Chapter 12
Social Identity and Conflict in Northern Uganda

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In Uganda, ethnic identity has been crucial in defining intergroup relationships at local, regional and national levels (Stonehouse, 2011). This chapter draws on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to explain intergroup relations in post-independent Uganda. After independence, ethnic identities have pervaded political parties and national institutions, such as the army and civil service, and have determined access to national resources. Although many factors including economic, religious and political have been associated with the political turmoil that engulfed Uganda after independence, shared allegiance constructed around common ethnic identity has made a significant contribution (Stonehouse, 2011). In Uganda, social identity has been associated with the polity, governance, cultural divide and conflicts both before and after the advent of colonial administration. As such, social identity may be understood in terms of ethnicity, religion, political factions, regionalism, physical appearance, gender, culture, and social class.

In this chapter, we focus on social identity in light of ethnic characteristics, social events and group membership, and their relation to conflict. In particular, we aim to point out the importance of social identity in relation to changes that have occurred in Uganda since the colonial era and perhaps led to the two and half decades of conflict in Northern Uganda. Before we draw from social identity theory and delve into explaining intergroup relations, it would be important to give a background to the recent history of Uganda.

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Colonisation and Ethnic Identity

Uganda is a former British colony with a population of approximately 35 million people and about 56 different ethnic groups (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2014). The population can be largely divided into the Bantu-speaking people who occupy the Southern part of the country (e.g. Baganda and Basoga); the Nilo-Hamites (e.g. Iteso and Karimojong) who live mainly in the Eastern and Northeastern part of the country; the Nilotics (e.g. Acholi and Alur) who live in the middle North of the country; and the Sudanic (e.g. the Lugbara and Kakwa), who occupy the Northwestern part of the country. Uganda gained independence from the British administration in 1962. The Acholi are the Luo-speaking people, believed to originate from the province of Bahr-el-Ghazal in Southern Sudan, and are known to have settled in part of Northern Uganda before the colonial era (see Okello, 2011 for full account of the Luo Origin of Civilisation). With further decentralisation, the Acholi districts have been divided into districts of Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum, Pader, Lamwo and Agago (UBOS, 2014). These Acholi districts were affected by the recent insurgency that occurred in Northern Uganda, and arguably at least every family have had their own share of the war. The Acholi have been stereotyped as "warriors" and a "martial" ethnic group both during the colonial time and in the postcolonial era. This stereotype may have led to greater suffering amongst the Acholi people, thus leading to further economic disparity and decline in the livelihood of the Acholi people in the current post-conflict period.

Although the colonial rule appears to have played a major role in shaping ethnic identity in Africa (Atkinson, 1994), it may be argued that the origin of culture and social identity of ethnic groups, in particular the Acholi, may be traced back to the precolonial period. Traditionally, the Acholi tribes were viewed by the British colonialist as warriors and perceived to be strong, with "fierce" looking characteristics. During the British rule, the perception of "elite warriors" did not go unnoticed. The colonial administration mainly recruited people from Acholi and Lango in the armed forces because they were aggressive and physically tall while they recruited and preferred ethnic Buganda in the civil service arguing that they were "intelligent, polite with good mannerisms" (see Amone, 2014). This led to under-representation of the Luo ethnic group in the white-collar jobs and over-representation in the army (Nannyonjo, 2005).

Apart from being grouped as belonging to the two major groups, the Nilotic and Bantu ethnic groups; people of Uganda have also been grouped according to the four major regions, Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. Within these regions, the divide also follows tribal identification, with at least 56 tribes/languages identified in Uganda. This ethnic diversity was exploited by the British colonialists and post-independent leaders in two ways. First, by recruiting the people of Northern Uganda, mainly from the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups into the armed forces and the Bantu-speaking people of the south into civil service, the British and postcolonial administrators created the perception of the "martial" tribes and "civil tribes" among these ethnic groups (Lomo, Hovil, & Institute for Security Studies (South Africa), 2004;

Mamdani, 1996). This led to stereotype-based discrimination in employment into the armed forces and the civil service in Uganda (Lomo et al., 2004; Mamdani, 1996). Second, the British policies of "divide and rule" and "indirect rule" (Finnstrom, 2008) promoted ethnic division in which groups were effectively kept from engaging in political opposition, since no group could grow large enough to challenge the British and their colonial rule (Lomo et al., 2004; Mamdani, 1996).

Postcolonial Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity in the postcolonial era continued to reflect what the British propagated. For example, the majority of positions in the public service were filled with people from the south, even during the first leadership of Milton Obote, whilst the top positions in the armed forces were occupied by people from Acholi and Lango. Although this trend continued during the reign of Idi Amin, the Langi and Acholi soldiers perceived to be agents of Obote were ill-treated and many were killed. During the rule of Obote II and Okello Tito, Acholi commanders were elevated to higher ranks, but this was short lived as many of them were either killed or flee to exile. These historical changes and shift in power have seen many people from the Bantu-ethnic group, in particular the Banyankole, take over many public service and private sector jobs, in addition to some becoming top army commanders in the Uganda People Defence Force (UPDF).

   The politics of favouritism of some tribes over others, from the time Milton Obote reigned as the first prime minister, to various Ugandan presidents seems to have been carried over to the current period. Thus, perceptions of social identity appear to be passed on (indirectly and directly) to the younger generation, who are arguably eager to continue perpetuating the same or similar attitudes. Therefore, it is plausible to suggest that leaders in Uganda have relied on their ethnic groups as reliable political and military constituencies to govern and maintain power.

Perception of Identity

According to International Alert (2013), youths in Uganda (especially those from the northern and western part of the country) appear to associate mainly with their ethnic group. At the same time, people in Uganda do show allegiance to their national identity, through symbols such as the coat of arms and the national flag, but ethnicity, geographical demarcation, religion and political factions seem to jeopardise the unity and equality that a common national identity can bring.

   Individuals in Uganda use the presence of stereotypical physical characteristics to determine group membership, such as skin complexion, height and physical attributes. In describing the Northerners (Nilotic and Nilo-hamites), characteristics such as having a dark skin complexion, being tall and physically built have been

used; a stereotype which passes on from generation to generation among the people in Uganda. The type of food consumed, such as millet and cassava which are high in energy, also appears to have been associated with the people from Northern Uganda. On the contrary, people in the southern part of Uganda (Bantu-speaking groups) have mainly been perceived as having light skin complexion with a rounded soft body and with less physical strength. Their main staple foods tend to be "matoke" (green bananas) and potatoes which appear to be soft and low on calories, compared to millet and cassava. Until recently, perhaps in the last two decades, peanut butter (*commonly known as odii in Luo language*) had also been mainly associated with the Acholi and Langi people from Northern Uganda. This may be attributed to internal migration and displacement as a result of war which saw most people from Northern Uganda settle in the central region for security reasons, and perhaps other parts of the country, particularly those who served in the armed and police forces. Having migrated with their cultural food in the community and through intermingling in boarding schools, "odii" has become a popular delicacy among many tribes in Uganda.

In addition to physical appearance, names also indicate group membership. Within Buganda, for example, names are clearly identifiable with a clan. This attachment to names within the Baganda culture appears to protect Baganda from the same clan from marrying people they supposedly call their "brothers" or "sisters", but they can marry from other clans. In Uganda, mainly "Christian" names are to some extent also used to take on similar propensity of the Catholic or Protestant faiths, and similarly religious names are associated with the Muslim faith. However, another complexity of using names appears to be related to the ethnic groups. For example, surnames beginning with letters "O" and "A" are perceived to be associated with males and females from the northern region, while those with letters "R", "T" and "K" have been associated with people from the western region and those with letters "S" and "N" mainly associated with the males and females from the Baganda ethnic group. With recent "development" in the post-conflict Northern Uganda, many people, in particular those of the Christian faith, have adopted a new trend in child-naming. They appear to prefer the use of biblical words or meaning, for example, Rwotomiyo, *Rwotlagen*, *Lakica*, and *Lubangakene*.

Religious Identity

Religion is very significant for people in Uganda, young and old, with many institutions, including education and the first political parties (International Alert, 2013) being founded on religious values. Religion, however, coexists with ethnicity. Political groups are not only based on the dichotomy of Catholic–Protestant dimensions, there are other religious groups such as Muslim, Seventh Day Adventist and the Pentecostal sectors that have led to a complex "criss-cross" in social identities. This is similar to Crisp, Hewstone, and Cairns' (2001) observation from work in Northern Ireland that argues that "information concerning in-group and out-group

members was processed as an interactive function of both religion and gender inter-group dimensions" (p. 501). Arguably, it is this multifactorial complexity that needs to be understood in trying to explain the conflicts in Uganda. For example, the inter-religious wars in Buganda, between the Catholics and the Protestants, appear to have been caused by increased influence of European missionaries over the Kabaka and the Kingdom of Buganda (for history of Christianity in Uganda, see Ward, 1991). Therefore, inter-religious conflict appears to have shaped the basis on which political parties in Uganda are formed.

Political Groups

Political groups in Uganda, founded on the basis of religion and ethnicity, have sprung from the postcolonial time to the present day. Leaders in Uganda appear to blame their predecessors for governing the country based on ethnic factions. For example, the Obote I and II government were criticised for favouring people from the Acholi and Lango subregion. It is this perception that appears to have created the formation of the National Resistance Army (NRA), predominantly formed by members from the same ethnic group in Western Uganda that led to the "Bush" war. Nevertheless the idea of ethnic interests, both at individual and communal levels, may also have led to the formation of the Holy Spirit Movement of self-styled prophetess Alice Lakwena and later, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony, that may have exacerbated the two and half decades of conflict in Northern Uganda (See Finnstrom, 2006 cited in Amone, 2015).

Post-independence parties such as the Democratic Party (DP) are primarily for Catholics and Uganda People's Congress (UPC) is dominated by Protestants. The idea that many parties seem to be integrated can be explained in terms of choice of social identity. For example, an individual can choose which religion to belong to, but not his or her ethnic group. Doornboss used this perception to explain the changes that took place in the postcolonial era between the Bahima and Bairu, as they identified with a particular political party despite their different religious backgrounds (see Doornboss, 1978 cited in Byaruhanga, 1999). Today, there appears to be a mixture of ethnic groups moving from one party to another. For example, the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups in Northern Uganda, and the Ateso, Kumam and Jopadhola groups in eastern Uganda, who were mainly UPC sympathisers appear to have joined other parties like the NRM and FDC; and a few may have defected to the DP, thus forging a common identity and reducing conflicts. This is in line with the common identity model of reducing intergroup bias by influencing social attitudes and enhancing personal well-being espoused by Gaertner and Dovidio (2000).

Although the current ruling party (NRM) seems to have integrated party members from different religious and ethnic groups, the majority of members are from Western Uganda. Arguably, this could be the reason why the current government appears to favour members from the western region more than their counterparts from other regions within the country. Alternatively, it could be that there is an

underlying ideology of "identity politics", in particular in the civil service and higher ranks in private sectors. An independent writer Morris Komakech, meanwhile, argues that political parties in Uganda are not only built on religious identity but also along "tribal" lines. He suggests that past and present political groups have served to divide the country by ethnic groups and that these groups suffer from identity conflicts that tend to lead to crisis in loyalty to Uganda and the public service. In agreement, opposition parties are blaming the government for favouring people from the western part of the country, as equated to the unequal share of the "national cake". It could therefore be argued that these ethnic divides in the postcolonial era have caused so many social changes and conflicts in Uganda. It appears as though every individual who assumes power does it with the idea to favour their own people in competition for economic goods based on the idea of sharing with your "own".

We argue that inequalities and control over state resources may be the main source of political conflict in Uganda and therefore understanding ethnic inequality and reconciling differences may reduce this gap and create peace. Whether the trend in ethnic inequality is revenge or just an identity crisis may warrant further research. Nonetheless, it is plausible that unless the cycle of ethnic identity favouritism is broken and "togetherness" is employed, as per the Ugandan Motto, "For God and my Country"; Uganda will continue to suffer from political conflict and civil war. How this should be done is a challenge that every aspiring leader needs to address. Perhaps leaders should be at the forefront to discourage conflict between ethnic groups and rather sow the spirit of nationalism. It may be suggested that African leaders could borrow "a leaf", not all of course, from the outgoing President Jose "Pepe" Mujica of Uruguay with regard to using state resources. Perhaps Africa would cease to see the repeat cycle of conflict that appears to be based on ethnic inequality, other than "tribal" hatred. Not forgetting that this may have been an individual's identity, but also understanding that some lessons could be learnt in terms of sharing state resources equally across the country to minimise conflict.

More importantly, intergroup contact, interaction and integration among different political and ethnic groups may create an opportunity to reduce intergroup conflict and prejudice and promote conflict resolution as espoused by Allport (1954) at the height of racial segregation in the USA and interpersonal relations among political leaders (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For example, "the potential application of crossed categorisation research to the development of intervention strategies" (Crisp et al., 2001, p. 510) could help to reduce intergroup conflict. Therefore, it would be important to explore the basis of multiple group identification, in particular, crossed-categorisation in determining how information concerning group members is processed within the Ugandan context where one facet of political party (NRM) is considered dominant. Although it appears as though ethnic group could also be a dominant basis for social categorisation in Uganda; it would require empirical research, may be in an experimental context, to explore the salience of social categorisation in order to understand its impact on the repeat cycle of conflicts observed in Uganda in the postcolonial period.

Ethnic Group Prejudices

Uganda is an ethnic medley with each group comprising different tribal facets and distinct dialects. This ethnic diversity is often accompanied by prejudices that seem to take on a dyadic relationship. For example, an ethnic group considered to be superior may hold their own biases towards those considered less superior and vice versa. Thus, within the intergroup context, emotions may cause individuals to process information about members of the other group. According to Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams, and Hunsinger (2009), such induced emotional states can increase unconscious prejudice towards the out-group members.

As such, it appears that specific emotions may arise as a response to social groups (Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008). Take the 2009 Buganda riot and the concurrent 2010 Kasubi riot 2010 in Uganda's capital city Kampala as illustrative examples. Riots appeared to have developed when the Kabaka of Buganda was stopped from travelling to a youth ceremony in Bugerere (Mukono district), and afterwards the Kasubi Tombs were gutted by fire. The riots highlighted the suspected tension between the state and the supporters of the Buganda Kingdom (mainly the Baganda ethnic group). During these riots many people were stopped and asked to either sing the Buganda Anthem or pronounce the word "Namungoona" (a name to one of the city suburb), as a means to deduce ethnic group membership through accent. Arguably, this led to the emotional responses towards out-groups (including anger) and subsequent violence directed towards those who could not sing the anthem or correctly pronounce the word. Sadly, if not resolved, this complex situation could lead to growing animosity between the state and the Baganda, as well as other minority out-group members.

Although it appears that intergroup tension and conflict are characterised primarily by emotional responses to in-group love and out-group hate, it may also be suggested that most postcolonial conflict in Africa is not just a result of these emotional responses, but rather as a result of inequality among ethnic groups. Perhaps this may confirm Tajfel and Turner's (1986) argument that the preference individuals hold for their in-group may be important in understanding social problems. For the case of intergroup conflicts in Uganda, it would warrant further social psychological research into understanding the preference, beliefs and attitudes that ethnic groups hold about their own and other social groups.

To some extent, therefore, the categorisation of ethnic groups in the precolonial and during the colonial era in Northern Uganda seems to explain the prejudices and stereotype that ethnic groups hold towards out-group members, with the Acholi people remaining the disadvantaged group in this society. Yet, such categorisation appears to be an essential process that reflects social reality and helps us to understand the world around us. In fact, a tendency to categorise people appears to be the basis for prejudice and discrimination; but with no distinction between individuals, discrimination may not be observed among intergroup members (see Schaller, & Maass, 1989 cited in Crisp et al., 2001).

Identity and Conflict

Perhaps unsurprisingly, ethnic-related conflicts have been occurring in Uganda since before the pre- and postcolonial period. Since independence, the main conflict has been between the Nilotic from the northern region, and the Bantu from the southern region. This history has seen three personalities from Nilotic-Sudanic speaking group as head of state of Uganda, namely: Milton Obote, Idi Amin Dada and Okello Tito Lutwa, with Obote having ruled twice. The National Resistance Army (NRA) and the Bush war led by President Museveni was organised to overthrow Tito Okello. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war, led by Joseph Kony, was speculated to also have been planned to overthrow President Yoweri Museveni. These two rebellions were believed to have been based on the social identity of the Banyankole and Acholi ethnic group, respectively. Meanwhile, another rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), that operated in the western border of Uganda was based on what appeared to be an Islamic radical ideology. Focusing on ethnic identity and religious ideology, the diversity within these groups appeared to have led to the outbreak of civil wars in Uganda.

Previous literature has suggested that identity is conflict in itself (an exhaustive account can be found in Byaruhanga, 1999). Therefore, it is plausible to note that political groups based on identity may split the country along ethnic and religious precincts that is likely to create political conflict, as evident in genesis of civil wars in Uganda (see Dolan, 2009; Finnstrom, 2008). While living in a country with protracted conflict is known to affect an individual's identity, Rohner, Thoenig, and Zilibotti (2011) report that people tend to strongly identify with ethnic group as opposed to the national identity. This is supported by Lapwoch and Cairns' (2012) findings where mothers from three different villages viewed the impact of the LRA conflict as a collective suffering that "the Acholi mothers" experienced. Mothers in these focus groups related more with the Acholi group and only identified themselves as Ugandans when they discussed matters related to peace, in terms of unity with other ethnic groups. Although social identity theory observes that people who identify with a group tend to favour their own group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; See Hogg, 2016 for more details), it may be of great importance for political groups to learn to respect each other not only on the basis of ethnic or religious identity but as human beings in need of sanctuary, and to create "Nationalistic" ideology and reconciliation of differences. In fact, learning other people's culture and language could be a good starting point to integration.

It may be argued that social identity is influenced by both external and internal factors. In addition to ethnicity and religion, groups appear to identify themselves by theory of difference or emotional feelings, belongingness, collective memories, and cultural expectations (Byaruhanga, 1999). Even though ethnic identity appears to be governed by cultural, economic and political factors, it may be that ethnic identities in Uganda are relatively isolated by differences in language and culture. The diversity in ethnic groups appears to cause social problems and conflict. In fact, Esteban, Mayoral, and Ray (2011) report that ethnic diversity is a predictor of the occurrence of civil wars.

Byaruhanga in his chapter on "Social Identity and Conflict: A Positive Approach" explains that social identity is based on cultural practices and ideology. However, with the immense pressure from either side of the political factions, the social structure of the Acholi appeared to have created social breakdown that seems to persist in the post-conflict period (see Dolan, 2009). From history, it appears that cultural practices such as traditional dances, songs and informal education conducted at the *wang oo* (fire place) were woven into the social fabric that created togetherness and harmony. Yet, these are structures that Chris Dolan appears to explain in his book on "Social Torture" as being lost to war. To reflect on tradition and cultural practices that may have kept the Acholi cohesion intact before the conflict between LRA and Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), restoration of these practices could be of great importance in creating peaceful environment.

Recently, the people of Acholi appear to embrace cultural revivals. Therefore, we argue that reviving traditional practices and cultural values could be used to help people to work through the past, restore social cohesion and create a new identity in the post-conflict era. Although culture is perceived as a factor that can influence social identity tensions, if not incorporated and accepted by future generations, it may also cause recurrent conflict. That said, it would be of great importance if the dynamics that surrounds it evolves as time changes. For example, it is argued that

> Current tension exposed in the research indicates that this evolution is precarious in northern Uganda and more work led by cultural leaders is needed to strike a balance between the generations. This will enable the community to move forward collectively. Dynamic cultural support will also help communities recognise the importance, value and rights of other groups in Uganda, which is critical to national reconciliation (The Pincer Group Limited Report, 2010, p. 33).

Therefore, it could be suggested that factors relating to social identity may enhance the peace process and reconciliation among the Acholi people and other ethnic groups. As mentioned earlier, Lapwoch and Cairns (2012) noted that mothers in focus groups described their pain and suffering during the LRA war by using collectivist terms such as "we", "our", "us", "mothers" and "the Acholis". Their individual description at the collective level could have portrayed their allegiance to Acholi/Luo identity having gone through similar traumatic experiences. Yet, these same mothers also used similar words to emphasise their Acholi and Ugandan identity in advocating for forgiveness, peace and reconciliation, the emphasis to end the war and refrain from repeat cycle of conflict between the government and "their" son Kony. Perhaps this signifies that social identity is not only conflict-inducing but also a solution to conflict that may help in creating lasting peace.

LRA Conflict in Northern Uganda

Among the Acholi people, war and conflict have been frequent throughout the Luo history (Atkinson, 1994). Intragroup conflicts were mainly observed through fights between different clans among the Acholi people; however, it is intergroup conflict

which is more prominent. For example, the LRA conflict is perceived to have been a fight between the Southerners and the Northerners (Banyankole vs. the Luo ethnic group) with regard to their differences in political ideology, as opposed to the misunderstanding between Bahima and Bairu from the Banyankole group or the Acholi and the Langi from the Luo group. Although there appears to be conflict at the individual level (tribal), social identity in terms of the region (collective level) appears to be paramount in the conflicts observed in Uganda, as many people in conflict areas appear to identify with their own ethnic group (Rohner et al., 2011).

The use of mixed/multiple identities was prominent during the LRA conflict. For example, at the peak of the war, people who moved to the Internally Displaced Camps (IDP) were considered by the rebels to belong to the government. At the same time, those who were still living in their homesteads were also alleged to belong to the rebel group (mother's focus group, in Lapwoch, 2014). The Acholi identity, though eminent, appeared to have been muddled within the identity of the rebels and/or the government during the peak of the conflict. It is likely that this crisis created a very intense relationship between the two factions and the innocent Acholi people, who appeared to be in a dilemma as to where they belong.

This identity crisis caused the indigenous Acholi people to make choices, either to show their allegiance to the rebels as "kinsmen" or to the government as "protector" at the cost of heightening the conflict, which saw many being massacred or having their limbs mutilated. The choice of belonging, perhaps, may explain why the Acholi people continue to be blamed for the war. However, we would also like to note that the choice of social identity for children in Northern Uganda is very complex. Many children abducted by the rebels were forced to choose the ideology of their captors at the cost of their own lives or that of the family members (Eichstaedt, 2009). What would a vulnerable child choose given this oppressive circumstance? We would therefore prefer not to compare the choice made by formerly abducted children, with freedom of choice observed between the Bahima and Bairu (see Byaruhanga, 1999) or perhaps the Acholi and Langi to join political party as per the circumstances that seem continue to surround them in the postcolonial era.

Identity and Peacebuilding

An entire generation in the Acholi subregion has grown up knowing only war and violence. This includes children born in camps during the height of war and those born to mothers in captivity, as well as those who were young when the conflict began. We suggest that a common identity of "children born of war", instead of different identities such as child born in IDP, town centres and captivity, in addition to their ethnic identity, would cause more confusion and conflict. Byaruhanga (1999) argues that it is not only an expression of conflict that occurs at both collective and individual level, "but also the possibilities of its rebalancing, reconciliation and tension resolution" (p. 107). Given the multiple identities of the Acholi children born

during the war and the fact that most of these children may have lost their parents to war, there could be a "fear factor" embedded in revenge in the future generation. This is most likely to depend on the information that children receive within their environment, whether they are sowing seeds of revenge or reconciliation as per their ethnic identity.

Whilst it may be argued, based on space and ideology, that different clans within the Acholi ethnic group would go to war (Atkinson, 1994), it could also be argued that it is on the basis of common cultural practices that these clans would reconcile. An example of this would be the *Mato Oput*, which is being advocated for reconciliation and the restoration of peace among the Acholi people. *Mato Oput* is a traditional ritual and process practised by the Acholi ethnic group whose aim is to restore relations among people who have been affected by either an intentional murder or accidental killing (Amone-P'Olak, 2006; Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO, & Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2005). Although this seems to be criticised by most people of Christian faith as "satanic", some religious leaders appear to have embraced its place in the peacebuilding process.

Byaruhanga (1999) suggests that it is important to understand identity in terms of "conflictual relation" in order to work towards reconciliation, in particular looking at the context of personal and social identity as being mutually connected. Perhaps, looking at one's self and others as being interconnected and with the "spirit of togetherness" could be a solution to the repeat cycle of conflicts observed in Uganda and in other parts of Africa. In fact, Leggett (2001) argues that it is critical to tackle the way identity is perceived in terms of religion, political ideology and ethnic groups which appear to have caused divisions in Uganda in order to reduce and replace this perception with "a stronger sense of nationhood and national identity, the role of economic and social development as a means of minimising differences, rather than accentuating them" (p. 10).

Although it may seem clear that conflict, tension and hate occur within the individual and collective level, it is also apparent that reconciliation and peacebuilding may take on a similar trend. Therefore, it could be suggested that the northerners could reconcile with the southerners. There could also be reconciliation within the different clans in the Acholi subregions, in particular, people who feel that individuals from other clans caused them pain and misery during the war. In addition, other tribes within the Luo ethnic groups and the neighbouring region who appeared to have blamed the Acholi tribe for the atrocities committed in the northern region could also participate in this process of healing and forgiveness. Perhaps this could pave way for both individual and collective healing from what Volkan termed as "collective trauma" (Volkan, 2006 cited in Lapwoch, 2014).

Learning from other parts of the world, in particular South Africa and Northern Ireland, where various attempts appear to have been made to use integration to solve intergroup conflicts, Uganda could use similar techniques. For example, integrating ethnic, religious and political groups to create a common "national identity" could be one approach to help promote peace. That said, solving the issue of social identity related conflict is complex, particularly as tensions in Uganda have been exacerbated by the transgenerational transmission of group perception of war knowledge.

As such, particular prejudices may be being passed on from one generation to another. Therefore, it is important that information about ethnicity and religion is given to the younger generation with positivity in a clear package within a non-ambiguous socioecological environment. Given the fact that almost every generation in a protracted conflict has their intake of conflict, it is upon everybody who cares about peace in their country to pass information about intergroup relations within a very supportive socioecological system. Perhaps this may help in shaping children's perception of other ethnic or religious groups which appear to be the main source of conflict, in order to create harmony within different social groups. Alternatively, considering the fact that social categorisation is not a single unit, but one that can combine different facets, may also be of great importance to help us understand and perhaps reduce intergroup prejudices and conflict.

Conclusion

Ethnic diversity and social identity tensions appear to have caused many conflicts in Uganda and around the world. It is important that we understand the causes and consequences of this for peace because social identity is a concept that may not be wiped away; it is vital for our self-esteem (see Martiny & Rubin, 2016) and identity narrative and norms continue to live from generation to generation. We argue that to solve social crises that have been observed to be the root cause of many conflicts would require an understanding of identity within the social sphere, and the internal and external factors that cause such identity crises. With this in mind, national leaders arguably need to develop strategies to ensure equal opportunities and status, devise ways of cooperation, identify common goals, and support social and institutional authorities for its different ethnic groups (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Once the conflicting nature of social identity is understood, it could be plausible to work towards peacebuilding, while incorporating crossed-categorisation and identity that individuals are "clothed" with.

Although various writers have reported on ethnicity and conflict in Uganda, there is still limited literature on social identity drawn from empirical social psychological research that may be used to support literature that has already been documented in the field of economics, political science and history. Therefore, we would suggest that future researchers devote time into studying social identity in relation to the repeat cycle of conflicts observed in Uganda.

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