrative
Officer Authorization Letter**



**GULU DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Tel: 0471-35185(Direct)
Fax: 0471-32132(General)

P.O. Box 2
GULU

In correspondence to this
Subject please quote **CR/D/220/1**

Date: 4th October, 2013

Professor Nhlanhla Mkhize, PhD
Dean & Head: School of Applied Human Services
University of Kwazulu – Natal

RE: Sr. Josephine Adibo's Application for Ethical Clearance

This is to inform you that the above student can come and do her academic research in Gulu as she had indicated

Ogwang Bernard
For: Chief Administrative Officer, Gulu

For
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
6 OCT 2013 *
GULU DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
GULU, UGANDA

Cc. The District Chairperson, Gulu

Appendix 5: Ker Kwaro Acholi Office of Prime Minister Authorization Letter



KER KWARO ACHOLI

P.O. Box 54 Gulu, Tel: - 0471 435560

Office of Lawirwodi

14th October, 2013

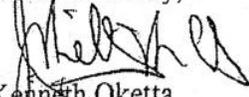
Dean and Head
School of Applied Human Sciences
University of Kwazulu- Natal.

REF: SR. JOSEPHINE ADIBO'S APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE.

Reference is made to the above fellow and yours dated 16th August 2013 on her doctoral thesis "The therapeutic value of African indigenous healing practices and reconstruction mechanisms for violent survivors of conflict"- (A case study of Gulu, Northern Uganda).

We as a Cultural Institution who has been in the forefront of transitional justice using the traditional mechanisms shall cooperate with her during her work and give her the necessary support we will afford.

Yours Sincerely,


Kenneth Oketta
Prime Minister

Appendix 6: African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Tortured Victims

Authorization Letter



AFRICAN CENTRE FOR TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE VICTIMS

19th October 2014

The College of Humanities
Prof Nhlanhla Mkhize, PhD
Dean & Head School of Applied Human Science
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Approval to collect data from clients

African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) is an indigenous, Non-governmental organization implementing activities towards treatment and rehabilitation of torture victims in Uganda since 1993. We offer services including medical, legal, psychosocial, psychotherapy and physiotherapy to survivors of war and custodial torture.

In reference to the above mentioned subject, the organization has granted approval for Sr. Josephine Adipo collect data from these clients. She has also been assigned an ACTV psychosocial counselor to assist her not only during the data collection process but also offer counseling service to the survivor(s) of war torture in case of re-trauma or disturbing emotions.

Yours sincerely,

ASJ 19/10/2014

Dr. Aloyo Judith

Branch Manager, ACTV Gulu

Block 39 Plot 113, Owen Road, (off Tufnell Drive),
Kamwokya,
P.O.Box 6108 Kampala - Uganda
Tel: +256 312 263918/620,

GULU OFFICE:
Layibi A& B Village, Left Hand on Kampala Road
Plot 16-18 Tony Olanya Road, Layibi A& B Pece Division,
P.O. Box 1076, GuluTel: +256 392 833598

Appendix 7: Gulu University Office of the Dean of Students Counselling Unit

Authorization Letter

GULU
P. O. Box 166
Gulu - Uganda



UNIVERSITY
Tel: 256 471-432514
Fax: 256-471-432094

**OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS
COUNSELING UNIT**

Our Ref: GU/CU/012/2014

Date: 29th October, 2014

The College of Humanities
Pro. Nhlanhla Mkhize, PhD
Dean & Head: School of Applied Human Science
University of Kwazulu – Natal
South Africa.

Re: Sr, Josephine Adibo's Application for Ethical Clearance

Sr. Adibo has approached this office to obtain Ethical Clearance for her to carry out her research in Gulu University.

I am glad to inform you that she has been granted permission to interview some survivors of conflict in line with her doctoral thesis with the help of the volunteer counselor.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grace'.

Nalubowa Grace Yumah (Mrs)
AG. DEAN OF STUDENTS



Appendix 8: Kitgum District Local Government the Office of Chief Administrative

Officer Authorization Letter

TELEGRAMS: COUNCIL
TELEPHONE: +256-0471440054
FAX:
TELEX:
E-mail: kitgumlocalgovt@yahoo.com
In any correspondence on this subject
please quote No CR/151/5



KITGUM DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
THE OFFICE OF
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
P.O.BOX 28
KITGUM. (U)

3rd. November,2014

- The Sub County Chairperson
 - The Sub County Chief
- KITGUM**

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

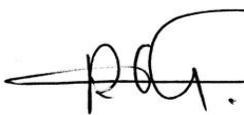
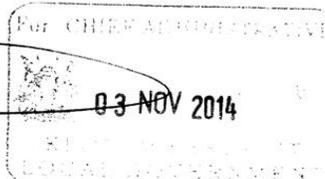
This is to introduce to you Sr. Josephine Adibo a registered PhD Student at the University of Kwazulu Natal , South Africa (Student Number 211559854).

She is carrying out her research on the title of her doctor thesis is Acholi Indigenous Method for healing and re-integrating survivor of conflict into the Community . Case study of Gulu , Kitgum , Northern Uganda.

The purpose of this letter is to allow her do her research and collect data from you sub county in order to complete her thesis.

Please accord her all the necessary assistance that she requires.

Thank you,

Oroma Rhoda
FOR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER-KITGUM

c.c. Professor Nhlanhla Nkhize, PhD
Dean & Head School of applied Human Services
University of Kwazulu

Appendix 9: Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative Kitgum Authorization Letter



ACHOLI RELIGIOUS LEADERS PEACE INITIATIVE

Kitgum Office
Plot: Awic Rd
P.O. Box 185
Kitgum, Uganda

Pader Office
1st Street
P.O. Box 50
Pader Town, Uganda

Gulu Office
Plot 16 Olya Road
P.O. Box 104, Gulu, Uganda
Tel: 256-471-432484
Email: arpi.interfaith@gmail.com

Our Reference:

Your Reference:

Date: 04th November, 2014

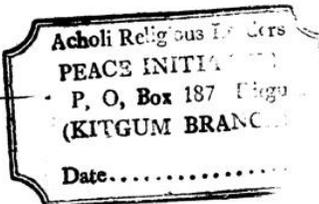
Dean and Head of
School of Applied Human Sciences
University of Kwazulu Natal

RE: SR. JOSEPHINE ADIBOS APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This is to introduce to you the above PhD Student at the University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa, who intends to carry out her research with ARLPI- Kitgum clients and its partners involved in implementation of religious and individual indigenous healing practices and re-integration.

By copy of this letter, the organization has approved of her request to carry out the research.

Yours sincerely,



Layet Paska

PROGRAMME ASSISTANT (0751801150)

Appendix 10: Refugee Law Project School of Law, Makerere University Kitgum

Authorization Letter



Refugee Law Project

School of Law, Makerere University
A Centre for Justice and Forced Migrants



National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre
04/November/ 2014

256(0) 776897080

www.refugeelawproject.org

Head School of Applied Human Sciences

University of Kwazulu - Natal

Dear Sir,

RE: SR.JOSEPHINE ADIBO

This is to confirm that the above named person (Sr.Josephine Adibo) visited the National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC) of the Refugee Law Project on Monday 3rd November 2014, to collect data/information relevant for her doctoral thesis. During her visits at NMPDC, Sr.Josephine was guided on a tour of the NMPDC Museum exhibition under the theme "Seven years of Peace and Images of war" with sub theme of "War, Peace and Reconciliation" and she also had an interview with our office field staff.

The NMPDC Document,Archive, Communicates and commemorate past Human Rights abuses, conflict related events and life histories as well as contemporary issues and the ongoing legacies of violence to inform ongoing transitional justice processes in Uganda

Yours sincerely,

Komakech John Ogwok

Centre manager

Refugee Law Project/NMPDC



Plot 7 & 9 Perrymans Garden, Old Kampala P.O. Box 33903, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: 0414 343556 Fax: 0414 346491

Appendix 11: Informed Consent Form (English)

Informed Consent Form (English)

Hello. My name is Sr Josephine Adibo. I am a doctoral student in Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. My studies involve a completion of a research thesis in a new or novel area of study. This is a request for you to take part in a study that seeks to explore the therapeutic value of African Indigenous Counselling practices and Reconstruction Mechanisms of Survivors Recovering from Violent Conflict. It will help us document them and derive implications for counselling, and rehabilitation of survivors in an African setting in a way that is meaningful to them as Acholi people. It may also go a long way in re integrating them back to their communities in a way that helps them better to fit into the community once again.

Procedure:

This will take the form of you being asked to answer questions through a self-report which will be tape recorded that is if you agree. And while you are speaking, the researcher will be taking notes. The reason for taking notes is to enable her to correctly capture what you are saying. At the end of it all, your views will be put together with those of the other participants and conclusions drawn as to whether there is therapeutic value in indigenous counselling practices and reconstruction mechanisms for survivors recovering from violent conflict in Acholi region.

Potential risks and risk minimization:

It is important that you know that, if you take part in this research the following risks and inconveniences may happen.

The research might take much of your time ranging from 45 minutes – 1 hour.

Unsettled: You might feel unsettled because the researcher is asking too many questions that you may not want to answer or feel like answering. If this happens, it is important that you know that, you do not have to answer what you feel like not answering; and you are even free to tell the researcher how you feel and it will not be taken against you in any way. It is also important that you know the reason why the researcher might be asking too many questions: The reason is to help the researcher to get a deep and clear understanding of the therapeutic value of indigenous practices and reconstruction mechanisms for survivors of violent conflict.

Re- trauma: You might feel that painful memories are coming back as a result of too many questions. Please feel totally free to let the researcher know that and to even ask for help if need be. Above all, know that you are not obliged, in anyway, to go on with the research. You can stop at any time.

Counselling: If at any time of the research, you feel that you need to talk to the researcher who is also a trained counselor or any counselor on standby in the other room about what has come up as a result of this research, please let the researcher know. You do not have to struggle with any disturbing emotions on your own. There is support for you from both the indigenous counselors and counselors from the counselling centers in the next room. Just let the interviewer know what you prefer.

Potential benefits and benefit maximization:

Participation in this research might not benefit you directly as an individual but your data will be used to press for counselling services that are more meaningful for the indigenous people. This will be through the Uganda Counselling Association and Ministry of Education.

Economic considerations:

You will be reimbursed for your time and travel expenses.

Recruitment:

We hope that 36 volunteers will participate in this research.

Location:

The research will be conducted in Gulu and Kitgum

Confidentiality/anonymity:

The researcher will assign you a code, and all your responses to the questions will remain anonymous. No names or identifying details will be used during the interview.

If the research is published, your name will not be used and you will not be identifiable.

All data, including tapes of recorded interviews and transcripts will be securely stored under lock and key and only the research team will have access to the data.

Consent procedures:

Once you have read and understood the information in this form, take your time and ask the researcher any questions you may not be clear with participating in this research. Once you understand and are clear of what is expected of you, then you can decide whether or not to participate in this research.

Participating in this research is voluntary. You are free to decide whether or not to participate. You are free to decide to participate if you feel it is okay with you. You are also free to decide at any point to leave the research if you do not feel you can continue anymore even though you will have already enrolled to participate. If you decide to leave, you will not lose any benefits you would have gotten.

If you decide to participate in the research, you will be asked to sign this formal consent form.

You will also be asked to sign a separate formal consent form for the researcher to tape record your responses. If you do not want your responses to be tape recorded, the interviewer will take notes of your response.

If you have any questions you would like to ask, you are welcome to contact me, the researcher, and/or my supervisor, Prof. N.J. Mkhize, using the details below. You may also contact Ms Phumelele Ximba of the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee at the university of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, via phone (+27 31 260 3587) or email(ximbap@ukzn.ac.za.)

Researcher:

Sr Josephine Adibo

Address: The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, P. O Box 62157 – 00200, NAIROBI, KENYA

Tel: +254 724 724 189 or +254 734 929 411

Email: Josadibo@gmail.com



Signed:

Research Supervisor:

Prof Nhlanhla Mkhize, PhD

Dean & Head: School of Applied Human Sciences

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Mazisi Kunene Avenue

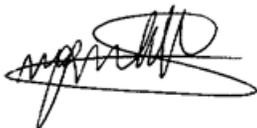
Dean's Suite: Memorial Tower Building

Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: +27 31 260 2006

Email: Mkhize@ukzn.ac.za

Signed:



Thank you for your time and participation. I now invite you to complete the attached consent form.

Authorization:

A. Study Consent:

I have read this form and understood and have decided that I,,

(Name of participant)

will participate in this research previously described and explained to me by the researcher.

I acknowledge that the researcher..... has informed me of its general

(Name of researcher)

purposes, procedure, possible benefits, inconveniences and possible risks.

My signature indicates that this information has been explained to me by the researcher to my satisfaction and that I fully understand the contents of this form.

I know that I may withdraw at any time without any consequences if I do not want to continue with the research.

In addition, my signature indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form from the researcher.

Signature.....

Date.....

For illiterate subject:

Mark with an "x".....

Date.....

Independent witness (signature):

Date.....

Title and name of independent witness:

Telephone number of independent witness:

B: Tape recording Consent:

In addition, I consent to tape recording of this interview.

Signature

Date

For illiterate subjects:

Mark with an "x"

Date

Independent witness (signature):

Date

Title and name of independent witness

Telephone number of independent witness

.....
Signature of researcher obtaining consent

.....
Date

Appendix 12: Informed Consent Form (Acholi)

Ngat ma tye ki ngec dok oye me pongo karatac man (Leb Acholi)

Apwoyo wu. An nyinga Sr. Josephine Adibo Atye latin kwan me kwan ma malo ma loyo I diro me ngeyo kit dano, igang kwan me kwan ma malo me Kwazulu Natal. Kwana okeme ki nongo diro ki kwiri ikom tam manyen ma ngat mo pud pe otimo.

Karatac man tye me legi me bedo ikin jo ma gipenyogi ikwan ma tye ka yenyo yo ma Acholi macon yam gitiyo kwede me kelo yom cwiny ki nywako tam bot jo ma guloyo ki itim aranyi dok gitye ka nongo kwe cwiny ki ipeko ma gukato ki iye. Lok magi gicoyo piny pien bikonyowa me nongo yo me nywako tam ki miyo kwe cwiny bot jo ma kit man ikit ma Acholi gitimo kwede onyo ginongo ni ber pi danogi. Man bene gwok bibedo yo acel me konyogi me dwogo cen ikin lwak ma megi labongo lworu mo.

Kit ma wabitimo kwede:

Yo ma wabitic kwede aye me gamo lapeny ma miyo itito lok komi dok kimako dwani ka iyee. Ma nongo itye ka lok, ngat ma tye ka penyi bibedo ka coyo piny gin ma iwaco. Gin ma oweko gicoyo loki piny aye me weko ni lok ducu ma iloko gicogi ma mo pe odong. I agiki ne, tami ki pa jo mukene ducu ma gipenyogi gibicoyogi piny me temo neno ka kony mo tye me kelo yom cwiny ki nywako tam ki jo ma guloyo ki itim aranyi ma opoto ikomgii lobo Acholi.

Gin marac ma twero time ki kit me jukune:

Pire tek pi in me ngeyo ni ka iyee bedo ikin jo ma giyerogi me kwedo kor lok, ayela mogo bibedo tye.

Kwedo kor lok bikwanyo cawani mapol ma romo kine ka dakika 45 me oo cawa acel.

Kine mukene pe ibedo agonya:

Kine mukene pe ibibedo agonya pien nongo iwinyo ni Lakwed kor lok tye ka penyi lapeny mapol ma mukene pe imito gamone. Ka man otime, pire tek pi in me ngeyo ni itye agonya pe me gamo lapeny mukene ka cwinyi pe mito dok bene pe ibed ki lworu me waco ki Lakwed kor lok kit ma iwinyo kwede icwinyi; en pe bineno marac. Pire tek pi in bene me niang pingo Lakwed kor lok tye ka penyi lapeny mapol: tyen loke ni Lakwed kor lok mito niang matut dok maber kit ma yo me kelo kwe cwiny ki jo ma guloyo ki itic aranyi ma opoto ikomgi tiyo kwede.

Poyo wic ikom gin marac ma okato con:

Ikare mukene ibiwinyo cwer cwiny malit tye ka dwogo i cwinyi pi lapeny mapol ma gitye ka penyi. Tim ber bed agonya me weko Lakwed kor lok onge gin ma tye ka time dok ipeny kony ka mite. Tutwale, omyero inge ni dic mo peke iyo mo keken pi in me mede ki gamo lapeny me kwedo kor lok. Itwero gikone icawa mo keken.

Nywako tam:

Ka otime ni ikare me gamo lapeny iwinyo ni imito lok ki Lakwed kor lok ma en bene tye ngat ma okwano kit me nywako tam, onyo Lanywak tam mo keken ma tye iot ma ingetwu pi gin ma obino ma calo adwogi me kwedo lok, tim ber wek Lakwed kor lok onge. Pe ibed ka cane ki tam ma yelo cwinyi keni, gin maber tye piri bot Lanywak tam ma idul wu onyo Lonywak tam ma gua

ki i Gang Pwonye Madit me Nywako tam iot ma tye ingeti.Wek Lakwed kor lok onge gin maber piri.

Adwogi maber ki adwogi maber mukato:

Bedo ikin jo ma gipenyogi me kwedo kor lok magi kine mogo pe bikonyi calo ngat acel ento lok ma ginongo ki boti gibitic kwede me nongo yo me nyawako tam ma bikonyo dano mapol ma gubedo ki peko. Man bitime kun woto ki bot dul pa Lonywak Tam me Uganda ki Gang Pwonye Madit ma tye I Kampala.

Miyo pwoc mo:

Gibimini pwoc mo manok pi jalo kare ni me gamo lapeny ki me dwoko wang cente ma iwoto kwede.

Coyo dano:

Wageno ni dano 36 gibidyere me bedo jo ma gipenyogi me kwedo kor lok.

Kabedo me tic:

Kwedo kor lok me medo ngec bibedo i Gulu ki Kitgum.

Gwoko mung/nyingi pe gibitucu:

Lakwed kor lok bimini alama mo ma weko ni lagami ducu bedo imung. Nyingi onyo gin mo ma nyutu ni in aye igamo lapeny pe gibitic kwede.

Ka kwedo kor lok man gicoyo ibuk, nyingi pe gibicoyone dok gin mo pe ma obinyutu in ibedo ikin logam lapeny.

Gibipungu lok ducu ma gicoyo ki dawn ducu ma gimako kacel i canduk.Lokwed kor lok keken aye gitye ki twero me yabone.

Gin me aluba ka iyee bedo ikin jo ma gipenyogi:

Ka dong ikwano dok iniang lok ma tye ikaratac man, kwany kareni me penyo Lakwed kor lok tam mogo ma gwok pe iniang ikare me gamo lapeny.Ka dong ityeko niang maber gin ma mite ki boti, ci dong itwero moko tami me bedo ikin logam lapeny me kwedo kor lok man onyo pe.

Bedo ikin logam lapeny me kwedo kor lok pe tye dic mo iye – idyere keni:

Dic mo pe pi in me bedo ikin logam lapeny. Bed agonya me yee gamo ne ka tye imitini. Itye agonya bene me weko gamo lapeny ikore ka inongo ni dong pe itwero mede kadi bed dong gityeko coni ikin logam lapeny. Ka iyero me wekone, pe ibikeng gin mo ma omyero onongo inong.

Ka iyee me bedo ikin logam lapeny me kwedo kor lok me medo ngec, gibipenyi me keto cing I karatac man me nyutu ni iyee.

Gibipenyi bene me keto cingi ikaratac mukene pi Lakwed kor lok ma en bitic kwede me mako dwani. Ka pe imito ni gimak dwani, lapeny in bicoyo lok dogi acoya keken.

Ka i tye ki lapeny mo ma in imito penyo, alegi me kubbe keda, lakwed ngec , ki/nyoLapwony ma tye ka lono an i kweddo ngec, Prof. N. J. Mkhize, kun I lubo kit ma gicoyo kede piny kan.I twero bene kubbe ki Ms Phumelele Ximba me komiti me Humanities

ki Social Science Ethics, ma tye I Yunibaciti me KwaZulu-Natal, Apirika ma Tungkunyango (South Africa), I namba cim (+27 31 260 3587), nyo imeil: (ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Lakwed Ngec:

Sr. Josephine Adibo

Adrec:

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Canduk Namba: 62157-00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Cim: +254 724 724 189, nyo +254 734 929 411

Imeil: josadipo@gmail.com

Lapwony Maloyo Kweddo Ngec

Prof. Nhlanhla Mkhize (PhD)

Diin ki Laloo Cukul me Applied Human Sciences

Yunibaciti me KwaZulu-Natal

Mazisi Kunene Avenue

Dean's Suite: Memorial Tower Building

Durban, South Africa, 4001

Cim: +27 31 260 2006

Imeil: mkhize@ukzn.ac.za

Wapwoyo totwal pi tic kanyacel kodwan. Dong wakwayin me pong form man me cwako.

Twero:

A. Cwako ni lok dogi gicoo piny:

Akwano karatac man dok aniang ci dong aye ni an (nyingi)

abibedo ikin logam lapeny me kwedo kor lok me medo ngec ma Lakwed kor lok ottita.

Aye ni Lakwed kor lok me medo ngec(nying

Lakwed kor lok) otita jami ducu, kit ma gitimo kwede, gin maber ma abinongo, ariya ki peko ma bingole.

Keto cinga ikaratac man nyutu ni Lakwed kor lok otita ngec ducu ma tye iye dok aniang maber gin ducu ma en otito, ci dong ayee.

Angeyo ni gwok abiweko tic man icawa mo keken dok dic mo bene peke iye ka pe amito mede.

Med ki meno, keto cinga nyutu ni atye ki karatac ma ayee keto cinga iye me nyutu ni lakwed kor lok omina.

Ket cingi.....Nino dwe.....

Pi jo ma pe gingeyo kwan ki coc:

Ket "X"Nino dwe.....

Cing ngat mukene ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya coc.....Nino dwe.....

Rwom ki nying ngat ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya kwan ki

coc.....

Namba cim pa ngat ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya kwan ki

coc.....

B. Ngta ma oyee ni gimak dwane:

Me medo ikom jami mukene, aye ni gimak dwana pi lapeny ma gibipeny.

Ket cingi.....Nino

dwe.....

Pi jo ma pe gingeyo kwan ki coc:

Ket "X"Nino dwe.....

Cing ngat mukene ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya coc..... Nino dwe.....

Rwom ki nying ngat ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya kwan ki

coc.....

Namba cim pa ngat ma cung pi ngat ma kwiya kwan ki

coc.....

Cing Lakwed kor lok..... Nino

dwe.....

Apwoyo wu. An nyinga Sr. Josephine Adibo Atye latin kwan me kwan ma malo ma loyo I diro me ngeyo kit dano, igang kwan me kwan ma malo me Kwazulu Natal. Kwana okeme ki nongo diro ki kwiri ikom tam manyen ma ngat mo pud pe otimo

Appendix 13: English Interview Guide for Survivors who have undergone Indigenous Healing Methods

Interview Guide for Survivors who have undergone Indigenous Counselling

1. How did you become involved in the war situation in your area?
2. What local practices or rituals did you go through in order to reconcile with the people who hurt you?
3. Why did you have to be involved in those rituals?
4. Do you think the rituals work? What has changed for you and your community and what has not changed as a result of going through these rituals?
5. How have the rituals helped you?
6. Have you forgiven those people who hurt you?
7. Which practices were you involved in together with the people who hurt you?
8. From which places are the rituals usually practiced?
9. Who is usually responsible for conducting the practices?
10. How is the community involved in the healing process?
11. Do you think that the Acholi rituals have an effect on you and your community in terms of healing people who have been affected by violence and how?
12. Is it possible to integrate survivors of violence back into their communities through the use of these rituals?
13. Why is the community involved in the reconciliation process?
14. How else could the community be reintegrated so that peace is restored?
15. Is there any other information about how these rituals are beneficial to Acholi communities that you would like to share?

Thanks for your cooperation

Appendix 14: Acholi Interview Guide for Survivors who have undergone Indigenous Counselling

DUL ME ACEL (1)

Lapeny pi jo ma gunongo kony ki ipeko ma gubedo iye ki nywako tam kit ma Acholi gitimo kwede

1. Icako bedo ikin jo ma gitye ikabedo ma lweny/mony obedo iye nining?
2. Kit yo mene onyo kwer mene ma gityo kwede ikomi me dwoko mer ikin in ki jo ma gutimo bal ikomi?
3. Pingo ibedo ikin jo ma gutimo kwer man?
4. Itamo ni kwer man otiyo? Gin ango ma oloke ikomi ki ikom lokakani ki ngo ma pe oloke ma calo adwogi me kwer man?
5. Kwer man okonyi nining?
6. Itimo kica ki jo ma gutimo bal ikomi?
7. Kit kwer me timo kica mene ma ibedo iye ki jo ma gutimo bal ikomi?
8. Kit kabedo mene ma pol kare gikwero iye kit kwer man?
9. Anga ma pol kare bedo la rii tal onyo latek?
10. Lokaka gitimo gin ango me kelo kwe cwiny?
11. Itamo ni kwer pa Acholi man tye ki adwogine ikomi ki lokakani iyo me dwoko kwe cwiny bot jo ma tim aranyi opoto ikomgi? Tye nining?
12. Itamo ni twere me dwoko jo ma guloyo ki ipeko ma racu ma opoto ikomgi bot lokakagi ki kwer magi?
13. Pingo lokaka gitye ikin jo ma giyubu pi mato oput onyo kelo winye me timo kica?
14. Tye yo mukene ma watwero tic kwede me kelo ribbe ikin kaka wek kuc odwog cen?
15. Tye ngec mukene ma imito medone ikom kwer magi ma wawaco ma twero konyo me kelo kwe cwiny bot Acholi?

Apwoyo konya

**Appendix 15: English Interview Guide for Elders and Religious Leaders involved
in Indigenous Healing Methods**

1. Do the Acholi have reconciliation practices?
2. What counselling and reconciliation practice for war survivors have you been involved in?
3. What was the reason for performing those rituals?
4. When are each of the identified rituals performed?
5. Which practices are used for the war survivors?
6. Why those practices are used for the war survivors?
7. In which ways do you help the survivors of war injustices to heal from their trauma as a result of the injustices suffered?
8. Who is usually responsible for conducting the practices?
9. How is the community involved in the healing process?
10. Why is the community involved in the reconciliation process?
11. How are these rituals helpful to the survivors of violent conflict?

Thanks for your cooperation

**Appendix 16: Acholi Interview Guide for Elders and Religious Leaders involved in
Indigenous Healing Methods**

DUL ME ARYO (2)

Lapeny pi Lodito kaka ki Lodito Dini ma Lonywak tam i Acholi

1. Acholi gitye ki yo me mato oput onyo winye me timo kica inge bal?
2. Kit nywako tam mene ki mato oput mene ma itiyi kwede pi jo ma guloyo ki imony/lweny?
3. Pingo itimo kwer magi?
4. Gitiyo ki kwer magi ma pat-pat awene?
5. Kwer mene ma gitiyo kwede pi jo ma guloyo ki i lweny/mony?
6. Pingo gitiyo ki kwer magi pi jo ma guloyo ki i lweny/mony?
7. Kit yo mene ma itiyi kwede me konyo jo ma guloyo ki imony/lweny ma gilwenyo ikomgi nonono me kelo kwe cwinyki cang pi can ma gunongo labongo balgi mo?
8. Anga ma pol kare bedo larii tal i kwer man?
9. Lokaka gitimo gin ango me kelo kwer cwiny bot jo man?
10. Pingo lokaka gitye ikin jo ma giyubu pi mato oput onyo kelo winye me timo kica?
11. Kwer magi konyo jo ma gukato ki itim me col cwiny magi nining?

Apwoyo konya

**Appendix 17: English Interview Guide for Community members who have witnessed
Indigenous Healing Methods being performed**

1. What are some of common Acholi reconciliation practices done for survivors?
2. When are the identified practices performed?
3. Why are the identified practices performed?
4. Who is usually responsible for conducting the practices?
5. How is the community involved in the healing process?
6. Why is the community involved in the reconciliation process?

Thanks for your cooperation

**Appendix 18: Acholi Interview Guide for Community Members who have witnessed
Indigenous Healing Methods being performed**

DUL ME ADEK (3)

Lapeny pi jo ma gikwo kacel ma guneno kit ma Acholi ginywako kwede tam

1. Kit mato oput/winye me timo kica mene ma Acholi gimaro tic kwede pi jo ma guloyo ki i mony/lweny?
2. Awene ma gitiyo ki yo magi ma pat-pat?
3. Pingo gitiyo ki yo magi ma pat-pat?
4. Anga ma pol kare bedo larii tal?
5. Lokaka gitimo gin ango me kelo kwer cwiny bot dano?
6. Pingo lokaka gitye ikin jo ma giyubu pi mato oput onyo kelo winye me timo kica i nge bal ma otime?

Apwoyo konya

Appendix 19: Research Question one voice centered analysis and “I” poem

Table 6: Voice centered relational analysis for research question one

Symbols	Listening for	Explanation	Examples	Interpretation
Symbols	Plots	Used to identify images/themes	Phrase/word enclosed (.....)	Identify types of ritual
			Phrase/word enclosed ([.....])	Shows when rituals were conducted
			Phrase/word enclosed [[.....]]	Shows the ritual processes involved
			CAPITAL PHRASE/WORD	Shows the place where rituals were conducted
<i>Italics words</i>	The self (“I”)	Used for listening for the voice of “I” and constructing the “I” poem	<p>..... was done on the day I arrived back home</p> <p><i>I was made to step on an egg</i></p> <p><i>I entered the compound</i></p>	Shows how the interviewees were situated in the various rituals performed
<u>Underlined words</u>	Self-in-Relationship	Used for establishing relationships of the self “I” (narrator/interviewee) with others (who may be another person or group of people or spiritual being such as God or a spirit). Thus, underlines show the different people the interviewee related with and how.	<p><u>the people</u> ([community])</p> <p><u>my uncle</u></p> <p><u>my cousin</u></p> <p><u>the family</u></p> <p><u>witchdoctor</u></p> <p><u>the elders</u></p>	Shows the various people the interviewee related when rituals were performed
Bolded words	Social Structures and Cultural Contexts	Used to indicate the cultural, political and social setting	<p>witchdoctor</p> <p>sprinkled the blood of the hen</p> <p><u>the family, clan and neighbors</u></p>	<p>Traditional belief in supernatural power</p> <p>Social relations</p>

Appendix 20: Research Question two voice centered analysis and “I” poem

Table 7: Voice centered relational analysis for research question two

Symbols	Listening for	Explanation	Examples	Interpretation
Symbols	Plots	Used to identify images/themes	Phrase/word enclosed (.....)	Social problems/issues for which rituals were prescribed for
<i>Italics words</i>	The self (“I”)	Used for listening for the voice of “I” and constructing the “I” poem	<p><i>... to protect me from ‘cen’ ([bad spirits])</i></p> <p><i>if they are not removed they will continue to attack you</i></p> <p><i>.... community needs to know that I have been cleansed</i></p>	<p>Survivor was involved in rituals for protection</p> <p>Survivor was involved in rituals for appeasement</p> <p>Survivor was involved in rituals to gain trust and confidence from his/her community</p>
<u>Underlined words</u>	Self-in-Relationship	Used for establishing relationships of the self “I” (narrator/interviewee) with others (who may be another person or group of people or spiritual being such as God or a spirit). Thus, underlines show the different people the interviewee related with and how.	<p>The family</p> <p>The clan</p> <p>The community</p>	The rituals for the survivor were performed with the family, clan and community
Bolded words	Social Structures and Cultural Contexts	Used to indicate the cultural, political and social setting	<p>Bad spirits if they are not removed they will continue to attack</p> <p><i>make the ancestors not to be angry with our clan</i></p>	<p>Ritual solved traditional belief related problems</p> <p>Ritual solved social related problems</p>

Appendix 21: Research Question three voice centered analysis and “I” poem

Table 8: Voice centered relational analysis for research question three

Symbols	Listening for	Explanation	Examples	Interpretation
Colour	Plots	Used to identify images/themes	Phrase/word enclosed (.....)	Shows various healing and therapeutic elements in Acholi indigenous healing processes
<i>Italics words</i> (NB: whether in colour or underlined or bold provided the phrase is italicized)	The self (“I”)	Used for listening for the voice of “I” and constructing the “I” poem	<i>if this could not have happened, ‘bad spirits’ ‘cen’ would still be attacking me.</i> <i>They accept me because they believe that I am cleansed and</i> <i>I cannot bring harm to the community,</i> <i>I felt that when people were celebrating and eating together</i>	Survivor’s belief in spirits as a healing/therapeutic element Survivor’s trust in community as a healing/therapeutic element
<u>Underlined words</u> (NB: whether in colour or bold provided the phrase is underlined)	Self-in-Relationship	Used for establishing relationships of the self “I” (narrator/interviewee) with others (who may be another person or group of people or spiritual being such as God or a spirit). Thus, underlines show the different people the interviewee related with and how.	<u>Spirits</u> <u>relatives,</u> <u>especially uncles and aunties</u> <u>the community</u>	The survivor associated the spirit to his/her healing The survivor associated family and community members to his/her healing
Bolded words (NB: whether in colour or underlined provided the phrase is bolded)	Social Structures and Cultural Contexts	Used to indicate the cultural, political and social setting	Through performing the said indigenous rituals The rituals brought us back together from the war and abducting most importantly what the Acholi do is to welcome	Healing/therapeutic elements in the cultural settings Healing/therapeutic elements in the social settings

			you at home In Acholi people attach a lot of importance to relatives, especially uncles and aunties	
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Appendix 22: Research Question four voice centered analysis and “I” poem

Table 9: Voice centered relational analysis for research question four

Symbols	Listening for	Explanation	Examples	Interpretation
Colour	Plots	Used to identify images/themes	Phrase/word enclosed (.....)	Used to identify perceptions towards the indigenous healing practices
<i>Italics words</i> (NB: whether in colour or underlined or bold provided the phrase is italicized)	The self (“I”)	Used for listening for the voice of “I” and constructing the “I” poem	<i>I felt more uplifted by the rituals at home because people were not distanced from me.</i> <i>In Gusco I felt like I was the sick one ‘a rebel’.</i> <i>I found them at home and our village more welcoming.</i> <i>I felt bonded to them.</i>	Perceptions of the survivors towards the indigenous healing practices
<u>Underlined words</u> (NB: whether in colour or bold provided the phrase is underlined)	Self-in-Relationship	Used for establishing relationships of the self “I” (narrator/interviewee) with others (who may be another person or group of people or spiritual being such as God or a spirit). Thus, underlines show the different people the interviewee related with and how.	<u>the community</u> <u>the family</u>	Perceptions of survivors towards the indigenous healing practices in relation to others
Bolded words (NB: whether in colour or underlined provided the phrase is bolded)	Social Structures and Cultural Contexts	Used to indicate the cultural, political and social setting	If you refuse to do it normally, <u>you will not be accepted a hundred percent in the community</u> <u>have a lot of positive effect in the community</u>	Perceptions towards the indigenous healing practices in the social settings

Appendix 23: Research Question five voice centered analysis and “I” poem

Table 10: Voice centered relational analysis for research question five

Symbols	Listening for	Explanation	Examples	Interpretation
Colour	Plots	Used to identify images/themes	Phrase/word enclosed (.....)	Shows ways the men and women were affected by the violent conflict upon their return from the war
<i>Italics words</i> (NB: whether in colour or underlined or bold provided the phrase is italicized)	The self (“I”)	Used for listening for the voice of “I” and constructing the “I” poem	<i>I find that a very difficult situation to have to deal with</i> <i>I still notice that the prospective boys who want to be my friend when I tell them about my life story</i>	How women survivors feel upon return marriage/relationship problems after returning from the war
<u>Underlined words</u> (NB: whether in colour or bold provided the phrase is underlined)	Self-in-Relationship	Used for establishing relationships of the self “I” (narrator/interviewee) with others (who may be another person or group of people or spiritual being such as God or a spirit). Thus, underlines show the different people the interviewee related with and how.	<u>the community</u> <u>Husbands should not treat wives</u>	Women survivors found difficult to be accepted in the community after returning from the war Women survivors found difficult to be accepted by their husbands after returning from the war
Bolded words (NB: whether in colour or underlined provided the phrase is bolded)	Social Structures and Cultural Contexts	Used to indicate the cultural, political and social setting	<u>In Acholi culture you will not be accepted a hundred percent in the community</u> <u>These men</u> are bad, they mistreat us <u>Husbands</u>	The Acholi culture sees rape as a taboo and children born by fathers who have committed crimes Un-conducive family environment a barrier to reintegration of women survivors

Appendix 24: Summary of Participants in the Study

Number and percentage of participants

Participants	Male respondents		Female respondents		Total respondents	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Gulu survivors	8	23.5	9	56.25	17	34
Gulu witnesses	4	11.8	1	6.25	5	10
Gulu elders	5	14.7	0	0	5	10
Kitgum survivors	8	23.5	5	31.25	13	26
Kitgum witnesses	4	11.8	1	6.25	5	10
Kitgum elders	5	14.7	0	0	5	10
Total	34	100	16	100	50	100

Codes for the selected participants used in the study

Gulu survivors	Gulu witnesses	Gulu elders	Kitgum survivors	Kitgum witnesses	Kitgum elders
001	002	001	002	001	002
002	003	002	003	002	003
003	006	003	005	004	004
004	007	004	006	005	005
005	008	005	007	006	006
006			008		
007			010		
009			012		
011			013		
012			014		
015			015		
016			016		
018			018		
019					
021					
022					
023					