‘PEACE BEGINS AT HOME’:

GEOGRAPHIC IMAGINARIES OF VIOLENCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN NORTHERN UGANDA

by

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Peacebuilding programs became increasingly prevalent in northern Uganda following the 2006 signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda. The agreement, however tenuous it appeared at the time, marked the end of over twenty years of armed conflict in northern Uganda. The preponderance of peacebuilding programs during this period simultaneously denoted and facilitated the transition from humanitarian to development programming in the region. The focus on peacebuilding allowed for an acknowledgment of the unique challenges facing a war-affected population while still promoting normative claims of economic development as the way forward (Government of Uganda 2007; International Alert 2008). The goal, in this down-scaled version of the liberal peace, was to stabilize the region enough to ensure its integration into national and international political and economic systems. Yet of the various approaches to building peace and creating stability that post-war interventions could have taken, many chose the same focus: to fight interpersonal violence in domestic and community settings.

This focus on the home as a site of peacebuilding is counter to trends identified by feminist scholars in other contexts in which mainstream narratives, if they do acknowledge of the connection between domestic violence and war, tend to give war primacy (C. Enloe 2000; Cuomo 2013; Pain 2015). Historically, peacebuilding programs draw upon a simplistic 'war story' in order to determine their site of intervention, a gendered story in which women on the home front are separate from the conflict between men on the battlefield (Cooke 1996). On the surface, the shift to domestic spaces in the peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda is in line with calls by feminist scholars and activists to make explicit the connections between domestic violence and war (C. H. Enloe 1989; Cockburn 2004; Sjoberg 2006). However, unlike Pain's (2015) call for an intimacy-geopolitics in which domestic violence and military warfare are

understood as connected yet neither is privileged, peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda produced the home as the primary site of post-war interventions.

In this paper, I argue that the skewed focus on domestic spaces in northern Uganda is actually in line with the Orientalist narratives of war perpetuated by the variously scaled geopolitical actors involved in the designing, funding, and implementing of peacebuilding programs. I shall show how a core assumption of the peacebuilding programs – that there is a violent masculinity amongst the war-affected population that needs to be addressed at its source, the home – is a continuation of racialized narratives of the war. To build this argument, I engage with peacebuilding programs as sites of geopolitical negotiations in which multiple actors are vying for position in the post-war landscape. I argue their ability to agree upon a site of intervention – in the case of northern Uganda this is the rural home of the prominent ethnic group, the Acholi – says less about the centrality of this site to the creation of peace than it does about the centrality of this site in maintaining the networks of mutual legitimization between peacebuilding partners. As I shall demonstrate, professional peacebuilders - variously scaled as national, international, and local - all deployed racialized, gendered, and classed narratives of violence to inform the development of peacebuilding programs and secure their influence in the region. These multiple narratives perpetuated different geographic imaginaries of where violence was located – from ‘Africa’ to ‘the North’ to ‘the village.’ It is my assertion that the rural Acholi home became the primary site of peacebuilding interventions because it emerged as the common site of violence within these imaginaries.

The narratives of violence upon which these interventions are based are reminiscent of what Narayan (1997) refers to as the ‘death by culture’ Orientalist narrative in which racialized women are in need of saving from the mortal threat posed by their primitive cultures. By

examining the practices of Sati and dowry-murders in India and domestic violence in the United States, Narayan (1997) makes evident that siting violence in the homes and communities of racialized *others* is thus not a new project. However, analyzing this project as it is adopted and adapted by variously scaled actors in post-war geopolitical negotiations allows for insights into how development-style programing undermines the possibilities of an intimacy-geopolitics as envisioned by Pain (2015). In the case of northern Uganda, I argue that peacebuilding programs perpetuated Orientalist mindsets that contributed to uneven geographies of intervention – geographies in which racialized bodies and spaces are associated with war and thereby seen as appropriate sites for peacebuilding.

It is important to note, before moving forward, that I am neither dismissing nor downplaying the importance of community arbitration processes to address interpersonal conflicts and peacebuilding initiatives that contribute to the complicated reintegration of kidnapped children who returned to their homes after having been forced to fight for the LRA (Baines 2007; and 2011). I am also not denying the psychological trauma experienced by members of the war-affected population that often found its expression in acts of violence (Derluyn et al. 2004; World Health Organization 2005) and particularly in acts of domestic violence (Annan and Brier 2010; El-Bushra and Ibrahim 2005; Koenig et al. 2003). However, rather than parallel the logic of peacebuilding programs in the region by performing a comprehensive study of the connection between domestic violence and years of militarized conflict (for examples of such analysis, see Annan and Brier 2010; El-Bushra and Ibrahim 2005), my contribution is to shift the focus to the peacebuilding programs themselves to understand how they deploy Orientalist narratives to construct domestic and community violence as the appropriate site of intervention.

This paper is based upon ethnographic research conducted in northern Uganda over thirteen months between July 2010 and January 2012. Participant-observation was conducted with three NGOs in the city of Gulu, the administrative hub of northern Uganda. The three NGOs selected were staffed and directed by people identifying as part of the Acholi ethnic group, the ethnic group most directly affected by the war. While they received funding and support from national and international agencies, they maintained a sense of themselves as local organizations working to support the needs of their communities. In addition to this participant observation, I used snowball sampling to identify and interview twenty individuals working at other community organizations, NGOs, and international agencies in Gulu. These interviews included a mix of national and foreign peacebuilding professionals. Due to significant turnover and reassignment within the workforce, these twenty people had collective experience at approximately thirty-five different organizations and spoke about current and previous employment experiences during their interviews. I also interviewed five government and military personnel working in northern Uganda to understand how they understood their roles in peacebuilding. Finally, the data in this article includes policy papers and reports from national, international, and local actors within the institutions of post-war peacebuilding.

It is important to note that I also spent a significant amount of time working with a community-based organization (CBO) in a rural area approximately three hours from Gulu city. Unlike the professional NGOs located in Gulu city that designed programs for vulnerable communities, this CBO was based on the volunteer labor of community members who sought to fight violence in their own communities – including their own homes. While their approaches to building peace are not the focus of this paper as they were effectively marginalized from the development-style peacebuilding programs, my experience working with them shapes my

critique of the mainstream peacebuilding narratives. In particular, the willingness of members of the CBO to address their own – individual and collective – role in fostering violence stood in stark contrast to the lack of accountability on the part of mainstream peacebuilding designers and implementers.

In this paper, I use these lessons to explore how the idea of violence as geographically separate from the location of peacebuilders was promulgated. First, however, I offer a brief history of northern Uganda as a means of contextualizing the peacebuilding programs in question. I then turn to theories of violence and the politics of peacebuilding to demonstrate how geographic imaginaries of sites of violence in peacebuilding programs can contribute to perpetuating violent social relations at multiple scales. This theoretical frame is then used to examine the gendering of peacebuilding and the racialized geographic imaginaries of violence perpetuated by variously scaled actors – from national to international to local.

NORTHERN UGANDA AS SITE OF VIOLENCE

During the colonial period (~1896-1962), the British Empire implemented a divide and rule colonial policy in the region that would become Uganda. The British constructed discursive and material divisions between the Bantu-speaking groups in the south, such as the Buganda, and the Luo-speaking groups in the north, such as the Acholi (the ethnic group primarily affected by the LRA war in northern Uganda). The British colonists created a racial hierarchy out of this distinction in which the southerners ranked higher due to, among other things, the hierarchical political structures in the south that were reminiscent of British structures and provided a foundation for colonial administration (Atkinson 1994, Branch 2011). Accordingly, the British considered the Bantu-speaking southerners more ‘civilized’ than their northern neighbors who, in

contrast, were characterized by the British as a martial race, inherently violent and aggressive (Atkinson 1994). This racialization legitimized the location of political and economic power in the south and led to the decline of northern economies. Without a functional economy, the northern population became labor reserves for southern projects, with large proportions of male northerners recruited as migrant laborers for southern agricultural projects as well as foot soldiers for the police and army (R. R. Atkinson 1994). The prevalence of Acholi men in the police and army was popularly interpreted by the colonial administration and in other parts of the country as the manifestation of the innate warrior identity of the male Acholi population (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999).

This colonial narrative of regional divisions continued into the post-colonial period following independence in 1962. This includes power struggles between the leader of Buganda in the south and President Milton Obote, who was from Apac in the north, after independence. Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971 who subsequently deployed his soldiers from the West Nile region to persecute the Acholi and neighboring ethnic groups (Dolan 2011). When Obote returned to power in 1980, Yoweri Museveni strategically invoked the north/south imaginary of difference to galvanize a southern base of support for a rebellion against Obote, (Branch 2011). Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) not only reified the colonial discourse of northerners, particularly the Acholi, as primitive warriors, they also maintained this north/south divide in their national politics: they excluded Acholi from national power, suppressed independent local leadership, and launched a military counterinsurgency operation in the north at a time when there was no insurgency (Branch 2011).

It was in this context that Joseph Kony founded the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the mid-1980s. The LRA was one of many northern rebellions that eventually developed to fight

Museveni and his new political machine. While ostensibly fighting the government, the LRA became infamous for anti-civilian violence. This violence increased in the early 1990s and was targeted at suspected government supporters as well as the general civilian population in order to be subsumed under the rebel's authority (Branch 2011). This change in LRA tactics, characterized by an increasing persecution of the Acholi people (Finnström 2008), facilitated a war story that accentuated the racialization of the Acholi as warlike. In a statement loudly criticized by international organizations, Major General James Kazini, one of the President's closest military associates, responded to a Human Rights Watch question regarding reported human rights violations by government soldiers in northern Uganda by saying, "If anything, it is local Acholi soldiers causing the problems. It's the cultural background of the people here: they are very violent. It's genetic" (Human Rights Watch 1997, 59). The colonial assertion that the Acholi were "primordially violent" (Finnström 2008) was strategically reappropriated by non-Acholi actors in the post-colonial state to disconnect the violence in the north from larger national projects and processes. In the popular media, this led to a revision of the north/south war story to one of a north/north conflict between the LRA and Acholi civilians (Author 2013). This new north/north spatial imaginary of the war was a place-bound narrative in which the causes and consequences of the violence were isolated to the north.

There are, of course, many other discursive frames one can employ to understand the violence in the region. For example, the war can be viewed as a proxy war between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments in which the Sudanese government allegedly funded the LRA to destabilize Uganda in retaliation for Uganda funding the Sudan People's Liberation Army to destabilize Sudan (Prunier 2004). The war can be interpreted as a convenient vehicle for forging a militarized geopolitical alliance between the United States of America and the Ugandan

governments in the international war against terror (Mwenda 2010). The war could also be seen as the result of President Museveni's military coup that chased the military of the former regime to the north where militarily trained individuals regrouped into new rebel organizations to fight those who took their jobs and positions of power (Branch 2011). In reality, the war was all of these things and much more. What is of import to this paper is how a conflict that was so clearly tied to international, national, and regional negotiations of geoeconomic and geopolitical power led to post-war peacebuilding programs that focused on non-violent conflict resolution for the war-affected communities. In other words, how does one get from a war involving military interventions against those labeled as international terrorists to peacebuilding programs fighting domestic violence? A first step in answering this question, and the subject of the next section, is understanding the link between theories of place and narratives of violence.

VIOLENCE AND PLACE

Geography is not destiny any more than culture is, and as such the possibility of violence being *bound* in place is only accomplished through the fearful and malicious imaginings of circulating discourses. -Springer (2011, 97)

In his analysis of how place-bound narratives of culture are used to perpetuate the idea that 'Asian', 'African', and 'Islamic' cultures have a predilection towards violence, Springer (2009; and 2011) argues that discourses of place-bound violence are self-fulfilling Orientalist prophecies. They identify certain expressions of violence as 'irrational' and therefore uncivilized while simultaneously tying such expressions of violence to particular cultures and places. As he notes, the literature promoting the idea of 'cultures of violence' (Curle 1999; Jackson 2004; Rupesinghe and Rubio Correa 1994) fails to engage critically with the concept itself, offering neither a clear definition nor comprehensive analysis of its dynamics. Nevertheless, the

discourses of ‘cultures of violence’ permeate popular media depictions and policy mandates which perpetuate the idea that particular peoples and places are inherently violent (e.g. the Western narrative of Islamic violence that underscores the tendency toward Western militaristic interventions in western Asia).

Springer’s (2011) aim in examining place-bound Orientalist discourses of violence is to demonstrate how these discourses are mobilized by neoliberal logics to argue that those who are not benefiting from the free market must not be taking full advantage of it because they are not sufficiently civilized. This logic is evident in the Government of Uganda’s National Development Plan (2010) which states, “Certain elements in Uganda’s traditions, culture and religious norms are not supportive to modern approaches in society and have, therefore, limited economic growth and structural transformation ” (p.31). Given that the north has the lowest levels of economic development and prosperity in the nation (Government of Uganda 2007), such statements implicitly point to northern Uganda as the national *other*.

While acknowledging the important geoeconomic implications of narratives of bounded violence, I draw upon Springer’s work to make a slightly different argument. I contend that narratives of place-bound violence facilitate post-war negotiations and collaborations between national, international, and local actors who seek the power to advocate for peace - a power which winners of social conflict have historically appropriated to shape the new status quo (Ross 2011). In northern Uganda, Branch (2009) documented this kind of collaboration during the war. He demonstrated how state violence and international humanitarianism depended upon the other for its own viability and its legitimacy in distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable forms of violence.

I suggest that this same kind of interdependence is continuing in the post-conflict period – although during this later period it also includes professional local organizations. National, international, and local actors and organizations negotiate terms of engagement in which they work together to build peace. Thus, as mentioned earlier, their ability to agree upon a site of intervention – in the case of northern Uganda this is the Acholi home in rural villages – says less about the centrality of this site to the creation of peace than it does about the centrality of this site in maintaining the networks of mutual legitimization between peacebuilding partners.

Discourses which site violence in particular places and amongst particular people are spatialized processes of *othering*. These processes rely upon racialized narratives crafted by dominant power blocs to maintain “cultural and moral legitimacy, and political and economic hegemony...to restructure communities, regions, and nations...” (Woods 2002, 65). According to Omi and Winant (1994, 55), projects of racialization are “simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines.” The creation of such racial projects are historically situated processes by which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized using ‘race’ as well as ethnicity as social markers of difference. I stress the correlation between these two concepts because it is difficult to disentangle the racialization of ‘the Acholi’ from their construction as an ethnic *other* within the nation-state. I use the term racialization to highlight the *process* of creating difference along lines of both racial and ethnic difference, a process that is intimately intertwined with Orientalist logics in the context of international development programming (Springer 2009; Mollett 2011).

One final point regarding my use of racialization as an analytic tool is the acknowledgement that where gender is not explicitly considered, masculine racial identities tend

to be privileged (Walter 1999). In such cases, gendering exists through the assumption of masculinity as an unmarked norm. Thus, the designation of the Acholi as a ‘martial race’ or ‘genetically violent’ is predominately in reference to Acholi performances of masculinity.

Racialized and gendered discourses produce geographic imaginaries which locate the other in supposedly distant and/or isolated places (Gregory 1995; Massey 2005). Such place-bound narratives view place as “a static entity, an inward-looking enclosure with fixed meaning and singular identity” (Massey 1994, 5). These processes of bounding place “authorize a politics of fixity and interdiction which in practice leads to exclusionary goals” (Escobar 2001, 150). Examining place-bound narratives of violence, therefore, provides a means by which to expose constructions of difference that perpetuate inequality and sustain systems of violence. Feminist and critical geographers have challenged such bounded conceptions of place and the reactionary politics commonly associated with it by promoting what Massey (1994) refers to as *place-based* narratives which conceive of the local as not only connected to the global, but implicated in its production (for similar theorizations of place see Herod and Wright 2002; Mountz and Hyndman 2006). By engaging these critical theories of place, this paper contributes to feminist geographic literature examining the relations between differently scaled violence (e.g. Dowler and Sharp 2001; Hyndman 2004; Loyd 2009) and the violent (dis)connections between places (e.g. Katz 2006; Fluri 2009; Sharp 2011).

In the analysis that follows, I use a place-based analysis, one which examines the (dis)connections between places created through orientalist logics and systems of violence, to undermine place-bound narratives which promote a geographic imaginary of violence as stemming from the war-affected region and, by extension, the war-affected population. Before delving into such an analysis, I offer a brief discussion of the geopolitical context in which

peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda were situated including the increasingly explicit connections between development and security interventions.

POLITICS AND PEACEBUILDING

It was not until the fall of the Soviet Union that liberal concepts of the market, governance, and development came to dominate international aid and the pursuit of liberal peace (Stokke 2011). At the same time, following the end of the Cold War, new sources of violence gained attention within international political circles. In particular, intra-state conflicts such as those in Yugoslavia and Rwanda were portrayed as a uniquely post-Cold War era form of warfare in which ethnic and religious tensions that were thought to be held in check by Cold War geopolitics had threatened the prosperity of liberal states (Van Creveld 1991; Boutros-Ghali 1992; Freedman 2001). These ‘new wars’ tend to occur in economically marginalized countries where the modalities of underdevelopment (e.g. poverty, resource competition, and weak or predatory institutions) combine with supposedly repressed identity-based tensions to create the ongoing potential for conflict in countries that are economically and politically marginalized (Kaldor 2007). Gregory (2010) critiques the new war rhetoric, arguing that it perpetuates a binary of ‘The West’ and ‘The Rest’ in which the conflicts of the Global South are characterized by brutality and irrationality while military interventions of the Global North are couched in the discourses of science, technology, and security. This Orientalist discourse of post-Cold War conflicts is based upon geographic imaginaries of conflict-ridden places and populations.

The evolving rhetoric of new wars paralleled the international development community’s transition from ignoring the role of conflicts in development to viewing development as a means of transforming conflicts and building liberal peace (Anderson 1999; Goodhand 2002). Peacebuilding in the post-Cold War era, as championed by the United Nations (Boutros-Ghali

1992; United Nations 2004), sought to address the intersection of violence and development by creating durable social, political, and economic systems to prevent future violence in so-called ‘conflict-prone’ regions (Sabaratnam 2011). This led to the construction of what Branch (2011) calls ‘total interventions.’ These interventions are based on the idea that violence leads to the breakdown of social order in a number of domains, including the political, economic, legal, social and cultural. These social breakdowns have the potential to create further violence, thus establishing a circular logic in which any deviation from international norms of peace and stability indicate potential violence.

The nexus of security and development inherent in total interventions provides a road map for peacebuilding interventions as it promotes the assumption of development’s ability to reduce poverty and thereby contribute to the reduction of social breakdown and conflict (Anderson 1999; Collier 2003). Critics of this new form of peacebuilding argue that it is an “enormous experiment in social engineering” (Paris 1997, 55), an experiment which reinforces Orientalist assumptions

that actors involved in conflict are somehow inferior, deluded, or obsessed by violence, identity claims, power, territory or resources. ...Conflict is not seen as a structural indicator, but as a dysfunctional form of behavior that can be modified if the correct political economic, social, and development approaches are adopted. (Richmond 2007, 5-6)

The Orientalism inherent in ‘culture of violence’ discourses is thus maintained in peacebuilding programs which perpetuate unequal social relations in the name of bringing peace and development to a population that is seen as neither peaceful nor developed.

Nevertheless, since the 1990s, the explicit connections between security and development have become increasingly prevalent in national and international policy making (eg. UNDP 2000; Solana 2003; United Nations 2004; OECD 2007), think tanks (eg. Hurwitz and Peake 2004; CIDSE 2006), and academic literatures (eg. Menkhaus 2004; Buur, Jensen, and Stepputat 2007; Chandler 2007; Uvin 2002; Stern and Öjendal 2010; Mark Duffield 2010; Hettne 2010). Despite this proliferation of interest in the security-development nexus, there is little consensus as to the specific character of the relationship between security and development (Stern and Öjendal 2010). It should not be surprising, therefore, that there is definitional ambiguity in the concept of peace within peacebuilding programs that draw upon the integration of security and development agendas (Barnett et al. 2007; David 1999).

While most peacebuilding practitioners agree that the peace they are trying to build is more than just the absence of physical violence which suggests, using Galtung's (1969) terminology, that they are trying to build positive as well as negative peace (Goetschel and Hagmann 2009), Richmond (2004) argues that amongst these same practitioners, "very little effort is extended upon conceptualizing the essential qualities of peace, nor is devoted to the multiple interpretations of peace" (136). In place of such conceptual work is the bureaucratization of peacebuilding work. Goetschel and Hagmann (2009) describe the situation as follows:

Although peacebuilding is committed to what peace research considers positive peace, its discourses and practices tend to depoliticise peace. Hence, peacebuilding represents a top-down variant of liberal peace, the meanings, substance and causal beliefs of which are taken for granted and less and less debated among practitioners and policy-makers. (55)

In addition to the depoliticization of peace through this bureaucratization of peacebuilding programs, Barnett et al. (2007) suggest the definitional ambiguity of peace deployed by such programs is strategically useful as it “camouflage[s] divisions over how to handle the post-conflict challenge” (44). Various positioned actors are subsequently able to work together under the banner of peacebuilding even as their geoeconomic and geopolitical agendas diverge.

Research into post-conflict development programs suggests that the agendas of peacebuilders matter as the goals of the program developers may reinforce the very instabilities that caused the conflict in the first place such as the perpetuation of problematic land tenure processes (Brottem and Unruh 2009), state-based territorial claims (Akçalı and Antonsich 2009), and systems of economic and political disenfranchisement (O. P. Richmond 2014). In northern Uganda, the political and economic disenfranchisement that characterized both the colonial and post-colonial engagements with the region (Atkinson 1994; Branch 2011) and contributed to the war (Bøås 2004; Dolan 2011) remain unaddressed in post-war peacebuilding programs. In fact, any measures to address historical inequalities have been thwarted by the government. The Refugee Law Project of Makerere University, for example, drafted a national reconciliation bill which was sent to parliament in 2009 (The Refugee Law Project 2009). To date, however, the bill is still idle in committee and has never been discussed. Furthermore, during the 2011 presidential election campaign, there was “a notable absence,” as one United Nations worker in the region observed during an interview, “of any talk about a new contract with the north.”

In addition to a lack of national reconciliation projects, there is also a noticeable absence of calls for accountability for international actors, such as the United States, which played a significant role in militarizing the region (Branch 2011; Dolan 2011; Mwenda 2010). Instead, peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda focus on building the capacity of war-affected

populations by providing them with non-violent conflict resolution training and encouragement to address their lack of development through entrepreneurial leadership (Government of Uganda 2007; International Alert 2008; Oxfam 2008). This approach to peacebuilding is consistent with the total interventions associated with the new security-development which focus on changing the conduct of populations in conflict-prone areas (M. Duffield 2001). To accomplish this, post-war initiatives draw on the development principles of partnership, participation, and self-management; these programs are based on the assumption that the behavior of the conflict-affected population is the problem and the expectation that people will willingly change their own behavior. The governmentality inherent in this paradigm perpetuates the neoliberal individualization of responsibility that exists within many development programs (Caulfield 2011), locating responsibility for social ills at the site of the individual (Larner 2000; Lemke 2001; Ilcan 2009).

It is this downscaling of responsibility to the site of the individual in combination with international Orientalist narratives and regionalized national politics that provide the context for the development of peacebuilding programs for northern Uganda. I now turn to the rhetoric of peacebuilding programs to show how these various discourses came together to produce a particular racialized, gendered, and classed narrative of violence amongst peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda.

GENDERED PEACEBUILDING

T-shirts with the slogan “Peace begins at home” were ubiquitous in the post-war landscape of northern Uganda. These and similar t-shirts were distributed by NGOs to promote their sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) campaigns. In the context of the region, basing anti-domestic violence campaigns on the idea that ‘peace begins at home’ immediately invokes

the histories of war and conflict in the region. Thus, while SGBV advocacy is common amongst NGOs throughout Uganda (Koenig et al. 2003), it is only in the north that creating peace in the home is tied to preventing war.

At first glance, many of the post-war peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda appear equivalent to contemporary development initiatives common around the world. There were programs for microfinance, agricultural development, and women's empowerment. To explain how these activities qualified as uniquely peacebuilding, Maryⁱ, an NGO worker from northern Uganda in charge of youth programming for an Italian NGO offered the following insight:

It is the intention with which we do activities. As we introduce ideas or activities to the groups, we always talk about how these could contribute to peacebuilding. There are always trainings about peace and reconciliation associated with our programs. For example, we sit the youth down to talk about nonviolent conflict management techniques before a sports event. We talk with the IGA [income generating activity] groups about group dynamics as they are designing their projects. Peacebuilding is more of qualitative thing – it isn't easy to measure its effect. But we put it into everything we do.

In the NGO Mary worked for, and almost every other NGO in the region, peacebuilding is realized through non-violent conflict resolution amongst the war-affected population. An individual applying for a micro-finance loan would be required to attend non-violent conflict resolution training before receiving the loan. An educational initiative received funding to design a 'conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding' curriculum for local schools. An agricultural extension program included community-building initiatives to deter violent land disputes during the resettlement process. There were a few organizations that sought to build a more comprehensive peace by holding other actors responsible for their role in conflict, such as the Refugee Law

Project which drafted a National Reconciliation Bill and the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative which sent representatives to Washington, D.C. to lobby against increased military support in the region. These interventions were notable exceptions as the vast majority of programs followed a standard formula – one that focused on changing the behavior of the local population.

During the course of my research I did not encounter a single peacebuilding program that did not associate ‘peace’ with gender in some way. While these programs used buzz words such as ‘women’s empowerment’ and ‘women’s rights’ to frame their interventions, there was an unmistakable focus on masculinity that countered trends amongst international development programs to equate ‘gender’ with ‘women’ and thereby excluding men from programs on gender relations (Cornwall 2000). The development-style peacebuilding programs that included non-violent conflict resolution training assumed the presence of violent masculinities. This assumption is evident in the following description of gendered peace programming offered by a Ugandan NGO worker in reference to his organization’s activities:

In terms of gender, we are actively addressing questions of masculinity with the thought that unless the ‘bellicose’ nature of Acholi masculinity is addressed, there will never be peace in the region. The main driver of this violent masculinity is the belief that an Acholi man should never be defeated, but this leads to fights over small things as neither man is willing to back down. So, through public forums and radio shows, we raise questions about what other forms of masculinity could look like that would still be fulfilling without pushing the singular idea of what it means to be ‘a real man.’

In the effort to change this narrow view of masculinity, such programs reinforced the idea that Acholi men are violent unless educated otherwise. This applied to expression of violent

masculinity associated with violent interpersonal conflicts in the community as well as domestic violence. There was a notable absence of interventions focused on other (i.e. positive) aspects of Acholi masculinity, including pride in resolving conflicts through negotiation and reconciliation (Dolan 2002).

Critical work on masculinities in the region demonstrates how the increased militarism of the Acholi male population during the war did not (obviously) result from their primordial nature, but, rather, was a response to the limited options available for them to realize their masculinity within a war-torn region (Dolan 2002). Making the connection between this war-driven reduction of opportunities and interpersonal expressions of violence, Dolan states:

the disjuncture between expectations [of masculinity] and the ability to live up to them go hand in hand with widespread feelings of fear, intimidation, humiliation, frustration and anger, often expressed in violence against the self and others, in the forms of alcohol abuse, suicide attempts and domestic violence... (p.71).

Effects of the war that continue into the post-war period, such as poverty and economic change, have been shown to have ‘demasculinizing’ effects on men (Thompson 2002; Barker 2000). In addition, the militarized and violent masculinities glorified as a means of performing masculinity during the war (Dolan 2002) continue into the post-war landscape. When interviewed about their fears of returning home after the war, some women expressed concern about these developments via a heightened fear of domestic violence after the war as the men in their lives sought to assert their authority on isolated homesteads in the post-conflict landscape (El-Bushra and Ibrahim 2005).

Addressing domestic violence in the post-war period is important, but peacebuilding programs that focus exclusively on changing cultural norms of masculinity miss the opportunity

to address complex systems of violence. As Connell (2000) contends, “masculinities are configurations of practice within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face to face relationships and sexuality” (p. 29). Following this theoretical frame, it is necessary to see boys and men as victims as well as perpetrators of violence (Thompson 2002). Current post-war programming in northern Uganda, however, continues to focus on men exclusively as the perpetrators of violence. The danger in focusing on men as oppressors and women as victims, as masculinity scholars have argued, is that it misses the complex and unequal gendered relations between men as well as between women (eg. Connell 2000; Cleaver 2002).

I suggest that this narrow definition of masculinity is not simply an oversight or a lack of knowledge about contemporary theories of gender. Rather, it mobilizes colonial tropes of passive women victims (women in need of ‘empowerment’) and aggressive racialized men (men in need of peaceful interventions) to justify development-style interventions. In so doing, it lends strategic support to the institutional collaborations of peacebuilding by focusing attention on supposedly errant masculinities rather than complex systems of violence that may implicate the very actors attempting to build peace. By isolating the causes of violence in the bodies of rural Acholi men, professional peacebuilders are able to simultaneously establish a site of violence and identify the behavior that needs modification.

In the next section, I examine the geographic imaginaries of violence that facilitate and justify this assumed location of violence in the Acholi home. To accomplish this, I trace Orientalist logics and racialized narratives as they move between variously scale actors – from national officials to international agencies to local NGO workers. By mapping the geographic imaginaries of violence of these various actors, I demonstrate the centrality of narratives of

violent masculinity to peacebuilders' narratives of violence. In other words, I demonstrate how the gendering of post-war peacebuilding is part of the racialization of different actors' stories of the war.

MAPPING GEOGRAPHIC IMAGINARIES OF VIOLENCE

In what follows, I identify multiple geographic imaginaries that converge to facilitate peacebuilding programming. I have employed a scalar heuristic to separate these imaginaries into national, international, and local categories. This heuristic is not meant to suggest mutually exclusive categories given that Orientalist narratives of development and insecurity are perpetuated within all imaginaries. My goal is therefore not to reify scalar separations between different actors but to demonstrate how these various actors interpret and produce racialized narratives of difference to meet their specific agendas.

National Imaginaries

As previously mentioned, the history of regionalized national politics in Uganda perpetuated racialized narratives of difference (Branch 2011; Dolan 2011)(author 2013). These narratives can be found imbedded within the Government of Uganda's Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda (2007). From the very beginning of the PRDP, impediments to peace and development in the region are presented as a problem of the northern population. Take, for instance, the following statement made by President Museveni as part of his directive to the committee charged with writing the PRDP. He states,

The recovery of northern Uganda is [dependent upon]...the re-education and reorientation of the minds and hearts of the population towards peace and development rather than war. (19)

Following this logic, post-war peacebuilding initiatives must focus on the ‘re-education’ and ‘reorientation’ of the northern population away from aggression and towards peace. This idea that the northern population has a problematic mentality resonates with other aspects of the national story of northern difference that effectively *other* the northern population.

Other statements in the PRDP, often a bit more subtle, promote a similar narrative. For example, the following text, drawn from the introductory paragraph on peacebuilding in the PRDP, continues the document’s tendency to define threats to peace as problems of the local population:

Northern Uganda holds a large proportion of the country’s population which has been affected by violence and war over the last two decades. In turn, there are many latent conflicts which exist between individuals, families, ethnic groups, and between civilians and government authorities (p.94).

This passage concentrates on interpersonal conflicts at the household and community level; the nod towards tensions between civilians and government authorities is framed in the next paragraph as a tension between civilians and local government representatives. One solitary statement in the PRDP acknowledges that “some of the conflicts [in northern Uganda] have cross-regional and cross-cultural as well as international dimensions” (96). However, the authors neither define these dimensions nor offer ways to address them. There is no discussion of the national government’s disenfranchisement of the region (Dolan 2011); there is no discussion of ‘latent conflicts’ presented by the militarization of the Ugandan state (Mwenda 2010) nor of the role of international actors in destabilizing the region (Clark 2010; Branch 2011). In comparison to the detailed outlines for addressing the reintegration of ex-combatants as well as inter- and intra-tribal conflicts, this acknowledgement of the complexities of the violence appears as little

more than a symbolic nod to the fact that factors contributing to the violence may lie beyond northern Uganda.

The PRDP was written in consultation with local, national, and international stakeholders by the Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee—a committee appointed by President Museveni for just this purpose. Not designed as a program to be implemented, the PRDP was presented as an “organizing paradigm that all stakeholders will adopt when implementing their programmes in the region” (Government of Uganda 2007, iii). Thus, the PRDP articulated the priorities of the Ugandan government for post-war programming in northern Uganda: the goal was to ‘re-educate’ and ‘re-orient’ the hearts and minds of the northern population towards peace and development.

This narrative does not include an explicit focus on domestic spaces; however, it does contribute important elements to the final design of peacebuilding programs. It *others* the population of northern Uganda through a racial project of locating violence within the innate characteristics of the Acholi ethnic group. In addition, as I have argued elsewhere (author 2013) the national narrative promotes an implicit focus on aggressive masculinities by associating the Acholi ethnic group with the male leadership of the LRA. Finally, the PRDP establishes the need for intervention by outsiders to bring peace to the people of northern Uganda. As a coordinating document, the PRDP established the foundations of a peacebuilding project that would allow for the collaboration of multiple actors in the name of bringing peace to the North.

International Imaginaries

In attempts to produce the appearance of context sensitive programming, international agencies and organizations followed the PRDP rhetoric. USAID, for example, has no obvious

stake in maintaining the north as a racialized other, yet their policy directives fall in line with those of the government. As a key USAID document states:

Programming in the north [of Uganda] should include more community peacebuilding activities and development programs should ensure that they mainstream peace and reconciliation practices, such as nonviolent dispute resolution and group dynamics, into their planned interventions. (USAID 2010)

Similarly, the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP), sponsored by the European Union, claimed its goal of “increased potential for the restoration and preservation of peace and the creation of an enabling environment for development in Northern Uganda” was in line with the “overall objective, programme purpose and expected results...of the PRDP” (European Commission 2007, 2). They achieved this alignment by calling for peacebuilding program proposals that focused on violence within the war-affected population. As their call for proposals stated,

reconciliation remains a paramount priority and local community conflicts need to be properly resolved as the IDPs [internally displaced persons] return to their home areas. Support to specific conflict resolution and peace building, as well as reintegration of ex-combatants in their communities of origin, is urgently needed” (2007, 3–4).

The Ugandan state’s place-bound narratives of violence, along with its consequent call to focus peacebuilding on the northern population, is thus picked up by international donors and collaborators. However, the geographic imaginary of violence associated with this focus on the northern population is different for these international (read Western) actors.

The Western geographic imaginary of violence as located in racially *othered* places such as Africa (Springer 2011) combined with the contemporary neoliberal governmentality in

development programming that focuses on individual responsibility and behavioral change (Caulfield 2011) leads to peacebuilding initiatives focused on individuals addressing their own responsibility for the cultures of violence in which they live. This was exemplified by the reactions of the U.S. embassy and USAID managers who were approached by one of their own peacebuilding programs to do conflict sensitivity trainings. Conflict sensitivity trainings are designed to help international aid and development organizations understand the “two-way interaction between activities and context and [how] to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of intervention on conflict....” (CSC 2013). Official USAID documents state this is an important part of their agenda (USAID 2015), but the American program manager responsible for carrying out sensitivity training as part of peacebuilding in northern Uganda found the results less than optimal. In his words:

We did this thing called conflict sensitivity mainstreaming. And a lot of it was supposed to focus on U.S. government programs and partners and the embassy, but there happened to be very little interest or buy-in from the U.S. government for that, even though they were asking for it. And a lot of interest from the local people for it, and it wasn't even intended to be for them.

When I asked him why he thought that was, he responded, “Well, the embassy and other USAID programs don't see themselves as part of the problem. They are here to help.” This is similar to a British program manager who said, when asked to comment on the violence of the war, “This was an awful war – so vicious. Communities have been torn apart, families torn apart. We are here to help the people rebuild their lives in peace.”

By taking on the position of peacebuilder as ‘helper,’ professional peacebuilders and the agencies they represent do not acknowledge any responsibility for the violence in the region.

Although it has been proven that international humanitarian interventions during the war contributed to the violence experienced by the war-affected population (Branch 2009) and that continued U.S. supported militarization of the Ugandan state perpetuated economic and political disparities in the country (Branch 2011; Mwenda 2010), international NGOs perpetuate the idea that they are outside the systems of violence. I suggest they accomplish this by maintaining Orientalist narratives of African violence which allows the violence in northern Uganda to be separate from their civilizing peacebuilding interventions. In other words, it behooves national and international actors to bind violence to place rather than acknowledge complicity.

As with the national narrative of violence, international narratives did not focus explicitly on domestic spaces. However, they contributed additional materials for the eventual construction of the gendered peacebuilding practices mentioned above. First, they maintained a geographic imaginary that understood violence in Africa as separate from other places and spaces. Second, they ascribed to the mainstreaming of gender issues common in international development programs since the 1990's in which progressive gender politics are seen as a marker of modernity (Obiora 2003). Finally, they perpetuated the neoliberal focus on individual rather than systemic change. To understand how these pieces fit together with other geopolitical agendas to establish the final design of peacebuilding programs, I now turn to the work of those who implemented the programs in northern Uganda.

Local Imaginaries

Potentially implicated in international narratives that locate violence in conflict-prone regions of the Global South as well as by national narratives that attribute violence to the inherent violence of the Acholi people, NGO workers from northern Uganda created their own place-bound narrative of violence which further narrowed the location of violence. They shifted

the narrative of 'northern' violence to violence in the villages. They used the village as a geographic imaginary which rested on divisions between urban/rural, educated/uneducated, professional/resource poor. The racialization that characterized sources of violence and underdevelopment in national and international imaginaries was side-stepped by NGO workers from northern Uganda who drew upon the classed and gendered aspects of those imaginaries without explicitly engaging with the racialized narratives. Rather than being the result of an innate African or Acholi nature, violence in this narrative was attributed to an uneducated population affected by trauma and extreme poverty. Post-war peacebuilding, according to NGO workers from northern Uganda, was about addressing the material needs of the rural population while teaching them how to resolve conflicts without violence. President Museveni's call for the 're-education' and 're-orientation' of the northern population is thus reinterpreted by local NGO workers to mean the 're-education' and 're-orientation' of villagers.

Take, for example, Sara's description of the USAID-program she managed that was designed to build the foundations for peace economies in the region.

We used an integrative approach, we are looking at economic securities, educating their capacities on farming and livelihoods, and their sustainability, and looking into how they're relating.... Access to justice comes in to address the disputes between them. In cases of land disputes, what do they need to do? In cases of misunderstanding between them, which was common, what do they need to do? ...then peace and reconciliation will come in to say what are some of the activities we can bring in to promote reconciliation between them. For example, sporting activities, guidance and counseling. So that makes it a full package.

Sara is a member of the Acholi ethnic group, yet she maintains a distance between herself and those who need help. She refers to “disputes between them,” “misunderstandings between them,” “promoting reconciliation between them,” and helping them “forget their differences.” In all cases, ‘them’ refers to the beneficiaries of the program – people living in rural villages. *They* need guidance and support in order to change the culture of conflict and build economies of peace.

Okello, a local NGO worker for a British organization, described a program for peacebuilding amongst the youth. He said,

We are doing peace education in secondary schools and this is basically looking at building a culture of peace in the communities, in the villages, trying to encourage the children to learn from the onset that *it’s their initiative to ensure that there’s peace*, and when you look at the children, the youth, *they* are the labor for any uprising, or any riots, for any war, *they* are used as the resource, so it’s just trying to change *their* mind, *their* perception towards violence.

The distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in these statements is not just a distinction between the implementers of peace programs and their recipients. It is tied to a geographic imaginary that locates threats to peace in the villages amongst the formerly displaced populations.

Amongst local NGO professionals, ‘the village’ became code for uneducated, poor individuals who were not exposed to the modern ideas of development, human rights, and women’s empowerment. As Orec said to me as he spoke of his organization’s work on women’s rights, “We have to do this work because not everyone understands the importance of gender equality. People in the villages, they are not like you and me...they do not understand these ideas.” Through his words and his gestures, Orec made a point of aligning himself with me, an

international researcher, against the ignorance of villagers. In so doing, he was also aligning himself with other collaborators in peacebuilding programming and thus creating geopolitical alliances amongst variously scaled actors in the name of building peace for those in the ‘village.’

Despite their professional obligations, not all peacebuilders supported the narratives of violence inherent in their programming. This was true for international as well as Ugandan professional peacebuilders. Their critiques, however, were voiced informally. They did not actively challenge these narratives because they had to maintain positive relationships with their collaborators – be they donors, government officials, or employers. Rather, they found a way of negotiating historical and contemporary Western narratives that perpetuate a racialized gendering of violence in Africa which blames said violence on primitive masculinities (McClintock 1995; Persson and Newman 2008) and state-based geographic imaginaries of northern violence which are built upon narratives of the Acholi as a martial race characterized by an inherently violent form of masculinity (Dolan 2002)(author 2013) by focusing their work on domestic spaces of gendered violence. Rather than designing peacebuilding programs that made the connections between variously scaled forms of violence (e.g. interpersonal violence, state militarization, and economic globalization), peacebuilding programs thus located the site of violence in the Acholi home. In making this argument, I am not suggesting that all parties went into the peacebuilding process with the explicit goal of focusing on intimate spaces of the village. Rather, it is the manifestation of all actors negotiating for their own positionality, legitimacy, and power within an institutionalized set of relationships that requires the violence to be outside of their network in order for their relationships to be maintained.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, I have purposefully avoided reinforcing the binary between war and peace because, as Ross (2013, 198) argues, “failure to recognize the violence of peace permits that violence” and attempts to realize social justice would be better served by focusing on power and equity than drawing a line between war and peace. Thus it has been my project to trace narratives of violence that span times of supposed war and supposed peace. Through this work, I have found that rather than making visible the connections between domestic violence and war, post-war peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda are in fact using domestic violence to obscure the causes and implications of war. They accomplish this by using Orientalist narratives to discursively tie the sources of violence for the war to the supposed site of domestic violence – the home and/or local community. Place-bound narratives of violence essentialize the identities of both the places and the people associated with them: they produce ‘Africa,’ ‘northern Uganda,’ and ‘the Acholi village’ as places of conflict and underdevelopment and the people associated with them as conflict-prone and underdeveloped.

My critique of racialized narratives of violence is consistent with Fluri’s (2011) analysis of savior fantasies and narratives of gendered freedom found in the embodied practices of international interventions in Afghanistan. In both cases, appropriate sites and types of intervention are tied to colonial tropes of the assumed ‘victim’ of violence (i.e. passive women and children) and the assumed perpetrator of violence (i.e. racialized male aggressors) (for more on these tropes, see Spivak 1988; Narayan 1997). The difference exists in the explicit ways in which the intimate is made the focus of intervention amongst peacebuilding programs in northern Uganda. Gender mainstreaming initiatives are folded into Orientalist geographic imaginaries of violence to produce a perverted version of Pain’s (2015) concept of intimacy-

geopolitics - perverted in the sense that while those in charge of post-war peacebuilding acknowledged the connection between the masculine aggression, protection, and control in both war and domestic violence, they avoid a comprehensive intimacy-geopolitics by creating a racialized and classed narrative that isolates the problematic masculinity to the rural Acholi population. Without a thorough engagement with the type of intimacy-geopolitics Pain (2015) calls for, such a connection between war and domestic violence becomes little more than a strategy for the continued *othering* of a marginalized population.

While there is an acknowledgement of the importance of geographic and historical context in contemporary feminist scholarship on the relationship between domestic violence and warfare, there remains an assumption that mainstream narratives will tend to separate these forms of violence or, if connections are acknowledged, warfare will be given primacy (C. H. Enloe 1989; Sjoberg 2006; Cuomo 2013; Pain 2015). Based on my empirical evidence from northern Uganda, I argue the presence of Orientalist narratives of violence in peacebuilding programs disrupts these assumptions by not only drawing together domestic violence and warfare but prioritizing domestic violence. There is no question that addressing sexual and gender based violence is essential to fighting systems of violence. However, in this paper I argue that when combined with racialized narratives of violent masculinity, such advocacy has the potential to discursively *isolate* rather than *connect* domestic violence to other forms of violence. This work serves as a reminder of how a seemingly progressive attempts to prioritize domestic spaces and everyday experiences of violence can be appropriated by Orientalist mindsets.

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ⁱ All interviewee names are pseudonyms.