

# **“The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears”**

Socialization of Child Soldiers within African Rebel Groups

**Lotte Vermeij**

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# **“The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears”**

Socialization of Child Soldiers within African Rebel Groups

**Lotte Vermeij**

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*“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage”*

*Anaïs Nin*



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*“Please take our stories with you. Tell the world about us,  
tell the people what the war did to us.  
Please let them come help us. We are just children.”*

Vincent and I were sitting underneath a mango tree on a cool, sunny morning when he begged me to take his story to the outside world. He was only 14, but he had already spent 6 years of his childhood with the rebels. He lost his family, lost his friends, lost his home. Having lost everything that had ever made him feel safe, he told me how the rebels had become his new family after his abduction, how he saw his commander as his father, and how gunfire started to sound like music to him. Returning from the bush, he could no longer remember a life without violence.

Vincent was not the only one. During my field research in conflict-ridden areas throughout Africa, I met hundreds of children like him. Many of them asked me how my research would help them—I said I did not know the answer to that very valid question, but the one thing I knew was that sharing their stories would help people to understand their situation better. And I added that I would do everything to get their message across to those who needed to hear it, leading, I hoped, to better support during their struggles for a better future, and preventing other children from experiencing the same horror. Although I could not make any promises, these children granted me a degree of trust that is indescribable. I will never be able to express how grateful I am for their willingness to share the worst experiences they had had in their short lives, for their devoted cooperation and generosity, and for taking me on journeys characterized by hope, loss, strength, and resilience. Without their devotion I could never have realized this project. I sincerely hope this dissertation will bring forward valuable insights that can contribute to better disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programs for former child soldiers.

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Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to the children living in conflict zones across the globe—may your voices be heard and your futures be brighter, filled with love, peace, laughter and hope. This is for you.

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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfD	Arms for Development Programme
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
ANC	African National Congress
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
CACD	Community Arms Collection for Development
CAFF	Children Associated with Fighting Forces
CBR	Community Based Recovery
CDF	Civil Defense Forces (Sierra Leone)
CIO	Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization
COFS	Combatants on Foreign Soil
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Liberia)
CPA	Concerned Parents Association (Uganda)
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
DD	Disarmament and Demobilization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
D&R	Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDRP	Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project
EO	Executive Outcomes
FRELIMO	Liberation Front of Mozambique
GOL	Government of Liberia
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organization
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
ILO	International Labor Office

ISF	International Stabilization Force
I&S	Information and Sensitization
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MDRP	Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAI	Nordic Africa Institute
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
NCDDRR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NTGOL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
PIDE	International and State Defense Police / Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (Mozambique)
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance
RR	Rehabilitation and Reintegration
RRR	Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Recovery
RSLMF	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RUF/SL	Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SBU	Small Boys Unit
SGU	Small Girls Unit
SIDDRS	Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration Standards
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLAF	Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SWAY	Survey of War-Affected Youth
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ULIMO	United Liberian Movement for Democracy

UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDPKO	United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary General
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
WAC	Women's Artillery Commandos
WACA	War Affected Children Association
WAFF	Women Associated with Fighting Forces
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union

# Map of Africa



Figure 0.1 Map of Africa  
United Nations (2009)



# Map of Uganda



Figure 0.2 Map of Uganda  
United Nations (2003)

# Map of Liberia



Figure 0.3 Map of Liberia  
United Nations (2010)

# Map of Sierra Leone



Figure 0.4 Map of Sierra Leone  
United Nations (2004)

# Map of Mozambique



Map No. 3706 Rev. 5 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

Figure 0.5 Map of Mozambique  
United Nations (2004)

## **Part I**

# **An Introduction to Child Soldiers, Socialization and Rebel Groups**

# 1

## Introduction

This thesis is about the powerful processes involved in the creation of child soldiers by African rebel groups. It is generally acknowledged that rebel groups recruit the majority of child soldiers by force, although the extent to which children are recruited and the degree to which they are forced to participate vary widely. Still, most of these children remain with these groups for lengthy periods. But why do child soldiers stay with rebel groups, even after having been recruited against their will? What induces these children to live under the severe circumstances entailed in being part of a rebel group? The answers to these questions appear to involve a complex myriad of motivating factors.

As child soldiering has become a global phenomenon, scholars have carried out numerous studies on the topic. However, the focus has generally been on the recruitment and/or rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers. Little is known about the life of child soldiers while they are part of a rebel group, and that has resulted in a limited understanding of the active involvement of child soldiers within rebel groups. In this thesis I argue that it is essential to analyze thoroughly the period when child soldiers are actively involved with rebel groups. Building on previous analyses and theories on child soldiering, this can provide insights as to why child soldiers remain with rebel groups, and what happens to them during armed conflict.

Why is this important? Once child soldiers have left a rebel group, they are often offered support to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society. Unfortunately these forms of support frequently mismatch the needs of these children. I hold that this is a consequence of our limited knowledge about the period of active involvement with rebel groups. An in-depth understanding of the active life of child soldiers can help us improve Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programs. In turn, it is to be hoped that this will result in more effective aid and efficient use of support, producing better outcomes in rehabilitation and reintegration. Additionally, this thesis will help to fill the current knowledge gap in our understanding of child soldiers as well as of rebel groups. As yet the literature has not yet paid sufficient attention to why child soldiers remain with armed groups, or to the dynamics within such groups. Thus, this thesis should help to create a broader platform for knowledge development in these areas.

In order to be able to offer recommendations for improving DDRR programs as well as fill the current knowledge gap, this thesis will analyze the processes

creating allegiance amongst child soldiers. Once children have been recruited by a rebel group, whether this is forced or voluntary, the rebel commanders seek to ensure that these children remain with the group and function as effective soldiers. A long and thorough process is needed to achieve this, and I will argue that the process of *socialization* is a determining factor here.

My extensive field research among former child soldiers in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique indicates that socialization processes are an essential component in creating allegiance. Socialization, whereby individuals acquire the culture of their group, inducts child soldiers into the norms and values of the rebel group and results in sustained compliance. Whereas fear and a lack of alternatives often seem motivating factors for joining rebel groups at first, socialization acts to facilitate bonding *within* such groups and hence plays a critical role in creating loyalty and dependence on a rebel group. However, little is known as to how this is actually achieved; the literature has tended to focus on the effects that violence, intimidation and indoctrination have on child soldiers, failing to address the broader set of socialization processes within rebel groups. It should also be borne in mind that violence is not something that is used solely to indoctrinate and intimidate children: it makes children adopt violent behavior and become role models themselves. As such, violence is an important aspect of socialization within rebel groups, but the complete set of socialization processes at work within these groups is much broader. There is a need for research that can deal with this knowledge gap. For instance, ignoring the dynamics of organizational socialization that child soldiers experience results in a scope too narrow for explaining the phenomenon of child soldiers, and fails to grasp the long-term consequences of child recruitment.

Important questions that can shed light on the dynamics within rebel groups and the creation of allegiance among child soldiers need to be targeted. For instance: what combinations of tactics and practices are used in the socialization process to achieve bonding within rebel groups? And how do these practices help to explain why many child soldiers remain with rebel groups for long periods of time, posing severe threats to regional peace? This thesis attempts to uncover the broader dynamics of socialization processes within rebel groups, using case studies among former child soldiers and commanders of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia, and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) in Mozambique. However, it should be noted that this study should be seen as a starting point for future research on socialization within rebel groups. Although this study focuses on the African continent, child soldiering is a global phenomenon and much remains to be learned from studies of child soldier socialization in, for instance, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The case studies in this dissertation were selected because each of the four rebel groups relied heavily on the use of child soldiers, perhaps even owing their very existence to the involvement of children in their armed struggle. Interviews with experts and former rebels indicated that between 60% and 80% of the LRA consists of child soldiers. Extensive research on how these children became part of the LRA has shown that abduction and the use of force are the main methods of recruitment (Blattman, 2007). However, even though the majority of child soldiers were forced to join the group and did not receive significant rewards, my field research indicated that they often remained with the LRA for quite some time (four years on average), and attempts to escape were rather uncommon. The same was indicated by field research among child soldiers who had been involved with the RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. This seemingly contradictory phenomenon gives rise to the question: exactly what is it that motivates child soldiers to remain engaged with rebel groups? Allegiance is relatively high among LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO rebels; many child soldiers become loyal to these groups and stay with their commanders—even though the majority were initially recruited by force.

This indicates that the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO used efficient mechanisms to engage their members, facilitate bonding and create allegiance. By utilizing socialization mechanisms, these rebel groups remained cohesive, which in turn enabled them to continue their violent struggles for years or even decades. How did rebel groups with large numbers of forcibly recruited children manage to become so resilient? My field research indicates that socialization served as the “glue” that kept the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO together, and prevented the child soldiers from seeking to escape.

In addition to challenges encountered when attempting to deal with rebel groups as organizations, the reintegration of former rebels into society has proved to be a complex process. Rehabilitation programs often mismatch the needs of former rebels, resulting in disappointing reintegration results (Borzello, 2007). My field research in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique has indicated that former child soldiers are generally poorly understood; they often become outsiders in their communities. This not only challenges their individual development: it also jeopardizes the development of their societies, which must struggle with a “missing generation” as a consequence of the war.

When former child soldiers return to their villages, they are generally perceived as changed individuals: they seem to have a new identity and have abandoned their societal norms and values. I hold that these changes are the result of socialization processes within rebel groups. Previous research on child soldiers has not yet sufficiently addressed this phenomenon, which allows this dissertation to provide additional insights into the processes whereby which children evolve into



soldiers and stay with the rebels. So far, our limited understanding of child soldiers has obstructed attempts to target rehabilitation programs effectively, which endangers regional peace and stability. It is therefore important to conduct in-depth research that can shed light on the actual experiences of child soldiers, not least the socialization processes within rebel groups. Since the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO did manage to create strong *allegiance* among *forced* recruits, it seems logical to assume these groups used efficient mechanisms of socialization. In order to analyze to what extent socialization mechanisms played a role within these rebel groups, the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO are used as case studies in this thesis.

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the lives of child soldiers during their active involvement with the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. I will analyze the myriad of motivating factors for their life as a member of a rebel group. Given the fact that most of these child soldiers were forcibly recruited, I seek to explain their reasons for remaining with the rebels. Limited research on this topic allows me to contribute to the evolution of the research environment that concerns a persisting problem: children embodying the ultimate weapon in war. In this thesis, I argue that socialization is one of the most significant processes in the transformation of a child into a loyal soldier. I analyze which socialization mechanisms are at play within rebel groups and explore what effects they have. Moreover, I show how socialization creates allegiance, facilitates bonding, and makes children—many of them forcefully recruited—identify with the organization.

My main research question is twofold, as follows:

*Why do child soldiers remain with rebel groups, and how does socialization play a role in this?*

This leads to the following sub-questions:

- How and why are child soldiers used by African rebel groups?
- What tactics do African rebel groups use to integrate child recruits and create allegiance among them?
- What socialization processes can be found within African rebel groups?
- Does organizational socialization play a role? If so, how?
- What are the means of teaching used by African rebel groups?
- What are the effects of socialization concerning behavioral patterns, values, skills and motivations?
- Does socialization lead to internalization? If so, to what extent?
- Does socialization have the potential to transform children into loyal soldiers,

even when they were initially abducted by a rebel group?

- What are the similarities and differences between socialization processes found in various African rebel groups?

Given the complexity of the phenomenon of child soldiering, this thesis seeks to shed light on the processes preceding the socialization period that child soldiers experience. In order to create a broad, well-developed understanding of child soldiering I will build on and include research conducted during work on my MPhil and PhD dissertations.

In the first part of this thesis, I elaborate on the difficulties in defining a child soldier, and on socialization theory. Additionally, one section explains the research procedure followed while conducting field research; this section presents the methods used and emphasizes the importance of interviewing former child soldiers. Chapter 3 explains the use of child soldiers in rebel groups, the methods of recruitment, and the process of transforming a child into a soldier. In order to offer a clear understanding of how children become parts of rebel groups, I present an analysis of various studies conducted by prominent scholars such as Blattman (2007, 2008), Gates (2002, 2007, 2009), Machel (2001), Rosen (2005), Singer (2006), and Wessells (2004, 2006). I analyze the perspectives of a range of scholars, seeking to address the problem broadly and to create a balanced understanding of child soldiering. Generally, scholars have tended to view child soldiers as either victims or perpetrators. That is an invalid approach, in my view: child soldiers are sometimes victims, but not always—and sometimes perpetrators, but not always. I will propose an alternative that recognizes child soldiers as social actors, albeit in a structurally restricted way as they are subject to the dynamics within armed groups.

The second part of this thesis focuses on the case studies of the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. Although it is not possible to do justice to all of the complexities and nuances of the wars in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique within the scope of this thesis, it is important to contextualize these conflicts in order to understand the reasons for establishing these rebel groups, and their motivations. Each chapter begins with a brief analysis of the conflict background and describes the developments during the war. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 go on to elaborate upon the dynamics within these rebel organizations, their use of child soldiers, and the creation of allegiance. These chapters include fieldwork evidence to provide deeper insight into the organizations and their use of child soldiers. The specific processes of socialization child soldiers encounter within these rebel groups is examined, building on my field research among child soldiers in these countries.

The third part of this thesis highlights the differences and similarities in socialization that child soldiers experience in the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. It

also identifies some reintegration challenges caused by socialization processes within these rebel groups. By explaining how socialization creates allegiance among child soldiers and by highlighting the challenges this leads to, I hope to develop a more in-depth understanding of the lives of child soldiers within rebel groups. This in turn will enable me to indicate, in the concluding chapter, opportunities for improving disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former child soldiers.

## 2

### Studying Child Soldiers and Socialization

#### *Theoretical framework and research procedure*

This chapter will elaborate upon the background of the phenomenon known as child soldiering. It will highlight the difficulties of defining a child soldier and indicate which challenges this brings along. Hereafter it will focus on socialization theory and explain why rebel groups use socialization processes. By elaborating upon childhood socialization it will show why rebel groups find child soldiers useful. Further, process tracing in socialization is explained in order to build a foundation for the analysis of LRA socialization in later parts of this thesis. Lastly, this chapter will address the research procedure and method issues, presenting the extensive field research conducted in connection with this project.

#### **What is a Child Soldier?**

The existence of child soldiers is often seen as offensive and unacceptable, challenging people's basic assumptions about children, good and evil, and humankind. The generally accepted view seems to be that children should not be part of armed groups and that they deserve protection exercised by adults and societies. This view is established in national laws around the world, as well as in internationally ratified legal standards like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Optional Protocol on Children and Armed Conflict. The Optional Protocol bans all child recruitment by groups outside official governments and sets the minimum age for participation in combat at 18 years (Wessells, 2006:1–2).

Although these standards are widely recognized, reality undermines them, as the use of children in armed conflicts remains a global phenomenon. During the past decade large numbers of child soldiers have participated directly in at least 27 conflicts throughout Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (Wessells, 2006:10). This clearly demonstrates the extent of the problem. On the other hand, child soldiering is not something new caused by globalization: it is as old as mankind (Gates and Reich, 2009:2). Despite the near-global consensus that children should not be used as soldiers, child soldiering is an on-going phenomenon. For instance, according to the Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, “when armed conflict exists, children will almost inevitably become involved as soldiers” (2008).

The Global Report 2008 stresses the urgent global need to combat the

problem of child soldiers. However, this struggle faces severe constraints: even defining “child soldiers” presents a range of challenges. Andvig defines a child soldier as “a child who participates actively in a violent conflict by being a member of an organization that applies violence in a systematic way” (2006:7). But what is a child? Definitions of childhood are culturally established and differ from one society to another. Whereas most developed countries as well as the CRC define a person under 18 years of age as a child, many developing countries regard a person as an adult once he or she has begun doing adult work or has completed cultural rituals that lead to man- or womanhood. This implies that cultural phenomena, traditions, and social roles in developing countries lead to the perception that children become adults when they are approximately 14 or 15 years of age. Whereas a 15-year-old joining an armed group in a developing country may be perceived as a young adult by his or her own society, developed countries would consider this 15-year-old as a child and thus a child soldier. Still, despite the differing perceptions of when a child reaches adulthood, large portions of the populations in developing nations consider people under the age of 18 too young to join armed groups, and refer to them as “underage soldiers” or “minor soldiers” instead of using the laden term “child soldiers” (Wessells, 2006:5).

The term “child soldier” does not refer only to uniformed people bearing arms: it applies to people with a wide range of roles in armed groups—for example, as cooks, escorts, porters, babysitters, sex slaves, bodyguards, spies, human mine detectors, or laborers. Child soldiers are used by a large variety of armed groups, ranging from rebel groups to government forces (Gates and Reich, 2009:3, Human Rights Watch, 2007, and Wessells, 2006:6–7). The lack of verifiable data further complicates the problem, resulting in a series of myths (Gates and Reich, 2009:1).

Taking these considerations into account, this thesis adopts a broad definition of the term “child soldiers,” including the somewhat arbitrary age limit of 18 to define the upper limit of childhood. It will draw on Machel’s definition: “a child soldier is any child—boy or girl—under the age of 18, who is compulsorily, forcibly, or voluntarily recruited or used in hostilities by armed forces, paramilitaries, civil defense units or other armed groups. Child soldiers are used for forced sexual services, as combatants, messengers, porters, and cooks. Most are adolescents, though many are 10 years of age or younger. The majority are boys, but a significant proportion overall are girls” (Machel, 2001:7).

According to this definition, an estimated 300,000 child soldiers participate in conflicts throughout the world as part of armed groups. Approximately 40% of these soldiers are girls (Human Rights Watch, 2007, Machel, 2001, and Wessells, 2006). Still, Gates points out that this estimate dates from 1994. UN estimates from 2008 calculate the figure to be 250,000. We should keep in mind there are no accurate

figures available on the exact number of child soldiers (2009:1).

Among the international community, child soldiers have often been portrayed as victims of adults who profit from the exploitation of children. However, this one-dimensional portrayal has recently become the topic of heated debate, and research has started to develop a more anchored, broader understanding of the phenomenon. The fluidity and diversity within the concept of child soldiers has been highlighted, bringing a more nuanced view of the problem: “previous tendencies to infantilize children and to regard them as passive are giving way to a view of children as actors who have a strong sense of agency, participate in the construction of political discourses and social identities, and in some cases lead political action” (Wessells, 2006).

Still, this remains a divided field of inquiry, with scholars generally divided into two camps: the one describing child soldiers as victims who have been intimidated by adults and forced into soldiering; the second describing child soldiers as voluntary, ruthless perpetrators who see violence as a way to obtain respect, social justice, and political and economic opportunities (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:39, and Wessells, 2006:3). However, my field research has shown that child soldiers can be victims and perpetrators at the same time: like civilians were forced to take part in the conflicts, child soldiers were often forced to participate in the acts of war and gradually turned into perpetrators. Moreover, there are different types of perpetrators, as shown by Smeulers in her typology of perpetrators of international crimes (2008). Smeulers distinguishes between nine types of perpetrators that get involved in collective violence—ranging from criminal masterminds, to fanatics, sadists, profiteers, careerists, devoted warriors, followers and conformists, compromised perpetrators, and professional perpetrators. This typology indicates there is a gradation in perpetrating behavior, showing the difficulties of classifying a person in one particular category. When applying Smeulers’ work to the child soldier phenomenon, most children seem to fall either in the category of followers and conformists (those who get involved in collective violence by obediently following a leader or a current, without specific personal incentives to commit crime), or the compromised perpetrator (who commits crimes because of coercion or force). Others may get involved with armed groups and collective violence in order to gain a better position, status or power, and can hence be classified as a “careerist” type of perpetrator (Smeulers, 2008). This indicates we cannot exclusively group child soldiers in a particular category as their reasons for getting involved in collective violence vary. In addition, over time socialization may change their incentives for being part of a rebel group and the type of perpetrating behavior they portray. The effects of socialization may transform children into different types of perpetrators while they are part of the rebel group, making it impossible to draw broad

generalizations that would group child soldiers in one particular perpetrator category.

Looking at the difficulties to establish a definition that would fit all child soldiers, I argue that child soldiers cannot be viewed as either victims or perpetrators: drawing this sharp distinction denies important aspects of the phenomenon and challenges our attempts to grasp the complexities of rebel group dynamics. Moreover, we should bear in mind that children are social actors, despite the fact that the extent of their agency is often structurally restricted by armed groups and the force they apply. Podder makes an important argument in this respect: “force exists; violence is an important source of establishing control over people, places and things. War is all about control of spaces and humans. Nevertheless, children are actors in this space, they navigate, they succumb and they respond” (2011:145).

One of my informants, a 15-year-old boy soldier from Northern Uganda, explained how he dealt with the violence he experienced within the LRA and how he eventually decided to train other children to become just like him:

One morning, it was early-early, I heard shouting coming from outside. I woke up my brother, I did not know what was happening. Then they broke open the door. There were loud noises and shots, and two boys with guns shouted at me to come out. They threatened us with the guns. When I was outside they looked at me and pushed me around. I was small but strong and the commander told me I was now his boy, that I was now coming to the camp. He told me to beat the other children, to cut them with the machete. I don't know what happened, my eyes went black, my hands were full of blood. When I could see again the girl was already dead. I cried but the commander said it was ok; she was not a good girl and I was now part of them, the LRA family. There was no way I could go back to my village, everybody knew what I had done. So I stayed, and the commander was now my father who showed me how to be a man. When I was a good rebel I was also teaching the new children; I did not want to be alone, be the only one. So I showed them how to be the same like me, to be a fighter.

This account is one of many examples I encountered, showing how child soldiers generally become subject to violence first, but eventually perform violent acts themselves. This indicates that they are socialized by the rebel groups but use agency to make decisions in this process, and can even become socializers themselves, using socialization to make other children part of the group. In this dissertation I seek to show how the power of socialization nuances a child's agency, and that child soldiers cannot be portrayed solely as victims or as perpetrators.

As Gates (2009) rightly argues, child soldiers are characteristically depicted as victims, but the complicating feature that they are simultaneously predators is generally ignored. One reason that child soldiers are often seen as victims is explained by Utas, who notes the active role former child soldiers may play in the

creation of the victim image and the logics behind it. He states it is “no surprise that children in front of aid donors pretend to be as innocent as possible to get whatever possible advantages in their fragile post-combatant lives” (2011:218). Utas calls this “victimcy—the agency (albeit structurally limited) of victims,” which is “a form of social navigation; a navigator tool used by child soldiers as tactic responses to their socio-economic environment” (2011:219). Utas came across this phenomenon during his extensive field research in Liberia (2003, 2011), and his findings highlights the importance of acknowledging child soldiers’ agency and their tactical responses to the situations they find themselves in. Viewing them as solely victims is hence too simplistic and even dangerous; it not only disempowers them by denying their agency, but also underestimates the complexities of conflict reality.

Another reason behind the invalid reflection of child soldiers as either victims or perpetrators is described by Podder (2011). She points out the role media plays in the inconsistencies of child soldier portrayals wavering between innocence/vulnerability/incapacity on the one hand, and agency/capabilities on the other hand: “cumulatively the Western media has advanced and popularized a pejorative, wasted image of youth in conflict, and tended to portray a dramatized and sympathetic account of the processes and experiences involved in the life of a child soldier. For a practitioner, academic or humanitarian worker who has lived and worked with child soldiers these are far from the truth” (2011:141). The dichotomy between these lived realities and projected truths obviously leads to incomplete and problematic conceptualizations of the phenomenon, urging for efforts to achieve a more balanced and realistic understanding of the lives of child soldiers that can lead to better informed DDDR programs (Podder, 2011).

To achieve this it is important to break through the polarized views on child soldiers, by having a closer look at the role that (restricted) agency plays and its interlinkage with the socialization processes that make children stay with rebel groups. As Podder notes, children quickly “bond, trust and gradually forgive their own captors. It is their willingness to embrace the worst as best possible under extreme difficulty which is key to understanding agency issues of why young people join” (2011:145–146). Whereas this already indicates the importance of increasing our focus on agency and socialization processes, she goes even further by arguing that “child soldiering is always a choice, for some it’s an optimal choice amidst structural compulsions, for others it’s an exercise in tactical agency and a tool of survival” (2011:151). Due to a lack of research focus on the dynamics within rebel groups, we are currently facing a knowledge gap that does not allow us to further analyze the connections between socialization processes and agency. Therefore the following chapters will draw on extensive field research to analyze the processes that are at work within these groups, indicating how they influence child soldiers affiliated with



them.

By analyzing the changes that occur within children due to socialization processes, this thesis will attempt to solidify the argument that reflections of child soldiers as either emotionally crippled victims or predatory killers are over-simplistic and invalid conclusions. With the purpose of contributing to an international community that is attempting to understand and address the problem of child soldiering, it is essential to offer a more balanced perspective that systematically examines rebel group dynamics and socialization mechanisms. Analyzing the process of socialization within rebel groups will further develop the findings offered by Gates (2009), Podder (2011) and Utas (2003, 2011), resulting in a better understanding of the complex dynamics that are part of the child soldiering phenomenon. The ultimate goal of achieving this is that it will offer us better tools to combat the phenomenon and allow for the improvement of current DDRR programs.

### **Girl Soldiers**

Women and girl soldiers are often overlooked in conflict research. As Nordstrom correctly observes, “too often the girls are considered only as silent victims of (sexual) assault—devoid of agency, moral conscience, economic potential or political awareness...We need to ask girls to tell their own stories of war, its impact, and potential solutions, rather than assuming the right to speak for them” (1997:36). In another observation, Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998) argue that “the enduring wartime picture of ‘man does, woman is’ has depended on the invisibility of women’s participation in the war effort, their unacknowledged, behind-the-lines contributions to the prosecution of war, and their hidden complicity in the construction of fighting forces...It is no longer possible to maintain the innocence of all women.” As I agree with the significance of including girls in conflict research and the need to give them a voice, I have aimed for equal representation of boy and girl soldiers among my informants. Mainly based on my interviews with these girls, the range of experiences girl soldiers had within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO will be thoroughly discussed in this thesis.

The importance of addressing girls in war zones was amplified during field research. It emerged that girls and women played significant roles within each of the four rebel groups I focused on. In fact, the rebels often relied on the girls for their very existence. I found that the survival of the rebel groups depended heavily on the cooperation of female members and the contributions they made. The complex plots of war reality I encountered also indicated that girl soldiers—like boys—cannot be portrayed as either stereotypical victims or perpetrators. Even though girls are often portrayed as victims, girl soldiers should not be generalized as civilians who have been forced to fight: 41 of the 118 girl soldiers I spoke with had chosen to take up

weapons and become soldiers. Furthermore, my field research indicated that women inside rebel groups play essential roles and many girl soldiers use deliberate strategies to utilize their agency within the context of war. They should hence by no means solely be perceived as passive victims. This is shown by Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998), who argue that “women are also combatants; women resist and fight back; they take sides, spy, and fight among themselves; and even when they don’t see active service, they often support war efforts in multiple ways, willingly or unwillingly.”

This points out the complexity of the child soldier phenomenon: child soldiers may be perceived as victims, but also as perpetrators or social agents, perhaps even simultaneously but on different levels. There is no clear dividing line that separates them into such categories, even though girls in particular are often perceived as victims. As Mats Utas explains:

The amount of individual agency or the amount of victimcy changes from situation to situation, from one social relation to another—whether you are a man or a woman. In war men and women are situated on the same sliding scale between abundant agency and victimcy. Even most so-called perpetrators are severely limited in their agency: to survive, civilians are forced to participate in war trade, while fighters are forced by their commanders to participate in atrocities. Likewise, the commanders are forced to command so as to keep their men in place and the enemy terrified” (Utas, [in: Honwana and de Boeck,] 2005:57).

This thesis will contribute to this debate by analyzing how children are socialized for their role as rebels, and to what extent they internalize this role and the values that are associated with it. Moreover, taking the complexities of war into account, this thesis will also show that girl soldiers—like boys—continuously oscillate between the position as a victim or perpetrator, civilian or soldier.

### **The Process of Socialization**

As rightly noted by Gutiérrez Sanín, “using children in war can be quite problematic. And the younger and more inexperienced the child, the more problematic it can become. Therefore, groups have to transform them into warriors” (2010:123). Moreover, “since the motivations to join an armed group are so varied, the recruits have to be thoroughly transformed into useful soldiers. [Compared to adults] children can be more easily induced into false beliefs before joining and more easily molded when they have become members” (2010:129). In this thesis I argue that socialization plays a significant role in the transformation from child to soldier. So far, little light has been shed to the social processes and dynamics within rebel groups. As Elizabeth Wood argues, limited “attention has been paid to the social processes of civil war—by

which I mean the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level—that sometimes leave profound social changes at their wake” (2008:540). Wood argues that these processes cause transformations in social networks, noting the importance to further deepen the explanation of socialization. “These processes reconfigure social networks in a variety of ways, creating new networks, dissolving some, and changing the structure of others, as when the local clients of a patron are mobilized into an armed network with a new central figure. A social network consists of persons (network nodes) linked by different kinds of relationships (edges)” (2008:540). Wood’s argument indicates that social processes of civil war have a large impact on the construction of society as well as rebel groups. My field research showed that this was the case also when children became part of the LRA, RUF, LURD or RENAMO: social processes aided their transformation into soldiers.

Children abducted to become part of a rebel group enter a completely new life from the moment they are taken away from their homes and enter the bush. The shift from “village life” to “bush life” encompasses changes on many levels, which require rigorous adjustment of the child to the lifestyle group. Field research I conducted among former LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO child soldiers and commanders indicated that socialization is used to make these children loyal members of the group, including those forcefully recruited. But what do we know about socialization? As Brim explains: “through socialization the individual acquires the culture of his group or groups. This includes two main divisions of culture: the traditional positions, or *statuses*, in the society and the *role behaviors* associated with them...Consider first the individual who is confronted with a new role and knows virtually nothing about what he should do. In such a case society will require new socialization” (Brim, 1968:555–556).

Checkel sees socialization as “a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community. Its outcome is sustained compliance based on the internalization of these new norms. In adopting community rules, socialization implies that an agent switches from following a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness; this adoption is sustained over time and is quite independent from a particular structure of material incentives or sanctions” (2005:804). Socialization can come about via various pathways. According to Checkel different socialization mechanisms take place and are effective (Zürn and Checkel, 2005:1075). These mechanisms aim for the internalization of values, but some methods are more effective than others in achieving the goals of socialization. “Effectiveness seems to depend on the nature of the content being transmitted, the characteristics of the persons being socialized, the persons’ relationship to the socializing agent, and similar factors” (Brim, 1968:557).

Checkel (2005) distinguishes between two types of socialization: the former referring to the adoption of new roles, while the latter refers to changes in values and interests. Bearce (2007) makes this distinction clear:

Socialization is the process by which actors acquire different identities, leading to new interests through regular and sustained interactions within broader social contexts and structures. Concerning socialization depth, constructivist scholars have carefully distinguished between Type I and Type II socialization. The former is relatively shallow and describes the situation in which an actor simply learns to play by the rules of a new social context or institution. Type I socialization clearly implies a change in an actor's behavior but not necessarily a change in the actor's interests. Type II socialization is deeper and refers to the situation in which actors take on a new social identity, independent of any material incentives to do so, leading to a demonstrable change in their interests over time" (2007:706).

This definition implies that Type II socialization leads to identity change.

Checkel stresses the importance of addressing a threefold analytic challenge when focusing on socialization. According to his theory, one must: "(1) establish the presence of socialization mechanisms and the conditions of their operation; (2) assess whether internalization (Type I or II) actually occurred; and (3) ask whether socialized actors behave differently than either they did before they were socialized, or than non-socialized actors do" (Checkel, 2005:816). Thus, in order to analyze the socialization process and its effects, one must examine whether a shift has occurred away from a logic of consequences and toward a logic of appropriateness (Checkel, 2005).

Checkel emphasizes the problem that scholars tend not to ask why actors comply with social norms:

Instead, they often focused on later stages of compliance, where internalization (full socialization) was nearly complete. This led many scholars to bracket the process of reaching this end state. At this late stage, however, compliance was not an issue of choice in any meaningful sense: agent behavior was governed by rules and driven by certain logics of appropriateness. The result was a somewhat static portrayal of social interaction, coupled with correlational and structural arguments built on "as if" assumptions at the level of agents" (Checkel, 2001:557).

The next chapters will show how studies of child soldiering have indeed bracketed the process pointed out by Checkel. Scholars like Blattman, Andvig and Gates note the importance of socialization, but have not systematically identified the key processes of how this takes place. This has resulted in limited understandings of child soldiering as such. To fill this knowledge gap, I will analyze the process of

socialization within rebel groups in line with Checkel's suggestion for a threefold analysis in the case-study chapters of this thesis.

### **Childhood Socialization**

As seen in the preceding part of this chapter, socialization is a powerful tool in the creation of a cohesive group by changing and assimilating the identities of individuals. Moreover, socialization proves particularly effective when used on children. As Brim states:

The fact that childhood socialization is usually so much more effective than adult socialization can be explained partly in terms of the different types of relationships that typically obtain between the individual and the socializing agent or agency at different stages in the life cycle. The relationship between child and parent is a highly affective one: by contrast, the adult socialization context is likely to be far less charged with emotion—in Parsons' phrase, it is characterized by "affective neutrality." Moreover, the parent socializing the child is likely to make a far more open and continual use of power, so that the child can hardly avoid realizing that it is the weaker party in the situation. Agents of adult socialization, on the other hand, typically appeal more to the reason and self-interest of the person being socialized, and use power only as a last resort (Brim, 1968:558).

This indicates that the socialization of children is generally both more effective and also easier to achieve. Rebel groups may find it particularly useful to involve children in their activities.

Brim sheds light on the different effects and consequences the use of power has on the socialization of children compared to adults:

There is at least one major consequence of this difference for the results of socialization: adult socialization limits itself, on the whole, to a concern with behavior rather than with motivation and values. In fact, it is less able to teach basic values and probably requires a relationship paralleling that of childhood to bring equivalent basic value changes. An example is the extreme one of prisoner-of-war camps. Work on "brainwashing" and the breakdown of resistance to enemy values shows the context to be one in which the captors use their extreme power in a deliberate manipulation of the whole range of affect, from rejection and hate, on the one hand, to support and positive sympathy on the other, thus bringing the prisoner into a position similar to that of a child with his parent (Brim, 1968:558).

This argument will be complemented with evidence from field research reflected in later parts of this thesis, showing that one of the reasons why rebel groups recruit children is because molding them into loyal rebels is easier as compared to adults.

Since it is easier and more effective to socialize children compared to adults, “it would seem desirable from society’s point of view to be able to socialize an individual in childhood so that he could successfully handle all of the roles he would confront in the future” (Brim, 1968:555). This indicates that by choosing to use child soldiers, a rebel group has to put less effort in creating loyal members. These children have not yet gone through the same socialization processes that adults from the same society have experienced. Their sense of identity is relatively weak compared to adults and it is therefore easier to use socialization as a mechanism to melt their identities into the group identity. This is a more challenging task when it comes to adult recruits since experience limits the effects of socialization. Brim argues that there are many reasons

why the effects of early experience place important limits on later socialization. In the first place, attitudes learned in childhood are especially durable because they are continually being taught and just as continually reinforced. Second, there is good reason to believe that during early socialization the bulk of the unconscious material of the personality is accumulated. The continuity of the individual personality (and probably its characteristic modes of defense as well) is therefore maintained by the inertia, so to speak, of unconscious forces relatively inaccessible to change by later socialization. Finally, it has been suggested that the human life cycle, like that of subhuman species, may contain critical periods at which human beings must learn certain things if they are to develop further. Failure to learn these things during the appropriate period may make it impossible for subsequent learning to take place” (Brim, 1968:558).

This explanation shows why rebel groups that recruit child soldiers may have an advantage in creating a loyal, cohesive group through socialization. Although children do have agency, when compared to adults it is much easier to melt the identity of child recruits into the group identity and transform them into loyal soldiers.

### **Culture and Organizational Socialization**

*“Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don’t understand the operation of these forces, we become victim to them.”*

Schein, 2006:3

Looking at the circumstances of child recruitment into rebel groups, it may be hard to imagine that child soldiers can become motivated to fight with these organizations. Andvig holds that “intrinsic motivation cannot be bought or forced, it is either present or not” (2006:32)—but this assumption is incorrect. My field

research shows that socialization within rebel groups has made child soldiers change their norms, values, and even identities to such an extent that their motivations have become intrinsic, even after these children were forced to become part of these groups. The African rebel groups studied in this dissertation have created sophisticated socialization mechanisms that create allegiance and fierce loyalty among many of its rebels. Still, understanding why child soldiers stay with rebel groups remains a challenge, especially when trying to grasp the situation of those who were forcefully recruited. The next few chapters therefore seek to shed light on this complex question, by exploring the dynamics of organizational socialization processes within the four rebel groups studied here. Although it often does not make sense to us that child soldiers become loyal to violent rebel groups, according to Schein (2006) the concept of culture can help us perceive the forces that operate within rebel groups and decipher the organizational dynamics that lead to allegiance.

Culture itself has been the topic of widespread academic debate (Ashkanasy, Wilderom and Peterson, 2000), but Schein aims to offer a precise definition by stating that culture is “the accumulated shared learning of a given group, covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the group members’ total psychological functioning. For such shared learning to occur, there must be a history of shared experience that, in turn, implies some stability of membership in the group. Given such stability and a shared history, the human need for stability, consistency, and meaning will cause the various shared elements to form into patterns that eventually can be called a culture” (2006:17). Group culture on the other hand, is defined by Schein as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (2006:17).

Given the culture of rebel groups, they are likely to suffer from ambiguity among its members due to forced recruitment, as well as insufficient shared history or stability of membership. In addition, Schein points out that “all group and organizational theories distinguish two major sets of problems that all groups, no matter what their size, must deal with: (1) survival, growth, and adaptation in their environment; and (2) internal integration that permits daily functioning and the ability to adapt and learn” (2006:18). This implies that rebel groups have to tackle a broad set of challenges in order to stick together and survive. The next part of this chapter will explain what organizational socialization mechanisms can contribute to overcoming these challenges, providing the “glue” that can aid to the creation of a cohesive rebel group. As Schein explains, socialization passes on the group’s cultural elements to new members, teaching them about the assumptions and operating

norms. This indicates, “culture is a mechanism of social control and can be the basis for explicitly manipulating members into perceiving, thinking and feeling in certain ways” (2006:19). This shows how closely culture, identity and socialization are interlinked.

The dynamics of this process will be explained in the case study chapters. First I present the foundational framework for analyzing the socialization processes at work within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. Viewing rebel groups through such lenses will assist us in developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of these groups. In order to analyze the dynamics within African rebel groups, this dissertation predominantly uses definitions of (organizational) socialization developed by Checkel (2005), Grusec and Hastings (2007), Van Maanen (1977) and Schein (2003, 2006). These theories on socialization have each been developed in different fields of research and have made a significant contribution to analyses of international institutions, organizations, and multinational companies, as well as the development of management theory. They have offered excellent insights into the functioning and sustainability of a wide array of organizations, and proved to be very useful for getting a better understanding of why organizations do or do not work. This thesis seeks out the relevance of these socialization theories for an entirely different context by applying them to four African rebel groups. During the course of this research I realized that other scholars had hinted at the importance of socialization in armed groups already, but did not yet develop a deeper analysis of the dynamics within these groups. Also, whereas the literature often reflects rebel groups as temporary, non-cohesive bunches of opportunistic bandits, my informants pointed out that these groups were actually quite well structured organizations. These paradoxes raised many question marks and pointed to a need for a deeper understanding of rebel groups as organizations in order to get to a better understanding of the child soldier phenomenon. Looking at the well-established theories of for instance Checkel and Van Maanen and their ability to unravel the many facets of an organization, I decided to use their organizational socialization lenses to look at rebel group socialization. With this “out-of-the-box” approach of ‘mixing and matching’ theories from different fields I aim to establish an innovative, systematic analysis of rebel groups and their use of child soldiers that contributes to new knowledge development in the field of conflict research.

To give an example, Van Maanen conducted research on organizational culture and its effects on group members and found that

any organizational culture consists broadly of long standing rules of thumb, a somewhat special language and ideology that help edit a member’s everyday experience, shared standards of relevance as to the critical aspects of the work that is



being accomplished, matter-of-fact prejudices, models for social etiquette and demeanor, certain customs and rituals suggestive of how members are to relate to colleagues, subordinates, superiors, and outsiders, and a sort of residual category of some rather plain “horse sense” regarding what is appropriate and “smart” behavior within the organization and what is not. Such cultural forms are so rooted in the recurrent problems and common experiences of the membership in an organizational segment that once learned they become viewed by insiders as perfectly “natural” responses to the world of work they inhabit” (1977:2).

This does not mean that it is easy to transfer an organizational culture to new group members: they may have different norms and values, backgrounds and behavior that are at odds with the organization and its more experienced members. These well-integrated members “must therefore find ways to insure that the newcomer does not disrupt the on-going activity on the scene, embarrassing or casting a disparaging light on others, or question too many of the established cultural solutions worked out previously. Put bluntly, new members must be taught to see the organizational world as do their more experienced colleagues if the traditions of the organization are to survive. The manner in which this teaching/learning occurs is referred to here as the organizational socialization process” (Van Maanen, 1977:3).

While doing interviews with former child soldiers and rebel commanders across the African continent this process was shining through their accounts time and time again, raising my interest in (organizational) socialization theories and their applicability to rebel groups. Therefore, I decided to use Van Maanen’s well-developed theoretical foundation on the six tactics of organizational socialization to see if it would allow for the deeper exploration of dynamics within African rebel groups. I argue that applying Van Maanen’s in-depth explanation of these processes to rebel groups can offer insights into the dynamics of these groups and help us to understand how organizational socialization contributes to the creation of allegiance among even forcibly recruited child soldiers. Checkel’s (2005) theory on the threefold analytical challenge and internalization will then be applied to analyze the effects of socialization within rebel groups. In order to provide a consistent analysis and to be able to draw a comparison between the rebel groups, the theories developed by Checkel and Van Maanen will be applied to each of the case studies in the following chapters.

### *The Six Tactics of Organizational Socialization*

According to Van Maanen (1977), socialization processes necessarily involve the transmission of information and values. Organizational socialization consists of six different tactics and refers to “the process by which one is taught and learns “the ropes” of a particular organizational role. In its most general sense, organizational

socialization is then the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen, 1977:3). Moreover, “organizational socialization refers to the fashion in which an individual is taught and learns what behaviors and perspectives are customary and desirable within the work setting as well as what ones are not” (1977:4). Socializing agents employ a mix of different tactics when socializing their new recruits into the organization, as will be described in the sections below. It should be noted that these tactics can be applied simultaneously and that there is no specific order in which they take place. In order to analyze how organizational socialization plays a role within African rebel groups, Van Maanen’s theoretical foundation will be applied to each of the rebel groups in the case study chapters.

### *Collective Socialization*

The first of six potential tactics described by Van Maanen is collective socialization. This “refers to the tactic of taking a group of recruits who are facing a given boundary passage and putting them through a common set of experiences together. A good example of this process is basic training or boot camp in military organizations” (Van Maanen, 1977:38). Further: “collective socialization programs are usually found in organizations where there are a large number of recruits to be processed into the same organizationally defined role; where the content of this role can be fairly clearly specified; and, where the organization desires to build a collective sense of identity, solidarity, and loyalty within the cohort group being socialized” (1977:41).

A clear example of this can be found within the military training of rebel groups. After groups of children have been abducted the rebels usually order all new abductees to gather for military training. They are shown how to dismantle and assemble guns, and told what all the gun parts are called. After this demonstration the new abductees are given guns and have to repeat what they have learned. The ones who fail are punished and usually caned until they manage to complete the training properly. Those who are successful will eventually make the transition to integrated or full-fledged member, signaled by receiving a particular responsibility (which if not carried out correctly will result in severe punishment). Schein explains that “the purpose of such transitional events is to help the new member incorporate his new values, attitudes, and norms into his identity so that they become part of him...With this transition often come titles, symbols of status, extra rights or prerogatives, sharing of confidential information or other things which in one way or another indicate that the new member has earned the trust of the organization” (2003:289). Examples of these are the allocation of bush wives, ranks, etc. Although some of these events may not seem significant to outside observers, they are of high importance to group members. As Schein indicates, a group member “knows when he

has finally ‘been accepted’, and feels it when he becomes ‘identified’ with the company” (2003:289). This shows that this dynamic is intended to lead to commitment to the group by gaining the new recruits acceptance of group ideals (Schein, 2003). If counter-organizational behavior arises, the ‘disobedient’ group member will be punished to point out that group ideals have been violated and that obedient behavior is expected.

However powerful this process seems, Van Maanen also acknowledges that collective socialization may provide a potential basis for resistance among new recruits. As the new recruits may face common problems overcoming the presented boundary passages, they may look for solutions as a group. Thus, the likelihood of rebellion within a collectively socialized group is relatively high, which may lead to collective deviation (Van Maanen, 1977:42). This is also recognized by Schein (2003), who describes the development of peer cultures due to heavy workloads. As Schein points out, these peer cultures function as a defense against the threatening organization and lead to a risk of counter-socializing forces that may result in resistance, rebellion or sabotage. However, any form of resistance or deviation is efficiently tackled by rebel groups through the use of extreme forms of violence against deviating members. An example of this is witnessing or carrying out the killing and beating of misbehaving fellow group members, either by integrated rebels or new recruits. This discourages other rebels from deviating, as they fear the same punishment. In addition to extreme violence to discourage deviation or resistance, strict rules are imposed on the group members. If a group member were caught deviating, extremely harsh public punishment would follow, discouraging any other group members from showing the same behavior.

It is a common strategy for rebel group commanders to tackle potential deviation by spreading fear and carrying out punishments in public, as the next chapters will show. In addition, collective deviation is avoided as child soldiers within rebel groups are generally strictly supervised and are not given the opportunity to discuss discomforts among themselves. Their behavior is thoroughly analyzed and if rebel commanders are not satisfied with their attitude they are heavily punished. In most cases, fellow child soldiers are ordered to carry out the punishment. The inclusion in these punishments prevents them from non-compliant behavior. This high level of surveillance significantly limits possibilities for collective deviation.

### *Formal Socialization*

In addition to collectively socializing new recruits, the rebel groups utilize a formal socialization process: the second organizational socialization tactic described by Van Maanen. “Formal socialization refers to those processes in which a newcomer is more or less segregated from regular organizational members while being put through a set

of experiences tailored explicitly for the newcomer” (Van Maanen, 1977:43–44). The segregation from regular organizational members, in this case “integrated” rebels, is an important aspect of the socialization process practiced by rebel groups. During their initiation period child soldiers stay separated from integrated rebels, sleep in different places, eat different food, and are not allowed to approach integrated rebels. They go through a set of experiences that is especially designed for new recruits in order to integrate them within the group. These include severe caning of each new recruit as a means of registration, the ritual in which new recruits are smeared with shea butter, the task of carrying out violence, and a strict training regime. This is done to teach the new recruit his or her new role and to feel and think like a group member. As Van Maanen describes it, formal socialization is typically found in organizations “where it is deemed important that a newcomer learns the ‘correct’ attitudes, values, and protocol associated with the new role. To put the matter bluntly, the more formal the process, the more concern there is likely to be shown for the recruit’s absorption of the appropriate demeanor and stance associated with the target role” (1977:45). Formal periods of socialization “serve to provide an intensive period in which others in the organization can rather closely judge the newcomer’s commitment and deference to the critical values of the occupation” (1977:46). During this period commanders closely monitor and supervise newly abducted children. As explained earlier, those who do not adhere to the demands of the commander face severe punishment and are likely to be killed.

### *Random Socialization*

The processes practiced by rebel groups can also be identified as random socialization: the third tactic of organizational socialization. “Random socialization occurs when the sequence of steps leading to the target role is unknown, ambiguous, or continually changing...Thus, in random processes, while there may be a number of steps or stages leading to the taking of certain organizational roles, there is no necessary order specified in terms of the steps that are to be taken” (Van Maanen, 1977:51). Generally there is no specific order of steps to be taken within rebel groups in order to achieve a particular organizational role. There is often a clear hierarchical system within these organizations, consisting of military ranks that distinguish between the status and roles of rebels. However, there is no structured path leading to the achievement of a rank or important role.

For instance, staying with the rebels for many years does not mean that one is ever granted a military rank. New recruits may receive a rank much earlier than integrated rebels, all depending on their behavior and the personality of their commanders. The distribution of ranks can therefore vary greatly between rebel group battalions. Generally speaking, if rebels are actively engaged with group

activities, they earn the appreciation and respect of commanders. In some cases rebels will be given a rank for this reason, which often will give them the responsibility for their own group of soldiers. Whether ranks are distributed in this way seems to depend on which battalion they are part of and particularly under which commander they fight.

### *Variable Socialization*

As a fourth tactic of organizational socialization Van Maanen describes variable socialization processes which “give a recruit few clues as when to expect a given boundary passage” (1977:55). Further: “variable socialization processes are most likely to produce custodial responses. The logic behind this proposition is simply that a variable situation leads to maximum anxiety and this anxiety operates as a strong motivator toward conformity...Variable socialization processes keep a recruit maximally off balance and at the mercy of socialization agents” (1977:58–59). This is indeed the case within rebel groups whose entire existence may be perceived as a variable situation. Rebel groups are often chased by government armies and thus constantly on the run throughout the region. These variable situations create maximum anxiety for recruits as they are taken far away from home, are constantly moving and generally do not know where they are. The sense of security children used to have at home is replaced by a feeling of great uncertainty and the only thing they have left to hold on to is the group, encouraging conformity to the group’s demands.

The variable socialization process is also explained by Schein (2003), who refers to these variable occurrences as ‘upending experiences’. Schein defines upending experiences as “deliberately planned or accidentally created circumstances which dramatically and unequivocally upset or disconfirm some of the major assumptions which the new man holds about himself, his company, or his job” (2003:285). As also explained by Van Maanen, such experiences keep the recruit maximally off-balance. As Schein’s research further reveals, this uncertainty makes recruits turn to their leaders for advice, facilitating the establishment of a relationship between them. Within rebel groups, these dynamics can also be witnessed and are of utmost importance to keep the group together. Interviews with former child soldiers in the studied countries revealed that this indeed led to conformity, which in turn contributed to the formation of ties to the group, bonds between rebels and a growing sense of community. As described by Brehm and Gates (2008), the feeling of camaraderie and solidarity results in social cohesion, compliance with collective goals and high retention, reinforcing the process even further.

### *Serial Socialization*

The fifth tactic of organizational socialization elaborated upon by Van Maanen is serial socialization. “A serial socialization process is one in which experienced members of the organization groom newcomers who are about to assume similar kinds of positions in the organization. In effect, these experienced members serve as role models for recruits” (Van Maanen, 1977:59). According to serial socialization, integrated rebels and commanders would serve as role models for new recruits. This is indeed the case as these integrated rebels and commanders groom new recruits, as they will have to assume similar positions within the group. An example of this is the teaching of new recruits how to operate guns so they can participate in fighting like integrated rebels do.

According to Van Maanen “serial socialization is most likely to be associated with inclusionary boundary passages. This association results because to become a central member of any organizational segment normally requires that others consider one to be affable, trustworthy, and, of course, central as well. This is unlikely to occur unless these others perceive the newcomer to be, in most respects, similar to themselves. Recruits must at least seem to be taking those with whom they work seriously or risk being labeled deviant in the situation and hence not allowed across inclusionary boundaries” (1977:62). The case study chapters of this dissertation will show that this is extensively tested among new recruits within rebel groups. Newcomers have to identify with and act as a rebel rather quickly. Integrated rebels and commanders test this development by asking new recruits questions that are often symbolic. This shows the importance of serial socialization and the consequences of not assimilating with integrated rebels.

### *Divestiture Socialization*

As a final tactic of socialization, Van Maanen elaborates upon divestiture socialization processes. These “seek to deny and strip away certain personal characteristics of a recruit” (1977:64). This type of socialization is “organized explicitly to disconfirm many aspects of the recruit’s entering self-image, thus beginning the process of rebuilding the individual’s self-image based upon new assumptions. Often these new assumptions arise from the recruit’s own discovery, gradual or dramatic, that they have an ability to do things they had not thought themselves able to do previously” (1977:65). This type of organizational socialization is also described by Schein (2003). He explains that the socialization of new recruits often first involves a “destructive or unfreezing phase,” as their values and behavioral patterns may not be aligned with the organization’s expectations. According to Schein, “this phase serves the function of detaching the person from his former values, of proving to him that his present self is worthless from the point of view of the organization and that he must redefine

himself in terms of new roles which he is to be granted" (2003:285).

This type of socialization is used by rebel groups in seeking to erase the "civilian spirit" from its recruits and turns them into integrated rebels. Children enter rebel groups with a self-image that is completely rebuilt by the socialization process they undergo within these groups. During the time they spend with the rebels, new recruits discover they are able to carry out extreme types of violence, kill people, loot villages and so on. In addition, they generally get new names. Receiving a bush or war name is an important part of the socialization process: it encourages the child to rebuild a new identity being part of the group, leaving the old self behind. This is also acknowledged by Schein, who notes that in extreme cases of organizational socialization the old self of the new recruit "is symbolically destroyed by loss of clothing, name, hair, titles and other self-defining equipment. These are replaced with uniforms, new names and titles, and other self-defining equipment consonant with the new role he is being trained for" (2003:285).

Furthermore, "in extreme circumstances, recruits are forced to abstain from certain types of behavior, must publicly degrade themselves and others, and must follow a rigid set of rules and regulations. Furthermore, measures are often taken to isolate recruits from former associates who presumably would continue to confirm the recruit's old identity" (Van Maanen, 1977:66). "Divestiture processes are most likely to be found (1) at the point of initial entry into an organization or occupation, and (2) prior to the crossing of major inclusionary boundaries where a recruit must pass some basic test of worthiness for membership in an organizational segment" (1977:67). This is clearly seen when children are recruited by rebel groups. For instance, from the moment children become part of rebel groups they are generally not allowed to identify with their biological family anymore. They are removed as far as possible from their old identity, by burning all bridges with their past. They are often forced to kill in front of their village members when they enter the organization. Then, to become an integrated rebel, they have to pass the questions of commanders and are ordered to perform certain tasks (like killing or looting) as a test of worthiness of the group.

This highlights that "divestiture processes, in effect, remold the person and, therefore, are powerful ways for organizations and occupations to control the values of incoming members. It is such processes which lie at the heart of most professional training thus helping to explain why professionals appear to be so deeply and permanently socialized. For, once a person has successfully completed a difficult divestiture process and has constructed something of a new identity based on the role to which the divestiture process was directed, there are strong forces toward the maintenance of the new identity" (Van Maanen, 1977:67). This explains why organizational socialization is used by rebel groups: it leads to high levels of

allegiance because their recruits take on new identities, align with the group culture and become loyal to the organizations.

Van Maanen's theory of these six different processes of socialization shows that "these tactical dimensions are associated with one another and that the actual impact of organizational socialization upon a recruit is a cumulative one, the result of a combination of socialization tactics which perhaps enhance and reinforce or conflict and neutralize each other. It is also obvious that awareness of these tactical dimensions makes it possible for managers to design socialization processes which maximize the probabilities of certain outcomes" (Van Maanen, 1977:68). The four case study chapters will show that looking at the tactics used by rebel groups one can indeed derive that these reinforce and enhance each other, ensuring that new recruits are subject to effective organizational socialization, which creates motivation, loyalty, control, resilience and allegiance to the rebel groups.

Still, as Schein rightly notes, the success of organizational socialization depends on various factors. First of all, motivation to join the group plays a major role: if the recruit is highly motivated to be part of the group he or she will tolerate distressing socialization processes. But if motivation is low, the recruit may decide to leave the group due to the discomforts of these processes, implying that socialization fails. Secondly, the success of organizational socialization is determined by the possibility to keep recruits captured during the process (Schein, 2003). Whether rebel groups are able to tackle these challenges, preventing failure of organizational socialization processes and making child recruits part of the group culture will be analyzed in the case study chapters.

### **Process Tracing of Socialization**

As seen in the previous sections, socialization not only leads to compliance: it also builds bridges between the individual and the group. Membership of the group evokes the socialization of actors, which in turn provides them with a new understanding of their interests and identity. Zürn and Checkel stress the importance of establishing "how socialization happens (identify the socialization mechanism) and under what conditions (identify the scope conditions)" (2005:1049). As part of this process, Checkel emphasizes the necessity of exploring "complex social learning, a process whereby agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction" (2001:561). A useful method to achieve this is process tracing.

This dissertation will use process tracing as a tool in order to analyze the interviews and discover how socialization plays a role within the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. Checkel used process tracing to study causal mechanisms in international socialization (2008). According to Checkel "process tracing means to trace the operation of the causal mechanism(s) at work in a given situation"



(2008:115). George and Bennett define process tracing as tracing “the links between possible causes and observed outcomes. In process-tracing, the researcher examines histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case” (2005:6). Moreover, “the process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable (George and Bennett, 2005:206). Process tracing can be used to “focus on whether the variable of interest was causally linked to any change in outcome and to assess whether other independent variables that change over time might have been causal” (2005:221).

According to George and Bennett, “process tracing is particularly useful for obtaining an explanation for deviant cases, those that have outcomes not predicted or explained adequately by existing theories” (2005:215). In his work on social learning Checkel uses process tracing “to document the processes and motivations through which agents comply with norms.” Through process tracing Checkel seeks “to investigate and explain the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes [compliance in this case]” (2001:565). This method has proved to be able to identify the causal mechanism leading to socialization. According to Checkel “the term causal mechanism refers to the intermediate processes along which international institutions may lead actors toward accepting the norms, rules, and modes of behavior of a given society. Mechanisms connect things; they link specified initial conditions and a specific outcome ... A causal mechanism that leads to socialization will be triggered under certain circumstances” (Zürn and Checkel, 2005:1049). This can also be applied to explain how the use of socialization by the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO creates allegiance among its rebels.

Given the lack of theories on socialization within rebel groups, one of the central concerns of this thesis is to specify the mechanisms of socialization used within the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. Process tracing seems a particularly valid method to use in these cases, as it will illuminate the conditions under which these mechanisms lead to the internalization of new roles and interests. Process tracing will be used to shed light on how socialization contributes to the creation of a sense of community and belonging, and thus allegiance within the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. The broader aim of this is to contribute to the development of a more general theory on socialization within rebel groups. However, in order to fully understand the use and influence of socialization within rebel groups, it is necessary to understand why and how children become involved with rebel groups. Therefore, Chapter 4 will elaborate upon the use of children in rebel groups and create the basis from which I will analyze socialization within the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO.

The results of the interviews conducted with former child soldiers and commanders will be analyzed in the case study chapters, revealing how socialization plays an essential role in creating allegiance among rebels in each of these groups.

### **Research Procedure and Case Studies**

In analyzing the phenomenon of child soldiering, it is essential to include child soldiers themselves in research. Only a “few researchers have made a consistent effort to include the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and specific statements of children in their empirical investigations” (Zwiers, 1999:127). But it is only the children themselves who can help us to understand exactly why they participate in rebel groups and remain with these groups. Including the voices of former child soldiers avoids the bias entailed in using solely the opinions of scholars and humanitarian organizations.

The benefits of including former child soldiers can be seen in recent developments regarding the study of child soldiering that show how these children are not mere victims: there is also a perpetrating side to the phenomenon. I argue that the inclusion of former child soldiers in research enables the creation of a broader understanding of the undermined complexity and multi-faceted character of the phenomenon. This is essential in trying to combat the problem of child soldiering, as the roots of the problem must be understood before one can reach solutions for this complex issue. As Hughes and Baker argue: “if one wants to understand a child's beliefs, perceptions, reasoning ability, attitudes and affective experiences that have relevance to the child's current circumstances, it is logical to ask the child to report on these self-processes” (1990). Nordstrom, who argues particularly for the inclusion of girls, also stresses this: “When I started looking for girls in numerous war situations, I found silences and empty spaces, punctuated only sporadically by a handful of researchers focusing on children in general and girls in particular. Their stories account only for the smallest percentage of scholarly and popular work on social and political violence and systems of in/justice” (1997:5). Therefore, this thesis uses a micro-perspective, focusing on the individual perspectives of former child soldiers (both boys and girls) obtained through personal interviews.

Chapter 3 of this thesis will mainly be based on analyses of previous literature regarding the child soldiering, rebellion and socialization. Thereafter, the main research method employed will be interviewing. Due to the limited availability of studies of socialization processes within rebel groups, and particularly regarding socialization of child soldiers within rebel groups, field research has been the main method used to answer the research question. Additionally, I have used other sources such as surveys carried out by other researchers. I have largely used qualitative methods and interviews in order to conduct the essential part of my research

regarding socialization within the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO. In order to achieve valid, reliable results, several factors have been taken into account when designing and carrying out the interviews. The interviews have been designed to take into account major guidelines established by Adcock and Collier (2001), Frey (1995), Gerring (2007), Rubin and Rubin (1995), and Silverman (2003), among others.

### **Field Research**

During field research, 65 semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with former child soldiers as well as with LRA commanders in Uganda. I interviewed 36 boy soldiers and 29 girl soldiers. These interviews were conducted in Gulu District, Northern Uganda, from January 2009 until March 2009. This area is considered to be among those most severely hit by the LRA, and its population has suffered numerous abductions. As abduction is the main method of child soldier recruitment by the LRA, it is especially pertinent to analyze, in depth, the influence that the process of socialization has on a child's decision to remain with the LRA.

Further, 65 semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with former child soldiers and commanders of the RUF in Sierra Leone. I interviewed 34 boy soldiers and 31 girl soldiers. These interviews were carried out in the capital Freetown, as well as in the Eastern region of the country, from January 2010 until April 2010. This region was chosen because the war started there, and many child soldiers and commanders still remain in the area. However, many former child soldiers also fled to the capital, seeking to lead anonymous lives after the war. Therefore Freetown was an important starting point for interviewing.

During the same period, 65 semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with former LURD child soldiers and commanders in Liberia. I interviewed 35 boy soldiers and 30 girl soldiers. These interviews were held in the border area between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Many former rebels are still hiding in this region, retaining similar hierarchical structures to those they had within LURD.

From April 2011 until June 2011 I conducted a further 65 semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interviews with former child soldiers and commanders in Mozambique. I interviewed 37 boy soldiers and 28 girl soldiers who had been members of RENAMO. Some of these interviews were conducted in Maputo, but most were held in the central/northern region, where many RENAMO members are currently located.

The total of 260 interviews with former child soldiers and commanders aimed to reveal what happens during the process of socialization in rebel groups and how this leads to the fact that many child soldiers remain with rebel groups despite the difficult conditions. Except when other sources are explicitly cited, this thesis builds directly on these interviews. The interviews with former child soldiers and rebel

commanders were supplemented with 148 interviews with civilian victims of the rebel groups, in order to give a better understanding of the local contexts and the typical behavior of the rebels when they interacted with civilians.

As the field of socialization has received very little attention, interviewing proved to be an essential means of gaining insights into the problem. Considering the shortage of information on socialization of child soldiers, the depth of the responses achieved was of key importance. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and consisted of thirteen open-ended questions in order to give the interviewee the opportunity to answer in detail. The length of most interviews ranged from an hour and a half up to three hours. Interviewees were selected according to age of recruitment, gender, length of involvement with the rebel group, whether they had a frontline or support role inside the group, and whether they had participated in any rehabilitation programs. Since these factors influence the experiences and roles of child soldiers that may have affected their socialization, it was essential to interview a large range of people and to analyze all oral accounts separately. During the field research several methods of sampling were used. Interviewees were identified and selected with the help of local leaders, local organizations and NGOs, as well as research assistants, which enabled verification of their backgrounds. Convenience sampling was used in “rebel-rich” areas such as Gulu in Uganda and Kenema in Sierra Leone. In addition, snowball sampling was sometimes used when interviewing war victims or former commanders; for instance some victims suggested I should speak with other village members who had fallen victim to the rebels, while former commanders would sometimes recommend that I speak with former child soldiers who had served in a particular battalion. In order to cross-check all stories I used triangulation. Interviewing war victims proved particularly valuable, as viewing the conflict from their perspective offered further insights into rebel behavior and crimes committed, yielding a more complete picture.

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis, but usually with an interpreter present, as most interviewees preferred to tell their stories in local languages. In case interviewees preferred to do the interview in English, I mostly conducted the interviews by myself without the presence of a third person. I decided to work with two assistants in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique. All these assistants had extensive experience in working with, interviewing, and psycho-social counseling of former child soldiers. Working with these research assistants had several advantages. Due to their background and gender, working with two assistants in each country gave me access to different age groups of former child soldiers. Moreover, female child soldiers and particularly young children seemed to prefer talking with a female interpreter, whereas male child soldiers responded well to male assistants. Since most of my assistants had experience working with former child

soldiers or had been child soldiers themselves, they had access to large groups of former child soldiers located in different areas. They also had a very good understanding of the circumstances of my interviewees, which facilitated contact, the creation of trust and in-depth discussions.

Follow-up interviews have been conducted in most cases. These proved to be very useful, especially when the interviews were held with informants who had a particularly detailed insight into their rebel group. During these interviews notes have been taken with the consent of the interviewees. In addition, 243 interviews have been recorded on a voice recorder with permission of the informants, under the condition that the recorded material would remain confidential and their identities would be protected. Each of these interviews has been fully written up after completion. The reason for writing up the results right away was to indicate where data coverage was still weak. These suggestions were then used in future interviews.

The exact location of the interviews was determined upon arrival in the region. All interviews in IDP camps and schools were conducted in a space determined by the interviewee and interpreter to create trust and comfort. The interviews in towns and cities were conducted in places I first discussed with the interviewee, which they then approved. Permission to interview my informants was given by the local authorities. In the case of young children, additional permission for the interviews was granted by the administration of the school that the interviewee attended and/or by their parents (in case they were still alive). The majority of my informants were footloose at the time of the interviews. Most of them lived in unstructured youth collectives and many were out of touch with their families and communities. The influence of adults in their lives or parental guidance seemed rather limited to non-existent, particularly for boys.

As most of the interviewees were former child soldiers, particular guidelines for interviewing children who have experienced traumatic events have been taken into account. Moreover, it was of great significance to take into account that “information that pertains to adult-focused interviews cannot be applied wholesale to children. Just as cross-cultural research reveals differences in thinking across peoples, developmental psychology has demonstrated that many adult assumptions regarding thinking cannot be generalized to children” (Zwiers and Morrisette, 1999:128). Therefore, guides on interviewing children written by Bourg et al. (1999), Faller (2007), Morrison and Anders (1999), Wilson and Powell (2001), and Zwiers and Morrisette (1999), were consulted when preparing and establishing the interviews. In addition, the book “Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences” by George and Bennett (2005) has served as a guide to design this study.

## **Data Collection**

The locations in which data was collected were chosen due to the fact that the relevant interviewees were located in these areas. In each country I chose several particularly important places to evaluate the impacts of child soldiering as large groups of ex-combatants were still residing in these areas. This implied there was a large pool of potential interviewees present. Besides that, the relatively safe situations combined with contacts established pre-arrival created the possibility to conduct field research in the areas of choice.

Several individuals served as gatekeepers during the field research. They assisted in identifying and gaining access to relevant individuals and organizations. Moreover, these people helped arranging transport to the interview sites and/or facilitated interpretation of interviews. These include people at local organizations and NGOs, other researchers and the Netherlands Embassies in Uganda, Senegal and Mozambique. As the majority of interviews would be conducted with former child soldiers I consulted with local organizations and professionals on how to proceed once I arrived in the research areas. The people I consulted have been/are involved with or knowledgeable about child soldiers and the particular rebel groups. Their advice has been truly helpful in deciding how to go about the topic.

The intention was to interview a wide range of people in each country in order to offset bias and to highlight a wide range of perspectives. I therefore aimed to spend at least three months in each region as this enabled me to get access to the right interviewees, create trust, to set up meetings with them for follow-up interviews, and to travel within the country in order to conduct additional in-depth interviews. Internal validity and thus credibility has been sought by interviewing a wide range of former child soldiers and commanders. Confidence that the information provided by informants was genuine, was enhanced by their willingness to answer questions with “I don’t know,” “No,” or “I did not witness that but heard other people talking about it.” In order to increase credibility and to confirm findings, data sources were cross-checked and triangulated, and follow-up interviews were conducted. Moreover, in order to ensure the replicability and reliability of the study, detailed records of the interviews have been kept and are, due to confidentiality issues, accessible by the researcher.

## **Informed Consent and Treatment of Data**

Participants in this research have been informed “as fully as possible about the goals of the research, the necessity for the research, the manner in which the research will be conducted, and any possible negative or positive effects” (Zwiers, 1999:139). Participants have been advised that there would be no negative consequences should they decide not to participate, and the possibility to withdraw from the interview at

all times has been pointed out. Moreover, all my interview participants have been able to ask questions about the research. Participants were explained orally or provided with a document explaining these matters before the interview took place (see appendix I). All interviewees gave their consent that the interviews could be used for this study. In case the interviewee was under 18 years of age, parents, guardians, the school administration, or rehabilitation center gave clearance for the interview. In addition, local authorities and traditional leaders gave permission to conduct interviews in IDP camps.

The identity of participants has been protected in a variety of ways. Code numbers were used to identify age, gender, location, the length of the period spent with the rebel group, and participation in rehabilitation programs. Transcripts of the interviews carry only the assigned codes. All documentation is kept in secure locations; raw data and transcripts are stored separately from code sheets and permission forms. When quotes are used, possible identifying information has been altered to protect the identity of the participant. Thus, only a code including the child's age at time of recruitment, the child's gender (F/M), and the length of the period spent with the rebels (in years) will be provided with the quote. This resulted in the following code style: (13F5) stands for: girl soldier, recruited at age 13, spent 5 years with the rebels. Hence, (5M9) stands for: boy soldier, recruited at age 5, spent 9 years with the rebels. In case child soldiers spent less than one year with the rebels, this will be coded as -1 (for instance: 14F-1). Since the research collected highly sensitive data, confidentiality of identity and thus anonymity within the research report has been guaranteed. Informants were ensured their information would be used only for the realization of this project and none of the recordings would be passed on to third parties. The research information, confidentiality of participant identity and data will be protected at all times (Zwiers, 1999:140; Brett and Specht, 2004:144).

### **Challenges and Limitations**

Interviewing children may be problematic, yet “interviews provide the most direct way to evaluate children's inner perceptions of reality” (Zwiers, 1999:128). The fact that the interviews were carried out in a post-conflict situation created several challenges. Memory, potential trauma and mental difficulties of the interviewees bring about potential bias and consequences for reliability. Cultural matters also played a role in the decisions of how to conduct the interviews and in the design of the questions. Some of the most important factors that were considered in this research are ethical aspects and working according to the “do no harm” principle (Wilson, 2001).

To overcome these challenges, I have used other case studies in post-conflict areas as guidelines for my research. An example of this is the work done by Elisabeth Wood (2000, 2003 and 2008). I have also gathered advice on how to interview former child soldiers through conversations with researchers and professionals working with child soldiers. In addition, I have approached people at local NGOs in each country for advice on how and who to contact for interviews. During the interviews I have continuously aimed to be sensitive to the feelings of the informants. This implied that if the informant tended to become slightly agitated we broke off the interview and talked about different things. It was up to the informant if he or she wanted to continue the interview at a later point in time or quit the interview process. This freedom to stop the interview was thoroughly explained to every informant and reassured during the interview if necessary. This happened twice: interviews were stopped by two of my female informants and they requested to continue at a later stage.

The well-being of people involved with the research was my prime consideration during the entire research process. Research has potential to disrupt the life of children as they “may have strong feelings or disturbing thoughts stirred up by questions asked during the interview. Once the interview is concluded, children may continue to be affected by the experience and may harbor negative feelings and thoughts” (Zwiers, 1999:136). For this reason I chose to work with two assistants in each country who all had extensive experience working with former child soldiers, interviewing and psycho-social counseling. However, my research ethic did not allow me to probe too deeply into my informants’ memories of the war, as I realized I was not equipped to deal with possible psychological repercussions in the long run, and neither were my assistants. I aimed to take any possible detrimental psychological effects into consideration and tried to fully protect their identities in order for our conversations not to have any effects on the status within their communities. For this reason, all people who were interviewed will remain anonymous in order to prevent negative long-term effects and impact on their relation with society (Zwiers, 1999).

While discussing such sensitive topics, I considered it essential to have eye contact with my informants at all times. This would allow for quick recognition of any disturbing effects the interview could have. For this reason I decided to use a voice recorder instead of taking written notes; the recorder allowed me to focus fully on the conversation, so I could pick up small changes in speech, body language, facial expressions and other types of behavior that might indicate that the interview was disturbing the informant. Further, the fact that I did not have to concentrate on writing improved the quality of the interviews as I could more easily react to subtle details within the informants’ anecdotes. This significantly improved our interaction. The voice recorder was used only with the consent of my informants.



Still, the introduction of the voice recorder entailed some challenges. The simple tape recorder I used proved to be an alien contraption to most of my informants. Most of them had never seen a tape recorder before, and were not sure what it was capable of: it was viewed with suspicion, and I was asked whether it was a camera. After I had explained it could only record sounds and no video footage, my informants approved my using it. They agreed to have the conversations recorded on the voice recorder as long as their identities were kept secret and their anonymity guaranteed. Still, some informants seemed hesitant due to the presence of the recording device. In these cases I switched off the voice recorder and put it away. This seemed to relieve the burden and the informant would relax and speak freely while I took notes by hand. I was sometimes given additional and detailed information during informal meetings, perhaps due to the absence of the recorder. This information led to valuable insights, which were further discussed during interviews. Even though the recorder led to some challenges, most of these were easily solved. Looking back, I consider the use of the voice recorder as a crucial advantage in the collection and storage of data during the entire research process. It allowed me to literally transcribe the conversations with my informants, whereas written notes would have undoubtedly jeopardized such detailed transcriptions of the interviews and important anecdotes might have gotten lost. In addition, it enabled the cross checking of translations, which contributed to accuracy of the interview transcriptions.

Another challenge I met during the research process was the establishment of trust between my informants and me. This challenge is also pointed out by Utas (2011), who found that his informants in Sierra Leone and Liberia would admit they had not been forced to join armed groups only once a deeper trust had been created. Trust is an essential factor between the interviewer and the informant when talking about such a sensitive topic as child soldiering. While doing field research it took time and patience to create trust, and the achievement of this is particularly owed to the unwavering support of my excellent research assistants.

What did prove difficult was researching the lives of girl soldiers within rebel groups. It was surrounded by numerous challenges, but as this study was designed to include an equal representation of boy and girl soldiers, these needed to be overcome. Former girl soldiers were often difficult to find, and were fearful to speak about their experiences, fearing retribution if they revealed their identities. Former girl soldiers rarely speak about their experiences at all, let alone discuss them with outsiders. To circumvent this problem, I worked together with one male and one female research assistant in each country. My female assistants were familiar with what female informants had experienced, and this usually resolved the initial distrust felt by the informants. My assistants would elaborately discuss the research purpose with the

former girl soldiers and repeatedly guarantee their anonymity. Eventually, most of them came forward and agreed to an interview in a place where community members would not recognize them. When I asked about their reasons behind the decision to cooperate, they first of all mentioned their guaranteed anonymity, then the purpose of the research, followed by a wish to change the situation for former child soldiers and the fact they would speak only with other women (myself and the assistant), as the main motivators for relating their experiences.

Although more often, former girl soldiers were not the only ones initially hesitant to contribute to the research project. Former boy soldiers also approached me with (slight) suspicion during the first introductions. I was frequently asked if the International Criminal Court sent me: many of my informants were afraid I had come to arrest them. My research assistants proved to be invaluable in those situations, explaining the purpose of the research in detail while conversing in their mother tongue and establishing the foundations for mutual trust. To reassure my informants, I explained them that it was of no significance to the research project to reveal whether they had taken part in atrocities or which crimes they had committed while being part of a rebel group. I never directly asked my informants in which acts they were involved. Instead, I stressed it was their own choice to discuss these issues. Giving them the opportunity to choose proved to be reassuring to most of my informants, removing their hesitations and allowing them to speak freely. As a result, some of my informants did speak about the crimes they committed, but they generally downplayed their own involvement and spoke mainly about friends raping women, burning houses, amputating and killing civilians. They said these subjects were still a taboo that they did not want to be associated with, mostly out of fear of the community. To provide further reassurance to my informants, the interviews were conducted out of the sight or hearing of officials.

My informants had few difficulties speaking about issues related to socialization: discussing this subject was generally not considered to be a threat to their personal situation and future. However, we did discuss sensitive topics such as the use of violence within the rebel groups. Although this could have been perceived as a threatening subject, I steered away from this perception by taking a less direct and less personal approach. For instance: I asked my informants to tell me about what kind of violence had been used within the group and for which purpose, rather than asking what they had done personally. This may have led to biased portrayals of the atrocities my informants were personally responsible for. Still, it allowed my informants to focus on detailed accounts of the circumstances within the rebel groups, which were essential to this research project. The freedom to speak about their individual acts had little to no consequences for the outcome of the research project as its focus lays on socialization processes within the rebel *groups*. Although

violence does play a significant role within socialization, this thesis was never meant to be an investigation of the perpetrating acts committed by child soldiers as *individuals*. Instead, it focuses on the creation of allegiance through violence used by the *group*, rather than amplifying the violence used by *individuals*.

The last challenges I met were the different circumstances and life stages I found my informants to be in. I spoke with Ugandan child soldiers who had just left the LRA rebels and found temporary shelter in rehabilitation centers, and on the other extreme interviewed Mozambican former child soldiers who had returned from the bush almost twenty years ago and mostly lived a civilian life again. Former child soldiers who had been part of the rebel groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia fell in between these two extremes as most had returned from the war between seven and ten years ago. This implied that I had to adapt my interviewing technique in each case, always keeping the well-being of my informants as the main priority. The Ugandan child soldiers who had recently returned were to a certain extent still numbed by the conflict experiences they had been exposed to, their memories were very fresh and some of them were still very young. Their information was highly valuable, but I had to tread very careful during interviews in order to prevent and protect them from any possible disturbances. These interviews were therefore conducted in the presence of a social worker affiliated to the rehabilitation center that offered them shelter.

In contrast, most of my Liberian, Sierra Leonean and Mozambican informants had reached adulthood and this resulted in different types of interviews and discussions compared to those with young children in Uganda. For LURD, RUF, and RENAMO child soldiers in particular, many years had passed since they were part of the rebel groups and their memories were logically fading. This potentially resulted in a post-war bias and may have had consequences for the reliability of their accounts. In addition, one should acknowledge that interviewing people can never be considered as a pure fact finding mission: every informant has his or her own reality and their recollection of events is a reflection of these. Due to security considerations I have unfortunately only been able to interview former child soldiers, preventing the establishment of a first-hand account of group dynamics within active rebel groups. At the time of the interviews my informants had already exited their respective rebel groups. Their exits took place in different ways and for different reasons and this, in combination with the circumstances of their stay with the rebels, may have affected the way they spoke of their experience. Some of my informants were heavily traumatized and abused, while others considered themselves heroes for being rebels. This implied that, depending on their situation and ideas, certain issues were highlighted, while others were downplayed. In an attempt to tackle this (post-war) bias, the accounts of my informants were cross-checked and other research on the

particular conflicts and rebel groups has been used as a means of verification. Still, as opposed to the young informants in Uganda, the Liberian, Sierra Leonean and Mozambican informants were capable to analyze to larger context of the conflict and the rebel group. This proved to be valuable input. Yet, what further complicated the research in Mozambique was the fact that the war had ended almost 20 years ago, making it more difficult to find informants than in the three other countries. Tracing people was hard, as many had moved to different areas. Others were reluctant to speak about the war and revive their memories. This lengthened the period needed to complete the research.

Even though the research design included challenges and limitations, I purposely chose for this set up. As this thesis aims to analyze socialization processes within African rebel groups and reveals whether these achieved internalization among their recruits, the comparison of several rebel groups seemed particularly intriguing. Looking at different rebel groups, continuing and ending their struggle during different periods of time, allowed me to investigate the similarities and differences between socialization processes used within the groups, whether these had lasting effects, and which factors possibly contributed to this. In addition, a comparison would allow me to point out how long the socialization effects could linger and would indicate how time affects the degree and strength of internalization. For these reasons I chose to focus on the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO: four African rebel groups that fought for and during different periods of time. Although generalizations cannot be drawn from this research project due to limits of its scope, the comparison of rebel group socialization may still indicate what we could possibly expect in other conflict cases. As child soldiering is a global phenomenon, this study should be perceived as a starting point for future research that can further strengthen our knowledge on child soldier socialization by focusing on rebel groups in for instance Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

# 3

## Life Within a Rebel Group: From Child to Soldier

*The recruitment, creation, and use of child soldiers within rebel groups*

This chapter offers an analysis of previous research focusing on the child soldiering phenomenon. It will particularly highlight the reasons why rebel groups recruit child soldiers, which methods they use in doing so, and which role forced and non-forced recruitment play. Moreover, this chapter will address methods used by rebel groups to transform children into soldiers and evidence from field research will be used as illustrations to these theories. It will illuminate the views of prominent scholars, analyze their standpoints, and address the weaknesses of their theories. In addition, it will underline the lack of focus on socialization processes within rebel groups. As such, it will clarify why previous research is indeed moving forward in understanding the child soldier phenomenon, but ignores the essential influence of socialization processes. This implies that this chapter will highlight the limited understanding of the entire child soldiering problem caused by neglecting the socialization aspect.

### **Using Child Soldiers within Rebel Groups**

Several scholars, such as Collier (2004), have addressed the phenomena of rebel groups. A particularly interesting view has recently been developed by Jeremy Weinstein, as reflected in his book *Inside Rebellion*. Weinstein takes an alternative approach to rebellion. According to Weinstein there are two general types of rebel groups, which are distinguished by the availability of resources. He argues that rebel groups either fight for economic endowments (such as resources), or social endowments (such as beliefs). Weinstein claims that this availability of resources is a key factor in determining the character and levels of violence to be employed. In the case of an abundance of natural resources or external support, rebel groups tend to carry out high levels of indiscriminate violence. Indiscriminate violence includes “exterminating particular groups, displacing people, plundering goods, or demonstrating a group's power and ability to hurt another group” (Kalyvas, 2006:147). In resource-poor contexts on the other hand, rebel groups resort to selective and strategic violence. Selective violence “entails the personalization of violence and requires information that is asymmetrically distributed between political actors and individual civilians” (Kalyvas, 2006:173). Weinstein argues that looking at the distinctive levels and characteristics of violence used by rebel groups

one can distinguish between activist and opportunistic rebellions. Activist rebellions attract committed investors, participating despite risks and few short-term gains. Participation in opportunistic rebellions on the other hand, involves immediate rewards and fewer risks and thus attracts consumers (Weinstein, 2007:7).

In establishing and maintaining an organization able to fight for its causes and carry out violence, rebel groups face several difficulties. For instance, the types of individuals to be selected to join the rebel group, strategies of violence, civilian support, and resource availability are all examples of what should be considered by rebel leaders. However, one of the most significant challenges is participation of individuals in rebel groups as this represents one of the fundamentals of a rebel group. According to Gates, a rebel army's ability to succeed depends "on its ability to recruit and motivate its soldiers to fight and kill" (Gates, 2002:112). It is a challenge to attract recruits for the difficult and dangerous tasks one gets involved in when joining a rebel group. Potential recruits will weigh the costs and benefits of high-risk collective action and often have to be motivated to join a rebel group. Therefore, Weinstein argues that rebel groups attempt to establish motivation by offering selective incentives in the case of access to economic resources, and by creating appeal around a set of ideas and promises in case of constrained resources. By doing this, they intend to obtain high-quality recruits (Weinstein, 2007:8–12).

Besides this challenge of motivating recruits, rebel groups attract different types of individuals. High-commitment individuals can be considered as investors, being dedicated to the cause and willing to make investments for future rewards. Low-commitment individuals on the other hand, can be considered as consumers who merely seek short-term gains from getting involved with a rebel group (Weinstein, 2007:9–10). As rebel groups do not have access to the actual motivation of potential recruits, they run the risk of including the wrong people in their group, which can possibly undermine its existence. The third participation challenge faced by rebel groups is how to ensure their orders will be followed without destroying the support of participants. Internal discipline needs to be maintained in order to sustain the rebel group. Structures of internal control enable the creation of disciplined behavior by members of the rebel group, but these need to be carried out carefully. This also contributes to overcome the fourth challenge, which is the difficulty to achieve resilience and maintain rebel membership over time (Weinstein, 2007:9–10).

As one can derive from these challenges, rebel groups face significant difficulties in achieving sufficient recruitment, control and resilience. In order to recruit the right people, potential recruits need to be screened. For instance, rebel groups need to gather information about the backgrounds of potential recruits and evaluate their level of commitment (Weinstein, 2007:104–105). Thereby, in order to achieve sustained cooperation of rebel members, sufficient training and preparation

for combat is necessary as well as realizing the expectations created before the recruit joins the rebel group. Moreover, in order to realize common objectives, rebel leaders need to demonstrate responsible behavior and cooperate. Thus, if leaders are rewarded despite violating their code of conduct, other rebel group members are unlikely to continue their cooperation (Weinstein, 2007:137). These are difficult and costly processes to carry out. In addition to this, most rebel groups “lack the formal structures and territorial control required to make threats of punishments credible” (Weinstein, 2007:158). Thus, according to Weinstein, it is a significant challenge for a rebel group to be successful, especially when this group consists of individuals weighing their costs and benefits.

### **The Benefits of Using Child Soldiers**

When rebel groups use child soldiers, they avoid many of these difficulties. Singer argues: “as a new source of fighters, children multiply the potential military capacities of groups...this eases the difficulties groups often face in force generation” (2006:94). Rebel groups can thus become more successful in combat, securing their survival. Rebel leaders generally consider the lives of children cheaper compared to adults and thus riskier tactics can be used. This implies that when child soldiers are involved with rebel groups, conflict situations tend to emerge easier, are more difficult to end, and result in greater casualty numbers (Singer, 2006:95). Thus, child soldiers are used in 60% of rebel groups as a means to overcome their weak starting point regarding recruitment and organization (Singer, 2006:95). In addition, “groups lacking a clear ideological basis may find it easier to maintain the loyalty, and participation, of children” (Andvig and Gates, 2007:2). This way of reasoning was supported during my personal interviews with a former LRA commander. He stated: “it was easy to make the newly abducted children participate with us. We taught them to become loyal and do what we said. They listened. This was difficult with the grown-ups; we could not change their minds easily, they were always thinking about going home to their families. It was much easier to make the children become good, integrated rebels.” This phenomenon was also noted in LRA studies carried out by Beber and Blattman; they found that younger children were trusted and easy to manipulate, while adolescents and adults were considered untrustworthy and harder to manipulate (2013). Still, Gutiérrez Sanín indicates that there are disadvantages to the use of child soldiers as well: “children can be undisciplined; their bodies and psychology are not prepared for the sustained hardships of war; and they do not stand a chance when confronting an adult force” (2010:121).

Training of child soldiers is cursory: they learn basic combat techniques but are not taught to protect themselves. Short-term, inadequate training in which children are just taught to shoot, operate their gun, ambush, and use grenades is

often the norm. This training overlooks the inability of many children to appreciate the risks of combat and understand their mortality (Wessells, 2006:67–68). Interviews with former LRA rebels indicated this is indeed often the case. Vincent, a former LRA abductee, expressed that “sometimes we had no time for training. The UPDFs were chasing us and the rebels only showed us how to operate the gun. Then we went to the battlefield and had to shoot everything around us. We had to run and never stop to hide. The rebels said the bullets would not find us if we were brave. So we ran and shot.” This indicates that the life of a child is considered cheap, they learn about mortality and combat skills on the battlefield since losing a child is not as costly for a rebel group as losing an adult fighter. This makes it very beneficial for rebel groups to deploy child soldiers instead of adults. Children in rebel groups are indoctrinated and manipulated, securing their commitment to the group. This indicates that recruitment, control, and resilience are more easily achieved with children compared to adults. Thus, the use of child soldiers contributes to overcome some of the numerous challenges faced by rebel groups and is therefore beneficial. This explains why large numbers of child soldiers are recruited. Moreover, “such large proportions of young children indicate that they are employed as substitutes for adults and not as complements” (Andvig and Gates, 2007:4).

As Weinstein assumes, adults are rational and “their actions reflect deliberate decisions designed to maximize payoffs” (Weinstein, 2007:40). This implies that it is a difficult task to engage and recruit adults. This is not to say that children are irrational actors, but rebel groups often use forced recruitment of children, which is accompanied by a thorough process of indoctrination. When children are abducted, they can more easily be shaped into rebels compared to adults who are less easily influenced and overpowered. This argument was indeed supported during field research among former LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO rebels. Furthermore, child soldiers are known for their resilience and ability to continue fighting for a longer period of time compared to adults. Whereas adults have lives to return to and often join rebel groups for a period of time to gain income, child soldiers are often deprived of other beneficial opportunities and thus stay with rebel groups, as a means to survive (Wessells, 2006:41).

This argument is also reflected in a prominent study carried out by Christopher Blattman (2007). His paper proposes an economic rationale for recruitment of children by rebel groups, based on evidence from the LRA. Blattman argues, “when rebel groups are constrained in the number of feasible recruits (e.g. due to resource constraints or supervision costs) they will target individuals offering the highest expected net benefit” (2007:1). Interviews with rebel leaders indicated that the costs and benefits of recruits differed systematically with age, and that the recruitment of adolescents yielded the largest expected net gain. Furthermore,



Blattman emphasizes, “While adults appear to have been skilled guerrilla fighters, they were also the most likely to desert. Young children were most easily indoctrinated and disoriented (and thus likely to stay) but were relatively ineffective as fighters. Adolescents, however, appear to have offered the optimal combination of military effectiveness and ease of retention” (2007:1). The strong evidence Blattman presents explains the economic incentives for rebel groups to prefer the recruitment of children compared to adults. This is supported by Andvig and Gates who indicate “desertion is a potential problem facing any army and children often find it harder to desert than adults. To discourage desertion further, some groups force children to commit atrocities in their home villages, thus severing former bonds and limiting the child’s options” (2007:2). Later chapters of this thesis will provide examples drawn from my own field research in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique that support these arguments.

Child soldiers are considered as serious or even preferred players on the battlefield due to their ability to fight effectively with small arms. Most wars today are fought in developing countries. Due to a proliferation of small, lightweight arms such as the AK-47 and the related reduction of costs, small weapons have become readily available and shape contemporary warfare. During the 1990s, 46 out of 49 conflicts involved only small arms (Wessells, 2006:18). Moreover, small arms have proven most deadly, causing 90% of all casualties in recent armed conflicts (Singer, 2006:46). The technological developments in this area of weaponry have made it possible to turn large pools of child recruits into capable soldiers. Small arms such as rifles, light mortars, land mines, grenades and light machine guns have become “child-portable.” That these can easily be carried and operated by children makes child soldiers effective fighters who are just as lethal as adults (Singer, 2006:46). Also, most rebel groups use tactics and weaponry that require relatively little training or skills, making child soldiers useful as combatants.

Moreover, adult recruits are not endlessly available for replacing troop losses—but there is often an abundance of children, as they compose about half of the population in developing countries. Recruiters often promise money as a trigger for children to join armed groups. Still, this promise is generally just a ploy; once the children are in the group they are intimidated so they will not dare to ask for money. Thereby, brutality and forced recruitment is frequently used as terrorized children do not have to be paid and are easily manipulated. Another motivation for the recruitment of children is their shock value: using them creates confusion and terrorizes the opponent. Opposing groups are often reluctant to kill children. Additionally, child soldiers are pliable, easily manipulated and controlled, flexible, exploitable, effective, and expendable. The use of child soldiers is particularly effective because “through violence or threat of violence, young children can be

trained to obey commands that many adults would contest or find ways around” (Wessells, 2006:34–35).

This indicates that the use of child soldiers is the result of deliberate choices made by leaders of armed groups. Children in conflict zones are often recruited due to convenience, impunity and low costs. According to Singer “conflict group leaders now see the recruitment and use of children as a low-cost and efficient way for their organizations to mobilize and generate force” (2006:38). It is cheap and easy to include children in rebel groups and thereby the costs are generally outweighed by the benefits. Thus, significant amounts of force are generated with little investment. Thereby, rebel groups who face difficulties in mobilizing support can vastly expand their power by using child soldiers. This is especially the case for groups fighting for social endowments that include few rewards, as indicated by Weinstein. Additionally, children are rarely paid, “they are cheaper than adults, and they can be drugged or conditioned more easily into violence and committing atrocities” (Singer, 2006:52–55). This demonstrates that rebel groups fighting for economic endowments benefit from using child soldiers as well since children do not get paid the same way as adults do and thus rebel leaders can keep most of the profits gained. These factors have contributed to the fact that children are often systematically preferred as soldiers in today's armed conflicts. As Singer describes, “despite their smaller physical size and development, child soldiers are serious players on the modern battlefield” (2006:83). Andvig and Gates use a quote from a Congolese rebel leader explaining why child soldiers were particularly useful: “they obey orders; they are not concerned with getting back to their wife and family; and they don’t know fear” (2007:4). Considering the previously named factors that make it beneficial for rebel groups to use child soldiers, it becomes apparent that the use of children indeed seems to have a comparative advantage over adults.

However, this argument is not complete. The theories on recruitment, motivation, control, and resilience within rebel groups put forth by Weinstein and other scholars, lack the inclusion of socialization processes. Socialization plays an essential role within rebel groups as it creates interests and hereby significantly contributes to motivation, control, resilience, and allegiance among rebels. This indicates that the theories developed by Weinstein and others are too reductionist. In later chapters of this thesis I will explain why socialization is an essential mechanism for rebel groups. These chapters will illuminate that socialization processes need to be part of research concerning rebel groups and therefore show in detail why the approach of scholars like Weinstein is too reductionist.

### **Forced Recruitment**

Recruitment of children into rebel groups is a carefully planned process that may

include force and thus take place through, for instance, abduction. Due to their smaller size and the ease with which they can be intimidated, children are particularly susceptible to forced recruitment compared to adults (Wessells, 2006:37). In addition, the lower mobility of children compared to adults makes them more exposed, which makes it easy to catch them (Andvig, 2006:20). In case of forced recruitment, recruiters typically target places where children are most vulnerable and gather in greatest numbers, such as schools, orphanages, refugee camps, stadiums and churches (Machel, 2001:10, Andvig, 2006:20). During these recruitment operations, children are assessed on their physical condition and size. The suitable children are often abducted, accompanied by rape, severe beatings and killings of relatives to intimidate them. In case children oppose or thwart these abductions the recruiters threaten to kill them, and thus the children are left with no choice but to join the rebel group as a new recruit (Singer, 2006:57–61).

Other examples of forced recruitment are press-ganging and recruitment by quota. Press ganging is a form of group abduction and is used for mass recruitment. In these cases rebel groups raid schools or sweep streets or marketplaces. Other sites that are frequently used for recruitment are refugee and internally displaced people camps.

Dispossessed children in general run a great risk of forced recruitment. As Wessells argues, “before war erupts, children from lower socio-economic classes carry a heavy burden of poverty and social exclusion” (2006:41). This makes them particularly vulnerable to become prey for rebel groups. On the other hand, when recruitment by quota is used, any child may become a target of forced recruitment. Rebel groups use this method to recruit children from villages. They require a particular number of recruits from the village, threatening that if these children are not delivered the whole village will be attacked. In these cases parents have no choice; they often hand over their children to the rebels to avoid a wave of death and destruction inflicted on the village (Wessells, 2006:42).

Previous research as well as field research indicated that the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO make use of abduction as the main method of child soldier recruitment. During one of our interviews, Walter, a former LRA lieutenant, said, “we would go to the schools to find new children. And many times when we were looting villages, we had to bring new recruits to the bush. When we were on a mission, we were all ordered to bring 5 children back to the bush. We had to catch the right ones. The small ones were not useful: they were too weak to walk for long. But the 12 year olds were good: they were strong enough to work hard and walk far. But we could also work their minds so they will be integrated rebels. The bigger boys were sometimes also taken but they are stubborn. If they did not listen we called the new recruits and let them finish the stubborn ones. They learned to be good rebels.”

These strategies of abduction, press ganging and recruitment by quota are commonly used among rebel groups and large numbers of children end up in rebel groups through forced recruitment. However, we should recall that there are various gradations or types of forced recruitment. As Utas (2003, 2011) notes, besides direct force, children often fall victim to structural/systemic violence (Galtung, 1969, Zizek, 2008), as well as military and social structures. In addition, there are several other motivations that fuel the decision of children to join rebel groups. The question concerning the motivation for children to enter rebel groups is surrounded by a variety of narratives. The former description coincides with a narrative focusing solely on forced recruitment and abduction, portraying child soldiers as victims of the brutality of adults. According to Wessells “this narrative is comforting in its depiction of wicked people as the cause of children becoming soldiers” (2006:31). However, this view is rather one-dimensional, as it does not consider the possibility of children joining armed groups without being forced.

### **Non-Forced Recruitment**

Contrary to the previous narrative, a second narrative portrays child soldiers as active agents with a significantly developed sense of agency. As opposed to the image sketched by numerous humanitarian organizations, research has shown that large numbers of children choose to join armed groups voluntarily or without force. According to Singer “the rough trend line seems to be that roughly two of every three child soldiers have some sort of initiative in their own recruitment” (2006:61). For instance, numbers of the International Labor Office show that 64% of all children participating in armed groups in Central African countries have joined these groups under no threat of violence (ILO, 2003). These examples crush the image of children as innocent and passive victims: we see child soldiers as active agents, as actors who can exercise choice and who have a strong sense of agency. Armed conflict is in these cases perceived “as a source of opportunities for children, who willingly join armed groups to obtain things” (Wessells, 2006:31). Their motivations for joining armed groups vary from obtaining protection, financial gain, a sense of family, power, revenge, defense of their ethnic group, education and training, martyrdom, a sense of purpose or even out of fear of being abducted. Most of these factors often have been denied to them in civilian life.

Scholars disagree greatly about the motivations of children to join rebel groups and particularly about the perception of them being active agents. Obviously, the genuine nature of non-forced recruitment can be questioned: prevailing insecurity, severe fighting and extreme poverty affect behavior and limit choices. As a consequence, children may choose to join an armed group purely as a survival strategy. In an attempt to explain the complexity of what motivates children to join

and remain with armed groups, this chapter will continue analyzing the variety of factors contributing to this decision.

### **Marginal Backgrounds and Divided, Violent Societies**

Many child soldiers emerge from marginal backgrounds which provide few or no opportunities for upward social mobility or progress. At the same time, conflict situations damage the state as well as its inhabitants, fuelling discontent and unemployment among youth who are dreaming of another life. This marginalization of young people in conflict situations creates a “vast pool of recruitment potential.” By joining rebel groups, factors such as personal gain, respect, survival, recognition, and the possibility to create new meanings of self appear to be within reach of the barrel of a gun. Thus, children often voluntarily join rebel groups in order to become “someone.” For instance, this may be particularly important for African boys since they gain rights when they become a man and can then start a family (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:42–51). This way of achieving social recognition is also emphasized by Münkler, who claims that children join rebel groups “in the prospect of an otherwise unattainable social reputation” (2004:77–78).

Wessells, Brett and Specht argue that children who are raised in violent, divided societies have an abundance of reasons to become fighters for their group (2006, 2004). These children have often been victimized and may perceive violence as a way to liberate their people or gain revenge. As Wessells claims: “children who have lost their parents may decide to join the struggle to avenge their loss, to protect their villages, or to seek protection and access to necessities such as food and health care. War crushes children's hopes by destroying the schools, markets, health posts, and other structures children need in order to have a positive future. As the war continues, children may see life inside an armed group as their best option” (2006). Thus, children's decision to become warriors can be a rational choice, based on hate or necessity, but often on a combination of these.

Children may choose to participate in the violence in order to get revenge and pay back the pain that has been inflicted on them and their families. The loss of parents is the greatest loss a child can suffer as their main source of care, protection and love disappears. It puts children at great risk by creating heavy emotional burdens and significantly increasing vulnerability and poverty. As a means of survival, these children may join armed groups (Wessells, 2006:25). The decision to participate in armed groups is thus a gradually evolving process, achieved “through a slow accretion of smaller decisions and gradually increased engagement with members of an armed group” (Wessells, 2006:32).

Moreover, Wessells argues that children run a particular risk becoming soldiers in divided societies for their parents and leaders teach them to continue the

struggle. During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda some 800,000 Tutsi were killed, organized by the Hutu regime. Large numbers of children joined the paramilitary groups that were responsible for the killings, as they had been taught to see themselves as Hutu but also as opposed to the demonized Tutsi. “Also, communities in divided societies teach their children the key wrongs done by the Other, stirring a desire for revenge and the fear that motivates pre-emptive action. This poisonous mixture of fear and hate heightens perceptions of evil and wrongdoing by the Other and strengthens children's own sense of victim-hood, motivating attacks and encouraging ongoing cycles of violence” (Wessells, 2006:22).

In these cases, dehumanization often plays a crucial role in the choice of becoming a child soldier. Dehumanization of opponents makes it easier to disregard the moral implications of murder (Kressel, 2002). This is for instance achieved by media distortion and propaganda. The spread of lies contributes to the dehumanization of the opponent and gives meaning and direction for the actions of child soldiers. Furthermore, peer pressure may play a significant role in the decision for children to join armed groups. Children who have already joined the armed group often approach their peers wearing new uniforms and the like. This makes it very tempting to join for children in deprived situations (Singer, 2006:67–68).

In addition, many people are displaced as a result of armed conflict, leading to immense refugee flows. According to Wessells: “refugees lack basic materials and a cultural identity, and suffer discrimination, alienation, and difficulties earning a livelihood and negotiating the complexities of their new social system. Refugee camps, with their arduous living conditions, frequently become political hotbeds where radicalized youths fuel continued armed conflicts” (2006:25). Not surprisingly, large numbers of children are recruited in refugee camps.

## **Poverty**

Other scholars, like Singer, argue that voluntary participation in armed groups is a misleading claim. This view highlights the inability of children to make mature decisions and to oversee the consequences of joining armed groups. Children are merely driven by forces that are beyond their control when they voluntarily join armed groups, for instance by economic factors. Due to hunger and poverty children may decide to join any group, particularly as a means to survive (Singer, 2006:62). Machel agrees with this, arguing that “rather than exercising free choice, these children are responding more often to a variety of pressures—economic, cultural, social, and political” (2001:11). Furthermore, Machel argues that poverty is one of the main pressures for children to become soldiers. They join rebel groups for protection or their parents even “sell” them into the army (Machel, 2001:12).

Boothby also addresses poverty as one of the main causes of child soldiering.

This perspective highlights the need for food, health care, and protection. Children in war zones frequently seek money to fulfill these needs and if they live with poor families, becoming a child soldier is perceived as a means to fulfill their family responsibilities (Boothby et al, 2006:181). Rebel groups provide child soldiers with food and protection, thus children suffering from poverty gain as individuals from joining rebel groups. Münkler touches upon this motivation, stating that children join rebel groups in return for a form of livelihood (2004:77).

Bøås and Dunn argue that potential child soldiers can be found in every slum or forgotten place. These youths see “little if any opportunity to make the transformation from their present state of despair and exclusion into something else and better. All it takes is one individual with an idea about something else and the means to transform his ideas into action—call it resistance, call it revolt, call it violence, robbery—and they are game, eager to settle the score of humiliation and marginalization” (2007:52). Opportunities for looting when joining a rebel group makes it possible for these children to acquire possessions and physically take them out of their state of despair.

### **Lack of Education, Unemployment, and Political Radicalization**

According to Bøås and Dunn, many children who become part of armed groups have dropped out of school. In Sierra Leone for an example, children who drop out of school are generally from poor families. School fees are too expensive, and when children attend school that means a loss of income, as they are not working for the family—so children are often taken out of school, to help generate income for the family (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:41). It is not rare that these children end up being part of rebel groups, as some are even stimulated by their parents to join rebels as a means to generate income for their family (Wessells, 2006:43). Dropping out of school limits these children’s future opportunities and joining rebel group may thus be an opportunity to create meaning in their lives.

Additionally, Bøås and Dunn describe the fact that there is little left to do in conflict stricken societies as one of the causes of child soldiering. This is especially the case for young men joining rebel groups. The authors state: “so few alternatives seemed viable, and this realization must have led some, obviously not all, to develop a mindset of hatred against their society, their communities, their elders, even their parents, that was unleashed in anger when a gun came within their reach. The gun became their tool, their personal revolution, and by killing they could finally prove that even they mattered. These young men are the creation of damaged and broken societies, where there is little left to do” (2007:46).

Boothby addresses the lack of educational opportunities, unemployment and failed expectations that are characteristic for war zones as breeding grounds for child

soldiering in rebel movements. Hopelessness and futility, as well as the desire to change failed political systems makes children eager to join rebel groups. Children often make up for half the population in developing countries and this may significantly contribute to the force of rebel groups. As noted in the previous chapter, in most developing countries teenagers are regarded as adults, attempting to define their place in society. With high unemployment figures in war zones (up to 80%) children become motivated to join rebel groups, as this can provide them with status—as well as skills that may be seem important to them (2006:183–184).

### **Multiple Causation**

In general, poverty plays a significant role, as poor children are overrepresented in armed groups. In addition, revenge for their personal experiences of extreme violence and the loss of relatives, political marginalization, unemployment and the lack of education tend to be factors contributing to the motivation to join armed groups. The status and power that comes with joining rebel groups is a trigger for participating for many children in otherwise desperate conflict situations. In some cases, family matters like domestic exploitation drive children into the arms of armed groups. Further, armed groups offer membership, acceptance and honorable roles (as soldiers or leaders) for children in floundering situations, something very seductive for children feeling powerless or victimized. The promise of rewards for fighting with a rebel group also convinces children it is worth joining (Singer, 2006:62–67). This implies that non-forced recruitment is often triggered by interplay of multiple factors and situational influences; it seldom reflects one motive. As Wessells argues “the causes of soldiering are contextual, vary across individuals, and are embedded in wider systems of exploitation and violence” (2006:55).

As seen throughout this section, all children are different and their decision to join rebel groups depends highly on the situation and environment they live in. Therefore, we cannot draw general conclusions about the motivations for children to get involved with rebel groups. For instance, the RUF in Sierra Leone created a viable fighting force by a combination of recruiting youth voluntarily and through force and coercion. By tapping into sentiments of social exclusion, youth often voluntarily joined the rebels. In cases of forced recruitment, youths had to participate in severe violence against local populations and leaders (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:48). Thus, in many cases rebel leaders add force to their group through a combination of forced and non-forced recruitment of children.

### **Creating a Child Soldier**

Once children are recruited to become part of a rebel group, they undergo a variety of intensive training programs and methods in order to convert into effective soldiers.



These programs are designed to create dependency on the rebel group. By achieving dependency, rebel leaders aim to prevent attempts to escape from the group (Singer, 2006:57). One of the essential parts of the transformation into a soldier is indoctrination. Indoctrination provides child soldiers with a new perspective of the world, which creates and sustains combat motivation. This type of motivation is supposed to keep child soldiers in the rebel group in spite of the risks during battles. Besides these, rebel leaders use coercive, remunerative, and normative motivators to keep child soldiers in the group and make them use violence that would be rejected under normal circumstances. Coercive motivators, based on physical punishment, are particularly popular among rebel leaders. It rapidly enables the use of children as soldiers as high levels of obedience are achieved by using brutality, fear and psychological manipulation (Singer, 2006:71). This is also elaborated upon by Kressel, who argues that threats, manipulation and persuasion contribute to obedience and the creation of brutality (2002).

The result of the process of indoctrination is that child soldiers quickly become dependent on their leaders for protection and needs. Simultaneously, terror and propaganda are used in order to stimulate the children to identify themselves with the goals of their rebel group and realign their allegiances and worldview. This process contributes to the creation of moral disengagement from the violence they will use as soldiers. For instance, by dehumanizing the targets of the rebel group, children perceive these targets as the enemy who is righteously attacked. This implies that any sense of responsibility for violence inflicted upon the “enemy” is diffused (Singer, 2006:71–73). The resulting “us versus them” strategy is frequently used in collective action of armed groups. As Vetlesen argues, the individual agent, in this case the child soldier, perceives himself as acting on behalf of his group. This individual agent is a representative of his group and acts for reasons shared with his fellow group members. Thus, the agent thinks, feels, and acts in a manner giving primacy to his relationship with his fellow group members over his relationship with his victims. The connection with the group prevails to such an extent that the connection with the victim is effectively cancelled out (Vetlesen, 2005). This provides a justification for the continuation of attacks targeted at the enemy. Therefore, indoctrination plays a significant role in the violence carried out by child soldiers but it also provides them with a new identity.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the transformation of children into soldiers is re-identification, also referred to as the “construction of identity.” Re-identification ensures that the child no longer identifies with his past but becomes a devoted member of the rebel group. The re-identification alluded to above takes place through various methods such as the shaving of a child soldier’s head or even branding the skin with the group's name or insignia. Arms, chests or

foreheads of child soldier recruits are frequently carved with sharp objects so that the resulting scars will identify them as a member of a particular rebel group. Moreover, the creation of alternative personas is a significant step in the transformation from a child into a soldier and rebel group member. As Singer (2006) argues, the creation of alternative personas enables a complete split with the prior self of the child and thereby neutralizes the consequences of the violence that rebel groups try to indoctrinate. Furthermore, child soldiers are generally renamed and use a special war- or jungle name. The use of nicknames dissociates children from the violence they carry out and makes it possible for them to function as killing machines without remorse (Singer, 2006:73). This clarifies why names like “Blood Never Dry,” “Laughing and Killing,” “The Castrator” or “Bad Pay Bad” are not uncommon among child soldiers.

A common preparation of the mass violence that is to be carried out in the future is the forced killing of people. According to Kressel (2002), preconditions for mass violence are achieved through three specific mechanisms. The first step to convince child soldiers to use violence against the target is authorization. This includes approval, explicit orders, and encouragement by an authority figure, in this case the rebel leader. The second step that ensures the continuation of violence is routinization; when the use of violence against people becomes a routine this makes it easier to continue using violence. The third step to mass violence is dehumanization, which enables the perception of victims as less worthy and inhuman and thus enables child soldiers to disregard the moral implications of the violence inflicted (Kressel, 2002). By switching off the emotional burden of inflicting violence on others, dehumanization establishes the fundamentals for the ruthless and fearless image child soldiers are often associated with.

A complementary tactic to make child soldiers participate in mass violence is forcing them to participate in ritualized killings shortly after their recruitment. Child soldiers are not left with the choice whether to participate or not; in case they refuse they are killed themselves. During these rituals, child soldiers are forced to kill children who attempted to escape the rebel group. Moreover, it is not uncommon that child soldiers have to kill their relatives or community members, a ritual which generally takes place in public places. This implies that the child's home community witnesses the killing. This prevents the child from escaping the rebel group as he or she cannot just return home anymore; in most cases there is nothing left to return to (Singer, 2006:74). Intimacy is an essential aspect of violence in civil war and is frequently used by rebel groups to define the new identity of a child soldier. In general, people are reluctant to exercise these extreme forms of violence against people they know. As Kalyvas claims, it is easier to “kill men who are strangers, to obliterate faces which have not smiled on one in recognition, and to burn houses

which have never welcomed one as a guest” (2006:331). The intimate character of the violence child soldiers are forced to use, naturally goes against their norms and causes a rupture with their home communities. The ritualized killing makes children therefore cross the ultimate moral boundary and is considered as a defining moment in breaking the resistance to the rebel group. Due to their frequent exposure to extreme violence children become desensitized to suffering. Rebel groups use this in order to harden the child and “make it easier to sever links with the rest of society” (Machel, 2001:14). This indicates that child soldiers become reliant on the rebel group as the child's home community vehemently disapproves what the child has become.

This chapter highlighted various organized strategies, demonstrating how children are turned into soldiers by breaking down their defenses and memory. This process results in the fact that child soldiers often have only two anchors left: their fellow rebel group members and their guns. Due to the achievement of moral and psychological disconnections, compliance to orders will therefore generally be almost total after the indoctrination process (Singer, 2006:75). The relation between these tactics of creating child soldiers is obvious as they both complement and reinforce each other. Still, there is more to the creation of a child soldier than the analyzed theories in this chapter. Field research has indicated that socialization plays an essential role in the creation of a child soldier. Therefore, in the following chapters I will use the previously analyzed theories as a starting point and additionally investigate how the process of socialization contributes to the creation of a child soldier. I will argue that socialization further reinforces the previously mentioned methods that accompany the transformation of children into soldiers. By analyzing the socialization processes used by the LRA, RUF, LURD, and RENAMO, I will address how socialization convinces child soldiers to remain within rebel groups.

## **Part II**

### **Case Studies**

# 4

## Following the Holy Spirit

### *Child soldier socialization within the Lord's Resistance Army*

*"When we were in the training camp, Kony came to visit us sometime. When he was around he sat down together with the children, chatted and he was making jokes. He was always smiling and very friendly with me, he was nice."*

Formerly abducted 15-year-old boy soldier

This chapter will provide an analysis of the background of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the conflict in Northern Uganda. In addition, it will elaborate upon tactics used by the LRA to create allegiance among its rebels. It will emphasize which factors are important in creating allegiance within a rebel group. Moreover, evidence from field research will be used to show the use of child soldiers by the LRA, leading to the thorough analysis of socialization processes used within the LRA and its far-reaching consequences.

### **Conflict Background**

Since 1987 Northern Uganda has been suffering from a violent conflict involving three main parties: the central government, the LRA, and the local population, which mainly consists of the Acholi tribe. "Abductions, including the kidnapping of children, have been common, and hundreds of people have been compelled to kill and maim or be killed and maimed themselves. Victims have had lips, hands and fingers cut off. Some have been forced to slaughter their own parents, or drink the blood of those they have murdered. Several massacres of civilians have occurred, and hundreds of thousands of people are living in displacement camps, where conditions are often appalling" (Allen, 2006:1).

During the two decades of conflict in Northern Uganda, it has remained unclear what the exact roots and causes of the continuing violence are. "Twenty years after its birth, the strategy, organization and motives of the Lord's Resistance Army remain shrouded in mystery and supposition. What little we know is drawn almost entirely from interviews with former participants, commanders, and civilian victims. What emerges is a patchwork of motives, methods, and structure, with different accounts sometimes in direct conflict" (Blattman and Annan, 2008:7). One of the

reasons for this is that Joseph Kony has refused to speak with representatives from the international community until the 2006 peace talks. This was due to his suspicion of their motives and fear of being captured (Borzello, 2007).

Due to a lack of systematic and representative information the LRA and its use of child soldiers is poorly understood. To illustrate the complexity of the conflict: Bøås and Dunn developed five main theories about the nature of the conflict of which none has proven to be true. First of all, some believe Joseph Kony is engaging in an irrational campaign of terror and violence without a purpose or ultimate goal and acts like a madman. Secondly, it is believed that the conflict resulted from legitimate and serious complaints of the Northern Ugandan population against the central government of Museveni. A third explanation argues that the conflict is a by-product of “the larger geopolitical rivalry between the Sudanese government and Uganda.” If this were indeed the case, the LRA would be used by the Sudanese government as a rental army to destabilize Uganda. Fourthly, the government of Museveni and its army are believed to have no interest in combating the LRA. From this perspective, the conflict is exploited for political purposes to disadvantage the Northern Ugandan population. Lastly, it is believed that Northern Uganda has become subject to political economy of conflict. This view implies that various actors are benefitting economically from continuation of the conflict and thus have no interest in finding a solution (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:132–146).

This complex variety of perspectives on the Northern Ugandan conflict indicates that the relationship between the LRA and the people of Northern Uganda is not clear-cut, but one of a complex, multidimensional nature. The LRA, which has been fighting the Museveni government in Kampala since 1987, is claimed to mainly draw its strength from the largest tribe in Northern Uganda: the Acholi. The Acholi people in Northern Uganda mistrust the government in Kampala due to a history of conflict and exploitation. This feeling of mistrust was enhanced when the Museveni government started disadvantaging the Acholi due to the belief that the people of Northern Uganda supported the LRA. This belief was initially incorrect yet resulted in the government inflicting severe violence and human rights abuses on the Northern region and relocating the Acholi into displacement camps. As a result, the people of Northern Uganda developed deeply rooted feelings of resentment towards the Museveni government. The Acholi claim that the Museveni government deliberately relocated them and by doing this allowed the LRA to weaken the Acholi in order to undermine political challenge. This resentment caused many Acholi to join the LRA as a last resort to fight for their rights. This contributed to the fact that the Acholi people eventually did make up most of the LRA's rebels (Redress, 2006:9).

However, the people of Northern Uganda, including the Acholi, have been subject to numerous atrocities committed by the LRA. The reason is that “Kony

claimed that Acholi society had to be purified by violence” (Allen, 2006:40). Some 70 to 80% of the LRA rebels are child soldiers abducted mainly from the Acholi tribe when the LRA operated in Uganda. Bøås and Dunn argue that the LRA has created a historical trap through this behavior. Due to the fact that the LRA committed numerous atrocities and kidnapped thousands of children, they have lost the support of the Northern Ugandan population and seem to continue fighting solely for survival (2007:147). This implied that the LRA mainly became abusive of the Acholi and used terrorization to acquire sufficient supplies of resources and human capital (Redress, 2006:9). Today we see similar patterns throughout the region, as the group has scattered and spread its violent activities to South Sudan, DR Congo and the Central African Republic (Cakaj, Lancaster and Ronan, 2013).

### **Characteristics of the LRA and the Use of Child Soldiers**

In recent years child soldiers have been portrayed as a new source of fighters who become increasingly involved in conflicts. This assumption is due particularly to the changing nature and proliferation of conflicts, combined with global monitoring, reporting and transmission. The public has become more aware of the phenomenon. Moreover, the flourishing commercial and illegal trafficking in small arms has enabled children to participate in armed conflict as more efficient combatants. Still, as Gates and Reich argue, child soldiers “have been with us from time immemorial” (2009:3). However, the widespread availability of lightweight weapons that are easily maintained and operated, has significantly contributed to the roles of child soldiers becoming increasingly violent and destructive (Rosen, 2005:14). Combined with issues like poverty, discrimination, and vulnerability, children are soft targets for recruitment into armed groups (Redress, 2006:5). Not surprisingly, this “leads to vicious cycles of violence and insecurity, prolonging suffering and obstructing post-conflict reconstruction” (Machel, 2001:119).

Singer argues, “children multiply the potential military capacities of groups that choose to adopt the child soldier doctrine” (2006:94). As rebel groups often face challenges in force generation, the use of child soldiers allows a proliferation of such groups. The relatively weak starting point of rebel groups is overcome by using the child soldier doctrine. Child soldiers are either forcibly or voluntarily recruited to become part of armed groups due to the relatively small investments that groups have to make for their recruitment, training, and arming (Redress, 2006:5). This is accelerated by the flourishing small arms industry that has allowed children to become highly effective fighters. One of the rebel groups who multiplied their fighting numbers through this strategy is the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, which is led by Joseph Kony. The LRA started out as a group of 200 core members

but swiftly transformed into an army of 14,000 soldiers once they implemented the use of child soldiers (Singer, 2006:95). This has resulted in the fact that the LRA has persisted since they started waging war in the north in 1987 (Behrend, 1998).

The LRA is often portrayed as a barbaric and insane cult by Ugandan and international media. One of the reasons for this is that the LRA, led by self-proclaimed prophet Joseph Kony, is known to target children in order to increase its forces: it has abducted more than 60,000 Northern Ugandan children, with a particular preference for young adolescents. Research has shown that a 14-year old child is three times as likely to be recruited compared to a 9 or 23 year old (Blattman, 2007), and that the LRA retains child soldiers because they are “more easily indoctrinated and misinformed than adults, and have more difficulty escaping” (Beber and Blattman, 2013:6). Due to its practice of kidnapping children, the LRA is often portrayed as a barbaric, irrational group. Thousands of children have been kidnapped by the LRA to become soldiers, porters or wives for LRA commanders. Estimates claim that approximately 70% to 80% of the LRA is made up of child soldiers; this explains why the LRA is often characterized as an army of children (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:131, and Redress, 2006:8).

Most child soldiers fighting for the LRA have become part of the rebel group after being abducted from their homes, schools, or villages. Due to the numerous abductions of children by the LRA, a phenomenon of “night commuters” has erupted in Northern Uganda. These night commuters are thousands of children who leave their homes every night to walk to larger towns and sleep in shelters or on the streets in order to prevent possible abduction by the LRA (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:131). This phenomenon has subsided during recent years, yet according to Bøås and Dunn “resolution of the conflict remains highly elusive” (2007:131). Yoweri Museveni, the Ugandan president, has promised to end the war and has proclaimed that peace was near on numerous occasions. However, the LRA increased its activity each time Museveni claimed they were on the road to peace, and instead enhanced its attacks on the civilian population. This has resulted in more than half of the Acholi population in Northern Uganda living in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps whilst children have been abducted throughout Northern Uganda on a daily basis until 2006 (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:132). As elaborated upon in the introduction of this thesis, the LRA is at the time of writing scattered throughout the Central African region. This resulted in drastically decreasing rates of abduction in Uganda, yet led to numerous abductions in South Sudan, DRC, and the Central African Republic (International Alert, 2009).

Kony still uses large numbers of child soldiers, among other reasons because the LRA “need them in their ranks to avoid defeat” and because of the belief “they can negotiate an amnesty on this matter in agreeing to a ceasefire” (Gates, 2009:4). While



this explains part of the reasons why the LRA tries to hold on to its child soldiers, the question arises: why do Acholi children still remain with the LRA after experiencing such severe violence and exploitation, instead of escaping to their villages?

### *Spirituality and Fear*

Part of the answer to this question can be found in the importance of spirituality for the Acholi population. Joseph Kony, who was born in the early 1960s, dropped out of school during his primary education and was trained as an *ajwaka*: a spirit medium. He became possessed by a variety of spirits and started recruiting followers near Gulu in Northern Uganda to establish the LRA in 1987. By 1990 the LRA had become the most significant armed unit fighting in Northern Uganda. Field research implied that Kony has always received information and instructions from his spirits through which he still leads the LRA. He is believed to be possessed by 13 different spirits, coming from Uganda, Sudan, Italy, America, China, and Korea. This group of spirits is headed by Juma Oris, his Sudanese spirit, and includes one woman who is in charge of LRA operations: Silly Silindi (Borzello, 2007:394). Interviews with former rebels indicate an incredibly strong belief in Kony's spirits among LRA rebels; none of them denied the existence of the spirits and all acted accordingly to their orders and believed Kony could predict the future. This is also highlighted by Borzello who explains: "Kony can see the future: some of his prophecies are specific (predicting that the UPDF will attack at a certain time), while others are more opaque (that he is 'like Moses' and will 'never see the promised land')" (2007:394). The strong spirituality of the Acholi resulted in relatively low numbers of defection among LRA rebels. As Borzello explains: "Kony appears to have a genuine hold over his followers. It is rare to meet former rebels who do not believe that he has real spiritual power" (2007:394). The spiritual dimension of the LRA instills fear and respect among its members. This either makes the rebels believe that Kony can read their minds and will kill them if they think about escaping, or they awe at his remarkable capacities (Allen, 2006:38–43).

Besides spirituality, fear plays a significant role in achieving compliance among LRA rebels. The use of violence creates high levels of fear among rebels, which encourages compliance with the LRA. This is clearly shown by Allen: "a key strategy of the LRA has been to abduct young people, including children, and to educate them to be part of a new society, using forms of abuse that are hard to believe. Many recruits become sexual slaves or are deployed as combatants. Some are required to perform atrocities against civilians in order to punish them for accepting President Museveni's rule, demonstrate their loyalty and make it difficult for them to return home because of the fear of reprisals. At peace talks in 1994, Kony justified LRA actions to those present as follows: "If you pick up an arrow against us and we ended

up cutting off the hand you used, who is to blame? You report us with your mouth, and we cut off your lips. Who is to blame? It is you! The Bible says that if your hand, eye, or mouth is at fault, it should be cut off” (Allen, 2006:42).

### *Rational Decisions and Terror as a Strategy of Choice*

Even though the LRA generally tends to be depicted as an irrational, barbaric cult because of this behavior, this picture is challenged by an emerging literature about the LRA. “In the absence of a public face and (until very recently) an active political arm, the LRA’s activities, motives, and structure have been defined by external actors, from Western academics and journalists to the Ugandan military and government...What has often emerged is a picture of the LRA as a primal force—illogical, barbaric, and cultlike” (Blattman and Annan, 2008:1). Blattman and Annan have done extensive research in Uganda which has shown that “the LRA turns out to be a much more strategic and conventional military organization than often supposed, however terrible its violence” (2008:7). Allen extends this argument, stating that LRA leaders have made a more coherent political argument than is portrayed and “desire to make a case to the Acholi population as a whole” (2006:44). An example of this can be found in the LRA’s statements of demands. These call for: “(a) an all-party ‘National Conference’ followed by general elections; (b) creation of a Religious Affairs Ministry to ‘see an end to the use of witchcraft and sorcery by promotion of the Ten Commandments’; (c) rehabilitation of the economy and rehabilitation of the country’s infrastructure; (d) national unity (through inter-tribal marriages and language instruction); (e) education for all; (f) policies encouraging foreign investments; (g) the independence of the judiciary; (h) the formation of an ethnically balanced national army; (i) improved diplomatic relations with neighboring states; and (j) relocation of Uganda’s administrative capital to Kigumba in Masindi district” (Allen, 2006:43).

The picture drawn by Allen contradicts “assertions that the rebels are all deranged and unaccountable for their actions. There are aspects of the LRA which draw on local understanding of the spirit world, and resonate with perceptions of ‘the bush’ (*olum*) as a place of unpredictable and amoral phenomena. But rational decisions have been made about politics, and terror has been a strategy of choice” (Allen, 2006:44). However, due to their use of extreme violence, it has become increasingly difficult for the LRA to get support and recruit their forces voluntarily. Therefore, they resorted to forced recruitment of children, providing them with the possibility to remain a cohesive group. The following section will entail a more detailed explanation how the use of child soldiers contributes to allegiance within the LRA.

### *Allegiance within the Lord's Resistance Army*

Chapter three has outlined the range of tactics used by rebel groups in order to create child soldiers. In addition, rebel groups employ tactics to make their members loyal to the group. Allegiance is essential in order to maintain a cohesive rebel group, as defection of its members will significantly undermine its success. As Andvig and Gates point out, “the incentive to exit for an individual will increase with the number of others exiting” (2007:10). However, “what motivates a person to risk his life in armed rebellion? Why continue to expose oneself to life in the bush where one may be killed at any minute without home, family, or other comforts? Or, from the perspective of the rebel group, how does a rebel group maintain organizational cohesion and deter defection? How does a rebel group sustain itself?” (Gates, 2002:111). These questions are of essential importance in analyzing allegiance within rebel groups.

Gates (2002) examines the organizational structure of rebel groups in order to understand patterns of recruitment and allegiance. In this analysis Gates focuses particularly on three factors which significantly influence the likelihood of military success, defection, and help shape recruitment: geography, ethnicity and ideology. “Even for the most blatant loot-seeking groups, ethnicity, ideology, and geographical proximity play a direct role in shaping the pattern of compliance and enforcement in a rebel army. Likewise, ideologically and ethnically motivated groups do not motivate their members exclusively with non-pecuniary awards” (Gates, 2002:113–114).

According to Gates, “geography is a fundamentally important variable for understanding the supervision, oversight, and control of a rebel organization ... Military tactics and strategies must address geographical issues, shaping the nature of engaging the enemy in battle, supplying troops, and the supervision, control, and recruitment of the troops” (2002:113). This implies that the geographical distance between commanders and soldiers is a determining factor in creating allegiance. Looking at the LRA and its recruitment by abduction, geographical distance indeed seems an important influence in creating allegiance. Are the newly recruited LRA rebels not to be supervised and controlled in close proximity to their commanders, one may expect a high chance of defection since they are initially forced to be with the LRA.

Gates' concept of distance can also be applied to ethnicity. As Gates argues “ethnic distance constitutes the sense of group identity that an ethnic or national group feels with respect to one another and to other groups. An ethnically homogenous rebel group with a clear sense of group identity, therefore, exhibits narrow ethnic distances, whereas an ethnically diverse group possesses great ethnic distance” (Gates, 2002:113). The majority of the LRA consists of rebels coming from the Acholi tribe in Northern Uganda. According to Gates' explanation this contributes

to the creation of a group identity. This is enhanced by the fact that the LRA is fighting the Ugandan government forces (UPDF), which represent different tribes. Moreover, the people of Northern Uganda have been in conflict with the central government for decades. Thus when adopting Gates' theory on allegiance, recruiting people from Northern Uganda is likely to enhance allegiance within the LRA due to narrow ethnic distance.

Thirdly, Gates argues that ideological distance influences allegiance within rebel groups. According to Gates, "ideological distance can be represented in terms of mapping preferences in an issue space as used in spatial models of elections and committees" (2002:113). The distance between ideal points affects allegiance in a similar way compared to ethnicity; if rebels share the same ideology, the likelihood of allegiance is higher. Looking at the LRA this is a tricky subject. Since the majority of LRA recruits are abducted and forced to participate, it may seem unlikely that the same ideology is shared. This impression may be even further enhanced by the commonly sketched image of the LRA as a brutal organization without clear goals. However, if one takes the analyses by Blattman (2008) and Allen (2006) into account to which I referred to earlier, the LRA does seem to have an ideology and fights for its Acholi people in Northern Uganda. This indicates that there may not be such a large ideological distance among LRA rebels as one would expect. The LRA's ideology may therefore contribute to allegiance.

#### *Using (Non-) Pecuniary Rewards to Create Allegiance*

In addition to these factors, the provision of benefits also contributes to allegiance among members of a rebel group. Gates focuses on the principal agent model, and argues that "agents of a military organization (that is soldiers) when recruited on a voluntary basis, have to receive sufficient utility by joining that they do not run away (the participation constraint). Furthermore the leadership (the principal) must be able to find a way to reward the soldiers so that they choose to act in a way that will produce the maximum increase of the probability of winning (or sustaining a "profitable" conflict) with the lowest financial cost (incentive compatibility constraint)" (Andvig and Gates, 2007:7). Moreover, non-pecuniary rewards can be used to meet the participatory and compatibility constraints (Gates, 2002). Non-pecuniary benefits (such as the belief to fight the good fight) "can be created by the group and can be used to motivate members instead of material benefits. Leaders have an incentive to inculcate a sense of membership and solidarity and thereby construct an identity for their organization" (Andvig and Gates, 2007:9).

Gates acknowledges "the nature of benefits will vary considerably across different kinds of rebel groups. Loot-seeking groups will rely on wages and other pecuniary rewards distributed from their rent-seeking activities. Ideological groups

anchor the other extreme, relying on the non-pecuniary rewards of fighting the ‘good fight’. All groups distribute benefits that exhibit a mixture of pecuniary and non-pecuniary rewards” (Gates, 2002:114). Andvig and Gates state that the LRA, as a religious mystical group, uses a mix of functional and solidarity benefits to create allegiance among its members (2007:9). In addition, punishment and the use of force are often used as means to encourage compliance and control the behavior of rebels within the group. “The leader of a rebel group can offer an incentive scheme to a subordinate agent through a benefit stream for compliance and punishment for defection” (Gates, 2002:116).

Gates argues, “compliance depends on a minimal allocation of pecuniary rewards, but the fact remains that non-pecuniary benefits go far in maintaining allegiance to a rebel army” (2002:120). An interesting finding is that non-pecuniary benefits seem to be more influential for children than adults. Thereby, Blattman (2007) argues that children have a greater tendency towards bonding to a group and altruism, which may imply that it takes less effort to create solidarity norms for children within the organization. Moreover, children bond more tightly to a group (Andvig and Gates, 2007:9–10). This may explain part of the reason why the LRA resorted to the recruitment of children as the main source of their fighters; it seems the chances for allegiance would be significantly higher among child soldiers compared to adult fighters. As Gates points out, “children offer a possibility for rebel groups to meet the reservation level of benefits and the compatibility constraint that they might not be able to meet with adult recruits” (2002:128). Interestingly, Beber and Blattman found that “not only were the LRA more likely to forcibly recruit adolescents than adults, but once recruited, younger recruits received more punishments and fewer positive inducements” (2013:87). Also, children were “more likely to be forced to commit acts that would reduce their real and perceived outside options,” such as killing family members (2013:87). Their work showed that younger recruits would stay longer before trying to escape, demonstrating that children can be coerced to a greater extent compared to adult fighters. Beber and Blattman note that, in addition to the above factors, this is partly due to the fact that young recruits were easier to influence and convince (2013). However, although their comparative statics are an important addition to our knowledge of the LRA, they fail to explore the deeper dynamics of this phenomenon.

When analyzing the LRA as an organization, it emerges that compliance is relatively high yet there is hardly any allocation of pecuniary rewards—except for commanders, who generally get all the looted goods. Interviews with former LRA fighters and commanders have shown that pecuniary rewards are generally not used to motivate the rebels. Moreover, the LRA is not particularly driven by ideological or ethnic factors. Punishment and force on the other hand, are regularly used to

maintain allegiance of the rebels. One should take into account that the spillover effect of this use of force creates general fear among LRA rebels. According to Andvig and Gates this may lead to either increased obedience or desertion (2007). This highlights that the factors indicated by Gates (2002, 2007) do to a certain extent play a role in the creation of allegiance; however, interviews undertaken for this thesis have shown that these are not the most essential factors. What then actually creates allegiance within the LRA? What is the glue that keeps the LRA together? The LRA consists mainly of abductees who have been forced to become part of the group and stay in the bush. The lack of both pecuniary and non-pecuniary rewards would make one assume that non-compliance and defection is high among LRA rebels. Yet this is not the case and the LRA still exists after more than two decades of fighting with child soldiers abducted years ago in Uganda still being part of the group. One of the clearest examples is Dominic Ongwen, who was abducted by the LRA as a teenager, became one of the top commanders, was put in charge of the LRA operations in DR Congo, and is currently under ICC indictment (Cakaj, 2010). Gates points out that a rebel group needs organizational abilities to ensure allegiance of its troops (2002). How does the LRA manage to remain such a cohesive body?

### *Neglecting Socialization*

The factors pointed out by Blattman, Andvig, and Gates indeed play a significant role in deterring defection and creating allegiance. However, an important contributing factor that is neglected by these scholars is the process of socialization. Interviews with former LRA child soldiers and commanders have revealed that socialization plays an essential (if not the most significant) role in deterring defection and creating allegiance. Blattman indicates that child soldiers often encounter possibilities to run away from rebel groups, yet decide to stay (2007, 2008). Furthermore, he points out that in order to maintain allegiance among forcefully recruited children, indoctrination and socialization play a fundamental role (2007). Even though he makes a significant move forward with his research on why and how children end up with the LRA, he does not answer the burning question why child soldiers remain with the LRA for such long periods of time. Blattman indicates socialization has something to do with it, yet fails to explain how the process of socialization leads to allegiance. Thus, Blattman notes the importance of socialization yet neglects the dynamics and key processes of how this takes place. This approach neglects the process leading to allegiance and is the exact trap Checkel emphasized in his research and to which I referred earlier (2001:557, see chapter 2 of this thesis, *The Process of Socialization*).

Simultaneously, Gates and Andvig progress with their theory on allegiance yet do not reflect the whole problem either. Their research focuses on non-material

incentives, which, to some extent, play a role in the process of creating compliance and allegiance within the LRA. According to Andvig and Gates “members of a military group are kept attached to the organization through three forms of incentives: force; non-pecuniary benefits (often linked to ideology, religion, or ethnicity); and economic incentives (2007:10). This theory represents a step forward in understanding the mechanisms used by rebel groups, but fails to explain the entire problem. Again, research conducted by Andvig and Gates does not feature explanations of how socialization contributes to allegiance; they fail to analyze the dynamics and in-depth processes. As socialization creates interests, they neglect an essential aspect of the problem in their attempts to better understand rebel groups and child soldiers. However, although Blattman, Andvig and Gates fail to look at the problem dynamically, they all acknowledge that socialization is a significant contributing factor in the development of interests and allegiance. The main problem with their research is that while it presumes the dynamics, their analysis is one of comparative statics. This unfortunately results in a scope too narrow to reflect the broader picture and prevents them from in-depth analyses of how socialization contributes to the creation of interests and allegiance. This stresses the importance of research with a greater emphasis on the dynamics of socialization processes within rebel groups: it will give us so a better understanding of how these groups function and manage to sustain.

Wood (2008) addresses some fundamental aspects of socialization and emphasizes the lack of research regarding social processes of civil war. Research has particularly failed to address how socialization is accomplished within rebel groups. In order to fill this gap in the research, the next section of this thesis will clarify how socialization is an essential, decisive factor in the creation of allegiance, interests and deterring defection within the LRA. Since the LRA recruits the majority of its members by force yet manages to efficiently control them, it is particularly interesting to analyze to which extend socialization plays a role in this. Socialization may serve as the glue that holds the group together. The following section builds primarily on the 65 in-depth interviews I conducted with former LRA child soldiers and commanders. Only their accounts of the socialization processes within the LRA can solve the puzzle and give us the answer how socialization facilitated them with the motivation to stay.

### **Fieldwork evidence**

The following figures show parts of the findings from my 65 interviews with former LRA child soldiers and commanders in Northern Uganda. Here it should be kept in mind that it is difficult to generalize from these results, as it is a relatively small sample. Still, the results support general patterns indicated during personal

interviews with former child soldiers and commanders. Besides this limitation, many LRA rebels remain in the bush. These figures indicate only the average ages of rebels who have returned from the bush. Average age and time spent with the LRA would probably be much higher if the group remaining in the bush were included in this research. These figures thus constitute a lower boundary.

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Average age of recruitment</b>	14.6 years	12.6 years
<b>Average age of return to society</b>	17.5 years	17.6 years
<b>Average period within the LRA</b>	2.9 years	5 years
<b>Proportion participating in DDRR programs</b>	56%	43%
<b>Total number of child soldiers in sample</b>	36	30*

Table 4.1 Field sample of LRA child soldiers. Total sample size: 66

\* One girl was abducted twice; hence the total number of recruits is 66 instead of 65

Table 4.1 shows the average age of recruitment, the average age of return to society, the average number of years spent within the LRA, and the percentage of returnees who participated in DDRR programs after their return from the bush. In order to see whether there are differences in recruitment patterns of boys and girls, these are divided into different categories. The table shows that the average age of girls in this sample at time of recruitment was significantly lower than the average age of recruitment of boys. This can be explained by the fact that many young girls are recruited to become servants to older female rebels. They are particularly targeted during recruitment missions to help these women with domestic tasks and babysitting. Still, the average age of return to society was comparable for boys and girls in this sample. This indicates that girls remain with the LRA for longer periods of time. A possible explanation for this is that they are given to male rebels to be their wife and are encouraged to have children. Because of this, girls often give birth to several children in the bush, which makes it more difficult to leave the LRA. Interviews indicated that the LRA is particularly keen on raising these children who are born in the bush: they are “real” rebels, they know only “bush life” and will have a strong sense of loyalty to the group. Since the girls have to take care of their children, it is more difficult to leave the LRA.



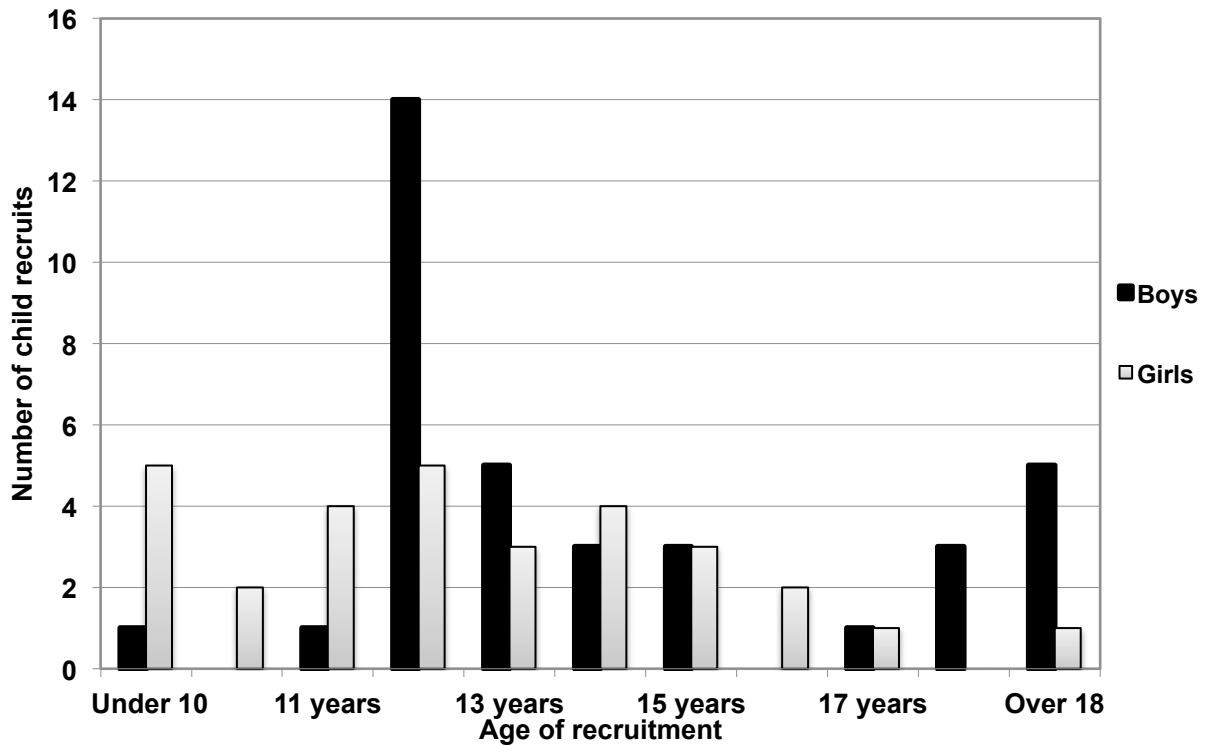


Figure 4.1 LRA child soldiers: age of recruitment. Sample size: 66

Figure 4.1 indicates that the majority of child soldiers in this sample were recruited between the age of 12 and 15. This supports Blattman's theory and data that young adolescents are preferred by the LRA (2007). The horizontal axis shows the age of recruitment, the vertical axis shows the number of children recruited at this age.

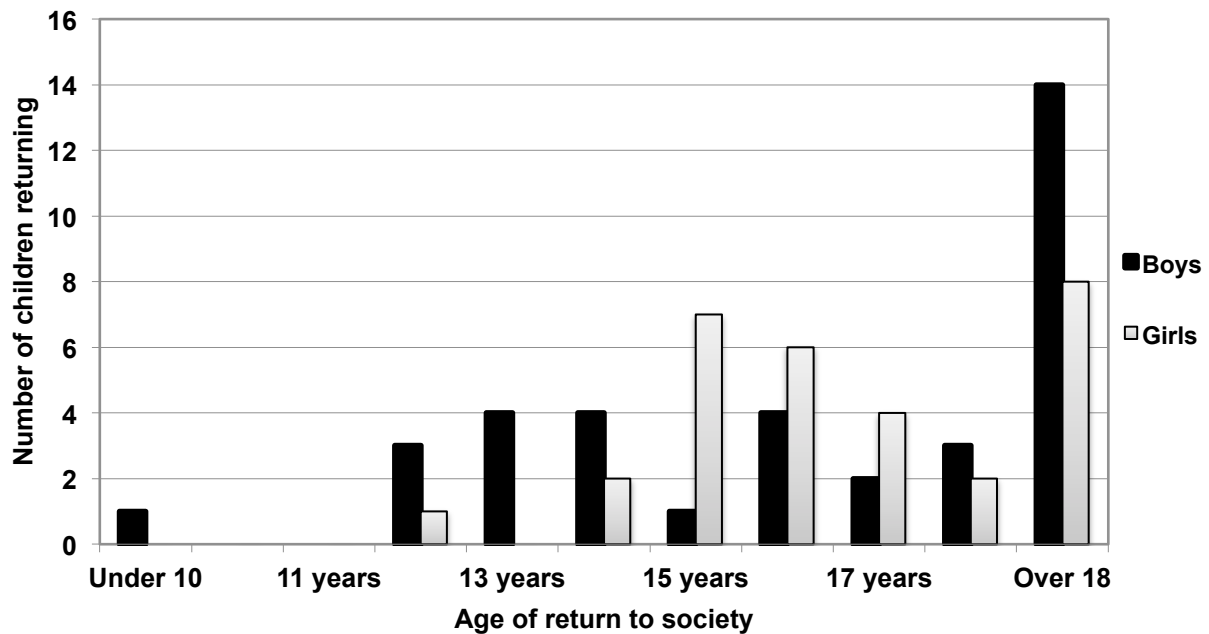


Figure 4.2 LRA child soldiers: age of return to society. Sample size: 66

Figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of child soldiers in this sample return to society when they are over 18 years of age. The horizontal axis shows the age of return to society while the vertical axis shows the number of children who returned at this age. The figure indicates that it is very difficult for younger children to leave the LRA, which I addressed, in earlier parts of this thesis. One of the reasons for this is that young children are extremely loyal, as also found in research conducted by Beber and Blattman (2013). Young children are generally more dependent on fellow group members and it is relatively easy to disorient them. This shows how difficult it is for them to leave the bush on their own; their sole chance to get away from the LRA is being rescued by the UPDF. The only boy in under the age of 10 in this sample who did manage to escape the LRA was in fact rescued after a hard battle with the UPDF.

Figure 4.2 also indicates that child soldiers are most likely to escape from the LRA when they are older than 18. My field research indicates that a possible explanation is the fact that child soldiers get more freedom within the LRA once they have become integrated rebels and stayed with the LRA for a longer period of time. Senior rebels and commanders heavily monitor new recruits for several months up to years, yet if they give a continuous impression of being well integrated into the group, they are given more freedom. This implies that they are no longer strictly supervised; they can for instance fetch water or hunt on their own. Given these conditions, this increases their chances to escape and leave the bush. This is in line with research conducted by Beber and Blattman, who found that young recruits had the highest

allegiance to Kony: 34% of rebels aged 11–13 were loyal to the group, compared to 22% of rebels at the age of 24–26 (2013:88).

### **Socialization Processes within the Lord's Resistance Army**

“The LRA’s almost total reliance on forced recruitment distinguishes it from the other rebel majority of rebel movements in Africa and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the LRA, like any force, has to motivate its recruits not only to participate (i.e. not run away) but also to carry out their dangerous duties” (Blattman and Annan, 2008:7).

This section will show how the LRA motivates and controls its members: most importantly, it will highlight the role socialization plays in achieving this. This section will particularly reflect the first processes of socialization used within the LRA. It will shed light on the role of initiation rituals, training, violence, and hazing, and how these contribute to socialize and hereby motivate new abductees. Blattman and Annan (2008) argue that their interviews with rebel commanders and abductees have revealed which methods the LRA employs in order to create motivation for abductees to participate and perform. According to their results, the provision of material incentives and rewards did not play an important role in creating this motivation. There was little to give so instead promises were made that upon victory the rebels would receive material rewards and high positions in the army or government. Moreover, the main methods of control proved to be violence and the threat of punishment. “Real and threatened death and injury were among the primary means of dissuading escape and motivating performance.” Moreover, control was achieved by ordering “the forcible commission of violence (typically killing or the desecration of dead bodies) as a key feature of initiation into the group, one that serves several purposes: terrorizing the youth to break down his psychological defenses, raising the specter of punishment by his community if he were to return, and desensitizing the recruit to violence” (Blattman and Annan, 2008:7). Indeed, these tactics contribute to the creation of motivation and control among child soldiers with the LRA. However, Blattman and Annan miss out on the essential role socialization plays in the creation of *allegiance* by failing to analyze the deeper dynamics of socialization processes within the LRA.

#### *Formal and Informal Socialization*

In her work on the social processes of civil war, Wood states that these processes play a significant role in the creation of a cohesive unit. She argues that “the consequences of military socialization for combatants are not well documented, but they surely include the effects of recruitment and training processes as well as the effects of

witnessing and wielding violence. Whether recruits of armed groups are volunteers or have been coerced, they have to be socialized in the use of violence for group, not private, purposes, if group leaders are to control the violence deployed by their combatants, typically through the building of strongly hierarchical organizations. Training and socialization to the armed group take place both formally, through the immersion experience of “boot camp,” and informally, through initiation rituals and hazing. The powerful experiences of endless drilling, dehumanization through abuse at the hands of the drill sergeant, and degradation followed by “rebirth” as group members through initiation rituals typically melt individual recruits into a cohesive unit in which loyalties to one another are felt to be stronger than previous loyalties, such as those to family” (2008:546).

Military socialization as Wood describes it certainly takes place within the LRA. Abductees are socialized in the use of violence for group purposes resulting in a strong hierarchical organization. This process of formal and informal socialization starts from the moment children are abducted by the LRA. Formal socialization is achieved by “boot camp”: an intense military training which drills the newly abducted children as soldiers. They are generally taught how to dismantle and operate guns, how to march, how to patrol areas to detect UPDF forces, how to dodge UPDF soldiers, and learn about fighting tactics. This process can take several days up to some months, depending on the LRA’s position and the intensity of attacks by the UPDF. Generally, training seemed to be most intense when the rebels were located in camps throughout South Sudan. There were few confrontations with the UPDF, which gave the LRA more time to sufficiently train their new recruits. As a former LRA rebel (13F5) explained, “after I was abducted, the rebels took me to Sudan. We had to walk for 4 days without food and did not rest. When we came to Sudan we were taken to the LRA camp. Then the training started. The rebels taught us how to dismantle the gun and how to shoot and march. I also learned how to move through the bush without leaving traces for the UPDF. The rebels told me how to use tactics to attack the enemy. We were 12 people in the training. We all came from different places in Gulu, Pader, and Kitgum districts. The rebels trained us for 2 months so we would be good rebels and could be selected to go fight in Uganda. The training was difficult but we wanted to be selected to fight for the LRA. I tried to become a good rebel and I can shoot the gun very well. I killed many UPDFs when I was selected to go back to Uganda.”

In addition, informal socialization takes place through a “welcome ceremony” of initiation rituals and hazing. The initiation ritual of the LRA is used to register its new members. As a means of registration, newly abducted children on average receive 50 to 150 caning strokes. If they cry the number of strokes is increased, often until they lose consciousness. Alternatively, they are beaten with the flat side of a

*panga*, a machete, to be registered as a group member. In addition, a ritual with shea nut butter is performed. The butter is smeared on the head, chest, back, and hands of the abductees. Another former LRA child soldier (12F5) explained: “the rebels told us that the shea butter will protect us from UPDF attacks. The bullets would not be able to find us. They also told us that they would always know where we were because of the shea butter. If we would escape they would always get us...and then they would finish us.”

After completing the shea butter ceremony, boys are not allowed to wash themselves for three days and girls cannot wash themselves for four days. During these three or four days, the newly abducted children are guarded and have to eat and sleep separately from the rebels which have stayed in the bush for longer periods of time. This has an important symbolic value in Acholi culture: when a baby is born it is not taken to the outside world until it is three (in case it is a boy) or four days old (in case it is a girl). This implies that the shea nut butter ritual leads to the “rebirth” of abductees as group members. According to LRA terms the civilian spirit is erased and the children become “integrated rebels.” As one boy (14M4) expressed “they chased away the civilian spirit by performing the rituals. You become a real integrated rebel after that and you are accepted as a member of the group by the commanders. You are no longer a civilian, the rebels are your new family.” These formal and informal socialization processes within the LRA show the beginning stages of how individual recruits are melted into a cohesive unit.

### *Experiencing Violence*

During and after the registration process LRA abductees generally experience extreme forms of violence. This is commonly used within rebel groups as described by Wood: “once deployed, combatants experience (to widely varying degrees) violence as perpetrators, as witnesses, and often as victims. Combatant memoirs consistently report the traumatizing effects of watching the death or injury of fellow combatants, as well as the harrowing effects for many of using violence themselves. Among the psychological mechanisms possibly at work in these processes of socialization to group membership and the wielding of violence are compliance, role adoption, internalization of group norms, cognitive dissonance reduction, habituation to violence, diffusion of responsibility onto the group, deindividuation, and dehumanization of the victimized group” (2008:546). Through these processes, children become part of the violent culture of a rebel group.

The profound effects that a combination of these processes exerts on LRA child soldiers are clearly shown by their allegiance to the group and the extreme violence they practice. Young abductees are often forced by LRA commanders to exert lethal violence, in many cases against family or village members. Besides that,

violence and fear are used to control the behavior of new recruits. Suffered and observed violence create high levels of fear among abductees. This was strongly indicated during field research. As one of my informants (13M6) explained: “one day I was going to town with my friends to get sugar, salt and cassava. On the way back I was walking in front because my friends were tired of carrying the sugar. I met the rebels on the road. They came out of the bush and asked me where I was going. I told them I was going home. They asked if I was alone so I told them I was with my three friends. They ordered me to wait in the bush with them until my friends came. I could not run: they had guns. When my friends came they took them too. Then something bad happened. Two of my friends tried to run away. The rebels shot one and captured the other one. They told me and my other friend to kill him. They gave us the panga (machete) but we could not do it. They got angry and were yelling that they would kill us all if we would not do it. They started beating my friend so we had to kill the other one, I was fearing them. After we had finished him, the rebels told me to open his skull. I had to eat his brain and drink the blood. I could not go home, I was covered in blood. The rebels told me I was becoming a real rebel now and we started walking into the bush. I never went back home.” This account is just one of many cases in which children are forced to exert lethal violence on their relatives and friends. However dramatic this may seem, it often results in strong allegiance to the group. In Several informants revealed that they were so ashamed of their acts, that it prevented them from returning home: instead, they stayed with the rebels and become part of a ‘new family’.

Moreover, the rebels tell new recruits they will be killed if they try to escape—so most of them stay with the group. Children that do try to escape are often caught and killed. The experience of an informant (9F11) is just one of many. She tells: “one of the girls tried to escape when she was sent to fetch water. The rebels caught her and she was given to the other abductees to be killed. There were ten newly abducted children. The rebels put the girl in the middle of the group. The new abductees were all standing around her and the rebels ordered them all to touch and beat the girl. The abductees started beating her until she did not move anymore.” Another child (12M4) said: “one of the boys who had tried to escape was caught. They took him back to the base and then the other children had to beat him with all the tools we had, until he died. His eyes looked so scared and he cried and cried. But we all had to laugh and yell at him. The commanders said that if we wouldn’t do so, we were also thinking about escaping and we would be killed just like the boy. So we laughed and laughed until his screaming stopped and there was no more life in his eyes. That was my first one and it was the worst of everything I experienced as a rebel, it felt as if part of me also died right there.”

Interviews with former LRA child soldiers revealed that the use of violence had become normal for them: all constraints disappeared due to the exposure to constant violence. This may explain why the LRA has become more and more violent towards civilians over the years. In her analysis of military socialization within the RUF in Sierra Leone, Wood identifies a similar phenomenon. Wood explains that “the frequently observed widening of repertoires of violence over the course of the war likely reflects the ongoing effects of these underlying mechanisms, particularly dehumanization, diffusion of responsibility, habituation, and deindividuation, all of which are likely to undermine constraints on violence” (2008:547). This contrasts with Weinstein’s explanation of violence, who claims that external support or an abundance of natural resources are key factors to high levels of indiscriminate violence being carried out (2007). In the case of the LRA, neither of these two factors were present, yet the level of indiscriminate violence was extraordinary with numerous mutilations, extensive plundering and displacement of people taking place (Kalyvas, 2006).

As elaborated upon in chapter 3, violence is a powerful tool to turn children into effective soldiers. Violence wielded, suffered, and observed also emerges as an integral part of the process of socialization of LRA combatants. As a result of this traumatic socialization, many child soldiers started to view the LRA as their family and their commanders as father figures. As one of the LRA child soldiers (14M4) put it: “when we were living in the bush, there was a lot of violence. The UPDF attacked us and we had to fight them back. Some of the children did not listen and were punished. They were properly caned and the rebels would say this is what happens when you do not listen. But when I was a good rebel and killing many UPDFs, the rebels were good to me. I was not caned anymore and I got the rank of sergeant. I had my gun in the bush and the rebels protected me from UPDFs. They were my family, this was now my life. I wanted to fight, I was not thinking of home anymore.”

As this account indicates, the LRA displaced and transformed the socialization processes of civilian life. As Wood argues: “recruits’ socialization into military life reshapes social networks in many ways. Rather than transitioning to adult life through traditional cultural rituals of maturation, apprenticeships to particular occupations, and participation in migrant labor networks, young recruits are socialized to adulthood through their integration into armed groups and the wielding of violence. In Uganda, former child soldiers were significantly disadvantaged by their loss of schooling and skill development, and a minority was significantly traumatized as well. An overarching pattern is the substitution of complex everyday ties, shaped by multiple overlapping networks of family, employment, and community, by ties with the members of the armed group” (2008:547). In many cases ties with the LRA became so strong that it replaced family ties. During interviews

former child soldiers often expressed a sense of belonging to the LRA. They had friends and a new family in the bush, and could loot whatever they wanted. They had gotten guns now which gave them power, while at home they did not have anything. They were living and fighting together as a group; they were taking care of each other and there seemed no point to return home. This sense of community is also described by Brehm and Gates, who argue that the feeling of camaraderie and solidarity results in social cohesion, compliance with collective goals and high retention (Brehm and Gates, 2008, and Gates, 2011).

The strong ties among LRA rebels deter defection. One of the first stages in the development of these new ties is the restraining of mobility. Children are forced to publicly kill in front of their family and neighbors and are then taken away to unknown areas. Most children are taken to Sudan and separated from children from their home village. This keeps them from running away; the killing has burned the bridges with their home community and even if they want to return they do not know the way. This is particularly effective with very young children, as seen in figure 4.2. As a result they start developing new ties with the rebel group. Also, a buddy system is established. Child soldiers monitor each other and are punished in case their buddy misbehaves or tries to escape. This prevents defection. This shows how fear is indeed a cause for joining as well as staying with the LRA as indicated earlier by Blattman and Gates. Brim argues that the use of “group interaction as the context for learning and group interchange is the most effective method. This follows from the fact that the adult is not a *tabula rasa* and that the educational problem is one of change, of erasing what exists and substituting something new” (Brim, 1968:557). By letting these children kill their relatives and burn the bridges with their past, the LRA aims to erase their civilian spirit and substitute it with the identity of a rebel.

Child soldiers within the LRA developed personal ties to each other, their commanders and even to Joseph Kony. This makes the character of the LRA as an organization rather personalized and indicates that children became loyal to their superiors not only because of their position, but also because of their personality. As Andvig and Gates reason: “children’s need for security, to have someone to love and respect may be—rather perversely many would feel—transferred to military commanders” (2007). This is indeed the case: many former LRA child soldiers explain that the LRA has become their new family and their commanders became their new fathers. Many even seem to have had a special connection to Kony himself. They used to be in training camps in South Sudan and Kony would come to the camp every once in a while. He would come to preach to the rebels but afterwards, when all children had returned to their barracks, Kony would pay them a visit and have a chat with them. They would talk about general things, about life in the camp and Kony would make jokes. During personal interviews, many children expressed feelings of



affection and appreciation towards him. Kony's charisma, and that of other commanders, seemed to have played a significant role in the development of such feelings. Such developments seem extremely contradictory given the fact most of these children were abducted and forced to join the LRA. This indicates how powerful the process of socialization within the LRA is and highlights the importance of researching this phenomenon in order to better understand child soldiers.

### **Organizational Socialization within the Lord's Resistance Army**

Socialization is used by the LRA to remain a cohesive body. It is amongst other things used to achieve internalization of the norms and values by their new members. However, "practices, norms, and preferences are not only internalized by individual actors, but, because they are shared by many, also characterize and shape the identity of larger social aggregates" (Beyers, [in: Bearce and Bondanella] 2007:707). This implies that internalization leads to a cohesive body: it can be seen as the glue that keeps a group together. Through interaction on a regular, sustained basis new identities and interests are taken on among the members of a group (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007). This leads to interest convergence and building bridges within the LRA, aiming for an effective organization and high allegiance among its rebels.

According to Van Maanen socialization processes necessarily involve the transmission of information and values. As explained in chapter two of this dissertation, organizational socialization consists of six different tactics and refers to "the process by which one is taught and learns "the ropes" of a particular organizational role. In its most general sense, organizational socialization is then the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (1977:3). Moreover, it refers to the way new recruits are taught about the group expectations concerning behavior and values, while simultaneously learning about what is not acceptable in these regards. As seen while laying out the theoretical foundation in chapter two, socializing agents employ a mix of different tactics when socializing their new recruits into the organization. The following sections will provide an analysis of the different types of organizational socialization that are at work within the LRA, based on the framework developed by Van Maanen (1977).

#### *Collective Socialization*

The first of six potential tactics is collective socialization. This "refers to the tactic of taking a group of recruits who are facing a given boundary passage and putting them through a common set of experiences together. A good example of this process is basic training or boot camp in military organizations" (Van Maanen, 1977). Moreover, Van Maanen argues that "collective socialization programs are usually found in

organizations where there are a large number of recruits to be processed into the same organizationally defined role; where the content of this role can be fairly clearly specified; and, where the organization desires to build a collective sense of identity, solidarity, and loyalty within the cohort group being socialized” (Van Maanen, 1977:41). A clear example of this can be found within the military training of the LRA. After groups of children have been abducted the rebels usually order all new abductees to gather for military training. They are shown how to dismantle the gun and told what all the gun parts are called. After this demonstration the new abductees are given guns and have to repeat what they have learned. The ones who fail are punished and usually caned until they manage to complete the training properly.

However, Van Maanen acknowledges that collective socialization may provide a potential basis for resistance among new recruits. As the new recruits may face common problems overcoming the presented boundary passages, they may look for solutions as a group. Thus, the likelihood of rebellion within a collectively socialized group is relatively high, which may lead to collective deviation (Van Maanen, 1977:42). However, any form of resistance or deviation is efficiently tackled by the LRA through the use of extreme forms of violence against deviating members. An example of this is witnessing or carrying out the killing and beating of misbehaving fellow group members, either by integrated rebels or new recruits. This discourages other rebels from deviating, as they fear the same punishment. According to LRA standards, a rebel misbehaves not only when he or she attempts to escape, but also when this person thinks about home. This emerges clearly from the account of a former LRA child soldier (10F13): “there was one young boy who was always sitting alone. He was not active and very quiet. One day, the rebels ordered me to get him. I brought him to the group and they gave me the panga (machete). In front of everyone they said: “this one is trying to escape. He is sitting alone and thinking about home. We don’t want that, you have to be active! We are your family and you will stay with us in the bush! You know what happens to betrayers? We finish them! You first kill this boy!” They pushed me to the boy. He looked at me with big eyes. I did not want to but I had to do it. If I did not finish him they would kill me too.”

This example shows that LRA commanders tackle potential deviation by spreading fear and carrying out punishments in public. Besides that, collective deviation is avoided as child soldiers within the LRA are strictly supervised and are not given the opportunity to discuss discomforts among themselves. Their behavior is thoroughly analyzed and if rebel commanders are not satisfied with their attitude they are heavily punished. In most cases, fellow child soldiers are ordered to carry out the punishment. The inclusion in these punishments prevents them from engaging in non-compliant behavior. This high level of surveillance significantly limits possibilities for collective deviation.

### *Formal Socialization*

In addition to collectively socializing new recruits, the LRA utilizes a formal socialization process: the second organizational socialization tactic described by Van Maanen. “Formal socialization refers to those processes in which a newcomer is more or less segregated from regular organizational members while being put through a set of experiences tailored explicitly for the newcomer” (Van Maanen, 1977:43–44). The segregation from regular organizational members, in this case “integrated” rebels, is an important aspect of the socialization process practiced by the LRA. During their initiation period child soldiers stay separated from integrated rebels, sleep in different places, eat different food, and are not allowed to approach integrated rebels. As explained in the previous section of this chapter, they go through a set of experiences that is especially designed for new recruits in order to integrate them within the group. These include severe caning of each new recruit as a means of registration, the ritual in which new recruits are smeared with shea butter, the task of carrying out violence, and a strict training regime. This is done to teach the new recruit his or her new role and to feel and think like an LRA member. As Van Maanen describes it, formal socialization is typically found in organizations “where it is deemed important that a newcomer learns the “correct” attitudes, values, and protocol associated with the new role. To put the matter bluntly, the more formal the process, the more concern there is likely to be shown for the recruit’s absorption of the appropriate demeanor and stance associated with the target role” (1977:45). Formal periods of socialization “serve to provide an intensive period in which others in the organization can rather closely judge the newcomer’s commitment and deference to the critical values of the occupation” (Van Maanen, 1977:46). During this period commanders closely monitor and supervise newly abducted children. As explained earlier, those who do not adhere to the demands of the commander face severe punishment and are likely to be killed.

### *Random Socialization*

The processes practiced by the LRA can also be identified as random socialization: the third tactic of organizational socialization. “Random socialization occurs when the sequence of steps leading to the target role is unknown, ambiguous, or continually changing...Thus, in random processes, while there may be a number of steps or stages leading to the taking of certain organizational roles, there is no necessary order specified in terms of the steps that are to be taken” (Van Maanen, 1977:51). Within the LRA there is no specific order of steps to be taken in order to achieve a particular organizational role. There is a clear hierarchical system within the organization, consisting of military ranks that distinguish between the status and roles of rebels. Yet it there is no structured path leading to the achievement of a rank or important

role.

For instance, staying with the LRA for many years does not imply one is ever granted a military rank. New recruits may receive a rank much earlier than integrated rebels, all depending on their behavior and the personality of their commanders. The distribution of ranks can therefore vary greatly between LRA battalions. Generally speaking, if rebels are actively engaged with LRA activities, they earn the appreciation and respect of commanders. In some cases rebels will be given a rank for this reason, which will give them the responsibility for their own group of soldiers. Whether ranks are distributed in this way seems to depend on which battalion they are part of and particularly under which commander they fight. If a rebel manages to achieve something significant, a rank might immediately be given to this person, no matter how long he or she stayed with the LRA. Examples of achievements which generally lead to the provision of a military rank are: killing an important UPDF official, shooting UPDF vehicles, looting important supplies like weapons and bullets, and abducting a large number of children.

The image on the next page shows a good example of the distribution of ranks within the LRA. The picture shows two of Kony's bodyguards during the 2006 peace talks in Sudan. Interviews indicated that being a bodyguard implies that these two boys are both well integrated rebels: Kony does not allow newcomers close to him as he is afraid to be killed and needs to be surrounded by people who are capable to protect him. Therefore, they need to be well trained and integrated, showing that they have become "real" rebels. Even though the boys on the picture are both considered to be "real" rebels, they have different ranks. The one in the background does not wear a uniform and does not show signs of having a rank, which indicates he is a "normal" integrated rebel. The boy in front however, has an important rank within the LRA, which indicates an extraordinary accomplishment. Looking at the uniform he is wearing, one can see this is a uniform from the Ugandan government forces: the UPDF. Wearing this uniform indicates he has most likely killed a UPDF soldier and was able to take the uniform of his victim. Moreover, the blue and pink ropes on the left side of his body indicate he has achieved a rank: for instance by killing a high UPDF official, stealing their arms and radios, or shooting their vehicles. Still, even though some rebels obtain higher ranks through such achievements, these actions are not rewarded in a standardized way within each battalion and may lead to a higher rank only for some. Interviews with former LRA child soldiers revealed that there was no specific sequence of steps that could guarantee them a higher rank. These insecurities indicate that the LRA uses random socialization.



### *Variable Socialization*

As a fourth tactic of organizational socialization Van Maanen describes variable socialization processes which “give a recruit few clues as when to expect a given boundary passage” (1977:55). According to Van Maanen “variable socialization processes are most likely to produce custodial responses. The logic behind this proposition is simply that a variable situation leads to maximum anxiety and this anxiety operates as a strong motivator toward conformity...Variable socialization processes keep a recruit maximally off balance and at the mercy of socialization agents” (1977:58–59). This is indeed the case within the LRA whose entire existence may be perceived as a variable situation. As a rebel group they are chased by the UPDF and thus are constantly on the run throughout the region. This variable situation creates maximum anxiety for LRA recruits: they are taken far away from home, are constantly moving and generally do not know where they are. They have lost the sense of security they used to have at home and the only thing they have left is the LRA. This indeed leads to conformity, as shown by Gates (2011), and Brehm and Gates (2008). During interviews with LRA officers and abductees, Beber and Blattman found that a variable situation and uncertainty particularly affected young abductees; unfamiliar surroundings and their inability to be sufficiently cunning made them most fearful of escaping (2013).

Many child soldiers indicated during interviews that they had no idea where they were during most of their time with the LRA. Long periods of time were spent in South Sudan and it was impossible to escape from there, making them subject to lengthy socialization processes. Besides that, the UPDF was following them all the time. Being with the LRA they had the opportunity to defend themselves. They did not know where to turn if they wanted to leave the LRA and were scared of being killed by the government forces or civilians. For these reasons, many LRA rebels decided to stay with the group. This indicates the effective use of a variable socialization tactic by the LRA.

### *Serial Socialization*

The fifth tactic of organizational socialization elaborated upon by Van Maanen is serial socialization. "A serial socialization process is one in which experienced members of the organization groom newcomers who are about to assume similar kinds of positions in the organization. In effect, these experienced members serve as role models for recruits" (Van Maanen, 1977:59). According to serial socialization, integrated LRA rebels and commanders would serve as role models for new recruits. This is indeed the case as these integrated rebels and commanders groom new recruits, as they will have to assume similar positions within the group. An example of this is the teaching of new recruits how to operate guns so they can participate in fighting like integrated rebels do.

According to Van Maanen "serial socialization is most likely to be associated with inclusionary boundary passages. This association results because to become a central member of any organizational segment normally requires that others consider one to be affable, trustworthy, and, of course, central as well. This is unlikely to occur unless these others perceive the newcomer to be, in most respects, similar to themselves. Recruits must at least seem to be taking those with whom they work seriously or risk being labeled deviant in the situation and hence not allowed across inclusionary boundaries" (1977:62). This is extensively tested among new recruits within the LRA. Newcomers have to identify with and act like LRA rebels rather quickly. Integrated rebels and commanders test this development by asking new recruits questions that are often symbolic.

A former LRA rebel (11M5) explained how commanders used to talk to newly recruited children in order to measure if they could be considered a real LRA member: "Commanders would often come talk to us, especially if we sat alone. The commanders would say they were thinking about home and ask if we felt the same. They did that to test us. If someone said he was thinking about home they would get really angry and cane him. If someone said he wanted to go home, we were told to finish him because he was not a good rebel." Another boy (12M2) told about a more

symbolic type of questioning: “there was a boy in my group who was quiet. One day the commander asked him why he was so quiet. He said he did not know. Then the commander asked him if he liked turtles or scorpions better. The boy said he liked turtles. The commander got very angry and he yelled at the boy. He said that the turtle was like the UPDF: slow, stupid and useless. The scorpion was like Kony: mysterious, smart, fast, and poisonous. The commander yelled that the boy was a betrayer because he chose for the UPDF and not for Kony. Then he told us to chop him in pieces with the panga because we do not want betrayers.” This type of testing shows the importance of serial socialization within the LRA and the violent consequences of not assimilating with integrated rebels. If new recruits are not seen as identifying with the group and its members, severe punishments are carried out to set examples for the rest of the group. This encourages other group members to fulfill expectations so that they will be considered as trustworthy, well-integrated group members and hence avoid being punished.

### *Divestiture Socialization*

As a final tactic of socialization Van Maanen elaborates upon divestiture socialization processes. These “seek to deny and strip away certain personal characteristics of a recruit” (1977:64). This type of socialization is “organized explicitly to disconfirm many aspects of the recruit’s entering self-image, thus beginning the process of rebuilding the individual’s self-image based upon new assumptions. Often these new assumptions arise from the recruit’s own discovery, gradual or dramatic, that they have an ability to do things they had not thought themselves able to do previously” (Van Maanen, 1977:65). This type of socialization is used by the LRA when it seeks to erase the civilian spirit from its recruits and turns them into integrated rebels. Children enter the LRA with a self-image that is completely rebuilt by the socialization process they undergo within the LRA. During the time they spend with the rebels, new recruits discover they are able to carry out extreme types of violence, kill people, loot villages and so on.

Furthermore, “in extreme circumstances, recruits are forced to abstain from certain types of behavior, must publicly degrade themselves and others, and must follow a rigid set of rules and regulations. Furthermore, measures are often taken to isolate recruits from former associates who presumably would continue to confirm the recruit’s old identity” (Van Maanen, 1977:66). “Divestiture processes are most likely to be found (1) at the point of initial entry into an organization or occupation, and (2) prior to the crossing of major inclusionary boundaries where a recruit must pass some basic test of worthiness for membership in an organizational segment” (Van Maanen, 1977:67). This is clearly seen when children are abducted by the LRA. From the moment they become part of the group they are not allowed to greet their

family anymore and have to pretend they do not know them. They are removed as far as possible from their old identity, by burning all bridges with their past. They are often forced to kill in front of their village members when they enter the organization. Then, to become an integrated rebel, they have to pass the questions of commanders and are ordered to perform certain tasks (like killing or looting) as a test of worthiness of the group.

This highlights that “divestiture processes, in effect, remold the person and, therefore, are powerful ways for organizations and occupations to control the values of incoming members. It is such processes which lie at the heart of most professional training thus helping to explain why professionals appear to be so deeply and permanently socialized. For, once a person has successfully completed a difficult divestiture process and has constructed something of a new identity based on the role to which the divestiture process was directed, there are strong forces toward the maintenance of the new identity” (Van Maanen, 1977:67). This explains why organizational socialization is used by the LRA; it leads to high levels of allegiance because their recruits take on new identities and become loyal to the group.

Van Maanen’s theory of these six different processes of socialization shows that “these tactical dimensions are associated with one another and that the actual impact of organizational socialization upon a recruit is a cumulative one, the result of a combination of socialization tactics which perhaps enhance and reinforce or conflict and neutralize each other. It is also obvious that awareness of these tactical dimensions makes it possible for managers to design socialization processes which maximize the probabilities of certain outcomes” (Van Maanen, 1977:68). Looking at the tactics used by the LRA one can indeed derive that these reinforce and enhance each other, ensuring that new recruits are subject to effective organizational socialization, which creates motivation, loyalty, control, resilience and allegiance to the LRA. In order to analyze this process more in-depth, the next section of this chapter will further elaborate upon socialization processes found within the LRA.

### **LRA Socialization: A Threefold Analytical Challenge**

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Checkel stresses the importance of utilizing a threefold analytic challenge when focusing on socialization (2005). To pinpoint the socialization processes practiced by the LRA this section will use Checkel’s theory, aiming to “(1) establish the presence of socialization mechanisms and the conditions of their operation; (2) assess whether internalization (Type I or II) actually occurred; and (3) ask whether socialized actors behave differently than either they did before they were socialized, or than non-socialized actors do” (Checkel, 2005:816). Applying this theory to the LRA will enable the identification of the exact mechanisms of



socialization used by the LRA, assess which type of internalization occurs among its rebels, and reveal whether socialized LRA rebels demonstrate different behavior. This threefold analysis will provide a clear overview of the effects and consequences of socialization within the LRA, and it will reveal whether recruits adopt the community rules, shifting away from a logic of consequences and toward a logic of appropriateness (Checkel, 2005).

### *Socialization Mechanisms Present within the LRA and the Conditions of Their Operation*

Socialization is a highly efficient tool to engage children with the LRA. In comparison to adults, children are generally considered to be vulnerable, naïve and susceptible to outside influences. Thus, when growing up within the LRA, socialization teaches them to become part of the group and creates a sense of belonging. A variety of socialization mechanisms are used to achieve this, hence this section will address the following question: Which socialization mechanisms were present within the LRA and what were the conditions of their operation? According to Grusec and Hastings “socialization refers to processes whereby naïve individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations” (2007:13).

This definition will be used in order to show the mechanisms present within the LRA and under which conditions they operated. Thus, I will analyze which skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations are taught to child soldiers within the LRA. In addition, I will highlight which methods are used to achieve this.

### *Skills*

As Grusec and Hastings (2007) emphasized, socialization processes transmit culture from each generation to the next, for instance by training for specific roles in specific occupations. This can be seen in the particular types of training carried out by LRA rebels. Abductees are grouped and trained in different fields in order to eventually carry out a variety of roles. This is an important part of the socialization process—it is repeated with each new group of child recruits in order to transmit the rebel culture to the new generation.

Children who have become involved with the LRA are taught a large variety of skills. They generally undergo an intense military training through which they are

taught how to operate and dismantle arms, lay land mines, learn how to target the enemy and how to march. In case children are selected to become bodyguards for commanders, they are taught the skills to protect their superior. Besides that, child recruits are taught about military strategies and tactics. Children who are not selected to become combatants are taught a variety of different skills. Integrated rebels teach them a range of skills needed for escorting, porting of looted goods, cooking, nursing, and babysitting. In addition, a selected group of rebels is trained to become medical personnel within the LRA. Commanders assess the intelligence of their recruits and the ones who seem capable are sent to do medical training at “sickbay” (a place where sick and wounded rebels are sent to in order to recover). Commanders discuss the assignment of tasks; they decide what kind of role a newly abducted child will perform and which skills they are to be taught. This is a common process within rebel groups which is also described by Andvig and Gates, who note that “officers of an armed force that employs children assess the relative capabilities of children and adults both in their recruitment and when allocating tasks” (2007:4). By assessing their capabilities and allocating the tasks, commanders seek to ensure that recruits are taught the right skills and perform maximally.

### *Behavioral Patterns*

Teaching new recruits appropriate behavioral patterns is an important aspect of socialization within the LRA. New recruits are taught a large set of rules when they become part of the group in order to make sure they behave correctly. The 65 interviews I conducted among former child soldiers and commanders in Northern Uganda revealed that the LRA top designs specific rules to control behavior of their recruits. Examples of these rules are the following:

- LRA rebels are prohibited to escape
- Rebels are prohibited to have any form of contact with civilians
- Rebels are prohibited to eat food prepared by civilians, this will poison them
- In case family or village members are recognized these people are to be ignored
- During training in Sudan girls are prohibited to have contact with the Arabs
- Rebels should at all times cooperate with fellow group members
- Rebels should at all times protect fellow group members
- It is prohibited to think about or discuss their earlier homes
- It is prohibited to discuss ideas to escape with other rebels
- Solitary behavior is not allowed, one should at all times engage in activities
- One must engage in group prayers which are held on a weekly basis
- It is prohibited to drink alcohol

- It is prohibited to smoke because this enables the UPDF to detect them
- In order to prevent tensions amongst rebels, it is prohibited to fall in love with fellow group members unless women are given to a male rebel to be his wife
- It is prohibited to withdraw from fighting the UPDF
- Recruits must stay in the bush because people from their village and even family will reject and kill them if they return
- Looting and killing is allowed only when this is ordered by Kony or his commanders
- If Kony decides they enter a period in which killing of civilians is not allowed, this rule is to be adhered to until Kony declares otherwise
- When rebels are looting they should avoid red and white things because the enemy will detect them
- When girls menstruate they are to stay separate from the group until “they are clean again”
- New recruits are to stay separate from the group until they are initiated and become real rebels
- When new recruits enter the group they should address all integrated rebels as “teacher”
- It is prohibited to use a bicycle or vehicles, rebels always have to go on foot
- Rebels are prohibited to use looted goods for themselves, everything is to be given to the commander who may divide it amongst them
- Rebels have to be “strong hearted” and fight to take over the government
- Rebels who are active and perform well will receive a rank
- Newly abducted children are to be divided into different groups and cannot stay with people abducted from the same village
- Groups of four newly abducted children are given to an integrated rebel who has the responsibility of supervising them
- When attacking a village, each rebel has to abduct a specific number of people
- It is prohibited to eat on the battlefield
- Whatever Kony’s spirits say, all rebels must comply with its orders

### *Values*

As explained earlier in this chapter, newly abducted children are registered as LRA members by caning and several spiritual rituals. Kony is believed to be a disciple from God and thus all LRA members are to follow his orders. The orders come from several spirits by which Kony is possessed. Most importantly, it is believed by LRA rebels that Kony possesses a Holy Spirit that tells the LRA what to do and gives directions and orders. Rebels are to obey all orders given and express a sincere belief

in Kony's spirits. Interviews have revealed that the LRA becomes the abductee's new family: it will take care of abductees, and gives them a new outlook on life. Former rebels express the importance of avoiding tension within the group. Tension among rebels is not allowed and should be solved right away in order not to form a threat to group cohesion. The rebels become each other's brothers and sisters and should treat each other like that: they must protect and take care of each other.

New abductees are at the bottom of the hierarchical system and should always show respect to integrated rebels. The integrated rebels will show them how to live in the bush. Once newly abducted children become real integrated rebels (by showing correct behavior) they are given their own group of new abductees, which they are supposed to integrate in the LRA. Respect for each other is a key factor and rebels who do not behave according to expectations are to be reported and punished. There is a relatively high social control among the rebels, which, in combination with their shared values, melt them into a cohesive group.

### *Motivations*

Looking at the circumstances of their recruitment into the LRA, it may be hard to imagine child soldiers become motivated to fight with the rebels. Andvig claims that "intrinsic motivation cannot be either bought or forced, it is either present or not" (2006:32). This assumption is incorrect. Socialization within the LRA has made child soldiers change their norms, values, and even identities to such a large extent that their motivations have become intrinsic, even after being forced to become part of the LRA. The LRA has created a sophisticated socialization mechanism that creates allegiance and fierce loyalty among many of its rebels. For instance, LRA rebels are generally motivated to remain part of the group by promises of Kony and their commanders. One of the most important motivators is the promise they will get a position within the government once the Ugandan government is overthrown by the LRA. As these rebels come from very poor backgrounds and miss out on education during their stay in the bush, this seems the most viable option for most of them. The rebels are promised that if they fight hard, they will get money when they overthrow the government and that they will rule the country together in order to realize better life standards for the Acholi population in the North. This motivates them in their struggle with the UPDF and contributes to a shared feeling of "us vs. them."

Another significant factor contributing to motivation is the achievement of ranks: an example of non-pecuniary rewards. Getting a rank will give a rebel control and power; he or she will be given an own group of soldiers. These soldiers have to fight for the rebel and carry out tasks like cooking, washing, and fetching water. This gives the rebel a sense of power, which is not likely to be experienced in their old village. In addition, male rebels are given wives. They start a new family within the

LRA, have children and establish friendships. This contributes to the development of strong ties among LRA rebels. Besides that, the rebels have an almost constant access to food and other supplies since they loot what is needed in the bush. The fact that everything is “free” in the bush proves to be a significant motivating factor for remaining with the LRA. Overall, many child soldiers express the feeling that life in the bush had significant advantages over life in their villages or IDP camps. At home they simply did not have anything, due to the extreme poverty. There were few future expectations and opportunities, which made staying with the rebels a good alternative. They were not so hungry any longer and believed they would take over the government one day. The prospect of such rewards provided them with a much brighter future compared to if they had stayed at home. Therefore, many former child soldiers expressed high levels of motivation when they were part of the LRA and were transformed from scared, abducted children into motivated, loyal fighters.

### *Means of Teaching*

Several means of teaching are used in order to create the necessary social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity among child soldiers within the LRA. An often described example of this is the use of fear. In addition to this, punishment is an important means of teaching within the LRA. If child soldiers do not successfully acquire the skills they are taught, caning or strokes with a machete heavily punish them. Yet most of the time they are killed to set an example of what happens if you are not a “good” rebel. The same types of punishment are carried out when rebels break the rules or show a lack of motivation. For instance, it is common to kill a couple which fell in love in front of their group, as this is inappropriate behavior. Also, commanders have rebels killed who do not show active behavior and do not eagerly fight the UPDF. This sets examples for other group members who adjust their behavior in order to avoid punishment. In addition, rebels are told they will be punished anyhow, even if fellow rebels do not discover their misbehavior. They are told that the bullet will find them at the battlefield and they will be killed by the UPDF.

Although these are prominent factors, fear and punishment are not the only important means of learning. The LRA uses group meetings, assemblies, and spiritual beliefs as well. Each battalion of the LRA has its regular group meetings. These often take place when they have received a message from Kony on how to proceed with their struggle. All the rebels are informed of the new expectations and are supposed to act accordingly from that moment on. If they fail to do this, punishment will follow. Rebels are called to gather in certain areas for an assembly whenever the LRA is either unsuccessful or successful in its achievements. If they have failed in battles with the UPDF and have lost many of their combatants, Kony generally calls for an

assembly to discuss what has happened. Failing tactics are pointed out as well as other areas of improvement. Kony instructs his rebels how to proceed and gives his commanders orders to closely supervise their rebels. If the rebels have been very successful and won important battles, Kony calls for an assembly to emphasize this. According to former child soldiers these meetings motivated the rebels to continue the fighting and be “good” rebels, aiming to destroy the enemy.

Since these children are growing up in the violent culture of the Lord’s Resistance Army, these means of teaching ensure they are competent in functioning as full members of the rebel group. As Grusec and Hastings (2007) argue, social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity are of essential value for the interaction with fellow group members in order to fit in with the functioning of the entire group. The aim of achieving this can clearly be seen within the LRA by the presence and operation of a variety of socialization mechanisms.

### *The Achievement of Internalization Type I and II*

According to Checkel socialization leads to Type I or II internalization. The first type refers to “learning a role—acquiring the knowledge that enables them to act in accordance with expectations—irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it. The key is the agents knowing what is socially accepted in a given setting or community. Following a logic of appropriateness, then, means simply that conscious instrumental calculation has been replaced by conscious role playing” (Checkel, 2005:804). “On the other hand, following a logic of appropriateness may go beyond role playing and imply that agents accept community or organizational norms as “the right thing to do.” We call this Type II internalization/socialization, and it implies that agents adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are part. Conscious instrumental calculation has now been replaced by “taken-for-grantedness”” (Checkel, 2005:804). Checkel’s definitions will be used to answer the following question: did internalization, Type I or II, actually occur within the LRA?

Interviews have revealed that socialization within the LRA has indeed led to internalization, both Type I and II. Still, which type of internalization has occurred varies from person to person. It emerges that children who have been abducted at a very young age (under 12 years of age) are most likely to reach the stage of Type II internalization. This can be explained by the fact they have experienced less socialization processes as civilians, making it less complicated to socialize them within the LRA. Recruits who were over the age of 18 were the most difficult to socialize, and generally reached Type I internalization. According to LRA commanders it seemed more difficult to get them to adopt the identity of the LRA, not least since they often had wives and families at home. They found it hard to forget

about civilian life and erase the civilian spirit. This indicates a significant difference between children and adult recruits. These findings are in line with Blattman (2007, 2008) and Andvig and Gates (2009).

Gender also seems to play a role in whether Type I or II internalization is achieved by LRA socialization. Girls more often expressed feelings of wanting to go home, particularly because they were given as wives to male rebels. They had no choice of who would become their “husband” which initially made it more difficult for them to consider the LRA as their new family. They performed their roles because it was expected but generally did not adopt the LRA identity. This seemed to change when the girls got pregnant and gave birth to the rebels’ children: bush children. Once they had children girls seemed to adapt more easily to the group and started considering it as their new home. Male abductees on the other hand, seemed to have less problems achieving Type II internalization. Having access to a gun, food, clothes, and eventually getting a wife and children in the bush, gave them a strong sense of agency and power. Boys generally expressed strong motivation to remain with the LRA to fight for its goals. Moreover, they clearly expressed that they felt life in the bush was better than life in the camps. They had no future in the camps and were suffering from poverty, and felt the LRA offered them a better alternative. This made them feel part of the LRA community and they generally perceived themselves as real rebels.

Overall, a clear majority of the total number of interviewees reached Type II internalization while they were with the LRA. They expressed feelings that they were indeed doing the right thing by fighting with the LRA. They particularly expressed the motivation to be fighting for a better future for the Acholi. Still, after these child soldiers had returned to society, Type II internalization eventually started to diminish. The majority speaks of severe problems when they returned from the bush. Many of them were rescued by the UPDF and placed back into society involuntarily. This has led to numerous escalations and violent encounters. One of my female informants had spent 8 years with the rebels, was rescued by the UPDF when she was 17 and brought back to her home community. She did not understand the way of life in her village and according to which standards people behaved towards each other. She (9F8) explains: “after the UPDFs brought me home, I was living with my family. It was very difficult. I was not used to them and I did not like it in the village. People looked at me and they did not want to talk with me. They were making fun of me. I wanted to go back to the bush, back to my friends and fight. One day my father was angry with me because I wanted to go back. He did not understand being a rebel is good. My mother took me into the hut and we started cooking. She asked me to go out and get some cassava from the field. She gave me the panga (machete). When I came out of the house my father was sitting there. He made me so angry. I took the

panga and cut his head. He fell on the ground and I finished him. People were screaming and crying. My mother cried and yelled to me. She said I had to stop. She asked me what I was doing. I did not understand why all these people screamed so much; this is what we do in the bush. He was not a good man and I am a good rebel.”

This account explains why their communities looked upon many former child soldiers as dangerous criminals, and why they often felt rejected. For this reason former child soldiers often moved to different communities. However, when becoming part of a new community, they describe feelings of slowly starting to see they were not fighting for the right thing with the LRA. This indicates the extremely strong effects of socialization within the LRA, particularly when Type II internalization is achieved.

### *Socialized Actors Demonstrating Different Behavior*

Do socialized actors behave differently than they did before they were socialized, or, than non-socialized actors do? Looking at the outcomes of socialization processes within the LRA, they prove truly effective. Child soldiers who have experienced socialization processes within the LRA display behavior very different from that of actors who have not been subject to LRA socialization. Andvig and Gates argue, “Organizations that have developed sophisticated socialization mechanisms are likely to handle collective actions better and therefore rely less on force as long as the members stay strongly motivated. That motivation embraces not only direct military task solving, but also the motivation to monitor and discipline the other members” (2007:16). Andvig and Gates fail to analyze the exact processes through which these developments come about, but taking the LRA as an example, this is rightly indicated by them. New recruits suffer from a lot of violence when they first enter the LRA. However, once they start adapting the identity of the LRA the extent of violence they are exposed to significantly starts to decrease. Many child soldiers express that when they acted according to the expectations of their commanders, they were not caned anymore. They became good rebels, which gave them more freedom. They did not get punished as much anymore and they were allowed to walk freely without the strict supervision of their commanders. Still, this stage was achieved only after they were heavily tested as to whether they indeed had become integrated rebels.

This indicates that the behavior of child soldiers changed during the period they were part of the LRA. During their first weeks with the LRA punishment was severe, as they did not yet act as a good rebel. But as soon as they changed their behavior and started adopting the LRA identity, they were treated differently and considered as part of the group: as new family members. Thus, integrated rebels who had experienced thorough socialization processes clearly showed different behavior compared to new recruits who had not been socialized yet. This shows the enormous



impact socialization has within the LRA and how it significantly contributes to allegiance among its rebels.

One should keep in mind their allegiance was not achieved by pecuniary rewards; it is purely a result of non-pecuniary rewards and socialization. As Blattman pointed out, pecuniary rewards were basically absent in the LRA and “indoctrination into the LRA was a complex process of spiritual training, misinformation, and the strategic use of fear and violence” (2007:18). This shows how powerful socialization mechanisms can be in changing behavior and even identity; within the LRA these mechanisms transformed abducted children into motivated rebels with high allegiance to the group. Gates argues that “the more a rebel leader can appeal to the provision of non-pecuniary rewards, the better he is able to recruit and maintain the allegiance of his rebel soldiers” (2002:127). This is certainly the case with Kony as the leader of the LRA. Once his soldiers are going through the socialization process, interests and motivations are being created to remain with the group. Their behavior shifts from a civilian child to that of a well-trained rebel.

This shift in behavior and identity also clarifies why it is impossible to purely identify child soldiers as victims or as perpetrators. The LRA practices one of the most extreme tactics to recruit its rebels, namely abduction, which could make one perceive these children as victims. However, when these children change their identity within the group and become ruthless killing machines it seems more viable to classify them as perpetrators. The LRA case clearly shows that none of these two classifications is correct: it is a mix of the two. The only conclusion we can draw from this is that socialization serves as a powerful mechanism that changes *children* into *soldiers*.

In addition, this development has serious consequences for the reintegration of former child soldiers (Vermeij, 2011). Given the fact that children change their identity within the LRA due to socialization processes, these children will not be the same person if they return from the bush. They have drastically changed from the abducted child they once were. This indicates the importance of rightly targeting rehabilitation and reintegration programs. These programs need to address the personality changes coming about during the period spent within the LRA. My field research indicates that this has not taken into account sufficiently, which results in limited success or even failure of attempts to reintegrate former child soldiers (Vermeij, 2011). As one former LRA child soldier (8F7) explained: “our future is already spoiled, we do not have opportunities to develop. The rehabilitation only helped us in the beginning; they gave us food and a place to sleep. But now we have nothing. They did not integrate us in the village. People do not understand us, we missed out on school and our communities are afraid of us. There is no job for us. We do not have a future, we can only hope for our children. This is the only reason why

we are still alive; we have to try to make the future of our children brighter.” This account shows that our limited understanding of the child soldiering phenomenon is failing to offer these returnees opportunities to become well integrated in their communities again. Further research on socialization processes within rebel groups is necessary and needs to be included in the design of such programs. It is to be hoped that this will contribute to a more peaceful future for the regions suffering from insecurity caused by rebel groups using child soldiers.

# 5

## Too Tough to Die

### *Child soldier socialization within the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy*

*“Pa, I’m back! What’s the problem? I’m a woman now, I’m home!”*  
*“Where have you been? Go away, you cannot stay here! You are not my daughter, I*  
*am no more your father! You are a rebel, you are an animal... Out!”*

Final conversation between father and daughter, ex-LURD girl soldier

This chapter will provide an analysis of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and their use of child soldiers. In order to be able to understand why LURD was established, a general understanding of the Liberian war is required. A brief conflict background will be provided first. Subsequently, the characteristics of LURD as a rebel group and their use of child soldiers are explained. This will lead to the use of socialization processes used within LURD, which will be analyzed in detail. Evidence from field research will be used to shed light on the lives of child soldiers within LURD, and show the major impacts of socialization.

### **Conflict Background**

During the last three decades Liberia has suffered from several periods of violent conflict, killing thousands of innocent civilians and transforming numerous children into soldiers. The outbursts of violence started in 1980 when Master Sergeant Samuel Doe assassinated President William Tolbert in a coup. The coup turned the political situation in Liberia into a landscape characterized by vengeance and revenge, and armed groups would struggle for power in the decades to come. While Doe was in power, he favored his fellow Krahn tribesmen, providing them with important political and military positions. Besides promoting the Krahn people, Doe did not accept alternative political beliefs and kept the Liberian population under strict control, with a tight grip on its many tribes. Tensions started to rise and in 1985, following rigged elections won by Doe, Sierra Leonean General Quiwonkpa attempted to overthrow Doe—unsuccessfully. In the years to follow political tensions kept increasing and economic decay reached a peak, eventually resulting in civil war

breaking out on Christmas Eve 1989. That night Liberia was invaded from neighboring Côte d'Ivoire by a small group of Libyan trained men: the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (Alusala, 2011, Bøås and Dunn, 2007, Gates and Reich, 2010, Honwana and de Boeck, 2005).

Prince Johnson initially led the NPFL, but within weeks, problems surfaced. Although they had just invaded Liberia together, Prince Johnson and Charles Taylor decided to stop fighting side by side, mainly due to operational differences. This caused the NPFL to splinter into two factions: Taylor, being a former ally of Doe, took leadership of the new NPFL, while Prince Johnson created the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). In the meantime Doe had started to lose control of his Krahn tribesmen who engaged in fighting other tribes, and ordered the Liberian Army to retaliate against the violence in an attempt to control the situation. Instead, chaos erupted: young people started fighting each other for wealth, power and family protection, spreading terror all across the country. Taylor and his NPFL forces contributed by molesting and the looting the Nimbadians—the very tribe they claimed to be fighting for. Johnson's INPFL forces also took part in the power struggle and eventually managed to capture and kill Doe in 1990, resulting in a power vacuum and deepening the civil war even further (Alusala, 2011, Honwana and de Boeck, 2005).

As a response to Doe's killing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) facilitated an interim government. However, Taylor was determined to take control of Liberia and refused to cooperate. He continued the war, which in 1991 spilt over into neighboring Sierra Leone (Alusala, 2011). As will be thoroughly explained in the chapter on Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh invaded eastern Sierra Leone with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a mix of Sierra Leonean and Liberian rebels, supported by Taylor. Meanwhile in Liberia, several unsuccessful attempts were taken to counter Taylor, leaving the war to rage on in both countries. The United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) was established in Freetown to fight Taylor. Back in Liberia, "ULIMO split in two along ethnic lines: ULIMO-K became largely a Mandingo faction supported by Guinea whilst ULIMO-J enjoyed support mainly from the South-East Krahn population" (Utas, 2005:411). It took until 1996 for peace to return: the signing of the Abuja Peace Accord formed the Liberian Council of State which finally comprised all the seven warring factions which had been established over the years. In order to monitor the peace process, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) were deployed. Lack of funding and political will hindered their task, which was in turn exploited by the armed groups and created circumstances that led to the start of a new civil war in 1999 (Alusala, 2011, Merrill, 2010).

It was at the start of the Second Liberian Civil War that one of the most brutal rebel groups in Africa established itself: the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). Since the conclusion of Liberia's costly episodic civil war in 1996, dissidents had been active in the north of the country. The rebels had various motivations for taking up arms against the increasingly authoritarian government, ranging from ethnic discrimination to the treatment of displaced persons. The various insurgent factions were united in February 2000 under the umbrella group LURD. The newest addition to Liberia's wide range of armed groups, LURD consisted mainly of Muslim fighters from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, adding yet another dimension to the incredibly complex character of the war (Pugel, [in: Gates and Reich,] 2010).

Backed by the government of Guinea, the LURD started their rebellion in the northern part of Liberia in early 2000. As many other armed groups, LURD's political goal was to push Charles Taylor out of power. Taylor had been elected as president of Liberia in July 1997, following a campaign during which his armed supporters sang: "He killed my Pa, He killed my Ma, I'll vote for him" (Bøås and Dunn, 2007: 69). However, during his presidency Taylor continued spreading fear by terrorizing the country. According to Reno, "Liberia under Taylor was a prime example of a system of personal rule constructed behind a facade of statehood. This system of authority is founded on the ruler's ability to control his subordinates' access to markets. Control over a state and the prerogatives of sovereignty that global recognition accords gives ruler opportunities to manipulate laws and regulations to favor his associates. This and the capacity to issue passports and conceal transactions of business partners give such rulers the ability to control even clandestine markets" (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007:71). Taylor's Liberia was an extreme example of such a system, leading to tensions and dissatisfaction among the population, and motivating the LURD to kick off a violent campaign to overthrow the president and start a struggle for power.

After years of struggle and controlling the northern part of the country, the LURD rebels managed to reach the Liberian capital, Monrovia, in 2003. They launched three attacks on the city: operations World War I, World War II and World War III. This resulted in masses of innocent civilians being killed, yet this did not stop the LURD rebels and Taylor's government forces from continuing their gruesome battles. It took until August 2003, when ECOWAS intervened and peace talks put pressure on all the involved parties to stop fighting. Part of the agreement was that Taylor resigned as President of Liberia, so he left to live in exile in Nigeria. After that, the Accra Peace Agreement was signed by the warring parties: this signified the end of the war, starting the disarmament and demobilization of Liberia's numerous fighters, and leading to democratic transformations and peace (Alusala, 2011).

The formal end to 14 years of civil war was marked when the Liberian parties involved signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003. The CPA was designed to start the reconstruction of the country; during the war more than 250,000 people had been killed, towns and infrastructure had been destroyed, 850,000 refugees had fled the country and about 2,000,000 people had been internally displaced (Specht, 2006). As part of the CPA, the National Transitional Government was assisted in implementing the peace process by the deployment of a 15,000-strong UN force: the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The force disarmed over 100,000 ex-combatants (Pugel, 2007). Simultaneously, the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) was established which became responsible for the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) of ex-combatants. Looking at the thousands of ex-combatants present in Liberia, according to the UN Secretary-General the success of the DDRR programs would be crucial to create and maintain peace and security in the country (Alusala, 2011, Honwana and de Boeck, 2005).

### **Characteristics of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and the Use of Child Soldiers**

Although LURD was formally founded and announced during a meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 2000, the movement had already existed since 1999 and was based in Guinea (Brabazon, 2003). During the early stages, LURD was comprised of a coalition of politicians and veteran fighters who were convinced that Taylor had manipulated the Abuja Agreement, through which he had avoided full disarmament of his forces, and intimidated other factions and the population. Partly due to the severe intimidations and claims he would start a new ferocious war if he was not elected, Taylor became Liberia's new president in 1997. Although the elections had been designed to make one government and army out of all the warring factions, after being installed as president, Taylor started systematically targeting his rivals, opponents and civilians who had campaigned against him. Hundreds of ULIMO-J fighters were killed during the "Camp Johnson Road" incident in 1998. ULIMO-J, one of Liberia's many armed factions, had been Taylor's main opponent during the first civil war, and the violent incident caused numerous survivors and other ULIMO fighters to flee to refugee camps. Fearing assassination, these fighters reunited with their old comrades, re-grouped and made plans to remove Taylor. This signified the birth of LURD, and anyone who held a grudge against Taylor could join the movement. The presence of ULIMO fighters in refugee camps spread across the region gave LURD leadership easy access to experienced fighters and commanders, and the newest rebel group quickly grew into a capable force (Brabazon, 2003, Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007).

### *Leadership*

Sekou Damate Conneh, a Liberian born in 1960 and belonging to the Muslim Mandingo tribe, led the LURD rebels. Although he had previously worked at the Ministry of Finance in Liberia, during the first conflict Conneh had been primarily based in Conakry, Guinea where he worked as a second hand car trader. During his stay in Guinea, Conneh established an extensive network of connections and had high-level contacts within the Guinean government. When he and other Taylor opponents formed LURD, these connections led to Conneh being elected National Chairman by the National Executive Council and it was decided that he would lead the group's mission to remove Taylor from power, giving him a political and military mandate. According to Brabazon, "Conneh's appointment was intended to bring impartiality, dynamism and international recognition to LURD. His lack of direct involvement in the pre-1997 war was thought to augur impartiality, enabling him to mediate between the ULIMO factions, while his Mandingo ethnicity would ensure the respect of the bulk of LURD personnel" (2003:3).

Guinean President Lansana Conté, who backed the rebel movement throughout the Second Liberian Civil War, also supported Conneh's leadership position. Although President Conté held some grudges against Taylor for attacks on Guinean soil, the decision to back LURD seemed due largely to Ayesha, the wife of Sekou Conneh. Ayesha, also referred to as "The Lady" by LURD rebels and a Guinean citizen, was President Conté's principal spiritual advisor and played an important role in his life. She had warned him of a coup attempt in 1996, which allowed him to prepare and stay in power. It is argued that this influential and direct access led to Sekou Conneh's election as National Chairman (Brabazon, 2003). Furthermore, when Ayesha urged Conté to back her husband Conneh and the LURD rebels in their attempt to overthrow Taylor, the President decided to support the group. During the course of the war, Ayesha mostly remained in Conakry, from where she ensured the flow of arms and ammunition from Guinea into Liberia, which enabled LURD to fight Taylor's forces. Her presence greatly benefitted the LURD as the Guinean Army even began covert support for the rebels (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007).

### *Why Fight?*

While Conneh would remain in Guinea for most of the conflict, he sent his LURD forces to invade northeastern Liberia from Guinea in early 2000. The rebels quickly captured the town of Voinjama, which would become the rebel headquarters during the conflict. At that point, the group consisted of a mere 70 fighters (Pugel, 2010). When the LURD started their mission, little was known about what the rebels were fighting for and several theories erupted. Not knowing much about the group and its whereabouts, the UN initially described the rebels as factionalized. LURD also

seemed to fit Christopher Clapham's definition of warlords, as it looked as if they had "poorly defined aims, and could largely be associated with the personal ambitions of their leaders" (Clapham, 1998:212). According to Reno, "like other warlords, LURD's leaders sought external patronage on an opportunistic basis. In this it resembled the NPFL regime that it fought" (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007:69). LURD rebels also resembled the NPFL in their wish to become rulers of Liberia. At time of the invasion, LURD mainly consisted of junior commanders who had fought for a range of armed groups during Liberia's first civil war. They were still holding a grudge against Taylor and sought to continue their struggle for power. As the government of neighboring Guinea now backed them, these external ties played a role in shaping the behavior and organizational structure of the group (Bøås and Dunn, 2007).

According to Brabazon, LURD was an "irregular military and political organization" with the primary objective to remove President Charles Taylor from political office, whether by force or not. LURD had been formed out of feelings of frustration and the perception of exclusion from the Abuja Peace Accord. However, the group was "not in any sense characterized by political or ideological polemic or grandiose intentions" (2003:3). Hoffman adds that the group aimed at "instituting a new political regime, and jump-starting the post-war Liberian economy" in addition to overthrowing Taylor (2004:219). However, LURD did not seem to be a very well-established rebel group. Although it is impossible to calculate exact figures, it is estimated LURD consisted of approximately 3,000 armed rebels, of which half were child soldiers. There were no strong ideological principles besides the wish to overthrow Taylor, members had little to no training, the organization and strategic planning was weak, and their survival as an armed group completely depended on their backers. LURD had no direct control over necessary resources such as weapons and ammunition, and therefore had to adapt their behavior according to the interests of their supporters. This implied that powerful individuals and their regional informal political networks mainly dominated them. Since Taylor was supporting several armed groups who were fighting his opponents in neighboring countries, these opponents sought to strike back in the same way and supported LURD (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007).

### *Regional Complications and Strategies*

The fact that the conflict was far more complex than just being a power struggle between LURD and Taylor's government was initially ignored. Still, it had a much wider interstate political context and was characterized by regional personal-alliance politics. Funding of the movement was opaque, obscure and shrouded in secrecy; senior political LURD officers claimed that the group was completely financed by exiled Liberians in the US, but their identities have never been revealed. LURD did



not seem to finance their struggle with illegal diamond sales (Brabazon, 2003). According to Reno (2007), Guinea incorporated LURD in their international relations and political strategies to pursue their goals, using it as a proxy to pressure Taylor. As Hazen argues, Guinean president Lansana Conté had several reasons for supporting LURD: his rivalry with Taylor, the economic benefits that were connected to the facilitation of the arms trade, as well as his “desire for a buffer zone between Guinea and Liberia and from his relationship with the LURD’s leader’s wife Ayesha” (2013:119). And Guinea was not the only LURD supporter: the United States government as well as the United Kingdom subtly backed the rebels, with its military advisers providing LURD leadership with advice from 1999 until early 2002. According to Hazen, “the US interest in LURD stemmed from its desire to rid itself of the headache of Taylor, although this often took the form of keeping Taylor occupied, and therefore contained, rather than seeking his ouster” (2013:120). It was difficult for the United States to support Taylor’s removal overtly, as he had several friends within the US government. However, with Taylor becoming more defiant and ignoring US pressure to quit RUF support, US support for Taylor’s regime diminished and the engagement with LURD was increased. The British, on the other hand, supported LURD to counter efforts by Taylor to destabilize the region and because of his support of the RUF: these were the main threats to the Sierra Leonean peace process in which the UK had made extensive financial and political investments (Hazen, 2013).

Yet, the regional context became even more complex as the war continued since “Taylor himself found ways to exploit LURD’s presence for internal and external political gain” (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007:70). As an example, to increase regional tensions, Taylor sent some of his own armed units into Guinea to cause destruction, yet claimed that these units were not his own but defeated LURD rebels causing havoc instead. Besides that, Taylor, who had been backing the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, requested the Sierra Leonean rebels to assist his forces in fighting LURD. Even though the UN accusations that Taylor was funding, arming and training the RUF rebels had led to commercial and military sanctions imposed on Liberia, he managed to fly RUF mercenaries into the country in order to fight LURD. In response, the Sierra Leonean Civil Defense Force (CDF) supported the LURD rebels (Hoffman, 2011). The CDF were loyal to the Sierra Leone government and as revenge for Taylor supporting the RUF’s mission to overthrow the government, Sierra Leone decided to support LURD in their mission to throw Taylor out. Brabazon (2003) reported that small numbers of RUF forces were found with LURD, as well as some of the Sierra Leonean West Side Boys. Moreover, in an attempt to gain international support to fight the rebels, Taylor used LURD’s presence to request the imposed arms embargo to be lifted. Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General at

the time, denied his request. These examples show the regional complications and the fact that Taylor proved to be a sophisticated strategist (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007).

### *Recruitment and Structure*

During the war, LURD used voluntary and forced recruitment to strengthen its forces. The Liberian population had suffered severely from years of conflict, and maltreatment by Taylor motivated some civilians to join the rebels. This was enhanced as “people were generally poor, disenfranchised, and without any access to or hope for upward social mobility” (Bøås and Hatløy, 2008:42). Some people believed that joining LURD would eventually improve their desperate situations. However, Pugel notes that, compared to the other fighting factions, “LURD soldiers were the most prone to violent introductions by favoring village attacks and ambushes as a way to meet their potential recruits” (2010:167).

The rebels did not recruit only on Liberian territory: they also tried to engage the Liberian diaspora in neighboring countries. As Brabazon notes, “Recruiting heavily in refugee camps in Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire, LURD relied extensively upon the regional Liberian diaspora to swell their ranks” (2003:7). According to Pugel (2007), recruitment increased every year and the LURD forces expanded rapidly. Bøås and Hatløy (2008) explained this by stating that the closer LURD came to Monrovia, the more people they needed to fight. LURD recruited many people from communities and IDPs that were encountered during their advance, while during the Monrovia attacks recruitment on the spot was common. No training was provided to these recruits as they were expected to start fighting immediately. Whereas the Monrovia recruits had the option of fighting or becoming victims to the brutal violence that was swallowing the capital, many took up arms and fought alongside the LURD rebels. Field research indicated that LURD did train some of its recruits that had become part of the movement before it reached Monrovia.

According to Pugel, approximately 70 percent of LURD recruits were Muslim and 30 percent were Christian. Not all recruited LURD rebels had Liberian nationality, however; the group was strengthened by members from Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire (2007). However, core LURD members seemed to be Liberians from the Mandingo and Krahn tribes (Brabazon, 2003, Levitt, 2005). These tribes had been the target of a wave of repercussions directed by Taylor, which inspired tribe members to take up arms (Specht, 2006). The fact that the group was made up of these different tribes and religions did not affect or influence operational cohesion (Brabazon, 2003). LURD divided itself according to military structure: it consisted of brigades, which were divided into several battalions, which were divided into companies. Besides the regular battalions there were Special Forces battalions

that stood under direct command of National Chairman Conneh. According to Specht (2006), LURD was loosely based on the US military model as the organization consisted of a coherent system of titles and ranks. Specht further acknowledges that “promotion and the award of rank are based upon longevity of service, age, ability in the field, and more especially previous military experience or affiliation” (2006:23). She argues that ranks and discipline were respected by most fighters, but not all. Pugel notes that discipline among LURD fighters strongly depended upon unit commanders (2010). This is also highlighted by Brabazon: “discipline in the LURD army is heavily dependent upon the quality and moral caliber of any given commander in charge, and supplemented by those fighters who have had regular training in the AFL, including some instruction by American military personnel.” He continues, certain troops “showed a remarkable degree of military discipline, including regular salutes, the honorific reference to rank, and a willingness to carry out life-threatening orders without question” (2003:7). In areas where senior commanders were not present, discipline disintegrated “rapidly and almost completely. Firing becomes random and indiscriminate, the civilian population is harassed, and territory is quickly lost as government troops capitalize on their opponents’ disorganization” (Brabazon, 2003:7).

### *Infighting Taking Its Toll*

As mentioned, in its early days LURD showed few signs of being a well-established organization, apart from its military structure. However, during 2001 attacks the rebels seemed to become better organized and more disciplined. Administrative structures were being established in captured areas and severe human rights violations seemed to decrease. Given the sharp contrast with earlier behavior, plus the fact that the rebel group’s founding was highly factionalized and all top commanders had presidential aspirations, this was likely due to Guinea’s influence (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007). This development was short-lived and LURD never achieved the capacity to win the war. Infighting soon started among top commanders, separating LURD into smaller groups that started initiatives on their own to prevent other LURD groups from reaching Monrovia first. All LURD commanders seemed to be struggling to become Liberia’s new president and fought for their own interests. Due to their rivalry and disagreements, LURD forces lost their common goal and mayhem resulted. Field research revealed that, as the war raged on and Taylor’s forces kept posing threats, disagreements within the group led to the cleansing of LURD’s own ranks. Commanders were killed by their own men and an internal power struggle implied that those rebels who did not obey and/or posed threats to power relations were likely to be killed. Brabazon further indicated that “conflict between LURD’s political representatives in Conakry and their military

command in Liberia was a source of considerable mistrust and instability within the organization” (2003:3).

During the peace negotiations in Accra, Sekou Conneh was still in power, despite the internal difficulties. It was obvious that several commanders wanted to take his position, yet Conneh had managed to stay in command by leading his forces by radio or phone while he was organizing weapons from Guinea. When Taylor was not arrested during the negotiations in Ghana, despite his indictment for war crimes by the Sierra Leone Special Court, LURD rebels used his release to justify their cause; they were no longer a brutal rebel group trying to overthrow a democratically elected government and fighting for their own interests, but freedom fighters struggling to release their country from the tight grip of an indicted war criminal. One of my informants (16M3) tried to justify the mayhem: “We always fight to protect our country and our people. But now we had no choice. Taylor was back and we had to bring him down, we had to shed blood on our way to Monrovia.” The situation got out of control as the rebels started to live what seemed to be lawless lives.

Eventually Taylor left for exile in Nigeria in August 2003 (Specht, 2006). LURD rebels had not managed to overthrow him, and could not install themselves in power. The parties that backed LURD understood that if they would let the LURD commanders become the new leaders of the country, it would not take long for new conflict and power struggles to erupt. Some LURD officials did however get positions in the new government. In 2004 fighting between LURD factions was reported again; competition for allocated customs and ports positions drove the former rebels further apart. It was clear that LURD “was settling into the same pattern of exploiting resources of the state for members’ benefits. This happened in a very different context, however, as the UN prepared to deploy 15.000 peacekeepers. LURD had served its usefulness to the government of a neighboring state and to a coalition of non-African states that needed to address the problem of state collapse at low cost and low risk (Reno, [in: Bøås and Dunn,] 2007:80).”

### *Civilian Relations*

In general, LURD seemed to “enjoy a high degree of cooperation and a reasonably strong degree of support from the civilian population” (Brabazon, 2003:5). Civilians were claimed to be well treated as the LURD had established strict rules on the behavior of their members. The treatment of civilians however varied over time and between regions LURD controlled: as indicated before it heavily depended on the commander in charge. Field research indicated that LURD was dependent on the Liberian population for the provision of food and shelter. The rebels moved in from the northeastern part of the country, but were not self-sustaining. On foot, they moved hundreds of kilometers through the dense Liberian forests, which made it very

difficult to bring sufficient supplies, and there was no time to grow food. Being dependent on Guinea for military supplies, it was hard to continue the struggle, especially when transport of goods became almost impossible during the rainy seasons. Informants stated that LURD rebels suffered from hunger almost constantly. However, while they relied on the Liberian population to feed them, civilians were starving too. Hence, Brabazon argues “food shortages account for the greatest amount of friction between LURD and the local population in their controlled areas, as LURD commanders requisition food for their growing army” (2003:5). Civilians had very little to eat due to the conflict: it was too dangerous to travel to markets and it was not safe to plant crops either. The population was starving and so were the rebels. LURD forces commandeered what little food there was, as soon as they occupied an area, increasing civilian food shortages even further.

LURD rebels were instructed by their commanders how to approach and treat civilians, and were strongly discouraged to harm them. Still, the Liberians had little choice whether to participate or not if they received orders from LURD. If civilians did not participate to the satisfaction of the rebels, there were violent ramifications: they were often beaten or killed (Pugel, 2007). Field research indicated that the rebels realized that civilians could be commandeered and coerced only so much: LURD’s survival depended on civilian cooperation and support, and they could not afford to lose this. Therefore, LURD rebels would be punished in front of civilians in case of wrongdoing; this way the commanders sought to display order and rules within the group, and convince the population that LURD was fighting for them. Civilians were also gathered when LURD prisoners were to be punished. During these occasions, the prisoner would generally be stripped naked, after which interrogation and humiliation started. Some prisoners were taken into the LURD forces, while others were killed. Interviews revealed that it was not uncommon for rebels and civilians to eat the prisoners; civilians reportedly assisted in making pepper soup of LURD enemies, and would sometimes eat together with the rebels.

The rebels predominantly used civilians as forced laborers and porters. That LURD frequently ordered civilians to porter incredible amounts of ammunition over distances of up to 200km, obviously affected relations between the rebels and the Liberians. It was extremely hard work and although civilians were initially promised to be paid in salt or rice, some refused to cooperate. The rebels did not accept refusal, so they eventually enslaved numerous civilians for porter duties. As the war raged on, this threatened to break down civilian relations, and the rebels cut down on the use of enforced porters. Sometimes the relations were repaired. When LURD for instance lost Bopolu, civilians became subject to the systematic human rights abuses by Taylor’s forces again. This seemed to encourage civilians to re-volunteer to support LURD by carrying ammunition (Brabazon, 2003).

### *Child Soldiers*

LURD made extensive use of child soldiers, eventually about half the group was estimated to consist of children (Achvarina and Reich, [in: Gates and Reich,] 2010). Compared to the other fighting factions, Pugel notes that LURD had the highest abduction rate of child soldiers; approximately half of all children affiliated with LURD were recruited during attacks or ambushes, most being recruited from the Greater Monrovia area (2010). Child recruits were used for a variety of tasks. As shown by Pugel (2007), they not only acted as combatants, but were also used as camp workers, medical staff, and wives, and they were assigned to administrative tasks, spying duties or forced labor. Child recruits were particularly attractive to LURD; as there was no money to pay its forces, men and women were reluctant to join the movement. Especially at the end of the war, most of child soldiers were claimed to have supporting roles and were used as porters, not as actual fighters as combat capacity was discouraged from late 2002. Instead, commanders used child soldiers to carry ammunition and weapons to the battle site and called them *pekin* (Brabazon, 2003). The exact number of child soldiers within LURD remained unclear. Pugel (2010) acknowledges that 34,285 ex-combatants, including 4,228 children, reported themselves as LURD affiliates at the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), while Brabazon (2003) estimates that the group consisted of approximately 3,000 armed fighters, plus an unknown number of porters and other assistants. In June 2002 the organization itself stated to have 14,000 members in total, which dropped to 5,000 in October that same year. It is very difficult to give exact numbers on the involvement of children with the rebels. This is jeopardized by three main factors: LURD did not seem to officially register the continuous flow of new recruits, they generally denied to recruit child soldiers, and innumerable child soldiers died of hunger, disease, and combat during the war. However, what is known about LURD is that girl soldiers played a rather special role in the group, particularly when compared to other African rebel groups.

### *Girl Soldiers*

Even though war may seem a male playground, it is nothing like it. Girls and women played significant and complicated roles within the LURD: supporting the group, fighting, seducing young boys to join the group, or even commanding its ranks. Although many had been forcibly recruited, they were not solely victims as girls also transformed into perpetrators. Taking Mats Utas' argument into account, it is important to highlight the relation between victimhood and agency, in order to create a more balanced view of girl soldiers: "A more robust analysis of women's lives in the war zone requires seeing women as something other than mere victims devoid of

agency, or alternatively as ‘fully free actors,’ but rather as tactical agents engaged in the difficult task of social navigation” (2005:426).

LURD’s girl soldiers were indeed a good example that girls cannot solely be regarded as victims. Many of their tasks within the group were similar to those of men. Although most girls were used for domestic duties, this was certainly not the case for all of them. Even though boys more often had a fighting role, when girls were assigned with the task, it was carried out with extreme precision. And, girl soldiers generally had a positive reputation within the LURD forces as they managed to encourage the male rebels (Specht, 2006). Most were respected by their commanders as they took their tasks seriously and did not lose sight by alcohol abuse, as their male counterparts often did. Although many girl soldiers within LURD seemed to have been forcibly recruited, others volunteered. Contributing factors to join LURD were poverty, survival, protection, revenge, other economic motives or a wish to achieve equality between men and women (Specht, 2006). Utas (2003) states that some girls became involved through their boyfriends who were already part of LURD. That many girls left their families and hometowns during the war, made it easier for LURD to recruit them as these girls often lacked the protection of a community.

After their recruitment, the girls were mostly taken to the base where they were trained and assigned with roles. Particularly young girls were assigned to do housekeeping duties such as sweeping, cooking, fetching water, and washing. Others became engaged in the war the rebels were fighting. It seemed as if many girls found out quickly that playing an active role contributed to their chances of survival and improved their position. And so these girls eagerly joined other child soldiers when they were sent out on looting missions. Some girls carried out support tasks within LURD; others were armed combatants, or both. As mentioned by McKay and Mazurana (2004), their participation resulted in new opportunities regarding positions of power and learning new skills. The girls who achieved commanding positions generally possessed qualities as courage, strength, persistence, character and independence. In many traditional African societies, as Keairns (2002) explains, these qualities are usually not valued highly when possessed by women. Instead, these societies “promote women’s submission, servility, and willingness to endure and accept their subordinate position” (Coulter, Persson and Utas, 2008:14). Girls who did show courageous behavior often rose in the ranks and became commanders within LURD. Some led groups solely consisting of women, while others commanded men and women at the same time. This expanded traditional gender roles as girls achieved influential positions in which they experienced power, control, status and a sense of freedom. McKay (2007) notes that this created feelings of pride, self-confidence and a sense of belonging among girl soldiers.

For several girl commanders, the war proved a successful endeavor, as they managed to start business enterprises with looted goods after the war (Utas, 2003). One of these girl commanders became famous when the international media discovered her: she was called Colonel Black Diamond and had led her own group within LURD (Utas, 2005). LURD had a special characteristic, as it was known to have units composed wholly of girls and women: the Women's Artillery Commandos (WAC) (Coulter, Persson and Utas, 2008). At the peak, the WAC consisted of at least 100 women. They were fighting against rape, which established strong bonds, a sense of unity and solidarity among the girls (Specht, 2006). Black Diamond was the commander of a WAC. She joined LURD when she was a teenager and had been raped by Charles Taylor's forces. Even though she had several motivations to join the rebels, the rape by Taylor's men was her key reason. Black Diamond: "It made me want to fight the man who caused all that, because if you are a good leader you can't behave like that" (BBC News, 2003). She was determined to get her revenge, and showed such courage and persistence in achieving this that most male fighters feared her. Her fighting skills earned her respect from other combatants and from her enemies, they all acknowledged her strength. Like many other girl soldiers, the girl who said to favor mortars also became a mother doing the war. Her daughter "Small Diamond" was born in the bush after she had been at the warfront until she was eight months pregnant (BBC News, 2003).

Black Diamond led a group of determined young girls and women. Taylor's forces had sexually violated many of them, and some were recruited from refugee camps in neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea. Some joined out of revenge, others wanted respect. As one of my informants (15F2) expressed: "As soon as I picked up my gun, the people respected me. I was no longer harassed and was finally in control of my own life. No one dared to get near me anymore, I finally had peace." Still, roles like the one Black Diamond had were not common. As noted by Specht (2006) men controlled most girl soldiers, demanded sexual favors of them and/or forced them to marry. Field research indicated that LURD girl soldiers had been raped frequently, and, depending on their position, even very young boys could have four or five wives. It was a matter of power and status. Particularly child soldiers, who did not have any power or say in the Liberian society, seemed to be extremely proud to demonstrate the power they obtained by having wives. Girls on the other hand, also used (forced) marriage to improve their position. Some of my informants stated that they purposely selected male rebels who had several wives as they considered it a sign that the man could provide for all his wives and had a lot of power to protect them. This was also indicated by Specht (2006). From a strategic point of view, the girls were interested in becoming wives to powerful rebels and tried to get close to these men. This often caused jealousy, inducing trouble among the women, and the other wives always gave



the youngest or newest addition to a polygamous marriage a hard time.

This shows that, even though many girl soldiers were victims as they had been forcibly recruited, they employed tactical agency to make the best of their situation. As Specht (2006) notes, Liberian women are known to be relatively independent and strong. The girls who took part in her study on the experiences of girl combatants in Liberia addressed their inequality and “complained about their suppressed role in traditional society” (2006:11). Among my informants, similar statements were made resulting in the fact that even forcibly recruited girls chose to become fighters as this gave them power and some independence. It gave them a certain authority that kept men at a distance, and particularly decreased their chances of being sexually abused. This shows that girls did not simply accept their situation but used strategic insights to improve their lives. As Black Diamond said: “If you are angry, you get brave. You can become a master in everything” (BBC News, 2003).

### Field Evidence

The following figures demonstrate the findings of 65 in-depth interviews with former LURD child soldiers and commanders. Due to the relatively small sample size, it is difficult to draw generalizing conclusions solely based on this field research. However, these findings are comparable to the results of research conducted by other academics or organizations, and the results support general patterns that my informants indicated during interviews. Still, the fact that numerous LURD child soldiers died in combat or failed to be registered as such represents a major limitation to the research. These children are not represented in the sample, which implies that the results reflect only the situation regarding child soldiers who survived the war and decided to speak about their experiences. The actual numbers may therefore be different, but the circumstances made it impossible to include this group of children in the research.

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Average age of recruitment</b>	11	11.7
<b>Average age of return to society</b>	13.1	13.1
<b>Average period within LURD</b>	2.1	1.9
<b>Percentage participating in DDRR programs</b>	62.9%	43.3%
<b>Total number of child soldiers in sample</b>	35	30

Table 5.1 Field sample of LURD child soldiers. Total sample size: 65

Table 5.1 reflects the average age of recruitment, the average age of return to society, the average number of years spent with the LURD rebels, and the percentage of returnees who participated in DDRR programs after they had left the rebels. In order to show the difference in outcomes for boys and girls, the results are divided into two categories. We see that on average girls were a few months older at time of recruitment. Field research indicated that most girl soldiers in this sample were used for sexual purposes, which could explain why average age of recruitment was 11.7 years; they had started to develop womanly features that were attractive to the LURD rebels. The average age of return to society is the same for boy and girl child soldiers, indicating that boys and girls spent a similar period of time with LURD forces (2.1 and 1.9 years). Given the relatively short period LURD was involved in the Liberian civil wars (LURD forces fought from early 2000 until mid-2003), this implies that the majority of child soldiers in this sample served the rebel group during most of its existence.

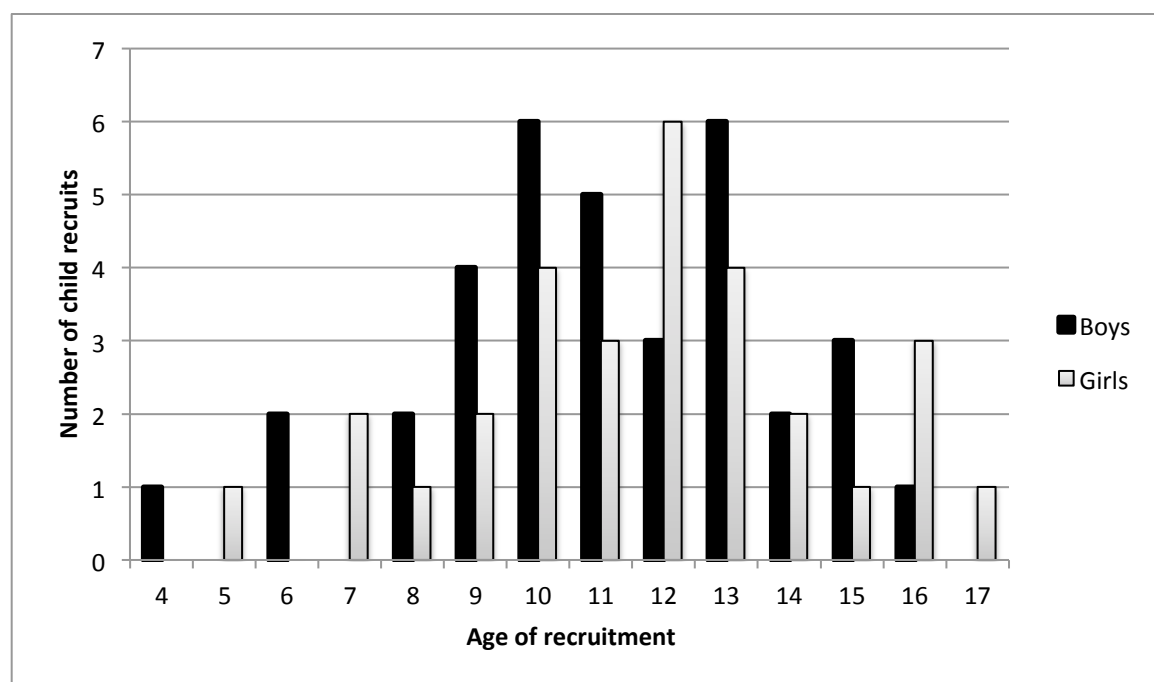


Figure 5.1 LURD child soldiers: age of recruitment. Sample size: 65

Figure 5.1 indicates that the majority of LURD child soldiers in this sample were recruited between 10 and 13 years of age. The horizontal axis shows the age of recruitment, the vertical axis shows the number of children recruited at this age. Field research indicated that LURD commanders preferred to recruit children of this age as they could be used for supportive roles as well as combat. Commanders stated that these children were developing physical strength at this age while emotionally still being dependent and manipulative, and were hence a useful contribution to the group. Since LURD was dependent on civilians for most of its food, it was a risk to

force them to fight with them. As described by Brabazon (2003), survival depended on civilian cooperation and support, and LURD could not afford to lose this. Civilian relations had to be carefully maintained, and interviews with former commanders indicated that this encouraged them to recruit children instead of adults. Children below 14 years of age were favored as it was easier to make them obey, which is reflected in the figure.

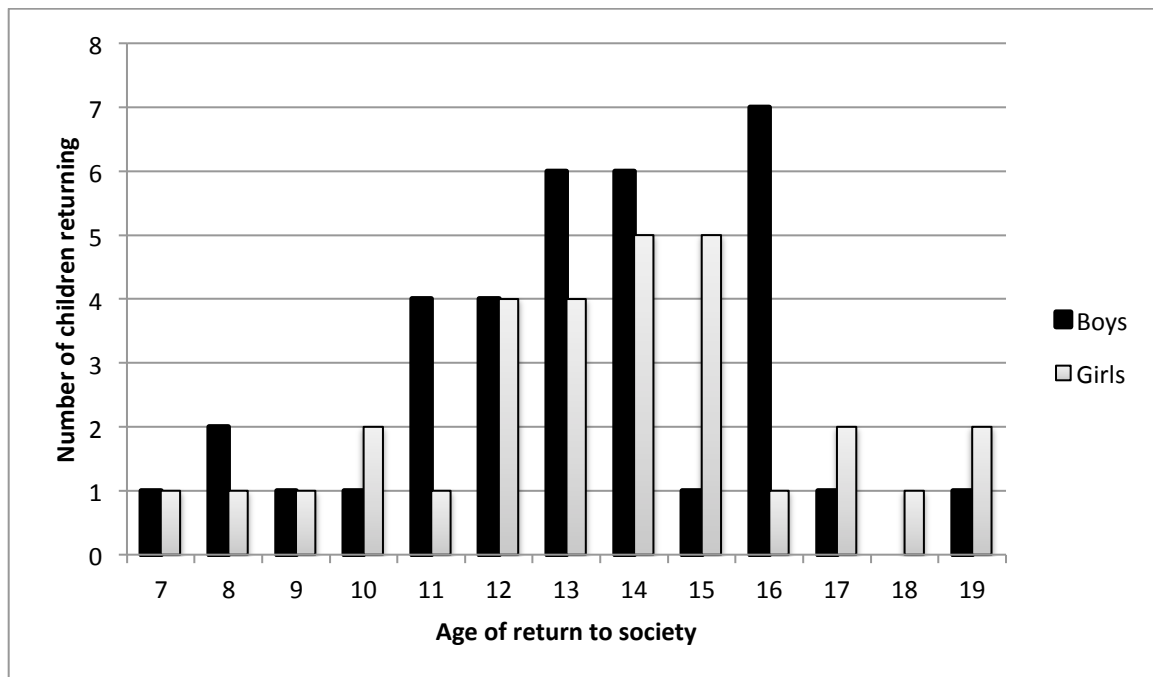


Figure 5.2 LURD child soldiers: age of return to society. Sample size: 65

In figure 5.2 the horizontal axis shows the age of return to society while the vertical axis shows the number of children who returned at this age. The figure indicates that an overwhelming majority (89.2 percent) of child soldiers in this sample exited LURD at the age of 16 or younger. This result is not surprising, since the war lasted less than three years and 92.3 percent of the LURD child soldiers in this sample were 15 or younger when recruited.

### **Socialization Processes within the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy**

This section will analyze how LURD controlled and motivated its recruits, and explain how socialization proved to be a significant aspect of this. The section will focus on the first stages of socialization, shedding light on the effects of initiation rituals, training, extreme violence, and hazing. How these factors socialized and motivated new recruits will be illustrated with personal accounts of LURD members, which were collected during field research. As Brabazon has noted, “contrary to

certain media reports, LURD are not comprised of isolated groups of loosely affiliated rebels, but are a coherent and integrated mobile irregular army” (2003:9). Interviews with former LURD child soldiers and commanders revealed that socialization processes played an essential role in the creation of allegiance among LURD rebels. This section will explain how this contributed to the establishment of a cohesive group.

### *Formal and Informal Socialization*

Whereas most African rebel groups are known to rely on forced recruitment of child soldiers, LURD was different. Although the group did use some forced recruitment, about half of all the children affiliated to LURD joined the movement without being coerced by the rebels (Pugel, 2010). The first conflict in Liberia had left thousands of children orphaned, and almost every child in the country had witnessed acts of extreme violence during early childhood. Many families had been target of Taylor’s forces, and these circumstances seemed to motivate some children to join LURD once the second war had started. Some were looking for protection, others for revenge, but most opted to join the group so they would have a chance to survive the war. As one former LURD child soldier (14M2) explained: “I wanted to go to school but I was working in the field. Taylor boys killed my father and my mother, and later they came for my brother. They all died during the war because of Taylor. I was alone and life was hard. Nobody took care of me and I had no money, I could never go to school or even get enough food. I decided to join LURD when I was 14 years old in 2001 so I could try to survive with the group.” Another informant (10M3) said about his experience: “The LURD come to the house at night so I go with them. I was abandoned, I have nothing, they are my saviors. They become my father and my mother. My parents die so me and my brothers join to survive. My brother was killed in combat. The LURD are fighting for peace for the people. Taylor treat us bad, burn our houses, treat all the civilians bad so we join to defend our people. Me and my brothers and two girls join the group. Taylor boys capture me sometime before to carry a heavy load. I hate Taylor for what he did to my parents so I manage to escape and want to join LURD. I was 10 or 11 and stay with them until the end of the war.”

Although these accounts seem to indicate that these boy soldiers already possessed motivations to join LURD, socialization within the group remains an important aspect of establishing a cohesive organization. Wood argues that “whether recruits of armed groups are volunteers or have been coerced, they have to be socialized in the use of violence for group, not private, purposes, if group leaders are to control the violence deployed by their combatants, typically through the building of strongly hierarchical organizations. Training and socialization to the armed group take place both formally, through the immersion experience of “boot camp,” and

informally, through initiation rituals and hazing. The powerful experiences of endless drilling, dehumanization through abuse at the hands of the drill sergeant, and degradation followed by “rebirth” as group members through initiation rituals typically melt individual recruits into a cohesive unit in which loyalties to one another are felt to be stronger than previous loyalties, such as those to family” (2008:546).

LURD aimed to initiate the formal socialization of its child recruits into the strongly hierarchical organization by providing them with basic training. Training was mainly administered in the Voinjama headquarters, while limited programs were offered in some smaller towns (Brabazon, 2003). Training mainly consisted of basic weapons operation and maintenance, ambush tactics, physical training and drilling. These were generally rather short processes, which lasted from some days up to some months. One of my informants (12F2) who was recruited from an IDP camps said: “One day the LURD rebels came and us children were all taken away from the camp. We were about forty boys and girls. The rebels ordered us to come and we marched through the jungle until we reached the base. We had carried heavy loads so we were tired but after some days training began. We were at least 150 people being trained. The rebels trained us how to fight, how to shoot the gun. We learned about tactics and how we should escape the enemy. The training was two or three weeks, and then we were ready to fight my commander said.”

Still, some of my informants had received no training at all, as fighting was so heavy when they joined the movement that they were expected to engage in combat straight away. Senior rebels quickly demonstrated to these children how to shoot and then they were told to join the group to defeat Taylor’s forces. Interviews indicated that training within LURD was generally not very thorough: it basically prepared LURD child soldiers for the frontline. However, the lack of intense training did not seem to hinder the LURD in establishing a cohesive organization. “While LURD do not bear any comparison with a trained African army, their apparent respect for (and dependency on) the civilian population, combined with a strong *esprit de corps* and a degree of basic military training, certainly elevates them above the level of other regional insurgents, specifically the RUF” (Brabazon, 2003:8).

Informal socialization was also used within LURD. Although new recruits were not registered by name, many would be initiated into the group by spiritual rituals. They were blessed with sacred water that protected them from bullets. These rituals were repeated before combat in order to ensure that all LURD rebels would be protected. My informants stated that these processes made them feel as a group and it created a sense of belonging. In addition to these rituals, an essential part of socialization within LURD was the “attempts to instill a sense of identity with songs” (Brabazon, 2003:8). The rebels sang songs before and during combat which were meant to motivate the LURD members to fight for their goals. This contributed to the

establishment of a sense of belonging among child recruits, which was further encouraged by a common fashion style. LURD rebels used to dress in similar styles or even wore the same t-shirts. My informants stated that this helped them to identify LURD members and that it made them feel as if they were part of a group.

### *Experiencing Violence*

LURD child soldiers were constantly exposed to violence while they were part of the rebel group. My informants stated that they were threatened and confronted with violence on a daily basis. However, most LURD child soldiers had already spent their early childhoods experiencing violence. They grew up during the first civil war, which affected their lives in many ways. Most children had never had the chance to go to school, had witnessed family and community members being beaten, raped, tortured or killed, suffered from hunger and were desperate to find ways to survive. Experiencing violence had to a certain extent already normalized for children before they joined LURD. In a way it seemed as if this normality of violence made them less resistant when joining LURD. As Specht notes: “Forced recruitment did not always meet great resistance and was even welcomed under certain circumstances. In some refugee camps, people were inclined to join armed forces after having been forced to flee as a result of violent raids and living under bad conditions in the camps” (2006:29). For some children, the extreme violence they experienced in the years preceding the second civil war even created motivations to join LURD. Growing up in a war environment, they wanted revenge, protection and desperately sought for ways to survive the conflict. Several informants stated that because they had witnessed Taylor destroying the country and their families, they believed something had to be done. Others had been orphaned and no longer enjoyed the protection of their families. When LURD came along, they decided to join the group. Within LURD the hazardous and violent conditions continued. What did eventually change was that many children felt they were no longer just victims and subject to the violence: they started to exercise violence instead. This change in behavior was mainly due to their socialization within LURD.

As Wood explains: “Once deployed, combatants experience (to widely varying degrees) violence as perpetrators, as witnesses, and often as victims...Among the psychological mechanisms possibly at work in these processes of socialization to group membership and the wielding of violence are compliance, role adoption, internalization of group norms, cognitive dissonance reduction, habituation to violence, diffusion of responsibility onto the group, deindividuation, and dehumanization of the victimized group” (2008:546). This was indeed happening within LURD, as child soldiers were experiencing violence as witnesses, victims and perpetrators while they were with the group. This experience started during their

recruitment. As an informant (13F2) recalled: “When we first came to the group, we had to watch how people were killed. They caught some enemy Taylor boys and then it all started. The enemy had to be tortured the commander said, so some children who had been there for some time were told to wash (kill) one of the boys. So they took his clothes away, beat him, then chopped off his fingers, his hand, ears, nose and then his toes. There was blood everywhere and the boy was screaming. I think he was only 15. Then in the end one LURD boy stepped forward. He was only small but they called him The Castrator. And so he did his job, castrating the enemy boy. The boy passed out and then he died, we left him by the road. I did not like it when they did this, but the war had already showed me many dead people.” This account shows how LURD child soldiers had to witness extreme violence, but also indicates that the confrontation with violence and death was not new; experiencing violence had somewhat normalized over the course of the conflict. Burning people alive, rape, torture and cannibalism had become routines during the wars and many informants claimed they had witnessed such acts even before they were recruited by LURD. Experiencing such violence continued within the LURD forces and it seemed, compared to other conflicts, less difficult for the already traumatized child soldiers to adapt to these conditions or even cross the boundary of committing acts of violence.

Through experiencing violence LURD child soldiers learned to adopt to their new roles and they internalized the group norms. This was for instance achieved by installing a set of rules that was connected to certain rewards and punishments. If child soldiers acted in accordance with the rules, they stood a chance of being promoted and military achievements were sometimes celebrated. However, if LURD rebels disobeyed the rules, failed to act in compliance with an order or tried to escape, violence would be used to punish them. Punishments were carried out in public to ensure that child soldiers would witness and/or suffer violence, which would further normalize the use of violence. Victims of punishments were often stripped naked in front of the group and were caned until they lost consciousness or death followed. LURD child soldiers were numbed to violence by witnessing numerous people being mutilated, tortured and killed. Furthermore, these experiences instilled a great sense of fear among them, as commanders would tell the children that they would also be punished or killed if they misbehaved, disobeyed or tried to escape. My informants reflected that this fear led to an increased motivation to act in compliance with the rules and stay with the group.

Some former girl soldiers stated that they were subject to sexual violence if they were not married to a male rebel. According to one of my informants (12F2): “As for us the girls, we had to be careful around the men. They can just grab you and use you. They said you were their woman now and they can do what they like with you. So they sex you. Many girls without a bush husband are raped like that. Also, when we

moved to a new town they sometimes get the girl in the middle of the village and just rape her like that. Four, five, six, nine soldiers, they all use her until they finished.” As explained before, girl soldiers who belonged to a WAC were often protected from rape. However, girl soldiers with supportive roles in the group tried to marry powerful male rebels, as this would be their best option to be protected them from rape. My female informants stated that even if they were forcibly married to a male rebel and repeatedly raped by this person, eventually it did not count as rape anymore. “If it happens many times, it is not rape anymore, it is loving as you are now husband and wife” (16F2). This implies that the girls did not look upon themselves as victims. Still, they realized women were truly vulnerable to become victims and used tactical agency to prevent this. One of my informants (13F3) explained this: “I see what they do to the other woman; sometimes when we come to a new place they grab the women and force the weapon inside. Sometimes they put a big stick inside so the woman scream and scream until she quiet with all the blood running. There was one wicked boy; to make example for the people what the rebels can do, he put a grenade inside this woman so she will blast. So at that time I find out to be one of them. So then I survived, I was active and one of them. It was the only way I can be safe, so I make myself one of them.” These examples show how LURD made child soldiers experience violence in different ways in order to socialize them to group membership.

### **Organizational Socialization within the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy**

As shown in the first part of this section, socialization was used within LURD to create and remain a cohesive body. It was intended to lead to the internalization of group norms, values and identity among child soldiers. LURD wanted their child recruits to internalize the identity that was already shared by the other group members, so they would melt them into the organization. Socialization within the group meant that children changed from being individual actors, to actors part of a larger social aggregate. They adopted new identities and interests that were in line with the group. This led to interest convergence, which eventually built bridges within LURD. During this process, socialization created allegiance among LURD rebels and can hence be perceived as the glue that kept the organization together.

Van Maanen (1977) argues that socialization processes are necessarily composed of the transmission of information and values. Besides the experience of violence and formal/informal socialization described in the previous section, organizational socialization is an essential part of the process to achieve internalization. When combining the six tactics defined by Van Maanen, a process is



created during which new recruits learn how to take on a particular role within an organization, what kind of behavior is required of them and what the consequences are when crossing the borders towards unacceptable behavior. This process with all its elements is intended to lead to the establishment of a cohesive organization. The following sections apply Van Maanen's theory to the LURD, as to see how the six tactics of organizational socialization contributed to the establishment of a cohesive rebel group.

### *Collective Socialization*

The first tactic of organizational socialization as defined by Van Maanen (1977) is collective socialization. An example of this tactic is military training, as new recruits are made to go through this experience together before they can become part of the group. The aim of this type of socialization is to create a collective sense of identity, solidarity and loyalty to the group, as recruits simultaneously learn about the new organizational role they are to take on. As illuminated in the previous section, LURD indeed used training to put new child recruits through a common set of experiences. Child soldiers who were expected to become combatants were trained together and prepared for the same organizational role. The content of the role was clearly specified, as commanders among other things instructed them how to defeat the enemy. Child soldiers generally had to demonstrate they could successfully use the skills they had been taught by the commanders. If they failed, they were often punished and had to repeat the exercise until it would be completed successfully. One of my informants (11M2) explained what his LURD training consisted of: "I was trained for two months. The commanders taught my group how to fire, how to use the guns, how to fight and how to kill the enemy. Sometimes the commanders were shooting at us and then we had to move around. This is how we learned to dodge bullets on the frontline. I became a good fighter in the training and was very brave, my commander was proud of me and told the other children I did a good job to show them what to do." However, some child combatants were not trained at all, as they were recruited during combat and were expected to fight at the frontline immediately. Most of these children were quickly instructed how to use the gun on an individual basis and did not have the collective experience, limiting collective socialization with regards to military training. These children did however experience how LURD rebels used to sing songs together before and after attacks. These songs were also part of the socialization process, as they sought to install a common sense of identity and motivation to fight for LURD. All the rebels had to sing along.

Van Maanen (1977) argues that collective socialization may, however, lead to collective deviation and resistance among recruits. As the recruits have to overcome the same boundary passages, they may face common problems for which they may try

to find a solution as a group. This implies that the chance of rebellion within the group is quite high and may cause collective deviation. LURD tackled this possibility by installing a set of strictly observed rules, supervision and punishing any deviant group members. Punishments were carried out in public, and the resulting fear among child soldiers discouraged them to deviate. Violent recruitments were also used to avoid deviation. According to one informant (11M3): “When we were recruiting new kids, we would kill the ones who were scared in front of the others. We set an example like that, so the others will join us and stay with us, they don’t want to die. If we attacked civilians we told them to laugh when we killed their family. If they did not listen and cried, we would kill them. This way all the children knew it was better to be part of the group.” Besides that, escapes were prevented by supervision and sending new child recruits on missions with rebels who had been with LURD for some time. An informant (12M2) told me, “When moving around in the jungle we used codes and passwords to find LURD family members. This way we always knew who belonged to us. We always moved at least two by two so that nobody would get stupid ideas to escape. The new kids had to stay with the big men so they were under control and could not make plans together to leave.” These examples show that punishments, fear, and supervision discouraged (collective) deviation. The strict supervision of new child recruits particularly limited their chances to collectively deviate, as any signs of such plans were picked up early and punished heavily.

### *Formal Socialization*

Formal socialization is the second tactic described by Van Maanen and refers to the separation of new recruits from well-integrated group members. The potential member has to go through a set of experiences that are designed for new recruits, in order to learn about the expected behavior, values and attitudes within the group. These are generally intense periods during which other group members critically evaluate whether the behavior of the new recruit is in line with the organizational expectations, and whether the recruit is committed to the group. As described before, child soldiers within LURD were subject to this tactic, as they were expected to integrate into the group, learn new roles and correct attitudes, values and protocols in order to make them feel and think like members. During this process they were closely supervised by the commanders and monitored on their personal development. Those who did not make enough progress were punished in front of the group in order to encourage children to adopt the group identity. Most children were initially separated from senior rebels so they could complete their training and learn how to become a LURD member. This shows that formal socialization was also used within LURD. However, the degrees of formal socialization varied: children who were recruited in battle often experienced such processes to a lesser extent as they were

expected to start fighting with the group straight away. A former LURD child soldier (9M3) who did go through a period of separation expressed how he felt after he had completed the stage: “We do not love, show compassion or be friendly. We are strong, hardhearted men now. All the things my parents teach me I was forgetting, because I was now learning how to be LURD. First I was confused but now I know what is right—we have to be strong. When I know that, I belong to the big men.”

### *Random Socialization*

Random socialization, implying that the target role is achieved by an ambiguous, unknown or changing sequence of steps, is the third tactic of organizational socialization identified by Van Maanen. Traces of this tactic were found within LURD as well, as my informants stated that they did not know when they would be considered as a group member. As one of them (12F3) explained: “When I was recruited, the commander took me with him. He said I was going to be his wife and so I had to stay with him. He had three other wives and we all stayed together. I was thinking to be part of the new family then, but when I just arrived I felt like an outsider, they did not like me and I had to do the bad jobs. But after some time I knew how to be a wife and they somehow accepted me. Still it was not the same every day and I did not understand what was wrong. On bad days they accused me of being a stupid child with civilian mind but other days they treated me like their family. After some time I became strong and my husband said I would be a good fighter. I went to training with some other girls and learned how to fight. After that, the wives never bothered me again.” This account shows that the sequence of steps in becoming a rebel varied: some children were trained right away, while others received training only after they had been with the group for some time.

Random socialization was also reflected in the distribution of ranks. Even though Specht writes that “promotion and the award of rank are based upon longevity of service, age, ability in the field, and more especially previous military experience or affiliation” (2006:23), the order of these criteria varied. In some cases they were not even applied. Field research indicated that child soldiers could also achieve ranks when they accomplished particularly impressive missions, but again, there was no specific order in the steps that had to be accomplished to reach this target. Fulfilling certain criteria was not a guarantee for promotion either, as it very much depended on the personality of the particular commander. Child soldiers seemed to have little influence on their career within LURD as the sequence of steps to be taken were usually unknown, ambiguous and changing. This indicates the use of random socialization within LURD.

### *Variable Socialization*

Variable socialization processes are the fourth tactic of organizational socialization, leading to maximum anxiety among recruits which in turn leads to conformity (Van Maanen, 1977). Such variable situations are intended to keep new recruits off-balance, which makes it easier for rebel commanders to socialize them into the organization. Interviews with former LURD commanders revealed that the rebels indeed created maximum anxiety among the child soldiers; according to informants this was done specifically to motivate maximum conformity. They kept child soldiers off-balance by making them realize their situation was susceptible to change and highly volatile. Generally, the only sense of security that child soldiers had was the group, as everything else was highly variable and insecure. Even within the group, safety and security were not guaranteed, as children were punished severely for misbehavior and Taylor's forces kept chasing them as the conflict raged on. My informants said they lived in constant fear, and did everything they could to be accepted as full members. However, acting in compliance with the rules was generally not enough to achieve this boundary passage and there was great uncertainty as to when they could relax.

As described before, many of my female informants tried to secure their situation by linking with powerful male rebels. The girls tried to survive as they were not able to escape and linking with male rebels was one of their strategies for coping with the extreme environment they were part of. Still, this did not necessarily lead to a more secure situation and protection. This was explained by several informants, of which these accounts are some examples: "I got married because then I would get protection. But when my husband was going to combat and I had to stay in the base, I would hide myself until he came back. I did this because one of my girlfriends was found and raped by the other rebels when her husband was away" (14F1). Sometimes girl soldiers used pregnancies to stay close to a powerful commander and ask for protection. A female informant (12F3) said about her relation with her bush husband: "I carried his child and told him the baby would be real LURD, born in the bush. He liked the idea and kept me safe." Although this worked in some cases, it was not always leading to an improved situation. As another informant (13F2) said: "When I was eight months pregnant, my commander told me to get rid of the child. He did not want to have it, because there was not enough food for the group and I was slow with my belly. Then they put me on the ground, and some of the small boys started jumping on my stomach. I was in so much pain and then the baby came out. It was not alive. Now I still have problems with my stomach and I was never pregnant again." These examples show that linking with male rebels did not always secure the situation of girl soldiers. My informants stated that this scared them, but many opted to try and link with a male rebel anyway as it was their best option for gaining more

protection. The fact that some were successful while others even saw their situation deteriorate indicates that variable socialization did play a role within LURD.

### *Serial Socialization*

The fifth aspect of organizational socialization, serial socialization, is the process during which well-integrated group members serve as role models and groom new recruits (Van Maanen, 1977). The reason for this is that new recruits can be considered as central members to the group only once they have become similar to well-integrated rebels, and are hence seen as being trustworthy and taking the group seriously. Only then will new recruits be allowed to cross inclusionary boundaries that make them central members. Within LURD, experienced members served as role models for new child recruits, and they groomed newcomers to assume similar positions. Teaching and testing new child recruits with questions regarding LURD's struggle was quite common. Interviews revealed that senior rebels were sometimes trying to mislead child recruits as to see if they were adopting the group's identity and assimilated with the other rebels.

This implied that child soldiers were tested and observed while they were becoming part of the group. Children were taught about the injustices Taylor had inflicted on the Liberian population and expected to answer questions about him. As explained by one informant (15M1): "My commander was teaching us about Taylor boys and how he ruined our country. It was very good education because he also give us exams sometimes. When he was asking me who Taylor was I answered: 'Taylor is like a monkey sitting in the top of the tree. He picks all the good fruits and leaves nothing for us', and the commander said I was becoming a good rebel when I understand that." Another informant (13M3) explained the rebels would chant and sing songs together to show they were a strong group: "Before combat we would drink and smoke together, even the young children shared. We get ready to fight together. We dress up together, sing and dance before and after battle. Also when we killed the enemy. We were singing: 'Taylor the woman, Sekou the man! Monkey come down! No more monkey!' And then, when we started we shouted: 'If you don't want to die, then don't be born'." All the children were expected to be part of these 'celebrations'. Those who did not assimilate risked being labeled deviant and could expect to receive severe punishment.

Eventually some child soldiers were even given the responsibility to groom newcomers themselves. This was illustrated by one of my female informants (16F3) who had become a WAC commander: "After I went with LURD, they took me to the base camp. I was already very strong so they trained me there. Then I went to the frontline and after fighting for some time I was good at shooting and hardhearted so the commander said I can now have my own group. I got 20 new girls in my group

and I took care of them. I was training and educating them so they all become strong and together we fight the enemy very well. All the Taylor boys were scared to death when me and my girls came around.”

### *Divestiture Socialization*

Divestiture socialization, the final organizational socialization tactic, is aimed at breaking down the personal characteristics of new recruits in order to rebuild his or her self-image based upon the values of the group. This development is accelerated when new recruits discover they are capable of things they could not imagine before, and when they are kept separate from people or factors that could confirm their old identity. To further enforce this process, new recruits become subject to rigid rules and regulations, are prohibited to show certain behavior and are ordered to degrade others and themselves in public (Van Maanen, 1977). Field research suggested that in order to achieve allegiance among child recruits and establish a cohesive organization, LURD made extensive use of divestiture socialization. The rebels sought to strip away personal characteristics of child soldiers by remolding them so they would fit in with the organization. As a result, child soldiers did indeed rebuild their self-images and acquired new rebel identities. The new identities led to high levels of allegiance and loyalty among child recruits once they started perceiving the LURD rebels as their new family.

An example how the rebels sought to erase the civilian identity of children was the inclusion of child soldiers in military practices and ideological discussions. Interviews indicated that all the rebels in the base would get together in the mornings, stand in line, salute the commanders and sing war songs. An informant (13M2) illustrated this with the following account: “Before battle we often talk strategic talk. We discuss the arms, codes, the way we want to attack, how we going to take the city and take Taylor out. After battle we also discuss to see how the fighting was. Or we would just celebrate. These discussions make us feel like a group because we all know what we have to do and we feel like fighters. It was like we get a new life, we have goals now and are not just children like before. When I was with LURD all this things make me feel like a fighter, I don’t feel like civilians because I was now fighting for my country and the bullets sound like music to my ears.” That the socialization into the group indeed led child soldiers to rebuild their self-image, is also indicated by this account: “If anyone was talking about their parents, he was punished because LURD was the new family. I missed my family for only three days, after that I was becoming a man. I had to fight to survive, thinking of my parents was no good. The rebels were my new family and I belonged in the bush to fight with them” (10M3).

Field research showed that the new identity was enhanced by friendships, which appeared to be strong among the rebels, and the fact that they dressed similar. Cannibalism also seemed to add to the establishment of new identities and allegiance. As an informant (15M2) explained: “We eat the enemy to show we are the real rebels and to show Taylor who is the strongest. Also, when we eat the enemy, we take their powers. We cut out the heart and liver. It's good, it tastes like real meat. You would also eat it if you could. Sometimes we cook it, or make soup with black pepper and vegetables. Or we just eat it raw. The General's heart is good! We will capture the enemy and kill them, and take the skull with us as a trophy. This way we get many special powers and become big men. It show us all the power we can get when we are with LURD. To me, I never feel so strong before.” Another informant (9M2) seemed to have become obsessed with the thought that eating human beings would strengthen him while he was with LURD: “We sometimes kill a child before the fight, drain the blood and drink it to become strong. We also taking drugs and alcohol for this. Sometimes we dismember the pregnant women, sliced out the baby and use the body parts to mark our area and make soup. That also make us strong. And I will eat you raw, if you are my enemy, I will eat you and take all your power.”

To encourage a new self-image and identity, child recruits were provided with a new name once they became part of LURD. As indicated by an informant (8M3): “We get new rebel names in the base to become real members to LURD. The small small children are Young Rebel or Young Killer. My name was General Skinny. They give me the name because I was so small when I joined the group. Our civilian name was never used. I love that bush name. The name was used to make people fear us. My name was somehow friendly so the civilians would not fear me, I was there to protect them.” That names were sometimes chosen to characterize a particular rebel's behavior is suggested by the following account: “We all get new names. Sometimes we can pick, sometimes the older rebel give us one that fits how we act” (11F2). Interviews revealed the following names were used within LURD: Master Bullet, Jungle Killer, Bush Dog, Nasty King, Blood Dragon, Never See Light, Death Dealer, No Death No Rest, General Never Die, Killer Baby, Rocket Killer, Master Castrator, Savannah, Bruce Lee, General Butt Naked, Jackie Chan, Terminator, and Rocky.

These examples highlight that “divestiture processes, in effect, remold the person and, therefore, are powerful ways for organizations and occupations to control the values of incoming members. It is such processes which lie at the heart of most professional training thus helping to explain why professionals appear to be so deeply and permanently socialized. For, once a person has successfully completed a difficult divestiture process and has constructed something of a new identity based on the role to which the divestiture process was directed, there are strong forces toward the maintenance of the new identity” (Van Maanen, 1977:67). Divestiture socialization

played an essential role within LURD. What should be kept in mind is that the impact of the six tactics of organizational socialization is cumulative, and the processes are likely to have enhanced and reinforced each other, as indicated by Van Maanen (1977). Some tactics had stronger effects than others; interviews indicated that divestiture socialization had the strongest effects, particularly due to renaming and the encouragement of behavior in line with these gruesome war names. Collective socialization did not always reach its potentially strong effect on LURD child soldiers as many children were taken into the group during the heights of fighting, not allowing for any significant military group training or other common experiences. However, interviews indicated that each of the described tactics played a particular role in the dynamics of organizational socialization within LURD. The combination of these tactics ensured that child soldiers melted into the organization as they provided the possibilities to create the new identities, loyalty and allegiance which glued the LURD members together.

### **LURD Socialization: A Threefold Analytical Challenge**

As mentioned, Checkel (2005) stresses the importance of utilizing a threefold analytic challenge when focusing on socialization. This theory will be used in order to breakdown and analyze the socialization processes practiced by LURD. It will “(1) establish the presence of socialization mechanisms and the conditions of their operation; (2) assess whether internalization (Type I or II) actually occurred; and (3) ask whether socialized actors behave differently than either they did before they were socialized, or than non-socialized actors do” (Checkel, 2005:816). This will allow a thorough identification of the socialization mechanisms used by LURD, assess which type of internalization occurred among its rebels, and highlight whether socialized LURD child soldiers demonstrate different behavior than they did before they were socialized. The establishment of this threefold analysis aims to provide a clear overview of the effects and consequences of socialization within LURD. It should reveal whether a shift occurs, away from a logic of consequences and toward a logic of appropriateness.

### *Socialization Mechanisms Present within LURD and the Conditions of Their Operation*

As indicated in the previous sections, socialization has proven an efficient tool for engaging child soldiers within LURD. Children are generally considered to be vulnerable, naïve and susceptible to outside influences, particularly in comparison to adults. This makes them attractive to rebel groups, as was also the case for LURD. While spending time as members of LURD, socialization taught child soldiers to become part of the group and to certain extent created a sense of belonging. As a



range of socialization mechanisms were used to achieve this, this section asks: Which socialization mechanisms were present within LURD, and what were the conditions of their operation? To answer this question, this section will provide an analysis while applying Grusec and Hastings' (2007) definition of socialization. According to their research "socialization refers to processes whereby naive individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations" (2007:13). Combined with Checkel's (2005) theory, this definition will be used in order to answer which mechanisms were present within LURD and under which conditions they operated. The skills, behavioral patterns, values and motivations that were taught to child soldiers within LURD will be analyzed. In addition, the methods used to achieve this will be highlighted.

### *Skills*

As Grusec and Hastings (2007) emphasized, socialization processes transmit culture from each generation to the next, for instance by training for specific roles in specific occupations. Although most LURD child soldiers received some basic training that taught them how to shoot, the rebel forces were generally not trained very well regarding other, additional skills. Numerous children were involved in combat; Pugel's research revealed that almost 70% of the LURD child soldiers interviewed had been involved in combat; the remaining children were engaged with supportive and administrative roles at the base (Pugel, [in: Gates and Reich,] 2010). Among my informants that percentage was lower: 63 percent had been involved in combat, whereas the others had been spies, recruiters, cleaners, cooks, bodyguards, forced laborers, bush wives, or medics. During the conflict, my informants stated to have been suffering from hunger all the time, as there was no food provision. When they had attacked Taylor's forces they would try to steal their food, but this had often been poisoned and caused many child soldiers to get very sick or die. The medical staff was supposed to look after the sick and wounded, yet most had not been given any training. As indicated by Brabazon (2003), multiple gunshot wounds were treated with Paracetamol. The older rebels had many small soldiers who accompanied them and carried out tasks. These young children delivered goods, did washing, prepared food and so on. Girl soldiers also became involved in the recruitment of new children. An informant (12F2) recalled: "My commander said I had a good eye for new children, so recruitment became my mission. I took the children away from villages,

or sometimes even from the enemy. I looked at the child and if it was ok, I decided to take it back and train them for us. But sometimes, if they looked too much like enemy, we killed them right there.”

Most child soldiers had very little skills training. Field research indicated that there was little time and opportunity for training, as the rebels either seemed chased by Taylor’s forces or lacked training material. The majority of my informants was trained for just some weeks or had been sent to the frontline straight away. Still they operated weapons such as AK47s, rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), large-caliber machine guns and even anti-aircraft guns. The weapons were handled with nonchalance, leading to innumerable accidents. For instance, AK47 safety catches were hardly ever set to safe, but usually to fully automatic. As a result, the children’s weapon handling was extremely dangerous and careless. Not surprisingly, most rebels were initially not very good at shooting and combat tactics. These skills were mostly learned during actual combat. Interviews revealed that many (fatal) accidents occurred, as the group largely seemed to consist of rather chaotic and unskilled child soldiers. Even LURD Special Forces did not seem to have enjoyed thorough training; they were simply assigned with special tasks and were in no way highly skilled fighters, despite what their title would suggest. The same went for rebel leaders who kept claiming they would get Taylor, but their lack of strategic insight and training jeopardized their attempts to take over Monrovia time after time. Ceasefires were merely used as tactical ploys to regain strength, weapons, and territory. As soon as the new weapons arrived, a briefing would be given and the rebels would advance again. The fact that the organization as a whole was rather unskilled meant that numerous children died during the course of the war, during combat but also due to accidents when the rebels were not fighting.

Due to the lack of training, the LURD did not function as a well-organized military group. Child soldiers were known for wasting the scarce ammunition as they were often running around shooting without gaining any territory. Due to the unprofessional combat behavior of the group and insufficient planning, LURD was nearly defeated on numerous occasions and had to retreat to regain strength several times. Their challenges were increased by the fact that they always had to wait for new supplies from Guinea, on which they were dependent. Still, interviews revealed that child soldiers always took the orders of their commanders and drilling officers seriously, as they would face severe punishment otherwise. LURD commanders seemed to have installed a high degree of discipline among the children. Most child soldiers saluted their seniors and followed their orders without question, which was an important skill they were taught in order to keep the group together.

### *Behavioral patterns*

Teaching new recruits appropriate behavior is a significant aspect of every rebel group aiming to establish a cohesive organization. According to Specht, in order to achieve this “LURD strongly emphasized discipline and order, including through a rigorous system of corporal punishment and the very real threat of execution for mutiny” (2006:24). Field research indicated that the LURD attempted to achieve a cohesive organization by teaching their recruits a set of rules which they had to obey at all times. These rules were frequently repeated and commanders made sure they were considered with a high degree of importance. Some examples of the LURD rules indicated during interviews are:

- It was prohibited to loot civilian property
- It was prohibited to harass civilians
- It was prohibited to rape civilians
- It was prohibited to rape girls affiliated to LURD
- Passwords had to be used when moving through areas
- Rebels were not allowed to move on their own, they at least had to be two by two
- Commanders were to be respected and saluted
- Orders from commanders must be followed
- Ranks were to be respected
- Prisoners had to be interrogated
- ‘Good’ prisoners had to be integrated into the LURD forces, whereas ‘unreliable’ prisoners should be killed
- Quarreling among LURD forces was prohibited

There was quite a strict social control to guarantee that the rebels would behave according to the rules. If someone disobeyed, the commander would be informed and the person would be punished. Female commander seemed to be particularly strict, as also argued by Specht: “Female commanders at LURD were known as stricter disciplinarians than their male counterparts. One of the explanations for this discipline is found in relationships between commander-girls. The comment of a Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) staff member provides further insight to this: ‘Just like a mother, she would immediately punish a child or reward it when it is doing something wrong or right’. This analysis sees the enforcement of quasi-maternal discipline by commanders as both an act of restraint and protection from the consequences of misbehavior, suggesting both a strong sense of responsibility on the part of the commander as well as a clear power over the actions of the ‘child’” (2006:24). Discipline was an important value, yet varied widely among LURD forces as it very much depended on the commander in charge. In order to preserve the fragile relationships with civilians, commanders would constantly

remind child soldiers that the Liberian people were not their enemy yet had to be protected, and that they were solely after Taylor and his forces. Although most rebels were living by the rules, this changed at the end of the war when all control seemed to be lost and lawlessness took the upper hand.

### *Values*

Whereas Liberia once had a tradition of secret societies to maintain local traditions and customs, this was severely disrupted during the war. Normally these societies would teach children about respect, discipline and responsibilities for life. Due to the conflict, “the current generation of youth, including the girl combatants, is the first not to have been collectively initiated into secret societies” (Specht, 2006:42). Whereas secret societies are considered an essential socialization process within the Liberian society, the lack thereof has effects on the relationships between children and the older generations, but also implied that LURD socialization could go to great lengths. Like many other African rebel groups, LURD promoted a strong belief in spirituality and witchcraft. Briefings were held before each battle and fighters would wash themselves with blessed water as a means of protection. According to one informant (10M2): “Before battle the special man would come. He prepared us for battle on a spiritual level and washed our body with sacred water and herbs. We would dance around the fire and he would give us blood tattoos and talisman for protection of the bullets. Then, the commanders would try to shoot us with their weapons but nothing happened. The special man made us invincible, the bullets could not harm us. So when we went to battle we just had to keep going if the enemy was shooting at us. We just shoot back and never ever pull out. If you try to retreat without order, you be killed, otherwise no bullet can harm you.” In addition, many children would make white marks on their faces to provide them with protection. And, as the LURD rebels practiced different religions, verses from the Bible as well as the Qur’an were chanted.

Cannibalism by LURD rebels was not unheard of and was part of the spiritual beliefs as well. Interviews suggested that child soldiers believed that if an enemy fighter was captured, eating his heart and/or liver would give them the opponent’s power. That the rebels also sought to spread fear with this practice was noted by one informant (13M3): “In the combat I was scaring many people to yell at them. ‘If you fight against me, I’ll come and get you. I’ll eat you raw and drink your blood’. Taking out the heart will make my protection more stronger, help me to kill and give me his powers. I’m a wicked boy, I’m a real rebel! We are the lions of the jungle!”

In addition to spiritual values, fashion seemed an important aspect of identifying with LURD. Although some rebels wore military outfits such as uniforms from the Guinean or Liberian armed forces or other camouflage, most child soldiers

distinguished themselves as LURD by wearing t-shirts, jeans and flip-flops. Ripped jeans with thick belts were very popular amongst them, and some LURD groups all wore the same t-shirts. The t-shirts stated to which battalion they belonged or which operation they were involved in. Many favored red clothing; the WAC girls would wear numerous red accessories and some of the boys also wore red t-shirts emblazoned with the motto "Too Tough To Die." Cross dressing was also common and many boys were seen to wear dresses and/or wigs. It seemed an important part of LURD culture to wear bizarre outfits, as many children were seen wearing combinations of sunglasses, wigs, masks, hats, shower caps, shell necklaces and goggles, while they were dragging teddy bears and other stuffed animals along. In addition, most child soldiers wore bandanas around their heads, and were bedecked by a collection of numerous bangles, necklaces, beads, bracelets, amulets and ammunition. The 'jewelry' often had spiritual value and was used for protection. Interviews indicated that child soldiers commonly believed bullets could not hit them as long as they were wearing their talisman. According to one informant (12F3): "I am invisible because of my protection and my necklace. The bullets cannot harm me because they just pass me. They change into water when they are fired and never come to me."

### *Motivations*

In order to motivate child soldiers, Pugel reports that LURD commanders promised them jobs, money, food and an improved situation in Liberia. In addition, ideological goals and family protection were emphasized (2010). The general motivations to join and remain with LURD indicated by my informants varied between family or individual protection, revenge, support of LURD's goals, food, money, boredom, poverty, hunger, fear, economic prospects, education, peer pressure, and grievances, while many female informants were motivated by a strive to become equal to men or because of relationships they had with male combatants. Many joined the group because they were abducted, and scaring provided them with the initial motivation to remain with the rebels. Others joined because their friends or family already had, and they were asked to follow them. Some believed in LURD's goals, while others were motivated to join, as it would prevent exploitation by Taylor's forces. As an informant (17F2) said: "The people of Liberia must be free, and the LURD forces were fighting for their freedom and peace. Charles Taylor is a liar and a criminal, and we had to bring him to justice, we will bring him down! We had an agreement that when he goes, we will lay our weapons down. No Taylor, no war." Some others joined to improve Liberia's future or because the circumstances were better within the group as compared to civilian life. Poverty and exploitation were hence important motivating factors, as well as victimization. The following account shows how this compelled an

informant (16F1) to join the LURD forces: “Me, I decided to join LURD. I was treated really bad and I was so poor, I could hardly survive. I was angry at the system and I wanted to do something about it.” Another one (12M1) said: “I joined to fight the government forces. They were bad, hurt my family and killed my friends. They forced me to do hard work for them but I could never rest. They beat me all the time and never treated me nicely. So when LURD came I wanted to be with them, and fight the government. Taylor boys had done too much destruction for Liberia.”

Some of the youngest informants joined because they had been staying in displacement camps without their families and LURD rebels recruited them while they were on their own. LURD child soldiers “indicated a catastrophic loss of the family structure” (In: Gates and Reich, 2010:181). LURD provided them with some sense of security as they had lost their families. There were hundreds of child soldiers under the age of ten. Informants remembered their guns dragged on the floor and some seemed even smaller than their weapons. Some families motivated their children to join the rebels, as indicated by one of my female informants (14F1): “When the rebels came, we were all scared. Some people were beaten and the property was destroyed. My parents said I had to go to the big man and love him, for protection. They were scared the rebels would force me, so I went to the commander myself. Because I was now staying with him, my family was protected when the rebels are around. The commander liked me, he said I was pretty and called me Bum Bum. But then we moved to the battle front and he tell me to come. We never come back to my town. I don’t know where my family is now, I have never seen them again.”

Promises also played a significant role. Senior commanders told child soldiers they would get jobs and positions in the government once they had overthrown Taylor, and that the international community would pay them. Almost all of my informants claimed they believed to get a big pay day once Charles Taylor was pushed out of office. They stated that many child soldiers fought for benefits promised to them after the war. These promises often included money, but some were promised to see their parents again. However, the promise to reunite with family seemed rare, as most children were told to forget about their parents. Some informants stated that the victory celebrations held by LURD were a motivation to stay, as the rebels would sing, dance and drink together. Power was a significant motivator as well. Many informants spoke about the power they experienced when holding a weapon as boy or girl soldiers. A male informant (11M1) stated: “I was just small-small then, so the people in the village ignored me and not respect me. But then I had the gun, and they feared me, I can control them and I get many things I can never even dream of. The power let me stay with LURD, so I could enjoy the war. If I leave I have nothing.” Besides power, promotions were a motivating factor to remain with the rebels: “When I was promoted I was very happy and felt good. I was an adult man then. I had

more control and disciplined the boys under me. I was happy to protect my country and fight for my people. All the LURD people were happy to fight” (13M1).

Girls often joined to protect themselves and linked with male commanders to avenge sexual violence. According to one female informant (11F3), “For me it was good to have my husband, he took care of me and my family. He was a good man, and provide my family with protection and sometimes food. Whenever he go looting, he bring me something back. When your husband die, it is better to find a new one right there. If not, they will all try to use you. It was better to stay with one, so he give you little more protection.” As Specht (2006) indicated, economic motives also played a role for girl soldiers. Being part of the rebels gave the girls access to make up, clothes and shoes, which they otherwise could not have obtained. This was also reflected in interviews: “I preferred staying with the rebels; at least I had access to things and food when they went out looting. If I stay by myself I would die, so my life was better with them, even if it was hard” (13F1). As explained earlier, fighting against rape was another major motivator for girl soldiers and many joined LURD to avenge as well as prevent rape by other forces.

Field research indicated that child soldiers often had a nervous energy among them, which was settled or accelerated by the use of drugs, depending on going to combat or not. LURD rebels used a lot of drugs as marijuana was generally smoked on a daily basis while cocaine and amphetamines were taken regularly when the group was going to combat. Child soldiers joined in this practice and frequently drank alcohol in addition. Informants stated drug use motivated them as it helped them forget about the war for a while or made them happy to fight. Hence, commanders encouraged children to take drugs before fighting. Several informants told me about drug use. For instance: “Sometimes children began crying during combat because they were so scared. That’s why it was better to keep them high on drugs. The commanders would shout at them: what’s wrong with you? You see many people die! If the enemy fire you, you fight back or you be killed! Now fire! So instead next time we go to the battlefield, the commanders cut a little on the side of our head and put cocaine. It prepared children for battle and make sure we win because nobody was fearing anymore. Through drugs you can do anything” (14M2).

### *Means of teaching*

Although skills training provided by LURD varied from rather basic to non-existent, a range of other means of teaching was used to transform child recruits into soldiers. Fear and punishment were predominant as using extreme violence taught the children to become part of the group. Punishments ranged from double shifts at the front line up to death, and would be carried out in public. During interviews, informants showed how and why punishments took place: “We could not kill or

violate civilians because we needed their support. If you did harm them there was trouble. All commanders ordered to respect life and property of civilians. If you see them suffering, you must help them. We were fighting to save their life and properties. So if you disobeyed the strong law, they kill you or punish you. First they tie you, and then everybody was watching, even the civilians. It was an example for the civilians that LURD punished the rebels who did not obey. The civilians were happy to see the LURD was fighting for them and punished the bad rebels” (14M2). Another one (13F3) stated: “If you were looting, you were severely beaten. If you were raping, they kill you. They tie you and beat you until you die. Sometimes they lock you inside a building somewhere. Then after that you have to go fight in the frontline as punishment. It was an example for the others because it tell them do not ever do this.” Setting examples by public punishment seemed an important aspect of controlling the behavior of LURD child soldiers. As a female informant (9F3) explained, “When I became the wife, I did not know he had other wives. He already had four. That was difficult because I was new and young, the other women humiliate me and make me do hard work. I suffered a lot. Then one day he discover the other women jealousy of me. He was very angry and he take one on her hair, outside. He beat and beat and then shot her. Then he say: if you women ever make more trouble, I kill you. From that moment we never fight again.”

Besides punishment, spiritual ceremonies were also used as a means of teaching. Child soldiers were taught that spirit mediums provided them with supernatural powers and once they had performed rituals, senior rebels would pretend to shoot at the children with real bullets to prove they were invincible and could not be harmed by bullets. Rewards also played a role in teaching what was right or wrong: “When we did a good job, we get rewards from the commander sometimes if the situation was safe. We party and drink alcohol from Guinea and smoke. The music was so fine. And sometimes you get a promotion or some small small things for rewards to teach all the children that it was a fine job. I sometimes get a small allowance but I was fighting to live” (10F3). And, as indicated during several interviews, even movies were used as a means of teaching: “We used American films as examples to get used to fighting and see how to do it. Rambo was the best, I also chose that as my name. I wanted to be as strong as he was” (15M2).

### *The Achievement of Internalization Type I and II*

According to Checkel, socialization leads to Type I or II internalization. The first type refers to “learning a role—acquiring the knowledge that enables them to act in accordance with expectations—irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it. The key is the agents knowing what is socially accepted in a given setting or community. Following a logic of appropriateness, then, means simply that conscious



instrumental calculation has been replaced by conscious role playing” (Checkel, 2005:804). “On the other hand, following a logic of appropriateness may go beyond role playing and imply that agents accept community or organizational norms as “the right thing to do.” We call this Type II internalization/socialization, and it implies that agents adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are part. Conscious instrumental calculation has now been replaced by “taken-for-grantedness”” (Checkel, 2005:804). These definitions will be used to address the following question: did internalization, Type I or II, actually occur within LURD?

Field research among former LURD child soldiers suggested that both Type I and II internalization were achieved by in-group socialization. Especially the continuous experience of extreme violence seemed to produce a change in attitude and made child soldiers play the expected roles (Type I) or adopt the identity (Type II) of the movement. Given the character of the movement, this may come across as an unexpected result. Brabazon also acknowledges this: “Despite dressing partly in military uniforms and partly like rap singers, LURD shows higher than expected degrees of morale, discipline and training. Despite being unpaid and suffering perhaps 1.000 fatalities over the last three years, they display generally high morale, if occasionally boosted by copious amounts of marijuana. The singular cause of ousting Taylor from power is easy to grasp, and highly appealing to former ULIMO fighters who felt they were denied the benefits of the 1997 peace agreement. If nothing else, fighting with LURD offers prestige, excitement, food, and the possibility of employment in the event of a LURD victory” (2003:7).

Although LURD recruited numerous children by force, internalization was still achieved among them. For most of my informants, it did not take long to get used to life within LURD as they had grown up in a conflict ridden country and had, to some extent, already become used to witness extreme violence during their early childhoods. Some LURD child soldiers had been orphaned during the first war, which allowed the factional identity of the group to shape them. However, Type I internalization was most common among my informants. During interviews, the former child soldiers stated they knew what behavior was accepted within the group and acted accordingly: they performed a role but did not adopt the identity of a LURD rebel. The following account is from an informant who reached Type I internalization: “I was small and so scared when the fighting started, my body sometimes almost collapsed when I was shooting. The people were butchered and we had to protect ourselves, no one else would look after us so we just had to fight everything to survive. But it never made me happy, I was happy only when it finished and I could go home again” (9M1).

Female informants reported that many girl soldiers calculated their moves and

manipulated their environments without actually adopting the rebel identity. Without reaching Type II internalization, they developed ways to broaden their perspectives. “We had war for so many years, we were quick to learn how to operate with LURD. Especially the smart girls were performing well in the group, they were loving the powerful men and that gave them status and respect. Many admired them, so if the man wanted to keep her, he must take care of her by bringing her many beautiful things. The girls became wealthy like that, because their manipulations of stupid male rebels helped them survive. They were very successful without becoming true rebels: they just played the game. As soon as the war was over, they were gone, looking for a new project” (16F2).

Still, some of my informants reached Type II internalization. An informant explained he identified himself as a rebel, and realized what had happened only years after the war ended. He (13M3) stated: “When we were fighting we were doing the right thing, we had no idea we did wrong things. I was a radio operator; I did not have a weapon. We were drilling and singing songs to prepare to move to the front and fight. We had a strong identity, because the songs also created tight bonds between us. We were a tight group, a strong connected fighting force that many people identified with and believed in.” Another informant (8F2) explained why she identified as a rebel; “I was too small, I start fighting when I was 8. I don’t know my name, I don’t have no family, the rebels are my family. I am motherless, I am fatherless, so I don’t care, I am LURD. My weapon is my mother and my father, we are freedom fighters.”

Whereas the effects of Type I internalization quickly subdued once child soldiers had left LURD, Type II internalization lingered for quite some time after the war finished, as shown by this account: “It was very hard to come back home, and also to see the enemies we had been fighting against all those years. Now the war was over, but we still had our own beliefs. It took a long time to know we were all the same human beings. Only after some years did I know that the enemy was just like me: used by the big men to get money and power. Only when I knew that I did not want to be a rebel anymore, I did not feel like LURD anymore. I wanted a new life and a new family” (14M2).

The field research indicated the following general patterns: the younger the recruit, the more likely he or she seemed to be to reach Type II internalization. This may be explained by the fact that particularly young children are considered to be most easily manipulated. Moreover, these children proved to be most actively seeking for a sense of family protection, and hence adopted the rebels as their new families more easily. Whereas most girl recruits achieved Type I internalization, boy soldiers seemed more likely to achieve Type II internalization. Earlier parts of this chapter have made clear the active and independent attitude of Liberian girls. They often

used tactical agency to maneuver through the war, which may have protected them from reaching internalization Type II. Furthermore, the longer recruits remained with LURD, the more likely it became to achieve Type II internalization. This result seems quite straightforward as recruits simply become more susceptible to indoctrination the longer they are exposed to its forces. To conclude, child soldiers who had reached Type II internalization most often reported that they felt LURD socialization thwarted their reintegration into society after they had left the rebels. The fact that they had adopted a new rebel identity and cut ties with their communities implied they had to start all over when they returned to civilian life. They had not only to re-adapt their behavior, but also to shed their rebel identity in order to be able to rejoin civilian society. This process was much easier for child soldiers who just had achieved internalization Type I, as they had merely assumed a role, not a new identity.

### *Socialized Actors Demonstrating Different Behavior*

Do socialized actors behave differently than they did before they were socialized, or, than non-socialized actors do? Looking back at the analyses provided in this chapter, LURD child soldiers definitely did. They were socialized from the day of their recruitment and it seemed as if this fractured their social norms, while the societal hierarchy was severely disrupted. Young children could become commanders who enjoyed a sense of power, control and respect, and while they achieved these positions older people were frequently disrespected. Besides that, socialized child soldiers learned to behave according to LURD rules and expectations, and these were very different from the societal rules and expectations non-socialized actors complied to. Hence, socialized child soldiers demonstrated different behavior.

Many LURD child soldiers learned that violence could be used in ways that would increase their control and influence. Interviews revealed that even forcibly recruited children realized that they could use violence to find their own ways in the war, implying that violence transformed victims into agents by changing their behavior. Within LURD, girl soldiers may be the most obvious example that socialized agents changed their behavior. Although boys also did this, girls in particular seemed to use violence to take control over their own lives, as they no longer accepted to be victimized and sexually assaulted. Whereas most girls had led rather subordinate lives before they became part of LURD, joining the rebels changed all their perspectives and behavior. Many tried to turn the war into a successful endeavor and achieved power through the barrel of their guns. This shows how powerful the socialization mechanisms within LURD were. A former boy soldier (14M2) explained that the changed behavior of girls scared him during the war: “Before the war, I had never seen violence by girls. But now, the girls were so much

wicked. They are even more hardhearted than men, you don't want to meet them in combat. As your enemy, they will leave nothing, you will be finished in few minutes. They were different from the boys when we were fighting and I think it was magic. When we were attacking the enemy the girls had no fear, they went ahead just like that. They were very good fighters. Sometimes the boys were more scared than them. Yes, we were also fearing them ourselves because their wickedness was so much different from before." However, boy soldiers were frequently involved in extremely violent behavior as well: "We sharpen the bayonet on top of the AK47 and cut the enemy's stomach to get out the good stuff. The children were eager to eat the enemy, they were wicked. Ha, sometimes I saw them cutting off the penis and testicles of enemy soldiers and yelling: 'You are my pussy!' Most of those children were far gone and did not think straight anymore, the war had taken total control of them" (16M3). These two accounts clearly show that socialized actors demonstrated behavior different from that of non-socialized actors. Whereas most had predominantly been the subjects of violence before they joined LURD, socialization within the group taught them to become used to employing violence themselves.

The fact that socialized LURD child soldiers demonstrated such different behavior, led to severe challenges during their attempts to return to society. As LURD had particularly fought a lawless war towards the end of the conflict, the Liberian population was generally not very keen to reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities. Many child soldiers had been involved in innumerable atrocities, which caused fear and anger among the population. This led to the stigmatization and exclusion of former LURD child soldiers. Although this was overcome in certain cases, especially girl soldiers who returned from the bush with children fathered by male rebels, seemed to be condemned to a future of hardship. According to one informant (16F1), "I was with the rebels because I had no other choice. Now the community judge me for it, I had a baby in the bush, it is a rebel child. I was raped, but now the society is excluding me because of the child. Rape is now kind of accepted because so many women were raped, but rebel babies, that is the end of your life." Other children proved to be severely traumatized by their involvement with LURD. One of my informants had been socialized so deeply by the continuous exposure to extreme violence within LURD, that seven years after the war ended still all he could think of was violence. I quote: "The youths of our country are destroyed, our women are raped, our country was looted. Now I want to keep fighting, I am LURD and I want to kill Taylor people. First they give me drugs and tell me lies, and then they teach me how to fight. Then the war is finished but I want to continue now, I want revenge even if the war is over. If I kill them, I feel better. It is better when they are dead." This account is just one of many examples that indicate socialization within LURD had far-reaching and severe consequences. It significantly changed the

behavior of child recruits and managed to transform them into soldiers. As this example shows, some child soldiers took on the identity of a LURD rebel through socialization, and never lost this sense of belonging after the war ended. This indicates that, in order to assist child soldiers in their return to civilian life, DDRR programs should address the socialization processes during the war and aim to reverse their disturbing effects.

# 6

## An Idle Mind Is the Devil's Workshop

### *Child soldier socialization within the Revolutionary United Front*

*"Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

*RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone  
RUF is fighting to save our people  
RUF is fighting to save our country"*

RUF Anthem: Footpaths to Democracy, 1995

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the socialization of child soldiers within the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. First, in order to create a deeper understanding of the circumstances RUF child soldiers were broadcasted to, a study of the Sierra Leonean conflict is provided. This section will touch upon the extremely turbulent years of war, yet will not provide a complete analysis of the conflict—this is mainly due to the complexities and numerous facets of the conflict, in combination with space limitations of this thesis. Still, a summary of the most important stages of the conflict should create the sufficient background knowledge needed to apprehend the thorough analysis of the RUF as a rebel group and its child soldiers. The RUF and their use of child soldiers will be discussed in detail, followed by a comprehensive analysis of the socialization processes used within the rebel group. This analysis will mainly be based on extensive field research conducted in Sierra Leone and include the voices of former RUF child soldiers.

### **Conflict Background**

Sierra Leone suffered from a violent civil war between 1991 and 2002. Years of high unemployment, gradual erosion of civil society and chronic economic stagnation had led to mounting frustration and disappointment among the population, especially among Sierra Leone's youth. With their desperate situation mainly being the result of governmental mismanagement, it became the foundation for a decade long civil war and created a recipe for rebellion: the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Coulter,

2009, Denov, 2010). The RUF found its roots in a student movement and outlined its ideology in a manifesto that proclaimed the group was fighting for the population. As the population seemed to become the target of the RUF revolution, its legitimacy and justification soon became disputed. According to Abdullah, “the language of revolution was not only ambiguous, it was also misunderstood by those who claim to speak that language on behalf of the people who ironically became their prime target” (Abdullah, [in: Honwana and de Boeck,] 2005:186).

Although the war involved numerous armed groups, the main parties were the government army and the RUF rebels (Rosen, 2005). The RUF rebels were seeking to overthrow President Momoh’s All People’s Congress (APC) regime and install democracy. For this reason they invaded Sierra Leone’s eastern districts Kailahun and Pujehun from war-torn Liberia in March 1991. Reports claim the RUF started its rebellion with only 100 fighters, but rapidly grew into a large organization by recruiting thousands of youths and children. The expansion of their forces helped to make it possible for the RUF to control a fifth of Sierra Leone within a few months, based in the eastern and southern parts of the country. The government of President Momoh, which had until then not taken the RUF seriously, seemed unable to control the rebels (Denov, 2010).

The security situation in Sierra Leone aggravated even further due to the fact that President Momoh failed to pay his soldiers at the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), resulting in a crippled morale and numerous defections (Denov, 2010). The uncontrolled situation regarding the RUF led to even stronger dissatisfactions among defected SLA soldiers and in 1992, a year after the war had started, a group of these young military officers overtook the government through a successful military coup led by 26-year old Captain Valentine Strasser. His men took over the capital Freetown, blaming the APC government for not doing enough to control the RUF. They established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and would stay in power until 1996 under command of President Strasser (Peters, 2006).

After Strasser’s coup, the RUF called for a ceasefire. As the APC government had fallen, the RUF proposed to start peace negotiations and establish a new government. However, the NPRC neglected the proposal and instead killed several RUF key figures. This enraged the rebels and triggered the eruption of a full blown war. By the end of 1993, the heavy fighting had taken its toll on the RUF, and the rebels retreated into the Gola forests at the Liberian border (Coulter, 2009, Denov, 2010). Still, Strasser was determined to wipe out the entire RUF, and the NPRC started a campaign to double its forces. During the campaign thousands of youths were recruited in Freetown to fight the RUF rebels, but it would not bring an end to the conflict. After a few months the NPRC was no longer able to control the new recruits: approximately 40% misbehaved, defected the NPRC or even cooperated with

the RUF rebels in attacking civilians (Peters, 2006).

Strasser's NPRC was not able to stop the RUF surge towards Freetown on its own. The uncontrollable situation gave the RUF rebels a chance to pillage scores of villages and towns, and thousands of children were kidnapped throughout the country to strengthen the rebel forces. President Strasser then decided to take a new approach to stop the RUF, and hired a group of mercenaries from South African based Executive Outcomes (EO) in 1995. EO, who were supposed to be paid 31 million US dollar annually in diamonds concessions and cash for their involvement, managed to force the rebels from the hills surrounding Freetown and pushed the RUF back to their headquarters around the diamond mines of Kono in eastern Sierra Leone. After the attacks carried out by EO it seemed as though the RUF would not be able to function as a rebel group anymore and thus, following national and international pressure, the NPRC scheduled democratic elections in 1996. The government finally seemed to be placed back into the hands of the Sierra Leonean people (Peters, 2006).

Then, against expectations, the RUF resurfaced: ordering the population not to vote during the elections, increasing atrocities and re-starting the terrorization of towns and civilians. Violence gripped the country again as the theme and slogan of the scheduled elections—*'The future is in your hands'*—was used by the RUF to begin a new, bloody campaign of their own. The rebels started amputating the hands and limbs of thousands of people, warning them not to support the NPRC. To maximize fear among the Sierra Leoneans even babies were amputated during this so-called Operation Stop Elections (Denov, 2010). The violence continued until the RUF, mainly motivated by their wish to be part of the electoral process as a candidate, eventually agreed to a ceasefire in early 1996. The rebels called for peace before elections and—temporarily—laid down their weapons. In February 1996, even though a peace process had not yet been established, elections were held due to national and international pressure. Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was elected as President and established a multi-ethnic, multi-party government (Peters, 2006).

After being elected, President Kabbah continued peace negotiations with the RUF. Involving RUF members in the government seemed an opportunity to end the war and finally bring peace to Sierra Leone again (Denov, 2010). However, Kabbah was also persuaded to authorize an operation to 'neutralize' the RUF headquarters and key figures by EO. In cooperation with the Kamajor, an armed civil militia group also known as the Civil Defense Force (CDF), EO attacked several RUF camps in the months to follow (Peters, 2006). These attacks brought RUF leader Foday Sankoh to call for a ceasefire again, which eventually led to the signing of the Abidjan peace accord in November 1996. The peace accord included "a cessation of hostilities,



conversion of the RUF into a political party, a general amnesty, DDR for the combatants, downsizing of the army and withdrawal of EO” (Peters, 2006:178). In addition, the government was called to address the marginalization of the country’s rural population, and hence target the socio-economic dimensions of the war (Denov, 2010).

However, it did not take long for chaos to break out again: in December 1996 the ceasefire was broken by all parties and in attempts to take control of Sierra Leone’s diamonds and resources, clashes between the armed groups increased. On the RUF side, top commanders had been particularly hesitant to honor the peace accord, probably out of fear of retaliation and due to the economic benefits to be gained from the war. Rebel leader Sankoh reportedly intended to sustain the conflict but when he was arrested in Nigeria for smuggling ammunition, a power struggle was ignited within the RUF (Denov, 2010). Civilians seemed to be the main victims of the in-group struggle as it once again led to intensified attacks throughout the country. Meanwhile, the Kabbah government had increasingly started to support the CDF and provided the militia with weapons. The President’s favoritism of the CDF, in combination with rumors the SLA would be downsized, caused SLA soldiers to increasingly resent the Kabbah administration, which was subsequently overthrown by a military coup (Denov, 2010). Kabbah was removed; the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) became the new junta government and invited the RUF to form an alliance. Sankoh accepted the invitation and AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma made an official announcement that the RUF had become part of the new government. Koroma claimed he had brought peace by the “only way possible: aligning with the enemy: the RUF” and asked the population for support of his decision (Gberie, 2005:102). Instead, 400,000 people fled Sierra Leone, hoping to find protection in Liberia, Guinea or the Gambia (Gberie, 2005).

The international community condemned the AFRC/RUF junta outright and sent ECOMOG forces to help restore President Kabbah’s government (Denov, 2010). The offensive, launched by ECOMOG with support of CDF units, managed to force the AFRC and RUF alliance out of Freetown and both groups retreated to the eastern and northern parts of the country (Coulter, 2009, Peters, 2006). Subsequently, Kabbah was reinstalled as President of Sierra Leone and upon his return 60 junta members and collaborators were charged with treason by the government, RUF leader Foday Sankoh amongst them (Denov, 2010). Twenty-four of these junta members were executed for taking part in the coup and Sankoh remained among the ones sentenced to death, re-igniting a new explosion of violence by the RUF rebels. Another reign of violence was unleashed on innocent civilians on the countryside in two campaigns: Operation No Living Thing and Operation Pay Yourself (Honwana and de Boeck, 2005).

The RUF rebels were determined to take Freetown and attacked Sierra Leone's capital again on January 6, 1999. That week violence reached another peak: the RUF and AFRC saw more than 6,000 people killed in one week, hundreds of abductions and numerous atrocities. The RUF had planned to kill everyone they came across and "made little distinction between civilians and military targets, stating that they believed that civilians should be punished for what they perceived to be their support for the existing government" (Denov, 2010:74). Hence, the explosive situation got out of control again, which made concerned West African leaders insist on new negotiations to reach a settlement. Meanwhile, ECOMOG forces continued their support of the Sierra Leonean government and eventually managed to push the RUF out of Freetown for the second time (Coulter, 2009).

In the wake of this defeat and with national and international pressure rising, RUF leader Foday Sankoh agreed to new peace negotiations with President Kabbah and on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1999 the Lomé peace accord was signed. The agreement included the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC), a commitment to the end of all hostilities, a power sharing deal with the RUF, DDR of all combatants, and blanket amnesty (except for international crimes against humanity). UN peacekeepers and military observers would replace the ECOMOG force, yet in practice had limited access to areas controlled by the RUF, and the implementation of DDR programs was delayed (Denov, 2010, Peters, 2006).

Initially, the Lomé peace accord did not manage to stop the war. During the following two years unsuccessful outbursts of RUF violence continued. Even though their strength began to fade, the RUF was not ready to give up just yet (Denov, 2010). In 2000 the rebels captured 500 UN peacekeepers within days. In response, the 9,250 strong United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping force was increased to 17,500 troops and given a more robust mandate. Simultaneously, Liberian President Charles Taylor used his power on the RUF to achieve the release of hostages held by the rebels (Peters, 2006). This slightly improved the situation and peace negotiations continued in Abuja, Nigeria. By the end of the year the Abuja peace accords were finally signed by all parties, leading to the demobilization of 42,551 fighters during 2001 and bringing an end to the war. In 2002 the Joint Declaration of the End of War was signed, and Sierra Leone officially emerged from the civil war that left an estimated two million people displaced, 10,000 amputated, 70,000 killed and destroyed the country's infrastructure (Coulter, 2009, Denov, 2010, Peters, 2006). According to Ibrahim Abdullah, "the end result was a grotesque caricature of revolution, one that left thousands of Sierra Leoneans dead, thousands of others maimed for life, and a country ravaged and stripped in the name of an elusive but least understood ideal (Abdullah, [in: Honwana and de Boeck,] 2005:186).

## **Characteristics of the Revolutionary United Front and the Use of Child Soldiers**

### *Why Fight?*

Even though the RUF is often pictured as a brutal, self-enriching group of drug-abusing maniacs, the rebel group emerged proclaiming a coherent political argument and developed itself into a cohesive military organization. What initially started out as a student/political youth movement soon developed into a brutal rebel group (Rosen, 2005). As a response to the corrupt government, the RUF invaded the eastern part of Sierra Leone by crossing the border from neighboring Liberia on 23 March 1991, having been trained in Libya and receiving material support from Liberian president Charles Taylor (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008). Supported by Taylor and under command of Foday Sankoh, the RUF found its roots in the aspirations of alienated youth and claimed to be fighting for political goals: they aimed to overthrow the government so a multiparty democracy could be established and economic exploitation would come to an end (Denov, 2010). In their manifesto *Footpaths to Democracy* the RUF presented its political agenda. It read:

“We can no longer leave the destiny of our country in the hands of a generation of crooked politicians and military adventurers... It is our right and duty to change the present political system in the name of national salvation and liberation... This task is the historical responsibility of every patriot... We must be prepared to struggle until the decadent, backward and oppressive regime is thrown into the dustbin of history. We call for a national democratic revolution—involving the total mobilization of all progressive forces. The secret behind the survival of the existing system is our lack of organization. What we need then is organized challenge and resistance. The strategy and tactics of this resistance will be determined by the reaction of the enemy forces—force will be met with force, reasoning with reasoning and dialogue with dialogue” (*Footpaths to Democracy*, 1995).

The emergence of the RUF can also be explained looking at the position of youth in Sierra Leone. According to Abdullah (2005), one of the driving forces behind the rebellion was a perennial lack of means to acquire skills and job opportunities. Numerous young men were unemployed due to the non-availability of small loans to start up businesses, the absence of vocational education opportunities and the fact that few jobs were available. Still, most of these young men were literate and did possess special skills. Most had enjoyed some formal education and were politically conscious. Not being able to use their skills and knowledge, and seeing their country slip away, caused a frustration that contributed to the establishment of the RUF (Abdullah, in: Honwana and de Boeck, 2005). However, once they got access to weapons the rebels seemed to forget that the offensive was launched to stop

corruption in the government. Community leaders were decapitated, villagers were enslaved to work in the mines, and children were forced to rape their mothers: the RUF became famous for their countless human rights abuses.

### *Leadership*

Led by former army photographer Foday Sankoh and senior members like Rashid Mansaray and Abu Kanu, the RUF consisted of a mere 100 fighters at time of the invasion (Bøås and Dunn, 2007, Coulter, 2009). Sankoh, embittered by his imprisonment for alleged involvement in a coup d'état in 1971, was determined to strike back at the APC and mobilized disgruntled Sierra Leoneans for his cause. However, without the extensive support of Charles Taylor, the RUF would not have managed to fight their war of terror. Sankoh and Taylor had met each other during military training in Ghana and Libya during 1987–1988 and decided to form a mutually profitable alliance. Taylor, who was in charge of the NPFL rebels in neighboring Liberia, was seeking to extend his control to Sierra Leone and therefore provided his ally Sankoh with extensive support for the RUF military operation (Rosen, 2005). Moreover, Taylor wanted revenge as Sierra Leone had allowed ECOMOG forces to use its territory as an air base for their mission in Liberia. This greatly frustrated Taylor, especially since it were the ECOMOG forces that kept him from capturing Liberia's capital and bombed his NPFL rebels (Denov, 2010). Hence, in addition to financial support and the provision of arms, Taylor organized that RUF members were trained in Liberia (Coulter, 2009). "Over time, the partnership evolved and Taylor eventually played the role of banker, trainer and mentor to the RUF by providing them with outlets for diamond exports in return for weapons and military training" (Denov, 2010:62). In return, Sankoh and the RUF supported the Liberian NPFL rebels, and when Taylor became President of Liberia, RUF forces were sent into the country to fight off the LURD rebels who were trying to overthrow the Taylor regime.

### *Recruitment and Tactics*

At the early stages of the Sierra Leonean conflict the RUF consisted merely of borrowed but experienced Liberian commandos from Taylor's Special Forces, mercenaries from Burkina Faso and some young Sierra Leoneans (Denov, 2010). When this small group of fighters invaded Sierra Leone and announced its goal of liberating the population from the corrupt government, the government did not consider the RUF as a serious threat. However, this would soon change. In order to achieve their goals, the RUF started to increase their number of forces. Sankoh began a large recruitment campaign, mainly targeting youth who dropped out of school and/or lived and worked in towns or mining areas unaccompanied by their families.

Indeed, the RUF smartly tapped into the sentiments of social exclusion by promising a better future for Sierra Leone's marginalized youth. Besides using this strategy to attract voluntary recruits, the RUF also enlarged its force by coercion through "systematic, but indiscriminate use of abduction" (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008:438). Furthermore, the rebels often forced youths to commit atrocities against the population and local leaders and then took them away to the rebel base camps where a new life started. This proved to be a rather successful strategy, as the RUF established a viable force and controlled one fifth of the country within months of invading Sierra Leone (Bøås and Dunn, 2007).

"Reportedly, initial RUF recruits were a mixture of disaffected Sierra Leonean youths and intellectuals and Sierra Leoneans arrested by Taylor in Liberia" (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008:438). Most RUF youth recruits were unemployed, uneducated, and unemployable (Denov, 2010). Their lives before the war were often characterized by desperate misery yet after they had joined the rebels, some youth seemed to get struck by megalomania. According to Abdullah, "lacking any clear-cut ideas about the political goals of an armed uprising, and mesmerized by the individuals who set themselves up as guardians of the revolution-to-be, some of these youths were convinced that they had arrived at a level of political maturity that would usher in the much talked about revolution. Those who were involved in these conversations about revolution/violent change were impatient with the protracted process of political education and ideological transformation, which normally comes with a revolutionary project. They were convinced that all that was needed was guns: guns, not even military training or political education...The conversations about revolution and violent change among rebellious youths, produced youths obsessed with the necessity of violence in changing the system, not conscious revolutionaries" (Abdullah, [in: Honwana and de Boeck,] 2005:184).

This indicated that the recruitment campaign had particularly strengthened the RUF by enlisting youth with an "obsession with violence as the midwife of change" (Abdullah, [in: Honwana and de Boeck,] 2005:184). Still, this did not seem to transform the RUF into a cohesive rebel group that would cause lasting trouble in Sierra Leone. Responding to the rebel invasion, President Momoh hit back with forces loyal to the APC, which were turn reinforced with Liberian combatants who were anti-Taylor. The RUF seemed to be close to defeat in 1993, when the rebels retreated into the Gola forest on the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia and only few fighters seemed to have remained. However, nothing could have been further from the truth as the rebels established inaccessible training camps and silently prepared to continue the war. Shortly after their retreat the RUF pulled itself together and came out of the forest with a renewed determination and strategies, launching a large surprise attack during which they recruited numerous people,

looted everything they wanted, and destroyed or killed most of what they did not need. After the attack they retreated into the forests again until it was time for a new attack. This period was called Phase Two of their war against the government and the guerrilla style attacks of indiscriminate violence became the signature style of the RUF (Coulter, 2009). It was during Phase Two that, whereas the Liberian forces had been blamed for the extreme violence at the beginning of the RUF invasion, it became obvious that Sierra Leonean rebels participated just as much. This realization resulted in a lack of popular support, which was again compensated by an increasing reliance on acts of incomparable brutality and violent rhetoric (Abdullah, in: Honwana and de Boeck, 2005).

Even though the rebels had little support and were chased by government forces, the forests provided them with protection and hiding places, enabling the RUF to stay beyond the reach of the Sierra Leonean army and ECOMOG peacekeeping forces. As RUF leader Foday Sankoh wrote: “Frankly, we were beaten and on the run, but...we dispersed into smaller units. We destroyed all our vehicles and heavy weapons. We now relied on light weapons, and our feet and brains and knowledge of the countryside. We moved deeper into the comforting bosom of our mother earth—the forest. The forest welcomed us and gave us succor” (Footpaths to Democracy, 1995). This move allowed the RUF to regroup and retrain fighters, permitted its leaders to rethink their strategy and *modus operandi*, and saved the movement from an early defeat (Bøås and Dunn, 2007).

### *A Baptism of Fire*

According to Bøås the RUF was fighting for a new Sierra Leone through a baptism of fire. To illustrate this statement: Operation No Living Thing, Operation Burn House, Operation Cut Off, and Operation Pay Yourself were just a few names of RUF missions, clearly implying violent goals. In most cases, the extreme violence used by the RUF does not make sense from a military point of view. Looking at it from Weinstein’s perspective (2006), the extremity and high level of violence can be explained by the availability of natural resources: diamonds in this case. However, Bøås argues that the RUF’s reasons “must be sought at another level. Most likely the war was just as much about symbolic acts as about ordinary warfare...the war was not simply a war of arms but also an attempt to reconstruct the societal structures of Sierra Leone through violent but basically discursive means” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:49). This may well have been the case, as a typical characteristic of Sierra Leone is its patrimonial political system. Sierra Leonean society is led by economically and politically powerful ‘big men’. Children, youth and adults are dependent on these men and often provide services in exchange for support by the ‘big men’ (Coulter, 2009). For instance, young men would offer their physical strength for economic benefits.

Many youth were discontent with this situation as employment and resources had been monopolized by big men, and their frustrations with the system became a main reason to join the RUF. Their increasingly violent behavior as the war raged on, particularly after the RUF's near defeat, could be explained as follows: "as these people understood their own actions, they were fighting for a new Sierra Leone, putting their lives at risk for a revolution that would save Sierra Leone from the years of corruption and mismanagement that had followed after independence. Now they had to seek refuge in the forest, as their project was generally not well received in rural communities. This may very well have increased the frustration and hatred that these young men already had toward rural life and traditional structures of authority" (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:48).

### *Diamonds Are Forever*

Although the war did not start as a competition over natural resources, diamonds did commence to play an important role in the conflict as the war raged on: the stones helped the RUF to sustain the movement. Although the RUF initially did not start fighting for diamonds, it became one of their main objectives to control the Sierra Leonean diamond fields since the selling of diamonds implied a steady supply of weapons (Rosen, 2005). RUF rebels took control of the mines, performing the various roles that used to belong to traders, chiefs, soldiers, politicians and civil servants in order to obtain all the extracted diamonds. Some civilians were chased away from the area; others were killed or used as diamond diggers (Bøås and Dunn, 2007). The illegally extracted diamonds were used to obtain weapons and ammunition through international networks of illicit arms trading. Charles Taylor was an eager 'customer', offering extensive support to the rebels in exchange for the so-called blood diamonds. "While there is no doubt that international networks of clandestine dealers in diamonds and weapons assisted the RUF, it took the RUF until 1998 to get such activities organized—a fact that fatally undermines the argument that diamond mining and control was the sole objective of RUF and its fighters" (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:47).

### *Extreme Violence and Civilian Relations*

The negative image of the RUF is mainly due to the extremely violent behavior towards innocent civilians, particularly during the latter part of the war. Even though new recruits were still educated about the RUF's ideology during Phase Two of the war, murder, mutilations, amputating people's limbs, raping women and generally disrespecting the lives and property of civilians seemed to become the modus operandi. As Denov puts it: "the RUF's so-called 'democratic revolution' was ultimately fought not through the political realm, but instead through the pillage of

rural institutions and industrial assets, the mass looting of village property and, perhaps most disturbingly, brutal violence against the very civilians it was claiming to liberate” (2010:63). The group became well known for their ‘short-sleeve’ or ‘long-sleeve’ amputation options: cutting of hands and arms of civilians at the wrist or just above the elbow (Coulter, 2009).

The use of rape became more widespread over the years as well. In her study of sexual violence during the Sierra Leonean civil war Dara Kay Cohen found that the RUF’s increased use of rape functioned not only as a tool of military strategy, but also as a method of socialization within the group: it was “useful both as a bonding tool and also as a method for proving one’s bravery as a warrior” (Cohen, 2007:21). Cohen argues that there are high costs to rape: sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea and syphilis were rampant during the war and left many RUF fighters ineffective as the diseases were left untreated in the jungle and quickly worsened. In addition, because rape requires physical contact, it could lead to “emotional hardship on the perpetrator that other types of more removed or abstract forms of violence arguably do not” (Cohen, 2007:5). All the same, these emotional and physical costs were outweighed by the social benefits within the RUF, and rape proved a highly successful tool to facilitate bonding between its members. How rape was part of the socialization process is shown by the way it was carried out in Sierra Leone: 75% of reported incidents were gang rapes and hence public acts. In Cohen’s interviews with ex-combatants they reported “a strong social pressure to commit rape” and they described “a subculture in which those who had raped many women obtained a sort of legendary status among their peers, and those who refused to participate were ruthlessly mocked” (Cohen, 2007:6).

The RUF particularly used rape as a “tool to terrorize the inhabitants of strategically important areas” (Cohen, 2007:7). To illustrate this: 60% of all rapes committed during the war were committed in 1998 and 1999—years during which the RUF attacked the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown (Asher, 2004). Cohen also found that rape in villages usually took place as part of a hit and run style attack, while rape in larger cities “was more of an organized event, during which time public spectacles of gang rape took place, along with organized attacks of other types of violence...Interviews with ex-combatants confirmed this general pattern: the former fighters reported that major battles were among the only times they were actually ordered to commit rape; otherwise, rape was treated as a ‘private issue,’ outside the purview of direct war strategy” (Cohen, 2007:7).

Although the movement had started quite differently, these examples illustrate that the violent behavior became more extreme over time. The RUF transformed into a brutal force, controlling the diamond mines to finance their struggle. However, control of the diamond mines was not sufficient to sustain the movement; the rebels



were also dependent on the cooperation and support of civilians. Although large parts of Sierra Leone's population felt grievances against the government and thus initially showed (some) support for the RUF, this significantly decreased over time. Whereas the RUF had proclaimed to be fighting for education, human rights, and against patrimonial structures and corruption, reality proved quite different: there was an enormous rift between RUF propaganda and rebel behavior. This resulted in a lack of local support, which made the rebels increasingly turn on the rural population and target their predatory behavior on civilians. "The terror used against civilians and soldiers was both symbolic and pragmatic: it delivered a message that the central government was incapable of protecting the civilian population, and it pushed the population into submission or flight by showing that the rebels could kill with impunity" (Rosen, 2005:86).

Still, field research indicated that the rebels were dependent on civilians, as they did not have access to resources: they moved through the jungle and their continuous relocations made it very difficult to grow food. Hence, the RUF depended on civilians for the supply of goods. Civilians needed to cooperate and provide the rebels with food and basic necessities, otherwise the movement could not sustain itself. Given that the rebels were armed, civilians were forced to support them: if they refused they would be punished harshly. Punishment could imply that several villagers would be tortured and killed as to set an example for the rest of the population. Or, the village would be completely looted and then burnt down. If the villagers did cooperate, the rebels promised to protect them in return.

The RUF often announced their arrival as well as the goods they required in written statements. This created fear among the civilians, as the requirements were usually absurd but had to be met in order to prevent a new killing spree. One of my informants showed me letters that had been written to a village chief in eastern Sierra Leone, signed by an RUF commander. The letters read that large amounts of food, alcohol, oil and gas were required at a specific date. The notification would give the villagers some time to deliver, yet if they failed to provide on time, the rebels rigorously punished them. "If the people did not cooperate, we would kill them. Sometimes we would shoot them, or we would lock them inside a house and set it on fire." A civilian survivor told me: "it was bad when the RUF came. Sometimes they announced it, but it was the worst when they had the crazy look; when they were high on drugs. Those times, they would just kill everything they came across and chop hands everywhere."

### *Child Soldiers*

Field research indicated that child soldiers were no exception regarding the brutality of the RUF: they were gouging out the eyes of civilians, filling the sockets with

melting plastic from burning carrier bags. They wiped out entire villages, killing everyone, slitting the throats of their elders and leaving women with sticks in their vaginas. As touched upon earlier, Bøås believes these practices “represent direct connections between the old social systems of the dysfunctional state and the new social orders practiced by the armed insurgents. If acceptable modes of social (to say nothing of political and economic) behavior are cast so openly and violently into question in the wake of dysfunctional states, is it so striking that some of the young, marginalized, and vulnerable elements of society eventually gravitate to extremes? In very real ways, these young men are only putting into practice what they have learned from their elders” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:51).

That this behavior led to a negative image of the RUF was not a surprise. Rosen: “A murderous army cloaked in revolutionary ideology, the RUF was drenched in the blood of the people for whom it claimed to be fighting. It was also an army of children and youth. Indeed, with the exception of its leader, Sankoh, virtually the entire army, including its command and control structures, was under thirty” (2005:83). The use of child soldiers became a key element of the RUF: Peters and Richards (1998) estimate that approximately half of the RUF was between eight and fourteen years old, while Boothby et al. (2006) and Mazurana et al. (2002) argue that up to 80 percent of the RUF forces consisted of child soldiers between seven and fourteen years old. Several thousand children got caught up inside armed forces: according to UNICEF 6,000 child soldiers took part in the Sierra Leonean civil war, UNAMSIL estimated 10,000 children were conscripted, and McKay and Mazurana speak of 48,000 child soldiers (Denov, 2010). McKay and Mazurana (2004) estimate that the RUF had 22,500 child soldiers, of which 30 percent were girls. The exact number of child soldiers the RUF managed to recruit remains unclear: the chaos of war made it impossible to keep track of such numbers. Furthermore, numerous child soldiers have died during the war, others escaped or were never identified as soldiers. This makes it impossible to make a conclusive statement about the exact number of children involved. Hence, the figures provided are only estimates.

The role child soldiers played became symbolic for the brutal character of the war: the type of warfare in Sierra Leone was described as the main example of the “new barbarism” which was signifying modern conflict (Rosen, 2005). Whereas the rebels mainly relied on voluntary recruited youth and adults at the beginning of the conflict, once the war was underway they started conscripting thousands of young boys and girls by force. “As the rate of attrition among adult RUF combatants increased, with factors such as the prolongation of the war, the horrible conditions of service, the lack of salary (whereby many soldiers augmented their pay through looting or mining), the high death toll and the overall senselessness and brutality of the war, the RUF needed to devise another recruiting strategy” (Denov, 2010:63).

Hence, the RUF started recruiting children. Although some of these children joined the rebels willingly (Peters, 2004), most were press ganged to join the movement and had little ideas what they were fighting for (Honwana and de Boeck, 2005). The rebels kidnapped children in the villages they looted, took them to the bush, provided military training and desensitized them to killing and death. For instance, the rebels would often kill a child's family or friends in front of their eyes, telling them the same faith would await them if they did not join the rebels as child soldiers or tried to run away. Enslaving these children led to a “social death”: they were torn out of their communities, which destroyed family ties. “In Sierra Leone, the kidnapping of children and youth, the permanent tattooing of child soldiers with the mark of the RUF, the reports of gruesome rites in which children were forced to publicly murder family and community members to ensure their alienation from them show the trademark violence of a slave regime” (Rosen, 2005:59).

Field research indicated that child soldiers took on a variety of roles within the RUF; there was no exclusiveness. Not all RUF child soldiers were taken to the frontline and used as combatants: many were used as porters, cooks, spies, babysitters and sex slaves. Child soldiers also had various positions and responsibilities within the RUF's hierarchy, ranging from domestic and supportive roles, to positions as combatants or commanders. The type of role they would take on depended on a variety of factors such as physical capabilities, age, skills and the demand for fighters.

### *Girl Soldiers*

Even though Rosen (2005) argues that the majority of girl soldiers had subordinate positions, the girls played an essential role within the RUF. Out of all child soldiers, approximately 40 percent were girls (Save the Children, 2005) and it is believed that the RUF had between 10,000 and 20,000 girls and women associated with them (Coulter, 2009). These girls performed a variety of roles within the movement: some were used as combatants, but most were given domestic duties, were used as sex slaves and/or became bush wives. The majority of girl soldiers are likely to have experienced sexual abuse. Girls are usually portrayed as sex slaves when part of a rebel group, yet not all girls were abducted and used as sex slaves by the RUF. Field research indicated that some chose to join the RUF, as they believed it would bring material gain, protection and power. These girls were particularly active inside the movement and were known for their “wicked” behavior. Male rebels were often scared of them due to their violent attitudes and for that reason did not harass them. These girls played significant roles during battles and had powerful positions within the RUF, often being responsible for dozens of (girl) child soldiers. Rosen (2005) calls these girls mammy queens and describes how former girl soldiers still salute

them in reintegration centers. However, most girls who chose to join the RUF conceal this fact out of fear for community rejection and see it as their best interest to claim they have been abducted instead. As Brett and Specht explain, girls “may consider it to be in their own interest (retrospectively) to let it be assumed that they, like the majority, were abducted” (2004:85).

According to McKay and Mazurana (2004), girl soldiers represented 16 percent of the total RUF forces. The majority of these girls have been raped during the conflict. If they refused sex, they were most often killed and otherwise mutilated. Gang rapes were no exception and Wessells states “the rapes of abductees in Sierra Leone occurred on too vast a scale to write them off as the crimes of a handful of psychopaths. They were part of accepted practice, a de facto policy, within the RUF” (2006:89). That the majority of RUF girl soldiers experienced sexual violence was also reflected in my field research: 80.6 percent of my informants said to have been raped at least once. Most of these girls had been continually sexually abused and gang raped during their stay with the rebels. This number corresponds with estimates given in an Amnesty International report (2000), stating that between 70 and 90 percent of abducted girls were raped. Rape simply became part of daily life for most girl soldiers.

Girls, who managed to become a bush wife to one of the high ranking commanders, were considered lucky. These girls often escaped being sexually abused by multiple rebels as they belonged to the commander and could stay in the base during combat most of the time. In addition, they were sometimes given “staff” to work for them. Senior wives in particular had considerable power within the group. As Coulter (2009) explains, these women were in control of distributing weapons and ammunition before an attack, were in a position to get everything they wanted, could punish and reward, and often had commanding responsibilities within the group. Moreover, when the commanders had gone to combat, their wives “kept in communication with the commander and would select and send troops, spies, and support when needed. These girls and young women decided on a daily basis who in the compound would fight” (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004:14).

Girls who did not become bush wives were used as slaves by the rebels, would be raped frequently, had a lack of food and suffered from general hardship. This did cause jealousy among the girls in lower ranks and struggles to become wives to powerful commanders frequently erupted between them. Many of my female informants said they were treated well by their commander or bush husband, yet they were afraid of the other women. The situation between co-wives was very hostile and should not be underestimated: field research indicated there was a fierce competition over powerful men, and women would sometimes kill for it. Moreover, if girls and women had trouble amongst themselves, it happened that the commanders took

them out and killed one of them to solve the problem. It was a dangerous game girls had to play.

### Field Evidence

This section presents the results of field research in Sierra Leone during which I interviewed 65 former RUF child soldiers and their commanders. Some of my informants stayed with the RUF for a few months before escaping, while most stayed for several years or even during the entire course of the war. They had had different roles and responsibilities within the movement. The following charts will show at what age they were recruited by the RUF, and at what age they returned to society. It also shows the percentage of child soldiers who joined DDRR programs. As I focused on a generally small sample size, these figures are not conclusive and further research is necessary to establish generalizations about child soldiers within the RUF. Although I have sought to portray a representative image of the life of child soldiers within the RUF, one should keep in mind these numbers are estimates: it is impossible to calculate definite figures in the chaos of war. Still, these findings are generally in line with other research and reports written about child soldiers in Sierra Leone, and support the general patterns indicated during field research.

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Average age of recruitment</b>	12.6	11.9
<b>Average age of return to society</b>	18.1	17.1
<b>Average period spent within RUF</b>	5.5	5.2
<b>Percentage participating in DDRR programs</b>	55.9%	38.7%
<b>Total number of child soldiers in sample</b>	34	31

Table 6.1 Field sample RUF child soldiers. Total sample size: 65

Table 6.1 shows the result of field research conducted in Sierra Leone. It shows the average age of recruitment, the average age of return to society, the average number of years spent within the RUF, and the percentage of returnees who participated in DDRR programs after they had left the rebel group. In order to see whether there are differences in recruitment patterns of boys and girls, these are divided into separate categories. The table shows that the average age of recruitment was comparable for boy and girl soldiers at 12.6 and 11.9 years old. On average girls

returned one year earlier: at 17.1 years of age, while for boys this was 18.1 years of age. The table also shows that girls had significantly lower participation levels in DDRR program. This is a well-known given, as a clear majority of DDRR registrants were male former rebels. According to Coulter (2009), most RUF girl soldiers have never been through DDRR programs. They have not been registered as former child soldiers and did not receive any benefits from the programs. Coulter's research may indicate that the 38.7 percent DDRR participation among girl soldiers in this sample is rather high and not necessarily a representative result; actual figures may be significantly lower.

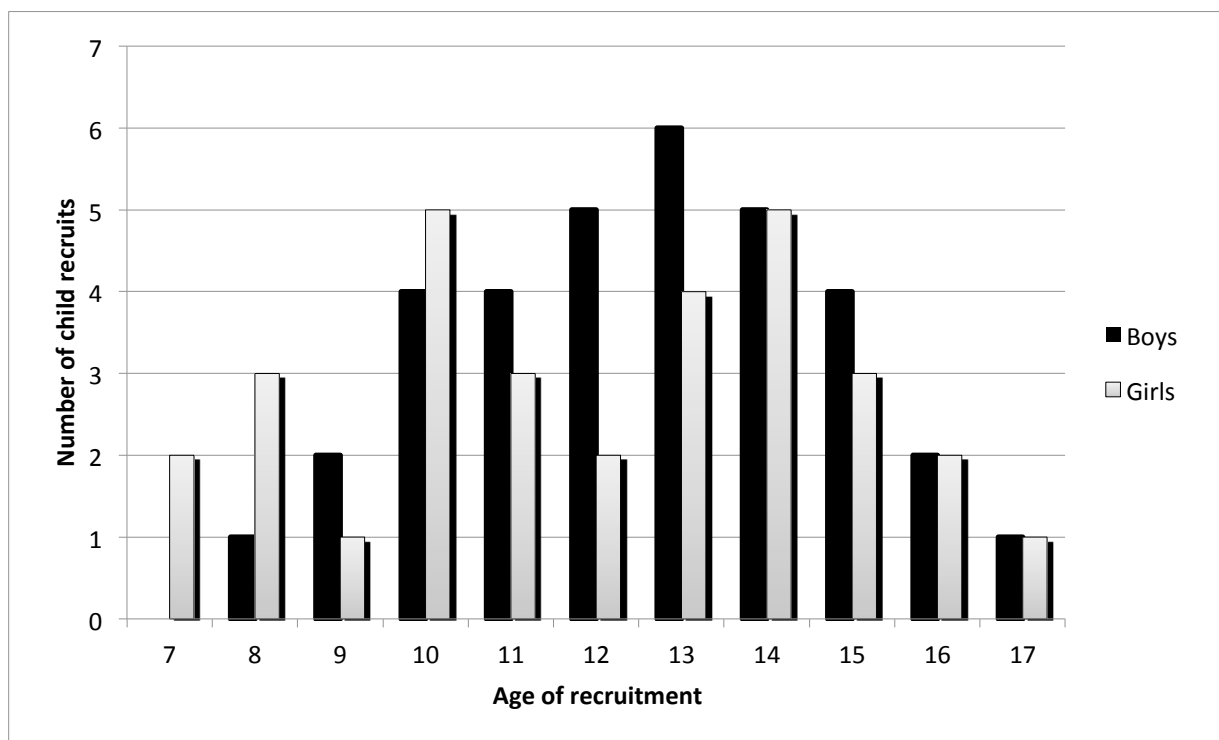


Figure 6.1 RUF child soldiers: age of recruitment

Figure 6.1 indicates that the majority of RUF child soldiers in this sample were recruited between 10 and 14 years of age. The horizontal axis shows the age of recruitment, the vertical axis shows the number of children recruited at this age. Field research indicated that commanders recruited these children deliberately; they often selected child recruits by physical appearance and age. If children looked healthy and strong they were taken to the base for training. As it was important they could fight and obey orders, former RUF commanders stated that they particularly targeted children between 10 years and 15 years of age.

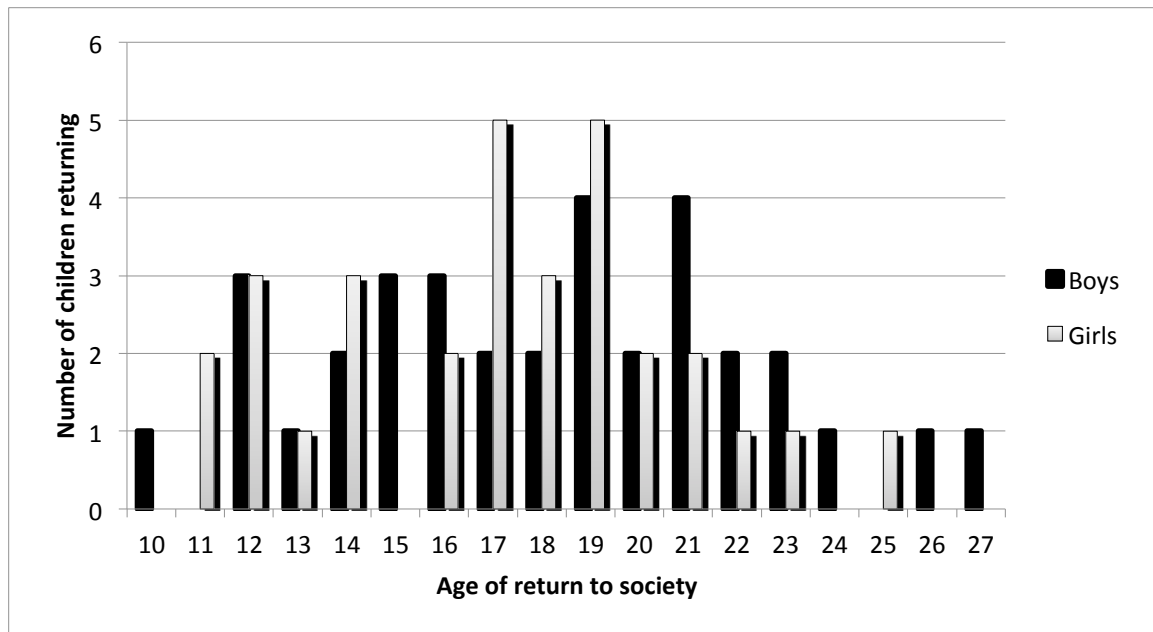


Figure 6.2 RUF child soldiers: age of return to society

Figure 6.2 shows that most the child soldiers in this sample were 17 years of age or older when they left the RUF. The horizontal axis shows the age of return to society, while the vertical axis shows the number of children who returned at this age. That RUF child soldiers had often reached adulthood when they left the group is partly due to the fact that the war lasted almost a decade. This implied that numerous children grew up within the RUF; many felt they had become RUF, and subsequently decided to stay with the rebels. Others had achieved ranks and did not want to sacrifice their privileges for a return to civilian life. My field research indicated that the older child soldiers got and the longer they remained with the RUF, the less likely they were to exit the group. Hence, most of these children stayed with the RUF until the Sierra Leonean conflict ended.

### **Socialization Processes within the Revolutionary United Front**

The Sierra Leonean conflict cannot be described as an ethnic one: neither ethnicity nor religion played a role in the war. Its roots were far more complex, resulting in young fighting old, countryside fighting towns, and the interior feeling that Freetown was exploiting them. The most common reasons to fight were economic aspects (Kandeh, 2002, Reno, 2000), youth dissatisfaction (Abdullah and Muana, 1998, Richards 1996), cultural and historical conditionalities (Denov, 2010), the urban–elite bias and the unrest of marginalized farmers (Peters, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the RUF originated as a student movement. Its core consisted of relatively privileged students who increased their forces by recruiting children and youth from Sierra Leone’s poorest areas (Rosen, 2005). Many child soldiers were recruited by

force, yet it was not uncommon that they joined the RUF willingly. Reasons were marginalization, boredom, economic reasons or revenge. Many youth were discontent with the fact that local rulers or big men had monopolized employment and resources. Protection was a main factor: many children felt it was better to be armed and fight, compared to be unarmed and subject to violence. Others experienced a sense of freedom once they had joined the RUF: societal rules no longer had to be taken into account and they finally experienced a sense of power and agency. However, one should keep in mind that the motivation to fight was often the result of myriad factors and different for each child, a sole common denominator cannot be pointed at.

Once children had been recruited, the RUF was left with the difficult task to make these children loyal to the group, even though many of them had been coerced to join the movement. As Denov rightly explains: “Newly abducted children were clearly terrified, full of despair and profoundly disoriented. Moreover, they were highly uncommitted to the RUF as a whole. For the overall ‘success’ of the movement, the RUF leaders needed to ensure that children gradually internalized and adopted the values, norms and practices of the militarized world that was forced upon them” (2010:98). In order to shed light on this challenge, this section will show how socialization enabled the RUF to motivate and control child soldiers, and made them part of the group. It will address the different stages of socialization processes used within the RUF. Field research indicated that, although rewards played a minor role, initiation, violence and fear were main methods of control exercised to motivate newly recruited RUF child soldiers. Therefore, the first part of this section will mainly focus on the roles initiation rituals, training and extreme violence played in the creation of allegiance among new recruits, and provide a thorough analysis of how these contributed to motivation among RUF child soldiers. Hereafter, to establish a broad understanding, a detailed analysis of organizational socialization within the RUF will be provided.

### *Formal and Informal Socialization*

When analyzing the existence and characteristics of the RUF, it becomes apparent that the rebels effectively transformed children into soldiers. How did the RUF, which relied largely on forced recruitment, accomplish this? Richards: “If we want to understand the behavior of RUF abductees we shall have to look at the way their social worlds were pulled apart by social exclusion and capture, and put together again through initiation and subsequent control” (2005:125). This section aims to do this. Field research indicated that the RUF indeed first pulled the worlds of their child recruits apart by ensuring alienation and loss. Then, the confused child would be integrated into the group and provided with an illusion of control through weapons.



This section will provide a detailed analysis of the myriad aspects of this process by focusing on socialization. As Wood argues: “Whether recruits of armed groups are volunteers or have been coerced, they have to be socialized in the use of violence for group, not private, purposes, if group leaders are to control the violence deployed by their combatants, typically through the building of strongly hierarchical organizations. Training and socialization to the armed group take place both formally, through the immersion experience of “boot camp,” and informally, through initiation rituals and hazing. The powerful experiences of endless drilling, dehumanization through abuse at the hands of the drill sergeant, and degradation followed by “rebirth” as group members through initiation rituals typically melt individual recruits into a cohesive unit in which loyalties to one another are felt to be stronger than previous loyalties, such as those to family” (2008:546).

The RUF certainly used this kind of military socialization to make child soldiers part of the group and hereby managed to establish a cohesive organization. Both formal and informal socialization played important roles in the transformations children underwent while they were part of the rebel group. These processes started immediately after a child had been recruited. Formal socialization was achieved through several types of training, as pointed out by Denov: “To facilitate children’s pathways into violence and armed conflict, the RUF leadership began children’s initiation into the dictates of the RUF using physical, technical and ideological training” (Denov, 2010:98).

That training was a truly important characteristic of the RUF was indicated by field research. All of my informants stated they had received training when they joined the RUF. All had had ideological training, and the majority had been given military training. However, their accounts suggested that the extent of training child soldiers received varied. Some children only had crash courses in handling AK-47s. This was often the case when the RUF was involved in heavy fighting. Other children were provided with thorough and lengthy training routines that could last up to several weeks or months. The RUF seemed to train both boy and girl soldiers. As indicated by an informant (11F8): “All the girls who stayed over a year were trained. We all knew how to fire, and many of us were even better fighters than the boys.”

Most of my informants stated they initially found it difficult to participate in military training, they were scared of holding a weapon and were not used to the violence they witnessed. Some of them said, that in order to erase their fear, their commander or the ‘doctor’ would inject them with drugs. This would help them to complete the training program, as they were no longer fully aware of their actions. Their accounts revealed that new recruits used drugs and alcohol often; it was said that their intoxication would make them better fighters and the commanders used this fact strategically. It made the initiation of children into the world of the rebels

easier, as indicated by one of my informants (10M4): “When they took us, we were all scared. And then we had to learn to fight. The training was not good for many children, we were fearing the weapons. But then the commander injected us with some medicine and it was better. It freed our mind, we felt strong and ready to fight.”

In addition to military training, the rebels taught child soldiers about the ideological cause the RUF was fighting for. The children were told about the RUF’s goals of stopping the marginalization of the population and establishing democracy. One of my informants (14M7) recalled: “When we were captured they took us to the base where we got ideological education and training. We listened to Papi Sankoh’s speeches about the government. The government had maltreated us for too many years, marginalized Salone’s youth, and caused poverty with their corruption and oppression of the population. Papi Sankoh was right that men, women and children had to stand up and fight for our future and the equal distribution of Sierra Leone’s resources.” Besides Sankoh’s speeches, my informants state they were given lectures by the commanders, had ideological discussions and were singing songs about the RUF cause during morning parades. Several informants indicated that this kind of training motivated them to fight, often because they came from extremely poor families. Even forcibly recruited children were affected by the ideological training. As one informant (13M6) explained: “I was abducted but when I learned all these things, I wanted to fight. I felt I had an important role, to save my country.”

In addition to training, informal socialization was an essential aspect of becoming RUF. Secret societies are a significant part of Sierra Leonean culture. Initiation practices are an important aspect of these societies by marking the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. According to Mende tradition, one of the main ethnic groups in Sierra Leone that was well represented within the RUF, boys are initiated at puberty to the male secret association Poro. Their initiation would signify their transition into manhood and warrior status, as it allowed for “rebirth into a world of adult responsibility” (Richards, 1996:81). Even though the boys would still be in their (early) teenage years, the Mende looked at them “as young adults with the rights and duties of adulthood” (Rosen, 2005:64). Details of such initiation rites are not to be revealed to outsiders, hence the name “secret societies.” However, research has indicated that during the Poro initiation process, boys would learn about the expectations of manhood, their relationship to the community and the moral conduct of war. Sande, a similar secret society, was concerned with the initiation of girls and teaches them about marriage, medicine, child rearing and midwifery (Denov, 2010).

“The rigors of initiation are said to symbolically break the family tie, create bonds among peers, as well as the life-long respect for the expertise of elders, and commitments beyond the web of kinship” (Denov, 2010:58). This indicates that these

societies are of fundamental importance in Sierra Leonean culture, as they signify the start of a child's transformation into an adult. Since the RUF had to transform their child recruits into soldiers, it may not come as a surprise that such initiation traditions were also used within the RUF. Rosen explains: "RUF recruits were often sworn to secrecy and took oaths of loyalty, the violation of which was said to result in the magical death of the violator." And "a report of the European Commission claims that the RUF's use of the Poro was a way of manipulating the cultural 'infrastructure' of rural life in Sierra Leone. Arguing that the Poro is the "main idiom of transition from childhood to adulthood in forest society" the report interprets the use of the Poro by the RUF as a way of abusing traditional sacred rite to convert children to a radically new way of life" (2005:72).

Field research indicated that the RUF's use of initiation rites was indeed an efficient means to encourage the transformation of children into soldiers. It severed the ties to their families and communities, symbolized the start of a new life as a rebel, and prepared them for becoming full members to the rebel group. An informant (12M7): "as for the children, the ceremonies were very important because after that we were part of the group now. Some children tried to resist but we had no choice, we were now RUF, and the bush was home. There was no point going back to the village." This illustrates the importance of both formal and informal socialization within the RUF as to create a cohesive group by engaging child soldiers.

### *Experiencing Violence*

Like many other African rebel groups, the RUF became famous for its brutality. The group is well known for its absurd violence, committed by 'wicked' child soldiers and 'evil' women. The question rises how children became actively involved with this group. Child soldiers continuously seemed to suffer from the violent circumstances surrounding the RUF, yet innumerable children stayed with the group for several years. Although it may sound awry, this section will explain how it was the actual experience of extreme violence that encouraged children to become part of the RUF. The use of violence was a significant part of the socialization mechanisms used by the Sierra Leonean rebel. The RUF was not unique from this perspective, as Wood explains it is common for rebel groups to use violence in order to engage their recruits: "Once deployed, combatants experience (to widely varying degrees) violence as perpetrators, as witnesses, and often as victims...Among the psychological mechanisms possibly at work in these processes of socialization to group membership and the wielding of violence are compliance, role adoption, internalization of group norms, cognitive dissonance reduction, habituation to violence, diffusion of responsibility onto the group, deindividuation, and dehumanization of the victimized group" (2008:546).

Field research indicated that, amongst child soldiers within the RUF, the experience of violence created allegiance and loyalty. Over time, it led to changed behavior and developed new identities. The exposure to extreme violence already started during the recruitment of RUF child soldiers. As one of my informants (11M5) stated: “I was working in the field one day with my parents. The RUF came and wanted to take me away. My parents begged them to let me go, but the rebels killed them instead. Then they gave me the option: kill or come. So I went.” When recruiting children, it was not unheard that the RUF forced them to kill family or village members in the presence of the entire village, rupturing their bonds with society. Moreover, boys and men were sometimes forced to rape their mothers and daughters. Refusing was no option if these boys wanted to survive, as the rebels threatened to kill them if they would not rape. As another informant (10F4) recalled: “When the rebels came to town, they grabbed me and other children. They told us to kill some people. My uncle and neighbor were with the people, so I did not want to hurt them. But the rebels said the other children would kill me too if I didn’t cooperate, so I did it and survived.” In some cases, children were given drugs during their recruitment in order to numb their feelings and make them more cooperative. This is illustrated by the account of another informant (8M8): “First they killed my parents. I had to watch and dance, I could not cry because then the rebels would kill me too. They gave me drugs and then I don’t know what happened. When I woke up all my family was dead. The rebels told me I was a good soldier now, because I had washed them all.” RUF rebels often refer to ‘Washing’ when they speak about killing.

Using violence against their own community members was purposely ordered by commanders, as this would sever the child’s family ties and discourage potential attempts to escape and return home. Once newly recruited child soldiers were taken away from their homes and brought to the RUF base, the violence would continue. My informants stated they witnessed and suffered extreme forms of violence on a daily basis, and they were often ordered to carry out violent acts. Most said that they eventually became used to it, as the violence would never stop. And so they started engaging in violence too, often motivated by fear. As one former girl soldier (14F8) explains: “I was frightened and so I did what I was told. After some time I did not see the people anymore, I just chopped when they told me.” That RUF child soldiers became used to violence is also suggested by the following accounts: “After some time I became used to the fighting and sounds of war. Now to me, firing the gun sounds like music” (10M7), and, “When we captured the enemy we tortured them and then killed them. Sometimes we chopped them into parts and leave them on the road. It would show the people we were around and controlling the area, it was our territory” (12M9).

That many child soldiers, even those who had been forcibly recruited, over time became actively involved in extreme violence became apparent during interviews. One well-known example of RUF atrocities is their practice of attacking pregnant women and eviscerating the fetuses they were carrying (Coulter, 2009). This practice was confirmed by my informants: they stated that the rebels would often argue over the sex of the baby and then cut the woman open so they could take out the fetus and find out whether it was a boy or a girl. One informant (14M6) explained: “Whenever we came across pregnant women we would capture them and become curious about the sex of the baby. We would cut her stomach and pull the baby out. The ones who guessed right would celebrate.” Another one (13F5) said: “I have seen the women split open to check on their baby’s sex. We would make bets if she was carrying a boy or girl. There were so many, sometimes I won, sometimes I didn’t.”

Sexual violence was also very common among the RUF. One of my informants (12F6) told me about her experience: “when the rebels attacked I tried to run but they captured me. They hacked off my mother’s arm and killed my father. I couldn’t cry because they said they would kill me. They looked like wild beasts and they were shouting. They killed many people that day, also babies. They just took them from their mothers, tossed them high into the air. And then you would hear the sound when the baby hit the ground, it was finished. After a while they started beating me too and then took their turns. They undressed me and *virginated* (de-flowered) me, one by one they used me. When they were finished I was told to get up and they took me to the base. I was in so much pain but I had to walk, they kept saying they would kill me. When we came to the base I was given to a commander, I was now his wife. From that day, I was raped almost every day.” During interviews, the term “virginating” was commonly referred to by girls to explain they lost their virginity.

According to several informants, the social pressure to use sexual violence was so high that young boys often tried to imitate older rebels by raping women. These boys could be as young as 9 years old. Male rebels would generally discuss their skills and proudly announce how many women they had raped during attacks. These findings are also noted by Cohen (2007), who emphasizes that rape was a public event and that any rebels who refused to participate were ridiculed. However, rape was not committed solely by male RUF rebels: some girl soldiers played an active role in raping other women. As one of my female informants (11F9) explained: “Sometimes we would assist when other women were raped, I held them down so they could not fight back when the boys took turn. I have seen RUF girls put the AK47 in the woman’s vagina and other times the girls forced some boy recruits to rape their sisters.” These findings are confirmed by Mansaray’s research (2000), stating that female fighters committed or assisted during approximately 12 percent of rape cases.

Asher (2004) even found that in almost one third of reported rape cases female fighters were implicated as perpetrators.

These examples show the extreme extents to which the RUF utilized violence. Initially child soldiers would mostly suffer from these practices, but field research indicated that over time some of these children became perpetrators themselves. My informants also said that the described practices of formal and informal socialization led to the creation of allegiance to the RUF. They changed their behavior in order to be considered a member of the group. Part of the reasons behind their often violent behavior is summarized by Coulter: “Fear was definitely a motivator of violence, especially violence perpetrated by those rebels who themselves had been abducted by violent means. Many abducted men and women had witnessed the brutal assassination of their own families, and some had been forced to participate in them. Life with the rebels after such events consisted of few, but nonetheless complex, options: adapt, die, or try to escape” (2009:123). Most child soldiers adapted to survive; thus, one can conclude that violence wielded, suffered and observed was an integral part of child soldier socialization within the RUF; it effectively contributed to the transformation of children into soldiers and the creation of allegiance.

This argument is bolstered by Cohen’s work on sexual violence (2007). She argues that socialization and sexual violence within military units are inextricably linked, stating that “rape as a means of socializing new membership is best understood as an interactive process in which members in an armed faction establish their position in the group. Rape bonds together people in social groups, and plays an especially important role in groups with low cohesion, in which the members know very little information about each other.” This certainly was the case within the RUF, where combatants “typically knew nobody in their factions” (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2004) and approximately 85% of RUF rebels was recruited to the group by strangers (Cohen, 2007). This indicates that rape has been an essential aspect of the socialization process within the group.

Cohen explains that most RUF rebels initially started using rape as a means that would ease their entry into a group that was characterized by an “immense pressure to participate in sexual violence—creating a self-reinforcing circle of sexual violence” (2007:18). However, the social pressure to keep engaging in sexual violence was high, particularly encouraging those at the bottom level of the group to organize rape in order for them to be recognized as real rebels. “Rape, with its attendant dangers to the individual’s health, was an especially useful signaling device, because it encompassed both a form of torture and a grave personal risk. Ex-combatants reported that those who participated in rape in Sierra Leone were seen to be more courageous, valiant and brave than their peers ... Those who committed rape were respected by their peers as “big men”—essentially, strong and virile warriors with

tough attitudes” (Cohen, 2007:8). This shows that sexual violence was not just a tool of military strategy: it was an essential aspect of socialization within the RUF. It contributed to the organization of the group structure and because it was “the costliest form of civilian torture perpetrated by the combatants, it was arguably the best signaling device available to group members” (Cohen, 2007:9).

### **Organizational Socialization within the Revolutionary United Front**

Whereas the previous section elaborated upon formal and informal socialization, this section will deepen the analysis by focusing on organizational socialization. Organizational socialization consists of six different tactics and refers to “the process by which one is taught and learns “the ropes” of a particular organizational role. In its most general sense, organizational socialization is then the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen, 1977:3). Moreover, “organizational socialization refers to the fashion in which an individual is taught and learns what behaviors and perspectives are customary and desirable within the work setting as well as what ones are not” (Van Maanen, 1977:4). Working from this definition, the following sections will illuminate the presence of the six organizational socialization tactics within the RUF, to create a broader understanding of the group’s use of child soldiers.

#### *Collective Socialization*

Putting new recruits through experiences as a group before they can become accepted members, collective socialization generally takes place when the organization aims to achieve a collective identity, loyalty to the group and solidarity. Examples of this socialization tactic are military boot camp or training (Van Maanen, 1977). When analyzing the RUF as an organization, it becomes apparent that the training provided to their new child recruits was an attempt of collective socialization. As thoroughly explained in the previous section on formal socialization, the RUF made extensive use of military and ideological training. Child recruits were always trained in groups and they went through the same experiences on the way to becoming a rebel. During these training periods, child soldiers were given new names. An informant (14M5) stated: “All the children were getting new names to make us feel good and confident. Sometimes it was because of the personality, hot temper or something that happened. But everybody got the jungle name so we were becoming real members of the RUF.” This account shows how the collective renaming of child recruits contributed to the transformation of children into soldiers.

In addition to training, the RUF organized meetings that had to be attended by all the rebels. These meetings can also be perceived as collective socialization as they

aimed to create a collective sense of identity, solidarity and loyalty. As indicated by one of my informants (15F4): “We spent most of the time with our family group, but in the morning we grouped together with all the people on the base. We would all join the morning parade and pray together. The commanders would give us tasks for the day at that point and they preached about the movement. This way we found out about our plans and they encouraged us to be a group. Everybody was there and had to listen carefully.”

As Van Maanen (1977) indicates, collective socialization brings along certain risks. As participants go through the experience together, this may create a potential foundation for collective deviation and resistance among recruits. As participants may face similar problems during training, they may look for solutions as a group. Hence the chance of collective rebellion may originate. The RUF tackled this possibility by strongly discouraging their recruits to deviate. The rebels spread fear by threatening recruits with execution and by carrying out punishments in public. This significantly limited the chances of escaping the movement, as explained by one of my informants (8F8): “If you did not manage to escape straight away, the rebels would keep you with them for years. Your only option to escape would be death or when they left you behind during combat. If you tried to run or misbehaved, they would kill you and show everybody. There was no other way but follow the orders.” If an RUF rebel did deviate, the morning parade was often used to carry out punishments so that all RUF members in the base would witness what happened to disobedient rebels. Depending on their violations they were beaten or killed in front of the entire group, which discouraged the other rebels to resist against their leaders.

### *Formal Socialization*

During formal socialization, new recruits are generally segregated from the other group members while going through a set of experiences that is designed to ensure they learn the correct behavior and values associated with life as a rebel. During this intensive period, new recruits’ commitment and respect of key values to the rebel group are closely monitored (Van Maanen, 1977). Examples of formal socialization can be traced back in the dynamics of the RUF. Interviews suggested that this type of socialization was particularly used to teach children their new role and make them feel and think like members, while they were closely supervised by commanders who kept track of their developments.

How newly recruited children were segregated from other RUF rebels became apparent during interviews. One of my informants (13M3) said: “When the rebels attacked my village, they took many children. I was taken with my friends and when we came to the base, we were locked up in separate places. They kept boys and girls in different areas, and we stayed separately from the other rebels when we were getting



our education. Some rebels were assigned to guard us so we would not escape. Those people were very angry. The commander said we had to stay in that place until we were ready to become real members.” A female informant (14F3) stated: “I was taken with many other children. When we came close to the base, we were divided in groups. Then I was kept in one space with 22 new girls. We were all young, maybe around 12 or 14. When we just arrived the rebels came to check on us. They first picked the pretty girls and used them one by one, just in the room. Some said you will be my bush wife. We could not refuse when they wanted to sex us, they would kill us. We stayed in that place until we had the understanding of the ideology. The men said we were ready to be wives and then we were moved inside the base.”

### *Random Socialization*

Interviews with former RUF commanders and child soldiers indicated that the third tactic of organizational socialization also took place within the group. This tactic, referred to as random socialization, “occurs when the sequence of steps leading to the target role is unknown, ambiguous, or continually changing” (Van Maanen, 1977:51). This dynamic can be found within the RUF as the rebels generally did not determine a necessary order or specific sequence of actions that had to be accomplished to reach a particular target. For instance, obtaining a rank within the RUF had mainly to do with a child’s performance and his or her relation with the commander. Child A and B could have similar performances, but whether they would be promoted often depended on the relationship with their superiors as well as the commander’s character. Still, there was never a guaranteed promotion; the process was rather vague and ambiguous. Ranks were not organized according to age or the period of serving, they were mostly given to rebels who proved they could fight and demonstrated violent behavior. According to my informants, ‘wickedness’ was an important quality for rebels who wanted to achieve a rank and brutality was hence encouraged. This implied that young boy and girl soldiers could become commanders within the RUF, whereas this would have been unheard of in traditional society.

However arbitrary their promotional system may have been, the RUF had a strong hierarchy in place. According to Rosen this was a rather fluid hierarchy: “Those who volunteered to join had higher status than abductees, who often became virtual slaves. Men and boys had much more power than women and girls, although women and girls attached to higher-ranking officers could sometimes wield considerable power and influence. Most women and girls were in subordinate or slave-like roles” (2005:83). Although Rosen indicates the general divisions within the RUF hierarchy, random socialization through arbitrary promotions implied that there were many exceptions made to these patterns.

### *Variable Socialization*

As a fourth tactic of organizational socialization, variable socialization played a prominent role within the RUF. Variable socialization processes create maximum anxiety among new recruits, as it keeps them in the dark regarding the passing of boundary passages. The anxiety resulting from not knowing what to expect motivates new recruits to obey and drives them towards conformity, making them susceptible to the demands of their leaders (Van Maanen, 1977). Based on interviews with former RUF members, the rebels indeed seemed to ensure maximum anxiety among its child recruits by exposing them to an extremely volatile environment. Constant violence kept the children alert and aware of their behavior. My informants stated that they had to calculate every move they made as the rebel's normalized use of violence made them realize situations could turn explosive within a split second. This resulted in a deep fear to be executed and the impression that they could not afford to relax.

Moreover, the existence of the group itself can be seen as rather variable, as the rebels were almost continuously on the run from enemy forces and had to establish new bases frequently. Child recruits were moved away from their home areas; the unfamiliarity of the new territory made the rebel group their only sense of security, discouraging them from escape. Interviews revealed that this situation added to the constant fear experienced by all of my informants. One of them (15M8) explained the volatile situation: "For me, fighting was not the worst. Even to survive in the base was complicated, I was alert for my life all the time. I had to satisfy the wishes of my commander, avoid contact about the past and even more things. I knew that because those were the rules. But still, even if I did everything my commander ordered me, he could still become hot tempered and punish me for no real reason. I was scared the big rebels would kill me, I was scared all the time. I never knew when I was ok and when I could feel safe, or when they would get angry and violent. Honest, I realize I was living in fear all the time and could never rest. My heart kept beating so fast and loud. It never stopped until the war ended." Still, there was no other option but to remain with the group. Successful escapes were very seldom and the unknown areas led to profound confusion among child soldiers. Even though the situation within the RUF was volatile, most of my informants claimed there was no alternative; they had to obey the commanders in order to stand a chance to survive.

### *Serial Socialization*

The fifth tactic of organizational socialization is defined as serial socialization. During this process, well-integrated members groom new recruits who will take on similar roles within the group, functioning as their role models (Van Maanen, 1977). Using this definition when analyzing the dynamics within the RUF, it seemed that serial socialization indeed took place. Interviews suggested that senior RUF rebels would

serve as role models to new recruits: child soldiers learned how to be a rebel from their superiors as they provided them with training and monitored their developments. The children typically remained under close supervision until the senior rebels decided they had adopted the group's behavior and identity, and hence acted accordingly. This is in line with Van Maanen's further specified description of the process: "Serial socialization is most likely to be associated with inclusionary boundary passages. This association results because to become a central member of any organizational segment normally requires that others consider one to be affable, trustworthy, and, of course, central as well. This is unlikely to occur unless these others perceive the newcomer to be, in most respects, similar to themselves. Recruits must at least seem to be taking those with whom they work seriously or risk being labeled deviant in the situation and hence not allowed across inclusionary boundaries" (1977:62).

Within the RUF serial socialization was taken rather seriously. As Coulter notes: "Every act and spoken word was measured in a dangerous balance between life and death" (2009:120). This was also experienced by most of my informants. I quote one (16F7): "The commanders tested us, we could never know their minds, they would ask us questions and if you gave the wrong answer, it was finished for you. The commanders did not trust the new ones, they first had to prove themselves." That this was indeed the case is illustrated by the account of a former commander (16M10): "When you are recruited we do not know your mindset, so you could not go to the frontline straight away. We were testing them, we kept them somewhere without arms and ammunitions. When they tried to escape we would catch them and set the example." Another informant (12M8) told about his testing experience: "So one day they decided to test me. They took me to my village and killed some of my people. I knew I could not make a sound and had to watch and celebrate. If I didn't, I would have joined my family and be chopped. But I completed the assignment and then they accepted me as a real rebel and I got my rank."

Still, even though child soldiers successfully passed their 'tests', a certain degree of mistrust was always present among the RUF forces. According to one informant (14F6): "Sometimes we stayed behind in the base when they went out to fight or loot. But the commander never left us alone: he always told some men to stay behind and watch us. This was both for protection but also because we could not run away." The rebels continuously had to prove themselves, even commanders had to invest to ensure that the RUF top was convinced of their loyalty and impressed by their performance. One of my informants (13M5) addressed which implications this had for the hierarchy within the RUF: "The hierarchy worked like this: our group was led by my commander, and he had to report to his commander and he had to report to Maskita or Superman (senior commanders). This way they could control all the

rebels, they had divided the responsibilities. If one of them was not successful in controlling, he was wiped out and replaced.” These accounts suggest that serial socialization played a significant part in the creation of allegiance among child soldiers within the RUF.

### *Divestiture Socialization*

The sixth tactic of organizational socialization may be most extreme, as it aims to destruct the self-image of new recruits by stripping them of various personal characteristics, and rebuilds it based upon a new set of assumptions. This is often the result of the new recruit realizing he or she is capable of doing things they would not have deemed possible (Van Maanen, 1977). Within the RUF, this type of socialization is for instance used during the initiation rituals performed on child soldiers. As explained earlier in this chapter, the initiation ceremonies sever family ties and prepare children for a new life as a rebel. Field research indicated that the importance of such ceremonies in Sierra Leone implied that the ceremonies within the RUF had consequences on the self-image of a child; he or she was likely to no longer consider him or herself as a child after the ceremony and the other rebels encouraged this. From that moment on the new self-image of child soldiers started to develop. The socialization processes within the group confronted the children with the fact that they were able to do things they would have never imagined. Killing, extreme violence and looting are obvious examples of this.

In addition to triggering the building of a new self-image, divestiture socialization also implies that “recruits are forced to abstain from certain types of behavior, must publicly degrade themselves and others, and must follow a rigid set of rules and regulations. Furthermore, measures are often taken to isolate recruits from former associates who presumably would continue to confirm the recruit’s old identity...Divestiture processes are most likely to be found (1) at the point of initial entry into an organization or occupation, and (2) prior to the crossing of major inclusionary boundaries where a recruit must pass some basic test of worthiness for membership in an organizational segment” (Van Maanen, 1977:66–67). Looking at the perpetrating acts child soldiers were forced to commit on their family and village members during their recruitment or later tests, the RUF did make use of this type of socialization. These acts were not only degrading, but also isolating, as they burned the bridges to the communities. In addition, once part of the RUF, child soldiers were forced to show different behavior and were confronted with a rigid set of rules, as will be further analyzed in the next section of this chapter.

Divestiture processes have the power to remold new recruits, and it is therefore an efficient socialization tactic for the group to control the person’s values. It is also one of the most important processes that contribute to the survival of the

group as such: “for, once a person has successfully completed a difficult divestiture process and has constructed something of a new identity based on the role to which the divestiture process was directed, there are strong forces toward the maintenance of the new identity” (Van Maanen, 1977:67). This explains why the RUF used divestiture socialization; it made child soldiers take on new identities and feel allegiance to the group. To illustrate this, Bøås explains how young men underwent a personal transformation once they had picked up a gun: “Importantly, the gun represents not simply another form of survival but also the possibility of creating new meanings of self. As noted at the outset, war does more than disrupt existing social systems; it also creates new social orders. In this process, the fighters become active agents in the transformation of their social systems and their selves. They are no longer merely passive agents of a brutal system, but through the gun they gain agency in their daily lives. As they gain agency, others pay the price as victims of the violence used to establish this agency” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:46).

This exemplifies how children transform into soldiers within rebel groups, adopting new identities. What also contributed to their re-identification was the use of new names. This made it easier for child soldiers to become a devoted member of the group as it further disabled the identification with their past. Within the RUF most child soldiers were given a *nome de guerre*, whereas some picked one. Some examples were provided by my informants: Commander Blood, Superman, General Cut Hands, No Laughing, Pay Yourself, Killer Baby, Chop Chop, Die Naked, Commander Bloodshed, Captain Slit Throat, Pepper, Nasty Killer, Mandela, Burn Baby, No Mercy, Nothing Spoilt, Slice Through You, Junior Sankoh Trouble, Consider and Super Washer. Most of these names leave little to the imagination as to which identities and roles these children had taken on.

The six different processes of socialization explained in this section are linked to one another and the impacts on new recruits are a cumulative result of this mix, mostly reinforcing one another (Van Maanen, 1977). Looking at the RUF, it seems as if each tactic of organizational socialization was deliberately used to effectively control the rebels. The tactics enhanced and reinforced each other in this case, leading to the creation of allegiance, obedience and loyalty among child soldiers and allowing the RUF to become a cohesive rebel group.

### **RUF Socialization: A Threefold Analytical Challenge**

This section will provide a detailed analysis of the socialization processes used by the RUF. In order to achieve this, Checkel’s (2005) theory on the threefold analytical challenge regarding socialization will be applied to the Sierra Leonean rebel group. Hence, this section will “(1) establish the presence of socialization mechanisms and

the conditions of their operation; (2) assess whether internalization (Type I or II) actually occurred; and (3) ask whether socialized actors behave differently than either they did before they were socialized, or than non-socialized actors do” (Checkel, 2005:816). The threefold analysis aims to provide a clear overview of the effects and consequences of socialization within the RUF. It will reveal whether a shift occurs away from a logic of consequences and toward a logic of appropriateness.

### *Socialization Mechanisms Present within the LRA and the Conditions of Their Operation*

Which socialization mechanisms were present and what were the conditions of their operation within the RUF? This question will be addressed in this section. Previous sections have shown that socialization was a highly efficient tool to engage child soldiers with the RUF. The rebel group used the fact that children are generally considered to be vulnerable, naïve and susceptible to outside influences to establish a cohesive organization. While numerous child soldiers grew up within the RUF, socialization taught them to become part of the group and even created a sense of belonging amongst them. A variety of socialization mechanisms were used to achieve this, hence this section is designed to shed light upon these. This will be done according to Grusec and Hastings definition of socialization: “socialization refers to processes whereby naïve individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations” (2007:13). Combined with Checkel’s (2005) theory, this definition will be applied to the RUF in order to identify which mechanisms were present within the rebel group and under which conditions they operated. Skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations that were taught to child soldiers within the RUF will be analyzed and the methods used to achieve this will be revealed.

### *Skills*

As emphasized by Grusec and Hastings (2007), socialization processes transmit culture from each generation to the next. An important aspect of this transmittance is the provision of training for specific roles in specific occupations. The RUF handled this by providing ideological training to all its recruits as this would transfer their values and contribute to the establishment of a common identity. Moreover, recruits were grouped and trained for a variety of tasks. Some children were selected to learn

combat skills during intensive military training. Here they learned skills related to military strategy, tactics and guerrilla warfare. However, not all children were taken along during battles. Some were used to control the diamond mines and their commanders taught them skills related to supervision and security. Other children had responsibilities on the base and were expected to possess a range of supportive skills; they were used for cooking, fetching water and firewood, washing, cleaning and guarding. Their training was often informal as they learned skills from working with or for senior rebels. That child soldiers generally learned a variety of skills while they were part of the RUF was indicated by the following account: "When the rebels attacked my village they took me with them. I was brought to the base camp where they trained me to operate the gun so I could go to the battlefield. When I was not fighting I had to do domestic tasks and the women showed me. When we attacked villages I had to chop hands many times. My commander first showed me how to do it, and then me and other children were told to pick the people, and give them short sleeve or long sleeve. Most of us were doing many different things" (11M4).

In order to sustain the movement, the RUF recruited numerous girls. Girls were often selected for their productive labor and had usually been taught useful skills by their families already. They carried out everyday life tasks if there were no villagers to exploit and were valued highly for their contribution to the movement. Their skills often proved essential for the survival of the rebels. These were not their only skills. As this informant (11F10) explains, girls were often used for spying too: "I was a spy. When we needed new things and wanted to attack, I was sent to the town first. There I would look around, see how it works and talk to people. I was just a little girl, so nobody suspected me. When I was getting older, I still went to town and talked to the soldiers. Sometimes I loved them, I let them use me, so I would get more information from them. Then when my job was finished, I moved back to the base and told my commander everything I knew. He used to be proud of me, and with my information he started the attack."

The youngest children often became part of the Small Boys Units (SBU) or Small Girls Units (SGU). These children were trained in combat skills and sent ahead at the frontline, or used as bodyguards. The SBU/SGU were feared and had a terrible reputation, they were often regarded as exceptionally cruel. Most of these children were severely traumatized as many of them had seen their families being killed. Their commanders tapped into this by providing them with skills and drugs, which unleashed a seemingly irreversible anger and urge to kill while all their fears had been erased. An informant (8F10) said: "The rebels drugged me and I started killing. I killed many. I don't know how many people I killed, I was shooting and shooting and shooting until nobody moved. I was singing. My mother is dead, my father is dead, I have no one, now I will kill you."

### *Behavioral patterns*

Another significant aspect of socialization within the RUF, was teaching new recruits appropriate behavioral patterns. As indicated by Weinstein (2007), in order to sustain the group, it needs to be ensured that rebel group members follow orders and that internal discipline is maintained. Disciplined behavior by group members is enabled by structures of internal control, and new recruits are generally taught an extensive set of rules. This was also the case for child soldiers within the RUF. That these laws were to be taken seriously is indicated by the account of this informant (14M5): “We knew we had to obey the laws, even when we drank or took drugs they had printed it into our minds.” The following list of RUF rules are examples that were provided during interviews:

- It was forbidden to kill without permission
- It was forbidden to fight or quarrel with fellow rebels
- If a rebel killed anyone on the base, this would be punished by death
- Children should not be beaten
- Rebels were not supposed to socialize and friendships were discouraged
- Bush wives were not allowed to have sex with other men
- Bush wives had to accept co-wives and a polygamous marriage
- If a rebel fell in love with someone else’s wife or husband, this person would be punished by death
- Everybody had to speak Krio in order to prevent secret talking in local languages
- It was forbidden to kill and loot from civilians when a cooperation had been established between the rebels and the villagers
- It was forbidden to discuss the past and talk about life as a civilian
- Rebels had to discuss the RUF, goals, tactics and strategies
- Passwords had to be used when rebels moved through areas
- People who could not answer the password are enemies and should be interrogated and killed
- Stealing from commanders or other rebels was strictly forbidden
- When civilians were captured, they must be interrogated
- Any looted goods had to be reported and provided to the commander
- Any stolen money had had to be provided to the commanders
- All the RUF members had to take part in ideological training
- If rebels had sex they were expected to wash themselves so they would not become ‘ill’
- Rebels were not allowed to shoot at random, only on command
- Rebels had to surrender whatever possessions they had and everything had to



be shared with the RUF

- Missions had to be completed under any circumstances
- Weapons should never be left behind
- Any vehicle should be taken to the base, except military vehicles; those must be destroyed.

### *Values*

The RUF installed specific values among their members. The group changed many important aspects of traditional Sierra Leonean society: war names were used, the hierarchy of age was reversed, women and children suddenly became powerful while elderly men were disrespected, civilian identities were concealed in order to achieve power, backgrounds were denied, and local languages were forbidden. RUF rebels lived in constant fear as violence could flare up any moment, projected on anyone. Although everyday life in the base camp consisted of the preparation of food, taking care of children and other domestic duties, the fear of death was present at all times. It only took being in the wrong place at the wrong time, saying the wrong thing or looking at someone in the wrong way to be killed. Whether deliberately or not, the culture of fear was used to keep the rebels together. Child soldiers seemed to do everything they could to adapt to the values of the RUF in order to survive. As a result they were always on guard, did not show their feelings or intent and eventually adopted the identity of an RUF rebel.

As described before, spiritual values were of great significance. Initiation rituals had far-reaching effects on child soldiers and besides that they would often wear necklaces and charms filled with herbs in order to protect themselves from bullets during combat. Spiritual rituals were often used in the transformation of members and as a preparation for combat, as described by this informant (12M9): “To make you a member they killed animals, get special leaves from the bush. They put the blood of the animal on the leaf and rub it on and around our neck. It was protection against our enemies. So when you see them, you are protected.” Interviews revealed that the RUF strongly believed in the powers of traditional African medicine and witchcraft (juju) played an important role in the movement. In addition to respecting those values, respect for superiors in the RUF hierarchy was of key importance to survive. New child recruits were at the bottom of the hierarchy and had to prove themselves in order to climb the ranks.

### *Motivations*

Former RUF child soldiers expressed a variety of motivations to remain with the movement. It emerged that many forcibly recruited children even developed motivations to stay with the group. The motivations of my informants were often a

combination of two or more factors. These ranged from promotions, celebrations, friendships, women, dependency due to family separation, promises, survival, control, prestige, anger, fear, poverty and access to resources. Some of my informants willingly joined the rebels to fight for their country. Their motivations for joining were solely political and they did not feel like victims of the rebels. As one girl said (17F8): “I chose to pick up my weapon and fight for our freedom. It was not because I was raped or abducted, it was because I want to liberate my country. I wanted to fight for the women, we also have rights, at least we should get them.” Being from marginal backgrounds, many RUF child recruits had had no perspectives in their home communities and dreamt of different lives. However, there were few possibilities for progress as many areas were suffering from negligence by the government. For some, this became a motivation to join the RUF, as they believed they would escape poverty and achieve a better future.

Other children stayed with the RUF out of revenge. As one of my informants (9M3) said: “When I was abducted, I was with my mother and siblings. My mother and sisters were raped by too many boys on the way to the camp. When they cried and begged them to stop, they chopped them. After that I was very quiet, they continued raping my mother. Later on I found out that my brother also got killed. That changed everything. First I was just scared, but now I also wanted revenge. I lost everyone. I became very active and my mission was to kill as many people as possible, just because my siblings died for nothing. I became fearless then and could do anything.” This account shows that this boy was taking revenge for the killing of his siblings, yet did not target his violence at the initial perpetrators. The boy decided to redirect his anger, fear and pain on civilians, adding to the gruesome cycle of violence.

Another motivating factor to fight for the RUF were promises made by the rebels. The commanders frequently promised child soldiers to avenge against the Big Men who had marginalized them (Rosen, 2005). Some of my informants indeed indicated this as a motivation to stay with the group. This is an example (12M7): “I was motivated to stay with the group because of the ideology. We don’t know about politics, we were just juniors. They emphasized the politics so we took it as very important information and decided to take part in the movement. And the training also gave us courage, to participate. And also the weapon, it gave us courage to stay and power. The commander promised us that after the war we would be educated, the property of our parents would be restored, we could return to our homes. There were a lot of promises; it was so fertile that I wanted to continue with the movement. It gave us courage to carry out the movement. Although at the end of the day we did not make it.”

Others recalled no motivation at all, as they had been drugged during most of the conflict. Sometimes drugs became a motivating factor in itself, as child soldiers developed addictions while they were with the RUF, and the only way to access drugs was to stay with the group. Drugs turned many RUF child soldiers into tenacious fighters. My informants stated they were given marijuana, cocaine, crack, brown brown (heroin or a mix of cocaine and gunpowder) and amphetamines, often on a daily basis. The drugs, which were often taken with alcohol, “can induce recklessness and suspend normal inhibitions by impairing judgment and other cognitive functions” (Wessells, 2006). This partly explains the behavior of child soldiers within the RUF. My informants stated they became ‘wicked’ once they had taken drugs and they could do anything without showing hesitations. They became extremely violent, even against family, friends and elderly people. One of them (11M5) said: “You won’t feel anything until the drugs is finished working. The only thing you feel is like superman. The drugs made me feel brave, I could do anything. I did not recognize the people I was fighting anymore so I could even kill my own family and friends. Then later maybe you realize what happened, but to forget we just took more drugs. Marijuana was most common. It was everywhere, available for free and we took it every day.” Another one (8M8) stated: “The rebels injected us with drugs and gave us alcohol. Or the commander would cut my body and put drugs inside. Then they sent us, the small small pikin (children), to the frontline because we have no fear. We would just move, fire and kill everyone. Because of the drugs we were fearless, even when the enemy shot at us. We would not retreat, we could not die.”

Another motivating factor was the availability of weapons: it gave child soldiers a new outlook on life. Whereas they used to be rather powerless due to their marginal backgrounds and the fact they were at the bottom of their society’s hierarchy, having guns opened entirely new perspectives for them. Power, respect, personal gain and recognition were suddenly within reach. My informants stated that their guns created new realities that they could have never imagined. As explained by one informant (12M9): “This is my gun, it is my mother and my father. It gave me everything: power, women, respect and money.” Most of my informants expressed rather high levels of motivation for remaining with the RUF. They had become allegiant to the group, indicating that their socialization was very effective.

### *Means of teaching*

In order to achieve emotional maturity, as well as social skills and understanding among their child recruits, the RUF used several means of teaching. Fear was obviously an important aspect, as indicated by Denov: “The RUF was extremely adept at using propaganda and misinformation to instill widespread fear and panic, as well as project an image of control and supremacy” (Denov, 2010:63). They used this to

terrify the population, but also to control their own recruits. In addition to fear, punishment played an essential role in the lives of child soldiers within the RUF; it was continuously used to teach them what they could or could not do. The RUF used a variety of punishments. The most common examples were beatings and killing but imprisonment was also used, as explained by an informant (14F5): “They took immediate action when the commander knew you disobeyed the law. We had one place: the jorjor (prison), it is made for people who did not obey the law. They made a deep hole in the ground, they will beat you and then place you in there for some time and close it. It was so inconvenient for human beings, it was dark, too much respiration, no flowing of air, no freedom of movement, no food and sometimes rebels urinate on you. Everything was inconvenient, it was a bad punishment.”

Some of my informants spoke about ‘branding’ as punishment. One said (13F4): “after the RUF took us, we were trained in using the gun. After some time we were taken to combat. Some children were too scared to fight: they were not strong hearted yet. Then after fighting we moved back to the base and these children were labeled RUF. The commanders would cut their skin with razors or knives and write RUF. After, they put some substance inside so it becomes a scar and it will say RUF for the rest of their lives. That way, they could never leave the group, because everybody knew they were a rebel. They did it with many children—they cut RUF on their skin to punish them and to make them rebels.” Further interviews revealed that branding indeed prevented child soldiers from escaping, as their scars would reveal they “belonged” to the RUF. Any child who was believed to be planning an escape was called upon by the base commander who would subsequently brand the child using razor blades, knives or other sharp objects. The children were taught that anybody who would find them would kill them instantly because their scars read RUF. Even after the war, this had prevented some of my informants from returning to their home communities. They expressed fear of retribution, since the community could see they had been with the rebels.

RUF child soldiers were taught to act in compliance with the laws under any given circumstance. In addition, they were ordered not to show fear, pain or other “weak” emotions. This is shown by Coulter, who argues that “in the socialization of young women they are taught to endure pain, keep it hidden inside, and not to reveal any emotions, as is obvious, for example, in female initiation ceremonies and in childbirth” (2009:99). Boys were taught the same, as the rebels wanted to mature their child recruits. Field research indicated that lectures given by commanders were used to teach child soldiers what was expected of them regarding social skills and understandings. To reinforce this, public punishments as well as recognition were important means to teach the children. Children who accomplished extraordinary results were praised in public, in order to encourage other children to show similar

behavior. Simultaneously, punishments took place in public to discourage certain behavior. As one informant explains (12F7): “I was in command of 16 boys. I was 15 years old but they knew I was in charge. If one of them disobeyed I would punish straight away. Sometimes I beat them until they passed out, sometimes I would burn them or blind their eyes. If they did bad things I would order the boys to kill. All the boys had to watch or participate, so they knew what to expect when they broke the law. I had to be tough, once they feared me they would listen to me.”

To achieve full control, child soldiers were taught they would be punished for their deeds, even if they had not been caught in the act. According to one of my informants (16F7): “If you disobey, the bullet will touch you, you will go. Even if your commander don’t know, the bullet will come and kill you. At that time we trust this, we see examples.” The combination of these means of teaching ensured that child soldiers behaved and functioned as was expected of all the RUF members.

### *The Achievement of Internalization Type I and II*

Internalization is an essential facet in the creation of a cohesive rebel group. Socialization processes leads to Type I or II internalization, as indicated by Checkel (2005). The first type refers to “learning a role—acquiring the knowledge that enables them to act in accordance with expectations—irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it. The key is the agents knowing what is socially accepted in a given setting or community. Following a logic of appropriateness, then, means simply that conscious instrumental calculation has been replaced by conscious role playing” (2005:804). “On the other hand, following a logic of appropriateness may go beyond role playing and imply that agents accept community or organizational norms as “the right thing to do.” We call this Type II internalization/socialization, and it implies that agents adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are part. Conscious instrumental calculation has now been replaced by “taken-for-grantedness”” (Checkel, 2005:804). In this section, Checkel’s definitions will be applied to the RUF in order to answer the following question: did internalization, Type I or II, actually occur within the RUF?

Most of my informants spent years under the harsh and brutal conditions within the RUF. Interviews revealed that the extensive socialization processes they were part of, indeed resulted in internalization. The results varied: some of my informants reached internalization Type I, while others reported Type II. My field research suggested the following general patterns: children recruited under 13 years of age seemed most likely to develop internalization Type II. The majority of this age group reported that the RUF’s interests became their own and changed their identities over time. This result can be explained by the fact that young children are considered particularly susceptible to indoctrination and they were looking for a

sense of security within the RUF. Even though they suffered from severe abuse, most of these children became loyal to their commanders. As one boy (11M6) noted: “I felt he protected me, so I wanted to give him something in return. He was the only one who cared about me, and who helped me to survive. My commander was my new father, I forgot my family, the RUF was now my family who took care of me. I belonged with them. My new name was Pepe, because I was so hot, I was so much wicked. My temper was bad.”

Also, the longer child soldiers stayed with the RUF, the more likely they seemed to become to adopt the RUF’s interests and identity. My informants stated that the longer they were subject to RUF indoctrination, the harder it became to remember village life and the norms and values of a civilian. As a result, they generally reached a confused state of mind in which their values were replaced and their behavior changed. Many of these former child soldiers reported that they believed they were RUF. On the other hand, children who had been recruited from 14 years of age, more often indicated they were performing a role within the RUF, and questioned whether it was right what they were doing while part of the rebel group. This suggested they had only reached internalization Type I. Most of these informants reported strong memories of home and a wish to return to their families. However, it did happen that these children reached internalization Type II as well, as indicated by this account: “When we were captured I did not believe in fighting the government. The RUF told me about all the things that were wrong and they were right, they woke me up. They educated me and then I got convinced they were fighting for the right things. I believed what they said and they motivated me to join. So I started fighting, I became one of them” (13F6). This exemplifies how political education led RUF child soldiers to reposition themselves and created commitment to the cause as well as the group. Those children who had initially chosen to join the RUF generally reached internalization Type II, no matter how old they were at time of recruitment. These children were motivated by the RUF’s ideology, and achieved internalization Type II more quickly and easily than did forcibly recruited children.

More boys than girls achieved internalization Type II. My female informants stated they were reluctant to become part of the RUF, as male rebels had often mistreated them. They indicated sexual violence as a major factor in decreasing their motivation to take initiative and showing active behavior. It negatively affected their image of the RUF, which caused them to do as they were told, but prevented most of them from adopting the rebel identity. Few of these girls eventually adopted the interests and identity of the group. This was different for those girls who claimed to have chosen to join the RUF; they were rather quick to adopt the group’s identity. These girls often managed to reach commanding ranks, which may explain why powerful girls were generally perceived to be more loyal and trustworthy by the

rebels. These results are generally in line with Coulter's research, stating that "To most girls and women, life in "the bush" was a far cry from life at home, but gradually some of the women became socialized into this existence, leaving both their language and their sense of belonging to their natal homes" (2009:110). What should be noted is that the girls who had achieved a commanding status, managed to keep men away from them and were no longer subject to sexual violence. This may have contributed to their adoption of the RUF identity. However, it also seems as if girls who had achieved high ranks within the RUF, suffered in particular during their return to society. They viewed themselves as rebel leaders, and were proud of their "strong-heartedness" and new identities. Looking at their reintegration, there was a very large difference as compared to girls who did not achieve such strong internalization.

Overall, the majority of my informants reached Type II internalization, which seemed largely due to the extensive periods they spent within the RUF. Some even reported disappointment they were no longer part of the RUF. Despite all the violence, they considered their lives had been better in the bush. Returning to society had confronted them with numerous challenges and most were suffering from poverty again, just as they had before their recruitment by the RUF. Interviews revealed that one of the most difficult things for them was to let go of their rebel identities and behavior. For most of my informants this process had taken up to several years, demonstrating the extreme consequences RUF socialization processes had had on them.

### *Socialized Actors Demonstrating Different Behavior*

Do socialized RUF actors behave differently than they did before they were socialized, or, than non-socialized actors do? This chapter demonstrated that RUF child soldiers definitively started behaving differently as they were being socialized. Keeping their past as children living normal life in mostly rural areas in mind, this chapter has shown how the socialization processes transformed them from children into soldiers, and how strict RUF rules determined their behavior. According to my informants, everyday life in the base camp was similar to life in the village. Even though they were living with a rebel group, my informants recall that they still had to perform tasks associated with normal daily life while they were in the bush. The organization of the camp, the hierarchies within the movement, the division of responsibilities and labor, as well as social structures were in a way comparable to civilian life. The major difference to life with the rebels was the use of violence. It was common to see people get punished, tortured or killed and all my informants had personally experienced violence. And, where life in the village saw the elders and big men in charge, within the RUF it was possible for young children to achieve ranks and power. This was unthinkable in civilian society and disrupted traditional structures.

The following account provides an example of such a disruption: “When I was a little boy, I used to work in the mines. We had no money at home, so I could not attend school. The miners used to abuse me, I was the youngest and they maltreated me. If I found a diamond I had to give it to my boss and he give me a few dollars. But, when I became a commander with the RUF, one day I returned to the mines. This time it was different; I was in control and the power was mine. I felt so proud; I had become a big man, a real victory that I never imagined when I was young. Now all the other men had to obey my orders, that made me very happy” (12M10). This abnormalization of life was accelerated by the enormous drug abuse within the RUF. Coulter: “it has been suggested that the tight security measures and the wrecking of the social world were aspects of the RUF master plan for creating a “bizarre new reality” (Richards 2005:135), and many stories reveal that some girls and women slowly became socialized into this new, “bizarre” way of life (2009:121–122).

That the behavior of socialized child soldiers changed as compared to non-socialized actors, can also be seen in their reactions to violence. Socialized RUF children had been taught not to show remorse, shame, or pain when they experienced violence as witnesses, victims, or perpetrators. The socialization had taught them to celebrate violence instead; they were told to sing, dance, and shout to demonstrate their happiness. This is an example given by one of my informants (12M8): “Whenever we attacked a village, we were clapping and shouting, sometimes singing. We were happy to make a successful attack. We surrounded the people in the village, scared them and chopped hands. Then we would put car tires around some people and set them on fire. They would burn and scare the other people. They had to be quiet; if they cried I killed them. It was my job and I was happy to tell my commander I was successful and had taken properties back to the base.” That this is completely different behavior from non-socialized actors does not need further explanation.

Although girls are portrayed as victims of the war, some certainly took an active role within the RUF, as also seen in Cohen’s work (2007). Many war accounts state that girls were used as sex slaves and had to fulfill domestic duties, yet this chapter aimed to show there was also another side to their lives as a rebel which has not been widely researched nor discussed: their role as perpetrators. In order to create a broader understanding of the complex phenomenon, it is important to go beyond viewing women as passive victims. Women do have agency and their acts and decisions need to be critically analyzed. Even though the majority of girls may have been forced to join the RUF, we cannot generalize that this was the case for all girls. Some girl soldiers took initiative to join the rebels and became active members, others developed such behavior over time as they started identifying themselves with the RUF through socialization processes. This cannot be neglected, as it would lead to invalid and incomplete conclusions. It must be understood that both boys and girls



were victims some of the time, but not all the time. And the same goes the other way around; many of the RUF's child soldiers were perpetrators some of the time, yet not all of the time. This implies that, also in the case of the RUF, most child soldiers were victims and perpetrators. This once again illustrates the complexity of the problem and shows the difficulties that come with drawing conclusions about the subject. These have to be well balanced statements, taking a broad range of factors into account. I hope this chapter has illuminated the significance of including the power of socialization to transform children into soldiers as one of those factors.

# 7

## Matsangas: Puppets or Patriots?

### *Child soldier socialization within the Mozambican National Resistance*

The war in Mozambique has been depicted as one orchestrated by external forces. This chapter seeks to provide a more balanced view, although its main purpose is not to explain the Mozambican conflict. This chapter is essentially meant to illuminate the socialization processes and the complexities of transforming children into soldiers within the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). In order to understand these processes it is important to have an understanding of the Mozambican situation and the characteristics of its conflict, so a brief conflict analysis will be provided. Hereafter, an in-depth analysis of RENAMO and its use of child soldiers will be developed, followed by highlighting the socialization processes used within the group. The latter analysis will build predominantly on field research conducted among former child soldiers in Mozambique.

#### **Conflict Background**

Mozambique has suffered from armed conflict lasting almost 30 years. In 1964 the first anti-colonial conflict broke out when the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) launched an insurgency against their Portuguese rulers. FRELIMO's goal was to liberate Mozambique from the Portuguese who had colonized the country in 1505. As Portugal resisted the struggle for liberation, armed conflict erupted. Simultaneously, the neighboring Rhodesian government was facing an insurgency by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). During their struggles, both ZANU and FRELIMO had ideological, organizational and personal links and the groups became increasingly organized and well-equipped. To tackle the subsequent threats posed to the governments, Mozambique and Rhodesia aimed to establish a cooperation that could tackle the insurgents (Young, 1990).

However, most cooperation tactics were obstructed and after a decade long war the Portuguese gave in: Mozambique declared itself independent in 1975 and FRELIMO stepped up to govern the country. These developments were closely followed by the neighboring white minority regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. Both countries were alarmed by Mozambique's independence, fearing they would be defeated in the struggles with their own indigenous populations. Sharing its eastern

800KM border with Mozambique, Rhodesia was particularly alarmed and its Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) organized an anti-FRELIMO group in 1976: the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). RENAMO consisted partly of disgruntled ex-FRELIMO fighters who had fled from Mozambique and was armed, trained and organized by the Rhodesian secret police. When Mozambique in turn welcomed and supported ZANU in 1977, this signified the go ahead for RENAMO to invade Mozambique and start its brutal operations (Boothby et al, 2006). The fact that Mozambique had closed its border to Rhodesia, inflicting considerable economic damage on the Rhodesians, encouraged Mozambique's neighbor to offer increased support to RENAMO and focus on the development of an effective strategy (Young, 1990).

A senior CIO official said about the support for RENAMO: "To start off with it was sabotage, to disrupt the population and disrupt the economy which really comes under sabotage, to come back with decent recruits at that stage and hit any FRELIMO bases they came across" (Young, 1990:495). In addition to sabotage and intelligence gathering, RENAMO was used by Rhodesia to cover for clandestine operations. The rebel group was continuously supported by Rhodesia during the first years of the civil war, which allowed them to push further into Mozambique and establish permanent bases (Young, 1990). Base camps were set up inside the country and in 1979 RENAMO was fully operating from Mozambique (Morgan, 1990). The Rhodesian support provided the rebels with arms until this changed drastically in 1980. The country's white minority regime lost its power to ZANU and Rhodesia became known as Zimbabwe. ZANU, led by Robert Mugabe, had been elected as the new government and as they had established friendly relationships with FRELIMO, support for RENAMO ended right there (Morgan, 1990).

At that stage, the rebel forces became rather demoralized, feelings that were amplified by the fact that FRELIMO managed to re-capture several areas and RENAMO bases (Young, 1990). However, South Africa stepped in and "took over as the mentor and major force behind RENAMO," offering the rebels support and training on its territory (Morgan, 1990). According to Young, "the importance of these developments was not then clearly perceived by the Mozambican government and in retrospect it is apparent that the Mozambicans had no idea that the South Africans were prepared to unleash such a serious assault on them and, furthermore, FRELIMO's judgment was distorted in the wake of ZANU's victory by a sort of Bastille mentality that anything was possible, a mentality not uncharacteristic of Marxist regimes at certain periods in their development" (1990:496).

While the independence process in Zimbabwe took off, a monitoring force was sent from the United Kingdom to supervise the developments. The force reported that RENAMO members and supplies were removed from the country by the South

African Defense Force (Metz, 1986). They were taken to South Africa, which “then provided RENAMO with improved training and logistical support, as well as advice about changes in strategy—specifically an increased focus on economic destabilization, notably by disrupting the country’s transport network, so vital to the region” (Morgan, 1990:606). South African support enabled RENAMO to re-train, gain strength and reinvade Mozambique to undermine its government and infrastructure. Whereas Rhodesia had mainly used RENAMO as a clandestine movement, South Africa aimed to give the rebels a public profile and presented them as a “genuine political movement” (Young, 1990:496). Still, although the South Africans tried to conceal their own interests, RENAMO was also used for covert operations, just as the Rhodesians had done (Young, 1990).

During their support of the rebels, South Africa encouraged RENAMO to extend its operations and take control of the Inhambane and Gaza provinces. Large numbers of RENAMO rebels were airlifted into Mozambique, allowing the group to expand its activities to ten of the twelve provinces in Mozambique (Metz, 1986). That South Africa took its role serious became clear when the Gorongosa Documents were retrieved from RENAMO headquarters: including detailed information about supply drops and training schedules (Manning, 1998). During the conflict it kept providing the rebels with arms, ammunition and medicine, which were delivered by land, air and sea (Minter, 1989). With South African material support, RENAMO attacked and destroyed towns and installations, and foreign aid workers were kidnapped (Young, 1990). Field research indicated that these destructive orders often came from South Africa as the country had interests in destroying Mozambique’s infrastructure and economy. And even though RENAMO’s top commanders would initially reject some of these orders, they were forced to carry them out by the South African government. Hence, the war raged on, and RENAMO destroyed numerous schools, shops, health clinics and factories over the years to come (Boothby et al, 2006).

However, South Africa was not the only country supporting RENAMO. The rebels received significant financial and material support from various external sources. These ranged from organizations in West Germany, Portugal, and the United States, Malawi and unknown sources, which sent their support through the Comoros (Morgan, 1990). Field research indicated that most former child soldiers had no knowledge of these ties. Although various organizations provided RENAMO with support, Young states that the group “has been condemned as a terrorist organization by senior officials of the United States and other Western governments.” He continues: “it is hard to avoid the conclusion that this more or less consistent outside condemnation is an effect of its all too obvious links with the South African armed forces and certain disgruntled colonialist circles in Portugal and South Africa” (Young, 1990:503).

Although the war may have been perceived as mainly being caused and supported by external factors while RENAMO functioned as a puppet of external interests, internal factors played a determining role in the proliferation of the scale and severity of the conflict (Morgan, 1990, Roesch, 1992). The harsh conditions within Mozambique, which were mainly due to inadequacy of the FRELIMO government, and the internal dynamics of the conflict kept the war going and encouraged support for the rebels who claimed to be fighting for a new government. According to Morgan (1990), these internal dynamics were a combination of economical, religious, and regional factors combined with a general weakness of the state. From an economical perspective, decades of mismanagement and exploitation under the Portuguese rulers had left FRELIMO with a poor economy when it came to power in 1975. Mozambican farmers had been forced to grow cash crops, which they could only sell for poor returns during the colonization, leading to widespread impoverishment and rural dislocation. In addition, forced and migrant labor in the central and southern areas of Mozambique had been encouraged and led to the neglect of rural areas, while the Portuguese had paid little attention to the development of infrastructure and the education of the population (Morgan, 1990).

The post-independence situation was not much better: FRELIMO adopted strategies that added to Mozambique's misery and increased the economic decline. Mismanagement regarding the agricultural sector was an important aspect of this. Although the agricultural sector supported 80 percent of the Mozambican population, the sector was neglected and the government embarked on a policy of collectivization of agriculture. As a result, family owned farms were disregarded and large state farms were established instead. Even though the family owned farms still provided the bulk of agricultural produce and state farms usually ran at loss, state farms received approximately 90 percent of FRELIMO's expenditure on agriculture. The peasants obviously suffered from these policies, and so did the situation regarding Mozambique's balance of payments. This created a widespread resentment of the government, which was enhanced even further when FRELIMO's ill-designed agricultural policies led to a severe food crisis. As a result, the rural population was alienated from the government, adding fuel to RENAMO's struggle (Morgan, 1990).

It was not only the agricultural policies established by FRELIMO that bred resentment against the post-independence government: the popular resurgence of traditional beliefs, practices and religion contributed to tensions as well. FRELIMO opposed the re-emergence of traditions and religion as it wanted to modernize Mozambique, leading to the development of another disagreement with the population. Young: "Mozambique was and is a largely rural society with complicated local village politics often bound up with local beliefs, all of which FRELIMO wrote off as backward" (1990:508). Morgan further explains: "FRELIMO's opposition to all

types of religion, to polygyny and to chiefs, stems partly from its commitment to the 'modernization' of what it saw as a backward and 'uncultured' peasantry, and partly from its desire to rid Mozambique of customs, beliefs, and especially institutions closely associated with the colonial regime" (1990:613). The population however felt it was of essential importance to re-connect with the traditional roots of their society. This disagreement added to the rural population's resentment felt towards the government and RENAMO smartly tapped into this: it used the resurgence of interest in traditional practices and beliefs as well as religion to rally support (Morgan, 1990, Young, 1990). Field research indeed indicated that the rebels paid respect to traditional customs and religion: spirit mediums and traditional healers played an important role within the movement and religious buildings were often left intact during RENAMO's violent attacks.

Regional and ethnic tensions were additional factors that played roles during the conflict. The northern, central and southern regions of Mozambique are very different on economical, geographical and cultural levels. Within FRELIMO's hierarchy, the southern Mozambicans acted as superiors. This led not only to internal struggles, but also to statements made by RENAMO claiming that FRELIMO's policies were ethnically biased and that the organization was not truly representative of Mozambican society (Morgan, 1990). Moreover, the weakness of the Mozambican state in combination with the political alienation of its inhabitants, probably contributed to increased support and growth of RENAMO. The weak state structure implied that FRELIMO was unable to cope with crises, particularly in rural Mozambique. These inherited weaknesses of the state required reforms, yet FRELIMO leaders lacked the capacities to realize these (Morgan, 1990). Meanwhile, the participation in the government by the Mozambican population was significantly limited by policies implemented by FRELIMO. As a result, FRELIMO's poorly designed policies initiated increased support for RENAMO in some areas and increased the revolt. Thereby, political power became concentrated in the capital Maputo where the central authorities were based. This led rural youth in particular feel excluded and alienated, and they subsequently became an important part of RENAMO (Morgan, 1990).

These examples illustrate how FRELIMO's policies led to growing dissatisfactions among the Mozambican population, which in turn initiated the political and socio-economic breakdown of the country. However, this did not lead directly to support for RENAMO throughout the country, as the brutality of the rebel operations and violence against civilians limited popular support in certain areas. Nevertheless, the Mozambican population could identify with the FRELIMO government less and less, and RENAMO did not give up their violent struggle. The government army found itself unable to defeat the rebels. Particularly due to a low

morale among its soldiers and a weak strategy to approach the rebels, FRELIMO proved incapable to deal with the threats posed by RENAMO and it seemed impossible to control the war (Morgan, 1990).

FRELIMO's incapacity to end RENAMO's struggle partly stemmed from the first conflict, which had led to Mozambican independence in 1975. FRELIMO had fought the Portuguese in a low-intensity war as a guerrilla movement, yet had to be transformed into a conventional army once the war for independence was over. A hierarchy of ranks and strategy had to be determined, as FRELIMO forces were incapable to deal with the challenges posed by the different type of war that was fought by RENAMO. It needed counter-insurgency techniques to conquer the rebels and hence young officers were promoted over conservative older soldiers. Still, the low morale among the soldiers, particularly due to a lack of basic supplies and a low concentration of troops on the ground, limited FRELIMO's chances against RENAMO. This was amplified by a shortage of the budget and the fact that the army had a difficult relationship with the Mozambican population. As FRELIMO soldiers were accused of brutalities and abuses too, the population was alienated even further from the government (Morgan, 1990).

After almost a decade of fighting, the Nkomati Accord was finally signed by Mozambique and South Africa in 1984, aiming to stop the violence. During these and later negotiations, "RENAMO issued a series of political demands, calling for the dissolution of the Mozambican government, the establishment of a power-sharing arrangement between FRELIMO and RENAMO, and the creation of a free-market economy" (Manning, 1998:162). However, the Nkomati Accord would not hold. Mozambique failed to expel African National Congress (ANC) members who had been challenging the South African Apartheid regime while South Africa continued their support for RENAMO, allowing the war to continue. As a result FRELIMO sought support from other external players. Zimbabwe deployed approximately 10,000 troops to protect vital installations, Britain trained FRELIMO troops, and Malawi and Tanzania sent units to support the army. In addition, multinationals organized their own militias in an attempt to protect their interests in Mozambique (Morgan, 1990). Violence nevertheless continued. Only when the Cold War ended in 1990 and apartheid disintegrated did external support for RENAMO dry up and opportunities for peace within the country were created. Peace negotiations between FRELIMO and RENAMO started again in 1990, and fighting eventually ended with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords in October 1992. By then, the war had displaced 5 million civilians and 900,000 people had died (Boothby et al, 2006).

## **Characteristics of the Mozambican National Resistance and the Use of Child Soldiers**

According to Manning, “RENAMO is best known to most of the world for its grotesque campaign of terror against Mozambican civilians, for its status as an army of captives and for its apparent lack of a political program” (1998:161). The movement was veiled in secrecy during the war, leading to a rather ill understanding of the shadowy group and the impression it was a puppet of external forces. “RENAMO, however, is more than just a creature of outside interests and a tool of destabilization” (Hall, 1990:59). The following sections will therefore aim to disentangle the often concealed nuances surrounding the Mozambican rebels.

### *Why fight?*

Although the existence of RENAMO has been shrouded in mystery and speculation during and after the conflict, the origins of the rebel group have been well documented (Hall, 1990, Minter, 1989). Being found by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) in 1976, RENAMO was initially established as a political, anti-communist organization with a military wing. With the creation of RENAMO, Rhodesia sought to target the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) as well as political and economic targets in Mozambique, particularly in the central area (Morgan, 1990). ZANU had been challenging the Rhodesian regime during the years before, and had been exiled from the country. The organization became mainly based in Mozambique as the FRELIMO government had welcomed the group. The Rhodesians supported the creation and growth of RENAMO, enabling them to become a cohesive rebel group (Boothby et al., 2006).

RENAMO mainly derived its logistical support from outside the country and developed a hierarchical and well-organized structure (Minter, 1989). Although it may have seemed that the existence of RENAMO mainly resulted from external funding, internal factors played an essential role in the creation and expansion of the group. Many of the initial RENAMO members had belonged to the anti-insurgency units of the International and State Defense Police (Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, PIDE) while Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony. When Mozambique became independent and FRELIMO took over the colonial regime, PIDE members fled to neighboring Rhodesia to escape retributions as they had established a reputation of torture, brutality and executions (Hall, 1990, Morgan 1990). One of the former PIDE members, Orlando Christina, became RENAMO’s secretary general. To increase the RENAMO forces, Christina blackmailed PIDE members who had remained in Mozambique; he threatened to hand confidential files about their past employment to the FRELIMO government if they would not join the newly established RENAMO ranks (Metz, 1986, Morgan, 1990). In addition to PIDE



members, RENAMO increased its forces with FRELIMO dissidents during its early days. Numerous recruits came from the many splinter groups that had broken away from FRELIMO in the years leading towards independence (Metz, 1986). However, the majority of the initial RENAMO recruits were dissidents who no longer agreed with FRELIMO post-independence and were disgruntled with the conditions in Mozambique. Many of these recruits had been sent to re-education camps by the FRELIMO government, and subsequently fled across the Rhodesian border (Fauvet, 1984, Hall, 1990).

RENAMO's objectives remained vague during their struggle in Mozambique. The movement has been "widely described as crudely anti-communist and anti-FRELIMO, with no political program as such" (Hall, 1990:47). According to Young, "RENAMO has not been pro anything, it has been anti-FRELIMO" (1990:508). Nevertheless, in 1981 the rebels came forward with a manifesto and program that elaborated upon its goals. The manifesto claimed that "apart from being opposed to communist systems of government and in favor of free market economic policies, RENAMO committed itself to an extensive social program" (Morgan, 1990:607). In addition, the manifesto called for a government of national unity, democratic elections and a mixed economy (Young, 1990). Still, this would be the only substantial political statement RENAMO made until a different program was announced in 1988, adding to the vagueness of the organization. The new program emphasized political and economic liberty and stressed liberating Mozambique from "Soviet colonialism, expansionism and imperialism" (Young, 1990:502). Besides these programs, witness accounts indicate specific grievances motivating RENAMO rebels. These were: "resentment at FRELIMO's suppression of traditional chiefly authority and repressive attitude towards religion and religious practitioners, and rejection of FRELIMO's economic and agrarian policies, which are perceived as having brought ruination. Above all, compulsory villagization, where this has occurred, appears to have caused outrage" (Hall, 1990:47).

Few statements have been made about RENAMO's objectives by its leadership. However, in an interview with Manning, Raul Domingos, one of RENAMO's military chief of staff, said the following about RENAMO's reasons for fighting and the lack of political statements: "People joined RENAMO without worrying about the details ... But people had no clear idea about an alternative [to FRELIMO]. Many thought, eliminate FRELIMO and we can do what we want. But this was not RENAMO's program. But [also] it was not the time then to elaborate a program for the RENAMO masses. There was a certain class of people who wanted to see a written program, by-laws, etc. Some people think that way. But there was another layer of people who just wanted to know simply what the war was about. You could say, 'it is against communal villages, or against cooperativization, or re-education camps, or passes' ...

The more intellectual approach would not do any good for most people. This explanation was for another class of people. This wasn't all necessary or even a good idea for most people. The war was about mobilizing people to get rid of aspects of the regime they found offensive. We used the language of the population, appealing to specific aspects that they felt. To speak to the population about democracy, liberty, human rights, things very.... [abstract]... they don't understand. Now, if you talk about the pass law, yes sir, this I know, it is very inconvenient. To visit my cousin who is just over there I have to go speak to the president of the Dynamizing Group to write a pass for me to go there. To get rid of this, this was enough of a motive for someone to go to war. Because he knows that otherwise, if he criticizes this he will go to a re-education camp. So what is the alternative? He joins RENAMO to get rid of this..." (Manning, 1998:178).

Domingos' account has been one of very few statements, resulting in the fact that RENAMO's broader political ideology always remained vague. As its leaders did not seem capable to express a coherent vision and were often inconsistent, Hall argues, "In the absence of any distinct political ideology, a motivating system of beliefs and values should probably be sought at the grassroots level of the military organization." She continues: "Elsewhere in Africa, inherently political peasant grievances have been channeled within a religious idiom. Traditional forms of belief particularly lend themselves to this form of protest, because of the usually strong association between the spiritual realm and the land; it seems especially common in Africa where political activity has been suppressed" (1990:47). This argument is further explained by Roesch, who states, "the core of the motivating ideology on RENAMO bases is expressed in a religious idiom that is rooted in traditional African ancestor worship. The constant political propaganda refrain of the RENAMO military commanders is that the war they are waging is a 'war of the spirits'—a crusade—in which FRELIMO is painted as a traitorous organization that is forcing people to abandon their ancestors and accept foreign ('communist') ideas, whereas RENAMO is allied with the ancestral spirits in a war to return Mozambique to its traditions and ancestral ways" (1992:472). This view is also elaborated upon by Wilson (1992) and seemed to be an important aspect of RENAMO. To underline the importance of religion and spirituality, churches and mosques were usually spared during RENAMO attacks and the rebels used to carry bibles. Further, spirit mediums or spiritual healers were associated to most bases and played an important role for the rebels. The rebels believed they were given supernatural powers by the spirit mediums, which amongst other things made them bullet-proof during combat (Hall, 1990).

The spiritual argument has not been widely elaborated upon in the literature considering RENAMO, which may have contributed to the limited understanding of the organization. Young (1990) argues that the apprehension of RENAMO was

predominantly jeopardized by polarized viewpoints: left wing writings claimed the rebels to be “just puppets,” and right wing groups portrayed RENAMO’s mass killings and violence as a “struggle for freedom.” This image bothered the rebel leaders and Manning argues that, during the last years of the war, “RENAMO was busily attempting to clean up its international image and to provide hard evidence that it did in fact have a political program and matching political ambitions” (1998:176), driven by their wish to become political party represented in the government.

### *Leadership*

André Matsangaissa initially led RENAMO. Matsangaissa, who had been responsible for the distribution of supplies and provisions within FRELIMO, had been dismissed from FRELIMO after he had stolen a Mercedes-Benz car. He was sent to one of FRELIMO’s re-education camps but managed to escape and fled to Rhodesia where he joined RENAMO (Fauvet, 1984). The Rhodesians pushed him forward as the rebel’s leader and supported him in achieving the position. RENAMO members became known as Matsangas, called after their leader (Minter, 1989). Although Matsangaissa was considered a brave fighter with leadership qualities, he would not remain in command of RENAMO for a long time. He was killed in Gorongosa in 1979, leading to a major crisis within the movement. A violent power struggle saw him eventually replaced by his deputy Afonso Dhlakama (Metz, 1986, Young, 1990). According to Morgan (1990), these events led to a period signified by the lowest morale and strength of RENAMO. Even “Dhlakama himself expressed the view that the organization had reached a very low point of disorder and demoralization” (Young, 1990:496). RENAMO was under the tight grip of CIO at that time, had little independence and consisted of only a few hundred fighters. The situation improved when South Africa took over as RENAMO’s main supporter and offered the rebels new training and shelter (Morgan, 1990).

Afonso Dhlakama, president and commander-in-chief, managed to establish and control a conventional military hierarchy within RENAMO based on good command, communications and control. Press interviews with the RENAMO leader were very rare, but “in 1983 he spoke in general terms of introducing ‘elections, real democracy and a mixed economy’, and vouched that after his forces had won the war and guaranteed peace, they would allow the civilians and intellectuals to govern. He described himself as a nationalist, whose only real responsibility was to rid his people of ‘communist oppression’, and complained that FRELIMO was worse than the Portuguese before them: ‘The colonialists exploited us, but at least they didn’t try to wipe out old traditions because they are so-called ‘reactionary’” (Hall, 1990:44).

According to Young, RENAMO became well organized under Dhlakama’s command and was not just “a band of criminals or anti-social elements” (1990:499).

Also, Dhlakama claimed that the rebels “controlled the countryside whilst FRELIMO ‘hid in the cities’” (Hall, 1990:44). Dhlakama based RENAMO’s national headquarters in Gorongosa, and command structures were divided according to the country’s regions, which were divided into provinces. The provinces were under the control of a provincial RENAMO commander, who was in charge of the rebels in the particular area. Whereas the movement had few ethnic imbalances, members from any ethnic group could become commanders, the RENAMO leadership was made up mostly of Shona speakers from the central region of the country (Hall, 1990, Minter, 1989, Morgan, 1990). Its leaders mostly came from relatively modest backgrounds, but “many in this group were ambitious individuals frustrated with their lot” (Manning, 1998:176). Field research further indicated that the rebel groups were divided into several smaller groups headed by commanders which communicated with the headquarters from the field on a daily basis, upon which Dhlakama decided which strategies to follow. This was enabled by the fact that each company was equipped with radio communications (Young, 1990). These efficient communications by radio proved to be a critical aspect of “RENAMO’s capacity to organize its attacks over the wide expanse of rural Mozambique” (Minter, 1989:12).

### *Recruitment and Tactics*

Most of the initial RENAMO members appeared to be volunteers. The population’s resentment of the FRELIMO government that could not provide their needs and condemned their traditions and beliefs resulted in RENAMO support in certain parts of the country. However, over time volunteering decreased and innumerable RENAMO recruits were forced to join the movement. Coercion became the overwhelmingly dominant method of recruitment (Minter, 1989), probably due to the brutality against civilians and the subsequent decreasing support (Young, 1990). Forced recruitment was usually done through abduction or kidnapping (Morgan, 1990). Moorcraft (1987) reports that while many recruits were press-ganged into the movement, others decided to join because of hunger, poverty and/or boredom. However, RENAMO never completely relied on forced recruitment. Schafer states “coercion was supplemented by non-violent persuasive techniques, including political education” (2001:223). Whereas some recruits were taken as individuals, others were forced to join RENAMO in large groups. These group recruitments often took place during attacks on small towns or villages, schools or plantations (Minter, 1989). Field research indicated that it was not uncommon that groups of people were taken to the bases, yet whoever complained, expressed a wish to return home or could not keep up, was killed.

Whereas RENAMO started as a small organization with only a few hundred members, the group rapidly expanded during South Africa’s support. While estimates

claim that the group consisted of approximately 5,000 rebels in 1981, this number increased to 8,000 to 10,000 rebels in 1982 (Hall, 1990, Young, 1990) and further expanded to 20,000 members by 1989 (Minter, 1989). It was the expansion period which started in 1982 that led to a significant strengthening of the rebel forces and enabled RENAMO to operate throughout the entire country, becoming a serious threat to the FRELIMO regime (Hall, 1990, Young, 1990). With the signing of the Nkomati Accord in 1984, RENAMO headquarters were moved from South Africa to Gorongosa in Mozambique. There, the rebels started a massive and aggressive campaign to expand the movement even further and innumerable recruits were enlisted to the group between 1985 and 1986 (Manning, 1998). That this campaign was rather successful can be derived from Morgan's claim: "except in the largest cities, the rebels cause an enormous amount of damage and virtually hold the government to ransom" (1990:608)

The tactics used by RENAMO have changed over time and varied by region. According to Wilson this reflected the "changing demands of external sponsors and the requirement for different strategies in the various military, political and socio-economic contexts in which it operates" (Wilson, 1992:529). Read in documents captured at the rebel headquarters in 1985, RENAMO's tactics mostly seem to have focused on destruction during the conflict. The documents included three major goals: "1. Destroy the Mozambican economy in the rural zones, 2. Destroy the communications routes to prevent exports and imports to and from abroad, and the movement of domestic produce, 3. Prevent the activities of foreigners because they are the most dangerous in the recovery of the economy" (Hall, 1990:58). South Africa is likely to have played an important role in the design of these goals. Young (1990) adds another goal by stating that RENAMO aimed to "steal people from the state by getting their chiefs to move them away from government controlled areas into RENAMO controlled areas" (1990:504). In addition, the rebels tried to tap support from Mozambicans whom had been particularly marginalized by the FRELIMO government: the rural populations. In these societies, RENAMO was received with initial enthusiasm, especially among the young. As the peasantry in particular had been marginalized by the government's policies, RENAMO exploited the situation to win popular support (Roesch, 1992). According to Hall (1990), RENAMO used different kinds of military tactics to achieve their objectives: sometimes they did guerrilla style hit and run attacks, whereas on other occasions towns were taken over by an entire battalion for a substantial period of time.

### *Civilian Relations*

RENAMO relied heavily on the rural Mozambican population for the provision of food, services, information, as well as recruits, portage and intelligence (Gersony,

1988, Young, 1990). Rebel commanders would make demands through village chiefs who had to fulfill their food and labor requests and/or indicate areas where RENAMO could set up base (Young, 1990). In these bases a strict division between the civilian population and the rebels' military structures would be ensured (Hall, 1990). Civilians were not allowed closer than 100 or 200 meters from the military base and were mostly used for obtaining and transporting food and goods (Minter, 1989). However, once base was set up, civilians automatically became part of RENAMO and had to support the movement. As bases were moved frequently, the most important task of civilians was to porter for the rebels (Roesch, 1992).

RENAMO called on "people to abandon communal villages and to return to their ancestral lands and traditional way of life" (Roesch, 1992:476). Whereas FRELIMO was trying to suppress this traditional way of life and cultural norms, RENAMO promised rural communities the "recuperation of an insulted identity" (Geffray, 1991:54). In some areas this led to widespread popular support for the rebels, as civilians were frustrated by the disrupting consequences villagization had had for the peasants (Schafer, 2001) and believed the rebels would redress the imbalance and government marginalization of rural areas (Manning, 1998). Geffray (1991) argues this belief changed around 1988 when it became apparent RENAMO could not address the marginalization. And so, communities that had initially volunteered to move to RENAMO areas became less and less convinced about the group's motives. This was also the case for Mozambican youth, who had until then been "a prime source of support for the movement." During this period, local populations started to realize that "they had been supporting a parasite army that was never going to improve things" (Manning, 1998:173).

As RENAMO's existence was dependent on the population, violent tactics were designed to deal with the lack of support in certain areas. However, Schafer (2001) stresses that there were significant differences in how RENAMO approached civilians; although mostly characterized as a rebel group projecting arbitrary and brutal violence on civilians, RENAMO predominantly attacked and destroyed towns and communal villages held by FRELIMO. Schafer states that the group's behavior was not particularly bizarre or irrational although often depicted as such. To illustrate this, Gersony developed three models to describe the ways in which RENAMO treated the population of different areas. "(1) The 'tax areas' are characterized by a widely distributed population from which RENAMO, on a regular basis, forcibly extracts food, clothing, and services, especially labor for portage duties. In what are known as (2) the 'control areas', which normally exist in close proximity to a large but secret base, the local inhabitants are permanently engaged in helping the rebels, often under extremely brutal conditions. They have to work in the fields to provide the RENAMO base with its food requirements, and are also heavily engaged in portage

duties, often over long distances during which they receive very harsh treatment. Finally, in (3) the 'destruction areas', RENAMO does not distinguish between civilian and military targets, and its tactics are characterized by violent, wholesale, and thorough-going devastation" (In: Morgan, 1990:608).

Field research indicated that to mark these territories, RENAMO rebels would place sticks with the decapitated heads of their enemies on top. Young (1990) states that heads on poles were also found within RENAMO camps. These were often the heads of civilians who had been suspected of spying for FRELIMO. Combined with mutilating adults and children, castrations and crucifixion, civilians were killed as a means to control the Mozambican population. Still, the extend of RENAMO violence varied throughout the country: most major massacres seemed to take place in the southern region, indicating that regional commanders had considerable autonomy (Hall, 1990). The brutality of RENAMO seemed pointless. If, however, we look more closely at the movement, the destruction of certain targets becomes slightly more explicable. For instance, RENAMO destroyed entire villages; these were often Communal Villages established by FRELIMO. Health centers and schools were destroyed in order to weaken and destroy FRELIMO's position in the area as well as to undermine its popularity. However, certain acts had no rational explanation. "Given RENAMO's other strange features—the extreme violence, the forced recruitment, the fascination with religion, the habit of destruction—suspicions must arise that the organization has been tapping the 'darker side' of traditional beliefs, in the absence of alternative overarching ideologies, and in doing so has become locked into a negative culture of evil. Put another way, destruction may no longer be merely a tactic, but may have become an end in itself, explicable more in psychological, than in political, social or military terms" (Hall, 1990:60). Even though the Mozambican population was living in constant fear, RENAMO's violent behavior did not keep the group from expanding into a large, cohesive rebel group.

As the war raged on, RENAMO's strength developed against a background of decreasing external support, which was mainly due to the rebels' brutality and violence used against the local population. Morgan explains why RENAMO was still able to flourish in these circumstances: "the destruction of social structures and the process of impoverishment which the rural inhabitants have experienced for decades, and which have been worsened by FRELIMO policies, have led to a scenario where a ruthless organization, operating in the way RENAMO does, is able to flourish. In a situation where day-to-day survival is so uncertain, the option of obtaining a living by violent means must seem persuasive, while the ability to resist is inevitably weakened. Hence, not surprisingly, in many districts the inhabitants have either fled from RENAMO, or give in almost without struggle" (1990:612). And so, some local chiefs, magicians and traditional healers cooperated with RENAMO and provided

support for the movement (Minter, 1989). However, RENAMO was also known for killing uncooperative village officials and powerful community members, especially during attacks on FRELIMO territory (Young, 1990). Powerful citizens were often killed first, after which a wave of uncontrollable violence would be unleashed on the rest of the community. The extent of this violence is shown by Young: “Military logic may provide a rationale for violence in the sense that RENAMO must secure its basic needs (essentially food and portage) from local populations as it has no rear bases to which it can retreat or on which it can rely for supplies. Yet the evidence suggests that the degree of violence goes beyond any purely rational military explanation. Attacks on schools and health posts have often involved not their simple destruction in a military sense but a joy in destruction for its own sake. During attacks on clinics there has been the dismantling and elaborate destruction of equipment” (Young, 1990:506). This indicates that RENAMO’s use of violence was characterized by the methodical, meticulous destruction of everything they came across, as was also the case for the RUF in Sierra Leone (see the Baptism of Fire section in chapter 6). However this brutality predominantly colors RENAMO’s image, we should note that there were significant regional differences “in terms of levels of RENAMO violence against the civilian population, levels of popular support for RENAMO, the existence of formal RENAMO administrative structures, the ethic and historical geography of RENAMO controlled areas, and the enthusiasm of the civilian population at being ‘liberated’ from RENAMO control by government forces” (Roesch, 1992:464). This implies that, although violence was generally speaking no longer a tactic but had become an end in itself, in some cases rebels were seen to support the civilian population. For instance, in times of severe hunger the rebels would occasionally hunt for meat and provide the civilian base with food as well (Schafer, 2001).

### *Child Soldiers*

According to surveys conducted by UNICEF during the war, the conflict has had ravaging impacts on children. “One-third of Mozambique’s children died before they reached the age of five from starvation, malnutrition, and preventable illnesses related to the continuing conflict” (Boothby et al, 2006:156). The surviving children had mind boggling stories to tell. In 1989 Boothby’s team interviewed 504 Mozambican children about their experiences during the war: 77 percent of them had witnessed murder, 88 percent witnessed physical abuse/torture, 51 percent had been physically abused/tortured, 63 percent had witnessed rape/sexual abuse, 64 percent had been abducted, 75 percent were then forced to serve as porters and 28 percent were trained for combat. These staggering results show how much children were affected by the extreme violence of the war.



In addition, the war saw an exorbitant number of children being recruited as child soldiers by RENAMO. Since the extreme violence carried out by the rebels led to decreasing voluntary recruitment and support of the population, RENAMO started targeting children in their recruitment campaigns. The rebels predominantly relied on forced recruitment to increase their forces and children became an easy target. According to Minter, in certain areas “there was a systematic preference for getting children because it was easier to keep them from running away than to control adults. Children as young as 10 were used, and more than half of the armed soldiers were children (roughly 15 or under)” (1989:5). The recruitment of children was also encouraged by the fact that many young men fled into the bush once they knew RENAMO was coming to the areas they resided (Minter, 1989).

Schafer (2001) provides an account of how child soldiers were recruited. She states: “RENAMO soldiers were sent on recruitment missions, with orders to round up a specified number of men and women of a certain age (usually between thirteen and seventeen). They picked up people at their homes or in the fields, usually in the daytime but occasionally after dark. They told recruits and their families that they were being taken to do a ‘job’ and that they would return home afterwards. The use of the term ‘job’ was an important tactic, as it imparted a sense of normality to the recruit and to the family. Since most of the young men were underemployed and eager for work at the time, it could even be used as an incentive to make them go more willingly” (2001:224).

In addition to ‘offering jobs’, promises such as scholarships in foreign countries were made, luring hundreds of secondary school students into RENAMO between 1989 and 1991. “Many of these students left behind government scholarships and hard-won places in secondary schools, with only a few semesters or even just a few exams left” (Manning, 1998:175). The students were initially recruited to allow the creation of a loyal RENAMO division, which could fulfill the duties that would come along if RENAMO would be elected into the government. However, things took a different direction. “None of them were sent on scholarships abroad, and many interrupted their studies in their final stages only to find themselves in a remote RENAMO outpost with no possibility of resuming their academic careers” (Manning, 1998:183). The majority of these children were trained and sent to various RENAMO bases where they were used as soldiers or administrative personnel instead.

Some rural youth voluntarily joined RENAMO “in an attempt to escape the unemployment and poverty that is its lot. Rather than face the uncertainties of illegal emigration to South Africa and with little interest in working the land, given the difficulties of hoe-based surplus production, a small number of young men opt for an easier life of marginality, first as petty thieves and ultimately as collaborators and actual ‘bandits’ in the ranks of RENAMO. For though life in RENAMO ranks is hard

and dangerous, it is also exciting, and offers access to luxury items and women on a scale hitherto impossible for rural youth” (Roesch, 1992:477). These youth were often referred to as bandits and were “extremely valuable to RENAMO from a military point of view. They are able to guide and direct RENAMO attacks on their home areas, pointing out village defenses, FRELIMO members, and the homes of migrant laborers working in South Africa, which invariably contain more food, consumer goods, and money than those of other rural dwellers. For these young men, membership in RENAMO is often also a way of settling old scores with neighbors and local authorities within their home areas—with people who may have punished or humiliated them at an earlier date for petty thievery or other marginal activities” (Roesch, 1992:478). Young (1990) adds to this argument by stating that child soldiers played a significant role in the conflict what seemed “a profound crisis in youth.”

### *Girl Soldiers*

Although the literature on RENAMO generally pays little attention to girl soldiers specifically, field research indicated they played significant roles within the movement. Most of these girls were forcibly recruited, yet some volunteered to join the rebels as a means to survive in the harsh circumstances they faced (Honwana, 2007). The majority of girl soldiers were assigned with tasks as recruiters, intelligence officers, spies, trainers for new recruits, weapon experts, wives, porters, medics, first aid technicians and slave/domestic laborers within RENAMO (McKay and Mazurana, 2003, Wessells, 2006), while few were used in combat (Honwana, 2007). According to Minter (1989), although reports varied per region, some girls were trained for combat but most remained in the base. Honwana (2007) states that many girl soldiers were provided with military training, yet most of these girls served as camp guards and joined in looting missions. Some of my female informants claimed to have been involved in combat on a regular basis, stating that physically strong girls were used for combat, while others took up roles as nurses, sex slaves, cooks or porters. While few of my female informants even became commanders and were in charge of particular units during their stay with the rebels, most girls had not much say in decisions regarding their own lives once recruited by RENAMO. They would be initiated into the group and subsequently ritually allocated to the rebels. Male base commanders, who could have several wives, had the right to choose between the captured girls first and after they had made their choice, the remaining girls would sometimes be distributed to other soldiers or become part of the civilian base. As Roesch states: “Only RENAMO commanders are allowed to bring women into the garrison area to serve as cooks and sexual partners. Lower ranking officers and rank and file combatants, on the other hand, attach themselves to particular women amongst the civilian population for sexual purposes, even though in theory

they are not supposed to maintain relations with civilian women” (Roesch, 1992:471). According to Thompson (1998), this was particularly the case in southern Mozambique, as girls did represent large parts of RENAMO bases in the northern region of the country.

According to Wilson (1992), girl soldiers were mainly used as objects. Honwana states, “the dominance of soldiers over captive girls was established and demonstrated right from the start” (2007:84). Girls were often strategically used as ‘rewards’ that motivated male rebels to stay with RENAMO once they had been recruited. For instance, in captured RENAMO documents from 1981, it is suggested “that in order to discourage the soldiers from leaving there should be a women’s detachment in the RENAMO training camp in South Africa in order to ‘entertain them’” (Minter, 1989:5). Next to being used as entertainment, girls were often given to commanders as wives and usually stayed with these men for long periods of time. Even though these were forced marriages, girl soldiers did, to some extent, benefit from pairing up with a powerful soldier. Honwana explains: “Well-fed and well-dressed women were those ‘adopted’ by or ‘married’ to powerful soldiers, who benefited from the spoils that were looted from towns, villages and factories. These women themselves became powerful and subjugated other women in the camps. They required services from them, such as cleaning; searching for water, firewood and food; cooking; and childcare. The wives of powerful commanders held special positions in the camps as leaders of women’s affairs, nurses, counselors, teachers and political advisors” (2007:87). If girl soldiers did not become a wife, they often served as concubines throughout their stay with the rebels. This indicates that RENAMO consisted of hierarchical structures and internal organization, in which “women played a variety of roles and invented institutions to mirror normal life” (Honwana, 2007:87).

Wilson summarizes the group’s use of girls as follows: “Rape and the use of slave-wives is rather seen by RENAMO soldiers as their right of access to women, and a key ‘perk’ of the job, not a direct tactic of war.” He continues: “RENAMO commanders repeatedly stress their special rights to women and girls, along with the status and prowess that this confers upon them as men of power relative to the RENAMO rank and file” (1992:536). If girls refused to have sex they would face severe punishment, ranging from being beaten, tortured or even killed. However, just as the use of violence, the behavior towards girls also varied throughout the country: Thompson (1998) states that rape was more common in southern Mozambique compared to its northern region. Schafer writes of the varying behavior towards women: “it appears that both FRELIMO and RENAMO combatants regarded women in the enemy area as fair game for capture and sexual abuse, whereas women in their own areas were to be treated with caution and approached according to normal social

rules” (Schafer, 2001:233). The extent to which girls within RENAMO territory were approached “according to normal social rules” remains questionable, however, as the majority of my informants reported repeated sexual abuse during their stay with the rebels.

### **Fieldwork Evidence**

During field research in Mozambique, I interviewed 65 former RENAMO child soldiers and commanders. The majority of my informants stayed with the rebels for several years. Some of them indicated they were with RENAMO during the entire conflict. All of my informants had carried out a variety of roles while they were part of the group, ranging from portering to combat. Most had several types of responsibilities at a time, which often changed as they got older. The following figures indicate at what age my informants were recruited and how old they were when they left RENAMO. The figures show which percentage of my informants took part in DDRR programs and indicate the differences between boy and girl soldiers. Since the research concerns a relatively small sample size, results should be interpreted as indicative instead of conclusive and final. Although supporting general patterns indicated during field research, these results are estimates due to the sample size and should therefore not be used as the foundations for generalizations regarding the subject.

	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Average age of recruitment</b>	10.2	9.4
<b>Average age of return to society</b>	17.8	16.5
<b>Average period within RENAMO</b>	7.6	7.1
<b>Percentage participating in DDRR programs</b>	48.6%	39.3%
<b>Total number of child soldiers in sample</b>	37	28

Table 7.1 Field sample of RENAMO child soldiers. Total sample size: 65

Table 7.1 shows the results of field research conducted among child soldiers in Mozambique. It indicates the average age of recruitment for boy and girl soldiers, their average age of return to society, the average number of years they spent within RENAMO, and the percentage of returnees that participated in DDRR programs after leaving the rebel group. In order to indicate differences between boy and girl soldiers, these have been divided into separate categories. The table indicates that boys included in this sample were slightly older when they were recruited as compared to

girls: on average boys were 10.2 years old, whereas girls were only 9.4 years of age. A possible explanation for this difference is the fact that RENAMO mostly recruited boys for the purpose of fighting, while most girls were given domestic duties that could be performed from a very young age. Within the movement young children seemed responsible for domestic duties while boys from the age of nine were generally considered ready to be trained for combat. This could possibly explain why the rebels targeted girls younger than boys.

As indicated by the table, boy soldiers were also slightly older when they returned to society: on average they were 17.78 years old, whereas girls in this sample were 16.5 years old. Boys remained with RENAMO longer than girls did and more often participated in DDRR programs. This finding is in line with the existing literature on DDRR in Mozambique, signaling that girls were often neglected in such programs and hence quietly blended in with society (see for instance, McKay and Mazurana, 2004).

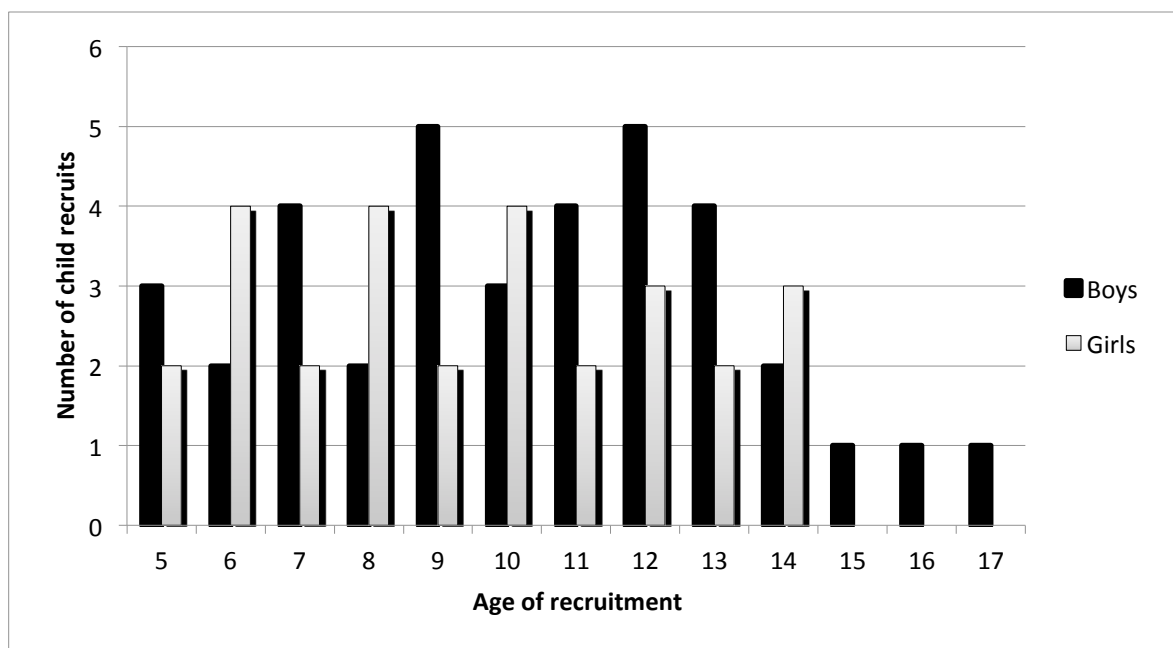


Figure 7.1 RENAMO child soldiers: age of recruitment

Figure 7.1 shows a wide variety in the age of recruitment. The horizontal axis shows the age of abduction, the vertical axis shows the number of children abducted at this age. A possible explanation for the variation is that RENAMO recruited children to fulfill different roles, and there did not seem to be a specific target age as the LRA for instance had. Boys over the age of 9 were generally provided with military training and became combatants, while younger children were frequently used for domestic duties and/or placed in the civilian base attached to the military base in order to support the rebels. Children of these ages were all considered useful

and hence stood a chance to be recruited and taken to the base. Figure 7.1 does show a decrease in the recruitment of children of 15 years or older. According to RENAMO commanders this was because these children were becoming “stubborn” and it was difficult to catch them, possibly because they hid in the bush once they knew the rebels were coming, as described earlier in this chapter.

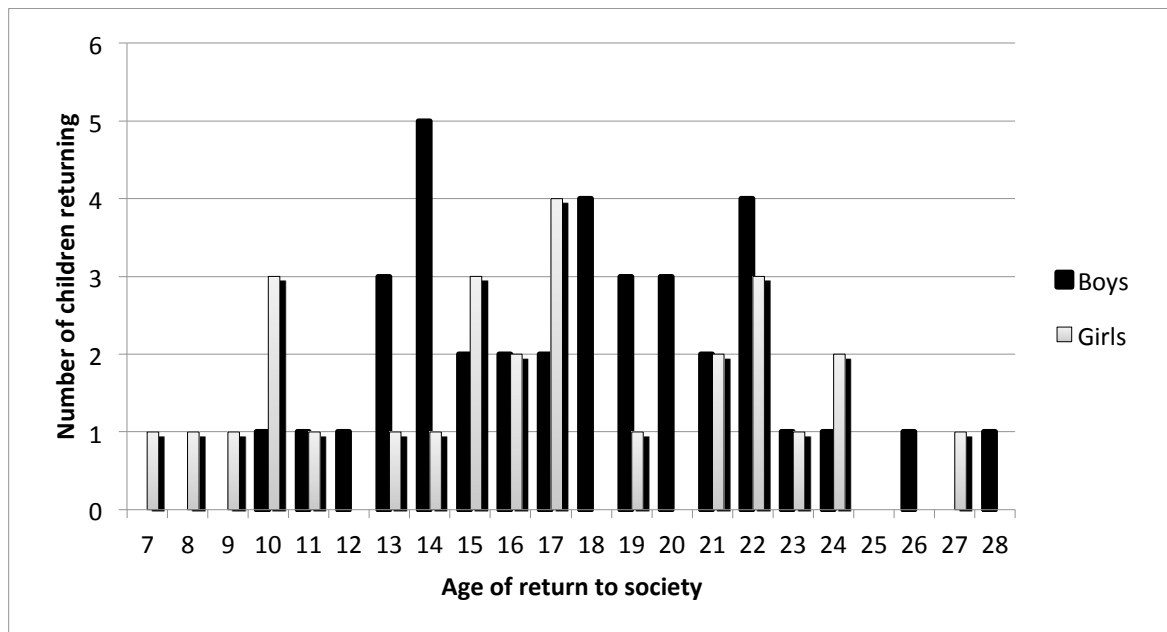


Figure 7.2 RENAMO child soldiers: age of return to society

Figure 7.2 shows a wide variety in the age of return to society by RENAMO child soldiers. The horizontal axis shows the child soldiers’ age at their return to society while the vertical axis shows the number of children who returned at this age. The figure indicates it was difficult for young children to escape; while 87.7 percent of RENAMO child soldiers in this sample were recruited at 13 years of age or younger, only 20 percent of child soldiers were 13 years of age or younger when they escaped. Interviews indicated several reasons: young recruits seemed particularly disoriented after they had been recruited, they had few ideas how they could leave the group, they quickly became dependent, and most started accepting RENAMO as their new family. The majority of child soldiers in this sample (55.4 percent) left the group when they were 17 years or older, which indicates that their chances of leaving RENAMO increased as they got older. Still, most child soldiers were between 17 and 22 years of age when they left RENAMO; the numbers drop again at 23 years of age. Interviews revealed that the group of 23 years of age or older had earned respect and ranks within RENAMO due to their years of serving. This provided them with certain benefits, which they said withheld them from exiting the group.

## **Socialization Processes within the Mozambican National Resistance**

This section will focus on the powerful mechanisms RENAMO used to motivate and control its members, and reveal how socialization contributed to the establishment of a cohesive rebel group. Although the circumstances in Mozambique made it seem unlikely for RENAMO to develop into a rebel group consisting of loyal members, reality proved to be different. As pointed out by Hall: “Lacking all the features we have come to associate with successful insurgencies in Africa, such as a charismatic leadership or easily identifiable ideology, it has failed to develop a political identity commensurate with its military strength. It has no clearly defined regional base, relies on widespread forced recruitment, and behaves with notorious brutality towards the civilian population. Yet it operates throughout the length and breadth of Mozambique, and holds the state in virtual paralysis. Since it lacks rear bases and therefore depends upon local provisioning, it must be able to obtain compliance over large areas of rural Mozambique. That also implies effective organization” (1990:39). Hall further questions, “how an organization with so little appeal that it must rely on widespread forced recruitment can achieve such a measure of ‘success’ against the Mozambican state” (Hall, 1990:39). RENAMO’s achievements are indeed remarkable given the Mozambican circumstances. In order to approach an explanation of RENAMO’s perseverance, I argue that socialization played an essential role in the achievements and “success” of the rebel group. Hence, this section will examine how RENAMO created obedience and motivation among its members, and show how socialization contributed to the establishment of an effective organization. The section focuses on the early stages of socialization processes within the group, showing how initiation, training and violence provided the foundations that kept RENAMO together. We will see that the actual provision of material rewards did not play a significant role in the creation of motivation among the rebels. Due to their dependence on the civilian population RENAMO had little to offer to their members. Instead, promises and ranks were used to motivate child soldiers. In addition, the experience, observation and use of extreme violence proved to be one of the main methods used to control and socialize child recruits within RENAMO, eventually leading to allegiance.

### *Formal and Informal Socialization*

As stated before, little is known about socialization processes executed within rebel groups. This is also the case for RENAMO. Still, field research indicated that the processes played a significant role in the creation of a cohesive unit while facing the discouraging circumstances of Mozambique’s conflict. Wood (2008) highlights the importance of socialization in her work and argues that each recruit, whether volunteering or coerced, has to be socialized within a rebel group. For instance, in

order to control the violence deployed by the rebel group, recruits need to be socialized in using violence for *group* purposes by their commanders. This is typically achieved through the establishment of a strong hierarchical organization. Wood further argues, "Training and socialization to the armed group take place both formally, through the immersion experience of "boot camp," and informally, through initiation rituals and hazing. The powerful experiences of endless drilling, dehumanization through abuse at the hands of the drill sergeant, and degradation followed by "rebirth" as group members through initiation rituals typically melt individual recruits into a cohesive unit in which loyalties to one another are felt to be stronger than previous loyalties, such as those to family" (Wood, 2008:546).

This type of military socialization has also been exerted by RENAMO; its leaders managed to establish a strong hierarchical organization by socializing each of their recruits in the use of violence for the group's purpose. Formal and informal socialization started immediately when child soldiers were recruited, whether voluntarily or through coercion. Formal socialization was achieved by thorough military training, which became an important aspect of RENAMO. Once new rebels had been recruited, they were divided into groups. Those selected for combat were provided with two to three months of training in specifically designed bases, separated from RENAMO's operational bases. The basic training consisted of weapon handling while additional training was provided in first aid, anti-aircraft, intelligence, paratrooper skills and communication (Minter, 1989). In the Rhodesian days of the movement, a permanent training camp had been established where the rebels underwent serious military training. During South African support, the rebels were trained on its territory (Young, 1990).

Child recruits from the age of 9 were provided with training in these camps. Younger children were generally sent to the civilian bases after their recruitment and were often provided with training once they got older. According to one informant (10F12), "The rebels attacked our town and started to collect everything. All the food and clothes and animals were taken to the middle of the village. Some people were killed and the houses were burned down. Then some villagers were forced to march to the RENAMO base. I think we were 100 people taken away: men, women and children. After marching for three days many people had died but we reached the base. They were taken to different areas but I was sent to training with the older children straight away. I remember the younger ones were sent to the civilian base, so they could support them with housekeeping." Another one (9M8) states: "When I was abducted, the rebels held me at gunpoint and told me to come with them. I was tied to some other people and we marched to the training base. I was on my own during training, I did not know any of the people. We all came from different places but we were many, I think 50 children. We stayed for three months. I learned how to use the



gun and how to fight the enemy. First it was scary and very difficult, but then I got used to the sounds of shooting. At the end of the training my commander gave me my own gun and I was so proud.”

Once RENAMO child soldiers reached the final stages of their training, the rebels organized a ceremony that was similar to the traditional rites of passage used by Mozambican society (Boothby, Crawford and Halperin, 2006). This was an important part of the informal socialization of new recruits, as the ceremony registered and prepared the children as full members of RENAMO. Although Wessells (2006) fails to acknowledge the equal importance for girls, he explains the importance of such ceremonies: “Psychologically, this tactic forges strong allegiance to the armed group, equating his role and identity as a man with belonging to the armed group.” The sense of belonging and allegiance among recruits were an essential achievement, which allowed RENAMO to become a cohesive group. With these ceremonies, RENAMO aimed to erase the civilian identity and replaced it with a rebel identity, making RENAMO the child’s new family. These developments were then further encouraged by political and ideological education. This is explained by one informant (14M8): “After being trained we were given the politics. They (RENAMO) were fighting to liberate our country and we were elected to join them. They explained FRELIMO would destroy our society as the spirits would not be honored and the chiefs would be removed. We need the spirits and our chiefs, so we fight for them.” The use of political education is also mentioned by Schafer: “Although the majority were forcibly recruited and subject to coercive pressures, many guerrillas attested to effective political education once within the movement. RENAMO slogans did find echoes with these rural recruits, as they expressed sympathy with the desire to ‘live as we pleased’ rather than being forced to move to FRELIMO’s communal villages—a cause for which they were ready ‘to accept death, because I wanted the country to be free’” (Schafer, 2001:226). These methods indicate the importance of formal and informal socialization, as they manage to involve new recruits and thereby encourage the establishment of the foundation for a cohesive unit.

### *Experiencing Violence*

RENAMO was known for its violent character. Not only did the Mozambican population fall subject to their extreme violence, child soldiers were kept under control by violent means as well. According to McKay and Mazurana (2003), “physical and sexual violence, including murder, amputations, rape, forced cannibalism, and torture, was widespread.” Field research indicated that during and after RENAMO’s recruitment process, child soldiers experienced all of these extreme types of violence. This is not uncommon for rebel groups, as Wood explains violence

is a common tool in the socialization of their members: “once deployed, combatants experience (to widely varying degrees) violence as perpetrators, as witnesses, and often as victims ... Among the psychological mechanisms possibly at work in these processes of socialization to group membership and the wielding of violence are compliance, role adoption, internalization of group norms, cognitive dissonance reduction, habituation to violence, diffusion of responsibility onto the group, deindividuation, and dehumanization of the victimized group” (Wood, 2008:546). Although it may sound crude, extreme violence creates allegiance and field research indicated that it made RENAMO child soldiers become part of the group’s violent culture.

The far-reaching effects of experiencing violence as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators, were powerfully shown by the development of allegiance and loyalty to the group, as well as by extreme violence carried out by child soldiers themselves. Field research indicated that even those children who had been recruited by force showed a change in behavior that seemed to become natural over time. The violent part of the socialization process was started immediately during the recruitment of child soldiers. RENAMO commanders forced children to witness or exert (lethal) violence against family and/or community members, instilling a paralyzing fear amongst them. According to RENAMO commanders this was done because the fear and violence would control the children and make them obedient to the group. One of my informants (8M6) told about his recruitment: “At the end of the year we had school holidays and I was on my way home with three of my friends. That day we were captured and recruited by RENAMO. It was a group of 30 or 35 soldiers, many of them carrying food looted from the civilians. When they found us, they asked where we are coming from. We answered that we came from school and we are on the way home. Then they said you have to follow us, you have to come, we are RENAMO. They beat us, and said if you don’t come, we will kill you on the spot. We knew that RENAMO was forcibly recruiting people and hurting them so we went with them. We walked and they said we should leave our belongings in the bush. When I put down my books, they gave me things to carry, food and other stuff. My one friend was not strong and he fell in the bush. The soldiers shouted at him and then chopped him with the machete. They looked at me; if you don’t walk and be quiet now, we will do the same to you. And so I walked with them without crying.” Although this is the personal experience of one of my informants, many informants recalled similar memories, which often led to strong allegiance to RENAMO.

Whereas RENAMO is often characterized as a captive army, the question rises how its leaders could create a cohesive group and deter their recruits from escaping. One of the most important factors was the systematic use of intimidation, violence and terror. This is also indicated by Young, who states “the organization uses a

variety of methods to deter escape. Recruits are transferred away from their home area often after having been forced to kill someone in that area” (1990:500). Relocating child soldiers and forcing them to kill someone from their home area restrained their mobility and burned bridges with their communities. This prevented them from escaping, which was further discouraged by extreme violence and constant threats. Once the newly recruited children had reached the base, they were told they would be killed if they tried to escape and that the rebels would go after their families too. The resulting fears discouraged recruits from escaping, as did the relocation to unknown territory (Minter, 1989). All my informants had witnessed the consequences when people tried to escape. One of them said: “Some people tried to run away. Then we had a general meeting with all the people. The commanders would say: ‘See, these people tried to run away. They are on FRELIMO side and traitors. We want to show you how we educate them’. Then they took the children and asked them: ‘Who is the man? Show you are the man and can kill these people’. This happened many times, the children killed many people like that. Sometimes it were complete families getting executed because they lived around the military base and tried to run together.”

As already indicated by this account, RENAMO rebels preferred to carry out punishment in public; it was a common strategy. As Wilson states, the first thing RENAMO did in newly captured control zones was “to warn the community of the dangers of disobeying them or trying to escape, and gruesome examples are quickly made of those who have resisted.” He continues: “People of all ages and sexes can be subject to violence, and frequently the blood relatives of those singled out are also subsequently abused. Particularly common is the forcing of mothers to kill or maim (and even eat) their own infants” (1992:534–535). In addition, to maximize fear among the victims as well as the witnesses to their violence, RENAMO mostly used machetes, axes and knives with which they would kill slowly, engaged in bizarre mutilations and tortured by delaying death. Then, the rebels seemed to pay careful attention to the visual impact of their violence, and therefore displayed bodies. This was used not only to discourage child soldiers from escaping, but also to discourage the people living in the civilian RENAMO bases from leaving. Hall argues that a majority of interviewees “who had resided in a control zone had personally witnessed severe punishment or death inflicted on captives apprehended while trying to escape, and reported that when individuals made successful escapes, any dependents left behind might be executed in retribution. In general, these punishments were conducted publicly, as a deterrent. The effect of this violence may have been to induce passivity—and a sense of fear, anxiety and helplessness—in the populations concerned” (Hall, 1990:53).

The threat of execution was used by RENAMO from the perspective of FRELIMO as well. In order to maintain control of his own rebels, Dhlakama gave regular speeches in which he claimed that “the government’s amnesty program was a lie, and that if they turned themselves in they would first be interviewed on the radio and then shot” (Minter, 1989:6). RENAMO recruits were hence presented with a catch 22, which is reflected by Minter’s explanation of the options that RENAMO rebels faced: “if he tries to escape and fails, he may well be executed, and, as far as he knows, if he succeeds in escaping he might be killed by the government” (1989:6). This was also acknowledged by my informants: “If you escape the government will kill you. We just had to stay and be one of them. We used the violence to keep the new children with us too; they were too scared to leave. Sometimes, we would set ambushes next to the road. Once we took a bus and set in on fire. We left all the people to burn alive and made the children dance around it” (12M12).

This account belongs to a boy who was forcibly recruited at the age of 12. He explained how he was initially forced to commit violence but later on started to engage actively without being ordered. Many of my informants had had similar experiences, which shows that over time the use of violence became normal for RENAMO child soldiers. The constraints disappeared, mainly due to their exposure to continuous violence, which in turn may explain why RENAMO became increasingly violent as the war raged on. As Wood (2008) also mentions in her research, the habituation of violence, dehumanization of victims, and diffusion of responsibility seemed to undermine constraints on violence for these children.

Similar to the case of LRA child soldiers, violence wielded, suffered and observed proved to be an integral part of the socialization of child soldiers within RENAMO. Many of my informants, particularly those who had been used as combatants, started perceiving their commanders as father figures. This development was encouraged by cultural values: Mozambique’s patriarchal society significantly enhanced RENAMO’s chances of creating a cohesive rebel group consisting of obedient child soldiers. As Wessells argues: “Highly patriarchal societies prize obedience to the father, bestow on him considerable power and authority, and treat his word as unquestionable. Living in a dangerous environment, vulnerable children may tend to follow the patriarchal norm, seeing obedience to a powerful, domineering adult as offering protection. Armed groups exploit this cultural tendency by promoting themselves as a surrogate family and invoking father imagery” (2006:65). This was certainly the case for RENAMO, which not only portrayed itself as the father of the nation—its commanders also portrayed themselves as the fathers of the rebels (Schafer, 2004). As indicated by field research, this had far-reaching consequences for child soldiers in RENAMO. The ties to RENAMO developed to such strength that family ties were replaced and a new sense of belonging was created. As

one of my informants (11M5) stated: “When I was taken I was just a small boy. I was in an area far away from my family and I did not know anybody. My commander took me in the group, teaching me how to be a big man. I listened to all his advice and took his orders without questioning so I grew up as a good fighter. I feel my commander was my new father, he was very proud of me and took care of me. It made me feel happy to show what I had learned from him, to make him proud. I belonged to RENAMO, my new family.”

Even though child soldiers developed a deep sense of respect towards their commanders, their guns simultaneously provided these children with a sense of social promotion. Owning a gun reversed power relations, as the children became masters over elderly people. Still, RENAMO leadership seems to have instructed these children to respect their elders. “Dhlakama taught us that ‘since I took you to be soldiers, it wasn’t for you to go and threaten people’. If you meet up with an elder, you must show respect, kneel down for them with your weapon, greet them properly. You must not rob, and not go begging. The people must just feel (sympathy) for you and give you whatever they can give” (Schafer, 2001:232). Not all child soldiers acted according to these instruction though, as field research indicated that elderly people and chiefs were killed and mutilated by child soldiers. This shows that children became used to witnessing and using violence, and shed their old identities. Instead of longing back to their families, most of my informants started developing ties to each other and their commanders. Although this may seem a distorted development, it proves to be quite logical, as explained by Andvig and Gates (2007): “Children’s need for security, to have someone to love and respect may be—rather perversely many would feel—transferred to military commanders.” The majority of my informants expressed these feelings. Furthermore, they expressed feelings of loyalty, appreciation and belonging to the group. Looking at the fact that most of them were forcibly recruited, this indicates how powerful the processes of socialization have been within RENAMO and how extreme violence was a significant aspect of these.

### **Organizational Socialization within the Mozambican National Resistance**

The previous section presented the first stages of socialization used by RENAMO in order to establish and remain a cohesive group. Violence, formal and informal socialization emerged as important factors in the creation of allegiance among child soldiers. This section further analyzes the dynamics of socialization present within the rebel group. It will particularly elaborate upon the norms, practices and preferences internalized by the group and hence on the inclusion of child soldiers within the group’s identity. The section will highlight how RENAMO sought to become an effective organization based on interest convergence and building bridges

within the group, leading to high levels of allegiance amongst its recruits.

As elaborated upon in earlier chapters, socialization processes involve the transmission of information and values (Van Maanen, 1977). The six tactics of organizational socialization that teach new recruits skills and knowledge needed to take on an organizational role are analyzed in the following sections. Shedding light upon these six tactics in which new recruits are taught about desirable behavior and values, the next part of this chapter aims to provide a more detailed understanding of the socialization processes present within RENAMO.

### *Collective Socialization*

To start with, collective socialization takes a group of new child recruits through a variety of common experiences such as military boot camp or training, in order for them to become loyal to the group, develop solidarity and start adopting a collective identity (Van Maanen, 1977). Applying this definition to RENAMO indicates that the military training of the rebel group was an example of collective socialization. After recruitment, physically capable children were sent to do military training. Although Minter (1989) states that training was mostly provided to male recruits between 12 and 30–40 years old, field research resulted in different numbers. According to my informants children were mostly trained from the age of 9. One of them (13M3) explains: “Child soldiers were given training from 8 or 9, 10 years of age. The rebels trained a big group and gave them weapons and on the first training they focused on how to shoot. The rebels were not so technical as the regular military, we did not always have to march and salute. In training we learned the most important things: how to protect yourself, how to fight in cities or jungle, and different styles of combat discipline were taught. Most children were sent to the training camps for some months and then came to the base as trained men. But sometimes there was little time for training, because RENAMO were moving guerillas. We had a base, but tomorrow we could have to run for FRELIMO. We wanted to get as many people as possible to fight guerilla warfare so at the least they always made sure to quickly teach groups of children how to fight. We were always taught how to carry weapons in training. Sometimes we had three, because there were so many. Even all the children carried weapons.”

Still, collective socialization is not without risks. As Van Maanen (1977) indicates it may provide a potential foundation for resistance among recruits and collective deviation. This is particularly due to the fact that recruits may experience similar problems while overcoming the boundary passages they are presented with, and in response search for solutions as a group. As a result, the likelihood of rebellion within a collectively socialized group is relatively high. As described in the section on extreme violence, RENAMO efficiently tackled this possibility by using violence

against deviating members and punishing them in public. This created fear amongst child recruits to be executed. According to Minter (1989), the fear of execution discouraged recruits to escape, as did the relocation to unknown territory, which was another strategy used by RENAMO. As explained by Young: “There is a hierarchical military organization which appears to have an effective command and control system. Camps are protected by manned control posts. Command structures are clear and normal military practices such as saluting officers are in use. New recruits, whether coerced or not, are sent for military training, under disciplined conditions, in areas some considerable distance from where they were first introduced into the organization” (1990:500). Relocating their recruits caused disorientation and dependency to the group, which discouraged escaping. Moreover, new recruits were, in addition to military training, provided with what was called a political education and training. This education was mainly used to prevent recruits from escaping and encourage them to fight for RENAMO instead. Commanders supervised the new recruits and monitored their developments to pick up any signs of deviation tendencies. These children were then immediately punished in public, and often killed. By setting these examples, RENAMO severely discouraged any potential rebellion in the collectively socialized groups.

### *Formal Socialization*

In addition to collective socialization, RENAMO invested in formal socialization as well. This second tactic refers to new recruits being segregated from the other group members, while going through experiences that are particularly designed for potential new members (Van Maanen, 1977). This was an important aspect of RENAMO, as new recruits were kept in separate places compared to rebels who had been with the group for some time. As one of my informants (14F8) indicated: “We moved the entire night until we came to the base camp. We did not see the commander, they left us a little outside the base because they had a big area which they controlled. There were many children around that area, maybe about 150. They had many people in the base camp and civilians surrounding them. The civilians belonged to RENAMO but were just living a normal life, going to the fields and so on. We (the children) were kept in separate areas where we had training and education. Then when we had learned about the movement and knew how to fight, we were allowed to move to the base and stay with the other rebels.” This is supported by Minter (1989), who states that new recruits were kept away from RENAMO’s operational base, as they were placed in separate training bases during the completion of their military training.

Field research indicated that the segregation from regular members during a specific newcomer experience was very common for RENAMO. During the

segregation, child soldiers went through a set of experiences that had been especially designed for the new recruits. The experiences were intended to encourage their integration, teach them new roles, make them feel and think like RENAMO members, and to learn the correct attitude, value and protocols. During this period the newly recruited child soldiers were supervised and monitored on their personal development and commitment to the rebels. More senior rebels were allocated with the tasks of policing, surveying the area and reporting disobedience. This established an effective surveillance and spy network (Hall, 1990). Interviews indicated that rites de passage were crucial and served as part of the induction into RENAMO's rebel ranks. Violence was an essential aspect of this and new recruits were reportedly held under gunpoint until they committed their first perpetrating act. They were threatened to be killed if they refused or tried to escape. As a means to become used to violence, blood and death, new recruits were often ordered to kill cows. When this process was completed, new recruits were allowed to move to the base. Still a hierarchical separation remained in place: commanders often lived in large houses in the center of the base, while regular soldiers lived in grass huts in the surrounding areas (Wilson, 1992). This was also the case for the civilian base, as noted by Roesch: "On all RENAMO bases, a rigid physical and hierarchical separation of the combatants from the civilian population is evident. Each group has its designated area where it lives and sleeps" (1992:471).

### *Random Socialization*

RENAMO also used random socialization practices, the tactic which encompasses the ambiguous, unknown or changing order of actions that are required to achieve a certain organizational role or target (Van Maanen, 1977). Random socialization took place within RENAMO as there was no particular sequence of steps to be taken in order to achieve specific roles within the group. The group consisted of a clear hierarchy, yet there was no determined road to take to reach the top. For instance, field research indicated that some child soldiers achieved a rank while in comparison with others they had not been with RENAMO for the longest period of time; the achievement of ranks rather depended on a particularly active performance and on the personality of the child's commander. However, even an active attitude did not guarantee child soldiers would be promoted. The distribution of ranks within RENAMO battalions varied significantly, indicating that commanders had a decisive role in the promotion of rebels and no comprehensive, organization-wide guidelines were followed.

Still, Manning claims that "it did not take much to rise to the prominence within the political-administrative structure of the movement, provided one had more than primary school education, a modicum of political savvy, and managed to



endure the initial hardships of life in the bush” (1998:175–176). This statement is supported by one of my informants (15M5): “Shortly after I joined RENAMO, I was promoted. I stayed in the base most of the time. What saved me was that I was going to grade 6. I could write and read, and that saved me. They needed literate people and asked ‘Who can write?’ I said I could. Three other children said they could write but they picked me. They said ‘you stay and register all people here. Control them, give us their names and age’. This saved me from going to combat many times. The other children were sent to go to combat or to loot food and other things outside the base, almost every day. Sometimes they stayed away for a whole week and then come back. I was lucky I did not have to join them. I never knew why they picked me over the other children who could write.” Given that these educated children were arbitrarily selected for organizational roles, indicates that RENAMO used random socialization techniques.

#### *Variable Socialization*

RENAMO also used the fourth tactic of organizational socialization: variable socialization processes. According to Van Maanen, these “give a recruit few clues as when to expect a given boundary passage” (1977:55). This type of socialization is most likely to lead to conformity, as new recruits are kept on the peak of anxiety and off balance. This makes it relatively easy for rebel commanders to socialize the new recruits, as they have nothing else to hold on to in their search for security. RENAMO frequently made use of this as it kept its child soldiers off balance almost all the time by creating variable situations. Field research revealed that child soldiers realized there was no security within the group; situations were sensitive to sudden change, implying it could always take a wrong turn and they could be killed at any given time. My informants indicated that the only sense of security they had was belonging to the group, the rest was highly variable and insecure. This resulted in a constant fear.

One of the reasons for the constant fear was that RENAMO systematically transferred its recruits away from familiar areas. “While a few may be kept in their area of origin to serve as local guides, almost all described marches of at least two days from the point of capture to the training base. Most reported being transferred to other bases immediately after training, or sometimes before. With very few exceptions, they were posted as soldiers in districts other than their home districts, and some to other provinces.” Moreover, military units were described as “very mixed in origin, and said they were not with people who they had known at home or who had been trained with them” (Minter, 1989:6). My informants stated RENAMO created these variable situations in order to make it very difficult for recruits to escape. Most of my informants had indeed been taken to unfamiliar areas and separated from their families. As one of them (8F5) said: “I was taken away to an area

I had never been before. It was far from home and I knew no one there. I was very scared because I was all alone and nobody told me what was going to happen. I saw the people getting killed and the commander told me to obey to his orders, otherwise it would also happen to me. I wanted to cry because I did not know what to do, but there was nobody there to help me. The commander shouted I better stop crying, and that I was lucky he warned me. I just had to move with the group and be one of them to live.” During interviews, RENAMO commanders revealed that the creation of anxiety was a deliberate strategy as it would make new recruits dependent on the group, and the unfamiliar surroundings would prevent them from escaping. Manning further indicates that the relocations “helped prevent people from building up a power base in their home region from which they might challenge RENAMO authority” (1998:166).

Looking at Wilson’s argument, RENAMO had a clear interest to invest in variable socialization, also from the perspective of using violence. As Wilson argues, “to have the desired effect, ritualized violence should not be predictable or legitimated. It must remain beyond the realm of comprehension and hence the belief that it can be managed. It challenges the capacity of the ‘social order’ to encapsulate it, and ultimately provides a foundation for RENAMO to reconstruct an alternative set of power relations and norms” (1992:533). Variable socialization hence seemed particularly useful in providing the “glue” that kept the rebels together.

### *Serial Socialization*

According to the definition of serial socialization (Van Maanen, 1977), senior RENAMO rebels would have served as role models for their new recruits, grooming them so they could assume similar roles within the group. As with the other rebel groups analyzed in this thesis, this was also the case for RENAMO. Senior RENAMO rebels taught child soldiers about fighting tactics and trained them in military skills. This prepared the children to eventually assume similar roles to those of their senior rebels.

Yet, there is more to this fifth tactic of organizational socialization. “Serial socialization is most likely to be associated with inclusionary boundary passages. This association results because to become a central member of any organizational segment normally requires that others consider one to be affable, trustworthy, and, of course, central as well. This is unlikely to occur unless these others perceive the newcomer to be, in most respects, similar to themselves. Recruits must at least seem to be taking those with whom they work seriously or risk being labeled deviant in the situation and hence not allowed across inclusionary boundaries” (Van Maanen, 1977:62). In the case of RENAMO, child soldiers were ordered to start serving the goals of the rebels immediately after their recruitment. From that moment onwards,

their obedience and capacities were tested continuously. If they showed any disobedience, weakness, or were suspected of defiance, they were executed in front of the other rebels. In other words, they had to identify with and act as rebels while assimilating with the group in order to survive. If they managed to do so, this often led to improved living conditions, as noted by one of my informants (13F8): “We were all treated the same in the beginning, but later, when they found out who really supported RENAMO, these people were given better positions. If you were motivated, you could become very important and your life would be easier, you would even get your own servants and did not have to be at the frontline anymore.” The consequences of not assimilating were also well known, as indicated by another informant (10M3): “Some children never changed, they were always thinking about home and cried about their parents. The commanders got really tired of this. They said ‘if you don’t want to be a rebel, we cannot use you. We will finish you off and cook soup of your body’. This happened sometimes. Other children had to kill the complaining child and chop it into pieces. Then they would eat the soup to show they had become real RENAMO members to the commanders.” These accounts were just two of many indicating that serial socialization played an important role in the creation of allegiance among RENAMO child soldiers.

### *Divestiture Socialization*

The final tactic of organizational socialization as elaborated by Van Maanen (2007) is divestiture socialization. These processes are rather rigorous as they deny the personal characteristics of the new recruit, aiming to build a new self-image that is in line with the identity and culture of the group. The construction of a new identity is generally based upon new assumptions that are derived from the recruit’s recognition that he or she is able to carry out certain acts that earlier seemed impossible (Van Maanen, 2007). As for child soldiers within RENAMO, divestiture socialization played a significant role. As an informant (11M7) explains: “The commanders tried to make children feel it was the best way to build a man by showing active behavior and following them. Being a man was very important. There were children who thought that kind of life was good. They said I want to be a lion of the forest, it was a philosophy they liked to follow, there was nothing else. So they were fighting active and then took initiative for attacks and killing. When we were children inside RENAMO, we could not compare our lives to life in the village anymore. We did not know what was good or bad. Normally, the old people in the community would educate us about life and how to live. Now we did not have those people around anymore, the only thing we saw and experienced was RENAMO. This led many children to believe it was right during the conflict and they did many things we had always learned were wrong.”

Van Maanen notes that in extreme cases, new recruits must obey a strict set of rules, refrain from certain behavior and publicly degrade themselves and other people, while being isolated from their former friends and relatives who could support attempts to stick to the recruit's old identity (Van Maanen, 1977). This was the case for RENAMO child soldiers as well, as they were forced to break family ties and/or even ordered to kill or violate family members. In addition, child soldiers were often moved to areas where they did not know anybody; they were isolated from their communities. This significantly contributed to the establishment of new identities. An informant (8F2) explains: "I was taken with six children from my school. When we reached the base, we were all separated and I myself since then was alone." Another informant (11F6) states: "I was taken from my village with eight other children. One of the boys had to do something very bad. The rebels told him to use his mother. Then, when he was finished, he had to chop her fingers and the rebels smashed the baby. This boy was dead inside after that day. The rebels said he would be a good fighter and was now part of the RENAMO family, because his old family no longer existed."

Furthermore, field research supported Van Maanen's assumption that divestiture socialization processes are mostly seen when recruits first enter the group, or just before they reach important inclusionary boundaries for which a test of worthiness may have to be passed (1977). At the point of entry into RENAMO, child recruits were often ordered to violate their family and/or community members and they were relocated to unfamiliar areas as the rebels wanted to burn all their bridges with the past. Then, before child soldiers could become part of the military base, they had to finish their training, undertake the initiation ceremony, and prove they had assimilated with the group.

This highlights that "divestiture processes, in effect, remold the person and, therefore, are powerful ways for organizations and occupations to control the values of incoming members. It is such processes which lie at the heart of most professional training thus helping to explain why professionals appear to be so deeply and permanently socialized. For, once a person has successfully completed a difficult divestiture process and has constructed something of a new identity based on the role to which the divestiture process was directed, there are strong forces toward the maintenance of the new identity" (Van Maanen, 1977:67). This clarifies why RENAMO used organizational socialization; it encouraged child soldiers to adopt new identities and become loyal to the group. Hence, it led to high levels of allegiance. These were further increased by the fact that most child soldiers adopted new names while they were part of RENAMO, often associating themselves with dangerous animals such as lions and crocodiles.

The findings elaborated upon in this section are supported by Boothby's research, describing "how RENAMO socialized children into violence. Adults relied on physical abuse and humiliation as the main tools of indoctrination. In the first phase of indoctrination, RENAMO members attempted to harden the children emotionally by punishing anyone who offered help or displayed feelings for others, thus conditioning them not to conspire to question the group's authority. Children were then encouraged to become abusers themselves. A progressive series of tasks—taking the gun apart and putting it back together, shooting rifles next to their ears to get them used to the sounds, killing cows—culminated in requests to kill unarmed human beings. Children were expected to assist adult soldiers without question or emotion. Those that resisted were often killed. Those that did well became junior "chiefs" or garnered other rewards such as extra food or more comfortable housing. Upon reaching the final stages of training, normally after their first murder, RENAMO marked the occasion with ceremonies that resembled traditional rites of passage. This process of mimicking traditional ceremonies appeared to be aimed at usurping children's ties to their families, communities, and traditional ideas of right and wrong" (Boothby et al., 2006:157).

Van Maanen's theory of these six different processes of socialization claims that the tactics are interlinked and that their impact is a result of their mix, making the effects on new recruits cumulative. In addition, they might enhance or neutralize each other, depending on how they are used by the socializing agent. (1977). Analyzing the tactics used by RENAMO, one can indeed derive that these enhanced and reinforced each other. This ensured that new child recruits were subject to effective organizational socialization, which created allegiance, control, obedience, loyalty, motivation and resilience to RENAMO. The next section will provide a more detailed analysis of socialization processes within RENAMO and their effects.

### **RENAMO Socialization: A Threefold Analytical Challenge**

As done in the previous case study chapters as well, Checkel's (2005) theory on the threefold analytic challenge will be used in this section to further reveal socialization processes used within RENAMO. The exact mechanisms used by RENAMO will be identified and an analysis of the different types of internalization among RENAMO child soldiers will be provided. This will eventually reveal whether socialized RENAMO child soldiers demonstrated different behavior. This threefold analysis will provide a clear overview of the effects and consequences of socialization within RENAMO. It will reveal whether a shift occurs away from a logic of consequences and toward a logic of appropriateness.

### *Socialization Mechanisms Present within RENAMO and the Conditions of Their Operation*

Field research and extensive literature reviews revealed that socialization has been a truly efficient tool to engage child soldiers with RENAMO. As explained before, in comparison to adults, children are generally considered vulnerable, naïve and susceptible to outside influences. This enabled RENAMO to teach children to become part of the group and create a sense of belonging while they were growing up with the rebels. Socialization was a key aspect of this process and, as already introduced in the previous section, a variety of socialization mechanisms were used to achieve this. To indicate these, this section will address the following question: which socialization mechanisms were present within RENAMO and what were the conditions of their operation?

As done in previous chapters, Grusec and Hastings's (2007) definition will be used in order to answer which socialization mechanisms were present within RENAMO and under which conditions they operated. Their definition of socialization "refers to processes whereby naive individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations" (2007:13). Using a combination of this definition and Checkel's (2005) theory as a starting point, I will analyze which skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations were taught to child soldiers within RENAMO. Additionally, I highlight the methods used to achieve this.

#### *Skills*

Socialization processes are designed to transmit culture from each generation to the next. This is often achieved by training for particular roles in specific occupations (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). Within RENAMO, training was certainly important. Whether recruited by force or not, RENAMO child soldiers who were physically considered capable to fight received military training. This was generally from the age of nine. They were relocated to specific training bases where they were taught a wide range of combat skills. They learned how to use arms and ammunition, lay land mines, operate according to specific strategies and tactics, and how particular targets should be approached. According to Roesch RENAMO child soldiers were most often used to attacks civilian targets. He states: "after undergoing basic military training—which involves a high degree of physical and psychological deprivation—older

children are integrated into separate military units under the command of adult combatants. These child units are used primarily in attacks against civilian targets and in resupply missions for the bases, and only rarely in direct combat with Mozambican government forces” (Roesch, 1992:472). In addition to roles as combatants, RENAMO child soldiers were often used for looting food and clothing, cooking, cleaning, registration, portage, herding cattle, guarding the civilian population to prevent escapes, spying and patrolling. Senior rebels and people in the civilian base taught them skills related to their responsibility. Training for these skills, was less strict and intense compared to the military skills taught in separate training bases. Still, these children remained under strict supervision as their performance and skills were continuously observed by their seniors. A select group of child soldiers was used for medical aid purposes and was taught skills to perform as nurses who would care for RENAMO’s wounded. However, in the division of tasks, commanders and other senior rebels made sure child soldiers were allocated with responsibilities that were in line with their capabilities. Hence, they aimed for maximum performance of the group.

### *Behavioral Patterns*

Newly recruited child soldiers immediately became subject to RENAMO’s strict rules that determined behavioral patterns within the group. They were taught a specific set of rules to ensure they would behave correctly, which, according to Weinstein (2007), is necessary for maintaining internal discipline and hence essential for the survival of a rebel group. Structures of internal control enable the realization of disciplined behavior. The top commanders and leadership designed general rules for their recruits, that had to be obeyed. For instance, all child soldiers had to obey their superiors, fulfill their responsibilities and stay with the group. None of the RENAMO rebels were allowed to mingle with civilians. They were held in isolated bases, as their commanders feared that tactics would be revealed to the enemy. This, in combination with other strict laws regarding the interaction with the population, allowed RENAMO commanders to keep a tight grip on their rebels and simultaneously envelop the group in a powerful mystique (Wilson, 1992).

Still, field research indicated that each base had additional rules in place. This suggests that the base commanders had a certain freedom in leading their group and had a personal influence on the behavior of their recruits. This could partly explain why the reputation and behavior of the rebels varied across the regions of Mozambique. Here are some examples of rules indicated by my informants:

- RENAMO members were forbidden to leave the movement
- Discussions about and attempts to escape were forbidden
- Rebels should continue fighting until all RENAMO’s goals were achieved

- The rebels should ensure that FRELIMO stopped humiliating the population and fight until all the people of Mozambique were equal
- Girls were not allowed in the military base during their menstruation
- Combatants could not have sex before or during battles
- Rebels always had to bring something back to the base from an operation or mission
- Each rebel knew what his or her tasks were and had to fulfill these
- Any form of defecting was prohibited and RENAMO spirits would kill the defector
- Every rebel on the base was responsible for fighting
- It was forbidden to betray the movement
- It was forbidden to pass information from the base to other people
- All orders from the commanders and RENAMO leadership had to be followed
- The rebels had to show confidence in everything they did
- Rebels had to loot what they could, nothing should be wasted
- Rebels had to fulfill their missions: only then they could return
- Rebels should never give their guns to others, as the guns were RENAMO property
- When rebels reached a community, they had to tell them what they wanted and get it from them; otherwise their stomachs would get problems
- Rebels were prohibited from sleeping with girls
- Male rebels were not allowed to have relationships with women, unless the commander had explicitly appointed or approved a woman
- The spirits always had to be respected
- If rebels did not fully respect spirit mediums, a spell would be cast on them.

### *Values*

As indicated by the last two rules and earlier sections of this chapter, spiritual values were of great significance within RENAMO. This already started with the establishment of RENAMO bases. When an area was selected, RENAMO visited the traditional land chiefs “in order to consult with, and seek the support of, the chief’s ancestral spirits, who are deemed the legitimate ‘owners’ of the land” (Roesch, 1992:472). Only then a base could be established. On all the bases, honoring spirits remained an important aspect of the RENAMO culture and was part of the daily lives of the rebels. On an individual basis, RENAMO rebels often carried out ceremonies and spiritual offerings for their household spirits and asked them to provide protection (Schafer, 2001). The importance of honoring spirits is further stressed by Roesch: “no major decisions, and especially no military decisions, are ever



undertaken without a prior consultation with the spirits” (1992:472). Thus, the spirits and ancestors of Matsangaissa, RENAMO’s first leader, were often consulted by the rebels for guidance and assistance (Roesch, 1992). Field research further indicated that if RENAMO members did not respect these spirits, it was commonly believed that these rebels would die. Almost all of my informants acknowledged these beliefs, and indicated that they adopted these values.

Simultaneously, traditional spirit mediums played a significant role within RENAMO. Field research indicated that each base had spirit mediums associated with it. The mediums were treated well and respected by the RENAMO rebels, who would visit them when ill and consult them before every battle. These findings are supported by Wilson (1992). The mediums were “magically protecting RENAMO bases, making them invisible to FRELIMO soldiers, ‘vaccinating’ RENAMO combatants to make them bullet-proof, identifying witches amongst the civilian population and captives contemplating flight. All residents on RENAMO bases are obliged to participate on a regular basis in such religious ceremonies—ceremonies in which the ancestral spirits ideologically legitimate RENAMO’s war against FRELIMO” (Roesch, 1992:472). These ceremonies were believed to have significant effects on child soldiers as well, as the spiritual mediums would ensure that (new) recruits would be looked after by protective spirits. Their protection would be enhanced by magical charms: rebels would be protected against bullets, believe they could transform them into water, become invisible or even fly. It was also believed that recruits fought better if they were protected by spiritual mediums. In order to complete their protection rebels often drank goat blood before going to battle. Also, spirit mediums required the organs of babies to make protective medicine (Roesch, 1992).

The strong spiritual beliefs indicate that spirit mediums became important parts of the lives of RENAMO rebels. Roesch supports this: “RENAMO forces treat this whole traditional religious discourse as an integral part of the struggle and as the central element of the movement’s mobilization ideology” (1992:474). It was commonly believed among my informants, that those who did not pay respect to spirit mediums and those who were disobedient, would be put under a spell and die. Respect was also a key feature within the general hierarchy of the rebel group. Dhlakama was leading a strongly hierarchical organization, in which all the rebels had to pay respect to their superiors. Disobedience and disrespect were punished immediately and strongly discouraged. Child soldiers were monitored if they behaved according to these values, and most of my informants recalled adopting the values as they melted into the group.

### *Motivations*

A combination of positive as well as negative incentives was used to create a cohesive core and allegiance among RENAMO's child soldiers. Most rebels "understood the reasons for the war, but some had different ideas about the objectives: 'Some thought RENAMO was just going to kill FRELIMO. But the Commissars taught that that wasn't the way—the goal was to eliminate the existing system, to make FRELIMO accept its errors and abandon its ways'" (Manning, 1998:177). Although most of my informants had been recruited by force and captured during attacks, some indicated they believed in the purpose RENAMO was fighting for and therefore joined the movement. Others were promised scholarships, jobs, education and money, which motivated them to join the rebels. Besides that, RENAMO was often seen as an opportunity to escape the despair and frustration of rural daily life. Geffray also argues this: "In truth the recruits simultaneously escape the retrograde constraints of domestic life and the contempt and lack of trust of local lineage notables and party and administrative officials. All the authorities that had blocked their destiny, who deprived them of a future and reduced to nothing their hopes of satisfying their social aspirations, suddenly disappeared from the horizon immediately after the first few days of capture" (1991:76). This account is supported by Hanlon (1984), who states that press-ganged recruits were induced to stay within the group due to the excitement they experienced as a rebel. Their life had improved in comparison to the poor and dull life in the Mozambican countryside. Schafer provides a similar statement: "former guerrilla accounts included a combination of resignation, lack of alternatives, the possibility of gaining access to survival goods, and an element of political conviction which was not insignificant. They emphasized feelings of deprivation from being away from their families and normal life, although at the same time they expressed some excitement at the new life" (2001:236).

Moreover, Abrahamsson and Nilsson (1995) argue that the majority of RENAMO recruits were people with lower education levels and living standards than average. This is explained by the fact that these people were often too poor to flee their communities, which made them more vulnerable and hence more likely to become subject to RENAMO attacks. The researchers also found that RENAMO's most loyal recruits in terms of years spent with the group, were people who had the least education and those who had been worst off economically before the conflict (1995:90). This supports the indications that were confronted during field research: namely that RENAMO commanders predominantly, yet not alone, encouraged the recruitment of children, youth and the poor. Children seemed particularly interesting targets, as it was almost certain they had little education, which would make them more likely to become loyal to the group.

Although the researchers mainly highlight motivations to join the rebels, motivations to stay with the rebels were equally important. During RENAMO's early years, these had often been the salaries paid by the Rhodesians (Schafer, 2001), and South Africans (Minter, 1989). However, this changed when support dried up and RENAMO had little to offer their recruits. Manning indicates several motivating factors that contributed to the decision to stay with RENAMO during later periods. These were amongst others: "fear and the risks of deserting (this included not only the fear that they would be killed or punished for running away from RENAMO, but that if they returned they would be viewed suspiciously by FRELIMO); the appeal of a lifestyle free of conventional constraints, or perhaps more importantly, the freedom to take on a new identity and wipe clean the slate of the past; genuine dissatisfaction with the FRELIMO government, or conflicts with particular local officials; and finally...the opportunity for socioeconomic advancement" (1998:174).

These motivations were all suggested during interviews with my informants, who stated that they contributed to the development of ties to and within the rebel group. Many informants were convinced that if RENAMO would win the war, they would be provided with jobs, education and money. Promises were hence a significant motivating factor for child soldiers. Others stated they were motivated to remain with the rebels because they had no other opportunities, because they had obtained a rank, or because the commanders threatened to execute them if they tried to leave. Another one (9M12) said: "The situation in the group was better compared to life as a civilian. I always thought the rebels had no food and clothes, but when I joined they offered me food, clothes and shelter. I had many things during the war that I could never get at home. I also got a rank, so I was sure I wanted to stay. My life was easier and better in the bush." Interviews often indicated that child soldiers remained with RENAMO due to the fact that their guns gave them power and control, and their access to free, looted goods. They often came from impoverished families and had no prospects for better futures. This transformed many RENAMO child recruits into determined soldiers. However, it should be noted that during interviews with my informants it became apparent that the provision of goods and power depended on the position of the rebel in question. Higher ranking child soldiers would receive much more compared to low-ranking children; they would receive supplies only sporadically. The motivations of child soldiers for remaining with RENAMO thereby varied.

### *Means of Teaching*

According to Grusec and Hastings' (2007) definition, social skills, social understandings and emotional maturity among child soldiers would be of essential value for the interaction with fellow group members and necessary to fit in with the

functioning of RENAMO. Different means of teaching were used within RENAMO to achieve this. Fear was an important aspect to encourage internal discipline. As explained by one of my informants (12F4): “When the enemy started shooting at us I was very scared. I remember I was trembling and I wanted to cry. But then the commander shouted at me that I had to shoot or he would kill me. And so I did start shooting, and I was proud of myself. I was no longer afraid.” Although the commander of this girl soldier only threatened with execution in this case, actual punishment represented a significant means of teaching as well. Whenever child soldiers would disobey, showed a lack of motivation or showed other undesirable behavior, RENAMO commanders would be quick to punish them. The types of punishment varied: “one of the most important controls is the threat of execution or other severe punishment” (Minter, 1989:5). Although (the threat of) execution seemed most common within RENAMO, various other types of punishment were mentioned by my informants. Predominant were imprisonment, torture, beatings and starvation. When rebels were sent to prison, this often implied they were kept in a hole in the ground or a hut. Interviews revealed they were usually deprived of food in these circumstances and some of them remained tied up for 100 days in a row.

Field research indicated that punishments were carried out in public, as to set an example for other rebels not to misbehave. Victims of punishment were often mutilated with machetes, axes or the bayonet of a rebel’s gun. The witnesses to the punishment were often explicitly told that the same faith would await them if they disobeyed RENAMO rules. Young support this: “Internal discipline is harsh and brutal and punishment is exemplary, knives or axes being preferred to firearms” (1990:500). One of my informants (16M2) said about the punishments: “The punishment was too bad. If you were lucky you would only be deprived of food. But if you were unlucky...this was better avoided. They would beat you, kill you. Human rights don’t matter in this situation, it was full on war and rules do not apply, only those of the rebels. Everybody knew the rules. If you break them, you be punished. Always in public, same with the rewards, to set examples for other people with good or bad ideas and teach us.”

As indicated by this boy soldier, rewards, although rather limited, also played a role within RENAMO. Commanders taught their child recruits that they would be rewarded if they showed “big men” behavior. This was particularly done to encourage active engagement with the group and provided children with incentives to stay with the group. For instance, if child soldiers managed to loot a substantial amount of goods, caught high ranking enemies or won important battles, celebrations were often organized. The rebels would dance, sing, eat and drink together during these occasions. Another type of reward was obtaining a rank. In most battalions, ranks were solely provided to skilled child soldiers who kept demonstrating their

engagement with RENAMO, had a pro-active attitude and took their responsibilities as given by their superiors. In fact, the rebels had not much to offer their child soldiers. “In the absence of any rewards in the leadership’s gift—other than the guerillas’ access to a gun, loot, and a relatively well-organized system of first aid—violence is probably the most effective and cheapest means to obtain obedience within the ranks, and outside it” (Hall, 1990:54). Hence, to add to their means of teaching, Dhlakama organized for his rebels to be briefed about the struggle. Field research indicated that the rebel leader would hold occasional speeches or spoke on the radio, teaching the rebels about RENAMO’s purpose and the Mozambican situation. These were obligatory, political meetings and all child soldiers were ordered to listen how Dhlakama tried to motivate them by saying they were fighting for capitalism and free lives in the bush. Using a combination of the means of teaching described here, RENAMO aimed to ensure that their child soldiers became competent in functioning as full members of the group. The broader analysis provided in this section indicates that in addition to teaching, a wide variety of socialization mechanisms were present and operated by the rebels.

### *The Achievement of Internalization Type I and II*

As addressed earlier, Checkel (2005) states that socialization leads to Type I or II internalization. The first type refers to “learning a role—acquiring the knowledge that enables them to act in accordance with expectations—irrespective of whether they like the role or agree with it. The key is the agents knowing what is socially accepted in a given setting or community. Following a logic of appropriateness, then, means simply that conscious instrumental calculation has been replaced by conscious role playing” (2005:804). “On the other hand, following a logic of appropriateness may go beyond role playing and imply that agents accept community or organizational norms as “the right thing to do.” We call this Type II internalization/socialization, and it implies that agents adopt the interests, or even possibly the identity, of the community of which they are part. Conscious instrumental calculation has now been replaced by “taken-for-grantedness”” (Checkel, 2005:804). This section will use these definitions in order to address the following question: did internalization, Type I or II, actually occur within RENAMO?

In-depth interviews with my 65 informants revealed that internalization Type I and II were both achieved by child soldiers within RENAMO. Whether Type I or II was achieved, seemed to depend on several factors. One of these was age: as with the LRA, most children abducted at a particularly young age (under 12 years old) were most likely to achieve Type II internalization while they were part of RENAMO. Whereas this could partly be explained by their lack of socialization experiences as a civilian and the fact that they grew up learning to believe RENAMO was doing the

right thing, Geffray argued about these young recruits: “they become aware that they are not captives like the others, that they are not submitted to the authority of captors who intend to reduce them to a servile condition, but, on the contrary, to men whose intention is to make of them (the youths) their peers and equals. They become conscious of the possibility of being integrated into an independent social milieu, completely new and very special—an army in battle” (1991:76). This explanation seems a valid point, as several of my informants expressed similar experiences. Several male and female informants stated they realized that if they cooperated with their commanders, their situations would improve and they would receive benefits instead of punishment. While most continued their cooperation for several years, this eventually made them adopt the identity of a RENAMO member: it was the new family they belonged to. Honwana (2007) explains this as tactical agency. She argues that, in order to cope with the immediate circumstances of the war, child soldiers exercised tactical agency. This was clearly seen during field research. As one informant (9F6) said: “I had to carry on with my life and needed protection. So I decided to become a rebel, because then they would take care of me.”

For some of my informants it seemed not difficult to achieve Type II internalization, as they had volunteered to join RENAMO. As one of my informants (14M7) said: “When the rebels attacked my town, I joined them. I wanted to join RENAMO because I agreed with their politics. Our country had to change and joining them was the way forward. My parents agreed so I went fighting for my people. I never wanted to escape. FRELIMO has mistreated us, and I wanted revenge. I want to change the system and with RENAMO we were working for a better country.” Still, Type I internalization was common too, as noted by another informant (11F5): “I decided to fight active, because then we would win and I could go back home. The base never felt like home. I did my duties so the commander would not beat me, but I missed my mother.”

As was also the case within the LRA, gender did seem to play a significant role in whether internalization Type I or II was achieved. Field research revealed that this was mainly due to the additional violence girls faced while they were part of RENAMO. Whereas all child soldiers were frequently confronted with extreme violence, girls were also raped often. This could be an explanation why, among my informants, girl soldiers typically reached internalization Type I. They often complained about the sexual violence they endured, which made them want to leave the movement. This was especially the case for girls who were repeatedly (gang) raped by different men and forced into loose sexual relationships. The experience of my female informants who had married a commander within RENAMO was very different. These girls reported significant benefits and improvements, and became part of the movement more easily. One of them (10F13) said: “When I was 12, I

married a commander in the bush. We had two children together and developed a good relationship. I was very lucky because I was no longer used by other men when I was with him, he took care of me and we started a family. I forgot about life in the village, because now I had my own family. I stayed for 13 years and RENAMO was my own life.” The difference in these accounts indicates that (gang) rape is very likely to have played a determining role regarding the internalization of girl soldiers.

The benefits child soldiers experienced when they became part of RENAMO often accelerated internalization. As one of my informants (13M9) stated: “After I became a real part of RENAMO and behaved like a big man, I had many privileges I never knew. I had status, they called me commander, I had servants, I could have a wife, and my weapon gave me all the power I needed. I had become the superior to my community elders who had always dominated me. I feel I belonged to the group, I never wanted to leave anymore.” Another one (11M3) said: “My life with RENAMO was good, I had no problems and I was treated well. I was very poor before the war, but now I had food. I was proud when I was fighting, especially when I accomplished my missions, then we would sometimes celebrate.”

Even forced recruits reported the existence and/or development of a high morale while they were part of RENAMO. Roesch also explains this phenomenon: “A certain percentage of those kidnapped by RENAMO eventually come to accept this harsh and precarious existence and give up the idea of escape. Faced with the prospects of returning to the poverty, insecurity, and anomie of their former war-torn lives, the relative stability and subsistence security of a semi-nomadic, military life of pillage, of the sort offered by RENAMO, becomes preferable for many people” (1992:471). This argument is supported by Geffray: “the life of adventure and the exaltation of war was by far preferable to the insipidness of domestic life, and many must have considered the years they spent living in a bush camp, in the company of a submissive wife and their comrades-in-arms, to be the best hours of their lives” (1991:77). Although some of my informants spoke of comparable experiences, Geffray’s statement seems rather biased: it fails to include the negative experiences that child soldiers had, thereby giving a rather unbalanced view of RENAMO rebels.

Most of my informants achieved Type II internalization. That this was quite common is noted by Manning (1998), who describes how many RENAMO members who had initially been forced to join the movement, decided to stay affiliated when RENAMO transformed into a political party after the war. Although the majority of my informants were coerced into the movement, most of them expressed that they believed to be rightfully fighting against FRELIMO and were motivated to fight for the future of their country. As will be further elaborated upon in the next section, their internalization diminished only slowly once they returned to society, which led to significant challenges.

### *Socialized Actors Demonstrating Different Behavior*

Do socialized actors behave differently than they did before they were socialized, or, than non-socialized actors do? Analyzing the outcomes of socialization processes within RENAMO, these proved highly effective. Child soldiers who had been socialized within RENAMO indeed demonstrated different behavior as compared to actors who had not been socialized by the rebels. Most of them portrayed violent behavior, even after they had left the rebel group, most likely due to the extreme violence they had become used to within RENAMO. As described in the previous section, child soldiers adapted their behavior while they were part of RENAMO. Behaving like a 'big man' and hence adopting the identity of a rebel enabled them to avoid punishment and become more likely to receive benefits. In melting into RENAMO, informants explained that this felt as if they became family members of the rebels. Most of them said that the longer they stayed with the group, the more loyal they became towards RENAMO. Analyses of their accounts and the lack of material rewards indicate that the thorough socialization processes within RENAMO had significant effects on child soldiers, even on those who had been forcibly recruited. The group efficiently transformed children into soldiers.

One can imagine that these developments had serious consequences when child soldiers left RENAMO. Showing great similarities to the outcomes of my own field research, Boothby's study (2006) on RENAMO boy soldiers found that some boys kept acting as RENAMO commanders once they had left the group, ordering other children to do things and steal goods for them. Taking whatever they wanted had become normal to them, and they did not consider whether this would be right or wrong. They fought over many things yet over time their behavior started to normalize and they became more supportive and cooperative towards each other. With time, leadership dynamics changed and the former boy soldiers became a more cohesive group. Their aggressive behavior subsided and made place for social behavior. The amount of time the boys had spent with RENAMO had a significant influence on their adjustments. "In general, boys who spent six months or less with RENAMO (72 percent) appeared to emerge with their basic trust in human beings and social values more or less intact. Although all of these boys had been exposed to severe trauma, and some also had participated in abuse and violence, members of this group described themselves as victims rather than members of RENAMO" (Boothby et al., 2006:163).

Similar results were found during field research. My informants stated they had remained aggressive and violent for some time after the war had ended. How long this behavior lasted mainly depended on how long the child had been part of RENAMO. The research indicated that the longer child soldiers had been with the rebels, the more difficult it seemed for them to adjust to civilian life and show



according behavior. Children who had spent relatively short periods within RENAMO and reached internalization Type I, were relatively quick to leave their rebel behavior behind and re-adapt to the norms and values of their society. This was different for Type II internalization child soldiers who had started identifying themselves as members of RENAMO and assimilated their self-images to those of their commanders. As Boothby's research (2006) also indicated, the children who had spent more time with RENAMO had gone through some serious changes. He writes about their rehabilitation: "They continued to exhibit disobedient and uncooperative behaviors during the first three months at the center. Despite their ability to articulate the belief that violence was wrong, these boys continued to use aggression as a principal means of exerting control and social influence." One child stated that RENAMO used people "like animals to achieve its objectives. He stated that he thought this was wrong. The next afternoon, however, this same boy was observed beating up a smaller child because this child refused to steal food for him" (Boothby et al., 2006:164). My informants told similar accounts. During interviews they repeatedly stated that they slowly started realizing that violent behavior was not right. Still, they also stated that they continued their violent behavior, despite this realization. Only over time did their behavior become normalized.

As Boothby claims "there appears to be a child soldiering duration-of-time threshold that is correlated with individual well-being and social functioning outcomes" (Boothby et al., 2006:165). My own field research in Mozambique led to the same conclusion. The longer children stayed with RENAMO and were subject to the rebel socialization processes, the more and longer they suffered from behavioral problems and reintegration challenges. Also, the younger a child was at time of recruitment and the higher the rank a child soldier achieved, the more difficulties he or she faced when trying to leave the war behind. Almost all former child soldiers stated they had had aggressive, violent and disruptive behavior for certain periods of time. Many of them became addicted to alcohol and/or drugs and threatened the people around them. If they managed to find a job, which was often an incredible challenge due to their lack of education, it was often very difficult for them to stay employed, due to their violent behavior. These factors indicate that the behavior of socialized RENAMO child soldiers significantly differed from non-socialized actors.

In addition, many former child soldiers who were with RENAMO for several years found it frustrating that they lost their status after the war. Instead of being respected, they often felt stigmatized and isolated by their communities. Some of my informants said they still felt like members of RENAMO instead of civilians, and they often stayed together with other former rebels. All of my informants indicated that they have had thoughts and memories about traumatic experiences since they left RENAMO. As also found by Boothby (2006), some claimed the war was still going on

in their minds, preventing them from leading a normal life even though the war ended twenty years ago. As a result, most had demonstrated withdrawn and unpredictable behavior, and were suffering from violent mood swings. That the internalization which resulted from RENAMO's socialization processes had far reaching consequences becomes clear when addressing the long-term effects: forty percent of my informants said they were still suffering from nightmares related to the war almost twenty years after the conflict had ended. This signals that the socialization within rebel groups needs to be thoroughly addressed when attempting to reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities. To enable an outlook on positive future prospects for former child soldiers, its effects need to be reversed.

## **Part III**

# **From In-Group Socialization To Reintegration**

# 8

## Socialization within African Rebel Groups:

### A Comparison

#### *Effects, similarities and differences*

The previous chapters have shown the characteristics and use of child soldiers by the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. Each of these four African rebel groups is different and unique, yet there are many similarities regarding the socialization processes within the groups. Although little was known about socialization within rebel groups, the case study chapters revealed that these processes play a significant role in the creation of allegiance and prove to be an efficient tool for engaging children with these rebel organizations. The children were transformed into rebels after a sequence of socialization processes through which they learned to identify with the group. This chapter will compare the four rebel groups by highlighting the similarities and differences of their socialization mechanisms. Moreover, it will compare the effects that socialization processes have had within these rebel groups and analyze to what extent internalization type I or II was achieved. Ultimately, the chapter aims to provide an indication whether factors such as age, gender, motivations and the period spent within the rebel group have significant effects on the outcomes of socialization processes.

#### **Transforming Children into Soldiers**

The case study analyses show that socialization processes were essential mechanisms at work within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. Socialization taught children recruited by these rebel groups how to become part of the group and created a sense of belonging. As many of these children grew up within the rebel groups, they eventually adopted the identity of the group. The case-study chapters have shown that various socialization mechanisms were used to achieve this. In each group, experiencing violence, as well as formal, informal and organizational socialization played distinctive roles in the transformation of children into soldiers. These processes often complemented, reinforced and enhanced each other, and their combination seemed to provide the glue that enabled the establishment of cohesive rebel groups. The following sections will illuminate and compare the socialization mechanisms present within the four rebel organizations. Here I will work on the basis of the definition offered by Grusec and Hastings: “socialization refers to processes

whereby naive individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations” (2007:13). The skills, behavioral patterns, values, motivations and means of teaching within each of the rebel groups will be compared, providing an overview of the socialization effects on their child recruits.

To present some of the findings indicated during field research on the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO, the following tables reflect the outcomes of the interviews conducted with 261 former child soldiers and commanders related to these groups. Table 8.1 gives their average ages of recruitment and return to society, average periods spent within the rebel groups, and the percentages of DDRR participation. The distinctive outcomes for boy and girl soldiers are reflected in table 8.2 and 8.3.

	<b>Boys Sample</b>	<b>Girls Sample</b>	<b>Average recruit- ment age</b>	<b>Average time with rebels</b>	<b>Average return age</b>	<b>Average DDRR participation</b>
<b>LRA – Uganda</b>	36	30	13.7 years	4 years	17.5 years	49.5%
<b>LURD – Liberia</b>	35	30	11.4 years	2 years	13.1 years	53.1%
<b>RUF – Sierra Leone</b>	34	31	12.3 years	5.4 years	17.6 years	47.3%
<b>RENAMO Mozam- bique</b>	37	28	9.8 years	7.4 years	17.2 years	44%
<b>Total / Average</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>11.8 years</b>	<b>4.7 years</b>	<b>16.4 years</b>	<b>48.5%</b>

Table 8.1 Overview field evidence. Total sample size: 261

	<b>Average recruitment age</b>	<b>Average time with rebels</b>	<b>Average return age</b>	<b>Average DDRR participation</b>
<b>LRA</b>	12.6 years	5 years	17.6 years	43%
<b>LURD</b>	11.7 years	1.9 years	13.1 years	43.3%
<b>RUF</b>	11.9 years	5.2 years	17.1 years	38.7%
<b>RENAMO</b>	9.4 years	7.1 years	16.5 years	39.3%
<b>Average</b>	<b>11.4 years</b>	<b>4.8 years</b>	<b>16.1 years</b>	<b>41.1%</b>

Table 8.2 LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO girl soldiers. Sample size: 119

	<b>Average recruitment age</b>	<b>Average time with rebels</b>	<b>Average return age</b>	<b>Average DDRR participation</b>
<b>LRA</b>	14.6 years	2.9 years	17.5 years	56%
<b>LURD</b>	11 years	2.1 years	13.1 years	62.9%
<b>RUF</b>	12.6 years	5.5 years	18.1 years	55.9%
<b>RENAMO</b>	10.2 years	7.6 years	17.8 years	48.6%
<b>Average</b>	<b>12.1 years</b>	<b>4.5 years</b>	<b>16.6 years</b>	<b>55.9%</b>

Table 8.3 LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO boy soldiers. Sample size: 142

Before we move on to a detailed analysis of the socialization processes, the following table shows certain differences and similarities regarding the characteristics of the rebel groups. The figures provided in this comparative overview are estimates based on a combination of field research and literature reviews, and provide an indication of the situation within the rebel groups. These are not to be interpreted as final and conclusive, as the actual percentages may have varied in reality. As explained before, it is unfortunately impossible to guarantee full accuracy of these numbers as the chaos of war has severely limited detailed recordings of child soldier involvement in each conflict. The fact that many child soldiers did not participate in DDRR programs yet quietly returned to society to lead anonymous lives, further jeopardized this. As a result, the exact number of child soldiers that have been involved with these rebel groups remains unknown. Still, with these numbers I aim to reflect the most realistic image possible at this stage, as they are based on thorough literature reviews and hundreds of eye witness accounts.

	<b>LRA – Uganda</b>	<b>LURD – Liberia</b>	<b>RUF – Sierra Leone</b>	<b>RENAMO – Mozambique</b>
<b>Time period</b>	1986—ongoing	1999—2003	1991—2002	1976—1992
<b>Structure</b>	Military	Military	Military	Military
<b>Ideology</b>	Political/Spiritual	Political	Political	Political/Spiritual
<b>Leader</b>	Joseph Kony	Sekou Conneh	Foday Sankoh	Afonso Dhlakama
<b>Civilian support</b>	Initially high, significantly decreased over time to no support	Varied widely, little towards end of the war	Initially high, significantly decreased over time	Initially moderate, decreased over time. Regional differences
<b>Child soldier use</b>	Very high, deliberate	High, deliberate	Very high, deliberate	High, deliberate
<b>Youngest recruit</b>	7 years	4 years	7 years	5 years
<b>Recruitment methods</b>	Predominantly forced, some voluntary	Voluntary, partly forced	Voluntary and forced	Voluntary and forced
<b>Incentives</b>	Predominantly fear	Varied widely	Varied widely	Varied widely
<b>Civilian violence</b> ⤴ <b>Sexual</b> ⤴ <b>Punishment</b> ⤴ <b>Torture</b>	Severe Severe Severe	Started moderate, increased to severe towards the end of the war	Severe Severe Severe	Varied from moderate to severe, depending on region
<b>In group violence</b> ⤴ <b>Sexual</b> ⤴ <b>Punishment</b> ⤴ <b>Torture</b>	Severe Severe Severe	Limited Severe Severe	Severe Severe Severe	Severe Severe Severe
<b>Brutality</b>	Severe	Extreme	Extreme	Severe
<b>Child soldier / adult ratio</b>	Estimates range from 22 to 80 percent children	Estimates range from 53 to 70 percent children	Estimates range from 50 to 80 percent children	Estimates range from 27 to 40 percent children
<b>Boy / girl soldier ratio</b>	Estimated between 60/40 and 70/30 percent	Estimated between 60/40 and 70/30 percent	Estimated between 60/40 and 70/30 percent	Estimated between 65/35 and 80/20 percent
<b>Drug/alcohol use</b>	Low	Very high	High	High
<b>Discipline</b>	Very high throughout the conflict	Initially high, significantly decreased towards end of the conflict	High throughout the conflict	High throughout the conflict
<b>Exit</b>	Death, rescue or desertion	Death, end of war	Death, end of war desertion	Death, end of war, desertion

Table 8.4 A Comparison of African rebel groups and child soldier use

### *Formal and Informal Socialization*

As shown in the case-study chapters, formal and informal socialization were significant aspects of each of the rebel groups, aiming to bring about the re-birth of children as soldiers. These types of socialization started immediately after the recruitment of child soldiers. Military and ideological training was a main aspect of formal socialization. Although the extent and intensity varied, military training of child soldiers was used within all the groups. LURD did make exceptions to this towards the end of its struggle, as children were recruited on the spot and were expected to start fighting straight away without being trained. There was simply no time or opportunity to invest in training. Within all the groups, military training seemed rather basic. Children were generally taught how to handle certain weapons and how to shoot, and sometimes learned about military tactics and strategies.

Additional training was provided to RENAMO, RUF, and LRA child soldiers who were assigned with particular responsibilities, such as medical staff. This implies that, compared to the other groups, training within LURD was most basic. A logical explanation for this may be the relative short life span of the group and the high intensity of fighting during their existence, not allowing much time for (additional) training of their recruits. Ideological and political training was less common than military training but still seemed to be provided by the LRA and RENAMO on a quite regular base. RUF informants even stated that all of the recruits were provided with ideological training. During these trainings the rebel leader or senior commanders would usually preach about the reasons to fight and objectives to reach. All the rebel groups that provided ideological training stressed the marginalization of the population during such meetings. Spiritual beliefs would also often be highlighted during these occasions

Informal socialization played a role within each of the rebel groups as well. Initiation rituals and ceremonies are examples of these. Within all four rebel organizations, initiation rituals were conducted to confirm new recruits as members of the group. These rituals were often similar to traditional rites of passage and were designed to instill a sense of belonging to the group among new recruits. Interviews revealed that within each of these groups, the rituals allowed for the 're-birth' of children and transformation into soldiers. They severed the family ties of the child and symbolized the start of a new life with a new family: the rebel group. Besides that, war and victory songs were used to instill a common sense of identity among the rebels. Child soldiers were obliged to participate and it seemed as if the pressure of the group eventually contributed to making them feel part of the rebels. Overall, formal and informal socialization were important means to involve new recruits with the rebel groups as they established the foundations that enabled all four organizations studied here to become cohesive units.



### *Experiencing Violence*

Experiencing extreme violence is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the lives of child soldiers. Besides that, it is the most obvious similarity between LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO child soldiers. The profound effects that these experiences exerted on children within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO is sharply illustrated by their allegiance to these groups. Field research revealed that children within the different groups had comparable experiences and numerous parallels were indicated. All of my informants stated to have witnessed and suffered violence, and most of them had executed violence during their stay with the LRA, LURD, RUF or RENAMO. Most of the children who had been forcibly recruited were continuously exposed to violence, starting during their recruitment. Within each of the rebel groups, violence was used to burn the bridges with the child's family and past. However, RENAMO made some exceptions to this, sometimes keeping entire families together in the base. By contrast, the LRA, RUF, and LURD expected all of their recruits to break family ties. Life as these children once knew it was supposed to be left behind, and the rebels sought to erase their memories and civilian identities. Violence and the threat of execution were important tactics for achieving this.

Those children who chose to join the groups were generally exposed to violence once they reached the military base. They were trained to use violence and witnessed violence during the frequent public punishments and combat. Children who tried to escape the rebels were killed in front of the other child recruits, or the child recruits were ordered to kill the escapee themselves to prove they did belong to the group. Contrary to what might be expected, such violence resulted in allegiance among the child soldiers within each of these rebel groups, whether they had been recruited by force or not. The constant exposure to violence made all constraints disappear and children changed their behavioral patterns towards the demands of the group they belonged to. In order to encourage compliance to the group, experiencing violence continued during the entire stay with the rebels. Field research indicated that these processes were similar in each of the groups: within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO experiencing violence was an integral part of socialization and it resulted in strong hierarchical organizations. In addition, violence against civilians was an important aspect of the behavior of each of these rebel groups: the longer the wars raged on, the more brutal the violence exercised by the rebel groups seemed to become. Just like the RUF, LRA and LURD, "RENAMO destructiveness has progressed beyond any reasonable strategic goal and reduced the rural areas to economic devastation and social breakdown" (Hall, 1990:59). This may imply that socialization normalized violence to such an extent, that there were no limits to its use anymore.

### *Organizational Socialization*

Organizational socialization played a role within each of the rebel groups as well. The case studies revealed that each rebel group used the six tactics of organizational socialization as defined by Van Maanen (1977). Firstly, child soldiers within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO became subject to collective socialization, as they were trained in groups. Each of the rebel groups discouraged collective deviation by installing a large set of rules and a tight supervision system. If any signs of deviation were discovered, the rebels would publicly punish the suspected child in order to set an example for the other children not to misbehave or try to escape. In each case, this was highly effective as relatively few children escaped and allegiance to the group was established instead due to this socialization process of which fear was an important aspect.

Formal socialization took place through the segregation of new child recruits from rebels who were already considered to be full members of the groups. Segregation seemed to be particularly strict within the LRA and RENAMO as child recruits were often sent to special training camps that were separated from the military base. Within the RUF, and LURD new recruits were also separated from senior recruits as they stayed in different areas, yet they often remained within the same base. In all cases, the segregation was used to teach new recruits about the correct attitudes and values that were related to their new role as a rebel. During segregation all children were supervised and their developments were closely monitored so commanders could judge when they were ready to become full members. In each group children were generally allowed to join the senior rebels only once they had proved themselves. Although these were the general patterns indicated during field research, there were exceptions to these rules. Looking at LURD for instance, some children were recruited just before or during combat and there were no opportunities to train or segregate them. These children were often instructed to join the struggle straight away and hence skipped the collective and formal socialization that the majority of child soldiers underwent.

Random socialization took place within each of the groups as well. This was usually reflected in the division of ranks. Particularly within the LRA, RUF, and RENAMO, the sequence of steps leading to obtaining a rank was ambiguous and subject to change. Some rebels could stay with the groups for years without ever being promoted, while relatively new recruits could obtain a rank. Promotions often depended on the character of the child's commander, were influenced by the various situations the rebel group found itself in. There were no given criteria that needed to be passed before a rank could be achieved. This indicates that the promotional systems within the groups were rather fluid. This was also the case within LURD, yet LURD rebels were often also promoted based on the length of service, age or previous

experience. This was generally not the case within the other rebel groups, indicating that their random socialization of child soldiers was even stronger.

Variable socialization seemed to be used in rather similar ways within each of the rebel groups. Maximum anxiety was created among child soldiers in order to keep them off balance and encourage allegiance to the group. Given the chaos of war, the only sense of security these children had was the rebel group, and within that the protection of their commanders. Most children were taken far away from home and had to march two or three days through dense jungle to reach the rebel base camp. These areas were unfamiliar to them, which led to disorientation and confusion. There was generally no chance to escape and thus these children considered becoming a member of the group as their only option for survival. However, within the groups, circumstances were susceptible to change and highly volatile as well. The child soldiers had to be alert constantly and consciously act according to the laws installed by the rebels. If not, they risked severe punishment or execution, and thus variable socialization encouraged them to become allegiant to the group. Former child soldiers of each of the groups reported these feelings and situations during interviews, indicating that variable socialization was used within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO.

The effects of variable socialization can also be understood through an analysis of the Stockholm syndrome. As explained by Wessells: "Obedience may also reflect a psychological process called Stockholm syndrome, wherein captives identify with their captors. The process is named for a 1973 bank robbery in which four hostages who had initially been fearful of their captors developed a strong association with their robbers, even fearing rescuers who had come to help them. This process occurs in situations in which the captives experience a strong fear of death and have no way of escaping. That their captors, who could kill them, spare their lives, creates a strong sense of gratitude in the captives. Isolated from the outside world, they come to see their captors as good people or even as saviors, forging bonds of identification with them. A similar process may affect child soldiers, who recognize that the armed group could kill them at any moment but who see particular commanders as having saved them. The resulting gratitude can create a strong sense of loyalty and obedience to the commander" (2006:66).

Interviews with LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO child soldiers indicated that this was a common phenomenon within the groups. I quote a former boy soldier that was abducted in Liberia: "When he first take me away, I fear him every time I breath. He take me in the night, away from my village to the bush. He say I was now his boy and we go fight. When he look at me with the fire eyes I fear he will take the machete and finish me. But after some time I know how to be good because he protect me. He save me, show me how to be a good man and be strong. My Pa, I want to stay by his

side every day. One day they came look for us to take us to the village but I don't go back, my Pa teach me how to be a man, and me, I want to be strong like them." This quote shows striking similarities with the Stockholm syndrome. During the interview the boy spoke about his commander (Pa) with affection, showing how he became loyal and considered his commander as his father. When an attempt was made to rescue the boy, he decided to stay with his commander instead.

Stockholm syndrome was quite a common phenomenon among my interviewees, as also seen in this quote by a former LRA child soldier who was forcibly abducted from his home: "When we were in the training camp, Kony came to visit us sometime. When he was around he sat down together with the children, chatted and he was making jokes. He was always smiling and very friendly with me, he was nice. I liked him." Although the boy said he knew Kony abducted thousands of children just like him, he started associating with his leader and the group. Not being in contact with his friends or family anymore, Kony became a "nice guy" who gave him a new family that he felt he belonged to. This shows how socialization is closely linked to the powerful Stockholm syndrome, which, as indicated by interviews with former child soldiers and commanders, is at work within rebel groups.

The fifth tactic of organizational socialization, serial socialization, was present within each of the analyzed rebel groups as well. In each case, new recruits were groomed by senior rebels who taught them how to become respected members of the group. During this process, new recruits were frequently tested as to see whether they were trustworthy and if their behavior was in line with the group. Field research provided some particularly good examples of serial socialization within the LRA, LURD, and RUF, as child recruits reported they had to answer misleading questions to show they were becoming 'real rebels'. Whatever they said was measured carefully to see whether the children were assimilating with the group. In general, child soldiers in each of the groups were considered full members and allowed across inclusionary boundaries only after they had proven that they had assimilated with the group. However, LURD did make some exceptions to this, as they recruited during combat and expected children to act as full members straight away. Some of these children went through serial socialization at later stages, but others never reported such experiences.

Divestiture socialization may be perceived as the most influential part of organizational socialization, having a particularly long-lasting effect by stripping away personal characteristics of the children and aiming for the adoption of a new, rebel identity. Not surprisingly, this tactic was at the heart of organizational socialization within each of the rebel groups. A good example is that within each of the groups, child soldiers were provided with new names. These names were intended to erase their civilian identities and provide them with a rebel identity instead,

indicating they belonged to the group. In addition, divestiture socialization rebuilt the self-images of child recruits, as they discovered to be capable of things they never had imagined. An example of this is that within each of the analyzed rebel groups, child soldiers were not just victims and witnesses to extreme violence: many started executing violence themselves. However, divestiture socialization cannot be isolated as the most important tactic of organizational socialization. As indicated in the case study chapters, organizational socialization within each of the rebel groups was a combination of the six different tactics of organizational socialization. The use, intensity and frequency of these six tactics varied within each group, with divestiture seeming to be particularly important. The combination of organizational socialization tactics was essential: they enhanced and reinforced each other, and appeared to provide each group with the glue that enabled the establishment of a cohesive organization within the harsh war contexts. Field research revealed that the combination of organizational socialization tactics within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO made their child soldiers loyal to the groups, and contributed to the rebels' adopting a common group identity.

### *Skills*

Most child soldiers in the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO were taught and performed a large variety of skills. Some learned skills to engage in combat and were taught about military strategies and tactics, how to operate and dismantle arms, how to approach the enemy and set ambushes. Within every rebel group a select group of children learned the skills to protect their superiors so they could become their bodyguards. Children within the LRA and RENAMO were also taught how to lay land mines. Child soldiers who were not selected to become combatants developed skills to perform supportive tasks. Their roles were comparable in each of the rebel groups and ranged from those of cooks, recruiters, spies, cleaners, bush wives, porters, babysitters, nurses, escorts, looters to medics, forced laborers, guards, registrars and/or sex slaves. Most of my informants performed various roles and developed a set of skills over time.

In each of the groups commanders discussed the assignment of tasks; they decided what kind of role a newly recruited child would perform and which skills they were to be taught. This is a common process within rebel groups which is also acknowledged by Andvig and Gates who describe that "officers of an armed force that employs children assess the relative capabilities of children and adults both in their recruitment and when allocating tasks" (2007:4). By assessing their capabilities and allocating the tasks, commanders ensured that recruits were taught the right skills and performed maximally. How well developed the skills of child soldiers were largely seemed to depend on the training they had participated in. Whereas the LRA, RUF,

and RENAMO seemed to invest in training quite seriously, this was different within LURD. This implied that the Liberian rebel group included numerous rather unskilled child soldiers prone to cause accidents. The other three rebel groups hence seemed to be more well-organized.

### *Behavioral Patterns*

Teaching new recruits appropriate behavioral patterns was a significant aspect of socialization within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. New recruits in each of these groups were taught a large set of rules when they became part of the group in order to make sure they behaved correctly. The (number of) rules varied slightly between the groups yet all sought to establish control as well as obedience to commanding officers. Whereas severe punishment would be inflicted upon those who disobeyed the rules, high levels of obedience were achieved among child soldiers. Wessells explains their obedience by stating that “a desire to survive is one of the main reasons child soldiers obey commanders. However, their obedience is also rooted in socialization and cultural processes antedating entry into the armed group” (2006:65). Interviews revealed that the rules were generally designed by LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO top commanders and were to be obeyed by the entire group. However, it was common that the commanders would establish additional rules for the members of their own fighting units. All of the rebel groups can be perceived as highly disciplined yet for some this changed during the course of the war. For instance, LURD commanders seemed to have lost all control of their child soldiers towards the end of the struggle. Infighting started, rules were disobeyed and mayhem resulted. This was also the case within the RUF during times of their struggle. What all groups had in common was that the behavior and discipline of child soldiers was affected by and depended on their personal commanders. Some commanders within the groups were extremely strict, ensured that their child recruits were highly disciplined and tried to steer the group away from human rights violations. Other commanders had different interests, which in some cases implied that their child soldiers carried out brutal violence. This variety in discipline was found within each of the rebel groups.

### *Values*

Values played an important role within each of the rebel groups. Respect for the hierarchical systems was one of those. New child recruits were at the bottom of the hierarchy and should always show respect to their superiors. Still, within each of the groups, these children could become commanders at a young age, which implied that the traditional social hierarchies of age were reversed by the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. Field research indicated that each of the rebel groups were well structured

in hierarchical terms. They were for instance divided into battalions, companies, and platoons, which were under control of senior commanders who in turn had to report to the rebel leaders. None of the rebel groups seemed to be loose collections of gangs—not even RENAMO or LURD, which were groups often portrayed as such. Each of the rebel groups had an established hierarchy of ranks and effective systems of control and command, in most cases leading to relative coherence of military actions. The rebels were under strict military discipline within the LRA, LURD, RUF and RENAMO, which was based on a formal rank structure in each group and centralized coordination. Besides that, there was a relatively high social control among the rebels, which melted them into a cohesive group.

In addition, respect of spiritual beliefs was an important value emphasized within each rebel group. Newly recruited children were generally registered during spiritual ceremonies within the LRA, and RENAMO rebels stressed the importance of honoring the spirits of their ancestors. Within the RUF and LURD, traditional secret societies were reenacted to provide child soldiers with the rebel identity. According to my interviews, spiritual ceremonies and witchcraft were used mainly for protection and were often conducted before the rebels went to the frontline. Members of each rebel group believed that such practices protected them against bullets and other things that could harm them. It was also common to wear bracelets, necklaces, charms or other talisman for protection within each of the rebel groups.

Mutual respect between rebels seemed to be an important value and disrespect was often punished immediately. The rebels were expected to treat each other like family in all of the groups. In every case study, cannibalism was reported. Although this seemed most common and of particular spiritual value for LURD rebels who believed it would give them the powers of their enemy, incidents were reported by child soldiers who had been affiliated to the other groups as well. Within LURD a particular fashion sense was an important means to show that children belonged to the group. Within the LRA this was completely different, as children would simply just wear what they could find.

### *Motivations*

Field research revealed that child soldiers within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO had numerous motivations to join or remain with the rebels. Examples were food, education, individual or family protection, ideological goals, poverty, prestige, access to resources, weapons, scholarships, personal gain, respect, boredom, fear, revenge, hunger, peer pressure, grievances, equality issues, relationships, exploitation, promises, drugs, family separation, survival, control, power, economic prospects, jobs, and sometimes money. Looking at the often harsh circumstances of their recruitment into these groups, it may be hard to imagine child soldiers

becoming motivated to fight with the rebels. Andvig claims that “intrinsic motivation cannot be either bought or forced, it is either present or not” (2006:32). This assumption is incorrect: socialization within each of these rebel groups has made child soldiers change their norms, values, and even identities to such a large extent that their motivations have become intrinsic. This development was reported even among those children who had been forced to become part of the groups.

Some of my informants chose to join the LRA, LURD, RUF or RENAMO. Even though this is often referred to as voluntary recruitment, it may be better described as tactical agency or a “reasonable adaptive strategy or practical protection mechanism in situations of extreme danger or deprivation” (West, 2004:185). Living in conflict ridden countries, children had few opportunities for development. They faced mismanagement, a lack of educational opportunities, power abuse, bribery and corruption on a daily basis, which created motivations for them to take up arms. Some of my informants who had been part of the RUF and LURD particularly expressed they wanted to achieve change and no longer accepted to be marginalized. According to Bøås, “the state’s failure to provide for its population is largely responsible for creating the nearly permanent marginalization of large segments of the public in political and economic life. This leads to intensified political conflicts over the distribution of ideas, identities, resources, and positions.” He continues: “As states sank into seemingly permanent crisis, those hurt the most mentally were young people, emerging from an impoverished and tattered education system to seek an employment that the formal economy could not provide. The continued marginalization of young men in particular, created the vast pool of recruitment potential that has fed the rebel movements” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:45). This statement can indeed be applied to the RUF, LURD, and RENAMO as the circumstances as described by Bøås created motivations to join for many of their recruits.

Although the motivations and causes of conflict are often a complex combination of factors, according to Bøås these have one thing in common: “Almost every movement, however distinctive, emerged as a corrupt and dysfunctional state receded, leaving behind disaffected youth with little means of achieving status or material improvement except as combatants...The bitter truth was that there was little left to do. So few alternatives seemed viable, and this realization must have led some, obviously not all, to develop a mindset of hatred against their society, their communities, their elders, even their parents, that was unleashed in anger when a gun came within their reach. The gun became their tool, their personal revolution, and by killing they could finally prove that even they mattered. These young men are the creation of damaged and broken societies, where there is little left to do” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:46). Bøås certainly has a point here, yet he neglects the essential role



young women played within these movements; some of them were just as fed up with the circumstances in their countries. However, the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO indeed seem to have been established like this and for some of my informants this was a motivation to join the movements. This seemed to be the case particularly in Sierra Leone and Liberia; in Northern Uganda, relatively few children were motivated to join the movement—they were forced instead.

Still, the LRA created a sophisticated socialization mechanism which created allegiance and fierce loyalty among its child soldiers. LRA child soldiers were generally motivated to remain part of the group because of promises made to them by Kony or their commanders. One of the most important motivators was the promise that they would get a position within the government if they won the war. As the children came from very poor backgrounds and many missed out on education, this seemed the most viable option for most of them. This was also seen within the other rebel groups, yet the use of rewards varied between the groups. Whereas the LRA mainly relied on non-pecuniary rewards, the LURD did offer pecuniary rewards such as jobs, money and food. At least, they promised to do so. In this regard, the rebel groups are very similar: they all offered child soldiers promises as a means to motivate them. In fact, these hardly ever came true.

Another significant factor contributing to motivation within each of the rebel groups was the achievement of ranks. Ranks gave child soldiers a sense of control and power that was not likely to be experienced in civilian life. An additional motivator for male rebels was the fact that they were usually given bush wives when they stayed with the group, which contributed to the development of strong ties among the rebels. Besides that, the access to free food and other supplies emerged as a significant motivating factor for remaining with the rebel groups. Overall, many child soldiers expressed the feeling that life in the bush had significant advantages compared to civilian life. At home they simply did not have anything, due to the extreme poverty. Future expectations and opportunities were few, which made staying with the rebels seem like a good alternative. The belief that they would take over the government one day offered far brighter future prospects than if they stayed at home. As a result, many former child soldiers expressed high levels of motivation when they were part of the rebel groups. This demonstrates the efficiency of socialization: it transformed many terrified children into motivated, loyal fighters.

What should be kept in mind is that the rebel groups were not static organizations. They changed over time, as did the behavior and motivations of child soldiers. How these exactly evolved during different periods of the wars is difficult to determine as each of the rebel groups were to certain extents shrouded in mystery. The enigma surrounding the groups was particularly persistent in the cases of the LRA and RENAMO, as their respective leaders Kony and Dhlakama refused to meet

the press to provide statements about their struggles. Although each of the analyzed rebel groups seemed to have had relatively coherent political arguments and reasons to fight, these goals faded during the course of the wars. Using the RUF as an example: “What had started out as a social revolt ended up as a perverted version of the state the movement initially rebelled against. This is not unique to the RUF but seems to be a common pattern among current armed insurgencies all over Africa” (Bøås and Dunn, 2007:51). Although it is hard to draw such extensive generalizations, field research indicated that Bøås’ conclusion was at least valid for the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO. My informants stated that once they realized the rebel group could not achieve its objectives, this initially decreased their motivation to stay but when they found out there were few other opportunities, most remained with the group anyway.

### *Means of Teaching*

The predominant means of teaching used within all four groups were training and the exposure to violence, fear and punishments. Fear and punishment taught children to become part of the group and transformed them into soldiers. Violent and public punishments took place within each of the rebel groups if child soldiers did not successfully complete their orders. Child soldiers were also punished when they broke rules or showed a lack of motivation. They were generally severely beaten but some children were even killed to set an example of what happened to children who did not behave as ‘good’ rebels. These examples taught other child soldiers to adjust their behavior in order to avoid punishment. Within the RUF, LURD, and RENAMO child soldiers were also punished by imprisonment. And whereas the RUF used branding to punish misbehaving children, RENAMO used starvation as well. Besides that, interviews revealed that rebels within each of the groups believed they would be punished anyhow, even if fellow rebels did not discover their misbehavior. Some of my informants expressed the belief they would be shot during combat if they disobeyed the rebel laws and nobody noticed. This once again shows that violence wielded, suffered and observed was an essential part of child soldier socialization within the rebel groups.

Although these were prominent factors, fear, violence and punishments were not the only important means of teaching within the four groups. Each used rewards, ideological/political meetings, and/or spiritual beliefs and ceremonies to teach their child recruits about life as a rebel as well. Wessells explains how the use of rewards can lead to high levels of obedience: “By identifying with the commander, children gain a sense of power that they are otherwise denied. Identification can also have instrumental aspects, since children come to believe that if they do what the commander wants, they might get additional rewards. Commanders can further

amplify this loyalty by providing rewards that previously were unavailable to the child. These processes, backed by survival fears, typically instill high levels of obedience” (Wessells, 2006:66). Besides using rewards, the LRA and RENAMO had regular group meetings and assemblies during which child soldiers were instructed how to proceed the struggle or educated about the group. Within LURD children were taught to honor spiritual mediums as they would provide them with supernatural powers, and American movies were sometimes used to teach them about fighting. Within all of the groups, rewards were typically victory celebrations, promotions or wives. Again, the means of teaching varied between fighting units within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO, as they were designed by the organizations but commanders had a certain freedom in the execution of the process. As Pugel notes: “the essence of a fighting unit is ultimately a reflection of its commander and the organization’s goals” (in: Gates and Reich, 2010:178).

### *Internalization Type I and II*

As shown in the case-study chapters, some child soldiers within the four organizations studied here achieved internalization Type I, while others achieved Type II. The general patterns indicated were as follows:

Most of my informants who had been part of the LRA, RUF, or RENAMO achieved Type II internalization. These informants expressed the belief that they were indeed doing the right thing by fighting with the rebels and they stated to have adopted the group’s identity. They perceived the group as their new family and the male commanders were generally accepted as their new fathers. This indicates that family ties had been replaced. This provided them with a strong motivation to continue the struggle and stay with the group; there seemed to be no point in returning home. Furthermore, my informants that achieved Type II internalization stated that they forgot about civilian life and had severe problems readapting to society once the war was over. They felt out of place as they considered themselves belonging to the rebel group, and experienced stigmatization by civilians. Most felt ostracized in their communities and decided to start a new anonymous life in urban centers where nobody knew about their past.

On the other hand, the informants who achieved Type I internalization stated they were just doing what they were told to do to survive. They adopted roles but never started feeling that they belonged in the bush. These informants said they were thinking about their families and homes during the war, and often daydreamed about escaping. Although they did become loyal to the groups, they did not express the same type of motivations as Type II internalization informants did. That LURD child soldiers less frequently seemed to reach Type II internalization may be because the war in Liberia was much shorter than the conflicts fought by the other rebel groups.

LURD child soldiers were generally subject to socialization processes for shorter periods of time. In addition, several informants entered the war at a very late stage, and were generally not provided with training and certain other types of socialization, because the fighting was simply too intense. This suggests that not only did they undergo briefer socialization than children within the other rebel groups, but also certain socialization processes were likely to be skipped. This may well have affected the internalization outcome.

Overall, the outcomes indicate that age played a significant role in achieving Type I or Type II internalization. The younger children were when they joined a rebel group, the more likely they seemed to be to reach Type II internalization. The older the children were at time of their recruitment, the more difficult it seemed to socialize them as they were less likely to achieve Type II internalization. This result may be explained by the fact that older children had already been exposed to socialization processes within their communities, which had shaped their identities. Young children on the contrary, had experienced relatively few socialization processes within their community and in comparison had a weaker sense of identity as well as a more flexible self-image. It seemed less complicated to socialize these children into the rebel groups and make them adopt new identities. Besides that, the field research indicated that the longer children spent within the LRA, LURD, RUF or RENAMO, the more likely they were to have achieved Type II internalization. This result can be explained by the length, depth and continuity of the socialization processes they experienced.

Gender also played a significant role during the internalization process. Within the LRA girl soldiers were less likely to achieve Type II internalization as compared to boys. This seemed due to the sexual violence they experienced within the group and their forced marriages to bush husbands, as this made them long to go home. My female informants who had been part of the RUF and RENAMO indicated the same. However, my informants stated that these feelings often changed when girls became mothers in the bush. The fact that they started a family of their own by having children in the bush also made them more open to accept the rebel group as the new family. LURD girl soldiers generally seemed to achieve Type I internalization as well. This was particularly due to their independent attitude and strategic choices. They did not perceive themselves as victims but instead developed an art to broaden their perspectives without losing their identities to the rebels. My female informants stated they “just played the game,” indicating that they only assumed a role for as long as they stayed with the rebel group.

As may be expected, motivations played a role in the outcomes of internalization. Children who were forcibly recruited were most likely to stick to Type I internalization. On the other hand, child soldiers who had chosen to join one of the

rebel groups because of several motivations seemed to achieve Type II internalization rather easily. Almost all of my informants who chose to join the rebels, reached Type II internalization. Among my informants who had been forcibly recruited, the majority reached Type I internalization, while some reached Type II internalization. This shows the strong effects of child soldier socialization within rebel groups, as it even manages to change the identities of some coerced children and transforms them into loyal soldiers. When internalization Type II was achieved, my informants reported having faced severe difficulties when trying to return to society. They still identified themselves as rebels and were feared by the communities. These former child soldiers said that they started feeling like civilians only months or even years after they had left the war behind them, often jeopardizing their attempts to reintegrate into society.

# 9

## Towards a New Future

### *Conclusions and recommendations*

Why do child soldiers remain with rebel groups? And what induces these children to live under the harsh conditions entailed in being part of a rebel group? This thesis has aimed to provide insights into these complex questions by analyzing the socialization of child soldiers within African rebel groups and thereby shedding light on some of many challenges that still surround this global phenomenon.

As explained in the introduction, I have sought to explain how the process of socialization provided child soldiers with the motivation to remain with the LRA, LURD, RUF, or RENAMO. Complementing previous child soldier research done by other scholars, I aimed to fill a knowledge gap by analyzing the dynamics found within rebel groups and explaining how their socialization processes are one of the most significant aspects in the transformation of a child into a soldier. Socialization implies that individuals acquire the culture of their group. The process inducts actors into the norms and values of the community and results in sustained compliance. Actors acquire new identities through socialization, leading to new interests. In emphasizing this, I have revealed how socialization created bonding among members of the LRA, LURD, RUF and RENAMO. I have also shown how socialization has been used as a tool to create allegiance and keep child soldiers within the rebel groups, preventing them from escaping. This thesis has underlined the rigorous developments that emerge in the course of the socialization processes used by all four rebel organizations studied here.

This thesis also has highlighted the challenges concerning child soldiering. The first chapters showed that it is difficult to define a child soldier, a phenomenon still surrounded by many myths. Further, the variety of views on rebellion and child soldiers put forth by prominent scholars was analyzed. This analysis of previous research focusing on the child soldiering phenomenon brought out the reasons why rebel groups recruit child soldiers, and the methods they employ. This thesis also presented the methods used by rebel groups to transform children into soldiers and create allegiance. However, the literature analysis also indicated some of the weaknesses of previous research and how this constrains our understanding of child soldiering. The lack of focus on socialization and dynamics within rebel groups has resulted in a gap in the literature, and, perhaps more seriously, has led to mismatches

in rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former child soldiers as these children and their needs are not fully understood. This thesis has shown that depictions of child soldiers as either emotionally crippled victims or predatory killers are over-simplistic and erroneous. Socialization processes can effectively transform even forcibly recruited children into soldiers and make them loyal to rebel groups. Thus, child soldiers are sometimes victims, but not all the time; and they are sometimes perpetrators, but not all the time. Existence as a child soldier means maintaining a fragile balance between the two.

The concept of socialization was introduced in this thesis to show its powerful capacities within rebel groups and to highlight the need to conduct future research on the topic. Extensive field research was necessary to study the socialization dynamics within rebel groups, as only (former) child soldiers can explain what they experienced within their organizations. For this reason, 260 interviews were conducted with former LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO child soldiers and commanders. The interviews gave these children a voice and revealed the role played by socialization in creating allegiance among rebels in each of the groups. The interviews showed that the rebel groups relied heavily on well-developed, efficient socialization processes; these processes served as the (social) glue through which the four rebel organizations managed to remain cohesive bodies. Moreover, the interviews clarified why previous research is indeed moving forward in attempting to understand the child soldier phenomenon yet fails to grasp an important aspect of the problem: the research community has not yet analyzed the influence and effects of socialization processes, and the dynamics of rebel groups. This neglect has resulted in a limited understanding of the entire problem of child soldiering, which has dramatic consequences for DDRR programs designed for former child soldiers. The programs often mismatch their needs as too little has been known about what these children experience in the bush and how their identities gradually change. Rehabilitating and reintegrating these children into society will require extensive knowledge about the mechanisms used to create child soldiers. This thesis has shown that socialization is an essential aspect of this, and should be further analyzed in future research. This thesis can be seen as a starting point for such a development. As child soldiering is still a global phenomenon, it is important to expand our focus beyond these four cases and study similar processes in other African, Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern contexts.

Analysis of the role of socialization within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO has shown that either/or portrayal of child soldiers—as either victims or perpetrators—is incorrect. In many forced recruitment cases socialization still manages to mold children into soldiers, melting their identity into the group identity of the rebels. We have seen that the change of identity is one of the most important

developments needed in order to create allegiance among child soldiers within rebel groups. By focusing on four rebel groups that have all managed to make loyal soldiers of *abducted* recruits, this thesis has shown the powerful, life-changing effects of socialization. We have noted several contributing factors that influence the allegiance of child soldiers within rebel groups, and the role of the process of socialization. Socialization processes change the behavior and identity of children affiliated with rebel groups by teaching them new skills, roles, norms, values, motivations, and rules. By using Checkel's threefold analysis, I have highlighted the extent to which socialization led to internalization within the rebel groups. Internalization transformed the children into members of the LRA, LURD, RUF, or RENAMO with a sense of belonging in the bush. This makes clear the effectiveness and efficiency of socialization processes: children change their own identities into those of rebels and develop a strong sense of belonging to the groups. Moreover, my interviews showed that these new identities persisted, to varying degrees, also after the children had left the rebel groups. This posed critical challenges to their attempts to return to society and jeopardized the reintegration of thousands of former child soldiers. Many children continued to identify themselves as rebels and perceived the group as their family. This indicates that if socialization within the rebel group is not targeted in attempts to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers, this may cause severe problems for the children as well as their communities. Negligence to do so may even pose threats to regional security as re-recruitment is looming.

This thesis has highlighted the importance of including socialization processes in future research concerning child soldiers. Uncovering how socialization mechanisms work within the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO offers a broader understanding of the phenomenon of child soldiering. Although we should not draw generalizations from these four cases, it is likely that similar mechanisms apply in other rebel groups as well. Unfortunately, research on socialization within rebel groups is still rather limited. If socialization is addressed at all, it is often covered superficially, without analysis of the in-depth processes and rebel group dynamics so essential for understanding the whole problem. As Checkel (2005) has argued, scholars tend to overlook and bracket the process that leads to internalization. It is vital to avoid this trap in future research, and efforts to understand the dynamics and processes taking place within rebel groups should be increased. It is important to study these phenomena further and to analyze the influence of socialization on child soldiers within other rebel groups, in order to deepen our knowledge and expand our capacities for dealing with related challenges. A better understanding of the problem cannot eliminate child soldiering—but it can contribute to the improvement of policies aimed at reducing child soldiering. Focusing on gaps within our knowledge of child soldiering will be of value, as it will indicate how to proceed in supporting these



children.

Why is this important? One main reason is the current mismatch and failure of DDRR programs. The recovery of a child soldier's lost childhood proves to be one of the most difficult challenges. Growing up within a rebel group estranges children from civilian life without war, and challenges their reintegration once they have come out of the bush. These children have grown up learning that violence is the means to get what you want or solve problems. In order for them to reintegrate into and function as part of society, these effects of socialization within the rebel groups must be reversed. Considering the influence that socialization has on children, while they are part of rebel groups but also after they have left these groups, I argue that it is essential to increase research and focus deliberately on rebel group socialization in programs designed to reintegrate former child soldiers. These programs need to tackle the challenges created by rebel group socialization and offer reverse intense socialization to give former child soldiers the opportunity to re-adapt to the civilian way of life. Only then may these programs be able to achieve what they are designed for, and work towards a brighter future for these children and their communities

To conclude: child soldiers are often portrayed as dangerous, merciless killers. However, interviewing former child soldiers in different African countries showed that they all had some things in common. They were fragile, felt betrayed, used, desperate, scared and lost. Existence seemed meaningless: the wars had not brought them what they had hoped for, promises were broken, families were lost, and most of them ended up in situations of desperation very similar to the situations they had hoped to escape by joining the rebels. Their trust in adults had been shattered by the war: they had put their lives in the hands of commanders who promised the world to them, and now they were left with nothing. Many had tried to find guidance in their struggle for a better life; most had failed. Opportunities for changing their lives were scarce, yet most child soldiers who did come across anything like this used it as a change catalyst. After the war, numerous child soldiers did not return home; they felt ostracized, stigmatized, demonized, and rejected by their societies. Many of these children have disappeared into the anonymity of urban centers where they continue to face hardship and look to one another for support, often sustaining the same hierarchical order as in the wartime group.

It is necessary to restore the broken trust between former child soldiers and their societies in order to facilitate rebuilding the bridges between them, and to strengthen their positions, resources, and networks within the community. One way of achieving this are DDRR programs focusing on renewed cooperation, which can help to foster the re-establishment of ties between children and their communities. It can assist former child soldiers in creating new civilian identities and in finding respected and meaningful social roles within their communities. This will benefit the

communities as well, as many communities have been robbed of entire generations of young people due to the recruitment of children during the war. On the other hand, my field research has also shown that former child soldiers do not constitute one homogenous group: they have different ways and needs in coping with their past and trying to reintegrate. For instance, the needs of young children differ from those of older children. Whereas schooling may be beneficial for younger children, older children will benefit more from learning practical skills during vocational training, as this will help them to find employment and become self-sustaining. Here we should bear in mind that demands for skills vary, and offering large groups of former child soldiers the same type of training cannot improve the situation if there are few jobs available and an oversupply of youth with similar skills. In order to be able to offer a real future opportunity to former child soldiers, the types of training must be adjusted to local contexts and local demands. Local needs assessments before implementing DDDR programs are an important aspect of this.

Similarly as regards former boy soldiers and girl soldiers: they have different needs as well. Assistance must be tailored to their specific needs in order to contribute to the establishments of new lives. One need that they all have in common is that, just as with socialization when entering a rebel group, civilian socialization processes must be exercised for re-entry to civilian life. This will aid former child soldiers in shedding their rebel identities, which is necessary to their successful functioning as members of their communities. Only by reversing the process of socialization within rebel groups and working to reconstruct the place and role of these children in the civilian world can they be led on the road to a better future.

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## Summary

Why do child soldiers remain with rebel groups? What induces these children to live under the harsh conditions entailed in being part of a rebel group? This dissertation, “The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears,” provides insights into these complex questions by analyzing the socialization of child soldiers within African rebel groups. Even though child soldiering has become an extensively studied global phenomenon, myriad challenges still confront the researcher. Not only is it difficult to define a “child soldier,” depicting child soldiers as either emotionally crippled victims or predatory killers proves over-simplistic, with invalid conclusions, and the phenomenon is still surrounded by a mixture of myths and unknown terrain.

Research on child soldiers has made significant strides during the last decade, but it has failed to grasp the entire problem. This dissertation combines in-depth analysis of previous research on child soldiers and rebellion with innovative data from extensive field research conducted by the author. Where previous research has tended to focus on recruitment and/or reintegration issues, the author’s field research sheds light on the period when child soldiers have become actively engaged within rebel groups. Drawing on hundreds of in-depth interviews with former child soldiers and commanders of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) in Mozambique, this study explores the methods used for transforming children into soldiers and creating allegiance within African rebel groups.

The author’s field research indicates that socialization processes within each of the studied rebel groups played an important role in transforming children into soldiers, having robust effects even in cases of forced recruitment. Socialization, whereby individuals acquire the culture of their group, inducts child soldiers into the norms and values of the rebel group and results in sustained compliance. These children acquire new identities through socialization, leading to new interests, motivation, allegiance and loyalty to the group. Through this process, the rebel group eventually becomes perceived as the child’s new family. Hundreds of in-depth interviews show that all four rebel groups relied heavily on well-developed, efficient socialization processes, and discloses how these processes represented the (social) glue whereby the groups managed to remain cohesive bodies.

“The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears” explains in detail how socialization manages to mold children into soldiers, merging their identities into the group identity of the rebels. Analysis of these dynamics makes it clear that the change of identity is one of the most important developments needed in order to create allegiance among child soldiers within rebel groups. By focusing on the LRA, LURD, RUF, and RENAMO—four rebel groups which managed to gain the allegiance of even their *abducted* recruits—this thesis shows the powerful effects socialization can have. Socialization processes change the behavior and identity of child soldiers, teaching them new skills, roles, norms, values, motivations, and rules.

The extent to which socialization led to internalization among child soldiers within these four rebel organizations is alarming. This field research makes clear the effectiveness and efficiency of socialization processes, showing that internalization transformed the majority of interviewed child soldiers into dedicated members of the rebel groups. These children affirmed a strong sense of belonging to the group, and these new identities often persisted after they had left the rebel group. Their accounts show how this posed critical obstacles to their attempts to return to society and challenged the reintegration of thousands of former child soldiers.

Research on socialization processes within armed groups is still rather limited: scholars tend to overlook the dynamics within rebel groups and bracket the process that leads to internalization. As this pointed out in thesis, such neglect has had far-reaching consequences for the post-war lives of child soldiers, and has limited the success of Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programs. Because so little is known about the socialization mechanisms that change children’s identities into those of rebels, DDRR programs are unable to target these changes sufficiently. Moreover, DDRR programs are often designed in ways ill-matched to the needs of former child soldiers, failing to assist child soldiers in shedding their rebel identities. The consequences of socialization within rebel groups merits more research in different parts of the world and should be specifically addressed in future DDRR programs and research. Negligence to do so can cause severe problems for former child soldiers as well as their communities, and may even pose threats to regional security.

## Samenvatting

Waarom blijven kindsoldaten bij rebellengroepen? Wat beweegt deze kinderen onder de barre omstandigheden te leven die daarmee samengaan? Dit proefschrift, “The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears”, geeft inzicht in deze complexe vraagstukken. Het geeft een analyse van socialisatieprocessen van kindsoldaten binnen Afrikaanse rebellengroepen en legt daarmee een basis voor nieuwe inzichten op dit terrein. Het onderwerp kindsoldaten is uitgegroeid tot een uitgebreid en wereldwijd bestudeerd verschijnsel. Desondanks zijn er nog steeds talloze uitdagingen en vragen rondom dit onderwerp. Het is moeilijk om de term ‘kindsoldaat’ te definiëren, en hen af te schilderen als emotioneel beschadigde slachtoffers of als roofzuchtige moordenaars is te simplistisch en leidt tot ongefundeerde conclusies. Dit fenomeen wordt nog steeds omgeven door een mengsel van mythen en onbekend terrein.

Door onderzoek naar kindsoldaten is er het afgelopen decennium aanzienlijke vooruitgang geboekt in de kennis daarover, maar het probleem is nog steeds niet voldoende doorgrond. Dit proefschrift combineert analyses van eerder onderzoek over kindsoldaten en rebellie met innovatieve data, verkregen uit door de auteur verricht veldonderzoek. Waar vorige onderzoeken de neiging hebben zich te richten op vraagstukken met betrekking tot werving en/of re-integratie, belicht dit onderzoek de periode waarin kindsoldaten onderdeel zijn van rebellengroepen. Op basis van honderden diepte-interviews met voormalige kindsoldaten en commandanten van de Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Oeganda, de Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Liberia, het Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, en het Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) in Mozambique, beschrijft deze studie de methodes die worden toegepast bij het transformeren van kinderen in soldaten en het creëren van hun loyaliteit binnen Afrikaanse rebellengroepen.

Veldonderzoek van de auteur toont aan dat socialisatieprocessen binnen elk van de bestudeerde rebellengroepen een belangrijke rol spelen in de transformatie van kinderen tot soldaten. Zelfs in gevallen van gedwongen rekrutering leiden de door rebellen gehanteerde socialisatiemethodes veelvuldig tot loyaal lidmaatschap van zo’n groep. Socialisatie, waardoor de cultuur van de groep wordt eigengemaakt, wijdt kindsoldaten in in de normen en waarden van de rebellengroep en resulteert in langdurige volgzzaamheid. Deze kinderen nemen een nieuwe identiteit aan, wat leidt tot nieuwe interesses, motivatie, trouw en loyaliteit aan de groep. Door dit proces gaat het kind de rebellengroep uiteindelijk zien als zijn of haar nieuwe familie. Uit honderden diepte-interviews blijkt dat alle vier de rebellengroepen zwaar leunden op sterk ontwikkelde en efficiënte socialisatieprocessen. De interviews laten zien hoe deze processen de ‘(sociale) lijm’ vormen waardoor de groepen erin slagen om samenhangende organisaties te blijven.

'The Bullets Sound Like Music To My Ears' legt in detail uit hoe socialisatieprocessen kinderen tot soldaten transformeert en hoe hun identiteit samensmelt met de identiteit van de rebellengroep. Een grondige analyse van deze dynamiek maakt duidelijk dat de verandering van identiteit een van de belangrijkste ontwikkelingen is die nodig is om loyaliteit van kindsoldaten aan rebellengroepen te creëren. Door te focussen op de LRA, LURD, RUF en RENAMO (vier rebellengroepen die erin geslaagd zijn om zelfs de trouw van door hun ontvoerde kinderen te winnen) toont dit proefschrift de krachtige effecten van het socialisatieproces aan. Deze processen veranderen het gedrag en de identiteit van kindsoldaten en leert hun nieuwe vaardigheden, rollen, normen, waarden, drijfveren en regels.

De mate waarin socialisatie heeft geleid tot internaliseren van kindsoldaten binnen deze vier rebellenorganisaties is alarmerend. Het veldonderzoek maakt duidelijk hoe effectief en efficiënt deze socialisatieprocessen zijn. Het toont aan hoe de meerderheid van de geïnterviewde kindsoldaten veranderde in toegewijde leden van rebellengroepen. Deze kinderen ontwikkelden een sterk gevoel van verbondenheid met de groep en hielden vaak vast aan hun nieuwe aangenomen identiteit, ook nadat de rebellengroep was verlaten. Hun persoonlijke verhalen laten zien hoe dit de pogingen van duizenden ex-kindsoldaten om terug te keren en te re-integreren in de maatschappij ernstig belemmerde of zelfs verhinderde.

Onderzoek naar socialisatieprocessen binnen gewapende groeperingen is nog steeds vrij beperkt: wetenschappers hebben tot nu toe weinig aandacht besteed aan de dynamiek binnen rebellengroepen en het proces dat leidt tot internalisering. Zoals opgemerkt in dit proefschrift heeft dit verzuim verstrekende gevolgen voor het naoorlogse leven van kindsoldaten en heeft het het succes van ontwapening, demobilisatie, rehabilitatie en re-integratie (DDRR)-programma's beperkt. Omdat er zo weinig bekend is over de socialisatiemechanismen die de identiteit van kinderen veranderen in die van rebellen, zijn DDRR-programma's slecht in staat om deze kwesties aan te pakken. Bovendien worden DDRR-programma's vaak ontworpen op een manier die slecht afgestemd is op de behoeften van voormalig kindsoldaten. Ze slagen er daardoor niet in om kindsoldaten te helpen bij het afschudden van hun rebel-identiteit. De gevolgen van socialisatie binnen rebellengroepen verdient nader onderzoek in verschillende delen van de wereld en moet specifiek worden aangepakt in toekomstige DDRR-programma's en onderzoek. Als dit niet gebeurt, kan dat ernstige problemen veroorzaken voor voormalig kindsoldaten en hun gemeenschappen, en kan zelfs de regionale veiligheid bedreigen.



# Appendix: Informed Consent Form

## **Research Project: Socialization of Child Soldiers in African Rebel Groups**

Researcher: Lotte Vermeij

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Project housed at: Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Field research period: January 2009 until April 2011

## **Overview of the Project**

This project analyzes the socialization of child soldiers involved with rebel groups in Africa. The project first examines general motivations for child soldiers to remain with the rebel group. It then examines the particular role socialization plays in this decision. The objective is to create a broader understanding of the child soldiering phenomenon and to illuminate the processes child soldiers encounter while being part of a rebel group. This could indicate opportunities for improvements of rehabilitation and reintegration programs as specific areas that need to be addressed in these programs may be highlighted by the research. The following research questions will be addressed:

How and why do child soldiers become involved with rebel groups?

What happens once child soldiers have become part of a rebel group?

Which mechanisms contribute to the decision to remain with a rebel group?

What role does socialization play in the decision to remain with a rebel group?

How does this strengthen the ties to a rebel group?

## **Method and Output**

Data will be gathered through interviews conducted with former child soldiers who were involved in the conflicts in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Mozambique. These interviews will be conducted between January 2009 and April 2011. Academic publications will be produced from 2009 onwards using the data collected. The project aims to return the results to Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mozambique for use by international organizations, non-governmental organizations, institutions of higher education, and government entities.

## **Interviews**

The researcher involved with this project will ensure that all interviewees have the following rights:

- To decline to participate in the study and interview, and to participate voluntarily,

- To withdraw from the interview and the study at any time,
- To ask the researcher questions at any time,
- To consent to any note-taking and audio recording by the researcher, and to all forms of information given to the researcher,
- To have identity remain anonymous, and any personal details to remain confidential,
- To understand the risks of participation in the study.

**Lotte Vermeij**  
**PhD candidate, Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)**  
**Completed Training and Supervision Plan**



Name of the activity	Department/ Institute	Year	Credits (ECTS)
<b>Project related competences</b>			
Writing of PhD Research Proposal	PRIO/Wageningen University	2009/10	6
Giving presentations/workshops on the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict	War Affected Children Association, Gulu	2010	1
Giving workshops on child soldiers socialization and DDRR programs	Youth Dream Centre, Freetown	2010	1
"Child soldier socialization within the RUF and DDRR consequences"	War Child Sierra Leone	2010	2
"Child Soldiers: From Recruitment to Reintegration"	Hotel de Wereld, Wageningen	2011	1
"Children and Armed Conflict on the African Continent"	Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria	2011	2
"Child soldiers, Combat and International Humanitarian Law"	Norwegian Armed Forces/Red Cross	2013	1
<b>B) General research related competences</b>			
Qualitative Methods and the Study of Civil War	PRIO/University of Oslo	2009	6
"Child Soldiers: Socialization within the Revolutionary United Front and its consequences for reintegration"	Oxford University	2010	1
Visiting Research Fellowship	NUPI, Oslo	2012/13	6
Publishing seminar	NUPI, Oslo	2013	1
Master class on Network theory	NUPI, Oslo	2013	1
"Child soldiers and DDRR initiatives"	University of Tromsø	2013	1
<b>C) Career related competences/personal development</b>			
"Child soldiers and their socialization within armed groups"	Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria	2011	2
"Child soldiers in Africa"	War Child HQ, Amsterdam	2012	1
"Child soldiers and DDRR programs: how to move forward"	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague	2012	1
"Child Soldiers on the African Continent: How They Are Turned Into Soldiers Loyal to Armed Groups"	NUPI, Oslo	2012	1
Teaching Master students on field research in conflict zones	University of Oslo	2012	1
Teaching Master students on field research in (post-) conflict zones	Wageningen University	2012	1
"Children and Armed Conflict" and lecture on child soldiers	NUPI, Oslo	2013	1
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>38</b>

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